STORIES OF THE INTERSECTION: INDONESIAN “STREET CHILDREN”
NEGOTIATING NARRATIVES AT THE INTERSECTION OF
SOCIETY, CHILDHOOD, AND WORK

BY

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DISSE**TATION

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Abstract

Children’s work in the street of developing countries has been accused of contributing to children’s low enrollment in formal schooling. In Indonesia, the government has been employing the Education for All policy in order to abolish children from working in the street. This dissertation demonstrates that the street children’s disengagement in formal schooling is not related to what the dominant Indonesian society perceives as the “poverty habit” constituted by the street family’s preference of working in the street over learning. Rather, disengagement seems at least partially supported by the discourses of schooling and working embedded in formal schooling practices as well as in the larger society’s perception of these families.

This dissertation specifically raises questions regarding various discourses of childhood, work, and schooling embedded in the Indonesian government’s policy, and in the narratives of middle-class communities, media, and a Non-Governmental Organization which works with street children, as well as in the narratives of street children and their families. The dissertation thus investigates how the intersection of discourses may be reflected in formal and non-formal literacy practices participated in by the street children. Specifically, this study seeks to examine various power-relations in different literacy venues in order to better understand first, how literacy is organized by adults to accommodate children’s learning, and second, how during the process children may be given latitude to enact their agency.

This study documents the oral narratives as well as the written products and the drawing of children who work in the Pasundan area in Bandung, Indonesia. In addition, data for this study consists of classroom and street activities observations, as well as interviews with children and their families, the NGO staff members, and teachers. Secondary data includes the government’s Children Social Welfare Program policy, media news, and a teacher’s and a tutor’s diary. Data
has been analyzed using critical discourse analysis to reveal the discursive meanings embedded in the vocabulary and the linguistic features deliberately used by the participants. This dissertation hopes to extend the contemporary study of childhood and literacy by bringing up the significance of the literacy practice that is respectful of the cultural experience and perspectives of children who work in the street.
Dedicated to all the brave children who work in Indonesian streets
Acknowledgment

I was once one of passersby who always tried to keep a distance from children who work in Indonesian streets. Every time I ran into the children, I was worried that they would harm my properties or myself. Today, I proudly consider myself as a passerby who is also a “street children’s” friend. As I passed Parung and Pasundan area in Bandung, for example, children in the street would call my name, approach me, and kiss my hand once they recognized me. The transformation of my passerby’s stance would not be possible if I were not attending courses in the College of Education in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I hereby acknowledge those who have contributed to my intellectual journey.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Intersection

Andi, an eight-year-old, makes scribbles on the dirt with his wooden stick. The traffic light turns green, and some children are seen coming to the sidewalk where Andi and I are seated. Another boy, who is about as big as him, comes with a “music instrument” – made of some caps taken from Coke bottles that are attached to a small stick – in one hand, and a wooden stick in his other hand. He sits next to Andi on the ground. Both of them move their sticks around on the ground while imitating the sound of a car.

“Watch out, my truck is coming!” Andi digs the dirt with his stick.

“You dig over there. I dig over here,” his friend says, while digging on another side.

“What are you both playing?” I ask them.

“It’s truck,” Andi mumbles.

“Did you just come from school, Andi?” I asked again.

Andi shakes his head.

“You’re not going to school? Why?”

Andi does not respond, as if he does not hear my question. But then after a while, he says,

“I don’t have the batik uniform,” and then he is busy moving his “truck” again.

Andi lived just a few blocks from the intersection where he worked as a street musician. As a street musician, he sings to his music instrument – some bottle caps attached to a stick – when the traffic light turned red. Andi left home in the morning with his expecting mother, a fifteen-year-old sister, and a three-year-old sister everyday and stayed in the intersection until dusk. Andi took a bath in the public restroom nearby before going to his school, a public Elementary School just one block away from the intersection. After school, he came back to the
intersection to work. Andi did his homework in the abandoned food stall where his mother and some other mothers got together and chatted. Besides working and doing his schoolwork, Andi hung out with friends, and played in the sidewalk.

The intersection was like a community backyard. Mothers chatted and exchanged gossip while supervising their children playing and working in the intersection. Children played hide and seek, and chatted with each other when the traffic light turned green. The traffic light served as a sort of signal. Red was for working, and green was for playing. As it turned red, children would approach the stopped vehicles; they sang to their musical instruments (*ngamen*) or dusting cars with their long brush (*ngelap*). Children who were enrolled in schools came to the intersection after school in their school uniforms and joined their friends after changing their clothes. Those who were school dropouts stayed in the intersection almost a whole day to work, play, and take care of the younger siblings. Some of the children and parents lived in the slum areas surrounding the intersection. Children and parents would come back and forth between their rented homes in the slum neighborhood and their “work place,” as if the intersection was their front yard.

Having occupied the intersection, children and their families have to share it with other street users. Vehicle drivers, public transportation users, and passersby are among some who witness these children’s activities and sometimes, contribute to the continuation of children’s activity by giving them money. Other than those, there are Non Governmental Organization (NGO) tutors who come regularly every week to supervise and provide the children with literacy activities for those who are dropped out from schools and are willing to learn. There is also the government whose voice is represented by a billboard standing near the intersection, saying, “Come home my dear children, street is not a place for you to work and play.” As if to conform
to the government’s stance, many street users also express their concern toward the presence of these children in the street. For instance, vehicle drivers are worried about the safety of the children as they chase each other and run between cars. Worth mentioning also is the voice of the NGO that has assisted and interacted with the children in the street on a daily basis.

The circulating diverse voices concerning children who work in the street have constituted the intersection of ideologies and interests related to the issue of childhood, labor, and even schooling, as the kind of practice commonly associated with children. Thus, the intersection is not merely a physical meeting place that connects the slum area and the highway to Jakarta -- where my study was conducted – but also a site where the Indonesian society dialogizes the conception of childhood, child work, and schooling. In this regard, the intersection represents the ideological space, or the “constructed space” to quote Lefebvre (1992) in which the function of the street as public space is constructed by the Indonesian society to determine what activities are allowed to take place within it. This is where paths cross. Public space is seen as danger-prone in such a way that it is not an appropriate space for children to grow and develop. Locating childhood seems to be the central issue when the children’s occupation over the “public space” is discussed along the conceptualization of protection over children, and children’s participation in society.

Through this dissertation I seek to document the intersection of voices, ideologies, as well as the constructions of childhood, labor, and schooling undergirding the issue of children’s participation in income-generating street activities. I also seek to understand the ways the contesting discourses are reflected in the literacy practices that are organized for, and participated in by the children in the intersection whom the Indonesian society deems the “street children.” In so doing I aim to contribute to and extend the ongoing conversations of the theory
of contemporary childhood and literacy studies as it is enacted in the life of children who participate in both working activities and diverse literacy venues.

My problematizing of discourses serves a purpose. The street children’s disengagement in formal schooling, as evidenced by their low enrollment rates, is viewed by the Indonesian government and the dominant society as representing parents’ and children’s ignorance toward education and the children’s own future. As I will argue in the forthcoming chapters, the children’s disinterest in schooling may instead be enabled by power relations within the schooling system itself as well as within the larger society as embodied in the establishment of moral discourse – in what way the society perceives as attention, caring, and love for these “abandoned” children. This moral discourse shaped societal perspectives on what is to be blamed for children being in the street. Within those entangled webs of discourses, I view street children’s experiences in schooling as taking place within, and as related to, how their presence in the street comes to be marginalized by the Indonesian society.

One of the outcomes of this study therefore is to contribute to educational practices and reform in Indonesia by offering insight into both reasoning and resources surrounding children’s participations in literacy practices. By bringing up three different examples of literacy venues – an early childhood learning site, an out-of-formal-school literacy activity, and public school classrooms – my goal is to investigate what resources may have enabled children’s enactment of agency, and how power relations in each venue may figure into children’s perceptions toward schooling. By so doing, I aim to bring into attention the example of the “caring approach” enacted by the Indonesian government – as it as also experienced by the so-called “abandoned” children worldwide through the humanitarian assistance provided by various international institutions such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) or International Labor
Organization (ILO) -- which in turn may constitute the exploitative system that further marginalizes these children.

In trying to capture the diverse “stories of the intersection,” I document narratives concerning the children’s activities in the intersection produced by the government, community members, NGO staffs and tutors, children who participate in street activities, and their families. I define the “narratives” broadly, which include government’s policies, personal life stories, media reports, questionnaire responses, diaries, children’s products, interview and conversational transcripts produced by my participants. These narratives are all representations of how “street children” are viewed as being in the street, and how they come to be “in the street.” I view “narrative” as an ideological product, a use of language to conceptualize a phenomenon within a certain worldview, which is unique according to one’s experience and sociocultural background.

In addition to all of those, I include my own narratives, which emerge from my reflections as I interact with my participants and my collection of memories that I grew up with, and that informed me about a set of cultural values with which to interpret my participants’ narratives. Being an Indonesian researcher, I share some cultural and religious beliefs with my participants; yet, I am an outsider in a lot of cultural aspects with regard to my relationship with my participants. I acknowledge my “ambiguous” roles, both as insider and outsider, as I enact multiple identities in interacting with my participants in different venues. Having set the stage for introducing this qualitative study, I would like to note that my personal life and academic experience confine my understanding and interpretation of my participants’ stories. In this introduction chapter I lay out a brief theoretical lens and the macro context within which the questions I raise are situated.
Brief Theoretical Sketch

The overarching debates regarding protection over childhood has marked the emotive tone in the discussions of children working on the street. For example, the street is considered as a public space appropriate only for adults (Hengst, 2005), which are prone to violence and crimes and therefore are viewed as too dangerous for children (Berman, 2000; LeRoux & Smith, 1998). The singular notion that children are conceptualized as raised and “protected” in the warmth of homes is challenged by the contemporary theory of childhood (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Jenks, 2004) by noting that childhood is not singular, but rather, is shaped by cultural practice. Across cultures, children develop by being socialized into their cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003), and there cultural practices may include children’s participation in their family’s economic activities (Burr, 2004). Some empirical studies recognize the boundary between children’s participation in household settings and children’s work, known as child labor, in public spaces. While children’s contribution to domestic households is acknowledged as developing children’s responsibilities (Gonzu, Ozer, Ohioglu, 2009; Solberg, 1997), child labor in the public domain is often discussed with tension (Henks, 2005). James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) argue that this dichotomy between domestic work and labor does not always relate to the issue of children’s safety, but, also to the ideology undergirding the societal conception of childhood.

I have chosen to study the enactment of the discourses of child work and schooling through narratives because I have seen a lot of examples where both discourses are viewed as counterproductive. For instance, child labor has been seen as reducing children’s enrollment in formal schooling (Weiner & Noman, 1991). Other studies also note that most of the “street children” are illiterate (Connolly, 1990; Lalor, 1999; Scanlon, Tomkins, and Lynch, 1998). This
notion has led the Indonesian government to believe that one way to curtail children’s participation in income-generating street activities is to allow access for children to enroll in formal schooling.

The portrait of “illiterate street children” however contrasts with the sights I have had the opportunity to witness in this study. I have seen children learning under the guidance of their tutors. Children also came to the street intersection directly from school, after they changed their school uniforms. I do not ignore the fact that many of my child participants have not been enrolled in school for some years. Yet, the relation between child work in the street and children’s low enrollment in school implied in the Indonesian government’s policy has led me to consider if poverty and work in the street really serves as the only element figuring into what the government has perceived as “children’s disengagement” in formal schools. Would there be something else? Further, what do work and school really mean for these children and their families? How do children and their families negotiate work and school in their lived experiences? What if we expand our deficit, decontextualized lens of literacy to include the broader communicative competence children may demonstrate if they are given a chance? What would the children create in the given context? These questions have served as a rationale for my participant selection. Among various groups of children who work in Indonesian streets, I purposely chose the group of children who have past and ongoing experiences in schooling in order to examine the intersections of the discourse of schooling and working.

Within the complicated knot of relationship between the ideology of work and schooling as conceptualized by the street workers (children and their families), street users and bystanders (the internet users I define as “middle class” community, NGO staff, teachers, and those who express concern for the issue of “street children”), as well as the decision makers, in this regard,
the Indonesian government, my decision to investigate narratives through literacy practices is supported by three theoretical landscapes.

The first one is the sociocultural framework of literacy that has defined literacy as encompassing cultural values, attitudes, feelings and relationships which shape and give meanings to activities surrounding the texts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995). Empirical studies have expanded the meaning of literacy by investigating the emerging nature of literacy practices within families (Compton Lily, 2009; Reese, 2009; Volk & de Acosta, 2003) and communities (Hull & Schultz, 2002). Such studies emphasize the activities surrounding texts (Wolf & Heath, 1995) or other “cultural tools,” to borrow from Vygotsky (1978). Those tools include popular culture (Dyson, 1997, 2003; Marsh, 2003; Wolf & Heath, 1995), religious texts or scripture (Compton-Lily, 2009), and functional texts (Street, 1983). The aforementioned studies have defined literacy as a broad meaning-making process in which children construct their identity through diverse venues surrounding the use of text. Through this study, I seek to understand the ways in which street activities and peer relationships may provide children with “cultural tools” in their productions of narratives enabled by literacy activities. Additionally, I aim to investigate how the nature of literacy events across settings structure and figure into the children’s construction of narratives. My premise here is that children demonstrate a “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1964), that is, an ability to appropriate their voice according to the situated context, purpose of event, and audiences, if given a space to develop their agency.

The second landscape is the studies of children’s narratives that investigate how children are socialized into narratives at home, school, and other social settings where adults play various roles (Fung, 1999; Howard, 2008; Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho, 2002; Sandel, 2003). Fung
(1999) and Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho (2003) for instance, study how adults organize their narratives around the cultivation of self-esteem or shame in a moral landscape. Through documenting adults’ narratives – parents, teachers, and NGO tutors – I seek to understand what moral values the children are socialized into. In so doing, I aim to investigate the extent to which the adults’ discourse of schooling and working are negotiated by adults through their narratives.

The third framework is the notion that the classroom serves a site of negotiation of power. Various studies have investigated the enactment of “classroom discourse” (Cazden, 2001; Michaels, 1981) in which teachers exercise power through the use of the language of instruction. Some other studies have also demonstrated that children are marginalized in a setting where they speak the language of the minority (Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Michaels, 2005; Wortham, 2006; Yosso, 2006). By documenting several literacy settings, I aim to investigate how power relations are negotiated by teachers and children in those settings. Particularly, I seek to examine how the discourse of schooling and work plays its role in those negotiations of power.

Examining societal discourse and its various enactments, as well as discourse as it is negotiated in the classrooms, this study defines discourse as the enactment of “being in the world which integrates the way of acting, speaking, believing and valuing, and behaving,” to quote Gee (1989). Yet contemporary discourse study views discourse as inseparable from the negotiation of power. In this regard, power is seen as embedded in the production of the claim of truth, or the dominant value in a society, which, in the process is enabled by the roles all society members have played. A Foucauldian lens views discourse as a system which structures the way people perceive reality. What is relevant in this regard is not that the powerful oppress the powerless, but rather, the way that power operates within everyday practices and relationship (Rabinow,
Amidst those aforementioned theories and empirical studies, this study offers interwoven stories created about, and from, the intersection. Making the unheard of voices of “street children” heard, this study situates the stories of these children in the entangled stories of adults who show concern, try to take care, and are worried about them. All stories are discursive. Stories lend themselves to reflect on, to teach, to reach out, and to judge others. In this sense stories play social roles, through which one relates to others by making a distinction or a similarity. Stories in this study serve two dimensions; the macro context and the local practice. Stories produced in local practices, be it in classroom, in the street, or in the slum neighborhood, reflect, resist, and respond to the societal stories produced and reproduced by the dominant Indonesian society.

“Street Children” in Indonesian Context

The Indonesian Social Ministry notes that the number of street children in Indonesia keeps increasing. In 2009, as many as 230 thousand of Indonesian children aged one to eighteen-years-old are categorized as “street children,” which comprises 2.8% of the children population nationwide. Of this number, twelve thousand “street children” are reported to live in Jakarta, and another twenty thousand children are living in the West Java province, the closest province to Jakarta. Bandung, the capital of West Java, has as many as eight thousand children categorized as “street children.” The Social Ministry points out that the biggest push factor for children working in the street is poverty. Children who work or live in the street to try to survive poverty comprise 70% of the total “street children.” Another 30% of the children are reported to move to live and work in the street for a motivation beyond the poverty reason, such as attempting to run away from their “dysfunctional” homes and families.
It is also reported that 60% of children who work in the street are still enrolled in schools (data according to Indonesian Ministry of Education, released in 2009) while the rest (40%) are dropouts from schools. Given the typical family’s support to children’s education in Indonesian culture, it is most likely that children who are still enrolled in schools are living with their families. This confirms the data reported by the Rainbow Foundation, an NGO that assists children who work in the street in Bandung. The foundation reported that majority of “street children” in Bandung are living with their families in urban slum areas surrounding the intersections. Referring to the percentage of school children among the street children population described above, I tend to argue that children of urban poor families appear to dominate the population of the so-called “street children” in Indonesia.

Children from one to eighteen-years-old who work in the street and live with their families constitute one of the definitions of “street children.” That definition conforms to the United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) definition of “children on the street.” Another definition by UNICEF is the “children of the street,” which is comprise of children who ran away from their families and live in the street in order to support themselves by earning money through working or begging in the street. With regard to appearance, it is hard to distinguish whether children are “run away kids” or those who live with parents when they are present in Indonesian streets, except that in some areas, mothers are seen to be supervising the “children on the street” in the sidewalk. Yet, in some cases, parents would work in the street too, which makes them hard to distinguish from other adults who are not biologically related to the children.

The presence of adults in the street along with children who work in the street has created a “societal knowledge” regarding the children’s intentions to work. Children are described as victimized by being enforced by adults – which can be parents, relatives, or other adults in the
street community -- to work. Like other developing countries that are under the increasing international pressure to eliminate child labor (Weiner & Noman, 1991), the Indonesian government implements a policy of compulsory education to deal with the issue of children working in the street. One of the policies is the Children Social Welfare Program that distributes a certain amount of educational funds to each street family with a condition that children have to be withdrawn from any kind of street activities. As the public elementary and middle school tuitions are free, the fund is expected to be spent on school-related expenses such as books, uniforms, transportation, or school supplies.

Additionally, a law has been ratified in some cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Makasar to encourage people to give money not directly to the street children, but instead, to the social organizations dealing with street children (The Jakarta Post, April 7, 2008). The government of Jakarta, Malang, and Palembang have also issued as much as 2 million Rupiah (equals to $ 200) fines to those who give money or buy products sold by the street children (Tempo Newspaper, August 9, 2007). Hoping that street children will leave the street as a result of income decreases, the policies tend to serve as an instrument to mobilize support from the society in defining “what would be best” for children of low-income families who are visible on the street. In so doing, the Indonesian government assumes the way to “protect” the street children and determine what kind of “participation” the street children can contribute to the Indonesian society. Schooling, in this regard, is considered as the accepted participation, while working on the street is seen as risky and unsafe.

The Study Design

This study involves the children who work in the street and live with their families in two intersections areas in Bandung, Indonesia, which I call Pasundan and Parung. The bulk of the
research, however, was conducted in Pasundan where more children were present in the street during the time of my fieldwork. Children’s, parents’, teachers’, and NGO tutors and staffs’s narratives are collected through one-on-one interviews and casual conversations. The casual conversations occurring, for example, in home visits, street visits, NGO meetings, and conversations occurred in the Pasundan Early Childhood Center, one of the literacy venues, when the NGO staff or parents visited the teachers. In addition, I also included the organizing committee members of an orphanage in Bandung who interacted intensively with Bu Sri, the teacher and founder of Pasundan Early Childhood Center, and some parents in Pasundan neighborhood. I have decided to include samples of their conversations with me as well as their interactions with Pasundan residents because they represent the dynamics of societal beliefs and attitudes toward the children who work in the street and their families. Written narratives are also documented through the collections of children’s drawings and writings, as well as the diaries of Bu Sri and one of the NGO tutors.

The government’s narratives in this study are represented by the document of Children Social Welfare Program and the speech of a government official I call Mr. B. Additionally, some government officials’ statements published in the media are also quoted and analyzed. I consider the online questionnaire responses I collect in this study as representing the “middle-class” society’s narratives, along with those of the orphanage committee ladies. Given the nature of Internet connections in Indonesia, which are not yet as affordable as in the United States – in that free online connections and computer units are available in U.S public libraries – I tend to argue that the internet is only accessible to those who are well educated (at least High School graduates) and are wealthy enough. To complement these “middle-class” narratives, I also include media reports portraying the Indonesian “street children.”
The literacy venues of intersection in which narratives are produced by participants in this study include; (a) Pasundan Early Childhood Center located only one block from the Pasundan intersection, participated in by four to seven-year-old children, (b) the street literacy activities organized by the NGO, the Rainbow Foundation, which is participated in by children of eight to fifteen-years-old who work in Pasundan intersection, and (c) Public School classrooms participated in by children who work in Pasundan intersection. In all these literacy venues, not only did I collect children’s written and spoken narratives, but I also documented children’s narratives as they interact with teachers and friends, as well as teachers’ and tutors’ narratives that describe the activities and their students.

**Research Questions**

I situate narratives as open texts, in that they revoice and reproduce the surrounding voices (Bakhtin, 1981). In this sense I perceive narratives as intertextual, as they interpret and somehow resist the voices of others. I analyze children’s and their parents’ narratives in the backdrop of the dominant societal conception of childhood and schooling in Indonesia. Although my emphasis will be on the social process through which these narratives are constructed, I also investigate the discourse embedded in (a) the government’s policy concerning the Indonesian street children, and the middle-class communities’ responses to the policy, (b) the beliefs of the parents who have allowed their children to work, and (c) the beliefs of the literacy organizers, which include Rainbow Foundation tutors and teachers in Pasundan Early Childhood Center and formal classrooms.

In examining Indonesian government’s policy, my questions are:

1. Who are, and what are “street children” as defined in the government’s policy? Which street children are addressed in the formulation of policy?
2. How do the government’s policies relate to issues of schooling, and those of child labor?
3. What is the public stance toward the policy concerning street children as demonstrated by the Indonesian Internet users? How is the policy taken up as public discourse?

In investigating the parental beliefs, my questions are:

1. How do the parents of working school-children view the issue of children working? Do they agree with the circulating definition of “street children” as portrayed by the media and governmental policy?
2. How do the parents set the standard for child labor / works? What jobs are allowed and not allowed? What is the accepted standard for child labor; how long, where, what time, and how it should be adjusted to schooling activity?

In examining beliefs undergirding the organizations of literacy activities, my questions are:

1. What types of activities are provided and organized for the children? What are the nature and the purpose of the activities? In what way do they further children’s learning?
2. What are the teachers’ and tutors’ perceptions regarding literacy learning? How do they exercise power in the interactions with children?
3. What are the beliefs that teachers and tutors convey to the children? In what ways are the beliefs reflected in their interactions with the children?

The productions of street children’s narratives in this study thus are situated within (a) the societal and cultural discourse concerning how the street children are defined, perceived, “protected,” and the kinds of participation that they are expected to contribute to society and family, and (b) the contexts that situate their literacy activities. Considering the above elements, my research questions are:

1. What kinds of meanings do the children construct through their narratives? In what way was the societal discourse reflected in their constructions of narratives?
2. How does the nature of writing activities (e.g. the purpose and the teachers or tutors instruction) contribute to the production of writing?
3. To what extent and in what way are the interactions within the peer groups enacted in their productions of writing?
4. What kind of resources do children interweave in their productions of narratives?
4. In what way do children in each literacy venue exercise their agency?
The Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized in such a way as to show how the macro societal discourse concerning childhood, child work and schooling informs the way my participants interact and construct their narratives. The macro context and local practice connections organize all stories I have managed to obtain throughout this study. I outline this dissertation chapters according to the literacy venues in which children of different groups participate. By doing so, I hope to present the analytic themes that are unique to the group of participants, and the nature and purpose of each event.

Chapter 2 synthesizes the theoretical frameworks and empirical studies discussing child labor, contemporary childhoods across culture, literacy in a sociocultural perspective, and children’s narratives. Using these theoretical frames I intend to define some terms I use in this study such as “discourse,” “power,” “literacy,” and “childhood,” in order to provide directions for the study analysis. I also attempt to present the theories and studies as dialogic, which I hope is useful in setting a context for the questions I raise for the analysis.

Chapter 3 presents some methodological issues and the study design, which is hopefully useful in understanding the context of this study. By “context,” I refer not only to the physical space, but also to the community’s meanings and interactional patterns that help to situate my understanding of my participants and their local practices. This chapter also brings myself in relation to my participants, which I find significant in understanding the participants’ responses that further constitute the findings of this study.

Chapter 4 portrays the contesting perspectives regarding “street children,” child labor, and children’s participations of schooling as constructed by the Indonesian government, the middle-class society represented by the Internet users and orphanage ladies, media reports, NGO
staffs, children, and their parents. The differing perspectives are expected to provide contexts that situate literacy practices in the following chapters.

Chapter 5 displays the literacy practices as they were enacted in Pasundan Early Childhood Center participated in by young children, some of whom work as street musicians. In this chapter I present literacy practices as complex webs of meaning-making processes involving children and their teachers in which both teachers and students interweave resources from their social world to collaboratively develop literacy learning.

In Chapter 6, I discuss literacy activities participated in by older children, those of eight to fifteen-years-old who work in Pasundan intersection. I present the literacy activities as a means through which children construct themselves in time and space. I also demonstrate that this is enabled within the latitude provided by their literacy tutors.

Chapter 7 describes how learning occurs in formal public school classrooms, within the interactions that the teachers perceive as “caring.” In this chapter, I also present how Indonesian society, parents, and children approach and conceptualize “caring” in relation to schooling. Through this chapter I aim to display the typical literacy organization in the public schools, which is distinctive from those enacted in the previous chapters.

Chapter 8 summarizes all findings and offers a lens of how to understand the pattern of the differing voices that constitute the intersection. I then provide suggestions to future research and educational practice in order to redefine children’s literacy learning and societal responsibilities. Referring back to the notion of the “intersection,” this study hopes to provide a perspective of how the voices of children in the street as well as their families have thus far been unheard in the intersection. It is through understanding the complicated discourses that the approach to deal with the issue of these marginalized children’s schooling can be better defined.
Chapter 2

Problematizing Power in the Intersection:

Childhood, Work, and Literacy

A Theoretical Framework

The Jakarta city administration said on Wednesday that it would join a police initiative to round up street children and physically examine their anuses for evidence of sexual abuse, a move that the country’s leading nongovernmental child-rights organization opposes as abuse. The move follows a police announcement on Tuesday that street children would have to submit to rectal examinations in an effort to identify victims of sexual abuse. The head of the city’s Social Affairs Agency said that during the citywide search for street children, the Jakarta Health Agency and the Jakarta Police would cooperate in an effort to find possible child abusers. He said that 500 personnel from different agencies would be involved. The planned round-up is in response to the arrest of Bayquni, 49, who is also known as Babe, an accused serial killer who allegedly killed at least 10 male street children (Jakarta Globe January 21, 2010).

Among all the somber stories I heard and read about the gloomy experiences of Indonesian “street children,” I found the government officials’ authority over these children’s bodies as reported in the aforementioned news the most disturbing. Children, given their occupation of public space, are considered as belonging to the “public,” and thus are subjected to societal, in this instance represented by the government officials,’ exercise of power. The government’s interventions in children’s lived experiences intended to what the government’s perceive as “protecting the children,” but instead demonstrated the government’s ignorance toward children’s voices and agency. Children’s narratives are marginalized in the intersection of
childhood and schooling because not only their voices are ignored in the discussion of the issue of child labor, but also in many literacy settings.

I have chosen the theory of childhood and literacy studies as two domains under which my research questions are raised. In using both frameworks, I use a narrative approach to understand how my participants use language to position themselves within those domains. This chapter particularly discusses how power operates and marginalizes children in the frameworks of childhood theory and the literacy studies. First, I discuss a brief historical lens through which childhood comes to be idealized by the Western society. By highlighting the historical landscape and the dominance of the Western middle-class point of view, I aim to present the context within which certain children’s cultural practices such as child labor are seen as “problematized.”

In the next theoretical ground, I present studies of literacy and narratives as sites where power and agency are negotiated. Looking at literacy as sociocultural practice involving the children’s constructions of identity surrounding the use of texts, I intend to present the conversations of empirical studies in which children are marginalized in literacy practices due to the language they have spoken and their place in the society. In looking at the intersection of literacy with the issue of class and race, I demonstrate how the practices of literacy perpetuate the domination of the conceptualization of childhood in society.

The purpose of this presentation of theoretical ground is as follows, first, to explain the theoretical domain within which I use of terms such as “literacy,” “narrative,” or “childhood.” Second, I aim to show readers the theoretical conversation to which the findings of my study are responding. In so doing I propose to set the ground on which my study can be read and understood.
Problematizing Childhood

Defining childhood in historical trajectories situates children within their relationships with adults. The definition of childhood entails the theorizing of childhood by scholars, the formulation of childhood through policies, and the upbringing of children by the society. The historian Phillipe Aries (1982) investigates how children come to be viewed separately from adults. The idea that childhood is invented (Gittins, 2004) and discovered (Aries, 1982) by adults not only frames childhood as a general state of “growing up” as children, but also situates childhood as a conceptual state constructed and developed by adults over time.

Medieval arts, children’s literature, biblical texts, and parental manuscripts provide some historical proofs through which the societal construction of childhood emerges. Rawlins (2002) studied 150 child-rearing advice manuals published in the United States between 1860 and 1930. The findings revealed that nearly one third of the manuals studied warn parents of the danger of precocity. Precocity is associated with problems or pathologies, ranging from physical weakness, overstimulation, to mental peculiarity. The discourse of childhood then creates a certain norms or standard through which children are idealized and assessed to determine what is considered the “normal” and “peculiar.”

Looking at the discourse of normality, we should not ignore the role of the developmental psychology paradigm in defining childhood. Jenks (2004) considers developmental psychology a ‘paradigm,’ marked by the famous contribution of Piaget through his developmental theory.

Lee (2001) indicates that developmental pattern has geared childhood toward the “finished” standard of adulthood. The dichotomy implies the unequal power sharing in which the adulthood has power over or responsibility toward the “unfinished” childhood. James and Prout (1997) and Lee (2001) criticize the developmental psychological approach that views childhood
as “human becoming,” decontextualized from the sociocultural structure that allows the variety of childhoods to develop. Through sociological studies, they offer a paradigm to understand childhood as “human beings,” produced in relationship to power structure (James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Jenks, 2004, Lee, 2001).

Walkerdine (2004) has called for the scholars’ attention beyond the sociology – psychology dichotomy. She suggests that even in the psychological domain, there is no universal truth about childhood. “Growing up” is contextualized within certain cultural practices and is embedded within different meaning in diverse societies. The notion of multiplicity of development yields the inception of cultural developmental psychology, characterized by the influence of an anthropological approach in studying childhood across cultures. Walkerdine notes that “…the subject is not made social, but rather the social is the site for the production of discursive practices which produce the possibility of being a subject” (p. 103).

Sapir (1934/1970) acknowledges that culture is dynamic and “gradually discovered.” However, in viewing children’s membership in culture, Sapir still considers children as the inheritance of culture who constantly and consciously accept and adapt to culture. In this sense, children are regarded as “human-becoming” (Lee, 2001) who are prepared to be competent members of society. Briggs (1992) argues that the meaning-making is not a one-way process. Children do not passively adopt a meaning that exists inherently in a culture. Rather, children “actively select, interpret, and utilize it in various ways” (p. 25). Additionally, Gaskins, Corsaro & Miller (1992) acknowledge that culture has provided a space as well as ingredients for children to participate and contribute to cultural practices. Yet at the same time, children’s development is not only bounded in the process of enculturation, but also involves children’s active participation in the meaning-making process. The study of local events show children’s
agency, the study of macro contexts shows the portrayal and how children are represented by the dominant culture. The contexts are discursive, but the discursivity varies according to what kind of ideology is being enacted and what institutions play a role in the ideological practice.

**Problematicizing the role of media in childhood.** The studies of the portrayal of childhood by adults through media comprise the idea that childhood is “symbolic” and “representable” (Cook, 2002). On the one hand, media produces images of children and depicts children in certain portrayals. These representations allow childhood to become a site in which moral values and ideologies are constructed by adults, and sometimes are even contested. On the other hand, media also provides children material with which to construct their own practices.

First, scholars address concerns such as how American and European children are becoming “mediatized” (Dortner, 2005). Part of that study of mediatization is concerned with how children’s movies, such as cartoon imagery, describe childhood as embedded within deconstructed meanings. For example Steven Spielberg’s Animaniacs, the complexity of childhood is symbolized with laughter, which Mukerji & Gillespie (2002) deem as representing the “ambiguity” of childhood. It is ambiguous in that the cartoon “stabilizes a” an unclear category. On the other hand, the cartoon serves as a parody, in which the expectation and values toward childhood are ridiculed and desacralized. The study of the portrayal of childhood situates social contexts as “discursive practices,” in Bakhtinian terms; that is, the contexts involve the societal ideology in its creation process. As a consequence, the studies point to the unifying of the imagery of childhood and view the media as supporting the dominant imagery (Brembeck, 2008; Hunt, 2004) or resisting it (Mukerji & Gillespie, 2002; Ito, 2008).

Second, one of the important aspects of media study in education is to show the relationship between childhood and the media and its possible role in literacy learning. For
instance, the analysis of children’s interactions allows scholars to view popular culture as resources for children’s meaning making and the construction of agency (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Newkirk, 2002; Marsh, 2003). This way, media culture equips children with “material culture” (Gutman and Conink-Smith, 2004) or “textual toys” (Dyson, 1993, 2003). Dyson (2003) shows that popular culture becomes an entry into friendship, as well as a ticket for a child to participate in classroom literacy.

Children’s preference for the consumption of media culture shows that they are not passive consumers, but rather, active participants of the production of media culture who make use of the media in expanding their competencies. The competencies are situated within the multilayered social world, which according to Dyson (2003), includes their “official” and “unofficial” (or, relatively child-governed) world. The discursive context in this sense provides a backdrop through which children are responding by producing the childhood culture, characterized by practice, membership, and participation (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). As Corsaro (2003) notes, the discursive context constructed by adults may shape or confine children’s preference and participation, but it can also serve as a resource for children to produce their agency.

**Problematizing Child Labor.** The modern study of childhood challenges the idea that childhood is singular (Cook, 2002, Genishi & Dyson, 2009; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). The discussion concerning childhood, labor, and schooling encompasses the idea of how to best “protect” the children and what kind of “participation” -- be it labor, working, or schooling -- are expected from children to contribute to the society. Again, the notion of children as ‘human-becomings’ (Lee, 2001) frames the discussion of how adults can protect or allow the participation of these “future adults” in order to better produce the society.
James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) argue that the discussion of child labor does not always relate to the issue of children’s safety, but also to the discourse of childhood. Street, industry, and other labor places are considered by the dominant society as public spaces and therefore, are occupied by adults. Children, given their vulnerability, should not be visible and should be raised at “home.” The concern about child labor emerges as one aspect that opposes the cultural hegemony that adults wield over the street (Hengst, 2005). In responding to the issue of child labor on the street, Glauser (1997) offers to unpack the construction of “street” and “home” by opening up a possibility that children may consider street as a site of growing up. This deconstruction challenges the meanings of “family unit” which usually refers to the biological family with certain distribution of responsibilities between adults and children as novices.

The discussion of childhood and labor usually entails the paradigm of schooling. Kehnie and Hobbs (2001) point to the historical fact that the reduction of child labor in Britain was due to the introduction of compulsory education. However, their review of historical data reveals that child employment and education are not compatible. This implies that the impact of employment on education will depend on the condition of the employment and the nature of educational activity. They also note that the relation between both is ambiguous. While work experience is theoretically valued as part of education, some cases of children’s employment are being ignored by educators as they are viewed as contributing little for educational competence. Going back to the historical trajectory, the inception of schooling demonstrates a strong relationship with attempts to transform working-class behavior. Schooling embodies the discourse of discipline and moral landscape, to quote Foucault (Rabinow, 1994), in which the middle-class people discipline those of the working-class (Jones & Williamson, 1979). In this sense, schooling and child labor represent two poles of discourses of class structure; the civilized middle-class and the
‘immoral’ working-class. Schooling serves as a medium through which society is projected as moving toward a better civilization.

**Childhood and labor in the Indonesian context.** The historical landscape of the discourse of childhood in Indonesia is situated in a context where children’s participation is enabled by local cultural practice (Rogoff, 2003). A few studies of local cultural practices (Koentjaraningrat’s, 1985; Nag, White, & Peet, 1978) proved that economic participation of children was once valued in Javanese rural areas. Nag, White, and Peet note that the rural Javanese families do tend to value having many children because they consider children as economically valuable. Parents regard children as a source of labor contributing to the household economy in agricultural activities as well as source of economic support for their elderly parents. This confirms Koentjaraningrat’s (1985) findings of the value of children in Javanese culture, that having many children is seen as benefiting parents, as evidenced in the famous Javanese philosophy, “akeh anak akeh rejeki,” or the more children the more wealth (one can get).

The contemporary objection to child labor in developing countries such as Indonesia reflects the dominant international ideology represented by the pressures imposed by the international agencies, labor unions, and many other organizations, toward the governments of what they call the “third-world” countries (White, 1994). This dominant ideology tends to view children as passive victims rather than active social actors capable of exercising their agency.

Having synthesized all of these studies, I conclude that the study of childhood, characterized by interwoven disciplines, describes the emergence of the social constructionist epistemologies. What has been known as the singular form of childhood introduced by developmental psychology has now been expanded not only by a variety of cultural views, but also by an awareness to unpack the hegemonic structures of power in which childhood is
conceptualized. The contemporary approach of investigating childhood entails deconstructions of perspectives regarding children and childhood, which have been taken for granted thus far. Included in the deconstructions are the conceptions of “protection” and “participation” which may embody different meanings depending on in which structure and culture both terms are situated.

As I will present in the forthcoming chapters, children frame their perceptions of working in relation to their families’ poverty. While being portrayed by the Indonesian government and society as “abused” and “victimized,” children’s voices in the intersection provide an alternative view of what it means to “protect” themselves and to “participate” in cultural practices in the way children themselves desire. The children’s and their families’ cultural values regarding working in this street extend the notion of “singular” childhood idealized by the middle-class Western society which I have discussed.

Following this formulation of the ground of childhood, I propose to discuss the framework of narratives and literacy studies as a sociocultural lens in which all these constructions of childhood are located. Using the perspective of the “ethnography of speaking” (Hymes, 1972), narratives are not seen as decontextualized, but rather as produced within a set of discursive contexts. The societal as well as the cultural concepts and practices of childhood thus provide a stage in which the whole conversations of childhood are situated.

**Locating Children’s Agency in Literacy Studies**

As I will present in this dissertation’s findings, I find literacy studies inseparable from the study of narratives, in that both may investigate the production of stories or narratives in various forms of texts within particular context. By “texts,” I refer to oral and written modes of narratives that are produced through meaning-making process that includes circulated “texts” in
the society such as those of popular culture, which Dyson (2003) deems “cultural texts.” While literacy studies in education are limited to the uses, reproductions, and productions of texts in institutional settings in which learning-related activities occur, the study of narratives offers a way to closely examine narratives as they relate to sociocultural issues such as language socialization, and identity constructions. I use both frameworks because they serve two purposes. First, literacy studies enable me to frame my findings within the issue of power relations and children’s agency within the given nature and organization of literacy learning events. Second, the study of narratives provides me a lens to view the productions of narratives with regard to, for instance, how the narrators position themselves in relation to each other, as well as the cultural or socialization values that contextualize the production of narratives. To start off, I will define what I refer to as stories or narratives in this study. I then discuss how previous studies frame the construction of identity with regard to narrative practices. Next, I present how some studies investigate children’s narratives in various literacy settings.

