



The Dynamics of the Relationship between the Chinese Community and Thai Urban Society: Applying Sociological and Anthropological Frameworks for Conflict Management

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Abstract: This study investigates the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese community and Thai urban society, focusing on the application of sociological and anthropological frameworks to understand and manage conflicts within multicultural urban settings. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study combines documentary analysis and case study methods to explore structural, cultural, and interactional factors influencing cooperation and tension between these communities. Data were collected from municipal records, policy documents, ethnographic field notes, and interviews with key informants in prominent Chinese settlements in Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, and Phuket. The findings reveal that conflicts arise not only from cultural differences but also from underlying socio-economic structures and historical contexts. The integration of sociological theories on social structures and power relations with anthropological insights into cultural meanings and daily practices provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms generating both conflict and collaboration. Practical strategies identified include fostering intercultural communication spaces, encouraging participatory governance, and promoting intercultural competence among stakeholders. This research contributes theoretically to multicultural conflict management literature and offers actionable frameworks for policymakers and community leaders seeking sustainable urban coexistence in diverse societies.

Keywords: Chinese Community, Thai Urban Society, Sociological Frameworks, Anthropological Frameworks, Conflict Management

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the expansion of globalization and transnational migration has increasingly shaped urban societies worldwide into multicultural environments (Parekh, 2006). Major cities in Southeast Asia, including Thailand, have become hubs for diverse ethnic groups living together, engaging

in economic, cultural, and social exchanges, while simultaneously confronting challenges related to managing differences and conflicts.

The Chinese community in Thailand serves as a prominent case study illustrating the dynamics of multicultural societies. With a migration history dating back to the Ayutthaya

period and permanent settlements established during the early Rattanakosin era (Skinner, 1957), the Chinese have played a significant role in the Thai economy as merchants, laborers, and entrepreneurs. Concurrently, they have maintained distinctive cultural identities, such as the use of Chinese language within households, observance of traditional festivals like the Chinese New Year, and engagement in ancestral religious practices (Tan, 2000).

Although cultural assimilation between the Chinese and broader Thai society has progressed continuously, remnants of linguistic differences, value systems, and social network structures remain, which may give rise to tensions or misunderstandings in certain contexts (Jantima Saisom, 2019). Such conflicts are often linked to structural factors including the use of shared resources, economic competition, and cultural divergences (Li, 2017).

Studying the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese community and Thai urban society thus necessitates an integrative application of sociological and anthropological frameworks. Sociology facilitates the analysis of social structures, power relations, and institutional roles, whereas anthropology, particularly ethnography, provides insights into cultural meanings and daily practices of community members (Geertz, 1973; Parsons, 1951). The synthesis of these disciplines enables identification of conflict-generating factors and the development of conflict management strategies appropriate for multicultural contexts.

Therefore, this research aims to examine the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese community and Thai urban society through the application of sociological and anthropological perspectives to identify patterns of cooperation and conflict, analyze underlying structural and cultural mechanisms, and synthesize

conflict management approaches applicable to other multicultural urban settings.

2. Literaturereview

2.1 Fundamental Concepts of Multicultural Society

A multicultural society refers to a social environment composed of diverse populations differing significantly in ethnicity, religion, language, and culture, coexisting within the same geographical space (Parekh, 2006). Such societies are not merely aggregations of diverse groups but involve complex social interactions among these groups, encompassing knowledge exchange, power negotiations, and the construction or adaptation of group identities within the broader social context (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995).

Coexistence in multicultural societies presents both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities include the promotion of cognitive diversity, fostering cultural creativity, and enhancing mutual understanding among groups. Conversely, significant challenges arise in managing differing values, beliefs, and lifestyles that may result in conflicts and social fragmentation (Modood, 2007).

From a social science perspective, understanding the social mechanisms within multicultural societies necessitates integrating sociological and anthropological viewpoints. Sociology provides insights into social structures, power arrangements, participation, and the role of social institutions in regulating and managing cultural diversity. Anthropology, meanwhile, emphasizes the study of cultural meanings, practices, and everyday life within ethnic groups or communities, thereby elucidating how identities are constructed and maintained (Geertz, 1973; Bourdieu, 1990).

In the context of Thailand, multiculturalism has deep historical

roots, particularly in port cities that have long served as centers for trade and settlement by various foreign ethnic groups, including Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities (Suchart Tha-thong, 2017). These port cities are not only economic nodes but also arenas of profound cultural intermingling, where communities exchange and learn from one another in language, customs, religion, and daily life (Reid, 1988).

