

Abstract

This study is an interdisciplinary research that combines feminist theories, postmodernist theories, and theoretical perspectives of cultural studies. The integrated epistemologies are based on feminist standpoint theory and interpretive constructivism. The research uses qualitative research methods, using 3 main techniques of data collection. Non-participant observation and in-depth interviews were employed in data collection of three soap opera of production sites: "Tom," "Lhong Tang Rak," and "Kol Luang Rak." Textual analysis was used to analyze women representations presented in all three soap operas.

Employing Foucault's disciplinary power helps researcher in understanding and explaining the complexity of dynamics of meaning construction of women representation of the soap opera production teams. Such power is at the ideological level permeating and influencing meaning construction of women and gender representation in many dimensions. The manifestations of disciplinary power are evident not only in social discourse about women and gender but also in organizational and institutional establishment of the television production power structure. Intra-organization relationship pattern, gatekeeping, and business context of soap opera industry were present in all production sites. Nature of production practices indicates that there is shared basic belief among the organizational members where power is legitimized. Therefore, power is ingrained in the production site, supported by compartmentalization of responsibility, and a high level of professionalism appearing in production routines and conventions. In addition, meaning construction of soap opera production, which is very fragmented and predetermined by non-continued shooting, creates gaps of knowledge and understanding of the whole cultural products among different production crews. The result reveals that there is also the ideological power embedding in aesthetic dimension. It reveals that the construction of women and gender representation is a process where by soap opera producers symbolically and imaginatively engaged in meaning making through light, scenery, and camera angle.

In answering the question concerning the dynamics of gendered meaning construction of soap opera producers, the findings indicate 3 different patterns: 1) a

pattern of co-optation appears where the individuals surrender their meaning defining and interpretative power to the director, resulting in individuals' perception of powerlessness. Such powerlessness promotes the individuals to negotiate their identities; 2) a pattern of collaboration appears when the production crews collaborate with the director to construct women representations. The individuals who involve in the collaboration is well aware of being agency; 3) pattern of negotiation appears both when the individuals directly negotiate with the purpose of altering presentation and (re) construction the women and gender representation, and when the individuals indirectly negotiate by raising questions in regards to women and gender representation alternation on the case-by-case-basis. Questions which were often raised concerns 'realistic' constructed representation of women.

The analysis leads to a conclusion that there exists three different patterns of relationship between women representation and social movement. Firstly, the unresolved relationship is resulted from an interaction between two sets of ideologies, namely, feminism and Buddhism, which is apparent in "Tom." While feminism critiques family as an institution and primary source of women oppression, Buddhism as interpreted by Tom's producers heightens functionalist worldviews of motherhood and wifehood without asking questions to the oppressive ideology. Secondly, the resisting relationship is resulted from an interaction between oppositional social ideologies of the production crews and women's/feminist movements, which is apparent in "Lhong Tang Rak," While individuals involved in the production are aware of the project of women's movement, they choose to reproduce the dominant gender ideology in order to response to particular group of viewers. Lastly, the supportive relationship is resulted from an interaction between gender consciousness and identity of homosexual producers and women's/feminist movement, which is found in "Kol Luang Rak." By referring themselves from the non-hetero identity, the constructed women representation challenges the mainstream women and gender representations as being dictated by compulsory heterosexual ideology. Women representation constructed by Kol Luang Rak's producers demystifies the sexuality polarization between the main female protagonist and the female antagonist. This is achieved by similar portrayals of opposite characters.

The researcher purposes that directions for future research in the area of construction of women representations should continue to incorporate interdisciplinary epistemology. The researcher believes that such orientation in knowledge creation can open up spaces for soap opera producers to engage in thinking, reflecting, and synthesizing their experiences along with institution-based researcher. Collaborative action research for learning can create co-researcher from soap opera production teams whereby interdisciplinary body of knowledge in social sciences may trigger social movement and social change more forcefully in the near future.