**Stories and narratives in the ethnography of communication.** Scholars use the term “story” and “narrative” interchangeably in various studies. While some studies investigate the stories of others in adult literature (Federici, 2007; Tang, 2007) and children’s literature (Beckett, 2007; Searle, 2007) as a site of subjectivity development, some other studies investigating stories as a means of socializing language at home (Miller, 1994; Miller, Cho, Bracey, 2005; Miller, Fung, & Liang, 1997; Miller, Fung, & Mintz, 1996), as a tool for negotiating agency in school settings (Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Heath, 1994; Howard, 2008; Newkirk, 2002; Talmy, 2008; Wortham, 2008; Yosso, 2006), or as a way of allowing children into peer interactions (Corsaro, 2003; Dyson, 1993, 2003, 2009; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin, 2006). The uses of stories and
narratives have marked the inception of the “ethnography of speaking” (Hymes, 1972; Sherzer, 1992) which allows the study of language use in its social context.

Narratives and stories provide a means of accessing individual’s construction of meanings in detailed everyday interactions. The interactions do not occur in a power vacuum, but rather, entail negotiations of power. In the “ethnography of speaking,” the unit of analysis in investigating language use is not sentences of speech, but rather, the “narrative event,” that consists of all sociocultural features that enable the production of narratives (Hymes, 1972, 1974). Social context is central to the ethnography of communication. The idea implies that language serves a social function, and in order to understand its use, one needs to delve into the meanings shared by the particular community members. What matters according to Hymes is not the linguistic competence, but rather, a communicative competence in which the participants of the interactions contribute their cultural resources to their constructions of meanings.

Communicative competence is discussed by various scholars as they conduct ethnography in home or school settings. For instance, Dyson (1993, 2003) investigates how school literacy practices mediate the production of written stories. Dyson views children’s writing as embedded in their “imagined, experienced, and ongoing social world” (1993, p. 12). The social world however is not a singular ongoing world, but rather, a complex of multiple worlds in which children encounter different materials from popular media and their relationships with peers and adults. Children’s social worlds therefore provide a context through communicative events in which children use language to interact with others and construct meanings.

The term context has been addressed in different terms by various empirical studies. Among those, Dyson defines context as “social world” (Dyson, 1993) or the “complex world” in
which the boundaries of “unofficial” and “official” norms intersect (Dyson, 1994) to foreground the idea that context is discursive and dialogic. Quoting Bakhtin, Dyson underlines that children’s written narrative is embedded in social dialogue (p. 10). Hymes (1974) would agree that the speech context is also dialogic because narratives are always negotiated between the speaker and the addressee.

Narrative is defined as a verbal activity of telling an audience about particular events (Miller, 1994). Story, on the other hand, is defined as series of events that involves, at least, predicament, conflict, struggle, the portrayal of a protagonist, and sequence (Carter, 1993). Both definitions show that the contexts of studies of stories and narratives are often overlapping and intersecting. However, scholars tend use the term “story” in relation with intertextuality of narrative with other cultural resources such as popular culture and children’s literature (Alexander, Miller, Hengst, 2001; Clark, 2003; Dyson, 1994; Newkirk, 2002; Paley, 1997; Wolf & Heath, 1992). Children’s emotional attachment to stories provided by popular media and other cultural resources are found to be cross-cultural (Alexander, Miller, Hengst, 2001), but its construction is specific to personal subjectification related to gender issues (Newkirk, 2002) as well as other conditions, such as coping with illness (Clark, 2003).

Narratives, on the other hand, are more broadly used to represent the production of talk and written composition in communicative practices related to the issue of language socialization (He, 2003; Miller, 2004; Miller, Sandel, Liang, & Fung, 2001; Rampton, 2004; Sanchez & Orellana, 2006) and the issue of power structure (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin, 2006; Howard, 2008; Talmy, 2008). Some scholars, however, use the term ‘story’ to represent a counter-narrative (Hicks, 2005; Smith & Neill, 2007), and other scholars use both “narrative” and “stories” interchangeably as they investigate the communicative practices in home setting.
(Miller, 1994, 2004), or classroom and peer interactions (Newkirk, 2002; Dyson, 2009). The use of both terms shows that the definition of “stories” and “narratives” are not mutually exclusive. Throughout this dissertation, I use “story” and “narratives” interchangeably. I use “story” mostly in presenting the multiplicity of voices in the “intersection.” Meanwhile, I use “narratives” to situate participants’ perceptions against the backdrop of the larger societal discourse of childhood work and schooling.

**Narratives and the construction of identity.** Bakhtin (1981) acknowledges that internalized dialogues resemble the complex interactions among heteroglot voices in inner speech. Bakhtin presents the notion of selves as entities that perform “responsible acts” in social interaction by “finalizing” each other (p. 105). Morson and Emerson (1990) explain that “unfinalizability” occurs because human beings are continually engaged in such social interactions. This suggests that identity making is a social process. This notion also extends Vygotsky view of identity in that individuality is always being made as social process, that is, in the interaction between self and others. What Vygotsky considers as ‘self’ is shaped by the “interweaving between the inner psyche and the roles of otherness” (Wertsch, 1991). The dialogue occurs while at the same time, new meanings are continuously being produced and reproduced. But the dialogical landscape is not sterile. Bakhtin notes that in the process, an ideological environment is being created. It is shaped by human consciousness in the social intercourse, and is constantly produced through the contradiction and the production of meaning.

Wortham (2008) addresses the issue of “objectification” of social identity through the use of language in interactions. Wortham (2006) also notes that one should view the construction of identity as the intertwining of the “social identification” imposed by the dominant society -- concerning the issues of race, class, and gender -- and the social practices in academic learning.
As I will present in the forthcoming chapters, this “social identification” is apparent in the way
the dominant society, as represented by teachers and some middle-class community members,
interact with or portray the children deemed the “street children.”

Narratives have provided a window to see how the self and identity is created. The fact
that narratives are viewed in social communicative events confirms the idea that a self is not
created in a social vacuum, but rather, is always negotiated and situated in a power structure.
Combining Bakhtinian and Vygotskian conception of language and identity together, the
relationships between ideology, human social interactions, and the internal landscape of human
mind are inseparable.

Children’s narratives have been studied to understand the ways in which children are
socialized in particular cultural contexts. In addition to the conception of culture as a “bag of
ingredients” (Briggs, 1992). Gaskins, Miller, and Corsaro (1992) consider this process of
learning a culture an “interpretive approach,” that is, the children use their interpretive abilities to
participate in cultural practice. The process is “individual” in that a child creates a personal
meaning, yet it is “collective” at the same time, as a child makes use of the cultural resources that
are created by the previous generations and made available by them. Through this interpretive
approach, children’s development is viewed as a reproductive process because children
contribute to the productions of culture, as some literacy studies below attempt to demonstrate.

**Children’s narratives in literacy practices.** Some studies of children’s narratives
show that the minority children are marginalized in school settings. For instance, Heath’s study
(1982, 1983) in working-class Trackton community demonstrates how the community members
interwove the oral and the literacy activities in various social practices that differed from the
mainstream school-oriented communities. This working-class community viewed literacy
activities, such as reading, not as individual activities, but rather, as sources of social interactions in which meaning from written texts were shared, discussed, and negotiated. The view and practice however was marginalized as children from this community were socialized into school settings in which they participate.

Corsaro and Rosier (1982) and Michaels (1981) investigated how the narrative competence of working-class children affects their performances in the classrooms. Corsaro and Rosier followed the transition process of a working-class child from Head Start to Elementary School and found that the teacher-directed lessons in first grade might have affected her hesitance to contribute in her classroom. Michaels, on the other hand, demonstrates how a linguistic discourse in a classroom practice privileged a middle-class way of thinking and talking. Although the working-class children demonstrated the competence to move between scientific and narrative discourse, their efforts to use narratives were not appreciated, extended, or used productively by teachers in developing students’ academic arguments. Michaels concludes that what counts as “being smart” (p. 144) at school is carried in particular speech genre practiced by the middle-class children.

Despite the confinement of children’s narratives in out-of-home settings, some studies document some social spaces in which children are allowed to practice their agency through narratives. Corsaro (2003) and Dyson (1993, 2003, 2009) investigate the ways in which children use narratives to negotiate their roles in peer relationship. Corsaro acknowledges that children adopt and interpret information from adult’s world and produce their own meanings. Using narratives, children develop their perspectives on friendship, play, monsters, and resolve their peer conflicts. He highlights that in so doing, children elaborate and adopt adult’s perspectives, rather than simply imitating them. In seeing how children respond to adult ways of thinking,
Corsaro suggests that adult’s culture and child’s culture (p. 112) are interwoven and children always participate in both. This argument supports an idea that children’s world is a completely distinctive self-governed world, instead of an “immature imitation of adult’s culture” (p. 212).

While Corsaro (2003) defines children’s worlds as different from that of adults but related, Dyson (2003) symbolized child’s culture as the ‘abandoned’ space outside the adults’ norms and expectations of moral values and literacy performance. The child’s culture is full with “unofficial” resources children manage to include and interweave with the neat “official” school literacy (pp. 1-2). Dyson brings the instances of how children incorporate popular culture among other cultural materials (e.g., folk culture, religious practices) to their literacy learning. Interestingly, not only are children aware with the resources and the extent to which they can appropriate them, but they are also capable of knowing their boundaries, and limitations in adults’ normative rules. Such awareness, again, confirms Corsaro’s idea that the child’s culture is always influenced by and situated within adult’s culture.

The idea of literacy as a social site of children’s agency is extended by Marsh (2003), Marsh and Millard (2001), and Marsh and Thompson (2001) and Pahl (2005) in studies conducted in United Kingdom. Pahl discusses the idea of the New Literacy Studies, in which children draw on the cultural experiences of their lives in school literacy. The cultural resources include the popular culture, home literacy, religious practices, and technology.

While Dyson (2003) examines children’s experiences with popular culture, Marsh (2003) investigates the extent to which “the two way traffic” may occur between school literacy practices and home practices. The finding revealed that although the children’s favorite texts were mostly related to popular culture and media, there had been limited ways in which these resources are incorporated in the nursery's curriculum. By contrast, the curriculum appears to be
brought into the home environments by parents. This pattern emerged as a "one way traffic" in which the school literacy has infiltrated the home practice, rather than the other way around.

Unlike the study of children’s narratives at home, the study of narratives in peer relationships attempts to access children’s narratives as they are situated in the child culture (Corsaro, 2003; Dyson, 2003). While Corsaro and Dyson investigate how the children appropriate their oral and written narratives in adult-dominated literacy practices, Marsh (2003), Prinsloo (2004), Prinsloo and Stein (2004) and Prinsloo and Breirer (1996) demonstrate the extent to which children’s narratives are cultivated or curtailed in classroom settings. The study of children’s narrative in school contexts thus supports the dynamic relationship between child and adult culture in that children’s ability to engage their cultural resources and narratives depends on the adults’ practices and perspectives. With the variety of adults’ acceptances of children’s narratives and cultural resources, children demonstrate their ability to practice their agencies in many diverse ways.

Children’s ability to interweave various resources through narratives, and also to move between the boundaries of “official” and “official” world (Dyson, 1993, 2003) demonstrates their awareness of the “multiplicity of social voices” (Bakhtin, 1981) provided by friends, families, and the media. Hymes (1973) would consider this ability a “communicative competence,” that is, a competence to use language to serve a certain purpose, certain audience, and in a particular context. In particular school settings however, such “social heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981) is not being recognized. In responding to that, children negotiate their voices in certain strategies, including switching the talk genre (Miller, Cho, Bracey, 2005) or embedding the “unofficial” content in “official modes” of narratives (Dyson, 2003).
Having presented literacy practices as sites for children’s narratives, I view literacy as a negotiated space in which various identities enact their voices through narratives. As a negotiated space, voices are not heard equally, but rather are situated within a power construct. Power relations and the exercise of agencies characterize the production of narratives in literacy settings. The “street children’s” narratives that I will present in the following chapters add to the ways children of underrepresented population negotiate their narratives, as demonstrated by previous studies.

**Study of street children’s narratives.** There has been a growing attention dedicated to document the narratives of underrepresented populations (Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Dyson, 1993, 2003; Goodwin, 2006; Heath, 1983; Hicks, 2002; Labov, 1973; Michaels, 1981; Miller, 1994; Newkirk, 2002; Yosso, 2006). The studies define the ‘underrepresented narrator’ as those whose narratives have been devalued, especially by the school system and the dominant culture. The findings call for more attention to the diverse modes to acknowledge children’s language diversity, and for school providing a nurturing space for children to develop their communicative competence. The following studies investigating the voices of street children in Indonesia contribute to the conversations of the studies of counter-narratives.

Berman’s ethnography (2000) of street children’s in Indonesia reveals that the street children construct the discourse of violence as a strategy of survival through their narratives. Berman studies the written narratives of ten to seventeen-year-old street children published in a bulletin. Their writings show their evaluations of power enforced by the authoritative adults in which they portray themselves as victims. Berman acknowledges that for the street children stories provide a means of sharing survival strategies. Through analyzing children’s written narratives, Berman demonstrates the ways in which they negotiate and transform their
conceptions of selves from victims to authors. Here, narratives serve a means to create and portray a new agency, in a situation where their accesses to power are limited.

A study by Beazley (2002) reveals how another group of street children in Indonesia use narratives to mark and identify the spatial boundaries in relation to their comfort zones. Having lived with peers on the street, the street children emphasize on drawing the maps of places such as traffic lights, bus terminal, road tracks, and other public spaces that have served as their territories or hanging out sites, and exclude certain spaces where they have experienced verbal abuses, evictions, arrests, beatings, and tortures by the police officers. The fact that street children use narratives and mappings to conceptualize their territories proves the interweaving of cognitive and narrative competence in the process of constructing their selves.

The studies of constructions of counter-narratives, that is, narratives that are challenging the dominant narratives, bring the devalued narratives of minority children to the center of academic attention. The studies give a light not only to the issue of who are being marginalized, but also to the discussion of what and how marginalization has been unconsciously pervasive in a society and what impact it may have to the construction of identity of minority, and non-minority children. The marginalization may have emerged in differing forms across cultures. For example, while school children in the United States use narratives to negotiate their voices in responding to the power structure undergirding the school curricula and peer relationships, the Indonesian street children’s negotiations of power through narratives show their struggles in dealing with the government officials’ violent treatment in everyday life. Despite these differing contexts of power structure, Corsaro (2003), Dyson (1994, 2009), Berman (2000), and Beazley (2002) suggest that children must be permitted a space for their narratives. Stories and storytelling events will provide a site for children’s meaning making and identity construction.
In a Bakhtinian (1981) perspective, the counter-narrative is responding to the “unitary language,” in which the counter-narrative always attempts to decentralize the dominant ideological thought in a society. The ideological unification creates a “social heteroglossia” (p. 271) in which the language diversity is built upon dynamic and even conflicting linguistic forces. Taking a metaphor of a novel as a “mundane reality,” Bakhtin’s dialogical notion represents the complexity of narratives as a means of understanding self, relationship of self and others, as well as the connections of self with the world. Within the complexity, self is constructed dialogically by acquiring, internalizing cultural norms or producing agency, by receiving or resisting. In a social landscape, self is a site where dialogic forces occur through the use of language.

Setting the Critical Lens

All these theoretical grounds have brought us to awareness that all academic voices are discursive. Our intellectual understandings are informed by which paradigm we use to capture, and to present a social phenomenon in a certain way. My choosing of a critical lens, represented by the use of discourse analysis in examining participants’ narratives in this study, thus entails a discursive purpose. By selecting, organizing, and framing the “unheard” children’s and their families’ narratives, I aim to challenge or to problematize the dominant narratives of childhood enacted in government policies and society’s approach in dealing with the issue of children who work in the street.

Using the discourse analysis framework, I investigate how the policy concerning the “street children” uses language to represent and formulate the “street children” as “problem.” By doing so, I conform to the idea that language and discourses embody ideologies and therefore constitute social identities, social relations, and worldviews (Fairclough, 1989). Through the analysis of policy as “text,” I intend to understand how discourse is enacted and organized as a
practice involving the issue of class in society, in this case, those who have privileged access to economic resources and power. I also use this lens to understand the embodiment of societal structure, in terms of what Foucault (1984) deems the production of power and knowledge, which in this case, allows the confinement and objectification of “street children” in particular ways.

To conclude this theoretical ground I propose that education should be empowering, as suggested by Freire (1970/1993). In a context where “street children” are taught and are enforced to conform to the dominant societal values through schooling practices without appreciating their cultural values as I will indicate in the following chapters, I argue that not only the children are oppressed. The oppressive system distributes within the education system equally and “victimizes” the whole society by reproducing anxiety and fear when the society has to handle issues such as the educational performance gap and low school enrollment rate which I will discuss later in the finding chapters. On our way to the finding chapters, the next chapter will take us to the contexts and the design of the study.
Chapter 3

Interpreting the Intersection: People, Place, and Meanings

Methodology

“Sanes anak jalanan abdi mah. [I’m not gonna put my name down], I’m not a street kid.” Amir, 15 year old, passes the attendance sheet around to his friends, chuckling. Nobody, however, responds to his joke. The rest of the children put their names on the sheet and after one go-around the sheet eventually reaches Amir again. This time Amir puts down his name quietly. The two times three meters room looks crowded with twelve children sitting on the floor. Serving as an Early Childhood Center in the morning, the room shifts into a teen’s literacy class guided by a tutor from the Rainbow Foundation (fieldnotes, September 29, 2010).

Filling in the attendance sheet in this situated social context has not only served as an opening routine of a literacy activity, but also a discursive event in which the children are categorized and labeled as “street children.” The joke above is expressed amidst such awareness. Entering a room characterized by the presence of books, school supplies, a white board, and “more capable” adults in charge with their learning activities, children are also aware of a set of classroom-learning rules which embody what Rosaldo (1993) considers “cultural patterns.” Viewed through this lens, street presents its own cultural pattern too. The street culture resides in the margins of Indonesian society, symbolized by distinctive practices. As Beazley (2003) describes, “These symbolic challenges to the dominant culture are communicated and dispersed within the social group and conveyed to the world via the subculture’s specialized semiotic: their style of dress, their acts of bodily subversion or dissent (in the form of tattoos, body piercing and sexual practices); the music they play and listen to; and their use of drugs and alcohol.”
The methodological approach that I have chosen enables me to understand the dynamics of schooling in relation to street intersection’s life. In doing so, I choose not to view children working in the street as a homogenous entity. Rather, the forthcoming chapters will demonstrate the dynamics of the meaning-making process of each child participant in relations with others, peers, adults, or me, as a researcher, within the larger discursive context of schooling and working in the street. In those relations children are free to create distinctions and construct boundaries, associate themselves with, or build similarities with others. This chapter presents the methodological conceptions that undergird my understanding of the complexity and the dynamics of the “street community’s” life. First off, I discuss the moral and political landscape that has informed my site selection, and explain how the term “community” is defined and negotiated by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), members of the community, and illustrate the sociocultural boundaries that have been established within the community. Then, I will describe the sociocultural context that influences my decision to use the term “street children” throughout the study. Following the conceptual discussions is the design of this study. I will introduce the participants, the literacy sites, data collection methods, the transcription key, steps of data analysis, and a description of how I negotiated my role as a researcher.

**On “Shame” and Space: How It Begins**

This is my first time in Pasundan. Rain was pouring in the whole night. The intersection is flooded, not so many adults and kids were seen on the street. The river blows up, dirty brown water mix with mud forced the cars to slow down. I notice the alley Yuma told me, but it’s impossible to get off the angkot – the public minivan – with the water as high as my knee. I have to let the angkot to take me into a dry area. It’s a little further, but I do not have choice. This is an abandoned place, I thought. It is as if flood visited this area
every other day and the government pretends they don’t know. The street is also shabby with a string of small-scale industry activities. Car parts shops, automobile services, food stalls, construction shops, and kettle factories display workers with greasy and dirty looks. That is where the Pasundan Early Childhood Center is located – right behind the shops and just one block from an intersection heading to a highway to Jakarta. As I am carefully tiptoeing on puddled sidewalk, I could see the center in the mouth of the alley. Women are gathering in front of the door as I walk closer. Voice of kids’ singing tries to compete with truck’s noise passing by. With no front yard, no porch, and no playground, the passing trucks and vehicles pour in loud noise and dust to the crowded room (field notes, June 19, 2010).

This overwhelmed, disturbed feeling I encountered on the first day of site visit reminds me of that experienced by other scholars who study the inner city children (Valenzuela, 1999; Weis, 1990). The marginalized community Cintron (1997) describes as occupying the “decayed” part of the city, is located in the old, abandoned, center of US big cities. Here in Bandung, the spatial dichotomy is also present. The deserted part of the city represents the contrast between center-periphery, the abandoned-old versus the developing-new city area which follows the power of capital distribution (Keith & Pile, 1993). Unlike Cintron’s Angelstown however, Pasundan is not the old, inner city which may represent the “problematic” schooling system in the US education disparity context. Instead, Pasundan is the newly developed area in which commercial enterprises and industries are built along its main road.

My initial intention is to include street children in the older, Parung area, which is the site of my pilot study back in 2008. However, my 2010 visit to Parung intersection did not find any children in the intersection. It was not until my interviews with Rainbow – a Non Governmental
Organization that provided me access to my participants -- staff that I learnt that this absence relates to the enactment of Bandung government’s policy that grants an amount of educational funds to street children’s families with a condition that parents should withdraw their children from the street. This is when I witness the intersection of some forces: the global discourse of childhood, children’s rights and fighting over illiteracy; the national and regional policy of urban planning and regulation; and the local practice – the foundation’s, and the parents’ responses to those policies in their relationships with their children. The interplay of those forces has affected my selection. I shifted to Pasundan, located in the eastern side of Bandung - which is according to Rainbow foundation “one of the toughest areas” the foundation has been dealing with. Unlike Parung children who are predominantly school children, most of Pasundan children are school dropouts. Upon focusing on Pasundan for nearly two month, I went back to Parung to do interviews and focus group discussion with parents. My intention to include Parung parents is to get variety of parents’ responses, stances, and perceptions toward schooling and working in the street.

Both Parung and Pasundan serve an entrance to Bandung city. Highway exits in both areas are loaded with the highest incoming traffic from Jakarta and surrounding cities. A contrast view however, distinguished Parung from Pasundan. Parung main road’s sidewalk displays billboards promoting high-class restaurants, hotels, and convenient shopping malls, as if trying to attract the owners of private cars, mini-shuttle users, or air flight passengers who just headed out of a commercial airport. It is not uncommon that the main road has to be vacated to provide access to high-rank government officers heading to the provincial capitol building just ten miles away from Parung. Pasundan road, on the other hand, exhibits varieties of small-scale enterprises; from home industries to food stalls, from pedicab station to traditional markets. It is
reported that criminal rate in this area has remained high for years, a typical challenge associated with the presence of bus terminal everywhere in Indonesia. Pasundan area has developed in the last twenty years, following the development of Leuwipanjang bus terminal that was built 1994. The terminal provides affordable inter-city bus services from Bandung to many cities in or outside of Java Island.

*Figure 3.1. Map of Parung and Pasundan.*
Juxtaposing Parung and Pasundan therefore does not only involve the capital distribution which governs the spatial planning of the city. There is a geographically specific, city function which entails its own imagery. Parung may serve a metaphor for Bandung’s veranda and living room, a site in which knick-knacks should be displayed attractively. Whereas Parakan, may represent the kitchen, which in Indonesia, functions a space of domestic productive activity and therefore, may look messy and shabby. Kitchen in Indonesian houses is usually located in the inner part, so that it is hidden from the visitors’ eyesight. The contrast is also expressed by Rudi, the Child Division Head of Rainbow Foundation in describing why children should disappear from Parung,

“The guideline [of the educational grant program] does not mention anything about where it should be distributed, but this is the instruction of the “king” of the West Java province [He may think that] it would be shameful if guests noticing children *ngamen* – play music for money in the street.” (Minutes of Rainbow’s meeting, July 30, 2010)

The conception of “shame” in relation to space comes to play when Indonesia hosts international events. Back in 2004, Bandung government conducted a street-children abolitionment act in preparation for the 2005 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung (Tarti ana & Sujarwo, *Pikiran Rakyat* Daily, December 6, 2004). Growing up as Javanese, I also learnt that shame relates to an awareness of where to behave appropriately. A competence to behave according to the adults’ expectation of morality serves me an entrée to Javanese culture’s membership. “Be a Javanese,” my grandmother would say, “If you keep crying like that on the street, you’re not yet Javanese.” In addition to not expressing negative feelings in public space, a friendliness and cleanliness is what the Javanese adults may expect children to demonstrate to guests in the living room. Maturity and an awareness of one’s status and place in society is what has been associated with being a “Javanese.”
Hildred Geertz (1969) discusses the complexity of the conception of “shameness” in Javanese culture as it is symbolized by several hierarchical vocabularies describing its intensity; *sungkan, isin, saru*. My use of personal experience here does not serve as a means of essentializing Javanese culture when it comes to discussing street children’s place in the society. Rather, it should be seen as a representation of a societal value of how the dominant culture may perceive childhood in the culture’s moral landscape. Being mostly Javanese, street children may not be Javanese enough in the sense of self-control and maturity. Working in the street is embarrassing. Perhaps, my grandmother would say, “Javanese child should not ask or beg for money from adults. That is very rude and impolite. Children should behave and play on a secure place. They should be “Javanese” enough to be able to gauge the risk of what they’re doing. Being Javanese entails with acting responsibly.”

As my fieldwork unfolds, I find “shame” as not only an institutional implementation of emotion which plays out beyond regulating the space, but also, an untold voice undergirding practices and collective choices. It serves an invisible thread woven in the “webs of significance” (Geertz, 1977). The term is first expressed by Yuma, the Rainbow staff member and my local informant, who accompanied me to interview Fini, a fifteen year-old street girl in Parung. When I asked Fini about why she preferred to *ngamen* in the street at night, Fini replied, “It feels cooler at night, and less dust too,” to which Yuma commented, “She’s embarrassed to be seen on the street at daytime. She can’t stand people’s stares and everything.” After leaving Fini’s house I asked Yuma to explain how she came to such an assumption, and she said, “That’s the thing you can’t get from just asking. She may answer one thing but then the other time she tells you different thing. I just knew that. She used to tell me everything.” Regarding why other children older than 15 years-old generally stop working in the street, especially in daytime, reasons
related to shame were also confirmed by many Rainbow facilitators who have been working with these children for years.

The notion of “things we can’t get just from asking” represents the depth of cultural pattern in which “moods, motivation, affects, and activities constitute symbolic interrelation in the cultural system” (Sewell Jr, 1999). Realizing the depth and the complexity of emotion may be embedded in the narratives the participants provide for the research, I was aware that I would rely much on my key informants for clarifications. Concerning “shame,” Wikan (1984) asserts that it applies to an act, and that it is ascribed through social interactions. I found that in my fieldwork shame was situated within particular context of interactions. Participating in casual conversations, attendance in variety community events, and hearing participants’ opinions on others helped me to understand and to interpret the depth of this symbolic meaning. However the analysis of shame in this social context does not only reflect “thick description” (Geertz, 1977), as Ortner (1999) puts it, shame is also enacted within the societal moral landscape which devalues practices of this marginal community.

**Houses Without Numbers: Class, Communities, Negotiated Boundaries**

“The children that we assist are mostly produced by the street communities in Bandung” (Interview, June 15, 2010). Rudi went on explaining that “street communities” were slums surrounding intersections in which children and their parents work. Rainbow Foundation had been supervising and assisting some of twenty-three “street communities” identified by Bandung government as producing “street children.” The government’s and the foundation’s idea of “community” struck me as I visited Sampurna, one of the communities the foundation assisted, which happened to be where Yuma’s parents live. What constitute a “community”? Is it bound by geographical proximity, administrative boundaries, or something beyond? How do
people – the foundation perceives as “members of community” feel about the membership? Having lived in a neighborhood in which a house is identified by a number, street address, and a postal code, my sense of spatial identification was challenged as Yuma provided me the direction to her house. “Enter gang Omo (Omo alley), just go straight, and then ask people where’s the house of Ibu Ana. That’s my mom’s name. And they will certainly direct you to my house” Sampurna, Parung, as well as Pasundan, represented the typical Bandung slum area. Alleys served hallways connecting rented rooms on which neighbors got together, chatted, and helped each other by taking care of children or picking out head lice.

House’ numbers, unfortunately, served as an entrée to official bureaucracy system. One day I helped Bu Sri, my local informant from Pasundan, convince a bank – a branch of a national bank – which almost rejected her new account application. Even though the bank was only a half block away from the Pasundan intersection, the idea of a residential address without a number – and then, a fixed telephone line -- was unacceptable to the banking administration system. It took nearly an hour and a back-and-forth consultation between the staff and the manager before the application was finally approved. The process was settled down after they asked for my fixed telephone line as a warrant. The absence of houses’ numbers always presented a challenge, as Pasundan residents had to deal with capital or governance institution. Within the neighborhood, houses were not marked by numbers, but rather, by acquaintances and familiarity with the house members. For instance, all students of the Early Childhood Center had similar address and no concern had aroused thus far as everyone knows who lived in which house.

When discussing about assistance and treatments, the foundation regarded Pasundan as a “community,” an entity with which was unique in character and historical background that deserved an approach different from the other communities the foundation was working with.
“Pasundan people are more difficult. Parents are not trying hard enough to force their children to school. The dropout rate is really high. In Parung it’s not like that.” (Interview with Anang, October 5, 2010). Yet a closer look at individuals’ narratives reveals the dynamics within the community as members construct boundaries, draw distinction, and similarities.

One day Bu Sri’s eldest daughter, a fifteen year-old High School student, was asked to represent Pasundan community in a Bandung’s government-founded Children’s Forum meeting. Rudi had been complaining that the forum had been “an exclusive gathering only involves those chosen mainstream kids from public school and give only a limited space for poor and street children” (minutes of Rainbow meeting, July 30, 2010). After several attempts of negotiation, the foundation was then invited by the Social Ministry to send children from the communities they assisted. Bu Sri later told me that her daughter was not impressed with the way the forum was organized. Other than the fact that children did not seem to be taken seriously as “a priority” – Rudi kept wondering how come in an event like that it was adults who were escorted to the lunch room before children – Bu Sri said that her daughter got annoyed. She put it, “My daughter doesn’t like the way they questioned her. It’s like they have their thoughts about street children first and they expect my daughter to expand on that. My daughter doesn’t know much about street children’s life, she’s not one of them” (Observational notes from the meeting, July 30, 2010). Bu Sri’s daughter never worked in the street, but being asked to join the forum on behalf of Pasundan and the foundation – which had been associated with this street community – she could not escape the stereotypical assumption of street children as ascribed to them in Indonesian media.

One of the tasks that I found challenging in the field was to identify the boundaries, one of which was, who are the members of this “street community”? Not all of Pasundan residents
depended on street jobs, and assuming that they did was considered offensive. On the first month, I relied on key informant’s input in selecting my focal participants, that was, families who were working in the street. People never talked about their jobs openly, especially with strangers, yet as time unfolded I gained the skill. If the answer to my question was, “Serabutan, miscellaneous,” I could assume that they mostly depended on street jobs, which could include ngamen, street vendors, or ngelap (dusting cars with a big brush).

In this study I use the term “Pasundan community” to include, but not limited to, families living in Pasundan neighborhood who worked in the street, either on daily basis or seasonally. There were about 116 families listed in the Pasundan community database (the community administrator anticipated that this amount was less than the actual number due to the high mobility and migration). Seventy percent of the families were suspected to work in the street. The occupation information was not obtained through a formal survey, but as admitted by Pak Eje, the head of community, through his personal observation. He explained that he usually went to the intersection to see who works in the intersection and then wrote them down. This was conducted once in a certain period of time, as the data may change frequently. Pak Eje proudly described that that was the first time that the data was collected formally. “Previously, the head in charge was illiterate. He used to be a preman [gang leader] who hung out a lot in the terminal, getting drunk.” Bu Sri once recalled that even though illiterate, the late head of Pasundan was a very charismatic, wise leader. “It was safer here back then. Even though he is such a drinker, no alcohol was allowed to enter this neighborhood. He’s somebody everyone can seek protection from and look up to.”

A sense of trust and togetherness was highly respected in the community. Rainbow foundation advised me that it was important to not making a resident feel left out. In the past
there had been a misunderstanding when a child did not get a pencil in a literacy tutorial activity organized by the foundation. This incident had caused a discomfort in the relationship between the foundation and the community. A sense of togetherness characterized the everyday life in Pasundan. Women got together and chatted in the alleys while supervising their children playing on the dusty main alley. Residents who worked in the intersection were often seen sitting on the sidewalk in Pasundan intersection and chatting in groups. Children were playing around them. Only sometimes when the traffic light turns red that women, men, and children approached the passengers inside the angkot or the private cars.

Low education level was believed to be the reason for the residents’ lack of marketable jobs (observational note from interview with Bu Sri and Pak Eje, August 2010). Low-paid jobs in factories that required Elementary School Diploma were even inaccessible for most of the residents who were mostly school dropouts. Limited access to government’s social services and aids had become a concern for the Pasundan community as well. “Such programs are intended to permanent residents. The thing is, these people don’t have a proof [as a permanent resident] because they don’t have proper documentation…No matter how long they have been here, they’re still considered a newcomer [without proper documentation]…Applying for the documentation is not cheap either…Residents are reluctant to apply” (Interview transcript with Bu Sri, August 9, 2010).

The boundary between “newcomers” and “inhabitants” was not apparent in daily interactions given the closeness among the residents. However, when interviewed separately, Bu Sri and pak Eje used the term “newcomers” often. Having married to a “Pasundan native” in 1994 and then moved in to the neighborhood, Bu Sri noted that, “Even though they have been here longer than me, they are newcomers.” (Personal communication, August 9, 2010).
“Newcomers” had been associated with uncertainty, both in administrative and economic sense. Other than having no residential proof or houses, they also lacked of access to marketable jobs, governmental services, and further, an administrative privilege as an urban citizen.

My definition of “Pasundan community” in this study, therefore, was not informed by an administrative, geographical conception, but rather, a sociocultural one. Having defined that, I selected participants of this study as those who were considered by the community administrator as “newcomers” of Pasundan area. This framed them within a situated margin in a power relation that the enactment of “street identity” was embedded with a sense of belonging of sociocultural space, created from a distance from government’s service and programs. The following section will discuss another boundary these Pasundan’s newcomers have constructed in Pasundan intersection, in an attempt to distinguish themselves from other intersection occupants. While the Pasundan neighborhood offered them limited privileges, the intersection served them as a site on which authority, sense of identity and moral landscape was defined.

Figure 3.2. Map of Pasundan Area.
Invisible Street Median

Street medians in Indonesia usually functioned to separate lanes and serve as a decorative space. In Pasundan huge flowerpots were put on the street medians. During my fieldwork, the pots only contained dirt with no flowers or plants, and therefore functioned as “tables” on which children read or write, or as big poles between which children could play hide and seek. Besides the physically visible medians, people working in Pasundan intersection had constructed an unspoken agreement to divide the intersection into two working area. Area one was intended for children and parents coming from the Pasundan community. Area two was intended for children and parents who were coming from areas outside of Pasundan neighborhood (see map).
Regarding the invisible divider, nobody had recalled how it started. “I don’t know, but it helps children to know which angkot (the public minivans) they can get in. Otherwise they will have a fight” (Bu Nina, October 30, 2010). Rina, a fifteen year old girl from working area two revealed that even though they did not get along much, children from area one and two played together sometimes. A moral boundary had been identified by parents in working area two, “The children in that side of the street are ngelem [sniffing the glue]. We just do not want our children to get affected,” (Bu Mari, Rina’s mother).

Despite the existing boundary, youths from both working area one and two participated in literacy activities organized by the foundation. Parents from both areas attended the foundation’s meetings as well. I spent more time observing area two rather than area one due to a practical reason. Children in this area tended to stay in the intersection the whole day while the children and youths in area one often boarded in buses and followed them wherever the public transportations took them.

**Street Children Defined**

Bu Nina was the last parent I interviewed. Having no children who attended the Center, I previously thought to exclude her from this study. In addition, Bu Nina’s and her children’s daily trips outside of Pasundan area – which according to Bu Sri was to ngamen to Dago, the downtown area – had made me difficult to find them in Pasundan intersection. However Bu Sri convinced me that she was worth being interviewed, arguing that she has been receiving assistance from the foundation since a long time which might made her open about revealing her opinion to me. Bu Nina actually met me a couple of times at Bima Elementary School. Having invited me to visit her house in our brief meetings, I decided to give it a shot. At the end of our interview, I asked her about how she would feel about having her children being addressed as
“street children.” Bu Nina stared at me, looked puzzled. It was not until after Yuma and Bu Sri rephrased my question that she responded briefly. “Nyeri. It hurts inside,” she said while tapping her chest (Personal communication, October 29, 2010).

The term “street children” was a common term used by outsiders, including media, government, most street users, and academic scholars. Bu Sri, Rainbow staff members, and the local people used to address them “children” or “children who work in the street” to distinguish them from those who did not work in the street. West Java Governor defined “street children” as “children who constantly wander around in the streets or other public places for at least four hours in a day, each day, for at least a month” (retrieved from the official governor’s website, May 2010). This definition would therefore apply to children who spent their time playing in the street or children who had to follow their parents who work in the street as nobody was available to take care of them at home. All purposes of going to the street - economy and leisure – fell under the Rainbow foundation’s definition of children who “have been in and potentially go to the street and therefore in need of assistance.” While all my participants received assistance from the foundation in diverse ways and therefore fitted in the foundation’s definition, I looked for the dynamics and power relations embedded within the interactions among children who participated differently in street activities.

While I have tried to avoid the term “street children” when conducting the fieldwork, it is almost impossible to disregard the use of the term throughout the chapters as it has been employed extensively in the Indonesian media and scholarly discussion. Thus, given the ambiguity surrounding the employment of such label, I will not use the term unless it is written between quotation marks.
Participants

I got acquainted with most of my adult participants through snowball sampling. I knew Rudi, the Head of Child Division of Rainbow Foundation, and Yuma, one of the staff members, from my 2008 fieldwork. Rudi and Yuma then introduced me to other staffs and the local community members, Bu Sri of Pasundan, and Bu Mamik of Parung, as well as the school teachers. These local people then introduced me to other parents in their communities. I had met and talked to many people during my fieldwork who may have contributed interesting insights into this study. However, my focal participant selection was mainly guided by the following questions: (1) What is the perception surrounding the issue of schooling and children working in the street, and (2) How are such perspectives enacted in the organization of literacy activities intended for these children, and (3) what alternative meanings do the children construct through the literacy practices. Given these purposes, the participants in this study were selected on the basis of their interactions with the families of the street community as well as their active engagement in the provided literacy practices. Because “literacy” in this study was situated in a space in which parents and other family members were asked by Rainbow to actively participate by providing support to their children, I considered family members’ perspectives toward literacy and schooling significant. These perspectives may include parental interest, supports, and persuasion in encouraging their children to attend school or education-related activities.

