The Transition of Worldviews: Collective Information Behavior during the 2006 Thai Coup D’état

Songphan Choemprayong

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Information and Library Science.

Chapel Hill
2010

Approved by:

Paul Solomon, Advisor
Barbara B. Moran
Barbara M. Wildemuth
Claudia Gollop
Laura N. Gasaway
Copyright © 2010
Songphan Choemprayong
Some Rights Reserved

(This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 license.)
Abstract

SONGPHAN CHOEMPRAYONG: The Transition of Worldviews: Collective Information Behavior during the 2006 Thai Coup D’êtat. (Under the direction of Paul Solomon)

This study explores the way in which people sought and shared information during a socio-political crisis, using the September 19, 2006 coup d’état in Thailand as a case study, where the traditional flow of information and communication was interrupted. Using Chatman’s notion of small world and Merton’s Insider and Outsider conception as major theoretical frameworks, this study particularly focuses on collective information behavior and the roles of insiders and outsiders in this disruptive situation. Exploratory qualitative methods were applied, including document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The document analysis covers coup-related public online documents (i.e., blogs, photos, videos, and Wikipedia entries) created and/or uploaded during September 19 to September 23, 2006. Sense-Making Methodology (SMM), including the Micro-Moment Timeline interview approach and SMM question roster, was used to frame the interviews. The interview informants were selected using two methods: eight from extreme case selection (whose content was most visible, commented, viewed, ranked during the coup), and four from a snowball sampling technique. The data analysis used both deductive and inductive coding techniques. The findings explain how people sought and shared information in order to make sense of the situation as well as to serve other motivations (e.g., to persuade others, to be part of a history, and to entertain). Some factors influencing information behavior during that period were examined including individual (i.e., emotion, memory, and physical capacity), collective (i.e., to know better and faster, to achieve particular goals, to feel secure, and to be encouraged), and contextual constructs (i.e., time and place). In addition, this study found that there
was still a strong form of the Insider among those who were in Thailand during that
time, confirming the applicability of Chatman’s small world. However, there was also
evidence of the Outsider, especially highlighting the eminent roles of converted members
– insiders-out and outsiders-in – in terms of bridging worldviews. This study supports a
call to reconsider threats from censorship as a derivative form of information poverty as
well as revisit the creation and adjustment of social norms, and the sense of excitement
in the context of information behavior in socio-political crisis.
To my mother, Bunma, and my brother, Songwit.

Without your sacrifice and belief in me,

my life would not have come this far.
Acknowledgments

Writing a dissertation is a long hard-working process. Throughout this entire journey, I have received tremendous supports from numerous wonderful individuals. It is very hard to mention all of their names to show my appreciation.

First of all, I would like thanks Paul Solomon, my advisor, who has guided this part of my intellectual expedition from the beginning to the end. I also would like to thank all of my committee members, Barbara Moran, Barbara Wildemuth, Claudia Gollop, and Lolly Gasaway, for their valuable suggestions and comments. In addition, I also would like to thank you Paul Mihas for helping me with NVivo troubleshooting.

Without all of the interview informants who shared their amazing stories to me, this work would not be completed and colorful. I would like to show my gratitude and respect to them all. I also would like to thank Natta Akapaiboon for allotting her valuable time (from writing her own dissertation) to be a second coder. Furthermore, I would like to thank Joey Carr, Dana Hanson-Baudalf, and Carolyn Hank who helped me with editorial works as well as being great social supports.

Everyone at SILS, including my fellow doctoral students, faculty members, and administration and service team, deserves my appreciation. In addition, it is a grateful to have a large social support group, a Thai community at UNC-CH.

Without the inspiration of Krich and Prapavadee Suebsonthi, my great mentors at Suranaree University of Technology, I would not have decided to get a doctoral degree.

Finally, I am greatly in debt to my family for their love, support, and understanding. Because of them, I had the courage to finish this work.
## Contents

**List of Figures**

**List of Tables**

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Statement of Problem ........................................... 1

1.2 Research Questions ........................................... 8

1.3 Contributions of the Study ................................... 8

1.4 Scopes and Definitions ....................................... 10

1.4.1 Political Crisis ........................................... 10

1.4.2 Coup D’état ............................................. 12

1.4.3 Collective Information Behavior ......................... 13

### 2 Literature Review

2.1 The Small World of the Information Poor .................... 15

2.1.1 Information Behavior of the Information Poor ........ 15

2.1.2 The Development of the Small World Concept ........... 16

2.2 Insiders’ and Outsiders’ Information Behaviors ........... 27

2.2.1 From Sociology of Knowledge to Information Behavior 27

2.2.2 The Insider/Outsider and Small World in Social Structure Terms 28

2.2.3 The Insider ........................................... 30
2.2.4 The Outsider ........................................................................ 31
2.2.5 Transition of Worldviews .................................................. 32

2.3 Political Information Behavior .............................................. 35
2.3.1 Political Context ................................................................. 35
2.3.2 Psychological Factors Related to Political Information Behavior . 37

2.4 Seeking and Sharing Information During Crisis .......................... 44
2.4.1 From Irrational Behavior to Rational Action ......................... 45
2.4.2 Emotion .............................................................................. 47
2.4.3 Rumor/Informal Communication during a Crisis .................... 49
2.4.4 Roles of Mass Media in Communication during Crisis ............... 54
2.4.5 Roles of ICTs in Communication during a Crisis ...................... 56

3 Research Methodology .................................................................. 59
3.1 Qualitative Methodology ......................................................... 59
3.2 The Insider and Outsider Perspective ....................................... 61
3.3 Sense-Making Methodology .................................................... 63
3.4 Research Design ....................................................................... 66
3.4.1 Document Research .............................................................. 68
3.4.2 Interviews ........................................................................... 71
3.4.3 Data Analysis ...................................................................... 80
3.4.4 Writing the Research Report ............................................... 85
3.5 Trustworthiness ........................................................................ 85
3.5.1 Credibility ........................................................................ 85
3.5.2 Transferability .................................................................... 86
3.5.3 Dependability and Confirmability ........................................ 87
### 6 Roles of Insiders and Outsiders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 The Insider</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 The Outsider</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Bridging the Two Worldviews</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7 Conclusion and Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Summary of Research Findings</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Information Behavior during Political Crisis</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1 Censorship as Derivative Form of Information Poverty</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2 Collective Information Behavior during the Coup</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.3 Reconsidering the Outsider in a Disruptive Context</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Limitations and Challenges of Research Methods</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1 Document Analysis</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2 Interviews</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Implications for Future Research and Practice</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Fact Sheet</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Invitation Letter</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Interview Question Roster</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Codebook</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Samples of Memo-notes</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Thailand: Political and Information Infrastructure</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Figures

2.1 Theoretical framework of the study ........................................ 15

3.1 Sense-Making metaphor ......................................................... 64

3.2 Data collection and analysis processes ................................. 67

3.3 Coding categories of small world membership ....................... 81

4.1 Windows Live Messenger screen shot during the coup ............ 136

F.1 The vicious cycle of Thai politics .......................................... 327

F.2 Estimated Internet users in Thailand from 1992–2007 ............. 358

F.3 Estimated Internet users in Thailand per 100 populations from 1992–2007 359

F.4 Thai websites blocked by any means from 2004–2007 ............ 361

F.5 Thai website visits (page views) in 2006 by months ............... 362

F.6 Thai website visits (unique IP) in 2006 by month .................. 363

F.7 Thai website page views in 2006 by month and type of website . . . . . 364
List of Tables

3.1 Status of small world membership ........................................ 61
3.2 Number of cases by small word membership and content type .......... 82
F.1 Coup d’états in Thailand from 1932–2006 .............................. 324
F.2 Thailand Press Freedom Index from 2002–2008 ......................... 355
F.3 Estimated mobile phone users in Thailand from 2001–2006 ............ 365
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Statement of Problem

On September 19, 2006, the Royal Thai Army staged a coup d’état against the elected government led by Thaksin Shinawatra. It was the first coup d’état in fifteen years and the twelfth coup since Thailand was first introduced to democratic administration in 1932. The 2006 coup was apparently motivated by long and intensive political turmoil, resulting in a mass polarization between those who supported and opposed the Thaksin administration. The military, calling itself The Council for Democratic Reform (CDR) \(^1\), canceled the upcoming election, suspended the constitution, dissolved the parliament, arrested cabinet members, banned political meetings and gatherings of political parties, and controlled and censored the media.

Although it was claimed as a bloodless coup, freedom of expression became a major concern among active citizens, the media, scholars, and activists. During the first twelve hours of the coup, all free-to-air national television stations were under the control of the military and became the official source of information regarding the coup. The CDR

\(^1\) The exact transliteration of the name is “The Council of Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy.” However, the “under Constitutional Monarchy” portion of its English name was removed later to avoid the suspicions about the role of the monarchy in the coup. However, such part remained in the Thai version.
banned any discussion about the coup and the overthrown government, particularly the ousted prime minister who was working overseas at that time. The censorship of communication during that period raised serious concerns regarding the trustworthiness of traditional media.

It is important to note that people were aware of a substantial role of the media prior to the coup. Mass media had been perceivably used to propagate political campaigns (either to support or oppose the Thaksin government). Opinions and critiques – instead of facts – overwhelmed the media space. Journalists had been questioned in terms of transparency and neutrality. Self-censorship evidently became a common practice among Thai journalists and editors (Woodier, 2008).

When the coup was first announced, the traditional mass communication channels and official sources apparently did not satisfy the needs of those who hungered for information. They sought information from alternative sources. Based on a preliminary observation, this phenomenon seems to deviate from the pattern of information behavior in a normal situation. As a Thai person living abroad, my experience during the early stage of the coup was memorable to me. I wrote down my observation on my personal blog uploaded on September 20 2006 at 1:22am (Eastern Standard Time).

**Seeking information in a critical situation: 2006 Thailand coup d'état**

After I enjoyed having lunch with my doctoral fellows on Franklin Street, I got a note from a news reporter to contact him back about the attempted coup in Thailand. I was quite shocked because I remember the military leaders gave an interview and told they would not do this. But they broke their words. Well I am not going to talk about what it is actually going on there politically. But I think it would be important for me to record what happen to me in terms of experience on information seeking and communication aspect. I would think we, as information professional, might learn something from this situation especially the understanding of how people cope with their information needs in a critical incident.

**Instant Reaction**

Instead of calling the reporter back right away, I turned on the computer and
checked on a couple of Thai national newspaper websites at least to verify whether his statement was true or not. However, it took a while for the pages to load and [the websites] looked malfunctioned. Some of them were even gone offline. I guess there would be enormous access at that period of time. So my first attempt to get the information was to answer “true” or “false”. No detail was gathered at that point.

Meanwhile, I signed on my Microsoft Live messenger (or MSN messenger). A bunch (about 10 people) of people in Thailand sent me notes right after I signed on asking me if I heard the news. The message alerts kept annoying my colleagues in the office. So I decided to turn the sound off.

My friends asked me if I could watch the CNN, BBC or any international news outlets (either on TV or radio). They told me that all national television channels have been controlled by those who called themselves “the reform group”. They asked me if I see the tank. I was really surprised and began panic after realizing that all Thai people cannot access other news sources except the ones controlled by the military. All international television channels were terminated. [I later found out that some were still accessible] Only national televisions were running official coup announcements. The announcements were the only information sources they got at the moment.

A number of friends formed group chats discussing about the issues and kept updating the situation. We were sharing and verifying the news that we had. There were a lot of rumors throwing out into the group. What we all do were checking where the rumors were from. For example, we got the rumor about who took control, who will be the next prime minister, the communication that would be cut off since the coup d’état group will take control of the Communication Authority of Thailand (CAT). I believe that the rumor s sent from one-to-one connection rather than mass communication.

Then I decided to check out international media websites like CNN and BBC. There I could see the video and read the whole story. I tried not to get the news from any national news websites since the political turmoil, been in this country for a while, made me curious about their standing points whether they are English or Thai newspapers. Therefore, I decided to use the international agencies because they seems to be more neutral and off the issues. (Note: The political tension against Thaksin involved a lot of media engagement. A number of leaders of the mob are from media agencies.)

This was also the case when the coup happened in 1992. The only source of information at that time was BBC news radio (Thai Language). The station was based in London. People would like to know what was going on from the sources that were available and trustworthy. As a result, the situation made a hero. BBC news radio (Thai) became one of most favorite and reliable radio station during that time. Unfortunately, last year BBC Headquarters decided to shut down the operation of the BBC Thai station due to financial
There were a lot of calls to reconsider the decision from the audiences. However, they did not make it through. I wonder if today the station still operated, it would have been once again the most heroic situation for the station. Anyway, when people do not have any other choice, we had to find the way out but how?

Among a number of instant messenger windows, there had been rumors all along that all communication channels, Internet and telephone, which mainly controlled by Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT) would be shut down for a while. At the same time, a friend of mine in Chapel Hill told me that he tried to call his girlfriend in Thailand. The phone call was cut off. I felt overwhelmed by the information and was kind of worried that I would not be able to connect to my family and friends in Thailand. The only way to prove the rumor was to call my mom.

I called my mom. It worked very well. My mom did not sound panic at all. It seemed like she heard and prepared for the rumor of coup before as well as other people I read on BBC opinion section. (I supposed those are people who are against Thaksin) During the talk, the announcement was coming up. My mom put the phone near the TV set so I could hear the announcement. I hardly heard what it said but at least I felt involved in the event. She told me that she was able to call my brother and her siblings who live in Bangkok. The network was not that bad. Then I was relieved emotionally. I figured it out myself that there would be enormous connection that caused fail connection. Anyway, I still needed to keep watching if all the communication channels were going to cut off as the rumor said.

Gathering Information

The phenomenon was interesting in that it revealed the importance of social capital. I was fascinated by how groups rapidly formed via instant messenger. Microsoft Live Messenger (or MSN Messenger) is the most popular tool among my Thai community. I got involved with two groups without getting their permissions. They dragged me in because they wanted me to report as an “outsider”. This reminded me of Chatman’s theory of life in the round. My friends’ and family’s world at the moment was restricted. Unfortunately, I could not access any media in my office except the Internet by that time. I believe that if at that time I was able to connect to other live media, I could have been one of the trusted sources among my friends.

There were actually two IM groups on my desktop. One group included my friends in college and I have their contacts in my list. The other group of people were those who I know from previous work and those who have become friends of mine now. Also I got IM messages from other individuals on my list as well including those whom I rarely talked to. I could also have merged this two group together. I did not do so because I thought there might be an explosion of information for all. The conversations went very fast. I could not
keep track of both of them. I had to decide which is the main one and then left the other one behind. This situation brought people together to perform “collaborative information seeking” tasks.

Another source of information that I usually use to update what is going on in Thailand is the most popular and largest national online community named “pantip.com”. With pantip.com I can get the news from the mainstream media as well as behind-the-scenes information. There are a number of rooms in the webboard, including, for example, seeking relationships (Siam Square), entertainment (Chalermthai), and Thais overseas (Klaiban). One of the most active rooms is the political room (Rajdumnern). I checked the Rajdumnern room first. The room was closed (until the time I am writing this post) because they said they cannot control the post. They also asked for attention not to create politic-related posts in other rooms.

However, it is hard to control the enormous waves of thoughts. I went to Chalermthai, the entertainment room. It is hard to control people not to talk anything about their experiences, especially on how they could not get access to mainstream media (e.g. “bring CNN BBC Bloomberg back”; Note: This post may not stay much very long). Also there have been questions regarding the temporary termination of their usual and special entertainment activities since the group declared today (September 20, Thailand Time) as a holiday for government offices and banks. Also there are a couple of posts calling for respecting the norms of not talking about politics.

However, at the time, I looked at Chalermthai recently. There were less than 100 posts since the first post about the emergency call by Thaksin (about 10pm on September 19). I actually expected more posts though. However, since the administrator asked for cooperation, I figured that might be the reason that there were less posts than I thought. Among those posts, there were a few posts that do not relate to the turmoil.

In Klaiban, the Thais overseas room, there were less than 20 discussions about the situation, at the time of writing. Again, I thought this would be a good spot for people outside Thailand to update and share their information they got. It did not turn out as I expected, anyway.

Social Networking

When I looked at international mainstream media websites such as BBC and CNN. On their websites, there were options where local people could report what was going on there (e.g. CNN i-report and BBC’s Eyewitnesses: Bangkok turmoil.) Although one would imagine and wonder about the filter process, they were some sources that people could use collaboratively to build a picture of the situation. Actually there seems to be more posts saying that the situation was calm and quiet there. But most of the “identity” on that website seems to be from an English-speaking person, which frankly I trusted less
than the words from Thai people. Anyway, those words made me feel more comfortable with the situation there.

Wikipedia is one of the most updated places. There is a topic called “2006 Thailand coup d’état”. A lot of people have been active in writing the topic. The item has evolved as time goes by. It is actually interesting that these people do not write only the encyclopedia record, but also the history of the country and the world. However, as the classic inquiry about Wikipedia, it would be nice to know who those people are.

Blog is another space where the updates could be harvested. In my blogroll, I have not seen any post regarding the situation until an hour after the announcement. There is a Thai blog called “revolution,” mainly summarizing and citing the news from different mainstream sources. Also 19sep is an English blog updating news from various sources. However, There are not many other blogs I could think or link to. Therefore, I went to Technorati to check English blog. Not surprisingly, “Thailand” and “Bangkok” were among the top search terms, although the first result from “Thailand” search was Lesbian Strippers Sex Games (-_-).

In addition to keep watching CNN on TV, I also keep refreshing Google news to see the latest news. However, I did not read every single piece. Instead I read only the headlines and the excerpts. Until I found any piece new, I then click to read more detail.

As the time I am writing this post, I keep CNN international on and updating the news to them. I still get IM from Thai folks. I hope the situation will return to normal soon.

In such a critical situation like a coup d’état, the world of the insider was restricted. However, accessing information is the only way to cope with people’s stress, uncertainty, and confusion. Only a single official source did not serve the hungers for information. The Internet, especially through social networking tools, has shown its power as the major communication channel to fulfill people’s information need in this critical situation.

We have learned that people seek and share information in order to cope with stress, uncertainty, and confusion in everyday life. Nevertheless, it is a critical situation that assumingly increases the degree of the desire to seek and share information. In closing her article The Impoverished Life-World of Outsiders, Chatman (1996) asserted that “[i]t is the [recognition] of the existence of a critical situation which converts what was otherwise mere information into news” (p.29). The fundamental goal of this study is to explore and explain the way in which people seek and share information during political
Another focus of this study emerged from the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by people during the early stage of the coup (i.e., while the operations of the media were under the control of the military). ICTs evidently have essential roles during social crises, especially diminishing the difficulties posed by geographic separation (e.g., Hagar, 2005). When ICTs are substantially involved in the space of crisis, the physical and virtual world become simultaneous and intertwined (Palen, Hiltz, & Liu, 2007; Palen & Liu, 2007; Palen, Vieweg, Sutton, Liu, & Hughes, 2007). From preliminary observations as a Thai person who was living abroad during the coup, the world of insiders seemed to be restricted. It is apparent that the role of outsiders, such as those who live outside Thailand and the international media, was crucial. Thus, this study particularly pays attention to the deviated flow of information through the interactions between insiders and outsiders.

Chatman's (1999) Theory of Life in the Round discusses the way in which people (i.e., the information poor), in everyday life, construct social boundaries and tend to restrict themselves from crossing such boundaries (i.e., decline to seek information from the outside world). In particular, the sixth proposition of the theory provides three conditional exceptions that make a member who lives in a round (i.e., an insider) to seek information from outside their own world. This exploratory study aims to validate and extend the theory by 1) expanding the discourse of information behavior of information poor beyond an everyday life context (i.e., a political crisis, in this study); and 2) extending the understanding of conditions/factors influencing the interactions between insiders and outsiders especially when the insiders step outside of their own world to obtain information.
1.2 Research Questions

To respond to the conditions addressed above, this study focuses on the following research questions regarding collective information behavior during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état.

1. How did people seek and share information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?

2. What were the factors influencing the way people sought (and did not seek) information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?

3. What were the roles of insiders/outsiders in terms of seeking and sharing information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?

1.3 Contributions of the Study

Fundamentally, it is believed that the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand was a contextual stimulus to changes in information behavior.

Context has become the focus of information behavior and system design research since the call for a paradigm shift by Dervin and Nilan (1986). In addition to the everyday life of specific populations, attention has been paid to non-routine contexts such as natural crises, wars, and personal health issues (e.g., McKnight & Zach, n.d.; Featherstone, Lyon, & Ruffin, 2008; Turoff & Hiltz, 2008; Robbin & Buente, 2008). However, most of these studies are from a top-down perspective. In other words, researchers have viewed the phenomena from practitioners’ and institutions’ point of view (i.e., disaster planning, emergency preparedness, disaster recovery). Only a few have interests in a critical context from the users’ perspectives (e.g., Hagar, 2005). Therefore, this study aims to extend the understanding of information behavior, from the users’ perspectives, in a context outside everyday life.
The world has been facing numerous critical moments, including social, political, and environmental crises. It is apparent that context plays a significant role in the valuation of information. This study aims to illustrate how people define the value of information in the context of disturbed information flow from both individual and collective perspectives.

The way in which the findings from this study can be transferred/carried on to other studies would come from the consideration of the 2006 coup d’état as an extreme case study (Yin, 2008). There are two unique characteristics of the 2006 coup d’état that are of interest for this study.

The first characteristic of the coup is based on the perception of a coup d’état as a socio-political crisis, a disruption of social and political system and order. The discussion of the socio-political crisis can be analyzed into three basic conditions.

1. The coup was a short-lived and non-routine event (e.g., Duggan & Banwell, 2004; Hagan, 2005). In addition to such descriptions, one would also consider that the event was sudden and unexpected to most people.

2. Since the impact of the coup was massive, not only within Thai society but also the global community, the consideration of people’s reactions should involve collective influences.

3. The topical elements of the context were specific to the perceived threats/risks of political life (for instance, Robbin & Buente, 2008). Such a perception may have different implications from threats/risks in other personal and social life situations (such as health issues, financial crisis, crimes, etc.). It is important to note that a coup, as a result of a human-made crisis, may be less serious than natural disasters, which may eliminate the power supply and other infrastructure, making the use of ICTs impossible. However, a coup could still pose a substantial threat to people’s lives.
The second characteristic of the coup is derived from the disruption of communication channels (i.e., censorship). The significance of a coup in the context of information behavior is mostly related to the way in which the free flow of information is disrupted. Governments or those who deploy coups use mass media and telecommunication facilities in order to neutralize political forces. The main objective is not merely to control but also to monopolize the flow of information (Luttwak, 1979). The situation during the 2006 Thailand coup d’état is similar to other coups in terms of the limited flow of information, which essentially threatened the fundamental right of expression. A critical situation, such as a coup d’état, becomes a crisis of isolation; the information sources and channels that people usually use to access and exchange information become unavailable (see Hagar, 2005). Nevertheless, Mufti (2007) observed that such a restricted condition encouraged people to find new and creative ways to share information, especially through the use of ICTs.

1.4 Scopes and Definitions

1.4.1 Political Crisis

Researchers have been studying sociological constructs during pre- and post-phases of crises for nearly 100 years (R. Perry & Quarantelli, 2006). There are a number of events that can be easily recognized as crises, such as natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, floods, and drought). Crises can be variably identified depending on “the constructs, limitations, and perceptions of the crisis situation” (Hagar, 2005, p.5). Thus, one should view crises from multidimensional perspectives (Fotopoulos, 2009).

The term crisis is originally rooted from Krisis, a Greek word that means a moment of decision. Gregory (2000) identified a crisis as “an interruption in the reproduction of economic, cultural, social and/or political life” (p.123-5). Shrivastava (1993) examined three characteristics of crises including “urgency of decision, large impacts, and system
(restructuring” (p. 25). Crises can be categorized at various levels, including personal (e.g., Westbrook, 2008), organizational (e.g., Jasanoff, 1994), communal (e.g., Walker, 2004), national (e.g., National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004), and international contexts (e.g., Garthoff, 1989). A crisis can be caused by natural, human-induced, and technological forces. Thus, the implications for various types of crises are different.

According to O’Connor (1987), the use of the term crisis in political discourse beginning in the late eighteen-century was similar to its Greek root, referring to “time for decision” and “political transformation” (p. 108), in particular the trials and tribulations of nation building and the expansion of empire. In the nineteenth century, the notion of crisis was used to explain the “critical moments when national character and institutions were thought to have been decisively shaped and tested” (Starn, 1971, p. 9). Grew (1978, p. 12) indicated that there are three concepts associated with political crisis: a serious threat, an irreversible change, and a political problem. Zimmermann (1984, p. 320) insisted that the scope of political crisis is broader than the change of personnel (i.e., government, cabinet, and coalition). Rather, political crisis is essentially related to the change in policies and political order. O’Connor (1987) further elaborated events that could be considered political crises, including “sharp turns to the political right or left; a polarization of attitudes towards the capitalist state or political system; mass discontent with bourgeois democratic norms; and political revolution” (p. 109).

Nonetheless, the consideration of political crisis in context can be highly subjective and culture-specific. According to Edelman (1971, p. 32–33),

political beliefs, perceptions, and expectations are overwhelmingly not based on observation, or empirical evidence available to participants, but rather upon cuing among groups of people who jointly create the meanings they will read into current or anticipated event[s]. . . The particular meanings that are consensually accepted need not therefore be cued by the objective situations; they are rather established by a process of mutual agreement upon significant symbols.

Vatz (1999, p. 230) adopted Bitzer’s criteria on rhetorical situation to analyze whether
a political crisis is a rhetorical or situational issue. Vatz (1999) indicated that the declaration of victory in the Vietnam War by George Aiken is merely rhetoric, since people did not understand what actually happened in Vietnam. On the other hand, the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962 is situational as the nation was threatened.

A political crisis is intertwined with social systems such as juridical, educational, and cultural institutions. It is apparent that politics has a great impact on social order. On the other hand, social systems are significant to the stability of political institutions. Thus, many studies use social and political crisis as a single frame of analysis (e.g., O’Connor, 1987). Political events such as coup d’état could pose perceived risks to various elements of society, such as safety and economic and financial crisis.

1.4.2 Coup D’état

According to Luttwak (1979), coup d’état is the “infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus, which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder” (p.24). The motivation for a coup mostly comes from economic recession and political instability. Although seizures of power are mostly done by military power, Farcau (1994) pointed out that armed forces are not always part of coups, for instance, the Bolshevik coup in Russia in 1917. A coup d’état is usually perceived as a problematic event for the state from a democratic point of view. Nonetheless, in Latin America and some other developing countries, people apparently perceive coups as just another way of changing the state administration (Farcau, 1994).

Within the context of this study, the coup d’état (or coup) refers to the seizure of power in Thailand by the military on September 19, 2006. However, it is hard to define a clear cut boundary for the situation, even though the coup leaders have already given the power back to the civil government. The consequences of the 2006 coup seem to be continuous and diffuse, even until the time of writing this research report. The political polarization has continued to lead to other critical events in 2008-2009 such
as the invasion of Government House and the closure of the two major International Airports. Conceptually, people still seek and share information as an impact of the 2006 coup.

Of particular interest for this study are the first few days (September 19-23, 2006) after the seizure of power in September 2006, implying that people had just heard/learned about the situation. This includes the first twelve (12) hours when most television and radio stations were under the control of the CDR. Only video clips of royalty and royal music were played during that time. International programs from local cable operators were censored. Only those who received TV from satellite could watch news from the international media. The Internet and mobile phones became the major communication devices. Although TV and radio stations continued their normal programs during the next day of the coup, the military still controlled and censored the programs at a high level. By framing this period, it highlights a critical moment when the normal flow of information was dysfunctional.

1.4.3 Collective Information Behavior

Regardless of the variety of the fundamental concepts used (see also Savolainen, 2008; Wilson, 2009b; Savolainen, 2009b; Wilson, 2009a; Savolainen, 2009a), the intention of the use of information behavior in this study is merely to differentiate itself from what is known as communication research. The focus of this study is primarily to explain the way in which people seek and share information, rather than explore the effects of information activities/practices/behaviors on human attitudes and behaviors. In addition, this study applies collective behavior/action theories to frame the observation of people’s behavior in a group setting during the disruptive moment of the coup. Although the boundaries of collective behavior/action, from a sociological perspective, are mostly based on rationality and irrationality, this exploratory study does not reject both hypotheses; rather it views the phenomenon as being located somewhere on a continuum.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter introduces and reviews the theoretical framework of the study as well as literature related to the study of information behavior during the 2006 coup d’état.

The 2006 coup d’état can be considered as an exemplar of the dynamics between chaos and order (i.e., certainty and uncertainty perspectives; Dervin, 1999a). People become information poor, with presumably a higher degree of information needs than in normal contexts. On the basis of such a conclusive assumption, the notion of small world (Chatman, 1999) becomes the foundational framework of this study as shown in Figure 2.1.

The unique characteristics of the coup pose distinctive threats to people’s lives, and therefore can be expected to affect the way in which people seek and search for information. In a small world perspective, Chatman (1999) referred to Merton’s (1972) notion of the Insider and Outsider to discuss the interactions among people from different backgrounds and contexts. In this study, the Insider and Outsider perspective is applied to investigate the way in which insiders in Thailand interacted with outsiders while communicative resources are restricted and information flow is either stopped or constrained.

The next aspect of the research framework grows out of an information need perspective. Given the coup as a political event, it is certain that people, more or less,
would look for information regarding political life. Therefore, the effects of politics on information behavior are discussed, including cognitions and behaviors, and context.

The related literature from a collective behavior/action perspective are also included in this chapter. Such perspectives contribute to the understanding of a collective sense making of behaviors during social crises. Particular attention is given to rumor as a form of informal communication and the roles of mass media and ICTs during crisis situations.

2.1 The Small World of the Information Poor

2.1.1 Information Behavior of the Information Poor

The majority of the works related to the information behavior of the information poor are concerned with a socioeconomically disadvantaged group: for instance, janitors (Chatman, 1987, 1990), senior citizens (e.g., Chatman, 1992; Pettigrew, 1998; Wicks,
The discourse of information poverty is highly embedded in an assumption that the center of the issue is about the weakening characteristics of users, what Dervin (1980) called *receiver deficits*. Empirically, a number of studies show that the characteristics of users alone could not even answer the basic gap questions: whether the gaps exist, and why they exist. In particular, the basic assumption of a relationship between economic poverty and information poverty seems to be most noticeable (e.g., Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970). However, Chatman (1996, p.194) argued that “[the] linkage is not necessarily true.” Dervin (1980) even broadened this perspective beyond *receivers* by pointing to *ceiling effects*, where “some kind of ceiling prevents the informationally/communicatively rich from acquiring more, giving the poor a chance to catch up, or, in some cases, reverse the gap” (p.24). She further suggested seeking more explanation from an understanding of the source deficits and communication foundations.

### 2.1.2 The Development of the Small World Concept

Chatman was a pioneer in constructing theories of the information behavior of the information poor. Her early works directly focused on the information behavior of marginalized populations. Later, her works shifted to impoverished information environments. Her ethnographic investigations centered on a theoretical framework, known as *small world* (Chatman, 2000) including the theory of information poverty, the theory of life in the round also known as “rounding theory” (Solomon, 2005), and the theory of normative behavior.

Chatman (1983) began investigating information behavior of the working poor by
applying diffusion theory in conjunction with opinion leadership theory in her dissertation. She found that diffusion theory could not fully explain the nature of information environments. For example, the short life cycle of a certain type of information (i.e., employment information) affects the utility of such information. In addition, she found that the impact of opinion leadership theory was very minor since the working poor were not sharing information (Chatman, 1986, p.384). Chatman (2000, p.4) also found that there are risks involved in the information exchange.

These limitations of the application of diffusion theory led to the study of the information world of janitors. By adopting Seeman’s (1959) alienation theory as a framework, Chatman particularly investigated what factors were hindering information sharing, emphasizing secrecy and defense mechanisms. Alienation theory is comprised of five concepts: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, self-estrangement, and normlessness. Chatman’s findings indicated that every concept of alienation is applicable to janitors, except normlessness. Chatman observed that the janitors were obedient to social norms (Chatman, 1990, p.361). In addition, alienation theory does not consider “information as a critical element in one’s sense of isolation” (Chatman, 2000, p.5). The results of these two studies led to the application of the small world concept to the problem of the information poor.

Chatman continued to observe the information seeking behavior of the same group, janitorial workers at a southern university, but, framed the analysis in gratification theory (Chatman, 1991). The findings indicate that, even though such a lower economic class population stated their information needs, they were not active in seeking information from sources outside their social milieu. In this particular case, the institution where they worked had little to no role as a source of information, as the janitors saw the information as too costly (in the sense of revealing information about themselves) and irrelevant to them (Chatman, 2000, p.5). With this study, the influence of the small world became clearer as the application of gratification theory helped to identify the role of an individual’s perception on how information poor seek and avoid information.
To expand the observation to a network level, Chatman utilized social network theory to investigate how aging women in a retirement community shared information. Chatman indicated that social network theory was chosen because “it appears to lend itself to an examination of ways in which older people might resolve some of their concerns. Not only does the theory explore the types and degrees of relationship comprising a person’s network but also more importantly the emotional or financial resources that might be exchanged” (Chatman, 1992, p.43). The findings reaffirm her earlier observations, especially the exploration of self-imposed social risks that become a major barrier to information sharing, even to others who had strong ties such as family members.

Based on these observations of impoverished information worlds, Chatman used the notion of small world as a major construct to explain the boundaries of the information life-world of information poor. The notion of small world, framed by a sociological and social psychological concept (e.g., Schutz & Luckmann, 1973; Kochen et al., 1989), refers to “a world in which everyday happenings occur with some degree of predictability” involving other people “who share physical and/or conceptual space within a common landscape of cultural meaning” (Chatman, 2000, p.3).

Chatman began conceptualizing the small world concept based on the fact that there is a disconnection between the world-at-large and the information poor’s interests. Four critical social elements of impoverished lifestyle were examined: secrecy, deception, risk-taking, and situational relevance (Chatman, 1996). These elements contributed to the construction of her theory of information poverty, intended to explain “ways in which people define their life experiences in order to survive in a world of distrust.” (Chatman, 2000, p.7) Six propositions were addressed including:

1. People who are defined as information poor perceive themselves to be devoid of any sources that might help them.

2. Information poverty is partially associated with class distinction. That is, the condition of information poverty is influenced by outsiders who withhold privileged
access to information.

3. Information poverty is determined by self-protective behaviors, which are used in response to social norms.

4. Both secrecy and deception are self-protecting mechanisms due to a sense of mistrust regarding the interest or ability of others to provide useful information.

5. A decision to risk exposure about our true problems is often not taken due to a perception that negative consequences outweigh benefits.

6. New knowledge will be selectively introduced into the information world of poor people. A condition that influences this process is relevance of that information in response to everyday problems and concerns. (p.198)

The second theory that was proposed by Chatman came after her exploration of the strong influence of social norms and self-protective behaviors (2000, p.7). This time Chatman chose female prisoners as her study participants. She found that the female inmates established their own insider world and ignore information from the outside world. The small world conceptualization evolved into Chatman’s theory of life in the round (1999), which was grounded in a number of sociological theories; for instance, Luckmann’s (1970) editorial works on a small life-world, Douglas’s (1971) Understanding Everyday Life, and Merton’s seminal work on the Insider and Outsider (1972).

The small world sets the social boundaries by influencing its members’ worldviews, representing a collective sense of belief of members who live within a small world. The major characteristics of the small world are commonness, which “lacks sweeping surprises or catastrophic problems, at least as these are commonly defined” (Pendleton & Chatman, 1998, p.733). Social norms set the standard of what is appropriate or not. Additionally, the concept of social types, referring to a social classification given to a member of the small world, influences the desirability of a member to that particular world. The Insider and Outsider concept (Merton, 1972) becomes
the manifestation of the social type in a small world. Information behavior, in this model, is “a state in which one may or may not act on available or offered information” (Burnett, Besant, & Chatman, 2001, p.537), which can be predicted by examining and linking contextual elements together. Applicable to particular types of information, Chatman (2000) pointed out that the members who live in the round “will not search information if there is no need to do so” (p.10), since their world is seemingly working without such information. Chatman also indicated that the members of a small world tend to limit themselves by not seeking information from outside of their world unless it falls into these conditions (Chatman, 1999, p.214):

1. the information is perceived as critical,

2. there is a collective expectation that the information is relevant, and

3. a perception exists that the life lived in the round is no longer functioning.

The way in which everyday life in a small world is predictable, routine, and manageable becomes a framework for Chatman’s third theory, the theory of normative behavior (Chatman, 2000). The theory extends her previous theory in terms of defining the commonness or routineness of everyday life in small world. Normative behavior refers to a “behavior which is viewed by inhabitants of a social world as most appropriate for that particular context” (Burnett et al., 2001, p.538).

Four concepts were discussed in relation to the theory of normative behavior: social norms, worldview, social types, and information behavior. Social norms provide a sense of balance between rightness and wrongness, which leads “the way to acceptable standards and codes of behavior.” Social norms also play a significant role in holding the small world together (Chatman, 2000, p.11). In terms of worldview, Chatman included the concept of collective sense in the theory. Using Weber’s definition of social type (1978), Chatman modified the notion by including the commonsense to identify the connection between individuals in the small world. These conceptual constructs lead to five propositions of the theory of normative behavior including:
1. Social norms are standards with which members of a social world comply in order to exhibit desirable expressions of public behavior.

2. Members choose compliance because it allows for a way by which to affirm what is normative for this context at this time.

3. World-view is shaped by the normative values that influence how members think about the way of the world. It is a collective, taken-for-granted attitude that sensitizes members to be responsive to certain events and to ignore others.

4. Everyday reality contains a belief that members of a social world do retain attention or interest sufficient enough to influence behavior. The process of placing persons in ideal categories of lesser or greater quality can be thought of as social normalization.

5. Human information behavior is a construct in which to approach everyday reality and its effect on actions to gain or avoid the possession of information. The choice to decide the appropriate course of action is driven by what members’ beliefs are necessary to support a normative way of life.

For a small world, it seems likely that the major theme and pattern for observation is routine activities as Pendleton and Chatman (1998) indicated that “linking individual behavior with what appears to be patterned routine activities will allow the application of conceptual schemes in order to anticipate normative behavior” (p.747).

Applications and extensions of the small world concept

A number of works apply and extend the small world as a theoretical framework for investigating information behavior in various contexts. Pendleton and Chatman (1998) suggested practical implications for developing policy and research in public libraries from the small world concept. Burnett et al. (2001) extended the four elements of the small world conception to the online environment, where members of a small world are
not located at the same geographical location. In addition, they also applied the concept to a group of feminist booksellers, which was “purposefully and self-consciously dedicated to the sharing of information” (p.545). Jaeger and Thompson (2004) used the normative behavior theory to explain why e-government in the US is ignored by some populations. Hersberger (2003a) applied the six propositions from information poverty theory to explain the way in which homeless people access information. Burnett and Jaeger (2008) found the connections between Chatman’s small world and Habermas’s lifeworlds concept. They elaborated the way in which both concepts can be applied to online communities (e.g., blogs, wiki, and e-government).

Huotari and Chatman (2001) integrated the concept of social capital and the small world theories to identify the process of value creation in strategic information management. Trust is an essential element of the integration since it plays a significant role in information behavior in a small world, which is also involved in social capital. Solomon explored the generalization of Chatman’s work in the context of work planning (Solomon, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d), college students’ use of the Internet, and travel planning (Solomon, 1998) (see also Solomon, 2002, 2005).

In addition, the notions “way of life” and “mastery of life”, described in Savolainen’s Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS), are similar to the small world conception as both seem to explain the contributions of a “socially and culturally determined system of thinking, perception, and evaluation, internalized by the individual” (Savolainen, 1995, p.262), known as habitus and social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Although ELIS was not intended to exclusively apply to the information seeking behavior of the information poor, the ELIS model partially grew out of an interest in the information seeking behavior of a marginalized population, industrial workers, by comparing them to those of teachers (Savolainen, 1995). Interestingly, Savolainen also found that “information seeking does not always follow the boundaries of social class” (p.288). In 2006, he collected data from a group of unemployed persons and compared it to the information practices of environmental activists (Savolainen, 2008).
Another aspect of a small world is related to the construction of spatial context (Savolainen, 2009c, 2006). Space, either physical or conceptual, is a central idea to capture in the context of a small world (Chatman, 2000). Chatman (1999, p.210) stated that location is another way to identify a small world. Thus, the small world became one of the fundamental concepts of the notion of an information ground. The information ground conception is also influenced by Oldenburg’s third place concept (1999) referring to where someone can be found at other than a residence and workplace. Although the studies of information ground as a conceptual model do not pay attention explicitly to the information poor, the concept arose from Pettigrew’s dissertation on information sharing between nurses and the elderly at community foot clinics (Pettigrew, 1998). In addition, the later works supporting the conception of information grounds center around information poor populations, for example, immigrants in Queens, New York (Fisher, Durrance, & Hinton, 2004), Hispanic farm workers and their families in Yakima Valley, Washington (Fisher, Marcoux, et al., 2004), and sexual minorities in Seattle (Unsworth, n.d. cited in Fisher & Naumer, 2006).

The small world concept not only provides a theoretical construct related to an impoverished life world, but also sheds light on the role of qualitative data collection, particularly an ethnography approach, in the information seeking research stream. Chatman (1984) highlighted the importance of field research, in particular the way in which researchers gain entry to informants (Carey, McKechnie, & McKenzie, 2001). Pendleton and Chatman (1998) also suggested three approaches, which seem appropriate for analysis of ethnographic data: contextual findings, co-associational findings, and causal data.

**Criticisms of small world concept**

As far as the small world concept has been applied and validated within LIS community, the major criticism of the theory is that it emphasizes the impact of social norms on information seeking behavior. At the same time, it pays less attention to the influence of
individualism. Savolainen (2008) argued that “a broader view of information seeking is also needed because it is obvious that in times of increasing individualization characteristic of reflexive modernization and the extensive availability of networked sources, people may be less subject to the norm-based pressures that direct information seeking” (p.6). This question becomes a case for the online environment. Burnett et al. (2001) found that a number of computer-mediated communications studies indicate a phenomenon where a person become less aware of themselves and others as a social individual due to the reduction of social cues in online communication.

Sligo and Jameson (2000) focused on the social isolation aspect of Pacific Island female immigrants in New Zealand, particularly focusing on the use of information regarding cervical cancer. Interestingly, contradicting what Chatman found, Sligo and Jameson found a strong sense of community awareness and connectivity among others who share ethnic and cultural background. Sligo and Williams (2001) tested six propositions of Chatman’s information poverty theory in a low socio-economic group in Auckland, New Zealand. They found that two of the propositions were supported, three were unsupported and one was neutral. Sligo and Williams (2001) questioned whether the way in which interviewers were insiders or outsiders to the subject influenced the observed level of secrecy and deception. In another word, the cultural milieu seemed to affect the way social barriers were created.

In defense of the small world concept, Thompson (2006) argued that many studies (e.g., Hersberger, 2003a; Sligo & Jameson, 2000) that found Chatman’s theory of information poverty inapplicable focus exclusively on each proposition rather than the theory as a whole. As a result, such studies may overlook the coherence of the concept, and therefore misinterpret the findings. The difference that Sligo and Williams found from Chatman’s propositions may reflect a different set of social norms among these New Zealanders than for the people studied by Chatman. Thompson (2006) asserted that these studies used a semi-structured interview as the main instrument for collecting data, rather than extensive field observation – another difference possibly contributing
to variation in findings. In addition, Thompson argued that these works were trying to make connections between material poverty and information poverty, which Chatman’s later works found not always to be the case.

**Beyond the small world concept**

There are a number of works that have studied information behavior in information poverty environments outside of Chatman’s small world framework. One aspect that is usually emphasized is the channel of information transfer. In terms of information source, a number of studies (e.g., Childers & Post, 1975; Dervin & Greenberg, 1972) assert that television has become the medium of choice for the information poor. However, the consumption of information from mass communication does not necessarily contribute to new knowledge. On the other hand, interpersonal sources among the information poor contribute less due to high mistrust related to Chatman’s conceptions of secrecy, deception, risk-taking and situational relevance (Chatman & Pendleton, 1995). However, the study by Wicks (2004) on information seeking by older adults found that this may not always be the case. Spink and Cole (2001) investigated low-income African American’s use of information channels in their daily lives by applying a structured interview approach. Their information environment model was developed based on the formality and type of information (i.e., news, security, health, education, and employment). In terms of needs, Hersberger (1998, 2001) adapted Dervin’s taxonomy for analysis of everyday information needs (1976) to address information needs of homeless people based on their everyday life problems. Dunne (2002) modified Allen’s person-in-situation approach (1997) to describe how battered women seek information and help. In addition to personal and situational barriers to information seeking, Dunne added responsive constraints to the model to explain a progression during an abusive situation.

Information poor are favored as subjects-of-interest in constructing information behavior theories and frameworks since these groups presumably present the extreme cases and live in an environment where they usually face crises in daily life. The studies of
these phenomena help to define the boundaries of information behavior. However, it seems likely that a focus on everyday life information and help seeking may limit the definition and explanation of information behavior of the information poor.

In addition, information poverty is not only a direct result of material poverty, educational shortcomings, behavioral deficits, and technological deficiency. According to Haider and Bawden (2006) and Britz (2006), it can also apply to situations in which information is restricted due to censorship, freedom of speech, human rights, or intellectual property violations. Britz (2006) recognized the brain drain (the migration of well-educated and skillful personnel from developing to developed countries) and information and document trade (i.e., the dominance of Western scholarly works in high-ranking journals and research tools) as causes of information poverty as well.

It is apparent that research in the area of the information behavior of the information poor seldom addressed people who are restricted in access to information from such conditions or those who define their small worlds in such a way as to create a situation of information poverty. Britz (2006) observed that this may be because the discourse on information poverty primarily comes from a perspective of developed countries. In addition, these issues have been overwhelmed by studies from a public policy perspective. By allowing the extended perspective of information poverty, the notion of a small world and its elements may be revisited. For example, the notion of responsiveness in Dunne’s person-in-progressive-situation (2002) may need to be reconsidered. Moreover, the development of ICTs increases the complexity in information delivery and dissemination, and, thus, affects our everyday life as well as information behavior. As such, it may strengthen or lessen the creation and maintenance of a small world.

Another aspect of a small world that may need to be further investigated is the role of outsiders in an insiders’ world. Chatman (1996) identified the Outsider from a study of female prisoners. In her theory of life in the round, she addressed the situations where insiders can go outside their world to get information from outsiders. What are the kinds of situations when insiders would seek information from outsiders? What does
the world of outsiders look like to insiders?

To bridge the knowledge gap in society, Chatman and Pendleton (1995) suggested that as information scientists and professionals, we should help the information poor to acknowledge people who are out of their life world, in particular ourselves, as well as items that are valued as trustworthy, reliable, and useful from the outside world applying to their situation. By studying these groups, we can collect the holistic concept and could find that way in which outsiders approach the small world.

2.2 Insiders’ and Outsiders’ Information Behaviors

2.2.1 From Sociology of Knowledge to Information Behavior

To consider why people select and interact with specific information sources during a coup, Merton’s conceptions of Insider and Outsider (1972) seem to be useful. They can broaden the explanation of information behavior during such critical situations, especially through the interactions among various groups and communities as well as in the sense of geographic differences.

Merton’s work on Insider and Outsider is primarily based on epistemological development. At the beginning of his paper, Merton mentioned polarization as a general social and political phenomenon, but he admitted that the development of these conceptions was heavily framed within the context of the black social movement in the United States. Yet Merton’s subjects of interest were mainly scholars and scientists. Therefore, Chatman’s small world concept is used as a construct linking the concepts of Insider and Outsider to the context of information behavior through social structure.
2.2.2 The Insider/Outsider and Small World in Social Structure Terms

The common aspect of both Merton’s conceptions of Insider and Outsider and Chatman’s small world conception is the application of structural analysis to the domain of knowledge and information seeking. For Merton, trust plays an essential role in the polarization of society, especially in claiming and aspiring to truth. The separation is typically based on the “membership to certain social identities, statuses, groups, or collectivities” (p.11). Merton noticed that the way in which groups are active is based on the ascription, rather than the acquisition, of social status or identities, which features some sort of collective affirmation (such as pride and solidarity).

It is crucial to note that the notions of the Insider and Outsider, in Merton’s view, are the basic categories in social structures. He explained it in the simplest form by saying that “[i]nsiders are the members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specific social status; [o]utsiders are the nonmembers” (p.21). Every person pertains to both categories as we all have multiple social statuses that are interrelated and deviated, which Merton called a status set.

A single social status already has its own dynamic (e.g., Merton, 1957) (i.e., the collective aspect of status set doubles the complexity of structural analysis). In his example (Merton, 1972, p.22), “if only whites can understand whites and blacks, blacks, and only men can understand men, and women, women, . . . some insiders are excluded from understanding other insiders with white women being condemned not to understand white men, and black men, not to understand black women, and so through the various combination of status subsets.” In addition, the complexity is augmented by institutional autonomy and social situations (p.25–26).

In a small world perspective, Chatman approached such complexity with the notion of social type, “traits or characteristics that distinguish them from other members of their world” (p.214). By assigning certain roles as social types, Chatman (1999, p.209)
explained that roles would collectively provide a sense of the perceptions and expectations of others. She also proposed that social types are certainly subjective and never neutral.

Chatman’s (1999) small world is central to a worldview, defined as “a collective set of beliefs held by members who live within a small world” (1999, p.213). Merton focused on the intellectual and ideological domain of knowledge, which is sometimes also referred to as interpretation. However, he later addressed that perception can be more reasonable to be used to draw the line between the Insider and Outsider (Merton, 1972, p.30).

What the small world concept contributes the most seems to be the idea of social structure that can deal directly with issues in communication and information seeking patterns (e.g., the contribution to the gratification perspective in Chatman, 1991). However, what has been constructed so far is seemingly limited to one world or another, mostly through the notions of the Insider. This may be because of the specific characteristics and social status of Chatman’s participants, for instance, prisoners, janitors, and elders in a retirement residence that try to limit themselves to their own world. They lose a sense of control of their small worlds when their lives are dependent on outsiders. For example, Chatman (1996) described how “a number of inmates experience both emotional and physical problems because of their sense of helplessness. In these cases, they know that it will be better for them to focus instead on the daily living patterns, relationships and issues that come within the prison environment” (p.215).

Beyond social structure, there are also some other contextual qualifiers underlying social processes that need to be addressed. The most visible one is social location. Merton (1972, p.16) referred to Weber (1922) regarding the way in which “social locations, with the distinctive interests and values, will affect the selection of problems for investigation.” For a small world, Chatman paid attention to physical proximity (Chatman, 1999, p.210) and social events (Chatman, 1992, p.122). Savolainen (2009c, p.41) concluded that the spatial factors in the small world construct are interlaced with other social factors (e.g., social norms and social types). In other words, the physical/virtual location
would convey nothing meaningful without the analysis of social elements of doers (p.43).

2.2.3 The Insider

For Merton, the core element of the Insider is the inequality in access to knowledge. He argues that certain individuals/groups have monopolistic or privileged access to certain kinds of knowledge. On the other hand, access to such knowledge poses a high risk cost to others (p.11). Generally it is the Insider who earns such privilege and the Outsider is forbidden. Such a nonequivalent phenomenon has existed in various platforms, such as social, political, demographic, geographic, and even biological grounds, divided by different ascribed statuses (p.13).

From an extreme perspective, the major metaphor of the Insider is, “you have to be one in order to understand one” (p.15). The major process in this view is continued socialization, which contributes to shared experiences, symbols, sensitivity, and realities. Merton (1972, p.17) also used Sumner’s ethnocentrism (1906) and Caplow’s aggrandizement effect (1964) to explain the distorted views of centrality and superiority that fertilize pride and solidarity of groups. The Outsider is incapable of understanding the others regardless of how skillful and thorough they are. In this view, the meaning within a group is totally preserved, even though the underlying assumptions, signs, and symbols are implicit (e.g., Suchman, 1997; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). When insiders, if necessary, have to communicate with outsiders, the message content tends to be reinterpreted and repackaged (e.g., Paepcke, 1996; Agada, 1999, p. 82). At the same time, a high level of distrust is applied to information from the Outsider.

Binding to this extreme perspective, nevertheless from the opposite side, Chatman (1992) found that the disclosure of insiders’ information has costs to insiders themselves, for instance, a fear of a trip from independent living to assisted living or a nursing home when an elderly person discloses their health or physical issues.

In the more humble perspective, outsiders may be allowed to be included only if they
are relevant and there are not enough insiders (p.13). This view considers outsiders, who engage in the same domain, as having significantly different foci of interest, which are relevant to their group (p.16). By adding a subordinated layer within a domain, Merton (1972, p.17–18) remarked that it stretches out the metaphor of this perspective to say that “one must not only be one in order to understand one; one must be one in order to understand what is most worth understanding.”

### 2.2.4 The Outsider

Merton (1972, p.30) used one of the four Idols (i.e., sources of false opinion) from Bacon’s metaphor of the *Idol of the Cave*, to explain the stringent perspective of the Outsider. In this perspective, the Insider’s worldview, as well as the way in which it is created, is believed to be restricted. Thus, one needs to leave one’s group affiliation, as well as perhaps one’s social location, in order to extend one’s vision and be able to access authentic knowledge. The Outsider rejects the opposing Insider view by referring to a temporal implication. Merton applied this argument to the epistemology of historical knowledge indicating that, “[i]f direct engagement in the life of a group is essential to understanding it, then the only authentic history is contemporary history” (p.32). According to Merton, when historians study phenomena in a time other than their own, they are already outsiders.

Drawing from Simmel (1908), Merton (1972) remarked that one who is not committed to the group tends to be more objective strategically and “finds what is familiar to the group significantly unfamiliar and so is prompted to raise questions for inquiry less apt to be raised at all by insiders” (p.32–33). Major components of the notions of Outsider include passivity, detachment, distance and nearness, indifference, and involvement (p.33).

However, in reality, this perspective in sociology of knowledge appears to be in a more or less weaker form. For example, studies of the Insider and Outsider succession in
a closed environment such as a work setting (e.g., Wishart, 1989) have indicated that the Outsider is more likely to be taken when change is needed, although Dalton and Kesner (1983, 1985) speculated that this is more probable in smaller and more poorly performing organizations.

In the weakest form of this conception, the Outsider have only a passive impact on the Insider, for example, the way in which cancer patients seek information from sources outside their trusted network (e.g., Ankem, 2006; Carlsson, 2000; Mills & Davidson, 2002).

Above all, Merton (1972, p.36) suggested that the quest for truth is not a one way or the other perspective, but involves worldviews from both the Insider and Outsider, which have their own distinction and interaction. Thus, methodologically one should not look at the Insider and Outsider as a dichotomy, but rather two separate continuum scales.

### 2.2.5 Transition of Worldviews

It is apparent that both perspective have their own advantages and limitations (Merton, 1972, p.33). One need not be committed to any particular perspective regarding any domain of our worldview at a certain place and period of time. Applying these perspectives to everyday context, Merton (1957) suggested that there are two types of people/networks that we seek for help and support: cosmopolitan (who have an orientation outside one’s social world) and locals (whose interests are focused on the everyday reality of life within one’s social world; Chatman, 1999).

The line dividing insiders and outsiders blurs to a certain extent in many situations. Merton (1972, p.29) acknowledged Mannheim’s(1952) notion of classless position of the socially unattached intellectuals, saying that:

[T]here is a category of socially free-floating intellectuals who are both Insiders and Outsiders. Benefiting from their collectively diverse social origins and transcending group allegiances, they can observe the social universe with
special insight and a synthesizing eye.

Additionally, as one may realize, the Insider is rather competitive in the extreme sense. Groups in conflict try to make their worldview dominant, measured by the acceptance by others. Such a perspective leads to the other extreme point of view regarding the way in which the converted Outsider seeks validation from others (p.20). Merton pointed out that these converted outsiders are more advocative than the insiders, giving the example that “[h]e then becomes more royalist than the king, more papist than the pope” (p.20).

On the contrary, insiders sometimes have to convert themselves to be outsiders primarily for two major purposes: 1) to obtain trust from the evaluation of their own group (p.18), and 2) to get a better understanding of “alien social structure and culture” (p.29). Furthermore, Merton (1972, p.29) specifically paid attention to “outsiders who have been systematically frustrated by the social system: the disinherited, deprived, disenfranchised, dominated, and exploited outsiders.” He argued that this special category of people is distinctively capable of understanding both worlds and more likely to pick up or seize what has been taken for granted by others (p.29).

In many cases, the converted insiders and outsiders become opinion leaders of both groups. For instance, Agada (1999) applied Taylor’s (1991) information use environment framework to investigate information behavior of African-American gatekeepers who apparently connect the communities together.

Nonetheless, the challenge of ever-changing structure needs to be considered. In general, the way in which people cross the boundaries of a life world is usually through the spatial and temporal shift (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). Dervin (1997, p.14–15) also addressed similar concerns regarding the subjectively constructed context that is emergent and fluid.

In the transition across physical boundaries, the notion of globalization diminishes the wall of geographic segmentation. The perception of reality is no longer dependent
on firsthand experience. From medium theory, Meyrowitz (1997) pointed to the evolution of media society, from oral to print and to electronic societies, influencing people’s awareness of the existence of outsiders. The social structure of groups has been transformed. Considering the social process that produces social information, we may no longer need to be physically with someone to know about someone. The traditional social boundaries (e.g., family) become weaker. The Internet facilitates such social processes to make them possible without investing physical effort. One of the attempts was the study of a virtual community that incorporated local communities (Burnett et al., 2001). By applying the small world concept to the online environment, the study shows that the concept is more relevant to firmly established and fairly closed environments (Savolainen, 2009c, p.44).

Another aspect of the outcome of the transition of worldview that may need to be further discussed is the observation of “asymmetrical relations between diverse kinds of insiders and outsiders” (Merton, 1972, p.30). Merton pointed out, as an example, the fact that black people have worked in white environments, crossing “the walls of segregation to discover with little effort what was on the other side.” On the other hand, it was quite apparent that “the highly visible whites characteristically did not want to find out about life in the black community.”

To a certain extent, Chatman’s sixth proposition in her Theory of Life in the Round is supplemental to the understanding of the conditions of the transition of worldviews (Chatman, 1999, p.214). The competitive view of this notion provides an underlying picture of how insiders and outsiders interact with each other. In this view, the worldviews of both perspectives are comparable to a certain extent as “[c]ompeting or conflicting groups take over ideas and procedures from one another” (Merton, 1972, p.37). At the end, Merton (1972, p.38) argued that it is the interaction between conflicting groups that causes the intellectual exchange as an outcome of this social process. Sharing and exchanging information, whether within or across groups is eventually mutual enhancement (e.g., Wittenbaum & Park, 2001; Wittenbaum & Bowman, 2004).
2.3 Political Information Behavior

Since most coup d’états are rooted in political tension, it is speculated that understanding political context is central to understanding information needs and behaviors. Therefore, it is important to understand the process of political information transfer. This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on how people seek and discover political information as well as the factors affecting the ways in which people seek political information. In addition, it provides insights on how political context influences information seeking behavior.

2.3.1 Political Context

Researchers in political communication derived their understanding of context from social structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). In political discourse, context is viewed as an arena for action. According to Nash, Hudson, and Luttrell (2006, p.1), “political context refers to the political aspects of the environment that are relevant to action.” Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) highlighted the relationship between people and context saying that “contexts are external to the individual even if the composition of the context depends upon the makeup of individuals contained within it” (p.1200). Yet context may exert pressure, which shapes political information behavior in the duality of structure and action as noted in Gidden’s structuration theory.

Political context can be viewed from a political system perspective. Easton (1965) provided a definition of a political system as “the authoritative allocation of values for a society” (p.49–50). Authoritative, according to Easton, refers to the collective values that are bounded by the political system. There are two types of people in a political system: members and authorities. The system operates through authorities. On the other side, members provide inputs to the system. Inputs can either be demands or supports. In general, demands are what members want and need, as well as their opinions. On the other hand, supports (e.g., donations) can be delivered to a system
in general or specific units. The support could be for government (and non-government agency), regime (constitution), or country. The system produces outputs, which are rules, policies, decisions, actions and services. In this model, Easton also mentions that social stress (e.g., in the form of a crisis of some sort) could affect the persistence of the system.

Thus, areas that are of interest to political researchers could relate to any part of a political system: distribution of power, political organization, and the applications and interactions of formal and informal rules among stakeholders (Nash et al., 2006). There are three major arenas that shape the boundaries of political context: electoral politics, civic engagement and organization, and political movement. However, electoral politics apparently dominates the study of information transfer and the communication processes of political information (Robbin & Buente, 2008). Weissberg (2005) called for researchers to expand the analysis of political participation beyond electoral politics.

In addition to the political aspects of social context, many discussions focus on the impact of social setting on political activity. To clarify, Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) pointed out that “social context is clearly a much broader concept that encompasses wider domains, such as religious affiliation, recreation activities, and social organization” (p.1201). According to Schenesele et al. (2004), social context plays an essential role in political participation. For example, those who participate in volunteer group-based discussion tend to be active information seekers (p.330). On the other hand, work-based discussion does not have a relationship with the way in which people participate in politics. Furthermore, a number of studies show that involvement in even temporary social situations stimulates increases in political activity resulting in active seeking of information regarding political and public affairs (Atkin, 1972; Kanihan & Chaffee, 1996; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001).
2.3.2 Psychological Factors Related to Political Information Behavior

Related to active citizenship, there are a number of cognitive and behavioral indicators that empirically have a relationship with political participation and information behavior. For instance, a number of studies indicate the relationship between political interest and information behavior. Bimber (2001) conducted an analysis of how Americans used three different media – television, newspapers, and the Internet – to obtain information about the 1996 presidential campaign. The results show a significant effect of political interest on the use of all types of media. Also within the context of the electoral process, Xenos and Moy (2007) pointed to the role of political interest in how the Internet, in particular, enables political and civic engagement.

When it comes to certain political issues, differences in individual opinion seem to have an impact on information behavior. Robbin and Buente (2008) found that political attitudes and beliefs is one of several significant factors influencing how people used the Internet to seek and share information on the Iraq War. Other significant factors include gender, political motivation, traditional media consumption, perceptions of bias in the media, and computer experience and use.

A number of studies have confirmed that people who have a higher level of political knowledge tend to seek news and information more than those who have a lower level of political knowledge (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Price & Zaller, 1993). Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) suggested that political knowledge is the leading indicator for information need, in particular of active information seekers who tend to be satisfied by information sources that contain a variety of public strategies.

Another personality trait that has proved to be relevant to political information behavior is the desire for control. In Althaus and Tewksbury’s study (2000), the findings indicate that the desire for control and political knowledge are good predictors of the exposure to news and information, measured by time using media. The desire for control...
appears to be associated with a motivational tendency (Burger & Cooper, 1979). In other words, those who have a higher level of desire to be in control tend to take on leadership roles as well as to make decision for themselves.