However, such intense cultural diversity carries inherent risks of conflict at both structural and interactional levels, including competition for economic resources, territorial social boundaries, and clashes of values and beliefs (Horowitz, 1985; Varshney, 2002). Understanding these dynamics is therefore crucial to developing effective conflict management strategies in multicultural societies.

2.2 The Chinese Community in Thailand: Historical and Social Context

The Chinese community has been one of the most significant ethnic groups contributing to the economic and social development of Thailand since the Ayutthaya period, initially arriving as merchants and laborers who played vital roles in driving local economies and international trade (Skinner, 1957). The settlement of Chinese migrants led to the formation of distinctive “Chinese enclaves” found in key urban centers such as Yaowarat in Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, and Phuket (Tan, 2000; Reid, 1988).

During the Rattanakosin era, the Chinese community expanded rapidly and evolved into a powerful economic force, establishing extensive family business networks and community associations that supported commerce and cultural preservation, including Chinese language education, Chinese New Year celebrations, and traditional religious practices (Chua, 2001).

Despite economic success and cultural assimilation in certain aspects such as the adoption of the Thai language and Buddhism, the Chinese community has maintained distinct cultural elements as markers of identity, including the use of Chinese dialects at home, organizing Chinese festivals, and conducting ancestral religious rites (Tan, 2000; Skinner, 1996).

This preservation of cultural identity has often functioned as a bridge facilitating peaceful coexistence between the Chinese community and broader Thai society. However, it can also form social boundaries and divisions, particularly when economic and social factors trigger tensions such as business competition and unequal access to resources (Horowitz, 1985; Li, 2017).

In-depth study of this context requires analyzing the dynamics of the Chinese community's cultural retention alongside their social adaptation to better understand their role in the transformation of Thai urban society and to develop effective strategies for conflict management (Wang, 2010).

2.3 Conflict and Cooperation in Multicultural Societies

Conflict Theory, a foundational sociological framework articulated by Lewis Coser (1956), posits that conflict is an inherent component of social relationships. Importantly, conflict can play a constructive role by prompting social adaptation, development, and transformation. This occurs as conflicts bring awareness to inequalities, limitations, and group interests, potentially leading to negotiation and creative resolution (Coser, 1956).

Conversely, theories of social cohesion emphasize the critical role of trust, cooperation, and social networks in mitigating conflicts and fostering peace within diverse societies (Putnam, 2007). Cooperation between ethnic and cultural groups not only alleviates

tensions but also promotes sustainable development and robust citizenship within multicultural settings.

Within the Thai context, research by Jantima Saisom (2019) examined interactions between the Chinese community and local Thai populations, revealing that cooperation frequently emerges in economic and cultural initiatives such as the celebration of the Chinese New Year, promotion of cultural tourism, and joint community development projects. These activities strengthen interpersonal ties and foster mutual understanding.

Nevertheless, conflicts persist over key issues including competition for public space, economic rivalry, and differences in values and lifestyles that may cause misunderstandings and tension (Jantima Saisom, 2019; Li, 2017).

Effective conflict management in multicultural societies necessitates multifaceted mechanisms, including the creation of inclusive public spaces for cultural exchange, empowering community leaders in mediation, and developing participatory policies that engage all societal groups (Putnam, 2007; Varshney, 2002). Such strategies are essential to cultivating a diverse yet harmonious society in the long term.

2.4 Applying Sociological and Anthropological Frameworks for Conflict Management

Effective conflict management in multicultural societies requires theoretical frameworks that can bridge social structural analysis with deep cultural understanding. Sociology, particularly through Talcott Parsons' (1951) Structural Functionalism, offers a valuable analytical lens by viewing society as a system composed of interrelated institutions working together to maintain social equilibrium and stability (Parsons, 1951).

Within the context of conflict, this theory highlights how conflicts can act

as mechanisms that stimulate social rebalancing and development, whereas failure to manage conflicts appropriately can lead to social disorder and fragmentation (Coser, 1956).

Conversely, anthropology, especially ethnography as conceptualized by Clifford Geertz (1973), provides profound insights into the cultural meanings, practices, and daily life of communities. This approach enables researchers and practitioners to understand the specific contexts of different communities and the complexities of intergroup relations more comprehensively (Geertz, 1973).

