

**ROLES OF DISCOURSES AND THE MEANINGS OF SAME-SEX  
MARRIAGE COMMUNICATED IN THE NEWS OF MASS  
MEDIA IN THAILAND**



**Siriwat Mathet**

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Communication Arts and Innovation)  
The Graduate School of Communication Arts and Management  
Innovation  
National Institute of Development Administration  
2020**

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## ABSTRACT

<b>Title of Dissertation</b>	ROLES OF DISCOURSES AND THE MEANINGS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE COMMUNICATED IN THE NEWS OF MASS MEDIA IN THAILAND
<b>Author</b>	Siriwat Mathet
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The research, entitled “Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand,” reflects the study of meaning construction and power through discursive practice on same-sex marriage via the presentation of news of mass media in Thailand, including the study on the perception and interpretation of receivers with different social experiences and backgrounds. The concepts of sexual diversity, marriage, same-sex marriage, discourse, and discourse analysis, including audience analysis by a cultural approach, are used as a theoretical framework for the study. Qualitative research based on cultural studies was conducted to analyze two principal components in a communication process by 1) discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough, comprising text, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice, and 2) audience analysis from a cultural approach.

The findings reveal that when couples of same-sex strive to seize the meaning and righteousness related to the marriage field, the competing force of the other side also tries to maintain the traditional social structure of heterosexuality or male-and-female marriage. Thus, it is a collision between a homosexual and heterosexual agency in using words and defining their meanings in the sphere of mass media news. The findings are divided into four levels:

The institutional power and the creation of righteousness in the meaning of “marriage.” Typically, when a couple just voluntarily lives together, it seems that no argument is raised. However, an argument takes place once a marriage discourse is constructed to create some righteousness for some groups of people with some institutions involved. In other words, a problem occurs when a change in the mode of production enters the capitalist economic system. Namely, capitalism plays a role in

organizing human factors involving the family institution, based on several institutions: religion, medicine, law, etc., including mass media. Since same-sex couples cannot produce any heir as a production laborer into a social system to mobilize such a society. Eventually, the meaning of “marriage” of people in a society is defined with a focus on only heterosexual marital relationships to respond to the goal of capitalism.

A clash of marriage discourse of homosexuality. Same-sex marriage is one of the tactics in expressing power in constructing the meaning of a "bride" and "a groom." It is another struggle concerning sexual relations that rejects male-female sexual relations at both individual levels or by a homosexual agency and at the societal level via social institutions or structure. A group of same-sex couples inclines to negotiate with social structural systems through ritual activities, which brings about a tendency of introducing power in releasing or struggling oneself from the dominance of social structure systems. Besides, it is found that homosexuals can appear in mass media news, but are presented exclusively and repressively with restricted news and connotative-meaning language within the sphere of homosexuality.

Same-sex marriage presented in the news. Generally, news can arouse the audience's attention, but it can also be mingled with biases and prejudices. News can present their paradox through language usage that identifies certain types of columns for categorizing news, i.e., miscellaneous news, weird news in a society, or funny columns by adding emotional language or puns, to distinguish them from general news. It is a kind of repression through the power of social structure via news. Furthermore, news also tries to insert and maintain the status quo value of male-female marital relationship and the related marriage traditions.

Audience's perception and interpretation on same-sex marriage. The samples reflect their views as an audience. They view that the way homosexuals stand up to organize a wedding for their couple indicates their rejection and protest against the mainstream male-female sexual relationship. On the other hand, mass media may also present the news only partially, attempting to induce the audience to accept same-sex marriage. Besides, some social and cultural factors have been emerging to play a role as a mechanism for determining “the acceptance of homosexuality,” with meanings behind the acceptance.

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Siriwat Mathet

August 2020

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and Rationale of the Study**

#### **1.1.1 Marriage: A Tradition of Two People Living Together in Human Society**

Since 1865, MacLennan, an English scientist and lawyer, studied about a marriage of people in the old age and traced their thought behind such marriages, especially on their family concepts. He found that each human family comprised one man and one woman having sexual relations as a husband and wife, and accordingly, the concept of monogamy occurred. However, later men had sexual relations with other women. Likewise, women also had sexual relations with other men. Therefore, it is doubtless that since the primitive history, concepts and beliefs against monogamy have been witnessed. In ancient times, the sexual relations of human beings were promiscuous. Each human being, both male and female, had a right to have free love or extramarital sex equally. Besides, children born by such promiscuity were also accepted. However, human sexual relations have been evolved in sequences until it emerged a concept of monogamy. In other words, human sexual relations started from a broad definition of extramarital sex or free love to a narrower scope of a couple's engagement in the form of "a marriage" as existing nowadays. (Kulap Saipradit, 1981).

Therefore, "marriage" can be considered as an important institution. Since by nature, human beings are not different from other creatures in the world whose goal is the maintenance and reproduction of their species. Human marriage thus makes people different from other animals as it involves tradition, rituals, beliefs, and accumulated values. It also includes religious and law principles. The definition of marriage has been mentioned since the Roman periods.

From the review of literature, it is found that Justinian, the emperor of Byzantine, or the Rome empire, issued two kinds of marriage laws. The first law was a Patriarchy law in which a wife is interior to her husband in at least three ways. 1) A wife must have a religious practice following her husband. 2) A wife is assumed to be purchased, or a man buys a woman to be a wife. 3) A wife has to stay with her husband. The second law is a marriage in which a wife is independent of her husband. Relatively, the latter has been admitted widely for a long time. However, this kind of marriage requires the couple to have at least certain ages. According to Roman laws, a man had to be fourteen years old and a woman twelve years old. For general people, a couple of eighteen years old is a perfect couple. Still, if either men or women are still under the nurture of their parents, they have to ask permission from them first

Accordingly, marriage or the meaning of marriage still relies on tradition, values, religious and legal principles, varying in each society and time of each country. However, one shared implication is “marriage” is the couple’s intent to spend their lives together (Na Nuch Thongkam, 2003).

In the Thai context, marriage is a starting period of family life for living together. People eligible for having a family life must be a husband and wife who pass a traditional wedding ceremony of a society or community. Generally, in a wedding ceremony of all ethnicities, relatives and friends are invited to participate and be a witness in the celebration. They are also guests in a feast. Such feasts are called differently in each region of the country. For example, in the north, it is called “Kin Khak,” northeast “Kin Dong,” Central (some areas) “Kin Sam Thuan,” and south “Kin Ngarn” or “Kin Niew.” A part of the ceremony is the northern pray for encouraging or calling morale and motivation for the couple (In Thai called “Soo Khwan”). It says, “to declare to be a husband and wife; they must let their ancestors witness this ceremony to see that they are married properly by the required tradition.” Regarding “tradition,” it is accepted to be part of a culture determined or created by each society as a way of life. It is a specific cultural terminology of each community. In other words, an inherited tradition is the collective agreement of people in a society. Like other substances according to the rules of regularity, which are composed and constructed by human beings, tradition is dynamic or cannot be fixed unless it is supported or reinforced. Otherwise, it will get smaller, deteriorated, and



slowly disappear. However, if something new comes to support or interfere, but too much, it will be changed or deformed so quickly that the old form cannot exist anymore. Similarly, marriage nowadays is not merely for maintaining or reproducing human species like in the early days but is developed to be homosexual or intersex, depending on the changing direction of social contexts (Sathian-Koset, 1958).

Therefore, “marriage” or “wedding” must comply with the tradition, values, and laws of each social context. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that marriage in the past involved polygamy until it evolved to focus on monogamy. Thus, when the socio-cultural context has changed over time, the purpose of marriage has changed from maintaining the species of human beings in the old days to the modified meaning and form. Importantly, nowadays, wedding covers same-sex couples, introduced into society by an urge for sexual rights and freedom. Notably, the principles of marriage allow a same-sex couple to live together like the male-female couple as a consequence of their call for sexual freedom. Besides, the legalization of same-sex marriage is raised up as a social issue depending on each country’s social changing environment. Correspondingly, present marriage requires no fixed rules but depends more on the values, tradition, religion, law, and culture of each society in determining, objecting, or supporting human marriage life.

### **1.1.2 Same-sex Marriage: A Power Struggle of Desirable Sexual Taste**

As a society today is multicultural, a diversity in ways of living is thus immense, even a diversity of genders and sexuality. The perspectives of sexual ways of life have been expanded. Some disruptive behaviors that used to be concealed are more revealed at a certain level, probably due to increasing social movements in human rights, especially in sexuality diversity.

Kritaya Archavanitkul (2011) mentions “a sexual diversity. The word “sexual diversity” was used to coin the working network of those fighting for the rights of same-sex lovers in the mid of 2005. The term includes all kinds of alternative genders, i.e., MLM, FLF, king guy, queen guy, quing, tom, dee (lady), queer, transgender, tood, tab, etc., including heterosexuals. Later, the network tends to use the name “LGBTI” (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) to represent sexual diversities. Furthermore, Jackson (2000, as cited in Kritaya Archavanitkul, 2011) studied, “An



Explosion of Thai Identities: Global Queering and Re-Imagining Queer Theory.” He found that since 1960, there has been a classification of alternative genders in Thai society. Some newly-coined name-callings of alternative sexuality disappeared (i.e., Kratiam (a Thai word means garlic) while some have still been used up to present, with some increasing new words. All of the names or vocabularies represent sexual diversities in LGBTI. However, the competence of people of alternative genders and social acceptance of them has still been limitedly portrayed in some public and specific spheres, underlined by Thai society, i.e., in entertainment and beauty circle, some mass media channels, etc. A large number of reflections of the lives of sexual diversities have been broadcast through a variety of media, i.e., news, drama, movies, etc. Besides, the third gender plays more roles openly on various kinds of media (Pimonpan Isarabhakdi, 2015). Concerning sexual expression of people of alternative genders, from the survey of the National Statistical Office of Thailand on Thai people’s social condition, culture, and mental health (happiness) in 2014, it was found that there was the increased number of people who rejected free sexual expression from 81.8% in 2011 to 83.0% in 2014. However, regarding sexually disruptive behaviors, i.e., women-to-men, men-to-women, etc., there was a decreased number of social rejection from 23.1% in 2011 to 17.5% in 2014

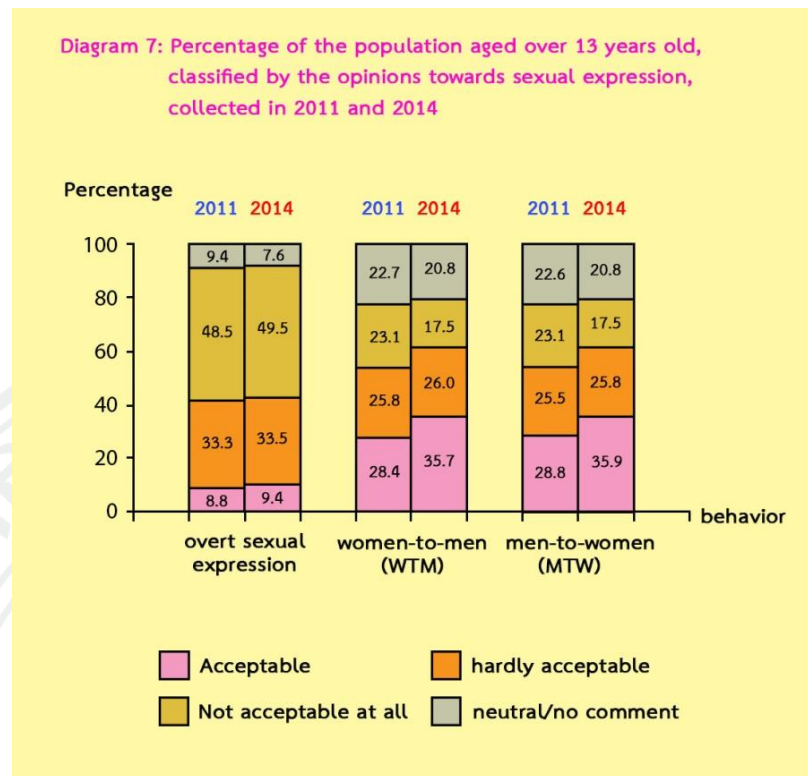


Figure 1.1 Percentage of the Population Aged Over 13 Years Old, Classified By Their Opinions Towards Sexual Expression Behaviors in 2011 and 2014

Source: National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2015.

From the findings, it shows that people accepted the sexual expression of alternative genders increasingly; however, it was an attitudinal change at some levels only with a substantial consequence to enlarge their sexual expression in broader spheres of a society without doubts. Jackson (1999b), calls this change as “tolerant but unacceptable.” In other words, alternative genders are still a minority group and marginal people whom society treats discriminately with inequality in various contexts.

Besides, tracing back to how the world valued and provided sexual liberty and rights in the past, Baramée Panich (2016) conducted a study and found that such sexual freedom and rights of alternative genders were questionable and questioned by all sectors of human society. It includes same-sex relationships and marriage, which are still argued at present about the appropriateness and feasibility in connection with each society’s culture and tradition. In democratic countries, people view that the

appreciation and provision of liberty and rights for people to express their homosexuality are fundamental rights each citizen should have. The government also has no right to interfere with their personal affairs. They also believe in their free choice of any sexual orientation and to have the couple's life with no restrictions on sexuality. People can make their own decisions based on equality, while the state should not discriminate against those of same-sex relationships.

Concerning the social order for sexual relationships in Thai society, Thai society still emphasizes cross-sex or heterogeneous relations of males and females, primarily through wedding or legal marriage accepted by family, community, cultural tradition and values, and laws, including the related contexts. Such an emphasis reflects sexual inequality in society that affects ways of life of those with sexual diversities, especially their rights, freedom, and sexual expression. Despite more opportunities for them, it is still challenging to open social space widely for them to express their behaviors freely. Opinion expressions are still expected to comply with what the society underlines for them, who are positioned as those deviated from general people

Struggle towards sexual rights, freedom, and social acceptance takes place periodically through group formation, such as Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, Anjaree Association, etc., or the state legislature, i.e., Draft Marriage Act. In Thailand, although there is no legislation for punishing any unacceptable gender or gender identity, the acceptance of alternative sexuality and gender identity through legislation is still at the beginning stage, and the legal protections for the rights of sexual diversities is within a limit. Mainly, there has been no law to certify people of sexual diversity, except for males and females. Nor has there been any legislation related to LGBT especially (Busakorn Suriyasarn, 2014).

Moreover, NIDA Poll of the National Institute of Development Administration conducted an opinion survey of 1,250 Thai people in every region of the country with various educational levels and occupations on "how does Thai society think about the third sex?" during July 1-2, 2015. It was found that regarding people's opinions on the legalization of same-sex marriage, 59.20% agreed since they viewed that marriage is a personal love of two people. They deserve to have equal rights as male-female marriage. Nobody's soul should be enforced. Especially, now time changes and

society is more open as witnessed widely of same-sex relationships in foreign countries and general culture. 35.04% disagreed with the reasons that same-sex relationships violate the law of nature. Males and females are supposed to be an average couple. Besides, homosexuality also violates some religious principles, and the laws do not support it. Thus, there might be some problems when they separate from each other. The rest 5.76% were not sure, nor did they specify any response.

Comparing the above findings with those in 2013, the percentage of agreement increased. In 2013, 52.96% of the respondents agreed, 33.87% disagreed, and 13.18% were not sure.

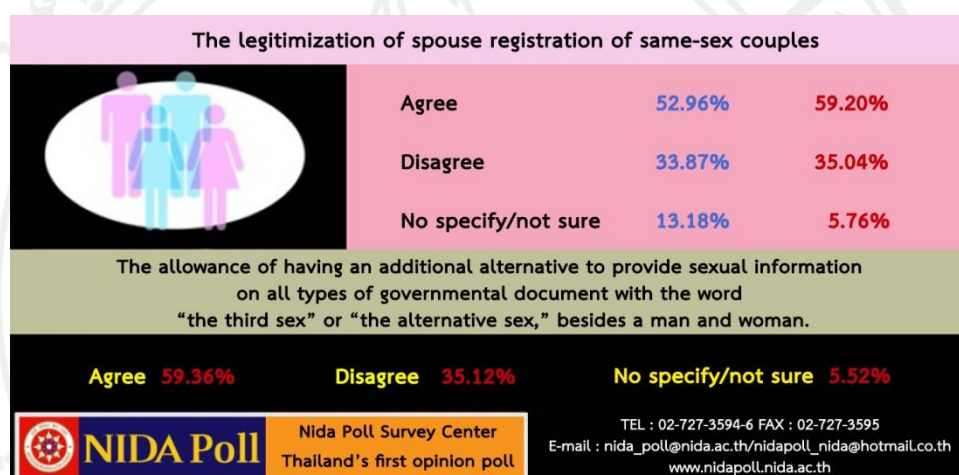


Figure 1.2 The Opinion Survey Findings on the Legitimization Of Same-Sex Marriage

Source: NIDA Poll, 2017.

From the findings, they lead to a further question “to what extent Thai society, which is embedded with predisposed values, tradition, and culture, can accept the legislation of same-sex marriage seriously until Marriage Act can be pushed to be drafted in Thailand. Furthermore, The Standard, an online press, urged for the legitimization of same-sex marriage and the marriage equality of the couples of all genders. Many sectors of the global community thus supported it. From 2001 to 2019, there have been 27 countries, including autonomous area, in which same-sex marriage is legal. The Netherlands was the first country that legitimized same-sex marriage in 2001. After that, several nations followed: Belgium, Spain, Canada, South Africa,

Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Argentina, Denmark, Brazil, Uruguay, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (except North Ireland), Luxemburg, the United States of America, Ireland, Greenland, Columbia, Finland, Faroe Islands, Malta, Germany, Australia, Bermuda, and Taiwan.

Still, several standpoints related to marriage life of sexual diversity are tied with and regulated by the surrounding social institutions.

Preeyawan Suwannasoon (2013) mentions human rights related to same-sex marriage that generally human rights concern about the appreciation of all equalities: age, race, ethnicity, or sex. However, each society exerts different determinations for its social order and regulation. Similar to the issue of the human rights movement, each country values various concerned aspects by considering its public benefits as the priority. Accordingly, some problems might be neglected or diminished, including the issue of sexual diversity. However, as society is more open and projects broader perspectives of sexual rights, including the flow of information in the digital era, some opinions, and views towards human ways of life has altered. Each country calls for legal same-sex marriage because people of sexual diversities should have rights and freedom in having their family institution, which is considered a fundamental human right. Such a right should not be limited only for male-female couples. Thus, marriage is an underlying issue that people of all sexes or genders can access. At the same time, liberty and rights in choosing one's marriage pattern should also be open without any sexuality limitation.

### **1.1.3 Discourses of Same-Sex Marriage: The Meaning Construction in Same-Sex Marriage Communication through Mass Media**

The mass media landscape has been shifted very rapidly, while a considerable amount of information flow takes place in all media channels. At present media industry, most of the mainstream media is facing high competition in the form of online media. Several kinds of digital media and communication technology changes emerge ceaselessly. People can access a variety of channels easily. Therefore, amidst digital communication, communication in combination with information technology has filled up a gap among all groups in society. People can use them to manage knowledge related to themselves and their society, including their culture and ways of



life. Thus, communication technologies bring about a new sphere in the information society, namely a shift of space. Specifically, they help to expand public space in terms of information, commodities, capitals, ways of life, and people in the way that people can connect with all happenings around the world easily and quickly (Asawin Nedpogaeo, 2012).

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the selection of issues to be presented in the news in the information society must concern about diversity to respond to all kinds of people in all matters: social, economic, cultural, sexual, including alternative genders. In general, Thai mass media tend to present people of sexual diversities negatively or as a clown in TV programs, films, variety programs, etc. Thailand still lacks a formal channel reporting about threats, discrimination, and violence against people of sexual diversity. Besides, there has been a lack of positive presentations to create good attitudes and the right image towards them in the country or a particular society. Notably, national or local media also portray the news about same-sex marriage as irregular or abnormal interpersonal relationships of people in a society (Busakorn Suriyasarn, 2014).

Since mass media play a role as a representative agent in opening public space for people of sexual diversity, they can be compared as an amplifier to voice out the needs of people of all ages, classes, and sexes. In a social context in which several social institutions regulate social practices, including traditions, values, and culture, mass media is viewed as another institution. From the cultural studies approach, the emphasis is on the media's roles, functions, and influence over individuals in two-way dimensions: production and consumption. Regarding the production dimension, mass media is analyzed by Structural Marxism, which believes that those in power maintain their control or dominate people's thoughts by constructing dominant ideologies (or the concept of hegemony), which are usually promoted by mass media. Besides, images, texts, or any ideas appearing on media can be only social construction of reality. Namely, the identity of people of sexual diversity may be presented via media as marginal. Likewise, same-sex marriage is also presented in a smaller proportion than opposite-sex marriage.

Moreover, same-sex marriage is presented as peculiar. Such biased reports even induce the audience to question the appropriateness and possibility of same-sex



marriage. In other words, mass media are assumed to play a role in connecting the audience with the real world directly. Its role functions no matter if the viewer has experienced it or not, in all issues: politics, economics, society, culture, foreign affairs, or even sex or sexuality, etc. (Anan Ganjanapan, 2012).

In the study of Attanan Tachopisalwong (2011) entitled, “Discourse Study of Thai Representation through Newspaper of Mekong Sub-Region Countries,” it was found that mass media influenced learning and could create a belief of social reality. In other words, what happens elsewhere will be filtered and interpreted by mass media. Therefore, all presented social reality is the screened or selected reality. Besides, the process of constructing the real world of mass media is more complicated than other institutions in society. However, each type of media presents social reality differently. For example, news presentation with texts and images is the most powerful in constructing reality and signifying an occurrence in society.

However, the media also play another function. That is a call or a campaign for creating righteousness and acceptance of same-sex marriage, and mobilization towards draft marriage act in a variety of forms. Media also determines a standpoint in society, which is a kind of resistance against social power.

Regarding the dimension of consumption or the daily usage of media from cultural perspectives, it can be assumed that each individual consumes media differently; however, it does not mean that media must always have power or influence over individuals. The audience may have power in classifying, selecting, and negotiating the meaning of a message conveyed by media as well (Kamjohn Louisyapong & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008).

Besides the projection of media’s power and power relations of mass media, especially in terms of information, images presented in the news also portray power struggle of diverse sexual orientation via the establishment of some associations and foundations, a call for equal rights, and support for same-sex marriage concretely in Thailand. Accordingly, the presentation of the content on such a struggle uses a sign system through language, communicative expressions, and images of communication representatives. Michel Foucault criticizes that human lives in the modern world are like puppets manipulated by various institutions: economics, politics, laws, jurisdiction, prisons, police, hospitals, schools, religions, including all institutions

involving the use of language. Mass media is also another institution, which exerts its power through language. Language is not the only action via thought but also penetrates human organs according to the concept of “bio-power” of Foucault. Correspondingly, discourses in mass media are regulated by the episteme of society each time, and the flow of information results in some congruent social practices (Foucault, 1972).

Foucault expresses his idea about power. Power is everywhere, not only in the institutional systems, i.e., government, society, capital or monetary systems, etc. Power is also in the conflicts between things or all social relations is also power relations, even in sexual relations. Thus, there is always a relationship pair, either power users or power victims (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008). Therefore, the use of power sexual-diversity people and their resistance against same-sex marriage in both mass media and the real-world depends on what kind of relations they have with individuals or society and which tactics they use to manipulate or negotiate for such power. Such power is thus aimed at what they need, i.e., liberty and rights, genuine social acceptance in various dimensions, especially equality among males, females, and alternative genders, the certification of legal status, Draft Marriage Act, etc.

Similarly, Wilasinee Pipitkul and Kitti Gunpai (2003) explain that discourse means a set of systematic meanings, appearing in the form of texts, images, symbols, practice paradigms, culture, belief, value, and identity, to convey the essence of values, rules, and conditions. Discourse affects social regulation of institutions and individuals in pointing out what should be presented or interpreted, what should be convinced, or followed. It also affects the construction of social reality in a specific time.

Notably, discourse plays a role in constructing sexual reality and sex roles in society. Discourse penetrates human ways of living in all dimensions; thus, it is worth being studied. A discourse study can indicate the impact or consequences of discourses on sexuality in Thai society, especially on same-sex marriage, presented through mass media. From the study, it can show which perspective or what kind of hidden power from mass media presentation determines the perception of people in society concretely. Besides, it helps to identify the roles of society and mass media in

using discourse, including their power in constructing social reality concerning people having sexual diversity and same-sex marriage in Thai society. Typically, a frame of thought is produced by those with power in a society. Uniquely, cultural reproduction enables any constructed ideology to dominate people's opinions until it becomes a dominant ideology of society, eventually without any doubts if it is true or false.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that although discourse is not a matter of obstructing nor prohibiting the dissemination of same-sex marriage news, it is disseminated under some kinds of power control. Thus, it determines to what extent, through which perspective, and how mass media present same-sex marriage news in society.

In this study, the researcher conducts discourse analysis on same-sex marriage presented by one of the foremost social institutions or namely mass media. Still, discourses can be primary and secondary, produced by several social institutions, i.e., family, governmental, etc., and through socialization. Accordingly, the research, "The Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand," aims to study discourses and their meanings on same-sex marriage. Besides, from the review of literature on same-sex marriage, it points out that most previous studies emphasize legal analysis, especially on human rights. Some studies are merely opinion surveys, while the proportion of the study by communication and innovation approach is relatively tiny. Accordingly, the researcher intends to expand the survey on same-sex marriage through discourse analysis, emphasizing power relations and the roles of discourse in determining the direction of the news narration and in constructing the identity, including its effect on perception and image of same-sex marriage. Therefore, the study combines discourse analysis, mass media studies, and audience analysis by cultural approach. Tentatively, the findings will help to expand new knowledge of communication at the cultural and societal level, which will be beneficial for society and the study in various fields, especially in sociology, in the rights and liberty of alternative genders, and communication and management innovation. Accordingly, this study focuses on two main communication elements: discourses and their meanings of same-sex marriage (text or message) and analysis of audience (receiver) with different social experiences and backgrounds through the cultural approach.

## 1.2 Research Questions

- 1) How do mass media in Thailand construct the meaning of same-sex marriage through their news presentation? Has there been any change?
- 2) What kind of discourses on same-sex marriage do social institutions practice in Thailand? Which socio-cultural practices affect the discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society?
- 3) How do the audience with different social experiences and backgrounds perceive and interpret same-sex marriage? Are their perception and interpretation affected by the same or different discourses?

## 1.3 Research Objectives

- 1) To study the construction of same-sex marriage meaning presented in the news of mass media in Thailand.
- 2) To examine the discursive practice on same-sex marriage determined by social institutions and socio-cultural practices affecting the discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society.
- 3) To explore the perception and interpretation of receivers having sexual diversity with different social experiences and background on the same-sex marriage presented by mass media in Thai society.

## 1.4 Research Scope

The research “The Roles of Discourse and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand,” emphasizes two principal communication elements: discourse and its conveyance of meanings (message) of same-sex marriage and the analysis of audience (receiver) with different social experiences and background. The former was conducted by discourse analysis of (Fairclough, 1995), comprising the analysis of a text, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice, while the latter by cultural approach with details as follows:

1) Text: Content of the news of online press on same-sex marriage, publicized through the internet in Thailand, i.e., Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, was analyzed.

(1) The press selected in this study are populism and influence the audience's thought in Thai society. Besides, mass media present a variety of news to general people at all levels. Moreover, their transmitted information is expected to be the truth and what happens in society. Thus, their transmission of information and truth presentation in society are very crucial for people's decision-making in their daily life and social movements.

(2) Besides, the selected news is based on the appearance of discourse as a representation of institutions in Thai society and as the main criterion in classifying news related to same-sex marriage. In other words, the selected news can represent a variety of discourse forms in Thai society. Thus, it is possible to specify to what extent or how the power of the following institutions regulates the meanings of same-sex marriage:

- a) Marriage tradition or rituals
- b) Laws or legal system
- c) Family system
- d) Religion system
- e) Social status
- f) Economic status

The news on same-sex marriage from 2013 to 2018, a total of six years, was selected by purposive sampling. The criterion of choosing 2013 as the starting year for data collection is that it was the year in which the Draft Marriage Act Year.... was proceeded by the Rights and Liberties Protection Department, the Ministry of Justice. Thus, it was the first move by a governmental office, on same-sex marriage in mobilizing such a matter.

2) Receivers or audience: The audience of a variety of genders, i.e., males, females, and those having sexual diversity, with different social experiences and backgrounds, were selected to explore their perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage. Besides, the study examined if there were any differences in the perception



and interpretation of the same-sex marriage of the audience with different social experiences and background, affected by the same or different discourses.

Preliminarily, the researcher interviewed with receivers or the audience of different social experiences and background by two questions:

(1) Do they agree or disagree with same-sex marriage in Thailand, and why?

(2) Do they agree or disagree with the news presentation of Thai mass media on same-sex marriage and why?

The responses of the two questions from the audience having sexual diversity with different social experiences and backgrounds were analyzed to see which embedded or predisposed discourse they used to reply to those questions.

## **1.5 Operational Definitions**

**Signification of same-sex marriage:** Meanings communicated or conveyed in online news by the online press in Thailand: Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, that are presented on the internet about same-sex marriage aimed towards same-sex relationships. In this study, it focuses on people having sexual diversities, such as Men-to-Men (MTM) and Women-to-Women (WTW), determined by internal and external factors, including how they are treated or presented in society.

**Discursive practice:** Concerned factors in creating texts and transmitting discourse as information. This study focuses on news headlines and news content on same-sex marriage in Thai society presented on the internet by the online press in Thailand. The following dimensions are analyzed: 1) Marital dimensions, i.e., sex, age, occupation, social and economic status. 2) Relationships dimensions based on both individual and societal levels, i.e., spouses, spouse and family, and spouse and surrounding people in society.

**Socio-cultural practice:** Contextual relationships related to the creation of texts to help examine something behind the texts expressed through discursive practice via new headlines and news content presented on the internet by the online press in Thailand. It is related to “power” and “knowledge” or “Episteme” in signifying the



meaning of same-sex marriage. In this study, the power and knowledge at the societal and institutional level of the following institutions are focused: marriage tradition or rituals, laws or legal system, family system, religion, social status, and economic status, in analyzing discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society.

Receivers' perception and interpretation: The perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage of the audience having sexual diversities, namely Men-to-Men (MTM), Women-to-Women (WTW), males, and females, through the cultural approach.

## **1.6 Expected Benefits**

### **1) Academic Benefits**

(1) The findings can help to explain the source or the origin of how discourse is constructed and how the discourse of same-sex marriage is communicated through the news presentation of mass media in Thailand. They can also reflect the value and the relationships of such construction of the meaning of same-sex marriage portrayed in Thai mass media.

(2) The findings as an integrated study of several disciplines can bring about new and diverse knowledge. They can be beneficial for understanding society and culture; for example, for sociology and humanities on rights and liberties of people having sexual diversities or for communication arts and management innovation for further studies.

(3) The findings can introduce and mobilize the concept of sex roles and gender diversity that is appropriate at present and for the international level.

### **2) Benefits for Social Contribution**

(1) The results of the study can explain and reflect the value or impact caused by a discourse on same-sex marriage. Such reflection can be tied with the effect of mass media on the audience in terms of creating or reinforcing their awareness, perception, values, attitude, and behaviors towards the expressed roles of people having sexual diversities and same-sex marriage in society.

(2) The findings can help a society to learn and understand the impact of a campaign on certification and legitimization of equal rights and liberties of people

of alternative genders. Furthermore, they reflect how the Draft Marriage Act for people with gender diversity in Thailand was enacted due to temporal changes.

(3) The findings can be used as a tool in mobilizing multicultural society concerning same-sex marriage in Thai society. They also reflect the roles of concerned social institutions, i.e., the campaigns of human rights organizations to foster gender diversity at the national or global level, including at the local level, i.e., governmental offices, or private sectors playing a role in regulating the functions and status of people with gender diversity, etc.

### 3) Professional Benefits

(1) The findings of the study can create a better understanding and awareness of the consequences or the impact of their news or information presentation or dissemination on the audience's perception, especially about those with gender diversity for those who work or are responsible for information provision, including mass media practitioners in Thailand.

(2) The findings expectedly can establish positive benefits for those concerned in terms of innovative techniques of transmitting sex-role or gender issues, including campaigns on human rights from various perspectives that will be conveyed through future information in Thailand.

## 1.7 Research Conceptual Framework

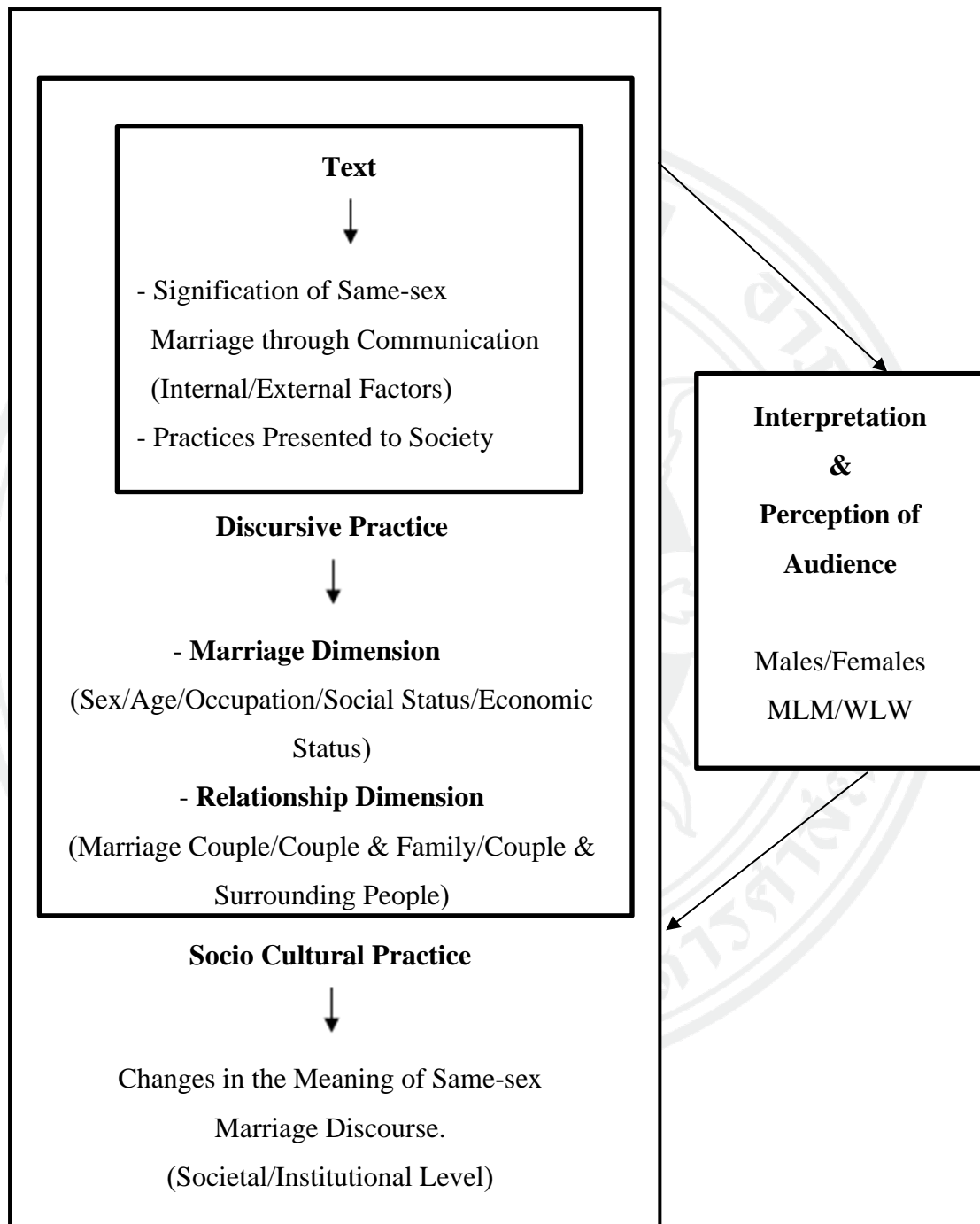


Figure 1.3 Research Conceptual Framework

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPTS, THEORIES, AND RELATED STUDIES**

The research “The Roles of Discourse and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand” aims to reply to the research questions: how mass media in Thailand constructs same-sex marriage through its news presentation and if there has been any change of its constructions from the past. Besides, it aims to study which social institutions practice discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society and how socio-cultural practices affect the discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society. Furthermore, it explores if the audience or the receivers of different social experiences and backgrounds perceive and interpret same-sex marriage and if they perceive and interpret it from the same or different discourses.

For this study, the following concepts, theories, and related studies were used as a conceptual framework:

- 2.1 The Concept of Sexual Diversities
- 2.2 The Concepts of Marriage and Same-Sex Marriage
- 2.3 The Concepts of Discourse and Discourse Analysis
- 2.4 The Concept of Audience Analysis from Cultural Approach

#### **2.1 The Concept of Sexual Diversities**

In Ancient Greece, “sex” was treated as one of the human necessities as eating and drinking. Ancient Greeks believed that sexual pleasure is a kind of happiness for human beings. However, it is quite difficult to distinguish “sexual pleasure” from “sexual release” when compared with sexual disorders or dysfunctions. Nowadays, we can witness several people who imitate sexual coarseness from the ancient Romans.

In the nineteenth century, a group of scientists published their studies on the knowledge of sex. Sex was a relatively new and exciting issue at that time. In the

beginning, such publications were criticized by people in society that they were seductive, lustful, and damaged the virtue of women's virginity or purity. However, those scientists still insisted on their findings and adhered to their grounded theories about sex. After the nineteenth century, many researchers on sex, i.e., Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, etc., started to study more scientifically on the causal relationships of sex (Verapon Jandeeying, 1995).

To explain the word "sex" or use some definitions like "real men" or "real women," it requires connectivity between its causal relationships and specific perspective. For example, before calling a person "an intersex," it needs to know which angle is used to define the word, i.e., physical vs. psychological, deep vs. superficial relationship, a diversity of masculinity and femininity. Verapon Jandeeying (1995) explains sex-related words in his sex dictionary as follows:

- 1) Real Women: mean women whose given sex is female, and their psychological gender is feminine. Their chromosome is female (XX)
- 2) Bisexual Women: mean women with female biological given sex but Have sexual satisfaction with both an opposite-sex and same-sex partner. However, their chromosome is female (XX)
- 3) Homosexual women: mean women whose assigned sex at birth is female but have sexual satisfaction with females only. Their chromosome is female (XX) Transvestite or cross-vesser women mean women with female biology but tend to be masculine or like to imitate or act like men. Their chromosome is female (XX)
- 4) Intersex women: mean women with feminine physical appearance but Have Big clitoris like men. They want to be either men or neutral. Their chromosome is female (XX)
- 5) Male-to-Female (MTF): mean men who possess both female biology (with Female breasts and clitoris) and femininity as they have been brought up to be a woman. However, they also have a penis (or testis) like men. Their chromosome is male (XY)
- 6) Real Men: mean men whose given sex is male, and their Psychological gender is masculine. Their chromosome is male (XY)

7) Bisexual Men: mean men with male biological given sex but have Sexual satisfaction with both an opposite-sex and same-sex partner. However, their chromosome is male (XY)

8) Homosexual Men: mean men whose assigned sex at birth is male but Have sexual satisfaction with males only. Their chromosome is male (XY)

9) Transvestite or cross-vesser men: mean men with male biology but tend to be Feminine or like to be dress like women. Their chromosome is male (XY)

10) Intersex Men: mean men with masculine physical appearance but want to imitate or act like women. Their chromosome is male (XY)

Besides, Verapon Jandeeying (1995) also specifies other alternative genders, i.e., women looking like men who have all-female biology but also possess some male characteristics, i.e., the big shape of the body, mustache, hairy, etc. Their chromosome is female (XX). Similarly, some men look like women but are short of the male hormone, so they possess some female physical appearance, i.e., big bottoms, no mustache, etc. They tend to be feminine or neutral. Their chromosome is male (XY), etc.