Political efficacy is another construct that has been consistently shown to influence political information seeking. Political efficacy is defined as “the feeling that one is capable of influencing the decision making process” (Goel, 1980, p.127). There are two types of political efficacy: internal efficacy (one’s perception of personal effectiveness that participatory channels are open to them) and external efficacy (one’s belief about the authorities’ or regimes’ responsiveness to individual inputs; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Political efficacy tends to have a positive relationship with political interest and education (Blasius & Thiessen, 2001). In general, many studies have found two-way interactions between political efficacy and the selection of information source (e.g., McLeod et al., 1999; Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, 1998). However, it seems that internal efficacy tends to have a stronger effect.

Another concept related to political efficacy is political trust, which concerns the anticipated quality of government outputs (Craig, 1979). A study done in Western Europe (Kaase, 1999) indicates that the effect of interpersonal trust on political trust is relatively small, though positive. Moreover, a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and non-institutionalized political participation was found. All in all, these factors informed the impact of political activism on information seeking behavior (e.g., Robbin & Buente, 2008; Shaheen, 2008).

Emotion also plays a significant role in political information seeking behavior, especially when conflicts in political opinions emerge. Emotion appears in politics everyday. The major argument of emotion in political context has its roots in perceptions from popular culture that emotion is related to irrationality or lack of self control (Pantti & Zoonen, 2006). However, a number of researchers argue that emotion should be viewed as a fundamental construct of political activity and decision. Researchers from this school of thought point out that a lack of passion results in political apathy.
They also suggest that irrationality and emotion should be viewed separately. There is also the view that emotion is the original source of practical rationality, which is fundamental for collective action. Nonetheless, emotional commitment is required as well. A number of political movements, revolving around such events as the assassination of Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands or the White Marches in Belgium, are emotionally driven, in particular, with media as a main mechanism for information transfer. Such events portray that emotion is central to self-identification and the social bond, which represents, for example, nationalism.

Emotion seems not to be allowed in many formal political environments or in some societies. However, some societies accept collective emotion for its moral, historical, and cultural values. Hochschild (2003) introduced feeling rules, which indicate when and in which situations simultaneous emotions are accepted. As a result, this view suggests that there is an inequality of the expression of emotion between elites and other groups. There are also studies examining public mood (Rahn, Kroeger, & Kite, 1996; Rahn & Hirshorn, 1999; Rahn, 2000), “a diffuse affective state that people experience as a consequence of their membership in a national political community” (Rahn et al., 1996, p.389–390). The results from the experiment conducted by Rahn and Hirshorn (1999) indicate that children, who have low political efficacy, tend to be influenced by media on diffuse emotional states. Richards (2004) reviewed the literature regarding emotional aspects of political communication through postmodern and popular culture discourse. He listed three affective dimensions of politics, including: 1) diffuse affective states in the public mind; 2) emotionalized forms of political discourse, and 3) individual personalities of political actors (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Mazzoleni, 2000). He also highlighted the role of fear appeal in political discourse. Based on psychodynamic theory, Richards (2004) also suggested the following basic themes in the study of the affective aspect in the political context, as follows:

- dependency and autonomy,
• loss and mourning,
• gender and sexuality,
• authority (including leader-follower relationships),
• rivalry (within and between generations), and
• guilt and forgiveness.

Selection of Information Sources

Mutz (2001) asserted that “the emphasis in today’s communication environment is on choice, on making it easier for the consumer to get what he or she wants when he or she wants it” (p.232). The wealth of information and the advancement of ICTs provide us various alternatives to obtain information. Knoke (1989) examined two general approaches, persuasion and selection, to study how people shape their political attitudes and activities in a network context. It seems likely that these two approaches can be adapted for use in exploring the fundamental question about the relationship between political information users and information sources, particularly in the context of ICTs.

For persuasion, it is believed that a social actor intentionally transmits information to alter another’s actions “from what would have occurred in the absence of that information” (p.1042). What influences people’s actions is not the ability to control people. Instead, it is the application of information based on the judgment of credibility and trustworthiness.

Generally individuals choose information sources based on their own preferences, which could be shaped by social and attitudinal characteristics. The discussion of the preferences is divided into two points of views: homogeneity and heterogeneity (Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2004). Homogeneity can be described as a phenomenon where people tend to seek information from/to others with shared interests. In his diffusion model, Chaffee (1975, p.112) used a principle of relevance overlap to
explain the phenomenon by saying that “[i]nteractions between citizens of similar orientation to the system would be more likely to foster diffusion of mutually relevant information than would interactions between citizens of different orientations.” For Knoke (1989), homogeneity of point of view plays a significant role in network settings. In addition, when an actor has to confront another who has contrasting interests, it is likely that they would either resist the exposure to information or misperceive and misrepresent the information and situation (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987; Knoke, 1989, p. 1044).

The discussion can be applied to an online world. There are a number of observers suggesting that people who participate in online discussions tend to fragment into like-minded groups (Davis & Owen, 1998; Selnow, 1998). These observations are based on the belief that people hear what they wish to hear, which is grounded in the limited effects or minimal consequences model, regarding the selective exposure and interpretation of political communication (Klapper, 1960; Chaffee, 2001). As a result of this fragmentation, Sunstein (2001, cited in Stromer-Galley, 2003) observed that the members of like-minded groups will hold a more extreme perspective than each individual would hold alone.

On the contrary, the heterogeneity perspective believes that people would like to seek information from those who have a different worldview. It is apparent that this view has been highly supported since the introduction of ICTs. ICTs, particularly the Internet, are perceived as a tool to facilitate political pluralism (e.g., Truman, 1965; Walker, 1991; Dahl, 1989; Bimber, 1998). Huckfeldt et al. (2004) pointed out that people do not eliminate someone who they disagree with politically in their social network. In Stromer-Galley’s (2003) study of users of online political discussion forums, the findings show the strong appearance of the desire for experience of diversity. However, one would not assume that people do not enjoy talking to people who share similar opinions to their own since the participants expressed their enjoyment of socializing with people who are similar to themselves as well.
The findings of these studies favor the sense that people are likely to go online for comprehensiveness of sources and points of view. One example comes from the reasons that Americans go online to get information about the Iraq war. Rainie, Fox, and Fallows (2003) found that the majority of Americans (about 66 percent) were seeking a variety of information sources. They expected points of view that are different from what they have learned from traditional media or official sources.

Some believe that the extreme consequences of the heterogeneity perspective result in a conversation that is “unruly, irrational, and far from ideals of public deliberation” (Stromer-Galley, 2003). Huckfeldt et al. (2004) argued that political disagreement is vital to sustain the vitality of democratic politics. However, it is important to note that ICTs might enable political discourse that involves constructive dialog beyond discussion and disagreement.

**Avoidance of Political Information**

It is interesting to consider avoidance in the political context. Political matters seem to be inevitable as they are intertwined with our everyday life, especially through the media (Jones, 2005). However, some people perceive politics from a pessimistic perspective. According to Robbin and Buente (2008), politics is usually viewed, to many Americans, as a site of conflict and to be avoided. Childers and Post (1975) noted that disadvantaged people see politics as complex systems of role behavior, which exclude them from the dialogue. Buckingham (2000) pointed out that politics alienated children and young adults because: 1) the majority sees politics as simply irrelevant to their lives (i.e., there is no stake to make a change – for instance, they did not pay taxes and were not allowed to vote); and 2) they have a negative perception of politicians. It seems that politics is generally not central to people’s everyday lives for reasons which may be related to Chatman’s (1999) theory of life in the round. T. Brown (1981) asserted that, when it comes to choice, politics is not the major criterion affecting people’s decisions. People are more likely to make decisions based on other matters than politics and political
preference.

McLeod and Becker (1974) employed a uses and gratifications approach to make sense of the way in which people avoid or receive political information from television. It is essential to point out that avoidance can be seen either from positive (e.g., I already made up my mind) or negative perspectives (e.g., I am not interested in politics). A number of empirical studies show that partisanship, relaxation, and alienation influence the interaction between exposure to television and political activities. Patterson (2002) indicated that a long presidential campaign could also have a negative effect on political interest. In addition, a number of studies show that programs that are superficial and image-oriented and use negative tactics could lead to political disaffection, alienation and apathy with regard to the democratic system, which eventually may result in a lack of effort in seeking political information (e.g., Pinkleton & Austin, 2001; Martinson, 2009).

Additionally, the notion of disinformation plays a significant role in political discourse, especially through mass media (Montgomery, 2006). Disinformation basically refers to deception or falsehood. Disinformation has been studied from various contexts such as political campaigns (Rodriquez, 2002), warfare (Barnes, 1994), racism (Skinner & Martin, 2000), and historical fabrication (Drobnicki & Asaro, 2001). Hernon (1995) explored the accuracy of information available online and offline, and found that there seems to be little difference in perceptions of disinformation between offline and online information. Floridi (1996) argued that disinformation can originate in three ways: lack of objectivity such as the case of propaganda, a lack of completeness, or a lack of pluralism such as censorship. These causes can exist separately or together. The diffusion of disinformation can be supported when the information source is viewed as authoritative and the users are more naive. Furthermore, the distribution of disinformation depends upon “how easy it is, on the part of receiver, to control the level of objectivity, completeness, and pluralism of information received” (Floridi, 1996, p.511).
2.4 Seeking and Sharing Information During Crisis

Another important contextual construct that is worth for an investigation is human behaviors in social crises. The current perspective of such context is primarily based on the development of the notions of collective behavior, originating from an observation of composite reactions to various kinds of social strain. From an early observation during the coup as discussed in Chapter 1, people sought supports from each others to access and distribute information (e.g., discussion forums, and chat rooms). Therefore, considering information behavior as collective behavior/action extends the fundamental understanding of how people as in a group environment seek and share information during social crises such as the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand.

There are a number of connections between the study of information behavior in everyday life, and even scholarly, context and information behavior during a social crisis. For example, central to ambiguous situations is the focus of emotion. Negative feelings such as uncertainty, anxiety, and frustration have been frequently observed in collective behavior. At the same time, researchers in ILS have also been investigating the role of emotion in information behavior (e.g., Nahl & Bilal, 2007; Kuhlthau, 2004; Mellon, 1986). In addition, the methodological approaches to collective behavior/action are, to some extent, similar to those employed in ILS and communication studies. For instance, social behavior interactionists are interested in significant symbols, including verbal and nonverbal gesture, action or action trace (McPhail, 2006). Rumors or informal communication in a crisis can be considered as a sense-making function, from either an individual or collective sense (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007).

A number of scholars in collective behavior/action suggest that the difference between collective behavior and normal behavior is a matter of degree, not of type (e.g., J. Perry & Pugh, 1978; Ginneken, 2003; D. Miller, 2000). Therefore, instead of exploring deviant types of components of behavior, this study investigates the impact of the intensity of situation and related constructs on the way in which people seek and share
information. Therefore, collective behavior/action is used as a frame of reference providing justification, from a socio-psychological perspective, for the way people sought and shared information in response to the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand. Specifically focusing on a communication and interaction perspective, this section also reviews the literature related to the concept of rumor and communication during situations of social crises. Then, the roles of mass media and ICTs are also discussed.

2.4.1 From Irrational Behavior to Rational Action

Since the mid-nineteenth century, scholars in sociology and social psychology have been studying the way in which people, in a collective sense, respond to critical situations (D. Miller, 2000, p.4). However, Park and Burgess (1921) first used the term collective behavior, which is defined as the behavior of individuals under the influence of a collective impulse. The study of collective behavior originated with an interest in mass hysteria, such as Le Bon’s classic work, The Crowd (2001[1895]).

According to D. Miller (2000) the idea of collective behavior can be divided into three subareas. Firstly, collective behavior is seen as aroused by emotion. In this view, the emotions and behavior of people in crowds tend to be exaggerated. Secondly, collective behavior is defined as adaptive response. This definition focuses on emergent and temporary behavior that is adaptive to new and ambiguous situations, especially where there is no pre-existing social norm. Finally, collective behavior is conceptualized as a non-institutionalized response to social strain – the phenomenon through which normal social structure fails. This perspective leans toward explaining social mobilization events such as panic, fads, riots, and civilian coups.

The traditional conception of collective behavior has been criticized as being based on stereotypical characteristics (i.e., irrational, emotional, and impulsive). A number
of models and explanations do not fit the increasing interest in politically-oriented social movements that are goal-oriented and mostly in control. Social researchers have empirically examined whether the way people behave in social movements is different from what they do in normal situations. The notion of collective action, then, has been introduced to explain such purposive and justifiable actions within the context of social movements. McPhail (2006, p.455) argued that the notion of collective action provides a clearer perspective on “what people do with and in relation to one another.” In addition, the original principle of collective behavior focused on non-interpretative actions, while the collective action perspective recognizes that people make decisions on whether or not to act the way they do. He highlighted the role of language as a significant tool in his temporary gathering model.

The nature of collective events is extremely diverse depending on the particulars of a case (e.g., Weessies, 2007). Thus, epistemological and methodological approaches are also varied. For example, Le Bon’s (2001[1895]) classical perspective of crowds illustrates a strongly pessimistic picture of the crowd. This point of view highlights the role of mental unity created by opinion leaders or elites. However, Le Bon’s work is unclear in many respects. Turner and Killian (1957, 1987) rejected Le Bon’s mental contagion assumption and proposed an emergent norm approach, which emphasizes that groups affect the way people respond to normative constraint (e.g., social pressure toward the reactions to polices during a protest (D. Miller, 2000), and the helping behavior at the stairwell during the evaluation of the World Trade Center complex (Connell, 2001)).

In addition, Smelser’s (1962) value-added theory pays attention to values, norms, the organization of motivation, and situational facilities. These components incorporate social action within the goal of changing society. From an organizational perspective, resource mobilization theory is used to explain how a group gathers and moves through a social network and utilizes material resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1973). Moreover, the social behavioral interactionist (SBI) perspective led by McPhail (1991, 2006) focuses on the organization of convergent activity by interpreting different forms of social action.
(e.g., chanting, singing, waving, and gesturing). Adopting Goffman’s (1966) conception of the gathering, the additional focus of SBI is on the assembling and dispersing process of temporary groups.

Although there were street demonstrations or announcements of various different political groups after the 2006 coup, such organized collective activities are not the main focus of this study. It is worth noting that the first street protest was not until three days after the seizure of power (on September 22, 2006). This study primarily focuses on the way in which people sought and shared information during the first couple days of the coup. Therefore, the notion of collective behavior is fundamental to this study. However, the idea of rational collective action is not totally discarded from the frameworks of interest, but supplements and is an alternative to the collective behavior perspective.

2.4.2 Emotion

Normally in response to critical situations, people’s cognitive state would be reflected in emotion. For example, most survey respondents articulated shock and disbelief after first hearing about the assassination of Kennedy. Later on, they developed an awareness of loss leading to mixed feelings of sorrow, sadness, shame, and anger (Schramm, 1965). Apparently these emotions, especially negative ones, lead to motivation and effort to learn about critical events (Boyle et al., 2004).

Panic is apparently the most visible phenomenon to collective behavior in the traditional perspective. Panic is usually seen in association with anger, fear, and anxiety. Panic is viewed as “responsible for the sense of confusion and personal helplessness within communities confronted with disaster” (D. Miller, 2000, p.256). In an extreme case, panic “may easily overrule conventional types of mental and social functioning” (Ginneken, 2003, p.178). There are numerous cases of panic that originated via rumors,
for instance, the 1979 concert stampede in Cincinnati, Ohio (Johns on, 1987), the stampede as a result of a rumor about a suicide bomber in 2005 in Iraq (Worth, 2005, cited in DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007), and the failed escape of the smokejumpers during the Mann Gulch disaster in 1949 (Weick, 1993).

Mawson (2007) suggested that there are two behavior classes relevant to the notion of panic: stimulation-seeking and stimulation-avoidance behavior. Stimulation-seeking behavior refers to behaviors that involve an intensive level of activity, for instance wild running, agitation, and aggression. In this view, the susceptibility to social influence is often considered, speculating that anxious situations could increase suggestibility (i.e., people are more likely to be imitative of or receptive to others’ behaviors). At the same time, it could weaken cognitive function and personality. These intensive behaviors are seen as expressions to “increase sensory input and at the same time reduce the level of arousal” (p.117). On the other hand, when an individual is alone, there is a chance that one would respond to the event with immobility (“freezing”) referred to as stimulation-avoidance behavior. Mawson explained such behaviors as “a biological phenomenon that serves to minimize contact with the environment and to reduce all forms of sensory input” (p.179). Mawson’s behavior classes seem to be in line with what information professionals have observed as information seeking and information avoidance (e.g., Case, Andrews, Johnson, & Allard, 2005; S. Miller & Mangan, 1983; Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002).

However, the perspectives on collective behavior and collective action, such as emergent-norm and social behavioral interaction, attempt to minimize or even eliminate the effect of panic by explaining such irrational activities in a more organized form (D. Miller, 2000, p.256). McPhail (2006, p.455) asserted that “panic is no longer a useful description or explanation of the individual or collective actions people take in the face of life-threatening situations.” He argued that panic rarely appears in disaster incidents and other emergency contexts (Quarantelli & Dynes, 1972, 1977; Quarantelli, 2001; Clarke, 2002). In disaster contexts, Ginneken (2003) observed that confidence
and trust in authorities, including efficiency, concern, and credibility, lessen such panic incidents, especially in developed countries.

2.4.3 Rumor/Informal Communication during a Crisis

Although there are various approaches to studying collective behavior and collective action, it is apparent that, to a certain extent, these approaches fundamentally view the concept of rumor in similar ways. Rumor is viewed as the major communication and interaction function of groups or collectivities, as Turner (1994) described rumor as intensified (and active) information seeking. While the traditional view of collective behavior recognizes rumor as simplistic, usually inaccurate, and emotion-provoking, the collective action view leans toward adopting normal communication models (D. Miller, 2000).

As Aguirre (2002) asserted, rumor is perhaps one of the least understood forms of collective behavior. By definition, DiFonzo and Bordia (2007, p.13) viewed rumors as “unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in contexts of ambiguity, danger, or potential threat and that function to help people make sense and manage risk.” However, it seems that there is no consensus on the use of the term, rumor. Rumor can either be considered as a process or a product. Aguirre (2002) used the term rumoring to refer to “the search for meaning through information sources of information,” while rumor may be understood as a cultural object as defined by Griswold (1987). Rosnow and Kimmel (1974) used the term rumor discussion, defined as a group interpretation process, to differentiate this process from rumors as a product of informal communication.

Evidently there are numerous ways to typify rumors. Certain criteria have been used to categorize rumors, including their temporal aspects, subject matter, content or theme, pattern of discussion (low-anxiety to high-anxiety), origins, motivations, and
sense-making functions (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p.36). However, these diverse perspectives share at least one common characteristic: that rumor is represented as informal communication.

Rumors and ambiguous situations seem to have a reciprocal relationship. In other words, certain types of situations cause and maintain rumors. At the same time, rumor can turn a normal situation into a chaotic situation. Additionally, rumors can be investigated prior to or after the occurrence of critical events such as crisis or disaster.

Functions and Motivations of Rumors/Communication in Crisis

The traditional view of the function of rumors can be obtained from Shibutani’s (1966) perspective. He indicated that people use rumors to share information as well as evaluate, compare, predict, and interpret an ambiguous situation. DiFonzo and Bordia (2007) asserted that the key construct of rumor is sense-making of the situation. Cantril (1941) addressed rumor as the pursuit of meaning. Additionally, Festinger et al. (1948) suggested that rumor is a way to gain cognitive clarity.

In addition, the literature also suggests that rumor can serve other purposes as well, however secondary, such as entertainment, wish fulfillment, alliance making and maintenance, and enforcement of communal norms (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p.15). DiFonzo and Bordia (2007, ch.3) used the motivation model to characterize different functions of rumors including fact-finding, relationship-enhancement, and self-enhancement. The fact-finding motivation is driven by a combination of uncertainty and the importance of the situation as well as personal attributions of lack of control and anxiety. People are basically motivated to reduce uncertainty and anxiety while they renew the sense of control over the situation. For the relationship-enhancement motivation, the minimized unpleasant message effect, describing the reluctance to transmit negative information, is applied. In other words, people tend to pass positive rumors more than negative ones since the latter could generate a bad social image (see also
Noelle-Neumann’s 1974 concept of the spiral of silence). Additionally, sharing information that is believed to be accurate and valuable could enhance reputation as a credible and trusted source of information as well as status and prestige in one’s social network. The self-enhancement motivation can be based on two primary sources: consciously malicious intent to others (e.g., product rumors and rumors during war-time) and enhancing self-identity (e.g., to support or justify pre-existing prejudices).

Rumor Content

The roughest classification of rumor content would be positive and negative rumors. In addition, the nature of a rumor may be explained by the distance of the impact to oneself. For example, during the invasion of Iraq, Muhammed (1994) found that two types of rumors were spread: 1) unpleasant news (e.g., death or arrest of leaders), and 2) threats to lives and property (e.g., censorship of carrying certain objects). Bordia and DiFonzo (2004) conducted a content analysis of rumors posted on the Internet, dividing rumor content into 11 categories, including delivering an explanation, evaluating an explanation, verifying an explanation, falsifying an explanation, accepting an explanation, reporting other information related to the explanation, seeking information, directing, justifying an explanation, hoping for certain positive consequences, motivating by considering losses, and casual participating.

There are four basic attributes of rumor including informative, communicative, instrumental, and unverified (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p.16). Although some rumors could raise questions, be persuasive and direct behavior, the form of a rumor statement is simple and informative (i.e., telling a story). In addition, rumor has to be communicated. It could not be recognized as rumor if it is only situated in someone’s mind. Rumor is perceived as purposive, not just being “entertaining, sociable or aimless.” Rumor also refers to information that has not yet been proved to be true. In other words, it is “constructed around unauthenticated information” (Rosnow & Kimmel, 1974, p.27).
Ginneken (2003, p.31) asserted that the way rumors are viewed as unverified and unauthenticated information can be explained by at least three conditions: “1) the original author of a rumor is usually not known, 2) the author is usually not the appropriate authority to make official statements about the matter, and 3) the rumor is often explicitly at odds with authorized information.”

By comparing rumors to news, DiFonzo and Bordia (2007) pointed to the similarity between rumors and news, which is sharing new information. In addition, topics that attract people are relatively more urgent, significant, purposeful, or important. However, the fact that rumors are unverified and could fall into what is called misinformation makes a rumor different from what is labeled news.

A rumor could begin with a one-line message. However, the snowball effect could make the content more elaborate (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007). The life of a rumor may depend upon various variables. For example, dramatic rumors, even though they are inaccurate, have longer lives. DiFonzo and Bordia (2007) saw rumors as a subclass of memes which are ideas, symbols, or practices that survive through cultural processes analogous to those of natural selection. However, the most important aspect of rumor content seems to be its accuracy (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, chapter 6), which not only affects the life of a rumor, but also belief in the rumor as well.

It is worth noting that the content of a rumor is likely to change throughout the transmission process, in accord with Shibutani’s (1966) notion of rumor as improvised news. The alteration of rumor content is generally based on the principle of assimilation (Allport & Postman, 1965). Assimilation denotes the distortion of a message to lean, to some degree, toward one’s personal psychological schemes. In other words, we “tend to see things in a way that fits in with our preconceptions and bias” (Turner, 1994). Generally, there are three practices in changing a rumor’s content: leveling, sharpening, and adding (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p.135). Leveling refers to the simplification of content, usually reducing the detail so the content can be transmitted easily. Sharpening means highlighting or paying more attention to particular details so as to make the story
more coherent. Adding refers to the action of inserting additional detail into the content.

Factors influencing Transmission of Information in Crisis

DiFonzo and Bordia (2007, p.69) reviewed the psychological literature and found out that there are five individual-level psychological factors affecting the transmission of rumors, including uncertainty, importance or outcome-relevant involvement, lack of control, anxiety, and belief.

In collective terms, group standards of the plausibility of rumors seem to matter to some extent (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007). In other words, if the group standard of plausibility is high, such behavior/action can be considered as fact finding. On the contrary, when the group standard of plausibility is low, the notion of contagion or panic is in focus.

In addition, the study conducted by Aguirre (2002) indicates that the way in which mass media predict the occurrence of a crisis plays a significant role in the transmission of rumors. His study supports Shibutani’s (1966) prediction of the positive relationship of the exposure to information between formal and informal sources. At the same time, it also indicates the chance of participating in rumoring based on a person’s availability as well as social network density (McPhail, 1991, p.91–94). The most visible examination of person’s availability (i.e., time and spatial location) would be the study of the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy (Greenberg & Parker, 1965). Schramm (1965) observed that the time of day of the event (i.e., morning, daytime, evening or night) impacted where people heard the news and how. Subsequently, Greenberg (1964) pointed out that physical location and source of information were highly correlated. For example, those who received the news about the assassination at home were likely to hear it from relatives, neighbors, or friends. Those who were at their workplace would get information from colleagues. Interestingly, most people who were out there somewhere were firstly informed by strangers. However, Greenberg (1964, p.231) concluded that “access to other persons may be not only a matter of physical location, but also to
some degree a matter of social location”. That is, some people seem to be able to locate themselves in, or perhaps create, a social situation in which interpersonal communication is more likely, regardless of physical location.

However, in most cases, rumoring seems to depend on the plausibility of rumors and the extent to which they fill a gap. It is speculated that when people believe in rumor, the speed of rumors is accelerated. DiFonzo and Bordia (2007, p.111) presented factors related to belief in rumor based on Brunswick’s lens model of judgment (1952). These factors include the receiver’s attitude (i.e., rumors are more likely to be spread if they are consistent with our existing attitudes), source credibility, hearing repeatedly, and rumor rebuttal. Moreover, when a rumor already fits the social pattern, emerging data, or expert consensus, it increases the probability that one would believe such a rumor.

Furthermore, intensity of emotions or moods can also affect the pattern of rumor as well. Shibutani (1966) introduced two forms of rumor construction based on the emotional intensity: deliberative and extemporaneous. When the unsatisfied demand for information and the emotional state of the collectivity is perceivably mild to moderate, rumor can be critically and deliberately constructed. For extemporaneous construction, DiFonzo and Bordia (2007) suggested that, when collective excitement is intense, the construction of rumor turns into social contagion.

2.4.4 Roles of Mass Media in Communication during Crisis

Rumor is perceived as mass behavior, usually through interpersonal interaction and communication. However, there is an essential role of the mass media in delivering information during social stress. In everyday contexts, mass media have proven to be a main source of information (see also Political Information Seeking Behavior). Mass media can be used as a tool to spread rumor and even construct the mythology of an event (e.g., Fischer, 2008, p.75–59). On the other hand, media can be the source of rumor in an ambiguous situation (e.g., Aguirre, 2002). In addition, the way in which
mass media fail to meet audience expectations can motivate them to seek information from other information sources, including interpersonal channels.

For instance, Muhammed (1994) interviewed sixteen Kuwaiti families who lived in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation in 1990. By comparing their communication patterns prior to and after the invasion, Muhammad observed the way in which Kuwaitis used the mass media as well as interpersonal channels. Based on the use and gratification theory and Shibutani’s analysis of rumor (1966), the results show the transition from a communication pattern that was primarily based on the availability and trustworthiness of mass media (i.e., damaged or taken by the Iraqi military) to one that was founded in rumorizing. During the occupation in Kuwait, local newspapers, radios, and televisions were controlled by the Iraqi government. People relied more on news media outside Kuwait (e.g., other Arab radio stations, BBC, Radio Monte Carlo, and Gulf Television Channel). A television program about/from the departed Kuwaiti was the most popular program among the respondents. However, rumor/word of mouth became the primary source of information about local situations. Although telephone service was available at that time, some respondents preferred to meet in-person with people who they trusted because they were afraid of being monitored. While word of mouth was perceived as being exaggerated, it was necessary to live in such an uncertain situation. Although most of the informants were getting news from people within their social networks (e.g., family and friends), they could not specify exactly where the news came from. The rumors were used to express people’s frustration and desperation. In addition, people needed to complain about the situation as well as help each other interpret the messages.

According to Shibutani (1966), rumors are more likely to spread under these three conditions: 1) disasters when the news media could not keep up, 2) situations in which the media could not be trusted, and 3) situations where the media is suddenly unavailable. For Turner (1994), rumor is situated on the upper level of a normal collective information seeking model, which basically consists of four action stages. Firstly, after hearing about a social strain situation, people turn to mass media as they would do in
an everyday context. Then, they begin to discuss these media accounts with others in their social network such as relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Turner speculated that rumoring begins at this second stage. Thirdly, the discussion tends to get amplified. People become intolerant to the situation and begin seeking both official and unofficial information, which is then broadly shared. In the end, intensive demand for information contributes to the offer and accepting of wild inventions and speculations as fact.

2.4.5 Roles of ICTs in Communication during a Crisis

A number of research studies have attempted to explain the way in which people use ICTs in response to social stress. Once again, two major technologies are highlighted in this study: the Internet and mobile communications.

The most promising role of the application of the Internet in crisis is related to the sense of place and community (Shklovski et al., 2008). Hagar and Haythornthwaite (2005) indicated the emergence of a new virtual space in place of physical gathering due to the restriction of movement during the Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic in 2001. While creating and maintaining connections at a local level, the Internet also extended Cumbrian farmers’ perspectives to an international ground. Hagar indicated that ironically “the need for international contact was driven by geographically local conditions” (Hagar, 2005, p.48).

There are evidently various applications/platforms on the Internet that people utilize to seek and share information during critical events, such as discussion forums and bulletin boards (e.g., Abdulla, 2007; DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007; Rosson, 1999; James, Wotring, & Forrest, 1995), blogs (e.g., Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Ramos & Piper, 2005; Hughes & Palen, 2009), instant messenger, and social networking sites (e.g., Shaheen, 2008; Palen, 2008).

Evidently the pattern of use of these applications during crises is different than in
normal situations. For example, Eisenberg and Partridge (2003) observed the pattern after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 saying:

[People] sent less e-mail overall (although some substituted e-mail for phoning where the telephone networks were congested), and they used news sites more heavily. They made greater use of instant messaging. Those unable to view television often substituted Internet news. The telephone, meanwhile, remained the preferred means of communicating with friends and loved ones, but chat rooms and e-mail were also used, especially where the telephone infrastructure was damaged or overloaded. The levels of other activities on the Internet, such as e-commerce, declined. One consequence of this decrease was that in spite of larger numbers of person-to-person communications, total load on the Internet decreased rather than increased, so that the network was not at risk of congestion.

There seem to be a number of factors affecting the way in which people seek information online. For example, Spence et al. (2006) found that gender and age are related to the way in which people perceived the Internet and other types of mass media as useful sources of information after the 9/11 terrorist attack. In addition to demographic factors, Liao, Finn, and Lu (2007) found the importance of Internet dependency and positive attitude toward seeking information online to motivate international students to seek information online about the critical events. Moreover, also based on the 9/11 events, Dutta-Bergman (2006) highlighted the channel complementary theory stating that those who communicate to people in their social network via telephone were more likely to use the Internet to communicate with their families and friends.

According to Rainie and Keeter (2006, p.1), “74 percent of the Americans who own mobile phones said they have used their hand-held device in an emergency and gained valuable help.” This may prove the perceived benefit of mobile communication technology in critical situations. Such technology has played a significant role in various crisis contexts. The portability of mobile devices enhances the accessibility of information and connectivity to others. The application of mobile communication has extended beyond just voice communication to multimodal communication such as Short Message Service (SMS), camera, video, and even Internet connections.
In particular, SMS seems to be the most studied cell phone feature for communicating during crisis. For instance, SMS was widely used to disseminate information among Chinese people during the SARS epidemic in early 2003 (Law & Peng, 2004). Although the connectivity was broken during the London subway bombing in 2005, a number of people used cell phone cameras to take photos and videos of what was going on.

However, these ICTs are still vulnerable to a certain extent. People’s reactions to crises could produce an enormous number of messages, which could cause what is known as information overload. Klapp (1972, ch.9) argued that the information overload can lead to decision lags, failure to integrate information into new common meanings, and inability to effectively construct meaning of the situations. In addition, although information is now in digital form, the delivery of digital information, either through wired or wirelesses, is still reliant on physical communication infrastructures and facilities. Therefore, in crisis and disaster situations, these technologies could fail to operate to some extent (e.g., Palen & Liu, 2007; Latimer, 2008; Meng, Zerfos, Samanta, Wong, & Lu, 2007).

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to this research study. However, it is essential to note that the primary focus of this study is to validate and extend the understanding of the notions of the information poor outside an everyday life context. The analytic mechanisms for validation is through the investigation of the Insider and Outsider perspective: the roles of insiders and outsiders. Other major concepts discussed in this chapter (e.g., political information behaviors, and information behaviors during a social crisis) provide the basis for the contextual analysis of the study through a grounded theory approach. In addition, concerning the cultural perspective of the setting of this study, Appendix F also discusses the background and contextual information about the political turmoil in Thailand in 2005 leading to the coup d’état on September 19, 2006 as well as the current perspective on the information infrastructure in Thailand.
This chapter presents insights on methodology, data collection, and data analysis to the study of collective information behavior during the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand. A methodology emphasizing qualitative data collection and analysis was selected for this exploratory research, influenced by Dervin’s Sense-Making Methodology (SMM). The research design was primarily based on the opportunities and limitations that were shaped by the following research questions:

- How did people seek and share information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?
- What were the factors influencing the way people sought (and did not seek) information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?
- What were the roles of insiders and outsiders in terms of seeking and sharing information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état?

3.1 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research is a broad framework to study social phenomena in a naturalistic, interpretive, and holistic way. It highlights the complexity of social phenomena as well as
the interactions between an inquiry and a researcher. Even though there is no singular consensus on the definition of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 2005) identified the two core elements of such an approach: “a commitment to some version of the naturalistic, interpretative approach to its subject matter and an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of postpositivism” (p.8; 10).

Qualitative research facilitates the study of depth and detail (Patton, 2002, p.14), providing deeper understanding of social phenomena (Silverman, 2005) “from the point of view of the meanings employed by the people being studied” (Bryman & Burgess, 1999, p.X). The flexibility and recursivity of qualitative methods allow an investigator to review and revise the procedures and instruments used during the research project. A qualitative approach was selected as a broad framework for this study because it maximized the opportunity to gain a comprehensive picture of the situations as well as the details of people’s reactions to the event.

The nature of inquiry for qualitative research is context bound. This study was founded on the major assumption of the situational approach that the 2006 coup d’État as a social situation had a significant impact on human cognitive and behavioral attributes. Meyrowitz (1985, p.vii) described the situational approach saying “people behave differently in different social situations,” depending on where one is and who one is with. Implicit in such an approach is the idea that behavior in a given situation is also affected by where one is not, and who is not there. Basically, a situational approach is inherently a study of boundaries and limits. For Meyrowitz, a situation is considered as an information system. Nodes within the system include people and intermediaries (e.g., mass media and the Internet) in the social setting.

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: 1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; 2) direct observation; and 3) documents. Although it is possible to directly observe a crisis situation (e.g., Kraus, Davis, Lang, & Lang, 1975), it requires prompt response, primary planning, and a large amount of resources, which are beyond the means of this study. Therefore, two types of data collection are considered in this study:
in-depth semi-structured interviews and document research. While adopting Dervin’s Sense-Making Methodology to frame and guide the data collection (e.g., initial questions and interview protocol), this study also used grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as a framework for data collection and analysis in order to increase the flexibility of the data handling as well as connect to theoretical constructs.

3.2 The Insider and Outsider Perspective

A qualitative approach allows the integration of multiple realities (e.g., J. Miller & Glassner, 2004), especially emerging from the complexity of the Insider and Outsider perspective. Considering the impact of the Insider and Outsider on qualitative research (e.g., Carey et al., 2001), the “complex set of insider/outsider identification” (Bridges, 2002) of the researcher seemingly affected to the quality of the study results.

Two characteristics of a member of a social group during the 2006 coup in Thailand were observed in order to identify each individual’s small world membership: inherited social status (i.e., nationality) and geographical location. With the juxtaposition of these two characteristics, there are four categories of membership of a small world as shown in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial location</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside Thailand</td>
<td>Thai, Absolute Insider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigner, Outsider-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Thailand</td>
<td>Thai, Insider-Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigner, Absolute Outsider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only two levels of spatial location are noted: those who were in Thailand and those who were outside Thailand. Nationality refers to the country of a person’s citizenship. Similar categorization is applied, dividing between Thai nationality and non-Thai. It is important to note that nationality could not be directly observed in the content.
Therefore, it was identified by other means, for instance, language. See Appendix D for a complete coding scheme.

Thai people who resided in Thailand during the period of interest are considered *Absolute Insiders*. Examples of other types of small world membership are Thai students who studied abroad as *Insiders-Out*; foreign correspondents who worked in Thailand as *Outsiders-In*; and foreign scholars who are interested in Thailand and were outside Thailand during that time as *Absolute Outsiders*.

As a Thai native studying abroad for many years, I, as the main researcher of this study, was considered as what [Merton (1972, p.29)](https://doi.org/10.2307/2032790) called an *insider as an outsider* during the time of the coup. Although being Thai contributes to a general understanding of the social, economic, cultural, and political context of Thailand, the physical distance, especially during the early stage of the coup, prevented me from gaining direct (or firsthand) experience compared to those who were living in the country.

According to [Olson (1977)](https://doi.org/10.2307/2032790), “insiders can provide information about their subjective reality, and outsiders can provide data on objective reality, and both realities are important.” In general, it seems to be an advantage to be an insider, as [J. Perry and Pugh (1978, p.19)](https://doi.org/10.2307/2032790) noted that “what appears haphazard or senseless to outside observers may be quite rationale from the point of view of participants.” However, when an insider converts to being an outsider, according to [Merton (1972)](https://doi.org/10.2307/2032790), this person gains trust from insiders as well as being capable of understanding both worlds, especially from observing what has been taken for granted by others.

However, the Insider/Outsiders dichotomy is not limited to direct experience and ascribed status (i.e., nationality). Considering the situational approach here, it is believed that the coup d’état, highly motivated by a long period of political turmoil in Thailand, had an impact on the way in which people sought and shared information. Therefore, the effect of political attitudes should be noted in this study as well. The researcher’s political point of view potentially challenged the way in which the researcher gained access to subjects. Even though a researcher could label him/herself as politically neutral,
academics and researchers from various disciplines have substantially and visibly participated in the discussion of political turmoil in Thailand. Thus, one could easily question the plausibility of such a claim, which leads to various implications and, eventually, bias in data collection.

In order to respond to such challenges, two methodological approaches were applied. The first approach focused on the quality of the research report, which is the critical part of qualitative research (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1990). In this sense, the information on the historical background and current state of Thailand’s political system, provided as Appendix F, in addition to serving as environmental scanning, represents the researcher’s political knowledge and perceptions. Although the researcher attempted to comprehensively investigate the situation and its context, the exposure to and selection of materials were limited to personal capacity and based on his political stance. Therefore, it is ultimately up to the readers to make the interpretation in terms of the researcher’s political knowledge and attitude.

3.3 Sense-Making Methodology

Sense-Making Methodology (SMM) is focused on the study of sense-making and sense-unmaking as metaphoric phenomena, and was mainly developed along with Brenda Dervin’s research stream since the 1970s. The grounded framework of sense-making metatheory can be described in metaphoric terms (Dervin, 1999b) as shown in the Figure 3.1.

[A] person is seen as embedded in a context-laden situation, bounded in time-space. The person pictured as crossing a bridge is used to metaphorically describe the way that humans are mandated by the human condition to bridge gaps in an always evolving and every gappy reality. The person is seen facing a gap (i.e., a sense-making need) that arises out of a situation. Through the process of gap bridging, people seek inputs (sometimes the stuff
systems call information) and engage in other activities through the time-space continuum that lead to outcomes. (Naumer, Fisher, & Dervin, 2007, p.2)

As Savolainen (1993, p.16) elaborated, “[s]ense-making behavior is communicating behavior. The central activities of sense-making are information seeking, processing, creating, and using. Sense-making is a process; sense is the product of this process.” Two fundamental assumptions of the metaphor are essentially addressed, “the universal gappiness of the human condition”, and “the extraordinary capacities of human beings to bridge these gaps in a multitudinous array of possibilities” (Dervin, 2008, p.8). Conceptually, situations refer to what people see themselves departing from. A gap is perceived as the struggle that results as a person moves through time-space. The specification of the bridge broadly covers various constructs such as ideas, thoughts, emotions, memories, and values that are used for making sense or, in metaphorical terms, bridging
the gap. “The outcomes are as defined by the sense-maker and often form part of the situation for the next step-taking” (p.8).

The development of Sense-Making Methodology is intended to bridge polarizations (i.e., “methodology between the cracks”) in research of human information and communication behavior (Dervin, 2003). Such polarizations include, for instance, structure and agency ideologies, quantitative and qualitative approaches, critical and administrative research, and American and European perspectives. Therefore, sense-making is highly cited as one of the provocative approaches for the paradigm shift from system-centered to user-centered research in information science (Naumer et al., 2007).

In addition, Sense-Making Methodology is also constructed and differentiated from other methodologies based on five other essential assumptions (Naumer et al., 2007, p.3), including that: 1) “communication must be studied and practiced communicatively with the realization that research is itself communication practice”, which leads to a focus on the 6Hs - head, heart, hand, habit, hegemony, and habitus; 2) “people perpetually move between states of certainty and uncertainty;” 3) “it is important to focus on processes and verbs rather than descriptors and nouns;” (see also Dervin, 1993) 4) “power is assumed to be ontologically real, as a force acting on – constraining and/or facilitating sense-making and sense-unmaking processes;” and 5) humans are recognized as “theorists engaged in identifying the nouns of their world and the linkages between them.”

The goal of SMM is to hear informants’ voices in their own way and in the way that could facilitate both qualitative and quantitative methods (Dervin, 2008, p.15). A core set of fundamental mandates is suggested. For example, Sense-Making interviewing suggests that researchers be less intrusive in terms of their credentials and expertise. In addition, researchers need to respect informants by not being their representatives, but aware observers, of collective impact. Moreover, SMM recognizes various dynamics of the human being such as the ability to answer questions immediately or even in a well-articulated manner, and to incorporate subjective reality into what they experience. Sense-Making interviewing also suggests that interviewers see informants as unstable or
varied through time-space, as well as confused and muddled.

Thus, the informants should be allowed to see situations outside the frame of reference shaped by researchers and be aware that they create their own worldviews. Researchers are also encouraged to build trust from informants as sense-makers and to use redundancy to link informants’ and researchers’ worldviews. Furthermore, informants should be allowed to discuss their situations in terms of constraints and forces. The goals and these guidelines seem appropriate to respond to the challenges of the complexity of political worldviews, addressed earlier.

3.4 Research Design

Two sources of data were collected in this research: document research and in-depth interview. The flowchart shown in Figure 3.2 illustrates the work flow and time line of the data collection and analysis processes.

The data collection and analysis were conducted between November 2009 to May 2010. It began with the aggregation of publicly available online documents. The flexibility of the qualitative method allowed data analysis to be integrated into the process of data collection. Therefore, the researcher began the analysis of documents using both deductive and open coding techniques right after finishing the aggregation of documents. The analysis of these public documents informed the recommendations for selecting interview informants as well as guiding the interview questions. After finishing the analysis of public documents, the researcher began the interviews. After each interview, the researcher transcribed, cleaned, and analyzed the data in order to ensure that the data obtained were rich enough and to check whether the overall analysis reached theoretical saturation. Although during the interview, the informants were asked to voluntarily provide personal records (e.g., personal diary, history logs of instant messenger, and other records of online/offline activities) relating to their behaviors during the coup, it is noteworthy that none of them provided any additional private records as they did not
keep any records. The informants were also asked to address their contacts as a snowball sampling technique. The purpose of the snowball sampling technique was primarily to contribute to the trustworthiness of this study (i.e., data triangulation). It is important to note that, during the whole process of data collection and analysis, the researcher wrote memos regarding his reflective ideas and thoughts regarding every step of the study. The memo-notes also contributed to the process of writing the research findings. After finishing the data analysis, intercoder reliability was tested for the deductive
coding only. Then the researcher began writing the research report. Most of the data management and analysis processes relied on the capacity of NVivo (version 8) qualitative data analysis software. NVivo allows researchers to work with different document formats (i.e., text, image, audio, and video) in one workspace. One can preview/code imported image, audio, and video files in NVivo. It also supports data analysis based on the grounded theory approach.

### 3.4.1 Document Research

Documents represent nonliving forms of data (see also Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, part III), providing a primary method for unobtrusive observation. In the context of studying events in the past, where the researcher could not observe the situation directly, documents seem to be a more reliable source. It is important to recognize the nature of the document that uniquely contributes to the quality of qualitative research. Prior (2004) addressed three features of documents as a field of social research: documents as product, documents in action, and text and identity. These features provide evidence, to some extent, of the authenticity of data (i.e., unobtrusive and reaction; see also Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.108), responding to the requirement of two frames of reference in this study: communication functions in collective behavior/action (i.e., rumor is a communicated statement) and the focus on communication practice of Sense-Making Methodology. Document analysis also contributes to data/method triangulation, improving the trustworthiness of research findings which will be discussed later. Providing the richness of data collected from documents, document analysis was a main approach for this study.

Another purpose of document research was to provide a direction for the interviews, especially in terms of selection of informants and construction of interview questions. The first group of informants were purposefully selected from people who appeared (as users, creators, references, and commentators) in publicly available documents. In
addition, the documents were referred to during the interviews to assist the informants to recall the situation.

Publicly Available Documents

Publicly available documents are documents for which the online contents are available to the public. Four content types were aggregated including:

- weblogs (i.e., blogs),
- photos,
- videos, and
- Wikipedia.

The following are the general criteria for document selection applied (as a search strategy) across various types of documents used in this study:

**Time frame** Since the focus of this study is on the early stage of the 2006 coup in Thailand, the period that is used to frame the coup is from September 19 - 23, 2006. The time frame of interest were applied to the search strategy in two ways: 1) contents created and uploaded during the given period, and 2) contents created during the specified time frame but uploaded to the Internet later.

**Topical relevancy** In order to aggregate relevant documents, the scope of relevant topics is defined. The following entities guided the construction of keywords or search terms. These terms were connected with boolean logic operations. Truncation was also applied, where appropriate, for covering all of the variations of search terms.

- concepts (i.e., politics, democracy, authoritarian, revolution (“Rattapraharn”), seize the power (“Yudammard”), and coup d’état (“Patiwat”))
- persons (i.e., Thaksin Shinawatra, General Sonthi Boonyaratglin)
organizations or groups of people (i.e., *Council of Democratic Reform - CDR* (and its various forms of name), *People Alliance for Democracy - PAD, military, army, soldiers*)

- places or locations (i.e., *Bangkok and Thailand*)

- objects (i.e., *tanks and guns*)

**Language** Due to the limited capacity of the researcher, only content posted in Thai and English languages was collected. The keywords illustrated above were also translated into Thai.

Different techniques were used to collect different types of contents applying the above criteria to select relevant documents. *Google Blog Search* ([blogsearch.google.com](http://blogsearch.google.com)) was used to aggregate relevant blog posts. The search results were exported into RSS feeds and imported into Google Reader. *Flickr* ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) was a primary source of photos posted online. To collect relevant video posted online, *YouTube* ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) was the main data source. In addition to the content itself (e.g., blog posts, photos, and videos), associated data, such as metadata, rating, and comments, were also included. The data were saved manually to a local machine. All blog data were stored in .PDF format due to its readability and portability to different platforms. The photos were downloaded to a server/local machine and kept in original formats (.JPG). The videos were converted into (.MP4) which is an NVivo-compatible format.

Instead of relying on a search engine, two *Wikipedia* entries were specifically selected (i.e., “2006 Thai coup d’etat” for an English entry and “Rath pra harn nai pra thet Thai Por Sor 2549” [Coup d’etat in Thailand 2006] for a Thai entry). Instead of collecting the current content of the entries, the history of revision and discussions during the focused period was crawled.

As a result, there were 814 photos from 110 Flickr accounts, 990 blog posts from 775 bloggers, and 112 videos from 61 YouTube accounts representing documentary data of this sort. For the English Wikipedia entry (2006 Thai coup d’etat), there were 978 entry
revisions and 376 discussion (talk) revisions. For the Thai Wikipedia entry, there were 293 entry revisions and 61 revisions for the discussion page during the first four days of the coup.

### 3.4.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews were used as a supplementary method to document analysis. According to W. Miller and Crabtree (2004, p.185), the interview as data collection is “a research-gathering approach that seeks to create a listening space where meaning is constructed through an interexchange/co-creation of verbal viewpoints in the interest of scientific knowing.”

A semi-structured interview or what is also known as the general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) was applied. This approach allowed informants to address their views in various ways. In the meantime, it provided, to some extent, a structure for managing and analyzing data. Such an approach often begins, prior to the interview, with a set of issues and related questions that are to be investigated. A guideline is created to “ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p.343). The interviewer can alter the order of the questions or further probe the informants to clarify or elaborate certain issues (Berg, 2001).

In addition to the quest to reach theoretical saturation, the Sense-Making interview approach also played an important role in guiding the interview techniques of this research. Generally, the underlying assumptions of sense-making on communication practice support the use of an interview since such a method provides informants the “freedom to define themselves and also license to present themselves as both flexible or inflexible, as both centered and decentered” (Naumer et al., 2007, p.3). The Sense-Making Methodology was applied to the study of information behavior during political crisis in two major practical aspects: interview technique and interview guide.


**Interview Technique**

The first application is based on the fact that Sense-Making Methodology is a situation-oriented approach. The contextual corpus of the methodology is apparently time-space. As the object of this study, the Thai coup in September 2006 is a time-specific event, which is considered a critical entry in an SMM interview (Dervin, 2008, p.28). In this case, the interviewer induced informants to recall the situation where/when they first heard about the coup in 2006.

Aligned to Sense-Making philosophical assumptions, the Micro-Moment Time-Line interview approach (Dervin, 1992) was applied in this study. The informants were asked to explain what happened in a situation step-by-step. Each moment is called time-line step (e.g., “I tried to contact my parents”, “I saw something wrong on the television”). Then they were asked to express questions, doubts, or difficulties related to each time-line step.

After that, the questions reflecting sense-making concepts (i.e., situation, gap, uses/helps) were used (Savolainen, 1993, p.24). Such a technique allows informants to focus on the situation.

Another practical aspect of Sense-Making Methodology relies on the premises of talking cure and conscientizing process, digging deeper for studying the tacit, unarticulated, and unconscious (Dervin, 2008, p.12). Thus, the interviewer explicitly allowed time for informants to articulate their realities. In addition to allowing the interviewer to obtain deeper data, it appeared to allow informants to systematically recall the situations and what happened to them in the past.

**Interview Guide**

The second application of Sense-Making Interviewing deals with the interview guide, which was derived from the Sense-Making question roster (Dervin, 2007, 2008, p.10–11; 19) as shown in Appendix C. The interview guide began with the reconfirmation of
privacy assurances and ended with demographic information.

The way in which the researcher asked questions applied the notion of SMM triangulation. In addition to the main roster, which is considered as the first level of SMM triangulation (Dervin, 2008, p.21), the second level of SMM triangulation was also used to gain deeper detail on a certain situation by “re-asking the same array of SMM questions but now focused on the particular conclusion” (p.22). Dervin suggested that the second level SMM questions should be handled as flexibly as possible (i.e., the order of questions depends on the relevant point). In addition, most of the questions in this level are done on the fly. (p.22) Dervin also argued that the SMM triangulation approach “can be very deep and seemingly very repetitive. This built in redundancy is considered (and has been empirically shown to be) a crucial aspect of the deep consciousness-raising, bringing-to-articulation dig” (p.29).

In addition to the Sense-Making roster of questions, background/demographic information (i.e., age, education, occupation, political orientation) about informants were also collected at the end of interview. However, more than half of informants did not provide demographic information because they would like to remain anonymous as much as possible.

**Interview Mode**

Due to the difficulty of conducting face-to-face interviews, this study took advantage of Internet technology as a medium for the interview process. There are various applications/tools to be utilized as communication media. Although the recruitment of the informants and scheduling of the interview was primarily done via electronic private message and email, this study design allowed informants to choose the medium based on their own preferences including, but not limited to, email, instant messenger (IM), telephone, video conference, and chat room.

However, when it came to selection, nine out of twelve informants preferred to use email as a main communication channel. One was interviewed via telephone. One wanted
to be interviewed in the text mode of instant messenger. One requested to use the voice communication feature of instant messenger. However, due to network difficulty, the interview was later changed to telephone. There was no interview via video.

In addition to increasing the level of participation (i.e., convenience) (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), such a technique balanced out the medium effects (i.e., synchronicity and asynchronicity; textual, vocal, and visual cues; e.g., Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Meho, 2006; Bampton & Cowton, 2002), since each medium has its own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, although email provided more time for informants to think about questions/issues, participant attrition, leading to an incomplete process, was a major concern. Conducting interviews via textual conversation (e.g., email, instant messenger, chat) may lessen the burden of transcription. However, it instead increases the cost on the informants’ side (i.e., typing). While video conference/chat requires additional expenses on both interviewer’s and informants’ sides, such a medium allows the interviewer to observe visual cues such as facial expression and body language (Bryman, 2001).

For synchronous textual and verbal communication (i.e., text mode of instant messenger, and telephone), the interview was done in one session. The researcher posted a number of questions one-by-one. All textual conversations on screen were save into .TXT file format and then imported to NVivo. The telephone conversations were recorded and imported directly to NVivo. Both questions and answers were stored and marked in NVivo. This channel of communication allowed the researcher to probe the interview questions better than asynchronous mode. The average length of a synchronous interview session was about 2 hours.

For asynchronous communication (i.e., email), the researcher first asked informants to provide background information about themselves. In the same message, the informants were asked to explain the situation (see “To tap situations” section in the question roster). After receiving the first set of answers, the researcher sent a couple of follow-up questions. This process was reiterated until the researcher obtained perceivably enough data or the informant stopped the interview. On average, there were 7 email
conversations per informant over a 12-day period.

**Recruiting Informants**

Ragin, Nagel, and White (2004) asserted that “considerations of the scientific foundations of qualitative research often are predicated on acceptance of the idea of cases” (p.9). Therefore, the process of recruiting informants of this study was based on the discussion of case selection (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2008). As mentioned above, there were two major rounds of recruiting interview informants: 1) selecting from document analysis, and 2) snowball (or chain) sampling.

For the selection from document analysis, informants were primarily chosen based on theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), referring to “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006). However, purposive sampling (i.e., critical case sampling) was also utilized when it came to the selection of a single individual.

After finishing the data analysis of a document, the researcher looked for concepts, relationships, and details that were still missing or needed to be explored. The selection of informants was primarily based on these missing links. Another set of selection criteria was derived from the identification of a “case” (e.g., an author, a commentator, or even a reference). In order to guarantee the diversity of the pool of informants, three more user characteristics were also considered when selecting informants: type of content the informants originally created, status of small world membership, and critical case. Note that the status of small world membership is discussed in the data analysis section. Informants were selected from critical cases (e.g., the first, the last, the most visible, the most popular, the richest content). According to Patton (2002), critical cases are “those that can make a point quite dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of things” (p.236). It is speculated that such a technique would yield the “the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge”
These criteria were transformed into the attributes of each case in NVivo. NVivo allows the researcher to create a table of attributes for each case. The analysis for the selection of informants was done by generating matrices and queries to classify cases based on the above criteria.

The second selection of informants came from a snowball sampling technique. During the interview, the informants were asked to provide at least one reference to someone who they contacted during the early stage of the 2006 coup. Warren (2002, p.87) argued that “theoretical sampling may be carried out through a snowball process: One respondent is located who fulfills the theoretical criteria, then that person helps to locate others through her or his social networks.” This study especially focused on the transmission and diffusion of information. This perspective of linking through social networks is critical to complement the research findings. In addition, the data from the snowball technique helped the researcher to construct a collective perspective of relevant phenomena. At the same time, it was used to increase the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the study by verifying data obtained from the informants recruited from the document analysis.

In total, 40 invitations were sent to potential informants. Twelve people responded to the invitation. One said they were willing to participate, but eventually could not allocate the time to participate. Three rejected to the opportunity to participate. The rest did not respond to the invitation. As a result, there were 8 informants recruited in follow up to people identified during document analysis. One of the eight informants stopped responding during the middle of the interview via email. Since his responses at the beginning of the interview were valid, he, however, was included as a valid informant. Four of the eight informants recruited through document analysis were bloggers whose blogs were popular during that time. Two informants were among the earliest to upload photos on Flickr. One was a YouTube user whose video of the coup announcement was one of the first coup-related videos during that time. The last informant was one of the
most active Wikipedia users.

Four informants were successfully recruited through the snowball sampling technique. Apparently, the major reason for references was that they were contacts during the early days of the coup. One informant did not use the Internet during that time.

It is important to note that only a couple of people reported all of the requested demographic information. Some answered some questions. The majority said they did not want to provide any demographic information at all.

**Approaching Informants**

After the potential informants were chosen, an invitation to participate was sent through the electronic mail features of each of the platforms (e.g., *Youtube Message, Flickr Mail, Wikipedia talk page*). Unless email addresses were not identified, the invitation letter was sent through each channel individually. A couple of informants reported that they did not check private messages often. This may be one of the contributors to a low response rate.

For those who were referred from the first group of informants, the invitation letter was sent through email, citing the identity of their reference (with permission). If the nationality of an informant was known, the language used in the invitation was based on the informant’s nationality (i.e., Thai or non-Thai). When the informant’s language preference was unknown, both versions (Thai and English) of the invitation were sent.

The invitation mail included background information about the study (with minimal information about the researcher) accompanied with a fact sheet about the study. The informant was asked to reply with a choice of interview mode. To increase the efficiency of the study, informants were given one week (seven days) to respond to participate. However, most of the informants responded on the next day after receiving the invitation. Then the researcher scheduled the interview time with the informants individually.

Since the study obtains data directly from human subjects, ethical concerns were observed. Fontana and Frey (2000) discussed three major ethical issues related to research
interviews: “informed consent (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), right to privacy (protecting the identity of subject), and protection from harm (physical, emotional, or any other kinds)” (p.662).

The fact sheet was sent as an attachment with the invitation. The content of the fact sheet includes “detail information about the research in which they are asked to participate and ensuring that they understand fully what participation would entail, including any possible risks” (Meho, 2006, p.1288). In addition, the researcher asked informants not to distribute interview transcripts or documents to others either privately or publicly (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). This is to protect the researcher’s privacy as well as to not affect the study results, especially for a study that is using a snowball sampling technique.

Another concern was to preserve the anonymity of informants to protect their privacy as well as building trust with the informants (Meho, 2006, p.1289). In response to this concern, the informant’s real name was not asked, unless the informants preferred to use their real identity during the interview. However, whether the informants preferred to use real names or pseudonyms during the interviews, their names were replaced with pseudonyms specifically assigned for this study (based on the classification of small world membership). These pseudonyms were used in the interview transcript, memo-notes, and coding documents. The researcher created and maintained a list of informants privately. The list of informants links the informants’ identity and contact information used during the interviewing process and the pseudonyms. Once this project was finished, the list was destroyed. This blind process was chosen to standardize the anonymization process since the implications of anonymity were various based on different interview modes.

Another way to build trust was making the conversations informal and accepting the complexity of human subjects. Based on the Sense-Making Methodology (Dervin, 2008), the researcher explicitly gave informants time to recall the situations and step outside of the question framework, as well as gave informants permission to be less than
perfect. Before every interview began, the informants were informed that they were not expected to answer the question right away. They were allowed to take some time to recall the situation. They might use any references to start thinking about the situation. They might correct their previous responses at any time, if they would like to. Some informants, contacted via email, took a few days to answer questions. Some reported to correct what they said earlier.

In addition, the researcher used probing questions and techniques from the second level of SMM triangulation (i.e., re-asking the same set of questions, but focusing more on particular issues) to assure informants that whatever they said was heard and that their comments would not be evaluated.

**Recording and Transcription of Interview Data**

Since email, instant messaging, and text chat are self-transcribing, there was no need to transcribe these interviews (Herring, 1996; Meho, 2006). However, since there was variability of responses, especially from the interviewee’s side (e.g., typing skill, use of emoticons and abbreviated terms), such data was reorganized and cleaned, for instance, distinguishing between interview-related and non interview-related threads.

For voice-based communication (i.e., telephone and video conference), the interviews were recorded electronically since the researcher used a Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP – i.e., Skype) application to communicate with informants verbally. The recordings of the interviews were directly imported to NVivo without being transcribed. However, partial transcriptions (i.e., only main questions and responses) were applied during the first round of the coding process.
3.4.3 Data Analysis

Unit of analysis

There were two units of analysis in this study: person and “person-in-situation.” The notion of person-in-situation was used throughout the qualitative content analysis, which was the major analytical part of this study. This approach is derived from the micromoment timeline interview technique of Sense-Making Methodology. Dervin (2008) argued that “communicating (internal and external) is assumed to occur in micromoments in time-space and the bracket of time-space chosen for consideration is itself a methodological choice” (p.23).

Deductive coding

The deductive coding (i.e., content analysis) is, itself, a systems analysis of various types of content. One of the main characteristics of deductive coding is that the coding scheme is developed before the analysis begins (Spurin & Wildemuth, 2009). For this particular study, the only code that was pre-defined prior to the analysis was the status of small world membership. The criteria were discussed above (see also: coding scheme in Appendix D). The unit of analysis for deductive coding was person which was used to identify the status of small world membership of an individual (i.e., case). The development of the coding scheme was done right after finishing the collection of public documents. The coding scheme was tested with a small set of data and revised before use with the whole collection of data. As a result, the final coding scheme, considering missing values, includes nine categories. In this coding scheme, one person (i.e., case) can belong to only one category. Figure 3.3 shows the final codes using in the analysis.

Table 3.2 illustrates the number of cases by status of small world membership and content type. The majority of bloggers (517 out of 775) aggregated through Google Blog search were absolute outsiders. About 67 percent of Flickr users were identified as outsiders-in. The YouTube videos were uploaded mostly by outsiders-in and absolute
insiders; 22 and 19 users, respectively. Wikipedia editors were the most challenging group to identify the small world membership. Only 161 out of 462 Wikipedia editors (approximately 35 percent) indicated both nationality and geographical location.

However, it is important to point out that the status of small world membership obtained by deductive coding was not directly used for any quantitative or systematic analysis (e.g., cross-tabulations). It was used only as a reference for open coding and pseudonyms.

The intercoder reliability test was conducted after the development of the codes. Another coder, a Thai graduate student in the United States, was selected. The second coder coded 10 percent of the cases across all types of content. The selection of cases for the intercoder reliability was via systematic randomization. The cases of each content type were sorted alphabetically. The researcher chose one out of every ten cases for this reliability test. The researcher conducted an informal training session for the second coder, including co-coding in order to make sure that the second coder understood the

Figure 3.3: Coding categories of small world membership
Table 3.2: Number of cases by small word membership and content type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Type</th>
<th>Blog</th>
<th>Flickr</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>Wikipedia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute insider</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute outsider</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider-out</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsider-in</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous-in</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous-out</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider-anonymous</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsider-anonymous</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute-anonymous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>1407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

procedure and the coding scheme. After the second coder finished the coding, the codes were compared. Scott’s pi was used to report the reliability of coding as it is appropriate for a nominal variable and two coders (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). For this study, the minimum acceptable coefficient (i.e., acceptable level of agreement beyond chance) was at 0.70, which is appropriate for an exploratory study (Lombard et al., 2002). The Scott’s pi value computed for this study based on the above procedure was 0.763, which was deemed acceptable.