The tutors. Rudi, the head of Child Division of Rainbow Foundation told me one day that he thought of quitting his job that he started in Rainbow ten years ago and started to look for a “more serious” job. “But then I cried. The thought of my friends came to mind. I can’t just quit” (personal communication, August 6, 2010). Dealing with the complex problems of children in the street and youths experience trafficking had made Rainbow staffs feel close to each other,
in the way they describe, “like a family.” Being the head of Child Division, Rudi supervised all tutors and facilitators responsible for working with children working in the street and youths encountering trafficking. Rudi himself had been a tutor and a facilitator in Parung, along with Arif, for at least ten years. He came to Pasundan quite often to visit Bu Sri and to supervise the Center. Having been acquainted with children and parents in both Parung and Pasundan communities, Rudi regarded them as parts of his family. The intimacy was evidenced by the children’s attitude toward Rudi. Little children would cling to him and even sit on his lap during our interviews. A boy even took his cellphone and played a game on it while Rudi was responding to my questions.

Rainbow assigned Anang and Ima to supervise children in Pasundan area. This responsibility covered the intersection, the Center, and the neighborhood surrounding it. Part of the responsibilities had been to accommodate children’s and parent’s needs and inputs, to promote schooling among the dropped-out children and to find ways to return them to formal schooling – either the Special Service Class or the regular schools – and to maintain children’s basic literacy, for those who had been dropped out, and to assist children with homework. When I accompanied Ima on her visits to the intersection, she constantly asked children as to why they were not interested in school anymore. To parents, she would persuade them to consider sending their children back to school. Anang however, employed a different approach. He seemed more relaxed and rarely pushed the conversation into the schooling issue. The different approach in addressing schooling among Rainbow staff might have related to the specific responsibility assigned to each staff. Other than being a facilitator, Ima was a literacy tutor who organized learning activities in Pasundan intersection. Parents and children came to her to express their interests in joining school. Anang, on the other hand, seemed to handle issues related to parents’
economy empowerment. For instance, when Bu Sri brought up the issue of which parents should be given a grant to support a small-scale business, Anang gave her his insight about the situation of each parent. Despite the different emphasis on schooling issues, the facilitators seemed to gain trust among the Pasundan community. They mingled well in the intersection and casually joined the parents or children’s conversation. Children shared their jokes and stories with the facilitators and parents invited them to join their chat.

Pasundan area was regarded as the “toughest” area Rainbow has been dealing with, evidenced by the high rate of dropout children and the number of children working in the street. One day, Ima expressed her concern that the area was too big for her to handle alone. While the shortage of facilitators has been the main concern in Rainbow, Rudi responded to her worry by encouraging other facilitators to help in Pasundan. Except for Ima, who just joined Rainbow around six months previously, other facilitators had had experiences in interacting with both Parung and Pasundan communities. Therefore, a comparison of parental behavior and attitudes kept emerging in their meetings and informal conversations. The facilitators’ perspectives had served as me a window through which the ideal portrayal of parenthood in street community was defined by this NGO.

The locals: Bu Sri.

“She went back and forth from her house to here only to find me still teaching. She kept carrying her baby in kain [a body-size baby sling carrier] the baby was so quiet. Mak Uti [one of the neighbors] got suspicious. “Why you keep carrying the baby like that since morning, doesn’t she need to eat?” she forcefully open the sling, and found the baby, her body was stiff and crooked [for being carried too long], she’s dead already. I suspect she’s been dead since I don’t know how long, probably since early morning… Until I got back home at four o’clock nobody’s done anything. No money to even burry her or to buy the kaftan [special cloth to wrap dead body]. The dead baby was there lying, still crooked I had to straighten her feet and tied them with a shoelace.” (personal communication, October 1, 2010)
Bu Sri’s involvement in Pasundan community extended beyond being an educator and a founder of The Center. People came to her not only to enroll their children in the Center, but also to borrow rice, money, and to seek advice. Being a High School Graduate and having married to a “native” Pasundan resident, Bu Sri was considered capable and was invited by residents to help them in cases from illness, death, accident, to marriage problems. “My parent in-laws have been living here even before the highway was built,” explained Bu Sri.

Coming from a relatively wealthy family, Bu Sri recalled that moving into Pasundan community was a shocking experience. She documented all emotions and feelings developed in her adaptation process in a diary. Wanting to help the community, Bu Sri hired some community members in a branch of garment factory assigned to her.

“I remember they lined up in front of the gate of the factory with empty carts in the morning. They would return with all their works done in the afternoon. At that time, only a few people went to the street” (personal communication, August 10, 2010). The company unfortunately had to be shut down by the Indonesian government’s ministry of treasury due to its failure to pay the tax.

“Yes, I admit that I spent the tax money to pay for the outsourcing employees’ zakat [charity to the poor obliged in Islamic rule]. Since they’re not affiliated with the main factory, they did not get any bonuses other than their main incomes. That’s just too small…I gave them zakat on every Eid [Islamic holiday] If I paid the tax, I wouldn’t be able to give them any additional bonus…Now tell me. Did I do something wrong? Now, look where the tax money goes, it’s being corrupted by people like Gayus [a name of a government’s officer accused with corruption officer constantly appeared in the media]. It doesn’t go to poor people like this…Now that factory was shut down, I had to fire the outsourcer. And that’s when people went back to the street again.” (Personal communication, August 10, 2010)

Bu Sri expressed her commitment to fighting against children working in the street. Her concern with the crime issue in the street worried her, “A lot of sexual assault, rapes, happened. One of the victims got mentally disturbed…Don’t think that children in the street are that strong.
They are infected with skin, scalp diseases. They catch flu easily.” Even though worried, Bu Sri demonstrated her understanding toward the situation encountered by families who had to earn an income from street-related jobs. When accompanying me to some parents’ houses, she comforted them with her words, “Be patient, keep praying… Having to work in the street is not something to be ashamed of. Be strong!” (Observational note, October 1, 2010). Her concern about street activities mainly related to the lack of opportunity, which she had wished to provide for the community since a long time. “People might think that they are stupid and ignorant (by sending their children to the street) but if given jobs these people will be responsible. I never stop thinking of ways of providing employment to them. That’s the way I can be of help” (Personal communication, October 10, 2010). Throughout my interactions with her during the fieldwork, Bu Sri had given me valuable insights as a teacher, a community leader, and a community member.

The locals: Bu Mamik. I have chosen Bu Mamik from Parung because she was often described at Rainbow as an example of “ideal” parent of children in the street. Bu Mamik strongly pushed her children to school, as she put it,

“...I do not want them to be uneducated like me. [This is all because] I do not own any [graduation] certificate that allows me to have a marketable job. Thanks to God. So no matter how they want to avoid school, even though they have tantrum [in refusing to go] I make them to go. [I told them] If you have a certificate then it is easy for you to apply for job anywhere. But kids are kids. Sometimes they said school is not important” (Personal communication, September, 23, 2010).

Rainbow Foundation knew Bu Mamik since the first time she came to Parung following her husband’s death in 2000. “Being here [close to the intersection] I sent two [of four] of the kids to work in the street...Silmi, the oldest one, did not want to go so only the boys [the second and the third one] went. The fourth, the youngest one, was still one year old, and I had no job.”

Receiving educational funds from Rainbow to support the children’s school tuition could not
stop Bu Mamik’s children from working in the street. “We still need money to cover daily expenses, transportation cost to school, and kids’ allowances.” Bu Mamik herself sold newspapers in the street, yet she had to quit some years later after the newspaper company required the street sellers to pay in advance. “...that means we also have to pay the company for the unsold copies. That’s just too much.”

Bu Mamik had been a key local person of Rainbow foundation in Parung since her early years. She helped organizing Rainbow meetings with parents, and mediates parents and children with the Rainbow. Being called as “kepala suku” (the chief), Bu Mamik was practically the foundation’s “right hand” in Parung. To Bu Mamik, Bahtera foundation staffs were like family members. “I always leave my house unlock when I am away, so they can come in anytime and have a nap here,” she pointed to the only bed in the room, which was only separated from the living room by a curtain, “When it’s time to break the fast in the fasting month, I shared with them anything I have, even if only chilli and rice.” Bu Sri’s hospitality was not only offered to the Rainbow staffs, but also to everyone related to street activity in Parung intersection, one of which, was Pak Nanang, a traffic police officer in the intersection.

“He stopped by to have lunch or just a short nap. Must be tiring for him to be in the intersection for a long time... He’s just like a friend to our family, I know his family really well too. He always shares us the information about when the street children round up will be held, so we can get prepared. That way, none of children from here ever got arrested...I know, it’s funny right, a police officer shouldn’t take our side [laughing]” (Personal communication, September 23, 2010).

It was Bu Mamik who offered me the opportunity to meet with the other parents in Parung. She enthusiastically assured me to have a parents’ focus group meeting in her house, saying that it would be interesting to have parents discuss about their children and their experiences in the street. Rudi welcomed my approach to Parung community through Bu Mamik, yet then warned me that this close relationship with Bu Mamik might spark jealousy among the
community members. Neighbors, especially, often express discomfort toward the intimacy developed in Bu Mamik’s relationship with Rainbow.

**The Families in Pasundan: Dian’s Family.** Dian was a four-year-old street musician who was also a student at the Center. Her instrument was a few bottle caps nailed to a short wooden stick. While shaking the instrument, Dian would sing popular love songs Bu Sri considered “adult songs.” While her mother sat down on the sidewalk and watched for her, she approached stopping *angkot* in the intersection, and sang in its opened door. In the center, Dian was a shy, quiet girl. During the observations I rarely heard her talking while doing the school tasks. When singing with classmates, Dian would do it quietly. However, in the intersection she was very playful and talkative. Even though she never talked to me in the Center and always responded to me in a quiet voice, in the intersection she called out my name, ran to me, and told me what she had been doing in the street.

Being one of two girls wearing a headscarf on each school day, Dian was easy to notice. Dian was the youngest of four children in her family, described by her mother as the “daddy’s little girl.” Her older brothers also worked in the street, while her father worked as a garbage collector. During two visits to Dian’s house, the father happened to be at home, but preferred to step outside in order to make us: me, Bu Sri, and Yuma fitted in the only room of the house. Anang of Rainbow describes Dian’s mother as having a “difficult” personality. “She got offended a lot, so be careful with your words.” Bu Sri explained this “bad-temper” personality in more details. “She’s just a straightforward person, she gets disappointed easily but got over it fast.” There was a time when Bu Sri declined the mother’s request to loan money. Once she saw Bu Sri walking to a grocery store in the intersection, she blurted out, “Now you go to the store,
you said you didn’t have money!” to which Bu Sri responded in a light tone, “Why? I can’t come get my daily needs? I need a detergent to do laundry” (Observational note, August 20, 2010).

Dian’s mother was recommended by Bu Sri to me because “she had been around in the street and been with Rainbow for a long time.” Bu Sri also asserted that she would be open and glad to talk about herself, which I found true. After I was introduced to Dian’s mother, she kept bugging Bu Sri as to when I would interview them. I took this enthusiasm as her willingness to reveal her experience and perceptions on street activity, which would be a great contribution to my study.

**Pasundan families: Danti’s Family.** Danti had captured my attention from my initial visit to the Center. She was the evidence of Bu Sri’s remark, “You will be able to spot which children go to the street. It’s easy. It will be the most active, the brightest, the most outspoken, the most-confident looking.” Danti stood out among the crowd of her classmates. She sang at the top of her lungs, enthusiastically responded to teacher’s questions, and liked to imitate animals. Danti was the third of five children in the family. Her father was an electronic repairer, yet, as Bu Sri stated, “Having lived deep in the alley nobody comes to him to have things fixed.” Bu Sri also verified that because of the low demand of repairing, Danti’s father worked as a street musician (*ngamen*) and brought along his daughters to work too. When asked by the orphanage committee ladies about whether he sent his children to work in the street, the father assured confidently, “*Henteu atuh. Ih, amit-amit, Bu.* Oh no, in the name of God, it never cross my mind.” The bold response – which differed from the reality as it was witnessed by Bu Sri -- had taught me to approach this issue carefully.

I lost Danti from my observation during *Ramadhan*, the fasting month. She in fact showed up a couple of times in the Center, but was under her typical performance during her
presence. She not only seemed to have lost interest in the Center’s activity, but she also stayed quiet most of the time, and looked sleepy, which according to Bu Sri was due to her daily travel to Dago area with her mother and sisters to ngamen. “She [Danti] herself told me. She showed me the money she’s got [from ngamen]. Her mother would not admit it of course. But you know, kids can never lie.” Concerning why some Pasundan residents chose Dago over the Pasundan intersection, Bu Sri commented that other than the availability of malls, a mosque packed with lots of visitors who used to give more charity in Ramadhan, being in Dago area could keep the residents from being noticed by neighbors.

On the first school day after the long Eid (an Islamic holiday after Ramadhan), Danti’s mother took her to the Center, complaining about her laziness and disinterest in school. It took some days for Danti to go back to her cheerful self again. I have chosen Danti as one of my focal participants because of her distinctive performance in class and her engagement in drawing activity. Considered as “not diligent enough” in writing by teachers – when asked to write and count, she kept complaining “cangkeul [tired]” -- she poured down a lot of stories into her drawing. Danti seemed to enjoy activities such as singing and unstructured playing time the most. She liked to play building blocks, flash cards, browsing through pages in picture books, and to invite adults to read stories to her. When drawing, Danti made sketches, talked about her drawing to herself, and sometimes sang while drawing. Coloring activity, which usually followed the drawing, usually interested her less. Instead of coloring all of her drawing, she just scribbled her pencil colors on a few of her sketches, and then announced that she was done.

I came to visit Danti’s family once, and intended to approach and interview them. Yet, given their reluctance to share more about their street activities, I became hesitant. In the last days of my fieldwork, Bu Sri told me that the family was struggling with financial needs that the
father rented their room for hourly prostitution transactions. This had left the family stranded in the street and had affected Danti’s attendance at the Center again.

**Pasundan family: Udin’s Family.** Udin represents the Center’s achievement and Bu Sri’s pride. “He’s one of the Center’s graduates who is now performing well in first grade. I picked him up myself from the street in order to learn here.” Udin was the third child of four children in his family. His father had been unemployed for a long time, and his mother helped taking care of the grandchild, the daughter of the first child, Lusi. On the typical day, mother or father walked the children to Bima Elementary School, which was located across the Pasundan main road. “It’s too dangerous for the children to cross the street by themselves. Besides, they do not want to go to school unless I take them there,” Bu Nina pointed out.

According to the teacher, Udin’s and Umar’s -- his older brother -- attendance however, highly depended on school’s time and schedule. “If it’s a rainy day, they are not coming. Friends said they saw Umar helping with pushing broken motorcycles across the flooded road…” Mother’s comment however, reveals different thing. “No, no, I never give permission for kids to be outside in the rain,” to which she continued a little while, “…except for a few time, yeah, Umar is so stubborn.” (Personal communication, October 29, 2010)

Bu Sri accompanied me one day to meet with teachers in Bima Elementary School where Udin and Umar were enrolled. Responding to Bu Sri’s enthusiasm regarding Udin’s performance in first grade however, the teacher just commented, “Yeah, yeah. He’s not bad. Just average, I’d say” (personal communication, October 7, 2010). Umar was practically the backbone of the family as Lusi, the first daughter, had no longer been working in the street since she turned fifteen. In Pasundan intersection, Bu Nina, the mother, joined Dian’s mom in the sidewalk and had a chat with her while supervising the boys. Occasionally, during Ramadhan, the mother and
the boys went to Dago area where they could earn more money. While Udin’s and Umar’s involvement in this study was limited due to their absence during my observation at their school, their mother’s opinion and perspectives regarding the family’s construction surrounding the issue of working in the street contributes significantly to this study.

**Pasundan family: Emi’s family.** I have chosen Emi because of her participation in the workshop organized by Rainbow Foundation. Admitting that she has just quit working in the street as she just turned fifteen a few months previously, Emi still hung out with her circle of friends in the street and participated in Rainbow’s activities as well. Emi had four older sisters, who have been married, and seven little brothers, all of whom were working in the street. She lived with all siblings, except for those who were married, parents, grandmother, and nieces, all in a house with one bedroom. When I was doing the interview with Emi’s mother, rain was pouring so hard that water leaked down the house and ran through under the door. Water forced us all to stand up and Emi had to wipe out the water. Emi’s family is known among the Pasundan community for its boldness and “devotion” in protecting or defending each other. “Nobody dares to mess up with them [otherwise] the rest of family members will fight you and they wouldn’t care if it’s right or wrong,” Bu Sri told me. One popular story told by Rainbow staff was when Iman, Emi’s brother was invited to a Ramadhan party along with his friends and “unashamedly” took all the chicken thighs provided by the organizer. “We were so embarrassed but Iman said those are for his little brothers. We’re just so touched,” Yuma recalled.

Emi’s family had been receiving assistance from the foundation since Emi was still a baby. At that time, they were not living in Pasundan, but instead, in an area behind Cimandi wholesale market. Emi’s father was unemployed, while her mother mainly stayed at home, helping taking care of the grandchildren. No longer working in the street, Emi helped in running
the home, doing tasks ranging from cooking to babysitting the babies. Income for the household was practically earned by Iman and his younger brothers.

**Pasundan’s family: Sandi’s Family.** Like Danti, I find Sandi, a seven-year-old, met Bu Sri’s description of “children who were stood out in classroom because of their encounters with street life.” Sandi was an outspoken, confident-looking student of the Center who also liked to sing on top of his lungs. Sandi loved watching television at home, and incorporated television shows a lot into his drawings. Having been used to drawing collaboratively with his best friend Adi, Sandi had been a great influence to his classmates. Sandi lived with his grandmother, a street meatball seller. Sandi had stopped working in the street a year ago, as his mother got a job at a handicraft industry in Bali. Having taken care of her grandson and not being able to leave him at home alone, Sandi’s grandmother decided to sell meatballs at the mouth the alley.

Sandi is recalled by Bu Sri as one of the Center’s success stories. “In the early days, when he was still in the street, his words were mostly dirty,” Bu Sri described, “It took us a lot to change him.” Sandi’s grandmother really put emphasis on Sandi’s attendance at the Center. She would force and take him to the Center on days when he felt hesitant to go to school. The grandmother reported to Bu Sri that whenever she noticed signs of Sandi’s “laziness,” she would persuaded Bu Sri like, “Don’t you think you need to check on Sandi? He told me he’s not feeling well, but I got a sense that he’s lying.” Bu Sri then discussed with grandmother whether the “laziness” might be caused by the delay of the mother’s monthly money sending, to which grandmother agreed.

Sandi appeared to be aware of Bu Sri and grandmother’s partnership in taking responsibility for raising him. There were some moments when Sandi manipulated Bu Sri’s words in order to get what he wanted. One day in Ramadhan, grandmother asked Bu Sri if it was
true that Bu Sri told the students that fasting only applies to meals and did not include snacking. Bu Sri laughed out loud to hear that, and the next time she met Sandi she told him to not make an excuse for not fasting. Grandmother revealed to bu Sri that sometimes it was hard when Sandi used Bu Sri in his argument. Using this example, Bu Sri and other Rainbow staff described Sandi’s grandmother as a role model of how parents in Pasundan should educate their children. “She has a strong will, good cooperation, and really cares about children’s education,” they argued.

**Pasundan family: Siti’s Family.** I met Siti one day when a Rainbow staff member brought her to the Center. Being a tall girl with an optimistic smile on her face, her figure interested me. “Siti wants to join school,” the staff said. After grabbing a notebook and a pencil, the staff member took her to a Special Service Class provided by Cimandi Elementary School, about two miles from the Center. Having dropped out since first grade, and had been off from school for four years, Siti, who was ten-years-old, was assigned in second grade group in the class. Being the oldest one in her group, however Siti did not seem to mind.

I came to visit Siti in her house a couple of times. She lived with her sister’s family, which consisted of her son, a two-year old toddler, and husband. Siti used to *ngamen* (playing music) in the street in the afternoon, and stayed in the street until about eight o’clock. She was doing homework during my visits and could not keep her eyes off the pages of her book. She said she would do homework right after she gets home, before going to the street. Her perseverance in studying and her perspective toward schooling served as this study a great addition.

**The Orphanage Ladies.** My neighbors’ participations in this study was enabled by their involvement in an orphanage they found and had managed since 2008. Often called a
“community project,” this orphanage facilitated the residents’ passions to help solve social problems, especially those of the group of poor children they considered “abandoned.” The initial purpose of the orphanage was to assist poor orphan girls. Having been built to accommodate about twenty children however, there were only six children who met the criteria and recently were living in the orphanage. The committee than extended the focus to include the children who were raised in poverty.

After noticing my involvement with Pasundan community, the committee started to express interest in searching interested children in Pasundan. I introduced the committee to the Pasundan community through Bu Sri. Some charity activities they had organized in this community included providing lunch for students in the Center, visits to some houses and distribution of staple food and basic needs, as well as providing dinner for breaking the fast for children in Pasundan intersection. Throughout the interactions I found these committee’s reflections on, and perceptions regarding the Pasundan families intriguing. Their perspectives reflected the thoughts of middle-class mothers in responding to the phenomenon of children’s working in the street, especially as they reminded them of their own children at home.

“Ibu-ibu komplek,” was the term used by Rainbow staffs and bu Sri to address women living in a middle-class housing complex. This term carried with admiration as “ibu-ibu” entailed the attribute “ladies,” the educated and respected women who were usually stay-at-home mothers. The term “ibu-ibu komplek” was situated within a sociocultural context that according to Bu Sri and Yuma, did not apply to me, despite my location of residence. Yuma expressed her concern regarding these ibu-ibu’s appearance one day, “We would be happy to take them to visit other intersections if they wish so they can see other street children up close, but can you tell them to dress modestly?” Yuma asked me. Bu Sri and Ikang, a Rainbow staff member,
confirmed their approvals. Ikang pointed out that getting dressed in all red – tunic, purse, and shoes – would only distracted the children from learning. “Tell them to dress as modest as you do,” Yuma went on. I found the fact that Rainbow staff members excluded me from the category of *ibu-ibu* intriguing. The term “*ibu-ibu*” was not only embedded with the way certain group in society dressed and acted. Also, it carries an attribute of the “innocent” charity approach often associated with certain groups of middle class people which in this case, was pointed out by this NGO, or those dealing with street children on a daily basis. I provide the list of all participants’ names in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

*List of All Participants’ Names*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Names / Sex / Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow staff members</td>
<td>Rudi/M</td>
<td>Also a teacher in Pasundan ECC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuma/F</td>
<td>Tutor in Pasundan intersection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anang/M</td>
<td>Tutor in Pasundan intersection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ina/F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikang/M</td>
<td>Music tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leo/M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arif/M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zul/F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pak Maman/M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Bu Sri/F</td>
<td>Also a local resident in Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuma/F</td>
<td>Also a Rainbow staff member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. P/F</td>
<td>Teacher in Bima Elementary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Y/F</td>
<td>Teacher in Cimandi Elementary School.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. B/F</td>
<td>Teacher in Cimandi Elementary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. A/F</td>
<td>Teacher in Cimandi Elementary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Bu Mamik/M</td>
<td>Parung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bu Mari/M</td>
<td>Pasundan (but living outside of Pasundan neighborhood).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bu Nina</td>
<td>Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dian’s mom.</td>
<td>Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danti’s father.</td>
<td>Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sandi’s grandma.</td>
<td>Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emi’s mom.</td>
<td>Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fini/F/15</td>
<td>Parung.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siti/F/10</td>
<td>Enrolled in Cimandi Elementary School, living in Pasundan neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dian/F/4</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danti/F/7</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Sandi/M/7</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abi/M/7</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunga/F/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uli/F/7</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rio/M/6</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rima/M/6</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby/M/6</td>
<td>Enrolled in Pasundan ECC.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Udin/M/8</td>
<td>Enrolled in Bima Elementary School.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umar/M/9</td>
<td>Enrolled in Bima Elementary School.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iman/M/10</td>
<td>Enrolled in Bima Elementary School.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andi/M/8</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amir/M/15</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina/F/15</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emi/F/15</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ina/F/15</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elis/F/10</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idang/M/14</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santi/F/14</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indah/F/14</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odi/M/14</td>
<td>Working in Pasundan intersection.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning Within and Beyond the Classroom Wall**

I define “literacy learning” as any state or any institution organized intentional instruction in the production and interpretation of organized symbols of written language. Referring to this definition, literacy practices in this study include composing writing and drawing activities. I argue that literacy practices represent “the interplay of agency and structure (Holland & Levinson, 1996) in which the construction of identities occurs within the enactment of ideology of learning and of state policy. The three literacy sites that I have chosen to observe, elementary schools, the Early Childhood Center, and the street literacy workshop were situated within the enactment of the state’s Education for All policy intended to include all Indonesian children,
regardless of social backgrounds and economic difficulties, in schooling. Even though the
structure, content and the nature of learning organized by the foundation through the Center and
the street workshop were unique, the main intention of the practice was to get children through
school readiness, which came to play in two formats: the school admission either as a new or
returning student, or the elementary school graduation equivalency exam. The Center, Rainbow’s
street literacy activities, Special Service Class in Cimandi Elementary School, and Bima
Elementary School’s first grade classroom were selected in this study in responding to the
following question: (1) What types of activities are provided and organized for the street children
and what are the purposes of the activities? In what way do these activities extend the children’s
learning? (2) To what extent and in what way are the interactions within the classrooms enacted
in their production of writing and drawing?
Table 3.2.

*Description of Literacy Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Content of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pasundan Early Childhood Center</td>
<td>Rainbow &amp; a local resident (Bu Sri)</td>
<td>Preventing children from working on the street, reducing the time children spent on the street</td>
<td>35 children / 4-7 years old</td>
<td>Introduction of early literacy skill</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>Training on Reproductive Health</td>
<td>8 children / 11-15 years old</td>
<td>Lecture, Focus Group Discussion, Individual writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pasundan Intersection</td>
<td>Training on Children’s trafficking</td>
<td>15 children / 10-15 years old</td>
<td>Lecture, Focus Group Discussion, Individual writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>“Street Tutorial,” promoting learning of children</td>
<td>6 children / 9-15 years old</td>
<td>Lecture, Focus Group Discussion, Individual writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>“Street Tutorial”</td>
<td>8 children / 9-15 years old</td>
<td>Home work assistance, Math worksheets, copying texts from magazines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cimandi Learning Center</td>
<td>Bandung Social Ministry &amp; Rainbow</td>
<td>Street Children “EXIT” program, aiming to promote formal schooling to children in the street</td>
<td>30 children of 8-15 years old</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bima Elementary School, 1st grade classroom</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Formal schooling</td>
<td>25 children / 7-9 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Service Class in Cimandi Elem School</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Transition to formal schooling</td>
<td>18 children / 7-14 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

My data collection procedure was mostly guided by what occurred in the field, yet in order to keep the method improvisation on track, I reflected on my research questions and research design. Framing each of my participants as a significant part that constituted a social
interaction, I relied on my fieldnotes to document ideas and exchanges among the participants. In order to get clarification of his or her perspective and in-depth understanding of his or her attitude and remarks, I pursued the opinions further through interviews. My interviews, however, did not include all the participants’ family members the way I wanted. This was due to time constraints, conflicting time schedules, and the interest of the participants in being involved in my study. A few parents did not seem comfortable in sharing with me their experiences in the street, evidenced by their straightforward or vague responses. Those who were interested in being involved in my study usually showed openness by taking their time talking, taking initiatives in telling me stories, or sometimes approaching me on the street.

The observations took place three times a week in the Center, Monday, Wednesday, from 9 – 12, and Friday, from 9 – 11. I managed to observe the 5 – 6 year old class, or the Strawberry Class, and the 6-7 year old class, or the Grape Class. I scheduled visits to Pasundan intersection at the same day as the Center observation, yet the schedule had to be adjusted due to the tight schedule of the Rainbow staff members. With the occasional rains, and the staff’s unavailability, I visited the intersection at least two times during the first two months, usually from 12.30 to 1.30. Other than the practicality reason, the time slot was chosen to consider the time children were available in the street. The number of visits increased in the third month, to an average of three visits in a week. Other than the scheduled visit, I also observed the intersection on my way of finding an angkot, the public minivan, and as I did not always have my recorder ready on this “unintended” observation, I wrote scratch notes once I got home. All the scratch notes were later rewritten and modified into fieldnotes.

In the class observations I placed my recorder close to the focal participants. The small class size and the small group of children in every session enabled me to move around. Children
and the teacher seemed to get used to seeing my small recorder. Children always thought that it was a “modern” gadget that functioned similarly to a cell phone. On the first days, children took turns holding it and admiring how small the size was. Once they knew that it was not a cell phone, they started to talk on it, treating it as a microphone. In the street, children also paid attention to my recorder, asking me if it was the newest model of a cell phone. I tried to remind them that it was a recording device as I had explained to them previously, yet they kept telling each other about their amazement with my “modern look cell phone.”

In street literacy activities, I moved around children who were engaged in writing. I was aware that I had to keep a certain distance since being too close could make the children insecure in writing (evidenced by their attempts to cover their writings). Considering the level of background noise in the street, I relied heavily on my scratch notes in addition to the observation’s transcripts.

I started to visit Special Service Class in Cimandi Elementary School and Bima Elementary School in the last month of the fieldwork. Bu Sri introduced me to the teachers in Cimandi Elementary School, and Ima of Rainbow took me to meet Mrs. Y, a teacher in charge of the Special Service Class in Cimandi Elementary School. I did four classroom observations in Bima Elementary School, each covering the whole instruction that lasted two and a half hours. In Cimandi Elementary School, I also conducted four classroom observations, each of which lasted one and a half to two hours.

During the classroom intersection I sat around children living in Pasundan area. I left my tape recorder on during the interview while I took my observation notes. The interviews with teachers were conducted prior to classroom observations. Interviews with teachers were conducted in an open, casual manner. The interviews were conducted in teacher’s lounge where
teachers used to take a rest and prepare their teaching. I usually invited any interested teachers to jump into our conversation. The purpose of the study and consent letters were explained and distributed in advance.

All interviews with child and adult participants were also conducted casually. Consent letters were described and distributed in the first meetings so as they would be aware that all conversations would be written down or recorded. Conversations with Bu Sri and Rainbow staffs generally occurred after the Center’s class. I also recorded the Rainbow meetings, attended by all staff members, in which I was invited to participate. Permissions to record the meetings had been granted by the Rainbow staffs in the initial meetings with individuals. In the home visits, parents and family members were aware that our conversations were recorded. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my visit to Pasundan in the initial home visits so the participants were aware of the presence of the recorder in my next visits. The questions I asked parents basically emerged spontaneously as the conversations unfolded. However, I checked on my interview protocol to make sure that I covered all the points. In order to have parents expand their responses the way I intended, I provided them with some examples. For instance, if I asked them whether they had some rules regarding their children’s street activities, I gave them examples such as working hour, whether they only could go after finishing homework, or whether it would be okay to work in travelling busses. After leaving the interviews, I usually crosschecked the parents’ answers with Bu Sri’s or other Rainbow staff members’ experiences with the children. Bu Sri once notified me that certain kids were being caught in the street at night without their parents’ supervisions.

Rainbow staff members and parents seemed to be generally enthusiastic to get involved in my study. The Rainbow as well as the head of Pasundan neighborhood aide shared their street
community demographic information to be analyzed further in my study. Bu Sri and Ima showed me their journals that recorded their everyday experiences, reflections, and impressions when interacting with children in Pasundan, and gave me permission to copy and quote them. Rainbow also allowed me to borrow some samples of bulletins and textbooks to copy. All written products and children’s drawing were collected and copied after the drawing and writing activities. In order to document the nature and the content of the instruction, the copy of reading textbooks and some students’ workbook were also made.

With regard to online survey, the permissions from the listserves administrators had been obtained prior to the fieldwork. I distributed the surveys by posting them in the listserves in the first week of June 2010. I reposted the surveys in the same listserves, as a reminder, in the following week. I managed to collect a hundred responses within two weeks after they were distributed. I consider the respondents’ prompt responses as well as the extended answers they provided as signs of the online community’s interest in the issue of children working in the street.
### Table 3.3.

**Data Collection Procedure**

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<th>Activities</th>
<th>June 1</th>
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<th>July 1</th>
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**Linguistic Context and Translation Key**

As a qualitative researcher, I am aware that the language choice and use in this study is situated within the specific context of power relationships. The language that the child and adult participants had chosen to respond to my questions and to communicate with others in this study had clearly defined the way they viewed me and the way they saw their relationships with me in
this study. Languages spoken in this study were Indonesian, the official language or as known as the “national” language, and Sundanese, a variant of Javanese language (Bandung is the capital of the province of West Java) which embodied a distinctive written and oral linguistic system. In Indonesia, Indonesian language served as the medium of formal instruction in all schools. While Indonesian is mainly used in all textbooks and literacy sites, teachers used to incorporate a few Sundanese vocabularies in classrooms and to use Sundanese to talk to children personally. Indonesian was basically used by teachers in the Centers and formal schools to explain the content of the subjects in the front of the classroom. Yet when expanding the teaching in small groups, teachers used Sundanese a lot.

Sundanese was the language spoken in all participants’ homes. Sundanese was spoken among children and adults in most all occasions. Even a few participants who were not native Sundanese had acquired Sundanese once they moved to Bandung. Conversations among children in the Center and formal classrooms always occurred in Sundanese. Active Indonesian competence – the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in Indonesian, was usually determined by age and exposure to formal schooling. However, due to the intense exposure to popular culture brought by television shows (most of families in this study had television sets), young children could understand Indonesian – the sole language used in popular culture - very well. Parents, even though they had little formal schooling in their childhoods, could also use Indonesian actively.

Young children in the Center incorporated a few Indonesian words in their Sundanese when responding to my questions. The older children in the intersection code switched between Sundanese and Indonesian in communicating with me. All adult participants used Indonesian in their responses, with a thick Sundanese dialect and interception of some Sundanese vocabularies.
Being an East Javanese who lived in Bandung for thirteen years, Sundanese is generally comprehensible to me. There were a few times, however, where words spoken were new to me. If these were spoken by the Rainbow staff members, I would ask about the Indonesian translation right away. If those were spoken by parents and children, I would seek clarification from Bu Sri or Yuma. Yet most of the time, the adults’ conversations occurred in Indonesian if I was around.

The use of Indonesian not only marked the origin and cultural background of speakers, but also indexed the degree of closeness between speakers and the formality of speech event. I was aware that my limited Sundanese competence had figured into my role and my relationship with participants. As time unfolded however, my participants (especially children and parents) and I got used to our different language use. In this manuscript, I omit the excerpts of the original Indonesian and Sundanese narratives, however, to mark the shifts between Indonesian and Sundanese, English translations of Sundanese narratives are underlined.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was guided by the following two questions: (1) what are the beliefs and perspectives concerning schooling and children working in the street that are constructed by the mainstream society, as represented by the internet users, the Non-Governmental Organization, and the parents of children working in the street, (2) the ways in which street children construct meanings through narratives produced in various literacy activities organized by the NGO and the government.

I developed themes and categories emerged from the observational fieldnotes, interview transcripts, writing and drawing products, as well as the collected children’s products. Even though the discourse of schooling and working in the street was embedded throughout the data, I separated interviews with parents, Rainbow staff members, government policy documents,
conversations among the orphanage committee ladies, and children, which directly or implicitly addressed their conceptions of learning, the importance of formal schooling, moral values, and motivations of working in the street, as well as the questionnaires responses from the set of data. I organized all this “perception” data in a way to develop theoretically rich themes. For instance, for the theme “participation,” I looked for how the government officer viewed participation in the street as articulated in his speech, and then I juxtaposed it with the parents’ stance regarding the similar issue. The theoretically-based themes emerged from the initial coding, and I broke down each theme with focused coding to uncover more detailed topics hidden in the bigger subcategory. In doing the coding, I looked for recurrent vocabularies and topics addressed by the participants and analyzed whether the topics were approached differently by others.

The second set of data was observational notes and products related to literacy practices in which children participated. I divided data according to site and sponsor into three categories: the Pasundan Early Childhood Center, the Rainbow-sponsored street literacy activities, and two classrooms in Bima and Cimandi public Elementary Schools. During the analysis of data in these three literacy sites, I sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of literacy activities in each site?
- What is the nature of the interactions between children and their teachers or tutors?
- To what extent and in what way are the interactions within the learning events enacted in children’s productions of writings and drawings?
- What are the available resources that children incorporate in the production of their writings or drawings?

In employing the coding analysis for each site, I sought to discover a main theme and then broke it down into theoretical-supported detailed categories. For instance, for the main
theme of “the involvement of popular culture,” I looked for ways my child participant may appropriate the television show or popular songs. Did they reclaim the authorship, modify it, reconstruct it differently, or rewrite it collaboratively? As I also looked into peer interaction, I examined conversations that occurred in the process and saw how it figured into the written products.

The final stage of analysis was to seek the patterns of relationships among discourses undergirding the participants’ constructions of childhood, schooling, and working in the street. I revisited the contesting discourses, for instance, the discourse of “working,” as it was differently conceptualized by participants, and then found out how the contestation might figure into certain social phenomenon, such as, children’s attitude toward schooling. I went throughout my theoretical frame guided my construction of assertions to explain the patterns. I concluded the analysis by proposing directions for future studies and educational practices based on the assertions I had developed.

**Researcher’s Role: Negotiating Self Between Discourses**

When I entered the field, I introduced myself as a researcher. However when the fieldwork unfolded, I realized I was not carrying a singular identity. Being present at the Pasundan intersection, Pasundan Early Childhood Center, and the neighborhood, I was ascribed by my participants emerging, multi identities. This section describes how participants viewed myself and my roles in the intersection, Early Childhood Center, and the Pasundan neighborhood.

**At the intersection.** My acquaintance with the Rainbow Foundation had allowed me access to the network of street community. In the street, I was introduced to children and parents as a researcher from the foundation. Yet, as time unfolded, children and parents did not seem to
care about my researcher’s role. They often asked me questions related to the foundation’s policies as if I was one of the staff. I tried to remind them of my position but later did not find it useful. The mistaken role however had given me an advantage. Children and parents seemed comfortable to have me around. Rarely was I left sitting down alone. They always came to see me to share their stories, jokes, and complaints. Some mothers told me their worries about their children, and I tried my best to comfort them. Children shared with me their disappointments toward their friends, and I did my best to listen. In trying to act the “buddy” role, I observed and imitated the way the staff members communicate with and respond to them.

I visited the Early Childhood Center three times a week, and I usually went to the Pasundan intersection afterwards. In the first three month I always had a staff member accompanied my visits in the intersection. In the last month of my fieldwork, the staff members assured me that I could go by myself if I felt comfortable. I took this permission as a sign of trust toward my research. From some staff members and Bu Sri, I had heard stories that the foundation’s director had to interrupt some research due to their disapproval toward the research methods and approaches to children in the street. Referring to the researcher-administered questionnaire often used in previous research Rudi told me that “children got annoyed because they’re asked about the same thing over and over again” (personal communication, June 15, 2010). The other day Bu Sri told me that the foundation was really disappointed because a researcher has distributed cigarettes for children to smoke in exchange to the stories they shared. “That disrespects children who are in the street. Rainbow and parents are against children’s smoking” (interview transcript, October, 27, 2010).

Insensitivity toward street children’s feelings, interests, and working times, as well as disrespect toward the foundation’s and parents’ value presented me an existing stereotype that
the mainstream Indonesian society had about children working in the street. Being a researcher who was trying to “fit in” within the street community and a member of society with its deficit perspective toward street children at the same time, I often found myself trapped between the conflicting discourses. The way people around me viewed my involvement in Pasundan community demonstrated how the street community was excluded from the mainstream. The gap even existed inside the angkot on which children worked everyday.

