

## Abstract

The study on "Women in the Racecourse" has the objective to study the life of a small group of women in the Thai society who dare to defy the social traditions by stepping out of their own 'spaces', namely the household or private sphere, and entering the racecourse, a space traditionally defined as 'men's sphere', where women are normally unwelcomed. It also proposes to study how the meaning of racecourse is defined by women gamblers, the role and power of the racecourse in the construction, transformation, and reconstruction of the women's self. Data are collected by participatory observation of 3 groups of women: women who are men's followers, women who work in the racecourse and women gamblers. The researcher also includes feminist ethnography as a part of the study.

The study finds that most women in the racecourse are either in middle or old age, similar to men who have been horse gambling for a very long time. The racecourse, thus, is a cultural space of which a generation of people has been creating a way of life, experiences and memories. Meanwhile, the power and influence the racecourse has on the gamblers reveal the power relationship between spaces and people. Women in the racecourse have to face problems of negative attitudes from men in the racecourse who classify them into types so that they may be easily kept under surveillance. In this manner, the production of space in the race course that still preserves the class and patriarchal ideologies casts power over women in the racecourse by means of partitioning and exclusion, which in turn affect the process of construction, transformation and reconstruction of the women's self.

The women's operation on the racecourse begins as they replace, affirm and defy the rules, while transforming the existing meaning of the racecourse. Concurrently, the women in the racecourse have been diversely defined. In the mean time, the space's operation on women as an actor has created an identity/ meaning for women, as well as using the methodological techniques in using the social power to create, produce and manage the space of the racecourse. These generate a form of politics of space, including the struggle for the leading position to define the meanings within the racecourse.