**Open coding**

This study applied qualitative content analysis as a main analytic framework. In general, the analysis relied on an inductive strategy, which generates and confirms theory based on patterns, themes, and categories emerging from data (Patton, 2002). However, in terms of practical and theoretical process, a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach was specifically implemented. Patton (2002) noted that grounded theory “operates from a correspondence perspective in that it aims to generate explanatory propositions that correspond to real-world phenomena” (p.489).
Grounded theory emphasizes what is known as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.223), which highlights the discovery of concepts, their properties, and dimensions directly from data. Thus, the categories and a coding scheme are derived from the data, rather than from other studies or theories.

There are three phases for grounded theory coding: 1) an initial phase involving naming each segment of data; 2) a focused, selective phase that derives the codes from the initial phase; 3) an axial coding phase focusing on the properties and dimensions of the categories (Charmaz, 2006).

The initial coding is to ensure that the analysis is based on careful reading and observation. For this study, different techniques were implemented based on content types. For textual data (including blog posts, Wikipedia entries, and associated data of non-textual contents – metadata, tags, comments, etc., and memo notes), the researcher read and observed text (and its context) carefully and created a new code or applied an existing code to appropriate messages. Basically, codes, marks, and annotations were attached to each phrase, sentence, or paragraph of interest. Note that one message could have more than one code. For still image data, position-based coding was applied. NVivo allows position-specific description of image. Certain descriptions refer to the specific area of an image, rather than the overall picture. A researcher can highlight a spot of interest (the size is flexible) and insert a description of that spot. For audio and video files, the coding technique was based on timeline coding. The researcher listened and annotated the codes at the timeline (in range). Partial transcription was applied only for responses that might be used for citing. The transcription consisted of timestamps and text.

The second phase of the coding is called focused coding, referring to the use of “the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. One goal is to determine the adequacy of these codes. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p.58). In this phase, the researcher reviewed the
codes generated from the initial phase. The researcher used NVivo to organize the data by code. The analytical process included sorting, synthesizing, integrating, and organizing data. In addition, data that belong to the same codes were compared to ensure consistency. With the query (search) functionality of NVivo, the researcher used keywords referring to each of the codes to check if there was anything else that might be included.

After finishing the focused coding, the codes were aggregated into a separate space (i.e., coding book). Then the researcher conducted theoretical coding (i.e., axial coding) by making connections among the substantial codes and constructing the hypothesis to be integrated into a theory based on such connections. In this phase, the researcher constructed a coherent picture (i.e., analytic story) by sorting, synthesizing, integrating, and organizing categories. In addition, the coding involved the construction of relationships between codes and categories (i.e., codes and codes; codes and categories; and categories and categories). At the same time, the researcher also evaluated the convergence – internal homogeneity (the extent to which the data that belong in a certain category hold together or “dovetail” in a meaningful way) and external heterogeneity (“the extent to which differences among categories are bold and clear”; Guba, 1978; Patton, 2002).

As a result, the coding schemes were primarily framed by the three research questions of this study. The code book is shown in Appendix D.

Throughout data collection and analysis processes, the investigator made informal memo-notes. According to Charmaz (2006), memo-writing helps the researcher to construct and elaborate the analytic frameworks, and accelerates productivity. The memo-notes will be written throughout data collection and data analysis.

It should be noted that NVivo was used throughout the process of data analysis including coding and annotating transcripts and documents, memo writing, retrieving data and codes, manipulating codes and categories, and creating visual diagrams.
3.4.4 Writing the Research Report

The findings were divided into three parts based on the three major research questions. It is noted that the findings include an abundant supply of text and quotations from the document analysis and interviews in order to provide a thick description of each of the constructs. In an online environment, it is apparent that the way in which people communicate informally changes the structure of language (e.g., the use of abbreviation, sign language). In addition, the way in which people used language could indicate their fluency with the English language. Some grammatical errors were forced by contextual bound (e.g., in a hurry; group-specific jargon). Therefore, I decided to include items written in English verbatim. For the original texts that were written in Thai, the English translations are provided after the original text in a bracket.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Instead of using a conventional positivist paradigm for addressing quality of research (i.e., internal validity, external validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability), this study applies a naturalistic/interpretive concept of trustworthiness to examine the quality of research. The goal of this methodological paradigm focuses on intersubjective depth and deep mutual understanding, rather than an absolute single reality (J. Miller & Glassner, 2004, p.127). Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed four criteria to address the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability to prove that “the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.201). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested five major techniques to establish the
credibility of qualitative research. However, this study focuses particularly on triangulation, “a process of using multiple perception to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2000, p.443). Denzin (1989) proposed four different modes of triangulation including: 1) data triangulation (combining data from different sources; 2) investigator triangulation (combining data collected by multiple researchers); 3) methodological triangulation (combining data collected via different methods); and 4) theory triangulation (combining data collected from multiple theoretical perspectives). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.412) argued that the fourth type of triangulation, the use of multiple theories, does not fit with a naturalistic paradigm.

In this particular study, two types of triangulation were implemented: the mix of multiple data sources and methods. Within the collection of documents, there were different types of data, including text, image, and video from different sources, representing different environments of information sources. In addition to documents, the data in this study also came from interview informants. The documents were considered as the products of information seeking and sharing processes, while the focus of the interview was on gaining understanding from a process perspective. Within a group of informants, triangulation was also used in terms of sampling. The first group of informants was selected from the document analysis, while other informants were referred by the first group of informants through the snowball technique.

### 3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to “the extent that the researchers’ working hypotheses about one context apply to another” (Bradley, 1993, p.436). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.412) asserted that it is the responsibility of someone who is interested to make the comparison. Thus, the only responsibility to address transferability for the researcher is to provide the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description. In addition to the research report, the coding book and the memo-notes explaining the idea and logic
throughout data collection and data analysis processes also contribute to transferability. Such documentation allows future researchers to make judgments by comparing the results in other contexts.

### 3.5.3 Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability deals with “the coherence of the internal process... and the way researcher accounts for changing conditions in the phenomena” (Bradley, 1993, p.437). In other words, the goal of dependability is to make sure that the results of the study could be replicated if the study was conducted with the same respondents in the same context. The basic idea of dependability can be compared to consistency or reliability in a conventional perspective (Seale, 1999, p.468).

For establishing confirmability, the researcher should make sure that research results “reflect the participants and the inquiry itself rather than a fabrication from the researchers’s biases or prejudices” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.201). Bradley (1993) implied that confirmability referred to “the extent to which the characteristics of data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or review the research results” (p.437). It is apparent that confirmability is comparable to the notion of neutrality or objectivity in a positivist’s perspective (Seale, 1999).

In this study, dependability and confirmability were developed by the use of a reflexive journal, “a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis, or as needed, records a variety of information about self and method” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.429). The memo-notes in this study served as the trail of methodological decisions made as the research progressed. The researcher used them to “audit his own inference and interpretations, and other interested researchers could review the research finding” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.317).
Chapter 4
Seeking and Sharing during Disruptive Moment

This chapter provides an overview of how people sought and shared information during the early stage of the coup. It is divided into three sections. The first two sections discuss the major stages of information activities during that period: reactions after first hearing about the coup, and sense making of the situation. The last section focuses on how people utilized information sources and channels during the early stage of the coup.

4.1 When I Heard about the Coup

This section investigates how people learned about the coup. The way people learned about the coup can be described in three general scenarios based on sources of information: firsthand experience, media reports, and word of mouth.

4.1.1 Firsthand Experience

Although the first coup announcement was broadcast around 11PM on September 19, people in Bangkok and major cities in Thailand began to witness the appearance of armed soldiers and military vehicles around important places, such as government
houses, royal palaces, government offices, media stations, and major streets, earlier that night. As the situation was unusual to many people, many decided to take photos and videos of the happenings. As the story developed, people began to speculate that there was an attempted coup.

For example, AbsoluteInsider1, a Thai medical doctor, explained his experience in the description of the video he posted on YouTube.

http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/09/20/coup.email/index.html – Rite, so I took the dogs to the vet, and ran out of gas when the Coup d’état was taking place. The intention was to park and see, but then they blocked off the roads on both sides, trapped in between the media of the world. So - I usually have a camera sometimes, so just stuck around the place along with dazed tourists and everybody else. So here’s what I saw, and the rest of the world didn’t see much coz they blocked off the satellite feeds.

(AbsoluteInsider1 - Video description)

AbsoluteInsider1’s video captured an American journalist on duty reporting the situation live on the first night of the coup. While leaving the audio in the background, he inserted the photos he took while he went out at the end of the video. These photos were also uploaded to his Flickr account. These actions suggest that people who witnessed the situation in Thailand did not only capture the moment for personal record, but they also tried to disseminate information about what they saw to either their personal contacts or the public. It is apparent that AbsoluteInsider1 is an active Internet user as his profile can be linked to his other accounts of online social media sites such as BlogSpot, Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Firsthand experience was not specific to only bystanders on the street. People who worked inside major media facilities (e.g., government houses, media stations, and telecommunication facilities) also witnessed the situation from a very insider perspective. For instance, OutsiderIn1, a foreign journalist and TV personality in Thailand, who is famous for his English-learning program, wrote on his blog about his experience while he was working for one of the free-to-air TV stations.
It was about 8.30 pm on Tuesday night, as I was leaving Channel 3, that I received a phone call. “There’s going to be a coup tonight,” I was told. I quickly turned around and went back to the Channel 3 newsroom, where we were preparing for that night’s edition of [an illegible name of a news program]. It seems I had been the last to know about the coup... everybody in the newsroom knew already.

In the channel 3 newsroom there are six TV screens in a row, with each of the free to air channels being shown. We watch them to monitor the news. We watched as Channel 5 started playing songs in honor of His Majesty the King... then Channel 9 (after it had broadcast the State of Emergency address by Taksin Shinawatra from New York)... then iTV.

We received a phone call that the military, along with their tanks, were coming to Channel 3. We were told to go home, but we decided not to. We just waited.

... Soon, Channel 7 changed over to the royal music. We knew then that it would only be a matter of time before we, Channel 3, the last of the stations, would be cut off.

... Back in the newsroom, we heard word from downstairs that the military had arrived. Not a tank. Just a group of soldiers carrying M-16s. They were very polite, and asked us to switch our signal over to Channel 5, the military channel. And so, just at the end of the soap opera, and just before [illegible text] was about to start, Channel 3 joined all the other free to air stations in showing the royal music.

... “Why don’t you teach us some English while you’re waiting?” one of the soldiers joked, and we all had a laugh.

Yesterday . . . there was a big tank outside Channel 3. Lots of people were taking pictures of the soldiers and the tank. The soldiers were very friendly. I invited them in to learn some English with me. They smiled and said they’d like to, but they weren’t allowed to leave their posts. Channel 3 was deserted yesterday morning. Finally, just after 9 am, we went back on the air, with shows as normal.

... There are still soldiers in and around the building today, but we are getting used to them now. Last night I taught one or two of them how to pronounce “coup” correctly.
4.1.2 Media Exposure

As we can see from what OutsiderIn1 described, another sign of the coup was through media exposure. It is important to note that the first sign of the coup on television happened when Channel 5 terminated its normal programming. About an hour later, Thaksin remotely attempted to declare a state of emergency on Channel 9. However, his declaration was interrupted before the declaration ended. People who watched both channels noticed the irregularity. After that nearly all local TV stations ceased their normal programs and began to broadcast pictures of the royal family and His Majesty’s picture and patriotic lyrical songs. The following is a blog post describing how AbsoluteInsider2 learned about the coup from watching television.

19th September.

while I was watching a comedy show .. that program was suddenly stopped and replaced by a blue screen with some text..

I didn’t have a clue that what was coming. Heard a rumour but I didn’t think it would be real. But yes, it was.

It’s the coup.

(AbsoluteInsider2 - Blog)

Similarly OutsiderIn2, a foreign blogger, whose English posts during the coup were cited by other bloggers and traditional media, described his first knowledge of the coup.

The moment I learned that something was going on was when Thaksin came on TV and tried to declare a state of emergency and fire top military men (I was recording at the time and that moment is on my YouTube channel here: [URL]). The most shocking part was when Thaksin’s message was apparently cut.

So I started out by thinking Thaksin was taking over, but clearly, since the broadcast was cut, something more was happening. Within a few minutes, various Thai media sources said a coup was underway.
It is important to note that the role of the media as the first source of information can be divided into two perspectives. The first one considers traditional media, particularly television, as the situation itself. As discussed above, here I refer to the fact that the media was symbolically used as a battlefield between the ousted prime minister and the coup leaders. The irregularities that appeared on television signaled the coup.

The second role of the media with regard to the coup exposure concerns the traditional perspective of media derived from an everyday life context. The mainstream media that was not controlled by the military was still able to report what was happening. It is important to note that there were some cable TV stations broadcasting their normal programs, including news stations such as ASTV and Nation Channel. People around the world, including local people, also learned about the coup from international media such as CNN, BBC, NPR.

There was a coup d’état in Thailand yesterday. I heard about it on NPR when I was driving home. They said, ’There was a coup in Thailand while the Prime Minister was in New York.’ That’s all. I didn’t hear anything else about it in the media until the next morning when they showed tanks rolling through the streets of Bangkok, but didn’t say much more than the NPR report. Of course I called my sister-in-law to see if her family are all OK, but she hasn’t heard from them yet.

I hope Mike will let us know what really happened so we can either be properly outraged or put our minds at ease.

Thailand just called a state of emergency, according to the BBC. Tanks have appeared in Bangkok, and “An army-owned TV station has altered its programming to broadcast images of the royal family and songs associated in the past with military coups.”

Not good.
the UN meeting, powerless and toothless.

(Absolute Outsider3 - Blog)

It is evident that those who lived outside Thailand seemed to rely on media reports more than those who were in Thailand during the time. People in Thailand who learned about the coup from media reports were the regular audiences of those uncontrolled media or people who heard about the coup later in the morning (e.g., from reading morning newspapers).

4.1.3 Word of Mouth

Although mainstream media was the major place to learn about the coup for many people, it was not really the first source. Many people heard about the coup from personal contact instead. Consider the following message of AbsoluteInsider3, indicating that, even though she learned about the coup from the media, it was her contacts who woke her up to check the news.

i saw a tank.

it’s had a coup in thailand 19 sep 06. in that day i sleep early(around 21.00) but announcement of coupe is around 10.00. :p but i don’t miss that because a lot of people call me to tell me open a television and see it. then i open a nationchannel (all channel is not boardcast) i watch a television until midnight and go to sleep.

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Blog)

For OutsiderIn2, even though he witnessed the signs of the coup on television as mentioned earlier, the coup was confirmed by words from his friend who was in the controlled area.

I also had a friend later call me from the Silom area [one of the commercial districts in Bangkok] saying soldiers were telling everyone to go home and shutting the bars. Some business contacts he was meeting with at the time received a call from their headquarters in the U.S. telling them to collect their possessions at their hotel and go directly to airport and take the next flight to flee the country.
The dissemination of information seems to be primarily through personal contact such as from family members, friends, and colleagues who witnessed the situation around Bangkok and its vicinity. These communications were conducted through different platforms, for example, mobile phone, email, web forums, and even face to face. Here are some examples of how people first heard about the coup from others.

I first heard about the coup the evening when it occurred. I was at home with my partner (now husband). We had eaten dinner and returned home about 8:00. [My Thai partner] had heard many rumors floating around during the day about a likely coup and shortly after dinner he started receiving phone calls and text messages from various people. The first was a customer of his who is well-positioned and probably heard about the coup earlier than other people.

I and Paula had no idea what was happening on the street as well. We were about to start our quiet time in my room when my colleague called and informed me about the revolution. Both of us rushed to downstairs and turned on the TV just to find that every government channels were displaying the story of King Bhumiphol on the screen. We looked at each other eyes and knew that it was the sign of something very unusual was going on!!!

I was in my apartment, surfing the Internet. I visited a webboard that I regularly visit to talk to my friends. Then I saw a thread informing that there was a coup. ...

It was an underground bittorrent website which I want to reserve its name....

'Just heard on the news. Military coup in Thailand to overthrow president. Taken over bangkok while the president was overseas. They’ve imposed martial law.'

I received this msg at 8:55am. Thanks to [his friend’s name]...he woke me up! haha

So...it makes no difference - I’m already booked to go to Thailand at the end
Some people benefited from knowing someone who was perceived to be a very insider source. For instance, AbsoluteInsider4, who worked at a university in the vicinity of Bangkok, told how she heard about the coup from an interview. The fact that she was working at a site that could potentially be a target spot for seizure during the coup did not let her know about the coup earlier. Instead, her colleague’s friend, who worked at a TV station in Bangkok, told her about the early signs of the coup.

Around 8:00PM while I was working, one of [my colleague]’s friend who worked at Channel 11 called and told us that there would be a coup tonight in Bangkok. There were a lot of tanks running around. After 9:00PM, I went back to my room in the dorm after I finished my work. [My colleague] has a TV set. Around 10:00PM, my colleague knocked the door and told me to pack my belongings because there was a coup. TV stations ceased their operations (because the military already seized all TV stations.)

Similar to AbsoluteInsider4, a political scientist, AbsoluteInsider5, also heard about the coup from a very insider source whose identity should not be identified.

People reactions to the coup were various based on how, when, and where they first exposed to the coup. This section highlights the three major scenarios where the exposure
occurred including self exploratory, media report, and interpersonal communication. After they heard about the coup, people tended to begin actively seeking and sharing information in order to resolve the puzzle about the situation that they had in mind.

4.2 Making Sense of the Situation

This section presents active information activities that people performed in response to the first evidence of the coup. Based on the data collected, the way in which people sought and shared information during the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand can be described in three dimensions: sense-making of obstacles or gaps, sense-making of bridging the gaps, and uses and gratifications of information sources and channels.

4.2.1 Making Sense of Obstacles or Gaps

The data from both publicly available documents and interviews indicates that people reacted to the information received based on the obstacles they perceived. The major obstacles include the censorship of mainstream media by the military, the difficulties of accessing telecommunication networks, and cultural barriers.

Mainstream Media Censorship

The interruption of the traditional media played an important role in terms of influencing people’s behaviors. As mentioned earlier the mainstream media was used as a battlefield to gain authoritative power; a number of people witnessed the way the military controlled the traditional media. As the situation seemed noteworthy and critical to them, some people captured photos and videos of TV screens (either by using a camera or a special screen capture device) and uploaded these images to the Internet. A number of bloggers also reported what they saw on the TV screen. For example, AnonymousIn1 wrote one of his first blog posts about the coup describing what was showing on the television screen.
Cable television is no longer operating in Bangkok (3:30am)

...

What was on Thai television at 11:30pm? Every Bangkok TV station was playing a video of the Thai Royal Family. Here is a photo of the local Thai TV (four and a half hours ago). Shown on the screen is HM the King of Thailand who is greatly beloved by the Thai people.

(AnonymousIn1 - Blog)

Two days later, even though the media resumed their normal programs, people still experienced interventions in media operation, not only of local stations, but also international streams.

I was watching BBC World today. They interviewed a Thai academic who had just begun to express an opinion critical of the junta. Zap! BBC World was off the air until the segment had finished. Clean and clinical censorship – exactly the way it’s done in China today. It’s quite ironic, really. The guy the army deposed, Thaksin, was widely criticized for having exerted too much control over the Thai media.

(AnonymousIn1 - Blog)

Another example is from a Thai blogger, AbsoluteInsider6, who was among a few bloggers who did live updating during the early stage of the coup. Below are examples of her live blogging.

**Blast to the Past**

The tanks have taken to the streets.

Jesus Christ, we’ve gone back in time twenty years.

(Maybe this is inappropriate, but I wonder if this means finals are cancelled...)

@ 12:16 AM: CNN, BBC, CNBC, and Bloomberg news have all been suspended due to a “sun outage.” I smell bullshit; lots of it. Interesting how the “sun outage” should happen just in time for Thaksin’s speech at the UN General Assembly.

...

**Coup D’Etat Part Deux**

@ 10:46 AM: I forgot to mention this earlier, but on my way back from the
airport, I flipped on the radio to 102.5 and SexyBack by Justin Timberlake was on, followed by silence, then Nelly Furtado’s Maneater, and then...more silence. For some reason I have this mental image of a military dude sitting in a closed radio booth trying to decide on what to turn on next – Stars are Blind by Paris Hilton or Buttons by the Pussycat Dolls? Oh, the dilemma!

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

Other evidence of the way people experienced media censorship comes from a few photos posted on Flickr depicting officers trying to stop or question cameramen from recording the situation in prohibited areas (for example, the army headquarters, palaces, etc.). One of the photos is of a soldier who was guarding the army headquarters and its description says, “Posing for the camera. This guy wanted to know if we were with CNN.”

Nonetheless, whether or not people agreed with the media censorship or the coup, it was legitimate and understandable to many people when put it in the context of the coup as OutsiderIn2 pointed out on his blog:

I thought, ‘In this day and age, censorship is clumsy, if not impossible to pull off.’ It makes the coup plotters look ridiculous. However, I did understand the immediate extreme sensitivity that exists after the coup as an insincere military makes sure all bases are covered and no resistance will come.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

So as AbsoluteInsider7, a Thai Wikipedia editor, observed, local media were used to formalize the operation of the coup.

TV was only for updating the announcements. My observation was the coup was trying to formalize the procedure in order to be more transparent and righteous.

...

There was no evidence to me that the media was bias or conceal anything.

(AbsoluteInsider7 - Interview)

However, when comparing the situation of the 2006 coup to other coups in the past, especially the Black May coup in 1992, the media censorship in the 2006 coup was less...
intense as people had many more alternatives to access coup-related information. At the same time, the fact that the regular TV programs were on the air the next morning led to a sense of relief. What OutsiderIn2 described seems to summarize this perspective well.

Just in comparison with [1992] when the radio and TV were taken over and newspapers were hard to come by (there was also no foreign cable TV).

... In 2006 there were websites, blogs, newspaper websites, SMS messages, email, cable TV, and even the TV stations locally were back to normal right away. It seemed like one had access to a lot more sources of info than ever before.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

**Difficulties of Communication Networks**

Although there was no official announcement from the coup leaders on restriction of communication networks, some people had difficulty accessing phone lines and the Internet during that time. Apparently, the inability to access the communication network intensified the need for information to many people. Without any clarification from the military or telecommunication service providers, people had to deal with uncertainty, speculating what actually caused such difficulties (mostly between the military intervention or traffic jam).

I was not that panic[ed] but rather dying to know what would be the next thing the military do. I first called my mom and told her that I was ok and later tried to call my friends but suddenly the telephone connection just broke down. We could only get the information from the internet only. One thing that made me feel upset is the truth that in Thailand, we always like to shut people[’s] eyes from the truth when something serious happen!!! we will cut the phone line, show only the beautiful thing on the TV while letting people guessing what is going on... I knew in my heart that I couldn’t wait longer to hear the further info. of the news, I needed to come before my Father and asked Him to give me a peaceful heart and gave me the wisdom to pray for my country. I came back to my bed room and started to pray and pleaded [to] God to bring the revival and healing to this country...
In addition to speculating on the cause of the difficulty, people also thought about an alternative plan. With the rumor that the Internet might be closed down, AbsoluteInsider6, for instance, expressed her concerns about how the coup leaders were going to deal with such a situation.

They better not “suspend” the internet. If I wanted to be cut off from the rest of the world, I’d live in North Korea.

@ 2:22 AM: Internet’s going to be cut down in a few hours. I’m trying to get as much down here while I can. With access to CNN, BBC, and CNBC down, who knows how we’re going to find out what’s going on now?

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

However, since the difficulty in access was temporary and sporadic, some people were not concerned and perceived that such an obstacle was not an issue.

It worked. Everything worked. All communication was up and working including the internet (although the net slowed to almost a stop at some points—probably due to heavy usage).

(A OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

Cultural Barriers

Another obstacle that arose during the early stage of the coup came from a cultural perspective. Since the coup was not only of domestic interest, people around the world also wanted to know about the situation. However, communicating across cultures was somewhat problematic and challenging. The role of cultural barriers has two apparent aspects: political knowledge and language.

With regard to political knowledge about Thailand and the coup, people who were not familiar with Thai politics were confused with names and ideas. One form of evidence comes from pictures and videos of the official coup announcements. There were a number of comments related to these items that asked about the cultural significance of those
who appeared in the pictures or videos.

Another form of evidence of the political knowledge gap comes from the people, bloggers in particular, who raised questions and provided the answers that they received. The questions posted were often about the history of the coup d’état in Thailand, the coup leaders, or even the terminology used. InsiderOut2, a Thai student abroad, wrote the following on his blog.

“A reform, son, not a coup.” My dad told me when I called back home yesterday.

“How do they differ?” I thought, but keep talking “I will check about this afterward.”

And I already checked it out. This is from Wikipedia.

[Ratthapraharin] Coup d’état is a sudden and non-pattern change of administration or any component of administration like what is happening now.

[Patiwat] Revolution is a change of administration system such as the change of administration in 1932.

[Patriroop] Reform is a slow-moving change and for a better result.

Therefore, they stage a coup d’état to change politics and administration. The term Revolution is too harsh.

(InsiderOut2 - Blog)

It is interesting to note that such discussions of the appropriateness of the terms
used were widespread across the Internet. In addition, during an interview for this study, one of the informants asked me why I use the term Patiwat not Rattapraharn. This terminological gap led to many discussions and conversations, regardless of whether or not they involved Thai or foreigners.

The second element of cultural barriers deals with language across the international community. It was not too surprising to see a number of conversations asking someone to translate what is written or said in the photos or videos. For example, a user, AbsoluteInsider8, uploaded a TV screen shot of the coup announcement in Thai onto his Flickr account. The only description of the picture was the caption, which says in Thai “Thai Coup tonight”. When a commentator asked him in English saying “What does it say?”, he responded back in English saying:

> Oh! I'm not good at [English], anyone could help me this? please....
> sorry, but I'll try later if I could.
> (AbsoluteInsider8 - photo comment)

Other evidence of language barriers emerged even for bloggers who were fluent in both Thai and English. Sometimes these bloggers decided to stop translating the content to save time and labor. For example, when it comes to providing links to other sources, instead of translating, some bloggers inserted a caption next to the links informing the readers that these links are for Thai readers only.

The inability to translate in juxtaposition with the intensified need for information led to confusion and frustration, which appeared in a number of the discussions and conversations online. Consider the comments on a video of the third announcement of the coup posted by AnonymousOut1.

[Comment1] (2006-09-19T19:56:52.000Z): Can someone put up a translation for this announcement?

...  

[Comment2] (2006-09-19T21:52:55.000Z): Anyone have a translation for this
and who is the man speaking?


[Comment4] (2006-09-19T22:46:39.000Z): seriously...can we get a thai speaker, please???

[Comment5] (2006-09-19T23:22:26.000Z): I’m in Bangkok right now, but I can’t speak Thai... we desperately need someone to translate. News/phone networks has been cut off and we can’t find out anything but from the slow internet

[Comment6] (2006-09-20T00:01:50.000Z): Translation in English : “We’ve decided to have a mass sex change operation..We all decided to come out of the closet today. Yay Gay. Gay Pride Hurrah tumbalo pi pi”

[Comment7] (2006-09-20T00:15:10.000Z): Bangkok got Coup’d out the Wazoo.

[Comment8] (2006-09-20T01:04:32.000Z): Using a lot of formal language...a lot of unnecessary words. Simply put, a new PM is being assigned.

[Comment9] (2006-09-20T01:49:03.000Z): Too bad! I really hope the military begins to target westerners and begins a mass extermination of people who don’t speak Thai. SIEG HIEL!!!

[Comment9] (2006-09-20T01:51:31.000Z): Disregard my comment, I typed it up but didn’t mean to post it. Sorry, just ignore it again, I’m an f***ing dumbass...

[Comment10] (2006-09-20T02:22:49.000Z): I hope no civilian will be the victim in this military operation.

[Comment11] (2006-09-20T02:35:45.000Z): He just says the constitution has been revoked, also the Assembly. Privy Council still maintain their positions. Lastly, all courts except Constitution Court still able to do their jobs. Peaceful movements to let Taksin didn’t work, so Thai Army just pushed a reset button. I hope this coup is not gonna be worse like the one 15 years ago.

...

[Comment12] (2006-09-20T21:35:50.000Z): No translation arr?? I really insist to know wht he says....


[Comment14] (2006-10-15T07:05:30.000Z): Well, that was pretty boring, errm he didn’t really say anything significant. just stated some years and something about democracy, but that’s as much thai as I know

103
(AnonymousOut1 - Video comments)

Apparently this conversation ended unsatisfactorily with no translation of the content of the video.

Another example is from Wikipedia editors and their discussion about the English name of the coup. As there was no official name in English, there were a number of variations of the name of the coup. When it comes to writing an encyclopedia article about it, apparently one must be chosen.

**Some naming conventions**

Lets agree, if at all possible, on how to translate some Thai terms used in the coup.

- The provisional government: Media sites have called this the Administrative Reform Council [3], the Party of Democratic Reform [4], the Council for Democratic Reform [5], and Council for Political Reform [6].

  - [WikiEditor1] 04:41, 20 September 2006 (UTC): Until this officially clears up, I’d like to use “Administrative Reform Council”, as that is what The Nation is using, and over the coming weeks, the Thai newspapers will become the primary news sources.

  - [WikiEditor1] 04:47, 20 September 2006 (UTC): The Bangkok Post is using Council for Democratic Reform. I’d rather use the Nations, as the Post doesn’t keep permanent copies of articles up.

  - [WikiEditor1] 06:43, 20 September 2006 (UTC): The regime leader: Sonthi Boonyaratkalin is the spelling that is used for his article title. It is sometimes spelt Sondhi; this isn’t his official spelling and can cause confusion with Sondhi Limthongkul. Please make sure to change the spelling to make it consistent.

  - [WikiEditor2] 04:44, 20 September 2006 (UTC): Thai names: Thais use their given names as the public form of their names. Thus with Thaksin Shinawatra, his surname is Shinawatra, but he is always called Prime Minister Thaksin.

  - [WikiEditor3] 05:45, 20 September 2006 (UTC): Wow, how interesting. That’d be like us saying “President Bill” or “President George” rather than Presidents Clinton and Bush.

  - [WikiEditor1] 05:50, 20 September 2006 (UTC): Surnames are a relatively modern innovation for Thais. I think less than a century ago, people still didn’t use surnames, and Thai people to this day never address people by
surname.

(English Wikipedia Entry - Discussions)

The sense-making of communication obstacles of people during the early stage of the coup indicates that people expected they could have resumed the normal flow of information. The roles of media, communication network, and language difference were rising as they seemed to be “taken for grant” prior to the normative world failed to function properly.

4.2.2 Sense Making of Bridging the Gaps

This section addresses how people sought and shared information as ways to bridge the gaps described above. The way people bridged the gaps involves four major categories: fact finding and validating, clarification, translation, and support and entertainment.

Fact Finding and Validating

Since the coup was not officially announced until late on the night of September 19, a sense of uncertainty was strong. People wanted to know what was going on as the story developed. There was a lot of information/rumor - neither validated nor confirmed - that was floating around. Even though writers tried to identify sources of information/rumor as much as they could, this unofficial information (i.e., not announced by the coup leaders) made people question the trustworthiness of all the information that they received. Nevertheless, writers still shared with others as they seemed to hope that there might be someone who could validate the information they received. Therefore, people were not just looking for new updates during that time, but they also wanted to confirm what they already knew.

There are apparently two types of information that people were looking for and sharing during that time: collective sense of situation, and personal interest.
Collective sense of situation primarily deals with national or international interests. Inevitably, politics was the most visible topic during that time. When asked during the interview, most of the informants said that the major questions they had during the time were, for instance, where was Thaksin? Who was behind the coup? Was this coup related to the insurgency in the South? Was there a sign of violence? How did the international community react?

(I wanted to know the reason of the coup and wanted to know that what was going on (the latter seems to be a major question))

(AbsoluteInsider4 - Interview)

I wanted to know exactly what was happening. Some coup attempts fail so wanted to know if there was a successful coup attempt.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

My key concern was whether there was any “counter-attack” from Thaksin’s allies. In the hours and days after the coup that was, by my estimation, all that really mattered. As it turned out, there was only a whimper of immediate resistance, and that burned out quickly. We then had to wait until 2007 before the real anti-coup resistance took up the electoral challenge of fighting the pro-coup forces. We all know how that ended.

(AbsoluteOutsider4 - Interview)

Mainly clarification on what the viewpoint of the coup plotters was: Were the military units taking over for or against Thaksin? Would pro-Thaksin military units fight back? Would they be able to take over cleanly or would there be resistance?

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

In addition to political interest, another collective concern relates to the issue of finance and economy. Here are some blog titles during the early stage of the coup that relate to finance and economy in both national and international levels.
What Investors Did on News of a Thai Coup (AbsoluteOutsider5 - Blog)

Thai Baht [stock market?] shakes off political crisis (AbsoluteOutsider6 - Blog)

S&P puts Thailand rating under watch with negative implications, post coup (AbsoluteOutsider7 - Blog)

“วิเคราะห์เศรษฐกิจช่วงนี้” [“The economic analysis this period”] (AbsoluteInsider9 - Blog)

The second type of information that led to fact finding and validating during the coup concerns personal interests. People sought and shared information that had potential threats to their daily lives. For example, when asked what the major concerns were during that time, AbsoluteInsider3’s response seems to be more concerned with the effect on everyday life than with political interests.

อยากรู้ว่ามีต่อสู้ มีแผนลอบเคลื่อนไหวรึ no ไม่เกิดเหตุการณ์ ออกไปนอกบ้านจะอันตรายไหม วันรุ่งขึ้นมีอะไรทำงานหรือเปล่า [I wanted to know whether or not there was any fighting or violence. What media was censored? Was it dangerous to go outside? Did I have to go to work the next day?]

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Interview)

AbsoluteInsider3 was not the only one who was concerned about his daily life. A number of people also shared information about the effects of the coup on various topics regarding their daily lives such as work, school, food, traffic, and travel. The following quotations were examples of blog posts addressing such concerns.

ปฏิวัติ ขณะนี้

วันนี้ทำงานถึงทุ่มครึ่งตามปกติ จริงๆแล้วต้องบอกว่าโชคดีที่หนีมาได้ตอนทุ่มครึ่ง กลับบ้านทำโน้นทำนี้เหมือนทุกที อยู่ดีๆจะเข้าด่านไปจอม ทำงานอยู่ จึงถามเพื่อนที่ทำงานว่าเกิดอะไรขึ้นหรือเปล่า มีอะไรเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือไม่ พวกมันอยู่ดีๆแล้วก็ไปทำงานไป ขึ้นต้นปฏิวัติโลกนี้ไม่เห็นได้อย่างนี้แล้ว ซักทีก็ถามว่าปฏิวัติจริงๆนี้ แล้วก็ที่มาที่ไปผูกมันในหัว

107
Coup already

Today I worked until 7:30 as I normal do (Actually I have to say that I was very lucky to be able to escape at 7:30.) I went home and worked a little bit of this and that as always.

All of sudden my colleague who work outside Bangkok called and asked me what happened in Bangkok. My sister’s friend told [earlier] that they were about to stage a coup d’état. I reckoned I had not heard the news. Well the news came so as the coup. Then a question got into my head.

Do I have to go to work tomorrow? When it happened last time, I was still a student. I did not have to go to school. ——>Is that all I can think of?

Now I am sitting and following the news. Thai [TV] channels are no longer working.

(AbsoluteInsider10 - Blog)

Exam

The first day of exam

Actually it should have been yesterday, but...

the situation of the coup saved my life ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

.......... It was funny ..........
I stayed up all night reading. ha ha ha
So today is the first day of the exam.... French VI
We were dead..... Ghostly exam.]

(AbsoluteInsider11 - Blog)

ปฏิวัติ !!!
วันนี้ถูกกระทำทั้งหมดเพราะถูกปฏิวัติ-toggle ยังไม่จบเลยวิชาวันนี้ ไม่มีวันอื่นแล้วด้วย ทำ
ใจหั่นนั้น จะสอบไงจะเนี่ย แต่ก่อนเวลาจะ ให้ วันนี้มี presentงานด้วย embryo
ไม่ได้presentจะแล้ว แต่ก่อนทำไมไม่ได้ไปพูดวันอื่นแทนแม้ วันไหนอย่า ไม่มีแล้วจะสอบแล้ว
เป็นเรื่องของอนาคตฉบับเดียวกัน ถ้าไงจะสอบในวันนี้ อย่าทำอะไร
[Coup !!!
Today the class was ceased because of the coup. We were not even finished
today class. There will be no more class on another day. What should I do?
We are about to have an exam. And today we were supposed to present our
works too, embryo.

We did not present. We could do nothing. We might have to present another
day. When? No more. The exam is coming. It’s about the future. We’ll
know. Let find some music lyrics to play with.]

(AbsoluteInsider12 - Blog)

It is also interesting to note that there were a number of photos showing how street
merchants made financial benefits from selling merchandise related to the political sit-
uation in Thailand (e.g., yellow shirts, and screen printed clothes with sayings about
Thaksin – the deposed Prime Minister) and foods. These people seemed to utilize the
information about the appearance of the military to identify the location where they
should sell their products.

As mentioned earlier, rumors seemed to be omnipresent during the coup as it was
hard to verify who the original source of some particular piece of information was. During
that time people exchanged information about what they heard from someone else. Here
are some of the examples of rumors during the early stage of the coup.
What was interesting is when we could not rely on mainstream media, we had to rely on word of mouth. During that time there were a lot of rumors, for example, there were shootings here and there, Thaksin brought American commando troops to fight back, and the Internet would be cut off.

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Interview)

@ 12:56 AM: There are rumors that all cell phone networks are going to be cut off in the next hour. Hopefully this is just that – rumors.

@ 1:01 AM: Rumors are swirling like crazy. I have been getting phone calls and text messages that say a new prime minister, Akrathorn Jurarat, has been appointed.

@ 1:22 AM: Apparently Thaksin’s headed back to Thailand (by commando, natch), and according to rumors, he might not be allowed to land.

...  

@ 2:14 AM: Rumors (and I strongly emphasize this because rumors are going around like crazy) say Pantongtae has been detained at the airport while trying to leave the country.

...  

@ 2:48 AM: A friend has told me of rumors of a shooting around the Rattanatibet area.

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

Rumours were written online that some recent events (Prem’s jockey speech and transferring of some mid-level officers) months before the coup and then from 7pm and 8pm on September 19 you could hear mention of troop movements.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

10:24am - Somebody sent me this link. There is now a rumor that Thaksin’s cabinet and political figures are now plan to hold a satellite government in Singapore with the hope to lobby the UN to back them as the true representative government.

...  

12:01pm - Rumours say Thaksin is fleeing to London.
'Rumor': He had another riot plot that was supposed to happen on Wed. 20th, hence a Coup on the 19th to prevent the possible chaos.

And that was why his whole family was out of the country and that was why he rescheduled his speech at the UN G.A. from Wed. to Tue. and planned to come back to Thailand a day earlier.

now, that’s just what I’ve heard through a grapevine. (it makes sense though)

In addition to sharing what they heard, people also provided evidence to prove that rumors were reportedly false. OutsiderIn6, a foreign Flickr user in Thailand, for instance, posted a picture of himself holding a local English newspaper to falsify the rumor he heard that the military controlled the newspapers.

We finally found the paper. Word on the street was that the newspaper publishers were closed down and there would be no papers today. Word on the street was wrong, I guess.

Being a Part of a Historic Moment

It is interesting to learn that people perceived the 2006 coup d’état as a historic moment. Especially, people who were in Thailand during the coup night thought that they were a part of the history. Therefore, the way people sought and shared information was also substantially related to this perspective.

For many absolute insiders, the coup d’état was a collective historic and memorable event. Some related the event to their own memories. Below are some of the example of how insiders perceived the situation as history in either personal or national context.
It has been told that what happen to an individual becomes experience. However, if it happens to a crowd, it is history. A couple ago, our country has add a new page of history. Usually, I always followed political news, until a month or two ago. I stopped following. It was sewage, like soap opera in some countries in South East Asia. Today, I came back to follow again. There are many things I want to say. But I am afraid to get arrested.]

(AbsoluteInsider25 - Blog)

[Revolution...
What happened to Thailand?... This is one of historical events of my life that I had a chance to be involved.]

(AbsoluteInsider26 - Blog)

[Coup D’etat
On September 19, 2006, there was a coup d’état. I want to remember today as a historical day. When I heard about it, I was very scared. But they declared the next day (September 20) as a holiday, I was very happy.
That’s it... he he]

(AbsoluteInsider27 - Blog)

Many outsiders also expressed the importance of the situation as history in their views as well, whether or not where they were during that time. OutsiderIn4 commented about his online activities during the first night of the coup.

The reports over the first few hours were extremely limited and quite to-the-point. I went online out of curiosity to see what, if anything, was being reported and whether there was any effort being made to block access to news sites. Because I didn’t feel any threat by the political instability, I wasn’t worried and I wasn’t trying to get information out of concern. Instead, I realized that I was in a moment that would have historic importance and wanted to try and understand what was happening.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

It is important to note that OutsiderIn4’s video on YouTube was one of the first uploads during that time. In response to a question asking the reason he decided to record the first coup announcement, he made a similar comment about his experience:

I felt there might be some historical significance and knew that, for friends and family reading my blog, they might not otherwise have a chance to see what such an announcement looked like.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

Even for foreigners who live outside Thailand (i.e., absolute outsiders), what they saw or heard from media also became historic moments.

Tanks, yellow ribbons, soldiers, threats, coyote dancers. TV brought all the elements to life, in a sense; particularly the Thai TV channels that were then under strict junta control. We saw that the basic elements of a Thai coup haven’t changed much over the decades. Of course, it was fascinating to see the old music and films rolled out to declare the coup. It was historic, in a re-hashed kind of way.

(AbsoluteOutsider4 - Interview)

To some people, being a part of history also meant being involved. OutsiderIn7, a foreign journalist and blogger, was eager to go outside to observe the situation as she
wanted to be “in the thick of things”. Unfortunately, getting involved apparently was something that taxi drivers wanted to avoid (presumably because they perceived that the risk of getting involved was too high in terms of income, safety, etc.).

So when it happened last night (Tuesday, Sept 19), I was hardly surprise. Nevertheless, I was excited. I have never experienced a coup before and I wanted to be in the thick of things.

When I heard about the coup, it was already past 10pm, and I had just returned to my apartment after dinner. I tried to get a taxi to where the action is: the government house. But no taxi seem to want to ferry me there.

(OutsiderIn7 - Blog)

OutsiderIn7 was an unfortunate case. However, a number of people were able to go outside of their residences to take photos and videos around important places. They used the same expressions to describe their motivations to go outside. OutsiderIn3, for example, was among the first group of people who posted pictures of the coup on Flickr. He went outside and took photos of the situation. When asked what his concern was during that time, he responded.

I felt that I was ‘in the right place at the right time’ and this was an opportunity to share information of historical significance.

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

When asked if he could have changed anything, he replied:

I don’t think I could have hoped for the situation to have been any different. It was a very memorable point in my life.

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

OutsiderIn3’s notion of “right place at the right time” seems also to fit many other travelers’ perspectives, especially those who visited Thailand for a short period of time. Therefore, it was not too surprising to see people put personal tags that were related to the purpose of their visits to Thailand such as “honeymoon” on the photos of soldiers and tanks.
Clarification

As mentioned in the above section, the cultural aspect was one of the major barriers in information dissemination and transfer during the early stage of the coup. To some bloggers, sharing and providing firsthand experience was their first instinct. However, for OutsiderIn2, the fact that his readers were foreigners inside and outside Thailand led him to want to bridge the cultural barriers by providing an “almost like being there” experience.

My website has a long tradition of shooting photos like this. I wanted the site to be “almost like being there” so people could see themselves what is going on (as opposed to having it filtered through reporters who try to tell you what things are like). At one point, I was one of the only sites doing it in Thailand, but today everyone is doing it and it is not remarkable anymore.

... 

I had to go way downtown to the government district to take the shots and my goal was to give the website viewers a look at what was happening.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

He explained that he wanted to explain to his readers that the situation was non-threatening unlike other stereotypical coup d’états. It is interesting to note that the perception that traditional media, especially international ones, provided limited and often opposing view points was a big drive to make people begin to think about sharing information from their own perspectives to clarify the situation to others. As OutsiderIn2 pointed out during the interview:

Another thing that made us have to reassure business partners was the ‘parachute journalism’ of CNN and others who kept asking their correspondent if there was any death toll or casualties. The anchor seemed somewhat disappointed when there was no casualties (again overseas reporters were assuming that a coup must mean danger and fighting in the street).

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

It is interesting to note that people who were in Thailand, regardless of nationality, wanted to portray that the situation was non-threatening, welcoming, and festive.
Posting a photo of one intersection in Bangkok with normal traffic, AbsoluteInsider2 described the photo in the caption saying: “Nothing scary as it sounds on foreign TV I think..?” Apparently AbsoluteInsider2 held the perception that the foreign media did not report the real situation. That was why she had to take this photo. Another example by AbsoluteInsider2 is the caption of a photo of a soldier with a tank in the background, which AbsoluteInsider2 reproduced from the Associate Press, an international news agency. She also expressed the same point of view.

Everything is under control.

I just went to 7-eleven. Lot of people hanging there, drinking coffee, buying instant cup-noodles and talking about this craziness. Nothing seriously though they’re even making jokes out of it. Everybody seems quite glad I must say.

(AbsoluteInsider2 - Photo caption)

In addition to mainstream media, another motive of clarification came from personal contacts outside of Thailand. One of the first messages that commonly appeared on outsiders-in’s content was a response to the concerns of their families and friends. OutsiderIn4, for instance, wrote the following message on his blog apparently after receiving a number of contacts enquiring about his safety.

Thank you to all the people who have sent emails expressing their concern for the well being of [my partner] and myself. Rest assured that all is well here and Bangkok and that the reporting you’re hearing and the pictures you’re seeing represent a very narrow view of the overall situation.

(OutsiderIn4 - Blog)

OutsidersIn8, a foreign couple who went to Thailand for a vacation, wrote the following on their online travel journal on the day after the coup, expressing their well-being to the readers - presumably their families and friends.

Coup in Thailand

[We] are alive and well in Phuket Island of Thailand. We were staying at a nearby beach bungalow last night without email or tv, so we were a bit out of the loop. We headed back to our friend’s home an hour ago. They filled
us in on the situation. ... We will stay abreast of the situation and keep trying to find out about any travel warnings. Our plan is to fly up to Bangkok tommorrow (Thursday), spend the night and then fly to [Cambodia] the next day (Friday). We’ll be in Cambodia for a couple of weeks with the possibility of a detour to Vietnam. We fly back to Bangkok on October 11 and head up to Chang Mai for a few days before making one last stop in Phuket for the Vegetarian Festival and then off to Malaysia on November 1.

Thanks for all of your concern and especially all the love. It’s good to know we have eyes everywhere keeping tabs on what’s happening in the world. Rest assured knowing that we’re probably, like today, on a beach somewhere far from harms way.

(OutsidersIn8 - Blog)

For OutsiderIn2, a Westerner who conducted a business in Thailand for many years, to clarify the situation to his clients was the first thing he did after the coup was confirmed.

The first thing I did was to write a press release for the company I was COO at explaining the nature of Thai coups to our overseas clients: that everyone is working as normal, regular TV programming is continuing, the banks are open and doing business, few, if anyone, even saw troops. Also, that all military and political activity was confined to a small area downtown far removed from the everyday business of the nation.

This was [to] assure foreign clients that we would continue to do business and their business was still safe. Again, non-Thais would assume the coup meant military units in rebellion fighting each other in the streets.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

Translation

Another aspect of cultural barriers is language. On media sharing websites, where people posted photos and videos in the Thai language, a number of users provided English translations or summaries in a description or caption. The translation was helpful especially for those non-Thai people who were in Thailand during that time. As OutsiderIn4 pointed out:

I’m sure I visited CNN, BBC, Bangkok Post and The Nation as well. 2bangkok.com
is a good consolidator as the editor reads Thai fluently so he’s able to translate information from the Thai press as well as to include information from various English-language sources.

(OutsiderIn4 - Blog)

Another example can be seen when a YouTube user, AnonymousIn2, posted a video footage of the first coup announcement, apparently taken from a TV screen, without the translation. After being requested by his viewers in the comment section, he later inserted a translation in the description of the video. Note that other viewers also provided a summary:

[Comment1] (2006-09-20T05:45:20.000Z): what does it say? pls update coz i can read english

[Comment2] (2006-09-20T08:31:23.000Z): he said about Thai governent did corruption and sh**. And the situation in Thailnad doesn’t get any better since February ( Terrorist in South). President still want to be involved for reelection. Military afraid there will be a big Demonstration on Sept 20.

[Comment2] (2006-09-20T08:31:40.000Z): So they took over the government power and kick the prime Minister out. They will give the power back to Thai people when everything is over. It’s a good decision, b/c government doesn’t really help Thai people at all since beginning of this year. Many demonstrators in Thailand and we finally stopped it. Now we will have peace in Thailand and South Thailand.

[Comment3] (2006-09-20T09:27:30.000Z): yea,pretty much he’s saying He’s restoring the government to the ppl because the situation is getting worse. The king has even intervened but with no success, so as a necessity we have to. He also assured that they are not intersted in taking over, [they are] doing this in the name of the king and thai ppl and will restore everything as soon as possible.

[Comment4] (2006-09-20T13:06:43.000Z): What he said is only means we must sacrifice many fellow Thai’s life again. To bring down these dudes in the next few years or many years.

[AnonymousIn2] (2006-09-20T14:53:37.000Z): I’ve updated the description with a translation of the communique. Please correct if wrong, thanks to UlaanBataar for this info

[Comment5] (2006-09-21T01:10:51.000Z): wow i give credits to the translator, some of those words spoken are so hard to translate. I was just thinking about what some of those words meant in english.
The following is the translation later provided in the description of the video.

English translation (please correct if wrong): COMMUNIQUE NO 1 It has been clear that the administration of the country’s affairs by the current caretaker government has created conflicts and division, and sowed discord among the people of the nation. It is unprecedented in the history of the Thai nation that groups were determined to win through ways and means. The trend is getting more violent every passing day. The majority of the people are suspicious of extensive corruption and malfeasance practices among the bureaucracy. Independent agencies and organisations have been dominated by politics and unable to fulfil the objectives as stipulated in the constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Consequently, political activities have encountered numerous problems and obstacles. Frequently, the dignity of the Thai people’s king was affected. The efforts exerted by several sectors of society to alleviate the situation have failed to bring an end to the conflict. It is necessary for the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State, comprising commanders of the armed forces and the National Police Bureau, to seize national administrative power from now on. In so doing, the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State wishes to reaffirm that it has no intention to become the administrators of the country. The administrative power under the democratic system with the king as the head of the state will be returned to the Thai people as quickly as possible in order to maintain peace and order and preserve national stability, as well as to uphold the beloved institution of the monarchy of all the Thai people.

4.2.3 Support

It is interesting to note that, during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand, there were not many help seekers, but rather providers. Those who were outside Bangkok and Thailand during that time and who perceived that the coup was threatening sent out messages offering mental and spiritual support (e.g., praying, encouraging, wishing, hoping) on their blogs and media sharing sites. It is quite common to see comments similar to the following example messages on many of those sites.

I hope everything is okay for you and everyone you know out there. I have spent a bit of time in Thailand and really hope that things work out okay.
4.2.4 Recreation and Entertainment

To some people, the coup d’etat was another opportunity to have fun. People explicitly enjoyed seeking and sharing information during that time. In this perspective, the military sites were viewed as festive spaces where people could attend and had fun (e.g. from taking photos and meeting others). The following was one of those people who enjoyed going to see the situation.

I had a trip today

Today I went to see tanks on Rachadumnern Rd. I went with Nuk Nik and Bank. It was so fun. At first, I did not intend to go. But we ended up going anyway. We went to see what, I don’t know, around Nang Lerng Race Course. Just to take some photos. Then we walked to King Chulalongkorn Monument. There were a lot tanks parking in straight line. There were tons of people taking photos.

We also took some photos and brought them back to show you too. And it was coincident that we met tennis players who came [to Thailand] for Thailand
Open 2006. I was so happy.

Nick squeezed in there somehow and was able to get some photos. I used Bank’s camera. Anyway, don’t forget to see them. I had a great fun.]

(AbsoluteInsider13 - Blog)

The perspective was also partially evident from those photos and videos that made fun of the situation in Thailand. People in photos posted funny comments. The commentators said something that was intended to make people laugh (e.g., sarcastic). A small number of photos were reedited to make a parody of the situation (e.g., inserting a cartoon character). Below is an example of a blog post that used the coup to insult travelers in Thailand.

**Thai Coup Strands Thousands of U.S. Sex Tourists**

The ousting of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has thrown Thailand into political unrest, and filled the U.S. Embassy with thousands of American sex tourists seeking safe passage to Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Red Cross is urging all sex tourists to remain calm, and telling families that their relatives need not be suspected of murdering Jon-Benet Ramsey to secure safe passage. New military leader Gen. Sondhi Boonyaratkalin insists his country is still safe for the perverts of the world saying, “Thailand - come for the come, stay for the come.”

(AbsoluteOutsider8 - Blog)

During the early stage of the coup, a Thai blogger observed a web forum in Thailand and found that there were a number of threads that showed how optimistic the Thai people were during that time. I translated the topics of those threads in English and uploaded them on my personal blog.

**Optimistic Thais and the coup**

[AbsoluteInsider14] posted highlights on jokes and gags about the coup on Pantip.com (Lumpini forum), at least to show how some of Thais think about the situation.

Here are some of post title listed in that forum. Most of them are question-based posts. I translated only the one that would make sense to outsiders:

- I want to know a price of the tank.
- One of the replies asked “first or second hand?” Another one asked “Include air conditioning?”
- Can a tank has NGV engine?
- How a tank make a turn?
- I already asked the soldiers. They told me that there is no air conditioning in a tank.
- Do you want go out and take pictures of tanks with me?
- Is the lottery working tomorrow?
- This is the announcement of love revolution. Those who are in love, please be calm.
- Is this coup d’état or tank show?

In addition to posting non-serious questions, people also shared stories that were unprecedented and unexpected and apparently had entertainment and informative value. For example, people took photos and wrote a blog post about a Thai businessman who sprayed a message on his own car supporting the military and drove around Bangkok. Another example was the fact people took a number of photos in which soldiers and symbols of religion, Buddhism in particular (such as monks and temples), are in the same shots or even monks intentionally took photos with tanks and soldiers.

To summarize, while collecting information about the situation, people observed and evaluated the difficulties that were critical to the effectiveness of communication during that time. The awareness of the obstacles informed different information seeking and sharing strategies which are used to explain information behavior during that period of time. It is noteworthy that various types of information sources and channels played essential roles in the discussion of how people perceived the obstacles and how they came across these issues.

### 4.3 Roles of Information Sources and Channels

This section focuses on how people utilized different types of information sources and channels during the coup. According to what people expressed on their blogs and during the interviews, it is apparent that people were multitasking and trying to use more than just one information source and channel to serve their intensified information needs. The
following are some responses from various sources.

I’m in town right now checking out the internet getting NEWS! I was like I want news! May try to find a newspaper but I already looked at articles on the web. If you want to know more check out the Washington Post newspaper, the US Embassy in Thailand had an update also about the situation. They are telling americans to keep an eye on the events but they are not telling us to leave.

(OutsiderIn10 - Blog)

[I] had two computers running. One for writing up posts and viewing print articles, the other for international radio and TV.

(AnonymousOut2- Interview)

I didn’t do anything other than to turn on the TV and see the montage of patriotic songs and images that was playing. There wasn’t anything in particular to do. I recall going online and trying to get some news. I also posted a blog entry, posting updates throughout the evening and following days. I also sent a message to a friend from the US who was here visiting. I wanted to ensure he was okay and understood what was happening. As it turns out, he actually went out and took photos of the tanks.

...

I followed the situation by visiting websites, reading the paper and seeing what additional limited information was available.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

[I used] websites, blogs, newspapers, TV, everything. The Google News function was consolidating all of the relevant English language stuff. And then I read the Thai papers online too.

...

Google News was, and remains, the best way of consolidating English language news on any topic. If you type in “Vajiralongkorn” you get all of the recent news on the crown prince. It is simple, but very effective.

(AbsoluteOutsider4 - Interview)

I can’t say any [sources] were especially noteworthy. Most were just chugging out scraps of info and facts. But no one in this day and age “relies on a source of information” anyway. You look at the incredibly diverse soup of information
coming for multiple sources. In a few minutes one scans dozens of sites, picking up a sense of the overall situation. It doesn’t seem likely that one TV station, website, newspaper would have any real insight on its own. The value comes from multiple access to all of them...

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

พอขับออกมาถึงถนนด้านนอก รถไม่ค่อยมีให้เห็นตามท้องถนน [สามีเพื่อน] ก็ขับขึ้นทางด่วน จากแยกบางพูน บริเวณทางด่วนมีรถทหารจอดอยู่ระหว่างทางหลายคัน โดยมีทหารนั่งอยู่ บนรถ คอยสังเกตรถที่ขับขึ้นทางด่วน

พอถึงบ้าน[เพื่อน] ก็เปิดโทรทัศน์ก็ไม่มีการถ่ายทอดรายการใด ๆ จึงเปิดอินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อเช็คข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับข่าวช่วง แล้วปิดชุดข่าวต่าง ๆ ในประเทศไทย ไม่ว่าจะเป็น ไทยรัฐ แมติช เหรียญ ๆ ที่ไม่ปรากฏช่วงที่เกี่ยวกับการปฏิวัติในครั้งนี้ จึงเปิดเว็บไซต์ของ CNN และ BBC คู่ปรกมีภาพข่าวของการปฏิวัติของประเทศไทยในช่วงต่าง ๆ มีรถถังอยู่ทุกยุทธการในกรุงเทพฯ ทั้งถนนเส้นวิทยาภูมิ พหลโยธิน ราชดำเนิน และมีประกาศออกทางโทรทัศน์เรื่อย ๆ ถึงการปฏิวัติครั้งนี้ แล้วมีประกาศออกทางโทรทัศน์ว่าเกิดอะไรขึ้น เพื่อเป็นการควบคุมสถานการณ์

หลังจากเกิดเหตุการณ์ ถึงโทรมาเรียกเพื่อนให้มาถึงถนนและมองตัวเอง[เพื่อน]เพื่อรอว่าจะวันนี้จะต้องทำงานหรือไม่ ระหว่างที่นั่งที่ทำงาน มีโทรมาถามเพราะรู้ว่าทำงานอยู่ที่มหาวิทยาลัย ส่วนใหญ่ก็โทรมาถามว่าอยู่ที่ไหน แล้วเหตุการณ์เป็นอย่างไร

[When we were driving on the highway [leaving work], there were not a lot of traffic. [My colleague’s husband] drove for us and took the express way from Bang Poon. There we saw a number of military vehicles parking along the road with soldiers monitoring the situation on the express way.

After we arrived my colleague’s house, we turned on the TV and found nothing. Then we logged on to the Internet to check what happened, but we could not find any news about the coup from many websites in Thailand, for instance, Thairath, Matichon, etc. So we visited CNN and BBC and found some photos taken from different locations in Bangkok including on Vibhavadee, Paholyothin, and Rachadamnern Rds. There were occasional announcements on TV about this coup and an announcement saying that the next day was a holiday for controlling the situation.

After that, I called my mom to tell her that I already left my work and stayed with my friend to know that whether or not I had to go to work the next day. During that time, my friends and my aunt called and asked me because they knew that I work at [one of Thaksin’s organizations]. Most of them asked where I am and what the situation was like.]

(AbsoluteInsider4 - Interview)

These examples indicate that during the disruptive moment, people were not using
one particular source or channel. Rather people used information sources and channels to complement each other to gain as much information as possible. Therefore, when considering the utility of particular sources or channels, these multitasking experiences and use of multiple sources should be kept in mind.

4.3.1 Mainstream Media

During the disruptive moments of the coup, people still used various types of traditional media, including local and newspapers, television, and radio. However, with the intervention and control of the operation of these media, it is important to note that people realized the limited role of traditional media in a critical situation like the coup in 2006.

[I feel that Thailand and media control are still inseparable. Fact in news in Thailand is still under the control of political system, both before and after the coup. The trustworthiness of media were decreasing substantially, in my opinion. We could no long find fact in media. This makes people who receive information from one side are used as a tool by some groups of people.

...]

Most Thai newspaper provided news about the way people came out and took photos with soldier and the coup announcement. It was one-side of the story to make people feel that this is a good coup.

(AbsoluteInsider4 - Interview)

I turned on the TV out of curiosity to see what, if anything, was on it. I anticipated that there would be some sort of a news black-out so didn’t really expect to find anything substantive, but did want to see what was being
It should be noted that these critical perspectives did not emerge because of the coup, rather they were derived from what was perceived prior to the coup. Media played leading roles in the recent long-standing political turmoil in Thailand. People questioned the trustworthiness of media. Therefore, during the coup, some people used media, but did not expect anything as AbsoluteOutsider4, a scholar on Thai studies based outside Thailand, pointed out about the role of the newspaper.

Frankly, the newspapers do what they always do. There was a brief spurt of action and anxiety, that was followed by some days of greater reflection and analysis but, finally and inevitably, there was nothing, and Thailand was relegated to its usual non-existence – a place of only marginal international concern. That cycle tends to take two weeks but in the case of the 2006 coup I recall that it was even quicker.

As the coup leaders used TV stations to disseminate official announcements, some people used television as a main channel to monitor the situation. Nevertheless, similar to the newspaper, some people were aware of particular frames of reference that were presented on TV screens. On his blog, after explaining his well-being in Thailand, OutsiderIn4, an expatriate in Thailand, noted:

It reminds me of the case after the invasion of Iraq where we saw the images of mobs of people toppling the statue of Sadam Hussein in Baghdad. Later on we learned (source: Control Room) the pictures of the crowds bringing down the statue were deceptive: upon viewing a wider angle view of that square, there was only a small group of people, not the masses that it appeared in close-up. Plus, those people turned out not to be Baghdad locals but people who had been brought in from outside for the event. Interesting.

When I asked him about this perspective during the interview, he also elaborated that:

The comparison I was drawing was how what you see on TV isn’t necessarily
representative of what is going on more broadly. In this case, Bangkok wasn’t under siege and the streets weren’t lined with tanks and soldiers, although from what I understand from those outside Thailand, that was the impression formed by the way the media was covering the coup.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

To some people, radio was an alternative choice during that time, as AbsoluteInsider2 described her experience on her blog.

First announcement came. Just after Thaksin’s “half” announcement that he ordered a commander to be transferred to some other position .. that was really TOO LATE.

And [the TV screen] stayed blue like that forever. We had to follow news from radio kept waiting for more announcements. As soon as 2nd announcement aired. I heard some people outside blowing horns.. riding around on their motorbikes and shout “Yessss!!!! Thaksin GET OUTTTTTTT!!”