One day, Dian, a four-years-old, approached an angkot I was in with her musical instrument. Seeing me, Dian greeted and kissed my hand. After she left, the angkot’s driver asked how I could get to her and then went on, “Those people [parents, red] are just crazy. How could a mother be just sitting down and chatting on the sidewalk while her child is roaming in the street? I just can’t understand.” This showed my how my interactions with street children were viewed with curiosity. It demonstrated the gap separated this street community from the rest of society.

At the neighborhood. Being a researcher requires a competence to observe “from the periphery” (Cintron, 1997). Yet, I found the “periphery position” something to negotiate, given my “membership in middle-class society” evidenced by my interaction with the orphanage committee ladies. After the initial visit to some houses in Pasundan a few ladies claimed as “a first time being in a slum,” a lady proudly told me how she silenced Dian’s mother with her “preach.” “If you send your kids to the street like this, you will be questioned [by God] about your responsibility to your children [to raise them “properly”], that’s what I told her.” (Observational notes, August 4, 2010).

The ladies’ openness in telling me their feelings and opinions toward children working in the street implied their assumption that I - despite the research I was working on – shared the
same perspective that they did. For these ladies, telling the parents about the good way of raising children served a means of expressing their attentions and sympathies toward what they perceived as an ideal childhood. However, worrying about the emotional discomfort my participants might encounter as a result of this lady’s speech I decided that I would keep research separated from the ladies’ charity activities.

Yet, I was not somebody coming from thin air. Despite my attempts to show understanding and respect parents’ decisions and choices related to their children’s street activities, I still felt that my parent participants, despite their friendly attitude and openness, were uncomfortable with my “middle-class” background. I had to ask Bu Sri or Yuma to accompany me to visit some houses until they seemed comfortable with me.

**At the center.** Referred to as a guest of the Early Childhood Center, I was supposed to just stay in a corner of the room and observe. While I managed not to leave my “corner” most of the time, there were some moments when Bu Sri and Yuma invited me to participate in teaching or to interact with the students. Yuma, due to her pregnancy and other foundation tasks assigned to her, had to miss teaching often. Friday, the Islamic study day, became a time when additional instructors were needed. I helped Bu Sri with tutoring reading Quran with a few children. I used a little free time after tutoring to develop conversation with the students.

In the first week of the semester, when Yuma was not able to teach due to an illness, I helped Bu Sri with teaching drawing. What I did was ask children to draw on a blank sheet of paper after telling them my personal experience or reading a storybook. Sometimes children drew things as requested, then added other things they liked, yet most of students just drew whatever they had in mind. There were a couple of times when I was asked to teach English.
After some times, Yuma and Bu Sumi were confident enough to imitate my pronunciation of English words, numbers, and colors, and taught them to the children.

Even though only a few times, I could see that my role as teacher had an impact. I found Bu Sri combined my way of introducing stories through narratives or story reading prior to drawing activities, in addition to the traditional drawing through modeling in the white board she used to do in class. Bu Sri also started to express more verbal appreciation to children’s sketches, in addition to giving grades on children’s drawing. To the children, despite my little opportunities of teaching, I was still regarded as one of their teachers. This was obvious in the way they addressed me – Bu Sophie, as in Bu Yuma or Bu Sri – and in their requests for help with assignments. With the tape recorder on, I usually responded to children’s requests. However, when I looked busy writing notes, children would turn into the other Rainbow staff members who were available to help.

Having introduced as a “guest of the center,” parents seemed to see me as a teacher’s friends. I used to accompany Bu Sri when she visited some parents, for instance, to ask about why their children were absent. The fact that some children could not go to school because they spent too much time in the street had became a concern to Bu Sri. We spent time after school discussing about the issue of school attendance and considering better ways to keep children at school longer. The constant shifted identities that I carried during the fieldwork, from researcher and guest, “middle-class lady,” facilitator, teacher, a teacher’s friend, and sometimes a consultant, was situated by the social event and participants I interacted with in time and space.

Having been trapped between discourses, I did not intend to ignore that my own discourse regarding children working in the street has gone through transformation following my interactions with this street community. For instance, I used to have an anxiety when it came to
interacting with children who hang out in the street. The circulating stereotypes surrounding the crimes these children were said to be involved with had left me wondering if I could comfortably gain access to the “street children” without being “bullied” by these children (i.e., they were known to be hard to reach and to communicate using street slang that was commonly considered as “inappropriate” by the society). The societal perceptions toward children in the street, such as the “begging mental” due to laziness and “tricky behaviors” that I will discuss further in the next chapter, were part of my notions about these children as well. Yet having gained access to interact and communicate with them had enabled me to understand the variety of “street children” groups as well as the diverse communicative ways in which they appropriate and position themselves in relation to the adults they interacted with.
Chapter 4

Voices of the Intersection

The public minivan stops in front of the orphanage. There are about eight families get off from the minivan. Mothers carry their babies in their slings. Little kids run immediately to swings and slide next to the building, older kids march obediently behind their parents. “Come in, come in. We’ve been waiting for you guys. Are you tired?” An orphanage committee lady next to me greets them. The families soon follow her into the building. The families however seem hesitant to sit down, so the lady then offers them an “orphanage tour.” In the big common room, the orphanage girls look beautiful in their Muslim outfits, as they are getting ready for the afternoon Quran recitation. Standing and observing quietly, they smile to the guests. Those girls are not really orphans. Most of them are coming from poor families in slum areas like Pasundan.

I follow the lady who takes the guests to the common room, and then to bedroom in which beds with thick and soft mattresses are lined neatly. Plush dolls and stuffed animals lay nicely on the beds, adding a nice decorative touch to the soft color sheets. Up in the second floor, the lady shows the guests the marble white modern kitchen showing pantries with loads of food. “Everything is provided here, so you don’t need to worry about food, about finding good education for your kids. We’ll take care of all that. If she gets a good education, then she will give you a pride,” the lady assures the parents, smiling. The parents respond with polite laughs.

“What do you think? You like it?” The lady asks an eight-year old girl from Pasundan. “You will like it here. Lots of nice friends, books, toys, and you will go to a nice school.” The girl smiles shyly. We walk back to the living room, but instead of sitting on an empty
couch or rugs, the parents prefer to sit down on the cold ceramic floor. The lady asks
them to move to the couch, but they decline, arguing that they like the cold floor better.

“So what do you think?” the lady asks a father. “Sending one of your daughters here will
make things easier for you. You do not have to worry about one mouth to feed. Look at
this girl [she points to one of the orphanage girls]. She came here dirty, shabby and
skinny. But look at how chubby and clean she is now. Don’t you want your daughter to
be like that?” The father nods and smiles politely, “I guess I want to but [.] I’ll think
about it.” The lady replied, “You have time to think but please consider what’s best for
your children.”

“Will we be allowed to visit our kids?” a woman from Pasundan asks.

“Of course, but after some times. Please consider that your kids also need time to adjust.
After a few months then you can come for a visit…Oh, kids are just like that, don’t worry.
The have a hard time when they come, but if you endure [not to visit them while they’re
still adjusting], they will get over it. They’ll like it here. This one [mentioning a name of
a girl] even didn’t want to go back home during the Eid break. Even when she’s at her
family’s home, she couldn’t wait to go back here,” the lady laughs. But none of the
parents laugh.

“What if she forgets about us then?” the mother asks again.

“Oh, of course not. We always teach the children to obey and respect their parents. That’s
the way it is in Islam, right?”

(Observational note, August 4, 2010)

One day following the visit I asked Bu Sri if she heard something from the parents
regarding their impression about the visit. Bu Sri told me that the father who proposed the
question above was worried that his daughter would not recognize him as parent. “[After being there] What if she’s embarrassed to have me as her dad. Will she ever want to live in this house, in this slum again?” the father told Bu Sri.

The father’s rhetorical question offered me a view of “pride” that was different from what the orphanage lady perceived regarding “pride” as it related to school success. It was as if the father posed questions to me such as whether “pride” was considered a vertical mobility of social status granted by years of schooling or an inner sense of self of knowing one’s role and responsibility as a member of family and community. As I asked myself questions in trying to understand the father’s feeling and thoughts, I found myself helpless being not able to help the father to share his opinion to the orphanage ladies. The views of the “illiterate, low-educated” and poor parents remained unheard. It was the voice of the “literate” others that defined the role of parenthood and further, the best way to “rescue” children of poor families from their unemployed, and, according to the orphanage ladies, “incapable” parents.

“Come home my dear children, street is not your place to work and play,” the government called out to the “street children” through the street billboard. Even though many children in the street were living with and being taken care of by their families, the government considered them “lost,” and living in “inappropriate” space. “Street” reflected the contesting discourse of childhood and thus served as a domain in which the government and the dominant society dictated to poor parents as to how to properly raise their children in order to better develop the future nation state.

Children are living in a contemporary social space in a way adults could never imagine previously. Living in the street has been viewed as children’s construction of “third space” (Matthews, Limb, Taylor, 2005), separate from adults’ authorities in which children practice
their agency. However, this construction is defined in relation to adults, in particular, to the relation between children and adults that are constituted diversely in different social contexts. This chapter presents the voices of the intersection, which are, diverse conceptualizations regarding the issue of childhood, child caregiving, and specifically, how adults come to situate schooling as a way of children’s participating in Indonesian society. I discuss these voices in the light of critical discursive analysis, to borrow from Fairclough (1992), in order to investigate how power operates institutionally, through the enactment of government’s policy, and culturally, through the ways in which such policy is taken up by the dominant society.

I choose to analyze the enactment of discourse – which Fairclough (1992) defines as “the mode of socially constitutive action” – as it is embedded in various “texts” or discursive events. As Fairclough points out, “any discursive event is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” (p. 4). Adopted from Halliday (1978), Fairclough defines “text” as written and spoken language. In this framework, “discursive event” in this study entails all practices which include interactions among participants and their productions of narratives, which are, in a broader sense, that are undergirded by their constructions of childhood, child work, and schooling. This leads me to consider: 1) the written text of government documents concerning the issue of child protection that endorses the Children Social Welfare Program, 2) the spoken text of government’s policy, represented by the speech of a government official delivered in a “street children” workshop, 3) the enactment of the Children Social Welfare Program Regulation, which Fairclough would consider a “discourse practice,” that is, the process of text consumption in the society, and 4) the local practices that document interactions, beliefs, and perceptions constructed by Indonesian
society – as represented by Indonesian media and internet users – and the children working in the street as well as their parents surrounding the issue of protection and schooling of children.

First, I demonstrate how the media has shaped public perception toward children in the street, and display how this popular imagery of “street children” has figured into some middle class communities’ perceptions and beliefs. I then present and analyze the spoken and written form of the government’s Children Social Welfare Program and describe how it is implemented by the Rainbow Foundation. Further, I present the child participants’ and parents’ stances on what they perceive about “street” and schooling. I conclude this chapter by displaying the “intersection” in which various discursive texts and practices regarding working in the street and schooling collide and intersect.

The Street Life: News or Myth?

“Are they organized by adults [in doing their activities in the street]?” was the first question my friends usually asked Yuma every time she presented them with Pasundan Early Childhood Center’s proposal in fundraising activities. “Being organized” referred to the absence of children’s agency in the street, to children being enforced to work in the street by adults. Yuma then explained that there were children who were forced to work by parents or other adults, then she convinced them that such children were not among those she had been working with in both Pasundan or Parung. Assuring the society that children in the street deserved attention and assistance had been a challenge for Rainbow Foundation. The prejudice that children work in the street under adults’ organization and enforcement had hindered the issue of poverty with which these children’s families had been dealing. Working in the street had been viewed by the society as a sign of apathy, laziness, often associated with the “culture” of poor people. It was commonly believed that instead of competing in the job market, poor parents
would rather take advantage of their children’s innocent looks to earn money in the street. Furthermore, it had also become a popular assumption that giving money to children in the street would perpetuate the “culture of receiving” – a mental state that has made poor people prefer begging over working hard – associated with these poor families.

One of the ways the government responded to the suspected “child exploitation” was by conducting the “street people” roundup. “We target women carrying babies because we suspect that they’re not their own babies. Maybe the babies are even given sleeping pills they can get to sleep all the time and not crying,” the Head of the Police Unit for Public Control commented, “We also target the syndicate of children exploitation, those who force children to beg or ngamen and they just supervise from a distance” (Winarno, Detik Online News July 8, 2010, para. 8).

During Ramadhan, the intensity of street children’s roundup had also increased. The government believed that the poor people took advantage of the societal tenet regarding the blessing of charity conducted during the holy month. “These people are getting really rich during Ramadhan,” testified a police officer. “On typical days their daily income can reach 280 thousands. The amount doubles in Ramadhan. The minimum they can get is 30 thousands, so you can imagine how tempting this profession is” (Haryanto, Detik Online News July 12, 2010, para. 2 & 4). The officer believed that the coordinator he referred to as “the boss” transported the street people from their village in the outskirts of Jakarta to many areas of Jakarta with trucks. “With enough evidence, we’ll be able to send these syndicates to jail” (Haryanto, Detik Online News, para. 6).

Considering the total income people working in the street may have gotten, the Minister warned Indonesian society that charity would just perpetuate such “poverty culture.” “That is not a wise act. If you want to do charity, just donate your money to the national zakah foundation.
that will deliver your money to the right people [which appears to refer to poor people who do not work in the street]” (Widhi, Detik Online News, August 10, 2010, para. 1-2).

The media portrayal of the existence of the adult supervisor as the one responsible for “exploiting” and organizing children’s activities in the street had shaped a societal construction that begging, *ngamen*, and *ngelap* in the street served the poor communities a disgraceful strategy to survive poverty. “I’ve been knowing people like this since a long time. They are so deceitful. Even they are not poor at all. With all the money they earn, they have all these luxurious stuffs back in the village,” one of the orphanage committees ladies told Yuma. Regarding stories circulating in society that street people were suspected to be wealthy village people disguised in rags when they came to downtown, Yuma commented.

“Maybe there are people like that, but I never met them during my years of interacting with these people. There’s this story about that they have beautiful houses back in the village but I don’t know where it came from. One of our staff had tried to check whether it’s true. He went to the “village of beggars” reported in the newspaper and found nothing. It’s told that a journalist went to follow a beggar to a village in the suburb and asked him to show him his house. Being investigated like that the beggar got embarrassed so he pointed at the most beautiful house in the village. So perhaps the story goes like that, but I’m not sure” (Observational note, August 1, 2010).

“If people like that even exist, the number doesn’t even reach one percent of the total street people population,” Pak Tan, the Rainbow director assured a group of visitors who visited Rainbow office one day and asked the same question (September 3, 2010). Rudi pointed out, “The majority of street people are from the urban slum communities, but this media has told otherwise, and people believe that. I don’t know where the story comes from.” Yuma added, “Well, you may consider parents’ supervision as adults’ interventions. But to be called an enforcement, I don’t know, it’s complicated.”

Having shaped the societal perception toward the poor families’ attitudes and behaviors, the Indonesian media played an important role in establishing a stigmatized deficit perspective of
the presence of poverty in public sphere, in what Ruby Payne (2005) would consider “the culture of poverty.” Using vocabulary such as exploitation, crime syndicate, deceitful, and laziness, the society developed stereotypes to judge the poor families’ mental state, working performance, and parenting approach. The following section demonstrates how the government lent its authoritative voice in supporting such stigma.

**The Government’s Voice**

Government policy is not created in a vacuum. Rather, it represents a set of objectives to justify beliefs and values of the dominant power. Government policy uses a convention of language to constitute a “discursive text” (Fairclough, 1992) as a way to enact a power construct in a larger social practice. This enactment of power resembles what Bakhtin (1981) considers a centripetal force of unitary language. “Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal force of language” (p. 270). This section reveals how through written document and spoken narrative the government centralizes power by asserting particular assumptions toward the cultural practices of low-income families.

**The “written text.”** I have chosen to analyze the Children Social Welfare Program not only due to its influence in shifting my research site and participants selection but also because of its determined purpose, that is, to be able to “free the streets from street children by the year of 2011” (as mentioned in the official Ministry’s website). The Children Social Welfare Program (CSWP) is justified through the 2009 Ministry’s Instruction and is being implemented in five provinces. The detailed features of the program, as cited from the official Ministry’s website, are presented in table 4.1 below.
### Table 4.1

**The Children Social Welfare Program**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The problem of poverty has made a lot of Indonesian children abandoned. Other than this, other factors have also forced children to work in the street. The Indonesian Statistics Bureau of the Ministry documents that the number of street children has increased to as many as 230 thousand by 2007. It is anticipated that this number rise into 320 thousand by 2009.</td>
<td>Since 2009 the government has developed policies, strategies, and initiatives to draw more funding resources to deal with the issue of the abandoned children. Government has also shifted the paradigm in order to improve the policy which includes a broader perspective of the issue and the needs of abandoned children, the continuity of program implementation, the policy operation system, the quality of service and strengthening the institution’s role in providing service. In 2009, the Social Ministry launched PKSA or Children Social Welfare Program (CSWP). This program has been implemented in five provinces, which include West Java, Jakarta, Lampung, South Celebes, and Yogyakarta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Mulai 2010, layanan PKSA akan diperluas jangkauan target sasaran maupun wilayahnya, meliputi anak balita terlantar; anak jalanan dan anak terlantar; anak yang berhadapan dengan hukum; anak dengan kecacatan; serta anak yang membutuhkan perlindungan khusus lainnya seperti anak yang berada dalam situasi darurat, anak yang menjadi korban tindak pidana perdagangan orang, korban kekerasan dan eksploitasi seksual, eksploitasi ekonomi, korban penyalahgunaan narkoba/zat adiktif, penderita HIV/AIDS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Starting in 2010 CSWP program will be expanded to include the abandoned children under five years old, street children and abandoned children, children with disabilities, children in conflict areas or natural disaster aftermath areas, trafficking victims, children who are subjected to violence and sexual abuse, economic exploitation, drug users, and those suffer from HIV/AIDS.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Definition | Anak adalah seseorang yang belum berusia 18 (delapan belas) tahun, termasuk anak yang masih dalam kandungan. **Children** are defined as human beings under eighteen years old, including the fetuses.  
**Children Social Welfare** is defined as a state where all children’s basic needs, including material, spiritual, and social needs, are fulfilled. Children need to have all the basic needs fulfilled in order to live properly, be able to develop themselves, and be able to function socially.  
**Children Protection** is defined as all attempts to guarantee and protect children and their rights in order to enable them to live, develop, and to participate optimally according to their dignity and human nature, and to be freed from violence, abuse, and discrimination.  
**Children Social Welfare Program** is defined as an integrated, guided program that is implemented upon the coordination between federal and local government. This program includes social service to provide children with their basic needs, involving basic needs fulfillment assistance, access to basic social service, family/parents empowerment and the empowerment of social organizations assisting abandoned children. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Tujuan Program Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak adalah terwujudnya pemenuhan hak dasar anak dan perlindungan terhadap anak dari keterlantaran, eksploitasi, dan diskriminasi sehingga tumbuh kembang, kelangsungan hidup dan partisipasi anak dapat terwujud. Menempatkan keluarga sebagai pusat pelayanan dalam rangka memperkuat tanggung jawab orang tua/ keluarga dalam memberikan pengasuhan dan perlindungan bagi anak.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Program | PKSA dirancang sebagai upaya yang terarah, terpadu dan berkelanjutan yang dilakukan pemerintah, pemerintah daerah dan masyarakat dalam bentuk pelayanan sosial dan bantuan kesejahteraan sosial anak bersyarat (conditional cash transfer), yang meliputi:
- Bantuan sosial/ subsidi pemenuhan kebutuhan dasar
- Peningkatan aksesibilitas terhadap pelayanan sosial dasar (akte kelahiran, pendidikan, kesehatan, tempat tinggal & air bersih, rekreasi, keterampilan, dll.)
- Penguatan tanggung jawab orang tua/ keluarga dalam pengasuhan dan perlindungan anak
- Penguatan kelembagaan kesejahteraan sosial anak. |

The purpose of CSWP is to assist with the fulfillment of children’s basic needs and to protect children from abandonment, exploitation, discrimination, so children can develop properly, and, further, they can participate fully in the society. This can be achieved by putting families as a means to provide social service for children. Therefore, it is significant to strengthen parental responsibilities in providing caregiving service and protection to children.

The CSWP program is a conditional grant awarded to parents who are willing to maintain their commitments as required. The grants include:
- Grant for children’s basic needs fulfillment.
- Grant to enable access to basic social service, such as the assistance with official documentation application, formal education, health service, housing, clean water, recreation, etc.
- Grant to empower parental responsibilities in providing service and protections to children.
- Grant to empower social institutions assisting with children’s social welfare.
Table 4.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Some conditions required for the families and institutions receiving grants are as follows:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sasaran penerima layanan PKSA, baik anak, orang tua/ keluarga maupun lembaga kesejahteraan sosial yang menjadi mitra pendamping harus memenuhi persyaratan (conditionalities) sebagai berikut:</td>
<td>• A notable improvement regarding children’s and families’ social attitude and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adanya perubahan sikap dan perilaku (fungsi sosial) ke arah positif</td>
<td>• Children’s increasing attendance in social services provided by social institutions/organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intensitas kehadiran dalam layanan sosial dasar dari berbagai organisasi/ lembaga semakin meningkat.</td>
<td>• A notable improvement of parents’ responsibility in providing services and protections to children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tanggung jawab orang tua/ keluarga dalam pengasuhan dan perlindungan anak semakin meningkat.</td>
<td>• Specifically for abandoned and street children, improvements are expected in the following areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bagi anak terlantar dan anak jalanan :</td>
<td>• Parents/families do not abandon their children by not taking care, not protecting, and neglecting them from obtaining their basic needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• orang tua/ keluarga tidak menelantarkan anak (memberikan perawatan, pengasuhan dan perlindungan bagi anak) sehingga hak-hak dasarnya semakin terpenuhi,</td>
<td>• Parents/families do not exploit their children by asking them to beg in the street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anak tidak dieksploitasi untuk tujuan mengemis/ meminta-minta.</td>
<td>• Street children are to quit working in the street and to return to school. Those living separately from families must return to their families, and those who cannot return to schools have to participate in courses or community classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anak jalanan tidak lagi melakukan aktivitas ekonomi di jalanan, anak kembali sekolah, kembali ke keluarga (bagi anak yang terpisah), mengikuti kegiatan peningkatan potensi diri/ keterampilan.</td>
<td>• Children separated from families who cannot return to their families must be taken care of in foster homes/families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anak terlantar berada dalam asuhan orang tua/ keluarga atau pengasuhan alternatif.</td>
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Parents/guardians who have failed to meet the conditions above are considered as violating the Law number 23, year of 2002 regarding children rights protection and therefore will be sued. The sentence can include removing children from their biological parents or prison sentence.

As it is produced as a discursive text, the language convention, text structure, and vocabulary of a policy are situated in the enactment of a hegemonic ideology, in this regard, the societal beliefs regarding how children should be raised and “protected.” In this analysis I choose to focus on: 1) how the text employs discourse features to exercise an authoritative voice, and 2) themes conveyed through the vocabulary in the selected excerpt. Straightforward and direct linguistic expression is conventionally used as a marker of formality in government’s policy. However, the Children Social Welfare Program can be read in the context where producers and targets of the policy implementation are assumed to share the same beliefs and perspective regarding the children protection issue. However, a critical look into these assumptions will be able to reveal the deficit perspective toward the poor families. In the sections that follow I examine some embedded assumptions in the use of vocabulary as well as discourse features Fairclough considers “Intertextuality.”

Fairclough (1992) points out that “intertextuality,” that is, the use of other “texts” in particular text, can occur sequentially, embeddedly, and mixed within the body of text, depending on the explicitness of the represented text. The CSWP attempted to convince readers by presenting statistical warrant provided by the National Statistics Bureau, which documents the
significant increase of the number children in the street. Other statistical data quoted included the rate of crimes committed by children, the dropout rate of children who work in the street, and the number of children who suffered from sexual abuse and trafficking. The statistics provided readers with the significant need of the Indonesian society for a new policy that was more effective when dealing with the issue of children in the street.

Additionally, some higher-level regulations were also included to support the conceptualization of child protection and development, such as the Presidential Instruction (number 3 and 10, 2010) regarding children’s welfare and social development, International Children’s Rights Convention, and International Labor Organization’s (ILO) Convention on Child Labor (not quoted in the excerpt). Furthermore, the use of a legal voice when the law addressed the penalty, “Parents/guardians who are failed to meet the conditions above are considered as violating the Law number 23, 2002…” implied that caregiving practices in low-income families were situated in a public domain, and therefore, open to be evaluated and examined by the government through the use of the legal instrument. Table 4.2 below examines some themes embedded in vocabulary use of the policy.
### Table 4.2

*Government’s Construction of Parental Responsibilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Parental Responsibilities</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing resources</td>
<td>• A notable improvement of parents’ responsibility in providing services and protections to children.</td>
<td>• Parents/families do not abandon their children by not taking care, not protecting, and neglecting them from obtaining their basic needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children protection</td>
<td></td>
<td>“A notable improvement regarding children’s and families’ social attitude and behaviors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective social attitude and behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents/families do not exploit their children by asking them to beg in the street.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Street children are to quit working in the street and to return to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not involving children in families’ economic activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children Protection is defined as all attempts to guarantee and protect children and their rights in order to enable them to live, develop, and to participate optimally according to their dignity and human nature, and to be freed from violence, abuse, and discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s participation</td>
<td>Parents fulfill children’s rights so they can participate in society</td>
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</table>

The use of vocabulary to convey a deficit perspective regarding the “poverty culture” was also apparent in Ruby Payne’s claim of poverty (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008). In this document, the issue of poverty was addressed when the policy explained the background of why children work in the street, yet the rest of document text implied that children’s limited access to “basic needs” was also enabled by parenting attitude and practice. In other words, parents were assumed to be responsible for endorsing children’s economic activities in the street. The evaluative stance the government ascribed to parental roles and tasks was conveyed in the use of vocabularies are presented in Table 4.3 below.
Table 4.3

*The Use of Vocabulary to Describe the Quality of Parental Tasks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling children’s basic needs</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting children’s right</td>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable children to develop properly</td>
<td>Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking care of children properly</td>
<td>Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents being responsible</td>
<td>Asking children to beg / work in the street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While some straightforward terms such as “abandon,” “neglect,” “abuse,” and “violence” were used to represent negative parenting practice, the expected practices were described in ambiguous, jargoned terms, such as “fulfilling basic needs,” “children’s rights,” children develop “properly,” and taking care of children “properly.” While not explained in a straightforward manner, the use of vocabulary tended to portray childhood as singular (Jenks, 2005); all children developed and participated in society in the same way. The opposite abusive practices explained in negative examples in this regard appeared to serve as an identifier that were expected to clarify the parenting practices the government idealized. The use of ambiguous, generalized vocabulary eventually confirmed the hidden “truth claim” (Bomer et. al, 2008) assuming that all members of Indonesian society shared a similar ideology of parenting and parenthood that was the approach and beliefs commonly practiced in the middle class community. The spoken “text” conveyed in Mr. B’s speech below helps to elucidate the government’s “assumed” ideology.

**Discourse practice: the enactment of the Children Social Welfare Program.**

Fairclough considers discourse as “the dialectical view of the relationship between discursive structures and events” (p. 93). The discourse practice, in this sense, involves a process in which discursive “text” is being enacted in local practices. In this section I analyze the implementation of CSWP involving the Rainbow Foundation and some of the Ministry’s social workers. By social workers, I refer to the staff of the Social Ministry in charge of operating the CSWP
program. According to the Social Ministry’s instruction, the collaborations with an NGO or other social institutions will be able to maintain the effectiveness of CSWP (see Figure 4.1). In the following section I organize the findings I obtained from interviews with Rainbow staff and social workers into three themes: the organizational issue, the staff’s beliefs regarding the program effectiveness, and the issue of violence raised by Rudi, a Rainbow staff, as he evaluated the government’s conceptualization of “violence.

*Figure 4.1. Organizational structure of CSWP implementation.*

**The organizational issue.** Rainbow Foundation was assigned to “guide” the CSWP implementation. By “guiding,” Rainbow was ascribed a responsibility to select the grantee families, to distribute the money to the recipient families, help parents to open a bank account, and, along with the Ministry’s social workers, to meet with the recipient families on the regular basis to monitor the funding expenses. Rainbow was assigned to assist 93 children among the 250-targeted children who live along the street connecting Parung area and Gapura, the provincial government office. The rest of the children were under the supervision of other NGOs.
“A few NGOs were founded only to respond to this program. They are after the money, you know. These new NGOs of course do not have experience with children like these, but because they have connection with someone in the government, they can get access [to be included in CSWP program]” (Interview with Rudi, August 6, 2010).

When I asked Rudi about the performance and capacity of the new NGOs in handling a government project like this, Rudi commented.

“I don’t know, but children and mothers who receive the grant share information with each other because they are basically neighbors. Some [children and mothers receiving assistance from other NGOs] said that they are not given information about how much money they should receive. Some children are only given backpacks and school supplies [which worth only around 50 thousands, while the whole amount granted for a family is around 460 thousands]. That’s it. So you can guess where the money goes.” (Interview transcript, August 6, 2010)

Other than the lack of the government’s control in the implementation of the program, Rudi complained that the issue of the distribution of power between federal and provincial government had played into the way the program was managed.

“This is a federal program that is made with a good intention. The money comes from the federal government but it is the provincial government who manage the rest, including NGOs appointment, children and family selection, which area to be selected, things like that. The provincial government does not understand the issue of street children really well. We’re not being involved in the project planning so we couldn’t give them any inputs…For instance, the money was supposed to be distributed to the families in two installments. But as you know, the second installment was late. So children begin to go to street again. And we always advised them [the government] that it is important to transfer the money all at once so all families can get the money at the same time. But you know, some families got the money late, and this sparked jealousy. With people like this, you have to understand. Money is a sensitive issue.” (August 6, 2010)

Rudi further asserted that the collusion in establishing a network with NGOs, corruptions within the NGOs, and lack of control over the program’s implementation demonstrated the government’s lack of seriousness in assisting children in the street. “Government only wants to remove children from the street as soon as possible but they do not really want to understand them.” The decentralization, that is, the delegation of more authorities to provincial government, had led to confusion as to how and the way in which the grant should be distributed. “This is a
central government’s policy, but the provincial government instructed us with more detailed rules that were not stated in the document [such as the preference of Parung over Pasundan]. This is confusing,” Rudi testified.

**Is it effective?** Effectiveness of the program was judged based on the main purpose, which was to “free streets from children by 2011,” as stated by the Minister (quoted from the Ministry’s official website). Regarding the number of children who stop working in the street following the grant distribution, Rudi pointed out:

> “Fifteen out of ninety-three children have stopped working in the street. They stopped coming to the street especially soon after receiving the money. In addition, there are eight children who were returned to their families in Subang [another city in West Java province].”

While the “quitting” was still yet too far to be secured as the observation on children’s activities was still taking place, a Ministry’s social worker shared her testimony on what she envisioned about children’s quitting the street activities.

> “It is effective for now, but not for a long time. Yes, they are not visible in the street right now, but soon they will be back.” (Interview with a social worker, August 19, 2010)

With the total grant of 460 thousands Rupiah per family a year – which equals 46 US Dollars – the amount was considered by the social worker as too far from sufficient (as an instance, a family’s expense could exceed 100 thousands Rupiah or 10 UD Dollars for rice consumption only). Bu Mamik underscored that the only thing that could stop her children from working in the street was if she got a permanent job that could feed her family. As pointed out by the social worker, as long as families struggled with making the ends meet, children would keep coming to the street.

**The “violence” questioned.** The issue of violence was brought up when I, Rudi, and Bu Sri were having a conversation about the commemoration of the International Children Day on
June 13. While discussing the “Children Forum” Bandung government planned to organize to observe the Children’s Day, Rudi and Bu Sri talked about the street children roundup by police officers on June 13 throughout Bandung as reported in television news. “It’s tragic. They observe the Children Day by arresting children in the street and taking them to the police station.” Rudi went on to point out the government’s “organized violence” to children in the street. While promoting attempts to forbid children’s economic exploitation and domestic violence toward children, the government justified the arrest of children in the street on behalf of what they perceived of children’s interest and future.

“And what about the violence in school? Ministry of Education only cares about the dropout number, but they ignore the fact that children’s rights have been violated in school. Teachers pinch students, punish them, give them time out, order them to stand in the corner of the classroom. That’s violence too.” (Interview transcript June 15, 2010)

Rudi’s view provided an alternative perspective to the fact that some scholars had discovered (LeRoux & Smith, 1998), and to what the government believed that the streets had presented children with violence. While government considered parental approval on children’s street activities as a form of domestic abuse, the government had in some ways endorsed and organized a different kind of “violent act” (Berman, 2000). The NGO’s critical voice of the government’s construction of violence demonstrated how discursive text, in this regard a policy, was enacted through the negotiation of voice and power. Mediating its role between the government and the street communities, the NGO was expected to revoice the government’s beliefs and perspectives, yet at the same time, they construct their own agency by producing their own stance based on their own experience and interactions with the street families and children. In so doing the “consumption of text” was not perceived as a linear process, but rather, a site where text was reproduced, interpreted, and produced in local practices.
**Government’s speech.** The government’s speech, delivered by a government official I address below as Mr. B, demonstrates how language is used to reproduce the hegemonic voice of government’s policy surrounding the issue of schooling and working in the street. Such speech may be considered as a “monologue” – as it is delivered by a single speaker -- yet it fulfills a “dialogic utterance” (Bakhtin, 1981) as like any other utterances, government’s policy represents a discursive context which situates policy within a public sphere that is opened for responses and resistance.

Mr. B’s speech concluded the three-day workshop intended to provide children working in the street with an opportunity in which they can practice and maintain basic literacy skills – reading, writing, speaking – through art activities and discussion of various issued related to street life. Additionally, the workshop also aimed to provide the Ministry a description of whether the Pasundan communities were prepared for the enactment of the CSWP project. One of the readiness criteria, according to Rainbow, was if a community demonstrated interest in formal schooling. The workshop took place three hours a day, from 9 to 12 am, and children were introduced to song performing and writing, as well as group discussions and writings. There were about twenty children, from eight-to fifteen-years-old who participated in the workshop, most of whom worked as street musicians (*ngamen*) and street cleaners (*ngelap*).

The closing ceremony started as one of the NGO staff instructed the children to be quiet and listen to Mr. B. Children were seated in chairs arranged in a half circle, all were facing the speaker. Mr. B was seated in a chair in front of the room, separated from the children by a long table. Two NGO staff members, Rudi, and Maman, were in charge of organizing the workshop and were seated next to him. Mr. B started off his speech by addressing the audience as “my dear
children,” as presented by a transcript below. The whole speech was delivered in Indonesian language, except for a few sentences spoken in Sundanese (noted with underlines).

“...My dear children, let’s thank God that we are blessed with health so that we can meet this afternoon. We have been here for how many? [Children: three days!] for three days in order to gain knowledge, skill, and to interact with the facilitators and your friends. What do you think? You think you learn something? [Children: Yes!] Good if you do. But do remember that this knowledge is not for the present but also for your future. Because you can’t stay young forever, you will grow old. Me, the facilitators and the staff here, we all are the same, we’ve been through childhood too. So please while you’re a child, please fulfill your childhood with something meaningful, something you can use for your future. Because your future is shaped by your present.

So there’s no such thing as for instance, a person is appointed as a president, or a businessman, or the head of a foundation [pointed to Rudi who sits next to him] in an instant. It’s all through a process. The process is to pursue education or learning. Education is not only through schooling, but also through non-formal event like this. So for those of you who’re still in school, accomplish that and do not drop? [Children: Out!] because that’s the only way you can achieve your dreams. That’s one of the ways, the most important one, is to learn at school. I know some people make it without schooling but when they’re asked, where’s the certificate? What’s the proof? It just can’t do. Companies, the government, only recognize your certificate [The audience starts to get noisy, children talk to each other].

So please think about your future. Those in school please stay in school. Those who’re dropped-out please take any advantages offered to you. There’s Special Service Class, and there’s type A and type B equivalency exam, and you can get your certificate through them. Type A is for? [Children: Elementary!] Type B is for? [Children: Middle School!]. So if you participate, that means you do the right thing for your future. You don’t want to be sorry when you’re old. You know anyone old who wish he could turn back time to the time when he’s in Elementary age? Would be difficult if you’re old. Especially when you’re with family.

Who will run this country? It’s you, the next generation. We will retire soon. Who will replace us? That’s you. So, to replace us you need know? [Children: Ledge!] to build this country. No modern country without good knowledge. This is what you’re here for. To learn, to develop skill, to gain knowledge. And this is where you learn about responsibility? [Children: bility!] Exactly! We learn about responsibility since we’re small, that is, to think of how to live better. For instance, this is just for example. If a father does not succeed, then the children must suc? [Children: cceed!] Must be successful. Don’t be like, if father becomes a garbage collector, then children become one too. [smile] That’s no-no. That means no progress. Do you understand? [Children: Understand!] If you understand then do it.
So that’s what the foundation for. To help you with education. All you need to do is to ask them, consult with them. Children must study. Don’t spend all your life in the street. It’s dangerous. Am I right? [Children: Right!] Dangerous. Street is not a place for your future. There’s pollution, and you may get hit by motorcycles. Because if we you get hit, you’re the one who get loss. Say, if you get hit, who would get loss? The motorcycle or you? [Children’s noises get louder]. The motorcycle will go ahead, and you will pay for the hospital expenses [smile] So think about it. You can think like, who cares, as long as I get ten thousand rupiah, but what if you get through surgery. How would you pay for that?

So tell this to your mom. Tell her that you need to reduce your activity in the street. There shouldn’t be minimum earnings. If you’re succeed, is it for Pak Rudi*? [Some kids: No] For Pak Maman*? [Children: No]. You do not even need to come to let me know if you succeed because I won’t charge you for what I’ve done. It’s all for you. Our happiness is to witness your success, that is enough for us. We’ll be happy. Your parents will be happy if you’re success? [Children: Fuf!]. There, you got it.

We, the government, have done our part. We give you opportunities, your rights to get education. Now, your obligation is to take those opportunities, to study hard! Our wish is to see you become better individuals. Don’t be like this, spending all your life in the street. Please do remember. You must try hard. What is it again? [Children: Try hard!] We need to try hard. No such thing as living in freedom.

There’s got to be a struggle. There’s got to be a struggle [from this point his voice is difficult to be heard, as the children audience is really crowded]. That’s all I have to say [and the crowd gets quieter]. I’ll ask you one more time. Do you still have hopes for the future? [A few children : Yes we do!] Can you return to school then? Can you implement what I’m saying? [Children: Yes we can!] Just imagine this. You have two eyes, two ears, one nose, and so does the president. What makes him different then? Does he have four eyes? [Children: No::!] See? We’re all the same. Our opportunities are also the same.”

Bucholtz (2004) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) point out that identity is interactionally constructed. Given a stage as a speaker, Mr. B employed various strategies to establish an “interactional identity” -- to borrow Bucholtz’ and Hall’s point of view -- within his relationship with the child audience. In this given stage Mr. B established his social identity as a “father figure,” who was giving advice to his beloved children. The constructed identity implied that the advice was delivered upon a thoughtful consideration, a deep attention, and a care for the
children’s future. Some rhetorical strategies Mr. B employed in reaching out child audiences were presented in the following Table 4.1 and 4.2.