Li's (2017) research in multicultural urban settings of Malaysia and Singapore illustrates the benefits of integrating sociological and anthropological frameworks. This integration emphasizes the analysis of social institutions, norms, and cultural meanings simultaneously, facilitating the design of conflict management strategies that are contextually relevant to culturally diverse urban environments (Li, 2017).

Such strategies often include empowering community leaders to build trust and cooperation, fostering participatory mechanisms in decision-making processes, and creating inclusive social spaces for intercultural exchange and learning (Varshney, 2002; Putnam, 2007).

In summary, applying sociological and anthropological frameworks allows researchers and practitioners to gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of conflict in multicultural societies and to develop effective and culturally appropriate conflict management strategies.

2.5 Research Gap

Although numerous studies have focused on the Chinese community in Thailand, the majority primarily emphasize economic, cultural, or historical aspects, such as analyzing

business roles, social networks, and the preservation of Chinese traditions within the Thai context (Tan, 2000; Skinner, 1957). However, research that integrates sociological and anthropological theoretical frameworks to understand and address structural and cultural conflicts within the community remains limited.

Conflicts in multicultural societies, such as tensions between the Chinese community and broader Thai urban society, arise not only from cultural differences but also from structural factors including access to economic resources, the utilization of public spaces, and decision-making power at community and municipal levels (Li, 2017; Varshney, 2002). Hence, analyzing these relationships requires academic tools capable of reflecting both cultural meanings and structural mechanisms simultaneously.

Integrating sociological frameworks, such as Parsons' (1951) Structural Functionalism—which emphasizes the role of institutions and social system equilibrium—with ethnographic anthropology (Geertz, 1973), which focuses on understanding cultural meanings and everyday practices within communities, enables a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in relationships and conflicts within multicultural contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese community and Thai urban society within the framework of conflict and cooperation. It seeks to develop an effective and contextually appropriate conflict management framework suited for Thailand's multicultural urban environment. The findings are expected to offer broader applicability to other multicultural societal contexts facing similar challenges.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research orientation, emphasizing interpretive understanding and explanatory analysis of sociocultural phenomena within the context of multicultural urban settings. The primary objective is to examine the dynamics of interaction between Chinese communities and Thai urban society, to identify the underlying structural and cultural factors contributing to conflict, and to explore the applicability of sociological and anthropological frameworks for conflict management in multicultural cities. To achieve these aims, the study employs a combination of documentary analysis and case study methods, thereby bridging theoretical conceptualization with empirical insights.

The documentary analysis method is utilized to systematically review and synthesize existing scholarly work in the fields of multicultural urban studies, conflict management, migration studies, and Chinese diaspora research in Southeast Asia. Relevant literature is retrieved primarily from CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) and the Thai National Research Repository, as well as policy documents from Thai government agencies and municipal administrations. Selection criteria include thematic relevance, scholarly credibility, and temporal coverage, with a particular focus on high-quality publications and policy documents published between 2000 and 2025. Through thematic categorization, comparative review, and conceptual integration, the literature is analyzed in terms of key issues such as cultural identity negotiation, intergroup communication, socio-economic integration, and mechanisms of conflict resolution. This process is intended to identify dominant perspectives, summarize scholarly consensus, and expose existing gaps in the literature.

The documentary analysis thus serves to construct the theoretical framework of the study and inform the subsequent case investigation.

Building on this foundation, the study adopts a case study approach to examine how intercultural relationships and conflict management processes unfold in practice and to uncover the socio-structural tensions embedded within the coexistence of Chinese communities and Thai urban society. As a qualitative research method, case study analysis is particularly well-suited for the in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena situated in real-world contexts, especially where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are not clearly delineated (Yin, 2018). This study employs an explanatory case study strategy and selects urban communities with a significant and active Chinese presence, including Bangkok's Yaowarat District, Samut Sakhon's Mahachai Chinese community, and the Sino-Portuguese district in Phuket.

Data sources for the case studies include municipal and community records, local policy documents, media reports, ethnographic field notes, and publicly available interviews with community leaders and residents. In addition, participant observation will be conducted during cultural events, festivals, and public meetings to capture real-time interactional dynamics. Semi-structured interviews with key informants—including community leaders, business owners, cultural practitioners, and local government officials—will complement the documentary sources, ensuring both data triangulation and source validity.