(AbsoluteInsider2 - Blog)

For those who did not use radios, they still perceived that radio was useful but only to a particular group of audiences because of the mobility characteristics of the radio device and socio-economic status of particular audiences.

I can’t really recall radio specifically at this time. Radio tends to have a lot of talk and opinions of the man on the street. It was an interesting source that makes one feel close to the common man or taxi driver on their day-to-day business.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

4.3.2 Firsthand experience

In making sense of the way people went outside of their residences during the early stage of the coup to have firsthand experience, there apparently are a number of explanations to the phenomenon.

To some people who live or work close by a place where there was an appearance of the military, seeing with their own eyes seems to be valued.
I didn’t learn only from TV, because my home is located near former PM Thaksin’s place. I met many military officers around my house and had some chances to talk. ... Not only from my curiosity, but they seemed to me very kind and polite, guarding us and neighbors nicely. Many of us gave them some food, drinks, and flowers.

(AbsoluteInsider7 - Interview)

However, for other people, the motivation for going outside was mainly from dissatisfaction with the mainstream media’s reporting as OutsiderIn3 pointed out.

I realized that the media was unlikely to provide objective coverage of the situation (being de facto state-controlled) and so decided to see things for myself.

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

Another foreign traveler, OutsiderIn11, wrote on his blog how he decided to go outside. It was apparent that the main motive for him was that what he heard during the early stage of the coup was confusing. In the same post, he also provided some photos that he took with his friends.

**Ryan and the Coup in Thailand**

On this evening, Sept 20th 2006 i was sleeping. My friend called me and told me to turn on the TV. I put on CNN and saw that there was a coup in progress.

Well, we went out to our ‘hang out’ restaurant Sabah Cafe & Cinema. There we heard that we all had to go home. Hungry for information, we started to ask around. The stories were all different. Some said people died, others said tanks were all over Bangkok.

After restless talking over and over, Tony Heiko and I, decided to take a tuk tuk and cruise through the city. We went to all the main spots, like Khaosarn and from there to Sanam Luang, Democracy Monument and straight to the government buildings.

At the time we arrived at Khaosarn it was already shutdown, on Sanam Luang was nothing, not even a tank. Democracy monument same. When we got to the area (the royal area) with all the government buildings we saw the first tanks and soldiers. All wearing yellow ribbons, to show that they are loyal to the King. It was great to see it. The atmosphere was quite relaxed. Al lot of press, who had nothing to report, searching around for a story.
Tony, Heiko and I decided just to have some fun and we went out to shoot some pictures. Later on i will also post the movies.

Long story short: it wasn’t as bad as the media displayed on TV. A lot of people in Thailand were very happy with this coup. It was quiet and completely without violence.

See the pics for an impression.

(OutsiderIn11 - Blog)

A YouTube user, OutsiderIn12, recorded a video of the situation with a camera attached on his bike. The following is the description of his video.

I went for a jog around my neighbourhood at 12:30 am to see how things appeared. All was quiet, uncannily quiet, even the soi dogs were not barking and chasing me. So, I figured why not take a drive around on my bike with a video camera in tow. It’s quite difficult to drive a bike and take video at the same time. Mistake! At first I took video of whatever I saw. What I saw was multiple tanks at every intersection, armoured vehicles, gun mounted jeeps and 50 soldiers at ever intersection. I have never seen so many tanks. I must have seen over 20 tanks and I only drove two miles before I thought I better get back home. As I head back I was taking video and stoped at a red light, btw, all lights were red! at one intersection soldiers saw my camera and approached me, guns aimed at me. I freaked and I quickly offered them my tape hoping they would not take my video camera. They checked my video bag for more tapes. I had only brought two with me. One in the camera and one I had stashed in my pants. When they were sure I had no more tapes they let me continue home. 300 meters down the road I loaded my video camera again. This time I knew if I got caught again I would probably have a bigger problem than last time. So I tried to take hidden footage. Which I did but the footage is really bad and you can’t really make out stuff... Sorry. As I drove around taxi drivers gave me the thumbs up and said “Thaksin” and put their wrists together as if in handcuffs. I will venture out again tomorrow and see if I can get some good stuff.

(OutsiderIn12 - Video description)

4.3.3 Cellular Communication

As mentioned earlier, personal contact was one of the first reactions after hearing about the coup. In addition to face-to-face communication, people used different technologies to communicate with each other. The cell phone is inevitably one of them. People
used cell phones to contact their family members and friends to inform them about the situation and to check on their well-being.

Consider a comment shared on a blog post by AbsoluteInsider15 about his experience during the coup; he was outside Thailand when he heard about the coup. Note that this AbsoluteInsider15 blog was written as a memoir for two year anniversary of the coup.

‘What? The army has seized the power?’

After that, all Thai people who were standing around there and heard what s/he said, picked up their phones and called back to Thailand.

(Oh! [I did not know] there were many Thai people in Mustafa at this time?)

(AbsoluteInsider15 - Blog comment)

Particularly, the Short Message Service (SMS) was a quite popular feature during the coup. People used SMS to communicate with their personal contacts. For example, OutsiderIn4 used SMS to contact his friend who went out and took photos of the situation.

He did not send me any information while he was out, as it was already late at night. The following day he did send an SMS to me, telling me he had taken some good pictures and had not encountered any problems. Subsequently, he permitted me to use one or two of the pictures for my blog.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

SMS also used to distribute information among groups of people. AbsoluteInsider16 told that she received the news via SMS that her office was closing the next day.
People at my work sent messages to each other informing that the HR department received a phone call from the director saying that since there was a difficult situation in the country, the next day was a holiday.

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

In addition to voice and text communication, people used cell phones to take photos and videos of the situation. By looking at the device model reported on Flickr, a number of photos available were taken by cell phones. Therefore, cell phones were not only used as communication tools, but also as recording devices in this disruptive situation.

4.3.4 Internet

During the early stage of the coup, the Internet seemed to be the most successful as it became the major channel for disseminating information. Some people chose to use the Internet as a result of the hardship of accessing information from other sources and/or via other channels.

When TV became useless, the only media that we could rely on was the Internet. I was trying to access to manager.co.th first because during that time the manager[now ASTV] website was the fastest updated news site. However, it was unreliable as well as pantip.com because the capacity of both websites could not afford that enormous traffic like that.

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Interview)

I and a few others monitor newspapers, TV, some radio, and the net (although back then there were not as many blogs and news sites on Thai issues or opinions). These were simply sources of information. The internet turned out to be a main source as many people went out on the street, took photos and posted them.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)
This was also the case for OutsiderIn7, who also had difficulty accessing various information sources during the first night of the coup. Remember that she could not find a taxi to take her around Bangkok. Seemingly the Internet was her only success.

When I heard about the coup, it was already past 10pm, and I had just returned to my apartment after dinner. I tried to get a taxi to where the action is: the government house. But no taxi seem to want to ferry me there.

It became really frustrating. I wanted to know what was happening and started making phone calls, to check if my friends were safe and to pass on the news to those who were still partying. Some lines were interrupted and I couldn’t get in touch with a few souls. Fortunately, some of my friends were online and we started frantically exchanging information on the matter.

I checked the TV channels. The cable TV at my apartment only offered CNN, but that too was shut down by 12am. The TV suddenly went blank, damn! The coup plotters had taken control of all TV stations, apparently because the embattled Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was in New York, was giving interviews to the foreign press.

I turned to the Internet to get more information but due to overloading, news sites unfurled slowly. I was desperate to know what was happening. From the little that I read, I knew witnesses were saying that several hundred troops were posted at key points around Bangkok, including at government installations and major intersections.

(OutsiderIn7- Blog)

One of the utilities that people gained from the Internet during that period of time was personal communication. Email was used, similar to phone, to connect with personal contacts such as family members and friends.

The emails were from friends and family (presumably ones who hadn’t read my blog entries) who were concerned for my safety. I let them know that I was safe and that the media images they had seen (tanks, etc) were not representative of what was happening in the entire city.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

I sent lots of e-mails – always do. We were all confused, and before too long the coverage of the coup was overwhelmed by the “guns and roses” images that flashed around the world. In general terms, I was in contact with my
Another communication function of the Internet was through Instant Messenger (IM). Some people talked to their contacts one-on-one. However, a number of people created a temporary room and invited their contacts, whether or not they knew each other, to exchange information.

Yes. By gmail chat. A few friends and a fellow blogger called [a blogger’s name] who alerted me to the fact that normal programming had ceased and was being replaced by pictures of the royal family and music - a typical sign of a coup.

[At that night, I set up a chat room on MSN, talking about the situation with a group of people. We followed and looked for news from sources that we could find, for example, live blogging at 19sep.blogspot.com.

They were my colleagues at work, around 6-7 people. Normally, I did not talk on MSN with this group of people. However, at that night, they invited me to join one of the chat room that someone already set up.

The benefit we got [from using MSN] was just to know that whether or not we had to go to work because nearly all people in the group were around early 20 and were not interested in politics.]
During that night, I saw the largest group of people online on MSN Messenger ever. Normally around midnight, there are not many people online. But it might not be true because during that night everyone knew that all media was censored. And they knew that “which media that could find information”. And the Internet was the answer for the situation on that night.

During that time, people were grouped and opened a lot of large chat room through Messenger programs, distributed on the Internet. They were grouped among friends and talking about the situation, exchanging information in a chat room. Who got what information distributed it in that chat room. It then was quickly expanded to other chat rooms. It was unbelievable that new information would be disseminated among Thai people online around the country and the world within 5 minutes. Everyone could learn about the same news.

Therefore, even though many large websites were closed, information can be
disseminated through other channels in the Internet world. It was like underwater waves that went through the stream of Social Network Service (SNS). It were from friends or one society through other societies like chains through Instant Messaging (MSN, Yahoo messenger), email, or online marketing. We called the pattern of this phenomenon that Viral Marketing. However, in this situation, people shared information real-time that could be responded and interacted immediately (Interactive).

(AbsoluteInsider17 - Blog)

In addition, the way people communicated via instant messenger was not only through private chat, but also through status update. A number of people changed their status on instant messenger, which were shown to their contacts, to reflect their perspectives on the coup. For example, InsiderOut2 observed his contacts’ status and published some of them on his personal blog.

- เพราะรัฐบาลเปลี่ยนแปลงบ่อย <-- เสียงแบบ เพราะอากาศเปลี่ยนแปลงบ่อย Slogan ของทิฟฟี่ แพ็คเกจสีเขียวและหน้า Season Changes
- เคี่ยวกลายปฏิบัติ? ปฏิบัติอะไรกันหว่า ปฏิบัติอะไรกับทักษิณเฉยนะเพื่อนบอก (ผมอยู่ในยุคที่รับฟังเจ้าตี๋หรือเยะ)
- ฟีคำเลื่อนวันเด็กมาเป็นวันนี้หรือ? ยกเลิกเริ่มเลย?
- “Welcome to democracy Thai style” – TIME
- East Venice ก็อย่างนั้นชอบถอยหลังเข้าคลองกัน
- เราถือเด็กหลังเพื่อดั้งหลัง หรือเพื่อถอยหลังต่อไป

[- Because the government changes often. <-- Copied from “Because the weather changes often”, a slogan of Tiffy, a green package drug, and a movie Season Changes.

- Are they acting? Acting what? Impregnate something with Thaksin, my friend told (Am I living in the age of deception?)
- They move the children day to today? A lot of tanks?
- “Welcome to democracy Thai style” – TIME
- East Venice, That is why people like to go backwards to canals [Thai idiom]
- We step back to stand firmly, or move further backward.]

(InsiderOut2 - Blog)
AbsoluteInsider18 also captured a screen shot of her Windows Live Messenger, an instant messenger by Microsoft, showing the status updates of her contacts, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: An example of Windows Life Messenger screen shot during the coup (Reproduction permitted by the owner)

Speaking of status update, it was interesting to note that two of the interview informants mentioned they wished that Twitter, which was not around during that time, had been available. When asked if he had a magic wand, what would he do? AbsoluteInsider3 said:

[In terms of news and information, if it could be changed, I wish there was Twitter during that time (and it was not down too.) And there was no media censorship of all kind including the Internet and international TV channels.]

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Interview)
Similar to AnonymousOut2, he was not impressed with the way in which he communicated with others via Instant Messenger, and wished for the existence of Twitter.

Just some sharing some information, but it was still rather limited. Twitter was not around then. If it had been, it would have easier to find out information quickly.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

WWW is another common function of the Internet that people used during the early stage of the coup, as OutsiderIn2 pointed out:

Since the coup, internet coverage of Thailand by all methods (news sites, blogs, youtube, etc.) has exploded. Back in 2006 there were not as many sites covering events moment to moment other than Thai newspaper sites. And the newspaper sites just crib their information from Thai-language TV reports. I was very satisfied with the sites at the time–there was a glut of event-based information coming out that was quite exciting to follow. However, there is little background–just what is happening. The situation was especially good for me as I was one of the few English-language sites to have moment-to-moment posts. It led a lot of readers to me.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

As already discussed, the role of the WWW, in particular, was amplified given the fact that people were skeptical about what was provided from the traditional media. Blog (or Weblog) was the most visible WWW platform/service during that time and apparently were perceived as the most helpful.

Blog was had more coverage, more videos and photos, than I saw in international media, and Thai media was off-the-air.

(AnonymousIn1 - Interview)

[During the first period that we could not figure out the story, this blog (19sep.blogspot.com) was the place that collected a lot of news and clearly provided sources. It helped a lot. But days after traditional media resumed their duties in reporting news, I went back to the traditional media.]
For professional bloggers, keeping readers updated on the situation seems to be their first instinct and passion. For example, AnonymousIn1 mentioned that he began to blog when he first heard the rumors. When asked what made him decide to go out and report the situation, he answered “[because of the] intention to report the events on my blog.”

During that early stage of the coup, there were a number of blogs that conducted what is so-called “live-blogging” - another genre describing the way in which bloggers update a situation/event in one or a couple of posts. Readers have to revisit the posts or keep refreshing their browsers to see new items. There was not a concrete pattern in terms of writing pattern. However, it is noteworthy that each news item is usually concise. Except personal thoughts and opinions, most items refer to a source that comes either from traditional media (such as television), personal contacts, personal experiences, or other websites. Some blogs include timestamps for each news item.

A couple of blogs were created during that period just to report on the coup situation, for example, thailandcoup.blogspot.com, and 19sep.blogspot.com. AbsoluteInsider15, one of the founders of these blogs, wrote about this experience on his blog post titled “Best Decision in My Life”, two years after the coup.
ไปสมัครอีเมลใหม่ อย่าใช้ชื่อให้สาวถึงตัวได้

เอาอีเมลไปลงทะเบียนเว็บบล็อก ตอนแรกจะเอา Exteen แต่ก็พ้นน้องชาย เลยเอาของฝรั่งซึ่งมาลงเอยที่ Blogger

แจก account ให้กับคนรู้จักที่ไวใจได้ และส่งต่อกันไปเป็นทอดๆ ตอนเขียนอย่างใส่ข้อมูลที่สาวถึงตัวได้เหมือนกัน

เขียนเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ!

เขียนมาถึงตรงนี้ หลายคนคงรู้ว่า หมายถึง 19sep.blogspot.com ที่บอกว่า perfect ที่สุดครั้งหนึ่ง เพราะว่า 4 ข้อที่ว่าไปนั้นคงหลักและวัตถุประสงค์มาก

บล็อกเป็น persistence media แบ่งข้อมูลที่ถูกเปิดเผย และไม่เข้าข้อง ยังถือได้สะดวก

- ผู้ให้บริการเลือกอยู่ต่างประเทศ สีหายที่มาก (เพราะตอนนั้นไม่รู้จะเกิดอะไรขึ้น)
- ถึงจะหาอีเมลก็ไม่รู้จะเป็นอีเมลของใคร (กันไว้สองชั่วโมง) มีทางเดียวที่จะหากลึงก็ IP ซึ่งต้องใช้เวลาและความพยายามสูงมาก

- คืนมาของข้อมูลถูกบุคคล (โดยเฉพาะจากต่างประเทศ) เราสามารถสร้างชั้นพлยที่ยังต้อง ได้ง่าย (ตั้ง URL ไม่ใช่การเก็บข้อมูล) ให้ได้ ผลที่ดีถือถืออีกถึงเป็นจำนวนมาก

- เขียนเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ ความคิดวูบแรกของผมคือทหารมันกลัวฝรั่ง แต่เอาเข้าจริงแล้ว การเขียนเป็นภาษาอังกฤษช่วยให้ข้อมูลของเราสื่อถึงโลกได้ (เหตุการณ์นี้ทำให้ผมรู้ว่าถึงความสำคัญของเนื้อหาภาษาอังกฤษ ถ้า Addicted to Blogging in English?)

นอกจากนี้ตัวบล็อก 19sep อ้างมีพันที่ติดต่อที่มาจากใจของเขาคนอื่นๆ ถ้า เขียน เอกลั่งวิถี อย่างดังกล่าวจะแสดงถึงของ หลบ. แล้วอีกทีไทยแล้ว YouTube, ภาพถ่ายของ Dr. Rider, transcript ของแถลงการณ์แปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ (ซึ่งแปลกันแบบว่างๆ เพราะตอนนั้นยังไม่มีใคร รู้จักถ้าว่า Coup De’tat ลำนั้น) ผมจึงไม่ได้แล้วก็ต้องมีเรื่องที่มีความหมายที่น่าสนใจ เท่าที่นึกออกมี เท่านั้น แต่ถ้า Dr. Rider อ้างถึงถือของภัยคุกคามระมัด

การที่ข้อมูลมีมีมีมีนี่เป็นส่วนมาก และเราจะสามารถสร้างชั้นพยที่เหมาะสมได้ (เช่น มีวิดี โอของจริง หรือ มี transcript ที่แปลกันสุดๆ ออกให้อ่านแบบที่เห็นมอลอง) ดีกว่าและ เร็วกว่าสื่อกระแสหลัก (ซึ่งตอนนี้เทคโนโลยีเพื่อสื่อสังคมประเทศ) ถึงเป็นขั้นเปลี่ยนให้แผนเก็บ ผลลัพธ์ของ citizen journalism อีกเหมือนกัน

... “I want to state clearly that there is no Gun Fire or any violence until now and doesn’t tend to be too. Live seems to be as usual, anyone can walk around the street, some companies still open. So you don’t have to worry about safety for your friends or relatives, Thai or non-Thai, who currently are in all part of the country. They may be exited but they all are still fine.”
เมื่อสถานการณ์เริ่มกลับสู่ปกติ สื่อกระแสหลักต่างชาติเริ่มตั้งตัวติด และรายงานเหตุการณ์ในไทยอย่างต่อเนื่อง การกิจของ 19sep ก็หมดไป เหลือทิ้งไว้เป็นอนุสรณ์ว่าเมื่อคืนนั้นเราทำอะไรกันไว้เพื่อประชาธิปไตยบ้าง

[Two years ago, I got back home from work like everyone else. While I was playing on my computer in my bedroom, there was someone telling me via IM that I had to turn on a TV set. There were songs playing on TV. I don’t have to tell the situation after this. Everyone should have a shared experience and know it well.

The Internet was the only media that worked. (One of my friends explained that the military did not know about the Internet which I thought it make sense.) I remembered that [his co-founder] dragged me to a chat room on MSN where people copied and shared news from different places.

I just read, did not reply anything. My brain was still confused. After collecting myself, I yelled at him “What the heck are you doing?”

The fact that I yelled at him was not in a negative way. Good approach, but not-working method. The discussion on IM is narrowcast, specific to particular group, and not persistent - after closing the window, all (potential) valued information is also gone.

I told [the co-founder] what to do (Too bad I did not keep chat log) as follows:

- register a new email account that cannot be tracked.

- use this new email to register a new blog. At first, we thought about using Exteen [a local Thai blog service]. But we were afraid that it would bring trouble to our friend (the blog service owner). So we decided to use a foreign service, ending up with Blogger.

- send this account to trustworthy people and let them distribute as snowball. When writing, do not put any information that can be tracked.

- write in English.

After this point, many people would know that I mean 19sep.blogspot.com

What I just said one of the most perfect things because of these factors that were very powerful and concise.

- Blog is a persistent media. It also maintains one copy, no redundancy. It is easy to refer to.

- The service provider is outside Thailand. It is hard to track (because we did not know what was going to happen).

- Even though they know the email, they would not know whose email (double
protection). The only way to know is IP (address) which would take a long time and a great effort.

- There was a high demand of information (especially from foreign countries). We can create supplies that can be easily refer to (with URL not copy and paste the whole content). The result was we got a lot of citations.

- Writing in English. My first thought was that the military is afraid of foreigners. But for real, writing in English connected our information to the world (this situation led me to be aware of the importance of English content see Addicted to Blogging in English?)

19sep had also evolved from others’ ideas such as setting up a video camera to record the announcement of CNR and uploading on YouTube, using screen capture, writing transcripts of the announcement in English (They were very poorly translated because at that time, none of us know the word Coup d’état). I don’t remember everyone who helped us. As I remember, there were Keng, Sunit, and Dr.Rider. I am sorry if I miss anyone.

As there was a high demand of information, we could produce supply that are appropriate (such as live video or live transcriptions that were translated right after each announcement ended), better and faster [delivered] than mainstream media (at that time there was only international media). It was a turning point for me to realize the power of citizen journalism.

... “I want to state clearly that there is no Gun Fire or any violence until now and doesn’t tend to be too. Live seems to be as usual, anyone can walk around the street, some companies still open. So you don’t have to worry about safety for your friends or relatives, Thai or non-Thai, who currently are in all part of the country. They may be exited but they all are still fine.”

After the situation resumed to a normal state, the international mainstream media were settled and reporting the situation in Thailand continuously, the duties of sep19 came to an end leaving as the memory of that we did for democracy on that night.]

(AbsoluteInsider15 - Blog)

Unlike 19sep.blogspot.com, instead of having the public as an audience, some bloggers also used their blogs to communicate with their personal contacts.

My blog exists to help family and friends back home stay up-to-date about my life overseas. I know as a communication major that the way media represents events if often more sensational and over-focused than in real life. Because of that, I wanted my family and friends to know that I was okay and to try to
put the information they might be hearing in a larger perspective.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

In addition to blogs, media sharing websites such as Flickr (photo) and YouTube (video) also played substantial roles during the early stage of the coup. Similar to blogs, media sharing websites seemed to be used to communicate to others and as a part of their users’ memories.

To some people, taking photos and videos was recreational. However, some people dedicated their time and effort to capture and report the experience. For AnonymousIn1, he was so busy that he did not have time to check other sources.

During the coup night/morning I did not consult any other blogs or online news media (I was too busy uploading photos and writing up my own account of the coup.)

(AnonymousIn1 - interview)

OutsiderIn3, likewise, was excited to capture the photos and uploaded on Flickr.

I was hoping to see some activity at Rachdamnern Nok. When I arrived there I witnessed tanks and soldiers blocking off the street and establishing positions. There was a sense of tension in the air - the feeling that anything might happen. I stayed there for a couple of hours. I was concerned only with recording the situation with my camera and sharing what I saw with the world (via Flickr).

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

It is noteworthy that photos and videos from these sites were linked and reproduced among online content providers and online media.

And then I stumbled across the Flickr coverage, linked from the Flickr Blog. They assembled photos from various Flickr users located in Bangkok, added audio from an interview with one of the photographers, and the result is a very powerful photographic slideshow.

(AbsoluteOutsider10 - Blog)

It is interesting to note that there were two types of photos posted online: original photos (taken by posters) and photos taken from other sources (mostly news agencies).
AbsoluteOutsider10 published his article in The Age, an Australian newspaper, commenting about the roles of media-hosting websites during that time.

Image-sharing website [Flickr] is host to more photographs of the coup while blogger Jonah in BKK also offered his own images of the day after the night before.

Video-sharing website YouTube has been slower off the mark, with a small collection of videos relating to the coup - although they are mostly recordings of the coup announcement.

(AbsoluteOutsider11 - Blog)

Another way of utilizing new media during the early stage of the coup was in the form of Wikipedia and Wikinews. A number of people suggested the Wikipedia entries about the coup on their blog posts. For a non-Thai blogger, AbsoluteOutsider10, Wikinews was a better source than traditional media as he mentioned on his blog.

**Thailand coup, as told by Flickr users**

My brother has a house in Phuket, Thailand, so I’ve been trying to follow news on this week’s coup to see what’s going on. I had no idea there was an ongoing corruption scandal of that magnitude. It seems unclear whether this coup was a good or bad thing. Some people say it’s bad because it’s “against democracy” - others say it’s good because it gives a chance to reboot a democracy after cleaning out the garbage first.

I’d been following the story via Wikinews, which has been more useful than local/national newscasts. And then I stumbled across the Flickr coverage, linked from the Flickr Blog. They assembled photos from various Flickr users located in Bangkok, added audio from an interview with one of the photographers, and the result is a very powerful photographic slideshow.

(AbsoluteOutsider10 - Blog)

It is interesting to note that the development of an English Wikipedia entry of the coup during the early stage was in a narrative form from the beginning. However, the pattern was quite different for a Thai entry. As the situation of the coup was still developing on the first night, the editors during that time posted only the announcements of the coup with links to additional resources. Later on, the development of the entry was leaning toward the chronology of the situation in a form of event log. Then the
entry was expanded more toward important reactions toward the coup from inside and outside the country (for example, from financial markets, from international leaders, the protests).

However, from editors’ perspectives, it was apparent that they perceived themselves as providers rather than receivers of the information. For example, AbsoluteInsider7, a Thai Wikipedia editor, mentioned:

I have been a contributor for wikipedia for many years, started by my senior colleague’s recommendation. I have never used wikipedia as a sources, I’m a contributor not a user. But only as an editor.

(AbsoluteInsider7 - Interview)

Also when asked how her experience with Wikipedia during the coup differed from her other participations, she said:

“I found no difference to my other contributions to wikipedia.”

Another platform of participation can be tracked from a web forum. As mentioned, the web forum was one of the most popular online community platforms during that time. People reported that they visited web forums that they belonged to, whether or not they were related to Thai politics. The conversations in the web forums can be solely about the situation as it developed or how the coup was related to their topics of interests as AbsoluteOutsider11 pointed out what he observed in some of the web forums for foreigners who are interested in Thailand.

Travel-related discussion boards such as Lonely Planet’s ThornTree, 2bangkok.com and Thai Visa are abuzz with the coup, with many posters worried if the events of the past 24 hours will affect their holiday plans.

(AbsoluteOutsider11 - Blog)

During that time, people used web forums as a place to exchange information as OutsiderIn2 pointed out: “For me the forum was just an aggregator of additional information and links on the situation...”

As we can see, the way in which people sought and shared information during the
early stage of the coup may be partially explained through the discussion of the utility of information sources and channels. It is believed that the selection and use of information sources and channels are informed by the characteristics of users. In addition, in terms of the social aspect, the community of users of each particular source and channel has developed cultures and environments based on structure and roles. Therefore, the next chapter discuss extensively individual and social constructs that were noticeable during the early stage of the 2006 coup in Thailand.
Chapter 5

Constructs Related to Information Behaviors during the Coup

This chapter highlights some related constructs from individual, collective, and contextual perspectives that played substantial roles in influencing how people sought and shared information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand.

5.1 Individual Characteristics

The first group of related constructs to be discussed are socio-psychological, consisting of cognitive, affective, and physical characteristics, and pertain to an individual. In addition, the role of external factors such as resources is also examined.

5.1.1 Cognitive and Affective Constructs

It is apparent that emotions as well as memory of past experiences played important roles in terms of information behavior during the early stage of the coup. While people reacted to the situation differently, it was apparent that the sense of frustration that emerged from the uncertainty of the situation and the excitement of a major political event led people to pursue the information behaviors that they did during that time.
Mix of Feelings

During the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand, people expressed their feelings and emotions in various ways. It is interesting to note that these affective elements evidently were related to how people sought and shared information.

There are three plausible contextual stimuli that led to various expressions of emotions during the coup: the political situation, the restricted information from mainstream media, and the amount of information received.

The term coup d’état typically carries a variety of negative feelings (e.g., fear, sadness, and disappointment) to anyone who hears it. However, as thousands of photos and videos depicted a welcoming and festive atmosphere during the 2006 Thai coup, there is an indication of a sense of optimism among people who were there, either absolute insiders or outsiders-in. People who did not favor Thaksin expressed their sense of joy and happiness when they heard about the coup. Another group of people who had positive feelings were those who were tired of ongoing political tensions. The military coup was like a break event, bringing a sense of relief and calm. People who went outside not only took photos and videos, but also showed their support to the military (e.g., by giving flowers and food).

I think I also assumed at the time what many did as well: That this coup reset the political clock and that Thaksin would play fair in the traditional Thai way—he would lay low for a couple of years and then return to be a big man again—albeit not in a political role—resuming his position on the boards of major companies. ... I think most coups would make people feel anxious and uneasy, but in the specialized context of the 2006, I think it resulted in relief that a political stalemate had been broken.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

However, not all people were glad that there was a coup. There was also definitely a sense of disappointment, shame, and sadness toward the situation. The negative feelings were caused by the perception that the development of democracy in Thailand was interrupted.
As an absolute outsider who studied about Thailand for many years, AbsoluteOutsider4’s expression is a representative of those who disagreed with the coup.

Dread. I have read enough Thai history to appreciate that anti-democratic interventions rarely end well. Thailand’s history since the coup bears out this initial, pessimistic assessment: the country has hardly taken a forwards step since the coup. This is a great shame, but a shame that the coup-makers, alone, must bear. I probably also expected that there would have been a more concerted counter-attack from Thaksin’s allies. That may have been a naive expectation but having seen Thaksin in person merely one month before, surrounded by all of the trappings of his high office, I found it hard to believe that he would surrender quickly. As it turns out, he has decided on a prolonged battle – and one where his foot soldiers bear the brunt of the hardships.

(AbsoluteOutsider4 - Interview)

It is also important to note that, since both positive and negative feelings came from different causes - opinions toward Thaksin Shinawatra and the political system as a whole (i.e., democracy) – the situation brought two opposite feelings at the same time.

เป็นความรู้สึกผสมปนเปอยู/uni0E47.leftนความรู/uni0E49.lowสึกผสมปนเปอยู/uni0E48.lowพอสมควร เชื่อครึ่งไม/uni0E48.lowเชื่อครึ่ง ไม/uni0E48.lowคิดว/uni0E48.lowาประเทศที่ไม/uni0E48.lowมีการรัฐประหาร
มาสิบกว/uni0E48.lowาป/uni0E35.leftแล/uni0E49.lowวจะมีเหตุการณ/uni0E4C.lowแบบนี้ได/uni0E49.low แต/uni0E48.lowอีกใจนึงก็รู/uni0E49.lowสึกดีที่นักการเมืองที่ตัวเองไม/uni0E48.lowชอบหน/uni0E49.lowาถูกจัดการ

[It was quite a mix of feelings, half believable and half unbelievable. I never thought that Thailand, which had not had a coup d’état for ten years, would have a situation like this. But on the other side, I felt good that the politician that I don’t like was evicted.]

(AbsoluteInsider3 - Interview)

I stayed there until about 1.30 am. It was raining when I left the studio. I had to stand with three soldiers, no more than 25 years old, each holding rifles. I was filled with different emotions - sadness that we had to have a coup to solve our problems, relief that the stress and bad feelings we’ve had in Thailand might be coming to a close, and excitement that I was in the middle of something very historic.

(OutsiderIn1 - Blog)

AnonymousIn3’s blog is mainly a collection of personal records of exercise and health-related activities. However, on the day after the coup night, instead of writing a reflective
statement about the exercise as usual, AnonymousIn3 had to write about the coup experience instead.

**Week 22 Tuesday - Sep 19 Coup!**

Activities/Actions:
Coup took over Thailand

Stat:

Course condition:
How I felt:
(the 5-point scale)
Physically 5
Mentally 3
About my nutrition 4
About my sleep 3

Having an anxious feeling from the first heard about the situation, I am confused whether which side (former Thai Prime Minister or Thai army) is taking control. No news on Thai TV stations.... my brother and sister were very neverous, especially the Sis! She leaves some 50 kilometers from civilization. Since all national TV stations are broadcasting the king and royal family clips, I talked to both of them about what media here have covered. BBC, besides CNN, uses very strong words against the coup which sucessfully takes over the power of the former PM. I feel that they do not understand what Thai people want. Even though this PM came from “people votes,” he is evil. I use “votes” in a loss sense. They declare that they will bring justice to the PM regime on corruption and such.

I feel a relief but just sad... Relief for Thaksin was ousted!!! Sad for a chapter of Thai Demoracy with coup. Well, at least these coup leaders appear to be nice and seem clean of what they want to do for Thailand.

(AnonymousIn3 - Blog)

At the end of this post, s/he posted a news item about a coup from mainstream media and attached a photo of the coup announcement on TV.

Another example is the conversation happening on AbsoluteInsider19’s blog post. Note that this blog post is not about the coup as it was posted hours before the coup took place. It actually is the translation of a newspaper article on comparative economy.
Nonetheless, it was one of her regular blog readers who started a comment about the coup on this blog post. Her response is similar to what many other absolute insiders and insiders-out mentioned elsewhere.

Comment1 (September 20th, 2006 at 1:31 am): Well? What could we say now? at the moment (as of now, 1:21am Bkk Time) Council of Political Reform (military reform council) already overthrown PM?

Comment2 (September 20th, 2006 at 6:17 am): Can’t read the entry here, but I’d just like to congratulate you and all of Thailand for taking control of your own country at the hands of corrupt imperialism. (clich? rhetoric for the win?) Long live revolutionary democracy and long live Rama IX.

AbsoluteInsider19 (September 20th, 2006 at 7:43 am):

[Comment1]: I think Thailand’s Bobby is probably Pridi Panomyongse

[Comment2]: Hey, thanks I am actually sad that it has to end in this “undemocratic” way, but my happiness that the corrupt tyrant is gone far outweighs it. In many ways, Thaksin’s own stubbornness and refusal to bend slowly reduced alternatives until we have so few choices left. I’ll write something in English about this in a few days. I’m sure this incident will be slammed as “a huge step backward for Thai democracy” blah blah blah in all the foreign press for many months to come. Let’s hope political reforms are real this time so we can have a ’clean’ election in a year or so.

(AbsoluteInsider19 - Blog comment)

Additionally, when mainstream media could not provide information that people needed during that time, it also led to the state of uncertainty and a feeling of lack of control of the situation. The situation deviated from what people experience and expect in an everyday life context. People expressed the feeling of frustration, which intensified the need to seek and share information.

I will have to admit I was a little concerned at first. Information was hard to get but I was able to find out TV stations had been seized and put off the air. Nobody really knew what was going on or by who. Tanks and troops had moved in the capital and surrounded several government buildings, while others set up at key intersections.

(OutsiderIn13 - Blog)

Another example of the sense of frustration can be seen from AbsoluteInsider6’s
response to one of the comments on a live blogging post during the first night of the coup. Below is the conversation between AbsoluteInsider6 and her readers.

Comment 1 (September 20, 2006 1:40:00 AM):

From what I heard on BBC.... Thaksin’s still going to be giving an address to the UN General Council at 7pm EST!!! I’m going to be setting my alarm to wake up in time to watch that...

Not knowing what’s really going on is.... FRUSTRATING!

I heard the internet’s also going to be cut too... (HOPE that’s just a rumor) on the brighter side..... :) :) :) nice to see you updating your blog again though....

Comment 2 (September 20, 2006 2:32:00 AM):

Sorry to hear all that’s happening down there [AbsoluteInsider6]... Lots of luck and Good Vibes!

[Comment 2’s name]

Comment 2 (September 20, 2006 2:49:00 AM):

Do you still have access to the BBC, etc on the net, or not even that?

AbsoluteInsider6 (September 20, 2006 2:53:00 AM):

Hey [Comment 1]! Yeah, it IS frustrating not knowing what the hell is really going on. This is seriously crazy. I have an exam on Friday and finals are starting in a week. I’m in no mood to study with all this hoopla going on in the city. I hope you’re well na ja!

Thanks for the vibes,[Comment 2]. :) As of now, I still have access to the BBC and CNN through the net. I don’t know how long that will last, though. So far, blogs are still accessible, which is a good sign, I think. I don’t know about tomorrow morning, though.

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog comments)

It is also interesting to note that when people had difficulty with telecommunication networks in addition to mainstream media, it was a matter of degree of emotion (e.g., a stronger sense of frustration) rather than a different type of feeling. As people speculated about the termination of telecommunication networks, for example, when OutsiderIn7
had difficulty accessing the Internet, she expressed her high level of frustration on one of her blog posts:

You won’t believe me but I had been cut off from the Internet for a whole day. I just manage to log in. My frustration grew by the minutes. As a blogger, I feel pressured to update this blog, but everything was against me? sigh.

(OutsiderIn7 - Blog)

On the other side, since there was a lot of unverified information disseminated during that period, a number of people said that they were overwhelmed and frustrated by information overload, as the title of a blog post written by AbsoluteInsider21.

**Information Overload**

เหนื่อย...เหนื่อยที่สุด
เหนื่อยกับการรับข้อมูลข่าวสาร
รู้สึกว่า มันจะล้นทะลักเกินไปแล้ว
เพียงแค่รับข้อมูลมาอย่างรวดเร็ว
ข่าวสารที่พร้อมกระจายทุกสารพัด
ไม่รู้ว่าไหน “แท้” อันไหน “เทียม” ??
มันก็ยากพอ ๆ กับการสู้ว่า คนไหน “แน่น” คนไหน “แท้” ซัก??

แต่ที่รู้หนึ่ง อย่างหนึ่ง คือว่า “คณะปฏิรูป” ไม่เหมือน “คณะปฏิวัติ”
อย่างอิงจากพจนานุกรม ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน
“ปฏิวัติ” หมายถึง การเปลี่ยนแปลงระบบ เช่น ปฏิรูปอุตสาหกรรม, การเปลี่ยนแปลงระบบการบริหารบ้านเมือง เช่น ปฏิวัติการปกครอง
ส่วน “ปฏิรูป” หมายถึง ปรับปรุงให้สมควร เช่น ปฏิรูปบ้านเมือง ในภาวะปัจจุบันนี้
ต้องใช้คำว่า “ปฏิรูป” นะ ...อีกแล้ว!!!

[Information Overload]

Tired... most tired

Tired of receiving information I feel like there is too much overflow By just sitting in the midst of spider web, news surge from everywhere I don’t know which is ‘real’, which is ‘fake’?? It’s as hard as identifying who is ‘straight’, who is ‘gay’?!?!

But I know one thing for sure which is “reform group” is different from “revolution group”.

Citing from a dictionary, the Royal Institute edition:
Revolution means the change of system such as the industrial revolution, the administrative revolution (e.g., governmental revolution) Reform means appropriately adjustment such as reform the country

In this situation, “reform” is correct.]

(AbsoluteInsider21 - Blog)

**Sense of Excitement**

Another state of emotion that seems to determine the way people sought and shared information during that time was a sense of excitement and surprise.

Evidently, rumors about the coup were all over the country and disseminated through, not only word of mouth, but by traditional and new media, even before the coup night.

Coup rumours were circulating for hours before anything was confirmed, but with international news channels off the air and Thai stations playing nothing but images of the royal family, few people knew for sure what was going on.

(OutsiderIn5 - Blog)

A number of people explicitly projected that there might be a chance of a coup or “something” happening. On the basis of what he heard through the mainstream media, OutsiderIn14 was among those who suspected that the coup might happen. He wrote on his blog.

As God as my witness, I have been meaning to write a blog post for the last two weeks on how I thought there was a 1 in 5 chance of a military coup. Everyone is relieved of believing me.

(OutsiderIn14 - Blog)

When I asked him about that his experience, he elaborated his feeling as follows:

I was taking a year off. I used to go to Journalism school. So I was thinking about being a foreign correspondence. So while I was in Thailand, I read the two English language newspapers, Bangkok Post and the Nation. And actually for about two weeks before the coup, just kept reading the paper, it was very obvious that something was going to happen. And you know, I did not know much about Thai politics. But it was clear to me from what I was
reading that a lot of people in Bangkok, especially more sort of established people or wealthy people or government people did not like Shinawatra and Did not want him there. But he kept winning election. And then there was some sort of a rule of thumb that it said anytime of the year that the coup is going to happen, it’s gonna happen when the leader in New York during the meeting of United Nation General Assembly.

(OutsiderIn14 - Interview)

Nevertheless, the coup was still quite an unexpected situation to many people. It brought a sense of excitement for people as they perceived that they were the witnesses or even a part of a historic event (as discussed in the previous chapter). In addition, for serious bloggers (i.e., so-called grassroots journalists), they were excited about the opportunity to play a leading role in providing information to the public while the mainstream media was limited.

Interviewer: What was your first response and feeling after hearing about the coup?

OutsiderIn3: My first response was a sense of excitement that I was in the midst of an exciting situation. I responded by rushing outside with my camera and hailing a motorcycle taxi to take me to Rachdamnern Nok Avenue (approx 20 minutes from my home by bike).

Interviewer: Did you have any questions at the time related to the coup? If so, what was the biggest question/issue?

OutsiderIn3: Although I was concerned for my well-being in a potentially dangerous situation, my sense of excitement was far more powerful. I realized that the media was unlikely to provide objective coverage of the situation (being de facto state-controlled) and so decided to see things for myself.

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

At first, when I heard of the coup, it was uncertain there was actually a coup. I was lucky to have a fast internet connection and was able to watch Nation Channel, a then popular news channel, to see what was happening. You saw music with pictures of the royal family which was the sign of a coup. However, just 20 minutes later, programming appeared to resume to normal. Then Chulalongkorn professor Dr. Panitan, and now Govt. spokesman, appeared on TV stating that it appeared the coup was unsuccessful. He was cut off mid-sentence and then we had coup announcements. It was clear then there had been a coup. There was a sense of shock. There has been rumours of a
coup for a while, but they had come and gone. In hindsight, it was naive to think there would not be a coup, but at the time, it was a sense of surprise.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

My initial feeling was one of excitement - there was a rush of adrenaline as I could scarcely believe that I was living through an event that I had previously only read about in newspapers. Immediately after, I felt a sense of disappointment for the Thais as, given the number of coups that have happened since the country ostensibly became a democratic monarchy, the Thai people deserve better than this continual interference by the military in their lives.

( OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

[ไม่ได้ประหลาดใจเท่าไหร่ แต่ตื่นเต้น แล้วก็จะเกิดอะไรต่อไป ถ้าให้เปรียบเทียบ วันนั้นไม่ได้เสียใจที่เกิดปฏิวัติเท่าวันนี้ คำตอบนี้จะชัดกว่ารู้สึกอย่างไร

[I wasn’t that surprised, but excited to see what was going to happen next. To compare, I was not that sad about the coup as I am now. This answer would give a clearer picture of how I feel.]

(AbsoluteInsider5 - Interview)

The examples above indicate that a number of people perceived the coup in various ways, for example, as critical, confusing, uncertain, exciting, or as an historic event. These perceptions led to various actions to serve their needs to obtain and disseminate information.

Nevertheless, when there was no strong sense of excitement (e.g., no sense of attachment to self or society or risks), information behaviors during that period remained in a passive mode.

When asked what her major question was during the early stage of the coup, AbsoluteInsider16, recruited through the snowball sampling technique, did not see any substantial change around herself.
I wanted to know why the military staged the coup. What was the story? I knew after that it was because of Thaksin. During that time, I just wanted to know how long the coup was going to be. Would there be any violence? However, in overall picture, I didn’t feel any difference or violence. I felt normal like any other day.

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

She reported that she turned on a TV set and found nothing interesting.

[I kept watching TV] not that long because every channel showed the same thing. There was no information, except now the military seize Channel 5. For peace, stay at home or something like that.

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

When I asked what she did afterward, she responded:

I might have gone back and continued watching a Korean series. He He

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

Note that it was the Korean series that she paused after she was informed about the coup from her sister who lived outside Bangkok. In addition, when asked how the coup has had an effect on her, she also answered that:

[Not really. There was no effect. It was normal. I was probably excited when I looked and saw a parade of tanks leaving Channel 5. And I went back home a bit early, not too late. And my office would monitor the situation whether or not there would be any violence.]

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)
AbsoluteInsider16’s expression was similar to OutsiderIn15, a foreign businessman who was interviewed by a foreign media correspondent on the coup night. His live-broadcasted phone interview was recorded and uploaded onto YouTube. As he perceived the situation as being normal, he waited for information to get to him from his Thai friends.

News anchor: I understand that you are stuck at home. What is it like for you now?

AbsoluteInsider16: It’s just pretty normal. We are just at home, waiting the news to get to us and we got [DVDs] to few of us. We are just waiting to see things to blow over and get the green light to go to work.

(OutsiderIn15 - Video transcript)

In addition, the role of the sense of excitement during the early stage of the coup can be examined by looking at stopping behavior (i.e., how people stop actively seeking and sharing information). Apparently, the sense of excitement was one of the major indicators of whether to continue seeking and sharing or not.

Announcement: The Excitement is Over

Please be advised that the excitement related to our recent coup d’état is officially over. Unless you are a junkie for Thai political news, there really isn’t much more to see or talk about. So unless we have any developments, I think I’ll just move on to other stories.

(OutsiderIn4 - Blog)

When I asked OutsiderIn4 during the interview about the decision to stop writing about the coup on his blog, he mentioned that the sense of excitement was from mainstream media and the people around him.

Regular TV programming, general discussion of people around us had moved on to other topics, malls reopening, etc. Life was continuing as normal.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

When the situation turned back to normal as in everyday life, AbsoluteInsider20 also decided to stop live blogging about the coup.
REST

OK I’m giving it a rest. I live blogged because all the news channels were cut off and all the websites were blocked. Now all major newssites and channels are up and running, my job is done. Besides, school back to normal tomorrow so I need to get back to my work.

It was quite a fun experience! Again big thanks to everyone for sticking by and for linking back.

For intensive updates, again I’m handing the torch to[a fellow blogger]. For major updates that all must now, I’ll post here.

Sigh there better be a backup seminar class after all this. It’s not our fault it’s the government’s. If I’m not graduating because of this, there’ll definitely be a coup from me.

(AbsoluteInsider20 - Blog)

Similar to AbsoluteInsider20, AbsoluteInsider6 decided to go to bed after many hours of live blogging on the first night of the coup.

@ 4:48 AM: My phone has finally stopped ringing, so I’m off to get some shut-eye now. Things seem to have calmed down around the city; hopefully it stays that way when dawn breaks in a few hours...

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

AbsoluteInsider6 still updated the situation for the next couple of days. Then, on the last post of live blogging, she said at the beginning of the post:

I’m off to bed now, folks. Now that the major media networks are up and running again (with their lovely celebrity montages, but back nonetheless), there’s little point in me carrying on with the live blogging.

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

Past Experience

Another aspect of the cognitive construct that seems to be associated with behavior during the coup was memory. People sometimes related the situation to their past experience. For example, many people who are familiar with Thai political history were reminded of the 1991 coup, the one prior to the 2006 coup.
The 1991 coup was a more traditional coup—military guys wanting to grab a piece of the spoils of governing, but not wanting to go through the hassle of elections. This was clear in the aftermath as they tried to set up military-dominated parties and push unelected generals to lead coalition governments.

My feelings in 1991: I was quite shocked and surprised as well as a little scared. The coup happened quite unexpectedly under the cover of eve of the first gulf war and kind of got lost in the international media. The military was on TV hour after hour explaining they were taking over to defend the monarchy and broadcast “confessions” by people claiming they were involved in assassination attempts and that the government was not preventing it, etc. It was clumsy and unconvincing and seems like a ham-fisted grab for power.

The day after the coup I went to Siam Square with my girlfriend and was surprised all life was proceeding as normal. I asked her what she thought of the coup and she offhandedly said “Oh, well. No more democracy” and continued shopping.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

Apparently, their experiences in the past influenced the way people sought and shared information during the coup. After hearing about the coup, OutsiderIn1 went to an ATM machine and withdrew some money as the situation reminded him of the financial crisis in 1997.

I quickly went downstairs and took out some money from the ATM. Why? I don’t know. Just to be safe. Who knew what was going to happen. It reminded me of when, in 1997, the Baht devalued, and it tumbled and tumbled against the American dollar. In the end I withdrew Baht and hid it under my bed, for fear I would have to flee the country! That was nearly ten years ago, and here I was doing it again.

(OutsiderIn1 - Blog)

For OutsiderIn4’s partner, the 2006 coup reminded him of the coup d’état in 1991. As such, they decided to shoot a video of the coup announcement on the TV screen and upload it onto YouTube.

Watching the video, [my partner] translated what was being said. He explained that everything was very similar to what he remembered from a coup that happened in his childhood - probably in 1992:\footnote{In 1991, the military led by Army Commander Suchinda Kraprayoon staged a coup overthrowing}
footage using the video function of my camera and uploaded it to YouTube shortly thereafter.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

**Perceived Roles toward Themselves**

As mentioned earlier, there was a group of people who perceived themselves as having a role and responsibility to report the situation to their contacts and/or the public. Professional journalists, for example, felt that it was their duty and main responsibility to report the situation to the public, especially to those who were outside Bangkok and Thailand. Similarly, those bloggers who perceived themselves as alternative/grassroots journalists also shared the same feeling. Therefore, when I asked those bloggers whom I interviewed, a number of them said that they started blogging right after hearing about the coup as a deed to help others.

For personal reasons, foreigners who were in Thailand during that time felt obliged to report their well being to their families and friends back home. Thai people outside of Thailand, on the other hand, felt that they needed to check on the safety of their families and friends. The details of the interactions among Thais and foreigners who live in Thailand and abroad are discussed in the next chapter.

**5.1.2 Physical Capacity and Resources**

In addition to mental constructs, the way in which people sought and shared information during the early stage of the coup was also determined by their physical capacity and technical resources. Particularly for people who heard about the coup on the first night, many reported that they stayed up all night. However, at the end, they decided to stop as they ran out of energy.

---

Chatichai Choonhavan’s government. However, the major subsequent event was the mass protest opposing Suchinda’s government in May 1992. The protest led to the bloody military crackdown. Thus, many people remember that the coup happened in 1992, instead of 1991.
Was simply tired. ... Simply that the coup had been successful. Was too busy trying to catch up on news and hadn’t started to think about longer term consequences.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

OutsiderIn4 also decided to go to bed on the first night of the coup because of limited physical stamina.

I realized there wasn’t any more news, just rehashing of previously-reported information. As I’m not much of a night owl I decided it was time for bed.

(OutsiderIn4 - Interview)

In addition to physical capacity, sustaining involvement also depended on the technical resources that people had during that period. Technical resources in this case refer to tools, devices, or services that allow people to access information. During the early stage of the coup people tried to utilize all the resources that they had available to them to access as much information as possible. When asked how he took photos of the TV screen, OutsiderIn2 pointed out that:

I did have a screen capture hardware device that plugged into the TV and computer, but I can’t recall if I used that at the time. At some point around that time I just started taking photos of the screen with a digital camera. That is probably how I got those shots.

(OutsiderIn2 - Blog)

In addition, some people realized that their access to information was limited due to lack of resources.

[ ...

In addition, some people realized that their access to information was limited due to lack of resources.

[...]

Personal memory, emotion, perception toward themselves, and physical capacities are the essential characteristics that seem to be highly noticeable during that time.
These personal traits also seem to explain the reaction to the information as well the stopping behavior. However, the analysis of an individual trait would be less pertinent without the investigation of social interaction. Therefore, the influence of group (i.e., collectivity) is examined in the next section.

5.2 Collective Information Behavior during the Coup

According to the official announcement, “political gatherings of more than five people have already been banned, but political activities can resume when normalcy is restored.” Obviously the coup leaders tried to control people to form a group for political reasons. However, it is hard to imagine how such a rule can really be sustained in an online/virtual environment.

Concerning how people sought and shared information during the disruptive moments of the coup, there are some collective elements that can be observed from data collected in this study. The roles that collective elements played during that period can be observed through the discourses among different groups of people during the early stage of the coup. Apparently people utilized groups and collectivities for different purposes including 1) to effectively know about the current status of the coup, 2) to achieve particular goals/tasks, 3) to feel secure, and 4) to feel encouraged.

5.2.1 To Know Better and Faster

It is undeniable that rumors and word of mouth played a substantial role in disseminating information during the early stage of the coup as discussed in Chapter 4. Apparently, people were expecting to learn more about the situation and help each other verify information during this stage of urgency.

The following is an example of the way in which people help each other verify information on Wikipedia. This is one of the early threads on the discussion page of a Thai Wikipedia entry on the coup.
AbsoluteInsider21:
ตรวจสอบเวลา 22.25 น. สถานีโทรทัศน/uni0E4C.lowเกือบทุกช/uni0E48.lowองตัดเข/uni0E49.lowารายการเพลง เป/uni0E34.leftดเพลงที่มีเนื้อหาสรรเสริญพระบารมี ยกเว/uni0E49.lowนช/uni0E48.lowอง 9 และช/uni0E48.lowอง 3 ที่นาเสนอรายการปกติไม่ใช้ ช่อง 7 และ ช่อง 3 หรือครับ ผมว่าผมไม่ได้ดู คนคนหน้า อยู่นะ

AbsoluteInsider22:
ตอนนั้นกำลังมีคนคนหน้า พอประมาณ 4 ทุ่มครึ่งได้มีข่าวคำว่าทางเจ้ามาร์คิว พร้อมกับขึ้นหน้าทุกทันที ที่ชื่นชมสถานการณ์ลูกเล่น เปิดไปได้ช้าหนึ่ง ที่รับของ 9 ก็คับ แล้วจึงเปลี่ยนไปเหมือนกับช่องอื่นครับ อันนี้ผมแน่ใจยั่งยืน 100% [AbsoluteInsider21:
To check 10:25 PM Nearly every TV station stopped its program and turn to music program. They turned on songs that praise the charismatic of his majesty. Only Channel 9 and 3 remained their normal programs. Weren’t they Channel 7 and Channel 3? I thought I did not watch Khon Kon Khon [a TV documentary program.]

AbsoluteInsider22:
At that time, Khon Kon Khon was still playing. Around 10:30PM, there was an inserted news with the face of Thaksin with a text reads emergency situation. It was on for a bit. Channel 9 was interrupted and then changed like other channels. I was watching it. I’m 100% sure.]

(Wikipedia discussion)
The way in which people utilized rumor and word of mouth as a means to gain and share information during the early stage of the coup was through various sources and channels. However, people in a group communication during that time did not necessarily know each other. Therefore, the source of information in a collective environment during the coup was a mix of known and unknown people. AbsoluteInsider3 is one example of someone who participated in collective information seeking and sharing. After hearing about the coup, he reported that there were about 50-70 people who were monitoring the situation together in a web forum where he was a member. When asked who those people were, he replied:

บางคนก็รู้จักเป็นส่วนตัว บางคนเคยเจอตอน meeting แต่ส่วนใหญ่ไม่เคยเจอหน้าครับ
[I know some of them [in this community] personally. I met some of them when we had a meeting. However, I have not met most of them.]
At the same time, as mentioned earlier, he was also involved in a group chat room via Window Live Messenger (MSN) with colleagues from work. Seemingly these collective environments created a space for people to exchange and make sense of information and news together.

For OutsiderIn2, who wrote a live blog, during the situation, reported in the interview that during the early stage of the coup he and his virtual team helped each other with seeking and verifying information. They used email to communicate.

The blogosphere is another interesting venue that indicated the existence of a collectivity that helped its participants to learn about the situation. It is interesting to note that a number of bloggers whom I interviewed reported that they heard about the coup from their fellow bloggers via email.

The collectivity on the blogosphere has a characteristic that makes it different than other types of collective activities, as the interactions among members can be observed through comments on one’s space or conversations over two or more blogs. In more basic forms of online participation (e.g., media sharing websites such as Flickr and YouTube), people commented on particular content directly. However, bloggers could create conversations by writing on their own spaces and interacting with each other via links (e.g., pingback).

Another way that a blog facilitated the interactions among a number of people was through group blogging where a group shared the same space and helped each other by updating the situation. The example case in this matter is blog 19sep.blogspot.com where a number of absolute insiders shared and translated information on a blog that was created particularly for the coup.
5.2.2 To Achieve Particular Goals/Tasks

During the early stage of the coup, a number of online groups of local people, whether new or already existing, seemed to be challenged by the large amount of information related to the rules posted by the coup leaders. Therefore, these groups had to communicate to adjust the norms of the group in order to achieve particular objectives. Apparently, people who sought and shared information in a collective manner discussed, created, and adjusted group norms in response to the coup situation. The discussion (in the Talk page) on a Thai Wikipedia entry about the coup, 2006 Thai coup d’état [รัฐประหารในประเทศไทย พ.ศ. 2549], was an example of how members in an online group set particular rules in terms of editing the entry.

It is apparent that one of the Thai Wikipedia members started the entry three minutes before midnight of September 19, 2006 with a brief summary of the coup. Minutes later other users began to edit the entry as the story developed. It is interesting to note that the early version of the entry included the coup announcements and a few online resources (the first two were news video on the CNN website and the Flickr search result page). One of the editors suggested that the transcripts of the announcements should be moved to Wikisource since it was perceived that Wikipedia was not appropriate for original documents.

Another important development of the entry is that later on people used a time log to describe the sequences of the situation. Below is the example of the entry excerpted from the entry edited on September 20, 2006 at 9:59AM.

ลำดับเหตุการณ์วันที่ 19 กันยายน 2549

- เวลาประมาณ 08.00 น. วันที่ 19 กันยายน มีคำสั่งจาก พ.ต.ท.ทักษิณ ชินวัตร รักษาการนายกรัฐมนตรี เรียกผู้บัญชาการทหารทั่วประเทศเข้าประชุมร่วมกับคณะรัฐมนตรี (ครม.) ที่ท่าบึงรัฐบาล แต่ไม่มีผู้นำเหล่าทหารคนใดเข้าร่วม พ.อ.สนธิ บุญยรัตกลิน ผบ.ทบ. อ้างว่ากระชับชิดเกินไป ที่ให้คำมั่นจะวางศือการปฏิวัติรัฐประหาร แต่จะพัดไปทั่วทุกชนชั้น และเริ่มกระจายสู่ภายนอก โดยเฉพาะตลาดหลักทรัพย์

- เวลาประมาณ 12.00 น. พลังการประชุม ครม. โดยผ่านระบบวิทยุ-MM รัฐมนตรีหลาย
Around 8:00AM on September 19, there was an order from Thaksin Shinawatra, caretaker Prime Minister, calling all military leaders to have a meeting with the cabinet at the government house. However, none of the military leaders showed up. General Sonthi Boonyaratglin said it was too close. Then the rumors about the coup was disseminated throughout the government house and then outside especially the stock market.

Around noon, after the cabinet meeting via web camera system, a NUMBER OF ministers excitedly asked journalists about the situation.

Around 6:30PM there was a rumor that a special troop from Lopburi moved to Bangkok. There was also a rumor that General Prem Tinasulanon, Head of the Privy Council, had a meeting with the King. However, the rumor said it was for making a merit for M.L.Bua [the Queen’s mother].

Around 6:55PM, The Thai News Agency reported that Thaksin Shinawatra, the caretaker, announced that he would come back earlier from September 22 to September 21 at 5:00AM.

Is Wikipedia a log repository? Mind my frank speaking. This entry is the worst entry I’ve ever seen in Wikipedia. Do you think Wikipedia is a log repository?
repository that you can append whatever? This is encyclopedia. Use it as collaborative writing tool.]

(InsiderAnonymous1 - Wikipedia discussion)

Another instance concerns the pinned note about the enforcement of the coup’s law on Wikipedia. One of the editors created a pinned note on this entry reminding people to be careful when editing according to the fifth announcement of the coup regarding the freedom of expression. A number of editors commented that they disagreed with the message as Wikipedia is not under Thai law. They ended up conducting a poll to decide whether or not to keep the pinned note. The majority of voters (8 out of 9) favored to take down the note. Subsequently, the pinned note was eliminated.

5.2.3 To Feel Secure

People gathered as a group so they could feel they were not alone in a critical situation like the early stage of the coup. In a situation in which searching and sharing information could be monitored and was risky, like the 2006 coup, people collectively adjusted, created, and maintained a set of rules to protect themselves as much as possible.

From my own observation during the early stage of the coup, I wrote on my blog:

I got an IM message from a friend telling me where the Rajchadumnern folks would go for discussion, weekendcorner. However, I anticipated, because of security and traffic issue, they moved the website from .com to .net and restricted access. Only people who has registered before are allowed to get in. For those who need to register, you have to ask any existing members to register for you. That does mean you have to know some “insider” to be able to participate. It is interesting to investigate that the community has to transform into “close” model where only friends of a friend are welcome. I guess there would be a bunch of people that could not get into this community. And I am pretty sure that there are still a number of people finding the “locality” of the community. It is interesting to see how the locality is moving from one place to another place. And how they tried to protect themselves by setting the rules and regulations. The ties are mainly from the power of instant messenger.

This perspective also refers to a number of collective attempts to be anonymous.
The 19Sept.blogspot.com blog is one example. When the founders set up a blog, one of the rules was to use untraceable measures (e.g., fake email and identity) so they would not be tracked. However, it was apparent that the blog was censored by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology the day after. It is interesting to note some existing groups were not working, for instance, due to self censorship or congested traffic. In those cases, people set up new spaces to facilitate the discussion of the same groups of people. For example, when Rajdumnern Room of Pantip.com, one of the biggest political web forums in Thailand, was closed temporarily, the users of this forum set up new private forums and invited each other through word of mouth, keeping only those whom they trusted in the group.

5.2.4 To Be Encouraged

Another role of collectivity during the coup can be seen through a support system. The sharp increase of participation tended to encourage people to join with others in seeking and sharing information. For instance, a number of bloggers and content creators during the coup expressed their feeling of encouragement after realizing that their content was viewed or used by many people. The fact that the viewership was increasing seemed to be rewarding to many of them.

It was really fun to follow events as they happened–especially when I knew people were checking back to my site constantly. That night I was expecting the internet would be cut off (by the military) at some point so I wanted to make sure I had as much posted to be useful as possible.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

Well, it was the first event, that I live-blogged and I got a lot of positive feedback so continued this live-blogging for future events such as the TRT dissolution, referendum results, and election.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

Thanks for stopping by, though – all 2,354 of you. I mean, really, that figure
has left me reeling; that’s how many visitors I get in a month. Still, if there’s one thing I’ve learned during the past 24 hours, it’s that blog networking and the internet are seriously powerful tools. You may take away our TV, but you sure has hell can’t shut us up!

...

In the meantime, if you’re craving for some fantastically thorough updates, definitely stop by and visit blogger extraordinaire, Bangkok Pundit. The guy is simply the best.

...

As for me, I’ll return to my usual brain fart-esque blogging soon. Or at least once finals are over, I will.

(AbsoluteInsider6 - Blog)

During the early stage of the coup, it is apparent that people encourage each other to seek and share information regardless of the existence of intentions. They seemed to build a supportive and protective environment, although their relationships can be considered as weak ties (e.g., blog readers, peer members in an online community, etc.). In addition, it is also essential to note that groups emerged during that time were mostly temporary. Some were adaptive from groups that existed prior to the coup.

5.3 Contextual Constructs: Time and Location

In addition to individual and collective factors, context is another construct essential to the explanation of information behavior during the early stage of the coup. The importance of context in this situation can be addressed in terms of the temporal element. It is interesting to note the effect of time with regard to how much information was available during the coup night.