**Table 4.4**

*Mr. B's “Reaching Out” the Audience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Appropriating a fatherhood role.</td>
<td>“My dear children…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Rhetorical Questions          | Engaging audience in the speech.             | 1. We have been here for how many? [Children: three days!]
|                               |                                              | 2. You think you learn something? [Children: Yes!]
|                               |                                              | 3. So, to replace us you need know? [Children: Ledge!]
|                               |                                              | 4. And this is where you learn about responsibility? [Children: ability!]
|                               |                                              | 5. If a father does not succeed, then the children must succeed? [Children:ceed!]
|                               |                                              | 6. So for those of you who’re still in school, accomplish that and do not drop? [Children: Out!]
| Switching to Sundanese language | Expressing a casual, everyday utterance, the way a father talks to his children in Sundanese-speaking families. | 1. Don’t be like, if father becomes a garbage collector, then children become one too. That’s no-no. That means no progress.
|                               |                                              | 2. Children must study. Don’t spend all your life in the street. It’s dangerous. Am I right?
|                               |                                              | 3. The motorcycle will go ahead, and you will pay for the hospital expenses. So think about it. You can think like, who cares, as long as I get ten thousand rupiah, but what if you get through surgery. How would you pay for that?
|                               |                                              | 4. You do not even need to come to let me know if you’re succeed because I won’t charge you for what I’ve done. |
| Double-voicing                | Imitating an ignorant child’s voice          | 1. The motorcycle will go ahead, and you will pay for the hospital expenses. So think about it. You can think like, who cares, as long as I get ten thousand rupiah, but what if you get through surgery. |

While addressing children with an intimate term “dear children,” Mr. B highlighted his authority by constantly posing rhetorical questions. These questions were not information seeking ones but rather, were organized in such a way that children were invited to finish Mr.
B’s remarks. Mr B left the last syllables or word of his sentence unfinished, and let children finish it for him. This way, Mr. B attempted to make sure that he had children’s undivided attentions.

Essentially, Mr. B’s use of rhetorical questions with children of eight to fifteen years of age tended to devaluate the child audience. Such a rhetorical approach was commonly used by preschool, kindergarten, and early elementary classrooms teachers in Indonesia. Intended to check on students’ understanding of teachers’ instructions or lectures, such an approach also aimed to invite young students’ participation in the classroom in an “active listening” – paying full attention to speakers – manner. Employing such rhetorical questions with an older audience thus highlighted the age gap between speaker and audience, and further, obscured the “father figure’s” voice Mr. B attempted to establish.

The fatherly voice however reemerged in Mr. B’s switch to Sundanese language, which underscored the casual, intimate tone in presenting examples, and straightforward advice related to street life. This language switching appeared to serve Mr. B’s attempts to “soften the tone,” that was, reframing a harsh, bitter reality in such a way it could sound like funny, laughable jokes. In presenting examples in Sundanese, Mr. B also switched his serious tone to a casual one by smiling, and looking around to NGO staff, as if to seek their approval. Although the NGO staff smiled with him, the gestures however were not able to make the children smile along with them.

Additionally, Mr. B negotiated interactional distance by constructing “distinction,” (Bucholtz, 2009; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and establishing a friendliness by noting the similarities among himself, the children working in the street, and other NGO staff presented in the event. Voicing a “father figure,” Mr. B highlighted the struggle of childhood everyone had been
through – Mr. B as a former “child” -- and at the same time, drawing a distinction between adults and children, in this regard, the audience. The excerpts presented in Table 4.2 show how identities were constructed through the use of pronoun “we” and “you” in Mr. B’s speech.

Table 4.5

**Linguistic Features Conveying “Adequation” and “Distinction”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adequation</strong></td>
<td>The use of pronoun “we”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Me, the facilitators and the staffs here, we all are the same, <strong>we’ve</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>been through childhood too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Just imagine this. You have two eyes, two ears, one nose, and so does the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>president. What makes him different then? Does he have four eyes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Children: No::!] See? <strong>We’re</strong> all the same. <strong>Our</strong> opportunities are also the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distinction</strong></td>
<td>Highlighting role and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Who will run this country? It’s you, the next generation. We will retire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soon. Who will replace us? That’s you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>We, the government, have done our part. We give you opportunities, your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rights to get education. Now, your obligation is to take that opportunity,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to study hard!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “adequation” (Bucholtz, 2009; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) was made when Mr. B addressed the issue of struggle and opportunity. However, when presenting roles and responsibilities, Mr. B noted that as the next generation, children carried with them an obligation to develop the nation state in the future. Regarding roles and obligations, Mr. B displayed his evaluative stance in drawing a boundary between – what he perceived of as -- “school” and “street.” Some linguistic features conveying Mr. B’s evaluative stance are presented in Table 4.3.
### Speaker’s Evaluative Stance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features conveying stance</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of language use. Speaker’s Evaluative Stance Sundanese is used to present what the speaker perceives as the street life.</td>
<td>So please think about your future. Those in school please stay in school. Those who’re dropped-out please take any advantages offered to you.</td>
<td>1. The motorcycle will go ahead, and you will pay for the hospital expenses. So think about it. You can think like, who cares, as long as I get ten thousand rupiah, but what if you get through surgery. How would you pay for that? 2. Don’t be like, if father becomes a garbage collector, then children become one too. That’s no-no. That means no progress. Do you understand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Now and future - Investment and wastefulnes</td>
<td>So please think about your future. Those in school please stay in school</td>
<td>Street is not a place for your future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The meaning of “struggle”</td>
<td>There’s got to be a struggle</td>
<td>Don’t be like this, spending all your life in the street. Please do remember. You must try hard. What is it again? [Children: Try hard!] We need to try hard. No such thing as living in freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adult’s support for practice</td>
<td>We, the government, have done our part. We give you opportunities, your rights to get education…Our wish is to see you become better individuals.</td>
<td>So tell this to your mom. Tell her that you need to reduce your activity in the street. There shouldn’t be minimum earnings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authoritative voice was constructed through several attempts of dichotomizing, marginalizing street activities and authorizing schooling. The danger of the street was contrasted with the benefit children could get from schooling. The data analysis shows that Mr. B used linguistic features to establish his position with regard to how children should participate in Indonesian society. Being responsible and “struggle” was associated with school, and on the other hand, street activities entailed with “freedom, having fun, and living a free life.” Although street life was seen as sign of “laziness,” children were denied their agencies by assuming
parents as enforcing children to work in street. The section that follows describes children’s symbolic responses in surrounding Mr. B’s production of speech. These responses symbolize children’s appropriation of agency in a context where their authority is constrained within adults’ discursive voices.

**Children’s rhetorical strategies.** In a context where a speech was delivered by an authoritative figure such as Mr. B, children attained their identity as a passive audience who should conform verbally to the speech. In the Indonesian culture of communication, children’s marginalization to the adult speaker was situated within an intricate layer of cultural practices. First, Indonesian children were subjected to the older members of Indonesian society’s authority and were expected to be able to demonstrate such respect in physical attitude such as kissing adults’ hands, listening to their talks and not talking back, and obeying adults’ instructions.

Second, children working in the street had been targets of government’s operations, like roundups, which aimed to clear up streets from working children. Posters and billboards were visible in the street, voicing the government’s disapproval of their presence in the street. Being in a government-sponsored event in which their activities were evaluated and marginalized through a narrated speech, children were aware that they had to show respect, gratitude, and obedience. However, my observational field notes showed that the child audience embedded resistance in their obedient gestures and spoken responses. The children followed Mr. B’s rhetorical strategy by responding to every single question he asked, yet the response did not serve a conforming strategy, but rather, an attempt to obediently join a rhetorical strategy in order to get the event ended soon.

For instance, the responses were made by the children in chorus (“You think you learn something?” Children: “Yes!”). In the middle of the speech, however, as Mr. B pointed out the
significance of the graduation diploma, only half of the audience responded. Many of them were busy whispering and talking to each other. Despite their disinterest in the speech, however, children seemed to try to catch up with responses made by their classmates by imitating the responses in the middle of talking to their friends. When Mr. B told children, “There’s got to be struggle,” the noise level of the child audience got to the point that Mr. B’s speech was unintelligible in my recorder. This was when Mr. B employed a different strategy; he indicated that he intended to end the speech (“That’s all I have to say”). Upon hearing that, the audience became quieter, and the moment of silence was then used by Mr. B to deliver a few more messages before he eventually ended the speech. As children might have been exposed to numerous adults’ “sermons” delivering similar messages, children might have gotten used to express their superficial obedience, which was hiding their resistance behind physical and verbal conforming strategies.

My presentation of internet users’ voices below is intended to see the extent to which a group of society I categorize as “middle-class” may align their perspectives with, or oppose the government’s discourse of working in the street. In so doing I seek to understand how the government’s perspective is taken up to be a “societal discourse.”

**Internet Users’ Voices**

I distributed the questionnaires in three listserves where I participated: the Indonesian Students in United States, Indonesian Children Book Writers, and We Are Mommies, a listserve participated by mothers. I managed to obtain 102 responses in a week. The demographic information of respondents is presented in Table 4.6. Regarding the age and educational background information, I only present the categories with highest response counts.
Table 4.7

Demographic Information of the Survey Respondents (N = 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66.7 %</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33.3 %</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>28 – 37 years old</td>
<td>53.1 %</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38 – 47 years old</td>
<td>27.6 %</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 – 27 years old</td>
<td>14.3 %</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>53.1 %</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post graduate degree</td>
<td>29.6 %</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School graduate</td>
<td>17.4 %</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In responding to a question about whether about respondents agreed with children’s work activities in the street, of 102 respondents, none agreed with begging activities, two respondents agreed with *ngamen*, and ten people agreed with street sellers. The Figure 4.2 below demonstrates that begging activity is the most unexpected activity selected by respondents, followed by *ngamen*, and the street selling.

*Figure 4.2. Respondents’ disapprovals toward children’s work in the street.*

![Graph showing disapprovals](image)

Regarding stances toward government’s policy toward children in the street, respondents gave diverse responses. The responses were not mutually exclusive, so respondents could get to choose more than one policy they would prefer. Of the policies available, placing children in foster homes tended to be the most preferable policy, followed by the government’s
encouragement to donate money to social organizations rather than directly to street children. Following those, street children roundup was selected by thirty-five respondents. Of 102 respondents however, seventeen respondents chose to skip the question and provide extended responses, which generally expressed their disappointment and distrust toward the government’s seriousness in dealing with the issue of children in the street. I summarize some of the responses as follows:

- I would have chosen the foster homes option if I was sure that the funds for organizing it is not corrupted (written by six respondents).
- I would have agreed with the street children roundup if the government knows what the next step should be (written by five respondents).
- All the policies are useless because the government never touches the substance of street children issue (written by two respondents).
- The government should punish all adults who organize children’s activities (written by two respondents).
Concerning materials that should be given to children in the street, the majority of respondents (53%) preferred non-material things. In responding to this question, they expressed their preference by providing extended responses, stating that the thing these children need was education, care, love, and shelter. Of the material donation chosen by respondents, the most preferred things were books, school supplies and other needs, followed by food, and then money.
Figure 4.4. Respondents’ perception regarding what should be given to children in the street.

The last question of this survey, “What activities children can do in the street?” obtained the most extended responses. As many as 68 respondents out of 102 stated that no work could be done by children in the street because their main responsibility was pursuing education and attending school. Of sixty-eight, five responses mentioned that the only activities children could do in this age were to study and play. Seven responses provided reasons in their responses that the street was not a safe place for children’s activities. Of thirty-two responses that agree with children’s selling activities a number added some interesting viewpoints. Some of those are:

- “It’s okay for children to be young entrepreneurs, as long as they sell merchandise they produce by themselves.”
- “Children can be street sellers as long as they are under supervision by adults and are placed in a safe sidewalk – a drive-thru type of place.”
• “The entrepreneurship should be given an opportunity to develop. Government should provide classes to enhance their skills.”

The responses demonstrated that the middle-class members of the community situated their stance and positions toward the government’s policy in variety of ways. Although in general they disagree with children’s economic activities due to the safety issue, some critiques were expressed ranging from the government’s failure in organizing their approach toward the issue of children and poverty, the government’s ignorance in creating a safe space for children, to the government’s education curricula, which was viewed as not suitable for this group of children.

Figure 4.5. Respondents’ opinions on what kind of work children can do in the street.

Parents’ and Children’s Voices

While the government and the Internet users regarded the street as dangerous and thus, not a proper “hang-out” place for children and their families, interviews with children and a few
What does “street” mean?

“I wish I could just have stayed at home, but there’s nothing to do. I used to take neighbors’ orders to wash and iron their clothes but now since I’m pregnant, they don’t hire me anymore.” Bu Mari rubs her stomach gently while looking at her children who are playing hide and seek in the street median. She’s expecting her baby delivery next month. Being pregnant with the ninth child, she looks calm and relaxed. “My husband is a pedicab driver. Sometimes he brings home money, sometimes not. At home I keep thinking about the kids. Here, I can watch over them.” Another mother comes and greets me. We introduce each other and start to talk about the children. “It’s a quiet day. Usually more mothers are here,” sighs Bu Mari. This abandoned food cart can accommodate around six adults. A big blue canvas sheet attached to poles with strings serves a roof for this little piece of room, transforming it into a nice shady shelter. From this food cart, these mothers can see their children through the glass window. Sometimes little kids run in and jump into their mothers’ laps. (Interview transcript and observation note, August 9, 2010)

Bu Mari and her family rented a room located in a neighborhood around three miles from Pasundan intersection. Like other mothers in the food cart, Bu Mari spent almost the whole day - from nine o’clock in the morning to dusk -- supervising her children. While the abandoned food cart provided a meeting point for mothers in working area 2 (the northwest side of the intersection), the mothers from Pasundan neighborhood got together in the storefront in the southeast of the intersection. The activities of both groups did not seem to be different. Women chatted while looking at their children, and sometimes they bought lunch sacks from the nearby food cart and ate together. “Supervising” the children in the street appeared to entail:

- Watching over the young ones (those five years old and under). Children between two to five years old were carried or were always around the older siblings, but these young children tended to be not seen in the street unless their mothers were present.

- Controlling children’s school attendance for children who were enrolled in school, which was the case for Bu Mari, as she pointed out, “That’s why I moved Andi to a school around here [the intersection]. He skipped school a lot in his old school, he didn’t seem to enjoy it. Now he can’t run away.” Attending a school
nearby, Andi took a bath in a public toilet before coming to class and did all his homework in the intersection with the help of Bu Mari.

- Protecting children from unexpected incidents, such as traffic accidents or government’s roundup that targeted beggars, street musicians, all adults and children who worked in the street.

- Preventing children from being exposed to ngelem (sniffing glue), which Bu Mari referred to as a “bad influence from those older boys in the other side of the intersection.” Mothers made sure that children were not to cross the “invisible boundary” (see Chapter 3 for explanation) separating the northwest and southeast side considering the “bad influence” lurking in the other side. “Kids over there are much older. There are boys, who, you know, ngelem and everything,” Bu Mari said.

While mothers’ presence in the street was often associated with a parental tight control over children’s minimum earnings, regulation over working hours and persistence in working were not evidenced in interviews with parents. Some mothers acknowledged that other than working, children were basically hanging out with friends and “playing around.” “Yes they do work, but as you see they just have fun most of the time,” Bu Mari said. Bu Nina, a mother from Pasundan neighborhood, and Bu Mamik of Parung also pointed out that children’s attendance in street activities was beyond their controls as they testified that it was difficult to prohibit children from coming to the street on a rainy day. “In rainy days children have fun, so my children want to play along with their friends too.” This “fun” was thus confined within parental norms and observation, as evidenced by a scene I witnessed one day.

I was in a street median when I caught a sight of an old woman in a headscarf who gently poked a group of boys with her cleaning brush (kemoceng) while shouting at them. I saw that woman, a street cleaner (ngelap – wiping cars and motorcycles with her brush), every time I came to the intersection, but never had a chance to talk to her. The boys were fleeing toward us, laughing, with the woman chasing them. I could catch her talk as she was near, “You naughty boys, naughty naughty boys. You embarrass your parents. What
do you want to be when you grow up? You’re useless.” The woman stopped and turned to me, “I can’t understand these boys. I myself have been trying hard to send my son to an Islamic boarding school. You have to work and study hard to be good. These boys are useless.” Ina from Rainbow told me that the woman did not have her children in the intersection, but she was often seen lecturing children around. (Fieldnotes, August 3, 2010)

The parental responsibilities thus extended beyond a biological relationship. Mothers watched over and took responsibilities of children they knew about in their groups. The parental supervision however was taken differently by Bu Mamik and some parents in Parung as they viewed mothers’ presence in the street as “unproductive.” “No mothers in Parung would sit down doing nothing while children are working. We would do something too, be it selling newspapers or snacks or strawberry,” Bu Mamiek commented, to which her neighbors agreed. The wish to get involved in income-generating activities was also expressed by Bu Mari and other mothers in Pasundan to Rainbow staff. Regarding economic activities, it seemed that mothers in Parung had better opportunities and accesses to wholesale vendors and industries that enabled them to work in the street along with their children.

On the other hand, children’s early experiences with street activities served a significant element that constituted how they viewed and conceptualized the street. A conversation between Bu Sri and Emi revealed this:

Emi: No. I started ngamen when I was about 3 or 4 year old. It’s on my own will. My parents didn’t know that I went. I remember my mom asked me where I got my money. She got mad when she knew it’s from ngamen. I was only four. I didn’t care. I just wanted to make them happy.
Bu Sri: Who took you to the street back then?

Emi: I was just by myself.

(Transcript of interview with Emi, 15 years old).

Despite the societal portrayal that viewed street children as “victimized, being forced to work by adults, and losing their fun and happy childhood due to the obligations to work since the early age,” children in Pasundan intersection recalled their self motivation in the early days when they started to work in the street. Such intention was also testified to by parents.

“He [Udin] keeps wanting to go to the street…I told him that his teacher would be looking for him [if he misses classes, but he insists on skipping school]. I don’t know. He got a lot of friends [in the street]. Maybe because he feels sorry for me too. His dad is unemployed. He is the one who wants to [work in the street].” (Transcript of interview with Bu Nina, October 29, 2010)

Parents felt guilty about letting their children work in the street yet found themselves helpless that they could not do anything to change that fact, as expressed further by Bu Nina.

“Now [I have to admit] that the whole family depends on him [Udin]. I don’t like [the fact that it happens that way] but what can I do?” Bu Mamik of Parung admitted that poverty and social environment had played a significant role in children’s exposure to street activities. “I did run a small cafeteria until my husband died ten years ago. I ran out money and then moved here to Parung. Here almost all children go to the street. So that’s how my children started go too.”

A survey conducted by Indonesian Social Ministry in 1999 noted that helping parents financially had been the main reason children work in the street in Bandung (Saripudin, Komalasari, Bestari, 2009). This demonstrated that street had served as a site in which children practiced their agency and responsibility in contributing to family’s financial concern.

Additionally, the intersection functioned a meeting point where children hungout with friends and had fun while working. Children played hide and seek among the flowerpots on the street
median and used the sidewalk to chat and exchange jokes. This use of street had transformed a public space into children’s everyday spaces (Holloway & Valentine, 2005), the same way shopping malls function for their middle-class counterparts (Matthews, et. al, 2005).

Parents, NGO, and children negotiating “school motivation.” Despite the on and off children’s enrollment in school, all parents agreed that schooling was important. Bu Mari, from the northwest part of intersection, Bu Nina, and Emi’s mother from Pasundan neighborhood, and Bu Mamik of Parung wished they could keep their children at school and at the same time, did not understand why their children did not show interest.

“Of course as parent my wish is to see my children graduate from school. I myself am a school dropout, and I do not want to see my children become one. But Emi dropped out of school when she was at fifth grade. That time school was not free like right now. But now that she’s been off from school for three years, she’s no longer interested in it.” (Interview with Eli’s mother, date)

“I have to take and pick up Udin and his brother everyday from school otherwise they wouldn’t go. The school is across the big street and I’m worried if they have to cross the street by themselves. But if I’m sick and my husband offers to take them, they would rather not going to school. Especially Udin. He would have run to the street” (Interview with Bu Nina, October 29, 2010).

“…Rika [now is 15 years old] quit school at third grade…She’s embarrassed. Her friends kept teasing her. Telling her like, ooh, you’re in the street. So she told me, “I’m embarrassed, friends keep teasing me.” I told her nothing to be ashamed of. But she can’t stand it. I don’t know why only her being teased while there are a few other friends who went to the street too. I don’t know… But teachers were nice. Never heard they told her that thing. Even in school break she’s invited to one of teachers’ home and was advised to return to school. But she insists on not going.”

For Rainbow staff, the parents’ perceptions toward school were regarded as “superficial.”

“They have to say that in the interview with you but for me, they are not trying hard enough to push their children,” Anang told me. Ima, another Rainbow staff member wrote in her journal, “Most of Pasundan parents do not try enough to motivate their children to school. If children begged not to go to school, then parents just say okay. Children wouldn’t have motivation that
way.” When I asked the Rainbow staff about how parents should behave regarding motivating children to school, they referred me to Bu Mamik of Parung.

“So no matter how they want to avoid school, even though they have tantrum [in refusing to go] I make them to go. Kids are kids. Sometimes they said school is not important. Sometimes my son said that he’s going only if I buy him a cellphone. Whatever, I said. It’s good enough that we can afford food. I won’t fall into that” (Interview with Bu Mamik, September 24, 2010).

Regarding the experience of being teased at school, each of Bu Mamik’s child handled it differently, which according to Bu Mamik, depending on each child’s personality:

“Yes, it was hard for my third son. He was embarrassed of being teased. But this fourth one is so persistent [laughing]. If his friend said like, “Oooh, you’re ngamen,” he would say like “Good for me, I can get to school with my own money. You got money from your dad, shame on you! Can you do what I do? I bet you can’t, haha!” He’s that type of kid. If someone teases him he would tease him back, or even he hits or snaps him [laughing].”

Regarding whether Bu Mamik’s persistence reflected Parung parents’ attitudes toward school, Rainbow staff members agreed. Anang said,

“At least Bu Mamik’s persistence has a good influence on her neighbor. She’s a respected community member and people there look up to her. I think that’s why a majority of Parung children are schooled children. While here in Pasundan, only a few go to school.”

Additionally, enrollment in formal schooling appeared to play significantly in both Parung and Pasundan children’s enactment of identity. Parung and Pasundan children – the older children who worked in both northwest and southeast side of the intersection – were known by Rainbow staff members as “having a hard time getting along.” For instance, when they were invited to a Ramadhan dinner in the Rainbow office, both groups had a heated argument sparked by a joke expressed by one of the children. While the kind of joke and the topic of the debate were not clear to me, the argument almost ended up in a physical fight if it were not for the staff’s intervention. Yuma testified:
“This [fighting] happens a lot. If possible we did our best not to put them in a same forum. Parung children are kind of difficult. They think themselves as better, because they go to school, dress better, and look cleaner. Pasundan children think that Parung children are arrogant.”

Another Rainbow staff member, Leo, who used to supervise children in different areas including Parung, Pasundan, and Cimandi wholesale market area added:

“You will experience that a lot when you deal with these children. For example, Cimandi children are rough uhm rude because they live their life in the market. Oh yes, they are into physical fighting, so you may consider them rude. But in the market you have to live that way [the children work as a porter, and they have to compete really hard to get a customer]. You have to be tough to get money. These Pasundan or Cimandi children just can’t get along with children of Parung.”

The sense of “schooled” identity has played significantly in children’s enactment of self as described by Siti, an eleven years old street musician in Pasundan intersection. “When I was not enrolled in school I felt bad I kept thinking about going to school. Now that I’m enrolled I feel better.” Siti was enrolled in a second grade in Special Service Class in Cimandi Elementary School. Having missed school for two years previously, she showed a great interest in learning, evidenced by her intense attention in her homework during the interview with me.

While a few dropout Pasundan children showed interest in participating in Special Service Class, maintaining the enrollment had served as a concern for Ima, one of the Rainbow staff members:

“Only a few children managed to stay in school for a long time. Most of them just stayed for a few months…Although tuition is waived, school supplies and uniforms are provided, many children still find transportation fee a problem. Especially for those who live far away from school…Sometimes they quit just because their friends are leaving…Their motivation is not too strong and they depend a lot on friends…but this Sri is different. She’s so persistent. I hope she will not end up quitting like the others.”

One day Ima introduced me to a girl who was once enrolled in Special Service Class program. She was getting ready to get on a bus to ngamen when I asked her as to why she quit the class. “They were eight of us, and one by one we quit, and I was the last one. That was not
fun at all.” After the girl got on the bus, Ima told me, “That was just unfortunate because she was very motivated in the beginning. And she’s smart too.” Children regarded school peer circles as important. In this sense, schooling did not only entail the kind of activities taking place in the classroom, but also the social world they would be able to build and relate themselves with.

**Negotiating Street Norms and Children’s Protections**

I touch her forehead. It is steaming hot. She definitely has a fever. “Are you fasting?” I ask. She nods. “Just go home and break your fast. You have a high fever.” She stares at the passing vehicles, as if pretending not to hear me. Suddenly I realize that I am not someone who can ask her to do this and that. Two other girls come and shout at her. “You bullhead. I told you to break your fast.” And then they look at me, “She’s so stubborn. She insists on working.” The fifteen-year-old Ina then sits on the street median. Her face looks pale and reddish. Her three-year-old brother clings to her and starts to get cranky. This little boy usually enjoys *ngamen* activity. He would run among the stopped vehicles and then sing and clap. I know he can’t sit down still while the traffic light turns red. Yet he cannot go without his sister. Now that his sister is too weak to walk, he does not want to *ngamen* with the other girls.

“Is her mother here?” I ask the two girls. “Today, yes,” they answer, while pointing at a food stall across the street. “Does she know that her daughter is sick?” The girls shrug their shoulders. “Can you go and tell her that she’s sick?” They just stare at Ina, as if seeking her approval. “That’s okay, I’m fine,” Ina slowly wakes up. Her voice is really weak. She carries her brother and walks to the stopped vehicles, as the traffic light turns red already.
“What should we do? I’m afraid that Ina will fall down and faint” I return to the sidewalk and ask Zul, a Rainbow intern who just joined Rainbow for a month. She just laughs, looking confused. “Yeah, but we do not want to do anything wrong [such as ordering children around and intervening family matters], we don’t want parents to get mad at us.” I watch Ina drag herself slowly among the cars, her brother is in her arm. “But I will surely report this to Pak Anang to check with Ina’s mother to make sure that she goes to the clinic,” Zul adds.

The traffic light turns green, and Ina returns to the street median again. She sits down and puts her brother on the street. I make sure that nobody is around her when I approach her again. “Here,” I slip a Rupiah bill into her pocket, a sum that I estimate would be equal to her daily earning, “Just go home and go to clinic.” Ina looks surprised, and quickly slaps my hand, “Don’t. I can’t take this.”

“Yes, you can. You need it,” I insist. Ina shakes her head and walks away. I feel helpless, but decide to stay in the same spot and wait. When she comes back, I try to slip the bill again, to which she refuses, by saying, “I’m here for working” (Fieldnotes, August 20, 2010).

Amidst my desperation in witnessing Ina’s illness and not being able to help, I found Ina’s persistence in maintaining her working value amazing. Ina worked as a street cleaner (ngelap). Carrying a long brush, Ina walked around dusting cars’ windows and bodies. Despite that what she did was some seconds of doing a light stroke on the cars and not a serious cleaning, Ina considered that “working.” In this light, ngamen, which constituted singing while clapping hands or playing simple music instruments, was also considered as “working.” Ina’s and the street community’s norm that valued “working” over begging was situated within the Indonesian
societal value. Working was considered more respectful, and begging, on the other hand, was associated with sluggishness and thus, embarrassing. The value found its justification in Islamic belief. Working was viewed as part of spiritual deeds God would reward in the hereafter. A Prophet saying even equated hard work to a fight in the battle; a death during a hard work would grant one a paradise in the hereafter.

During my observation, however, I noted that one or two parents begged in the street. The begging was in fact done by disguising their appearance, as shown in my field notes below.

Bu Sri and I were crossing the street when Bu Sri whispers, “Did you see that? Did you see that?” “What?” I ask. “Dian’s mom was begging.” “No, I did not see it,” I respond. “Of course you do not see. She disguised herself really well. She’s in scarf, almost covering her whole face, and a hat. I have to pretend not to see. Oh, she must’ve been embarrassed to see us passing by.”

Interestingly, the families welcomed grants, donations, and other forms of organized financial assistance. By “organized,” I refer to those provided by individuals or organizations distributed to the families with the help of Rainbow or other foundations they acquainted with. Yet, impulsive donations given in their work place – that was, the street – that was not compensating their work activities could be viewed as part of begging activity.

Other norms constructed by children were the sense of closeness, friendship, and solidarity demonstrated by children in responding to sick or suffering peers. Friends were always available to comfort each other, and to offer solutions and advice. This confirmed findings of other studies that children working and living in the street maintained their sense of community by preserving a group integrity as a survival strategy in the street (Davies, 2008; Naterer &
Godina, 2000). The emotional bond within the peer group was so strong that dishonesty was seen as a sign of betrayal:

“How could they do that to us? I just asked them how much they got from Rainbow for the workshop and they didn’t tell me. Like I will take the money from them or something. I don’t care if it was bigger, I just ask. I told them how much mine was anyway.”
(personal communication, November 2, 2010)

Having posed such question, Rina, fifteen years old, was not only questioning the amount of money. Rather, she was raising the issue of trust and honesty which was to be shared by children in their everyday interactions; feeling that she was not given the trust that she wanted, Rina felt left out. Beazley (2003) and Naterer and Godina (2000) point out that street children maintain their “subculture” by sharing subcultural characteristic such as image, language, behavior, and a specific practice. In Pasundan street intersection, devotedness, trustworthiness, and loyalty to friends served children as an emotional way of establishing a street community of friends.

Children’s construction of the street norms above was situated within parents’ construction of norm and moral boundaries with which to ensure children protection. Being aware of the street as a dangerous and threatening place, parents’ presence and ways of protecting children functioned as a way of providing a safety net in a context where financial constraints had made all family members work in the street. This definitely challenged the government’s assumption that deemed low-income parents abusive and exploitative for allowing children to work in the street. To the contrary, the street norms constructed by parents and children had become space where this street community redefined their roles and positions in both cultural and geographical space. Further instances of constructed norms are presented in
Table 4.8

*Street Norms Constructed by Parents, Children, and NGO*

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<tr>
<th>Norms</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Children</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parung</td>
<td>Pasundan</td>
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| Duration | Children not being in the street after around 8 pm (some parents said after dark) | Stay away from “bigger children” — those who sniff glue (“ngelem”) and commit crimes | Norms in peer relationship:  
- Helping each other, sharing.  
- Honesty, trust, not lying.  
- Working, not begging. |
| Moral values | - Continue learning while working  
- Children are enrolment in formal schools  
- Children maintain basic literacy skills  
- Parents have to be persistent in supporting children’s attendance in school | - Children attend schools regularly  
- Children obtain school diplomas in order to be able to compete in job market  
- Children go to the street only after homework is done | |
| Attitude toward learning | Children can take care of their own health (e.g., stay away from the flood water) and know where to go to seek medical help. | Children take a bath before going to street, and stay away from rain, in order to avoid skin diseases | Children stay away from rain |
| Health and cleanliness | Children are aware of the danger of trafficking, and expected to stay away from “suspicious” adults | - Children are expected to take care of the younger ones  
- Children take responsibility of their own school-related expenses such as transportation fee and snack money | |
| Self responsibility | |

Defining Children’s Social Space: Conceptualizing Street and Schooling

“I do not fit in school. I’m not smart enough,” Fini, a fifteen years old girl responded to my question of why she was not interested in returning to formal schooling, but she declined to elaborate her statement further. My child participants expressed their disinterest in school in variety of ways. A few expressed their opinions openly, but many of them responded by silence,
laughs, or bored gaze and gesture such as pretending not to hear. Children’s inferior feelings toward schooling were mostly conveyed in stories told by Rainbow staff members or social workers.

“I took a few children to a Special Service Class. Oh boy, one was shivering. They stood in the door not wanting to get in. The teacher was nice though. But I guess, children stayed there only for a few days. The thing is the feeling of being inferior. They’re embarrassed. They’ve been out of school for too long.”

Children’s hesitation in participating in formal schooling took place in the context of the Indonesian government having extensively promoted formal schooling in an attempt to reduce the number of children and the duration of their presence in the street. In this regard, formal schooling was the only legitimized participation endorsed by the government, as evidenced in Mr. B’s speech that addressed the significance of a graduation diploma. In other words, a few years of schooling would not grant one access to the official job market – those offered by institutions such as factories or companies – unless one passed the national exam. The government’s promotion to formal schooling related to the attempt to reduce the national unemployment rate, which, further, was considered as affecting the nation’s economic growth and performance.

The government considered children’s participation in the street and the families’ poverty as the main reason for children’s lack of interest in schooling. Additionally, the lack of parental supports was also regarded as an “anti-school” attitude that characterized the street community. Through the enactment of Children Welfare Fund and Special Class policies therefore, the Indonesian government hoped to provide financial support through school tuition waivers in all public schools and Special Service Class.

Interviews with parents and children however revealed that tuition was not the only element contributing to children’s withdrawal from schooling. Parents and children took
schooling seriously, and were eager to attain the “schooling” identity (Levinson & Holland, 1993). Parents regarded schooling as a vehicle of social mobility, and were hoping for their children to participate in schooling in order to be somebody and elevate the family. Yet, children regarded schooling not only a site of knowledge transfer and learning, but also a space of “self-making” (Luttrell, 1993) in which they negotiated their identities. Some children’s responses revealed that they felt they did not fit into schooling because their identity as “street children” was not being accommodated in school interactions. Additionally, while the government considered schooling as a means of children’s participation in cultural practice (Rogoff, 2003), parents of the street community conceptualize “children protection” in responding to street cultural practices and norms. This demonstrates the divergence, and the contesting perceptions and ideologies with regard to children’s work in the street as a cultural practice. Figure 4.6 below demonstrates how government’s value regarding children’s protection figures into their persistence in promoting formal schooling as a way of removing children from the street. On the other hand, parental values that endorse children’s contribution into families’ income-generating practices have situated the construction of street norms as a way of “protecting” children in the street. Amidst the divergence voices, the NGO mediates its role in trying to understand and accommodate the families’ values while promoting the government’s policy.
Figure 4.6. Voices of the intersection.

Parents' and children's construction of participation: children takes adults' roles in contributing to family economic practices

Government's and society's construction of children protection: children should be removed from street

NGO mediates its role between families' values and govt's expectation

Parents and children's construction of protection: the parental constructions of street norms and values

Government's and society's construction of participation: children should be enrolled in formal schooling
Chapter 5
Finding a “Playground” in
Pasundan Early Childhood Center

“I will go to the place with swings and slide. Will we go back there? My mom said we’re going this Friday, but I think she’s lying.” Danti kept asking me the same question since the day we went to visit the orphanage. Going with the whole family to send her sister Nori (8 years old) there, Danti insisted on staying in the orphanage with Nori. Located in a calm, quiet neighborhood, more than ten times the size of Danti’s house, with a small yard decorated with swings and a slide, the orphanage appeared to Danti as a playground. Danti’s parents eventually had to come back to the orphanage to pick up Nori on the request of the grandfather who considered that sending a child to an orphanage was a complete shame. Having Nori back together in the house however, Danti still kept her dream about going to such “playground.”

The playground of the Early Childhood Center was a dusty unpaved street shared with pedestrians, street food sellers, trucks transporting materials and waste from tofu house industries, as well as minivans. Children gathered in the street to pretend play or to play cards after school. Some girls were sometimes seen wearing “fancy” dresses, high heels, carrying purses and dolls. Even though children were aware as to when to occupy the street and when they had to yield to passing vehicles, there were a few times when accidents occurred. One day, Danti and her cousin fell into an open sewer when they tried to avoid a passing truck while learning to ride two-wheeled bikes. “I think we need some street bumps to slow down the cars because drivers are often ignorant that children are around,” Bu Sri shared with me her concern. The open sewer presented Bu Sri and Yuma with another concern. Given the shortage of bathrooms inside the rented houses, the sewer often served the residents as a public toilet. In the morning particularly, some children or adults used the bamboo pole fixed over the sewer right
across the Center to defecate. Bu Sri and Yuma found the sight and smell so disturbing that they had to close the door – which thus left the room dark -- for a few minutes.

In this chapter, I present the enactment of literacy practice in Pasundan Early Childhood Center as one of the children’s “playground” in Pasundan neighborhood. My use of metaphor “playground” was derived from an opening song the children sang to start each school day, “The most beautiful playground is the one and only our playground.” While “playground” in this song referred to “school,” children and teachers in Pasundan Early Childhood Center, as I present in this chapter, approached the idea of finding a “playground” in diverse ways. Teachers had a set of learning expectations they wanted the students to meet, while children on the other hand, brought with them resources from homes, families, and lived experiences in Pasundan intersection. Pasundan Early Childhood Center thus served as an intersection within which teachers and children negotiate their attempts to make learning “fun,” or to create a “playground,” by sharing resources and materials through literacy activities.

In an attempt to portray the nature of the practice, the interactional structure, and ways children construct meanings through literacy activities provided in the Center, I organize this chapter surrounding the participants’ conceptions and constructions of “playground.” By playground, I refer to the – adult and child -- participants’ ways of incorporating available resources to constitute the activity of “play.” I pay attention not only to the physical activities, but also to all kinds of norms, beliefs, and attitudes that figure into the institutionalization, and the organization of activities in Pasundan Early Childhood Center that provide contexts for the teachers’ and students’ constructions of “play.”

The first part of this chapter presents the context and the community’s beliefs undergirding the literacy practices that take place in the Center. I discuss the history of the
Center, the community’s perception of the children’s uniform and why it provides a significant part of the schooling “culture,” as well as the children’s snacking that comes to play extensively in the learning practice. The second part describes the physical stage of classroom, the nature of events, and the interactional structure between the participants. The third part presents some samples of children’s productions and demonstrates how peer collaboration and popular culture figure into the children’s meaning making process. I conclude this chapter by illustrating how the conception of play in this “playground” is enacted, stretched, and negotiated between the students and teachers in the Center.

**The History of the Early Childhood Center**

Everywhere I look I saw them, the community. Those without the official documents, with no education and no purpose in their life. Nobody care about them. More children are being exploited by parents. Because of [parents’] lack of education, children are victimized. Their rights are not fulfilled. Children are the next generation, and yet they are being exploited. The next generation is now being exploited. (Excerpt of Bu Sri’s diary)

When it was founded in 2009, the Pasundan Early Childhood Center was known as “the hobo’s school.” “Parents who think they can afford school will not enroll their kids here. Instead, they go to Bina Baru, which is located in the inner part of the neighborhood. Maybe they are worried about the influence of these children on their own kids,” Bu Sri pointed out. Additionally, Bu Sri felt that in the early days, the local government did not provide her the supports that she needed. “I do not need them to come in the openings. They did not even respond to me when I came to the [local Ministry of Education] office and requested the curricular materials.” Being part of the national government’s program to provide early childhood education, the foundation of an Early Childhood Center was supposed to be under the supervision and coordination of the local *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Mengajar (PKBM)* or The Center of Learning and Teaching Activities, a branch of Ministry of Education responsible for
organizing early childhood education. Instead of getting assistance from the government, Bu Sri obtained supports from the Rainbow NGO in the form of monthly room rental, a few books, toys, other educational materials, a teacher, and curricular guidelines. This support thus left Pasundan Center under the supervision of the sponsor of Rainbow -- an international funding agency that based its operation in Europe, which I address in this study as the TCH.