From the above definitions, “sexuality” involves biological “sex” and psychological “gender,” including sex roles and imitation of another sex or gender. Thus, the concerned words are confusing due to sexual diversities. Therefore, a person with the physical appearance of one sex cannot be considered as his or her genuine or real sex since he or she may possess different psychological sexuality from physical appearance. On the other hand, sexual imitation focuses on the resemblance and individuation, including manifest behaviors that are expressed continually for a long time. At the same time, sex roles are the roles determined by oneself or by surrounding people. Therefore, sex roles are determined by society rather than sexual behaviors. In other words, each society defines “sex” differently, i.e., a society may give a definition differing from that of the medicine circle (Verapon Jandeeying, 1995).

Furthermore, Narupon Duangwises (2015), a scholar of Princess Maha Sirindhorn Anthropology Center (Public Organization), expresses his idea about gender by referring to the concept of Judith Butler, an American philosopher and feminist. Butler compares gender as a performance. She also points out that sexual



expressions are diverse. At the same time, some scholars remark that gender diversity (in sexual behaviors, emotion, practice, and identity) is based on the notion that variety is essential for co-existence in society. Accordingly, everybody should respect gender or sexual diversities. However, some academicians view people of sexual diversities based on the concept of a marginal man who needs a social release or social acceptance. Besides, the notion of sexual diversities also covers social organization and classification of sexual expressions of emotion, behaviors, and identity (Stevi, 2003). Such an idea has emerged since the end of the nineteenth century under a scientific paradigm.

Regarding the word “homosexual” or “homosexuality,” it comes from a Greek word, “homo,” which means the same. From a psychological approach, homosexuality means sexual relations of the same-sex partners. In other words, a homosexual is a person who has sexual desire to meet, talk to, think of, and have sexual relations with people of the same sex. In general, they can be homosexual men or women. Furthermore, Alfred Kinsey, an American researcher on sexuality studies, explains homosexuality is “a hidden phenomenon.” From his research on American sexual behaviors in the U.S.A., he found that both American men and women used to have homosexual experiences at least once in their life during their adolescence or adulthood. Besides, he further found that some of them dreamed of their homosexual relations without actual sexual intercourses. However, the distinction between “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” is still blurred since people tend to have sexual behaviors differently, depending on time and situation. Thus, it requires consideration from continual actions rather than individual behaviors at face value.

On the other hand, Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist, notes that people are born with some sexual orientation, i.e., either homosexuality or heterosexuality, at a certain level, but it is changeable. Their sexual experiences or learning enable them to choose afterward to which direction they are prone to become (Verapon Jandeeying, 1995).

From the study of Sigmund Freud, it was found that homosexuality is not a sexual disorder but is only behavioral expressions towards the opposite pole as a consequence of their sexual experiences during childhood. Some children may have dysfunctional nervous systems, which cause them to look for weird sexual pleasure, and homosexuality is one of their alternatives. Besides, it is some people's

imagination to search for sexual happiness. Freud believes that everybody possesses a feeling of both homosexuality and heterosexuality. Namely, people can love or have an attraction to both males and females. This kind of attitude is typical for all human beings. In other words, all human beings tend to be both homosexual and heterosexual sometimes in their life until they can choose what they want to be from their natural intuition. Freud further explains that sexual drive consists of no single identity but various and dispersed identities. Later, Jacques Lacan re-interprets Freud's concept for explaining the relationship between human sub-consciousness and sexual drive. Lacan does not believe in the genuine distinction between males and females. For him, the differences are a matter of social categorization through language. Thus, human sexual self and identity is just a reflection of imagination and a drive between consciousness and sub-consciousness. Such a drive tends to be unfulfillable. Sexual identity can be identified only by others' perceptions. In other words, sexual identities require the accompanying of someone or external surrounding as a reference for their identification. The consciousness of one's identity can be aroused when self-image is reflected via others' perception of self. However, some psychiatrists give different explanations from the theories of Krafft-Ebing and Freud. For instance, Havelock Ellis wrote a series of six books called "Studies in Psychology of Sex" from 1897-1910.

The books explain various forms of human sexual behaviors related to biological factors. Ellis argues with the assumptions of Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud that homosexuality is "sexual distortion." On the contrary, Ellis views all human sexual behaviors, i.e., masturbation, sexual pleasure inquiry, etc., by creating one's imagination or auto-erotism, which is not a mental disorder but natural behaviors of living creatures (Crozier, 2008, as cited in Narupon Duangwises, 2015).

From the second book of Ellis called "Sexual Inversion" in 1897, Ellis further explains that homosexuality can be found in both males and females and can be witnessed in all ages. Homosexuality is not abnormal. Besides, Ellis illustrates the findings of homosexuality in many cultures from ancient times up to the present. He believes that homosexuality happens naturally, like other human behaviors. However, nature is not a determinant of everything but just the foundation of behavioral

expressions. However, society regulates human sexual behaviors (Crozier, 2008, as cited in Narupon Duangwises, 2015).

In Thailand, evidence of sexual behaviors violating the traditional norms of heterosexual or cross-sex relationships has been recorded since the fourteenth century. Up to the nineteenth century, Thai society still viewed the issue of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) as an accessory of lifelike costumes and hairstyles. At the same time, during this period, Thai society started to adopt western thinking patterns and social norms, including punishment against homosexuality. The concept of gender was not merely a personal matter anymore but a part of social norms. Until the twentieth century, Thailand changed its governance system from the Absolute Monarchy to the Constitutional Democracy in 1932. During that time, the concepts of sex roles and sexuality were tied with the morality of a society

At the same time, homosexuality began to be commonplace. Notably, westerners living in Thailand played a part in inducing changes after the Second World War. Since 1950, the information on sex and gender has been widespread while LGBT movements have appeared in various media, i.e., the increasing numbers of books and films on gay culture, etc. (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014)

The history of homosexuality and trans-genders in Thailand can be traced back long ago. Plenty of occurring behaviors did not comply with social norms like cross-sex or opposite-sex relationships. However, the history was not formally recorded since governmental, religious, and education institutions perceive homosexuality as abnormal. Further, homosexuality was viewed as violating morality and the traditional culture of the country, especially the face-saving value and Theravada Buddhism. Later, homosexuality and trans-genders became a sub-culture that was accepted in Thailand. However, people's attitudes towards these groups have not been widely accepted (Jackson, 1999a), while there has been no legal certification nor formal public policies to support them (UNDP, 2014).

The concept of sexual diversities, according to Narupon Duangwises (2015), explains human sexual behaviors, identity, and practice, which have been discussed for a long time in history. It is a concept aimed to open more space for sexual identity and uniqueness of people that may not be accepted by general norms and social

regulations, i.e., the expression of homosexual and transgender identity, etc. The portrayal of sexual identity, which is different from “male” and “female,” can be witnessed in several cultures. Anthropologists have been studying on the transgender identity, i.e., a man of male given sex acts like a woman. For instance, Will Roscoe studied Berdache identity in Native America, while Serena Nanda on Hijra identity in India, etc. The studies reveal that human beings have multiple genders caused by different ways of thinking and cultural beliefs. Typically, the concept of sexual diversities is tied with Queer Theory. It can say that after structuralism, which questions about how reality in the world is constructed, the construction of sexual reality was a consequence of the scientific reasoning system. Such a system believes in real truth. Thus, Queer Theory objects western scientific thinking. It criticizes and rejects the assumption that the identity of all things can be universally explained.

Therefore, Queer Theory rejects the concept of universality claimed by scientists. Likewise, it rejects a universal explanation for sexuality. Queer Theory attempts to point out “specificity,” “nativity,” and “locality” to reflect some complexities in sexuality. Some scholars note that Queer Theory emphasizes “differences” among people and “internal self.” Accordingly, it pays attention to differences in the Men-Loving-Men (MLM) and Women-Loving-Women (WLW). Still, these transgender people have no unified characteristics.

On the contrary, they have different complexities in expressing their identity. Since sexual identity appearing on a person involves individuation, the identity of males, females, gays, lesbians, queers, transgender people, etc., is of no common core. Instead, each identity changes by power relations between an individual and society. Consequently, Queer Theory opens for an argument of what is human real identity or self. Thus, it does not believe in actual genders or sexes since they are constructed from unequal knowledge and power relations in society. Notably, the process of building knowledge is inseparable from the use of the power of some groups in society. Correspondingly, both homosexuals and heterosexuals refer to a different set of knowledge to fight or struggle for pinpointing their identity, including releasing, resisting, and regulating identities of some groups. Such a scramble of meaning leads the process of sexual identity construction is a matter of “constructed reality” and changeable in each historical period.



Warner (2000, as cited in Narupon Duangwises, 2015) studied “The Trouble with Normal” and found that the sexual identity of each group is diverse. For example, in different groups of gays and lesbians, their sexual expressions were also different, depending on social and economic status, race, and religion. However, such diversity was overlooked by gays who were social activists in calling for legal rights, i.e., marriage rights, etc. Warner criticizes that these gay activists try to adopt heterosexual family systems into gays’ marriage to make it resemble the cross-sex marriage. By doing so, it pushed gay couples’ life, which differs from heterosexual relationships, to become deviated.

Panitee Brown (2014) studied sexual diversities in Thai society. He found that most previous studies seldom used multiculturalism as the conceptual framework in their studies to understand sexual diversities in Thai society. Most of them studied via other paradigms, i.e., sub-culture, lifestyles, sexual rights, and social movement, etc. He proposed in his study that multiculturalism in Thai society should not only be limited to the acceptance of cultural differences or diversity of ethnicity, religion, classes, and political ideologies. It should also emphasize the support of justice or fairness and group rights of those of sexual diversities, who are oppressed and deprived of their rights by the majority and sub-culture groups of which they are members.

Chonticha Tippratum and Phitak Siritwong (2015) researched on sexual harassment of transgender men to build a grounded theory. From their study, sexual harassment was found to be a trespass without consent; however, it was the transgender persons themselves who initiated sexual harassment from their buying of love with money. Regarding sexual harassment experiences, they experienced sexual harassment from the low to the very high degree of violence. Transgender men preferred solving problems by ignorance but faced the problems by leveling their self-value the most. Besides, they found the following: 1) Whenever transgender men expressed themselves to call attention, used the money to buy love, or had strong sexual desire, they were often sexually harassed. 2) Sexual harassment at a low degree of violence was expressed through verbal harassment and visual harassment. At the same time, sexual harassment at the high degree of violence was through vulgar words and physical harassment. 3) Whenever transgender men were sexually harassed



at a low degree, they tended to be silent. 4) Whenever they were sexually harassed at a very high degree, they would fight back and took themselves out of the situation immediately. 5) To raise their self-value was another way of avoiding the problems of sexual harassment.

Moreover, Piyaluk Potiwan (2002) studied identity, sub-culture, and social space of the transgender. She found that the transgender in Thai society formed their group and sub-culture until they could establish their social space for their struggle at both group and individual levels. Namely, the battle was a daily struggle and a struggle for negotiating with power relations in society. The struggle may be varied by different purposes of life and each person's experience. Moreover, the transgender also constructed the meaning for themselves in social-cultural contexts and their daily life.

Besides, Pimonpan Isarabhakdi (2015) notes that people of different ages have different opinions towards sexual diversities in Thai society. From her study, it was found that most samples could not accept four types of people of sexual diversities: Men acting like women, women acting like men, men-loving-men, and women-loving-women. Furthermore, most samples accepted the transgender more than homosexuals. However, the samples of different ages had a different attitude. Specifically, people of younger generations tended to express their acceptance more than those of older ages. Gen Y accepted the most, while people of the earliest ages accepted the least. For example, Silent/Gen/ Greatest Gen groups reflected their growth at different times. Socialization, culture, experience, social learning, and information all caused attitudinal differences among generations. Besides, it was found that other variables, namely sex, marital status, education, religion, and residence location, affected the acceptance of sexual diversity at the statistical significance level (Pimonpan Isarabhakdi, 2015).

Besides, from the study Kritaya Archavanitkul, it indicates changes in sexuality in Thai society. Significantly, it reflects Thai people's perspectives towards people of alternative genders and gender diversity in a more positive direction. The society accepts people of sex and gender diversity increasingly. It has been proved by more employment for working in government sectors, more freedom of calling rights

in various issues, and more space for them in mass media nowadays than in the past (Kritaya Archavanitkul, 2011).

## **2.2 The Concepts of Marriage and Same-Sex Marriage**

### **2.2.1 Marriage: A Seal of Human Cross-Sex Relationship**

The word “a family” has been evolving since the Pre-Historical Period. “Polygamy” sexual relations or the relations with more than one wife or husband have moved to “monogamy” or a couple of a husband and wife owing to social prohibition.

In the old days, men never lived without women. On the contrary, they could have women more than needed. However, due to the marriage criterion requiring only one acceptable wife, a marriage of only a couple took place. Women became scarce, and men had to search for one, even by kidnapping or buying a woman. Such a practice was ubiquitous in Indian tribes, including other ethnic tribes during the period. The organization of marriage is not a couple’s responsibility solely but that of both parents. Very often, a couple has no chance to consult with each other about their wedding. Therefore, sometimes an engagement between a fiancé and fiancée takes place before the couple meets each other. Some couples may just know what both parents agree when their wedding time approaches them. It should be noted that a marriage of a couple evolved at the transition period between savagery or barbarianism period. It can say that couple marriage and family took place in the more civilized era, while collective marriage was the marriage type of savages or barbarians. Marriage and a family in the form of an cross-sex or male-female couple did not emerge by itself but by a new force of society from the establishment of new moral standards. Thus, it is doubtless if such a marriage is legitimate or not, but the question is whether a couple loves each other. The new moral standard of having a legal announcement of a couple’s marriage on a piece of paper, or so-called “marriage certificate or registration,” is thus accepted theoretically. It is treated in the same way as other admiration on paper but classified under law protection (Kulap Saipradit, 1981).

Regarding marriage in Thai society, Phraya Ratchawaranukul (Uam) explains about Thai wedding tradition in the past (Fine Arts Department, 1972). According to

Thai culture, after bringing children up to an appropriate age, parents let their grown-up children work by themselves. Once they were educated and ready to have a mate to set up their own family and be independent of their parent, then parents would choose a husband or wife for them. Such a selection was considered as either beneficial or harmful for the family. Good sons-in-law or daughters-in-law could determine the future of the family, either well-being or suffering. Thus, it required thorough consideration, and marriage could be organized when both families anticipated towards a good future. Therefore, choosing the right man or woman to marry brought great happiness to both families. However, in case that a couple loves each other by themselves without their parents' consent nor a traditional marriage ceremony, the couple would not be accepted despite no legal prohibition. Consequently, the couple had to live by themselves without their parents' support and amidst general people's dissatisfaction. Accordingly, it was commonly seen a big wedding ceremony to let other people be acknowledged that both families happily agreed with the marriage. Still, there were plenty of wedding ceremonies, varying in different cultures. However, for general Thai tradition, the common celebrations were to go to ask for a man or woman to marry, to collect both sides' property, to meet collectively among relatives of both sides, and to accept the organization of wedding celebration. After that, a legitimate husband and wife were accepted." (Fine Arts Department, 1972).

Furthermore, Professor Phraya Anumanratchathon (Sathian-Koset, 1958) elaborates the coining of the word "Somrot" (or marriage in English) that it was abbreviated from the word "Sek Somrot," used for describing the marriage of the noble classes in Thai society. "Sek" means a ceremony of pouring water as a sign of approval of a couple's marriage. According to the wedding traditions of the Royal families in the old days, the Royal members could select "Mom Ham" (a reserved lady only for a king and the Royal members or an ordinary woman who is a king's or a Royal member's wife) freely without getting through a formal wedding ceremony. The wedding ceremony of the Royal families took place in the reign of King Rama V and continued until King VI. He coined the word "Sek Somrot" for the Royal families and "Somrot" (cutting the word "Sek") for ordinary people to portray the hierarchy of the society. Besides, the wedding celebration party or ceremony for ordinary people has been called "Ngan Mongkon Somrot" (means good-fortune wedding ceremony in

English) since then. At the same time, the other two words of the same meaning were also used: “Wiwaha Mongkon” and “Ahwaha Mongkon.” The word “Wiwaha Mongkon” was used if the wedding ceremony was organized when a bride came to stay at a groom’s, while the word “Ahwaha Mongkon” when a groom came to live in a bride’s house. However, these two terms are not ancient Thai words but Bali-Sanskrit words. Nevertheless, these two words gradually disappeared and were not used any longer.

Phraya Ratchawaranukul (Uam) further explains about wedding or marriage tradition that to have acceptable marriage in the past, it depended on several surrounding social contexts. In other words, a couple did not determine their wedding. He also raises some examples of words related to the marriage of several cultures in the old days. For instance, in the northern and northeastern parts of Thailand, the word “Au Phua Au Mia” (means having a husband or wife) was used to call a marriage ceremony. In contrast, Thai Yai or Shan (an ethnic tribe in Thailand) called “Mung Kala Au Kan” (means good-fortune sexual relations). The word “Au Kan” (means sexual relations or intercourse) was impolite in the Central part of Thailand but used widely among ethnic tribes. The word “Tang Ngan” (means marriage ceremony) was used in the Central part of Thailand mainly. In Khmer (or Cambodia), they called marriage as “Rieb Kar” to mean an arrangement or organization, Mon called “Preng Kone” (or to have a wedding for one’s child) (Sathian-Koset, 1958).

Generally, there are two types of marriage: 1) marriage among people of the same clan or family, and 2) marriage with those out of one’s clan and family. Besides, after marriage, there are three types of family control: 1) by a father, 2) by a mother, and 3) by both father and mother. Still, marriage or wedding is the beginning stage of living together in society through a wedding ceremony, complying with traditions of each social context to gain acceptance of the society.

## **2.2.2 Social Norms on Same-Sex Marriage**

It reveals from the review and analysis of laws and social environment related with civil society sectors and people who are Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgender (LGBT) through their participation in a family and society under the “Being LGBT in Asia” program organized by the United Nations of Developmental

Projects Office (UNDP) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that Thai people treat and have an attitude towards LGBT in Thailand differently, both at the small-family scale and at the bigger-society scale. Sometimes, their treatment and approach are even incongruent. It is found that the factors buoying the acceptance of LGBT among family members, but not always, are each family's economic and social status. Besides, each family mostly expects its family members to have a marriage with the right image for the family. Thus, the value of "face-saving" to maintain a family's fame in the eyes of people in society and a family's expectation towards their members' responsibility as the descendants are significant factors. Marriage is expected to be accepted widely, especially marriage that complies with traditional sex roles. Accordingly, LGBT people face some difficulties despite their adaptation to the old tradition of marriage (UNDP, 2014). Although LGBT people are more accepted nowadays, they are often questioned if they violate social norms or not. Sanya Sanyawiwat (1980) defines "norms" based on functionalism as "the rules set by the society for members to comply with as they are decent and beneficial for the survival of a society. Typically, norms can be classified into four types:

- 1) Technical norms are professional standards, i.e., physicians, nurses, police officers, lawyers, accountants, government officials, etc. People who can follow such norms are considered as effective.

- 2) Folkways are social standards relating to proper collective behaviors, i.e., wearing black dresses or suits in a funeral ceremony, standing up for children, the elderly, pregnant women on a bus. People who comply with such norms are considered as having appropriate behaviors while those who do not will be gossiped and criticized by others in society.

- 3) Mores or Traditions are significant social standards for the survival of a society. Those violating the norms will be punished severely, i.e., being expelled from a group, being dissociated, being insulted, etc. In some cases, i.e., pre-marriage pregnancy, adultery, etc., in some countries, they can be lynched.

- 4) Laws are legitimized or legal rules the state or society issues, mostly in written statements, to enforce people to comply with the control and punishment



of some offices or officers, i.e., police officers, judges, etc. Any severe violation will be charged, prosecuted, and punished.

Based on the above four kinds of norms, same-sex marriage violates three types of norms: folkways, mores or traditions, and laws. For folkways and mores, it breaks the value and the culture of male-female or cross-sex marriage. For laws, only male-female couples can have a legally certified marriage registration.

Nowadays, there have been several uncertified same-sex marriages by laws. As a consequence, same-sex couples cannot be granted with provided rights and benefits. Nor can they ask for any prosecution against their mate or partner, i.e., rights for marriage-property management, rights on tax benefits, alimony after the divorce, social welfares of their couple from employers, and the government, life-insurance benefits and entitlements, etc. Same-sex marriage is also a challenging issue as it affects Thai social structure and general people's expectations. Primarily, Thailand focuses on a traditional Thai family resulted from a male-female marriage and is intolerant of traditional sex-roles. On the other hand, Thai culture does not value confrontation; therefore, the concept of same-sex marriage seems to challenge and disturb Thai people mentally (UNDP, 2014).

Correspondingly, this research applied the concept of marriage and same-sex marriage as a part of the conceptual framework of the study. The aim is to explain the perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage, not only through some particular groups but also all sectors in the country: government, society, economics, religion, or even family. The findings should help to understand all related factors from both the real world and the world constructed by mass media.

Furthermore, it is interesting to understand same-sex marriage in a more well-rounded view from other concerning dimensions. Kanitta Suksamai (2016) studied "Storytelling of Women-Loving-Women: Sexuality of Elderly Couples". The finding reflected the continual role plays of women, starting from feeling a difference in themselves, being confused, perceiving themselves to be homosexual, and finally accepting their homosexuality. Such a sexual orientation could trace back from their childhood with different sexual identities from other girls. They tended to have male characteristics and affection. Thus, they faced difficulties with revealing themselves in front of their intimates. They were confused and uncertain of the subsequent

consequences if they showed themselves to others. Until the teenage, they started to be attracted to a girl and dared to disclose their real self to intimates and surrounding people, especially their girlfriends, whom they expected to understand and accept their homosexuality. Their revelation encouraged them to face all confronting problems, especially those that violate social traditions and culture without paying attention to whether outsiders would accept their differences or not. They thus had to prove that they could continue their life like general people. Still, they understood well that women loving women is not accepted in society because it is perceived as deviated sexual behaviors and orientation, which is different from other women in society. However, when they entered the elderly age, their ways of life changed. Most of all, their physical condition changed because of their senility and sickness. They also needed some others' assistance, including in their career for earns of living. In their daily life, previous experiences taught them what they should or should not do to be accepted by society. Importantly, they had to prove that homosexual women can also behave appropriately in society.

Furthermore, Pornchai Pan-On studied the development and formulation of same-sex marriage registration policy in Thailand. He found that the said policy was initiated by the needs of same-sex couples to have rights for their legal marriage registration. They also appealed to several organizations, such as the National Human Rights Commission, Legislative Commission of Justice and Human Rights of the Parliament, etc. Consequently, a working committee was assigned to study the appeals, and it thus led to the draft marriage act. From the study, the most critical problem of same-sex couples was no laws certifying their co-living legally and caused them to have no rights related to their marriage, i.e., rights on the management of the shared property after marriage, rights in life insurance, rights in shared loans, etc. In terms of policies, it was found that most people were more open to issuing same-sex marriage laws. At the same time, the system on legal marriage registration was also supported by political parties. However, it was found that the policy of political parties did not affect the national policy on legal marriage registration (Pornchai Pan-On, 1973).

Na Nuch Thongkam (2003) found that most of the marriage laws of Thailand and other foreign countries mostly limited to male-female marriage only. On the

contrary, homosexuals, living together like a husband and wife, were not included in the marriage laws and had no marriage rights legally. However, many foreign countries realized about the current situation in society and thus accepted homosexuality. Besides, they launched new laws to protect same-sex marriage couples like those of male-female marriage. The researcher, therefore, studied the concepts, methods, and types of supports found in foreign laws and proposed her findings as guidelines for further implementation of same-sex marriage laws in Thailand.

Besides, Thanyalak Namjak (2013) conducted a study on the certification of the marital status of sexual-diversity persons and found that Thai society opened and accepted same-sex marriage of diverse sexuality persons increasingly. However, it had not accomplished the legitimization of marriage registration for certifying and protecting their concerned rights concretely. Moreover, an endeavor in urging for such legitimization had been done continually. The researcher further recommended that Thailand should scrutinize the possibility and direction of same-sex marriage laws based on the needs of a group of “Thai people” towards legal marriage registration without considering if they are male-male, female-female, or male-female couples. In other words, all Thai people should deserve to be protected under the same constitution equally.

Furthermore, Thotsaphorn Munrat studied the marriage rights of homosexuals. According to human rights principles, all human beings have marriage liberty and rights, including the formation of their family as their “fundamental” rights. The rights should not be limited to only male-female couples. Such principles are also in harmony with equality principles, which are also fundamental concepts of human dignity. Therefore, all human beings should be protected by the laws equally, as well. Accordingly, in revising laws for same-sex marriage, the lawmakers needed to survey people’s opinions first to see if they would accept such laws or not to avoid resistance against them (Thotsaphorn Munrat, 2013).

Likewise, Chawinrot Thiraphatcharaphon (2017) studied marriage and the equal rights of homosexuals in Thailand. He found that several couples of sexual diversities in Thailand faced legal problems. Since Civil and Commercial Code legislated marriage conditions for only those of male and female-assigned sex at birth,

delivered sex, couples of sexual diversities lacked rights and legal duties. The code, including other laws, related to the words, “marriage couples, husband/wife, statutory heir or heir at law, etc. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand in 2007 and 2017 does not allow any sex discrimination to comply with many other international conventions and treaties. Thailand thus countersigned and ratified the code. In some foreign countries, the certification of diverse sexual couples’ marriage was done in two ways. The first way was through the laws enhancing the dignity, rights, and duties of sexual-diversity couples to be equal to opposite-sex couples. Another way was to make marriage registration laws inferior to marriage laws by having fewer rights and obligations

### **2.3 The Concepts of Discourse and Discourse Analysis**

The meaning of the word “discourse” is two-dimensional. Krisadawan Hongladarom and Jantima Earmanond (2006) clarify that the two-dimensional meaning of discourse is a language or linguistic dimension and social practice dimension. James Paul Gee, however, separates this word into two meanings: discourse (with little d) and Discourse (with big D) The former (discourse) involves a linguistic dimension or focuses on components, structure, and organization of words, sentences, or statements. The latter (Discourse) emphasizes the analysis of social aspect and linguistic practices and usage.

The concept of discourse and discourse analysis are related to Post Structuralism paradigms with the assumption that meanings of all things appearing in society do not come from systems or structures created by human beings only. Still, they can also be dismantled and reconstructed through various interpretations. One of the significant and influential thinkers of discourse concept and discourse analysis is Michel Foucault. Foucault views discourse as a process in constructing an identity and meaning of all things in society in the form of sets of thought with hidden power and ideologies at a specific time. (Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 1999; Foucault, 1966). In discourses, Functionalism perspectives are integrated with those of Post Structuralism, including the mixture of linguistic dimensions and social theories and concepts. Therefore, discourse does not carry meanings interpreted from linguistic

aspects only, but its meanings include a social process which causes a discourse and its influence or effect on society. Thus, discourses are a part of human ways of living, which cannot be separable but have a dialectic relationship or mutual effect. A discourse is a social practice and what people act towards others through language and symbols as its representations. A discourse happens from human interactions, and at the same time, social structure and systems also affect human social practices. It means that discourses surrounding human beings affect human acts as well. Accordingly, a discourse involves socio-cultural systems and structure with hidden power and ideologies. Discourse analysis is thus a way of viewing society with more understanding (Krisadawan Hongladarom & Jantima Earmanond, 2006).

From the above rationale, discourse is the first key for revealing and understanding other concepts of Foucault. Discourse is also a concept related to “communication,” both directly and indirectly. Consequently, the analysis of linguistic procedure does not aim to search for a meaning conveyed through language but look for the process of meaning construction instead. Foucault does not believe in universal or rigid truth representation. On the contrary, he introduces a new paradigm against the old one. Foucault views that although the language is human thinking representation, thinking itself is its representation with hidden power as well (Foucault, 1970). This notion thus introduces the concept of discourse.

Notably, Foucault’s concept of discourse is extended from the idea of functionalism from several fields, i.e., Fernand Braudel from the field of History, Claude Levi-Strauss from Anthropology, Jacques Lacan from psychoanalysis, and especially Ferdinand de Saussure from Linguistics.

Ferdinand de Saussure is a structuralist who views language as having an inner duality. Precisely, such a duality composes of two sides: private or parole and public or language. To which Saussure pays more attention is the public side since it is the “linguistic structure” that individuals use to convey their thought. For instance, in the Thai language, the structure is “Subject/verb/object,” or an adjective has to be placed after a noun. Besides, it involves the proper use of words by considering occasions, purposes, and persons of various statuses, etc.

After the invention of the structure of language and symbol systems, many scholars from other fields extend his idea, i.e., Levi-Strauss, Lacan, etc. Thus, at the



societal level, linguistic structure (or later so-called “a symbolic system”) leads to the patterns of linguistic relationship, the concept of social truth, the power of social institutions, etc. At the individual level, it leads to the concept of self and identity, such as the saying that “we are what others say we are.”

From linguistic structure, Saussure penetrates one of its sub-structure, which is the structure of signs. He discovers that “a sign system” comprises three sub-components: signifier, signified, and the relationship between signifier and signified.

Previously, most structuralists were interested in the rigid or fixed relationship among these three sub-components that conveys the meaning of all things in a particular society or culture at a specific time. However, Foucault tends to seize the concept of post-structuralism. He denied the fixed relationship of the three sub-components and viewed them as varying and dynamic. Therefore, thinkers of Post Structuralism, i.e., Jacques Derrida emphasizes “the play of signifier.” However, Foucault proposes further that “the play of signifier” is beyond human control and can even become a system that controls human beings. An example of the play of signifier is a scene in the movie “The Matrix,” where a robot turns to control human beings.) (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008).

Foucault extends the concept of knowledge or episteme and discourse in his book entitled, “The Archeology of Knowledge” (and The Discourse on Language) in 1969. He emphasizes that knowledge structure in each historical period in which it arises, like the sky of thought that covers people all over at a specific time. Knowledge or episteme regulates what can be said and accepted by society. Sometimes, people may invent some contradictory statements, but from discourse analysis, they may be found to refer to the same base of thought (Foucault, 1972).

Nevertheless, discourses, which includes all types of communication through language, i.e., spoken, written, visual, body, etc. under the linguistic structure, directs the identity, knowledge, relationship systems of individuals, including meanings of all things. Therefore, the analysts need to dig into discourses to find the source of their meanings, interpretation, transformation, and dissolution. Foucault thus compares the work of a discourse analyst with an archaeologist.

Kanjana Kaewthep and Somsuk Hinviman (2008) give their further opinions that discourse is abstract. Therefore, it must be expressed in the form of a concrete

substance, i.e., spoken and written words, pictures, body movement, etc. On the other hand, discursive practice is the adoption of all available discourses filled with traditions, thought, beliefs, values, and power of concerned social institutions to be integrated. (Chairat Charoen-o-larn, 1999). Foucault states clearly, “the constructed discourses come from the difference between what can be appropriately said at a specific time (under certain rules and rationale) and what is actually spoken. The field of discourse at one particular moment is, thus, the provisions of such a difference. Correspondingly, discourses can construct things under a set of defined rules. Such rules determine the presence, change, and disappear from things. Therefore, besides what created by society, discourses also create and change what is mentioned (Foucault, 1972).

Each discursive practice is thus interaction and integration of discourses into words, written statements, drawing, body movement, etc. infinitely. Still, Foucault does not only aim to analyze discourse characteristics, but he also seeks to understand how discourses determine values, such as understandable, right or wrong, should or should not, able or unable to speak, able or unable to do, etc. In other words, he does not want only to reveal the surface grammatical or structure of a discourse (as Saussure used to do), but he also wants to point out “the roles and the use of discourse power”. He wants to reveal that power and righteousness a group of people claim by referring to all kinds of knowledge or episteme. Such knowledge is only the product or output of a set of discourses (Kanjana Kaewthep and Somsuk Hinviman, 2008).

Furthermore, among a variety of materials to be studied, one issue of his common interest is the concept of marginality or marginal man: insane people, prisoners, sick people, or sexual-disorder people, etc. Foucault also defines the term sexuality by arguing against “the emphasis on males and females” since such definition emphasizes obstructing and devaluation of the human dignity of some groups of people. However, Foucault does not want to understand the status quo marginality merely. On the other hand, he wants to use the concept of marginality to reveal the mainstream operating mechanisms of society. He wants to demonstrate that in modern society, people often refer to rationality, discipline, and the utmost benefits. Still, actually they create themselves an ideal identity by concealing their messy practices through discourses. Thus, such methods are all power-relations practice but

reflected in the academic form. It can be briefly summarized that “insane people are just a ladder for people in psychology to climb up and stand out predominantly.” Thus, to see “social mechanisms” clearly, we have to stand oppositely or in the position of the marginal people.

Concerning the construction of discourses, Anan Ganjanapan (2012) explains that discourses can be constructed through the provision of opinions, criticism, and observation of scholars via mass media, newspapers, lessons, and textbooks, including online news in the digital society nowadays. The receivers will follow them, while such discourses are reinforced all the time in daily life. Notably, the words will be more potent since those scholars possess high social status and social or cultural capital. The higher or more obvious their status is, the more precise the boundary line is. Regarding criticism, Foucault’s critique may differ from other thinkers. For example, the criticism of Marxism pinpoints the conflicts as a consequence of capitalism. Marxism explains what kinds of mechanisms in capitalism devalue humanity via the concept of deviance. For Foucault, he criticizes discourses in a more profound way than their surface and indicates how discourses or simple words can control and devalue humanity. Despite their differences in criticism, both share one standard methodology. Namely, they emphasize perspectives from a structural level or the domination structure. Both talk about the resistance and seizure of meanings.

Foucault uses a “digging” archaeological method to reveal the background of the creation of science by positioning “human beings” as study objects. (Before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, human beings had never been objects of studying.) The purpose of the study is to search for a thinking structure in each period. Foucault calls it “episteme.” Episteme is “knowledge.” An episteme regulates the network of knowledge, beliefs, thinking patterns, and understanding that flow within a society, namely discourses. Episteme is also a reference that people at a specific time use to give meanings and values to all things. (Kanjana Kaewthep and Somsuk Hinviman, 2008). As there are a variety of perspectives in the real world, an episteme plays a role as a frame of thought and perception and gives meaning to a particular thing.

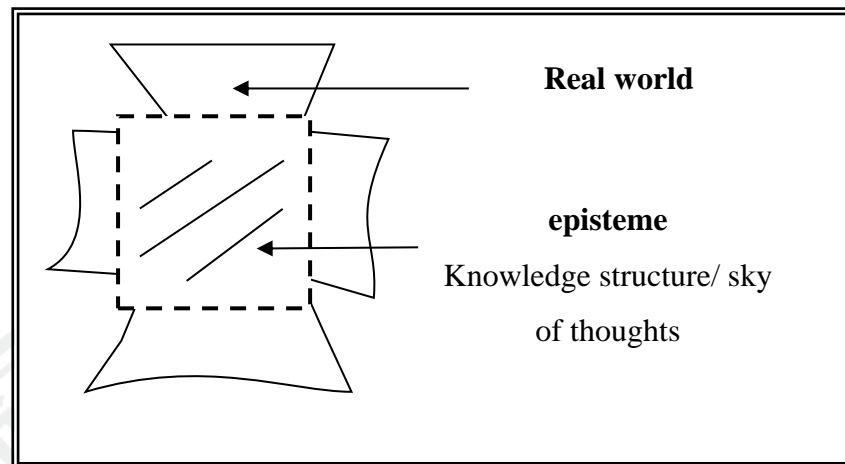


Figure 2.1 Analogy of Knowledge Structure (Episteme)

In the nineteenth century, the studies emphasized causal relationships, such as a search for causes and effects of learning history, etc. At the same time, a new conceptual framework of using human beings as study objects was introduced. It started from the study on human biology and physiology up to individuals' personality, mental state, cognition, and affection.

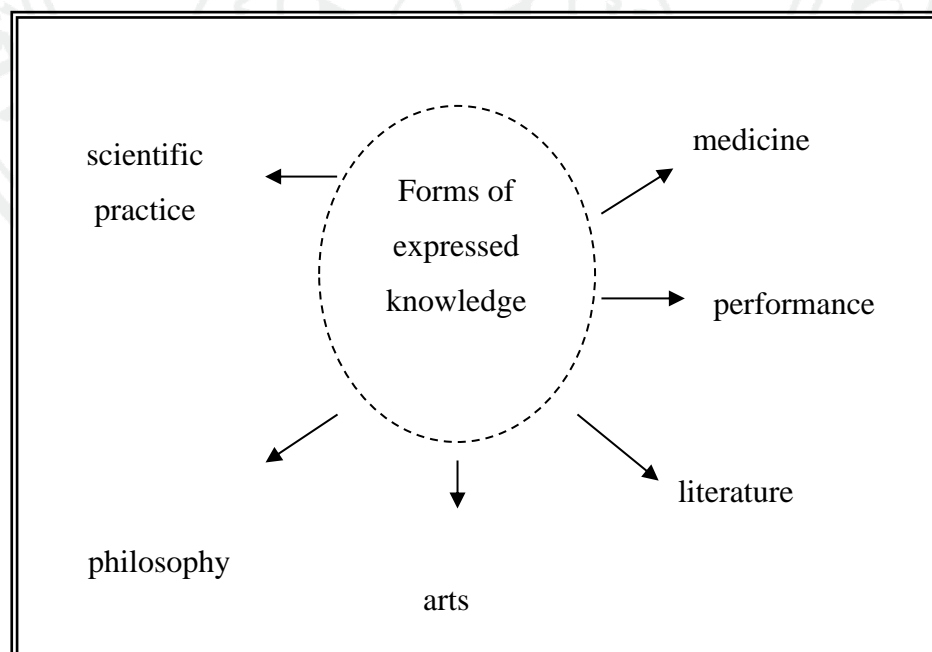


Figure 2.2 Forms of Expressed Knowledge or Episteme

The forms of expressed knowledge or episteme in each period appear in several practices, i.e., artistic practices, etc. Episteme in each period will regulate if the arts should be expressed in realism, impressionism, or expressionism style, etc. The episteme of the present time is expressed in scientific programs on television, movies conveying some kinds of philosophy, drawing, arts, literature, TV drama, songs, cartoons, or news presented by media, etc. (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008).

Chairat Charoensin-o-larn adds that Foucault's "episteme" is a process of producing or constituting an identity and significance of something in society that surrounds us: knowledge, truth, power, or even our integrity. Besides, it is what maintains the constructed things to exist and be accepted in society widely until it becomes "dominant discourse." While we cannot see the complication of a battle among discourses, we can misunderstand that there is a fixed boundary line between dominant discourses and secondary discourses. The dominant discourse is given such absolute power that it blurs a struggle among discourses. Foucault views discourses as "a set of composite parts that are unrelated and unconnected. They are neither unified nor stable but are united as a set of discourses expressing differences and varieties. Each has its specific and unique strategy within the collection of such discourses. (Foucault, 1978, as cited in Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 1999). On the other hand, discourses also play a role of pressing and obstructing the identity and meanings of some existence to disappear simultaneously (Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 1999).

As shown above, it indicates that no matter from which episteme base Foucault extends his concepts, he always covers the concept of power in those concepts. By doing so, he reconstructs the meanings and understandings of power projected in other previous disciplines.