A blogger, AbsoluteOutsider12, commented about the perceived difficulty of getting news, especially in relation to international investment, on the coup night.

What Investors Did on News of a Thai Coup

...
It should be known that the Prime Minister of Thailand is currently in New York at a Union Nations Assembly. After trying to access news sites within Thailand they are not currently accessible. That may just be from a flood of data traffic, and it may be from access being pulled. That just is not known.

Elections going against the pro-business factions of a country are rarely good for stocks, and military coups are far worse. We do not even want to speculate on the current situation because there just isn’t any good data. It is currently 11:47 PM EST in Bangkok, so it is going to be very difficult to get any solid data that is reliable since everyone is at home right now.

(AbsoluteOutsider12 - Blog)

Similar to a blogger OutsiderIn13, the fact that the coup was staged at night was somehow meaningful to her.

I think it was good idea for the coup to be put into action late at night... less traffic and people to have to deal with, and when opponents would be at their lowest reaction point. By day, the army had announced a 'holiday' was to be in effect... this kept many people from having to go to work or school.

(OutsiderIn13 - Blog)

The importance of time to information seeking and sharing during the disruptive moment of the 2006 coup can be examined in two ways. The first interpretation is in relation to the timing of the coup actions that took place during the night of September 19. Many people had already gone to bed even before the first announcement. My mother, for example, was already in bed when I called, and she had no idea that there was a coup happening in Thailand. As mentioned earlier, the sense of excitement emerged as the story was being developed. Therefore, those who woke up in the morning and found out about the coup would likely be less excited than those who stayed up during the night. The fact that the coup began at night also relates to the physical limitations mentioned earlier – that people in Thailand had to stop seeking and sharing because they had already stayed up all night and were already tired.

Another aspect of time is derived from the finding that people tended to seek and share information that potentially had effects on their daily lives. Therefore, time, in relation to their everyday activities, also influenced the topics of discussions. For
example, since September is the last month of the first academic semester, it is not too surprising to see that a number of bloggers who were students reported that the confusion during that time was about whether or not they were going to have an exam.

It is important to note that there is another contextual construct that played substantial roles during the coup: geographical location. From a broad perspective, geography concerns the differences in information behavior of people who were inside and outside Thailand during that time. It seems that geographical location played an important role during the coup. However, since geographical location is already embedded in identifying small world membership, the discussion of geographical location as a contextual factor is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Based on the findings discussed in this chapter, we have learned that people’s reactions to the situation reflect their memories (i.e., past experience) and emotions. People expressed a mix of feelings that can be in contrast to each other at the same time (i.e., happy and sad). However, the most common emotional expression during that time was the sense of excitement, which seems to play an important part for people to decide whether or not they were going to seek and share information. As the coup was staged at night (local time), physical stamina seems to be another indicator of how people continue or stop seeking and sharing process.

In addition, people, as in group, influence each other in terms of seeking and sharing information. The influence can be explained by common goals that were expressed during that time, for example, to gain accurate and more information about the situation, to develop a publication, and to feel secure. Furthermore, the comments exchanged through social network and communication systems during that time also provided a sense of encouragement.

Time and location of the situation as well as information activity also has an essential presence in examining behavior, cognition, and emotion of people during that time.

In conclusion, there are various constructs/concepts that seem to be associated with the way in which people sought and shared information during the early stage of the
coup. The findings in this chapter are not specifically intended to suggest generalized causal effects between these constructs and information behavior during a socio-political crisis. Nevertheless, the findings suggest the concepts that stood out among others in the pool of data. The relationships certainly need to be further investigated.
Chapter 6

Roles of Insiders and Outsiders

The September 19, 2006 coup d’état in Thailand raised concerns for people worldwide, not just for those people who were in Thailand. However, the interactions among different groups of people during the early stage of the coup were noteworthy, whether they were inside or outside of the country or insiders or outsiders to the Thai language and culture.

This chapter, adopting Chatman’s small world framework and Merton’s notion of the Insider and Outsider, discusses the roles of insiders and outsiders on information seeking and sharing during the early stage of the coup. However, the interpretation of the framework is important to review here. In this study, there are four primary types of small world membership, divided based on nationality and geographical location during the first few days of the coup. An absolute insider refers to a Thai person who was in Thailand and Bangkok in particular during the early stage of the coup. An absolute outsider is a non-Thai citizen who was outside Thailand during that period. An insider-out refers to a person who held Thai nationality, but was outside Thailand at the time. An outsider-in is a non-Thai citizen who appeared to be in Thailand at the time. However, since nationality and geographical location could not be directly observed for all informants (including those from document analysis), there are additional four types of small world membership. An anonymous-in is a person whose locality
is identified as inside Thailand but nationality is unidentifiable. An *anonymous-out* is an unidentifiable-nationality person, who was outside Thailand during that time. An *insider-anonymous* refers to a Thai person whose locality at the time of the coup could not be identified. And *outsider-anonymous* is a non-Thai who did not identify his/her geographical location during that time. Figure 3.3 illustrates a final coding categories of smallworld membership.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the cognitive authority of each group through the discussion of the relationships and interactions among these groups during the early stage of the coup. Then, the notion of converted members, either outsiders in or insiders-out, is discussed as a key player who helped bridging the communication gaps during that period.

Please note that major terms used in this chapter (i.e., the Insider, the Outsider, and conversion) were substantially adapted from Merton’s work (Merton, 1972). Particularly, the idea of conversion is adapted from Merton’s notion of a ‘converted member’ explaining the way in which insiders and outsiders seek validation, evaluation, and understanding of the world outside their own.

### 6.1 The Insider

Evidence from content analysis indicates that the privilege of access to information during the early stage of the coup was related to an individual’s Insider and Outsider social status. Instead of viewing themselves as subjects involved in the situation, absolute insiders seemed to perceive themselves as witnesses to a historic situation. The perception that they could access information based on their first-hand experience within Thailand as the coup was unfolding gave them such a privilege.

Many of the absolute insiders and outsiders-in apparently were granted authority of information and worldview as a consequence of their knowledge of the political situation in Thailand (for insiders) as well as their ‘being there’ (for insiders and outsiders-in). As
mentioned in Chapter 4, many people perceived that the information reported by the international media during the disruptive moment was different and misleading compared to the information that they received from their firsthand experiences. Therefore, these people wanted to share what they had observed in order to clarify the situation to others, who could not gain information from firsthand experience.

In addition to their perceptions of international news outlets, their interactions with contacts outside of Thailand also led to a similar impression for both absolute insiders and outsiders-in. AbsoluteInsider19, for instance, wrote a blog post two days after the coup, based on what she saw on the street with photos that she took, as a response to what she heard from her contacts from outside of Thailand.

I was writing a rather lengthy post in English about my thoughts on the recent bloodless coup, but I thought I should first post a few pictures of the coup, for foreign friends and visitors who may be concerned about my safety (thank you for all the kind e-mails), so everyone can see how peaceful this event has been and that most of us don’t feel threatened whatsoever by these tanks and humvees. The atmosphere now in Bangkok as you can see from the pictures below is much more like Children’s Day than a country under siege.

So, enjoy the pictures. I will post longer thoughts in 1-2 days, but in the meantime, in case you are wondering:

1. I dislike military coups as much as any pro-democracy person, and I am sad it happened, but I believe the coup leaders did this in goodwill to pull the country out from a political quagmire. Their actions from now will prove or disprove this goodwill.

2. I think the fact that many Thai people support this coup shows that “democracy” comes in many shapes and forms, and that its “substance” (check & balance apparatus) is as much as, if not more, important than its “form” (going to elections).

3. There is considerable risk of a counter-coup, since forces loyal to deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra are still around, and some people are understandably very angry at the coup. But the king’s formal endorsement of coup leaders’ power structure (which he signed yesterday) should help defuse the tension.

All pictures except the second one (which is from CNN according to friend who sent it) are taken by me and a friend yesterday during our tank-photo-hunting tour of Bangkok. For much better pictures, see this post and another one at Pantip.com.
Like in any military coup around the world, lots of tanks have taken up positions in front of strategic locations in Bangkok.

but I’m not sure how many coups see children and tourists gleefully pose for pictures (which the soldiers are happy to oblige).

All tanks have yellow ribbon around their muzzles to show allegiance to the king (yellow is symbol of king in Thailand). Many people give flowers and food, like fried rice in that plastic bag in the picture, to the soldiers.

While we were at King Rama VI monument yesterday, there were about 200-300 people taking pictures of tanks, which lined up on both sides of the monument. There were 10 tanks in total.

In addition, AbsoluteInsider2, a graphic designer, made a comparison between the reactions she got from both insiders and outsiders on her blog.

**Reactions**

**From those in Bangkok**

First on MSN everyone was checking news with one another. Rumours spread everywhere. Some real some crappy (As crazy as .. Thaksin would come back with his own private army, something like that) But finally it was confirmed that it was the coup.

Most of people I know they’re relieved. Finally it’s the end of all this craziness. 18 months we’ve been waiting for !!

Next day I went out to see the mood around the city. I shit you not. People looked so happy, everybody got smiles on their faces. Families took children out to take photos with army and tanks! (yeah, for real) They’re bringing flowers to give to soldiers too.

This never happened in Thailand. Every time it’s a coup. Of course people stay home and hold a grudge for a military. But this coup is different. Turned out that 83% of us are supporting this decision.

**Reactions**
From friends abroad, and foreign friends traveling in Thailand at the moment.

First I got text messages on my mobile phone.. messages on MSN.. email.. from everywhere I have friends there.. [Europe], [China], [India], US even Serbia. Asking if I was still OK. Then I realized that it must be looking really bad on the news in their countries. Since I live here, things look totally calm even closer to a celebration time. Having tanks running around doesn’t mean we’re having kind of civil war.

(AbsoluteInsider2 - Blog)

Note that AbsoluteInsider2 also has the largest collection of photos on Flickr, 187 photos, although the majority were from sources other than her own photos. The following dialog discloses the conversation that was happening in one of her photos. It is a photo of two secondary school students in school uniform posing with a soldier who was holding a gun. As response to other comments, her response indicates the strong nature of the Insider.

[Comment1]:
I don’t know this is we call “Coupe”....???? [I] am the one that agree with this strategy of army to solve in serious Thai politics situation now even it is not good image to foreigner...I saw the [newspaper] said it is the “Classic Coupe” What do you think? ;-)

AbsoluteInsider2:
As I always say to my non-Thai friends.
Personally I don’t like the coup. But this coup, it’s apparently the last choice. My friend in Denmark told me that their Minister called us “banana republic” :-P

But they never walked in our shoes, They never know.
There’re so many factors. Not just one word that’s called “Democracy” anyway, tanks are cool :-D haha

[Comment2]:
The minister of Denmark does not know Thailand, that is obvious. Banana republic is a term that is applied to countries who were colonized and exploited, and their products (bananas or coffee, etc) were exported by the companies who basically controlled the whole economy and politics of the country. And that was certainly never the case for Thailand. It is unfortunate that democracy had taken a detour, but I think that it will be only that, a detour, until things can get back on track.
Your pics are very interesting. I have recommended your site to friends who have asked me what is going on in Thailand.

AbsoluteInsider2:
“thanks a bunch! :-)

(AbsoluteInsider2 - Photo comments)

The perspective, similar to AbsoluteInsider2’s view that “they never walked in our shoes”, seems to be quite common among those who expressed themselves online. In a more intensive form, this kind of discussion also turned towards aggressive expressions. Below are the comments posted on a YouTube video showing a news clip captured from an international media.

[Comment1] (2006-09-20T16:41:44.000Z): The only COUP D’ETAT in the world that will save country

[Comment2] (2006-09-20T22:23:08.000Z): This report came from BBC, not CNN.

[Comment3] (2006-09-22T15:17:11.000Z): Most stupid and ridiculous phase I’ve ever heard. This happened in Thailand many times. And the ending is always the same, wait and see.

[Comment4] (2006-09-23T02:27:30.000Z): f*** those c*** who knows s*** and try to comment on such a stupid sentences..if you are not part of the country do not show your damn retard idea

(AbsoluteInsider24 - YouTube comment)

Another indication of the greater authority of absolute insiders is evident when outsiders reported that they heard about the coup from insiders. Outsiders had to rely on insiders whom they know to get information. Many absolute outsiders and insiders-out reported on their blogs and interviews that they heard about the coup from their contacts, who were in Thailand during that time. This phenomenon was obviously required by geographical limitations that made it impossible for those insiders who were outside of Thailand to get firsthand experience.

In addition to the geographical limitation, cultural differences, as pointed out in Chapter 5, also brought challenges to outsiders-in as well. For those whose Thai language
skills were not fluent or who had less knowledge about Thai politics, they had to rely on absolute insiders to learn about the situation and its place in Thai history.

For instance, OutsiderIn15, a businessman who was in Thailand during the coup, had a live phone interview with an international media organization during the coup night. AbsoluteOutsider13, recorded the interview and uploaded the video to YouTube. According to the interview, OutsiderIn15 had to rely on local friends to translate information for him.

News Anchor: Who are you, errr, who do you expect to give you the green light? What do you intend to do? Did you get any calls perhaps just to say that you don’t come in [to work] today? or how did you get your news?

OutsiderIn15: Ahh well. I have a good friend updating us, local Thai people. They’re just telling us what’s going on. Of course, they’re translating news for us and, you know, see if there is any work that can be resumed, then we will go back to work.

News Anchor: Are you concerned that this perhaps might be a long drawn process?

OutsiderIn15: No, I don’t think so because at the end of the day everybody involved just want the best for Thailand. So may be they might have different views and stuff. But at the end of the day nobody wants a long run conflict in Thailand. And I am pretty sure that political system and the people will be able to work it out.

News Anchor: And you said you’ve been talking to friends over this matter? What are the main concerns? And how are they looking at the situation? With the optimism? Or perhaps nodding their heads that, perhaps, this is not the right direction?

OutsiderIn15: Well people are pretty tight lipped about what’s going on. Over here people don’t want to say the wrong thing in case. They don’t know [about] this. I mean the local news channels have all been cut off. The only channel that was on once in a while was a spokesperson of royal family giving out news from the royal family and military. Other than that I’m not sure what people think but they just want to resolve as soon as possible.

(OutsiderIn15 - YouTube video transcription)

As shown above, besides the inability to obtain information from local media because of the language barrier, OutsiderIn15 was also told to stay at home. Therefore, he could
not access information regarding the coup from firsthand experience. Communicating with local friends was the only option.

Outsiders-in could learn about the situation from local television via visual comprehension only, and the lack of language comprehension could lead to misunderstandings. It is apparent that some of the information that OutsiderIn15 gave to the interviewer was incorrect. The spokespersons, who appeared on local television during that time, represented the military, not the royal family, though it is easy to see how an outsider might make this misinterpretation, given the background of pictures and video of the royal family.

The impression that OutsiderIn15 had when asked about local people’s perceptions, “people are pretty tight lipped”, is also noteworthy. The sense of uncertainty and confusion regarding the information that was available during that time may have been overwhelming. Not all absolute insiders had the same privilege to access first-hand information. With limited information from local media, being an absolute insider could also become a disadvantage. For those who did not go out to see the situation with their own eyes for any reason, local media was traditionally supposed to be a major source of information. However, since the media was controlled by the military during that time as mentioned in Chapter 4, being an absolute insider could be a weakness. They simply could not access information from the sources they normal used.

It is important to note that, during the early stage of the coup, a number of people in Thailand were critical of the limited role of local media.

Well the Thai TV channels had almost no information except the official coup announcements. There were soldiers at the TV stations so we were not getting much information.

...  

[I] was surprised that the Thai media were very accepting of the coup. There was very little criticism of the coup in the aftermath.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)
The quotes from the two outsiders’ perspectives above also indicated the notion of reticence among absolute insiders (i.e., local media and Thai people in general) which becomes another aspect of weakness in the Insider’s position of authority. Reticence is probably a part of the self-protective measures of insiders who may fear that they might be in trouble or that the situation might get worse if someone said anything negative about the coup, the military, the monarchy, or even Thai politics in general. In particular, even though there may be some speculations about the role of the monarchy during that time, it was quite noticeable that such discussions originated only from absolute outsiders and outsiders-in. Insiders or insiders-out seemed to be rather passive on this sensitive matter (e.g., by commenting on someone else’s blogs, or responding in web forums). As a result, some outsiders-in reported that they did not learn much about the situation from absolute insiders.

Additionally, it was apparent that some people had difficulties in accessing communication networks such as the Internet and cellular network. As discussed in Chapter 4, a number of people reported that they had a hard time connecting to the Internet or calling others. Regardless of the cause of the disruption, the fact that service and content providers were located in Thailand created a vulnerable point with respect to communication.

In terms of going out in the field, seeing soldiers and tanks in action brought live experience and a sense of involvement. However, relying on such firsthand experience might have limited the worldview of those who chose this approach to focus on a specific site, instead of the overall situation. Therefore, a few people whom I interviewed indicated that they did not learn much about the situation from going out and talking to people (including soldiers) on the site. Rather, they learned more from multitasking their information seeking activities obtaining information from multiple sources.

Overall, one can claim that the Insider was evidently strong during the early stage of the coup. People inside Thailand, both absolute insiders and outsiders-in, believed that the fact that they were able to access first-hand experience gave them privileges
in terms of accessing and sharing information. However, such a perspective also had limitations as discussed above. Therefore, a number of people in Thailand had to seek and share information with people outside Thailand.

6.2 The Outsider

Since the privilege of accessing information during the coup was limited for some insiders, the role of outsiders as sources of information as well as gatekeepers was important. Many people inside Thailand reported that they relied on outsiders to gain information about the coup.

The first source of the outsiders’ cognitive authority comes from the dissemination of information via personal contacts. It is apparent that there were those who were in Thailand (either absolute insiders and outsiders-in) who learned about the situation from those who were outside the country. An example can be drawn from my personal experience when I contacted my mother and friends in Thailand to ask about the situation in the middle of the coup night. My mother and some of my friends did not know about the situation. I had to inform them what was going on based on what I saw on American media and the Internet. AnonymousIn1, a blogger, who was in Thailand during that time, also learned about the situation from a friend in New York.

A cell phone call from a friend in New York City alerted me that there was “a revolution” taking place in Bangkok. I was in the lobby of my guesthouse checking my email at the time. I mentioned it to other guests – none of whom were as yet aware. We turned on BBC where Bush was addressing the UN.

(AnonymousIn1 - Blog)

OutsiderIn16 was also another non-Thai person who visited Thailand during that time apparently as a chaperone for some students. She got a call in the middle of the night from a student’s parent asking about the situation.

Safe and Sound...update on the military coup
I am safe and sound. Yes there is a military coup that took place last night in Bangkok, Thailand. The military is in control because they do not like the Prime Minister, Thaksin. The military are “better” than Thaksin. Many Thais do not like the PM, if I’m not mistaken there’s been corruption surrounding his re-election etc., I think even some dealings with Burma that haven’t been very good either. Check him out on the web.

So last night like at 1:20 am I was awakened from my peaceful slumber to my ringing cell phone. I slipped out of bed looked at the number on the phone and thought maybe one of the students parents or something were calling. It was [student]’s mother. She’d just seen on the news that a military coup had taken over power in Thailand that there were tanks in Bangkok and that Americans would be moved out of the country... boy was that a crazy call to get in the middle of the night... I was disoriented some too....ahhhh!

(OutsiderIn16 - Blog)

Even though this particular study defined small world membership geographically based on Thailand as a country, it is important to note that most of the coup movements happened in Bangkok and other major cities. Therefore, the strength of outsiders, in the sense of who was the first source, can also be examined from a local perspective, comparing Thai people who lived in Bangkok and its vicinity with those who lived in other areas. AbsoluteInsider16, for example, at the time, lived close by Channel 5, the TV station owned by the military, where the first sign of the coup occurred. She did not notice the irregularity until she got a call from her sister who lived hours away from Bangkok.

รู้ข่าวตอนกลางคืน ที่ทหารเข้าไปยึดช่อง 5
ถึง กำลังนอนดูหนังจากเกาหลี
แล้วพี่สาวโทรมาบอกว่าที่กรุงเทพมีอะไรไม่รู้ให้เปิดดูโทรทัศน์

... ใช่ อยู่ที่หอที่กรุงเทพ ที่สายอยู่ชอง

[I heard [about the coup] at night on the day that the military seized Channel 5.
I was laying and watching a Korean movie.
Then my older sister called telling me that there was something going on in Bangkok and to turn on the TV.

...
Yes, I was in my dormitory in Bangkok. My sister was in Chonburi [a province in the east of Thailand.]

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

In addition to personal contacts, the importance of the outsiders as information sources can be viewed from the role of international media during that time. As the operation of local news media was limited during that time, informants reported that they turned to international media such as CNN, BBC, and other international news agencies to follow the situation.

During the following days I was required by my organization to prepare reports on the unfolding situation in Thailand. While I relied on the Thai media to a certain extent, there was little substantive information available. Most of the information I gained was from the international media and observations from subsequent visits to coup-affected areas in the Government House area.

(OutsiderIn3 - Interview)

Even for those who worked in one of the free-to-air local TV stations, it is ironic that they had to gain information about Thailand from international media.

We flicked on CNN and watched their live broadcast. It [was] the only story on CNN and the BBC. “It’s funny,” I said. “The whole world is watching what is happening in Thailand. The only people who don’t know what’s going on are the Thais themselves!” It was true. The overseas media was soon cut, too. The whole world watched as the tanks rolled into the centre of our city. But we couldn’t find out anything.

(OutsiderIn1 - Blog)

Coding international media to smallworld was complicated as they can be considered both outsiders-in and absolute outsiders in this situation. Live broadcasting was taken as evidence of outsiders-in. However, it is important to recognize that the dissemination of information was based outside Thailand. Therefore, foreign editors and writers outside Thailand involved in the dissemination of information can also be considered as absolute outsiders.

In any case, the international media played a significant role in the online environment as the majority of the content about the coup that was disseminated online referred back
to the international media as sources of coup information. Many bloggers copied whole articles from the media and pasted them on their blogs. A number of Flickr users took photos of what was reported on television (e.g., CNN and BBC) and the Internet (New York Times’ homepage, for example) and uploaded them to their accounts.

Although some people reported that they relied on international media more than local media, it is important to point out that, during the early stage of the coup, the military controlled the broadcasting of the international media as well. In addition, the international media did not dedicate a great deal of time to report on the situation in Thailand. Therefore, absolute insiders and outsiders-in perceived that the information they received from international media was still limited.

BBC กับ CNN [เป็นเหลี่ยมวิริยะในช่วงนั้น] ค่ะ เพราะว่าสามารถให้ข้อมูลในขณะนั้นกับ หญิงได้ ถึงแม้ว่าจะไม่ 100% ก็ตาม

[BBC and CNN [were apparently the heroes during that time], because they could gave me information I wanted, although it was not 100%.]

(AbsoluteInsider4 - Interview)

BBC and CNN had some limited reports, but Thailand is not a big story.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

In addition to quantitative measures, it is noteworthy that people were also critical about the bias that might be disseminated by an international news outlet. It is apparent that trustworthiness became the biggest concern related to outsiders’ cognitive authority.

I have to correct myself: If you are talking about right after the coup, there WAS censorship of CNN/BBC World when stories that directly referring to Thaksin or showing were being censored.

... International TV stations were completely useless. Thailand is a hard country to understand and gets little air time on international news generally, so the reporting is incredibly superficial. As I noted before, the international networks seemed a bit befuddled since there was no strife or death toll to report and they really had to struggle to put events into perspective.
In terms of personal contact, the coup d’état in Thailand may be far from the interests of absolute outsiders. Since they could not learn about the situation from first-hand experience and did not have much background about Thailand, instead of considering the coup as a context that they were living in, they provided information from their own perspectives, which apparently did not match what the majority of people were looking for.

For many absolute outsiders, outsiders-in, and even some insiders-out, the coup became a reminder of particular persons and past experiences that they can relate to. A number of bloggers who were absolute outsiders wrote blog posts saying who they thought of after hearing about the coup.

First off, my thoughts and prayers go out to all my online friends in Thailand who have to experience this firsthand. I pray that events will continue to remain essentially peaceful and non-violent.

Of course, whenever the military of any country stages a coup to overthrow the current leader and government, that’s a very serious matter. I couldn’t even begin to imagine if a military coup like that would happen on American soil. I would definitely be traumatized and shellshocked, like many were when 9/11 occurred.

We just hope that anything like this anywhere will resolve itself by peaceful means?

Today’s has a very serious subject. A very good friend of mine lives in Bangkok (no, he doesn’t know John Mark Karr, but he did live and work very near him)...and in case you don’t know, there’s a military coup going on to overthrow the government. The Prime Minister is in the US at the UN, so it was ‘perfect’ timing for the coup.

I was at the gym yesterday around 10-10:30 when I saw the Breaking News on CNN. My thoughts immediately went to [AbsoluteOutsider15’s friend], and I prayed for his safety. It was a prayer I repeated through most of the day.

Since Bangkok is exactly 12 hours ahead of where I live, he was just going to bed as all this started. I finally got an email from him...here’s what he wrote.
This discussion gives me a flashback to the early sixties. I was a freshman in college and a Thai graduate student lived down the hall. One afternoon he showed my roommate and me a book of beautiful photos of his home country.

Leafing through the pages he got to a section near the end which had the official pictures of the country’s top leaders.

“This is the King,” he said, showing a splendid image that made us think of European royalty.

“And this is the President,” he continued. We concluded at this point that Thailand’s monarchy was something like those we already knew, figure-heads and all that.

“And this,” he said, turning another page, “is our dictator.”

We were amazed at the casual way that he showed us these pictures, never breaking that serene South Asian expression or showing any indication there was any problem moving from king to president to dictator...and having them all shown together in a single published book!

It was an early lesson in how, uh, carefully (?) democracy can be practiced in other parts of the world.

In addition, a number of absolute outsiders, instead of talking about the situation in Thailand, related themselves to the coup by speculating on the application of similar political measures to their own countries. When asked how the experience during the coup has related to building/changing his sense of self, OutsiderIn4 who wrote numerous blog posts and uploaded videos and photos online during that time, answered in an interview.

One thing is that it has given me a greater appreciation for the political system in the US. For all its faults (and there are many) I appreciate that there is at least relatively greater transparency in terms of where different politicians and groups get their support. I also appreciate that in the US, the military is fully subservient to the civilian authorities and is not an independent political actor.
From a collective point of view, AbsoluteOutsider17, a Filipino journalist, wrote a blog post about the coup in Thailand. A number of readers commented on how likely such an incident would happen in their own countries.

[Comment1] (September 20, 2006 11:33 pm): 
Is there one in the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] today capable of rousing the good men of the AFP to replicate Thai Army Commander in Chief’s coup d’état?
I don’t think so. Sadly, Esperon will have taken precautions.

[Comment2] (September 20, 2006 11:44 pm): 
It was interesting to watch and stay tuned with the events in Thailand? it IS an idea; it’s worth a try.

Isn’t it also interesting that Gloria had a meeting with her generals in Malacañan after the coup d’état in Thailand? Hee hee hee.

What IS weird is the military coming out on television expressing support for Gloria. I don’t think the other military in the region, or from other countries, are doing that-expressing support for their respective leaders. It goes to show that the possibility of the recent events in Thailand (coup d’etat) happening in the Philippines is high. I think it’s more like SOMEONE is very insecure and troubled by the recent events in Thailand.

One thing for sure is that the coup d’etat in Thailand killed the Cha-Cha. JdV should be slapped silly on the face for telling the Filipino people that Cha-Cha will prevent coups! Give it up, JdV. You’re a has-been trying so hard to be “in.” You’re era is jurassic!

[Comment2] (September 21, 2006 12:01 am): 
I was listening to Channel NewsAsia and it was interesting to note that Asian analysts that the Thai, Indonesian & Philippine military are the “same” in the sense that their respective miliatry relate to civilian politics. Asia is “interrelated” in the sense that, as an example, when Nepal had their peaceful protests, this influenced the protests in the Philippine. The events that recently happened in Thailand will probably influence other Asian countries, although this “new” type of coup d’etat may not happen immediately, THE COUNTRY where this would most-likely occur would be the Philippines.

(AbsoluteOutsider17 - Blog comments)

The theme of this conversation continued. By September 26, 2006, there were 232 comments in total on this particular blog post.

In addition to involving themselves by speculating about the relationship of the coup
to their own countries, some absolute outsiders also suggested their wishes to be part of it as they viewed the coup as a historic situation.

Thailand

Two days ago, the general of the Thai military took control of the country through a bloodless coup. Businesses and schools around Bangkok and the military leader shut down international news stations on television. He has promised to return power to the people as soon as possible. Thailand’s PM has been out of the country this entire time and will most likely step down. Should he return to Thailand, the military will arrest him under corruption charges. Already four members of his government have been detained and until a new election occurs, all political assemblies have been banned.

I wish I was living in Thailand right now. I look at pictures of people posing with next to tanks in downtown Bangkok and I can’t help but think how much cooler Thai politics are than American or Japanese politics. It sounds like the PM, Thaksin, had been pretty crooked, Based on what CNN had reported it seems like he was pretty crooked; but, what Asian government isn’t corrupt? And the fact that the military intervened with the nation’s political process makes it apparent that the country isn’t ready to adopt democracy. Furthermore, as the general arranges for more democratic processes he is suspending peoples’ fundamental rights until a sound democracy is created. I think it is extremely disappointing that the country couldn’t get rid of its leader through a natural process (which it was about to do in two months with another election).

(AbsoluteOutsider18 - Blog)

It is substantial to note that the information shared by outsiders, absolute outsiders in particular, tended to be opinionated rather than based on factual information. A blog post written by AbsoluteOutsider21 seems to a good example to highlight this point well.

For me, I thought this piece of news is interesting and refreshing. Don’t get on me too emotional if any Thais reading this. I do not have any heritage/bloodlines from Thailand. So I may be quite cold on saying Thaksin is greedy for power. In any case, I myself would like to see the removal of some ministers in my own country too... I think the whole lot of them will be awesome.

(AbsoluteOutsider21 - Blog)

The strength of absolute outsiders can be viewed from either the views of interpersonal or mass communication. It is noteworthy that the role of outsiders during the coup
was stronger when the information activities during that time were viewed as supportive and involving recreation and entertainment rather than fact finding and validation. The limitations of being either insiders and outsiders led to the conversion of smallworld membership – a member of a group was trying to or pretended to be a member of another group.

In summary, the roles of outsiders in information seeking and sharing during the early stage of the coup emerged due to the restricted flow of information inside Thailand. As an advantage, outsiders had a greater opportunity to see a broader perspective of the situation. This opportunity arose based on the fact that outsiders could access to information from multiple views.

However, the contributions of outsiders, in particular absolute outsiders, could be minimal as the content can be less relevant and less helpful. In addition, language and political knowledge could also be major challenges for outsiders to exchange information across worldviews.

6.3 Bridging the Two Worldviews

Insiders-out and outsiders-in, to some extent, seemed to hold a more privileged access to information during the early stage of the coup than other members of the small world. Being able to learn about the coup from first-hand experience as well as being a part of a historic moment were perceived as advantages of being in the country during that time. However, for outsiders-in, the privilege could be in understanding what foreigners, who were either inside or outside the country, would want to know.

 OutsiderIn2 has been a foreign resident in Thailand for more than ten years. During the interview, he highlighted his role in communicating to absolute outsiders who would not understand the context of Thailand well. Remember that he wrote a press release to his clients right after he heard about the coup; his greatest concern was about those who contacted him from outside the country:
Again this [press release] was written because all the non-Thais dealing with my business and who I knew personally called me with breathless questions: Will you have to evacuate? Is the media censored? Can you go out to get food? (So once again this is the general view of coups around the world that might not exactly fit the Thai situation.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

He also elaborated about the world view of absolute outsiders toward the situation that could be different from that of Thai people.

This is probably a good point for you: That non-Thais view a coup as a state of rebellion with chaos in the streets and an utter breakdown of services, fighting, etc. The reality is that Thai coups have tended to be (or seen as) one of the informal checks and balances for civilian governments attaining too much power or being seen as greedy. While they have often resulted in generals trying to install themselves as PMs and becoming greedy themselves, normally coups have meant little disruption to everyday life.

... This is quite different than most countries where coups are mainly military rebellions of lower level soldiers that result in fighting in the streets (and this situation did happen in Thailand during the failed “Young Turk” rebellions of the 1980s).

... Simply the reaction of Americans and British I know including my own Western perceptions: assuming that a coup means lines of communication are cut, media is censored, people are fighting, and that it is not safe to go out. From our experience seeing coups in Latin America and Africa, it appears that this is the nature of all coups.

(OutsiderIn2 - Interview)

However, when it comes to bridging the gap, a number of people appreciated his ability to translate Thai content into English. OutsiderIn4, another blogger, for example, said that OutsiderIn2’s website was one of the most helpful sources for the non-Thai like him. He noted during the interview that he had difficulties in learning about the coup situation from absolute insiders due to the language barrier.

I’m sure I visited CNN, BBC, Bangkok Post and The Nation as well. 2bangkok.com is a good consolidator as the editor reads Thai fluently so he’s able to translate
information from the Thai press as well as to include information from various
English-language sources.

... At that time my Thai was still pretty limited so I didn’t watch local broadcasts
very often because I didn’t understand them.

(OutsiderIn4 - Blog)

On the other side (i.e., having an information need), the ability to learn about
the situation on-site as well as to speak the same language of outsiders seems to be
appealing for absolute outsiders to reach out to those in Thailand. AbsoluteOutsider22,
an American blogger, wrote a call for readers who were in Thailand to update the
situation. Note that a blog that he contributed is a collaborative blog that focuses on
American politics. Therefore, it would be easy to assume that the readership of this
blog is based outside Thailand.

A day after the coup d’état in Thailand, the situation is becoming clearer
to distant observers. Local political observers are saying that the coup was
predictable and should have been seen by Thaksin, the PM of Thailand. I can’t
see how this is going to help Thailand in the short term but the problems of
corruption were widespread. During my own visits to Thailand I always heard
about corruption but it was not clear to me who was orchestrating it or where
the money flowed.

[A duplicate of news from other unidentified source]

Are there any [blog] readers in Thailand who have some local information?
It’s a shame to see this happen again so any feedback from the region would
be well appreciated.

(AbsoluteOutsider22 - Blog)

A call for local reporters (i.e., grassroots journalists or eye-witnesses) was apparently
common for international media (e.g., CNN and BBC) as well. They opened different
communication channels (e.g., email and web forum) for people who were in Thailand
during that time to submit photos, videos or comments.

For insiders-out, it is interesting to note that a number of Thai people abroad heard
about the coup from absolute outsiders: either spouses, friends, international news media, or even an American journalist in my case. However, when it comes to seeking and sharing information in order to make sense of the situation, there were still some senses of privilege in terms of having more Thai political knowledge among this group, even though they could not experience the situation with their own eyes.

Somebody even said it’s like we’re going backward to the undemocratic period—although this is the softest coup he have known. Nevertheless, Thai always be Thai. Thai people always be Thai people Thai norm always still be Thai norm. We have the way we are for a long time. We used to have a father-son system and it did well until the population are growth. the system doesn’t have any problem but we need to be changed because the number of people and the globalisation.

Why we need to care those others outside the country criticise us with the thing they have no idea. It’s enough for me to be graded by others and i think the country should not be graded by others as well. Luckily, until now i don’t hear anyone talking the negative side of Thai situation now, the media here is quite medium even though most pics are the tank :-(

(InsiderOut17 - Blog)

Besides the sense of attachment to the country, the fact that the geographical location prevented them from learning about the situation from first-hand experience also intensified the emotion to some insiders-out.

[There was a coup today. There is only one word that I could say: stress. I just realized how much I loved and missed Thailand because of a situation like this. I’m afraid I can’t go back.
Sigh...[her friend’s name]...I might have to settle down here. he..he Kidding.
hmmm...I hope the peace returns soon. Thailand. Yeah! Thaksin............ Get out!]
As seen above, there was still a sense of optimism, which brought humor to Insider-Out18’s blog post. On the other side, the sense of optimism seemingly led to passive information activities (e.g., waiting to hear from others), which appears to be common among absolute insiders. This characteristic can be seen among insiders-out also. It was apparent that AbsoluteOutsider19’s partner is a Thai abroad. The optimism of his partner seems to be somewhat confusing, but justified, to him.

**Up All Night**

I was up late last night, expecting some major announcements to come out of my company’s head office. At 2 AM, I checked the Blackberry and, sure enough, the first of what I expect will be several had arrived. Then I figured I’d do a quick news check and saw the info about the coup in Thailand. Ran back into the bedroom, told T what was going on, and switched on CNN. Back to the computer to look for more details. I thought she’d be concerned, worried about family and friends, all that kind of stuff. When I returned to the bedroom she had switched over from CNN to HBO and was watching one of the Chuckie movies. I didn’t ask, but I suspected this was due to a combination of her thinking that she and everyone she knows are so far down the line in Thai society that this would not impact them plus the general Thai “mai pen lai” [(no problem)] attitude.

Obviously insiders-out gained the absolute insider’s perspective by using their close relationships to absolute outsiders and their past experience with the country. A number of bloggers who were insiders-out noted that they contacted people in Thailand right after they heard about the coup. In addition, they also helped each other in terms of sharing information.

For instance, during the early stage of the coup, I observed what people discussed on a web forum on my personal blog. In Pantip.com, one of the most popular web forums in Thailand, there was a forum for Thais living abroad called Klaibann [far away from home]. An anonymous user posted a thread in the forum asking in the Thai language “What should we tell foreigners about the situation (in a constructive way)?”
Apparently, people participated in the thread proposed and discussed different ways to explain about the situation in English. Note that the forum members are Thai living abroad and Thai people who were planning to go abroad. Therefore the conversations in the thread were the exchange of opinions between absolute insiders and insiders-out.

The way in which different groups tried to bolster their status in order to gain attention from other groups is remarkable. Based on the perceived strength and accessory of the insiders’ views, a number of absolute outsiders and outsiders-in tried to increase the perceived trustworthiness of their information by explaining their relationships with Thailand and Thai people. Some said they have studied about Thailand for many years, married a Thai person, or just got back from a trip to Thailand. Some went there a number of years ago. Some even were in the country during the bloodshed of the 1992 coup d’état. These disclosures are usually stated at the beginning of blog posts, photo captions, and video descriptions. For example, AbsoluteOutsider20 recorded a video of himself discussing the situation in Thailand and uploaded it to YouTube. The following is the beginning of his monologue in the video.

[Thai music in the background]

I know that might seem a little of out of place because I’m obviously not Thai. but several years ago I dated a very nice Thai girl who was over here in US to get her MBA. and we were very serious about each other, for a while. and she flew back east and she met my parents. and I took off a couple of week and went and flew to Thailand so that I can meet her family. and it was very nice experience. let me tell you that country is a very beautiful country. and the people over there for the most part are so very nice. They’re called the land of smile. Now I know that it’s just the slogan from the tourism department, but it really is true that people are extremely friendly.

That’s not to say that they are perfect people. They are things about their culture that I don’t particularly care for. I’m not a big fan of their unwritten class system. I don’t particularly like the fact that they talk bad about people behind their backs quite a bit. And the level of corruption that they accept as a way of life particularly is saddening to me. But that’s not to say that my country, United States is any example of how to be. I understand that every country every culture has good and bad people and I understand that good people make mistakes and sometimes do bad things. But on the whole I
found Thailand, the Thai people, to be extraordinarily friendly and warm and caring and all around with great people. I think that’s why it’s particularly saddening to me so much. The reason of the event with the coup by the army.

I understand that the Thai history is filled with coup....

(AbsoluteOutsider20 - Video transcript)

The goal of conversion was to reach out and get attention from audiences outside of their own small world. The conversion from outsiders, either absolute outsiders or outsiders-in, to insiders was mainly to seek acceptance of the information they provided (i.e., why you should listen to me). For insiders, the purpose of conversion to outsiders was ultimately to change the perception of outsiders, which apparently is beyond the acceptance of information. As mentioned in Chapter 4, insiders were worried that the information provided among outsiders could damage the image of the country, which ultimately would affect economic development. Therefore, a number of bloggers created or delivered information in a form that outsiders would be able to understand (e.g., writing in English, participating in an international community).

Some absolute insiders were not only trying to be just outsiders, but insiders-out. AbsoluteInsider15, one of the founders of a collaborative live blog during the coup, apparently perceived that Thai abroad would be eager to learn about the coup. So it inspired him to create the blog.

[The outcome of this effort was that the blog was highlighted on Blogspot and heavily cited by foreign media. [My co-founder] told me that ‘(the experience of) making a website (blognone) for a couple of years could not compare to this blog (19sep) that were maintained for a couple of days’]

At the beginning, we wanted it to be a center point of information about the
coup. I simulated myself to be like a Thai living abroad who would be more furious to get information than those who lived in Thailand. Later on, 19sep was transformed to become a speaker to the world to let them know that everything was fine in Thailand, no need to be panic.]

(AbsoluteInsider15 - Blog)

AbsoluteInsider15’s attempt to feel like an outsider made his blog more accessible and well received by a wider community, including absolute outsiders. The conversion was apparently essential during the coup in terms of bridging the gap of information and knowledge since it increased the usefulness of information. At the time, it also diminished the cultural gaps between the two different worldviews.

As we can see, the conversion occurred in both groups, insiders and outsiders. Insiders wanted to reach out audiences and clarify the situation to outsiders. At the same time, they also tried to understand and made assumption about the culture of outsiders. For outsiders, they primarily sought acception from insiders. They wanted to be heard rather than access to first-hand information. Additionally, it is apparent that, some of converted members during that time appeared to be community leaders during that time.

This chapter applies the notion of Insider and Outsider to the explanation of information behavior during the coup in Thailand. By observing cognitive authority, it is evident that those who were in Thailand hold a perception that they had advantages from an opportunity to access first hand information about the situation. However, since the insiders world was longer functioning due to the disruption of traditional information, they began to seek information from outside. In addition, being insiders during that time also had limitation since they could not view the situation from broader perspective. That was seemingly when the role of outsiders was emerging in terms of accessing and sharing information that was not available to insiders. However, the message/content shared and accessed by outsiders may be irrelevant to many others, due to the lack of sense of collective attachment (e.g., nationalism).

However, the gaps between these two different worldviews were apparently bridged by
those who were called as converted members (i.e., insiders as outsiders and outsiders as insiders). People who were converted members during that time included, for instance, foreigners in Thailand and Thai people living abroad. This group of people seemed to have an advantage from understanding both different worldviews. Their role as middle men was essential in terms of connecting insiders to outside as well as outreaching people from around the world.

After learning about the three primary concerns of this phenomenon, the next chapter will summarize this research study and discuss the theoretical framework as well as methodological critiques. These reflective perspectives later inform recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 7

Conclusion and Discussion

7.1 Summary of Research Findings

During the early stage of the 2006 coup d’etat in Thailand, the traditional flow of information was interrupted through various measures (such as censoring mainstream media, monitoring networks, and banning political gathering). From my observation as an insider-out during that time as well as from the additional evidence gathered during this study, the way in which people sought and shared information deviated from the pattern of their everyday information behavior/practice. The goal of this research has been to explore and explain information behavior during political crisis. In addition, it aims to examine the interactions between insiders and outsiders in such a context.

This study developed as an extension to our understanding of information poverty and information behavior outside of everyday life and/or a routine context. By using the 2006 coup d’etat as an extreme situational case, the basic assumption of this study is that a socio-political crisis will have an impact on information seeking and sharing behavior. Given that those who were affected by the coup may be considered as information poor, Chatman’s notion of small world and her theory of life in the round (1999) were used as a fundamental framework of this study. Chatman argued that, in
the context of information poverty, people set social boundaries that represent a collective set of beliefs of members of the group. Note that the primary assumptions of information poverty suggest the substantial roles of privileged access to information, social class, secrecy, deception, trustworthiness, risk, self-protective behaviors, and relevance of information in an everyday life context. In addition, since the coup impacted various groups, Merton’s Insider and Outsider conception (1972) was adopted to focus data analysis on the interactions among these various groups of people (i.e., social types in Chatman’s small world framework). Emerging in the context of the sociology of knowledge, the Insider suggests that group members have privileged access to certain types of information or knowledge, while non-members do not. The Outsider presents the opposite belief. However, in the social realm, there are conversions from one status to another – as when normal information flows and communication channels are cut off during political upheaval or natural disaster – that would help in facilitating a transition in worldview.

Peripheral constructs that impacted the conceptual framework of this study also come from the discussion of political information behavior and collective behavior/action (in particular focusing on rumor as a sense making process during crisis). Political information behavior introduces the influence of psychological determinants (e.g., political knowledge, political efficacy) on the acceptance and avoidance of information. The concept of collective behavior/action is used to explain people’s reactions to critical incidents. The current literature indicates roles for social norms, emotion, and rumors as contributors to the associated sense making process when people had to deal with uncertainty, self-encouragement, and relationship enhancement in critical moments.

Qualitative methods were applied during this exploratory study using document analysis as a major source of data. Semi-structured interviews were used to complement and validate findings from document analysis. The document analysis covers various types of public online documents (i.e., blogs, photos, videos, and Wikipedia entries) that are related to the coup in Thailand and that were created and/or uploaded during
September 19 to September 23, 2006. There were 814 photos from 110 Flickr accounts, 990 blog posts from 775 bloggers, and 112 videos from 61 YouTube accounts representing documentary data of this sort. The document analysis also covered two Wikipedia entries about the coup (one in Thai and another one in English). For the English entry (2006 Thai coup d’État), there were 978 entry revisions and 376 discussion (talk) revisions. For the Thai article, there were 293 revisions and 61 revisions for the discussion page during the first four days of the coup. The accounts (representing the notion of case/doer/user) that were most visible, as they were commented, viewed, ranked during that period among the various documentary sources, were invited for semi-structured interviews. There were 8 interview informants recruited on the basis of the document analysis. Additionally, there were 4 informants recruited using the snowball sampling technique, referred by those who were recruited through the document analysis. Sense-Making Methodology’s Micro-Moment Timeline interview approach and question roster were used to frame the online interviews – both synchronous (i.e., Instant Messaging, Voice over Internet Protocol) and asynchronous (i.e., Email). The data analysis was comprised of two approaches: content analysis and open coding. The majority of data was analyzed using inductive coding (open and thematic coding) based on a grounded theory approach. Deductive coding was used for pre-defined codes, which are codes that are related to the small world membership. An intercoder reliability test was conducted using Scott’s Pi to evaluate the reliability of the codes. As a result, the Scott’s Pi value is 0.763 which is acceptable for exploratory research studies (the acceptable level of reliability is 0.70). The data analysis was based on three primary research questions.

1. How did people seek and share information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’État?

The way in which people sought and shared information during the disruptive moment of the 2006 coup can be explained into two parts. The first part deals with how people first heard about the coup and their first reactions. Most people heard about the coup from word of mouth through various kinds of communication channels (e.g.,
face-to-face, phone, and the Internet). They also learned about the coup from their first-hand experience either on the street or seeing what was happening on TV screens. In addition, some news outlets, in particular subscription-only and international stations, were able to broadcast. Therefore, some people heard about the coup using particular instances of the mass media.

After first hearing about the coup, most people seemed to try to make sense of the situation. Firstly, they focused on obstacles or gaps that seemed critical to them. During the early stage of the coup, people were trying to understand media censorship, network access difficulties, and cultural barriers (e.g., language and lack of political knowledge). Interestingly, a number of people perceived that the censorship of local media was justifiable for political reasons, even though they disagreed with the censorship. Since there were rumors that the various communication networks might be shut down, people thought about how they would live without such network access. Without knowing the actual causes, people who experienced difficulties in accessing networks speculated about what might have caused such disruptions. In addition, during the early stage of the coup, most official information was released only in the Thai language. Therefore, people who did not know the Thai language or were not familiar with Thai politics had a greater challenge in understanding the situation.

Secondly, people tried to make sense of the situation. Like other critical situations, many people reported that they were seeking and sharing information for fact finding and verification in order to reduce their high level of uncertainty. It was apparent that people exchanged information and rumors regarding their collective sense of the situation (i.e., risks or threats to the country) and personal interests (e.g., related to their everyday life context). In addition, considering the coup as an historical event, people explicitly expressed that they would like to be part of it. This perspective led them to be active

---

1 the military and the ousted prime minister used the media as a battle field. Therefore, in this case, witnessing the contest of political power on air was different than watching and listening to traditional media reports.
in terms of seeking and sharing information. In response to cultural barriers, people, especially those in Thailand, tried to clarify the situation with those who they thought had incorrect perceptions. In addition, translating information to other languages was another way to cross cultural barriers. Furthermore, there was a sense of recreation and entertainment attached to the way people sought and shared information during that period (e.g., using parody and being sarcastic).

Lastly, it is also important to note that people were multitasking and used multiple sources during that time. There was apparently no source or channel that was dominant during that time. People went outside to the places where there were appearances of the military and they took photos of and/or with them. They communicated back to their contacts and the general public informing them about what they were seeing. At the same time, they also followed what was reported by the mainstream media, realizing that the information provided was limited. Lastly, they used various Internet applications to disseminate information, not only to their contacts, but also the public. The roles of telephone, live blogging and instant messaging seemed to be the most prominent during that time.

2. What were the factors influencing the way people sought and shared information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’État?

There are three groups of factors that seemingly influenced information behavior during the disruptive moment of the 2006 coup, including individual characteristics, collective constructs, and contextual factors.

The first group deals with individual characteristics, focusing on cognitive, affective, and physical elements. For affective constructs, the political situation itself led to a mix of positive and negative feelings for numerous people. In addition, the disruption of the traditional flow of information brought a sense of uncertainty and frustration. However, it was apparent that a sense of excitement played an important role in influencing information seeking and stopping behavior during the early stage of the coup. In terms of the cognitive construct, the coup also reminded people of particular related points
of life in the past (e.g., the 1991 coup d’État or the financial crisis in 1995). This view also influenced people’s reactions to the coup. Moreover, the roles people perceived themselves playing during the coup seems to be influential (e.g., bloggers as grassroots journalist). Physical limitations also played an important role in terms of how and when people decided to stop following the situation. It is noteworthy that the coup began during the late evening in Thailand. A number of people who were in Thailand during that time reported that they stayed up all night to follow the situation and had to give up because of tiredness.

Another set of factors relates to the role of collective activities during the coup. It was apparent, due to the limitations of the mainstream media, that people helped each other to be efficient and effective in terms of seeking and sharing information in the disruptive moment. Some groups set or adjusted social norms for members to work collaboratively and achieve particular information sharing-oriented goals or tasks (e.g., editing Wikipedia entries). In addition, people collaboratively sought and shared information in order to maintain their personal security. Finally, people got encouragement from others, whether or not they knew each other, to lead the discussions and become the hub of information.

The last group of factors involves the context of the coup, which highlights the temporal element of the situation. Time was meaningful in two ways: 1) the timing of the coup actions as the story was unfolding during the night of September 19, 2006 and 2) time in relation to everyday life activities (e.g., the upcoming exam period). In addition, the importance of place was highlighted during the discussions of insiders and outsiders.

3. What were the roles of insiders/outsiders in terms of seeking and sharing information during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’État?

This study operationalizes the notion of Insider and Outsider as based on nationality and geographical location. As a result, there are four types of small world membership,
including absolute insiders, absolute outsiders, insiders-out, and outsiders-in. It is important to note that there was still a strong form of the Insider – being a witness to a historic situation gave absolute insiders and outsiders-in privileged access to certain types of information. At the same time, those who had access to firsthand experience assumed that outsiders might hold an inaccurate perception of the situation (e.g., the situation had turned into violence, etc.). This perception seemingly emerged in response to what they heard from international media or their contacts outside Thailand, but their lack of true insiders’ knowledge led them to interpret what they heard incorrectly. Thus, language and political knowledge made the role of absolute insiders stronger than outsiders-in in this situation. While being on the scene was an advantage, it was also a weakness, in that seeing soldiers and tanks intensified the sense of uncertainty and confusion among insiders. Being unable to access information from certain channels or sources, insiders had to make sense of the situation from what they saw or heard; this often led to a lack of comprehension of the whole situation.

This weakness of the Insiders became the strength of the Outsider as many insiders reported that they had to rely on international news outlets and their contacts outside of Thailand to learn about the coup. Nevertheless, people were still critical of the quantity and quality of information disseminated by the international media, especially outsiders. In addition, as the coup d’état in Thailand may be far from the interests of many absolute outsiders, or even some insiders-out and some outsiders-in, content from these groups apparently did not contribute much to the story of the coup (e.g., what the coup reminded them of in terms of the application of similar political measures to their own countries).

Nevertheless, it is important to take notice of a broader understanding of the coup claimed by outsiders-in and insiders-out. Outsiders-in claimed that they understood the absolute outsiders’ background, while they were also able to access information on the coup through their firsthand experience. Insiders-out had a strong role in bridging gaps through communication. In addition, insiders-out claimed additional authority through
their knowledge about Thailand (from being Thai natives). There was also an implicit conversion among absolute insiders and absolute outsiders, primarily in order to reach out to a wider group of audiences. For some absolute insiders, they thought about what insiders-out would want to know during that time. In order to clarify the situation to non-Thai audiences, absolute insiders also tried to understand the absolute outsiders’ perception of the coup. Absolute outsiders were also trying to convince others that they had, to some extent, relationships to Thailand or Thai people in order to gain acceptance for the information that they shared.

7.2 Information Behavior during Political Crisis

As mentioned in the introduction, the contribution of this study is twofold. Firstly, it extends the discussion of information poverty beyond everyday life and/or routine contexts. Secondly, it extends the understanding of conditions/factors influencing the interactions between insiders and outsiders, especially when the insiders step outside of their own world to obtain information. It is apparent that information behavior during the 2006 coup can be explained by linking Chatman’s small world framework and the notion of collective behavior to the context of the coup in Thailand.

7.2.1 Censorship as Derivative Form of Information Poverty

The notion of information poverty often assumes that material poverty is a leading determinant of behavior. However, as Chatman (1992) found out, the major barrier of the information poor is self-imposed, to avoid social risks that emerge from the lack of sense of control outside their social milieu. Therefore, the notion of small world represents “a world in which everyday happenings occur with some degree of predictability” (Chatman, 2000, p.3).

Nonetheless, the situation during the early stage of the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand presents a challenge to the traditional concept of information poverty as the coup
represents the interruption of predictability in everyday life. However, Britz's (2004) extensive definition and interpretation of information poverty covers the state of information needs of those who face a disruptive moment such as violations of freedom of speech, human rights, and intellectual property (Haider & Bawden, 2006). He broadens the scope of the notion by adopting a multidimensional approach to information access.

Information poverty is that situation in which individuals and communities, within a given context, do not have the requisite skill, abilities, or material means to obtain efficient access to information, interpret it and apply it appropriately. It is further characterized by a lack of essential information and a poorly developed information infrastructure. (p.194)

Although skills and materials are necessary to access information, the findings from this study show a prominent role of information and communication infrastructure in the context of information poverty. The control of information and communication facilities is a top priority in a successful coup d’état (Luttwak, 1979). The difficulties of communication network access without knowing the causes of interrupted access brought a sense of uncertainty and frustration. The effect of such measures led people to experience information 'concussions' in which they desperately needed information about the current state of affairs and its impacts on their own lives, where information infrastructure is suddenly unavailable. The information rich in a normal situation became information poor when regular sources and channels were no longer available or valid as Dervin (1980) describes the phenomenon as ceiling effect.

There are some important distinctions between the notion of information poverty in an everyday life context and in the context of socio-political crisis. In particular, information poverty during crisis seems to be an adaptive behavior, considering that it occurs when information behavior in the everyday context was interrupted. Nevertheless, the findings from this study confirm the applicability of Chatman’s notions of information poverty and small world outside an everyday context.

Ultimately, the data of this study confirms the existence of a world of distrust. People definitely constructed their worldviews by comparing what they already knew
or saw to what was learned by others. In order to construct their worldviews, they at least had to acknowledge the existence of contrasting or conflicting perspectives. In the case of the coup, many local Thai people heard about the coup from international news outlets or from their contacts outside the country. Therefore, they formed the idea that people, who could not be an eye witness or were not a native Thai, would hold opposite perceptions – this view was at least in part corroborated by the nature of international news reports of the Thai coup.

Information poverty, in an everyday life context, deals with self-protective measures in order to maintain a predictability in a world of distrust. This characteristic of information poverty seemed to be common among coup leaders and politicians during that time. The way in which they tried to suppress, control, and monopolize the normal flow of information (i.e., using mass media as a battle group) seems to be an exemplar of how they utilized behaviors in an everyday life context in this crisis situation. In addition, the evidence of self-censorship (e.g., closure of web forums) and privacy protection (e.g., using anonymity) in various online communities also supports the perspective of information poverty presented in Chatman’s small world work; surviving in a world of distrust (Chatman, 2000, p.7) but perhaps in a more intensive form. Interestingly enough, applying this interpretation to the coup situation, sharing information in order to clarify the situation to outsiders was also one of the self-protective mechanisms of insiders as they were afraid that the wrong/opposite perception of the situation could jeopardize the image of the country.

Even though the predictability of routine activities was interrupted by the coup, there was still a strong sense of trustworthiness. During the foot and mouth outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001, Hagar (2005) argued that the issue of trustworthiness especially in the online environment becomes crucial, but may be overlooked. Similar to Hagar’s findings, during the 2006 coup in Thailand, the practices of fact finding were not just to gain as much information as possible. To gain cognitive clarity (Festinger et al., 1948), the sense-making process during that time also included people helping each other
validate information. In other words, it was not only a matter of quantity, but of quality of information received as evaluated by, particularly, the trustworthiness of information sources. For example, many bloggers reported the sources of rumors/information they posted or cited. This also became a norm among Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia users.

The dynamic of trustworthiness may interact with people’s perceptions toward their lives ‘in the round’, whether or not they are functioning as desired. Note that one of the most interesting findings from this study concerns the way people variably perceived the coup situation. From a conventional perspective, a coup d’état is a non-democratic measure to alter a political system representing an unhealthy situation. However, the 2006 coup in Thailand has also been viewed as non-threatening and non-risky to many people. This can be explained by understanding that a political situation may be interpreted as situational or an expression of rhetoric (Vatz, 1999). In addition, according to Buckingham (2000), some people perceive that politics is irrelevant to their lives. For those people, politics is not a part of everyday life. They were still able to fit the coup situation in their everyday life routines that were still functioning without the availability of broadcast channels. Therefore, many people resumed the normal behavior during that time.

7.2.2 Collective Information Behavior during the Coup

Not only was ‘life in the round’ maintained by many as much as possible, there was strong evidence of how people collectively created and negotiated social norms during the disruptive situation of the 2006 coup. The analysis of social norms can be based on the fundamental assumptions of collective behavior/action. Observing both implicit and explicit expression, people’s behavior during that time can be explained in various dimensions of collective behavior/action. Instead of a strong sense of irrationality and panic as described in Le Bon’s notion of crowds, people in Thailand apparently dealt with the constraints from the suppression of the traditional flow of information by going
to their existing virtual groups. As adaptive responses (Turner & Killian, 1987), members of local online communities discussed the effects of the new prescriptive rules with positive sanctions (reinforcing the conformity) introduced by the coup (e.g., whether or not the rule of the coup can be applied to the virtual community).

When an existing group was not functioning, they formed a new group (e.g., chat room, or collaborative blogging) within a trusted network. Although recruitment was selective, it does not mean that they had strong ties. Some did not know each other, but recognized the existence of each other. Within a newly emerging group, they discussed and created specific social rules in order achieve particular goals (e.g., writing blogs, developing Wikipedia entries, crosschecking information).

Another noteworthy aspect of collective behavior during the coup was in emotion or public mood (Rahn, 2000), as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. From a traditional perspective, Schramm (1965) argued that various negative expressions of feeling such as sorrow, sadness, shame, anger, fear, and anxiety are common during critical events. During the 2006 coup in Thailand, people reported that they had mixed feelings. However, it was the sense of excitement that seemed to lead people to choose particular behaviors during that time.

Based on the dimensional theory of emotions, Lang (1995) suggested that this sense of excitement contains two connotations: high arousal and positive valence. The connotation of excitement is conventionally attached to pleasure or recreation (e.g., Fulton, 2005). This interpretation of excitement can also be valid in this coup phenomenon as many people referred to their experience as fun, as a response to the way they helped each other in searching and sharing information during the disruptive moment of the coup. This dimension of excitement may also be explained by the idea of information encountering (e.g., Erdelez, 1996) or incidental information acquisition (Heinström, 2006). Especially for active doers or “super-encounterers”, the sense of excitement may also come from the perception that the information they found was useful and important.
The presence of the super-encounterers was an especially interesting finding in this study. These respondents appeared to share a common excitement for information encountering. They believed in creating situations conducive to information encountering and in that way finding useful and important information.

(Érdelez, 1996, p. 412)

Besides the positive connotation, the sense of excitement deals with arousal that leads to an intensified and energetic emotional response. Chatman, in her early work on information poverty (1991), discusses a sense of excitement as one of the leading constructs in explaining the information behavior of the information poor.

Poor people seek immediate gratification because of behavioral characteristics not found in other classes. That is, because they are more inclined toward quick arousal, pleasure, or excitement, and they engage in activities that result in instantaneous pay-offs.

(Chatman, 1991, p. 442)

In the context of the coup, the intensity of arousal could be primarily derived from the situation of the coup. The overwhelming notion of “being a part of an historic moment” seems to be prominent during that time as discussed in Chapter 4.

The sense of excitement is nothing new when it comes to the study of information behavior or information system development. It is almost conventional knowledge, both academically and professionally, that excitement is a major construct for increasing the attractiveness of an information system as well as users’ satisfaction with it. This may be another area of research in the role of excitement in information behavior (for instance, a comprehensive study of the role of excitement in various contexts of information behavior, developing a measure to evaluate the sense of excitement in information and system interaction, etc.).

7.2.3 Reconsidering the Outsider in a Disruptive Context

The roles of social types in Chatman’s small world framework and social roles in collective behavior are remarkable. Chatman (1999, p. 209) pointed out that, “if the typecasting
is fundamental to the definition of a role, that role becomes the ideal representation of public expression behavior.” Aligned with Chatman’s social types, J. Perry and Pugh (1978, p.23) asserted that social roles make life easier by increasing the predictability of behavior and serving as a mechanism for coordinating behavior. However, at the fundamental level, both concepts deal with social classification.

In this study, Merton’s Insider and Outsider was used to observe the interaction among different groups of people based on nationality and geographical location at the time of the coup. The Insider has already been discussed when examining information behavior during a crisis in the terms of an everyday life context. However, in addition to the strength of the Insider derived from everyday life experience, the phenomenon during the disruptive moment of the 2006 coup in Thailand apparently highlights the enriched life of the outsiders.

The findings indicate that absolute insiders (i.e., local Thai people) and outsiders-in (i.e., foreigners in Thailand) had to at least partially rely on absolute outsiders (i.e., foreigners outside Thailand) and insiders-out (i.e., Thais living abroad) to obtain information about what was happening in Thailand. In this picture, the worldview of insiders was limited, especially by the control of mainstream media by the coup leaders and the difficulties of accessing communication networks. However, insiders still could (and did) contact information sources from outside Thailand, unlike other situations (e.g., natural disaster) where none of the information infrastructure was functioning.

In addition, the findings from this study confirmed the conditions that motivated members of a small world to seek information from outsiders. The three conditions include:

1. information is perceived as critical
2. there is a collective expectation that the information is relevant, and
3. a perception exists that the life lived in the round is no longer functioning.
The findings from this study show that people’s behaviors were variable, partly based on how they perceived whether the coup situation was critical to them, judged by the level of threats and risks to the sense of collectivity (i.e., Thailand as a nation and the political system) and their everyday life routines. People tried to make sense of obstacles or gaps that they were facing (e.g., media censorship, difficulties of network access, language, etc.). When the perceived threat of the situation is high and the obstacles and gaps are out of control, given that in this case available information could not satisfy insiders’ needs, insiders stepped outside their small world. Right after I signed on to instant messenger, for instance, many of my Thai friends in the contact list asked me to turn on the television and report back what I saw on the TV screen. Apparently I was not the only one who noticed this phenomenon, as examined in Chapter 4.

However, the way insiders connect to outsiders is still through the chain of trust, even though they do not know each other, as it is evident from, for instance, the recruitment of members into new web forums and chat rooms and the way insiders raised questions about the quality and quantity of information disseminated from international media.

The Outsider seems to be applicable to many other disruptive moments beyond political situations. On the day of the Virginia Tech massacre in 2006, for example, MSNBC’s Newsweek (“Panic, in real time”, 2007) reported on its website messages exchanged between a student (blueiyed) who apparently was locked down in a building near Norris Hall where the shootings happened and her brother (chiknman).

blueiyed (10:37:35 AM): ug?
chiknman (10:37:10 AM): ey joke
chiknman (10:37:24 AM): day haha
chiknman (10:37:28 AM): snow day*
blueiyed (10:39:25 AM): i’m on lockdown under a desk right now..there’s been shootings on campus and 1 person has been killed and another injured

chiknman (10:38:54 AM): wtf?
chiknman (10:38:57 AM): at vt?
blueiyed (10:40:33 AM): yeh put cnn on
chiknman (10:39:07 AM): what the s***
blueiyed (10:40:51 AM): watch the news and tell me what’s going on
chiknman (10:39:44 AM): they don't have it on there
chiknman (10:39:48 AM): I'll check other stations
blueiyed (10:42:17 AM): ok it's on the news tho I promise b/c drew was telling me then he had to go to class
chiknman (10:41:18 AM): ya it's on fox news
chiknman (10:41:19 AM): 1 sec
blueiyed (10:42:58 AM): ok
chiknman (10:42:19 AM): moms here
chiknman (10:42:36 AM): hey
blueiyed (10:44:06 AM): ok I tried calling her
chiknman (10:42:40 AM): what's going on now
blueiyed (10:44:25 AM): we can hear cops outside talking on loud phones
chiknman (10:43:00 AM): there's a gunman who shot someone
chiknman (10:43:05 AM): they said he's near the dorms
blueiyed (10:44:44 AM): apparently an RA was shot and 2 people jumped from the building and one person walked out bloody of burress

chiknman (10:43:34 AM): that's the building they are showing
chiknman (10:43:42 AM): reporter in pritcher hall
blueiyed (10:45:21 AM): no it happened in west aj
chiknman (10:44:08 AM): hang on
chiknman (10:44:57 AM): west ambler johnston hall
blueiyed (10:46:31 AM): yeh
chiknman (10:45:01 AM): is he still there?
blueiyed (10:46:39 AM): yeh apparently
chiknman (10:49:13 AM): are you class or at home
blueiyed (10:51:00 AM): I'm in class under a desk
chiknman (10:49:36 AM): oh dear god
blueiyed (10:51:13 AM): yeh
chiknman (10:49:47 AM): what happened
blueiyed (10:51:17 AM): my thoughts exactly
blueiyed (10:51:40 AM): we heard the cops outside on their mega phones so we turned the lights off and drew the blinds and go on the floor

chiknman (10:50:33 AM): how did you know what was going on and to get down
blueiyed (10:52:22 AM): b/c we were getting e-mails from the university
chiknman (10:52:08 AM): oh
blueiyed (10:53:55 AM): OMG
blueiyed (10:54:14 AM): I just found out the 1st shooting happened at 7:15 we didn't get a damn e-mail until 9:30!!
chiknman (10:52:49 AM): is the teacher taking charge or is someone in communication w/ the outside
blueiyed (10:54:44 AM): yeh he's been calling and getting updates and our doors are locked, lights off and blinds shit

214
chiknman (10:54:49 AM): you mean shut or is shit a Fruedian slip ;-)  
chiknman (10:55:01 AM): what class is this?  
chiknman (10:55:16 AM): and you thought h.s. taught you lessons  
blueiyed (10:57:47 AM): shut shoot...media writing we’re all like writing articles about it..yeh seriously like this is such terrible press for us i can’t believ this

chiknman (11:00:09 AM): don’t worry about the press. Worry about surviving  
blueiyed (11:02:05 AM): unconfirmed report from campus spokesperson: 2 people have been apprehended, 2 people killed  
chiknman (11:01:00 AM): are they killed students?  
chiknman (11:01:11 AM): who are the apprehended  
blueiyed (11:02:43 AM): yeh i htink so i’m not sure  
blueiyed (11:02:46 AM): i don’t know  
chiknman (11:01:26 AM): do i have the ability to log on to vt website and get the news?  
chiknman (11:01:37 AM): what’s the site  
blueiyed (11:03:24 AM): this is what i’m hearing in class  
blueiyed (11:04:25 AM): 5-6 gunshots outside my building =-O  
chiknman (11:03:13 AM): right now - shooting?  
blueiyed (11:06:13 AM): like 5 mins ago  
blueiyed (11:06:45 AM): 7-8 casualties  
chiknman (11:09:31 AM): are they students?  
chiknman (11:10:59 AM): they said there were 2 shootings  
chiknman (11:11:09 AM): one at 7:15 and the other at 10 ish  
chiknman (11:11:19 AM): they said they have one person in custody  
blueiyed (11:13:43 AM): apprently they have 2 in custudyu  
blueiyed (11:15:08 AM): we just got this e-mail  
blueiyed (11:15:09 AM): In addition to an earlier shooting today in West Ambler Johnston, there has been a multiple shooting with multiple victims in Norris Hall.

[The conversation is interrupted while the three exchange news forwarded from friends]

Another example can be drawn from the recent political turmoil in Thailand. Note that the political situation after the coup has not totally settled down. After the coup, Thailand had had four prime ministers in three years by different legislative measures. Until December 2009, Apisit Vejjajiva, a leader of Thaksin’s opposition party, was elected from the lower house to become Thailand 27th prime minister. When Apisit began his term, a group of people, including those who support Thaksin and those who oppose
the military coup as well as those who disagree with the monarchy system, formed an alliance named “United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship” (UDD), also known as “Red Shirt” to protest against Apisit’s government. During May 2010, the peaceful demonstration turned into violence. There was fighting and shooting between soldiers and protesters after a state of emergency was announced. On May 19, 2010, the situation turned into a riot after the leaders of the Red Shirt group announced the end of the demonstration. Apparently the protesters were not satisfied with the announcement. They went around the central part of Bangkok and other cities and set major buildings, such as department stores, government offices, and media stations, on fire. The following is the transcript of the interview given by a news anchor who was inside the Maleenon building, one of the target buildings.

The anchor said that he went to the building at 11 PM because he had a report in the evening and had to follow it. When the Red Shirt group came to find them at Thonburi, he and his colleagues were in the air conditioning. They didn’t think it would be so serious, because they had been asking for fair elections. Some of them had even brought letters to present, but there was nothing they could do. He thought they should continue watching the situation until his business was over. At 9 PM, the fire started, and everyone said they had to go down to escape. When they got to the ground floor, smoke started coming, and everyone said they should go up to the roof. As soon as they got up, the smoke started coming, and they went back down to the same floor. They were still confused about where they should go. The situation was getting serious because they could see nothing outside due to the smoke. They could only hear from the phone. The fire was burning, there were people dead, and there was chaos. They were still looking for their friends from every floor and were very stressed. They didn’t want to talk about the situation because they didn’t want people to be too worried. They avoided talking about it and thanked everyone for their support. The phone calls were coming in, and it gave them more courage.

216
[I was there from the beginning to the end (laugh). I went to work around 11AM because I had a how around 5PM. When we checked the news, we already knew that Red Shirt group, in Klong Toei area, would come to us at Channel 3. At that time, I was helping my friends preparing news to be reported during noon. We began to see them coming closer but did not think it was going to be this serious. Actually they came to us quite often. Nonetheless, they just yelled most of the time. Sometimes, they sent a representative to give use letters. Our staff went to see them and there was nothing. So we continued working this time. I also had to be on air for Rueng Den Yen Nee [Evening highlight news]. So I did not go anywhere. I wanted to see the situation first what it would be like.

Until my friends ran upstairs and told us that everyone had to go downstairs because there was a fire. I went down with everyone. However, when I went to the ground(G) floor, the smoke was getting in. Everyone then told that the news anchors should go back upstairs because it was not sure whether or not the protesters were outside of the building. At the end, no one could escape because the smoke was getting in. We went back upstairs [to our office]. After getting back, everyone was frustrated which floor we should go. At first, we spread out. At the end, we were together in one spot in the building.

Now the situation turned into a panic situation because we could not see the situation in the outside with our eyes. We had to receive the news from phone only. Now [the building] was already on fire. Now there was death. Now this and that happened. The news was way over [exaggerated]. Someone even told us that they brought bombs and car wheels into particular floor. We then lived with panic of information we received. In that minutes we did not talked about the situation because we did not to create more panic. We then changed the topics to others. I have to thank you everyone who worried about us. There were loads of phone calls. We felt supported (laugh). And brothers and sisters (media) helped each other. My friends from every channels called and asked how they could help. We were impressed with your help so much.]

(“Kai Pasit”…, 2010)

The way he had to rely on phone calls from outsiders and the way they stopped talking about the situation among insiders was remarkable. This kind of phenomenon seems to be found in many other critical incidents (e.g., September 9/11, the riot in Iran in June 2009).

These examples indicated that, during the critical moment, the sense of conflict or competition between insiders and outsiders was apparently no longer functioning. Instead the chain of trust seemingly secured the sense of collaboration – working together
to achieve particular goals and support. In addition, the example from 2006 also highlights the role of converted members, as discussed in Chapter 6, who helped break the boundaries of their small world to allow their transition in worldview to be more effective.

In order to apply this framework to other contexts, one must be aware of the interpretation of small world membership in this study. Clearly people did not construct their small world solely on nationality and geographical location. These two characteristics were chosen for this study because they were two of the most evident manifestations during that time. In addition, they are relatively objective determinants that carry important subjective constructs. Nationality is a proxy for the sense of attachment and belonging and, partly, political knowledge. Geographical location represents the ability to gain firsthand experience. Using these two factors as proxies increased the operationalizability of the framework.

Nevertheless, in reality, Chatman (1999) argued that social type is rather subjective and never neutral. The complexity of the structure of worldview can also be derived from understanding that one person usually belongs to multiple social groups and maintains more than one social role at one time (e.g., Killian, 1952). Therefore, this two-dimensional classification is considered only as a part of social structure in reality. For instance, I found that there are substantial distinctions between foreigners who had lived in Thailand for quite some time and who were there for a short visit. The length of time in Thailand seems to be somewhat associated with political knowledge about Thai politics. As a result, people who have more knowledge about Thai politics and/or local culture tend to be more willing to share information with others. Therefore, the length of time spent in Thailand, for foreigners, seems to be another proxy that should be observed for future research. In addition, readers should also be aware of variation in the granularity of the classification scheme. For example, based on geographical location, this study distinguishes insiders from outsiders in the broadest sense: whether they were inside or outside Thailand during the time. However, the findings suggest that there were differences in worldviews created and maintained by people inside and
outside Bangkok and its vicinity, since most of the coup activities were operated around Bangkok and vicinity.

Another challenge is that one could argue that a virtual environment can be considered as a distinct dimension of space as opposed to physical space. The premise of online discussion is based on the creation and maintenance of collectivity regardless of the geographical stances of group members. However, it is noteworthy that, in a political situation such as the 2006 coup, the sense of physical boundaries (e.g., Thailand) seemed stronger than the sense of online community. People attempted to communicate to others on the other side of the world.

7.3 Limitations and Challenges of Research Methods

There is no doubt that this qualitative research study is a product of subjective observation. Providing some critiques of the research method should help readers to be aware of the applicability of the findings of this research study as well as the methods used. The limitations and challenges, which emerged from the research design and methods are discussed below based on the two data collection methods: document analysis and interviews.

7.3.1 Document Analysis

The first issue to be noted in terms of document analysis concerns the selection of documents. Although specific keywords and document creation dates were applied to search engines, the availability of documents retrieved was also based on the performance of search engines (e.g., crawlers and algorithms). Google Blog search, Flickr, and YouTube were selected as popular retrieving tools, representing popular collections during the time of the coup. However, a number of researchers (e.g., Thelwall & Hasler, 2007;
Escher, 2008) point to the imperfect performance of different blog search engines, including Google Blog Search. There are, therefore, some issues regarding the reliability of Google Blog Search that are related to this.

It is not possible, as yet, to precisely estimate the number of blogs in the blogosphere. Although Google is currently one of the most popular search engines, the way that Google crawlers identify blogs is not disclosed. For example, how does Google crawler differentiate blogs from general websites? What are the characteristics of blogs that are taken into account during the web crawl? Apparently, in addition to content hosted by blog service providers (e.g., Wordpress.com, Blogger.com, or Windows Live Spaces), Google Blog Search also retrieves content that was hosted on independent servers (i.e., servers with their own domain names). Therefore, the search results apparently include content from mainstream media websites, web forums, and static web pages that use a blog platform as a content management system. Additionally, for Thai blog content, perhaps because Google uses the popularity of website (domain-level) and particular pages as parts of its Page Rank algorithms (Brin & Page, 1998; Bihun et al., 2007), there were not many representations of content hosted by local blog services (e.g., Exteen.com or Pantip’s Bloggang). In other words, content hosted by international providers seemed to get higher page ranks.

In terms of search results, one should be aware of the imperfection of search results presented by Google Blog search. As Escher (2008) and Thelwall and Hasler (2007) found out, the estimates of the number of search results changes every time the page is refreshed, regardless of whether or not new queries were entered. This issue also occurred for Flickr search results. In order to solve the inconsistency caused by variations in search engine operation, I decided to use feeds (i.e., RSS/Atom) to store search results before uploading to NVivo. However, it is apparent that using feeds provided by Google Blog Search contributed to another major challenge to the operation of this study. Google Blog Search limits the number of results to 100 items per feed. Therefore, I had to divide the search results into 100 item intervals. Apparently the crawler of Google Blog
Search, as well as queries, are updated every few days. Every time the queries were updated, Google Blog Search appended the results to the old feeds. As a result, time and resources were largely used for managing redundant items.

Another challenge of document analysis was from the perspective of historic documents. Note that the data collection was not begun until two years after the coup. Therefore, the persistence of content is very important in this stream of research. For example, the study on bloggers’ perceptions and behaviors regarding digital preservation (Hank, Choemprayong, & Sheble, 2007) indicated that nearly all bloggers make decisions to keep, edit, and delete blog posts after they publish them.

During the data collection, I also found that there were some blog posts that could not be aggregated (for example, broken links, age verification requirement, password protected, and invited list only). As a result, the readers of this research study must be aware of the dynamic of digital content in general in considering the data collection approach and research findings.

Besides blogs, photos, videos, and Wikipedia entries, I originally intended to include web forums as part of the document analysis. Most of the local web forums did not archive their content extensively. Therefore, I decided to not include web forums in the data collection of this study.

Another view of the dynamic of digital content as an impact on this study was evident from the search results of Flickr and YouTube. I found that the results of Flickr and YouTube yielded photos and videos where the creation and upload date are different. Interestingly enough, it took years for some people to upload such content. There were still people uploading photos taken on the coup date when I began collecting data. The last upload date stamp of photo in this collection was November 28, 2009, over three years after the coup. This challenge of aggregating digital content, in the context of the life cycle of personal information management, highlights the role of creation and dissemination of information in relation to time.

Additionally, while NVivo facilitates various types of media and open coding based
on the grounded theory approach, there are some technical issues that need to be addressed as they provided a challenge for this research study. NVivo does not support the management of large amounts of data. By appending original documents into a project file, the original NVivo project file of this study was very large, including thousands of PDF files, hundreds of photos and videos, which requires a large amount of resources and time to support the operation of the application. Therefore, I decided to separate the project file into five files based on document types - blog posts, photos, videos, Wikipedia, and interviews. Although, the separation helped the efficiency of file management, coding data in multiple files was challenging in that codes needed to be synchronized among the five working files.

Furthermore, the way in which NVivo deals with multimedia is also worth mentioning. Since NVivo does not support HTML documents, I decided to download blog posts in PDF format in order to preserve the context of the blog. Even though it is a proprietary format, it is a standard document file on the Web. Although NVivo supports textual PDF documents, the rendition of PDF documents with image and table, which are the majority of blog posts, is problematic. Note that using different PDF converters gives different results when importing documents to NVivo. Adobe PDF Professional, doPDF, and ConvertPDF were compared with a sample of blog content in PDF format. Apparently, ConvertPDF gave the best results for this study because it includes Optical Character Recognition (OCR) texts and still preserves the look and feel of blogs. Interestingly, NVivo has problems importing PDF documents generated from Adobe PDF Professional. At the same time, doPDF removes some features (e.g., high contrast image, URL link) in order to reduce file size, which decreases the richness of context of the document.

The coding of non-textual data in NVivo was also challenging. The process of coding itself was not too complicated. However, it is quite ambitious to make sense of a code when related data points are collocated. NVivo stores and displays the selection of visual and (non-transcribed) audio data in numerical values of space, which is meaningless to
normal users. Therefore, the researcher had to go back and forth to each data point to make sense of a code.

### 7.3.2 Interviews

The challenge of the interviews begins with the low response rate. Eight informants agreed to participate, out of 40 invitations selected from document selection. This seems to be a common issue among contemporary researchers. However, for this particular study, there are some observations that need to be examined.

A number of people who declined the invitation said in the response message that it was because they perceived themselves as outsiders. Some mentioned that s/he is not a politician or journalist or did not have a relationship with the “very insiders”. Some said that they were not in Thailand at the time. Even though I tried to explain the study, the perception that this study is far from their experience and interests (i.e., like politics is not a part of my daily life) seems to be strong.

In addition, the snowball technique was also not a big success. Informants recruited from document analysis were quite reluctant to provide names of references. There seemed to be two motivations related to the reluctance to refer to other persons. The first motivation seemingly comes from the informants themselves. A number of informants reported that they wanted to preserve their privacy. Some did not want to bother their family members or friends. Secondly, another motivation came from the instructions for the recruitment. The criteria for the snowball sampling technique was to find people who were different from the informants (e.g., Internet vs. non-Internet users, different age groups, geographical location, etc.). This criterion was too complicated. Therefore, a number of informants, when asked to provide the name of a reference, said that they did not know anybody to refer to right away.

In addition, this study focuses on the actions/behaviors that occurred during the 2006 coup in Thailand, which happened about two years prior to the beginning of data
collection. Although field observation has been conducted and was possible in some studies of critical situations (e.g., Kraus et al., 1975), such observation requires planning and a large amount of resources. Therefore, the interviews heavily relied on the informants’ memories. Even though the Sense-Making Methodology was selected to increase the richness of the data, the way in which people recall their memories could potentially become sources of error (Watt, 2007). Such errors can be discussed in terms of, for example, severe memory bias (Schacter, 2001), recency bias (Festinger, 1957; Gilbert, 2006), hindsight bias (Hoffrage, Hertwig, & Gigerenzer, 2000), and the tendency “to fill in details of partly remembered events, substituting stock footage like cultural norms or role perceptions for actual events and people” (Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld, & Sailer, 1984; Gilbert, 2006). A number of people had responded and had to correct their own answers during the interview. Most of them stated that they did not remember the coup events clearly. For example, when asked about the first exposure to the news about the coup, AnonymousOut2 thought that he did not remember the event clearly. However, when asked specifically what he did during that time, the explanation indicated that he remembered the situation in detail.

I remember it vividly. I was outside of Thailand at the time.

... I was watching a DVD of the West Wing. I was just about to turn off the computer, but went to check my e-mail.

(AnonymousOut2 - Interview)

For AbsoluteInsider16, she reportedly was confused when I asked her about when she heard from her colleagues that the next day was a holiday. She was afraid that what she said would mix with her recent memory of the insurgency in Bangkok.

AbsoluteInsider16: จำไม่ได้อะ
AbsoluteInsider16: กลัวว่าจะสับสนกับคนเสื้อแดงอ่ะ
t
Interviewer: ทำไม
Interviewer: สับสนยังไง
AbsoluteInsider16: ก็จาไดว่ามันมีเหตุการณ์เสื้อแดงที่ยืดหยุ่นด้วยอ่ะ [ที่ทำให้ด้วยเหตุจากงาน]
[AbsoluteInsider16: I don’t remember.
AbsoluteInsider16: I am afraid that I am confused with the event with the
Red Shirt group.
Interviewer: Why?
Interviewer: How does it confuse you?
AbsoluteInsider16: I remember that Red Shirt seize the streets [in Bangkok.
And I did not have to go to work the next day.]

(AbsoluteInsider16 - Interview)

As a result, the complication from this source of error apparently directly affects the
usability of the Micro-Moment Timeline interview technique. When asking informants
to describe a particular activity in detail, a lot of them said they did not remember.

Nevertheless, the retrospective aspect of this research also has a brighter side.
Maclean (1993) learned from the field research of the Mann Gulch crisis that “we don’t
remember as exactly the desperate moments when our lives are in the balance as we re-
member the moments after when the balance has tipped in our favor” (p.212). Therefore,
gaining information some time later could yield a more accurate reconstruction of an
event than recalling the memory during the event or right after the event ended (Weick,
1993). During the interviews, a number of respondents, when asked about subjective
constructs (such as feelings or impressions), instead of telling what they were feeling
(e.g., sad), gave answers about their current state (see AbsoluteInsider5’s response in
Chapter 5).

The second limitation/challenge comes from the nature of the mediated interview
mode, especially in an online environment. Compared to face-to-face communication,
the lack of co-location in mediated communication means the investigator cannot ef-
ectively observe the non-verbal cues and other realities outside the interview context
(see also J. Miller & Glassner, 2004). In addition, mediated communication heavily
relies on the reliability of the medium. Thus, the effectiveness and efficiency of an in-
terview is dependent on the medium. Hinds and Kiesler (1999) observed two features
of the medium effect on social processes: bandwidth (“reflects the number of different
cues or signals that a medium transmits”) and synchrony (“the potential to exchange information rapidly and adjust messages in response to signals from one’s partner”; Straus, Miles, & Levesque, 2001, p.364). Therefore, the interview may potentially be influenced by the delay or loss of communication. Although allowing informants to select interview modes at their preference and convenience increased participation and the richness of the data, this approach raises the cost for the researcher in terms of recording and transcription. The variety of interview data formats (e.g., textual, audio, visual data) requires more effort for cleaning data. Nonetheless, in comparison in this particular study, it seems that audio modes of communication (i.e., phone) seem to provide more richness of data as the interviewer can probe the questions, followed by email and instant messaging. This may reflect an implication of using instant messenger for a research interview. It was apparent that peoples’ responses were shorter than responses provided by other means. Probably people perceived instant messaging as a means of quick communication. Therefore, it is suggested that instant messaging may be most useful for structured and quick interviews.

7.4 Implications for Future Research and Practice

Concerning the methodological critiques above, the experience of conducting this study informs a few recommendations for future research. To improve this kind of study in the future, it is important to realize the grand challenges emerging from the use of a political crisis in the past as a case study. Firstly, since this kind of study is time-sensitive, one should be aware of the dynamic of the existence of information and knowledge. However, there is no concrete instruction in terms of how soon should the data collection begin in order to preserve the freshness of data that happens in the past. Therefore, it could be another venue of social research to improve the validity and reliability of historic data.

In addition, in order to strengthen this kind of research, quantitative measures such as the social network approach could also help to validate the findings from this study,
particularly in terms of confirming the strength of the Outsider in disruptive situations.

However, when conducting a research study on insiders and outsiders, one should keep in mind the complexity of the construction of one's worldview and that the structure of small worlds is multidimensional. Therefore, a measurement of the validity of the development of the pre-defined structure of a small world (e.g., nationality and geographical location in this study) might be considered to improve the quality of the analysis. In addition, researchers may want to focus on a particular group of people in a community (e.g., participants of a web forum). Analyzing data for this particular study was somewhat overwhelming due to the large amount of data. By narrowing down to a particular group, the effectiveness of the data analysis process could be improved (i.e., manageable dataset).

There are a couple lines of research that can grow out of this particular study. The first research stream is to extend the understanding of the Outsider in various disruptive contexts. This study shed some light on the role of outsiders and converted members in order to bridge the gaps and help insiders to continue the functioning of their small world (i.e., outsider as a life saver). However, as mentioned at the beginning of this study, the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand is only one single case focusing on a particular political crisis. There are other contexts where this reversion of small world might be applicable; in particular different types of censorship. For example, it is interesting to see how people get away with Internet censorship in different countries. Even from a traditional perspective, the way in which people obtain banned books or media may also indicate the strength of the Outsiders.

Another area that is not in the focus of this study but worth further studying is looking at information behavior through the lens of personal information management. This study confirms the substantial role of small devices (e.g., digital camera, camcorder, cell phone) to help people seek and share information during the coup. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore the information life cycle in a disruptive context. For example, how do people improvise devices and techniques to help them get the
information they want?

The last area that is noteworthy is the application of the Outsider in designing emergency information systems. In a current and conventional emergency system, the emergency system is designed based on the assumption that, when there is an emergency happening to someone, his/her contacts are the receivers of information. However, the strength of outsiders in disruptive moments can be applied in the transition of information (i.e., outsiders as source of information). People who are not at risk can save lives of those who are. The implication of the Outsider in this context is worth further development.

Finally, it was observed in Chapter 4 that the coding scheme may be comparable to the metaphor of Sense Making metatheory (e.g., Dervin, 1999b). It is important to note this research study adopted Sense Making metathoery as data collection guideline, particularly for the interview, in order to enhance the richness of the data set. However, the data analysis primarily relied on grounded theory’s open coding technique, without consulting any particular pre-define coding scheme. The coding scheme was solely derived from the data set. The goal of this study is to validate Chatman’s small world and Merton’s notion of Insider and Outsider. Therefore, it is recommended that this would be an opportunity for a future work to validate the applicability of Sense Making metatheory to information seeking and sharing behavior in a disruptive context.
Appendix A: Fact Sheet

English version

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Information about a Research Study

IRB Study # 09-1398       Consent Form Version Date: 09-17-2009

Title of Study: The Transition of Worldview: Collective Information Behavior during Thailand 2006 Coup D’tat

Principal Investigator: Songphan Choemprayong

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Information and Library Science

Faculty Advisor: Paul Solomon (psolomon@mailbox.sc.edu); Barbara B. Moran (moran@ils.unc.edu)

Study Contact telephone number: +1 919-338-2985

Study Contact email: songphan.coup06@gmail.com

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may decline, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand
this information so that you can make an informed choice about participating in this research study. You may ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

We want to understand how and why people sought, shared, and used information during the September 19, 2006 coup d’etat in Thailand.

**How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 40 people in this research study.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

It depends on your choice of interview mode. Overall, the interview sessions for the real-time mode, such as instant messenger (e.g., MSN Live messenger, AIM, Yahoo messenger, Google Talk) and private chat (e.g., Skype), will take about 30 minutes to one (1) hour each. It is very likely that you will be asked to be interviewed more than once (up to 3-4 sessions). The interview(s) should be done within a week timeframe.

For an asynchronous mode, such as email, Hi5, Facebook, or YouTube message, the conversations would take about a week or two to complete. Length of time will depend upon the length of your answer and your skill level (i.e., to use computer, software, and telephone). It could take from about 15 minutes to an hour for one session. Over a week’s time, there may be up to 3-4 sessions depending upon your responses. You would be expected to respond to the question within a day or two after receiving the question. If more time is needed, you will need to contact the researcher.

Please note that you may choose to stop either type of the interview at any time.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

The researcher will ask you questions about your experience during the early stage of the
September 19 coup in 2006 (roughly from September 19 - 23, 2006). The researcher will take notes about what you say. You will be asked to voluntarily provide your personal documents (e.g., diary/journal entries, blog posts, chat transaction logs) created during that time. In addition, you will be asked to identify one or more of your contacts during the early period of the coup. In order to seek a more diverse perspective, we would like to contact those who are different from you (for example, those who are different in age, location, occupation, or those who are non-Internet users, or who have different political points of view).

You do not have to answer any questions or provide any information that you do not wish to disclose, for any reason.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your participation is important to help us understand the way people seek, share, and use information during socio-political crises, but you may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

If you are interested in learning about the results of this study, we are happy to provide you with an electronic copy of the findings of this study when the study ends.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**
Since political distress could be a sensitive topic, if you experience emotional distress during the interview, please tell the researcher immediately. You may request extra time to think about the topic or even decline to answer any questions.

In addition, there may be some risks for expressing contrary perspectives to the current government, which could put you in legal jeopardy, for instance lse majesty law. The major concern is from the communication modes that may be monitored by a third party. Therefore, please consider the interview mode in which you feel most secure in
that it will not be monitored or wiretapped. However, you may change the means of communication at anytime, if you feel uncomfortable during the interview.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

I will create a pseudonym for you, not related to your identity, and use it on the transcripts and the notes from the interview. No one will know what you said. Your contact information will be stored separately and destroyed after the study ends.

Prior to the interview, the interviewer will ask a permission to quote your responses and contents in the public and personal documents in the research report. Please note that someone may be able to identify you from reading your responses and the contents in the document, though we will take steps to minimize this possibility. The researcher will not publish your responses or contents in the document if you do not grant permission.

Moreover, you are advised to delete any related interview documents (e.g., emails, history, transaction logs) after the interview is done. This is to protect your privacy at the highest level. Please contact the researcher if you need instructions on how to do so.
Will you receive anything for being in this study?
While there is no compensation available for your participation, your participation is very important to us.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
You will need access to a reliable communication medium such as the Internet and telephone. Also, there might be additional costs from making a copy of personal documents (e.g., photocopying and scanning).

Can you share information about this study to others?
Due to the controlled selection method, please do not forward the invitation to others. If you receive the invitation from someone other than the researcher named above, please disregard the invitation. In addition, to preserving the privacy and integrity of this study, please do not share data used in this study, such as email conversations or chat history logs, with anyone else until the study ends. Please contact the researcher if you would like to share the data with others.

In general, you can talk to others briefly about this study. However, it is highly suggested that you not reveal your participation of this study until this study ends, which is around May 2010.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me at songphan.coup06@gmail.com or +1 919-338-2985. You can also contact me or my advisor at the email addresses listed at the beginning of this form.
What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at +1 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Thank you for helping me with this study.
มหาวิทยาลัยนอร์ฟOKIEนา แชเปลฮิลล์

ขอสมัครเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัย

หมายเลข IRB # 09-0398 แบบฟอร์มใบยินยอมรุ่นที่: 09-17-2009

ชื่อเรื่อง: การเปลี่ยนผ่านของมุมมองต่อโลก: พฤติกรรมสารสนเทศในช่วงการปฏิวัติ พ.ศ. 2549 ในประเทศไทย

ผู้วิจัย: ทรงพันธ์ เจิมประยงค์

ภาควิชาของ UNC-Chapel Hill: โรงเรียนสารสนเทศศาสตร์และบรรณารักษศาสตร์

อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา: Paul Solomon (psolomon@mailbox.sc.edu); Barbara B. Moran (moran@ils.unc.edu)

หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ที่ใช้ติดต่อในการศึกษาวิจัย: +1 919-338-2985

อีเมลที่ใช้ติดต่อในการศึกษาวิจัย: songphan.coup06@gmail.com

คุณควรทราบอะไรบางในเบื้องต้นเกี่ยวกับการวิจัย

คุณจะสังเกตุหากท่านให้เข้าร่วมในการศึกษาวิจัย การเข้าร่วมเป็นไปด้วยความสมัครใจ คุณอาจปฏิเสธที่จะเข้าร่วม หรือคุณอาจยกเลิกความยินยอมที่จะเข้าร่วมในการศึกษาด้วยเหตุผลใด ๆ ก็ตาม โดยปราศจากข้อผูกมัดใด ๆ

งานศึกษาวิจัยออกแบบมาเพื่อสร้างองค์ความรู้ใหม่ ข้อมูลใหม่เหล่านี้อาจนำไปใช้ในอนาคต คุณอาจไม่ได้รับผลประโยชน์โดยตรงจากการเข้าร่วมในงานวิจัย นอกจากนี้ยังอาจมีความเสี่ยงในการเข้าร่วมให้ข้อมูลในงานวิจัยอีกด้วย

รายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยประกอบอยู่ด้านล่างนี้ เป็นสิ่งที่สำคัญที่คุณต้องเข้าใจข้อมูลเหล่านี้ เพื่อที่คุณสามารถตัดสินใจโดยรอบเกี่ยวกับการเข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยนี้ คุณควรสอบถามเกี่ยวกับที่ปรากฏช่องข้างด้าน หากมีคำถาม ที่เกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยนี้ได้ทุกเมื่อ

จุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คืออะไร
นักวิจัยต้องการที่จะทำความเข้าใจว่า อะไรทำให้คนตัดสินใจจะค้นหา แลกเปลี่ยน และใช้ข้อมูลสารสนเทศในช่วงการปฏิวัติเมื่อวันที่ 19 กันยายน 2549 ในประเทศไทย และอย่างไร

มีผู้เข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยทั้งหมด
ถ้าคุณต้องการให้ข้อมูลในงานวิจัยนี้ คุณจะเป็นหนึ่งในประมาณ 40 คน

คุณจะต้องใช้เวลาเท่าไร
ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการสัมภาษณ์ที่คุณต้องการ โดยทั่วไป การสัมภาษณ์ที่ผู้สัมภาษณ์และผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์จะต้องคุยพร้อมกัน เช่น instant messenger (IM ได้แก่ MSN Live messenger, AIM, Yahoo messenger, Google Talk) หรือ สนทนาสดสำหรับ (เช่น Skype) จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 30 นาทีถึงหนึ่งชั่วโมงต่อหนึ่งช่วงการสัมภาษณ์ และถ้าเป็นไปได้ สูงสุดที่คุณจะต้องให้ข้อมูลมากกว่าหนึ่งครั้ง (อาจถึง 3 – 4 ครั้ง) และคาดว่าการสัมภาษณ์สิ้นสุดภายในหนึ่งสัปดาห์

สำหรับการสื่อสารที่ไม่ได้เกิดขึ้นในเวลาเดียวกัน (asynchronous) เช่น อีเมล์ Hi5 Facebook หรือ YouTube message การสัมภาษณ์อาจใช้เวลาประมาณ 1-2 สัปดาห์ที่จะเสร็จสิ้น การใช้เวลาตอบคำถามแต่ละข้อก็ขึ้นอยู่กับความยาวของคำถามและทักษะในการใช้เครื่องมือของคุณ คุณอาจใช้เวลาตอบคำถามตั้งแต่ 15 นาทีถึง 1 ชั่วโมง ในช่วงเวลา 1 สัปดาห์ อาจมีการสอบถาม 3-4 ครั้ง ขึ้นอยู่กับการตอบคำถามของคุณ โดยปกติคุณควรจะตอบคำถามภายใน 1 -2 วันหลังจากที่ได้รับคำถาม หากคุณต้องการเวลาเพิ่มเติม กรุณาแจ้งให้ทราบ

คุณสามารถเลือกที่จะหยุดการสัมภาษณ์ได้ทุกช่วงเวลาที่ต้องการได้ทุกเมื่อ

จะเกิดอะไรขึ้นหากคุณเลือกที่จะเข้าร่วมในงานวิจัย?
นักวิจัยจะถามคุณเกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ในช่วงแรกของการปฏิวัติ 19 กันยายน 2549 (โดยประมาณตั้งแต่วันที่ 19 – 23 กันยายน 2549) และจะต่อจากนั้นเกี่ยวกับบันทึกที่คุณพูด คุณจะถูกถามเกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ที่คุณสัมผัสได้ในเวลาที่คุณสัมผัสกับคุณต้องการที่จะเรียนรู้ คุณจะถูกถามเกี่ยวกับคุณต้องการที่จะได้รับความรู้ในเรื่องนี้ คุณจะถูกถามเกี่ยวกับคุณต้องการที่จะได้รับความรู้ในเรื่องนี้ คุณจะถูกถามเกี่ยวกับคุณต้องการที่จะได้รับความรู้ในเรื่องนี้

คุณไม่จำเป็นต้องตอบคำถามหรือเปิดเผยข้อมูลใด ๆ ที่คุณไม่ต้องการ ด้วยเหตุผลใด ๆ ก็ตาม
อะไรคือผลประโยชน์ที่คุณจะได้รับจากการเข้าร่วมงานวิจัย งานวิจัยถูกออกแบบมาเพื่อให้เป็นประโยชน์ต่อส่วนรวมด้วยการสร้างองค์ความรู้ใหม่ การเข้าร่วมของคุณ มีความสำคัญที่จะทำให้เรามีการที่มุ่งมั่นค้นหา, แลกเปลี่ยนและใช้สารสนเทศในช่วงวิกฤตการณ์ทางสังคมและ การเมือง อย่างไรก็ตามคุณอาจจะไม่ได้รับประโยชน์ส่วนตัวจากการเข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยนี้ หากคุณสนใจที่จะทราบเกี่ยวกับผลการวิจัย เรายินดีที่จะมอบสำเนาอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ของผลการศึกษาเมื่องานวิจัยเป็นอันเสร็จสิ้น

มีความเสี่ยงหรือความไม่สะดวกสบายอะไรบ้างที่จะเกิดขึ้นจากการเข้าร่วมงานวิจัย เนื่องจากความรุนแรงทางทหารอาจเป็นประเด็นที่เป็นปัญหา หากคุณมีข้อขัดข้องทางทหารหรือทางการการเมือง อันเนื่องมาจากความสมัครภักดี กรุณาแจ้งเราโดยทันที คุณสามารถร้องขอความเพิ่ม หากต้องการหรือปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามใด ๆ นอกจากนี้อาจมีความเสี่ยงจากการแสดงออกที่ขัดแย้งกับระบบการปกครองหรือข้อกฎหมายในปัจจุบัน เช่น กฎหมายที่มีพระธรรมเทศนา หรือเป็นการขัดแย้งกับความปลอดภัยในช่วงทางการเสียหาย ดังนั้น โปรดพิจารณาข้อตกลงที่คุณต้องการ ไปแล้ว อย่างไรก็ตามคุณสามารถเปลี่ยนช่องทางการสื่อสาร หากคุณรู้สึกไม่ปลอดภัยหลังจากที่เริ่มการสัมภาษณ์ไปแล้ว เพื่อความปลอดภัยของคุณเอง คุณอาจจะลบเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสัมภาษณ์ทั้งหมด ไม่ว่าจะเป็นอีเมล, ประวัติการสนทนา, หลักการสัมภาษณ์เสริมสิ้น กรณีใดกรณีหนึ่ง นักวิจัยจะขออนุญาตจากคุณในการสัมภาษณ์กับคุณ อนุญาตให้คุณลบเอกสาร การสัมภาษณ์ดังกล่าว

ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของคุณจะถูกปกป้องอย่างไร นักวิจัยจะสร้างชื่อปลอมขึ้นมาสำหรับคุณ โดยที่ไม่มีความเกี่ยวข้องกับข้อมูลส่วนตัวของคุณ ชื่อปลอมนี้จะถูกนำมาใช้ในบทบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ และการผลิตนักวิจัยในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ จะไม่มีใครทราบว่าคุณคือใคร ขอให้คุณรู้ว่าข้อมูลด้านต่างๆของคุณจะถูกเก็บเกี่ยวไว้ดังกล่าว และถูกทำลายเมื่อเสร็จสิ้นการศึกษา ก่อนการสัมภาษณ์ นักวิจัยจะขออนุญาตจากคุณในการอ้างอิงบทสนทนาและเนื้อหาทั้งในเอกสารสาธารณะและเอกสารส่วนตัวในรายงานการวิจัย โปรดทราบว่าแม้คุณจะมีความเสี่ยงที่บุคคลต่างๆจะสามารถระบุคุณได้ หากคุณต้องการอนุญาตพื้นที่ส่วนตัวที่มีความปลอดภัย นักวิจัยจะไม่ใช้พื้นที่ข้อมูลดังกล่าว หากไม่ได้รับอนุญาตจากคุณ
คุณจะได้รับอะไรจากการเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้หรือไม่

เราไม่มีค่าตอบแทนใด ๆ สำหรับข้อมูลของคุณ แต่ข้อมูลของคุณนั้นมีความสำคัญอย่างมากต่อเรา

คุณจะต้องเสียค่าใช้จ่ายอะไรบ้างหรือไม่จากการเข้าร่วมงานวิจัยนี้

คุณอาจต้องมีค่าใช้จ่ายในการเข้าถึงสารสนเทศที่เชื่อมโยงได้ เช่น อินเตอร์เน็ต และโทรศัพท์ นอกจากนี้คุณอาจมีค่าใช้จ่ายในการทำสำเนาเอกสารส่วนตัว (เช่น การถ่ายสำเนา หรือการแสกน)

คุณสามารถแบ่งปันข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ให้กับผู้อื่นได้หรือไม่

เนื่องจากการตัดเลือกผู้ให้ข้อมูลเป็นแบบควบคุม ดังนั้นข้อมูลนั้นจะอยู่ในงบของข้อมูลของคุณ หากคุณได้รับข้อมูลจากผู้อื่นนอกเหนือจากผู้วิจัยนามชั้นสูง ความละเอียดของข้อมูล นอกจากนี้เพื่อเป็นการ รักษาข้อมูลส่วนบุคคลและความสมบูรณ์ของงานวิจัยนี้ กรุณาอย่าแบ่งปันข้อมูลที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยนี้ เช่น บทสนทนาในอีเมล์ การสนทนาส่วนตัว (Chat) และข้อมูลอื่น ๆ ให้ผู้อื่น จนกว่างานวิจัยนี้จะเสร็จสิ้น โปรดติดต่อผู้วิจัยหากคุณต้องการที่จะแบ่งปันข้อมูลให้ผู้อื่น

โดยทั่วไป คุณสามารถพูดคุยกับผู้รับเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยนี้ได้โดยคุณ อย่างไรก็ตาม เราจะแนะนำว่า คุณไม่ควร เปิดเผยข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการวิจัยนี้ต่อผู้อื่นจนกว่างานวิจัยจะเสร็จสิ้น (ประมาณเดือนพฤษภาคม 2553)

หากคุณมีคำถามหรือข้อสงสัยเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยนี้

คุณมีสิทธิที่จะถามคำถามและได้รับคำตอบที่เกี่ยวข้องกับงานวิจัยนี้ หากคุณมีคำถามหรือข้อสงสัย คุณสามารถติดต่อได้ที่ songphan.coup06@gmail.com หรือโทรศัพท์ +1 919-338-2985. คุณสามารถติดต่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาของผมได้ที่อีเมล์ที่ให้ไว้ชั้นสูงแบบฟอร์มนี้

หากคุณมีคำถามเกี่ยวกับสิทธิของคุณในฐานะผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัย?

งานวิจัยทุกชิ้นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความสมัครใจของบุคคลจะถูกพิจารณาโดยคณะกรรมการที่ทำงานเพื่อกำหนดสิทธิ์และสวัสดิการของคุณ หากคุณมีคำถามหรือข้อสงสัยเกี่ยวกับสิทธิของคุณในฐานะผู้ให้ข้อมูลในงานวิจัย คุณสามารถติดต่อ Institutional Review Board โดยสามารถไม่ประสงค์จะยอมได้หากคุณต้องการที่จะขอเลิก โทรศัพท์ +1 919-966-3113 หรืออีเมล์ที่ IRB_subjects@unc.edu

ขอบพระคุณที่ให้ความร่วมมือกับงานวิจัยครั้งนี้
Appendix B: Invitation Letter

Invitation Letter: English version

Subject:
An invitation to participate in a study of information behavior during the 2006 coup d’état in Thailand

Message:
Hi [informant’s name],

My name is Songphan Choemprayong, a doctoral student at the School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA. I am conducting a study about how people sought, shared, and used information during the first couple of days of the September 19, 2006 coup d’état in Thailand.

[Describe how informant is selected and provide a reference source. (e.g., blog post, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, snowball)] I would like to ask you to participate in an interview about your activities and experiences during the early stage of the coup.

The main objective of this study is to gain an understanding of information behavior during socio-political crises. The study involves one or more interview sessions (10-20 minutes each) asking about your personal experience during the first few nights after the coup was staged. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions or stop the interview at any point.

Here is a link to a fact sheet containing detailed information about this study: [http://ils.unc.edu/~songphan/coupstudy/factsheet_en.pdf](http://ils.unc.edu/~songphan/coupstudy/factsheet_en.pdf) If you are interested, please reply with your preferred choice of interview mode by next week. You can choose the mode from various alternatives including: email, instant messenger (e.g., MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, AOL, Google Talk, etc.), telephone, private chat (e.g., Skype),
Hi5, Facebook, or any other private channels as you prefer. Then I will contact you to schedule the interview or I could begin the interview right away, if you choose to talk via email.

Due to the focused selection method, please do not forward this invitation letter to others.

Your real identity is not necessary to this study. You can remain anonymous. Your identifiable information (e.g., name, and contact information) will be replaced by pseudonyms and de-identified tags (e.g., telephone and email) in all personal and private documents as well as interview transcripts. The information will be maintained separately in a contact sheet throughout the data collection and analysis process. I will be the only one who can access the contact sheet. The contact sheet will be destroyed after the study ends.

Your participation is valuable to the understanding of human information behavior which will inform recommendations for information system and policy development. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at songphan.coup06@gmail.com or +1 919-338-2985.

Best Regards,

Songphan Choemprayong
Invitation Letter: Thai version

Subject:
ขอเชิญให้ข้อมูลสำหรับการศึกษาเรื่อง พฤติกรรมสารสนเทศในช่วงวิกฤติการณ์ทางสังคมและการเมือง 19 กันยายน 2549

Message:
สวัสดีครับ คุณ<ชื่อผู้ให้ข้อมูล>.

ผม ทรงพันธุ์เจิมประยองนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก โรงเรียนสารสนเทศศาสตร์และบรรณารักษศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนาเรกแลวไลเนม แคนเบิร์ส ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา กำลังทำการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับพฤติกรรมของมนุษย์ในการตัดสินใจแลกเปลี่ยนและใช้สารสนเทศในช่วงที่ต้องเผชิญกับเหตุการณ์ทางสังคมและการเมือง โดยใช้เหตุการณ์รัฐประหารในประเทศไทย เมื่อวันที่ 91 กันยายน 2541 ที่ผ่านมา เป็นกรณีศึกษา

จากการศึกษาเบื้องต้น ผมพบว่าคุณได้มีกิจกรรมทางสารสนเทศในช่วงวิกฤติการณ์ทางสังคมและการเมือง <แหล่งที่มา> จึงอยากเชิญคุณมาให้สัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับกิจกรรมและประสบการณ์ของคุณในเวลานั้น ทั้งนี้ วัตถุประสงค์สำคัญของการศึกษาครั้งนี้ คือ การสร้างความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับพฤติกรรมทางสารสนเทศของมนุษย์ในช่วงวิกฤติการณ์ทางสังคมและการเมือง การศึกษาประกอบไปด้วยการสัมภาษณ์เนื่องครั้งหรือกว่า (ใช้วาจาระเวลาประมาณ 30 – 60 นาทีต่อครั้ง) เกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ของคุณในช่วงรัฐประหาร การเข้าร่วมให้ข้อมูลของคุณรับรู้เป็นไปด้วยวิธีการที่คุณต้องการ คุณสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคำถามใด ๆ ก็ได้ หรือหยุดการสัมภาษณ์เมื่อใดก็ได้

เอกสารที่แนบมาด้วยนี้ คือ เอกสารข้อเท็จจริง ระบุรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับการศึกษาในครั้งนี้ ที่คุณควรทราบก่อนตอบวันการให้สัมภาษณ์ โปรดอ่านโดยละเอียดและตอบวันการให้สัมภาษณ์ภายใน <9 วันต่อจากวันที่นี้> หากคุณสนใจ กรุณาตอบกลับมาพร้อมระบุช่องทางที่คุณต้องการด้วย ไม่ว่าจะเป็น <ชื่อของบริการสัมภาษณ์> เนื่องจากมีการควบคุมการตัดสินใจกู้คุณได้ขอตอบวันการให้สัมภาษณ์ในการสนับสนุนตัวที่เป็นการสัมภาษณ์ที่นั้น
คุณไม่จำเป็นต้องเปิดเผยชื่อจริงในการให้ข้อมูลครั้งนี้ ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของคุณ (เช่น ชื่อ, ข้อมูลการติดต่อ)จะถูกเปลี่ยนเป็นชื่อปลอมและตัวช่วยของข้อมูลส่วนตัว (de-identified tags) ในเอกสารต่าง ๆ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นเอกสารสาธารณะและเอกสารส่วนตัว รวมถึงบทสัมภาษณ์ ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของคุณจะถูกระบุกเก็บไว้ต่างหากและจะถูกทำลายเมื่อการศึกษานี้เสร็จสิ้น มีเพียงผมผู้เดียวเท่านั้นที่จะเข้าถึงข้อมูลนี้ได้

การให้ข้อมูลของคุณครั้งนี้ จะมีประโยชน์ต่อความเข้าใจพฤติกรรมสารสนเทศของมนุษย์ อันจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาระบบสารสนเทศและเป็นข้อมูลแนวคิดการพัฒนานโยบายทางสารสนเทศต่อไป หากมีข้อสงสัยหรือข้อแนะนา กรุณาติดต่อกลับมาที่ songphan.coup06@gmail.com หรือโทรศัพท์ +1 919-338-2985

ขอแสดงความนับถือ,
ทรงพันธ์ เจิมประยงค์
A brief study description: English version

Do you remember what did after hearing about the September 19, 2006 coup in Thailand?

Please consider participating in a research study about how people sought, shared, and used information during the September 19, 2006 coup dat in Thailand. The study is conducted by Songphan Choemprayong, a doctoral student at School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA.

The study involves a series of interviewing sessions asking about your experience during the coup. The interviews can be done via telephone or online. Its up to you!

Your participation is valuable to the understanding of human information behavior, which will inform recommendations for the development of communication and information system and policy.

If you are interested or have any questions, please contact the principle investigator at songphan.coup06@gmail.com or +1 919-338-2985 by [a week after the sent date].

Thanks!
คุณจาไดไหมว่าคุณทาอะไรหลังจากไดยินข่าวครั้งแรกเกี่ยวกับการรัฐประหารในประเทศไทยเมื่อ 19 กันยายน 2549?

โปรดพิจารณาเข้าร่วมให้ข้อมูลในการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับพฤติกรรมของมนุษย์ในการแสวงหาและใชสารสนเทศในช่วงรัฐประหาร 91 กันยายน 2541 ในประเทศไทย การศึกษาในครั้งนี้จัดทำโดยนักศึกษาปริญญาเอก โรงพยาบาลสารสนเทศและการรัฐประหาร มหาวิทยาลัยนอร์ทแคโรไลนา แอปเปิลฮิลล์ ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา

การศึกษาจะประกอบไปด้วยการสัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ของคุณในช่วงรัฐประหาร คุณสามารถเลือกได้ว่าจะให้สัมภาษณ์ผ่านทางโทรศัพท์หรืออินเทอร์เน็ตให้ข้อมูลของคุณในครั้งนี้จะมีผลประโยชน์ต่อความเข้าใจของพฤติกรรมทางสารสนเทศของมนุษย์ อันจะนำมาสู่การพัฒนาระบบสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร  และเป็นข้อมูลที่สำคัญต่อการพัฒนานโยบายทางสารสนเทศต่อไป

หากสนใจเข้าร่วมให้ข้อมูลหรือมีคำถาม กรุณาติดต่อท่านผู้จัดการการวิจัยที่ songphan.coup06@gmail.com หรือโทรศัพท์ +1 919-338-2985 ภายในวันที่ <1 สัปดาห์หลังจากวันที่ส่ง>
Appendix C: Interview Question Roster

English Version

To Obtain Consent and Remind Participant about the Risks of Being Monitored:

• Do you understand the information in the fact sheet? Do you have any questions about this study before beginning the interview? Please note that you may ask any questions regarding to the fact sheet and this research at any time during the interview.

• Would you allow me to use some of your interview responses and quotations either from public or personal documents in my research report? Please be aware that there might be a risk that someone would be able to recognize your identity from reading your quotes, though I will take steps to minimize this possibility.
• Since I cannot guarantee the security of your comments that may involve political opinions, are you confident that this mean of communication is secure enough (i.e., that it will not be monitored by someone else)? You can choose other means of communication if you want to. In addition, you can change it later, if you feel uncomfortable.

**To Tap Situations:**

• When did you first hear about the coup?

• Where were you?

• What were you doing?

• From whom/where?

• What happened next?

• What issues were you facing?

• Did that experience connect with your past event? How?

**Assisting to recall the situation:**

• To help you recall a situation, I want to you to watch a video of the coup announcement ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sU4xwv8ts](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sU4xwv8ts)).

• Based on your posts/discussions on [URL], you said Could you explain the situation at that moment?
To Tap Gaps:

- Did you have any big questions?
- What were your big questions?
- What were you trying to (unconfuse, figure out, or learn about)?
- What did you struggle with?

To Tap Bridges:

- What conclusion/ideas did you come to?
- What emotions did you come to? How did you feel?
- What led you to that conclusion/idea/emotion/feeling?

To Tap Outcomes Sought and/or Obtained:

- How did that [name that] help? facilitate?
- How did that [name that] hinder?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what would have helped?

To Dig Deeper Into Gaps and Struggles:

- What was missing?
- How did that stand in the way?
- And how did that prevent you getting more help?
To Dig Deeper Into What Led To An Evaluation:

- What led you to that assessment?
- How did that evaluation connect with your situation?
- What was limited or incomplete about that?

To Dig Deeper Into How Things Help:

- And, how did that help?
- What did that allow you to do/achieve/think?

To Explore Connections to Self, Identity:

- How has this experience related to building/changing your sense of self?
- How has this experience had impact on you?
- Do you see yourself as connected to . . . ([information source], PAD, UDD, CDR)?
- Do you see yourself as different from . . . ([information source], UDD, CDR)?

To Find Out More about Something:

- Tell me a bit more about that.
- Could you give me a few more details about that so I can understand better?

To Get Additional Items on A List:

- Anything else?
- Where there any more?
To Ask for Personal Records:

- Did you keep journal/diary during that period? Would you mind giving a copy to me?
- Did you keep history log of your instant messenger/chat? Would you mind giving a copy to me?
- Did you write, record, create any other contents regarding your experience during that period? If so, where are they? How can I access to those contents?

To Get Further Informants (Snowball Sampling):

- I am looking for other persons for an interview. Would you be able to recommend someone that you think s/he might be a useful source? Think of these criteria:
  - S/he is a person whom you first heard about the coup from, or whom you contacted during the early period of the coup, and
  - you think s/he was different from you in terms of demographics (for instance, age, sex, education, location), or who had a contrast/opposite political point of view.
Demographic:

- Can you give me background information about yourself a bit?
  - gender
  - age
  - highest level of education
  - current occupation
  - computer/Internet experience (Optional)

- How long have you used the Internet?

- How long have you used a computer?

- How long have you used [reference source’s name]?

End

You may delete any related interview documents (e.g., emails, history, transaction logs) if you feel uncomfortable about what you said during the interview. Please let me know if you need any advices on how to delete those files.

Thank you very much for your participation.
To Obtain Consent and Remind Participant about the Risks of Being Monitored:

• คุณเข้าใจข้อมูลในเอกสารข้อตกลงว้างานวิจัยนี้หรือไม่? คุณมีคำถามเกี่ยวกับงานวิจัยนี้ ที่จะเริ่มต้นการสัมภาษณ์หรือไม่? อย่างไรก็ตาม คุณสามารถถามคำถามเกี่ยวกับเอกสารข้อตกลง หรือร่างวิจัยขึ้นได้ทุกเมื่อในระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์.

• คุณจะอนุญาตหรือไม่หากผมจะอ้างอิงคำพูดของคุณทั้งจากการสัมภาษณ์และเอกสารที่ปรากฏในที่สาธารณะหรือเอกสารส่วนบุคคลในรายงานการวิจัย? โปรดระบุว่าอาจมีความเสี่ยงที่บุคคลอื่นจะสามารถระบุตัวคุณได้ หากได้ยินคำพูดของคุณ.

• คุณจะต้องรับประกันความเสี่ยงอันเกิดจากการแสดงออกทางการเมืองได้ คุณมั่นใจหรือไม่ว่าการสื่อสารด้วยวิธีนี้จะมีความปลอดภัยเพียงพอ (ที่ไม่ถูกจับตามองหรือดักฟันโดยผู้อื่น)? คุณสามารถเลือกช่องทางการสื่อสารอื่น ๆ หากต้องการ หรือคุณสามารถเปลี่ยนช่องทางการสื่อสารได้ระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์ หากคุณรู้สึกไม่ปลอดภัย.

To Tap Situations:

• เล่าให้ฟังหน่อยได้ไหมครับ ว่าคุณทราบข่าวปฏิวัติเมื่อไหร่?
  – ตอนนั้นคุณอยู่ที่ไหน?
  – กำลังทำอะไร?
  – ทราบจากใคร?

• เกิดอะไรขึ้นต่อจากนั้น?

• คุณกำลังพยายามจะทำอะไร?

• เหตุการณ์นี้เชื่อมโยงกับเหตุการณ์ในอดีตของคุณหรือไม่ อย่างไร

• ช่วยเหลือเพื่อให้ระลึกถึงเหตุการณ์
  – เพื่อช่วยให้คุณนึกถึงเหตุการณ์ในวันนั้น ผมอยากจะให้คุณดูวิดีโอของประกาศฉบับแรกบนหน้าจอโทรทัศน์ (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sUUzxwv8ts).
– จากที่คุณเขียนไว้ในโพส <URL> คุณบอกว่า... กรุณาอธิบายเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ในตอนนั้นให้ทราบหน่อยได้หรือไม่ครับ

To Tap Gaps:

• ณ ตอนนั้น คุณมีปัญหา/คำถามข้อใหญ่ในใจหรือไม่
• ปัญหา/คำถามข้อใหญ่ของคุณคืออะไร?
• คุณต้องการที่จะ (แก้ปม, ค้นหา, หรือเรียนรู้) อะไร?
• คุณมีปัญหาหรือติดขัดเรื่องอะไร?

To Tap Bridges:

• ตอนนั้นคุณได้ข้อสรุปหรือไอเดีย (ความคิด) อะไรบ้าง?
• ตอนนั้นคุณรู้สึกหรือมีอารมณ์อย่างไร?
• อะไรทำให้คุณได้ข้อสรุป/ความคิด/อารมณ์/ความรู้นั้น?

To Tap Outcomes Sought and/or Obtained:

• (ชื่อ) ช่วยอย่างไร? เอื้อประโยชน์อย่างไร?
• (ชื่อ) จัดวางอย่างไร?
• หากคุณมีใครช่วยในขณะนั้น อะไรที่จะช่วยคุณได้ (คุณต้องการ)
• หากย้อนกลับไปได้ คุณจะอยากทำอะไรในตอนนั้น
To Dig Deeper Into Gaps and Struggles:

- อะไรขาดหายไป?
- มืออะไรขวางทางอยู่?
- และมันขัดขวางการได้รับความช่วยเหลืออย่างไร?

To Dig Deeper Into What Led To An Evaluation:

- ทำไมคุณถึงประเมินเช่นนั้น?
- สิ่งที่คุณประเมินนั้นเชื่อมโยงกับเหตุการณ์ของคุณอย่างไร
- คุณมีข้อจำกัดอะไร หรือมีอะไรที่ไม่สมบูรณ์?

To Dig Deeper Into How Things Help:

- และมันช่วยอย่างไร?
- มันทำให้คุณทำไปถึงตรงนั้น/คิดได้อย่างไร?

To Explore Connections to Self, Identity:

- ประสบการณ์ในครั้งนั้นเกี่ยวข้องกับการสร้างและเปลี่ยนแปลงความเป็นตัวตนของคุณอย่างไร?
- เหตุการณ์วันนั้นมีอิทธิพลต่อคุณอย่างไร?
- คุณเห็นว่าตัวคุณเชื่อมโยงเข้ากับ . . . (<แหล่งข้อมูล>, พันธมิตร, นปช., คมช.) หรือไม่? อย่างไร?
- คุณเห็นว่าตัวคุณแตกต่างจาก . . . (<แหล่งข้อมูล>, พันธมิตร, นปช., คมช.) หรือไม่? อย่างไร?
To Find Out More about Something:

• ช่วยเล่าเพิ่มเติมให้หน่อย
• รบกวนช่วยบอกรายละเอียดให้ออกเล็กน้อย เพื่อที่ผมจะได้เข้าใจได้ดีขึ้นได้หรือไม่?

To Get Additional Items on A List:

• มีอะไรจะเพิ่มเติมไหมครับ?
• มีอะไรอย่างอื่นที่อยากจะเล่า/อธิบายเพิ่มเติมอีกไหมครับ?

To Ask for Personal Records:

• คุณได้จดบันทึกหรือเขียนใดๆในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวหรือไม่? จะขอสำเนาได้หรือไม่?
• คุณได้เก็บประวัติการใช้งานเครื่องคอมพิวเตอร์ หรือโปรแกรมต่าง ๆ เช่น Instant messenger หรือ การแชท ในช่วงเวลาที่คุณใช้หรือไม่? จะขอสำเนาได้หรือไม่?
• คุณได้เขียน บันทึก หรือสร้างเอกสารใด ๆ ที่เกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ของคุณในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวยังหรือไม่? ผมจะเข้าถึงข้อมูลเหล่านี้ได้อย่างไร?

To Get Further Informants (Snowball Sampling):

• ผมกำลังหาคนให้ข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม ไม่ทราบว่าคุณจะช่วยแนะนำใครที่พอจะเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์หรือไม่ ได้บ้างครับ โดยนึกถึงคุณสมบัติเหล่านี้:
  – เป็นคนที่คุณติดต่อตัวอยู่ในช่วงแรก ๆ ของการทำรัฐประหาร หรือคนที่แจ้งข่าวรัฐประหารให้กับคุณเป็นคนแรก และ
  – เป็นคนที่คุณคาดว่าเขาหรือเธอจะมีความแตกต่างจากคุณ ไม่ว่าจะในทางอายุ เทควิชั่น การศึกษา ภูมิลำเนา ผู้ไม่ใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต เครื่องมือสื่อสาร หรือสื่อ ตลอดจน มุมมองและความคิดเห็นทางการเมือง
• ทำไมคุณจึงแนะนำบุคคลนี้?
• คุณคิดว่าบุคคลนี้จะปฏิเสธที่ให้คุณเปิดเผยข้อมูลติดต่อ หรือปฏิเสธที่จะให้หมดติดต่อได้โดยตรงหรือไม่?

• ในกรณีที่ผู้ให้ข้อมูลปฏิเสธที่จะเปิดเผยข้อมูลติดต่อ: ข่าวกรุณาส่งต่อจะหมายเชิญเข้าร่วมให้ข้อมูลในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ได้หรือไม่?

Demographics

• ระบบรับข้อมูลส่วนตัวได้ไหมครับ
  – เพศ
  – อายุ
  – การศึกษาขั้นสูงสุด
  – อาชีพ

• ประสบการณ์การใช้คอมพิวเตอร์ (ตัวเลือก)
  – คุณใช้คอมพิวเตอร์นานเท่าไร
  – คุณใช้อินเตอร์เน็ตนานเท่าไร?
  – คุณใช้ <แหล่งที่มา> นานเท่าไร?

End

ผมอยากจะแนะนำว่า คุณควรลบเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสัมภาษณ์ครั้งนี้ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นอีเมล์ ประวัติการพูดคุย หากคุณรู้สึกไม่ปลอดภัยยันเนื่องมาจากการสัมภาษณ์ คุณสามารถสอบถามผมได้หากต้องการข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับวิธีการลบข้อมูลเหล่านี้ออกจากเครื่องคอมพิวเตอร์

ขอพรบุคคลอย่างสุจริตให้ความร่วมมือ
Appendix D: Codebook

Codes for content analysis (Deductive)

Scheme: Small world membership

*Description:* Identifies people (e.g., interview informants, blog authors, Flickr accounts, etc.) by types of membership in small world notion

**Absolute Insider**

*Definition:* Thai people living in Thailand during September 19 - 23, 2006

**Absolute Outsider**

*Definition:* Foreigner living outside Thailand during September 19 - 23, 2006

**Insider-Out**

*Definition:* Thai people living outside Thailand during September 19 - 23, 2006

**Outsider-In**

*Definition:* Foreigner living in Thailand during September 19 - 23, 2006

**Anonymous-In**

*Definition:* A person whose nationality is unidentifiable but living in Thailand during September 19-23, 2006

**Anonymous-Out**

*Definition:* A person whose nationality is unidentifiable but living outside Thailand during September 19-23, 2006

**Insider-Anonymous**
Definition: Thai people whose whereabouts during September 19-23, 2006 is unidentifiable

Outsider-Anonymous

Definition: Foreigner whose whereabouts during September 19-23, 2006 is unidentifiable

Rule:

If the content is collaborative authored (e.g., written/created by more than one person), identify the first author.

Source:

1. Profile page
2. Post/content/caption
3. Comment
4. Web domain name/IP address
Indicator:

1. **Nationality** is identified by one or a combination of these elements:
   - Language used (Thai language = Thai)
   - Name (e.g., Prameth - Thai; ExpatJohn - Foreigner)
   - Affiliation (e.g., Thai university, government)
   - Pronoun addressed to (e.g., to you, Thai people. Us - Thai people)
   - Idiom
   - Narration - textual, photo, and video

2. **Geographical location** is identified by one or a combination of these elements:
   - Identification = location field
   - Narration - textual, photo, and video
Open coding scheme (Inductive)

The following is the code book with a sample of data. Note that the codes without sample were emerged from axial coding.

**Scheme: Seeking and sharing**

*Description:* How people sought and shared information during the early stage of the coup
1. How I first heard about the coup

*Definition:* People describe the first moment they heard about the coup and their reactions

*Note:* For interview data, it is the first set of opening question.

1.1 I first saw it myself

*Definition:* Coup exposure from firsthand experience

*Sample:*

Tanks on the streets... at Nangloeng intersection, in front of Prem’s house, at government house and at the Rama V statue”

(Blog)

“I was in Kuala Lumpur yesterday but flew into Bangkok at 6 p.m. local time this evening; during the 30-minute ride from the airport to my apartment, which is located in central Bangkok, I witnessed a solitary military truck carting soldiers through the city. More military forces are stationed elsewhere.”

(Blog)
1.2 Mainstream media as a battle field

*Definition:* Coup exposure from witnessing the on television

*Sample:*

“At first, when I heard of the coup, it was uncertain there was actually a coup. I was lucky to have a fast internet connection and was able to watch Nation Channel, a then popular news channel, to see what was happening. You saw music with pictures of the royal family which was the sign of a coup. However, just 20 minutes later, programming appeared to resume to normal. Then Chulalongkorn professor Dr. Panitan, and now Govt. spokesman, appeared on TV stating that it appeared the coup was unsuccessful. He was cut off mid-sentence and then we had coup announcements. It was clear then there had been a coup. There was a sense of shock. There has been rumours of a coup for a while, but they had come and gone. In hindsight, it was naive to think there would not be a coup, but at the time, it was a sense of surprise.”

(Interview)
1.3 I heard it from word of mouth

*Definition:* Coup exposure from other people by interpersonal channels (e.g., email, telephone, face-to-face)

*Sample:*
“I and Paula had no idea what was happening on the street as well. We were about to start our quite time in my room when my colleague called and informed me about the revolution. Both of us rushed to downstairs and turned on the TV just to find that every government channels were displaying the story of King Bhumiphol on the screen. We looked at each other eyes and knew that it was the sign of something very unusual was going on!!!”

(Blog)
1.4 I first heard from media reports

*Definition:* Coup exposure from media report

*Sample:*

“Waking up this morning with some news from Thailand about coup taking over streets of Bangkok, I follow the situation unfolding from its beginning to some hours (until 2 pm) after couple announcement from the coup group leader.”

(Blog)
2. Making sense of situations

Description: To understand what was happening and relate to people’s lives during that time; What happened next after first hearing about the coup?

2.1 Making sense of obstacles

Description: Experience of difficulties and hardship that prevent people to resume their lives in normal situation

2.1.1 Media censorship

Definition: Experience and/or reaction to media control and disruption

Sample:

“They blog Thailand Channel 3,5,7,9,1,ITV including UBCTV (Cable TV). And also CNN and BCC from UBCTV Channel. So I didn’t know any news. Now i can still use Internet and Cellphone. But rumor say they will shut it off within an hour. Hope I can use it.”

(Blog)

“Hey you! You no allowed to be here!”

(Photo caption of a soldier with a hand up)

“I thought, “In this day and age, censorship is clumsy, if not impossible to pull off.” It makes the coup plotters look ridiculous. However, I did understand the immediate extreme sensitivity that exists after the coup as an insincere military makes sure all bases are covered and no resistance will come.”

(Interview)
2.1.2 Trouble with network access

Definition: Experience or/or reaction to difficulty to access telecommunication network

Sample:

“The internet is becoming very slow... - 22:55, September 19, 2006

We will try to keep posting as long as we are able.”

(Blog)

“You won’t believe me but I had been cut off from the Internet for a whole day. I just manage to log in. My frustration grew by the minutes. As a blogger, I feel pressured to update this blog, but everything was against me?.sigh.”

(Blog)
2.1.3 Cultural barriers

*Description:* Issues emerging from different socio-cultural background

2.1.3.1 Language barrier

*Definition:* Lack of appropriate language skills to access information (either from Thai to English or English to Thai)

*Sample:*

“[Comment1] says: What does it say?

[Poster] says: oh!, I’m not good at english, anyone could help me this? please... sorry, but I’ll try later if I could.” (Photo caption - Photo of a TV screen capture displaying the first coup message)

“I’m in Bangkok right now, but I can’t speak Thai... we desperately need someone to translate. News/phone networks has been cut off and we can’t find out anything but from the slow internet”

(Video comment)
2.1.3.2 political knowledge

**Definition:** The difficulty to understand Thai political system and personnel

**Sample:**

“ปฏิรูปฯลูก ไม่ใช่ปฏิวัติ” พ่อบอกตอนโทรกลับบ้านเมื่อวาน
“ต่างกันยังไงหว่า” คิดในใจ แล้ก็คุย ๆต่อไป “ เดี๋ยวจะไปเปิดดูว่าต่างกันยังไง”
แล้วก็เปิดดูเรียบร้อยละ ข้อมูลจาก Wikipedia

รัฐประหาร (Coup d’état) คือ การเปลี่ยนแปลงการปกครองหรือองค์ประกอบของการปกครองย่างกระ
พันธุ์และไม่เป็นแบบแผน เช่น ที่เกิดขึ้นเนี่ย

ปฏิวัติ (Revolution) คือ การเปลี่ยนแปลงระบบการปกครอง เช่น การเปลี่ยนแปลงการปกครองสมัยพ.ศ.๒๔๗๕

ปฏิรูป (Reform) คือ การเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างค่อยเป็นค่อยไป และเป็นไปในทางที่ดีขึ้น

สรุปว่า เมื่อวานเขาทำรัฐประหาร เพื่อจะได้มีการปฏิรูปการเมืองการปกครอง ปฏิวัติ มันแรงไป

[“A revolution, son, not a coup.” My dad told me when I called back home yesterday.
“How do they differ?” I thought, but keep talking “I will check about this afterward.”
And I already checked it out. This is from Wikipedia.

(Ratthapraharn) Coup d’état is a sudden and non-pattern change of administration or any component of administration like what is happening now.

(Patiwat) Revolution is a change of administration system such as the change of administration in 1932.

(Patiroop) Reform is a slow-moving change and for a better result.

Therefore, they staged a coup d’état to change politics and administration. The term Revolution is too harsh.

(Blog)
2.2 making sense of bridging the gap

*Description:* Information needs and purposes of information activities;

**2.2.1 Fact finding and validation**

*Definition:* To learn more about the situation; to check if the information received is correct; to evaluate the plausibility of rumor

*Sample:*

“My key concern was whether there was any “counter-attack” from Thaksin’s allies. In the hours and days after the coup that was, by my estimation, all that really mattered. As it turned out, there was only a whimper of immediate resistance, and that burned out quickly. We then had to wait until 2007 before the real anti-coup resistance took up the electoral challenge of fighting the pro-coup forces. We all know how that ended.”

(Interview)

“อยากรู้ว่ามีต่อสู้ มีกองเลือดหรือเปล่า มีการปิดกั้นสื่ออะไรบ้าง ออกไปนอกบ้านจะอันตรายไหม วันรุ่งขึ้นต้องไปทำงานหรือเปล่า”

[I wanted to know whether or not there was any fighting or violence. What media was censored? Was it dangerous to go outside? Did I have to go to work the next day?]

(Interview)
2.2.2 Being a part of history

*Definition:* The importance of being in a historic situation

*Sample:*

“Great to see these pictures from the ground. Let’s hope the situation is resolved peacefully. I was in Thailand a few weeks ago and found it to be a wonderful country with friendly people. However the army and police were not to be messed with. I have friends out there and as long as they stay respectful and away from any mass protests they should be safe. Must be a fascinating place to be right now. Thanks for the photo.”

(Photo comment)
2.2.3 Clarification

Definition: To clarify what was happening or what they saw that may be different from sender; To insert more detail; To convince or try to change readers’ attitudes or concerns

Sample:
“I was writing a rather lengthy post in English about my thoughts on the recent bloodless coup, but I thought I should first post a few pictures of the coup, for foreign friends and visitors who may be concerned about my safety (thank you for all the kind e-mails), so everyone can see how peaceful this event has been and that most of us don’t feel threatened whatsoever by these tanks and humvees. The atmosphere now in Bangkok as you can see from the pictures below is much more like Children’s Day than a country under siege.”

(Blog)
2.2.4 Translation

Definition: Translation of content from one language to another (i.e., Thai to English or English to Thai)

Sample:
“English translation (please correct if wrong): COMMUNIQUE NO 1 It has been clear that the administration of the country’s affairs by the current caretaker government has created conflicts and division, and sowed discord among the people of the nation. It is unprecedented in the history of the Thai nation that groups were determined to win through ways and means. The trend is getting more violent every passing day. The majority of the people are suspicious of extensive corruption and malfeasance practices among the bureaucracy. Independent agencies and organisations have been dominated by politics and unable to fulfil the objectives as stipulated in the constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Consequently, political activities have encountered numerous problems and obstacles. Frequently, the dignity of the Thai people’s king was affected. The efforts exerted by several sectors of society to alleviate the situation have failed to bring an end to the conflict. It is necessary for the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State, comprising commanders of the armed forces and the National Police Bureau, to seize national administrative power from now on. In so doing, the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State wishes to reaffirm that it has no intention to become the administrators of the country. The administrative power under the democratic system with the king as the head of the state will be returned to the Thai people as quickly as possible in order to maintain peace and order and preserve national stability, as well as to uphold the beloved institution of the monarchy of all the Thai people.”

(Video description of the first coup announcement)
2.2.5 Support

*Definition:* Expression of good will given to local people; Offering and/or seeking help

*Sample:*

“First off, my thoughts and prayers go out to all my online friends in Thailand who have to experience this firsthand. I pray that events will continue to remain essentially peaceful and non-violent.

Of course, whenever the military of any country stages a coup to overthrow the current leader and government, that’s a very serious matter. I couldn’t even begin to imagine if a military coup like that would happen on American soil. I would definitely be traumatized and shellshocked, like many were when 9/11 occurred.

We just hope that anything like this anywhere will resolve itself by peaceful means?”

(Blog)
2.2.6 Recreation and entertainment

*Definition:* expression of joyful to seek and share information; The appearance of satire, humor, parody in message

*Sample:*

“There has been a coup in Bangkok. I just want to say Bangkok. I just say it again.”

(Video transcript)

“Thai Coup Strands Thousands of U.S. Sex Tourists

The ousting of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has thrown Thailand into political unrest, and filled the U.S. Embassy with thousands of American sex tourists seeking safe passage to Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Red Cross is urging all sex tourists to remain calm, and telling families that their relatives need not be suspected of murdering Jon-Benet Ramsey to secure safe passage. New military leader Gen. Sondhi Boonyaratkalin insists his country is still safe for the perverts of the world saying, ”Thailand - come for the come, stay for the come.”

(Blog)
2.2.7 Passive information seeking

Definition: Waiting to hear from others; not actively looking for information

Sample:
“It’s just begin normal. we are just at home, waiting the news to get to us and we got dvds to few of us. we are just waiting to see things to blow over and get the green light to go to work.” (Video transcript)
2.2.8 Stopping behavior

*Definition:* People decided to stop actively looking for information or reporting information (either at the first night of the coup or after the first few days of the coup)

*Sample:*

“Announcement: The Excitement is Over

Please be advised that the excitement related to our recent coup d’etat is officially over. Unless you are a junkie for Thai political news, there really isn’t much more to see or talk about. So unless we have any developments, I think I’ll just move on to other stories.”

(Blog)
2.3 Information sources/channels

*Description:* The use and satisfaction of various information sources or communication tools

2.3.1 multitask/multiple sources

*Definition:* Use of different sources and doing different task at a time

*Sample:*

“I didn’t do anything other than to turn on the TV and see the montage of patriotic songs and images that was playing. There wasn’t anything in particular to do. I recall going online and trying to get some news. I also posted a blog entry, posting updates throughout the evening and following days. I also sent a message to a friend from the US who was here visiting. I wanted to ensure he was okay and understood what was happening. As it turns out, he actually went out and took photos of the tanks.

... I followed the situation by visiting websites, reading the paper and seeing what additional limited information was available.”

(Interview)
2.3.2 mainstream media as sources

Definition: Use and satisfaction of mainstream media during the coup

Sample:

“I feel that Thailand and media control are still inseparable. Fact in news in Thailand is still under the control of political system, both before and after the coup. The trustworthiness of media were decreasing substantially, in my opinion. We could no long find fact in media. This makes people who receive information from one side are used as a tool by some groups of people.

Most Thai newspaper provided news about the way people came out and took photos with soldier and the coup announcement. It was one-side of the story to make people feel that this is a good coup.”

(Interview)
2.3.3 firsthand experience as sources of sense making

Definition: Going outside in order to gain firsthand experience

Sample:

“My first response was a sense of excitement that I was in the midst of an exciting situation. I responded by rushing outside with my camera and hailing a motorcycle taxi to take me to Rachdannern Nok Avenue (approx 20 minutes from my home by bike).”

(Interview)

“I went for a jog around my neighbourhood at 12:30 am to see how things appeared. All was quiet, uncannily quiet, even the soi dogs were not barking and chasing me. So, I figured why not take a drive around on my bike with a video camera in tow. It’s quite difficult to drive a bike and take video at the same time. Mistake! At first I took video of whatever I saw. What I saw was multiple tanks at every intersection, armoured vehicles, gun mounted jeeps and 50 soldiers at every intersection. I have never seen so many tanks. I must have seen over 20 tanks and I only drove two miles before I thought I better get back home. As I head back I was taking video and stopped[sic] at a red light, btw, all lights were red! at one intersection soldiers saw my camera and approached me, guns aimed at me. I freaked and I quickly offered them my tape hoping they would not take my video camera. They checked my video bag for more tapes. I had only brought two with me. One in the camera and one I had stashed in my pants. When they were sure I had no more tapes they let me continue home. 300 meters down the road I loaded my video camera again. This time I knew if I got caught again I would probably have a bigger problem than last time. So I tried to take hidden footage. Which I did but the footage is really bad and you can’t really make out stuff... Sorry. As I drove around taxi drivers gave me the thumbs up and said ”Thaksin” and put their wrists together as if in handcuffs. I will venture out again tomorrow and see if I can get some good stuff.”

(Video description)
2.3.4 Cell phone as communication tool and recorder

Definition: Communication with others via cell phone (e.g., SMS, MMS, call) and/or use cellphone to record the situation

Sample:

“Taken with a Nokia N73”

(Photo description)

“ก็คนที่ทำงานส่งข้อความต่อๆกันมา เพราะทีีบุคคลได้รับโทรศัพท์จากผอ.สถาบัน ว่าเนื่องจากเหตุการณ์บ้านเมืองไม่สงบ จึงให้หยุด 1 วัน”

[People at my work sent messages to each other in forming that the HR department received a phone call from the director saying that since there was a difficult situation in the country, the next day was a holiday.]

(Interview)
2.3.5 Internet as source

**Definition:** Using various Internet applications to access and disseminate information; The discussion of the use of Internet, in general, as opposed to particular applications

**Sample:** “I had no problems with the internet at all. I was able to keep up with the news on the internet all day. Perhaps it’s just a congestion issue. I’m using SME package from True, but I don’t know if that has anything to do with it.” (Blog) I and a few others monitor newspapers, TV, some radio, and the net (although back then there were not as many blogs and news sites on Thai issues or opinions). These were simply sources of information. The internet turned out to be a main source as many people went out on the street, took photos and posted them. (Interview)
2.3.6 Instant messenger

*Definition:* Experience and expression in response to the use of instant messenger to access and disseminate information

*Sample:* 
"That night, I set up a chat room on MSN, talking about the situation with a group of people. We followed and looked for news from sources that we could find, for example, live blogging at 19sep.blogspot.com.

... 
They were my colleagues at work, around 6-7 people. Normally, I did not talk on MSN with this group of people. However, at that night, they invited me to join one of the chat room that someone already set up.

... 
The benefit we got [from using MSN] was just to know that whether or not we had to go to work because nearly all people in the group were around early 20 and were not interested in politics.

(Interview)
2.3.7 Email

Definition: Experience and expression in response to the use of email to access and disseminate information

Sample:
“I sent lots of e-mails – always do. We were all confused, and before too long the coverage of the coup was overwhelmed by the "guns and roses" images that flashed around the world. In general terms, I was in contact with my colleagues and friends.”

(Interview)
2.3.8 Blog

**Definition:** Experience and expression in response to the use of blog to access and disseminate information

**Sample:**

“My blog exists to help family and friends back home stay up-to-date about my life overseas. I know as a communication major that the way media represents events is often more sensational and over-focused than in real life. Because of that, I wanted my family and friends to know that I was okay and to try to put the information they might be hearing in a larger perspective.”

(Interview)
2.3.9 Web forum

*Definition:* Experience and expression in response to the use of web forums to access and disseminate information.

*Sample:* 
“Travel-related discussion boards such as Lonely Planet’s ThornTree, 2bangkok.com and Thai Visa are abuzz with the coup, with many posters worried if the events of the past 24 hours will affect their holiday plans."

(Blog)
2.3.10 WWW

Definition: Experience and expression in response to the use of websites to access and disseminate information

Sample:
“Since the coup, internet coverage of Thailand by all methods (news sites, blogs, youtube[sic], etc.) has exploded. Back in 2006 there were not as many sites covering events moment to moment other than Thai newspaper sites. And the newspaper sites just crib their information from Thai-language TV reports. I was very satisfied with the sites at the time–there was a glut of event-based information coming out that was quite exciting to follow. However, there is little background–just what is happening. The situation was especially good for me as I was one of the few English-language sites to have moment-to-moment posts. It led a lot of readers to me.”
(Interview)
Scheme: Factors related to information behavior during the coup

Description: Various constructs (concepts/ideas/objects) that seem to be important to information seeking and sharing during the disruptive moment of the coup

1. Cognition and affection of individual

Description: Psychological constructs that are related to information behaviors

1.1 Mixed of feeling

Definition: Expression of more than one feeling at a time (e.g., frustration, confusion, mix)

Sample:
“\textquote I stayed there until about 1.30 am. It was raining when I left the studio. I had to stand with three soldiers, no more than 25 years old, each holding rifles. I was filled with different emotions - sadness that we had to have a coup to solve our problems, relief that the stress and bad feelings we’ve had in Thailand might be coming to a close, and excitement that I was in the middle of something very historic.\textquote”

(Blog)
1.2 Sense of excitement

*Definition:* Expression of having high energy (e.g., exciting, enthusiastic, etc.) as well as the loss of such feeling

*Sample:*

Q: “What was your first response and feeling after hearing about the coup?”  
A: “My first response was a sense of excitement that I was in the midst of an exciting situation. I responded by rushing outside with my camera and hailing a motorcycle taxi to take me to Rachdamnern Nok Avenue (approx 20 minutes from my home by bike).”

Q: “Did you have any questions at the time related to the coup? If so, what was the biggest question/issue?”  
A: “Although I was concerned for my well-being in a potentially dangerous situation, my sense of excitement was far more powerful. I realized that the media was unlikely to provide objective coverage of the situation (being de facto state-controlled) and so decided to see things for myself.”  
(Interview)

“@ 4:48 AM: My phone has finally stopped ringing, so I’m off to get some shut-eye now. Things seem to have calmed down around the city; hopefully it stays that way when dawn breaks in a few hours...”  
(Blog)
1.3 Memory

*Definition:* Expression of how the coup remind someone of events in the past or something

*Sample:*

“I quickly went downstairs and took out some money from the ATM. Why? I don’t know. Just to be safe. Who knew what was going to happen. It reminded me of when, in 1997, the Baht devalued, and it tumbled and tumbled against the American dollar. In the end I withdrew Baht and hid it under my bed, for fear I would have to flee the country! That was nearly ten years ago, and here I was doing it again.”

(Blog)
1.4 Perception: It is my role and responsibility

Definition: People see an opportunity or necessity for themselves to become a source of information

Sample:
“My website has a long tradition of shooting photos like this. I wanted the site to be "almost like being there" so people could see themselves what is going on (as opposed to having it filtered through reporters who try to tell you what things are like). At one point, I was one of the only sites doing it in Thailand, but today everyone is doing it and it is not remarkable anymore.
I had to go way downtown to the government district to take the shots and my goal was to give the website viewers a look at what was happening.”

(Blog)
2. Physical capacity

*Definition:* The expression of physical weakness (e.g., I am tired; Stay up all night; etc.)

*Sample:*

“Was simply tired. ... Simply that the coup had been successful. Was too busy trying to catch up on news and hadn’t started to think about longer term consequences.”

(Interview)
3. Technical resources

Definition: Discussions of particular devices or technical ability

Sample:
“I did have a screen capture hardware device that plugged into the TV and computer, but I can’t recall if I used that at the time. At some point around that time I just started taking photos of the screen with a digital camera. That is probably how I got those shots.”

(Interview)
4. Collective construct

*Description:* Discussion of how people as a group perform information activities together during that time

4.1 We help each other learning about the situation

*Definition:* People set up a space or environment to exchange information

*Sample:*

Q: “รบกวนอธิบายเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับตั้ง group ใน msn หน่อยได้ไหมครับ เช่น”
A: “เป็นกลุ่มเพื่อนที่ทำงานที่เดียวกันครับ ประมาณ 6-7 คน ปกติไม่เคยอยู่คุย MSN กันคนกลุ่มนี้ เท่าไหร่งวดี แต่ครั้งนี้ในกลุ่มนี้ตั้งโปรแกรม invite ให้ผมเข้าไป join ในห้อง chat ที่ถูกคนหนึ่งในกลุ่มนี้ให้ไว้แล้ว”

[Q: Can you explain more about how you joined group chat on MSN?
A: They were my colleagues at work around 6-7 people. I didn’t usually talk to them on MSN. However, on that night, they invited me to join a group that someone had already set up.]

(Interview)
4.2 To finish a task(s) together

*Definition:* A group was formed or maintain to do a collective task, mostly sharing information to other (e.g., writing Wikipedia entries or contributing to collaborative blogs)

*Sample:*

"วิกิพีเดียเป็น log repository เหรอ
ขอถายที่พุดตรงๆบทความนี้ถูกทำที่ดีที่สุดเห็นในวิกิพีเดียมาเลย คุณคิดว่า วิกิพีเดีย เป็น log repository หรือยังไม่? มีอะไรก็ append มีอะไรก็ append มันเป็นสารานุกรมนะ ใช้มันให้เป็น Collaborative writing tool หน่อยก็ค่ะ"

[Is Wikipedia a log repository?
Mind my frank speaking. This entry is the worst entry I've ever seen in Wikipedia. Do you think Wikipedia is a log repository that you can append whatever? This is encyclopedia. Use it as collaborative writing tool.]

(Wikipedia discussion)
4.3 We feel secured together

**Definition:** Forming a group or setting certain rules to protect group members

**Sample:**

```
" ผมบอกเพื่อนผู้ร่วมก่อตั้งไปเป็นชุดคว่ำต้องทำอะไรบ้าง (เสียดายไม่มี chatlog เก็บไว) ดังนี้

• ไปสมัครอีเมลใหม่ อย่าใช้อีเมลเก่าไว้ด้วย
• เอาอีเมลไปลงทะเบียนเว็บบล็อก ตอนแรกจะเอา Exteen แต่กลัวจะเอา Exteen เลยเอาของผู้ร่วม อย่างนี้ มี Blog ที่ Blogger
• แจก account ให้กับคนรู้จักที่ไว้ใจได้ และส่งต่อให้ไปเป็นทอด ๆ ตอนเขียนอย่าใส่ข้อมูลที่สาวกถึง
• เขียนในภาษาอังกฤษ!

เขียนมาถึงตรงนี้ หลายคนคงรู้ว่า หมายถึง 19sep.blogspot.com"
```

[I told [the co-founder] what to do (Too bad I did not keep chat log) as follows:

- register a new email account that cannot be tracked.
- use this new email to register a new blog. At first, we thought about using Exteen [a local Thai blog service]. But we were afraid that it would bring trouble to our friend (the blog service owner). So we decided to use a foreign service, ending up with Blogger.
- send this account to trustworthy people and let them distribute as snowball. When writing, do not put any information that can be tracked.
- write in English.

After this point, many people would know that I mean 19sep.blogspot.com] (Blog)
4.4 We give courage to each other

Definition: A group or many people encourage oneself to seek and share information (i.e., fame; popularity)

Sample:
“I can’t recall exactly, but it was really fun to follow events as they happened—especially when I knew people were checking back to my site constantly. That night I was expecting the internet would be cut off (by the military) at some point so I wanted to make sure I had as much posted to be useful as possible.”

(Interview)
5. Time

Definition: The discussions about time-related issues or time-sensitive activities; The importance of time

Sample:
“I think it was good idea for the coup to be put into action late at night... less traffic and people to have to deal with, and when opponents would be at their lowest reaction point. By day, the army had announced a ’holiday’ was to be in effect... this kept many people from having to go to work or school.” (Blog)
Scheme: Insiders and outsiders

Description: The appearance of insiders’ and outsider’s doctrine in information behavior during the coup

1. The strength of insiders

Description: The privilege of access of information and knowledge is given to insiders

1.1 I know better because I am Thai

Definition: A perception that non-Thai would not understand the situation

Sample:

“As I always say to my non-Thai friends. Personally I don’t like the coup. But this coup, it’s apparently the last choice. My friend in Denmark told me that their Minister called us ”banana republic” :-P But they never walked in our shoes, They never know. There’re so many factors. Not just one word that’s called ‘Democracy’ ”

(Photo comment)
1.2 I know better because I see it

*Definition:* A perception that one who was in Bangkok had a privileged access of information and knowledge

*Sample:

“After the coup on Sep 19th, tonight I was drove around bangkok downtown to see and feel an atmosphere of the coup, one sentence I can explain about bangkok now is “Nothing to worried about”. People can go where they’re wanna go, no curfew, just only martial law is active, but as I told you “Nothing to worried about”. The situation in bangkok no is same as before the coup.”

(Photo description)

“I wish I was living in Thailand right now. I look at pictures of people posing with next to tanks in downtown bangkok and I can’t help but think how much cooler Thai politics are than American or Japanese politics.”

(Blog)
2. The strength of outsiders

*Description:* The privilege of access to information and knowledge is given to outsiders

2.1 Insiders relied on outsiders as information sources

*Definition:* People (both Thais and non-Thais) in Thailand had to rely on sources outside Thailand

*Sample:*

“So last night like at 1:20 am I was awakened from my peaceful slumber to my ringing cell phone. I slipped out of bed looked at the number on the phone and thought maybe one of the students parents or something were calling. It was [student’s] mother. She’d just seen on the news that a military coup had taken over power in Thailand that there were tanks in Bangkok and that Americans would be moved out of the country... boy was that a crazy call to get in the middle of the night... I was disoriented some too....ahhhh!”

(Blog)

“เอาอีเมลไปลงทะเบียนเว็บบล็อก ตอนแรกจะเอา Exteen แต่กลัวว่าจะจากสมาชิก เลยเอาของที่เรื่องซึ่งมาลงอีเมลของ Blogger”

[Use this new email to register a new blog. At first, we thought about using Exteen [a local Thai blog service]. But we were afraid that it would bring trouble to our friend (the blog service owner). So we decided to use a foreign service, ending up with Blogger.]

(Blog)
3. Conversion paradigm

_Description_: The discussion about roles of converted members (i.e., insiders-out and outsider-in) as well as the strengths and weaknesses

### 3.1 Seeking out converted members

_Deaninition_: Absolute insiders and absolute outsiders sought help from converted members in terms of access and sharing information

_Sample:_

“A day after the coup d'état in Thailand, the situation is becoming clearer to distant observers. Local political observers are saying that the coup was predictable and should have been seen by Thaksin, the PM of Thailand. I can’t see how this is going to help Thailand in the short term but the problems of corruption were widespread. During my own visits to Thailand I always heard about corruption but it was not clear to me who was orchestrating it or where the money flowed.

(Excerpt from other unidentified source)

Are there any [blog] readers in Thailand who have some local information? It’s a shame to see this happen again so any feedback from the region would be well appreciated.”

(Blog)
3.2 Pretend to be the other side

Definition: Insiders pretended to be outsiders and vice versa

Sample:

‘‘At the beginning, I wanted it to be a center point of information about the coup. I pretended that I was Thai living abroad during that time who would have stronger desire to have information than local Thai. However, later on, 19sep was turned into a speaker to foreigners; letting them know that Thailand is still fine. Don’t panic.’’

(Blog)
3.3 Outsider: You should listen to me

*Definition:* Outsiders give reasons why others should listen to them

*Sample:*

“I know that might seem a little of out of place because I’m obviously not Thai. but several years ago I dated a very nice Thai girl who was over here in US to get her MBA. and we were very serious about each other, for a while. and she flew back east and she met my parents. and I took off a couple of week and went and flew to Thailand so that I can meet her family. and it was very nice experience. let me tell you that country is a very beautiful country. and the people over there for the most part are so very nice. They’re called the land of smile. Now I know that it’s just the slogan from the tourism department, but it really is true that people are extremely friendly.

That’s not to say that they are perfect people. They are things about their culture that I don’t particularly care for. I’m not a big fan of their unwritten class system. I don’t particularly like the fact that they talk bad about people behind their backs quite a bit. And the level of corruption that they accept as a way of life particularly is saddening to me. But that’s not to say that my country, United States is any example of how to be. I understand that every country every culture has good and bad people and I understand that good people make mistakes and sometimes do bad things. But on the whole I found Thailand, the Thai people, to be extraordinarily friendly and warm and caring and all around with great people. I think that’s why it’s particularly saddening to me so much. The reason of the event with the coup by the army.

I understand that the Thai history is filled with coup....”

*(Video transcript)*
Appendix E: Samples of Memo-notes

Title: Searching and aggregating photos

(Dec 9, 2009 4:09PM)
My first impression from browsing through the collection of photos focuses on the joyful expression. Most of the photos uploaded on Flickr show positive attitude. It would be interesting to investigate how the metaphor of the coup to many people (e.g., as a life saver, as a festival, as a tank show). Foreign travelers seemed to enjoy taking photos with tanks, soldiers, and guns. Photos of kids are everywhere! It looks like a time for celebration.

(Dec 10, 2009 3:58PM)
People copied photos from news agency and posted them on their Flickr accounts. Therefore, it is easy to find redundant photos. ([AbsoluteInsider23]’s and [AbsoluteInsider24]’s collections are nearly identical!) Most interestingly, they even copyrighted these photos. :)

(Dec 15, 2009 5:57PM)
There were few photos replaced or updated. Why did they do that?

(Dec 22, 2009 2:14 PM)
There seems to be four types of photos based on the source. 1. captured from TV 2. computer screen capture (website, MSN) 3. photos from other news source (e.g., AP) 4. photos taken by themselves (eyewitness)

Everytime I refresh the search result pages, the number of photos is never consistent. There were 931, 933, 951, 954 photos variably. This time I got only 819 photos. I am not sure why? Maybe it is because of the performance of the index. I have to refresh
pages a couple of times before getting the data.

Searching for photos taken by cameraphones:

I used cellphone brands (e.g., Nokia, Samsung) as keywords to search using query in NVivo. There are not that much but they don’t look any different from photos taken by digital cameras.
Title: Importing photos to NVivo

(Dec 13, 2009)

1. What if title does not mean anything (e.g., automatically generated from a camera), should I still collect it?
      Yes, keep it. At least it might be able to tell the sequence of the photos (e.g., DSC0978, DSC0979, DSC0982).

2. It would be nice if Nvivo could some way to import image/video and description at the same time automatically.

3. It would be nice if Nvivo could detect redundant items (photos, videos, text).
Title: Just for the coup

(Feb 5, 2010 3:56PM)

People created a new account particularly to build a space to express about the coup (e.g., Flickr account, YouTube account, collaborative iBlog). The purposes can be interpreted in three ways. The first one may be for organization and presentation of the content (i.e., grouping the documents together). The second is for security reason. So a new account could be liked to the author/creator. The last one is to reach out to people because the new accounts tend to have some sort of pointer to the coup (e.g., 19sep06, coupthailand, patiwat, etc.)
(Jan 30, 2009)

On Flickr, there are a number of photos stating that it was taken on September 20, 2006 but uploaded on September 19, 2006.

It was quite confusing at first. However, it is possible that EXIF on the camera records the time in Thailand after 11:59PM of September 19, 2006 while it was still 11:59am of September 19 in the USA, EST.
Title: Voice from outsiders: You should listen to me

(Jan 22, 2009)

People were trying to convince or reach out others by relating oneself to Thailand or people before sharing his/her information. This phenomenon seems to be common amongst outsiders who commented on blog posts, photos, and videos. Here are some interesting reasons.

“I just got back from Thailand yesterday.”

“You know that my mom lives in Thailand.”

“I have lived and worked in Thailand for many years.”

“I have studied Thailand for many years.” “I follow Thai politics”

And the best one so far: “I dated a Thai girl back in 2005. I went to Thai and visited her parent.”
Appendix F:

Thailand: Political & Information Infrastructure

This appendix provides background information about the political system of Thailand from historical, sociological, and democratic perspectives. To construct the political worldview of the Thai people in general, two approaches are used: chronology and typology. Basically, the chronological approach follows the political history of Thailand, while the typological one synthesizes the main attributes of political institutions in Thailand. Furthermore, there are various perspectives that help provide a context for the coup more broadly than the moment when the military seized power, including the disruption of mass media and the role of information and communication technologies (ICT).

It is essential to note that this chapter serves two different purposes. Firstly, it aims to provide insights on how Thai people construct their political worldview. This is probably a brief introduction to Thai politics for those readers who might not be familiar with the Thailand political system. Secondly, this chapter provides the researcher’s political knowledge and perceptions toward the political system of Thailand. Therefore, for those who are familiar with Thai politics or Thai readers, this chapter can be used to evaluate the trustworthiness of this study based on bias that pertains to the researcher.

Political history of Thailand

From absolute monarchy to Thai-style democracy

It is quite domestically conventional to divide the history of Thailand chronologically into four periods based on empires, kingdoms, and dynasties: Sukhothai (1237-1488), Ayutthaya (1350-1767), Thonburi (1767-1782), and Rattanakosin (1782-Present). However, some scholars believe the post-absolute monarchy period (since 1932) can be classified
as a separate contemporary period.

The political history of Thailand began with an absolute monarch. During the Sukhothai period (1238-1488), the oldest period during which the kingdom was ruled by an ethnically Thai person (see also Syam-anada, 1971, p.1-14), the kingdom was mostly about art, culture, religion and peace (Gosling, 1991). Thai alphabets were invented in this period, around 1283 (Jumsai, 1970). The kings had close relationships with the populace. Since the kingdom was small, the King himself could attend to all complaints raised by citizens.

The politics during Ayutthaya, the next and longest period, were about establishing the empire and consolidating and protecting territory. There were evidently 46 wars, averaging one every nine years in this era (Samudavanija, 1987b). Bureaucratic values were rising as well as the prosperity brought about by commerce. The king’s authority and power, according to Girling (1981), was distributed through noblemen. As the French royalist described, during the late Ayutthaya period, “in the Indies there is no state that is more monarchical than Siam.” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005) The distinguished social status was primarily categorized into two groups: noblemen and their families, and the mass who surrendered some or all of their labor to the elites. “Entry into the official ranks was a noble preserve. Families presented their sons at court, where they were enrolled as pages. Ascent up the ladder of success then depended on personal skill, family connections and royal favour.” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.15)

The next period, Thonburi, was the recovery period from Burmese occupation. However, the span of this period was quite short (1767-1782). A coup ended King Taksin’s reign, the only king in this period, and transitioned to the present era, known as Rattanakosin (Bangkok), ruled by the Chakri dynasty. It is apparent that the early Chakri dynasty restored Ayutthaya traditions, including the divides between elites and slaves, and the hereditary administration and bureaucracy.

The traditional polity started to decline during the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV). Ideologies from western countries were increasingly adopted among elites, primarily to
defend the country from colonization. The essential reformation of the country occurred after the accession of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The period was characterized by a modernization of the country’s infrastructure, in areas such as commerce, education, transportation, communication, public administration, and the legal system. This transformation also included a cultural shift, especially later during King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) period, affecting architecture, literature, performing arts, and history. In addition, King Rama V proclaimed the end of slavery by ruling that nobody born from that date forward could sell himself or be sold into slavery. The noble status was also transformed to a service rank (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005). The notion of the centralized and unified nation-state was introduced in this period, however, with the force of authority.

The next milestone in Thailand’s politics was the fall of the absolute monarchy in 1932 (Stowe, 1991), which marked the beginning of the democratization of Thailand. It was the People’s Party (Khana Ratsadorn) that initiated the bloodless revolution, during King Prachatipok’s reign. There were about a hundred members of the Party, over half in the armed force. Most of them were educated in Europe. King Prachatipok announced the first constitution. The first prime minister of Thailand was Phraya Manopakorn Nithithada. However, the conflict between the liberals and compromised royalists caused another coup in June 1933, a year after the revolution by the liberals, followed by yet another coup attempt by royalists in October 1933. The king seemed to be uncomfortable with the political climate and the proposed solution by the coup leaders. He then announced his abdication, while seeking medical treatment in Europe.

The years after the revolution saw rivalry over the control of the nation-state among militarists, royalists, and liberals with the interventions of World War II. At the same time, the economic recession due to the war provoked workers to begin street demonstrations and unionization. The liberals used this mass politics as an experiment, while the militarists cooperated with communist intellectuals to deliver propaganda through newspapers. In June 1946, King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VII) was shot and found dead in his bedroom in the palace. His apparent assassination remains unexplained to the
public until today. Pridi Panomyong, the leader of the liberals, was blamed for the assassination by royalist politicians. He was arrested and eventually executed. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King Ananda’s younger brother, succeeded him to the throne.

It is worth noting that there were two coups during the period after the death of King Ananda and before the return of King Bhumibol after completing his education in Switzerland. The first one was in November 1947 by royalist politicians. The reason given was ”to uphold the honour of the army, to clarify the royal assassination plot, and to install a government...” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.142) The second coup was on November 26, 1951, the eve of the King’s return. This coup, also known as the Silent or Radio Coup, was initiated by militarists. The justification of the coup was to purge communists from the parliament and Cabinet.

After the accession to the throne of King Bhumibol, there were many consequences of note. Beginning with the American era during the early period of King Bhumibol’s reign (1940-1960s), the United States, an ally after World War II, was allowed to use Thailand as a military base during the Cold War (i.e. the Korean, Indochina, and Vietnam Wars), which opened the door for economic development in Thailand. The Thai economy was growing rapidly with the exploitation of natural resources and labor. However, it was still elites and urban people who benefited from the development. Thai armed forces received tremendous support from the US, gaining political power and bringing a military dictatorship to Thailand. In addition, the US had a strong political influence. Apparently the major political decisions in the country, including the two coups led by Sarit Thanarat and Phao Sriyanon, were supported by the US. The Thai military was strengthened by the aid money from the US. The role of the monarchy was restored. People from rural areas began to migrate to urban areas.

American influence was not only about economic development, but also led to a conflict of political ideologies. Baker and Phongpaichit (2005, p.167) point out that “[i]n Thailand, the US underwrote dictatorship, but at home it exemplified ideals of liberalism and republicanism... Opposition to neo-colonialism, military dictatorship, and
rapid capitalist exploitation also looked for inspiration both backwards into Thailand’s pre-American past and outwards to American’s Cold War rivals.” The leftists, who were influenced by Maoism and Marxism, gathered to form the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). The CPT formed guerrilla troops that fought with the government in the 1960s and 1970s. Another form of rebellion opposing military dictatorship was brought about by college students in urban areas. The right gained strength through the Nawaphon group and the Village Scouts with strong support from the military. Eventually there was a confrontation between soldiers and student demonstrators on October 14, 1973 and another encounter between rightists and students on October 6, 1976. Eventually the military gained its power back. However, the political situation afterward was not stable. There were two successful coups, and another attempt, during 1977 and 1980. All of them were the result of the fight over “the spoils of power and the direction of policy.” (p.196) In addition, as a result of the crises, the role of the monarchy was revived.

The next era (1980-1988) saw the rise of another group of military men, who mostly came from mid-rank officers and Democratic Soldiers, also known as “Young Turks”. General Prem Tinasulanond was revered by the group and became Prime Minister. However, Prem’s leadership did not depend only on military support. He also had a close relationship with the monarchy. Therefore, the role of the monarchy in government was bolstered during this period. In addition, discourse on democracy began to influence policy. However, there was no commitment to full representation of democracy in any of the eight years of Prem’s government. The major ministries were still allotted to militarists, while a number of MPs were trusted technocrats and elected constituents. At the same time, businessmen increased their influence over various political parties, especially those parties operating at a provincial level. At the end of the “Premocracy” period, the military came under attack by the press and political parties over issues with the national budget. Prem was pressured to retire at the 1988 election.

Chatichai Choonhawan was elected as the next prime minister. Although his personal
background was military, his affiliations rather leaned toward diplomatic and business interests. Along with rapid economic growth, it seems that the government had a larger financial stake than ever. Ministers were suspected of corruption and inadequate budget allocations. At the same time, the role of the military in governance declined. This situation led to the 1991 coup commanded by the generals from the Armed Forces Academy’s Preparation Class Five claiming to clean up the corruption in Chatichai’s government. However, during the interim period, people seemed to be suspicious the spoil of power and resources of the coup leader. The draft of constitution was questionable. The junta later formed a political party in which a number of Chatichai’s MPs attended. The party won the election in March 1992 and brought the coup leader back. The protest, also known as the mobile phone mob, was arranged and largely supported by urban middle class. The demonstration led to another outbreak of violence between soldiers and civil protestors. The king, once again, intervened in the situation. The military seemed to disappear from the forefront of the political arena, although it still “resisted in internal change or greater supervision.” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.246)

The crisis in 1992 opened a lot of room for businessmen and activists (including academics) in the Thai political sphere. Although both groups had different interests, they were able to compromise on a reform political agenda of stabilizing the political system and sustaining the country in the context of globalization. The new constitution was ratified in 1994, introducing a variety of administrative mechanisms including an Election Commission, National Counter Corruption Commission, Constitutional Court, National Human Rights Commission, as well as decentralizing democratic power by granting certain control mechanisms to local administrations.

The economic crisis in 1997 brought the country to another political challenge. Businessmen and the middle class blamed politicians for mismanagement and staged demonstrations in favor of reforming the constitution. As a result, the cabinet, led by Chawalit Yongchayiyut, had to resign. The Democrat Party formed an alliance with other parties
and technocrats to set up a government without an election. However, the administration of the Democrat party could not lessen the deepening economic crisis. Chuan, prime minister at that time, turned the economic crisis into a political opportunity to reform Thai politics, campaigning for the need for good governance (Bunbongkarn, 1999). Thus, during 1997 there was another constitutional reform attempt to stabilize the parliamentary system as well as increase the role of monitoring mechanisms.

It was Thaksin Shinawatra, then the country’s most successful telecommunications entrepreneur, who saw an opportunity to rise politically. He launched a new political party name Thai Rak Thai (Thai Love Thai: TRT). The party got support from various powerful business groups who survived the crisis. Also, he appealed to small and medium business people with his personal style, which differentiated him from the previous government. In addition, a number of NGOs and rural activists helped to formulate campaign strategies to attract villagers and the poor. Thaksin apparently spent enormous amounts of money on his campaign. The party, eventually, won the 2001 election by a landslide, taking nearly half of the seats in the house.

**From Political Tension to the 2006 Coup D’État**

After elected as the 23rd prime minister of Thailand, it was hoped that Thaksin Shinawatra would repair the economic crisis. His social agendas, also criticized as populist programs, were rapidly implemented right after he assumed office (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2005; Hewison, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005; McCargo, 2001). These included a debt relief program for the rural poor, village funds (one million baht per village), and a 30-baht-a-visit program to cover medical expenses. Thaksin’s government delivered “more of its promises than its supporters expected; polls after the election showed that many voters believed [Thai Rak Thai’s] platform was too good to be true.” (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004)

---

2Thaksin’s political party. The transliteration of the name is Thais Love Thais.
Politically, Thaksin’s position as prime minister was very strong. His strength being supported by three major factors, according to Phongpaichit and Baker: support from the reformed 1997 constitution, the scale of his victory at the election, and his personal popularity.

The fact that there were so many political parties in the election arena caused some concerns and raised issues regarding the transparency and stability of the political system. Historically no elected party in history had ever taken as large a majority of votes. Therefore, a leading party, according to a number of elected MPs, would have to have sought alliances from other small parties to set up a government. The practice resulted in negotiations that used money to secure minister positions. As a result, none of the cabinets, prior to Thaksin’s government, ever finished a four-year term of administration, mostly due to alleged corruption scandals and pressure by the press. The 1997 constitution aimed to solve such issues, by favoring a two-opposing-political party system. The 1997 constitution reform attempted to stabilize the politics by decreasing the power of no-confidence votes for the cabinet and prime minister. However, because of the landslide victory of the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party in 2001, a number of small parties dissolved themselves to join TRT, leaving only one party in opposition. Thus, the monitoring of the opposition faction in the parliament became very weak.

The way in which Thaksin made promises to end the economic crisis and help the poor earned him a lot of support during his first term of administration. In addition, his open-and-intimate style of communication touched people, especially those who were from rural areas. On the very first day of his administration, Thaksin spent some time talking to leaders of the Assembly of the Poor’s years-long protest. The protest was later temporarily dissolved. Moreover, Thaksin launched his weekly radio program to communicate with the people. A number of polls indicated that his popularity sharply increased. As such, he decided to continue his government for another term as indicated by his slogan “four years of repair, and four years of construction.” Phongpaichit and Baker (2004)
The Thaksin style of economic management was widely known as *Thaksinomics* (e.g., Looney, 2004; Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004). Aeusrivongse (2002, para.1) defined Thaksinomics as a situation in which “the government bestows patronage on its affiliated crony capitalist groups on the one hand and garners support from the lower classes by increasing their economic power on the other.” Phongpaichit and Baker (2004, p.129) further commented that “Thaksinomics approaches the national economy as a bundle of resources to be managed to deliver a higher profit. . . . The keys to raising profit are better skills and better infrastructure but, especially, more entrepreneurship to exploit the potential of resources available.” The ultimate goal of his approach was the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP). It was apparent that the GDP growth rate rose impressively during his period, about 6.7 percent in 2003. Instead of following the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s advice, Thaksin managed the economy according to his own style, apparently by viewing Thailand as a company, and eventually paid off all of the IMF loans in 2003, two years ahead of schedule. His success was internationally recognized, especially by leaders of neighboring countries.

Thaksin was reelected to a second term in February 2005. At that time Thai Rak Thai won more than half of the total seats (377 out of 500). Rather than stabilizing his administrative position, it was instead the beginning of his political downfall. Thaksin’s popularity and success turned into a double edged sword. The large majority of MPs in the coalition should have strengthened the position of the government. However, it caused concerns about the role of parliament since public objections to policy or ministers’ conduct would be less likely to be effective in the parliament (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.95).

In addition, Thaksinomics posed numerous risks to the economy as perceived by academics (e.g., Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.130–133). His populist policies had been widely criticized as a device for political purposes. For instance the 30 baht per medical visit policy seemed to be untenable, causing operational issues (p.93–94).

By attempting to reach people directly, his relationship with NGOs became sour
as there was evidence that the government attempted to persuade foreign sponsors of Thai NGOs to withdraw support. He derided NGOs as dishonest and disloyal for their acceptance of support from foreigners. His proposals to solve issues were then rejected by people who were affected by government projects (i.e., dam construction). The protesters returned and confronted police posing concerns for the National Human Rights Commission and the Senate.

Thaksin’s War on Drugs program, launched in 2003, became controversial. Even though the anti-drug agenda was generally supported by the public, its violent implementation caused a huge negative public reaction. Thaksin threatened to withdraw officials who failed in the campaign as he thought that officials and policemen were involved in drug dealing. On the other hand, there were also incentives for each arrest. 329,000 names were listed and targeted to be arrested within three months (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.161). During the three month period of the campaign, 2,637 people were killed and 68 were officially reported as being shot by police in self defense (p.162). A major contributor to the death toll was the practice of criminals killing their own accomplices to evade arrest. The campaign was roundly criticized by international agencies such as the United Nations and the foreign press.

The government handling of the insurgency in the South of Thailand also unsettled the public. The violence in the South, particularly in the three southern-most provinces (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) where the majority of the population is Muslim, began in 2001 and increased throughout Thaksin’s period. Hundreds of people were killed, most of them were bystanders. A number of scholars believe that the issue was historically rooted in a political and cultural conflict between residents and the government, which resulted in regional separatism (e.g., Nguyen, 2008; Albritton, 2008). Some suspected the ideological influence of foreign terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiya (Nguyen, 2008, p.5). At the beginning of his period, Thaksin declared on his radio program that he did not believe in these causes. He instead believed that it was
about local politics (Shinawatra, 2007). The government declared the State of Emergency Decree in those areas and set up a special committee. In the end the committee criticized Thaksin’s policy, citing ineffective policing and the arrest of innocent people, which engendered further distrust among residents (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.161).

The worst criticism of Thaksin leveled by the media and academia was that his style of internal administration had turned into dictatorship, especially for his threats to academics and journalists who criticized him and the government (e.g., Winichakul, 2008). Tejapira (2006a, p.230) stated that Thaksin’s regime was an “elected capitalist absolutism.” In addition, he tried to control the media in a variety of ways. Siriyuvasak (2007) pointed out that during Thaksin’s term there were numerous measures (i.e., business, legal, technical, political) to intervene in the operation of the mass media. In 2002, Thaksin bought ITV, an independent TV stations during the economic crisis. Under the administration of the government, there were also two TV stations under Thaksin’s control, MCOT (Channel 9) and Television of Thailand (now NBT). He also had investments in other types of media such as newspaper and entertainment businesses.

A political television program, Muang Thai Rai Sup Da [Weekly Thailand], was canceled from the station’s schedule due to an inappropriate reference to the monarchy according to the Mass Communication Office of Thailand (MCOT) (Ch 9 drops Sondhi…, 2005). Thailand Weekly was hosted by Sondhi Limthongkul, an owner of Manager Media Group. After the cancellation, Sondhi vowed to continue his program weekly at Thammasat University and Lumpini Park and began attacking Thaksin and his government. The audiences grew steadily. Sondhi later set up a new satellite channel to gain mass support.

Thaksin and his government were accused of corruption on the basis of many incidents. For instance, Thaksin granted multi-million baht loans to Myanmar to initiate telecommunications projects. Obviously the projects would hugely benefit his telecommunications business. It is important to note that Thaksin’s business owned major communication infrastructure in Thailand, including paging service, cellular network,
Cable TV, Internet, and satellites. The business has apparently expanded to neighbor
countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

Another major issue came up over corruption in the Suvarnabhumi Airport project,
a new international airport. Media discovered irregularities in the acquisition of the
baggage scanning machines. Thaksin was pressured to remove the Minister of Trans-
portation.

Nevertheless, the situation reached its peak when Thaksin and his family members
sold a multi-billion baht business to Temasak Holding, a Singapore government-owned
corporation, without paying taxes.

All around, the criticism of his alleged conduct was growing. Sondhi formed an
alliance with other anti-Thaksin activists called People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD).
Another of the founders of PAD was Chamlong Srimuang, who was also the leader of the
demonstrations against the military government in 1992 (McCargo, 1997). Chamlong
previously had a close relationship with Thaksin. He actually invited Thaksin to join
his political party in 1994 (McCargo & Pathmanand, 2005). However, Chamlong began
mass protests when there were attempts to list alcohol producers in the stock market
(Pathmanand, 2008). In addition, Chamlong also adamantly opposed Thaksin’s policy
on bringing monies that were out of the mainstream market, mostly from gambling, into
the system by legalizing those businesses.

Thaksin eventually announced the dissolution of parliament on February 24, 2006 ex-
pecting this measure to minimize the pressure from media and demonstrators. However,
his decision to arrange the next election in two months resulted in a boycott from other
political parties, since it was too rushed and seen as technique to eliminate competi-
tion. Additionally, it was claimed that he would use the election to legitimate himself.
During Thaksin’s campaign for the election, the PAD was also getting stronger in terms
of demonstrations and its mobilization of the crowd. At the same time, people who
supported Thaksin began to demonstrate.

The election results show that Thai Rak Thai, once again, dominated the election for
seats in the parliament. However, there were a large number of voters who chose the *no vote* option on the ballot. In the very next month (May 2006), the Constitutional Court revoked the election results, deciding that the ballots were set up inappropriately, and rescheduled a new election for October 15. Both pro- and anti-Thaksin demonstrations intensified. There were concerns that the groups might violently confront each other.

**Thailand 2006 Coup D’état**

The October 2006 election never occurred due to the military coup on September 19, 2006. The Royal Thai Army staged the coup while Thaksin was traveling to New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly. Thaksin had actually been out of the country for a week before the coup. During that period, the rumors about the coup were widely spread throughout news media (*Focus: Yonroy 11 won kon ja pen nayok re ron*, 2006). During his trip, he gave an interview in which he stated that he might give up his political career.

The military initially called themselves the “Council of Democratic Reform (CDR)”, changing to the “Council for National Security (CNS)” later on serving as advisory board to the interim government. The coup was led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, the commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army, who, a week prior to the coup, denied that the military would seize power (*Focus: Yonroy 11 won kon ja pen nayok re ron*, 2006). He admitted later that he and General Anupong Phaochinda had planned the coup for about seven months (*Namuan*, 2008). The military used government corruption and the need for national reconciliation as the main justification for staging the coup. In November 2006, the coup released a white paper providing the justifications of the coup (*Council of Democratic Reform*, 2006), including:

1. corruption and conflicts of interest,
2. abuse of power,
3. breaking the moral backbone and tarnishing the virtue of leadership,
4. intervening in the political and constitutional monitoring systems,

5. policy mistakes that breached human rights, and

6. destroying the unity of the nation and exposing it to risks and violence.

In addition, the coup also referred to the King’s speech, given to administrative court judges on April 25, 2006 (King Bhumibol Adulyadej, 2006), urging them to solve the crisis and move the country forward.

This coup resulted in the declaration of martial law nationwide, arrest of some of Thaksin’s allies, suspension of the constitution, dissolution of the Cabinet, banning of political gatherings, and controls on the media, especially television. By the late-evening of September 19, people throughout Bangkok began noticing tanks entering the city. The military mainly used the national television stations to control the situation. Major television stations replaced their own regular program with video footage of the royal family accompanied by patriotic songs. Around 10:20PM, Thaksin tried to declare a state of emergency via telephone on a government-owned national television station. However, the declaration was interrupted and returned to clips of the royal family. Around 11PM, the first announcement from the coup was displayed on all free-to-air television channels saying (Nelson, 2008):

At the moment, the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy, which is composed of the Commanders-in-Chief of the armed forces and the Commission-General of the Royal Police, has successfully taken control over Bangkok and its vicinity without meeting any resistance. So as to maintain peace and order in the nation, the Council seeks the cooperation of the public to remain calm and offers its apologies for any inconvenience caused.

The second announcement, aired about fifty minutes after the first announcement, explained the justification for and purposes of the coup. The first appearance of the coup leaders was not until around midnight (see also the chronology of the first two days from “Coup as it unfolds”, 2006). The coup leaders met the King at the palace seeking approval for the organization of the coup.

322
Later on the coup set up the National Legislation Assembly to review the constitution. It is apparent that the Assembly has been perceived as an elite group containing royalists, military commanders, and technocrats. Connors and Hewison (2008, p.2) suspected that the new constitution was intended “to allow the palace, the military and the bureaucracy to reassume a guardian role over the legislature that the 1997 Constitution had removed.” The leaders of the coup set up an interim government instead of taking control of the power themselves, nominating General Surayuth Chulanon, a member of Privy Council, to serve as prime minister.

The reactions of the Thai people to the coup are noteworthy. According to a national Suan Dusit poll (Chaleeuyssup, 2006), 84 percent of respondents agreed with the coup. Most of them believed that it would change the political climate in a positive direction. Peaceful images of people bringing food and flowers to armed soldiers and taking photos with tanks were highlighted in the national and international media. Both the media and scholars observed that this coup might be represented as a good coup (e.g., Connors & Hewison, 2008). A number of academics and thinkers asserted that the coup was necessary for the political development in Thailand (Boonmi, 2006; Pitsuwan, 2006). Some recalled the notion of Thai-style democracy to justify the coup (e.g., Kittiaras, 2006; Connors, 2007).

However, there were also people that disagreed with the coup, including those from pro-Thaksin groups. Pro-democracy activists began their campaigns to protest the coup. The pro-Thaksin and democracy activists later formed an alliance known as the Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship (DAAD). The group changed their name again, after the constitutional ratification vote, to the United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD). The common objectives of the UDD were the removal of the political power of militarists and royalists. International governments and organizations raised concerns about the coup as a threat to democratic stability (for instance, Commission, 2006). A number of scholars are concerned about the return of semi-democracy and military dictatorship (e.g., Pathmanand, 2008, p.138–9), even though the coup leaders repeatedly
expressed that they intended to relinquish power as soon as possible.

It seems that the coup itself could not relieve the political turmoil. Even after the coup relinquished its power, political tensions have persisted to the present. The election after the interim government in December 2007 brought Thaksin’s allies back into parliament causing the return of pro- vs. anti-Thaksin dilemma. The major event was when PAD demonstrators closed down the operation of two major international airports. The intervention of the judiciary ended two cabinets within a year. At the time of this writing, a new cabinet has been formed, led by the Democrat party, politically opposed to Thaksin’s allies. While the role of the PAD has dwindled, the UDD demonstrators seemed to be more active than ever. In April 2009, the demonstrators interrupted the ASEAN leaders’ Summit in Pattaya, Thailand by closing down major traffic spots in Bangkok. Eventually, the government declared a State of Emergency in response to confrontations between the protesters and the military.

Coup D’états in Thailand

The notion of coup d’état usually entails the use of force and violence to change political structures and constitutions. However, Xuto (1987) observes that the force has not often been used in Thai coups. Instead most Thai coup d’états only threaten to use force. History records twelve successful and eleven failed coups prior to the 2006 coup. Table F.1 shows the coups in Thai democratic history.

Table F.1: Coup d’états in Thailand from 1932–2006 (Suvarnajata, 1994).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Coup name</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Successful coups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>June 24, 1932</td>
<td>Khana Ratsadorn (The People’s Party)</td>
<td>military &amp; civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June 20, 1932</td>
<td>Khana Rattapraharn (Military Group coup)</td>
<td>military &amp; civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>November 8, 1947</td>
<td>Kana Taharn khong Chart (National Military Group coup)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table F.1: Coup d’états in Thailand from 1932–2006 (Suvarnajata, 1994).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Coup name</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>April 6, 1948</td>
<td>Khana Rattapraharn (Military Group coup)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>November 29, 1951</td>
<td>Khana Rattapraharn (Military Group coup)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>September 16, 1957</td>
<td>Khana Taharn (Military Group)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>October 20, 1958</td>
<td>Khana Patiwat (Revolutionary Group coup)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>November 17, 1971</td>
<td>Khana Patiwat (Revolutionary Group coup)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>October 14, 1973</td>
<td>People uprising</td>
<td>civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>October 6, 1976</td>
<td>Khana Pati-roop Karn Pok Krong Pan Din (National Administrative Reform Council)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>October 20, 1977</td>
<td>Khana Patiwat (Revolutionary Council)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>February 23, 1991</td>
<td>Khana Raksas Kwan Sa-ngob Reab Roi Hang Chart (National Peace Keeping Council)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>September 19, 2006</td>
<td>Khana Patiroop Karn Pok Krong nai Rabob Prachatipatai un mee Phra Maha Kasat Song Pen Pra muk (Council of Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy)</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Failed coups

1. October 11, 1933 | Kabot Bowaradet (Boworadet rebels) | military |
2. August 3, 1935 | Kabot Naisib (Sergeant rebels)       | military |
3. January 29, 1938 | Kabot Praya Song Suradet (Song Suradet rebels) | military |
4. February 28, 1948 | Kabot Bang-yak Din Dan (Separation rebels) Members of Parliament |
5. October 1, 1948 | Kabot Senathikarn (General Staff rebels) | military |
6. June 26, 1949 | Kabot Wang Luang (Grand Palace rebels) | civilian |
7. June 29, 1951 | Kabot Manhattan | military |
Table F.1: Coup d'états in Thailand from 1932–2006 (Suvarnajata, 1994).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Coup name</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>November 8, 1954</td>
<td>Kabot Santipharb</td>
<td>civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Manhattan rebels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 26, 1977</td>
<td>Kabot Yee Sib Hok Meena</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Peace Movement rebels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 1, 1981</td>
<td>Kabot Neung Mea-sa</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(March 26th rebels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>September 9, 1984</td>
<td>Kabot Kao Ganya</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(September 9th rebels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coup attempts happened about every three years on average including both successful and failed coups. As shown in Table F.1, the military is usually involved in coup d'états in Thailand, particular the army. Note that a coup normally becomes a legitimate coup group when the coup succeeds, whereas the failed coups are conventionally called rebellions (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.40). For failed coups the rebels were usually sentenced to jail, and most of them were eventually given royal pardons and returned to their previous jobs. Some even turned into professional politicians (p.41).

Suvarnajata (1994, p.77) indicates that the leaders of the most successful coup since 1932 were granted royal pardons for two main reasons: legitimacy of the coup via the King’s consent, and popular acceptance. Xuto (1987, p.203) observes that publicly anticipated coups tend to be more successful in Thailand, as opposed to the surprise ones.

Coup d’état has become a critical stage in the *vicious cycle of Thai politics*. The cycle illustrates the reality of the political system in Thailand as shown in Figure F.1.

The cycle emerges as a result of two types of politics: constitutional authoritarianism (usually adopted by a ruling group who are moderate, flexible, and careful to avoid confrontation), and constitutional democracy (Xuto, 1987, p.202). A number of students of Thai politics have attempted to intervene in the cycle to transform it into an ideal
Despite the rarity of bloodless coups in other countries (Hebditch & Connor, 2008, p.32), Xuto (1987, p.202) indicates that Thai coups are typically swift and peaceful, often without any fighting or casualties. However, confrontations usually took place when the authoritarians noticeably turned to totalitarians, which usually resulted during the transition out of the coup periods.

It is usually expected that coup makers intend to seize power for themselves and assume the leadership of the government personally. However, there have been a number of coups in Thailand, including the 2006 coup, after which the military set up a figurehead government. There seem to be three major justifications for such action: 1) the military intends to demonstrate that they did not seek power for their own, 2) the coup makers seek legitimation by requesting a royal pardon through the figurehead government, and 3) the government is used as an intermediary to avoid confrontations and conflicts (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.20).

Even though the 2006 coup set up an interim civilian government, it is still commonly perceived that the military took advantage of the situation. For instance, Pathmanand (2008) observes that the military budget and personnel got a boost during that period. In addition, a number of officers obtained executive appointments to various state agencies and enterprises. Most of them are telecommunications- and transportation-related
organizations. In addition, during the coup period, the budget allocation to the Armed Forces increased by 34 percent (Cropley, 2007).

Political systems and institutions in Thailand

It is apparent that the Thai political system is rather complex and unique. As mentioned above, a number of scholars have attempted to adapt the notion of democracy into a specifically Thai style of democracy. The idea of adapting democracy into the Thai political system was mentioned as early as the end of King Rama V’s period. Baker and Phongpaichit (2005) note that King Chulalongkorn ordered Vajiravudh, later King Rama VI, to set up a parliamentary system before he died. After 77 years of attempting to integrate a democratic system into Thai society, the issue of whether or not Thailand is suited for democracy is still debated in Thai society. For example, Boonmi (2007 cited in Winichakul, 2008) argues that Thai politics should not follow the example of Western countries. Rather it should be based on Thai intellectuals and culture. Laothamatas (2006 Winichakul, 2008) points out that electoral and parliamentary democracy that is suitable for Thailand should respect intellectuals and the monarchy.

The Thai political system can be described as an electoral, parliamentary, and constitutional government with the King as a head of state. The executive branch is led by Prime Minister who is nominated and elected by the House of Representatives. The prime minister sets up a cabinet consisting of 36 ministers responsible for 19 ministries and the office of Prime Minister. The parliament of Thailand, a legislative branch, has two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives consists of 480 elected members: 400 through single constituency elections and 80 elected through proportional representations of political party membership. The Senate contains 150 members. Seventy six of them were elected from each of the provinces, while the rest were nominated and selected by a selection committee. It is notable that
since 1932 all 150 members of the senate were selected by the monarchy. Until the constitutional change in 1997, the whole upper house was elected by province. The National Legislature Assembly, appointed by the coup in 2006, changed the constitution to the current system of senate selection. In addition to the executive and legislative branches there is also a judicial branch that is independent from the other two.

Besides the parliamentary system, Thai politics also includes various other institutions, which hold different values and power in the society.

“Nation, Religion, and Monarchy” (Chart, Satsana, Phramahakasat) is the patriotic slogan coined by King Vajiravudh shortly after his accession, to propagate the “devotion to Fatherland, Nation, and [the] Holy Religion as a focus for Thai unity.” Baker and Phongpaichit (2005) assert that the slogan was derived from “God, King, and Country” metaphor. The slogan was revived by the 1947 coup, strongly emphasized under the Sarit regime, and it has since become the “watchword of the post-1976 coup regimes.” Girling, 1981, p.139) Article 69 of the 2007 constitution states that “[e]very person shall have the duty to uphold the nation, religion, the King, and the democratic form of government with the King as head of the state under this constitution.” In addition, the Thai flag was changed during Vajiravudh’s period in order to respond to the theme above. Thus, the colors of the flag represent these three elements: red is Nation, white is Religion, and blue is King.

Nation-state

The red color of the flag represents the life-blood of ancestors dedicated to the construction and protection the country. The notion of nation-state was originally established, primarily, to protect the country from western colonization during King Vajiravudh’s reign. However, the discourse surrounding the national identity of Thailand began in earnest after the revolution of 1932 under the government of Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkram. With foreign support, especially from other Asian countries, Marshal
Pibulsongkram became a nationalistic-minded leader propagating national reconstruction and attempting to monopolize the national identity.

In 1939, Marshal Plaek changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand. The justification of name-change was to represent actual racial origins and the popular practice of Thai people. It is worth noting that Thailand is a diverse country, especially in terms of ethnicity. The name change has been criticized to mostly benefit the ruling elite, who spoke Thai, “to instill pride and equality with the West in the country’s citizenry.” (Anderson, 1978, p.212 cited in C. J. Reynolds, 2006, p.248) In addition, the fact that the word “Thai” also means “free” was significant during the colonial period. The debate over using “Siam” versus “Thailand” has continued until today (Chachavalpongphun, 2009).

Along with the name-change, Pibulsongkram also changed the national flag, national anthem, and royal anthem. He also discouraged the use of various terms that reflected segmentation in the country (e.g., northern Thais, northeastern Thais, southern Thais, and Islamic Thais) (C. J. Reynolds, 2002, p.5). His propaganda also included support for the domestic economy. Later on in his regime, prescriptions for everyday were also mandated, for instance using the official national language, dressing properly (in more Western style), engaging in healthy and productive activities, visiting art museums, banning the custom of chewing betel, and even mandating the use of the phrase “sawasdee” in greetings. C. J. Reynolds (2002, p.6–7) points out that Pibulsongkram’s regime aspired to what was called “civilization”, including the cultivation of “the value of enterprise, propriety, decorum, self-reliance, valour, and purity.” However, some scholars believe that the attempt to prescribe national uniformity indicates the real heterogeneity of Thai society (C. J. Reynolds, 2002).

Pibulsongkram’s regime laid out the discussion of what constitutes “Thainess” in the sense of national identity. In addition to international forces, national ideology was also a major factor. For example, communism became legally recognized as “un-Thai” during the Cold War period. C. J. Reynolds (2002) discusses various factors
that could determine the boundary of the nation-state of Thailand, including history, the country’s name, monarchy, language, ethnicity, and Buddhism. The relationship between the military and nationalism have also become intertwined since the notion of national security and peacekeeping has so often been used to seek justification of the military’s operations (including coups).

Peacekeeping, derived from the patriotic sense, also bears the meaning of unity (samakkhi). The theme was created in King Chulalongkorn’s era to strengthen the state and the foundation of the country (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.105). During Pridi’s government, he urged Thai people “to love the nation and preserve the constitution” by using unity as a justification. It is apparent that unity is among the most often highlighted themes addressed by King Bhumibol and other royal family members, referred to as a necessary moral principal for the survival of the country. Note that seeking unity was also used as a justification for the 2006 coup.

Above all, nationalism in the context of Thailand is centered on the notion of loyalty, especially to the monarchy. As Baker and Phongpaichit (2005, p.107) point out, “[n]ationalism and royalism were identical: ‘loyalty to the King is identical with loving the nation because the King is the representative of the nation’. The duty of the ordinary people was only to be unified, obedient, and grateful, to the point of self-sacrifice.” A number of appropriate “Thai” customs, before the Pibulsongkram’s Cultural Mandates, were diffused from the palace. Siwalak (1987) indicates that the prescription of cultural norms during Pibulsongkram’s regime was driven by royalists’ concerns. In 1981, during the early Prem administration, the National Identity Board was established primarily to preserve and promote Thai culture. The board used mass media, including TV, radio, and newspapers, to propagate Thai culture. It also created numerous publications regarding various topics such as local events, the royal family’s biographies and activities, and Buddhist’s special occasions. It also identified six major components of Thai identity including: 1) territory, 2) people, 3) independence and sovereignty, 4) government and administration, 5) culture, and 6) pride (C. J. Reynolds, 2002, p.15).
One of the common criticisms of this conceptualization of Thai nationalism is that the hegemonic influence was distributed from ruling class and state institutions through various techniques such as education, forces, and reproduction (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Winichakul, 2008). C. Reynolds (1987) suggests the adoption of the theory of false consciousness to investigate how Thai populations adopted the idea of national identity. However, a new form of nationalism came to attention when the economic crisis struck the country in 1997. Phongpaichit and Baker (2004, p.76) describe how a number of new organizations were set up to oppose IMF policies claiming that IMF policy was another means to economic colonization. The theme was transmitted to mass media and politicians. It seemed likely that Thaksin found his way to use nationalism to contribute to his political rise. His party name, Thai Rak Thai, was resonant of the theme of national defense (p.78). Thus, it is perceived that the new nationalism was no longer about opposition to a racial or territorial enemy. Rather, the true enemy of the nation apparently was capitalist. Phongpaichit and Baker (2004) state that the conceptualization of nationalism during Thaksin’s period was influenced by Greenfeld’s Spirit of Capitalism (2001). Thaksin cited nationalism as a primary mechanism for solving economic problems. Phongpaichit and Baker (2004) also level the criticism that in the later term of his administration, the enemy of the nation, in Thaksin’s view, seemingly expanded to any foreign journalists or United Nations agencies that made negative comments about him or his administration.

Religion

It is well known that Thailand is dominated by Buddhism. According to National Statistical Office (2000), about 94 percent of Thai populations are Buddhist. As of December 31, 2004, there were a total of 33,902 wats, sacred precincts or temples where monks live and preach Buddhism, in Thailand (Buddhist Monastery Division, 2004).

Buddhism and Thai politics seemed to be intertwined throughout history. Buddhism first entered Thailand in the thirteenth century in the form of the Theravada Buddhist
tradition from Sri Lanka (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004). The rulers since the Sukhothai period have patronized Buddhism to some extent. The basic tasks of governorship included building wats, appointing abbots, and leading rituals. The justification used to relinquish territories in Laos and Khmer (modern Cambodia) was to protect people from “less perfectedly Buddhist governance.” (p.32) In addition to Buddhism, Hinduism and Brahmanism also have strong relationships with monarchs. Hindu-Brahmanical ideology has been adopted since Ayutthaya period (Samudavanija, 1987b) which led to a belief that the King is a living god. Although this belief has been in common currency up to the contemporary period, Hinduism and Brahmanism have not been popularly adopted.

Although Buddhist monks are commonly thought to be excluded from political power, there have been a number of cases where Buddhism played a significant role in political context. For example, Buddhist monks during the Sarit government were sent to the northeast, not only to preach Buddhism, but also to “organize villagers in development projects, explain about laws, and discourage communism” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.172). During the trouble between the leftists and rightists in 1976, Phra Kittiwutho, a Buddhist monk who was among the leaders of the Nawaphon group, said “it was not sinful to kill communists” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.194) provoking a confrontation between the two groups. In addition, capitalist development of Thailand also led Buddhism to be adapted to the commercialized world (P. A. Jackson, 1997).

Another controversial incident occurred during the 1997 economic crisis: Luangta Maha Bua, one of the most respectful and popular monks in the northeast, launched a campaign to donate money, especially US dollars, to the government for international deposits. He was also one of the earlier supporters of Thaksin. Members of the Assembly of the Poor, his followers, canvassed to collect signatures to support Thaksin during the asset declaration lawsuit.

In addition, there was recently a controversial demonstration by thousands of Buddhist monks and supporters requesting to formally recognize Buddhism as the national
religion during the 2007 constitutional reform process. However, the request was eventually denied (Silp, 2007). The demonstration was dispersed after a speech by Queen Sirikit (2007) on her birthday in which she argued that religion is above politics.

Monks play significant roles in teaching peace and harmony, values which are transferred to Thai political culture. Most political changes in Thai history were conducted by selecting a path that avoids conflict and violence (Nakata, 1987, p.189). Buddhism influenced Thai social and political life by teaching individuals to respect elders’ age, birth, virtue, and merit. These personal concepts are transformed into seniority, superiority, nobility, wealth, power, knowledge, and religious or governmental position when enlarged into the public sphere. In addition, the common assumption among Thai people is that everyone deserves respect – recognition of personal dignity. Thai people are more likely to accept certain ideas without challenge or question (e.g., superstitions and horoscope) (Nakata, 1987, p.180-181). Thus, it can be partly inferred that there is a high level of interpersonal trust (Phillips, 1965; Piker, 1968). On the other hand, the perception of collective action among Thai people is deemed to be negative partly because it is derived from the “primacy of individual action and responsibility” that is immensely rooted in Buddhism (Jumbala, 1987, p.110; Somvichian, 1979). However, this individualism/independence seems to contrast with the fact that most Thais are obedient and submissive to the ruling class (Nakata, 1987). This internal conflict has in some ways caused problems with the democratization of Thailand, even though it is argued that Buddhism in Thailand favors democracy in principle (Jirakraisiri, 2004).

The politics of Buddhism has evidently influenced the politics of the country. The evidence of the administration of Buddhism in Thailand began during the Sukhothai period. However, the official politicization of Buddhism did not occur until the 1902 Royal degree, also known as the Sangha Act, which dictates the administrative structure of Buddhist temples, during King Chulalongkorn’s Reign (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005). The revolution in 1932 led to the change of Sangha Act to comply with constitutional democracy. However, the 1932 Sangha Act caused concerns regarding harmony between
the two types of Thai Buddhism, Mahanikaya and Dhamma-yutika Buddhism. The coup d’état in 1962 led to the reform of the act, which has been used since then. The core of the act addresses the administrative structure and responsibility of Buddhist monks in different levels. The Supreme Patriarch (sangharaja) is the highest ranking monk, appointed by the King.

**Monarchy**

One of the allegations the coup made against Thaksin was that he was disloyal to the monarchy. During the PAD campaign, Sonthi Limthongkul accused Thaksin of trespassing on the King’s power by appointing an acting Supreme Patriarch in place of the critically ill Somdet Phra Yanasangworn. In addition, Sonthi claimed that Thaksin breached royal tradition at the merit-making ceremony at the royal Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Pathmanand, 2008). Even though the latter case was clarified by Bureau of The Royal Household, the allegation helped PAD demonstrators gain support from royalists.

Traditionally the King has been portrayed as a Bodhisattva, a Buddha-to-be (Neher, 1979, p.6). Thus, the King is conventionally recognized as “inviolable and infallible, and remains free of any accusation” (Connors, 2007). After the 1932 revolution, the King became a constitutional monarch supposedly positioned under the constitution and above politics. Members of the royal family whose rank is above Mom Chao (His Serene Highness) were barred from politics. A number of royal family members were purged from the high ranking military and civilian offices (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005).

However, the revival of the monarchy began since Sarit’s coup in 1957. Sarit sought legitimation from the monarchy and announced that “the King and Nation are one and indivisible.” (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.177) Sarit encouraged the expansion of royalism by retaining royal customs that exhibits kingship. The King launched numerous rural and agricultural projects. His appearances were disseminated through mass media and publications. The portrayal of the King turned into a father-like figure (Connors, 2007).
The monarchy became the “soul source of unity and strength” of the country (OPPS, 1987, p.11 cited in Hewison, 1997, p.61).

On the other hand, the negative images of the military and politicians opened an opportunity for the monarchy to revive in a modernized society. The role of the King became crucial after the King’s intervention of the 1976 political crisis. In response to the request from students, the King demanded that the military leaders to go into exile, nominated the new prime ministers, and set up the National Convention. The terms “democracy with the King as a head of state” has been popularized since then. In the May 1992 uprising, the King ceased the political crisis once again. Connors (2007, p.131) remarks that his intervention led to the implication that the monarchy is “an indispensible para-political institution in Thailand democracy.” Winichakul (2008) notes that, while the King remains a sacred being, his authority is also based on popularity and democracy for justification. Hewison (1997, p.63) addresses that the King is typically viewed as “a popular, egalitarian, ‘elected’ and constitutionally correct monarch, vitally interested in the democratic transition, and as the architect of democratic development, while being cautious and avoiding excessive palace political involvement.”

During the political tension prior to the 2006, the role of monarchy once again was brought back to the forefront of the political arena. PAD leaders, opposing politicians, and some scholars launched a campaign requesting the King to intervene by citing the Constitution’s Article 7 stating:

When no provision of this Constitution is applicable to any case, it shall be decided in accordance with traditional practices in the democratic form of government with the King as head of the state.

It is apparent that the article provides an opportunity for the King to overrule the government. Traditionally, those actions include, for example, issuing royal decrees, proclaiming martial law, declaring war, making peace, concluding treaties with foreign states, and granting pardons. However, it was the King himself who denied stepping in through such a mechanism during the 2006 coup. Instead he suggested using the court
system to solve the crisis (King Bhumibhol Adulyadej, 2006). Apparently, the image of democratic kingship was once again revisited, while some scholars, such as Tejapira (2006b), addressed that the monarchy take advantage of the political crisis.

Another constant portrayal image of the monarchy, revived from a traditional perspective, is tightly attached to Buddhism. The king is believed to be a naturally elected (i.e., born to be king) and hold a high level of charisma (barami - usually referring to innate authority) that is relating to his karmic merit (Connors, 2007, p.128). In addition, the King is expected to follow the ten royal virtues (tosapitrajadharma) and reassert himself as the King of Righteous (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.175; Samudavanija, 1987b, p.9).

The constitution has one chapter addressing the position and responsibility of the King. The main features include: 1) the King is the chief of state and holds exclusively respectful position that nobody shall accuse him by any sorts, 2) he is honorarily positioned as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and 3) he is a Buddhist and upholder of religions. In addition, the King shall also appoint the Privy Council which supplies advice on all matters under the constitution. The King has to approve and put his signature of the legislation prior to publishing in the Government Gazette.

There is another type of law that deals specifically with the royal family, which is referred to as the Palace Law. The current constitution cites the Palace Law in the matter of succession to the throne. Historically, the Palace Law contains specific rules inside the court, first proclaimed by King Trailok in 1458 (Samudavanija, 1987b, p.13). The core principle of the law is strict loyalty, honesty, and obedience. The royal customs are still in place today in the palace. One of them is the court language that functions as a “safeguard and naturalizes the sacerdotal/common divide by enforcing and policing a linguistic divide which makes humble and earthy the addressee to royalty.” (Chantornvong, 1992 cited in Connors, 2007, p.129)

As the role of the King becomes increasing important, the lèse majesté law, preventing the King from criticism, has been getting more attention. The discourse of lèse
majesté has moved from the defense of monarchy to national security since 1957. The current sentence associated with breaking of the lèse majesté law is 15 years in prison, although the convicted usually get royal pardon. Traditionally, the law is perceived to cover not only the present extended royal family, but also deceased members (Terwiel, 2005, p.296). The National Legislation Assembly, appointed by the 2006 coup leaders, proposed to extend the law to cover the Privy Council. However, the proposal was eventually withdraw. The lèse majesté law has been used to attacked political opponents prior to and after the 2006 coup. The King himself indicated that he would like to allow criticism (King Bhumibol Adulyadej, 2005). Winichakul (2008) blamed censorship covered by the lèse majesté law on a misconception about the role of the monarchy in Thai politics. He suggested that, for the King, being above politics no longer means being outside of politics, but rather being “on top of or overseeing normal politics.” (p. 20)

A number of scholars (e.g., Winichakul, 2008; Pye & Schaffan, 2008; Pathmanand, 2008) even regarded the 2006 coup as a royal coup, which was backed up by royal military. The king’s speech led to the invalidation of the April 2 election by the Constitutional Court. General Prem, the president of Privy Council, insisted prior to the coup at the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy that “the soldiers belong to His Majesty the King, not to a government. A government is like a jockey. It supervises soldiers, but the real owners are the country, and the King.” (Bangkok Post, July 15, 2006 quoted in Pathmanand, 2008, p.128; Winichakul, 2008, p.30)

Military

The coup, representing as one of the royal military, used the King’s speech partly as a justification for seizing power. Winichakul (2008, p.30) argues that instead of seizing power for themselves, the coup leaders acted for the King. The notion of Army of the King, as mentioned earlier, has been introduced since 1957 during Sarit’s period (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.177).
The pattern of early militarization of the state highlighted the powerful role of warriors. Even when the country was not at war, military organizations and their members were still powerful and influential (Samudavanija, 1987b). The military personnel in the old time mostly came from either noble or aristocratic background (Nakata, 1987).

The role of the military has been strengthened in every political movement since the 1932 revolution. Suvarnajata (1994) discusses the transition of military ideology since the first coup attempt in 1912 prior to the change to democracy. The role of the military was highlighted around the idea of being a guardian or protector of the nation and avoidance of politics. The major responsibility was defense of the country from the outsider enemy.

However, after the democratic revolution, the soldiers have increasingly been involved in internal affairs. C. J. Reynolds (2002, p.22–23) asserts that the military had cited national security as a reason to monopolize and control Thai culture during Pibulsongkram’s period. The perception of military to civilian government seems to be around the notion of distrust (Girling, 1981, p.125), which had also been used during the anti-communism campaign. The relationship between the military and other sectors of Thai society has been increasingly closer. (Elliott, 1978) argues that the role of the military in Thai society actually rose from relationships with businessmen and rural people. After the fall of military power by unarmed civilians in May 1992, the military was perceived to be back in their barracks. However, McCargo and Pathmanand (2005) resist the idea that the military has been totally depoliticized, instead it has “adjusted itself to changing socio-political conditions, maintaining a low profile until conditions were right for a reassertion of influence.” The military has recently played a significant role in social control, for example, engaging in rural development projects, monitoring situations in the South, and controlling the demonstrations in rural areas (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005).

Suvarnajata (1994) indicated that the general ideology of the military after the 1932 revolution contains three major concepts: statism and national security, militarism, and
leadership. When it comes to political turmoil, civilian leaders are seen as relatively weak and indecisive (Nakata, 1987, p.175). In addition, military officers perceive themselves as well-equipped and capable of handling difficult situations better. These perspectives have been the main reasons for the military to seize power (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.46–47). In particular, it has become a part of the Thai culture for the military to seize power when success needs to be assured and associated actions executed effectively.

One of the perceived reasons for the 2006 coup was the fact that the military did not agree with the way in which Thaksin promoted his relatives in the military power structure against the reshuffle of traditions of seniority. Thaksin also promoted his classmates at the Armed Force’s Preparation Academy during his period of rule. McCargo and Pathmanand (2005) said that it was Thaksin’s actions, which brought back the power of military in the Thai political arena.

Civil administration

It is apparent that the civil administration began during the transition to the end of slavery in Thailand. Prince Damrong, a Minister of Interior Affair in King Chulalongkorn’s period, reformed the bureaucracy to a more distributed system (Neher, 1979). Recruitment and promotion had depended on personal patronage. In 1928, the bureaucracy began to be formalized by legislation (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.111). The revolution in 1932 transformed the bureaucratic system to depend on rank, position, and education. Additionally, the effect of World War II mitigated the superiority of government officers. During Sarit’s period, government power was decentralized to the provincial level. The number of lay people working in government offices had increased (p.172). It was during the same period that Thailand began to require national identification and household registration. In the mid-1980s, the economic acceleration changed the perception of civil officials since the salaries of those who works in commercial units were substantially higher than those who worked for the government. Throughout these changes, Thai bureaucrats or civil officers, however, has still been called Kha ratchakan,

According to the Office of the Civil Service Commission (2006), it was estimated that 1.92 million people worked in civil service in 2006. About 77 percent of them had at least an undergraduate degree.

Thailand has three levels of administrative structure: central, provincial, and local (Samudavanija, 1987b). The central level includes ministries and independent agencies under the control of the national government. There are 76 provinces under the direction of governors. Although the governor is the highest rank of the provincial administration, his authority directly controls only those who are in the Ministry of the Interior. A province consists of districts (amphur), which are governed by district officer (nai amphur). Township (tambon) is a subsection of a district whose head of township is called Kamnan. The smallest unit of the provincial administration is the village (Moo ban), which is led by head of the village (Phuyai ban). It seems likely that opinion leaders have a lot of influence in these local levels (both township and village) e.g., Moerman, 1969).

There are a number of researchers who have studied the social values and characteristics of the Thai bureaucracy. Four major characteristics of the Thai bureaucracy, which have been discussed included: hierarchical status, personalism, security, and social pleasures (e.g., Siffin, 1966). Girling (1981, p.147) addressed that these characteristics, in the sense of democracy, are quite individualistic, which is contrary to Western values. He further identified that family upbringing, education, peer values and career expectations influence these characteristics.

Riggs (1966 cited in Neher, 1979, p.469) identified four principles underlying the operating code of behavior of Thai bureaucrats, including:

1. reducing the work load for officials, particularly the necessity for making and enforcing hard decisions,

2. reducing tensions between the bureaucracy and the public primarily by distributing
benefits rather than enforcing regulations,

3. extracting the means of subsistence for officials from the public, and

4. being well situated in the bureaucracy by identifying with and servicing prominent officials.

Moreover, the instability of politics in the past, resulting in the frequent change of
government, affects the effectiveness of the Thai bureaucracy, particularly considering
that Thai officials heavily rely on top-down development (Samudavanija, 1987a).

These unique characteristics have led to unsupportive perceptions of Thai bureaucrats
in the eyes of the public. McCargo and Pathmanand (2005, p.8) note that:

The police suffer from serious image problems in Thailand because of pervasive
corruption. In the perception of most Thai’s, for a boy from a good family
to join a civilian branch of the civil service could imply a willingness to gain
prestige and job security, while working on behalf of the country for a low
salary. Joining the army might imply a quest for status and, traditionally,
political power or influence. Joining the police, however, is generally seen as
reflecting a simple desire to make money.

Corruption is a significant issue of the Thai bureaucracy and politics in general. It
is also a crucial argument in the political system as it has been used numerous times as
a reason for the coups in Thailand. Corruption in Thailand has usually been explained
through the cultural perspective of the patron-client relationship (e.g., Neher, 1977). Scotti (1972, p.60) briefly explains that “the patron is expected to protect his clients and
share his good fortune with them. The client must, in turn, support his patron in every
way possible.” It is seen as an exchange of mutual interest between two parties. The
simple formulation would be that the money or gift was given in exchange for security,
stability, power, and convenience. A number of scholars view corruption as a normal
phenomenon, especially regarding a traditional perspective, as the social norms tolerates
such actions (Riggs, 1966; Nakata, 1987). (Phongpaichit & Piriyarangsan, 1998, p.5) in-
dicate the three common forces that allow corruption in Thailand: 1) low level of official
personal incomes, 2) limitations of legal provisions and procedures for policing corruption, and 3) poor public support. Interestingly enough, Phongpaichit and Piriyarangsan (1998, p.162) further point out that the general public still did not view the works of public administration such as government offices, police, and politics, as public services.

The perceptions of corruption in Thailand range from unacceptable (such as cheating on the people, and cheating on the King) to acceptable (e.g., gifts or good will - sin nam jai). It is criticized as the conflict of traditional and modernized perspectives. Generosity (nam jai) is one of the most desirable attributes in Thai social value system. The rationale for what is acceptable or not is typically based on the amount (value) of the gift or money, intentions, and consequences (Phongpaichit & Piriyarangsan, 1998). Interestingly enough, those who have lower socio-economic status tended to perceive that politicians are more corrupt than bureaucrats. On the other hand, Thai’s who have higher socio-economic status view bureaucrats as more corrupt (p.184).

Political parties

The birth of political parties in Thailand occurred when the military was temporarily forced out of politics in 1946 (Bunbongkarn, 1987, p.68). There were originally three parties. As of February 2009, there were 68 parties registered with the Election Commission of Thailand. The Democrat party, the oldest and currently the governing party, has been in the Thai electoral battlefield for 63 years. Political parties in Thailand are generally perceived as weak and fragile in terms of organizational structure (Bunbonkarn, 1987, p.68), especially considering that Thai society has maintained the culture that depend on leadership and personal ties.

McCargo and Pathmanand (2005) identify three complimentary points of view, which characterize Thai political parties, including political economy, political sociology, and political sciences. From a political economy perspective, the close relationship between political activity and business activity is highlighted. Politics is seen as “the continuation of business by other means.” In this view, “parties were alliances of different factions,
brought together not by common ideology, but rather through shared financial interests, personal ties, and opportunism.” (p.71) Within one party, there needs to be at least one individual who is central to all factions. Not necessarily to be the head of the party, this person rather acts as “power broker and fixers”.

The concept of patron-client relationship has been commercialized in the view of political sociologists. From a broader perspective, this group signifies the role of political parties in Thai social structure. Political parties are viewed as groups of personalized factions (phuak). The benefits result in the form of cabinet positions, which were allocated on a quota basis (reflecting the size and number of political parties). Therefore, this leads to corruption and mismanagement, since the personnel were not associated with tasks or policy assigned.

Opposing the political economy perspective, political scientists see that political parties are driven by politics and secondarily influenced by business or patron-client relationships. There are two main elements of a political party: ideology and organizational structure (including mass membership and branches). Political scientists disagree with the coalition political system. Instead, the two-party system is preferred. The constitutional reform in 1997 apparently favored a two-party system, which later was criticized during Thaksin’s period as it allowed Thaksin to use a dictatorship style to administer the country.

**Civic movement**

Civic movement was quite alien in Thai society from the traditional perspective. In this context, civic movement refers to political movements and activities operated by lay people (e.g., labor unions, those who had effect by government’s projects, etc.). Due to the hierarchical structure and interest in avoiding confrontation, the masses historically had not been considered as a threat to the ruling elites. The most common way to respond to oppression traditionally was to escape to the jungle, which is far from political and social order (Samudavanija, 1987a, p.23). According to Samudavanija (1987a), there
are only a few major civic movements in Thai history. There were only three incidents during the Ayutthaya period and two early in the Rattanakosin era, which are limited to a specific area of the country and mostly among the ruling elites. Even during the transition period to the democratic system, the royalists were actually the group who circulated the rumor about social disorder and foreign intervention attempting to provoke civic movement (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.120).

The first non-elite civic movements seemed to begin after the Second World War in the form of street demonstrations. Most of the early demonstrations were driven by economic conditions. Baker and Phongpaichit (2005, p.142) pointed out that strikes by workers who worked in rice mills, docks, cement works, oil refineries, and timber yards in 1945 led to the establishment of the Association of United Worker of Thailand, the first unionization, in 1947 by friends of Pridi, a leader of the socialist faction.

The role of mass demonstrations has been crucial in Thai politics. There are three major mass demonstrations in Thai political history: two demonstrations in 1973 and 1976 led by student movements (Samudavanija, 1987a; Jumbala, 1987; Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005), and the 1992 demonstrations perceived as “middle class” or “mobile phone” mob (A. Brown, 1997). Although they were driven by different causes and contexts, all of them primarily shared the same agenda, against the military dictatorship. They also ended up with bloodshed. Interestingly enough, these three incidents were eventually interrupted by the King.

Another form of civic movement is driven by the discourse of rural and community development, which usually represents Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). NGOs have been around in Thailand since the late 1960s (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p.216). The ineffectiveness of protests by local groups by themselves led to the establishment of one of the most active groups called the Assembly of the Poor founded in December 1995. The Assembly began with a loose collective network of activists and local groups who protest governments on the establishment of Pak Mun Dam. The Assembly later expanded to other groups with various issues such as agricultural product price drops,
agrarian debt, and natural resource exploitation, primarily in order to strengthen their negotiation power. The street demonstration of the Assembly, mostly through villagers, began in 1997 and reached its peak after the economic crisis hit the country in the same year. The demonstrations of the Assembly have continued intermittently since then.

However, it was People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) demonstrations that has substantial influence in ousting Thaksin. Pye and Schaffar (2008) analyzed the mass movements against Thaksin, indicating that PAD is incorporated by both royalist elites and the grassroots opposition to Thaksin. For elites, the campaign was supported by academics and businessmen who were dissatisfied with Thaksin’s policies and actions, and the old network of civil servants around the King. It was apparent that PAD leaders, such as Sonthi Limthongkul, used royalist nationalism to unify the campaign as the slogan says “we fight for the King”, recognizing themselves as “guards of the land”, (Winichakul, 2008, p.30) and use the yellow, representing the King Bhumibol’s birthday (Monday), as the theme color. The grassroots supporters of PAD included farmers, students, workers, and urban poor. During Thaksin’s period, his policy to privatize state organizations such as Electric Generation Authority of Thailand, Petroleum Authority of Thailand also led state employees and local groups to join PAD. In addition, the attempt to initiate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Thai and US governments became a new inspiration of various NGOs and activists.

The first large gathering of PAD was on February 4, 2006, a few days after the announcement of the deal of selling Thaksin’s main telecommunication business, Shin Corporation, embracing approximately 50,000 people (Pye & Schaffan, 2008, p.41). The PAD demonstrations gained wider support and were more widely distributed geographically. On the other hand, after Thaksin dissolved the parliament, people who supported Thaksin, which is believed that mostly from rural areas and taxi drivers, began their demonstration as well, beginning in March 2006, even though they had been widely criticized that these demonstrations were set up by Thai Rak Thai and Thaksin himself. The demonstrations between both pro- and anti-Thaksin parties raised concerns that
there would be violence and bloodshed. PAD along with a number of academics and professionals asked the King to intervene. The King declined and indirectly suggested the Constitutional Court to solve the problem. However, failure to cancel the elections seemed to leave the issue unsolved. Thaksin and his alliances got elected again in April 2006. However, he declined to take the prime minister, but resumed his caretaker position until his successor is elected. Then, the coup took place on September 19, 2006.

To summarize, Thai political culture is quite unique. Neher (1979, p.459) summarized the major characteristics of Thai society, regarding political development, including the loosely structured social system, Buddhism, democracy and culturally rich. Also it can be explained through the notions of a bureaucratic polity, and patron-client relationship. Additionally, Nakata (1987) characterizes the Thai political culture as authoritarian, as well as involving patron-client relationships, personalism (leader’s personality), hierarchical relationships, individualism, traditionalism, passitivity, and peace-loving compromise.

The discourse of democratization in Thailand mostly focuses on the conflicts among different social classes, ideologies, and powers. These conflicts have been brought about by the demands of royalists, militarists, socialists, and capitalists. Moreover, the social status of civic movements has been collectively represented in the form of academics, middle-class, and the poor (both urban and rural). The complexity of the discourse of democracy in Thailand led to the emergence of Thai-style democracy, which is based in nationalism.

Neher (1979 cited in Girling, 1981) once suggested that “Thai favors democracy; but when queried specifically, [Thai people] prefer security, or development, deference, or economic stability.” These two contrasting characteristics lead to the continuous desire to reform democracy to fit Thailand. Winichakul (2008, p.24) addressed that among the elites, the expectation of clean politics has greatly impacted the discussion of democratic development in Thailand. There are four aspects of clean politics: the extreme perception of corrupt politicians, a belief that people in the rural areas are the
cause of vote-buying, the distrust of an election as a result of the two earlier discourses, and use of moral rules as the superior and ultimate legitimacy in democracy.

The 2006 coup can be perceived as a reasonable solution to some people. It is worth noting that it was not the first time for royal intervention, or military intervention (Winichakul, 2008). Additionally, corruption is not a new issue, but viewed as a chronic threat to the country. As a result, perhaps the coup d’état in 2006 was just a repeat of the vicious cycle of Thai politics.

**Information Infrastructure during the 2006 coup**

Mass media is perceived as the fourth estate due to its pivotal role in society. In addition, people take advantage of technology to communication, not only publicly, but also personally. Although Thai syntactically means freedom and Thai people love independence, such rights are not guaranteed in the context of communication in public, especially regarding politics.

The incident of the 2006 coup is an extreme case of the disruptive flow of information created by humans. As Luttwak (1979) describes, any government or coup leaders control the mass media and telecommunication facilities in order to neutralize dissenting political forces. Luttwak asserted that “control over the flow of information emanating from the political center will be [the] most important weapon in establishing authority after the coup.” He also suggested that such an operation would be more effective in a place where illiteracy is widespread. Additionally, to prevent revenge against coup members, the coup also has to paralyze the opponent’s reaction by taking control of telecommunications and other important resources of the country (e.g., electric power).

This section primarily reviews the current state of mass media in Thailand, especially its roles in Thai political life and the 2006 coup. In addition, the roles of ICTs, the Internet and mobile communications in particular, are also discussed.
Mass Media

Mass Media Adoption

According to the results of the household survey conducted by National Statistical Office (2008a), about 95 percent of the Thai population watched television in 2008, increasing from 80.4 percent in 1989. Interestingly enough, the proportion of children age 6-14 who watch television is the highest, 97 percent, comparing to other age groups. In addition, age seems to have an effect on the consumption of news program. Older people are likely to watch news more than the other age groups. From another survey done in 2004, Thai people tend to spend on average 2.7 hour a day watching television.

Currently there are six free-to-air television stations in Thailand. Three of them are owned and operated by the government and army. The other three are owned by the government but operated by private corporations. In general, the law controls the proportion of contents shown on televisions. For example, at least 15 percent of broadcasting time should be allocated to news and knowledge programs. The allocation of entertainment programs should not be over 65 percent, while advertisement and commercial service programs are limited to 20 percent. Programming in the 4:30PM - 6:30PM time slot is particularly dedicated to children and youth programs. A program related to Buddhism must be allocated once a week and no less than 15 minutes per program. In addition, the officials also censor the advertisement of amulets, cigarettes, and alcohol during the daytime (5AM-10PM).

Alternative to free-to-air television is subscription television, which is primarily divided into two groups, national and local services. According to Tangkitvanich (2003), the sole national operator, True UBC (once belonged to Thaksin’s Shin Corp), attracts the higher socioeconomic group. Economies of scale led them to monopolize some of their services, particularly an exclusive deal with the international providers. As a result, the local operators could not afford to buy such international programs.

In terms of radio, there were about 524 free-to-air radio stations in Thailand in
2003, not including community radio stations, covering 98 percent of the country (Tangkitvanich, 2003, p.26). In addition to AM and FM transmission, there are also a few radio stations that use satellite to broadcast their programs as well. The majority of the radio stations are now operated by private companies. Radio programs have also been monitored by the government as well as through the Department of Public Relations. Similar to the TV regulations, no less than 25 percent of broadcasting time should be allocated to news and knowledge programs. Entertainment programs are limited to 58 percent of time, while 17 percent to advertisements and commercial services equally. The concession contract is usually for less than two years.

For community radio stations, there were reportedly about 2,500 stations around the country in 2006. However, there were approximately a additional 1,000 community radio stations that did not register with the Department of Public Relations (Kheunkaew, 2006). Note that participatory programs such as reporting traffic and public legal disputes have become very popular for radio listeners in metropolitan areas. Pongsawat (2002) pointed out that it was because such programs deal with local issues that were closer to the interests of the public. Sirivuvasak (2007) examined the roles of community radios in rural area especially during/after critical situations such as storms and floods.

Despite the increase in community radio stations, it seems likely that the number of radio listeners in Thailand is on the downturn. Statistics from the National Statistical Office (2008a) show that only 31.1 percent of Thai people listened to radio in 2008, decreasing from 42.8 percent in 2003. Note that the proportion of Thai people who listen to news programs on the radio essentially fell from five years ago, while those who listen to entertainment programs increased. On average, Thai people spend about 1.4 hour listen to the radio in 2004 (National Statistical Office, 2004).

Another national survey focusing on reading behavior indicates that the proportion of the Thai population (6 years old and older) who read a newspaper was about 47.1 percent in 2008, which increased from 35.4 percent in 1995 (National Statistical Office, 2008c). Interestingly enough, the young adult group (age 15-24) had the highest proportion of
newspaper reading, 57.2 percent, followed by the working age group (age 25-59). At the same time, only 25.5 percent of seniors (60 years old and older) and 19.4 of children (6-14 years old) read newspapers.

Mass Media and Thai Politics

Print press in Thailand began even before the transition to democracy. As early as 1844, a printed newspaper called *Bangkok Recorder*, published by a missionary, began its distribution (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.91; Pongsudhirak, 1997, p.219). By 1910, there were 17 newspapers and 47 magazines distributed in Thailand (Morell & Samudavanija, 1981). Since the revolution in 1932, the press has increasingly played a significant role in every political movement. Most newspapers in Thailand are run by private companies and non-profit organizations.

Radio was first launched in Thailand around 1930, while the adoption of TV began in 1955 (Pongsudhirak, 1997, p.229). During the early period, the concessions were solely given to the government and the army. Some stations were operated by the government and the army directly. Some were run by private companies who subcontracted from the government and the army. Until the enactment of *Frequency Allocation for Radio, Television, and Telecommunications Act* in 2000 (Siriyuvasak, 2007), the regulations to manage radio frequencies were updated to ensure fair and neutral operations. Then the concessions of these broadcasting media began to be given directly to private companies and people (i.e., community media). A new TV station, ITV, was established due to the need for an independent news station after the 1992 uprising. Technology has influenced the expansion of alternative media in Thailand, including cable and satellite television, and community radio stations.

However, mass media has still not been viewed as a transparent and honest institution. Historically, media in Thailand have been used to promote nationalism (Hamilton, 2002). The national anthem is played at 8AM and 6PM everyday at government offices, schools, and on national televisions and radios. At the beginning of every theatrical show,
everyone must stand up to respect the King represented by the royal anthem. During the period of recovery during the economic crisis of 1999-2000, Phongpaichit and Baker (2004, p.76) observed that nationalism became a common theme in TV dramas and films.

On the other hand, media owners have also tapped into political power as well, primarily to take advantage of the business of political candidates (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.72). The economic crisis in 1997 resulted in the demise of many small independent media operators. The ones who survived are now the giants in the industry (Pongsawat, 2007). These surviving media owners, for instance Nation Group, Manager Group, BEC-TERO, and Matichon have become conglomerates, expanding their coverage to other types of media business, including newspaper, radio, television, and even film. In addition, some media corporations expanded their empires to other non-related types of business, such as real estate and property management (Pongsudhirak, 1997, p.217), sport organization, and ticket distribution.

Instead of being a gatekeeper (Jirasopon, 2008), Pongsudhirak (1997, p.218) used to Pharr’s typology of media role (1996) to argue that the role of the Thai press, particularly during the 1992 massacre, falls in between servant and watchdog, leaning toward opposition to the government. When the opposition in the parliamentary is weak, the press usually is tougher on the government. Newspapers additionally educate readers, as Pongsudhirak (1997, p.227) pointed out, through columns by respected commentators in the newspapers. Pongsawat (2007) asserted that such columns tend to provide in-depth analysis mostly from an anti-state perspective. Instead of having intermediaries from the interviews, these commentators are able to deliver their independent messages and opinions. These observations seem to be applicable to the role of news media during Thaksin’s period.

Pongsawat (2007, p.105) argued news reports regarding politics and elections are conventionally framed by editors’ experiences and perceptions solely with no influence from outsiders. Such practices could impose risks in terms of ethical issues. The most
controversial occurred during the PAD demonstration. Sonthi Limthongkul, who is one of the PAD leaders, used a variety of media through his Manager Group to openly attack Thaksin and broadcast the demonstrations. PAD leaders have been subject to a number of defamation lawsuits for criticizing Thaksin and his government. The Thai press has long been criticized for corruption and bias in favor of particular individuals, politicians, and parties (Pongsudhirak, 1997, p.228). By applying the Agenda Setting model to examine the relationship between Thai politicians and journalists, Komonbut (2006) found that apparently every political change in Thai history has proved that “the press was not able fully to assert itself as an independent political force.” (p.217)

The Thai media has also been criticized about being unprofessional, using such devices as benign plagiarism, usually among reporters (Pongsudhirak, 1997, p.229) and recently from online sources as well. In addition, accuracy has also been a concern. The most controversial concern recently would be the deletion of the King’s pictures on Thai Rath’s front page (e.g., Jee “Thai Rath” . . . , 2007).

**Media Intervention**

The press is a representation of freedom of expression. The constitution of Thailand guarantees such rights since the introduction of democratic government. However, it is not always the case that such rights are applied in reality. Thai governments have long been known to influence the media. Attempts to manipulate the media have appeared since the establishment of the press in Thailand. However, it was not until 1919, when Thailand announced its first censorship law that prohibits criticism of the bureaucracy (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.92).

There is a new form of intervention sought by the business community that has been of concern to scholars and media professionals recently. While the mass media is not always influenced by business, various political and business mechanisms are used to control what appears in the media (Komonbut, 2006). The Thai Journalist Association (2004 cited in Komonbut, 2006) reported that, while the press is independent in theory,
because it is normally owned by a private company, advertisements have been used as a main mechanism to set the agenda of the press.

Thaksin’s approach to political management seemingly was aimed toward calming the political climate for the benefit of the country’s economy. He apparently tried to manipulate the political context to be on his side, including controlling the media. Thaksin technically bought ITV (Yong, 2007) when it was on the down turn from the effects of an economic crisis. After the take over, ITV perceptively softened its news content and programming to be more sympathetic to Thaksin’s government3. In addition, Thaksin often urged the press to present only positive news and avoid negative political comments (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.150).

During Thaksin’s period, the selection of members of the National Broadcasting Commission, an independent regulatory body, became controversial due to speculations that there were conflicts of interest among the candidates. This led to the perception that the Thaksin government did not attempt to solve the conflict of interest issue and delayed the process of moving the administration of television and radio frequencies from the hands of the government. His business would thus benefit from such a delay (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004, p.153).

Komonbut (2006) explored the media intervention during 2005 - 2006 by Thaksin alliances. He found that there were in total 21 ways that had been used to intervene in the content of the mass media from direct approaches (such as giving orders, providing faulty information, declining to answer questions, and even using jurisdictional methods) to indirect actions (such as attempting to take control of the press’ stocks, intervening in the operations of independent agencies, and launching new laws favoring the government’s intervention actions).


3The coup leaders later nationalized ITV citing the station did not pay the concession in 2005-2006. Siriyuvasak (2007) observed that it was mainly because of the sale of Thaksin’s Shin Corp.
Rojanaphruk (2006) observed that editors, reporters, media organizations, media markets, and regulations played essential roles, which led to self-censorship, especially regarding lèse majesté cases. The media tended to set their own internal standards dealing with content about the monarchy. The lèse majesté law creates what Rojanaphruk (2006, p.7) coined as the upward spiral effect, consisting of three major elements: optimistic trend setting, dominating discourse on royal family, and manipulating (such as hiding, changing, or blurring) the complexity of political issues. Self-censorship ostensibly contributed to various counter reactions and side effects across the mass media. However, the boundaries of self-censorship were still subjective among media professionals.

Reporters without Borders, an independent international advocate for freedom of speech, has annually published the international Press Freedom Index, measuring the freedom of the press of each country based on “every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of newspaper issues, searches and harassment). [I]t includes the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these press freedom violations.” (Reporters Without Border for Press Freedom 2008, para.4) Table F.2 illustrates the press freedom index of Thailand from 2002-2008.

According to the index, 2007 was apparently the worst year for the Thai press in terms of freedom of the press. The sharp drop of Thai press freedom evidently happened in
2005 when the political crisis began. Note that the survey year begins on September 1. Thus, the effect of the 2006 coup would fall into the year 2007, which has the highest index score.

**Mass Media in the 2006 Coup**

The accusations from the mass media, either about the failure in administration or corruption of the government, have been a significant force for the military to stage the coups, especially the coups in 1947 and 1957 (Suvarnajata, 1994, p.93). The 1992 uprising also originated from the fact that people could not get information from the media and they wanted first-handed information. Additionally, radio stations did not report the protest as a result of self-censorship. The role of the foreign press in reporting what was happening was substantial during that period (Pongsudhirak, 1997).

For the 2006 coup, the situation was quite similar to the 1992 political uprising. Free-to-air television channels were used as an official source of information (i.e., announcements from the coup leaders). Channel 5, which is controlled by the army, was the first one to report the coup around 9:30PM. Nearly an hour later, Thaksin attempted to declare a state of the emergency via telephone on Channel 9. However, the declaration by Thaksin was interrupted. It is worth noting that Channel 9 is owned and operated by MCOT, which has been privatized since Thaksin’s regime. At the time the station was under the administration of Mingkwan Saengsuwan, who has a close personal relationship with Thaksin. Mingkwan was forced to resign his position after the coup for allowing Thaksin’s appearance.

It was apparent that all the television stations were under the control of the coup leaders after that. Tanks surrounded the television stations, in addition to the government house. At the same time, the international broadcasting channels such as CNN and BCC on cable television were blacked out for several hours. Note that CNN was among the earliest to provide international coverage of the coup at around 10:10PM, even before the official announcement (“Coup as it unfolds”, 2006). Only satellite TV
stations, such as ASTV and the Nation Channel, were able to broadcast their normal programs. By around 9:30PM on September 20, after the first press conference by the coups leaders, were all television channels allowed to resume their normal programmmes with intermittent interruptions by coup announcements.

The first announcement was broadcasted around 11PM on September 19. Within three days, the CDR had 12 announcements. The 10th announcement, in particular, sought cooperation from the media to present the news “according to the facts and in a creative way to rebuild the unity within the nation and bring peace back to the country as fast as possible.” Prior to that, the 7th announcement banned a political meeting involving more than 5 people. On September 21, the CDR leaders met with the media operators to request them to temporarily withdraw public participatory functions such as live text messaging on a news ticker, live interviews, and phone-in comments. On September 22, the first demonstration against the coup was launched. However, there was no media coverage of the protest on local television. Any footage that involved the ousted Prime Minister on the international TV channels was censored. Aglionby (2006) also reported that there were soldiers around the television studios and control rooms.

On September 21, the CDR suspended the broadcast of more than 300 community radio stations as they were perceived to support Thaksin (Kheunkaew, 2006). However, it was apparent that the CDR was skeptical about newspapers (AsiaMedia, 2007). There was no specific intervention for the press from the CDR. The distribution of newspapers was as usual. However, the level of self-censorship was very high during that period considering that the majority of the press in Thailand favored the departure of Thaksin (Reporters Without Border for Press Freedom, 2008). However, what concerned CDR the most seemed to be the criticism from foreign media regarding the roles of the monarchy.
Internet

Internet Adoption

The Internet in Thailand was firstly adopted among higher education institutions and then began to be commercialized through Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in 1995 (Koanatakool, 2007). The Communication Authority of Thailand (CAT), a state agency, originally provided concessions to ISPs. However, the 1997 constitution reform transferred the duty of Internet regulation to an independent commission, the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC). In 2008, there were 75 licensed ISPs. CAT was later commercialized as a service provider in 2003, however, still owned by the government (Paireepairit, 2008).

Approximately 28 percent of the Thai people, older than 6 years old, owned computers in 2008, while 18.2 percent used the Internet (National Statistical Office, 2008b). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated the number of Internet users in Thailand in 2006 to be around 11.41 millions (13.42 millions in 2007). About 105,000 users were broadband subscribers. Figure F.2 and Figure F.3 illustrate the trend of Internet users from 1992-2007.

Figure F.2: Estimated Internet users in Thailand from 1992–2007 (Source: ITU)
The household survey conducted by National Statistical Office (2008b) found that age and education seem to be related to Internet use. School, home and workplace were the most favorite locations to access the Internet. The most favorite search terms in Thai generally include game, song, and horoscope.

The most popular platform of online participation is the online discussion forum (commonly known as web board in Thailand). Pongsawat (2002) remarked that there are three major characteristics of online discussion that facilitate political discourse: allowing freedom of expression (e.g., anonymous post, be able to express feelings and emotions (Pongsawat, 2007)), increasing speed (e.g., real-time), and interactivity. He (2009) later classified the characteristics of political web boards in Thailand into two groups: independent online forum (e.g., Pantip.com, Fah Diew Kun) and extension of news website (e.g., Manager Online, Prachatai). In addition, Pongsawat (2002) concluded there are three common topics that have been discussed in the political web boards: politics of personality (regarding personality and personal life of leaders and person of interest), politics of development (whether Thailand is ready for democracy), and politics of memory (accuracy of historical political events).
Another way of sharing political opinions online is blogging. In addition to international blog providers (e.g., Wordpress.com, Blogger.com), there are also local blog providers as well, including privately owned providers (e.g., Exteen.com), those that are extensions from online communities (e.g., Pantip.com’s Bloggang), and those that are attached to the media corporations (e.g., Nation Group’s OKNation). The last group seems intended to expand the number of citizen journalists in Thailand. Additionally, microblogging services such as Twitter, even though it was not invented until March 2007 (after the 2006 coup), also support political discussions among Thai as well. Paireepairit (2008, p.28) also pointed out that Internet video is another services that people use to express their opinions online. PAD demonstration, for instance, has used video streaming technology to broadcast their activities. People use online video services such as YouTube and Metcalfe to share their views in support or opposition of various matters in Thai life.

In addition to online discussion and blogging, it seems likely that people use other means of Internet communication to share their political thoughts such as instant messaging (e.g., MSN Live Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, AOL, Skype, and Google Talk) and chat rooms (e.g., IRC and Camfrog). However, such technologies have not been studied as alternative platforms for political discussion in Thailand.

Even though the Internet has enabled Thai people to share their various opinions about Thai politics, Winichakul (2000 quoted in Pongsawat, 2002) argued that people in rural areas, who are perceived as “ignorant, selling their votes, and electing those corrupt politicians to the parliament” by middle class and elites are still less evident in online communities. Moreover, Pongsawat (2002) observed that although the Internet penetration is increasing, the discussions using political online forums may contribute to fragmentation of Thai society. The example could be drawn from Pantip.com’s Rajdumnern forum, one of the most popular online forums dedicated to political topics. During the political turmoil before the coup, Rajdumnern was flooded by two contrasting groups: pro- and anti-Thaksin. However, those who supported the ousted prime
minister seemed to dominate the room. Therefore, those who did not favor Thaksin left the room and set up their own community elsewhere.

**Internet Censorship**

Paireepairit (2008) studied Internet censorship in Thailand. He found that there are 9 topical areas that are sensitive to censorship in Thailand: pornography, the royal institution, politics, gambling, online gambling, religion, terrorism and separatism, proxy and anonymity software, and unknown/accidental censorship. The references to the monarchy during the political turmoil in 2005 and 2006 caused the lèse majesté law to be the most cited law for censorship. However, it was not until the interim Cabinet was appointed in late 2006 that the number of blocked websites increased sharply as shown in Figure F.4.

![Figure F.4: Thai websites blocked by any means from 2004–2007 (Paireepairit, 2008, p.47)](image)

Thai government has used different mechanisms to censor the problematic websites. Based on Lessig’s framework of regulation, Paireepairit (2008) found that the Thai government has manipulated laws, social norms (self-censorship), and technology architecture to force the shut down of websites. Two dimensions regarding the boundaries
of censorship were mentioned by the respondents of Paireepairit’s survey (2008): topic (i.e., what topics are not allowed), and the process of the censorship (i.e., transparency and trustworthiness).

Internet during the 2006 Coup

During the coup, Internet use reached its peak. Popular news websites such as Manager Online, The Nation and Bangkokbiznews had to redesign their appearances to minimize degradation of server performance. The coup led to the greatest number of website visits, including page views and unique IP addresses, in 2006 as shown in Figure F.5 and F.6. In addition, news and event related keywords, for instance news, newspapers, coup, and revolution, apparently dominated search engine searches that indexed Thai websites.

![Truehits Index (pageview*10000)](image)

Figure F.5: Thai website visits (page views) in 2006 by months (Source: Truehits.com)

Considering the news-related websites in specific, the proportion of visits to such websites increased slightly in September 2006. After that, the proportion went down as shown in Figure F.7. It is speculated that people became bored with the longstanding political tension.

For the general public, the first sign of the coup would be from national television.
However, it was apparent that there were a number of message posts on web boards reporting the appearance of soldiers and tanks around Bangkok, even before the interruption on television (“Coup as it unfolds”, 2006).

Although the military did not directly intervene in the operation of the Internet during the night of the coup and the day after, Paireepairit (2008) remarked that this may be because the army lacked experience. In fact, the coup’s fifth order on September 20 concerned the information transmitted through networks. The order granted the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology the authority to limit, control, stop or destroy the distribution of news and information containing articles, messages or dialogue that could “affect the democracy reform with the King as a head of state.” Such order was later cited to block numerous websites that criticized the coup and the monarchy, such as 19sep.org and Midnight University. The moderator of Pantip.com’s Rajdumnern forum self-censored the room, closing its operations until the appointment of the interim government in October 2006. Soon after, the interim government announced the Computer Crime Act, which has become one of the most controversial laws affecting Internet providers, web service operators, Internet users and the media.
Thailand is among the fastest mobile phone adopters in the world with 28 percent growth in the last decade (Dasgupta, Lall, & Wheeler, 2001). According to ITU, the number of mobile phone subscribers in Thailand reached 40.72 million in 2006, accounting for 62.88 percent of the population as shown in Table F.3. The adoption of mobile phone has even been faster than Internet usage.

According to National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (2005), 95 percent of the Internet users owned mobile phones in 2004. This could partly represent the dual relationship of the adoption of these two technologies. The most popular mobile phone data communication services were short messaging service (SMS), multimedia messaging service (MMS), and email, which accounted for 73.6, 25.7, and 16.2 percent of mobile users respectively. Only 0.7 percent of users connected to the Internet via mobile devices in 2004.

There are a number of domestic factors supporting the adoption of mobile phones. For instance, Thailand’s network growth has been greatly influenced by the policy shift
Table F.3: Estimated mobile phone users in Thailand from 2001–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total subscribers (thousands)</th>
<th>Five-year growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Subscribers per 100 populations</th>
<th>% of total telephone subscribers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,550</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>16,117</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>26.04</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>27,894</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>40.15</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>27,379</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>44.18</td>
<td>80.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>31,137</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>48.47</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>40,723</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>62.88</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>79,066</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>123.77</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in the early 1990s and the 1997 economic crisis (Gray, Kelly, & Minges, 2002). In addition, the Telecommunication Act of 2005 regulates the administration and competition of telecommunication businesses as well as promoting universal access. The government owned telecommunication business, Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT), was recently privatized, in order to promote a more competitive market environment. In terms of business, the price of mobile phone subscriptions has declined due to the high degree of competition in the market. There are four major players in the mobile phone market: Advance Info Services (AIS), DTAC, True Move (previously TA Orange), and TOT. In order to operate the services, Thai government currently reserves and licenses four radio frequencies for the mobile phone communications: 470MHZ, 900 MHZ, 1800MHZ, and 1900MHZ.

Mobile Communication and Thai Politics

Mobile communication has been well recognized as a facilitator of interpersonal communication. Additionally, broadcast media, including political programming, has been enabling such mobile communication features as SMS to encourage mobile communication use. However, the role of mobile communication in Thai political discourse reached its peak when the demonstrators against the military government in May 1992 called
themselves the *Mob mue thue* (mobile phone mob). In fact, mobile phones were not directly involved in the protest. Instead, it was used as a metaphor to explain the characteristics of the crowd, while at the time the mobile devices were employed only among businessmen, professionals, and other members of the middle class. The phenomenon was similar to what happened politically in Philippines in 1986 and 2001.

In addition to the use of mobile phone in politics, the politics of mobile communication is also of interest. It was Thaksin himself who caused concerns (see also McCargo & Pathmanand, 2005). Thaksin first received his telecommunication concession from his close relationship with politicians in Chatichai’s government. His business began with a paging service, and then was followed by mobile phone, card phones, phone directories, data networks, Cable TV and satellites. It seems likely that his special relationship with politicians and bureaucrats paid off, not just for getting the concessions, but also in minimizing competition (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004). From the day Thaksin began his political career to the night of the 2006 coup, he had the image of a businessman who took advantage of his political connections and power to promote his business.

By 2006, mobile phones were nearly omnipresent in Thailand. It was no longer considered as a representation of middle class. However, there has not been any substantial study in terms of how people used mobile phone during the 2006 coup. In general, the major evidence was through photos taken via mobile phone cameras and SMS sent to the press and/or posted on various websites, while interpersonal communication via mobile phone has not been studied. On the other hand, there was no sign of concern about or intervention in mobile communication from the coup.

---

4General Chatichai Choonhavan was the 17th prime minister of Thailand. Although his personal background was military, his affiliations rather leaned toward diplomatic and business interests. Along with rapid economic growth, it seems that Chatichai’s government had a large financial stake. Ministers were suspected of corruption and inadequate budget allocations. At the same time, the role of the military in governance declined. Chatichai’s government was eventually removed by the coup in 1992.


AsiaMedia. (2007, February). *First coup in 15 years shakes up the country’s political, media landscape*. (Available from [http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/06thailandcoup/](http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/06thailandcoup/))


Dervin, B. (1992). From the mind’s eye of the user: The sense-making qualitative-quantitative methodology. In J. Glazier & R. Powell (Eds.), *Qualitative research in information management* (pp. 61–84). Englewood, CO: Library Unlimited.


Escher, T. (2008, February). Five lessons on how Google Blogsearch works (or doesn't) and how to use it for research. (Available from http://people.oii.ox.ac.uk/escher/2008/02/28/google-blogsearch-howto/)


378


McKnight, M., & Zach, L. (n.d.). Choices in Chaos: Designing Research into Librarians Information Services Improvised During a Variety of Community-Wide Disasters in order to Produce Evidence-Based Training Materials for Librarians. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 2*.


Pitsuwan, S. (2006). Is there such a thing as a good coup?


Rainie, L., Fox, S., & Fallows, D. (2003). *The Internet and the Iraq War how online Americans have used the Internet to learn war news, understand events, and promote their views* (Tech. Rep.). Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.