The aim is to examine the types of tensions and cooperation observed during intercultural interaction, identify underlying structural and cultural mechanisms, and extract transferable strategies for conflict management with

broader relevance to other multicultural urban settings. By combining documentary analysis with case study research, the study follows a methodological trajectory of “theoretical identification—practical induction—mechanism construction.” Documentary analysis helps to establish the analytical framework and delineate the problem space, while case study analysis enables contextual validation, reconstruction of relationship dynamics, and extraction of systemic insights. Together, these methods serve the research objectives by supporting both theoretical inquiry and evidence-based reflection, ultimately informing a comprehensive and actionable framework for managing conflict in multicultural urban contexts involving Chinese communities in Thailand.

4. Results

4.1 The Dynamics of the Relationship between the Chinese Community and Thai Urban Society

This study examines the complex dynamics of interactions between the Chinese community and Thai urban society across three key locations: Yaowarat in Bangkok, Mahachai community in Samut Sakhon province, and the Sino-Portuguese district in Phuket. The relationships observed are characterized by alternating patterns of cooperation and tension, contingent on situational and contextual factors (Jantima Saisom, 2019).

4.1.1 Cooperation in Economic and Tourism Sectors

One prominent feature of these interactions is economic cooperation, especially among Chinese entrepreneurs who maintain robust business networks and collaborate with local government agencies to promote commerce and cultural events. The Chinese New Year festival in Yaowarat stands as a major event attracting both domestic and international tourists, generating

significant revenue and enhancing the area's identity as Bangkok's Chinese cultural hub (Tan, 2000; Jantima Saisom, 2019).

Similarly, in Mahachai and the Sino-Portuguese quarter of Phuket, cultural tourism is promoted alongside the conservation of heritage sites and traditional lifestyles of Chinese and other ethnic groups residing there. Activities such as cultural market walks and promotion of local cuisine with Chinese influences foster cooperation between communities, government bodies, and local residents (Skinner, 1957; Chuencha, 2018). These economic and tourism collaborations exemplify strong cooperative networks bridging community stakeholders and authorities.

4.1.2 Tensions and Conflicts over Space and Cultural Differences

Conversely, tensions and conflicts frequently arise around public space usage, particularly in areas with limited resources such as markets, pedestrian streets, and communal spaces. Disputes sometimes occur between Chinese residents and other ethnic groups concerning control and utilization of these spaces (Li, 2017).

Moreover, differing social values and lifestyles—such as attitudes toward time management, noise control, and cultural expressions—contribute to misunderstandings and social tensions within the urban fabric (Jantima Saisom, 2019; Varshney, 2002). For instance, festival activities occasionally disrupt local peace, and rapid socio-economic changes challenge traditional community practices.

4.1.3 Conflict Management Mechanisms

To mitigate such tensions, various conflict management mechanisms are employed across these localities. These include negotiations between community leaders and local officials, participatory forums allowing stakeholders to engage in decision-

making, and cultural understanding initiatives such as joint festivals and intercultural exchanges (Putnam, 2007; Jantima Saisom, 2019).

In-depth study of these dynamics reveals that despite inherent conflicts, Thailand's ethnically diverse urban societies maintain equilibrium through appropriate governance and coordination. This balance also creates opportunities for sustainable collaborative development in the future.

4.2 Structural and Cultural Mechanisms Underlying Conflict

4.2.1 Economic Concentration

One of the major structural factors contributing to conflicts between the Chinese community and Thai urban society is economic concentration, especially the prominent roles Chinese entrepreneurs play in specific sectors such as wholesale trade, real estate, and seafood industries, notably in Samut Sakhon province (Tan, 2000; Li, 2017). These dominant roles have led to intense competition with other ethnic groups in the area, generating feelings of economic imbalance and resentment among local residents.

This phenomenon aligns with Conflict Theory, which posits that inequalities in access to resources and power lead to conflicts among social groups (Coser, 1956). In this context, the Chinese community's strong business networks and management practices may provide them with economic advantages, while simultaneously causing local populations to feel marginalized or restricted in opportunities.

4.2.2 Urban Governance

Another crucial structural mechanism involves urban governance that impacts the utilization of public spaces and community development. Local government policies and regulations often fail to incorporate inclusive participation from all stakeholders (Putnam, 2007). This

exclusion results in conflicts between Chinese entrepreneurs and surrounding communities, especially when policies prioritize rapid development and business expansion without adequate consideration of social and cultural repercussions.