Even though receiving monthly support from the TCH through Rainbow, the Center solely relied on monthly tuition revenue from parents to cover its daily activities. The activities included purchasing teaching materials, schools supplies, and a monthly meal for the nutrition subject. “Unfortunately out of thirty-something parents, only about two or three pay the tuition regularly. The rest, I don’t know. I wish they would come to me to admit that they can’t afford it, so I know what’s going on. But maybe they just don’t care, I don’t know.” Having limited revenue, Bu Sri used her own money and people’s donations to cover the Center’s daily expenses.

The purpose of the Center was to provide an alternative space for young children so as to reduce their duration of being in the street. “I ‘bought’ the children for seven thousand rupiah from their parents. Seven thousand is the amount they earn per hour. I came to the street by myself to pick them up.” In the second year, Bu Sri no longer “bought” children from the street as parents came to the Center to enroll their children. “They start to develop trust to the Center now as I manage to bring in some guests with donations.” The guests, which are introduced to Bu Sri by Rainbow, have come from out of town and even abroad, such as the Netherlands and Japan. “Now the residents can see that the donations eventually reach them even though they have no children enrolled in the Center,” Bu Sri added, after noted that she always tried to distribute the donations to all residents in the neighborhood.
Regarding the activities she provided the children, Bu Sri explained, “At least children would find this place interesting. I’m happy if they can come everyday. Learning will follow if they’re interested.” The idea of creating a “fun space” as an alternative for street activities constituted the establishment of the Center. This idea is interwoven with what the community has perceived as the real “schooling” as described as follows.

**Uniforms and “Real Schooling”**

“A parent came saying that her child was willing to enroll only if she can wear school uniform. I set up a meeting with parents to ask them whether it’s true that wearing uniform would make their children more interested in enrolling to the Center [The parents say yes] So we made an agreement that the uniform can be purchased through several payments.” [Excerpt of Bu Sri’s diary]

The issue of a school uniform came up as I found Bu Sri struggling with a huge uniform production cost she had owed the tailor in the first days of new school year. As we discussed ways to solve it, we came across a television report we watched the previous day. The news portrayed an informal school in a bus terminal organized by an NGO for street children in Jakarta. Referring to how children are portrayed in the news -- wearing casual shirts, carrying no book bags, and barefooted – Bu Sri commented, “It doesn’t look like a real school. Parents here wouldn’t like the idea of sending their children to hobo’s school. Parents can’t afford uniform, but they want a real school.”

The Indonesian public school system employs a centralized policy to regulate the color of uniform according to school levels. In addition to white school tops, the government determines red pants and skirts for elementary schools, blue skirts and pants for middle school and grey skirts and pants for high schools. Even though not regulated by the government, kindergartens and preschools used to have their own uniforms, which can consist of two or more sets,
depending on parents’ financial situation. School uniforms thus index not only the social status of school, but also how the society perceives the school’s “formality.”

In Pasundan, children got two pairs of uniforms. One pair was a formal cotton top and pants or skirt, and the other pair was a more casual outfit designed for Physical Education on Thursdays. On Fridays, children were advised to wear a *muslim* outfit, that was, a clothing that covers the whole body except for the face for girls, and long sleeve tops and long pants for boys. Parents treated school uniform respectfully. Children changed their uniforms into casual clothes once they got home. Wearing school uniform when playing around outside of school time was seen as bad and “messy.”

The Center’s huge debt with the tailor reached the TCH one day and had made Bu Sri feel like being considered as “enforcing” parents into buying uniforms they could not afford. After the TCH visit to the Center, Bu Sri shared with me her complaints, “They kept asking me about this [uniform], and saying that it’s not a significant thing in this kind of situation. But then they had a meeting with parents, and they heard it from parents themselves that it’s on their own wish. I felt relieved.” Even though attending school in casual attire could have been a more possible choice for the Center, parents and Bu Sri did not take this due to the association of casual attire with informal schools intended for the poor, hobos, and homeless children. Through schooling, the community wished to attain a sense of formality – as it was presented in the majority of preschools – that is, an identity associated with a “schooled” person (Levinson and Holland, 1996). Through this schooling identity, the community – teachers, parents, and children – appropriated what they understood about how schooling was practiced in the dominant society.

In addition to school uniforms, other supplies constituting the identity of “schooling” were backpack, shoes – although children were barefooted in the classroom, I never saw any
students wearing sandals – taking a bath before coming to school, and snack money. The absence of one of those elements would “exclude” a child from the peers, as evidenced one day when Yeni attended her first day of school. Yeni was a street musician brought by Bu Sri from the street. She used to sleep on the sidewalk in the bus terminal with her parents, and spent some nights in her grandmother’s rented room just across the Center. Other than Yeni that day, there were two other girls, who happened to be Eli’s – a fifteen-year-old former street musician whose narrative was quoted in chapter four – nieces. Noticing Yeni’s appearance with sandals, casual shirt, short pants and no backpacks, these two new girls whispered among them and then told Yeni quietly, “You stink. And where’s your backpack?” Hearing the children’s conversation from me, Bu Sri then suggested Yeni to take a bath before coming to school. “I don’t want to push children to do this and that, but this is for her own sake. You know kids,” said Bu Sri. Through the ownership of shoes, backpacks, uniform, and the attitude of cleanliness, children negotiate their “schooled” identity in peer relationship within the classroom context.

**Snacking within Peer Relationship**

It’s hard when it becomes a habit. You see when they came here, kids were cranky for snacking. There’s no warung (street snack stall) here [so they might find it boring]. What was provided in the house did not please them [if it’s not street snacks]. That’s why Maya didn’t like it here. Living here, you have to follow some rules. There’s no such thing there [in Pasundan]. You live a free life.” [Observational note, September 3, 2010]

The comment above was expressed by one of the orphanage committee ladies in responding to why Maya (8-years-old), a girl from Pasundan, only managed to stay in in the orphanage for three days. Although she had never been working in the street, Maya was assumed by the lady as having the “snacking” habit, that is, the habit of consuming cheap, perceived less nutritious snacks, commonly associated with children living in urban slum areas. While in the orphanage snacks were mostly homemade, or at least factory brands that have been approved by the government’s Food Supervisory Board -- the snacks consumed by the children of Pasundan
were commonly produced by street sellers and small home industries known for incorporating ingredients in such a way to make the snacks affordable to children. Those included spicy fish cakes with lots of flour ingredients, mini omelets mixed with flour, and candies produced with the --government-claimed -- “dangerous” coloring and preservatives. Babies were seen to consume these street snacks while being carried in slings. Children were given street snacks since they were able to chew solid food. Snacks appeared to function as a sort of entertainment parents use to deal with children’s irritability, sadness, or anger.

While outsiders like the orphanage lady may value snacking as a poor community’s bad habit, snacking has figured significantly into the Center’s learning practices and peer relationships. For instance, snack money seemed to serve as tickets to friendship. Children showed their friends how much money they brought, went to the street seller and enjoyed the snacks together. Carrying empty backpacks, children tended to hold the money in their palms, sometimes until the school ended. Danti, for instance, used to hold the money in her pencil-free palm while doing her work. A common instruction Bu Sri reminded the children in the morning was, “Keep your snack money in your backpacks, please.” A few children, however, disregarded this reminder. Everyday children showed me the snack money they brought and told me about the food they planned to buy. In conversing about snacking, children invited their friends or were invited to jump in with questions such as, “Do you want to buy this [food] too?” or “Can I go with you? I like that [food] too!”

The significance of snack money had made Bu Sri reflect on the Pasundan families’ lifestyle. On the one hand, Bu Sri often complained that, “They could have saved the money so they can pay the school tuition,” or “Most of the ngamen money goes to snacking. Just imagine how much that is, what a waste.” On the other hand, Bu Sri also acknowledged that the somehow
Pasundan community considered that buying snacks was much cheaper than preparing homemade food. “Children are full from snacking they can skip lunch. Just think about how much you’ll spend for cooking. Fresh ingredients are now getting unaffordable. And add the [natural] gas for the stove to that.” Besides the financial reason, the low cooking activities were triggered by the space constraints. Most houses did not have separate kitchens. Although a stove was usually present in each house, cooking with a stove presented a high risk, particularly for families with babies.

Both in Parung and Pasundan, snack money had become one of the main reasons schooled children worked in the street, as Bu Mamik mentioned as follows, “I did tell them that we don’t have snack money for school tomorrow. They then go to the street to ngamen. If I were with a job, I don’t do that to my kids.” For cases when children went to regular public schools where they were socialized with other children from middle-class families, snack money served as a means through which their identity as “children of the street” was confirmed. This was apparent in Bu Mamik’s story about her first daughter’s experience in school cafeteria when she was in Middle School.

“She’s kind of embarrassed because all she had is coins. So at recess she went to the school cafeteria only when it’s almost empty, when none of her friends was there. All her friends had bills of one, or five-thousands, but all she had was coins of five-hundreds, or even a hundred [laughing] from ngamen. So she didn’t want her friends to see her coins…I told her having coins is better than having nothing at all! (Interview transcript, September 24, 2010)

While Bu Mamik testified that her daughter’s friends and teachers were all nice and friendly to her, the type of snack money – in this regard, coins, as opposed to bills – had indexed children with a low-class identity, which thus marked her as different from the rest of her schoolmates.
The Classroom

The early childhood center was housed in a rented room of a two-story house in Pasundan alley. The Center occupied the whole first floor, was sized two times three meters, and was shared with a kitchen, a semi-permanent wooden stair, and a restroom. The classroom was separated from the rest of the house by a curtain. The landlord was a middle-aged widow with two daughters living in the second floor of the house. While the learning activities took place, the landlord passed the classroom often in running her daily errands, ranging from going to the restroom, calling out to the passing vegetable vendor, to cooking. The children did not seem distracted by the landlord’s and her family’s activities. The only distraction from the house’s activity was coming from the landlord’s kitten that often jumped into the crowd of students and thus created havoc. Children would run around to chase her and scream.

Due to spatial constraints, the Center was divided into three groups of students according to age; four to five-year-old, five to six-year-old, and six to seven-year-old. Each group attended school at a different time and consisted of six to ten students. Added with two to four teachers and facilitators, the room did not have more space for individual chairs and desks. Thus instead of sitting down on chairs, children did their works on the rugged floor while lying down on their chests. If space permitted, some children did their works on the short-legged wooden bench that could accommodate up to three children. In general, the classroom’s furniture consisted of two drawers, one teacher desk and an adult chair, one blue thin rug, and four short-legged wooden benches. Two alphabet posters were hanging on the wall, along with an animal poster. Other than that, the wall looked bare, exposing the pale blue paint color that had been peeled off here and there.
The center provided all the school supplies. Each child got one drawing book, two notebooks, a grid notebook for math, an eraser, a box of color pencils, a pencil, and a pencil sharpener. All supplies were to be kept in school. Children were only allowed to bring home the homework materials. All other supplies such as crayons, papers, textbooks, were also kept in school to be used collectively. In addition to school supplies, some materials for play included plastic construction toys – teachers called the “cheap lego” – puzzles, flash cards, and a bunch of plastic balls. A few picture books, mostly those conveying Islamic stories, were also available.

In order to maintain cleanliness, everyone entering the classroom was required to take off shoes. Shoes and sandals were left out in the street outside the door, which often turned dirty after a few hours of exposure to dust, rain, being stepped on by passersby, or accidentally turned upside down by the wild cats. Some children were taken to school or picked up by mothers. Sometimes mothers stayed for a while and chatted with each other outside of the door. The interactions between adults took place casually. Bu Sri chatted with me or with other Rainbow facilitators while children were doing their individual work. Sometimes she called out the vegetable vendor to see if there was something she could buy. Children appeared to get used to have adults talking around them. A few older kids often jumped into adults’ conversations.

Interesting exchanges between Bu Sri and parents occurred as mothers took and picked up their children to and from school. Mothers paid school-related fees, complained about children’s behavior, and asked questions regarding school schedules. Information related to school was usually distributed to parents orally. Mothers were also asked to disseminate the information to other parents who were not present. In addition to getting information, parents looked up Bu Sri for her educational “expertise.” There were a few times when Bu Sri advised parents to “keep their hands off their children” and not to yell at their children in front of their
friends. “I know life is hard for them, as it is for me too, and it’s almost inevitable to vent out our anger to our kids, but I always told them to just hold it.” Bu Sri also intervened in cases when a few kids were slapped or hit by parents for what parents considered the “children’s mistakes” by telling the parents directly that it was a wrong thing to do. “Hey, do not treat your girl like that!” she told a mother one day. Bu Sri also complained that, “No matter how hard I tried, I could not stop violence done by parents to their children inside homes.”

The tensions at homes due to economic reasons reached its peak during Ramadhan as prices of basic needs increased and the Eid celebration was approaching. Bu Sri testified that Ramadhan had been always a hard time for the Center as the parents’ frustrations at homes had affected children’s attendances and performances at school. “Children are taken to ngamen in far away business areas so they come to school exhausted. I’ve heard fighting at homes, children crying, and this drives me crazy.” A few days before Eid, two to three mothers came to Bu Sri to ask if they could borrow the school’s money for the Eid’s trip to their hometowns – in Indonesia Eid is celebrated with the extended families in hometown – to which Bu Sri declined. The thought of the families’ struggles with preparation for Eid had left Bu Sri miserable during Ramadhan.

**The Nature of Learning**

_Taman yang paling indah hanya taman kami. Taman yang paling indah hanya taman kami. Tempat bermain, berteaman banyak. Taman yang paling indah, Paud Pasundan._

The most beautiful playground is the one and only our playground. The most beautiful playground is the one only our playground. This is where we play, making friends. The most beautiful playground is our Pasundan Early Childhood Center.

The song above starts the daily routine of each group level in the Center. Adopted from a song titled “The Most Beautiful Playground,” the song left a phrase to be adjusted locally and was commonly sung in many preschools and kindergartens in Indonesia’s big cities. A day in the
Center began with about seven or eight songs, sung by all the children and teachers. After taking off shoes and leaving backpacks leaning on the wall, children sat down in a circle, and then sang and clapped. The order of the songs was similar everyday, except sometimes Bu Sri and Yuma added one or two new songs. The songs were ordered in a way that it led to a morning prayer. A child, appointed as a leader, gave the class a command to start the prayer, then the class would recite the Arabic prayer out loud together. In the sections that follow I describe the nature of events in the teacher directed and children initiated activities in the Center, which Dyson (1993) deems “official” and “unofficial” events.

**Official events.** The class schedule posted on the wall mentioned that Monday was scheduled for reading and writing activities, Tuesdays was designed for math, Wednesday for Arts, Thursday for Physical Education, and Friday for Islamic Studies. What counted as “writing” activity was not composing, but instead, a copying event (see Figure 5.1). Children in Grape class (five to six-years-old) were assigned with copying some words, and the writing assignment for children in Strawberry class (six to seven-years-old) was to copy a sentence. The youngest level, which was the Apple Class (four to five-years-old) was where the children were introduced to alphabets and numbers. Writing in this class entailed copying alphabet and numbers in their notebooks. In all classes, teachers handwrote the word or sentence samples on children’s notebook, and children copied them. The emphasis of the event did not seem to be the sound and print agreement, as children were not asked to read what they write. Rather, the event appeared to focus on the fine motor skill. Children copied the words delicately, and then turned in the finished product for the teacher to grade. The grade was represented by stars. The better the work, the more stars children could get. Although children usually were excited to know how many stars they would end up getting, they seemed to find the writing task tedious, as many of
them complained, “Cangkeul. Tired.” Responding to such complaints, teachers encouraged them to rest for a while and did some arm exercises, and if children could not do the amount as expected, they would be asked to take it home as homework.

Figure 5.1. Copying product.

While the children were doing the writing task, each one of them was called out to do reading with a teacher. Reading instruction was structured to follow the Quran recitation event. Just like the Quran recitation, the reading event was conducted one on one. Supervised by the teacher, a child would read a simple word consisting of two syllables -- combinations of consonant and vowel. Each child got to read one page of variations of simple words. The kind of syllables was repeated so as to memorize the pattern. Unlike the writing activity that many children find “tiring,” most children did not seem to have “complaints” concerning the reading events. Those who sounded struggling to figure out the syllables combination usually just
repeated after the teacher. The children’s reading competence thus was determined by how well children noticed the syllable pattern and read them independently. The reading event was not graded. The children’s achievement was recognized by allowing children to proceed to the more advanced level. There was no discussion regarding the substance and the context of the text being read.

Math lessons were basically organized in a similar mechanical manner. Older children were given worksheets of addition and subtraction problems to do, while young children were asked to do the counting tasks. All worksheets, including problems and graphics, were handwritten by teachers (See Figure 5.2). Such mechanical writing, math, and reading instruction, according to Bu Sri, was organized in a way to get the children prepared for the Elementary School (which began at seven-year-old). “Currently students enrolled in Elementary Schools are expected to be able to read and write. First grade teachers no longer teach children how to write. We don’t want our kids end up going to Elementary School not able to read write and count while the rest of his friends can.”

*Figure 5.2. Teacher’s handwritten worksheet.*
Rudi, however, held a conflicting belief regarding how literacy should be enacted in Early Childhood Education. “The government says that teaching (mechanical) reading, counting, and learning to read should be left to first grade teachers. Learning in Early Childhood Center should be fun.” Ikang, who agrees with this stance, criticized the math lesson in the center one time when he paid a visit. “That’s not how you supposed to do it. This is too much for young kids,” he told Yuma. Once Ikang left, Yuma mumbled, “Then who else would teach them if the first grade teachers won’t.”

Yuma’s remarks stemmed from a common knowledge that most public elementary schools would not accept students in first grade unless they had mastered basic literacy skills. These basic literacy skills included reading (decoding), writing (independently spelling out words in written form), and counting (addition and subtraction). Many public and private elementary schools, according Yuma and Bu Sri, even employed an admission test in order to select students who were regarded as “ready.” Rudi’s and Ikang’s opinions that learning in the Center should not be driven too much to the mastery of basic literacy skills on the other hand were influenced by their meetings with the “high-ranked officials in the Ministry of Education,” to borrow their words. These beliefs however were not supported by the government’s policy to regulate the practice of basic literacy skills teaching in early childhood education. The elementary schools’ expectations thus had left many kindergartens’ and early childhood centers’ teachers like Yuma and Bu Sumi anxious that their students would not perform well in first grade.

“Art lessons” included craft making such as simple paper craft, – origami and collage making – coloring printed image, and drawing. The emphasis seemed to be more of practicing children’s fine motor skills rather than on the composing process. Teachers started the lesson by
modeling craft creation, and then let the children follow the steps. Children who did not seem to “get it right” usually got personal assistance. Some young children even had teachers do the craft assignments for them. Most children got frustrated with craft making, evidenced by their frequent complaints, “Teacher, I can’t do this,” or “Teacher, I need help!” In coloring activity particularly, only a few children accomplished coloring the whole image while some others took it home as homework.

On the first days of school, drawing activity seemed to be interpreted by children as sketching an object realistically and beautifully. When asked to draw, children looked anxious and started protesting, “But it’s too hard! I can’t! I can only draw scribble!” to which teachers responded, “Yes, everybody can draw. It doesn’t have to be real.” Once children drew a stroke with their pencils however, stories poured down on their papers. Drawing activity consisted of two types of events: free drawing, and thematic drawing. Teacher’s direction for free drawing usually was, “Ok, you can draw anything you want. It can be something you watched this morning, yesterday. Did you go somewhere yesterday? You can draw that.” In responding to such instructions, children told the teacher their stories that often were built upon each other’s stories, as evidenced in the following conversation between two non-focal children (X and Y).

X: I went to the supermarket yesterday, with my mom, my sister.

Y: Me too, me too. I bought chocolate and candy.

X: Well, I bought a chocolate milk.

Y: I bought a strawberry milk in a box.

X: Actually chocolate milk is better.
And the exchange went on until the teacher reminded them to start drawing. Thematic drawing was centered on teacher’s selection of theme. An example of thematic drawing was illustrated as follows.

Bu Sri read the children two picture books. A story is about cats and dogs who keep fighting. It’s told that the fight stemmed from a misunderstanding between them. Dogs waged their tails because its their request of friendship while the cats thought that’s it’s a fight invitation. Same way, dogs thought that cats’ attempt to make friends is to ask to fight. Second story is about friends who misunderstand each other. A rich boy thought that his poor friend stole his snack money but actually it’s just misplaced. Kids were attentive. They were quiet, paying full attention to the stories. After discussing whether it was true that the friend stole the money, BS asked the kids to draw their interpretation about the stories.

BS: Now you can draw. You can draw cats, dogs. You can draw yourself buying snacks or snacking. What do like to buy for snacking? [Children mention some names of food] You draw those.

Bunga: Teacher, but I can’t!


Teacher’s reading storybooks aloud appeared to be the children’s most enjoyable event. All children would gather around the teacher who held the book in the way that it faced the children. Children looked so enthusiastic that they could not sit still. They kept moving closer to the book in order to see well and to touch the illustrations on the pages. The children’s crowd usually got closer and closer to the book that it made the children in the back row protesting
because their views were blocked. The children in the middle row then tried to rise on their knees, which further made the children in the very back stand up. When the children’s noise got louder, the teacher paused the reading for a while and warned the children that she would not continue unless they behaved themselves. Children commented on the story and illustrations during the reading. The teacher listened to children’s commentaries and used those to continue reading the story. Storybook reading events were conducted spontaneously to pass the time, such as, when all children finished their assignments and there was a little time left until school dismissal. During my observation, storybook readings took place almost everyday. Due to limited book collection, the same copy was read several times. The repetition, however, did not affect children’s enthusiasm.

Unofficial events. Children-constructed events occurred many times between instructions -- for instance, when some children finished their assignments and teachers were still working with other students. The unofficial events could take longer if teachers were busy talking to guests, which could be ranging from Rainbow staff members or the orphanage ladies. In the latter case, Bu Sri or Yuma marked the event by saying, “Ok you can play, just remember to clean up.” The unofficial activities children participated in included playing with construction toys, puzzles, looking over flashcards or storybooks, and pretend play. Although the materials for play might not be as many as those that might be available in other schools, children were never seen to fight over toys. A group of girls in Grape and Strawberry class liked to pretend being mothers or teachers. They were “housed” in the teacher’s desk and walked back and forth to the other corner of the classroom designated as the “shopping mall” or “the office.” As teachers, they asked their “students” to mention the pictures displayed in the flashcards. Although boys and girls were often seen to play together inside and outside the classroom,
pretend play was usually girls’ exclusive activity. Composing and production events – which included writing names, drawing, or reading – however, were not found in these unofficial activities.

**Interactional Structure**

I define “interactional structure” as patterns of language use in which adults and children, in this case, share and negotiate authority in their meaning-making processes. Particularly, I pay attention to the ways in which talk is organized within teacher-directed official events and within peer interactions. First, I illustrate how the teacher perceives children’s talk as it relates to the learning process. I then present the ways in which teachers elicit talk from children in a more “loose” composing event, and then demonstrate how the interaction is structured by the nature of the events. Next, I will display some examples of peer interactions to show how children enact their agency in their relationships with their peers.

**Teachers directed interactions.** With a group of maximum of ten students in one class, the teachers in the Center appeared to have the instructional events under control. The teachers, Bu Sri and Yuma, got attention from the students in the way they wanted to, managed to listen to students’ responses, and were aware to provide assistance to those who needed a personal approach, such as individual scaffolding. I describe the situation of the classroom as noisy but manageable. Talking while working on individual assignments was allowed. Responses to teachers’ questions and inquiries were encouraged. Children could jump into teacher’s talk at anytime without a particular procedure. Teachers valued children’s active responses, often considering it as “cute,” “smart,” “brave,” and “confident.” Teachers’ appreciations entailed in their statement that “those who work in the street are noticeable because they’re confident and respond actively in class” obviously describes such value.
Teacher’s wish was to have a class full of talkative students as expressed by Bu Sri as she compared the Apple class (4-5 years old) to her own. “I envy Bunda’s class. Children are talkative there, so alive, so cute. They sing loud and look happy. My children are relatively quiet. I wonder how to make them talk more.” In addition to curricular-directed topics, exchanges between teacher and students encompassed everyday experiences in Pasundan neighborhood. As teachers knew the students’ families, they asked about students’ family members in front of classroom, such as, “Is your grandmother still here? Is your baby brother getting better? Has your mom taken him to the doctor yet?” Questions and remarks related to parents’ jobs were also common, such as “Hey, I heard your dad get a new job. You must be happy.” At the same time friends added to this family-centered conversation such as, “Oh, her grandma is really rich. She’s got a lot of money and she bought us chocolate too!” Everyday students shared their everyday experiences with teachers as well as their classmates.

One instance of teacher – student interaction was presented as follows. Teacher (Bu Sri) caught a new Sundanese vocabulary spoken by Rio while he was drawing. Rio was then asked to expand more on kuya batok – which later we found out as a ladybug – using his Sundanese competence. Bu Sri and a Sundanese Rainbow staff member (Zul) who was present at the time were amazed and wondering as to why they had never heard of the term previously.

Rio: This is kuya batok. Tik tik tik tik tik [a dramatic sound while he draws dots in his drawn figure]
Bu Sri: What is kuya batok?
Zul: Yeah. I never heard it before.
Rima: The little one. The flying one. In the pedicab stop. In Balitek [a training center building].
Bu Sri: On a tree? What tree?

Rio: The tree that has leaves.

Bu Sri: Oh, I wanna see it! Can you bring that for me?

Rio nodded.

Bu Sri: Now, can you color that for me, so I know what it looks like [pointing to R’s drawing]. What’s the color of that?

Rio: There are red ones. And yellow ones.

Bu Sri: Does it have wings then?

Rio: No. There’s red one. There’s yellow one. Zeeeng [dramatic sound, imitating a flying sound]. Up, they fly again to the intersection.

Bu Sri: So what are the dots? [pointing to the dots he just drew]

Rio: Oh, that’s the eggs. Kuya batok’s eggs. In the nest. They’re drawn in the water.

Bu Sri: What water?

Rio: The rice field.

Bu Sri: Why?

Rio: Because. There’s a crab. It’ll fight the crab.

(Observational note, August 18, 2010)

Bu Sri regarded Rio as an “expert” in Sundanese vocabularies. Considering herself a fluent Sundanese speaker, Bu Sri was amazed to know how rich Rio’s vocabulary was. In trying to elicit more details from Rio regarding the kuya batok, Bu Sri helped Rio by posing some questions. When Rio appeared to be helpless, Bu Sri asked Rio to elaborate it through drawing. This way, Bu Sri situated Rio as “expert” in the scaffolding process, which I found a clever way to request Rio to add some details.
Teacher-directed interactions, however, were structured differently in reading and copying writing activities. Children were told directly whether they are right or wrong, and children were supposed to follow directions and teachers’ guidance, as evidenced in a reading event in which Bu Sri helped Uli read.

Bu Sri: So, read!

Uli:  \textit{Di-si-ni-bi-sa-di-ta-na-mi-pa-di}.


Uli:  \textit{Di – sini – bisa – ditanami – padi} [Rice can be planted in here].

Bu Sri: Okay. Next line.

(Observational note, August 18, 2010)

The structure of Initiation -- Response – Evaluation (Mehan, 1979) characterizes the copying writing and reading events. Teachers established their roles as the guide of children’s learning process. Given the perceived curricular demand that would face children in the first grade, the repetitive method of decoding syllables was a means Bu Sri considered “effective” in teaching children to “read.” Exposed with “authoritative voice” in particular classroom events, children were not “passive bystanders” to whom adults passed down cultural practices. Rather, they proved themselves to be observers and meaning-makers who adopted, reproduced, and reconstructed the adults’ authoritative roles within their relationship with peers. The following section discusses how children reproduced and at the same time, produced this “authoritative” voice in their collaborative interactions.

**Peer interactions: Being a critical collaborator.** Rima draws some suns, each is located on top of her drawn figure. Then she colors them yellow. After she is done, Rio picks the yellow color pencil from a box he shares with Rima.
Rio: Are you done using this? [showing her the yellow color pencil].

Rima: Ooh: you copy me! It’s yellow!

Rio: Ces! Ces! [dramatic voice imitating the sound of a dropping object].

Rima: Here. My suns are many. You’re wrong! [pointing at her suns]

Rio: My sun is stronger. Here [pointing at his sun].

Rima: Mine is [shinning] stronger. Here. Mine is more. Yours’ not.

Rio: You should’ve put the sun in here [pointing R’s paper].

Rima: No, it should be here [pointing to another spot in her paper].

Rio: But yours is small. Mine is big.

Rima: But mine makes it full. Yours is too big. Here. This is how you draw a sun

[drawing a sun on Rio’s paper].

(Observational note, August 18, 2010)

Being in a classroom with no assigned seats and desks, children’s space to move around was boundless. However, children’s choice of sitting location was not unconfined. Rather, it was influenced by their peer relationships inside and outside the classroom. Rio and Boby for instance, were close friends and tended to sit next to each other. Other than the fact that Rio was Boby’s distant relative, Rio’s and Boby’s family rent rooms in a same house. Rima, although she played along with a few other girls after school, tended to sit by either Rio and Boby during class activities. Bu Sri pointed out that these three children were the most talkative in class. “Although they are loud and arguing a lot, they’re kind of giving support in their own way. It’s like, having a competition to get their work done. That way, they can get their assignments done,” Bu Sri commented on their “unique” interaction.
The excerpt above illustrate the “authoritative” voice both Rio and Rima take on in criticizing each other’s work. Having been socialized in a social world in which the “multiplicity of voices” (Bakhtin, 1981) comes to play through diverse authorities – teachers, parents, and other adults – and agencies, children internalized and interpreted such voices into their “children’s culture.” Corsaro (2003) points out, “Kids’ appropriation and embellishment of adults models is primarily about status, power, and control. Kids are empowered when they take on adult roles” (p. 112). Gaskins, Corsaro, and Miller (1992) regard this an “interpretive framework,” that is, when children employ their agency to select “cultural ingredients” to participate and contribute to cultural practices.

Children’s critical voices in collaborative interactions are also commonly found in Dyson’s (1991, 1997, 2003) studies in the United States and Sahni’s (1994) study in rural India. Corsaro (1991) considers this a “collective negotiation” in which children negotiate their opinions in trying to provide supports for their peers. As evidenced in the above excerpt, Rima and Rio were debating over the best way to draw the sun. Their exchange was not centered on the sun in the real world, but rather, on the artistic way of representing the sun on the paper. Another evaluative teacher – like remark was made by Rima on Danti’s drawing of the raindrops as follows.

Rima: Where are the raindrops?
Danti: It’s here! Got it?
Rima: You should draw more drops!
Danti keeps drawing as if she does not hear Rima’s comment and then soon she rushes out to the sound of the musical pedicab.

(Observational note, October 20, 2010)
This dialogue did not end up with collaboration, as Danti did not take Rima’s suggestion. Rima appeared to understand the boundary that Danti was building and therefore, she did not extend the conversation further. Children were fully aware of the time and space related social context, and knew how and the extent to which they could practice their agency.

**Resources for Composing**

Children’s composing serves a space where children’s social worlds intermingle. School world, home world, friendship world, is given a place in children’s constructed world (Dyson, 1993). In the context where children are classmates and at the same time, relatives and neighbors, the social worlds often overlap, and provide a space for teacher and friends to join in.

**Creating a window: Family and friends in an imaginary world**

Sandi and Abi draw a long pathway on their drawing books, so long that it is turning and twisting. The pathway leads to a house with a triangle shaped roof and windows. There is also a pond outside of the house.

Bu Sri [pointing to Abi’s drawing of a house]: Is it your house?
Abi: Yes.

Bu Sri: Nice! I will come to your house then. Draw me coming to your house.
Abi: Okay.

Bu Sri: And Bu Yuma too. We’re coming to your house. We’re coming a long way to your house [pointing at the twisting path]. It’s so far. We’re tired.
Abi & Sandi laugh.

[BS then asks Abi if this is his house back in the village – where the grandparents are. BS knows where each child’s hometown – where the grandparents live -- which also
becomes the families’ destinations in Eid’s travel. Abi shakes his head and says, “This is my house].

Figure 5.3. Abi’s “My House.”
Bu Sri joined Abi in his imaginary world to which Abi welcomed. Abi and Sandi drew two figures on their papers, along with a car, standing in the pathway. The typical drawings of Abi and Sandi include pathways, cars, and houses with windows. Drawing offered children a means to construct a world different from their physical world. Living in a rented room shared with other occupants leaving their houses with no windows. The “pathways” connecting the rooms were the narrow corridor that was soaked or even flooded during the rain.

Children invited family members – and a few friends occasionally – into their drawings. Mother, father, siblings served as the “cultural material” (Dyson, 2003) to be incorporated in the drawing. Stories such as “My dad is an army” (Danti, 7 years old) or “My mother bought me shoes” (Rima, 6 years old), framed the family portrayal. The excerpt below shows how Bu Sri
asks students to draw stories from their daily experiences. Children, of course, responded to this request by freely interweaving the teachers’ notion of “real life” – as demonstrated by Bu Sri in her examples – and their imaginary world.

August, 18, a day after the National Celebration of Independence. Today’s event is a free drawing. Bu Sri (BS) illustrates an example about one of the things that happened the day before, on the National Independence day. Children however, choose to draw something else. Rima is drawing her family, and Boby comments on it.

Bu Sri: You can draw anything. Did you go somewhere yesterday on school break? Did you watch television? There’s a national ceremony in the palace.

Rima: I went to the store. I bought shoes.

Bu Sri: Draw the shoes then.

[Rima starts drawing]

Bu Sri: Who did you go to the store with? Mom? Dad?

Rima: My shoes has eyes.

[R draws two dots]

Rima: I draw my lil’ brother, and then mom.

Boby: Your mom is fat.

Rima: This is me sleeping with my lil’ brother with my dad. Mom goes to store by herself [draws more people]

Boby: Sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, sleeping:: [singing tune]
Reconstructing television shows in the classroom. Pasundan children’s exposure to television show’s popular culture is situated within the Indonesian dominant society’s worries about the intensity of children’s consumption of television. The worries stem from data reported by Yayasan Kesejahteraan Anak Indonesia (Indonesian Child Welfare Foundation) that
Indonesian children have spent approximately 30-35 hours in a week in front of television. Some scholars note that the feared impact of television shows include the children’s vision health (Rosmaida, 2009), disinterest in home learning activities, particularly homework (Tjahjono, 2004; Mayangsari, 2010), children’s disrespects toward parents (Agustin, 2002), and children’s aggressivity which is considered as triggered by movies involving violent scenes such as *Crayon Sinchan*, *Dragon Ball*, and other manga from Japan (Ervinnurrahmah, 2002; Martani, 1992).

Some the aforementioned studies however acknowledge that the inadequate guidance regarding the audience’s age appropriate level has enabled the originally adult-intended Japanese cartoons to be viewed by Indonesian children audiences (Agustin, 2002; Ervinnurrahmah, 2002; Martani, 1992;).

In responding to concerns toward media culture, some internet-based parental groups, along with *Komite Penyiarian Indonesia* (Indonesian Committee for Broadcasting), have endorsed some ways to “protect” children from “television’s overexposure and child-inappropriate shows.” These include campaigns of no-television day, “child-inappropriate” movies ban, and the promotions of more outdoor, physical activities for children (Asih, *Kompas Daily*, December 2010).

Despite the above societal concern, television sets have become the main means of entertainment in Pasundan and Parung neighborhoods. Every single household in Parung and Pasundan owned a television set, and people watch television shows whenever they stayed at home. Soap operas, celebrities’ gossip news, and children’s cartoons had become the background noise in most of my interviews. Mothers watched soap operas while running the house errands, when children were present. The themes included marital affairs, relationship between in-laws, family conflict, love stories, and ghost stories Abidin (2010) considered “inappropriate” for child
audiences. Women discussed soap operas and the latest celebrity gossips when they got together in the neighborhood or in the street. Older children in the intersection conferred about the new music programs, boy bands, and musical top charts. Particularly, popular songs had provided these street musicians materials to perform in the street. In the Early Childhood Center, popular television shows provided children with abundant resources with which children reappropriated and reinterpreted. The popular show being discussed and performed within peer interactions was not limited to children’s cartoon characters, but also “adult songs,” and ghost stories the Indonesian Broadcasting Committee deemed as “child-inappropriate.”

“Popular culture” is defined as a mass-produced, mass-consumed cultural expressions and practices often contested with “high culture” (Marsh, 2005). Despite the adults’ attempts to “control” popular culture as a means to shape the idealized form of “childhood,” popular culture has significantly built children’s social world. Such “textual landscapes” (Carrington, 2005) or “textual toys” (Dyson, 2003) provide a symbolic means with which children practice their agencies through composing processes. The popular culture, along with peers and the adults’ voices constitute what Bakhtin (1981) considers the “heteroglossia of voices,” that is, the interweaving of voices and agencies in children’s social world. The following sections present two popular themes children play along with and incorporate into their composing processes.

**Superstitions and ghost stories.**

Children are seated in circle. The class is getting ready to sing a closing song when Yuma, the teacher, caught Riga’s yawning. Rima helps Yuma remind Riga of the consequences of yawning without covering the mouth.
Y to Riga: Hey, you remember what to do if you’re yawning? You have to cover your mouth! You don’t want a fly to get in [your opened mouth]. What if a ghost gets in?

Kids [all talk to Riga]: Yeah! A ghost may get in!

Yuma: And then you will have a stomach ache.

Rima: And it’s a disease nobody can cure!

(Observational note, October 22, 2010)

In Pasundan children grew up surrounded with, and listening to superstitions and ghost stories. These stories were told by adults and depicted in television dramas the Indonesian scholars consider “misleading” in portraying the “other world” (Al-Hamd, 2008). Diverse varieties of ghosts, such as pocong – a dead body wrapped in white cloth – kuntilanak – a female ghost in a white long dress and long hair – or jaelangkung – a voodoo doll that can mediate communication with spirits – were popular among children. Children fantasized themselves meeting and seeing such ghosts, which they believed living in the public cemetery near the highway, and adults used these children’s fantasies to make them behave well. Threats such as, “Finish your food, otherwise the kuntilanak will come and get you,” or “Get home before dark, otherwise the pocong will kidnap you” were commonly heard. Scholars such as Al-Hamd (2010) and Yadi (2008) warn parents that such “intimidations” will leave children insecure, anxious, and fearful.

In the Center’s unofficial events however, the ghost stories were told within peer circles with excitement. Child audiences usually listened to the narrator’s stories attentively, and then added their own stories enthusiastically. In these narrative events, the narrators cast themselves as either “protagonist” (i.e., managing to scare the ghosts away) or “victim” (i.e., bumping into a
ghost and then running away) – the same roles as those that had been depicted in television horror dramas.

Adults’ narratives concerning superstitious themes were embedded with their evaluative remarks toward an antagonist character in real life. One day, Bu Sri told me her suspicion toward a charity act done by Mr. Hajj, whom Pasundan residents considered as the richest one, the owner of a tofu factory, and the only one in the neighborhood who had ever performed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Mr. Hajj was known by residents as an “antisocial” person who would rather take his extended families to perform Hajj with him every year rather than giving to the poor neighbors. Thus, when Mr. Hajj asked Bu Sri to deliver his donation to a sick neighbor one day, people responded to it with suspicion.

“I sense something suspicious when he gave me the money. Neighbors told me to be careful because it’s fishy. [Although surrounded by poor neighbors] he’s not into charity. Not a penny. And suddenly he gave money, out of the blue. It must be something needed for the voodoo [in order grant him more wealth]. Neighbors also think so…And people say he performs hajj every year, but not to Mecca. He goes the opposite way. There’s this intersection, this way goes to Mecca, and the opposite way takes you to voodoo way. That’s where rich people go [to perform particular rituals so they can get richer]. No wonder he gets richer and richer everyday.”
(Observational note, October 8, 2010)

The above stance demonstrated the community’s belief regarding a metaphysics mechanism that could shape human behavior and attitude in this physical world. This invisible world, the other world governed by evil spirits and creatures, related to “unaccepted” behavior, such as greed, self-indulgence, or inappropriate public behavior, such as yawning. Children were socialized as a member of the community by becoming the intended audience of such narratives, when they were told and cautioned by adults using ghost-related stories, and the unintended audience, when they were around adults discussing the superstitions. Using their understandings
toward the ghost world, children reproduced ghost narratives and incorporated them into the composing practice.

Rio and Boby, both are six years old, are two close friends who like to draw together. They sit next to each other and talk a lot during drawing activities. Today’s event is free drawing, where Bu Sri let the children draw anything they like.

Rio: Teacher, I’m drawing a cellphone.

Bu Sri: O yes, it’s a cellphone. I can see the numbers.

Rio: Teacher, this sounds tenonet, tenonet [singing tune, imitating the ring tone].

Rio: And this is a pocong [zombie wrapped in a white cloth].

Boby: Haha! Pocong!

Rio: Ihiihihi [imitating the pocong’s typical hysterical laugh, as shown in television’s horror movies].

Boby: Tenonet, tenonet [imitating cellphone’s ring tone].

Rio: This is a blackberry [talking to self].

Rio: Teacher, this is pocong!

Bu Sri: What are these two pocong doing? [pointing to the drawing].

Rio: sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, sleeping [singing tune].

Boby: Teacher, this is blackberry cellphone [pointing to Rio’s drawing].

Rio: And this is pocong [laughing] Isn’t it nice?

Bu Sri: What is the pocong doing?

Rio: Staying at home.

Rio: This is the small one [R points to the smaller figure].

Boby: That’s a skull.
Rio: Ooh, skull [. Teacher, I drew a lot already!

Bu Sri: Okay, you can color them.

Rio: I got pocong too.

Bu Sri: How many are they?

Rio: Three.

Bu Sri: What is this? The sun? [BS points to the circle drawing].

Rio: Yes, the shining sun. This is star. Three stars.

Bu Sri: And what is this? [BS points to a dot on the paper].

Rio: Ladybug

Bu Sri: Ladybug?

Rio: Yes. The ladybug.

Rio: This is a big cellphone [R draws another figure]. Separated from the pocong.

Bu Sri: Why is it separated?

Rio: Because the pocong is [] inside home.

Rio: Then this is it. The uhm: The pocong. Pocong is reading. Reading uhm. Reading

    pocong

Bu Sri: With cellphone?

    [Then Rangga goes on coloring his picture, and then draws a line]

Bu Sri: And what is that? [BS points to the line].

Rio: The path. For the car. A turtle is being hit [by the car]

Bu Sri: The pocong is walking on the path?

Rio: Yes, he’s walking on the path. Pocong, pocong, pocong [singing tune].

(Observational note, August 18, 2010)
Note: All writings are made by the teacher, except for the 12345 in the blackberry drawing. The numbers in circles are corresponding to Rio’s actions in the above fieldnote excerpt.

Having been exposed to pocong stories in his social world, Rio however reinterpreted pocong differently in his drawing. His human-like pocong owned a blackberry cellphone, lived in a home with a walk path, and read. A few of pocong’s attributes that Rio maintained in his drawing are the look (the white cloth wrap) and the laugh. Pocong and other Indonesian ghosts were imagined to have a particular way of laughing, as imitated by Rio. The reconstruction of
“humane, and friendly” pocong demonstrated his reappropriation of a cultural narrative about a ghost. This conforms to children’s interpretive competences as members of community who internalize cultural practice yet at the same time, they play with it creatively (Miller, Cho, Bracey, 2005). Additionally, Rio’s knowledge about blackberry cellphone was not surprising. Blackberry became a current trend in Indonesian society, was extensively advertised through commercials, and was depicted as being used by soap operas’ characters. Giving the blackberry cellphone to a pocong, Rio gave him a popular attribute; possessing a modern gadget and therefore looking cool, just the way popular characters were portrayed in television dramas.

**Localizing Dora, complicating the “third space.”** Dora and Sponge Bob -- pronounced in Sundanese dialect as “Bong Bok” – represented a globalized popular culture delivered to children all around the world by television. Children could watch Indonesian dubbed Dora and Sponge Bob series everyday in basic non-cable television channels. The original English Dora and Sponge Bob series with Indonesian subtitle were also available in paid, cable television channels. Being delivered in Indonesian language, Dora series appeared to Pasundan children not as an English-Spanish bilingual program, but rather, as a show of a cute, Indonesian-speaking, little girl having adventures. Available in the early morning at around seven to eight o’clock, children watched Dora and Sponge Bob prior to leaving home for school. Some children also owned Dora and Sponge Bob locally- produced merchandises such as backpacks, hairpins, plastic jewelries, and outfits. Danti, a seven-year-old street musician, was known to be so obsessed with Dora that she even had a Dora style haircut.

“Teacher, I got a new hairstyle,” Danti shouted at me after poking me.

“Oh yes. You look beautiful!” I told her.

“It’s Dora!” She looks really excited.
(Observational note, October 20, 2010)

In the section that follows I analyze a thematic drawing event in which Dora was brought up by Danti in her drawing process. Like other typical thematic composing events in the Center, Bu Sri structured the instruction first by introducing the topic, and then modeling some drawings on the board. At the same time, a musical pedicab was going back and forth in front of the Center, carrying child passengers. Its loud musical tune distracted the children in the Center so that they ran outside every time the pedicab was coming near. They said they were worried that the pedicab would be gone by the time school ended. Bu Sri assured them that the pedicab would stay for a while so they still had a chance to ride in it. During the observation I (Sophie/SD) asked Danti a few questions.

Bu Sri: Now listen to me. Today is cloudy. What do you see in the sky when it’s cloudy?

Danti: A rainbow!

Bu Sri: We see a rainbow after the rain. Before the rain? Do you see clouds? Black clouds mean there’s going to be rain.

Children: Clo::ud!

Bu Sri: So now let’s draw clouds. Can you do it?

Children: We ca::n!

Bu Sri: So here’s the cloud [drawing a cloud on the board] And here’s the rain pouring down [drawing rain drops coming from the cloud]. And then there’s a rainbow over here. Red, yellow, green. And under here Riga with his umbrella [drawing a person holding an umbrella]. Here he is. [Children laugh out loud].
Riga: Where? Me? That’s not me!

Rima: Ah, the nose! Look at his nose! [Rm points at Riga’s figure on the board, laughing].

Bu Sri: See here. I have cloud, rain, and then rainbow. Can you do it?

Children: We can!

Bu Sri: Here Riga says, I need an umbrella! [Imitating a kid’s voice, Bu Sri draws an umbrella on top of the picture of Riga].

[Bu Sri then distributes drawing books to the kids].

Danti brought in Dora in a “free additional” space provided by Bu Sri. This free space was added to the thematic drawing of rainbow, cloud, rain as being modeled in the board. Bu Sri accepted Danti’s creative expanding of the weather themes into the television’s popular culture as evidenced as follows.

Danti: I wanna draw a rainbow!

Bu Sri: Yes, draw a rainbow.

Danti: But I can’t!

Bu Sri: Yes, you can! Look at the board. I’ve given you an example.

[Danti runs outside to the sound of the musical pedicab].

Bu Sri: Hey D, where are you going?

Danti comes back and draws the cloud.

Danti to Bu Sri: Like this? [pointing to her cloud]

Bu Sri: Yes.

Danti: Then what else?

Bu Sri: Then the rain, rainbow, and you can draw yourself.
Danti: Yes, I can do it! I can do it!

Bu Sri: Yes, you can do it!

[The pedicab passes by again and the kids rush out]

Danti: Teacher, is this how you make the cloud?

Bu Sri: Yes, that’s good [and then talks to all children] After drawing cloud, rain, rainbow, then you can add other things, people, park, anything.

Danti: The rain [D draws rains coming out of the cloud] Tik tik tik the sound of raindrop falling on top of my roof. Water’s pouring down, so hard. Come and let’s see, trees and branches [singing to self].


Danti: What else teacher? What else?

Bu Sri: Draw people or anything.

Danti: I’ll draw Dora!

Bu Sri: Yes, you can add Dora.

Rima: Dora? How?

[Danti draws Dora]

Rima: I can draw Dora too!

Danti: After Dora then Bong Bok [Sponge Bob]! And you can get stars [grade] with Bong Bok.

Rima: Bong Bok can’t be starred.

Danti: I can!

Rima: Yes, Dora and Bong Bok can.
SD: So, is this Dora or Sponge Bob? [pointing at a figure in her drawing]. 1

Danti: Dora! [] Give her bangs [singing to self]

[Danti goes outside again as the pedicab passes by]

Danti is back to her drawing again.

SD : And what is it? [pointing at a rectangular shape]. 2

Danti : That’s Dora’s house.

Danti : And this is the pillow. It has sheet. I wanna sleep, I wanna sleep [singing tune]. And a blanket! And this is the body pillow. Done!

Danti : Dora Clap [nods the head two times] Funny face. Has bangs. Carrying a backpack. Carrying a map [singing to self].

SD : What was that again?

Danti : Dora Clap.

SD [laughs] : Who taught you that?

Danti : Me! Me! [singing the Dora Clap all over again].
Popular culture as “third space” is a situated social practice in which globalized text such as television shows are locally adapted and reinterpreted (Marsh, 2005, in quoting Wilson, 2000). This “third space” refers to a sphere between globalized phenomenon and local interpretation, in which globalized commercial merchandises are adopted in locally social practices. Some studies investigating popular culture’s “third space” have analyzed how popular characters such as Pokemon, are interpreted differently in different contexts, such as Australia and Canada (Vasques, 2003, as quoted in Marsh, 2005).

Danti’s play with Dora Clap – a commonly performed children’s clap play -- conforms children’s agency as cultural “producers,” and not passive popular culture “consumers” (Dyson, 2003; Marsh, 2005). However, this “third space” created in the production process complicates as it is adapted through several degrees of contextualization. The first
contextualization relates to the presentation of the original Dora show to the larger Indonesian audience. The bilingual English-Spanish Dora is only available for the “middle class” families, consisting of those who can afford to subscribe to the television cable. The Indonesian-dubbed version thus represents the “popular Dora” – one that is watched by majority of child viewers – in which Dora is “textualized” (Bauman and Briggs, 1990) from its original context, and then is given a new meaning which Bauman and Briggs (1990) would deem “recontextualization.” With the new given meaning, the Indonesian-speaking Dora attracts young viewers with her cuteness, songs, and engaging adventures.

Dora’s fans such as Danti, proved themselves as an active audience of the “popular Dora.” In trying to “imitate” Dora – one of which is through what she thinks of as Dora’s hairstyle -- Danti framed Dora in a cultural practice similar to her own. In so doing Danti situated Dora in a house and snuggled her in blanket, along with a pillow. The Pasundan Dora even has a body pillow like most of Indonesian young children, who tended to be given a mini body pillow since the day they were born.

Adding to that “third space” was the school or religious text, that was, a didactic content being conveyed in a format of play. I came across the Ablution – the ritual of washing parts of body prior to daily Islamic prayer -- Clap one Friday, and found its similarity to Dora Clap interesting. Both Ablution and Dora Clap had similar rhythm, pattern, and could be performed alone, collectively or collaboratively. By collectively, a group of children performed the Clap by clapping their hands to the rhythm while singing together. By collaboratively, children formed a circle, and clapped their hands to friends next to them or her while singing together. Each lyric of both Claps represented significant features of the theme. Intended to introduce children to the order of acts in ablution ritual, the Ablution Clap featured the ablution’s steps
in order. On the other hand, Dora Clap presented the physical features children could associate with Dora; her distinctive look and things she carries with her (see Table 5.1 below).

Another distinction was that the Ablution Clap tended to be teacher-led and performed in the “official” classroom activities, while Dora Clap was played among circle of friends in “unofficial” events. This distinction however, was not clean-cut. Bu Sri knew the Dora Clap and helped me write it down. I also witnessed Bu Sri perform the Dora Clap with Danti as she helped Danti expand her drawing (see the following section). The way Danti put Dora in her constructed world, and the fact that Danti had Dora acknowledged by Bu Sri in stretching her composing skill, demonstrate an “emotional attachment” (Alexander, Miller, Hengst, 2001) not only between Danti and the characters, but also among her, her peers, and teachers.

Regarding the origin of the Ablution Clap, Bu Sri acknowledged that it was taught in a government-sponsored teacher’s workshop she and Yuma participated in a while ago, “We have a lot of Claps like that. You can make anything you want to teach children into a Clap like that. That way children will be interested more.” The didactic content “disguised” in a form of play, television shows featuring a “globalized” popular characters, have provided resources with which children interweave in their play event. Thus, the “third space” is not a single space inserted between the globalized and the local culture, but rather, an intricate and layered interwoven of meanings, as children bring in the home, school culture, or other forms of cultural practice into their reinterpretation process.
Clap Play in “Official” and “Unofficial” Sphere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ablution Clap</th>
<th>Dora Clap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Say <em>Bismillah</em>, wash your arms,</td>
<td>Funny face,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse your mouth, clean your nose,</td>
<td>Has bangs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and rinse your face,</td>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
<td>Carrying a backpack,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm to elbow, head and ears, feet is</td>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the last one, and then say a prayer.</td>
<td>Carrying a map,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amen!</td>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Clap three times]</td>
<td>We did it! We did it! <em>Yes!</em> **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In the name of God.

**Yes!** was spoken in English with pumping the fist down.

**Rhythmic Language: Children as Singers and Authors**

The Center’s drawing events were situated in a social context where talk and body movements were allowed. As children were drawing, they could lie on their chests, move around, talk with friends, or even tell stories. In a drawing process where talk to self and peers often occur, children were also given freedom to perform language in rhythm, which Dyson (1992) deems the “artful use of language.” Singing in these events, which children incorporated in their composing narratives, could be heard in three categories. The first type of rhythmic language were songs taken from nursery rhymes, such as “Rainbow” song and “Rain” song performed by Danti in her drawing of cloud and rainbow. Being able to create a connection between “text” and songs in her social world, Danti demonstrated her competence in bringing the “voices” from her social world.

The second type of rhythmic language was tunes that children took to represent particular meaning or function. Rio’s performing of “tenonet, tenonet” to symbolize the cellphone’s ring tone and the pocong’s laughing sound he took from television dramas fall into this category. The
last kind, the composed tune, was the made up of rhythms children used in playing with words. Other than rhythm, children also used repetitive pattern in performing. Some examples included Danti’s singing “I wanna sleep, I wanna sleep,” and Rio’s singing, “pocong, pocong, pocong.” The rhythmic language was usually performed to self in a low voice – yet too loud to be called a “hum” – except a few times when it attracted nearby friends to join in, such as in the case where Rio and Boby sang the ringtone tunes together.

Although I did not have a chance to observe Danti’s singing events in the street as part of ngamen activities, my observation on Dian and other non-focal child participants have informed me that children tended to sing popular love songs Bu Sri would consider “adult songs.” The tunes that children composed and performed in the classroom were school-specific and therefore, demonstrated children’s ability to appropriate song performing and composing within its social context.

Teacher’s Use of Children’s Resources in Scaffolding

Having a petite figure as compared to other classmates, I was not aware that Danti had turned seven years old until Bu Sri told me. “I decided to retain her last year. With the demands of first grade, I think she’d better learn with me here.” Danti often mixed up number 2 and 5, and the number 6 and 9. She knew alphabet letters, but was still struggling with decoding syllables. Being an active talker in unofficial events, Danti was relatively quiet in copying writing and math activities. She stopped a lot during working on her individual assignments and stared outside of the door, which seemed to me liked a daydreaming.

During the drawing event, Danti was distracted by the sight and sound of the musical pedicab passing in front of the Center. Bu Sri seemed to understand the children’s interest and curiosity toward the pedicab’s activity by letting the children running back and forth to the sound
of the pedicab. Bu Sri however tried to engage Danti more in her drawing by sitting next to her and employing an individual scaffolding. In so doing, she made use of Danti’s interest in Dora to add details to her drawing.

Bu Sri: This is Dora? How would you make it nicer? Give it a color. What color is Dora?

What does Dora have? Backpack, right?

Danti: And the map too!

Danti: Dora clap. Funny face. Carry a backpack [singing tune]

SD: Dora clap?

Danti and Bu Sri sing Dora Clap: Dora clap. Funny face. Carry a backpack. We did it. We did it!

D goes outside again and looks for the musical pedicab.

D sings Dora’s clap all over again.

Bu Sri: Danti, what is this? [pointing to cloud’s picture]

Danti: A cloud!

Bu Sri: A cloud. And then rain’s coming. And this?

Danti: Dora’s house.

Bu Sri: Dora’s house. And this?

Danti: That’s Dora [pointing to Dora figure]

Bu Sri: Where’s the bangs, then?

Danti: Here!

Bu Sri: Oh okay, What color is Dora’s cloth?

Danti: Yellow!

Bu Sri: Ok. What does she bring?
Danti: Backpack!
Bu Sri: Backpack. What else?
Danti: A map!
Bu Sri: So where’s the map here? So draw the map. Dora carries a map, right? Draw the map first [But Danti ignores that, she keeps coloring Dora’s bed green].

Cazden (2001) points out that the individual scaffolding strategy involves dyadic interactions in which an adult and a child engage in power sharing. This event is usually marked by adults’ attempts to extend children’s zone of competence, which Vygotsky (1978) deems the “zone of proximal development” that is, the distance between children’s actual competence as evidenced by individual problem solving and the potential development where children are guided by adults or more capable peers.

In this scaffolding event, some strategies employed by Bu Sri were*:

- Asking clarifying questions, “What is this?” These questions were intended to elicit Danti’s interpretation of her drawing.

- Asking evaluative questions, “Where’s the bangs? What does Dora have? What does Dora bring?” These questions demonstrated that Bu Sri knew some features about Dora, yet she needed Danti to elaborate them and then put them in her drawing. Bu Sri’s focus was not on the response’s accuracy – Danti answered that Dora’s shirt is yellow and Bu Sri knew that it was pink – but rather, on Danti’s willingness to get her drawing extended in details.

- Confirming Strategy. Bu Sri repeated Danti’s responses in approval with her. In a way, this functioned as a praising strategy too.

- Instruction, which was delivered to conclude all strategies. “So draw the map. Dora carried a map, right? Draw the map first.” After allowing Danti to draw on all her interpretations, Bu Sri then asked Danti to add a few more details.

* adopted and modified from Cazden (2001)

Although in this case Danti did not follow Bu Sri’s instruction (to draw Dora’s map), the individual scaffolding strategy however had proved to be effective in nailing Danti’s
attention to her individual composing process. Bu Sri’s knowledge about Dora added the depth to the interaction. The fact that Bu Sri and Danti performed Dora Clap together illustrated the use of popular culture in extending children’s interaction with the school practice, in this regard, the drawing event.

**What Does Play Mean for Adults and Children?**

“If it were not for these things, children would not be interested [in coming to school],” Bu Sri pointed to a few toys scattered on the floor. Bu Sri then went on comparing the Center to Bina Baru Preschool deep down in the neighborhood. “There are barely any toys. Kids sit formally. Chairs facing to the front, where the board is hang on the wall. They sit down straight, eyes fixed to the board, arms folded. Just imagine. For kids that young. Parents are waiting outside of the window, because otherwise kids would cry. They’re nervous, not wanting to be left alone. They don’t like [coming to school]. It should be boring [to learn that way]. I don’t mind having my school being called as “hobo’s school” as long as kids have fun. Here, you can see nobody cry [when parents leave them] even since the first day of school. They like it here because of these toys.” (Interview transcript, August 9, 2010)

For Bu Sri, “play” functioned as a distinctive contrast that characterized Pasundan Early Childhood Center that she founded. Bu Sri understood that it was the nature of children to play, in that to introduce young children to what she considered learning activities, children’s learning should be interwoven with play to make learning fun. This interview excerpt revealed that “play in the classroom” implied all activities that involved children’s making use of available “toys” for entertainment purpose. “Toys” in this social activity referred to supplies such as plastic balls, puzzles, construction toys, and picture books. In addition to children-initiated play events which often occured, “play” events were also used by teachers to substitute the learning events. For instance, when Bu Sri had to receive guests from Rainbow, Bu Sri’s instruction “Okay, you can play” usually meant “there is no lesson today. You can take all the toys out but please stay inside.”
Pasundan Early Childhood Center was provided by adults to facilitate children’s learning and “play” activities. The conclusive aim was to introduce children of this street community to “fun” learning activities, which hopefully, could motivate children to participate further in formal schooling. With the demand of basic literacy competence in the first grade however, children’s “play” in the sense of making use of available resources and symbols to take “intellectual and social action” (Dyson, 2003) was confined within the composing drawing activity and was separated from other literacy events. Despite teachers’ attempts to make learning activities “fun,” teachers were helpless when facing the need that children should be able to read, write, and count by the time they graduate from the Center. Teachers’ efforts for children’s mastering basic literacy skills stemmed from their desires to make children from Pasundan community “equal with the rest of children” (personal communication with Yuma and Bu Sri, August 25, 2010).

Amidst such desperations and demands however, children proved themselves to be able to construct a playground in which they brought in diverse resources; be it from home, from televisions, and from cultural narratives available surround them and appropriated them through a composing process. This playground is certainly not sterile from adults’ “gaze,” to borrow from Foucault (1995). In playing with various resources including those from television, children are aware of the boundary and appropriateness within the school social context and therefore, appropriate their constructions of “third space” in the accordance to such constraints. This children’s playground is shared with adults, and children are aware that this one presents them a different set of norms as compared to the other adult-shared “playground” they enact in the street intersection. Being a “gate” to the elementary school system, this “playground” entails a rigid structure aimed to socialize children into a set of “school culture,” while in the intersection,
norms that connect children with schooling (i.e. cleanliness, and appropriate songs to perform) is less visible. Children’s selections of songs to incorporate during drawing process, for instance, demonstrate that children move back and forth between both settings realizing which resources they can appropriate in the classroom and which ones should stay in intersection only.

Pasundan Early Childhood Center’s aim in orienting children toward formal schooling was similar to the goal of street literacy activities I will present in the next chapter. While the nature of interactions in the Center were organized in a way to respect the children so as to develop the idea that learning is “fun,” learning activities organized for eight to fifteen-year-old children working in Pasundan intersection was also centered on the Rainbow Foundation’s notion that learning should be “fun” and rooted in the everyday experiences of children. The fun learning, as I will demonstrate, constituted in the relatively equal interactions between children and their tutors, the contextualized discussion topics, and the relaxed learning atmosphere. Such latitude provided by Rainbow Foundation for children working in Pasundan intersection thus allowed children to exercise their agency in learning using the resources available in the street.
Chapter 6

“Composing” Self in Street Literacy Activities

“Do you want to see the swing that I made?” Andi, eight years old, poked me.

“Yes, sure!” I replied. He took me to the abandoned food cart where the mothers usually got together. A “swing” was attached to two poles next to the cart. It was made of pieces of fabric tied to each other with knots, forming a big pouch roomy enough for a fifteen-year-old to cuddle inside. Next to that, I also saw a smaller sling hanging. The smaller one however, seemed to be unused, as children gathered around the bigger swing, waiting for their turns.

“Now it’s your turn,” a girl said to Andi. Andi got in the swing, and two girls swung him. They swung him back and forth very hard I was worried the swing would break. Children were watching them, laughing, as Andi told the girls to swing harder. The swing turned out to be sturdier than I thought.

“This is so smart!” I told Ina, a fifteen-year-old girl who then helped to swing Andi. “Did you all make this?” I asked her. She nodded and smiled.

A few days later when I visited the intersection the swings were no longer there.

“Our mothers removed it,” Rina, Andi’s sister told me.

“Why?” I asked her.

“When we leave after dark the big boys come and use it for ngelem [sniffing glue]. Our mothers broke it down so the boys wouldn’t come here again. But it’s theirs anyway. The big boys made it [the swing] for ngelem.”

Rina’s statement gave me a whole different perspective on “making.” “Making,” in this regard, was not creating something unique to come into being, but rather, claiming an ownership,
and giving an established material a new function and meaning. In the “making” process, children neutralized the “negative” function associated with the use of swing by the big boys at night and turned it into adult-acceptable form of play. Children’s life in Pasundan intersection was characterized by symbolic making processes. It was here that children, for instance, transformed the activity of mixing black, muddy sewerage water into cooking a sweet banana soup for breaking the Ramadhan fast. On the other day, some boys were seen playing with the dirt using wooden sticks and used plastic water pipes in trying to “make” excavators digging the dirt in the broken sidewalk. Unlike the Pasundan Early Childhood Center in which some of materials for play were facilitated by adults, the Pasundan intersection presented an example where children structured play within what adults considered as a “dangerous” public space. Amidst the potential dangers, children created a composing space for themselves in which they constructed selves, words, and worlds, within the literacy activities organized by Rainbow tutors.

This chapter displays all forms of composing in which the eight-to-fifteen-year-old Pasundan intersection children interwove resources and voices available in the intersection. By “resources and voices,” I refer to materials, popular songs and societal discourse exposed and introduced to them through their interactions with their peers, parents, and the Rainbow staff. In playing with these resources and voices, not only children enact their own way of “composing,” but also they situated their identity construct within the sense of space, time, and moral landscape.

The first section of the chapter discusses how this identity construction is situated within a writing event addressing their future career choice. The second section explores the song “composing” in a workshop organized by the Rainbow Foundation. The third section presents the children’s construction of identity through the discussion of “safe” and “unsafe” places. I
conclude this chapter by analyzing the power sharing between adults and children that have allowed the children’s composing process.

**Composing “Cita-cita” through Writing**

When I was a child, the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” was asked to me by adults almost as often as, “How are you?” and “What grade are you in?” Being an adult right now, I am amazed with how my mother, uncles, and aunts still recall my *cita-cita* - the Indonesian term for the future career choice -- I told them in the past and with how they try to make connections between my childhood *cita-cita* and what I am doing right now. Comments such as, “I knew you dreamed about this profession since you were a child,” or “Do you remember how you wanted to be such and such?” were used to link the present self and the past childhood. I grew up knowing *cita-cita* not only as children’s construction of the imagined future, but also as adults’ “appropriation” of children’s narratives. Adults solicited and compared children’s *cita-cita* to each other – by questions such as, “so and so wants to be this, how about you?” -- and tended to regard them as “cute.” At school we were asked to write essays about *cita-cita*, and shared the *cita-cita* with friends by writing it in each other’s address book. Although the *cita-cita* was fluid – it kept changing over the childhood time – I experienced *cita-cita* not only as related to how one defined self in the schooling trajectory; but also to the way I was socialized by adults into conceptualizing myself and my future.

Reading the Pasundan children’s writings of *cita-cita*, I was reminded that the constructions of future career choices were confined within what was considered “appropriate” within schooling practices. Once attended schooling, a child would be expected by adults in the society to set a high dream career, as the famous Indonesian proverb had noted, “chase your dream to the sky.” This had been to conform what was perceived as the “ideal” purpose of
schooling in the society, which was, a means of a vertical mobility in the society. As my childhood experience informed me, and as these young writers in Pasundan intersection – most of whom were school dropouts -- will present in this chapter, the writing of cita-cita could not be separated from the situated sociocultural context in which the writing process took place.

Western scholars have taken children’s career aspirations and expectations seriously. Auger and Blackhurst (2005) noted that American children’s career choices were becoming more realistic and more socially prestigious as children developed. Children’s perception of their career choices had been viewed as significant in Western culture in that they were perceived to represent self-concepts and cognitive development (Gottfredson, 1981; Wigfield et. al., 2003). Despite the attention to the construction of self that tended to be the focus of analysis, these studies did not take into account the process by which children’s narratives of career choices were constructed in the interaction, especially as the narratives were created at the requests of adults. The narratives children constructed below were situated in a context where not only selves were being projected into future time, but also were constructed socially (Miller et. al, 1990) in their relationships with peers and adults.

**The writing event.** Children’s writings of cita-cita took place as part of a “street tutorial” in which the Rainbow staff provided children in the street with activities to maintain their basic literacy skills. For schooled children in Parung, tutorial activities entailed helping children with homework and other school-related assignments, especially work parents could not provide support due to difficulties such as English and other higher Elementary level subjects. For dropout children in Pasundan intersection, literacy assistance included math, copying writing, and learning to read. The nature of learning reading, writing, and math were similar to the mechanical events that took place in Pasundan Early Childhood Center: children were given
textbooks or problems corresponding to their competence levels. As these competence levels varied depending on how long they had been out from schools, almost every instruction was conducted one on one. In addition to the mechanical literacy instruction, composing writing was conducted once in a while. Rainbow tutors regarded composing writing as significant for facilitating children’s organization of thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, writing helped to maintain penmanship, vocabulary, and reading skills. The organization of a writing event, tutored by Ima, a Rainbow staff member, is presented as follows.

Ima distributes notebooks to around four children who are present in Pasundan street median. The initial plan was going to the lawn of “My Home,” a store located one block from the intersection, where the tutoring activities usually took place, but Ima decided to conduct the writing on the street median as the children had already gathered there. Ima has hoped that more children will participate, but Rina, a fifteen-year-old girl who has been sent by Ima to pick up other children says that they do not want to come. As Ima distributes the notebooks and pencils however, four more children come to join. Those are Idang, Elis, Ina, and Santi.

“What will we do today?” The children ask after all notebooks are distributed.

“You will write about “my cita-cita,” what you want to be when you grow up?” Ima tells them.

“Oh, that’s difficult. How?” the children replies.

“Of course you can do it. It doesn’t have to be long. Just tell a story.”

“A story? Just tell a story?”

“Yes, and put your name on it. Just a story. What you want. Anything you want. What do you want to be?”
Children are staring at their blank papers. They go to big flowerpots and then put their books on the surface of the pots.

“For instance, you want to be a teacher to make others happy,” Ima explains.

“I want to have a car,” Ina comments and then laughs.

“Write, write! Don’t just stare at it [the paper]” Ima tells the children.

Elis and Rina approached Idang who is writing alone.

“For instance. You want to be a doctor [then you write] why you want to be a doctor. So you can help people. You can cure people. Like that,” Ima adds as the children are busy writing.

Idang moved to sit next to Indah who sits on the street median. Elis and Rina follow him and four of them sit on the street median. They write with their notebooks on their laps, except for Elis who put her book and writes on Idang’s back. As they write, they show each other their writings.

“What’s next?” Elis asks Idang.

“Because” Idang replies. Rina and Elis check on Idang’s writing many times. And then, aware that I am coming closer to them, they cover their notebooks by putting them to their chests, then they look at me and smile. Idang then moves to another part of street median. Other children then follow him. When I approach the children, I see Santi, who just came back from school and is still wearing her school uniform, dictates to Elis what to write, “Because you want to” She grabs Elis’ notebook and pencil as if she is about to write something on it, but quickly returns it when she sees me. I leave them for a while and then come back to them. Without them noticing that I am around, I see that Elisa
consults Santi about her writing. Santi seems to not mind helping her. (Observational notes and transcript, October 5, 2010)

I present the original Indonesian text, and the English translations of some samples of children’s writings in Table 6.1 to 6.5 below. In addition, I offer my interpretation of children’s narratives with regard to how they “compose themselves,” that is, how they position themselves in the narratives. For instance, I viewed children’s constructions of cita-cita as a way children projected themselves in the future. I develop a frame of analysis to view self as constructed in time and space. The projected self is what Bruner (1990) refers to the process of self-construction, in that narratives can describe self as becoming “active agent,” or “passive experiencer” (p. 121) in the narrated events. In offering analysis below, I raise questions such as: What messages do the children convey in describing the significance of her or his cita-cita? In doing so, how do they position themselves in relation to others? What rhetorical strategies do children use to invite audience in their narratives? Additionally, I highlight some adjectives and verbs to index the narrators’ positionality. The bold print words provided in tables below represent: 1) the narrators’ descriptions of Self as active agent, and 2) the narrators’ descriptions of the passive others. I present both positionalities in Table 6.6.
### Table 6.1

**Idang’s (Fourteen-year-old, Male) Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cita-cita saya mau jadi pelukis karena saya gemar melukis saya ingin dikagumi orang</td>
<td>My <em>cita-cita</em> is to become an artist because I like to paint I want to be <em>admired</em> by people</td>
<td>The narrator projected the “future self.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semoga saja saya sudah besar</td>
<td>I hope when I grow up I will be a <em>successful</em> artist, amen</td>
<td>The narrator situates himself in relation to others (i.e. the audience of his future artworks).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saya sukses jadi pelukis amin Semoga Allah berkehendak doa kan saya ya.....</td>
<td>May God grant this [wish] Pray for me please...</td>
<td>The narrator invited the readers by using religious voice (i.e. the prayer).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.2

**Indah’s (Fourteen-year-old, Female) Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cita-cita saya ingin menjadi pelukis yang sukses karena aku ingin membuat orang tua saya bangga dan kakek nene saya bangga melihat cucu mereka akhirnya menjadi pelukis yang dikagumi oleh masyarakat</td>
<td>My <em>cita-cita</em> is to become a <em>successful</em> artist because I want to make my parents proud and my grandfather and my grandmother can be proud to see their grandchild be an artist who is <em>admired</em> by people</td>
<td>The narrator projected the “future self.” The narrator saw herself as contributing to family. The narrator positioned herself in relation to larger society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6.3

**Elis’s (Ten-year-old, Female) Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Cita-cita saya mau menjadi Polwan</em></td>
<td>My <em>cita-cita</em> is to become a Police woman</td>
<td>The narrator constructed the “future self” in relation to the social self (contributing to people).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Karena ingin membantu masyarakat dan melindungi masyarakat</em></td>
<td>Because I want to help people and to protect people</td>
<td>The narrator positioned self in relation to the society (protecting people).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Semoga saja saya sukses menjadi Polwan</em></td>
<td>I hope to be a successful Police woman</td>
<td>The narrator included religious voice in order to make the narrative dialogic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amin bila Allah berkehendak</em></td>
<td>Amen, May God grant this [wish]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narrator constructed the “future self” in relation to the social self (contributing to people).

The narrator positioned self in relation to the society (protecting people).

The narrator included religious voice in order to make the narrative dialogic.

### Table 6.4

**Santi’s (Fourteen-year-old, Female) Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Cita-cita saya ingin menjadi dokter karena saya ingin membantu rakyat yang sedang sakit</em></td>
<td>My <em>cita-cita</em> is to become a doctor Because I want to help people who are sick and I want to become a police woman because there are a lot of people who are [suffering] the reality in this world I am sorry for the Indonesian people because many people in Indonesia or other country who are cruel to each other. That is why I want to be a heroine like Our Mother Kartini</td>
<td>The narrator projected the “future self.” The narrator positioned herself in relation to society. The narrator attempted to address the social phenomenon. The narrator made connection with a historical figure (a heroine). This also demonstrated an influence of school literacy learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>aku ingin menjadi pejuang bangsa perempuan seperti Ibu Kartini</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.5

_Ina’s (Fifteen-year-old, Female) Writing_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cita-cita saya ingin menjadi dokter</td>
<td>My cita-cita is to become a doctor</td>
<td>The narrator projected “the future self.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karena saya ingin mengobati orang yang tidak berdaya</td>
<td>Because I want to help people who are helpless</td>
<td>The narrator positioned herself in relation to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebetulnya saya tidak menginginkan hidup di jalan ini</td>
<td>In fact I do not want to live this way</td>
<td>The narrator described herself as “victim,” yet she then shifted her positionality to “active agent” by recognizing her contribution to her family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trus apalagi yang harus saya perbuat selain begini</td>
<td>But what more can I do, I have no choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karena saya hidup begini ingin menghidupi keluarga saya</td>
<td>Because I want to help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terima kasih</td>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Except for Santi who was enrolled in a Middle School, the rest of children had been off from school for three to four years. Santi, in the event, demonstrated her mentorship in writing by showing support and help for her friends. Additionally, her writing showed sophistication evidenced by the interweaving of “academic-type” of vocabularies such as “reality” and “society” – while her friends used the word “people.” Furthermore, her writing contained more detailed features and included empathy toward a larger societal issue, “I am sorry for the Indonesian people because many people in Indonesia or other country who are cruel to each other.”

Idang and Ina were among those who wrote with confidence. During the event, Idang was looked upon by his friends. Friends followed him wherever he went and checked on what he wrote. Ima described Idang as diligent and showing interest in schooling. Among the boys however, he was considered as a social outcast. Boy friends teased him as a “gay” due to the fact that Idang often hung out with girls. While boys in his age started to _ngelem, ngamen_ in group,
or went with buses to ngamen in faraway places, Idang was often seen alone or getting together with girls. Girls saw Idang as a nice, caring friend. They invited Idang to join their conversations. Ina was the only one who wrote alone during the event. Having attended through third grade classroom until around six years ago, Ina was also described by Ima as a diligent girl who showed interest in learning. Ina was among a few girls who took Rainbow’s offer to sign up for a sewing class.

Elis and Indah interacted with Adang when writing their narratives, however, each story demonstrated unique features. For instance, although Indah stated that her cita-cita was to become an artist just like Idang’s career choice, Indah situated her dream in the context of her family’s pride. Elis chosen a female police officer as her cita-cita which was distinctive from the rest of the group. In a context where children found the writing examples from their friends useful to get their ideas flowing, children were still able to express their own voice in the composing process.

The similar features that emerged in all the narratives were the writing structure which shifted from the projected future self to the social self. After indicating the future career choice, children then situated the choice in relation to its contribution to a larger group of people; be it family, “other people,” or society. In so doing children used vocabulary to ascribe a protagonist role to the construction of self -- the role which was also evidenced in Miller’s (1994) study of narratives of working class families in South Baltimore – and to construct vulnerable others as shown in Table 6.6.
Table 6.6

**Vocabulary Depicting Self and Other**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projecting Self as Protagonist</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Describing Others</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>The narrators projected themselves as “protagonist” by describing themselves as wanting to be successful, to be admired, and to help and protect people.</td>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td>The narrators described the “passive others” by presenting them as suffering, sick, and helpless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be admired</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helpless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process of children’s self constructions in this example however should be seen in the light of adult’s organization of the literacy event, especially in the extent to which the children’s narratives responded to the provided narrative of cita-cita which Ima presented at the outset of the event. The example presented in Sundanese, “You want to be a doctor [then you write] why you want to be a doctor. So you can help people. You can cure people,” marked the way the cita-cita narrative was laid out and expected within a literacy event. The example then was interpreted by children as the way an “academic writing” sounded.

Having situated children’s narrative within the tutor’s narratives, I do not intend to imply that children simply lose their voices in by imitating the adult’s voice. Rather, the observed writing event represented how tutor and children negotiate their roles in the composing process, and in so doing, children proved themselves as composers who appropriated the adult’s voice to construct the self within what they perceived as the expected “school type of writing.” The appropriations include the interwoven of religious voice such as “May God grant this wish” and the direct rhetorical strategy to engage an audience in “Pray for me please.” While literacy was
often regarded as marked by the distance constructed between narrator and audience (Ong, 1982), children freely fused the so-called boundary of oral and literacy culture (Ong, 1982) by reducing the distance.

Additionally, children expanded their constructions of cita-cita beyond the example provided by Ima (“You want to be a doctor... So you can cure people. So you can help sick people. Like that”). In so doing children creatively included their reflections of what they viewed as a social phenomenon, and how they could find ways to contribute to larger society. Delving into children’s notions of cita-cita, one needs to see beyond the written narrative in literacy events. The section that follows presents some children’s conception of future career choices, which I managed to obtain through observations and interviews.

*Cita-cita: Beyond the Written Words.*

(Transcript of conversation between me/SD and Siti, September 24, 2010)

SD: What do you want to be when you grow up, Siti?

Siti: A doctor.

SD: That is a great, that’s a noble cita-cita.

Siti nodded.

SD: You know what schools you should take to become a doctor?

Siti stared at me.

SD: First you finish your Elementary School first. And after that?

Siti: Middle school.

SD: Good. And after that?

Siti: High School.

SD: Yes. And then? You go to college, to the medical school.
Siti: Jeez, you will surely get very old by then.

I and everyone in the room laughed.

SD: I know, right? I am old and I’m still studying!

Having returned to second grade after two years of leaving school, Sri, an eleven-year-old, might have thought that she would be able to grab her future dream choice back. The aspiration of cita-cita, guaranteed by formal schooling, was usually constructed by children in conversations surrounding the topic of schooling or during the school-related events. All the identification process these constructions entailed – imagining self as “somebody” who served the community at large -- thus served a part of the emerging identity of being an “educated person” in which the discourse of nationalism was being appropriated in the production of students’ identities as also evidenced in Skinner’s and Holland’s study in Nepal (1996). A closer examination of narratives produced in different context however revealed a different construction as parents and children realized that their access to college, the only means to attain the cita-cita, was restricted.

“Success is if I can send my daughter to college. My daughter is pretty smart [prior to the government’s implementation of free school some years ago, she obtained scholarship to study in the best public Middle School in Bandung], but all we can afford is the vocational High School [laughing] No matter how smart my daughter is, if she can’t go to college, the best job she can get is the low-paid one [when the interview was conducted the daughter worked as a salesperson in a clothing store] If we had money, she would have been in college now.”

The construction of cita-cita in relation to access to public High School and college was also expressed by Bu Sri.

“My daughter [who was fifteen years old when the interview was conducted] said that cita-cita is only for those who can afford college. She was being considerate enough for not pushing us [the parents] to send her to the regular High School. ‘I’d better go to vocational High School Ma, that way I can work once I graduate.’ If she’s asked by her teacher about what her cita-cita is, her answer is none. She knows her limit [laughing].”
Parents’ narratives revealed that the wish to see children to become “somebody,” as pointed out by Mr. B in his speech (see Chapter 4) was also expressed by these low-income families. What the government may not realized was that the low-income families’ limited access to education-driven “upward social mobility” (a change in a person’s social status as a result of obtaining education) was not due to the families’ low motivation, but rather, was due to the failure of educational system. In an attempt to support the implementation of Education for All policy, starting in 2008, the Indonesian government waived the school tuition fee for the first to ninth grade level. While the tuition waiver policy proved to be effective in improving students’ enrolment rate in Elementary and Middle School (Julia, 2010), the policy failed to secure the children’s accesses to regular High School and colleges as desired by parents and children from low-income families. Enrollment in vocational High School, which would open a pathway to low-paid jobs, thus served a survival strategy for these families given the colleges’ expensive tuitions. For most families with dropout children working in the street, the survival strategy was even more realistic. All they needed was an access to factory job openings enabled by a piece of Elementary School diploma, as stated by Emi’s mother (personal communication, October 20, 2010).

Children in Pasundan intersection, with the help of Rainbow staff, tried to set up their plan following their decision to exit the street activities, which usually emerged once children turned fifteen-years-old. The considered plan included taking sewing, cooking, or auto repair classes provided by the government or the communities. Emi, for instance, planned to take a cooking class in hoping to achieve her wish of opening a cookie shop. Ina had also enrolled in a sewing class when she participated in this study with the hope that she would be able to apply for a position in a nearby garment factory once she graduated. All these realistic plans however, did
not embody children’s criteria for the construction of “cita-cita.” While cita-cita was imagined as inhabiting the idealistic world privileged by Indonesian society, children lived their life knowing and realizing what resources they could employ to survive the poverty. The composing event enabled by the literacy practice thus served a gate through which children could construct the imagined cita-cita and further, to see themselves differently.

“I Compose That Song”

I saw Dian (5 years old, one of the Center’s students) in the street median. I waved at her, and she waved back. Along with her, there were three other children talking to each other. When I came near, they approached me and kissed my hand. I asked the names of the Dian’s three friends whom I never met. A girl who appeared to be eight or nine-years-old mentioned her name and then went back to playing her guitar. She seemed so occupied with her guitar playing that I stopped talking and started to listen. I found the guitar playing amazing. She played what sounded to me like a popular song beautifully. I clapped my hands when she finished playing. “Wow, that was great!” The girl just gave me a serious look. “I know that, it’s been a long time.” (Observational note, August 3, 2010)

Most young street musicians whom I met demonstrated the same confidence. Not only could they play musical instruments, they performed and sang popular songs well too. Children started singing in the street as young as three-years-old. Young children under five years old clapped their hands while singing, and the older ones used water bottle filled with coins or some bottle caps attached to a wooden stick. Some children, such as the girl I met above, played guitar to accompany the singing. Children made bottled water or wooden stick musical instruments by themselves, sometimes with the help of older siblings or friends. Children performed the songs
mainly in stopped public minivans. They used to sit down on the minivans’ doorways, as their doors were always opened. After performing one song, children would offer their empty palms or small boxes on which passengers could put in coins. Guitar playing skill was obtained mostly from older peers or siblings through learning by ear. Although parents were present to supervise children’s activities, parents generally did not interfere with children’s guitar learning process.

Songs performed in the street ranged from love songs originally sung by popular bands, boy bands, or singers, which children learned from television shows or radios, to songs circulating in peer circles depicting life in the street. The songs in the latter category resembled a kind of “folk songs” of the street world; they were widely popular but children could not trace where they learned the songs from in the first place. Regarding these songs about the street, Leo, a Rainbow staff member testified, “They probably got them from workshops or activities organized by NGOs like us. But even I know most of the songs, it’s hard to trace who the writer is” (personal communication, October 12, 2010). Songs in the latter category depicted struggles and hard life in the street, or the feeling of inferiority of being a street child. Children identified popular songs from televisions, by including the name of the original singer such as Wali’s (the name of a popular band) song. Popular songs about street were usually recognized by the title.

One of songs about the street was performed in the government-sponsored workshop for “street children” (see Chapter three for detailed information of the event) in which about twenty children, eight to fifteen years old, participated. In the last day of the workshop, children were divided into groups and then were asked to perform and interpret songs of their choices. By “interpret,” Rainbow gave children the opportunity to compose musical arrangement, dance, or movement to correspond to the theme and lyrics of the selected song. The song below, “The
Street Punk Rock,” was chosen and performed by a group of participants. Below is a conversation between me and Eli, a member of the group, about the group’s song.

SD: Whose song is this song? [I was referring to the writer or the original singer of the song].

Eli: Mine.

SD: You mean you wrote the song?

Eli: Yes. I composed that song.

SD: Wow! Can you write the lyrics for me?

[Eli took the notebook and pen that I offered, and then she wrote the lyrics on her notebook while humming the song to herself].

Sungguh menyesal telah mengenal dia I regret meeting her
Dan aku kecewa telah menyayanginya And I regret loving her
Dan aku tak akan mengulanginya And I am not going to see her again
Kusimpan rindu di hati I keep this feeling inside
Gelisah tak menentu berawal dari All this anxiety started when I first met you
Kita bertemu Kau akan kujaga sampai mati I will protect you until I die
Ku ingin tahu siapa namamu I want to know your name
Dan kuingin tahu di mana rumahmu I want to know where you live
Walau sampai akhir hayat ini Until the end of time
Jalan hidup kita berbeda Even if we walk different paths
Aku hanya punk rock jalanan I am just a street punk rock
Yang tak punya harta benda I do not have anything
Dirimu sayang, kutunggu kau kutunggu Darling I will wait for you, wait for you
Kunanti kau kunanti I am hoping, I am hoping
Walau sampai akhir hayat ini Until death do us part
Kukira kau setia padaku I thought you have faith in me
Dan ternyata kau menduakanku And it turns out you left me
Sungguh hatiku tak menduga I can’t believe it

While “punk rock” marked the rock music genre in the 70s that emerged as representing anti-establishment movement and power resistance in United States, the word “punk rock” in Indonesia was commonly associated with the unique fashion style, haircut, and preference to rock music genre adopted from the United States’ “punk rock.” Wallach (2008) notes that
Indonesian “punk” is the underground music movement subgenre participated by low-income students, though in reality local punk groups members vary from middle-class youth to those who cannot afford schooling. Street “punk rock” in this song appeared to refer to poor children dressed and behaved in a “punk rock” way as they occupied the street.

Emi’s claim of the authorship of a popular song resembled her use of the available voices Bakhtin (1981) deemed “dialogism,” in which voice was created upon the voices of others. As no voice was made in vacuum, a reproduction and modification was also entailed in one’s authorship process. As I looked up online sources such as Youtube, I found it was difficult to find the original version of the “Street Punk Rock.” Each lyric of the song that was available online showed a bit of modification, although the message of the song remained. Interestingly, none of the songs that I found mentioned the writer of the song. One version below even stated that the writer was unknown. The added parts, those that are not included in Emi’s version, are printed in bold.

*Sungguh menyesal telah mengenal dia*  
Dan aku kecewa karena menyayanginya  
Dan aku tak akan mengulang kedua kalinya  
Kusimpan rindu di hati  
Gelisah tak menentu berawal dari  
Kita bertemu  
*Ku ingin mengerti betapa aku cinta padamu aku bersumpah kau akan kujaga sampai mati*  
Ku ingin tahu siapa namamu  
Dan ku ingin tahu di mana rumahmu  
Walau sampai akhir hayat ini  
Jalan hidup kita berbeda  
Aku hanya punk rock jalanan  
Yang tak punya harta benda  
Dirimu sayang, kutunggu kau kutunggu  
Kunanti kau kunanti  
Walau sampai akhir hayat ini  
Kukira kau setia padaku

I regret meeting her  
And I regret *because of* loving her  
And I am not going to see her *for the second time*  
I keep this feeling inside  
All this anxiety started when I first met you  
*I want you to know that I love you I swear I will protect you till I die*  
I want to know your name  
I want to know where you live  
Until the end of time  
Even if we walk different paths  
I am just a street punk rock  
I do not have anything  
Darling I will wait for you, wait for you  
I am hoping, I am hoping  
Until death do us part  
I thought you have faith in me  
And it turns out you left me  
I can’t believe it
Dan ternyata kau menduakanku
Sungguh hatiku tak menduga
Kukesal ini kualami perjalanan cinta
Selama dulu Kukira kau bosan padaku
ternyata kau menduakanku
Dulu kau berjanji akan sehidup semati
Dan aku kecewa telah menyayanginya
dan aku takkan mengulang untuk kedua
kalinya ku ingin tahu siapa yang
menyayangimu dan ku ingin tahu
kumenyayanginu sampai akhir hayat ini

I am upset that this love has to end this
way after all we’ve been through
I thought you’re tired with me
But it turns out you leave me for
somebody else
You promised you’d keep your faith in
life and death
And I feel sorry for loving you
There will be no second chance
I want to know who is he and I want you
to know that I am the one who loves you
until I die

Juxtaposing both versions, Emi’s version was apparently shorter in length. In indicating
her role as “composer,” Emi extended her identity beyond merely performing the song in the
street. Having noted this Emi appeared to suggest that performing songs in the street could not be
taken as a simple task. This task included composing musical arrangement to go harmonically
with the song (Emi played guitar which she learnt by ear), and an emotional engagement she
needed to demonstrate to audiences. In the same workshop, Leo, the Rainbow tutor, performed
some songs known to be street “folk songs.” Circulated as songs written by “anonymous” like
the “Street Punk Rock,” the songs also portrayed the struggles and reflections of living in the
street. Leo also told me that many songs had been performed differently in the street. They had
been modified and appropriated anywhere, and the song reproductions and recreations were
boundless. In the street, the notion of song’s “authorship” appeared to be absent as performing
songs, as presented by Emi and her friends in the workshop, always demanded a new, creative
way, could be referred to as “composing.”

On Being a Good Child: Composing Self in a Sense of Space

Despite being prohibited by Indonesian government to use the public space due to its
“dangerous” potentials, children managed to construct boundaries of “safe place” in order to find
their space in public sphere. By appropriating the conception of “safety,” children offered their
agency in providing a “solution” (Beazley, 2002) in responding to the issue of public space safety, which was viewed by the government as a “problem.” The discussion of safe versus unsafe places below was organized by Rainbow in the “street children” workshop. Aiming at exploring children’s awareness of the safety issue, the discussion allowed children to develop a group’s opinion from individual’s account. Children were expected to write down the group’s list of safe and unsafe places on a paper. Each group then was asked to attach the list on the board and present it to the class. Led by a tutor, the class then summarized the discussion and collaboratively wrote a new list based on what had been formulated in the group. The class list was as follows.

Table 6.7

The Class List of “Safe” and “Unsafe” Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe Places</th>
<th>Unsafe Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow office</td>
<td>Wholesale market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersection</td>
<td>Highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Exit</td>
<td>Telaga Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police station</td>
<td>The Planet (a discotheque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food stall</td>
<td>Sarinah (a prostitution center)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Headquarter”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet café</td>
<td>Train station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play station place</td>
<td>Bus terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My Home” store</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public toilet</td>
<td>Town square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gas station</td>
<td>Jatinangor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My neighborhood (the environment around my house)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main criteria for a “safe” place appeared to be familiarity. Most of the places categorized as “safe” were those surrounding their neighborhood which they frequently visited to hang out, work, and play. The frequent visits seemed to develop children’s connection and trust to the place and adults within the space. The Rainbow office in this regard met the criteria of
space with which children developed such trust. The play station place, in which children could rent computers for online games or play station was also regarded as “safe.” On the other hand, the presence of gang members, transvestites, or older boys involved in criminal conducts or unexpected behaviors such as ngelem, constituted an “unsafe” place. Girls indicated unsafe places as those where older boys or men “nudged and poked” them. Although friendly physical touches were accepted within the peer circle, poking and touching by strangers with teasing purpose was considered “rude.” Additionally, far away places – such as Jakarta, Jatinangor -- that children rarely visited were considered to be “unsafe.” Places such as the discotheque, Sarinah prostitution center were known to be occupied by adults who organized themselves in gangs (i.e the bodyguards) who were in charge of maintaining the places’ security. Places such as the bus terminal and bus station were also famous for the occupation of gangs consisting of “the big boys” – those who work and live in the street separately from families.

The identification of safe and unsafe places represented children’s construction of self and group identity. Children considered unsafe places as those not belonging to their groups. Davies (2008) indicated that by identifying a space as “safe,” street children marked the boundary between their private and public space. For children who did not live with families, a safe place could serve as a “home” and thus should be marked differently from another group’s home (Naterer & Godina, 2000).

The discussion in which my participants were involved revealed that children used a moral construct as a spatial boundary. As their parents also indicated in chapter three, an unsafe place was associated with “unaccepted” street norms such as ngelem, prostitution, violence, and other criminal conducts. In claiming their use of public space children constructed themselves as “good children,” as opposed to other “bad” group of children or adults in other places.
The Power Relationship Surrounding the Composing Process

“It takes a long process. We can’t say [to parents] like ‘Hey, you have to stop your kids from going to the street!’ It’s not like that. We can’t do anything with their poverty either” (Personal Communication with Arif, September 29, 2010).

“You have to be able to gain the trust [from parents] first. Just go along with them, listen to what they say, just follow them. Do not oppose or criticize. Once they trust you, they will listen to you. But be considerate with your advice. You do not instruct them what to do, you can’t. Be their friends, and they will listen. That’s how I got accepted in Parung community. It took me years” (personal communication with Rudi, June 15, 2010).

Being aware of their role as the government’s and the international funding organizations’ hand in “educating” children working in the street, the Rainbow staff decided to take the process-oriented approach in persuading the street communities to stop sending children to the street. Although the government tended to prefer the abolishing approaches such as the street children roundup or “cleansing operation” (Beazley, 2002) and the Children Social Welfare Program -- which distributed educational grants to street families with a condition that they have to withdraw their children from the street -- the Rainbow staff perceived that the attempts to change the families’ beliefs, although might take a long time, would be more effective if done little by little. In enacting this approach, the Rainbow staff seemed to be very careful in exercising their power over children and their families. My observations revealed that they tended to play their roles as big brothers or sisters of the children rather than those of parental figures.

The composing events the children participated in thus were situated within the flexible, “permeable curricular” demand (Dyson, 1993), and a relatively equal power sharing between children and their tutors. In trying to ensure that children were engaged with the instructional content, tutors seemed to make sure that they included children’s daily experiences and understanding toward the street life. Additionally, tutors let children play with jokes, and include
creative interpretations in responding to the tutors’ teaching. My observational note below demonstrates children’s play with a homonym when they were asked to brainstorm their responses to the definition of “ache” in a Health subject discussion.

Tutor: What is this thing we call “ache”?

Odi: Headache!

Umar: Heartbroken [the homonym of “heart disease”]!

Emi: Concussion!

Santi: Ache is what makes us weak.

Odi: Ache is what makes us feel like giving up.

Emi: Malnutrition!

Odi: A pain for breaking up with a girl! [the homonym of “heart disease”]

Umar: A pain because you’re too poor you can’t buy food! [a creative interpretation of “heart disease”]

Emi: Marasmus [swollen belly disease, as a result to malnutrition]!

[The tutor wrote all the responses on the board].

Odi: Ache is what makes us sad.

Samsul: Ache is what makes us hungry.

Dodi: Ache because of a girl.

Tutor: Is that all?

Odi: Ache can make us want to commit suicide.

Tutor: How do we get sick? [keep writing on the board].

Emi: We don’t take care of ourselves.

Dodi: We don’t have enough blood [referring to anemia].
Odi: Because we don’t have money.

Emi: Because we don’t get enough healthy food.

Santi: Because we don’t eat regularly.

Indah: Not enough vitamins.

Tutor: Where do we go [to get treatment] if we’re sick?

Idang : Health clinic, pharmacy.

Odi, Umar [interchangeably]: Traditional healer, psychic, hospital, teachers, ustaz

[Islamic spiritual teacher].

[Tutor wrote responses on the board].

The tutor gave children a space for creative responses and children’s play with the homonym of “heart disease.” In Indonesian language, brokenhearted was also referred to as sakit hati or heart disease. In the excerpt above, not only did children creatively play with the homonym of “heart disease” in their brainstormed responses, they also provided traditional healing as a response for the healing method solicited by the tutor. Having mentioned the traditional healing, it did not mean that children were not aware that it was an unexpected response in the situated literacy context – later, the tutor suggested to children that they should prefer modern medical treatment over the traditional healing as the latter was seen as “too risky.” Rather, by playing with their responses children exercised their power in an adult-controlled literacy event.

Another example of children’s play with a homonym also emerged when children were asked to write down their impression (kesan) and feedback for future events (pesan) in the last day of the workshop. Instead of writing down their feedback for the organization of the
workshop, some children listed “grilled chicken,” “fried chicken,” and “rice” as they took the other meaning of *pesan*, which was “[taking] order.”

In response to children’s creative play with words, the Rainbow staffs just smiled. “You can’t be too hard on them. Otherwise, they would stop coming,” (Rudi, personal communication). Just like how a “playground” was organized by adults in the Pasundan Early Childhood Center, a permeable space was also provided by tutors to invite children’s interests and participations in literacy learning. Both in Pasundan Early Childhood Center in “street children” literacy activities and workshop, this permeability was created by a classroom social structure that allowed the interweaving the interpretation of social texts with learning, as was also evidenced in Dyson’s study in a Bay area classroom (1993). In turn, this permeability enabled children to laugh over, and to make a “parody” (Bakthin, 1981) of, a literacy text, which in this regard, was represented by the discourse of Health Education. In the next chapter I discuss the interactional structure and classroom discourse in public school classrooms in which one of the children participated in, to see if the latitude was also provided for children who work in the street.
Chapter 7

Reproduction of Shame: Negotiating “Caring” in Formal Classrooms

“I always wanted to hug and put them on my lap. They look dirty and dusty but kids everywhere are cute. Did you see that three-year-old girl? Oh, how I wanted to wipe her face but I didn’t have any tissue in my hand.”

The orphanage lady recalled her passionate affection when she visited a group of children working in an intersection of one of Bandung streets. She admitted that when talking to them she realized that they were no different from children in general. “They are funny, talkative, like to laugh, and they remind me of my own children.” The sympathy toward “street children” usually was expressed by street users as they compared them to the majority of Indonesian children who lived a “typical” life. Adults found the sight of babies carried by adults, toddlers running around the cars, and young street musicians in the street disturbing because they idealized children as being raised in the safe zone of home or school. Adults appropriate their role as society members by demonstrating their sense of caring for children they perceived as “abandoned.” The enactment of this caring thus varied according to adults’ access to resources and power relation they appropriate in interacting with children who work in the street.

This chapter discusses how the sense of caring is enacted and negotiated within the institution called formal schooling, and demonstrates how this enactment figures into the power relations between teachers and students in the classrooms. By “formal schooling,” I refer to educational institutions organized and sponsored by the Indonesian government as part of the implementation of Education for All policy. In this chapter I include two Public School classrooms, the first grade classroom in Bima Elementary School participated in by some children who work in Pasundan intersection, and a Special Service Class (SSC) designed to accommodate drop out children who decide to return to school. Siti, an eleven years old street
musician in Pasundan intersection, participated in the Special Service Class along with some other children who worked in other intersections. In delving into caring, I pay attention to what adults perceived as caring for children who work in the street and its enactments in the classroom, which entailed the use of language and the message conveyed to children.

First, in order to provide a context for how the Indonesian society conceptualizes caring toward children in the street, I present how the orphanage ladies, Rainbow staffs, and survey respondents perceive of the government’s intention and enactment of caring. I then display how parents, children, and teachers in Bima Elementary School and Cimandi Elementary School conceptualize teacher caring. Next, I demonstrate how teachers in both schools perceive their caring in cultivating children’s self-esteem, and to conclude, I situate the teachers’ caring in what they view as incorporating children’s experience in “culturally responsive” way of teaching.

**The Society’s Conceptions of the Government’s Caring**

Being a researcher who was affiliated with an educational institution in United States and studying Indonesian street children, I was often asked by my participants – neighbors, orphanage ladies, Rainbow staff, teachers -- about how the US government handled the issue of children in the street. My typical response was telling them that the issue of “street children” in the US was not usually linked to poverty. What had been considered as “abandoned” poor children were those the government considered “homeless children,” – those living with family yet had to move from place to place due to poverty. Then I shared with them a little information that I knew that US government did take some steps to deal with the considered “abandoned” children, some of which included providing shelters and foster homes. Additionally, I explained that the so-called homeless children were not usually visible in the US streets.
I found that my description of the US context was often used by participants as a means with which the Indonesian government’s intervention and intention in eradicating poverty was evaluated. My explanation was usually responded to by groans such as, “When can our government be like that?” One of the orphanage ladies and Rudi referred to the 1945 Constitution of Republic Indonesia article 34 that “the poor and destitute children shall be cared for by the State” to demonstrate how the current Indonesian government had been being ignorant for disobeying what had been established by the founding fathers. The orphanage lady added that if the Indonesian government managed to better organize the country’s natural resources they could have eradicated the poverty more effectively. “We could have been a more developed country and assisted those children better if the money were not corrupted by the government officials. There are no street children present in developed countries, because their governments are much more efficient” (personal communication, August 4, 2010). She went on wondering if the sights of children wandering in the street had not invoked the government officials to think deeply and sympathetically to assist those disadvantaged children.

Rudi and other Rainbow staff – as I have discussed further in Chapter 4 -- expressed concerns specifically related to how the policies toward the “street children” was efficiently implemented. Besides the corruption issue, Rudi highlighted the decentralization that shifted authorities to local government in implementing the central government’s policy, which had obscured the central government’s good intention undergirding the policy formulation. Confusion that had affected the effectiveness of the policy included the selection of the NGO involved in policy implementation and the Governor’s instruction that privileged some areas to be assisted by the policy over others. “The government intention in implementing this policy is
not genuine. They don’t really know the field, they don’t really care about these children” (personal communication with Rudi, August 6, 2010).

Along those lines, some survey respondents expressed similar concerns. Two responses underlined the government’s responsibility in applying the Indonesian Constitution article 34. “The government should have taken care and employed any possible attempts and allocated funding to deal with street children issue.” Of eighty-seven extended responses from three questions of the questionnaire, twenty responses explicitly mentioned the “government” as the institutionalized party responsible for organizing interventions toward the presence of children in the street. As one of the orphanage ladies commented, the presence of children itself should be marked by the government as a main concern. “As long as people could see children in the street, there’s no proof that the government had taken any serious effort. In a developed country this has been handled seriously by the government so no children are in the street” (personal communication August 4, 2010). All these perceptions appeared to demonstrate that it was the children’s obvious presence in the street that had evoked the society’s emotion toward children and poverty. The disturbing sight of children in public spaces such as the street had been regarded by the Indonesian society as a proof of the government’s lack of caring toward children of poor families.

**Teachers Caring**

SD: Siti, which school do you like better, this one or the old one [the last school she attended before quitting three years ago].

Siti: This one.

SD: Why?

Siti: The teacher.
SD: The teacher is nice? Mrs. Y is nice, right?
Siti nodded.
SD: How is the teacher in your old school?
Siti: She’s mean.
SD: Why?
Siti: She liked to pull the ear.

(Transcript of my interview with Siti, September 24, 2010)

Children associated teacher’s caring with a nice attitude, which was, the exclusion of physical punishment in the classroom. For instance, children in the Pasundan intersection liked the Rainbow tutors because they were nice and friendly. Below I present the teachers’ care for students in the parents’ eyes and in the context of the nature and purpose of educational practice where teachers are situated.

The parents’ views of teacher caring. Regarding the teachers’ attitude in formal classroom, Bu Mamik of Parung whose son went to a local Public Elementary School shared with me her son’s (Rony) experience with a teacher.

So one day Rony didn’t do his homework for Islamic study. There were six other children too [who didn’t do homework]. And the teacher said, “Those who did not do homework, do your homework outside [of classroom]”…[Before coming out of classroom] Rony told his teacher, “What’s the school for if I do my homework outside?” And then he, followed by his six friends, went out of school [laughing] They go to Hikmah Mosque [about one mile from school] and did their homework there and didn’t come back to school that day…The next day the teacher called me to school. Thank God! [making a frown face] First, I was left speechless, what can I do? The blame is on my son. Then I told the teacher. ‘Sir, you are well educated. My son is just an Elementary kid, and he’s a boy. If you teach him in a harsh way like that, then what difference could you make from what a mother could do at home? If you keep treating him like that, then fine, I’ll teach him myself. I want him to see a good example, so he can learn a good behavior, of how to behave well. He will copy the way you speak. Is that what you complained to me just now, that my son was rude? I want him to change, that’s why I sent him here,’ That’s what I told him.”
Aside from setting a good example for children in terms of behavior, Bu Mamik also considered that teacher’s “caring” entailed supervision and control over children’s behavior during the whole school time.

“It was when Imi (Tony’s older brother) was still in Elementary school. He’s bullied by his friends during recess. His bag was being thrown around and my son was really mad. Teachers saw that, but you know what they did? Nothing, they’re too busy with their lunch. It was one of Imi’s friend who told me. I came to school and told teachers. I said, “How come you only teach and are not caring for the kids?”

Bu Mamik made a bold distinction between “teaching” and “caring.” Her opinion implied that teaching was transferring knowledge transfer in order to make children understand. “Caring,” on the other hand, was paying attention to and being responsible for children’s morals and attitude at school. Bu Mamik’s confidence in protesting teachers served as an unusual example of parent participants’ attitude in responding to issues their children encountered in schools. In handling teasing or insults in schools, some Pasundan children preferred simply quit school, as I have discussed in Chapter 3. The Pasundan parents however did not explicitly frame their children’s quitting school as related to teachers’ lack of caring. Rina’s mother acknowledged that after Rina quit from school, her teacher tried to persuade Rina to return to school, which Rina’s mother perceived as a “nice attempt” (see Chapter 3). A teacher’s “caring” in relation to sensitivity and empathy toward children’s economic circumstances was also brought up by Bu Nina. According to her, Mrs. P, her children’s first grade teacher, was nice, and never treated her children differently from the rest of students. Additionally, Bu Mamik recalled one of her daughter’s former teachers in her previous Middle School who did not only teach, but also gave encouragement to her daughter.

“My daughter did not want to go to school for four days because she’s embarrassed with her old, ragged shoes. Her home classroom teacher came to visit us [to see why her daughter missed school] He said, ‘You should go to school no matter what. Even if you
have to walk. It’s for your own future, you have to struggle.’ And then he bought her a pair of shoes.”

This demonstrated that parents expected teachers to express “caring,” which entailed supervision over students’ moral conducts as well as attentions to students’ individual needs and family’s background. Along those lines, the next section will present teachers’ constructions of “caring” toward students who work in the street.

**Teachers’ voices and the context of public school learning.** Teachers’ understandings of students’ family circumstances were demonstrated by Mrs. P, a first grade teacher in Bima Elementary School, a public school where some of Pasundan intersection children participated. Mrs. P shared me her impression of Emi’s little brother, her former student, who was at that time a second grader.

“They [children who work in the street] are smart. I feel sorry to see them. [That is why] after receiving my payroll I bought them each a notebook. And that’s all they have for the rest of the year. [And one day he told me] ‘Teacher, I’m done with my writing.’ [I told him] ‘Let me see your hand.’ [The fingers are] so black. Then I cut his nails as we talk. It was like. ‘What does your mom do?’ [He said] ‘Nothing. That’s why I work.’ [And then I asked him] ‘What do you use your money for?’ [He answered] ‘For my snack money. I don’t want to burden my mom.’ It’s so sad. Unfortunately I did not have any chance to do the home visit. You know, they keep moving.”

Like the Middle School teacher Bu Mamik told me above, Mrs. P also provided encouragement and paid attention to children’s future. Mrs. P felt that her responsibility extended beyond her teaching routine, as she also transferred moral values in personal communication with Emi’s little brother.

“I’m worried about circumstances in the street, you know, with big boys ngelem and everything, it can give these little kids bad influences. I told him [Emi’s brother], ‘I’ll ask you one thing. Don’t ngelem. What do you want to be when you grow up?’ And he said he want to be a doctor. ‘If you want to be a doctor then ngelem is a big no. [If you ngelem] then if you die your grave will get struck by a lightning, and then you will turn into a pocong [a type of ghost], and you will neither go to hereafter or back to earth, you will have no place to go. Say, if you get your body tattooed, it will make it hard for you
to get a job. You won’t be given a job as a security guard or janitor because of your tattoo.’ That’s how I showed him the way” (Interview transcript, October 8, 2010).

Mrs. P believed that it was important to speak “nicely” to her young students so as to have her voice heard. Speaking “nicely” in this regard entailed not yelling, speaking gently, and incorporating stories in a way Mrs. P thought children would like. The belief that storytelling served as the best way to convey values stemmed from Mrs. P’s childhood experience with her own first grade teacher.

“With the first graders, you have to embed advice and moral values in stories. Because that’s what my first grader teacher did to me. My teacher had sharp tongue, but I always remember what she said because she conveyed morals through stories…Young children always listen to their teachers better than to their mothers [laughing].” (Personal communication, October 8, 2010)

By “stories,” Mrs. P appeared to refer to folk superstitions and ghost stories as the one she quoted above. Stories involving a ghost were aimed to evoke children’s emotions. Adults believed that ghosts were creatures that children feared the most. Ghost stories shared by adults with young child audience were also evidenced in Yuma’s and Bu Sri’s interaction with students in Pasundan Early Childhood Center (see Chapter 5). In this instance, a folk superstitious story was told by Mrs. P to make children aware of the bad influence lurking in the street. Having incorporated various stories into her “didactic” narratives, Mrs. P believed that it could strengthen the emotional bond between her and children who work in the street.

“That’s how I maintain a close relationship with my students. They told me like, ‘Teacher, I don’t have much money,’ Then I told them, ‘Don’t be sad. You’ll eventually get it. Or they say, ‘Teacher, I only got a thousand today.’ Then I’ll try to cheer them up.” (Interview transcript October 8, 2010)

While Mrs. P framed “caring” within a communicative strategy of using stories to convey values, Mrs. Y, the teacher in Special Service Class in Cimandi Elementary School used the term “showing affection” in describing “caring” for her students.
“It takes a lot of patience. For example, the multiplication by two. It took a long time for them to understand. Very slow. Asking for an excuse [asking teacher to reduce the number of assignments or problems], that gives me a headache. So I need to adjust to their competence. I can’t follow the standard [set by the national curricula]. The speed of instruction is unpredictable. Sometimes they can be fast sometimes they can be very slow. A lot of repetitions. Sometimes I have to coax kids to stay. Otherwise, for instance, they would ask permission to go to the restroom and wouldn’t come back for the day. So that’s how. We teachers have to show them affection, a lot of affection, in order for them to stay.” (October 25, 2010)

While both Mrs. Y and Mrs. P dealt with students’ poverty issues, Mrs. Y specifically highlighted the students’ underperformance, which she considered as presenting a distinctive challenge given her students’ long absence from formal school prior to participating in her class. Although teaching students older than the average classmates’ ages (some were enrolled in first grade at eight or nine years old) in Bima Elementary School, Mrs. P did not specifically have to deal with returning students as Mrs. Y did.

Given the distinctive challenge, “caring” in Mrs. Y’s situation included providing latitude to students in terms of time and approach to learning. Caring also entailed an understanding that the situation of children working in the street was unique, thus they deserved teacher’s attention and patience. Teacher’s “patience” in this instance spoke to the cultural context of teacher and student relationship in Indonesia. Whereas students’ talk back to teachers’ instructions and demands was considered inappropriate and disrespectful, Mrs. Y’s students appeals to reduce the assignments and problems was considered as “testing teacher’s patience” (personal communication, October 25, 2010). Mrs. Y’s coaxing the student to stay in the classroom was also viewed as teacher’s courtesy as it was given beyond teachers’ typical roles in Indonesia. Table 7.1 below portrays how teachers perceived of their care for children who work in the street.
Table 7.1

*Teachers’ Enactments of Caring in the Classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing resources to students</td>
<td>• Buying students school supplies (notebook, uniform, shoes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lending students textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing affections through communicative features</td>
<td>• Incorporating stories in order to convey moral values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Speaking in gentle and nice manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiating conversations about children’s personal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using affectionate gestures (hugging, clipping the nails while having conversation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing latitude for students’ learning</td>
<td>• Personalized instructions to meet children’s competence level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Incorporating children’s daily experiences in teaching practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quoting Nodding, Valenzuela (1999) put emphasis on caring in classroom practices on teachers’ roles in initiating relation with students, which further could extend teachers’ pedagogical tasks to include the mutual bond of respect, trust, and openness with students. In this regard the approach in classrooms was expected and idealized by both teachers and parents as they wished to develop students’ interests in schooling. In so doing, the teachers hoped that the approach was responded to by students with acceptance, in a way Valenzuela framed as “students’ willingness to reveal the essential self” (p. 21). The section below reveals how teachers viewed students’ signs of confidence and openness in the classroom as a result of their caring approaches. The section also describes Mrs. Y’s perception of how caring was thought to give a negative impact to children working in the street if given too much.

**Teachers’ Perspectives of “Caring” in Relation to Student’s Self-Esteem**

“Siti is a diligent student. At the first days she was here, she barely smiled. And then we showed her affection, you know, like greeted her like, ‘Show me your smile, Siti,’ or hugging her, until she seemed comfortable [being in the classroom]. Now she changes a lot. She reveals her real self. Now she’s the one who hug my head [touching the head of someone older was not considered respectful in Indonesian culture].” (Personal communication, October 25, 2010)
Teachers in Special Service Classroom expressed “caring” or affections in order to maintain students’ enrolment in school. Being out from schools for years, teachers considered these returning students easily distracted, “For instance, if it’s raining they looked bored and wanted to go home, saying like, ‘Teacher, it’s raining!’” (personal communication, October 25, 2010). Taking the role of nice and caring teachers, thus, served the part of attempting of making the learning process enjoyable. In this regard, teacher caring was seen as contributing to increasing students’ self-esteem in school. “It’s important that they feel confident, especially as they have to interact with more children in regular classroom someday” (personal communication with Mrs. Y, October 25, 2010).

For Mrs. P, students’ confidence in the classroom was also characterized by their willingness in initiating conversation with teachers.

“They started to be open to me. For instance, this Isan [Emi’s brother]. He asked me like, ‘Teacher, you just bought a batik cloth? How much?’ Then I said twenty-five thousands. He said, ‘Ah, that’s little with my money.’ [I said] You earn your own money, right? [in a praising tone]. I also like when they asked me question [when they don’t understand], like in addition, subtraction. That means they’re no longer shy” (October 8, 2010)

Within the relationship with adults, self-esteem was defined as children’s comfort level in talking to teachers. In the context where teachers were considered respected figures, children’s initiating talk with teachers in Indonesian Public Schools was not seen as common, and yet it was appreciated in the context of teachers’ relations with children who work in the street. On the other hand, teacher’s perception of children’s self esteem in social relations presented another dimension. Within the relationship with classmates from the regular classrooms, teachers in Special Service Class admitted that they were still struggling to develop their students’ “self-esteem” or confidence that they were “no difference” from those students in regular classrooms.

“It’s difficult, you know. Like one day in Maulid [a holiday to commemorate the birthday of Prophet Mohammad] celebration, we mixed these students with those from the regular
classroom. We gave them uniforms so they don’t look different. For regular classroom students this is a good chance to learn to accept them. For SSC’s students this is important so they can feel confidence. But I think it takes a long time.” (personal communication with Mrs. Y, October 25, 2010)

Mrs. Y realized that despite their efforts to develop students’ self-esteem by developing a caring approach to students, a deeper sense of inferiority complicated students’ socialization process in the regular classrooms. Self-esteem in relation to children’s socialization with others thus came into play in two dimensions, which I categorize as children’s relationship with adults and with friends. As teacher caring had proven to develop children’s self esteem in relation to adults in Special Service Class, it did not prepare children to move and interact with teachers and students in regular classrooms.

This confirmed the Ministry’s social worker’s testimony (as I have addressed in Chapter 3) that some children who work in Parung street intersection also experienced inferiority once they were transferred from Special Service Class to a regular class. In Cimandi Elementary School, children’s attachment to the nice and caring teachers in Special Service Class presented another concern. The Cimandi principal pointed out that,

“Our main problem is that some children insisted on staying in the Special Service Class. This is not possible because the government requires that after six months children need to be transferred to a regular class so the Special class can accommodate more incoming, returning students. There are some students who were retained in Special class after six month because teachers thought they’re not ready, but there’s this one student who really didn’t want to be transferred [to regular class], and we couldn’t do anything with him.” (personal communication, October 27, 2010)

With regard to children’s hesitation to move to the regular class, Mrs. Y linked that to the affections teachers had provided them, as demonstrated in her statement.

“I think it’s because we give them too much affection. Our affection and care is too much to these students that it gives student a negative impact. They don’t want to be in regular class because they say teachers there are not nice. [They said]’Ah, those teachers are mean. