

The Primary Observation in relation to the Meaningfulness of Being Thai Lady Boy University Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to find the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students. It employed ‘feminist post-structuralism’ approach to be a theoretical framework in order to understand ‘Thai lady boy students. The data was gathered by purposive in Thai university. The study was used in-depth interview to collect data and analyzed in thematic analysis. The finding showed two themes of Thai lady boy university students which are ‘Kathoeay’ and ‘Third gender’.

Keywords: Feminist post-structuralism, Lady Boy, Kathoeay

Introduction

Feminist post-structuralism makes visible, analyzable and revisable, in particular, the male/female and straight/lesbian binaries, which are, in turn, mapped on to other binaries, normal/ abnormal, rational/irrational. Through analysis of texts and talk, it shows how relations of power are constructed and maintained by granting normality, rationality and naturalness to the dominant term in any binary, and in contrast, how the subordinated term is marked as other, as lacking, as not rational (Davies & Gannon, 2005). Therefore, privileged heterosexuality as the norm for all sexual conduct both western and eastern society.

Heterosexuality is persistently accepted to be the ideas of sex categories, to be a man is to be a heterosexual man, to be a woman was to be a heterosexual woman. This can clearly conclude that the interaction in the society is filtered and seen via the lens of a heteronormative gaze. The heterosexual discursive practice plays vital roles in the society. The discourse of ‘heterosexuality’ is dominated the pattern of sexual relationship between man-woman. It is embedded into traditional context which is so called ‘compulsory

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heterosexuality'. Compulsory heterosexuality is a famous concept by Adrienne Rich in the 1980s, is the enormous, hegemonic, support the belief which everyone is assumed and positioned to be heterosexual. Heterosexuality is positioned as the cornerstone of the sex/gender system in which two sexes and two genders exist. Heterosexual norms, relationships, histories and meaning making are, therefore, naturalized, supported, and enforced through hegemonic discursive practices and structures in everyday life (Leap 2007).

Thus, compulsory heterosexuality is enhanced completely by patriarchal system but could be available in many perspectives: via advertising, mass media, pop culture, and general cultural norms. For instances, the premise which the man and woman would get married because it is the standard norm of society. Also, every family nurtures the children to be heterosexual. Religion and secular perception presume that everyone in the world is heterosexual or treat heterosexuality as a norm. While norms are reiterated, taught, and learned in a myriad of places (everywhere, in fact), schools stand out as a sort of concentrated norm constructing space (Reimers 2007). Society romanticizes and embeds the heterosexual relationship via pop culture through many kinds of mass media. Consequently, anyone who diverts from heterosexuality is seen as a threat to the established hierarchy of gender.

Moreover, compulsory heterosexuality always imposes a penalty on those who do not conform to heterosexuality. Then, homosexuality is labeled taboo and, also, criminalized, while pressure is on person to form heterosexual relationships and bonds. The demand to enforce man-woman relationships as a social norm recommends that heterosexuality may be less an innate response and more of a social conditioning. Heterosexual norms, not biological instinct have such a powerful influence on university's student gender behavior. Normative heterosexuality is, thus dependent upon the reproduction of binary gender identifications (male-masculinity), (female-femininity). Man and woman are trapped with the dominant discourse of 'heterosexuality'. Dominant discourses are socially and culturally produced, constitute power by constructing objects in particular ways, and play a critical role in the interpretation of meaning (Francis 2000). To exemplify, Hawkes (1999) states that these discourses have been historically shaped by fields such as religion, medicine, law, media and academic disciplines. Also, Allen (2003) points out that dominant discourse derives considerable power from their entrenchment within discursive fields such as the legal system, religion, and the family. In the educational institution as university and college, the students have to be followed the culture of heterosexual discourse as well. To support, it is a

commonly taken for granted view that female students should act like girls and male students should act like boys Generally, the heterosexual discourse is dominated and embedded to the society tightly.

Accordingly, the students who do not follow the dominant pattern of heterosexuality would be somewhat catch the subject position and have their own subjectivity. The aim of post-structuralist feminism is to disrupt the status quo and traditional power structures by critiquing taken for granted assumptions and establishing contexts whereby individuals can draw up other vocabularies to produce new meanings and practices (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

This study finds the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students. It deems that discourses offer particular ways of seeing the world and being in the world. This study employs the feminist post-structuralism for granted to be a critical lens to perceive the meaningfulness of individual Thai lady boys' university students in terms of rewrite the meaningfulness of one's own subjectivity to present in themes in terms of Thai contexts.

Objectives

To find the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students.

Literature reviews

Feminist post-structuralism is used philosophically at the way in which marginal people are treated in the world and attempts to break down barriers by identifying how society influences to individual and how the marginal people make sense to themselves. The following studies describe the implementations and advantages from feminist post-structuralism.

Firstly, (Barrett 2005) points out that feminist post-structuralism disrupts countless notions many of us have been “raised” with, conceptualizing what feminist post-structuralism might mean for understanding and enacting environmental education research and practice can be difficult. This paper articulates understandings and assumptions of post-structuralism and explores how it has enabled me to come to know in a way that the researcher would not otherwise. She claims that feminist post-structural research necessarily produces better knowledge, but that it produces different knowledge than that undertaken by positivist, interpretivist or critical approaches. Linking theoretical discussion to on the ground examples, she examines notions of subjectivity, agency, and the constitutive nature of discourse.

Therefore, (Blaise,2009) focuses on how gender is created and sustained in an urban kindergarten classroom. By investigating the phenomenon of compulsory heterosexuality and analyzing gender from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, this study explored how young children take an active part “doing” gender by socially constructing meanings about femininities and masculinities from the gender discourses available to them in their everyday worlds. In addition, it looks at how they used their understandings of heterosexuality to regulate the gendered social order of the classroom. Qualitative procedures of taking field notes, audiotaping and videotaping children's talk and actions in the classroom, and collecting of student artifacts were used over a 6-month period to gain in-depth descriptive information about how children socially constructed themselves as gendered beings through the heterosexual matrix.

(Panapa, 2019) explores the experiences toward ‘Midlife Professional Woman’ by employing ‘feminist post-structuralism’ to be a theoretical framework in order to understand the subjectivity of ‘Midlife Professional Woman’. Feminist Post-structuralism is taken for granted to be a critical lens to understand the ‘meaning and experience’ regarding to the individual subjectivity. The data is gathered by purposive and snowball sampling. The study is used in-depth interview to collect data. The data is analyzed in content analysis. The finding is contented and analyzed into narrative description.

(Shereen, et al. 2020) describe the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, two spirit, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth with school-based sexuality education (SBSE), as well as to document strategies LGBTQ+ youth are using to address their evolving and specific sexual health needs outside of SBSE. Researchers conducted focus groups with 17 adolescents (ages 14–18) from urban and suburban Midwestern cities. Results of this study indicate LGBTQ+ youth find SBSE to be heteronormative, cisgender focused, and primarily focused on pregnancy and disease prevention, which contributes to LGBTQ+ youth experiences of exclusion. Results of this study suggest that school personnel should consider alternatives to traditional SBSE models to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, and that an important part of SBSE should include guidelines for Internet safety.

(Chapman,2021) states that feminist post-structuralism and queer theory were used to examine Australian early childhood educators’ views on children’s gender identity development, and the content on gender in the Australian Government’s Early Years Learning Framework. The methodology and study design were based upon qualitative phenomenological

research methods. The participants consisted of 12 early childhood educators who worked in kindergarten and long day care settings. The data was collected through semi-structured focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis was used to identify discourses deployed within participants' responses in relation to how they may enable or constrain pro-diversity spaces.

In these senses, there is no absolute truth in relation to the subjective experiences of the individual in many research and so on, which is waiting to be demonstrated. There is no absolute truth about the way we will be, as researcher, I will illustrate this study in terms of the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students.

Theoretical underpinning: Feminist Post-Structuralism

A feminist post-structuralism lens is valuable because it offers a framework for discovering and sensitivity challenging oppressive discourse which could be informed the individual subjectivity. A feminist post-structural perspective incorporates gender issues into a post-structural framework (Arslanian-Engoren, 2002; Weedon, 1997) and provides a critical standpoint from which to view and analyze the significance of individual sexuality. Weedon (1997) describes the feminist concern with post-structural theory as a way to conceptualize multiple subject positions with varied discourses, a way to give voice to constructed meaning and rewrite personal experiences.

Thus, feminist post-structural assumptions claim that there is a subjectivity formed by gender that is socially, historically, and politically based, that power and knowledge are mutually generative, that knowledge is developed in historical, social, and political contexts and is fallible, and that while power is exercised in relation to resistance (Foucault 1990/1976). Furthermore, feminist post-structuralism, goals of scholarship would include developing understandings or theories that are historically, socially, and culturally specific and that are explicitly related to changing oppressive gender relations. Rather than "discovering" reality, "revealing" truth, or "uncovering" the facts, feminist post-structuralism would, instead, be concerned with disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledge (Gavey 1989). Interestingly, Letts (1987) points out that feminist post-structuralism acknowledges the sense of one's subjectivity as shifting, multiple, and sometimes contradictory. Anyway, translating this theoretical stance into the lives and bodies of people proves quite challenging.

Feminist post-structuralism discourse views the struggle over identity within the subject as inseparable from the struggle over the meaning of identities and subject positions within the

culture at large. Instead of framing the slipperiness of identity as a problem to be solved or an obstacle to be avoided, feminist post-structuralists regard the ability to fix the identities and to be known through them in any definitive way as a powerful means through which we can ‘denaturalize’ ourselves and embrace change (Allan, Iverson, S and Ropers-Huilman, R 2009).

Hence, a feminist post-structural analysis is interested in exploring how discourse and power relation have shaped and normalized perceptions and truths in relation to Thai lady boy university students. Within feminist post-structuralism a multiple of definitions of things, way of lives, concept and perspectives are acceptable. However, with this research, it will support many pathways by concentrating to the texts of others and to explore, interpret and explain individual subjectivity within feminist post-structuralism framework. This study will seek the theme of meaningfulness regarding being Thai lady boy university who lives against the heterosexual norm of society.

The definition of terms

Meaningfulness: the robustness and amount of individual meaning-connections (Thomas, J. L. 2019). *Lady boy*: is commonly attributed to males who dress as woman and assume or are born with feminine characteristics (Forbes, et al. n.d.).

Scope of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students.

This study is drawn on phenomenology study which is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual in relation to being lady boy by conducting in Thai university. Data is gathered by semi-structured and in-depth interview and analyzed in thematic analysis. Over a 4-month period, six Thai lady boy students in Thai university are interviewed with the purposive sampling technique. The interviews are conducted in university area, each approximately 2 hours in duration. With the participants’ consent, all six interviews are recorded, transcribed, and translated into English by researcher. Then, it will be analyzed and described in thematic analysis which is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data to facilitate the discovery of significant themes in relation to ‘lady boys in Thai university.

Findings

Meaningfulness of being ‘lady boy’

Theme 1: Kathoey

Kathoey is a person who is sex and gender are not matched. Also, it is natural and spiritual from inside. Kathoey means a person who is not satisfied to be a boy. They really want to be a girl. Although society judges or labels them ‘deviant’ but Kathoey thinks that they have got the perfect right to love a boy.

Theme 2: Third gender

Third gender is more acceptable in Thai society. Third gender is not freak or sick, we are human like everybody else in this world. The norm and culture keep embedding that ‘girl with boy’ type is third gender. Third gender are categorized, either by themselves or societies to become ‘third gender’.

Discussions and Conclusions

This study presents the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students. Also, it explains the thematic meaning of “lady boy” in terms of individual subjectivity on their sexual selves regarding see and be in the world. Rather than being viewed as a lady boy student who are oppressed and marginalized by heterosexual norms which gender norms tied to the presumption of heterosexuality. The ‘feminist post-structuralism’ theory enables us to see Thai lady boy university students and explain the meaningfulness of “lady boy. As (Chapman 2022) finds that ‘feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis was used to identify discourses deployed within participants’ responses in relation to how they may enable or constrain pro-diversity spaces.

In the light of main finding, feminist post-structuralism attempts to recognize the importance of standpoints and lens through which Thai lady boy university students’ experiences to be ‘kathoey’ and ‘third gender’ are viewed and meaningfulness are made. Accordingly, the meaningfulness of ‘lady boy, which is concurrent with the research in (Chan and Cheung 2021) which states that from the very beginning, gender is part of our everyday lived experience. Early on, children begin learning and integrating messages about gender into their identities and behaviors.

In addition, the findings indicate that the lady boy student's experiences have no mutual definitions by being 'lady boy'. The lady boy students make senses of their world in the senses of their own. It might be given in the discursive systems of meaning which depends on the way regarding lady boy students are interpreted the world on the discourses which would be available to them in different situations. To support, (Fivush, R., & Grysman, A., 2022) state interestingly that narrative and gender as mutually constituted meaning-making systems and converge on the idea that narratives are constructed within deeply embedded gendered ways of being in the world.

Moreover, the findings of this research are consistent with previous study of (Suphsert 2021) which points out that 'due to the persistence of racial and gender stereotyping, Thai women have become more self-colonize and reconcile with their power'. Also, the finding of this study confirms previous findings by (Mata, et al. 2021) which demonstrates that 'participants described varied experiences with school-based sexuality education (e.g., none, abstinence only, covered sexual health in some way), but it rarely addressed their unique needs.

Thus, in this study 'feminist post-structuralism' has been served as the frame which can introduce an active, fluid experiences regarding lady boy student's individual perspective which has enhanced us to understand how students make senses of their world and constitute the meaning of themselves. Lastly, the finding points out that dominant discourse as 'heterosexuality' is not significant for lady boy students to produce the meaningfulness for being 'kathoe' and 'third gender'. A feminist post-structuralism offers the pathways to intensify this study in terms of focusing on multiple perspectives and open the interpretation and some spaces for lady boy student's voices of the past and present in order to express a plethora of meaningfulness of being 'kathoe' and 'third gender' in Thai university.

Suggestions

This study is merely the primary observation in relation to the meaningfulness of being Thai lady boy university students. Then it should be concerned to find the meaningfulness of 'lady boys' by using other interesting theories in the next future research.

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