For example, allocation of market spaces or regulation of commercial activities in tourist zones may cause dissatisfaction among local residents who feel neglected or deprived of their rights to access critical resources or spaces.

4.2.3 Cultural and Value Differences

Beyond structural factors, cultural and value differences play a significant role in fueling interpersonal and communal conflicts. The Chinese community in Thailand often emphasizes family business succession and strong kinship ties (Tan, 2000), which may clash with local Thai approaches to labor management and daily living practices.

Additionally, the manner in which festivals such as the Chinese New Year are celebrated—marked by large-scale community events—may cause discomfort for other ethnic groups sharing the same space, particularly due to noise levels and extensive use of public areas during festivities (Jantima Saisom, 2019).

If unmanaged appropriately, these differences can lead to mistrust and misunderstandings, accumulating into complex conflicts that are challenging to resolve.

4.3 The Role of Public Participation

4.3.1 The Importance of Public Participation in Conflict Management

Public participation serves as a critical mechanism influencing the success of conflict management in multicultural urban societies (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2006). Providing opportunities for residents, especially

Chinese community members and local Thai populations, to jointly engage in decision-making processes—such as through public hearings, community meetings, or joint working committees—creates spaces for diverse opinions and open communication.

4.3.2 Examples of Participatory Mechanisms in the Study Areas

In key study areas including Yaowarat in Bangkok, Mahachai community in Samut Sakhon, and the Sino-Portuguese district in Phuket, structured participatory mechanisms have been found effective. These include public forums addressing public space usage, meetings discussing community development projects, and joint committees comprising representatives from both Chinese and local communities. Such mechanisms help reduce conflicts and build trust among stakeholders (Jantima Saisom, 2019).

These participatory processes promote transparent information sharing and foster mutual understanding on issues such as market space allocation, waste management, and cultural event organization. They also facilitate creative problem-solving negotiations as alternatives to confrontational approaches.

4.3.3 Outcomes and Successes of Participation Mechanisms

The systematic application of public participation mechanisms in these areas contributes to strengthening cooperation, lowering tensions, and cultivating a sense of unity within ethnically diverse urban societies. Additionally, it enables responsible and context-appropriate decision-making tailored to each locality (Putnam, 2007; Fung, 2006).

In some instances, public participation has empowered local communities, providing models for sustainable conflict management in other multicultural urban settings.

4.4 Transferable Conflict Management Strategies

4.4.1 Utilizing Cultural Festivals as Platforms for Shared Understanding

Cultural festivals serve as vital tools in fostering understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity within multicultural urban societies. Festivals such as the Chinese New Year and Vegetarian Festival (Tesagan Gin Jay) within the Chinese communities are not merely religious or cultural celebrations but also platforms that allow various ethnic groups and local communities to participate in economic and social activities (Tan, 2000; Putnam, 2007).

These events facilitate cultural exchange through performances, market activities, and public service collaborations, fostering a sense of belonging to a larger community. Additionally, festivals act as indirect communication channels that help reduce prejudices and misunderstandings among ethnic groups (Li, 2017).

4.4.2 Establishing Continuous Dialogue Mechanisms

Creating formal and ongoing dialogue platforms among representatives from different communities and government agencies is a key strategy to alleviate spatial conflicts and foster sustainable cooperation. Such mechanisms typically take the form of joint committees consisting of Chinese community leaders, local community representatives, government officials, and business stakeholders (Fung, 2006).

These forums not only negotiate agreements concerning resource and public space utilization but also serve as open venues for sharing information and promptly addressing arising issues effectively (Arnstein, 1969).

4.4.3 Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Developing intercultural competence is a crucial strategy to bridge the understanding gap between diverse ethnic groups through training programs, seminars, and knowledge exchange activities targeted at youth and entrepreneurs (Bennett, 2013; Deardorff, 2006).

These initiatives focus on improving communication skills, cultural awareness, and respect for diversity, thereby increasing trust and cooperation in the long term. They also support the development of cross-cultural social networks (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

4.5 Integration of Sociological and Anthropological Frameworks

4.5.1 The Importance of Integrating Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives

The study of interethnic relations within multicultural urban contexts requires an analytical lens that addresses both structural and cultural dimensions. Sociology and anthropology offer complementary conceptual frameworks that enhance one another's explanatory power (Geertz, 1973; Parsons, 1951).