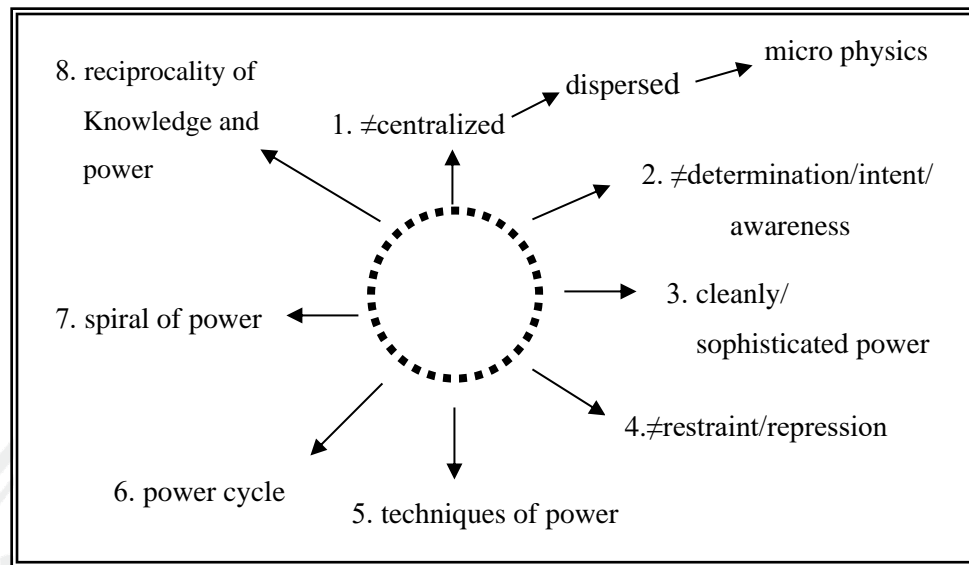


Figure 2.3 The Characteristics of Power from the Point of View of Foucault

1) Dispersed/pervasive power. Foucault warns that one should not pay too much attention to the familiar centralized power that is rather systematic and equipped with specific rules supported by apparent social institutions, i.e., laws, government, capital/finance, army/weapons, etc. Instead, it is more important to look at dispersed power from where it starts to the final destination. In other words, power is ubiquitous or can be seen everywhere. It is manifest through a contradiction of things. It can say that all social relations are power relations as well. Accordingly, none can avoid power. Each person is either a power user or a power victim.

Power is often commonly understood as centralized and decentralized (which is a traditional view of power). From the conventional perspective, power can be followed by the steps or layers of hierarchy in the social structure. However, Foucault rejects such a paradigm of power. From his point of view, power is pervasive all over the society or what he calls “microphysics of power.” He believes that power is like small particles clinging to human lives even more than laws. Power is not a possession of the state or government or any class but is pervasive without unity.

2) Power is not necessarily caused by determination, intention, awareness, or consideration of anyone. Foucault perceives that it is not essential to

focus on “a power user.” Instead, more emphasis should be on “power” itself, which is among relations of all things. For example, to study the power of a camera, it is unnecessary to consider who a shooter is. Still, the ties between a shooter and one being shot are more important. Power can be expressed and occur all the time without any intention or awareness. Still, it can cause an effect, namely, the ability to control. Anyone who is a shooter can control the image coming out. Therefore, analysts should not concern about “a source of power” but “action and the results of power.”

3) Power exerted in modern society seems to be so clean and sophisticated that one may not feel the use of it. Oppositely, the old definition of power is power or an act that can obstruct, block, or impede the needs and deeds of the powerless or power victims, i.e., putting in chains, lynchings, imprisonment, punishment by a weapon, etc. However, a new form of power is not like that. Some examples in our daily life can be given. When we go to a hospital, we are forced to change our name and family name to HN numbers or ID numbers of a patient. In a hospital, we see doctors and nurses. They wear white (symbol of power). Doctors and nurses have power in ordering us (as a patient) to comply with their instructions without questions or doubt. All of these are under the regime of practices, comparable to “a physical check-up.” During a physical check-up, patients hardly feel that they are in a method of cleanly and sophisticated power.

In the case of doctors and patients, the identity of a power user might be seen. However, in the fact that a lot of women have to control their weight, have a diet, exercise, or avoid wrinkles on their faces, etc., we hardly see who is a power user. Power comes from mass media mechanisms, i.e., advertisements in the newspaper, articles in a magazine, a health program on television, etc. All of them are a network of the regime of power practices or exercises.

4) Power is often perceived as a matter of prohibition, restraint, and repression. An example is a statement written in front of a governmental office saying “a governmental place: no entry without necessary affairs.” Foucault adds that there is not only power for repression, prohibition, or restraint, but also the potential for production and creation, i.e., power in creating knowledge and discourses, leading to human civilization. The most notable example is “sexuality” that has been produced and created hugely and dispersed in all kinds of mass media.

5) Techniques of power use. From the study during the transitional period from ancient to modern society in the western world, Foucault found that the unique method used as a tool of exercising power is “division” and “exclusion.” Examples are the separation of insane people from ordinary people, criminals from good citizens, “disordered” sexuality (sexual diversity or homosexuality) from proper or traditional sexuality (men and women). In other words, a set of norms are created, and other related things are compared with such standards. Anything that does not match with the established criteria will be separated, controlled, imprisoned, or restrained for being corrected and returned to normal state or condition. Foucault witnesses those happenings in parallel to changes in power characteristics. As abovementioned, power is dispersed and penetrates increasingly by managing all particles in human activities, i.e., at school, in a factory, a soldier’s camp, a prison, hospital. Etc.

6) Power cycle. Foucault views that power goes in the same way as discourses. In other words, all power starts from a source (i.e., from government, capital, weapons, etc.); however, once it proceeds to a certain point, power becomes anonymous and seems to be possessed by none genuinely. After that, it will go around to all directions and widespread to every level of significant social space with no course. Power thus becomes a kind of structure opening a door for a variety of people to enter and plays a role as an actor and a reactor interchangeably. Today, one is a student and has a teacher as a power user, but in the future, he or she plays a role of a teacher and turns to be a power user, etc.

7) A spiral of power. Foucault warns not to perceive power as possession or dominance of someone or any party over others or another party. Even “groups or classes” cannot possess power. (This notion rejects the concept of hierarchical power of Marxism). Indeed, power cannot exert any absolute differentiation. Nor is it static or fixed. Nobody can earn more or less or uses power or is used all the time. (this notion also rejects Marxism’s concept of hierarchical power). Power goes around pervasively into all social relations. Thus, all human beings are in a spiral of power and never stay still in any position or status.

8) The reciprocity between knowledge and power. From the standpoint of Genealogy, Foucault summarizes that “knowledge” can never be

separated from any happening involving the power of dominance. However, Foucault rejects general definitions of “knowledge” as previously defined. For him, knowledge or episteme is “what powerful people determine to be knowledge.” Therefore, human determination, curiosity, and desire toward understanding might not indicate their advancement. It reflects their desire towards increased power. (based on Nietzsche, a French philosopher who criticizes fundamental concepts of metaphysics.) Likewise, historical movements do not move from savagery to rationalism as philosophers in enlightenment claim. Instead, it is just a shift from the dominance of one knowledge system to another system, i.e., from the dominance of divine knowledge to the supremacy of scientific knowledge. (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008). Moreover, Foucault is interested in “sex.” He believes that discourses on sex vary by time. He also believes that knowledge or episteme determines people’s perception, understanding, reaction, and practices towards “sex.” An episteme does not occur naturally, but is determined by reciprocity between “power” and “knowledge.” Nevertheless, Foucault questions why the issue of sexuality has appeared tremendously in mass media. Primarily, he doubts about the reason behind a narration on sexual deviation and disorder, etc. It can say that in creating power, episteme, and individual identity, communication jointly plays a role in every process and practices, i.e., division practice, a classification for knowing and understanding oneself, etc. Communication media and channels are the most distinct operating area for creating and expressing power and knowledge, i.e., columns in magazines, news, scoops in the newspaper, etc. Foucault further points that similar to other issues, the issue of sexuality is a part of a network of practices that covers institutions and their surrounding sphere in society, such as politics, economics, psychology, society, culture, etc.

On the other hand, Fairclough (1995) perceives discourses as a relationship between a text and contexts. For discourse analysis, social practices must be included beyond the study of language or a production process. Namely, it requires a review of the relationships between language, a production process, and all social conditions: contexts, social institutions, and social structures (Coulthard & Toolan, 2005). Fairclough proposes that in analyzing the discourse of media, it involves the relationships between three dimensions: texts, discursive practices, and socio-cultural

practices. For a text, it means the usage of language and expression of people in society. Therefore, to analyze a text covers an analysis of language, vocabularies, the relationship between language and culture, grammatical structure, and tone of using language in writing or explaining a phenomenon. Typically, a way of describing a discourse tends to be criticism based on the assumption that society is unrighteous and full of exploitations. Thus, discourse analysis aims to reveal such truth to be acknowledged by people in society and to find ways to create righteousness for society.

Discursive practices mean an analysis of a process in which mass media produces a text for receivers to read and understand some situations. Discursive practices is thus a combined study of language and social happenings (Fairclough, 1995) to find out under what communication context a discourse takes place. From the analysis, it will help to gain a deeper understanding of how discourse is presented or the background of a discourse.

Socio-cultural practices mean the relationship between society and texts that has a mutual effect (Attanan Tachopisalwong, 2011).

Produced discourses might be interpreted differently since a text may not contain only a single meaning. On the other hand, communication discourses involve texts and discursive practices, including socio-cultural practices surrounding a text (Fairclough, 1995).



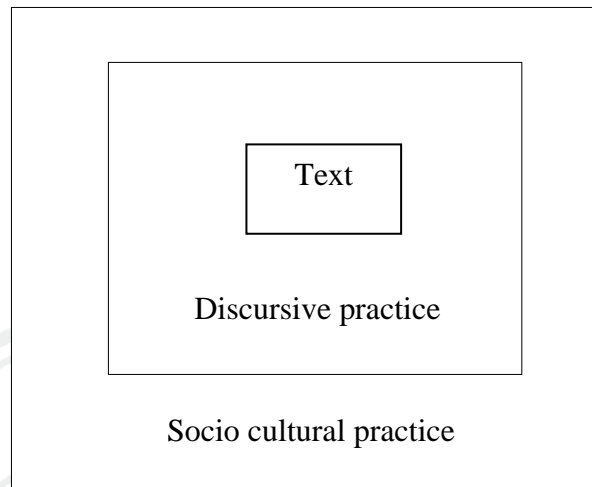


Figure 2.4 A Study of Discourse Based on Norman Fairclough

Source: Fairclough, 1995.

Besides, linguistic activities are also important. Linguistic activities are what exist between language and society. Thus, socio-cultural activities affect language indirectly via discursive practices (Fairclough, 1995). Furthermore, Fairclough believes that it is essential to study what is called “intertextuality,” which can be found at the connection point between a text and discursive practice. (Krisadawan Hongladarom & Jantima Earmanond, 2006). Fairclough’s meaning of intertextuality accords with the ideas of some philosophers like Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Barthe, who state that language contains no sense in itself. (Fairclough, 1995). In other words, the meaning will emerge only when it is in a context. Accordingly, meanings are not only created by previous texts, but also by the influence of other external factors, such as the environment of prior texts, culture, etc. Due to this nature of language, language cannot be translated literally. Therefore, textual analysis is an effort in searching for human traces or clues appearing in the constructed discourses to interact with society. Fairclough further believes that “intertextuality” brings about a diversity of conflicts among components in a text, or ambivalence of a text. Because of such variety, a text can be interpreted in many ways. He insists that the heterogeneity and conflicts in a text are caused by intertextuality. Thus, intertextuality is the integration of all components into a text in two levels:

- 1) It is an integration of all kinds of discourses or different discourses.
- 2) It is an integration of other people's words, and our words or other people's words appear in our discourse, i.e., in a report, speech, etc.

Accordingly, the research uses the concept of discourse and discourse analysis as a conceptual framework to portray the construction of discourses on same-sex marriage and the meaning construction of same-sex marriage communicated via constructed discourses, which are presented in mass media in Thailand. Regarding previous studies on the discourse analysis and sexuality, the following was found from the review of literature:

Pimwadee Rungruangying (2017) studied, "Linguistic Strategies in Female Homosexuality Discourse Analysis of @tom.actz Magazine" during 2007-2014. She found that the magazine producer used five patterns of language: words choice, postulates, modality, reference, and rhetorical questions, in constructing the concepts of "Women-Love-Women (WLW)". The five patterns were 1) The construction of the concept "WLW is personal or an individual's rights" through word choice and reference reflecting the freedom of choosing one's sexuality and sexual orientation. 2) The construction of the concept "WLW cannot be free from patriarchy" through the use of postulates and rhetorical questions. These two strategies reflected the influence of embedded knowledge or episteme on the mainstream concept of sexuality. Thus, female homosexuals borrowed the roles of masculinity and femininity for their ways of living. 3) The construction of "the concept of the otherness of WLW" by reflecting the division between mainstream sexuality and WLW. The texts thus were interpreted in the sense of struggle since the idea of otherness was communicated at @tom.actz. Such communication was like a space for a mouthpiece to correct bias and induce the acceptance of sexual differences and diversity, including creating a good understanding in society.

Another study related to discourse is "Kathoey Sexual Harassment: Its Significance in Heterosexual Discourse," conducted by Kittikorn Sankatiprapa in 2007. The findings revealed that the norms of heterosexuality constructed social reality about kathoey and made kathoeyes surrender to the power of heterosexual love. Thus, they directed themselves to create their femininity and present themselves by the power of discourse for their co-existence in society. Besides, their social identity

was constructed from the attached meanings of kathoey representation in both sex and gender dimensions. Accordingly, kathoey was used by patriarchy in the aspect of sexual intercourse easily. Sexual harassment and violence towards kathoeyes were found at several levels from slanders or spoken words, sexual assaults, rapes, deception, etc., depending on how discourses caused kathoey to interpret their identity. Such violence affected a kathoey's life, including his mental and physical condition, and health. The ideology of heterosexuality and patriarchy dominated a kathoey's invisibility and voiceless in society. Thus, it created a gap of episteme about a real self of kathoey and led to discrimination against them. Besides, kathoey and kathoey's rights were not protected sufficiently towards human dignity in society. The study illustrated the concept and meanings of sexual harassment against kathoey, which violated their sexual rights and humanity (Kittikorn Sankatiprapa, 2007).

Narisara Wattanachaisriskul (2017) studied "Representation: Acceptance of Homosexual" of Teenager in Thai Society from Club Friday Radio Program." She found that "the acceptance of homosexuality" was a representation reflecting teenagers' love. Linguistic strategies were found to be related to the representation portrayal. The linguistic strategies used were the use of a variety of verbs, speech acts, and postulates. The findings reflected that teenagers perceived homosexuality was normal and not social problems. They viewed that it was easy to access information. Especially the effect of media, i.e., through the performance of the third or alternative sex in drama, movies, and news presentation, made homosexuals feel that they had an identity in a society increasingly. Besides, homosexuals wanted to pursue their lives in the ways they desire rather than within the frame determined by culture.

Ratchadaporn Siraksa and Siriporn Panyametheekul (1994) studied "The Discourse of Sexual Harassment in Daily Life" by using discourse analysis as a conceptual framework. It was found that the strategies used the most by people who committed sexual harassment in daily life were the use of words referring to sex organs or conveying sexual meanings to make victims embarrassed, frightened, and afraid to fight back. From survey questionnaires, it was found that the ways modern women reacted to sexual harassment changed. Women did not feel embarrassed, frightened, or afraid to respond to offenders. However, they chose to avoid confrontation with the offenders by denying, giving reasons, and being polite to them

to let them know the effect on them from doing so. In an unavoidable case, victims chose to rebuke or speak sarcastically. Still, most of their reactions were no response or walking away to end such happening.

Jinnapat Saengma (2002) studied “A Discourse Analysis of Sexual Freedom in Q & A Column/Program of Thai Mass Media,” and three ways of approaching sexual relations and promiscuity were found: conservative, reformative, and proactive. All these three approaches affected the creation of identity and relationships between women and men in Thai society. Besides, in the process of constructing discourses on sexual freedom, interactivity between discursive practices, i.e., a text presenter, the selection of questions, types of communication, and target audience, and socio-cultural practices were found. A part of discourse construction in answering sexual questions accorded with mainstream discourses, i.e., discourses in socio-cultural systems, legal systems, and religious systems, which supported the ideology of monogamy. At the same time, some parts of discourses were found to accord with adverse discourses, i.e., discourses of feminists.

Notably, discourses on sexual freedom as appearing in each media contained similar content. Specifically, it contains conservative content more than proactive content based on ideologies of Thai society that adhere to the traditional ideology of male-female sexual relations. However, in each media, the presentation style was different due to the different characteristics of each kind of media.

Furthermore, in the study of Worapong Chairerk (2015) that focused on the relationship between language and masculine ideology in GM Magazine, altogether nine linguistic strategies were found in conveying masculinity ideology. The linguistic strategies used were: 1) choice of words 2) figurative language 3) rhetorical questions 4) sentence connectivity 5) informal verbal style 6) insertion of medical-scientific and technological discourse 7) narration of personal experience 8) a claim of male truism 9) the use of postulates. Regarding the relationship between masculine ideology and linguistic strategies used in texts of GM Magazine, three types of masculine ideology were found. 1) desirable characteristics of men: physical appearance, affection and feeling, and social roles. 2) undesirable attributes of men. 3) Body management towards desirable traits.

Similarly, Satanan Piangbunta (2013) studied “Language and Ideologies in Sexual Assault News Headlines: A Critical Discourse Analysis. It was found that Thai socio-cultural ideologies hidden in news headlines on sexual assaults were gender and hierarchy ideologies. Examples of ideologies were the “hierarchy of ages and occupations,” via the use of linguistic strategies, such as the choice of words to represent “actor” and “reactor.” Besides, another linguistic approach was the arrangement of information or words. In other words, importance can be given to the “doer,” the subject of a sentence (Kattuwasog) or the object (Karmawasog). Moreover, from the news headlines of sexual assaults, it illustrated a linguistic strategy of using the meaning relationship between the roles of all involved.

Notably, the studies on same-sex marriage from the communication approach tend to apply the principles of signification and interpretation of the communication output widely. Wang (2017) studied the marriage equality in Taiwan entitled, “Eyeing Marriage Equality: News Media Representation of Same-Sex Marriage Legalization Debate in Taiwan.” From the finding, it indicated that mass media presented same-sex marriage representation negatively as a group of social deviation, which was harmful to the survival of society and social norms. On the other hand, it appeared some arguments that supported to present homosexuals as ordinary people or citizens of society like heterosexuals. They perceived that homosexuals deserved to be granted marriage equality like male-female marriage. The tendency of such a movement appeared increasingly in the roles of mass media in Taiwan.

## **2.4 The Concept of Audience Analysis from Cultural Approach**

From the standpoint of the Birmingham school of thought, in each society, there is cultural diversity despite some shared culture. Still, each sub-group possesses some unique characteristics as its identity. Therefore, critical cultural studies pay close attention to the sub-culture of the marginal, the underprivileged, and the powerless in Thai society.

Based on political-economic principles, Birmingham School believes in the fundamental philosophical assumptions that society can be developed from “conflicts” and “culture is incomplete by itself but always relies on economic and



political dimensions.” Thus, among a diversity of culture and cultural exchanges, there are also conflicts in benefits, ideas, beliefs, values, history, etc., which lead to a struggle towards the seizure of cultural space all the time. Eventually, cultural triumph or loss leads to economic and political power. That is why all cultures strive to win so that they can establish their culture as the dominant culture of society.

However, in a capitalist society, mass media institutions play several roles, i.e., transmitting information, creating a unity of society, surveillance what is going on in society, etc. All of these functions are replacing traditional roles of cultural institutions. Therefore, mass media institutions become major stages for creating the culture of society. Accordingly, critical cultural studies argue the idea that mass media institutions function as a cultural transmission that other cultural institutions create. Birmingham School thus adds that under capitalism, mass media also works as a cultural generator besides cultural transmission. As witnessed in daily life, all cultural representations, such as thinking patterns, socio-emotional structure, conducts, practices, language, clothing, etc., are the outcome of the operation of mass media institutions (Kanjana Kaewthep, 2010).

Regarding general cultural analysis, “interpretation” is a significant part. Interpretation is the connection between two steps, namely the meaning construction at the encoding stage and the meaning interpretation or reconstruction at the decoding step to see what might be possible meanings by analyzing the outcome of communication production. Namely, after the exposure or reception, the purpose of the message is interpreted by the audience if it is appropriate or meaningful or not. From the critical cultural studies approach, receivers are creatures in one socio-cultural system (that may be alike, different, or similar to a sender). Therefore, on the part of receivers, they use their socio-cultural system as a frame for interpreting the received message. The audience analysis from a cultural approach indicates additional roles and functions of mass media from the traditional ones (Kanjana Kaewthep, 2000). Mass media performs two leading tasks relating to the audience and culture:

- 1) Mass media inherits and disseminates the culture of a society by transmitting it from generation to generation and by spreading sub-culture of some groups to be acknowledged by other groups in society. For instance, Manorah

performance of southern culture is disseminated through media to the audience in the northern, central, and northeastern parts of the country.

2) Mass media creates a culture for society. Based on cultural studies, mass media is a weaver of meanings in all forms surrounding people in society, i.e., knowledge, idea, an emotion of the period, and prescriptive behavioral guidelines. All of these become what we call “culture we breathe.”

Besides, Hall (1997) explains about the decoding step of the audience or receivers. He states that what the audience perceives is not “raw material that is genuine” but “raw material passing through a production process.” In other words, a producer contains some meanings into a product he or she produces. Still, Hall believes that the meanings and content of a message will always be transmitted if the production continues all the time. In the decoding step, there are two types of receivers’ reaction or response:

1) If receivers can create meanings from the message content, they will consume and give meanings for it. However, if they apply such meanings in their daily life with failure, those meanings will not affect or are meaningless for receivers.

2) If message content itself cannot create any meaning for receivers, it will only be a media exposure step without consumption.

From the standpoint of Hall (1997) gives equal importance to both receivers and senders as a meaning generator since meanings are not created only in the step of encoding or producing, but also in the receiving or decoding step.

In the step of decoding or receiving a message, Kanjana Kaewthep (2000) further explains that due to a variety of meanings (polysemy) contained in message content in combination with receivers’ independent interpretation, Hall proposes three types of receivers’ decoding:

1) Preferred code. It is a receiver’s decoding that agrees with the meaning conveyed by a sender or producer. For instance, a report on same-sex marriage might lead to imitation among adolescents in Thai society, and a receiver also thinks like that.

2) Negotiated code. It is combined decoding between one that a receiver agrees and another that disagrees or modifies. This kind of coding might be operated via various strategies, i.e., create one’s own rules, create exceptions, etc.

Although same-sex marriage might lead to adolescents' imitation by their preferred reading, they also learn from their parents or through other socialization channels about sexual diversities in modern society. Therefore, they know how to think, learn from it, and have the media literacy to catch up with changing social environment. (exceptions).

3) Oppositional code. It is a receiver's decoding based on his or her acknowledgment of the preferred code, but he or she tends to disagree with it. For example, receivers will express their ideas that nowadays, there are not only men and women, but a diversity of genders. Adolescents' imitation does not occur so quickly since no matter the marriage is male-female or homosexual, it depends significantly on other institutions, including the social environment of each couple, etc.

In the audience analysis of the research "The Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand," the study aims to find out how same-sex marriage was perceived and interpreted by receivers of different social experiences and background. Are they perceived and interpreted its meaning from the same or different discourse? Thus, the study will examine how receivers interpret and signify same-sex marriage from their standpoints

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research entitled, “The Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand,” is a qualitative research based on Cultural Studies, aimed to analyze two main communication components. 1) Analysis of discourses or “message” and the communicated meanings of same-sex marriage through discourse analysis based on Norman Fairclough’s analysis of texts, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. 2) Analysis of receivers through the cultural approach.

#### **3.1 Information and Sources**

##### **3.1.1 Discourse Analysis**

Information and sources of information for this study comprise the online news content of a news agency in Thailand on the internet and documentary information.

1) Online news content of a news agency in Thailand: Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, which are influential news agencies on the Thai audience, and present a variety of news types. News content focuses on facts and happenings in society. Therefore, the transmission of news means the presentation of events in society, which are very influential on individuals since they rely on mass media’s information for making decisions in their daily life and for any social movement.

News from 2013 to 2018, a total of six years, were purposively sampled. The reason the study started from 2013 was that it was the year in which the Liberty and Rights Protection Department, the Ministry of Justice, proceeded the Draft of Marriage Registration, year...., which can be considered as the starting of

movement on same-sex marriage by a governmental office in Thailand. Besides, such a year was the most significant period full of substantial information and raw materials related to same-sex marriage for the study.

Nevertheless, for this study, online news content on same-sex marriage in Thailand was selected from news appearing some discourses as institutional representations as criteria. It brought about a variety of news and helped a researcher to find out to what extent and how each powerful institution in a society signifies the meaning of same-sex marriage through the following dimensions:

- (1) Marriage rituals
- (2) Laws
- (3) Family
- (4) Religion
- (5) Social status
- (6) Economic status

Two characteristics of people with sexual diversities were determined.

(1) The samples of sexual diversities appearing on online news of news agencies in Thailand:

a) The samples of male homosexuals presented through mass media on the issue of same-sex marriage in Thailand.

b) The samples of female homosexuals presented through mass media on the topic of same-sex marriage in Thailand.

(2) News or news illustrations that were presented on social media, not by media nor any apparent news press or agency.

2) Documentary information: any document related to same-sex information or issues, most of which were collected from textbooks, theses, and pieces of research, of both Thai and foreign, including articles, critics, criticism, etc.

### **3.1.2 Audience Analysis**

Audience analysis was the study on the audience or receivers' perception and interpretation of the message or discourses. Personal media was studied by in-depth interviews to examine the receivers' interpretation process to see if they perceived and constructed the meanings of same-same messages from the same discourses if the



interpretation was the same or different. Receivers' responses were recorded by a tape recorder and decoded in the form of written data for further study

The samples of this study were twelve receivers of sexual diversities: Men-Love-Men (MLM), Women-Love-Women (WLW), males, and females, with different social experiences and backgrounds. These samples were considered as representatives of various social institutions of Thailand to explore if the meanings of same-sex marriage were interpreted differently. An informal in-depth interview was conducted with the samples individually.

Table 3.1 Samples with Different Social Experiences and Background

<b>Samples with Different Social Experiences and Background</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Name (Alias/Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Sex (Self-perception)</b>	<b>Age</b>
1.	A	MLM	42
2.	B	MLM	35
3.	C	MLM	44
4.	D	WLW	32
5.	E	WLW	28
6.	F	Male	30
7.	G	Male	43
8.	H	Male	30
9.	I	Male	37
10.	J	Female	42
11.	K	Female	38
12.	L	Female	35

### 3.2 Research Instruments

The research instrument used in this study was a discourse analysis sheet. Discourses are what society creates and, at the same time, also influence society. Thus, discourses selected in the study were the content of actual happenings in

society. The selected discourses were analyzed and tested by reviewed theoretical concepts and advice from experts and advisors to obtain research validity. The content was summarized and analyzed as appearing directly on the media.

Furthermore, the discourse analysis also included the data collected from documentary information during 2013-2018, including other factors in the news, to interpret texts and the non-personal samples from online news content to find the meanings of same-sex marriage. The analysis followed the framework of Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough for interpreting both the linguistic and communicative dimensions of same-sex marriage discourses in the news.

For the audience analysis, the analysis was conducted from in-depth interviews to classify if the perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage came from the same discourses. If so, the study further examined whether they were perceived and interpreted differently by receivers of different social experiences and background or not, based on two main questions:

- 1) Do you agree or disagree with same-sex marriage in Thailand? Why?
- 2) Do you agree or disagree with the presentation of news on same-sex marriage through mass media in Thailand? Why?

The responses to the above questions were analyzed to reflect which discourse respondents of sexual diversities (IMLM, WLW, males, and females) influence their thought or perception of same-sex marriage.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

#### **3.3.1 Discourse Analysis**

Texts were analyzed to find out discourses and their communication on the meanings of same-sex marriage. News content on same-sex marriage appearing in the news of mass media in Thailand was interpreted.

The analysis used the concepts of sexual diversity, same-sex marriage, discourse, and discourse analysis as the conceptual framework for this study. Principally, the concept of Fairclough's three-component discourse analysis: texts, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice, was used to respond to the research

question. Thus, from the findings, it pointed out how mass media in Thailand signified the meaning of same-sex marriage through its news presentation. Did the meanings change from those in the past? Which effect did discursive practice, determined by social institutions in Thailand, and socio-cultural practice yield to the implications of same-sex marriage in Thai society? The analysis framework comprised:

1) The analysis of same-sex marriage meanings appearing in the news presentation of mass media in Thailand:

(1) An analysis of texts, which were online news content and documentary information, to find out the types of linguistic patterns used in signifying the meanings of same-sex marriage.

(2) An analysis of discursive practice, which was news headlines and news content presented on the internet of news agencies or press in Thailand. The studied discourses were discourses in forthcoming events by taking into accounts the following dimensions. 1) The marital aspects included sex, age, occupation, social status, and economic status. 2) Relationship dimension included married couples, married couples and families, married couples and surrounding people.

2) An analysis of discursive practices on same-sex marriage communicated through media and power relations within a Thai society context.

It also included socio-cultural practices and their relationship among social contexts related to the text creation to know what was hidden behind the texts via discursive practices through news headlines and content presented on the internet of news agencies or press in Thailand. For this study, the analysis framework was divided into the societal and institutional levels to study changes of meanings of same-sex marriage discourses presented via Thai mass media.

### **3.3.2 Audience or Receivers Analysis**

It is an analysis of receivers' perception and interpretation or meaning construction on same-sex marriage discourses in Thai society.

Receivers of sexual diversities (Namely, MLM, WLW, males, and females) of different social experiences and background were selected to represent various kinds of institutions in Thai society. The audience analysis was based on the cultural

approach. A contextual analysis was also used to find out if receivers of different social experiences and backgrounds would perceive and interpret the meanings of same-sex marriage discourses with the same or different discourses.

### **3.4 Data Presentation**

Descriptive analysis was used to present qualitative findings of the study. The findings were divided into three parts:

- 1) Chapter 4: the results from discourse analysis to search for discourses and communication of meanings of same-sex marriage appearing in the news of mass media in Thailand. The findings focused on how mass media in Thailand constructed the definition of same-sex marriage presented in the news and its changes. Besides, it studied same-sex marriage discursive practices in Thai society, as determined by several social institutions in Thai society.

- 2) Chapter 5: the findings from audience analysis to analyze if the perception and interpretation of receivers with different genders, social experiences, and background, on same-sex marriage was different. Do they perceive and interpret or construct the meanings of same-sex marriage from the same or different discourses?

- 3) Chapter 6: The findings were summarized, discussed, and recommendations were proposed from the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCOURSES AND COMMUNICATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE MEANINGS**

The research entitled, “The Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand” is qualitative. The findings of this chapter focus on a discourse analysis for examining discourses and communication of the meanings of same-sex marriage by analyzing news content presented in the news. Thus, the results of the study can answer the research questions of how mass media in Thailand construct the meanings of same-sex marriage through the news presentation and if the constructed meanings change. Besides, the study aims to explore the characteristics of discourse and social practices on same-sex marriage, determined by social institutions in Thai society, including cultural practices that primarily affect discourses of same-sex marriage in Thai society. The analysis was conducted based on the cultural approach.

For this research, news from Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online during 2013-2018, were selected by purposive sampling. Specifically, the selected news were representative discourses of social institutions in Thai society on same-sex marriage to reflect different types of discourses. Doing so, it will help to point out to what extent and how influential social institutions determine the construction of discourses on same-sex marriage.

Subjects with two types of sexual diversities presented by media on the issue of same-sex marriage in Thailand were selected: male and female homosexuals.

Moreover, discourse analysis based on the concept of Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough was conducted to explore discourses and the meanings of same-sex marriage communicated in the news. The discourse analysis of the study used the framework of Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough to interpret language and communication for illustrating the power and knowledge or episteme in constructing



the reality of same-sex marriage in the news. The process of analyzing and presenting information was described as below:

Table 4.1 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Men-Love-Men or MLM)  
Presented in Thairath Online related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage in  
Thailand during 2013-2018

Thairath Online		
No.	Presented News	Date of News Presentation
1.	A Swiss big man carried 10 Million to marry a Thai queer (kathoeys)	March 15, 2013
2.	Sweet loving purple couples: a kindergarten-teacher groom married a young man from Nakhon (Si Thammarat)	May 18, 2013
3.	Sensational! A man engaged a man, carrying the dowry for a full traditional wedding party.	February 3, 2014
4.	A western man took 1 million to marry a Chanthaburi young man to weave their online relationships	February 13, 2014
5.	A man married a man by Thai tradition after seeing each other for 4 years	August 3, 2014
6.	Online-Inducing love. MLM in Nakhon (Si Thammarat) with thousands dowry.	January 8, 2015
7.	Double sweeter than sugar. Revealing MLM: a prize hunter with an overwhelming love story.	February 13, 2015
8.	The first pre-wedding of Lady Mam and a man before a formal wedding. Renowned couples preparing for the first marriage registration in Thailand.	June 9, 2015
9.	A 26-year-old handsome man walked arm in arm with a beautiful male-bride aged 32 in a Kanchanaburi wedding.	September 5, 2015
10.	2 queers in a wedding while the other 2 men had a marriage parade with trays of gifts from a groom to a bride's family.	September 7, 2015

Thairath Online		
No.	Presented News	Date of News Presentation
11.	Sensational purple. A (Maha) Sarakham man grasped 200,000 as the dowry for marrying a Kamphaeng Phet man.	January 25, 2016
12.	Love with no sex limit. A business man from the Aristocratic country (England) carried over 5 million to marry a Thai man.	May 8, 2016
13.	Nakhon Pathom male couples organized a valentine wedding, having families as witnesses.	February 14, 2017
14.	Love is ripened after seeing each other for 5 years. Two men decided to marry. A younger groom took hundreds to ask for a marriage.	March 5, 2017
15.	A sensational queer police officer married a six-pack groom. A concert was organized to celebrate their wedding.	May 5, 2017
16.	A transvestite policeman organized a simple wedding among relatives and rejected the dowry of 10 million baht.	May 11, 2017
17.	No sex-divide love. A rail driver of Mahasarakham University carried hundreds to marry a queer.	July 2, 2017
18.	A Paknam businessman carried the dowry of 1 million to marry a senior student. Quests were all delighted.	September 3, 2017
19.	A draftee took the dowry of 100,000 to marry a Prachinburi queer after 3 years of ripened love.	November 2, 2017
20.	Renowned news. MLM between 29-year-old man and a beauty-salon man. Love is so rich that both decided to marry.	November 5, 2017
21.	26 nations legalized same-sex marriage.	November 15, 2017
22.	No sex-divide love. The romantic image of a dark-tone policeman and a young boyfriend was shared in social media.	February 15, 2018

<b>Thairath Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
23.	Found love in social media. After 3 years, a man carried the dowry to marry a ladyboy.	February 17, 2018
24.	Delighted happiness. A groom from England gave money, gold, and a car to marry a Nakhon Sawan man.	May 13, 2018
25.	A dragon wedding in Paknampho. A sweet MLM married by Chinese tradition.	May 13, 2018
26.	Love IG-induced. After seeing each other for 4 years, a young MC carried the dowry to marry a male nurse.	June 16, 2018

Table 4.2 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Men-Love-Men or MLM)  
Presented in Daily News Online related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage  
in Thailand during 2013-2018

<b>Daily News Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
1.	Sensational! The first male-homosexual wedding in the Year of the Goat.	January 8, 2015
2.	A poll revealed most people supported same-sex marriage.	July 5, 2015
3.	A sensational MLM wedding. Parents proceeded the rituals by old tradition.	January 3, 2016
4.	A wedding parade in Kamphangphet. A sweet MLM wedding was organized.	January 25, 2016
5.	The father confirmed a wedding of his son and accepted his son loved truly with a middle-aged business man.	May 4, 2017
6.	An investigation was conducted to see if Pol. L/C married a businessman violated police ethics and rules.	May 5, 2017
7.	Male couples joined in the PDRC's demonstration. Ways for finding true love were recommended.	May 12, 2017

<b>Daily News Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
8.	Gay-Queer lovers declared to marry and asked the society to accept love without sexual concern.	July 20, 2017
9.	Acting Sub. Lt. carried hundreds and 2-baht gold to marry a man.	January 7, 2018
<b>Total 9 News</b>		

Table 4.3 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Men-Love-Men or MLM)  
Presented in Khao Sod Online Related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage  
in Thailand during 2013-2018

<b>Khao Sod Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
1.	A sensational male-male marriage between a museum staff and a performance-dress for rent owner. Udonthani governor was the chairperson of the wedding ceremony.	August 3, 2014
2.	Sensational! A man married a lady boy from Srisaket after 6 years, carrying the dowry of 40,000	November 28, 2016
3.	Sensational! Genuine love of MLM. A man organized a parade to ask a blind male bride to marry. The bride was so happy and shed tears of joy.	April 21, 2017
4.	Already married. Pol. L/C walked arm in arm with a big man, an entrepreneur, to a wedding ceremony with a crowd of guests.	May 10, 2017
5.	Sensational! A male-male marriage. Pol. L/C married a businessman happily, and rejected the rumor of the dowry of 10 million.	May 10, 2017
6.	A widowed father carried a million to marry a younger man, revealing his secret love since school age.	September 3, 2017

<b>Khao Sod Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
7.	Sensational male-male marriage. A Saraburi man carried the dowry of almost 1 million to marry his co-worker after seeing each other for 5 years.	November 13, 2017
8.	An Ayutthaya worker fell in love with a Saraburi man on social media. Finally, both married very happily.	January 7, 2018
<b>Total 8 News</b>		

Table 4.4 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Women-Love-Women or WLW) Presented in Thairath Online Related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage in Thailand during 2013-2018

<b>Thairath Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
1.	Be of interest. WLW walked arm in arm to a wedding ceremony.	May 4, 2014
2.	Sweet wedding. Tom carried the dowry to ask Dee (Lady) to marry after meeting love on Facebook	November 2, 2014
3.	For possessing a married life, a transsexual woman carried the dowry of almost a million to marry a beautiful lady.	November 16, 2014
4.	Renowned! A handsome woman married a beautiful woman after loving each other for 3 years with the dowry of 300,000.	February 20, 2015
5.	Joyful! A handsome woman married a woman so sweetly after having their love ripened for 9 years.	March 1, 2015
6.	A handsome former softball female player of the national team grasped the dowry of 2 million to marry a woman.	March 8, 2015



Thairath Online		
No.	Presented News	Date of News Presentation
7.	2 female scouts in Yala holding hands to a wedding after seeing each other for 5 years.	August 28, 2015
8.	A handsome woman married a beautiful girl after taking care of their love for 2 years, with 100,000 as the dowry.	January 11, 2016
9.	Make a sensational wedding: Tom and Dee (lady) with cheers.	January 18, 2016
10.	A tomboy married Dee (a lady).	January 18, 2016
11.	Ripened love in Ang-Thong. WLW with 200,000 cash. and 4-baht gold as the dowry.	March 16, 2016
12.	A handsome woman of Lamtub married a beautiful woman from Thung Song. The first couple of Krabi after having known each other for 15 years since the secondary school.	June 11, 2016
13.	Getting married for the second time, Mo held hands with a female pilot to marry secretly two months ago.	August 15, 2017
14.	A joyful wedding picture of 2 business women marrying, who claimed that after love was fulfilled, men are an unnecessary.	November 7, 2017
15.	Talk of a town. A 41-year-old woman married a 21-year-old woman and were very happy.	February 19, 2018
16.	A handsome business woman from Surat (Thani) held a hand of a beautiful bride and showed a wedding card in the 4.0 era.	February 21, 2018
17.	After passing by car and looking at each other every day for 8 years, a tomboy brought a half million to marry her girlfriend.	February 25, 2018

<b>Thairath Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
18.	Sensation! A handsome woman married a beautiful lady happily after seeing each other for 7 years.	February 26, 2018
19.	A handsome business woman in Surat (Thani) held the dowry of 50-baht gold to marry a 28-year-old woman.	March 15, 2018
<b>Total 19 News</b>		

Table 4.5 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Women-Love-Women or WLW) Presented in Daily News Online Related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage in Thailand during 2013-2018

<b>Daily News Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
1.	Happily, a handsome woman from the City of Black Water (Kalasin) carried the dowry to marry a beautiful woman.	December 18, 2016
2.	Sensation! “A handsome woman” had ripened love and brought a tray of betel and areca as a troth to ask for a bride.	July 2, 2017
3.	Sensation! “Sujittra” prepared to marry her girlfriend.	September 11, 2017
4.	Mo- Amena revealed after-marriage life. They were happy in spite of some quarrels.	January 5, 2018
5.	Pa Tob surprised Pee Mai by kneeling and asking for marriage.	February 9, 2018
6.	A handsome woman held 300,000 in arms to marry her girlfriend cheerfully.	February 24, 2018

<b>Daily News Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
7.	A Chinese tomboy, hitting on an older woman after wooing for 2 years, carried hundreds and gold as a troth.	March 24, 2018
8.	A tomboy held a half million to marry a woman. She declared her true love after seeing each other for 8 years with parents' approval.	February 25, 2018
<b>Total 8 News</b>		

Table 4.6 The News on People of Sexual Diversities (Women-Love-Women or WLW) Presented in Khao Sod Online Related to the Issue of Same-sex Marriage in Thailand during 2013-2018

<b>Khao Sod Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
1.	Sensation! A handsome woman carried 10 million to marry the beautiful girlfriend and surprised her by asking for marriage on a skyscraper.	December 11, 2016
2.	A sensational of female homosexuals' wedding with outbursts of dancing along the wedding parade. The couple revealed waiting for legalized marriage registration.	May 12, 2017
3.	Pouring into tears, a handsome tomboy claiming it was more than love carried the dowry to marry the girlfriend. Over ten tomboys joined the wedding parade vivaciously.	July 2, 2017
4.	Sensation! Both beautiful business women got bored with men decided to marry happily. The groom gave the dowry for the bride.	November 8, 2017

<b>Khao Sod Online</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Presented News</b>	<b>Date of News Presentation</b>
5.	Sensation! A tomboy in Nakhon Si Thammarat carried a million to marry a lady after seeing each other for 12 years.	November 28, 2017
6.	A Tomboy, impressed firstly with the identical birthday with the girlfriend, carried the dowry walking into the wedding ceremony happily after seeing each other for 6 years.	February 24, 2018
7.	Falling in love since the secondary school, “a Tomboy” held a million to marry “a lady” while revealing that the girlfriend helped to fulfill her life to be more complete.	March 11, 2018
8.	Sensation! A handsome woman brought a million cash and gold bars to marry the girlfriend of aged 15 years younger. She felt very enlightened and vowed to stay together until the old age.	March 15, 2018
9.	Acting the bride, Bell-Nantita, showed her sweet prewedding celebration photos with her female boyfriend.	May 12, 2018
<b>Total 9 News</b>		

#### **4.1 The Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Presented in the News of Thai Mass Media: Textual Analysis**

From the concept of Norman Fairclough and Guy Cook, who view “discourse” in the same direction as Michel Foucault, discourses are a form of the relations between a text and a context. According to Fairclough, to analyze discursive practices, it is necessary to study the socio-cultural practices as well. To analyze or understand either language or the production process is not sufficient, it requires to analyze the relations between language, a process, and social condition, including the

state of the concerned context, social institutions, and social structure (Coulthard & Toolan, 2005). Therefore, to analyze the meanings of same-sex marriage presented in the news of mass media in Thailand, the online news of Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, was used as texts or discourses representing social institutions in Thai society. The criteria in classifying the news related to same-sex marriage are to understand the patterns of discourses in terms of mass media's usage of language in presenting news to construct the meanings of same-sex marriage.

#### **4.1.1 Practices of Same-Sex Marriage Presented to the Society**

##### **1) Marriage Tradition or Ceremony**

From the textual analysis, mass media in Thailand, particularly online news of Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, presented the meanings of same-sex marriage of people of sexual diversity differently by different traditions of each region. Besides, in describing the content of the news, online news tends to signify the attached meanings of marriage tradition in sequences according to each social context. Marriage tradition or rituals are sequential and display the relationship of the male-female couple. The attached meanings illustrate the length of time the couple sees each other and an appropriate religious ceremony. From including a religious institution into the wedding ceremony, it points out that a religious institution is a sacred institution, which enables human marriage to be fortune and smooth. In other words, it reflects a belief in cross-sex marriage couples in Thai society and families' involvement. Importantly, it is noticeable that the presented news always contains details of the amount of money or dowry in a wedding tradition, including that of people of diverse sexual orientation: MLM, WLW, etc. Some samples from the news content are as follow:

Within the wedding ceremony, there are 300,000 baht in cash, and gold necklaces weighing 13 baht, which can be divided into gold necklaces of 8 baht, bracelet of 3 baht, and two gold rings weighing one baht each, more than one million baht. (Khao Sod Online, November 13, 2017)



The ceremony is like general wedding couples, consisting of a parade of trays of betels and areca, and troth of 200,000 cash and 4-baht gold. (Thairath Online, November 2, 2014)

For the dowry, it comprises 100,000 baht cash, 2-baht gold jewelry, and two gemstone rings. (Daily News Online, January 7, 2018)

## ข่าวสด



Figure 4.1 Sensational Male-male Marriage. A Saraburi Man Carried the Dowry of almost 1 Million to Marry his Co-worker after Seeing Each Other for Five Years

Source: Khao Sod Online, November 13, 2017.



Figure 4.2 A Joyful Wedding Picture of Two Women Marrying, Who  
Claimed that After Their Ripened Love, Men Are Unnecessity  
Source: Thairath Online, November 7, 2017.

From the illustrated examples, the wedding ceremony of people of diverse sexual orientation still adheres to the old tradition. It follows the steps of rituals, similar to those of male-female marriage. The news describes in detail all actual events and rites of each phase of marriage are transmitted in compliance with social norms as specified in wedding traditions. Such notion accords with the statement of Phraya Rajwaranukul (Uam) about wedding customs, “For any successful event, after the parents of both parties approve the couple to marry, and a matchmaker or respected representatives of both parties agree on the dowry. The groom’s family will wrap the trays of betel and areca given as betrothal given during the engagement from the groom’s house to the bride’s house. The pledge should be proper for the status of the bride’s family. The bride’s parents then find a respectful adult to welcome and take the engagement tray from the groom’s party considerately.”

Despite the seemingly proper wedding custom of people of diverse sexual orientation with a positive connotative meaning, the meaning of “a married couple” to represent a bride and a groom does not cover a couple of people of sexual diversity

according to Thai norms. Namely, a married couple means “male-female” couple. Male represents a groom while the female represents a bride. Such interpretation can be witnessed in the book “Rituals of Life” of the Fine Arts Department. It says, “Only when parents can select who is proper to be their child’s couple as wished will be considered as good fortune that will bring happiness and prosperity to the family. Hence, it will bring pleasure to both families, and they thus help to arrange the wedding for this couple to be a complete husband and wife.”

In the news, it refers to the wedding rituals of people of sexual diversity as well.

We both have similar characteristics. All the time that we see each other, we have more love for each other. Thus, we decided to marry following the right tradition to spend our happy life together. (Daily News Online, July 2, 2017)

When we know each other and start to talk, we have a reciprocal liking. Therefore, we had seen each other for several months before I decided to tell my parents to request a marriage for me to follow the tradition. (Daily News Online, January 3, 2016)

A young groom asked a company’s staff in Amphur Thamuang to marry among the full congratulations of parents, relatives, and friends of both sides. The ceremony passed through the right tradition completely. (Thairath Online, September 7, 2015)

In brief, from the textual analysis, the marriage or the fortunate marriage ceremony of people of sexual diversity has constructed a new meaning for a bride and groom representative in Thai society nowadays. It is the construction of a new sense of marriage in parallel to the changing terms of married couples. Specifically, it broadens the previous definition of “marriage” in the past that focused restrictively on sex or sexual identity of the pair to include people of sexual diversity as married couples as well. Still, the marriage keeps the old tradition, varying by different regions and cultures. Namely, marriage practices always are conducted to follow the traditional ceremonies and customs, i.e., dressing of a bride and a groom, marriage procedure, food, etc. concerning the cultural contexts.

#### 4.1.2 Factors Inducing Same-Sex Marriage

##### 1) Internal Factors

##### (1) Family

The presentation of news of Thai mass media: Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, from 2013-2018, shows that families of brides and grooms allow same-sex marriage without any conflicts or prohibition. In other words, they do not give importance to the issue of sex upon their allowance of the wedding. It indicates a change in the concepts and beliefs about marriage that have been inherited since the old days. Under the term “marriage,” it includes the word “a groom” and “a bride.” Typically, general people will perceive “a groom” as a man and “a bride” as a woman. Nevertheless, nowadays, due to cultural transformation caused by the integration between Thai and western culture, the scope of marriage couples excludes the dimension of sex and gender in the sphere of marriage life. Accordingly, the marriage couple shifts from the male-female couple to male-male and female-female couples. Love and engagement of the family institution lead to an indirect implication of accepting sexual freedom by overlooking the sexual deviation. As a consequence, the value of same-sex marriage and new married lifestyles are more acceptable, as shown in the following examples:

Sensation! A handsome woman carried 10 million to marry the beautiful girlfriend and surprised her by asking for marriage on a skyscraper. (Khao Sod Online, December 11, 2016)

A man married a man by Thai tradition after seeing each other for four years. (Thairath Online, August 3, 2014)

It can be seen that the construction of meanings by connecting same-sex marriage with the family institution does not concern specifically about what kind of background each family has. More importantly, it proves that the doubt or rejection of any other social institutions against same-sex marriage is not as influential as the family institution’s consent or permission. Thus, the family institution is not only a supporting institution for same-sex marriage; it is the most powerful and influential social institution despite its nature as the smallest institution

of society. In other words, a family is a starting point to effect a more substantial transformation of marriage from traditional cross-sex marriage to same-sex marriage.

Mrs. Somjai Jarucha, Jarupong's mother, said, 'I'm happy that both kids love each other. The other kid is a good man and loves my kid so much. I thus want to tell other parents that they should allow kids to love and live together happily. Don't forbid them. Mothers can always accept it if it makes their children happy, especially if they are good kids. (Thairath Online, September 3, 2017)

Mrs. Nongyao Suksonwan, the groom's mother, said, 'I see both of them very hard-working. They have known each other for a while, and then he introduced him to me. Nothing causes damage. I'm happy for them both. I wish them happiness and hope they help each other to earn their living well. (Daily News Online, January 7, 2018)

In summary, in Thai society, news on same-sex marriage is mostly presented in the form of online news. This kind of news has not been publicized widely either in the online or offline world due to many social limitations influenced by values and culture in the old days and regulated by some norms in Thai society. Contradictorily, the family institution becomes a part of society that creates righteousness for same-sex marriage. Therefore, the family institution plays the role of cultivating and socializing family members to conduct their ways of living to comply with traditional culture and values. It also has to play a part in supporting, creating an understanding of, and assuring family members as a part of a family under other social conditions without yielding any societal-level effect as a whole.

## (2) The Imitation of the Marriage Couple (Male-Female)

Generally, meanings are constructed through language. Language determines one's perception of the world and people's actions. Since the definitions of men, women, or people of sexual diversity, are constructed through language, femininity, masculinity, or alternative genders can determine people's perception of the world and social action towards people of diverse sexual orientation as well.



Notably, mass media presents news on same-sex marriage based on the notion that traditional marriage is between the male and female couple. From the news analysis during 2013-2018, it is found that most mass media presented same-sex marriage in online news, and the number of this kind of news has been increasing. Such findings might be interpreted in two ways: 1) mass media paid attention to it because of its abnormality. In other words, it is unusual in Thai society to have people of same-sex stand up to organize their wedding traditionally. 2) mass media wants to emphasize that Thai society nowadays is more open, and it creates the acceptance of same-sex marriage, especially mass media that gives space on this issue, equivalent to the area for social issues in general.



Figure 4.3 Sensation! A Handsome Woman Married a Beautiful Lady Happily after Seeing Each other for Seven Years

Source: Thairath Online, February 26, 2018.



Figure 4.4 Sensational! The First Male-homosexual Wedding in the Year

Source: Daily News Online, January 8, 2015.

It is common for a man and a woman to organize a wedding ceremony to follow the traditional rites that have been inherited in a society for a long time. However, for people of sexual diversity to hold same-sex marriage, it is not shared and thus is paid attention by mass media. At present, there have been campaigns and demonstrations calling for sexual liberty and equality, mainly due to the concept of nowadays democracy. Therefore, any social practice can be conducted without any violation of the laws. Hence, same-sex marriage can be considered as a social activity, which deviates from traditional social practice but does not violate the laws. Correspondingly, it constructs a new pattern of marriage, namely same-sex marriage, from the dominant discourse of male-female marriage. Notably, the announcement of same-sex marriage in public means society members witness and allow such a relationship in a society. Accordingly, the same-sex concept has been a form of tactful repression over people in society for a long time without their awareness of changes in Thai social contexts.

Mr. Thianchai Tao-thong, the groom, said, 'I have been impressed with the bride so long. She arranged things by herself. Before marriage, my parents met her constantly when she came to Bangkok. My parents did not say anything. It's up to our choice. Anyway, my parents are ok and have no problems. Previously, I also used to see a girlfriend before. Male=love-male is a matter of love. It relies on our hearts. ( Khao Sod Online, November 28, 2016)

From the above explanation, the organization of same-sex wedding reflects negotiated struggle over a standing place in society or the creation of any identity in society in the simplest way for homosexual married couples. Compared symbolically with male-female couples, the construction of "female" is not just unequal to "not male" meaning, but also covers the sense of "masculinity." It is similar to the axiom that "without badness, we will not know what goodness is." Likewise, the meaning of "people of diverse sexual orientation" couple is not equal just to "men and women." Therefore, mass media has constructed the definition of "people of sexual diversity" to be more distinguished.

### (3) Attitude and Value

No matter which sex or gender of married couples are: male-female, male-male, or female-female, marriage is the result of individuals' decision to live together. However, in reality, their choices are not sufficient for the well-being of marriage since there are other environmental factors involved, especially the attitude and values of people in society. Thus, an announcement of proper marriage tradition to the public or people in society seems to be necessary since married couples and their families have to interact with other people. Society plays a role of regulating behaviors and expression of all people in society, i.e., people of different race, language, culture, politics, economics, and religion, including sexual ideology and opinion expression about sexuality and same-sex marriage circulating in the present society. Thus, a diversity of customs and rituals are established in parallel to social dynamism. Consequently, attitude transmitted through the news of mass media is mixed with the real world of the marriage of diverse-sexuality people.

The marriage ceremony of both was simple. It started with Baisee So-Khwan, (offering of cooked rice under a conical arrangement of folded leaves and flowers), a northeastern ceremony. The bride and groom wore a ring for each other in front of Mr. Eitthiphon, the ceremony chairperson. The chairperson conducted a wrist-tie ceremony or tied a small white rope around the wrist of the bride and groom. Later, he put a marriage garland on the head of both. The bride and groom gave a wrist garland as a symbol for expressing their appreciation to the chairperson. (Khao Sod Online, August 3, 2014)

As both of us are female, we cannot have a child. Thus, after our marriage, I helped to take care of her business to release her burden. I don't care much about outside people, but I do care about our parents and siblings. We are lucky that our families understand us. (Thairath Online, February 25, 2018)

From the analysis, it is found that the presentation of news on same-sex marriage plays a role in constructing attitudes, values, and beliefs about marriage. Marriage of any sex or gender, including same-sex marriage, is reciprocity in relationships. In other words, it is a kind of mutual support for human co-living. It involves an exchange of ideas, beliefs, production factors, and the integrated kinship of two families, etc. However, such relationships are tied with family structure rather than legal regulation. From the analysis of online news, most same-sex marriage gives high importance to the wedding ceremony and rituals and the approval of both families. It also emphasizes Thai belief, "making merits and Takbat (or putting food offerings into a Buddhist Monk's bowl) for being together in every reincarnation world." Thus, attitude towards same-sex marriage is the consequence of the presentation of the identity of sexual-diversity people as a member of society who tries to keep social norms and traditional ceremony as the way they are. They also try to keep the identity of an independent individual who can drive or use such social norms to gratify his or her needs as well.



We have consulted with our parents that we want to organize a wedding ceremony traditionally as we want to build up ourselves like other married couples. They agreed with us as they view that society nowadays is much more open.” (Thairath Online, February 20, 2015)

From analyzing online news of mass media in Thailand: Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online during 2013-2018, the researcher found a large amount of news. They present pictures and content related to the delight for same-sex married couples, namely male and female homosexuals, mainly. The other highlighted news is on the marriage procedures following the social tradition.

In conclusion, the presentation on the same-sex marriage of mass media tries to construct the meaning that marriage is not only for male-female couples. It thus provides space for presenting news on male-male and female-female marriage to reflect the sexual fluidity appearing in Thai society. Especially in Thai society, the changing paradigm of sexuality has not been raised seriously. In other words, it confirms the existence of a new model on alternative genders at some corners of society. Still, the news presentation is merely a kind of criticism aimed to call for some rights. On the other hand, Thai culture also wants to know to what extent and through which way sexual equality is possibly proceeded or mobilized via social changes. These sexual values and attitudes are all screened and presented by mass media, which plays a role in expanding perspectives on some parts of social issues to be acknowledged by society.

## 2) External Factors

### (1) Mass Media

At present, mass media plays a role in presenting a variety of news and information to society, i.e., economics, politics, culture, and even changes or dynamism of sexual values. Mass media is partly a representative of social members who need to perceive news and what is going on in society. From the analysis of the news presentation of mass media, the content mostly involves general sexual values, an urge for human rights on sexual equality, and same-sex marriage. Besides, it is found that the presentation of mass media on sexuality has been increasing. Moreover, mass media moves its display on this kind of news to an online channel



progressively too. Therefore, the roles of mass media are a mediator connecting all relations appearing in mainstream media at the individual level as well as a reporter of social issues interested by people in society at the societal level in the online world.

However, it is remarkable that information presented online tends to be social issues that cannot be presented in mainstream media. Notably, the audience might be discontented by the use of insulting or discriminating words, language, or headlines of mainstream media related to the occurring social issues. The notion accords with the findings from previous studies on laws and social environment of civil society organizations and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) groups. The participatory process of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency of International Development (USAID), it reveals, “No law prohibits the presentation on LGBT issues in printed and public media directly. Still, mostly content related to LGBT has been censored or restrained from the violent expression on media. The case can be witnessed in the tension between mainstream media and the issue of LGBT presented in Thairath, a well-known newspaper. Thairath was accused of having headlines on LGBT issues with emotional and provoking language, especially the content on violence and murder.” From such an opinion, it illustrates that mass media is a social institution that proposes ideological ideas in various forms to members of society. Besides, to persuade the general public’s opinion in any direction, mass media is another mechanism in mobilizing any social phenomenon. Generally, people’s attitudes and beliefs have been socialized by other social institutions. Still, mass media is another sector that yields both positive and negative effects on the individual and societal level.

On the other hand, since mass media necessarily presents social occurrences of some groups of people in society with caution, it also has to clarify some doubts about current issues as well. Simultaneously, it has to be aware of presenting news without causing any conflict. Accordingly, the presentation of information in new media or on the internet is an alternative channel for mass media at present because it has fewer restrictions or rules. Mass media can present details or add its opinion. It can even offer and create news issues of those deviating from social norms, traditions, and culture, considered as the dominant discourse of society.

Moreover, it is further found from the presentation of news on the same-sex marriage of mass media nowadays that mass media has constructed the meaning of human intimacy in another form. Namely, generally, the information on same-sex marriage proposed to society is classified as the secondary news agenda. On the contrary, the fluidity of this kind of news is consistently high and can reflect public opinion on society. At the same time, the news is not presented for creating an acceptance of same-sex marriage directly, but to yield no protest against people of sexual diversity as a consequence through the socio-cultural practices.

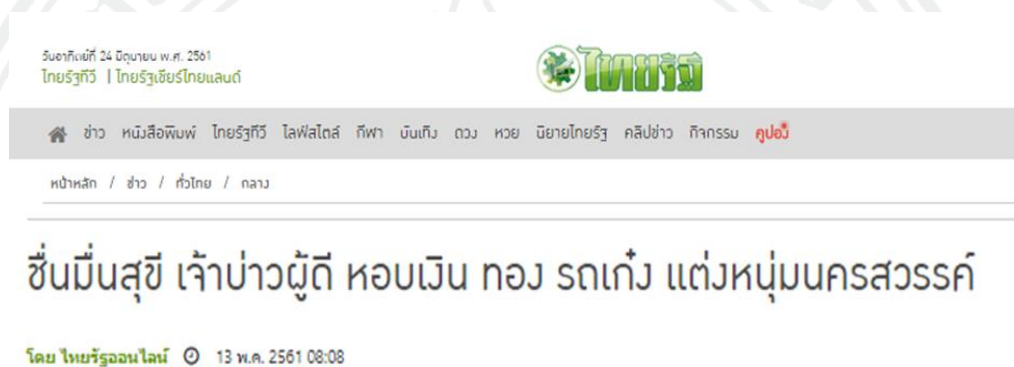


Figure 4.5 Delighted Happiness. A Groom from England Gave Money, Gold, and a Car to Marry a Nakhon Sawan Man

Source: Thairath Online, May 13, 2018.



Figure 4.6 Sensation! “A Handsome Woman” Had Ripened Love and Brought a Tray of Betels and Areca as a Betrothal to Ask for a Gride

Source: Daily News Online, July 2, 2017.



Figure 4.7 A Widowed Father Carried a Million to Marry a Younger Man, Revealing his Secret Love Since School Age

Source: Khao Sod Online, September 3, 2017.

In short, it can see that the media has a considerable effect on the general public and brings about changes in society and culture. In presenting any news, mass media must involve a specific social context and the reaction or feedback of members

of that society. Thus, mass media plays a role in driving any social phenomenon or constructing meanings of its conveyed message to let a society acknowledge, accept, or reject them.

## **4.2 Discourse Analysis of Same-Sex Marriage from the Presentation of Thai Mass Media News**

Michel Foucault defines discourse as a process of creating an identity and meaning of all things in society. It is a set of thoughts hidden with power and social ideology at a specific time. (Foucault, 1970). Besides, from the study of Attanan Tachopisalwong (2011), it further explains that from the analysis of social structure based on Norman Fairclough, mass media as one of the principals or major social institutions relates directly with discourse. Media discourse influences mobilization towards changes in society. On the other hand, it also emphasizes the existence of some characteristics of a society, i.e., values, beliefs, etc. (Fairclough, 1995). From the discourse analysis of same-sex marriage in the news presentation of Thai mass media, in combination with the study of discursive practice and socio-cultural practice, the findings are as follows:

### **4.2.1 The Analysis of Discursive Practice**

It is an analysis of discourse under some events of a communication situation to understand how discourses are presented and reflect the meaning of same-sex marriage. The investigation is conducted in two dimensions:

- 1) The aspect of “marriage.” The marital dimensions used for the analysis are sex, age, occupation, social status, and economic status.
- 2) The dimension of “relationship,” which is divided into the married couple, the married couple and families, and married couples and surrounding people in society, for analyzing both individuals and their social contexts.

#### **4.2.1.1 Marital Dimension**

##### **1) Sex**

In the study of the same-sex marriage presented through mass media in Thailand, both male-male and female-female marriage from Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, the findings are as illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Same-sex Marriage in Thailand Presented through Mass Media During 2013-2018

Same-sex Marriage	The Number of News Presented in Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Male-male	2	4	7	5	18	7	43
Female-female	-	3	4	7	8	14	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>79</b>

From Table 4.7, it can indicate that the number of news on same-sex marriage presented through mass media, namely Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, increased every year. Male-male marriage is found to be presented in the news more than female-female marriage. Besides, the content presented in the news displays the organization of the wedding ceremony and wedding pictures of the couple the most.

In constructing the meaning of “sexuality” related to same-sex marriage, it reflects changing wedding culture and custom of modern society by reducing the dominant discourse of society that focuses on binary opposition or cross-sex couples. Thus, it is a newly constructed meaning of a bride and groom in Thai culture. The concept of binary opposition, i.e., black vs. white, goodness vs. badness, or proper vs. improper, aims to create the orderly guidelines for a society to think by what the world is and to comply with social rules and regulations. However, the dominant discourse of marriage based on a heterosexual relationship or male-female relationship is diminished through the presentation of same-sex or homosexual marriage. On the other hand, the meaning of a bride and groom (a man and woman) in the past is also diluted.



Both who are women stated that ‘if the married couple does the right things, but not the liked one, they cannot live together. Love involves no gender. If we are happy in any place, we should be in that place. The most important thing is that “what we are” does not make others in trouble. (Khao Sod Online, November 28, 2017)



Figure 4.8 Sweet Purple Couples: A Kindergarten-Teacher Groom Married a Young Man from Nakhon Si Thammarat

Source: Thairath Online, May 18, 2013.

วันจันทร์ที่ 18 มิถุนายน พ.ศ. 2561  
ไทยรัฐทีวี | ไทยรัฐออนไลน์



ข่าว หนังสือพิมพ์ ไทยรัฐทีวี लाइฟสไตล์ กีฬา บันเทิง ดวง หอย นิยายไทยรัฐ คลิปข่าว กิจกรรม **คุณ**

หน้าหลัก / ไทย / ข่าวไทย / ภาคใต้

## สาวหล่อล่ำกับ แต่งสาวสวยทุ่งสง! คู่แรกของกระบี่ รู้จัก15 ปีตั้งแต่มัธยม

โดย ไทยรัฐออนไลน์ 11 มิ.ย. 2559 17:05

สาวหล่อชาว อ.ลำทับ กระบี่ แต่งกับสาวสวยทุ่งสง นครศรีฯ แห่งนี้มีมากเงิน 3 แสน ทอง 5 บาท จัดงานที่บ้านญาติ ฝ่ายเจ้าบ่าว แยกเหวร่วมยินดี หลังรู้จักกันนาน 15 ปี ตั้งแต่เรียนมัธยม บอกความรักเป็นสิ่งสวยงาม ไม่แบ่งแยกเพศ...

วันที่ 11 มิ.ย.59 ผู้สื่อข่าวรับแจ้งว่าได้มีพิธีแต่งงานระหว่างหญิงกับหญิงซึ่งไม่เคยมีมาก่อนใน จ.กระบี่ ที่ บ้านเลขที่ 647 ม.5 ต.ลำทับ อ.ลำทับ จ.กระบี่มีขบวนแห่ขันหมากจากบริเวณหน้าประตูที่ว่าการอำเภอลำทับ โดยมีเจ้าบ่าว ทราบชื่อคือนางสาวเพ็ญจวรรณ เพชรเรือนทอง อายุ 30 ปี พร้อมผู้ร่วมขบวนแห่ทั้งผู้ใหญ่ วิทยุชนชายหญิง รวมทั้งสาวประเภทสอง กำลังเดินร่าอย่างสนุกสนาน โดยเปิดเพลงแดนซ์ มาตลอดทาง มุ่งหน้าไปบ้านของเจ้าสาวซึ่งอยู่บริเวณข้างที่ว่าการอำเภอลำทับ

เมื่อไปถึงบ้านที่จัดงาน มีพิธีการต่างๆ ทำเหมือนพิธีแต่งงานปกติทั่วไป โดยสินสอดจากฝ่ายเจ้าบ่าว เป็นเงิน 3 แสน บาท ทองหนัก 5 บาท สร้างความฮือฮาแก่ชาวบ้านที่มาร่วมงาน โดยเฉพาะญาติฝ่ายเจ้าสาว ที่มีชื่อว่า นางสาวจินจิรา คุณเวช อายุ 28 ปี ซึ่งหน้าตาสะสวย บรรยากาศเป็นไปอย่างชื่นมื่นมีแขกเหรื่อที่ส่วนใหญ่เป็นญาติๆ ร่วมงาน ประมาณ 200 คน



ขณะที่นางสาวจินจิรา เจ้าสาว กล่าวว่า ความรักเป็นสิ่งที่สวยงามไม่มีการแบ่งแยกเพศ สาเหตุที่ตนเลือกที่จะคบเจ้าบ่าวคนนี้ และเลือกเป็นคู่ครองเพราะว่าเป็นคนดี คอยช่วยเหลือมาตลอด และเข้ากับครอบครัวได้ดี.

จากการสอบถามญาติฝ่ายเจ้าบ่าว ทราบว่าเจ้าบ่าวคือนางสาวเพ็ญจวรรณ ชื่อเล่นว่า น้อง เป็นชาวอำเภอลำทับ จ.กระบี่ ทำงานเป็นพนักงานบริษัทผลิตน้ำมันอุตสาหกรรมแห่งหนึ่งที่ จ.สมุทรสาคร ส่วนเจ้าสาว นางสาวจินจิรา ชื่อเล่น ว่าทราย เป็นชาวอำเภอทุ่งสง จ.นครศรีธรรมราช ทำงานเป็นผู้ช่วยแพทย์คลินิกเอกชนแห่งหนึ่งใน จ.สมุทรสาคร และมาจัดพิธีแต่งงานที่บ้านพี่สาวของเจ้าบ่าว โดยมีการเชิญแขกซึ่งส่วนใหญ่เป็นญาติๆ และเพื่อนสนิท มาร่วมงาน

นางสาวเพ็ญจวรรณ เจ้าบ่าว กล่าวว่า ตนรู้จักกับเจ้าสาวมานานกว่า 15 ปี แล้ว ตั้งแต่สมัยเรียนโรงเรียนมัธยม เจ้าสาวเป็นรุ่นน้อง รู้จักปลื้มตั้งแต่แรก เพราะเป็นคนน่ารัก ยิ้มหวาน ต่อมาก็ตามจับก่อนไปทำงานที่ จ.สมุทรสาคร และได้คบกันจริงจึงมาได้ 5 ปี ก่อนตกลงปลงใจจัดพิธีแต่งงาน

"เราไม่รู้ว่าวันข้างหน้าจะเกิดอะไรขึ้น แต่พวกเราจะทำวันนี้ให้ดีที่สุดอยู่ด้วยกันด้วยความเข้าใจ" เจ้าบ่าว กล่าวอย่างมั่นใจ

Figure 4.9 A Handsome Woman of Lamtub Married a Beautiful Woman from Thung Song. The First Couple of Krabi After Having Known Each Other for 15 Years Since Secondary School

Source: Thairath Online, June 11, 2016.

In short, the news presentation on same-sex marriage is found to be increasing every year. The news content focuses on the appreciation of homosexual relationships. It also gives a new definition for a bride and a groom, which is power relations between sex, to generalize same-sex marriage as a part of the marriage custom. In other words, a bride and a groom are not necessary to be male and female in the present era. Such construction of meanings is conducted through linguistic use in its news presentation.

## 2) Age

It is found that the age of same-sex married couples falls within a range of “working ages” from the legal age to the middle-age (adults). According to the age structure of Mahidol university, children age is between 0-14, working-age 15-59, and the elderly over 60 years old. Therefore, the researcher uses the said range of ages to analyze the age of same-sex married couples presented by online news of mass media, namely Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Range of Ages of Same-sex Married Couples Presented in Online News During 2013-2018

Same-sex Marriage	Range of Ages of Same-sex Married Couples Presented in Online News in Thailand		
	Thairath Online	Daily News Online	Khao Sod Online
Male-male marriage			
- Working age	44	12	12
(15-59 years old) – The elderly	2		
(over 60 years old)			
Female-female marriage			
- Working age (15-59 years old)	32	12	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>

From Table 4.8, it is found that the age of same-sex married couples presented in online news is at the working age, or 15-59 years old, the most. It is because when a person reaches the legal age, he or she can think and decide by himself or herself. People at working age can rely on themselves and can do things or social activities without violating laws or legal systems.

Furthermore, it is found that mass media also constructs the new meaning of marriage in Thai society. Typically, the dominant discourse of Thai society related to the age of a bride and groom focuses on patriarchy. A man or a groom is believed to be older than a woman or a bride since men are designated to be a chief of a family, responsible for all family activities towards growth and security in all domains: spouse, children, relatives, and the family's economics, etc. Therefore, age is one of the significant criteria in judging if a marriage is proper or not. Once a woman is older than a man, the question of appropriateness will be raised upon the marriage. Thus, the meaning of age, related to marriage, has been constructed since the old days.

Both families do not obstruct or object their wedding. We all support them because love concerns no sexual division. Society starts to accept a male-male relationship. No matter what we are, we are all equal. (Thairath Online, July 2, 2017)

To make decisions on this marriage, we never think that it will be norms for other couples. However, we decided for our happiness and for making our parents feel relieved. Love is always beautiful no matter under what form it is. I believe that once in our life, everybody wants to marry and have a family; though, the couple is male-male or female-female. (Thairath Online, March 1, 2015)

In conclusion, due to social changes nowadays, a dividing line for determining the proper age for men and women in marriage is gradually disappearing. Instead, a new definition of meaning is constructed in society, namely "marriage without gender and age concern." Therefore, married couples may not be only male-female, but can be of any kind: all sexes, genders, ranges of ages, etc. This

new concept of marriage has expanded the perception of the meaning of marriage to cover all genders and ages more broadly and is also stepping across a dividing line of sexual relations.

### 3) Occupation

In presenting news on the same-sex wedding of mass media, married couples' occupations are often reiterated. From the analysis, there are a variety of professions, reported in the news, both necessary occupations for one's earn of living and occupations as a public figure of society. Besides news content on the wedding ceremony, occupations of a bride and a groom are always included in the news report. Seemingly, the reason the news gives detailed information about their professions is to reflect that people of diverse sexual orientation have an acceptable occupation or duties in society. Still, the acceptance of same-sex married occupations is based on an individual's values; therefore, it is incomparable with the approval of a society on the wedding custom. Society, in general, still pays more attention to a traditional social practice that has been inherited for a long time. Namely, the activities of same-sex marriage are yet explained and perceived by a set of thought that values the marital relationship between a man and a woman.

Since it is not a male-female love, but male-male, there have been criticisms widely, especially among police friends. (Thairath Online, May 5, 2017)





Figure 4.10 An Investigation was Conducted to see if Pol. L/C Married a Businessman who Violated Police Ethics and Rules

Source: Daily News Online, July 5, 2017.

It can say that the concept of same-sex marriage is not truly accepted widely in society. Thus, mass media tries to insert information about the occupations of same-sex married couples in the news content to reflect another set of thoughts to society. It seeks to claim that since society values honest work and duties, it should adjust its perspective to value other dimensions being formed in modern times. Those dimensions do not violate either social or legal regulations, i.e., the arrangement of same-sex marriage, etc.

Moreover, according to a paradigm of Thai society, definite roles or men and women related to duties and responsibilities, including professional work, have been assigned. In each society and culture, sexual relations have been

created with work division suitable for sexual identity. Society determines which sex should be occupied in which area and which sex should do what kind of activities in society. Men are prescribed to be responsible for all activities outside the house, while women are defined to have their sphere within the house. Therefore, for the issue of same-sex marriage, mass media tries to present the news equipped with a set of ideas emphasizing the fluidity of sexuality and the sexual roles in the public and private sphere.” The intention is to let the audience scrutinize that any movement of sexual relations may affect the work division line. Thus, the work division line might not be a significant component in mobilizing interactions of other parts of society. Besides, the roles and responsibilities of diverse-sexuality people, both as individuals and as social members, can always be adjusted in the present society.

#### 4) Social Status

The differences in social status and classes in society lead to a question of equal rights of various conditions. Based on the dominant ideas of a society, the concept of social status between men and women is sexual relations by nature and social relations of having a defined group of people dominate or influence other people’s ideas. Specifically, it is the power of manipulating ideas and regulating other people’s behaviors. In terms of sexual relations in Thai society, it is found in this study that mass media has presented the news about same-sex relationships continuously through its online channel, especially the issue about the arrangement of the wedding ceremony of same-sex couples. Such a presentation seemingly goes against traditional culture or the dominant discourse of Thai society in maintaining male-female marriage traditions. Mass media presents the movement of sexual relations that happen truly in Thai society. On the other hand, the sexual repression in the Patriarchal society has also been continued without ceasing. In parallel, there has been an endeavor of forming a group of sexual diversity continuously in several dimensions as well due to flowing cultural influences and changing phenomena in social contexts via the integration of traditional values, cultural modification, and cultural diversity of each society.

A reporter was informed by people in Tambon Nai Muang, Amphoe Muang, Kamphang Phet Province, that there was a ceremony of male-male marriage at

a house located at 13-15 Tambon Nai Muang. The wedding ceremony was very sensational for people who knew this news. After visiting the place, the reporter found that there was a same-sex marriage ceremony as informed. Everything in the ceremony was arranged in a traditional Thai way. (Daily News Online, January 25, 2016)



Figure 4.11 Male-male Couples Joined in the PDRC's Demonstration. Ways for Finding True Love were Recommended

Source: Daily News Online, May 12, 2017.

From the above news, it can explain that mass media is an essential social institution playing leading roles in valuing the free expression of same-sex relationships and sexual liberty positively. The news also includes a positive attitude towards same-sex marriage through the interviews with the married couple, their families, relatives, and other people. The report also portrays factors and elements of same-sex marriage that lead to enduring love relationships like those of male-female couples, who can declare their love to the public with proper wedding ceremony arrangements in compliance with Thai traditional culture. From such a presentation, it is seemingly an announcement to the people of their relationship based on an ideal marriage life of the middle-class in the period of liberal structuralism. Such a statement of same-sex couples is for negotiating and constructing meanings for themselves in a society so that they can have a standing place for themselves and their marriage life under social and cultural contexts and in their daily life.

In summary, the structure of male-female relationships under the concept of dividing men and women as a binary opposition has been reconstructed with new forms of sexual relationships happening in society. The reconstruction is conducted through the creation of mass media's discourses on same-sex relationships under specific socio-cultural contexts and through the installation of a new set of ideas that do not adhere to sexual relations based on the former or old discourses.

#### 5) Economic Status

Marriage is society's value. It is the sealing of ownership or possession of correct sexual relations that complies with a stipulated tradition of a culture. The assigned roles of each person in society are unequal, as well as an individual's right to property ownership. Like many other inequalities in society, same-sex marriage also occurs under the disparity of various systems in society. Therefore, groups of homosexuality have tried to negotiate for a legitimacy of sexual equality and an ordinary marriage life. Besides, they have negotiated with the repression power in the systems of society. However, since their social capital in creating their identity and safe spaces in society is not so high, they have to concern about all factors that can make society accept them and do everything they can in all cases. For example, they have to create an identity of someone with good work, to accelerate themselves towards higher economic capital, etc., to avoid causing trouble to themselves, spouse, and family, etc.



🏠 ข่าวเดลินิวส์    🏢 สถานีเดลินิวส์    📄 บทความ    💰 หางาน สร้างเงิน

หน้าแรก / ข่าวเดลินิวส์ / ข่าวทั่วไป

## ฮือฮา! วิวาร์"ขายรักขาย" พ่อแม่สู้ขอตามประเพณี

ชาวบ้านตะพานหิน ฮือฮา ขายรักขายจัดงานวิวาร์ ญาติ 2 ฝ่ายร่วมยินดี หนุ่มนาข้าวพบรักสาวนักร้อง เผยประทับใจเสียงเพลง ถูกชะตาจึงบอกพ่อแม่สู้ขอ พร้อมร่วมชีวิต สร้างฐานะช่วยกัน

อาทิตย์ที่ 3 มกราคม 2559 เวลา 05.09 น.

เมื่อวันที่ 3 ม.ค.59 ผู้สื่อข่าวรายงานว่า ที่บ้านเลขที่ 122/2 หมู่ที่ 4 ต.จั่วราย อ.ตะพานหิน จ.พิจิตร ได้มีการจัดพิธีมงคลสมรสคู่รักหนุ่มเทศขึ้น สร้างความฮือฮาให้แก่ชาวบ้านที่ทราบข่าวเป็นอย่างมาก จึงเดินทางไปตรวจสอบ พบแขกเหรื่อซึ่งเป็นญาติทั้งสองฝ่าย รวมถึงเพื่อนในกลุ่มขายรักขายมาร่วมงานจำนวนมาก กำลังผูกข้อมือขอมืออวยพรให้กับ นายสมภพ พุ่มเผย อายุ 36 ปี เจ้าบ่าว ซึ่งมีอาชีพทำการเกษตร กับนายแสงแข เปี่ยมศิลป์หรือ เดียร์ อายุ 31 ปี เจ้าสาว อาชีพนักร้องร้านอาหารแห่งหนึ่ง โดยพิธีจัดขึ้นแบบเรียบง่ายตามแบบประเพณี

นายสมภพ เจ้าบ่าว เปิดเผยว่า ก่อนที่จะมาพบรักกับ "เดียร์" ได้ไปทานอาหารที่ร้านอาหารแห่งหนึ่ง ได้ยินเสียงเพลงที่เค้าร้องรู้สึกชื่นชอบในน้ำเสียง เมื่อได้รู้จักพูดคุยก็ยิ่งถูกชะตาจึงได้คบหาดูใจกันมาหลายเดือน ก่อนจะตัดสินใจบอกพ่อแม่ไปสู้ขอตามประเพณี ถึงแม้ว่า เจ้าสาวจะเป็นชาย ตนเองก็รัก สำหรับสินสอดทองหมั้นของคนทั้งสองที่มาร่วมกันเป็นสร้อยคอทองคำหนัก4บาท เงิน 40,000บาท เราตั้งใจแน่วแน่ว่าจะดูแลกัน ตั้งใจช่วยกันสร้างฐานะของครอบครัว โดยจะให้เดียร์เลิกร้องเพลงแล้วมาทำหน้าที่แม่บ้าน ส่วนตนเองจะทำนาหาเลี้ยงต่อไป

ส่วนนายแสงแข หรือ เดียร์ เจ้าสาว กล่าวว่า ได้คบหากันอย่างเปิดเผยในแบบคู่รักกันมาเป็นเวลา 5-6เดือน ก็ดูว่าจะสามารถอยู่ร่วมกันได้หรือไม่ ในที่สุดก็ตัดสินใจจะแต่งงานกัน ซึ่งผู้ใหญ่ของเราทั้งสองฝ่าย ไม่รังเกียจ โดยฝ่ายชายให้พ่อแม่มาสูขอ จากนั้นก็จะดูแลกันตลอดไป โดยในวันงานแต่งงานวันนี้ เป็นการเริ่มต้นปีใหม่ ญาติผู้ใหญ่ของเราทั้งสองได้เดินทางมาร่วมงานด้วย มีญาติที่เดินทางมาจากหลายพื้นที่มาร่วมแสดงความยินดี สำหรับช่วงเย็นวันนี้ก็จะมีการเลี้ยงฉลองมงคลสมรสด้วย..

Figure 4.12 A Sensational MLM Wedding. Parents Proceeded the Rituals by Old Tradition

Source: Daily News Online, January 3, 2016.

From the content of news, marriage is not related to the creation of love and family only, but also the transfer of production factors in several dimensions, i.e., people (a bride and groom), property (dowry), labor (married couples/ relatives), etc. Therefore, marriage is comparable to human economic trading. Likewise, women who become a bride are monetized or estimated, and so are men as a groom. They are evaluated by their predisposed or attached qualifications,



i.e., appearance, working position, family background, etc. For a man, the estimation is done by a bride's family to evaluate if he deserves to possess and take care of their daughter as a soulmate. Thus, it is an effort to create power righteously in distributing income, property, and ownership as per existing norms in society.

Moreover, a marriage proposal is an important part that leads to the negotiation of the dowry between two families. It is an inherited good custom to ask for the dowry as compensation for a bride's family in bringing up their daughter until she grows up. Accordingly, a woman is like a negotiated product in social activities as well. Furthermore, the meaning of marriage includes the settlement of a new family and the aftermath of bringing coming children up in the future.

Similarly, for same-sex people who decide to marry, they have to pass through the negotiation process in all forms of activities valued and determined by society like those cross-sex couples so that other people will not perceive their acts as different from absolute values of society. It means same-sex couples create righteousness and equality in society for themselves. At present, the economic dependence in marriage life through the connection of financial capital to increase a family's social and economic security has a less proportion than in the past. Nowadays, more people move to the labor market and become more economically self-reliant. It focuses on economic individualism. Correspondingly, such concept accords with the marriage lifestyle of same-sex couples. Due to their attitude molded by sexuality factors, same-sex couples desire to live independently without having children as a burden nor a part of the financial cost in the future. Therefore, economic capital is no longer a significant part of connecting relations among family members like the old tradition. On the other hand, same-sex marriage leads the couple to negotiate with social content periodically in terms of culture, ways of life, or even family economic systems.

Another notion found in the structure of the sexual relationship is that homosexuals do not perceive economic factors as the central core of marriage life. However, for them, financial capital conveys the meanings related to rituals or traditions. Dowry is treated as a tool in creating an image for a bride and groom, which requires certain types of customs. Dowry then is only a symbol involved in the wedding ceremony since such economic capital is not defined to be used in creating a

tie in a family, namely a family of a father, mother, and a child, as appearing in the dominant discourse of society.

#### 4.2.1.2 Relational Dimension

##### 1) Married Couple

Regarding a sexual relationship, it has moved from a male-female relationship and marriage for creating a tie in a family to same-sex marriage aimed towards an individualistic marriage life. It is the co-living of two people who have the same or corresponding purpose and lifestyle. Marriage is not aimed towards the creation of family relations systems accordingly.

Before deciding to marry my bride publicly, I'm impressed with her. She always takes good care of me. Despite our same-sex, we have no problems to live together as a married couple. Who wants to criticize us, it's fine. Other people are outsiders. The most important thing is ourselves. (Thairath Online, January 18, 2016)

It can say that for the relationship of same-sex married couples, it is not coincident but must be established. Especially in Thai society, there is no definition of same-sex marriage as it does not go along with accumulated and inherited values and social norms of society. On the contrary, it requires negotiation on their sexuality, including their same-sex marriage. The construction of meanings towards acceptance and righteousness in having a married life together from individual to societal level is thus necessary.

I clicked with her and started to see her. It's better to see a woman than a man as she takes better care than a man. Finally, I decided to marry her as a part of our life. (Khao Sod Online, November 8, 2017)

Nevertheless, Thai society contains only the definition of married couple relationship between a man and woman, especially in the sense of love between the two, according to the prototype of proper sexual relationship. It can be traced to the central discourse appearing in Thai literature, i.e., Samuttrakot Kamchan,

Anirut Kamchan, or a Thai play, i.e., Oonnarut, etc. since the Ayutthaya period. According to the Royal Institute Dictionary The Royal Institute of Thailand (2013), the word “Oom Som” (to carry someone to have sexual relations with someone) or “Thep Oom Som” (An angel takes someone to have sexual relations with someone). In Thai literature, such words mean an angel brings a hero to have sexual relations with a heroine as he thinks that both of them are compatible. Thus, they are often used as an analogy to mention a proper couple of a husband and wife. Therefore, they are words related to love and relationship based on a proper sexual relationship.

Since sexual relationship established in Thai society is based on male-female relationship moves to a new paradigm of sexual diversity, or from heterosexuality to homosexuality relationship, same-sex relationship is thus perceived as deviance and guilt. For instance, gays or lesbians might feel guilty as they do not comply with social norms about a sexual relationship. Therefore, they are afraid to express their love publicly. Accordingly, amidst the trend of alternative sexual relationships, the resistance against social structural power towards freedom of sexual relations is thus expressed through various forms of social activities. To arrange a same-sex wedding ceremony can be considered as one of them, which challenges the traditional heterosexuality relationship.

In short, same-sex relationship in Thai society gives importance and signification to the establishment of a marriage life through the manifest wedding ceremony and the announcement to the public about their marriage. Thus, the meaning or implication of marriage at the individual level as a settlement towards the creation of a future family is not highly valued. It is no longer the main factor in weddings nowadays. Instead, more emphasis is placed on social system relationships and social institutions.

## 2) Married Couple and Families

Lewis Henry Morgan, an American scientist, researched on human society in the Primeval Age. He states that marrying between families or lineages, which are not the same relatives, brings about the creation of more vigorous human species both physically and psychologically. When two families stepped to be one same lineage, their skulls and brains then were expanded and enlarged, depending on their physical fitness. The constructed lineage was thus originated and dominated

less developed lineages, but on the other hand, stimulated those behind families to move forward by following the more developed ones.

From the above reasons, family systems unquestionably were formed since ancient times, and the couple relationship required the connection of two parties' families before marriage was initiated based on the prototype of the sexual relationship. Thus, although the definition of same-sex marriage does not appear to be connected with family system relationships concretely, the movement of family relationships is still a significant component in a same-sex marriage that is placed as the priority.

Their love was ripened, so they decided to marry as a husband and wife. Chonnathee, the groom, stated that their parents were contented with their wedding. He also promised to love his wife all through his life. (Thairath Online, September 7, 2015)

From the above content, “a family” of same-sex couples cover the meaning of “a family.” Besides, it includes the meaning of “a primary social institution that influences both cognition and mind of the homosexual groups through the acceptance of their love and marriage.

We decided to marry, so we both consulted with our parents that we wanted to arrange a wedding traditionally. We just want to build up ourselves like cross-sex married couples. Our families agreed. They understand and are delighted with our love. Thus, we can have our wedding organized today. (Khao Sod Online, March 11, 2018)

Thus, it shows that the concept of marriage has changed by the social condition. However, since the dominant discourse of Thai society reflects the image of male-female marriage, the word, “a bride” and “a groom” is still perceived in a restricted picture. “A bride” is limited to only “a woman,” while “a groom” to “a man” in a wedding ceremony. There has not been a clear answer to the question if such terminology based on the dominant discourse of Thai society will be modified

by the flow of changes in a sexual relationship and gender diversity in the modern world or not. Will the sexes of the married couples still be determined as specified in the traditional discourse? Will a groom necessarily be a man or a bride, a woman? Hence, the questions or doubts on a social paradigm that constructs the meaning of males and females and the ability in challenging and negotiating sexual identity of people of diverse sexual orientations have not been raised so much in Thai society.

We held this wedding ceremony because we want to bring good fortune to both of us. It has been the tradition since our childhood. The younger have to pay respect to the older. Both of our families understand well and allow us to arrange a wedding ceremony. (Daily News Online, December 18, 2016)

Thus, it is noted that before organizing a marriage ceremony, it must be approved and consented by families of both sides. Therefore, same-sex marriage is not held only to let married couples accept the identity of each other at the individual level. Still, it is expected to yield affirmative acceptance and attitude of their families, which is the main factor for the establishment of their marriage life. Accordingly, regarding the relationship between married couples and families, it illustrates the negotiated meaning of same-sex marriage from the traditional male-female marriage, the dominant discourse of the society, through the acceptance and consent of same-sex couples' families. It thus portrays the power of the social institution, namely a family, that is the closest social unit of same-sex couples, to create a sense of freedom and gratify individuals' needs.

### 3) Married Couples and Surrounding People in Society

Due to changes in economics, the fusion of culture and society in each area has been increased to give more extensive space for the expression of ideas and gender diversity. The genders have not been limited to only "men" and "women," but with more diverse sexual orientations, including same-sex marriage. Correspondingly, new marriage relationships have been introduced in society. Notably, the relationship between people, no matter which sex or age, and between people and society inevitably interact with one another in people's ways of living.



Exchange of thought, attitude, perception, or a cultural and racial adoption of each society have continually occurred for a long time up to present.

Consequently, every human activity is connected to every part of society with reciprocal interaction. All parts of society do involve not only individuals or families but also other social surroundings. Therefore, in holding a traditional marriage ceremony, besides a bride, groom, and their families, all people surrounding them also participate in the wedding activity. The participation starts from an expression of opinions, assistance in organizing the wedding ceremony, and other types of support.

Mr. Ittiphon gave wishes to the bride and groom. He talked humorously, ‘I used to be the chairperson for many weddings, but I never lack my confidence like this. Thus, I have to invite the Deputy Mayor and City Council member to be on stage with me. The marriage of both is bravery, brave to identify themselves in front of the public. It is what should be raised as an exemplar. At first, I thought that who wears a male dress is a groom, and a female dress is a bride. It turned out that both are dressed in the same way, so I have to ask the Deputy Mayor to know who is a bride or a groom. (Khao Sod Online, August 3, 2014)

The above statements indicate that same-sex married couples often feel isolated to reveal their identity to society via their wedding ceremony, which might be perceived as violating social norms. However, the society does not observe and raise questions on their wedding ritual itself, but on their sexual relationship, or same-sex relationship, of married couples, which do not comply with normative social convention.

Miss Yurada said, ‘I don’t care about surrounding people, but I care about my family or those who love me more than others. I’m lucky to be born in a good family. My family also accepts my lover, and thus today we have parents and relatives of both families witness our love with utmost happiness. (Thairath Online, February 25, 2018)

Furthermore, each society perceives the roles of same-sex married couples differently, including other factors, i.e., families, relatives, friends, social institutions, etc., that enable them to have more public space to stand in the reality world. Accordingly, the power that same-sex married couples can create to have rights and voice in society via their traditional marriage ceremony depends on these surrounding factors as well.

Still, although society and mass media open more space for same-sex married couples, the provided space is for only some roles related to culture and customs of society, such as “the arrangement of a wedding ceremony.” The word “same-sex” reflects dynamism of culture caused by social trends, but on the other hand, it determines the same-sex married couples to be able to do social activities only partially. Same-sex married couples are thus determined to do things up to the level society perceives as appropriate with some acceptable consequences, either what will happen in the reality world or in the media. Therefore, wedding rituals are used to buoy up the power of same-sex married couples to negotiate with the dominant discourse of male-female sexual relationship. It also reflects the social practice by constructing the righteous power of same-sex married couples over other people. However, it also involves the use of different power of same-sex married couples in relations to their sexuality, both the creation of power for themselves and for power struggling against the marriage norms determined for cross-sex married couples only.

### **4.3 Analysis of Socio-Cultural Practice**

It is an analysis of discourse in the social and cultural situation involving communication as a part. Besides, such a relationship must have reciprocal effects. The analysis is aimed to study which socio-cultural practice affects the discourse of same-sex marriage in Thai society in the following dimensions:

- 1) At the societal level: The changes of meanings of same-sex marriage discourses presented in Thai mass media. The following issues are analyzed at this level:

- (1) Communication via social media: the extension of discourse space on same-sex marriage

(2) Public figures and same-sex marriage.

2) At the institutional level: The changes of meanings of the discourses on same-sex marriage presented in Thai mass media. It is found that the news on same-sex marriage presented in Thai mass media has social institutions involve and determine concerning discourses eminently. The involved social institutions are:

- (1) Law/Legal
- (2) Mass Media
- (3) Family
- (4) Religion
- (5) Medicine

#### **4.3.1 At the Societal Level: The Changes of Meanings of the Discourses on Same-Sex Marriage Presented in Thai Mass Media**

Communication Via Social Media: The Extension of Discourse Space on Same-sex Marriage

Today is the period of the borderless world caused by the advancement of communication technologies that connect people around the world to be united as a network system or in the form of “the Global Village.” Nevertheless, from communication theorists like Marshall McLuhan, the network of communication technology systems has been developed rapidly and enables the phenomena or happening at a corner of the world to be communicated or transmitted to the other corners of the world simultaneously. This phenomenon can be compared with what happens in a small village.

From McLuhan’s proposition, it can be summarized that the growth of communication technology at present can reduce the time and space constraints of human interactions. Therefore, the connection and growth of communication in the internet system nowadays has been developed very rapidly and affected ways of living of people of all classes in society so much that it becomes a phenomenon of what is called “social network.” Communication in the digital era, social network, or so-called “social media” is a phenomenon that occurs from the application of the internet that can connect communication between a sender and a receiver widely to exchange and share a variety of information.

On the other hand, it can also provide or create patterns of relationship and a communication channel for people with the same sexual orientation. It is another space for same-sex people to interact through various forms via the mechanism of revealing one's identity, thought, and opinions in the direction against social currents. It can also give them the power to select people with whom they can interact. Social media then is the space in which meanings can be produced and constructed by specific groups, including people of diverse sexual orientations or same-sex groups. The meanings of same-sex love have been constructed through social media until same-sex marriage has been increasingly witnessed in society. Therefore, to establish the relationship for any sexual group, i.e., same-sex, the use of social media for communication may lead to further development of the desirable relationship.

Mr.Sitthipong is Bangkokian, doing personal business in selling auto parts. He knows Mr. Piyanat on social media. Both of them have contacted each other via chat line for about 7-8 months until they were impressed with each other's mettle. (Daily News Online, January 8, 2015)

Mr. Phanu Naknuan or Nueng, an employee of a private company, aged 24 years old from Udonthani, revealed his story to Daily News Online that he kneeled to beg Mr. Nanthaporn Chooket or Tom, aged, 43 years old, to marry. Tom is the owner of a wedding shop in Chumphon. Both of them married several months ago after seeing each other for four years from the first contact on Facebook. (Daily News Online, July 20, 2017)

A 53-year-old man from Germany carried the dowry for almost 1 million baht to marry a man of Chanthaburi after seeing each other online for more than three years. (Thairath Online, February 13, 2014)

I met my bride the first time on Social Program B-Talk before we dated and were impressed with each other. (Thairath Online, February 17, 2018)

The groom asked me my Facebook, and we then talk to each other since then. (Thairath Online, July 2, 2017)

The bride revealed that he knew Sitthipong, doing personal business, on social media. (Thairath Online, January 8, 2015)

Since same-sex marriage is the disadvantageous discourse of society, to choose a same-sex life-partner is often done through the use of social space, especially in social media. It is a diversion from conflicts against social norms to another detour by which they can build their limited alternatives for themselves in selecting a mate and can negotiate on social norms through another alternative channel.

Moreover, the dominant discourse of marriage is under the power of representative sexual relationship focusing on binary opposition or cross-sex relationship. Therefore, same-sex marriage as subjacent discourse has to move to seize some public space to gain social acceptance and positive opinion and attitude in society. In other words, male-female marriage has space for creating the relationship both in the real and online world. In the online world, there is a free communicative way for same-sex groups to reveal their identity in searching for their mates or marriage partners through social media. The reason is their difficulty in communicating and express love among same-sex groups in the real world where society has not fully stamped to accept sexual relationships beyond traditional social values and norms on a male-female relationship.

As a consequence, online media seemingly is a channel that allows an opportunity for them to establish their same-sex relationship. The changed paradigm on marriage is not only an opportunity to create a different culture, but it also expands perspectives on social structure related to sexuality, which is dynamic due to changes in social conditions, especially under communication in the digital era. Digital communication thus plays a part in enlarging people's thought and creating new meanings of marriage that is unnecessarily the sexual relationship determined by society as proper.

#### Public Figures and Same-Sex Marriage

Each culture perceives the roles of men and women differently as appearing in Thai mottos, including simile and metaphor. For instance, in a patriarchal society, the metaphor "men are forelegs of an elephant" illustrates men as leaders while women are compared as hind legs or followers. Besides, at present alternative genders play more roles in society. Notably, there are other factors, i.e., the government, mass media, an individual's social position, etc., influencing the creation of more public



space for same-sex people to stand in the real world than in the past. Thus, the power of same-sex lovers towards gaining rights and voice in society is based on such factors. Still, some same-sex groups, such as public figures or stars, are set up to be a change leader in some contexts.



Figure 4.13 Mo-Amena Revealed After-Marriage Life. They were Happy Despite Some Quarrels

Source: Daily News Online, January 5, 2018.

หน้าแรก / ข่าวเดลินิวส์ / กีฬา

## ฮือฮา"สุจิตรา"เตรียมวิวาห์แฟนสาว

แฟนคลับ ฮือฮาทั้งบาง หลังสาวหล่อมาดเท่ "ตา" สุจิตรา เอกมงคลไพศาล อดีตนักแบดมินตันสาวทีมชาติไทย มือ 5 ของโลก วางแพลนลั่นระฆังวิวาห์แบบหญิงรักหญิงกับ "น้องชมพู" แฟนสาววัย 28 ปี ที่คบหาดูใจกันมา 3 ปีแล้ว

จันทร์ที่ 11 กันยายน 2560 เวลา 17.36 น.

เป็นข่าวฮือฮาบนโลกโซเชียล เมื่อ "น้องตา" สุจิตรา เอกมงคลไพศาล อดีตนักแบดมินตันหญิงทีมชาติไทย และมีวอจอันดับ 5 ของโลก วัย 40 ปี ซึ่งปัจจุบันผันบทบาทเป็นพิธีกรบรรยายกีฬารายการสำคัญ ทางจอทีวี โดยมีงานประจำที่ช่องพีพีทีวี เอชดี 36 วางแผนแต่งงานแบบหญิงรักหญิง ซึ่งสาวหล่อนี้คบหาดูใจกับ "น้องชมพู" วิศวกรเคมี ที่พรดาเปรมธรรนหวานใจวัย 28 ปี มาได้กว่า 3 ปีแล้ว

"ส่วนตัวมองแล้วตามองว่าคนที่มีความรักคงต้องอยากเข้าสู่พิธีวิวาห์กันทุกคน โดยไม่แบ่งว่าเป็นเพศไหนเพราะความรักเป็นสิ่งที่สวยงามสำหรับทุกคนนั่นเอง" สาวหล่อ ย้ำ

เครดิตภาพ : บ้านน้ำแม่ค้อพระยอง



Figure 4.14 Sensation! “Sujitra” Prepares to Marry Her Girlfriend

Source: Daily News Online, September 11, 2017.

# ข่าวสด



Figure 4.15 Acting the Bride, Bell-Nantita, Showed Her Pre-Wedding Celebration Photos with her Female Boyfriend. So Sweet!

Source: Khao Sod Online, May 12, 2018.





Figure 4.16 The First Couple! A Pre-Wedding Photo of “Jay Mam.” A Female Homosexual Wedding was Prepared. A Sensational Rumor on the First Legalized Marriage Registration in Thailand

Source: Thairath Online, June 9, 2015.

However, for other details, i.e., where will a wedding ceremony be held? What are the details of their wedding? Who are their guests? Are still in secret. Nevertheless, it is believed that once they are revealed, it must be sensational news without a doubt.

Thus, public figures or stars can present the roles of same-sex couples through their marriage ceremony arrangement by creating space for homosexuals in the marriage institution. At present, they play the role of a fighter in the form of idea struggle and a call for sexual equality. Such expressed positions can be reflected either intentionally or unintentionally. Typically, the presentation of mass media on the ways of public figures' living is paid great attention. Besides, mass media is also a communication channel for reporting what is going on in society and reflecting perspectives of public figures or stars who represent the homosexuals. Public figures or stars are thus like opinion leaders who open public space for same-sex groups and influence social phenomena by transcending social constraints. Mass media is also compared as guidance projecting the image of the negotiation power of same-sex representatives in society. It strives to illustrate the value of love without sexual concern via wedding tradition and ceremonies rather than the masculinity or femininity.

Nevertheless, the negotiation paradigm through the representation of same-sex couples leads to social actions for opening space for homosexual public figures or stars to reflect changes in values and culture in reality and on media. It also illustrates the social practices of constructing righteousness to negotiate the power of homosexuals with people and society.

It also involves the different exercises of power of the homosexuals. For example, the homosexuals who are ordinary people can exercise power to negotiate their sexuality in one way, while public figures or celebrities can use power in another way. Nevertheless, the occurring social practices can be the creation of power for their contradictory identity and for struggling against the dominant power of society. The struggle is caused by the dominant meaning constructed by society, which rejects the roles of homosexuals in creating or determining sexual relationships and other related things that can occur in society as a whole.



From the phenomenon of negotiating sexuality power of the homosexuals in the real world and their struggle appearing in the world of media, it reflects that mass media can also have power in creating social behaviors and culture. Therefore, mass media is like another kind of innovation that provides information, including creating values and guiding ideas for people in society simultaneously.

#### **4.3.2 At the Institutional Level: Changes of Meanings on Same-Sex Marriage Discourse Presented in Thai Mass Media**

Society is surrounded by many institutions playing a role in determining the moving direction of people's ways of life, including human sexual relationships. Besides, the social structure in capitalist economic systems also determines human sexual relations, especially cross-sex relations aimed to produce human labor into the production system. Such labor and human sexual relations are connectors to economic capital fed further into capitalism. Accordingly, there are not merely human relationships, but behind those relationships, social institutions play a role in manipulating all involved. Economic institutions, mainly the capitalist economic system, play a part in determining the direction of marriage life in a sexual relationship. Economic institutions are also linked to the operations of other institutions in society to establish guidelines for male-female couples. Whenever human marriage goes by the structure determined by the society, it will cause no problems on social systems. When human marriage patterns are changed into other forms, i.e., male-male or female-female marriage, the mode of production of human beings enters capitalism, which involves power relations and exercise of power. Same-sex groups thus try to fight and negotiate with the power of social institutions to find ways for creating righteousness for same-sex married couples. The other social institutions are:

##### **1) Legal Institution**

One of the social institutions that determine and construct the meanings of same-sex marriage in Thai society is legal institutions. Human beings are not connected through sexual relations, but social institutions, especially legal institutions, play a role in regulating and directing a marriage life towards the production of future families. Even for male-female marriage that complies with social norms, laws are

issued to regulate the marriage, starting from marriage registration, which is a stamp of marriage life and declares the ownership of a married couple's life. State or government officers are responsible for registering a legalized marriage. They are like a witness of the married couple's love that wants to be revealed to the public. Thus, the matter of marriage registration is no longer an issue at the individual level.

Notably, the tie of human relationships, especially male-female, has been changed by time. Due to the flow of sexuality, new definitions of a sexual relationship have been constructed diversely, and male-male and female-female sexual relationships have been proved to exist in the real world. However, for homosexuals, to tie their relationship and make society acknowledge it is not easy. Several questions towards value, tradition, culture, or social norms regulating sexual relationships in society cause the conduct of same-sex marriage life is limited. To what level or to what extent same-sex relationships are limited depends on whether same-sex couples can negotiate on the roles and regulation of value, tradition, culture, and social norms placed on them to that level. Accordingly, there has been an effort of several groups in society urging for the mobilization of human rights and sexual equality, especially same-sex marriage in Thai society.

Laws related to same-sex marriage are the laws that LGBT groups around the world give high importance since they mean the acceptance of the LGBT people's equality rights as real men and women. In other words, they are certified and legalized. Therefore, LGBT groups all through the world try to drive their country to issue same-sex marriage laws. (Daily News Online, November 15, 2018)

Spouse Registration Laws justify their rationale, "at present, people having sex or gender identity different from their sex assigned at birth or people of diverse sexual orientation can have their marriage life like general families. However, there has not been any law to certify their rights and duties as a spouse like male-female married couples. It thus is considered a kind of unrighteous discrimination. It violates certified principles written in the Constitution, including the Declaration of Human Rights by International Obligations, of which Thailand is a member. (The

Draft of the Act for Criticism by Article 77 in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2017, which had been amended the latest on November 5, 2018).

Sensation! Marriage of a Tom girl! Vivacious dancing along the betel-tray parade. Waiting for legalized marriage laws.

A wedlock of any sex requires understanding and flexibility; then life will be happy. If possible, we wish to have those concerned take care of the laws, especially rights of the third sex, to obtain legalized registration. (Thairath Online, May 18, 2013)

It explains that same-sex groups represent the exercise of power in urging and driving for equality in sexuality rights. Political and legal institutions play a part in dealing with these issues. Nevertheless, same-sex groups do not face only the problem of power relations oppressed by the dominant discourse of married partners or spouses based on male-female relationship, but also problems caused by the power relations of social, political, and economic structure in their daily life. The establishment of a same-sex relationship will face difficulties in different dimensions depending on each social condition and context. For instance, social systems specify norms related to sexuality through the belief and value of male-female marriage, including embedded belief on sexual inequality. The roles and duties of men and women are specified, i.e., the structure of a family system, fatherhood, motherhood. Moreover, legal structure indicates only male-female marriage that can get legalized marriage registration and spouse registration. Therefore, the legal structure is a process that can refine the social structural system to accept the rights, duties, and status of an individual in society.

The sexual expression or the positioning of the homosexuals in society, including their relations with other parts of society, are determined by value, belief, culture, and tradition, including social structure in political and legal systems. Besides, same-sex relationships are regulated by several social institutions through some kinds of mechanisms towards same-sex groups' acceptance of their condition and roles. On the other hand, they also create some arrangements, i.e., via some social movement activities, to protest and negotiate the power of society to create a new

definition of human sexual relationship to reflect different meanings from the traditional ones. Therefore, sexual inequality or the creation of sexual relationships in any form are the consequences of the nature of conditions of making differences. Power is created to dominate social systems since the state and laws provide space for only male-female marriage. In other words, all those concepts are governed by the cultural dimension of each society, emphasizing inequality. Thus, it becomes social factors leading to a call for legal action or righteous power to eradicate the disparity in society and enable the homosexuals to have rights and sexual equality, including space for building their marriage life like male-female couples, not only through legal provisions, but also through the penetration of ideas, beliefs, and traditions concurrently at the policy level and civic society networks of all parts.

If you ask if I'm afraid of others' negative perception. I don't think about anything because both of us love each other. When we live together, we are happy. We do not cause anyone trouble. We earn our own lives and do not rely on anyone. I don't care about others' words. In the future, if the laws allow us to have marriage registration, I will do. (Khao Sod Online, May 12, 2017)

In other words, changes in social structural systems related to culture are the negotiation by the power that tries to create a new meaning of sexual relationship. Such a new definition does not necessarily follow the dominant discourse of a male-female relationship. It can be seen in the negotiation with social systems in mobilizing and driving policies via governmental and legal institutions related to same-sex marriage, including the social processes of the homosexuals in opening a stage for discussion, conclusions, and implementation of guidelines for same-sex marriage. Nowadays, the flow of sexuality turns to present a gender diversity in society while creating a legal mechanism towards rights and liberties protection for homosexuals in Thai society.

## 2) Mass Media Institution

Discourse means a process of constructing meanings to the world and society. However, discourse is the creation of things under a specific set of rules.

Those rules are determinants of the existence, changes, and disappearance of all things. That is in parallel to something created by society, and there are the creation and modifications of the said things by discourse as well. People also want to challenge the roles and the use of discourse's power by revealing that power and righteousness claimed by a group of people that it comes from "assorted knowledge source," actually such knowledge is only the output of a set of discourses. In the present time, which is the period of digital communication, communication technologies have adapted the patterns that can access to people in society. Likewise, mass media institution is responsible for reporting the movement of society. The presented issues are assigned to have agenda-setting. Mass media institution produces information while positioning the meaning of what happens in a particular society perceived as truth by the audience. Accordingly, mass media is the foremost institution of providing both information and discourses, and at the same time, mass media forms the truth to be acknowledged by people in society.

The matrimony of male-female couples is determined by society to be the appropriate sexes and to create a family. Besides, the married couple has to perform a public announcement of their marriage via some social institutions, i.e., mass media, their symbol of sexual relationship is also acknowledged widely. Professor Phraya Anuman Ratchathon wrote in his book on rituals called "Thai Wedding Rituals," to tell other people to know about one's engagement is common in western culture. After the engagement, it will be reported in the newspaper. However, in our country, we had not had a press to declare, so only a few people will know, mostly people of the same village. Thus, it was a custom to give an engagement gift as a sign of acknowledgment instead, so now had we better announce it on newspaper?"

For same-sex married couples who announce their wedding in mass media, a question is raised if, besides same-sex couples and their families, it is necessary to let people in society be informed or acknowledged or not. Therefore, in reporting this kind of news, mass media will select information for its news presentation that can be either positive or negative issues, including equipping the audience with some set of thoughts.



Table 4.9 Headlines of Same-sex Marriage Presented in Mass Media in Thailand  
During 2013-2018

Direction of Same-sex Marriage Presentation	Headlines Presented by Mass Media Institution						
	Thairath Online/ Daily News Online/ Khao Sod Online						Total
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
<b>Male-male marriage</b>							
“Hue Ha” (in Thai) (Sensation/ excitement)	-	2	2	3	4	-	11
“Chuen Muen” (Joy/ delight)	1	-	-	-	2	1	4
<b>Female-female marriage</b>							
“Hue Ha” (in Thai) (Sensation/ excitement)	-	1	1	2	5	3	12
“Chuen Muen” (Joy/ delight)	-	-	1	1	1	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>

From Table 4.9, it can explain from the quantity of headline news presented by mass media institutions from 2013-2018, most of the headlines on same-sex marriage are presented with words of positive meaning. “Hue ha” (Sensation or excitement) is presented the most, followed by “chuen muen” (joy or delight).” According to the New Word Dictionary of the Royal Institute No. 1-2, page 393, the word “Hue Ha” (in Thai)

“ Hue ha” means “interesting but also surprising and exciting” (used with a large number of people), such as “the society is excited about the news of 100 million dowries for the engagement of a famous singer.”

LEXiTRON: Thai Electronic Media Dictionary defines “hue ha” as “to make a sensation, or to get interested.”

For the word “chuen muen,” according to the Dictionary of the Royal Institute (2013), page 384, it is defined as “joyful or delightful.”

Therefore, in defining the meanings related to same-sex marriage, mass media institution is like a producer of discourse transmitted to society to be acknowledged of the intended meaning it wants to convey. In the past, mass media tended to give more negative connotations of same-sex marriage, especially as deviance from social tradition and norms, which becomes a dominant discourse of society. Namely, it seemingly provided the truth that only men and women are appropriate to marry as a married couple in Thai society. On the other hand, mass media also produced another seeming reality to society that deviant sexual behaviors were abnormal or weird. Besides, the words used in the news headlines or the news content reflected the improperness. Thus, it used the power of cultural mechanisms to regulate receivers’ thoughts.

News headline of Thairath on October 29, 1972: “A widespread of homosexuality. Bizarre ways of living by setting a bar for revealing MLM emotion. (Therdsak Romjumpa, 2002)

News sub-headline of Thairath of evening version on October 30, 1972: A male homosexual revealed no desire for a woman, but needs for a same-sex man. (Therdsak Romjumpa, 2002)

In brief, sexuality is regulated by the power of mass media institutions through one single social dimension on sexual relationships negatively. It aims to create inequality in the sexual relationship of both male-female and same-sex relationships. Therefore, social institutions, i.e., legal or governmental, etc., in combination with a social condition, all transmit the concept of proper sexual roles and sexuality in society to make it as truth and a natural thing without a doubt.

Notably, mass media is still the power-operational sphere in defining meanings and excluding other purposes. It is the sphere of seizing and struggling for definitions through its acceptance or rejection of the contradictory meanings. The

struggle is on the male-female vs. same-sex relationship, the concept of a bride and a groom in a wedding ceremony vs. those of a same-sex marriage ceremony. Each constructed meaning will be reinforced repeatedly in the audience's daily life until such meaning is equipped and embedded in people's ways of life. It then becomes a regular thing accepted widely and being the collective consciousness of people in society through language as a vital tool in transmitting and reinforcing each ideology. Hence, mass media institution is powerful in driving meanings through language to let people think along and comply with them. It can create perspectives for any social phenomenon in the direction as it wants to convey, which affects ways of living and values of people in Thai society.

In parallel, at present, mass media also strives to determine or construct the meaning of same-sex marriage in another way by equipping a set of ideas that people's relationships are not limited only to sexual relations like in the past. Two people can tie their relationship with love as a human being, not as a man or a woman, which is perceived by society as the dominant discourse of marriage. Still, the researcher found such appreciation just as a starting point for not protesting people of diverse sexual orientation to practice a wedding ceremony traditionally according to Thai culture like cross-sex marriage. However, it has not been found widely that mass media presents its news to create full acceptance. Still, it only constructs meanings and establishes public space for other contradictory discourses to seize alternative meanings in society. Therefore, the discourses presented by mass media are the thought or idea that mass media constructs or eradicates for people in society. The content presented in the news is thus, the definitions of people, social institutions, and occurrences in society.

### 3) Family Institution

In society, the family institution is considered as the foundation of all social institutions. It is the institution in which family members are raised and nurtured. Besides, it is the institution that provides primary education, including politics, economics, and others. Even the issue of sexuality is also taught and guided towards what an individual should behave in society. Therefore, if this primary institution is not healthy and weakened, it will affect other institutions in society as well.

It is found that if society faces a variety of problems, the family institution will be the first place that is questioned on human behaviors. Besides, it is questioned if all kinds of youth's negotiation in society are socialized through their family or not, including sexual relations. Likewise, the emergence of human relationships is also influenced by family. Family is the starting unit that advises and fosters social learning on genders and sexuality in parallel to formal education. A family's initiation is the beginning of a sexual relationship with some kind of procedure as a frame from making a marriage proposal and approval by families of both sides. They have to agree on engagement, a wedding, and childbearing as a tie towards the expansion of family members. At present, family bonding has been changing from the past as the sexual relations have moved from cross-sex to same-sex relations, i.e., MLM, WLW, etc. Besides, the same-sex relationship itself comprises several kinds of forms, either disclosed or concealed.

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ไทยรัฐทีวี | ไทยรัฐออนไลน์



ข่าว ข่าวสังคมไทย ไทยรัฐทีวี โสฬัสโตส์ กีฬา อื่นๆ ไทยรัฐ คลิปข่าว กีฬาออนไลน์

หน้าแรก / สื่อไทย / ข่าวสังคมไทย / ภาพรวม

## คบหา 5ปี รักสุกงอม 2หนุ่มวิวาห์ร่วมหอ เจ้าบ่าวเด็กกว่า หอบเงินแสนสุขข

ไทย ไทยรัฐออนไลน์ 5 มี.ค. 2560 19:20

เมื่อเช้าวานที่ 5 มี.ค. บรรยากาศชุมชนท่าสินคำ เขตเทศบาลเมืองกาฬสินธุ์ เต็มไปด้วยความคึกคัก มีบรรดาแขกเหรื่อจำนวนมากมาร่วมแสดงความยินดี ในงานพิธีมงคลสมรสระหว่างชายรักชาย จัดที่บ้านเลขที่ 48/3 ถนนท่าสินคำ ต.กาฬสินธุ์ อ.เมือง จ.กาฬสินธุ์ โดยมี นายวุฒินันท์ ทรัพย์ประเสริฐ หรือวุฒิ อายุ 38 ปี เป็นเจ้าบ่าว และนายสัมฤทธิ์ อุดรบูรณ์ หรือคุณช้าง อายุ 53 ปี เป็นเจ้าสาว ซึ่งทั้งคู่มีใบหม้ายเข้มแถมแจ่มใส ที่ได้จัดพิธีสมรสเหมือนกับงานทั่วไป

ภายในงานมีการแห่ขบวนขันหมากฟ้อนรำของฝ่ายเจ้าบ่าวเข้ามาถึงบริเวณบ้านเจ้าสาว เริ่มต้นด้วยพิธีมอบสินสอดทองหมั้น เป็นเงิน 100,000 บาท และทองอีก 5 บาท พร้อมบายศรีสู่ขวัญ ผูกข้อต่อแขน ส่งคำคู่บ่าวสาวเข้าเรือนหอ ตามประเพณีอีสานทุกอย่าง ภายในงานมีญาติผู้ใหญ่ของทั้งสองครอบครัวและเพื่อนๆ พร้อมด้วยเพื่อนในกลุ่มชายรักชาย มาร่วมเป็นสักขีพยานในงานครั้งนี้อย่างคับคั่ง และได้สร้างความฮือฮาแก่ชาวบ้านที่ทราบข่าวเป็นอย่างมาก



Figure 4.17 Love is Ripened After Seeing Each Other for Five Years. Two men Decided to Marry. A Younger Groom Took Hundreds to Ask for a Marriage

Source: Thai Rath Online, March 5, 2017.



...Since both of us are women, we can't bear a child, so I will help her take care of her business to relieve her burden. I don't care about society, but only our parents and relatives. We are lucky that our families understand. Thus, we can arrange our wedding among our relatives' congratulations. (Daily News Online, June 24, 2018).

Society established “gender” as normality, namely human beings composed of men and women only. The concept of gender is thus embedded naturally in the cognitive system of people in society. Nevertheless, the power of determining the concept of gender is to use it as a tool of social institutions in placing such an idea into society members' thoughts. It thus induces society members who are same-sex couples to use the concept of married couples based on social norms, which determine one as a husband or head of a family, and the other as a wife or housewife. In other words, they are forced into the circle of cross-sex marriage couples, as illustrated in the following news:

## ฮือฮา! วิวห์"ขายรักขาย" พ่อแม่สู่ขอตามประเพณี

ชาวบ้านตะพานหิน ฮือฮา ขายรักขายจัดงานวิวห์ ญาติ 2 ฝ่ายร่วมยินดี หนุ่มนาข้าวพบรักสาวนักร้อง เผยประทับใจเสียงเพลง ถูกชะตาจึงบอกพ่อแม่สู่ขอ พร้อมร่วมชีวิต สร้างฐานะช่วยกัน

อาทิตย์ที่ 3 มกราคม 2559 เวลา 05.09 น.

เมื่อวันที่ 3 ม.ค.59 ผู้สื่อข่าวรายงานว่า ที่บ้านเลขที่ 122/2 หมู่ที่ 4 ต.จรัญ อ.ตะพานหิน จ.พิจิตร ได้มีการจัดพิธีมงคลสมรสคู่รักร่วมเพศขึ้น สร้างความฮือฮาให้แก่ชาวบ้านที่ทราบข่าวเป็นอย่างมาก จึงเดินทางไปตรวจสอบ พบแขกเหรื่อซึ่งเป็นญาติทั้งสองฝ่าย รวมถึงเพื่อนในกลุ่มขายรักขายมาร่วมงานจำนวนมาก กำลังผูกข้อมือขอมืออวยพรให้กับ นายสมภพ พุ่มเผย อายุ 36 ปี เจ้าบ่าว ซึ่งมีอาชีพทำการเกษตร กับนายแสงแข เปี่ยมศิลป์หรือ เดียร์ อายุ 31 ปี เจ้าสาว อาชีพนักร้องร้านอาหารแห่งหนึ่ง โดยพิธีจัดขึ้นแบบเรียบง่ายตามแบบประเพณี

นายสมภพ เจ้าบ่าว เปิดเผยว่า ก่อนที่จะมาพบรักกับ "เดียร์" ได้ไปทานอาหารที่ร้านอาหารแห่งหนึ่ง ได้ยินเสียงเพลงที่เค้าร้องรู้สึกชื่นชอบในน้ำเสียง เมื่อได้รู้จักพูดคุยก็ยิ่งถูกชะตาจึงได้คบหาต่อกันมาหลายเดือน ก่อนจะตัดสินใจบอกพ่อแม่ไปสู่ขอตามประเพณี ถึงแม้ว่า เจ้าสาวจะเป็นชาย ตนเองก็รัก สำหรับสินสอดทองหมั้นของคนทั้งสองที่มาร่วมกันเป็นสร้อยคอทองคำหนัก 4 บาท เงิน 40,000 บาท เราตั้งใจแน่วแน่ว่าจะดูแลกัน ตั้งใจช่วยกันสร้างฐานะของครอบครัว โดยจะให้เดียร์เลิกร้องเพลงแล้วมาทำหน้าที่แม่บ้าน ส่วนตนเองจะทำงานหาเลี้ยงต่อไป

ส่วนนายแสงแข หรือ เดียร์ เจ้าสาว กล่าวว่า ได้คบหากันอย่างเปิดเผยในแบบคู่รักกันมาเป็นเวลา 5-6 เดือน ก็ดูว่าจะสามารถอยู่ร่วมกันได้หรือไม่ ในที่สุดก็ตัดสินใจจะแต่งงานกัน ซึ่งผู้ใหญ่ของเราทั้งสองฝ่าย ไม่รังเกียจ โดยฝ่ายชายให้พ่อแม่มาสู่ขอ จากนั้นก็จะดูแลกันตลอดไป โดยในวันงานแต่งงานวันนี้ เป็นการเริ่มต้นปีใหม่ ญาติผู้ใหญ่ของเราทั้งสองได้เดินทางมาร่วมงานด้วย มีญาติที่เดินทางมาจากหลายพื้นที่มาร่วมแสดงความยินดี สำหรับช่วงเย็นวันนี้ก็จะมีการเลี้ยงฉลองมงคลสมรสด้วย..

Figure 4.18 A Sensational MLM Wedding. Parents Proceeded the Rituals by Old Tradition

Source: Daily News Online, January 3, 2016.

The power of distinguishing between femininity and masculinity is expressed through a set of discourses. These discourses try to get through the thought of people in society as a natural and regular phenomenon. Thus, same-sex groups are barred by such discourses but are expressed through another set of discourses presenting that a human marriage life involves no gender issue, not only that of cross-sex couples. Thus, human beings have a right to determine their meaning of same-sex

marriage, which is another form of married couples in society, through other constructed discourses as well.



Figure 4.19 Sensational! The First Male-Homosexual Wedding in the Year of the Goat

Source: Daily News Online, January 8, 2015.

The bride and groom revealed that after seeing each other for 7-8 months, they finally decided to marry openly. Families of both sides did not object to or mind their marriage. On the contrary, they expressed their congratulations to them for their love and marriage, and let them hold a wedding ceremony for them. (Thairath Online, January 8, 2015)

Families of both sides did not obstruct or mind their marriage, but they supported them since love cannot divide sexes. (Thairath Online, July 2, 2017)

Thus, power relations are always embedded in social institutions as mechanisms in controlling social network systems. Still, every power relation always has a way out while also faces resistance. Therefore, when the family institution determines and controls the thought of family members who possess deviant sexual behaviors, the negotiation of other society members then occurs. Typically, a change in the individual psychological state is harder than a behavioral change. Nevertheless, warmth, love, and understanding of the family are a variable that makes this institution exist. Family bonds cannot be cut. It is a Thai core value and leads to the acceptance and understanding of family members with homosexuality.

Consequently, the family institution has to negotiate with other social institutions as well. Same-sex marriage thus emphasizes sets of the idea, which reflect the concrete social structure, that sexual repression does exist in society. On the other hand, some social institutions, like the family institution, can also help to create people's consciousness towards the existence of another form of gender in society more eminently.

#### 4) Religious Institution

Every culture always signifies the meaning of "male" and "female" with different values and from different perspectives. Likewise, behaviors and ways of living of the alternative genders or homosexual groups are also interpreted differently in the sense of "otherness" from general men and women. An institution in society that aims to highlight the value of humanity to go along in a mid-way towards a peaceful way of life in society is the religious institution. It is the institution that plays a role as a tool in determining what is right and wrong conduct in society. Seemingly, the concept of no exploitation over others is identical in every religious institution in Thailand.

Besides, from the variety of social phenomena happening in society, it illustrates the roles of the religious institution as a spiritual anchor in all events, either positive or negative, and reinforces the importance of this institution for society. Notably, a socialization process of all forms in regulating human beings to follow social norms is also a part of the influence of the religious institution. Sexuality is also no exemption. One deep-rooted belief in Buddhism is men can gain more merit than



women because they can be ordained. Typically, for a man to become a monk in Thai society, it means an act of a man to express their gratitude towards his parents.

On the other hand, a woman can become a Buddhist nun under more restrictions, i.e., many more precepts or religious rules than a monk. The reason is that a Buddhist nun has to live among both men and women; thus, it can lead to some undesirable behaviors and defame Buddhism. Accordingly, sexual inequality also appears in religions.

Moreover, in Buddhism, there is the restriction of rights and liberties of men who desire to enter the monkhood. According to the Buddhist rules, men with improper qualifications cannot be ordained, and only a complete man can be. In Buddhism, homosexuality is “sinful and ill-fated.” The Tripitaka Version for the Public identifies “a person whose preceptor is transsexual or homosexual” or “a person with disordered gender” as a person who should not be ordained. Therefore, the concept of sexual inequality exists widely in every social institution.

In Christianity, the Bible states that homosexuality is sin. Preaching keeps focusing that homosexuality is the consequence of the denial and disobedience to God. It further says that when a man wants to walk in the sin with defiance to God, God then “releases” him to commit evil acts and immorality to show them a desperate and useless life when he walks away from God. Thus, homosexuality will never be able to enter the kingdom of God as a legacy.

God never creates human beings to have a desire for homosexuality. The Bible says persons who turn to be homosexual because of their sin, and eventually, it falls under his passion. However, the Bible does not say if homosexuality is a more severe sin than other kinds, i.e., adultery, paying respect to an idol, murders, etc., which are inscribed in the Bible.

Moreover, sexual deviance is also mentioned in Islam. According to Islamic belief, homosexuality is a sin. The laws of Muslim countries also refer to the Islamic faith. For instance, “men and women are not allowed to look at genitals of each other, even of same-sex people. Men and women cannot cover their bodies with the same blanket with people of the same sex.” The strict separation between men and women in Islam thus makes sexual-relief ways restricted.



Thus, from the analysis, it reveals that sexual repression is unveiled in the religious institution. Still, same-sex groups negotiate with the power of this institution via social practices, rituals, and values. One of them is “wedding rituals.” According to the tradition, a male-female married couple declares their marriage through the arrangement of a wedding ceremony and ritual. Therefore, a marriage in which a groom is not a man and a bride is not a woman will violate social norms. However, the alternative ways same-sex couples choose to react to such tradition is through the arrangement of a wedding ceremony and ritual in the same way as cross-sex marriage. It must include religious rituals as well. A bride and groom construct the meaning of “good fortune of a marriage life” by involving religious beliefs into the ceremony. Accordingly, same-sex marriage identifies their marriage identity and their marriage life with a proper meaning of religion through their wedding ceremony via religious institutions.

In the morning, the ceremony started with religious or Buddhist rituals. Nine monks were invited to pray and bless the couple with holy water. Food was given to the monks after they prayed. Thus, all the ceremony was done as specified in Thai tradition: a betel-tray parade, pouring blessed water, a wrist tie, etc.” (Khao Sod Online, November 13, 2017)

After finishing Buddhist rituals in the morning, then there was a betel-tray parade, engagement ceremony, and a wrist tie, respectively. (Thairath Online, May 8, 2016)

A welcome dancing was set in Ancient Chinese custom. After that, there was a blessed-water pouring ceremony to bring good fortune for marriage life in the future. (Thairath Online, May 13, 2018)

It can explain that same-sex couples have expressed their identity in another form of sexual relationship through their negotiation with social systems. On the other hand, the religious institution can be another variable playing a role in same-sex marriage. The religious institution creates limited rights and liberties of alternative genders in accessing religion. It also specifies several prohibitions as human evil acts, same-sex couples thus transform those limitations by having the religious institution

to be involved in the wedding rituals for their assurance. In short, instead of placing themselves into the religious sphere, which is obstructed and regulated by the main discourse of the society, same-sex couples have the religious institution to be a part of their wedding rituals.

#### 5) Medical Institution

At present, the issue of sexual taste, either homosexuality or heterosexuality, is at the individual level. Society plays a role in letting people know that there are not only men and women. Gender diversity is ubiquitous in every segment of society, including the medical institution. In the medical institution, genitals of both men and women are just their biological or physical state, but not a psychological state. Therefore, indices for identifying sexes can be explained in terms of academic theories, i.e., chromosomes or genes in the human body. However, to clarify by social structure, a fusion of same-sex married couples may be caused by the cultivation of social institutions.

Thailand has formally certified that homosexuality was not a mental disorder on January 29, 2002. The Department of Mental Health issued an official letter to inform that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and has been deleted from the list at the international level by WHO already. Although for almost ten years after the announcement of WHO and the Thai government accepted gender diversity as a not mental disorder, LGBT groups are still affected by sexual bias, discrimination, and insults from society. Cheera Thongkrajai, a scholar in sexuality and gender diversity, expresses his idea that the concept of homosexuality is still tied with the medical institution. Although homosexuality does not violate laws, modern medical discourses, especially western, play a role in stamping gender diversity in Thai society as deviation and abnormality since 1957. The body of knowledge or episteme in medicine has influenced the perspective on gender diversity in Thai society widely.

The establishment of the body of knowledge or episteme via various institutions to create an understanding of same-sex marriage gains more diverse dimensions. Even the medical institution also categorized femininity and masculinity since birth. Same-sex marriage has been explained through behaviors of same-sex groups, through the construction of meaning by cultural approach, and through the

organization of sexual relations by the medical institution under some kinds of ideology and belief.

Foucault agrees with the statement and gives an idea of “Subject Production or Subjection.” His concept is based on the assumption that the creation of a self can make a person believe that it is a true meaning until such belief makes him be a slave of that meaning. The construction of essence can make people see things as a fixed or real symbol of an object, but such symbols maybe only the myths.

Besides, Foucault also mentions the concept of “Divide Practice” that tries to distinguish the clear separation by establishing some borderlines. As a consequence, some distinctions like “mad vs. normal people,” have been raised. Similarly, same-sex or homosexual relationships are also separated from cross-sex or heterosexual relationships. Such distinction then turns people of the other side to be “abnormal,” including abnormal sexual relations. Another form of the difference mentioned by Foucault is “scientific classification,” which is a process of making a subject to be an object. Through scientific means, classification can be done in many ways, i.e., the classification between “healthy people” and “sick people,” or “man,” “woman,” and “deviant gender” by analyzing human biology and human genitals. People then believe in those classifications and definitions because those who classify or define them are trustworthy. Thus, classified or defined people fall under the control or regulation of the power of the medical institution. On the other hand, same-sex groups also negotiate with it from time to time.

Both who are women specified that if they did the right thing, but not the liked one, they cannot live together either. Love is not gender-limited. If we stay anywhere happily, we will stay there. The important thing is “what we are” does not make others in trouble. That’s O.K., and we will look after each other for good. (Khao Sod Online, November 28, 2017).

The concept of “Subjectification” is the process of creating or defining a subject. Such meaning lets the subject adhere to it until the subject is under the control and regulation of that meaning. Therefore, this process is like the creation of discourse. For example, the creation of a discourse that “people who can marry or

have sexual relations must be a man and a woman.” Thus, people adhere to such a constructed and fixed discourse. In other words, this process is to make what is not an issue yet to be an issue and make people fall under the control of such a problem eventually.

Although we cannot bear a child as our descendant, we both are contented and happy. We will ask my sister’s child to bring her up. We want to have a happy family like a male-female family despite our female homosexuality. (Daily News Online, February 24, 2018)

In conclusion, nowadays, the medical institution constructs the meaning of creating relationships in a marriage life by the expansion of species through modern medical technology. In other words, the inheritance does not necessarily come from cross-sex sexual relations. Once therapeutic development is more advanced, same-sex couples can construct another meaning of their marriage life through the creation of a family in their form. Therefore, their negotiation of meanings in sexual relations has been expanded to other sexuality groups through the creation of new types of sexual relationships in society.

Nevertheless, it can explain that the construction of the discourse on “same-sex relationship or marriage” presented to the society in mass media has been oppressed by the unequal sexual power relations that focus on male-female relationships, embedded in Thai society since the past to present. Although the concept of same-sex relationships has been disclosed increasingly, social practices that do not comply or go along with social norms and values can be conducted at a certain level only, both societal and institutional. The meaning of male-female relationships, as the dominant discourse of the society, has been denied or diminished. Besides, space for constructing the meaning of same-sex relationships and marriage is created through a wedding ceremony. The ceremony is; therefore, just a primary tool or formula to help same-sex couples to express their power in constructing their meaning in the sphere of the word, “a bride” and “a groom.” Besides, since social institutions, especially the legal institution, cannot value or create sexual equality, a tactic for opening a new meaning of human marriage life paradigm needs to rely on

an agency (at the individual level) to provide a negotiated meaning with social structure by connecting with the acceptance of the family institution of both sides. While the expectation towards same-sex marriage and the existence of same-sex couples are at the individual level, at the societal level, the family institution is the closest institution of human beings. When the family institution can accept same-sex relationships of family members, it will become a mechanism in shaping and creating a positive attitude for same-sex couples to conduct their life and to determine meanings in their social practices. However, to compensate for their struggle against social norms, a same-sex wedding ceremony in congruence with traditional and cultural customs is arranged. On the other hand, in a capitalist economic system, it requires feeding labor into the system; therefore, cross-sex sexual relationship is buoyed up by this economic system. Thus, same-sex marriage can be freed from adherence to the traditional social structure.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RECEIVERS' PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE MEANING IN THAI SOCIETY**

This chapter aims to analyze the perceived meanings of “same-sex marriage,” interpreted by receivers of gender diversity, namely the groups of men-love-men (MLM), women-love-women (WLW), men, and women, with different social experiences and background. The differences among the groups are considered as representatives of various social institutions in Thai society. In the previous chapters, discourse analysis was conducted to explore discourses and the communicative meanings of same-sex marriage from the presented news content. Besides, from the analysis of discourses appearing in the online news on the internet: Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, on same-sex marriage in Thailand, it can answer the research question of how Thai mass media constructs the meaning of same-sex marriage to be presented in the news and if there have been any changes. Besides, it aims to know what discourses determined by social institutions in Thailand are, including which socio-cultural practices affect the discourses of same-sex marriage in Thailand significantly. The previous discourse analysis also revealed marriage tradition and the arrangement of a wedding ceremony in a traditional Thai way. This chapter focuses on examining if receivers with different social experiences and backgrounds will perceive and interpret the meaning of same-sex marriage from the same or different discourses. The study was conducted by an informal in-depth interview with twelve receivers of gender diversity: MLM, WLW, men, and women, individually. An informal interview in the form of conversation can release an interviewee's stress and anxiety in answering questions since they are quite personal issues. Besides, interviewees were informed in advance about the interviewing procedure, the use of a tape recorder, the use of alias or pseudonyms, and a letter of consent, including the confidentiality of the given information. Besides, the interview

started with a dialogue to make the interviewees familiar. Then, the first question was to explore their opinions on same-sex marriage and the thoughts behind the answers.

An in-depth interview is useful for this study because it can reflect if receivers' opinions are identical or different, and to what extent the differences are. On the other hand, the framework of the questions was determined by the researcher to reach the desired answers more conveniently. To release the interviewees' tension and reduce a gap between the interviewer and interviewee, the interviewer encouraged the interviewees to give suggestions to make the study more fruitful. Most importantly, it was to create cooperation in answering the questions and connect the received information for a better understanding.

For presenting the information decoded from each interviewee's answers, a pseudonym is provided and rechecked to avoid mistakes. Besides, demographic attributes of the samples or the interviewees found to be related to the research questions on same-sex marriage in Thai society: occupation, marital status, and socio-economic status were also presented, as illustrated in Table 5.1

Table 5.1 The Classification of Demographic Attributes of the Samples Found to be Related to Same-sex Marriage

The Classification of Demographic Attributes of the Samples Found to be Related to Same-sex Marriage						
No.	Name (Alias/ Pseudonym)	Sex (Self- Perception)	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Socio- economic Status
1.	A	MLM	42	Autonomous government agency officer	Single	Medium- high
2.	B	MLM	35	Creative	Single (with a partner)	Medium
3.	C	MLM	44	Private company executive	Single (with a partner)	Medium- high
4.	D	WLW	32	Bank staff	Single (with a partner)	Medium- high
5.	E	WLW	28	Private	Single (with	Medium

The Classification of Demographic Attributes of the Samples Found to be Related to Same-sex Marriage						
No.	Name (Alias/ Pseudonym)	Sex (Self- Perception)	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Socio- economic Status
				company staff	a partner)	
6.	F	Man	30	Linguist	Single	Medium
7.	G	Man	43	Mass comm. scholar	Single	Medium- high
8.	H	Man	30	Hireling	Divorce (with children)	Medium
9.	I	Man	37	Personal Business	Married (with children)	Medium
10.	J	Woman	42	Government officer	Single	Medium
11.	K	Woman	38	Mass media	Married (no ceremony)	Medium
12.	L	Woman	35	Mass media	Single	Medium- high

From Table 5.1, the samples were people of gender diversity or alternative genders: MLM, WLW, men, and women in different occupations with different social experiences and backgrounds. Some samples worked under the regulations of social systems while some in private sectors with independent regulations. The samples were also from a variety of marital status: Single, married, having a partner without marriage, having children, etc. All of them were different in social background, not from a particular group. All of these different attributes and backgrounds are variables expected to affect the samples' perception and interpretation of the meaning of same-sex marriage. Two open questions were used to ask all the samples of gender diversity:

- 1) Do you agree or disagree with same-sex marriage? Why?
- 2) Do you agree or disagree with the news presentation on same-sex marriage of mass media in Thailand? Why?

The answers to the above questions were analyzed to explore which discourse was equipped in receivers' thoughts and if the samples of different social experiences and backgrounds were equipped with the same or different discourses. The analysis was divided into two parts: personal factors and socio-cultural factors. From the interview with the samples, it was found that there were three demographic attributes of the samples related to the concept of same-sex marriage: 1) occupation, 2) marital status, and 3) socio-economic status. Regarding socio-cultural factors, the analysis focused on receivers' perception of the roles of three major social institutions on their interpretation of same-sex marriage meanings: 1) family 2) laws 3) mass media. The findings of the analysis are presented as follows:

## **5.1 Personal Factors: The Perception and Interpretation of Same-sex Marriage Meanings**

### **5.1.1 Occupation and Career**

...In some careers in Thai society, they require source credibility. They may require men or women, or normal sexuality that is acceptable.

...Another thing is those who are soldiers or police officers or the careers that need high disciplines might not arrange a wedding ceremony openly or extensively, but prefer staying together secretly. ( B, personal communication, Interviewed, May 9, 2019)

The above statement is from B, the sample who is MLM. He perceives that occupational and career factors play a significant part in the perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage meanings. However, due to social movement and social advancement in various surrounding sectors towards sexual equality, including the transformation of the society into consumption society, people in society have gained more power in negotiating social and economic issues increasingly. Likewise, sexual expression has also been expanded accordingly. The current of sexual emotions of same-sex couples helps to develop space for presenting their identity in

society and constructing the meanings related to themselves and same-sex partners or themselves and social systems.

Nevertheless, the dominant discourse that oppresses the issue of sexuality in Thai society still can make people living in society accept the social current determined as norms in society. Therefore, people are in harmony with the compulsory sexuality with the knowledge that it is a normal thing in society until some groups of people strive to portray the irregularity in society, or the subtleness of having people consent with the discourse without questioning. Therefore, the marriage life of either homosexual or heterosexual couples is personal satisfaction within the regulation of society.

From the interpretation of meaning provided by B, it can imply that using one's capital or shared experience to define meanings through one's previous perception reflects the concept of "sexual relationship in public." In other words, to fight with social systems and construct the meaning of sexual expressions in public is another issue the homosexuals have to learn with each social system to see if there will be any possibility for making gender diversity visible.

From the interview with 12 samples of sexual diversity, the samples perceive that occupations and careers are important variables in determining the expression of sex roles and sexual behaviors, including decision-making on their marriage life, as illustrated in the interview of D (WLW):

...Negative consequences tend to be our image perceived by others. We might have a superior who does not want this kind of relationship. As I am married, but no matter what my work position is, I cannot introduce my couple in my workplace because it is not that open. (D, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

From the above interview with D, it illustrates that to create one's identity and power to be accepted at a workplace, it still adheres to the concept of sexual expression traditionally to be accepted in society under the dominant discourse of heterosexual relationships. Therefore, it requires negotiation with such discourse in every part of social systems in revealing one's true identity. Otherwise, if a person



defines the meaning of “otherness” for himself or herself, he or she will become a marginal man in society instantly.

Similarly, in the case of G (a man who is a scholar in mass communication), A (MLM), and E (WLW), all indicated their perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage affected by occupations and careers.

...If you are a soldier and you love another soldier, so you decide to marry. Is it wrong? It might not be illegal, but how do people in society look at you? Or can the government system accept it? Of course, if you are stars, it might not damage your career, but how about other social institutions? Have they accepted people of sexual diversity yet? Even if you are dressed like a lady and go to teach in any academic institution, it is acceptable. Some occupations in private sectors may accept it, or in the entertainment circle, you can be dressed as a woman and go to work. Just imagine if we have any director-general or permanent secretary of any Ministry to be a transgender, will the government accept them? The majority of people may accept it, but it turns to be their working place that does not accept it. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

...Concerning careers, if I have to marry, I don't think it will be ok. I will get plenty of questions from people surrounding me. We cannot reach that point because, in our society, people will not accept, especially in an occupation with orders and high disciplines, like government officers, soldiers, police officers, etc. It is inappropriate, and it's a matter of our institute or our office. (A, personal communication,, March 16, 2019)

...In online media, the news about Tom or Lady often appears, but most of them own professions that have no impact on society. Thus, they arranged their marriage, and it is not a big deal. However, it is for those in the high-discipline area, such as government officers or people in a uniform. People may not see their news. They might have married, but their marriage is not publicized in media. For those who are prosecutors, or work in a court, they will not reveal themselves or arrange their wedding ceremony because of their duties. Otherwise, their source credibility will disappear., It will surely

affect them, especially if they are in high positions. If they reveal themselves that they are same-sex people, how about their subordinates? Or others in their command? Will they still respect their superiors like before? Thus, forget it. (E, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

From the above-mentioned interview, it indicates that all of the samples gave almost the same opinions. Specifically, they think that the perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage meanings depend on the context and specific surrounding of each individual. Theoretically, according to Foucault, power does not exist, but is dynamic or moves around conditions, based on power relations between two different fields, which can be various government institutions or groups or any other groups. All areas of practice involve power.

Power flows and changes all the time, but it is not merely dispersed but is adaptable by conditions of dealing with each kind of relations. Since power flows everywhere and does not exist at any core, anyone can snatch or seize power. The power depends on the network of the relationships among people in each field of such relations. In other words, people can express their roles in the sphere where people can express their roles or their same-sex relationship as their discourse over the dominant discourse of male-female relations. However, if society is limited under the discourse of heterosexual relationships, the power for revealing their same-sex marriage life or for gaining acceptance of their same-sex marriage in their workplace will be hidden, concealed, and evaluated by the word “inappropriate.” Still, it does not mean that there will be no more extended negotiation to seize such power. Therefore, the dominant discourse will again appear continuously in society, depending on each context and situation of each individual. On the other hand, the struggle to seize the power of the dominant discourse also continues. Thus, once there is the negotiation with the main power or dominant discourse, the word “sexual disorder” will be redefined or reconstructed as well.

### **5.1.2 Marital and Social Status**

As aforementioned, human society values male-female relationships as determined by social norms that have been embedded and accepted for a long time

until such a relationship is considered as correct conduct and adhered to as the dominant discourse of the society. Therefore, to define any meaning deviant from social tradition or norms is perceived as an unrighteous act towards society. Likewise, concerning the concept of sexual relationship, the dominant discourse underlies “male-female relationship” only, and it becomes a typical paradigm of society. On the other hand, alternative discourses can also yield the existence of other sexuality and their different sexual expressions from the traditional ones.

Notably, society has expanded its sphere by rejecting the dominant discourse emphasizing the acceptance of merely male-female relationships and including the second discourse of gender diversity to interact with the traditional sexual relationship. To negotiate with a male-female relationship, people do it through some kinds of social activities or practices increasingly, primarily through the use of tradition, rituals, and culture, to create space for them in society. Accordingly, the expression of one’s marriage life through the public eyes is what same-sex couples use to construct the meaning of their marriage, primarily through a wedding ceremony. J, a single woman, expresses her view:

Marriage is a matter of letting others know that I’m the owner of this person. From the perspective of normal genders, it is a sign of showing respect. In Thai society, it is believed that women are inferior to men. Marriage is thus something to indicate respect, especially respect to the women’s family. However, for a same-sex wedding, the intention is to declare it for society’s acknowledgment. It is an announcement that I have none now. I have only you. It is a personal right. (J, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

Similarly, D, a WLW with a partner, reflects her idea on same-sex marriage:

Some people just want to have a genuine wedding. They love same-sex people and want to marry. They want to have such a moment like ‘once in my life. I have my wedding photo and ceremony.’ Previously people cannot do this as there was nothing to support, but now some people can do. It becomes a new

issue for any couple who wants to marry, so do we. I agree if he's ready. (D, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

From the interview with all groups of different ages, occupations, marital status, and socio-economic status, marital and social status is one of the factors that determine people's frame of thoughts in perceiving social phenomena. It is found that the appreciation of same-sex marriage in Thai society indicates the construction of another set of values that a wedding ceremony is the fundamental right of same-sex couples as well as that of male-female. In other words, from the social dimension, same-sex marriage has moved to negotiate with the discourse on sexuality, which is the dominant discourse held by society at the moment. G (a man who is a scholar in mass communication) stated:

I agree with same-sex marriage. If we perceive it from the view of humanity, it is also a human right and an equality right. At present, laws do not prohibit, and we have no laws to support it. It is an individual's right, like general basic rights. It is only the issue of how the majority of society perceives such a sexual relationship. Some parts of society may disagree, while some may agree. For instance, there is news on the same-sex relationship of some famous actors who are gays, so we have to think if Thai society agrees with same-sex marriage like this or not. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

F (a man) and E (WLW) mentioned about same-sex couples who organized their wedding ceremony in Thai society with the perception that it was another way to construct meaning in the sphere of marriage discourse.

I think it is normal. I tend to agree with same-sex marriage. It is possible to happen. It's just a change from male-female to male-male or female-female. It is the decision-making of two people. It is a personal right. (F, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

I agree because everybody has a right. Everybody has a right to do anything that causes no trouble to other people or society. It is not illegal,

either. Everyone wants to have a family, to marry, and to have a life partner. It is the right of everyone. (E, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

From the above statement, it indicates that there has been a collision between the dominant and opposing discourse, which is secondary, through an integrated way to negotiate with society. Such a way is to organize a wedding ceremony. Therefore, an arrangement of marriage rituals is the way same-sex groups exercise their power in constructing the meaning for themselves. On the other hand, society also tries to build a definition for these groups of people by using same-sex marriage as a tool to express sexual equality, which has not been widely accepted genuinely. L (a woman with a partner but is not married), who works in mass media stated:

I think they want to do everything to make it look normal, or like general male-female marriage. Same-sex people don't want to make it look different, but they only want to tell everybody that this is our love, and it is normal. General people perceive that people have their sex at birth, either a man or a woman. Both have to love each other as they own a reproductive system to bear a child. However, same-sex relations cannot reproduce like that. No heir will be produced. Then, people will perceive if this is abnormal. Like in the past, people looked at same-sex lovers as weird or having psychosis or mental disorder and questioned if it could be cured. Until lately, there have been more self-disclosure. Besides, media, such as drama, etc. started to portray same-sex marriage. At the same time, in foreign countries, there have been movements to accept same-sex marriage so that they will not feel like a minority in society anymore. Therefore, a same-sex wedding ceremony is seen as normal. Their families also acknowledge. Thus, I see it like people who love each other and then marry. It is prevalent in our society nowadays. (L, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

Another issue found in this study is that same-sex lovers do not concern if they or their couples behave in ways as determined by sexual stereotypes or schemes or not. However, they do concern about how to express themselves to look normal in



society. Besides, they pay more importance to their family's acceptance. For instance, C (an MLM with a concealed partner), working as an organization's executive, reflected his perspective about same-sex relationships.

In terms of cultural perspective, it is still inappropriate. Anyway, I understand that they want to express their love to others to see to show that they love each other and want to live together in the traditional way accepted by society like male-female marriage. Thus, to make people accept their marriage life, there must be a wedding ceremony. A ceremony should contain uproarious rituals to let others acknowledge that they are a formal husband and wife. Despite not widely accepted according to Thai culture, when I see news about same-sex marriage, I also want to marry. However, I don't think it's necessary to reveal myself that much. I do not fully agree since it is still inapplicable in Thai society. I know that it is a problem of feeling. Some people may become homosexual when they are grown up. They might develop continual behaviors when seeing two people of same-sex love each other. Thus, they want to imitate it. If possible, I prefer seeing the normal love of a man and a woman. In short, if it's me, I will not marry. (C, personal communication, May 17, 2019)

From the interview, C, who is an MLM, expressed his idea from the same-sex people's perspective and experience. He viewed that to reject the limited meaning of marriage to only a man and a woman, same-sex groups have tried to struggle to negotiate its meaning by a tie with a traditional wedding ceremony. Thus, an arrangement of a marriage tradition means an entrance to negotiate the meaning in one sphere of society. As a consequence, the meaning of marriage is limited to a man and a woman to represent the meaning of "a bride" and "a groom." Although, such penetration can illustrate the rejection of the dominant discourse of the society and at the same time portray human flowing sexual relationships beyond those of male-female, the exposure and acceptance of opposing discourses are still doubtful. At present, the rights of people of homosexuality are restricted, and they can conduct only the activities within the boundary defined and determined by society. Regarding this,

K, (a married woman who did not organize a wedding ceremony), working in mass media circle, expressed her idea as follows:

The first thing I think is they love each other, so they want to marry like other people. It's not a kind of contentment, but rather an understanding. Love has its way. Some people may marry, but some may not. Marriage is not a kind of announcement of one's marriage life that much. For me, I just married without any ceremony because I feel it's unnecessary to spend money on it. Thus, I don't feel that same-sex marriage is strange. (K, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

Besides, it is found that the culture and tradition of each society may perceive the roles of same-sex lovers differently. Some other factors become capitals for them to stand in the public sphere in a society increasingly, such as the acceptance of the family, professions, community, and the call for same-sex status as specified by laws, including their co-living, etc. Accordingly, the power created by same-sex lovers may have to rely on the foundation of those factors.

Some couples may think that marriage can upgrade their social status. Still, they have to consider their effect on their work and duties individually. If a government officer marries a same-sex people, I'm not sure if it's appropriate for him or her to arrange a wedding ceremony since society may still view same-sex lovers as a minority group of society. However, if it does not affect his or her work, I think he or she can arrange one. However, it's remarkable that once a ceremony is held, will other people keep their eyes on such a couple to see if their marriage can survive. Although the world is changed, human thought is changed, and society is changed, but the fundamental social structure still exists. Therefore, the revelation to the public may face problems at the initial or transitional stage. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Therefore, same-sex lovers can still play several roles in society, i.e., the professional roles, same-sex marriage life creation, legal claims, including their roles in politics, society, and culture, as appearing in society and through the presentation of mass media. It portrays the use of their roles and power in negotiating with society, which leads to social practices in constructing the righteousness of the use of society's influence in regulating the direction of same-sex lovers with others. It also involves different struggle and power exercises of same-sex couples as well as the creation of power for themselves towards sexual conflicts with society and their resistance in such power struggle, etc.

### **5.1.3 Economic Status.**

G, a male mass-communication scholar, explains the relationship between the meaning of same-sex marriage and economic status as follows:

Once someone is married and registered, it involves property burden and liabilities. This economic status will affect the marriage life of a man and a woman, including the marriage of same-sex couples. The only difference is social factors, or how surrounding people value their marriage. Will they be contented with it? In general, a same-sex marriage ceremony is often found in middle-class people, such as a northeastern man and a foreign man. We hardly see that of same-sex physicians or upper-class people. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

According to the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021), a part of development objectives, “the development is aimed for Thai people possessing complete Thai characteristics who are disciplined and have positive attitude and behaviors complying with good social norms. They are active citizens and able to adapt themselves and keep up with current situations and movements around the world. On the other hand, they should realize the flowing of global currents in parallel to the maintenance of local culture, which can cause a change in ways of life and contemporary culture.”

Therefore, the above plan is a scheme for determining the direction of the country, including making people in society be aware, while framing their conceptual schema. A part of the plan focuses on the right attitude and behaviors in compliance with social norms, which includes all types of practices. On the other hand, it also provides another direction of the country to realize the dynamism of global cultural currents in combination with the existence of a local culture that might affect people's ways of life and bring about contemporary culture. The latter reflects cultural changes and dynamism of social traditions, including the flow of culture related to sexuality. At the same time, the former insists on the traditional value of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman with no questions. Thus, to comply with regular Thai values, same-sex couples need to conduct any activities determined by laws, values, and traditions in which male-female couples do, and one of the practices is an arrangement of marriage custom as a sign of a husband and wife couple. Involved economic factors start at the marriage-request ceremony and the negotiation between families on the betrothal and dowry. Some couples have to acknowledge the property and liabilities of each side before becoming a married couple. Therefore, for same-sex marriage, such economic factors and procedures also play a part, not differently from male-female marriage. A, an MLM sample, stated:

Money is also a factor of living. Someone has to consider it in their decision making before marriage like male-female couples. Therefore, male homosexual marriage also requires the dowry. Have you ever noticed that when same-sex lovers marry, a ceremony is always held. Most of them are quite rich, so they don't care about the amount of money so much. I watch many pieces of news, and money is always mentioned related to a marriage ceremony. I found no news reporting that same-sex couples love each other so much that they are willing to spend their marriage life with hardship together. In some cases, the dowry is quite a lot, probably even more than that of male-female. Nor have I witnessed any news reporting that a homosexual ran off with another homosexual lover. They are required to marry, especially in a formal prototyped ceremony. No marriage ceremony means no public acknowledgment of their wedding despite their family's support. Thus, if any

family accepts to allow them to have such a ceremony organized, they will be delighted to see it happen. (A, personal communication,, March 16, 2019)

However, it is found that the constructed meaning of “marriage dowry” does not focus on the property of any party as the principal or critical factor, but financial status is only a minor factor in enhancing the image of the marriage arrangement. The most crucial objective is to disclose their marriage to the general public, surrounding people of a bride and a groom, neighbors, and concerned people for their acknowledgment and for constructing the meaning of “normalcy” over the meaning constructed by traditional norms as “abnormality.”

It must be consented by society or within one’s society first. We can see that some foreigners come to ask some Thai people to marry because they dare to disclose themselves. For male homosexual marriage with 100-million dowries, I’m sure it will be very sensational news and becomes talks of the town. However, if it is only a few thousands of baht, then gossip like ‘you’ re a queer, but you’re not humble at all’ will be heard. Of course, it’s possible to have financial status and the acceptance of people involved. Thai society is a dependent society, and we are afraid of being mentioned negatively by people in our community. Work or professions affect a lot too. It is a psychological value. At present, Thai society is more open, but still does not fully accept same-sex marriage as it affects our culture. Such cultural norms have been rooted in our society. (C, personal communication, May 17, 2019)

From the concurrent definition of C, the sexual pleasure of same-sex couples has been denied because of its deviance from sexual norms. Typically, members of each society are guided with proper behavioral patterns in their daily life. In other words, their behaviors are explained by structural meanings. It means that they are only taught to behave in specific ways under social structure and norms without being justified. Once individuals confront ambiguity or obstacles in their life, their solution is to define the situation and construct the meaning for the defined situation.” (Stoke and Hewitt, 1976)



From the interpretation of same-sex marriage by people of same-sex love, it is found that a marriage life of same-sex couples depends on the pleasure of both sides and the content of their families. Thus, the commitment in their relationship is achieved through their mutual acceptance since Thailand has not issued any laws to certify their marriage formally. It is still questionable if the attitude towards the supporting requirements can create equality for same-sex marriage life in the same way as that of male-female or not.

The financial status affects their decisions on marriage ceremony arrangement, including legal and family supports. Both families have to acknowledge their decisions since marriage involves two families like male-female marriage. (J, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

In conclusion, all samples: men, women, male and female homosexuals agree in the same direction that same-sex relationship occurs from the willingness of both sides to express to society that human co-existence should not have sex-divide. Despite their sexual-relationship freedom, same-sex couples can create economic status; although, the pair do not depend on each other in terms of economics directly. The study reveals that for same-sex lovers, the financial condition is not a significant variable for their marriage, nor does it affect their family's acceptance of their marriage. Besides, from their relationship that is not restrained by economics, it enables them to raise their earnings from their marriage life rather than to depend on or exploit the other side's economics.

## **5.2 Socio-Cultural Factors: The Perception and Interpretation of Same-Sex Marriage**

### **5.2.1 Family**

It changes by social appreciation and values. Since society changes, same-sex marriage or relationship is not a new issue only in Thailand. This phenomenon happens in many countries, so people in Thai society are more confident to

express themselves in that way. When society as a whole perceives it as not abnormal, it becomes an opportunity to create righteousness for same-sex couples to disclose themselves “I’m a homosexual” without concealment anymore. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

From G’s interview, it can explain that since human society gives high importance to the family institution as the primary institution that teaches and molds family members towards specific schemes or patterns, it is a part of the culture that induces human behaviors, including sexual acts. Each family will create practices perceived as appropriate and right for their expression in society. Members are also taught that misconduct or inappropriate behaviors can cause problems for themselves and their society. Because of such roles, a family performs to prepare the right tradition and ways of expression in society. Namely, it will not create any improper characteristics in society. The emergence of a same-sex relationship in society is another sexual alternative found in the present time. Firstly, society questions if an expression of people with same-sex orientation can be counted as “sexual disorder or deviance” due to its distinction from traditional or typical genders in society, namely a man and a woman. J (a woman), one of the samples expresses her idea:

Thai society does not accept same-sex relationships so much. People just witness that now in Thai society, especially in an urban area, there have been more third or alternative sexes: female or male homosexuals. We can see them walk in pairs. However, such witnesses can be also people’s gossips, but on the other hand, it is not what people can say it straightforwardly or condemn to anyone “I disagree, or I support.” If possible, I think to stay in the sex at birth and comply with social norms should be better. It’s better than being able to do it but not being accepted entirely. (J, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

Therefore, the decisions of homosexuals to have their marriage life without the sex divide are based on the objection against belief systems of society that have already specified which sexual relationship is righteous in society. By being

oppressed with the definition of “abnormal” or sexual disorder, homosexuals have to negotiate for themselves through some social practices towards social acceptance by opening public space through a process of social learning. In other words, society can accept their relationship through traditional marriage and proper conduct complying with norms of culture, values, rituals, laws, or even mass media. Accordingly, same-sex couples may choose to have legalized marriage and to have freedom of their sexual expression through a wedding ceremony to negotiate with the traditional social norms and values. Such negotiation is for creating an identity and establishing a marriage life, overlapping with the sexual relationship defined by another set of meanings of society.

It is related mainly to the family since mostly Thai society relies on family and the acceptance of their families. Some parents can accept it, but some may want to have some heirs or descendants. This kind of belief still exists. It does not disappear at all. Parents may hardly accept the fact that their children cannot have any descendants. Deep inside, I think most parents desire to have grandchildren, especially our society. To have grandchildren or descendants can make a family more complete. Mass media also plays a part because it can stimulate society to accept it more. For instance, it can present news about the marriage of some same-sex couples who have good economic status and good work but do not make other people in trouble. People of same-sex orientation with versatile abilities can also be presented. It can be social currents and disseminated through media. Therefore, mass media plays the role of portraying some examples of successful same-sex couples to the general public to see that these married couples can live together with a good life partner. Then, people may accept same-sex marriage much more than before. (A, personal communication,, March 16, 2019)

I think it involves all institutions, such as the legal institution. In some countries, same-sex marriage is illegal, but in Thai society, we do not specify that it's illegal. In some countries, it is both illegal and violates religious principles. In Thailand, our laws do not prohibit any same-sex marriage, nor does our religion. However, when there has been no clear-cut prohibition, it

does not mean that we support it. The closest institution of human beings is a family institution. Marriage, even male-female marriage, actually is not marriage for oneself, but people marry because of their family. Therefore, people like to say that they do not marry only their beloved one, but also their beloved's family. They marry their parents, siblings, and relatives of our girlfriend or boyfriend too. Consequently, the decisions are based on the consent of the family institution mainly. Although, marriage is a matter of two people, it involves each side's family, no matter your marriage is male-female, female-female, or male-male. Thus, the family institution is the most influential factor for same-sex marriage. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Furthermore, from the study, the responsibility for other family members, the interaction with family members, and the interdependence between parents and children are always found in Thai society context. Therefore, in starting a marriage life for male-female couples, family systems involved in every step. Typically, society expects a family member's marriage to add something in the family, i.e., to have someone assist, support, or take care of one another. Due to Thai inherited value, after marriage a bride must stay at a groom's house to serve the groom's parents. Although at present more married couples have their separate home apart from their parents' house, they cannot deny occasional interferences of family systems of both sides in their marriage life. The formation of family relations of both sides has been cultivated since the old days in Thai society.

I don't think same-sex marriage will cause any harm if they decide to marry. Anyway, society can play a part in same-sex couples' decisions, so can their family. Sometimes, it is tough for their family to accept it because parents want to have descendants or heirs. Therefore, the family institution involves the most in this issue. However, I think most parents can accept it. (H, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

Hence, if marriage partners are not the cross-sex gender as determined by society, the expectation of the family can influence their marriage decision. Generally, same-sex marriage may make the family or social systems unsure if the same-sex couple can maintain their status as a marriage partner. Thus, the condition of the family institution is an important and influential factor for same-sex marriage.

The family institution changes by social currents. Once there is a family with a member of a same-sex relationship, the family will look for other families to see how they deal with this issue, or with family members with such sexual orientation. In some families, it's the father who protests against it, while some families, it's the mother. Eventually, if they find some families where their children with same-sex orientation can have good work or be a well-known national person, they may perceive their children as normal after comparing with others. The only difference is their sexual taste. Since all social institutions change by an evolving society; therefore, the acceptance of same-sex marriage can be gradually developed. (K, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

A family thus is a reliance place or shelter for same-sex couples when confronting problems in society. It can also help to solve all obstacles of same-sex marriage. From the interview with the samples, it is found that from the energetic standpoint and acceptance of the families of both sides, including their assurance, influence same-sex couples' thought and their tolerance against social pressures on accusing them of having deviant behaviors. On the other hand, families also expect their children to have grandchildren for descent in the future. The impact of parents' expectations thus becomes a tense problem for same-sex couples. Therefore, only understanding families and their acceptance can justify same-sex love, especially in the case in which members of homosexual orientation feel confused with their ways of life and sexual expression against social norms. D, a WLW sample, stated:

Their family may know implicitly about their same-sex relationship. If one day, a family member tells his mother that he wants to live with this man or



that man without having a wedding ceremony, she may accept it. However, other members of the family will have a question or misunderstand why the mother brings up her child that way. Especially if it's a Chinese family, if we marry, we will be seen as weird. Chinese people mind so much about this issue. They will perceive it as inappropriate or improper; thus, same-sex marriage is impossible. Their family will blow up for sure because they cannot accept the others' criticism. (D, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

F, a male sample, reflects the interpretation of same-sex marriage influenced by the family institution. In other words, it illustrates family ties in influencing the standpoint of same-sex couples in their ways of living in society.

If considering society as a whole, the family institution is the most important one. I will not talk at the governance or political level. Nowadays, there has been no law prohibiting same-sex marriage, unlike Muslim countries. Therefore, there is no political effect on the marriage decisions of same-sex couples. Instead, it is rather a social issue since we have to live in a society. How is our projected image? Especially in our family. The effect on the family should be the most concerning issue. Can parents go to a market to confront society outside if their child marries a same-sex partner? How many questions will they face or confront society since their child's behavior is blamed by society as improper? Therefore, he has to encounter society. (F, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

From the interview with I, a male sample

I think social institutions involve as now there are a lot of social media. Thus, they can see this country this way, and that country that way. People stand up for changes to call for their rights. Even for Iranian women, they struggled for their rights so that they could choose their way of expressing their sexuality. Of course, the family plays definite roles. (I, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

It is thus found that besides social institutions surrounding discourses in society, sexual discourses are another set of the idea that mobilize people's thought. However, under the condition of the family institution that ties the relations among family members and is the closest institution of same-sex couples, the family institution is an influential institution that creates mental stability for them against the environment that determines their living in the society outside.

### **5.2.2 Laws**

Marriage relations will be smooth and permanent or not depend on social currents, family, and all related factors. Social systems embed sexual relationship values while family must consent the marriage life and sexual relations of married couples, and comply with rituals and customs as their practice guidelines. Still, society also needs to seal a married couple by legal provisions, namely marriage registration, as a social tool for stamping their marriage relations. Besides the acceptance of society gained from the compliance with traditions, laws related to marriage life also play a role in enabling the society to allow same-sex couples to live together and establish their family as determined by the society.

It is further found that when global society changes their view by changing situations, some social life, culture, traditions, and values that have not been raised as the essence of society are called for more attention. One of the most distinguished issues is the attitude towards sexuality and gender, especially homosexuality. The concealment of sexual orientation thus is submissive under the dominant discourse of the male-female relationship. The revelation of same-sex taste becomes an alternative discourse in social currents. Besides, rules and regulations provide ways of keeping society peaceful. Thus, laws are like the core of society for creating practical patterns for society members. Laws are a kind of tool in creating equality for people in society, including sexual equality. However, laws related to sexuality aim to the definitions of male-female relationships only; thus, it becomes a belief in the social learning mechanism that people in the society should learn without questions.

They should conduct their marriage life in the same way as the majority of the society, or male-female relationships. Then, there will be a question back on

why they cannot do it. Because of the laws? Or Because of the sex divide? Doesn't it reflect the reality in society, so groups of people call for sexual equality that enables them to stand in the sphere of the dominant current of society? Since they have fallen into the secondary current of society and have to stay in the corner of society, they deserve to have the sphere for entering the same current as that of normal gender. (F, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

From the interview with F, who is a male sample, it reflects that under the repression and power of society, ways of living and rights of alternative-gender and same-sex groups are blurred. On the other hand, social movements towards granting rights for these groups are not so apparent as they should be, especially at present in which there has been a struggle for sexual equality, which is defined only for men and women. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2560 (2017), going into effect on April 6, 2017, is the amendment of Drafted Constitution, B.E. 2559 (2016). It passed the referendum on Chapter 3, "Rights and Liberties of the Thai People." People are equal under the laws and have rights and liberties under legal protection equally. Men and women have equal rights. Any unrighteous discrimination cannot be committed against people of different birth and social origins, race, language, sex, age, physical and mental disabilities, income, economic and social status, religious belief, education, or political opinion that does not violate the provisions of the Constitution. Thus, it is found that while society constructs a set of legal discourses, another group of people creates another set of the meaning for the said issue, as illustrated in the interview with one representative of such a group.

It's strange that same-sex marriage is perceived by the general public as weird, while laws perceive it as normal, but have not granted equal rights. I feel that society has not opened so widely for them to organize a wedding ceremony publicly. However, conversely, laws allow same-sex couples to have their marriage registration or have their marriage life legally. It is like we just have marriage registration without any ceremony nor announcement to society. If you spend your marriage life with someone legally, while the other couple

arranges their wedding to let the society acknowledge it without giving importance to legal marriage registration. Then, which one does Thai society prefer? It may indicate that in the future, there might be marriage registration, but no revelation of the marriage. Laws allow them to do it, but society does not. It's worth thinking. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Thus, sets of meanings have been constructed in society ceaselessly with a different connotation. The meanings of sexual relationships defined by legal provisions are fixed and include only cross-sex relationships. On the other hand, although the legal requirement of rights and liberties in society introduces sexual equality, it can be explained only partially. For the sphere of culture related to same-sex orientation groups, there is always another set of explanations to negotiate with the regulation of social systems. Thus, the legal institution is one sphere for social interaction continuously via appeals to ask society to issue laws to support society members equally. In the case of C, a sample who defines himself as an MLM, he expressed his idea:

I think it concerns more about humanity rather than sexual issues. It is the law that gives respect to people, and we should keep it. However, it depends on each married couple if they want to have their marriage registered or not. It must be free. Why can men and women register and divorce countlessly? But why can't same-sex couples? We all have the same rights and liberties in society, not only men and women. We can exert our rights in terms of humanity. None can say that you have to register your marriage with only a woman. Therefore, the existence of laws is to indicate that male-male, female-female, or male-female relationships are all equal. It can't be that if you are a man and you love another man, you are not human. It is not.

On the other hand, if you are a man loving a woman, but you are bad, dishonest, and commit corruption. The humanness of this male-female couple may be less than same-sex couples. (C, personal communication, May 17, 2019)

Accordingly, legal provision is a tool to organize the convention of a human social process. In reality, the chance of divorces among married couples also often appears in society. Therefore, people of same-sex orientation perceive marriage laws as rights that should be maintained in Thai society to support all rights of same-sex couples to be equal with those of male-female couples. In Thai culture, the Thai cabinet approved the draft of the Civil Partnership Act or Bill, proposed by the Ministry of Justice. The main content in the act prescribes same-sex partners have the rights as married couples. However, society still has some doubts about some of their rights that are quite ambiguous, i.e., the consent for medical care, criminal proceedings, funeral arrangement after the partner's death, compensation or indemnity claims, heritage management, or inheritance, etc.

At first, I think the Civil Partnership Act is good. The government pays close attention to people of diverse sexuality and homosexuality. It seems to be righteous. However, from another perspective, this act seems to devalue our humanness. If the laws perceive MLM and WLW as equal to male-female couples, this partnership act is unnecessary. We can use the existing marriage act in hand that is for male-female partnership. In the new act, only some additional statements are needed. For instance, they should add a legal provision, "marriage can be a marriage between a man and a man, a woman and a woman, and a man and a woman." Instead, a new act was drafted. Thus, it is treated differently than that for male-female partnerships. When different laws are used, it can imply that society has not granted sexual equality genuinely. Superficially, this act is ok in terms of having support by legitimate power and enabling same-gender partners to live together legally.

Moreover, it constructs social and economic meanings. Same-gender partners can share their property and have the same commitment as male-female couples. Nevertheless, in terms of humanity, society still exercises the sex divide, and this act does not create genuine sexual equality. The laws are just for providing conveniences for same-sex couples who want to have a legal commitment to live together and be tied by legislation. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)



If this Civil Partnership Bill has not been enacted, it looks like same-sex couples have to pay taxes as a single individual, and all rights are thus different. Once people have a partner, they have to share all concerned. Under this law, they will pay tax in another way. Thus, it may be beneficial for some same-gender groups. However, if they don't want to register their marriage, it's also their personal choice. The laws thus aim to let us have complete dignity and rights in society and be equal like others in establishing their families. (L, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

In terms of laws, I think it's good. It's suitable for same-sex couples who want to have a formal relationship. Still, there are quite a lot of them too who do not want to register their marriage. They may prefer the way they are. Like our couple, we have not registered our marriage yet or organized any wedding ceremony. To have laws or the act to support us, it's good, but we have to separate into two issues. Legal provisions support us towards equal rights, but the desire to have marriage registration or to arrange any wedding tradition or not is another issue. A large number of same-sex couples do not want to reveal their relationships. They are happy by each couple's way. (E, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

From the above interview, it is found that the samples of all groups view that marriage laws that support rights of same-gender couples should exist in Thai society to create equality, including the amendment of legal provision to include more rights for alternative-gender groups.

### **5.2.3 Mass Media**

According to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2017, Section 35, under the Chapter 3: Rights and Liberties of the Thai People, "a media professional shall have liberty in presenting news or expressing opinions following professional ethics."

From gender criteria, it is found that there has been relatively a tiny amount of news presenting on sexuality, primarily homosexuality or same-sex marriage, compared with general news. The "minimal" amount is encoded with social meaning

as an “unimportant” issue, or “an issue to which has not been paid much attention” by society.



Figure 5.1 Self-perception MLM/WLW

Each society utilizes mass media as a device to explore human behaviors in its society that might be deviated from prescribed tradition and culture. On the other hand, mass media can portray representative images of practices entering to interact with traditional social systems. Nevertheless, while mass media is utilized by society for framing social organization and making people aware of the existing social norms, male and female homosexuals also enter the sphere of mass media for negotiating the meanings. Consequently, a search for alternatives rejected by society also appears in mass media. Besides rejecting some phenomena in society, mass media also reflects a call and opinions towards a positive presentation of representative images of same-sex oriented groups, including a positive attitude towards no gender-restricted relationship in the present time to the majority of people in society.

Arrangement of a wedding tradition is one of the concepts same-sex couples use to negotiate for power relations against the traditional sexual relationship, namely male-female. As a result of the presentation of a same-sex wedding ceremony in mass media, it implies that mass media is trying to offer another set of thought that exists in reality to society. It also regulates people's thoughts through a human learning process.

It can be viewed from different approaches. When mass media presents news, no matter through which channel it means within such news, there is an issue.

Notably, it is often interpreted as irregular issues. Thus, same-sex marriage is perceived as irregular, so it becomes news. From another point of view, the presentation of same-sex marriage news can also be an exemplar for

society to show that same-sex couples can marry. Thus, it can inspire other same-sex couples that they can do the same. As said, for general cross-sex couples, this is not a regular issue in society, so mass media publicizes it as news. Therefore, mass media can present both general news and absurd news.

However, it has to give the news in a descriptive statement, not evaluative. For instance, it can only report that there have been cases like this in our society. That should be better. (F, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

Mass media plays a big role in presenting news in a certain direction. It can present it as good or interesting news and can create positive or negative attitudes. Thus, it depends on from which perspective it wants to convey. (H, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

At present, mass media tends to present the marriage of same-sex couples, the acceptance of their parents, and good professions of both. Everything seems to be in a better way. However, in reality, I never know what it is. We see only what mass media presents to us. Nowadays, we almost see no negative news about same-sex marriage. For example, how is their married life? Is there marriage successful as presented? Mostly, I see news presenting their wedding ceremony and sensational news. (A, personal communication,, March 16, 2019)

If we can trace back to the previous news presentation, same-sex marriage news was perceived as irregular or abnormal news. It was limitedly classified as weird news. Therefore, the tone of the presentation was like this, “Hey, male-male wedding! How come? Funny.” Now, society opens for this kind of value increasingly. Male-male or female-female marriage seems to be typical. Then, it moves to present a new issue on the dowries or the sensational wedding ceremony. Mass media keeps changing its given subject rather than adheres to only the concept of the marriage of people of diverse genders, as it is not a new issue. The novelty falls at gimmicks of their wedding instead. For example, some got foreign husbands. The question is why it is presented online. It’s because online has no restraints on content despite some classifications. Still, there are some categories for exciting stories. Same-sex

marriage is also classified under this category. For TV news, it is limited by time or only in a short time. Therefore, mass media must have a screening process to distinguish which story is exciting and can be presented to society. Or this kind of news may not be exciting, so it will be moved to be reported at the end or can be readily moved out. (L, personal communication, May 9, 2019)

From the opinion of some samples, mass media should not present the news of same-sex marriage as exciting news since such a presentation can induce people in society to interpret it as something abnormal. Therefore, mass media needs to report facts to society. Since groups of all genders call for sexual equality for homosexual groups as a regular thing in society, there might be some questions if this kind of sexual phenomenon exists in Thai culture. Mass media thus might be an institutional device, reflecting what is going on and happens in society. However, mass media has to select news before its broadcasting as it is one of the social institutions that can influence people's ideas. On the other hand, it can create some ideas embedded in society as a whole. G, a male scholar in mass communication, proposed his views about the presentation of same-sex marriage.

In my opinion, mass media should not report about same-sex marriage. "Should not" here does not mean that it is a bad thing, but it will make this issue regular in society. It is based on the assumption that any normal phenomenon in society will not be presented in mass media...

Previously, the value of the news does not focus on being a good example. These people are friendly. I think the media does not value its news in this sense. Instead, it is presented because of its irregularity. Is this called media's bias? If mass media wants to claim that it is sincere to present those phenomena or because it wants other same-sex couples to see its presented cases as examples, it can do and assure people in society. However, seldom do I find this kind of content in same-sex marriage news. The content of news does not illustrate its appreciation towards the value of their love. Therefore, the media must ask itself why it presents this kind of story. Strangeness of

same-sex marriage or appreciation, admiration, or support for the marriage? By nature, what is presented in mass media is perceived as abnormal. (G, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Similarly, C (an MLM) reflected his perspective on the role of the mass media institution on same-sex marriage.

I disagree because if it wants to convey an image of a normal society, mass media should not present its news that way. Especially since we are a society of traditional culture, it should not be presented in any kind of channel. I confirm I disagree. Sometimes, it may be dysfunctional to let these groups of people witnessed increasingly because, in the future, their society might become a solitary elderly society, a society of which none takes care. In normal married couples or cross-sex couples, they can have descendants to take care of. In the long term, regarding the elderly society, these groups of people may face problems in the future. (C, personal communication, May 17, 2019)

Hence, a part of attitude found in society reflects problems in a same-sex marriage, which deviates from traditional social norms, in the long term. In other words, people of same-sex orientation might be a solitary older people, as assumed by C, an MLM. Nevertheless, this perspective relates to the family institution as well. Typically, to establish a male-female family, it is easier for them to have a marriage life without questions in society in terms of their sexual relationship. Anything that society perceives to be in accordance with rituals and tradition, or to be socialized can persist their status and co-living with others in society. Therefore, how mass media in Thai society will create any norms on sexual relationships, including same-sex, to be more open or accepted indicates the direction of its presentation, either to express their opinion or to provide truth to people in society.

From the findings, it portrays the perception and interpretation of the samples with different social backgrounds and experiences in two alternatives. Namely, mass media should or should not present news on same-sex marriage to society. The latter



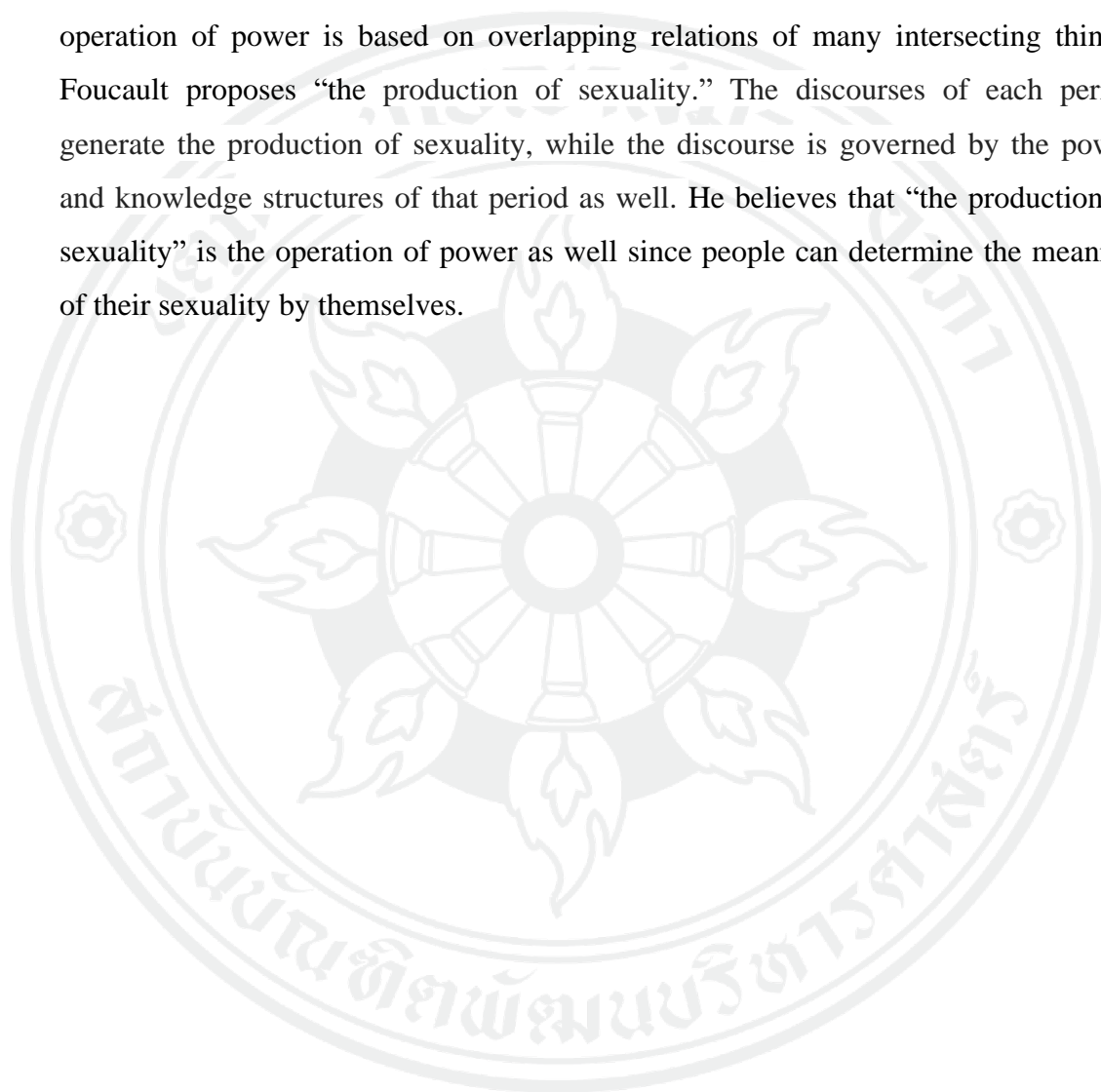
focuses that mass media should not portray behaviors of same-sex oriented groups to influence people's thoughts. Still, it can explain that mass media is a powerful and influential variable in inducing and creating any set of views into social systems. Therefore, the news presented to society is a mass media sphere that surrounds people in society. It thus can be considered as a form of political space that seizes to determine or prescribe rules for creating, regulating, surveilling, identifying, appreciating, and emphasizing any value and ideology for people in society.

In brief, the samples of different social experiences are found to be equipped with different ideas that lead them to perceive and interpret the meaning of same-sex marriage differently. Some differences are caused by different backgrounds and experiences of each person, while some similar interpretations of same-sex marriage are also found. Besides, some homosexuals also have different life experiences that are cultivated by various factors through a process of socialization and learning via a conventional method. Accordingly, there is an interaction between the news presentation of mass media on same-sex marriage, from the mass media's perspective, and receivers' interpretation of meanings from the social reality, influenced by embedded belief. Such interaction can define or create new meanings to society in the direction that accords with or contradicts the meaning of same-sex marriage constructed through a social process.

Besides, power relations cannot put over the alternative sexual relationship found in Thai society with the concept of the traditional cross-sex relationships in an adjoining way. To raise the current of sexual equality is one of the concepts to identify that same-sex relationship does exist in a society, not only in Thai but also in a global society. Although society has created an ideal meaning to accept same-sex orientation people, it is the construction of acceptance and creation of discourses for only particular groups only. The cultivation of same-sex and cross-sex relationships are still mentioned in culture, value, traditions, etc. by various social institutions in different ways. In other words, the sex divide and a learning process of sexual relationships involve some factors that keep distinguishing both of them and emphasizing their sexual inequality ceaselessly.

Moreover, all human beings have a right to enter some space in a socio-cultural context to conduct their social activities via culture, tradition, and laws.

However, due to the unequal power relations of human sexuality, all human beings in society cannot reflect their meanings of humanity genuinely. There has always been an exemption based on the use of sexual criteria to separate them. Besides, differences in sex, age, belief, and social status provide an opportunity for some groups of people to exercise power to manage sexual relationships. Michael Foucault indicates that the operation of power is based on overlapping relations of many intersecting things. Foucault proposes “the production of sexuality.” The discourses of each period generate the production of sexuality, while the discourse is governed by the power and knowledge structures of that period as well. He believes that “the production of sexuality” is the operation of power as well since people can determine the meaning of their sexuality by themselves.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research entitled, “The Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand” is qualitative based on Cultural Studies. The study aims to find how mass media in Thailand constructs the meaning of same-sex marriage through their presented news and if the implications change. Besides, it examines the characteristics of discursive practices on same-sex marriage determined by social institutions, including which socio-cultural practices affect the discourses on same-sex marriage in Thai society.

Hence, to achieve the answers as mentioned above, the objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To study the construction of same-sex marriage meaning presented in the news of mass media in Thailand
- 2) To examine discursive practices on same-sex marriage determined by social institutions and socio-cultural practices affecting the discourse on same-sex marriage in Thai society.
- 3) To explore the perception and interpretation of sexual-diversity receivers with different social experiences and background on the same-sex marriage presented by mass media in Thai society.

The researcher used the concept of sexual diversity, same-sex marriage, discourse, and discourse analysis as a conceptual and analysis framework. The concept of audience analysis based on cultural studies was also applied to explain the perception and interpretation of the meanings of discourses on same-sex marriage presented in mass media in Thailand.

In the qualitative method, the study focused on analyzing two main communication components. 1) Analysis of discourses or “message” and the communicated meanings of same-sex marriage through discourse analysis based on Norman Fairclough’s analysis

of texts, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. 2) Analysis of “receivers” through a cultural approach.

Data were collected from online news content of news agencies in Thailand on the internet, namely Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, which are influential news agencies on the Thai audience and present a variety of news types. News content focuses on facts and happenings in society. Therefore, the transmission of news means the presentation of events in society, which are very influential on individuals since they rely on mass media’s information for making decisions in their daily life and for any social movement. News from 2013 to 2018, a total of six years, were purposively sampled. The reason the study started from 2013 was that it was the year in which the Liberty and Rights Protection Department, the Ministry of Justice, proceeded the Draft of Marriage Registration, year...., which can be considered as the starting of movement on same-sex marriage by a governmental office in Thailand. Besides, such a year was the most significant period full of substantial information and raw materials related to same-sex marriage for the study.

Besides discourses or “message,” the study also analyzed the perception and interpretation of “receivers.” The samples of this study were twelve receivers of sexual diversities, namely Men-Love-Men (MLM), Women-Love-Women (WLW), males, and females, with different social experiences and backgrounds. The diversity of the samples is to have representatives of various social institutions of Thailand to explore if the meanings of same-sex marriage were interpreted differently. An informal in-depth interview was conducted with the samples individually.

## 6.1 Summary

The findings of the study were summarized and presented as follows:

Marriage discourses involve the benefits of two sides of married couples. Specifically, when same-sex couples struggle to seize the meaning or the righteousness in the field of marriage, two observations were found. 1) at the societal level: an effort of social structure in maintaining the fairness of traditional heterosexual married couples space, and 2) at the individual level: individuals as a new group of society trying to negotiate to seize the justice over the traditional area.

Such collision involves the use of words and the construction of meanings in the mass media space as well. In conclusion, the findings are classified into three levels:

### **6.1.1 Institutional Power and the Creation of Righteousness of “Marriage”**

Mass media in Thailand, particularly online news of Thairath Online, Daily News Online, and Khao Sod Online, presented the meanings of same-sex marriage of people of sexual diversity differently by different traditions of each region. The marriage or the wedding ceremony of people of sexual diversity has constructed a new meaning for a bride and groom representative in Thai society nowadays. It is the construction of a new meaning of marriage in parallel to the changing terms of marriage couples. Specifically, it broadens the previous meaning of “marriage” in the past that focused restrictively on sex or sexual identity of the couples to include people of sexual diversity as marriage couples as well.

In constructing the meaning of “sexuality” related to same-sex marriage, it reflects changing wedding culture and custom of modern society by reducing the dominant discourse of society that focuses on binary opposition or cross-sex couples. Thus, it is a newly constructed meaning of a bride and groom in Thai society via wedding tradition or ceremony. In presenting the news, some meanings are constructed through language, so language functions as determining how to perceive the world and human actions. Since same-sex marriage, including masculinity and femininity, is also formed through language, our perception is determined by such construction. Since power relations between genders can be generalized through wedding tradition or ceremony, marriage nowadays is unnecessarily between only a man and woman through the process of language use in news presentation.

Notably, lovers may have lived together without problems until the discourse of marriage emerged in society to create some righteousness for some groups with some institutions involved. Thus, human sexual relationship is no more non-patterned. The institution in society that influences human marriage the most is the economic institution as the changes in human sexual relationships also affect changes in “a mode of production,” fed into capitalist systems.



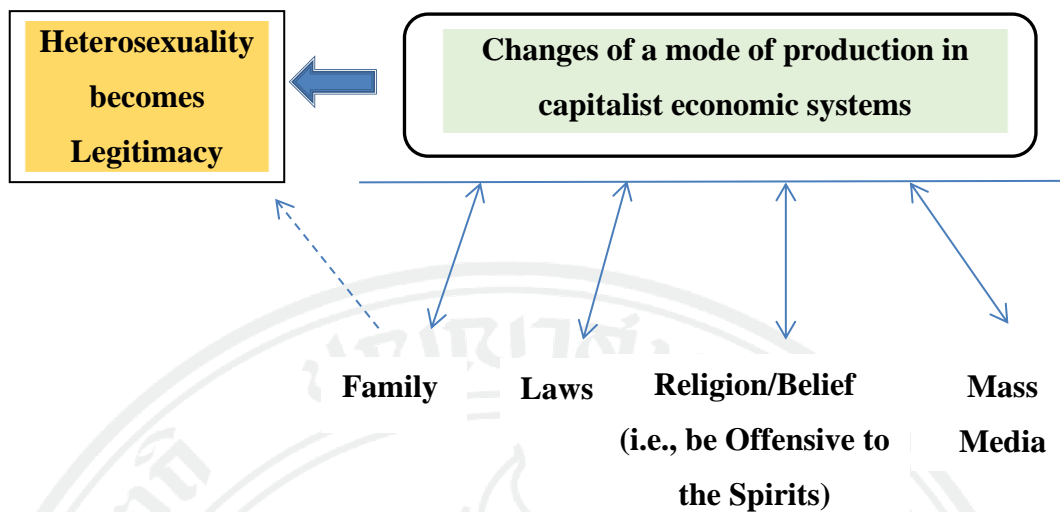


Figure 6.1 Explains why Human Sexual Relationship Requires Marriage Discourses and why Same-sex Marriage Discourses Occur in Thai Society Under the Capitalist Economic Systems

The economic cycle of same-sex marriage is like that of male-female couples. Homosexual groups have tried to negotiate the meaning by conducting all kinds of marriage activities determined by society or based on social values to let the general public perceive they have not violated any core values. It is a way of finding righteousness for themselves to be treated equally in society. Notably, modern society also requires the economic interdependence of married couples. Marriage is thus considered as a connection to financial capital. However, considering from sexual relationship structure, it is found that same-sex couples do not focus on economic factors as the main criteria in their marriage life. The only economic costs these groups use to construct their meaning is “wedding rituals.” Dowry just plays the role of being a symbol of one step of a wedding ceremony and a tool in creating an image of a bride and a groom, which requires specific prototypes. Besides, such economic capital has not been constructed with a meaning of family ties or bonds (a father, mother, and child) in the marriage discourse yet.

Accordingly, social institutions need to exercise their power to introduce the concept of “legitimacy” of marriage under the capitalist systems that have to produce human labor into social systems in cooperation with other social institutions. These

social institutions all play a role in defining the sexual relationship between human beings. Subsequently, same-sex oriented people strive to negotiate with the power of those social institutions to find ways towards legitimacy for their marriage as well.

The Family Institution is a part of society that tries to create righteousness for same-sex marriage through its acceptance. At present, the family institution has to play two primary roles. The first role is to be a social unit that nurtures and socializes family members to comply with social traditions and norms. The other function is to hold, support, understand, and assure them as a part of the family without yielding any effect at the societal level or affecting society as a whole.

Thus, power relations are always embedded in social institutions as mechanisms in controlling social network systems. Still, every power relation always has a way out while also faces resistance. Therefore, when the family institution determines and controls the thought of family members who possess deviant sexual behaviors, the negotiation of other society members then occurs. Typically, a change in the individual psychological state is harder than a behavioral change.

Nevertheless, warmth, love, and understanding of the family are a variable that makes this institution exist. Family bonds cannot be cut. It is a Thai core value and leads to the acceptance and understanding of family members with homosexuality. Consequently, the family institution has to negotiate with other social institutions as well. Same-sex marriage thus emphasizes sets of the idea, which reflect the concrete social structure, that sexual repression exists in society. On the other hand, some social institutions, like the family institution, can also help to create people's consciousness towards the existence of another form of gender in society more eminently.

The Legal Institution. Typically, social systems specify norms related to sexuality through the belief and value of male-female marriage, including embedded belief on sexual inequality. The roles and duties of men and women are specified, i.e., the structure of a family system, fatherhood, motherhood. Moreover, only male-female marriage can get legalized marriage registration and spouse registration; thus, the legal structure is a process that can refine the social structural system to accept rights, duties, and status of an individual in society.

The reflection of different meanings in sexual inequality or the establishment of sexual relationship in any form, male-male or female-female, is a consequence of the creation of conditions for creating differences. Institutions, i.e., social or legal, generate the power to dominate people's thoughts. Marriage gives space only for a man and a woman. In other words, in practice, the concept of male-female relationships is also dominated by the cultural dimension of each society emphasizing sexual inequality. Thus, it becomes social factors leading to a call for legal action or righteous power in opening a stage for discussion, conclusions, and implementation of guidelines for same-sex marriage. Nowadays, the flow of sexuality turns to present a gender diversity in society while creating a legal mechanism towards rights and liberties protection for homosexuals in Thai society.

**The Religious Institution.** The religious institution and beliefs are used as a part of a wedding ceremony. Thus, it is like a sacred institution enabling human marriage to be acknowledged in this world and the religious world or as a good fortune for their marriage life. There are several religious beliefs related to marriage in Thai society. Still, although the representation of a bride and a groom in same-sex marriage do not comply with norms in Thai society, the wedding ceremony follows the Thai traditional marriage.

It can explain that same-sex couples have expressed their identity in another form of sexual relationship through their negotiation with social systems. On the other hand, the religious institution can be another variable playing a role in same-sex marriage. The religious institution creates limited rights and liberties of alternative genders in accessing religion. It also specifies several prohibitions as human evil acts, same-sex couples thus transform those limitations by having the religious institution to be involved in the wedding rituals for their assurance. In short, instead of placing themselves into the religious sphere, which is obstructed and regulated by the central discourse of the society, same-sex couples have the religious institution to be a part of their wedding rituals.

**The Medical Institution.** In the medical institution, genitals of both men and women are just their biological or physical state, but not a psychological state. Therefore, indices for identifying sexes can be explained in terms of academic theories, i.e., chromosomes or genes in the human body. However, to clarify by social

structure, a fusion of same-sex married couples may be caused by the cultivation of social institutions.

Besides, the medical institution constructs the meaning for creating relationships in a marriage life by the expansion of species through modern medical technology. In other words, the inheritance does not necessarily come from cross-sex sexual relations. Once therapeutic development is more advanced, same-sex couples can construct another meaning of their marriage life through the creation of a family in their form. Therefore, their negotiation of meanings in sexual relations has been expanded to other sexuality groups through the creation of new types of sexual relationships in society.

The Mass Media Institution. From analyzing the news presented by mass media nowadays on same-sex marriage, another form of human marriage is constructed, namely same-sex marriage. However, the news on same-sex marriage has been presented to society as secondary or unimportant news but with continuous flows of information. By doing so, it helps to reflect some kinds of thought to the public, primarily through news headlines. Besides, the news on same-sex marriage seems to yield a more positive direction. Although the presentation of news may not gain immediate acceptance from the society, it induces less-opposing attitudes towards the conduction of cultural activities and traditions of people of same-sex orientation. Thus, it reveals the widespread influence of media on the general public and its effect on social and cultural changes. It is found that, for the news presentation of mass media, it always involves social contexts and the news will be responded or reacted by social members as well, i.e., the mobilization of mass media on some social phenomena or the construction of some meanings for society to acknowledge, accept, or oppose.

The construction of the discourse on “same-sex relationship or marriage” presented to the society in mass media has been oppressed by the unequal sexual power relations that focus on male-female relationships, embedded in Thai society since the past to present. Although the concept of same-sex relationships has been disclosed increasingly, social practices that do not comply or go along with social norms and values can be conducted at a certain level only, both societal and institutional. Although the meaning of a male-female relationship has been denied and

diminished, space is created for same-sex couples to express their power in the sphere of the word, “a bride” and “a groom.” Besides, it illustrates that since social institutions, especially the legal institution, cannot value or create sexual equality, a tactic for opening a new meaning of human marriage life paradigm needs to rely on an agency (at the individual level) to provide a negotiated meaning with social structure by connecting with the acceptance of the family institution of both sides. While the expectation towards same-sex marriage and the existence of same-sex couples are at the individual level, at the societal level, the family institution is the closest institution of human beings. When the family institution can accept same-sex relationships of family members, it will become a mechanism in shaping and creating a positive attitude for same-sex couples to conduct their life and to determine meanings in their social practices. However, to compensate for their struggle against social norms, a same-sex wedding ceremony in congruence with traditional and cultural customs is arranged. On the other hand, in the capitalist economic system, it requires feeding labor into the system; therefore, cross-sex sexual relationship is buoyed up by this economic system. Thus, same-sex marriage can be freed from adherence to the traditional social structure.

### **6.1.2 A Clash of Same-Sex Marriage (Structure vs. Agency)**

From the analysis of same-sex marriage discourses, using the “how” approach, it is found that the dominant discourse accepted in Thai society is “the marriage by social conventions or traditions,” namely male-female relationships. The secondary or non-dominant discourse, which is an oppositional discourse against the dominant discourse determined by social structure, is “same-sex marriage.”

The power relation and the exercise of power are found in the social structure via news presentation of mass media that influence the thought of people in society. Besides, there is also a power struggle and negotiation of same-sex couples who try to exert their power, possibly inferior power, to seize the meaning in society. Still, continuing movements to create and change the meaning of the dominant discourse are found. It can be called as another sexual-relationship battle.



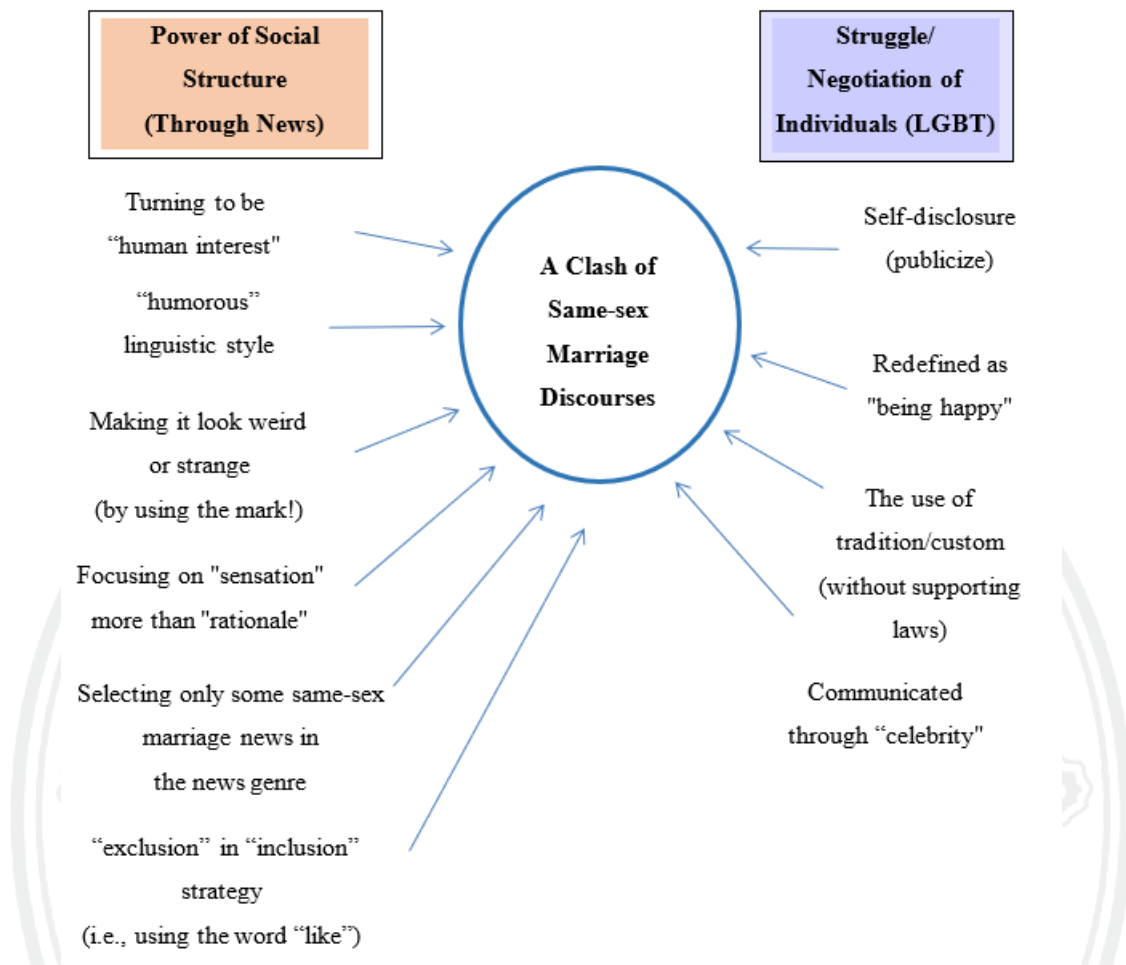


Figure 6.2 A Clash of Same-sex Marriage Discourses

From the above figure, it illustrates the endeavor of social structure in keeping the traditional social norms at one side and the struggle of same-sex couples through media on the other side. It is a clash between social structure power through the news presentation of mass media and the struggle/negotiation of individuals, namely LGBT groups.

#### 6.1.2.1 Power of Social Structure through the News Presentation of Mass Media

Thai sexual relationships, especially same-sex, that mass media has tried to present to society via online media or on the internet, are the relationships that go against the current or tradition based on the dominant discourse of male-female sexual relationships. On the other hand, there has been flowing news on same-sex

marriage due to the nature of mass media work, in combination with cultural currents around the world at present. Typically, news reporting emphasizes factual data and pressing issues, but for same-sex marriage news.

Furthermore, from the analysis of linguistic strategies, which is a part of discourse analysis, it assumes that linguistic approaches have some power in regulating righteousness on the issues of marriage. Linguistic strategies can indicate which can confirm more virtue in society: social structure focusing on the heterosexual or a negotiating agency or individuals on the homosexual relationship.

From the power of social structure, a process of selecting and presenting news is noted. The presentation of news is in the form of “human interest,” namely, the news is colorful and calling interest from people in society. This style of news might respond to some receivers’ curiosity. However, such news might not create any value or benefits for people in society who expose to the news. Another style of presentation found in mass media news is the use of humorous language, which can be perceived as another kind of repression from the power of social structure through news reporting. The amount of the use of this style found in the news on same-sex marriage is quite substantial. Same-sex marriage is portrayed as clowns in the news or an irregular issue in society.

Similarly, same-sex marriage news can be interpreted as a strange phenomenon through the use of an exclamation mark (!) to display surprise, astonishment, and excitement. It is obvious in the news headlines, aimed to present some sensational news or any deviance from traditional or adhered values. Accordingly, mass media is like a producer of discourses to let society acknowledge the meaning it intends to convey. Consequently, the construction of its meaning aims to create a sensational feeling on receivers rather than to give rationales to them for their scrutiny. Thus, most same-sex marriage news is presented through emotional arousal. They are constructed by a process for calling interest to the news and to the context where a phenomenon related to same-sex marriage takes place.

On the other hand, the social structure still has power over the news presentation of mass media on same-sex marriage. Only some cases of same-sex marriages are selected and presented in the patterned form or news genre. The news always cover the bride’s and groom’s backgrounds, how they meet each other, their

families' reactions and opinions, including opinions of those surrounding towards their marriage. News will be reported in sequences by each step of the ceremony, including problems and obstacles they face before the wedding. The tone of news emphasizes "surprises," "strangeness," and "humor," which is different from reporting general news, which focuses on severe and factual data in a straightforward style. Besides, only some cases of same-sex marriage are selected to be presented to society, based on the differences of married couples in occupations, age, or social status, etc.

Moreover, mass media is also an operational sphere of power in defining things by eradicating or excluding the definitions of others that tries to seize the meaning. The contradictions are male-female relationship vs. same-sex relationship, or a bride and a groom in a traditional wedding ceremony vs. a wedding ceremony of same-sex bride and groom. Each constructed meaning will be reproduced in daily life until it is equipped or embedded in people's ways of life and becomes a regular and acceptable issue in society like "a shared common sense" of people in society. Language is used as a vital tool in transmitting and emphasizing each person's ideology. Thus, from the past up to present, the mass media institution exercises its power in mobilizing meanings through language to make people think along and to create perspectives for viewing a phenomenon towards its conveyed direction. Thus, it has an influence on the culture and values of people in Thai society.

It can say that nowadays, mass media also uses the "exclusion" strategy, but rather "exclusion in inclusion" strategy. For instance, to use the word "like or as" in the same-sex marriage news. In other words, same-sex couples can appear (be included) in the news of mass media like male-female couples; however, they are also excluded from the news by linguistic uses with some implications of "eradicating" or "obstructing" same-sex marriage. Hence, mass media does not present the news in the way of creating acceptance from the audience or receivers. It only plays the role of defining discourses and opening some space for other alternative discourses to snatch the meaning from the dominant discourse. It communicates connotatively that same-sex couples are like male-female couples, but not all completely. Instead, they are still some strange or adulterated thing among human relationships in society.

#### 6.1.2.2 The Struggle/Negotiation of Individual Same-Sex or LGBT Couple (Agency)

The dominant discourse of marriage is under the concept of the cross-sex relationship with the representations of binary opposition. On the other hand, secondary discourses on same-sex marriage also move into the field of marriage to seize the space towards the acceptance of society, including positive opinions and attitudes towards LGBT people. While the male-female relationship has been created in both the real and online world in diverse directions, same-sex couples at present use communication tactics to provide alternatives for them in revealing themselves. Some communication tactics are an arrangement of a wedding ceremony, the presentation of mass media through the social structure, or communication through social media. Thus, power struggle and negotiation of same-sex couples is a kind of battle on a sexual relationship in a small space of society. The changed concept of marriage in society is the consequence of LGBT groups' struggle against the traditional social structure that tries to create a sense of otherness to the same-sex relationship. On the other hand, digital communication helps to expand ideas and create new meanings in finding a life partner for same-sex marriage.

Moreover, in the news content, aimed to struggle against the traditional social structure of same-sex couples, it often relates to the occupation of married couples. Since social structure sees same-sex marriage as abnormal, the revelation of the personal information of married couples in the news, especially their work and profession, reflects another set of thoughts to society. Mass media tries to imply that since society values honest work and professions, it should enlarge its perspective to value other dimensions of same-sex couples that do not violate rules and regulations of society, i.e., an arrangement of traditional wedding ceremony or wedding customs, etc. Therefore, the struggle and negotiation, or so-called strategy of same-sex power, which is inferior to the power of social structure under the capitalist systems, becomes a struggle in power relations at the individual level. Therefore, it appears that several same-sex couples have been using this kind of power in negotiating with the power of social structure all the time since the past up to now.

Furthermore, another strategy found in the struggle of same-sex couples against social structure is a new definition or to redefine same-sex marriage from the

image of “abnormality, clowns, and humorous issue” presented by mass media to “happiness” appearing in the news. Same-sex couples as individuals or an agency apply the strategy of creating the picture of happiness found in the same-sex wedding. Images of joy, amusement, and delight of same-sex married couples, their families, and surrounding people are displayed in the news. Besides, in the news content on same-sex marriage, wedding customs, and the acknowledgment of both families are also highlighted. Typically, same-sex couples will experience individuated thought. However, to reveal their unacceptable sexual relationship via culture and tradition accepted by society may raise some doubts and questions. It is not the question of the wedding rituals or ceremony arranged by same-sex couples, but on their same-sex relationship that violates social norms. Accordingly, the power of surrounding people can lead to the acceptance of these individuated couples and enables them to stand in public space in the real world increasingly.

When mass media presents same-sex marriage news based on the relative traditional male-female marriage in compliance with social structure, it also presents the way of perceiving the world and social actions, including the perception towards men, women, and alternative genders, through their content and language in the news. To respond to this, the strategy same-sex couples use is to marry per traditional rituals or ceremonies. Especially when the legal institution cannot function to support or legitimize same-sex marriage, they struggle through social practices. Despite some deviance in a same-sex marriage, it is the way of constructing the meaning of another form of marriage. Therefore, the negotiation with social structure may not be accepted at the societal or institutional level, but to struggle and resist social structure via culture and tradition or, namely, through the marriage institution, seems to be the easiest way same-sex couples can do.

Another strategy used the most by same-sex couples to protest social structure conventions is to communicate through a “celebrity.” First of all, actors or stars are public figures, to whom people pay close attention to their lifestyle. Besides, mass media is a channel for reporting what is going on in society. Partly, actors or stars, as representatives of same-sex orientation groups, reflect their points of view to negotiate with social structure towards social actions. Hence, mass media opens space for these stars who are same-sex oriented to use their roles given by society to express



their opinions on the changing values of marriage, both in the real world and in the media world, through their representation by public figures.

Moreover, the power of same-sex oriented people has been raised to be the power of their representation. It thus indicates social practices in creating righteousness of same-sex oriented people to negotiate their power with others and society. As the social structure is full of constraints and inequality, resistant discourses from the part of individuals as an agency, occur. Groups of homosexuality incline to negotiate with social structure via traditional activities, namely the arrangement of a wedding ceremony, as prescribed by society to create power for releasing themselves from the repression of social structure. Besides, these groups also exercise their power in other different ways. For instance, ordinary LGBT people use their power in one direction, while stars or public figures can create and exercise their power in other directions. Nevertheless, all of these are social practices for creating power for themselves to fight against conflicts and the dominant power of society. The reason is that these same-sex oriented groups are defined as a group with no role in creating or determining sexual relationships and other concerned issues for society as a whole.

### **6.1.3 Receivers' Perception and Interpretation of Same-Sex Marriage Meanings in Thai Society**

In this study, the researcher also studied the perception and interpretation of receivers who are men, women, MLM, and WLW, with different social experiences and background on same-sex marriage. The findings are as follows:

#### **6.1.3.1 Personal Factors: Perception and Interpretation of Same-Sex Marriage Meanings**

##### **1) Occupations/Careers**

The samples view that since same-sex couples can have space for performing their roles and their sexual relationship, it means that the discourse of same-sex marriage can be pushed through the dominant discourse of heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, to enter society under the discourse of heterosexual relationships, the power of same-sex couples will be repressed, concealed, and evaluated by the words, "inappropriate." Particularly, when same-sex couples are in

society, filled with fixed and strict rules and conventions, i.e., government officers, police officers, soldiers, etc.. At the same time, they want to reveal themselves in their workplace or to have their working society accept their marriage. Still, the struggle phenomena have been continued, depending on each individual's social context and circumstances. Therefore, they seize power with the dominant discourse of the society still carries on. On the other hand, such negotiation with the dominant power is still defined as "sexual disorder or abnormality" as well.

## 2) Social Status

The samples of all groups: MLM, WLW, men, and women, with different ages, occupations, and social status, interpreted that marriage and a wedding ceremony is a fundamental right of both heterosexual and homosexual couples. Thus, from a social perspective, same-sex marriage has been negotiating with social discourses, especially the dominant discourses, to which society still adheres at present.

Notably, these groups do not place importance on how to behave themselves following sexual conventions. Instead, they give priority to how to act as normal in society, including their marriage partner, and to the family institution mainly.

## 3) Economic Status

The samples of all groups give similar opinions that same-sex relationship occurs naturally and voluntarily by both parties. Both parties want to convey the message that human relationships require no sex divide. On the other hand, the creation of a sexual relationship with sexual freedom can also create an economic status for a family. Economic interdependence has no direct effect, nor is it a significant factor for the co-living of same-sex couples. It thus reflects that same-sex couples do not consider financial status as their primary variable. Nor is it a factor that affects the acceptance of both families. Their relationship is not established or limited by economic factors. Therefore, same-sex couples aim to develop their financial status together. They do not want to rely on their partner's economic status.

### 6.1.3.2 Socio-Cultural Factors: Perception and Interpretation of Same-Sex Marriage Meanings

#### 1) Family

The samples of all groups express their ideas in the same direction that a family is a shelter in which same-sex couples lean on when facing problems in society. It also helps to solve obstacles in their marriage life. Accordingly, the standpoint on the acceptance of families of both sides and the families' assurance on their marriage influences same-sex couples in enduring their marriage life and tolerating social pressures and criticism on their deviant behaviors from social norms. On the other hand, families also expect their children to have descendants or heirs. Parents' expectation of family descendants is thus a massive problem for people of same-sex orientation. Therefore, families need to understand and accept the way they are, especially same-sex people. Same-sex persons may be confused with their violation of traditional ways of living. At the same time, they also desire to express their status and their same-sex marriage

#### 2) Laws

Laws are comparable to the axis of society in establishing patterned guidelines for society members. Laws are also a tool in creating equality for people in society, including sexual equality. However, laws related to sexuality focus mainly on the concept of men and women. This concept becomes an embedded belief in social learning that leads people in society to comply without questions. All samples, including men and women, view that legal provisions are fundamental rights that people of all sexes and genders, deserve to have equally.

The samples, especially those of same-sex oriented people, perceive that the meaning of sexual relationship enacted as laws is fixed and limited only to the cross-sex or male-female relationships. Despite the statements describing the grant of equal rights and liberties to all, it can explain only partially. Therefore, same-sex couples rely on social space to acquire another set of explanations to negotiate with social structure. Thus, the legal institution is another space on which people enter for social interaction ceaselessly via their claims to urge society to issue laws to support society members equally.

### 3) Mass Media

The samples perceive and interpret the meanings of same-sex marriage related to the mass media institution differently. Parts of them view that mass media does not have to raise same-sex marriage as news or issue to call attention from society since people in society can interpret it as irregular or abnormal. Mass media must report facts to society. Especially since people in society, including men and women, all call for sexual equality for LGBT groups by making it a regular issue in society. Therefore, to present same-sex marriage news may induce some people to question what kind of sexual phenomena exist in Thai society. Still, mass media is expected to be a tool of social institutions in reporting what happens in society to people. Besides, the selection of news requires scrutiny before publicity as it is one of the social institutions that highly influence people's thought and implant sets of ideas to be embedded in society as a whole.

## 6.2 Discussion

The findings of the research “Roles of Discourses and the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage Communicated in the News of Mass Media in Thailand” can be explained in four main topics: 1) Institutional power and the creation of righteousness of “marriage.” 2) A clash of same-sex marriage discourses. 3) Same-sex marriage presented in the news. 4) Receivers' perception and interpretation of same-sex marriage.

### 6.2.1 Institutional Power and the Creation of Righteousness of Marriage

Socio-cultural factors emerge into society as mechanisms in determining “the acceptance of same-sex couples,” whose meaning is behind all acceptances in society. Likewise, the sexual phenomena in Thai society through a marriage process of same-sex couples leads to the generalization of rights and overall acceptance of human sexual equality through surrounding social institutions. Social systems involve economic factors. In contrast, the management and production factors require human capital to be fed into production systems to continue the cycle of capitalist economic systems. Similarly, human relationship through marriage emerges to create some

righteousness for some groups of people under the involvement of some social institutions. It causes some kinds of human relationships to be irregular or abnormal. The main point is what Karl Marx explains social formation and mode of production. He states that economic relations are the foundation of society. “Man” and “human relations” or so-called “social relationship” comprises several forms and dimensions of relationships, i.e., kinship, (through alternatives or marriage), male-female relationship, etc. All of the human relationships involve economic relations as fundamental in human life and society (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008).

Moreover, marriage under capitalist systems is the reproduction of new generations. Thus, the claim for a wedding is to bring about new people to be fed into society. From the standpoint of capitalism or capitalist economic system, marriage is the production of new labor into social systems in combination with other social institutions. Capitalism deals with the management of production factors (human capital), so it has to deal with other institutions, such as family, religion, medicine, laws, or even mass media. Accordingly, the power to create righteousness of “marriage” under capitalist economic systems and the management of production factors connect with several institutions in society. All these social institutions then determine the human marriage relationship. Same-sex couples thus try to negotiate with the power of these social institutions to find ways to create righteousness for their marriage. Accordingly, to generate understanding about same-sex marriage can be done through the knowledge of discourses, each social institution determines and constructs the meaning for it. Traces of social and cultural transition surrounding same-sex couples determine social organization by reflecting the meanings and pictures of same-sex marriage partially through their emphasis on some beliefs and ideologies in society. Sullivan (2003) explains about “real self or identity” of human beings, while Queer Theory does not believe in “fixed or stable” and “real” gender and sexuality. It assumes that an individual’s gender identity is fluid, fragmented, and dynamic. A gender identity is an outcome of the creation of “knowledge” or “episteme” and unequal power relations in society; therefore, it will change by power relations between “an individual” and “society,” especially when social institutions play a role in determining conditions for accepting same-sex marriage.



From the review of literature, there are many studies and findings on the roles of culture and society in framing and conceptualizing sexuality of people in society within a trail prescribed by society as appropriate for Thai society, including the struggle and negotiation of same-sex oriented people with traditional or existing social structure. For instance, Piyaluk Potiwan (2002) studied “Identity, Sub-Cultural, and Social Space of the Transgender.” She found that the transgender in Thai society formed their groups and created their sub-culture until they could create social space for their groups through a struggle at the group and individual level. It was a struggle in daily life and a negotiation with power relations in Society, which varied by the goals of life and experiences each transgender person faced. Besides, the transgender also created meaning for themselves under socio-cultural context and daily life.

Similarly, the study of Pimonpan Isarabhakdi (2015) revealed the opinions of different generations towards sexual diversity in Thai society. It was found that there were four types of sexual diversity most samples could not accept: Male-to-Female (MTF), Female-to-Male (FTM), Men-Love-Men (MLM), and Women-Love-Women (WLW). Besides, the samples accepted the transgenders more than the homosexuals. However, the samples’ attitude towards the transgenders was different in each generation. The samples of younger age tended to accept the transgender more than those of older age. Gen Y accepted them the most while the oldest group of samples, namely Silent Gen and Greatest Gen., accepted them the least. The findings reflect that the growth at different times, different socialization, experiences, social learning, and the acquisition of information cause differences in the attitude of each generation. Other significant variables affecting the acceptance of sexual diversity at the statistical significance level were sex, marital status, education, religion, region, and area of residence.

Besides, “awareness of same-sex marriage” has been equipped much earlier in other societies, not just occurred in Thai society. However, social norms, cultural values, and traditions of each society are mechanisms that regulate human sexual relationships to be on track as prescribed by society to be appropriate for men or women. Therefore, to exert power for any negotiation means to face an objection. It is what is said, “where there is power, there is resistance.” Therefore, same-sex couples redefine the meaning of marriage by entering social space via social institutions,

especially the family institution, in which there are no strict regulations. Still, one can create a set of knowledge on the acceptance of same-sex lovers the easiest. Thus, a family is a factor for creating “righteousness” for same-sex marriage and releasing themselves from the dominance of social structural systems. Narupon Duangwises (2015) portrays the idea of Foucault, who says that knowledge power is sophisticated in transforming oneself to be any form, without using any enforcement or legitimate authority. It can be contentment that makes people feel about freedom and happiness to spend their life. Namely, the instrument that enables scientific knowledge power to penetrate people’s daily life without referring to theories of Feminism, Marxism, biology, or psychoanalysis. However, all these theories transform to be “lifestyles” that people adopt to create their own life, i.e., identity or sexual identity (male, female, gay, tom, dee (lady), lesbian, etc.), the idea of freedom, liberty, love, desire, family, etc.

Nevertheless, “righteousness” of human sexual relationships is organized and framed by the relations behind social norms and concerned social institutions responsible for determining the dominant discourse of male-female relationships under the capitalist economic systems. As capitalism demands new generation into social systems while same-sex couples cannot produce descendants to be labor for driving society as required, the meaning of “marriage” in society is pushed by capitalist systems to cover only heterosexual relationships.

### **6.2.2 A Clash of Same-sex Marriage Discourses**

As the dominant discourse of society values only male-female relationships, supporting values, social norms, and stereotyped patterns of marriage traditions are created in Thai society. On the other hand, society exerts some power to obstruct the discourse of sexual inequality. Same-sex couples have to create some discursive practices presented to society besides their behavioral expression, i.e., a call for equality rights. One of the strategies same-sex couples use to exercise their power in constructing the meaning in the sphere of the word “a bride and a groom” through “same-sex marriage.” The struggle and negotiation of same-sex couples are thus related to power relations and the exercise of power in a sexual relationship. They construct the meaning of a sexual relationship that rejects the acceptance of only

male-female relationships at the individual level through an agency of same-sex couples and at the societal level through social institutions or social structure. Correspondingly, Foucault (1972) explains that discourses create things under specific rules. These rules will determine the existence, changes, or disappearance of everything. In other words, while society can develop something, discourses can also create and change the meanings of such a thing. Therefore, “same-sex marriage” is the seizure of mental or cognitive space on social structure from the power pressing same-sex couples to lie under cultivated ideologies through a socialization process. Anan Ganjanapan (2012) explains that discourses can be communicated by giving opinions, criticism, and comments of scholars on mass media, i.e., newspapers, etc. Especially, nowadays it is the era of digital society and the reporting of news through online media. On the other hand, a discourse constructed via language in the mass media news is not distinctive or has a meaning by itself. As explained by Fairclough (1995), a meaning can occur only when language is contextual or is communicated in a context. Thus, meanings are not only constructed by previous texts but only by influences of other external factors, i.e., prior environmental context and culture. Besides, it is reinforced all the time in our daily life until we understand as told. Finally, Foucault further explains that especially if people who say a discourse have high social status, social capital, or cultural capital, their words will be trustworthy. The more apparent is their status, the more visible is a border divider. Hence, in terms of power relations, the power struggle and negotiation of same-sex couples is relatively inferior in seizing the meanings in society. Still, continuing movements to construct and change the meaning of the dominant discourse have been witnessed. It is thus an expression of a struggle over the meaning of sexual relationships.

In the operational sphere of power, it also appears the definition for eradicating and excluding others’ interpretations to seize the meaning between accepting and not accepting the meanings defined by others, such as the meaning of “male-female relationship” and “same-sex relationship.” To fight with the definition of “male-female relationship,” the strategic power same-sex couples use is to establish another dimension of marriage by creating a set of knowledge aimed to gain acceptance at the level same-sex couples can do, or at the individual level. For the acceptance at the societal level, it has to be a struggle and negotiation on some issues

requiring cooperation at large. Thus, they aim firstly towards an individual-level goal that is sufficient for same-sex couples to understand and be ready to confront obstacles. As same-sex marriage does not intend to extend their lineage or descendants like male-female marriage, but only focuses on their marriage life, the acceptance of both sides' families is thus their ultimate goal. Distinctively, their goal is different from a male-female marriage that focuses on a proper marriage partner and to build an extended family in the future.

From the study, it is found that same-sex marriage phenomena do not appear in the real world, but they are also presented or reported as news on mass media in Thailand. News also reflects the arrangement of traditional marriage ceremonies and customs in the same way as that of male-female marriage. Van Dijk (1991) states that in the process of constructing a meaning related to sub-culture, it has largely proceeded through the use of discourse. Since "language" is never neutral, but always contains values, beliefs, and ideologies. Discourses appearing on the media play a very significant role in molding people's perception of the world they live in. (Kanjana Kaewthep, 2000). Since discourse is abstract, it must be expressed in "a concrete form," i.e., speaking, writing, photographing, body movement, etc. (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008). A working process of discourse (or so-called "discursive practice) is a process of adopting discourses to interact with traditions, thought, belief, value, and social institutions concerning a particular context or issue. (Chairat Charoensin-olarn, 1999).

Besides, concerning the issue of the acceptance of same-sex orientation people, some different findings are found. For instance, Narisara Wattanachaisriskul (2017) studied "Representation "Acceptance of Homosexual" of Teenagers in Thai Society from Club Friday Radio Program" and found that the acceptance of homosexuality was the representation that reflected the issue of teenagers' love. Linguistic strategies used were found to be related to the representation. Specifically, teenagers used the following linguistic strategies: the use of a set of verbs, speech acts, and the use of postulates. It was also found that teenagers perceived homosexuality as ordinary people and did not cause any problems to society. Especially nowadays, information is easy to access, especially by the influence of media, such as the presentation of alternative genders in dramas, films, and news. Accordingly, the homosexuals feel that they have an identity in society.

Furthermore, the homosexuals want to live by their ways rather than under a social framework.

On the other hand, in Thai society the acceptance of same-sex couples is not so universal. Nowadays, mass media also uses the “exclusion in inclusion.” The strategy is to present the news of same-sex couples in the news like that of male-female couples. However, same-sex couples are excluded as “otherness” through the way the news is presented, primarily through the use of language with some connotative meanings. Therefore, the presentation of mass media does not create an acceptance of same-sex marriage or same-sex couples entirely. It instead plays the role of providing space for other alternative discourses to seize their meanings in society. Therefore, same-sex couples seem to be like male-female couples, but they do not. They are still presented as “alien strain” or “adulterated occurrence” in human relationships of society.

Since same-sex couples cannot avoid the dominant power of heterosexual relationships in Thai society, they have to surrender and adopt such dominant discourse. Thus, the arrangement of a wedding ceremony of same-sex couples has to comply with the episteme of proper marriage rituals. The study of Kittikorn Sankatiprapa (2007) revealed that because of social norms based on heterosexual relationships, alternative genders (Katoey or queer) had to yield to such power and direct themselves to create an identity leaning on femininity and administer themselves to comply with the power of the dominant discourse for their existence in society.

As a consequence, an endeavor of same-sex couples in creating their identity and same-sex relationship is still partly under the shade of the dominant discourse of male-female relationships as prescribed and regulated by several institutions inevitably. The notion accords with what Foucault (1972) points out. He states that discourse is created from differences between what can be appropriately said at a specific time (under certain rules and logic) and what is actually spoken. Thus, the battlefield of discourse at a specific time is the rule of differences. Consequently, discourse creates all things under a set of explicit rules. Such rules determine the existence, changes, and disappearances of all. Therefore, things created by society will go in parallel to the creation and modifications of those things by discourse.



### 6.2.3 Same-sex Marriage Presented in the News

In terms of the definitions of same-sex marriage, among all discourse producers, it is mass media plays a significant role in making the meanings acknowledged in society. Mass media can be compared as a variable that constructs the meaning of marriage to society in another form, namely same-sex marriage. It can also diminish the meaning of same-sex relationships since the dominant discourse prescribed only for male-female relationships by social institutions through a socialization process. According to the poststructuralism approach, when mass media presents news on same-sex marriage, its meaning is constructed through language. In contrast, language plays a role in determining how we perceive the world and social actions (Kanjana Kaewthep & Somsuk Hinviman, 2008). Likewise, the meaning of same-sex marriage is also constructed by language. Therefore, the constructed meanings of male-homosexuality or female-homosexuality will determine how we receive the world and social actions of these groups and other people in society as well. Since mass media is responsible for reporting the happening phenomena and creating the value of news presented to society, how is the presentation of mass media on same-sex marriage? The findings of the study are summarized in Figure 6.3

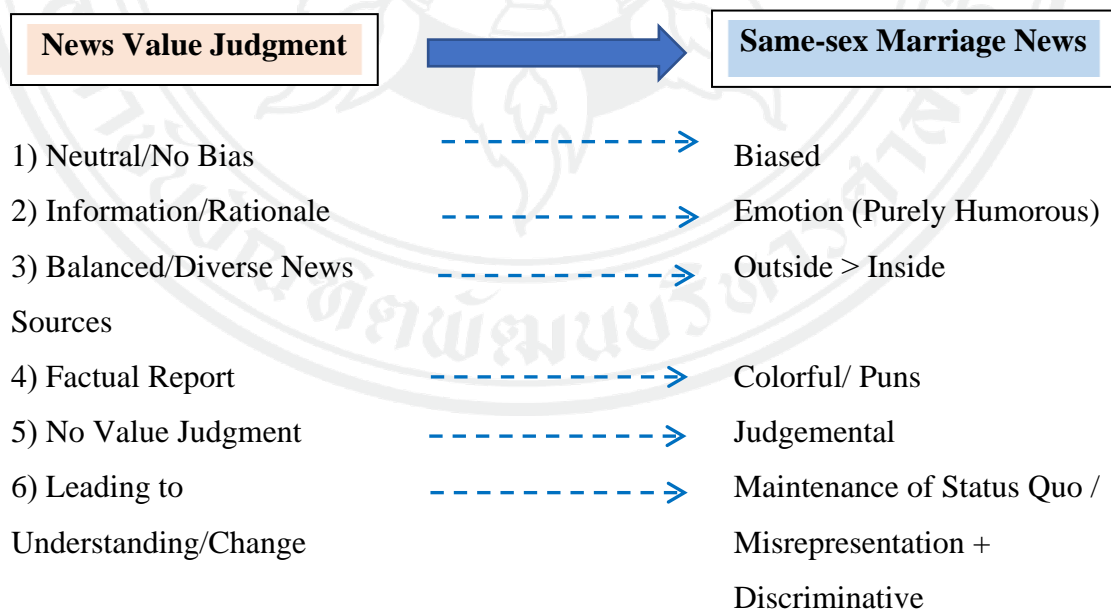


Figure 6.3 Same-sex Marriage Presented in News

News value is on which mass media should place importance through its writing of any stories or the presentation of any social phenomenon. News value can come from a selection of events or facts to be presented. Typically, it requires specific criteria in considering or deciding which news should be presented to the general public. Accordingly, a news value judgment is a significant component mass media adheres to as a criterion for writing and giving news to society. Besides, the mass media institution is also the producer of information positioning itself to report a social phenomenon that is called “fact” or “truth.”

Furthermore, what will be presented must be perceived as informative, logical, and neutral without any bias. To display any information that takes sides or guides society in a particular direction means such a mass media does not have news value judgment. Besides, news writing and presentation to society require creating a good understanding among people in society or leading to creative or beneficial changes for people in the nation. Hence, mass media is the foremost institution that reports information and produces discourses while revealing the truth to be accepted widely in society. However, mass media is only one of the social institutions that entail sets of thoughts and meanings for society to perceive and interpret the world, including the flow of sexuality phenomena. Up to now, culture, traditions, and social values surrounding same-sex couples have allowed them to conduct their social practices and negotiate with society in any social activities that do not violate legal rules or laws.

In the case of the presentation of mass media on the issue of same-sex marriage in Thai society, it is found that typically news can call attention, especially it can stimulate emotion and feelings of the audience on the occurrence. However, on the other hand, news on same-sex marriage has been presented with some bias. Some contradictions can be found in the news through the language used. Besides, it has been classified implicitly under miscellaneous news or strange happening in society. This kind of presentation has been found up to the present. Moreover, puns are used in the news to create a humorous tone of news or ridiculous news to make it irregular news. All of these portray a kind of repression via news since there is a high amount of this kind of news that exists in society but is classified as strange news related to a human sexual relations in society.

Furthermore, news on same-sex marriage is often reported broad general news, with no in-depth information and requiring no probing to get detailed information. The report is just a status quo, or it is a report of an arrangement of a marriage ceremony for maintaining social traditions. Eventually, it is an imitation of a male-female marriage prototype and is still based on the maintenance of the dominant discourse (male-female relationship).

Although same-sex marriage is still framed and determined by social structure, at least, same-sex marriage can be considered as “resistant discourse” of same-sex couples in negotiating for their sexual normalcy with social structure simply through either culture, tradition, or value of society. Normally, according to functionalism approach, there are four types of norms: technical norms, folkways, mores, and laws. Sanya Sanyawiwat (1980) views that since laws cannot create legitimacy for same-sex couples, the struggle on same-sex marriage might violate another two kinds of social norms: folkways and mores or tradition. In other words, same-sex marriage may have to chance to break folkways and mores or culture, which determines only male-female marriage. Thus, arranging a wedding ceremony by following the folkways and tradition is a simple strategy in negotiating with the dominant social structure.

From the study of Wang (2017), he found that in the news presentation of mass media on homosexual marriage, the representation was presented negatively and interpreted as deviant groups of society, which was harmful to the survival of society and social norms. On the other hand, there had been some arguments supporting to present homosexual couples as regular citizens of society like heterosexual couples. Besides, the homosexuals deserved to have equal rights to marry, like male-female couples as well.

Nevertheless, mass media is not only the primary factor to induce gender equality or sexuality equality and to reveal social repression that is ubiquitous in the present society. Therefore, the samples view that for an interpretation, it needs to distinguish that the current world does not have only men and women, but also other sexual diversity groups. An arrangement of a marriage ceremony of either heterosexual or homosexual couples depends on the determination of several institutions, including the social context of each couple.

#### **6.2.4 Receivers' Perception and Interpretation of Same-sex Marriage**

The samples or receivers view that the meaning of same-sex marriage involves “the legal institution” enormously since the legal institution is a tool in social organization, including the sexual relationship of human beings. When same-sex couples stand up to arrange their wedding, it reflects their disobedience and resistance against the mainstream sexual relationship or male-female relationship. In other words, they enter to create the sphere called “civil society” or what Foucault calls “other spaces” through some new forms of social movements, i.e., a call for sexual equality of alternative genders in Thai society or the mobilization of Civil Partnership Laws of the homosexuals. However, it is doubtful if an individual can apply the laws to certify the rights in their marriage life or rights as individuals. So far, the laws seem not to be the significant factor that can determine the meaning of same-sex couples as expected. It is just a tool to reflect the social acceptance of sexual equality.

Furthermore, in interpreting or decoding the meaning of same-sex marriage presented in the news of mass media in Thailand, the samples use their individual experience. Each sample uses different experiences due to his or her factors and social factors to analyze and interpret the meanings. The experiences might be those the samples faced or those related to each phenomenon. Correspondingly, Hall (1997) explains about the decoding of receivers that what receivers perceive is not “raw material that is a real phenomenon.” Instead, “it is the raw material that has passed a production process” with the meaning contained by a producer. However, in the steps of decoding from Hall's opinions. Hall believes that the meanings and content of messages have never been entailed but “produced all the time.” If receivers can interpret meanings from the content of the message, they will consume and give definitions to that message. However, if such meanings are inapplicable in their daily life, those meanings are useless or yield no effect for receivers. Kanjana Kaewthep (2000) further explains the process of receivers' perception and interpretation from a cultural approach. She views that experience gained from mass media is one of the receivers' life experiences. Consequently, receivers tend to connect their cultural experiences from other life angles to interpret the message conveyed by mass media.

In the case of same-sex marriage, receivers decode the message conveyed by mass media with negotiated reading, or they interpret the message with their

standpoint to negotiate for new meanings that are different from senders' intent. Still, on the other hand, they do not decode with oppositional reading directly. The interpretation of the samples reflects from the reality surrounding them that mass media may present a part or only some parts to create acceptance of same-sex marriage. Beyond that, social and cultural factors are significant mechanisms in determining "the acceptance of same-sex marriage," which is the meaning behind all acceptances of society. Concurrently with capitalist systems, mass media does not only convey the message, but it is the institution that screens and creates culture (cultural generator). As witnessed in our daily life, our thinking patterns, emotional structure, behaviors, practices, language, dressing, etc. all come from the operation of the mass media institution. (Kanjana Kaewthep, 2010) Similarly, the interpretation of receivers who live in the real world reflects their thought towards sexual phenomena in Thai society via same-sex marriage presented by mass media by constructing the overall meanings to negotiate the issue of human genders and sexuality via surrounding social institutions.

### **6.3 Research Recommendations**

1) An understanding and cooperation among government organizations and networks involving sexual diversity groups on the issue of same-sex marriage in Thai society should be emphasized. From the study, it is found that mass media and its operation towards this phenomenon in Thai society still place importance on human rights and sexual equality mainly. However, the problems at the societal level regarding the establishment of same-sex relationships have not been emphasized so much. The problems of same-sex couples' adaptation and social acceptance of same-sex marriage still need some solutions. Therefore, serious collaboration at the societal level to magnify an outcome towards appropriate same-sex marriage in Thai society in the future.

2) This study reveals the negotiation process on genders and sexuality of same-sex couples who try to create their identity and open space for marriage relationship in Thai society. Therefore, the findings from this study can be applied to



expand the body of knowledge on sexual relationship and marriage relationship through cultural approach by combining the results with other disciplines.

3) It is proposed that knowledge and understanding of mass media in presenting their news and information should be broadened. Mass media practitioners have to understand and realize the outcome and the effect of their presentation on LGBT groups and same-sex marriage on Thai people.



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