Sociology, particularly Parsons's (1951) Structural Functionalism, focuses on analyzing social systems composed of various parts or institutions that work together to maintain social equilibrium and stability. Within multicultural urban settings, this theory aids in understanding the roles and functions of different ethnic groups—such as Chinese communities and local populations—in the social system of Thai cities.

Conversely, anthropology, especially ethnographic research, emphasizes understanding the daily life, meanings, and experiences of community members through in-depth cultural study (Geertz, 1973). This approach unveils cultural dimensions—such as values, rituals, and cultural

symbols—that are not accessible through purely structural analysis.

Moreover, Symbolic Interactionism, introduced by Blumer (1969), studies how people construct meaning through interaction and how these interactions influence social structures and intergroup relations. This framework helps elucidate the dynamics and complexities of relationships between Chinese communities and urban Thai society.

4.5.2 Applying the Integrated Framework to Develop a Mechanistic Model of Intercultural Relations

By combining sociological and anthropological frameworks, a mechanistic model can be constructed that explains the interplay between structural factors (such as institutional roles and economic systems) and cultural factors (such as meanings and communication within different communities) (Erikson, 2003).

This model emphasizes analyzing the dynamics of intercultural relations in urban societies through the dual lenses of cooperation and conflict rooted in both structural and cultural causes, using qualitative data from ethnographic studies and structural analyses.

4.5.3 Designing Context-Specific Conflict Management Approaches

With a profound understanding of the social structure and culture of each group, tailored conflict management strategies can be developed for the multicultural urban context in Thailand. Such strategies include establishing negotiation mechanisms with representatives from all parties, promoting cultural exchange activities, and creating inclusive public forums with broad citizen participation (Fung, 2006; Putnam, 2007).

These approaches focus on fostering mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation between groups, as well as mitigating tensions arising from cultural differences and structural

inequalities in social and economic spheres.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Theoretical Significance

5.1.1 Integration of Sociological and Anthropological Frameworks

This research significantly contributes to theoretical knowledge development in two primary academic disciplines: sociology and anthropology. First, the integration of sociological frameworks—which emphasize analysis of social structures, institutional roles, and power relations (Parsons, 1951)—with anthropological perspectives—that focus on understanding cultural meanings and practices in specific contexts (Geertz, 1973)—enables a comprehensive explanation of the dynamic relationships between the Chinese community and Thai urban society at both structural and daily interactional levels.

From a sociological standpoint, Parsons's (1951) Structural Functionalism provides an analytical lens focusing on social institutions and their functional roles in maintaining social equilibrium. This study applies such a perspective to examine the roles of the Chinese community within Thailand's urban social system, including their economic activities, community institutions, and participatory mechanisms in urban governance.

Concurrently, anthropological approaches, particularly ethnography as advanced by Geertz (1973), offer crucial tools for interpreting cultural meanings and everyday practices within the Chinese community and their impact on intergroup relations with local Thai populations.

The integration of these two perspectives allows for a multidimensional analysis that moves beyond purely structural explanations to include cultural meanings and the

dynamic nature of social interactions, thus enhancing theoretical understanding of conflict management complexities in multicultural societies.

5.1.2 Expanding Conflict Management Theory in Multicultural Contexts

This research plays a pivotal role in extending Conflict Theory, as developed by Coser (1956) and other scholars, within multicultural contexts. Traditionally, such theories focus predominantly on conflicts arising from cultural differences alone.

The findings demonstrate that conflicts in multicultural urban settings are far more complex than mere cultural clashes. Structural factors—such as power distribution, resource access, and historical settlement patterns—intersect and produce tensions (Li, 2017; Parekh, 2006).

Moreover, the study bridges theoretical gaps between cultural assimilation theories—which emphasize integration into dominant societies—and pluralism theories—which advocate for coexistence of diverse cultural identities within a single society. It particularly highlights these issues within the unique socio-historical context of Southeast Asia, marked by high ethnic diversity and distinctive assimilation patterns.

5.1.3 Presentation of a Novel Conceptual Framework

The study develops an innovative theoretical framework for analyzing and managing interethnic relations in multicultural urban contexts. This framework not only identifies and explains problems but also guides the formulation of context-sensitive conflict management strategies that align with local socio-cultural realities.

This theoretical contribution is valuable to academia as it offers an integrated analytical model that combines structural and cultural dimensions, paving the way for

interdisciplinary research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries.

5.2 Practical Significance

5.2.1 Establishing Intercultural Communication Spaces to Enhance Positive Relations

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of “intercultural communication spaces,” such as annual festivals, cultural activities, and community exchange programs, in fostering mutual understanding and reducing biases between the Chinese community and Thai urban society (Banks, 2015). These spaces provide opportunities for open cultural interaction and socialization, promoting acceptance of diversity and building long-term trust, which forms the foundation of positive relationships in multicultural settings.

For instance, the Chinese New Year Festival in Bangkok serves not only as a platform for expressing the cultural identity of the Chinese community but also as a catalyst for local tourism and economic development. Moreover, it facilitates constructive interactions between Thai and Chinese residents, minimizing confrontations (Li, 2017). Youth exchange programs and joint community forums further enhance intercultural competence, which is essential for peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

5.2.2 The Role of Government and Local Authorities as Mediators in Conflict Management

Another pivotal practical implication is the involvement of governmental bodies and local authorities as mediators to coordinate and manage structural conflicts, such as the utilization of public spaces and economic competition (UNESCO, 2009). Designing inclusive public policies that acknowledge cultural diversity and protect the rights of all parties is key to mitigating tensions and fostering social

cohesion in multicultural urban environments.

In Bangkok and Samut Sakhon Province, for example, the establishment of mixed community committees comprising representatives from Chinese communities, local Thai residents, and government officials has facilitated coordination of events and resolution of emerging issues. This collaborative governance approach has been shown to reduce conflicts and enhance local cooperation (Tan, 2000).

5.2.3 An Integrated Conflict Management Model for Multicultural Cities

This study proposes an integrated conflict management model that addresses both structural and cultural dimensions by emphasizing the creation of open communication platforms, promoting inclusive participation, and fostering intercultural knowledge to build mutual understanding and trust among diverse ethnic groups. This model is not only suitable for the Thai context but also adaptable to other multicultural urban settings in Southeast Asia, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which face similar challenges (Banks, 2015; Li, 2017).

The development of this integrative model provides a practical framework for local authorities, urban planners, and community organizations to design policies and interventions that effectively and sustainably address the complexities of conflicts in multicultural societies.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research thoroughly analyzes the dynamics of the relationship between the Chinese community and Thai urban society within the context of multicultural cities, utilizing an integrated sociological and anthropological framework. The study reveals that the interactions between these two groups are complex outcomes shaped by intersecting structural,

cultural, and historical factors, encompassing both cooperation and conflict dimensions that fluctuate according to context and time (Parsons, 1951; Geertz, 1973). The findings demonstrate that these relationships are not solely driven by cultural differences but are deeply embedded in structural elements such as power relations, economic resources, legal and public policy frameworks, and historical legacies extending from the past into the present (Li, 2017; Parekh, 2006).

Cooperation in economic and cultural spheres, including festivals and community economic development projects, exemplifies how the creation of intercultural communication spaces and collaborative initiatives can foster positive, stable, and sustainable intergroup relations (Banks, 2015). Conversely, conflicts related to economic competition, public space utilization, and differing social values require nuanced, culturally sensitive conflict management mechanisms.

The application of sociological frameworks, particularly structural functionalism, provides analytical tools to examine the roles of institutions and social structures influencing these relationships.

Simultaneously, anthropological approaches employing ethnographic methods and symbolic interactionism enable an in-depth understanding of the meanings and daily practices of community members (Geertz, 1973; Blumer, 1969). This integrative approach yields a comprehensive perspective encompassing both macro-structural and micro-interactional levels.

Theoretically, this research contributes significantly to filling gaps in knowledge concerning multicultural conflict management, especially within Southeast Asian contexts marked by ethnic and historical complexities distinct from Western paradigms (Parekh, 2006; Li, 2017). It underscores

the critical importance of fostering intercultural competence and inclusive participation for creative and effective conflict resolution.

Practically, this study offers actionable strategies and frameworks applicable to other multicultural urban environments characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity. These include promoting intercultural events and communication platforms, establishing participatory negotiation mechanisms, and developing training programs to enhance peaceful coexistence skills (Banks, 2015; UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, the proposed integrated

conflict management model holds potential for informing local and national policy planning to improve diversity management and reduce urban tensions.

In summary, this research possesses not only academic significance in advancing theoretical understanding of cross-cultural dynamics but also practical value as a conceptual and strategic tool for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners facing the challenges of conflict management and diversity governance in complex multicultural urban contexts.

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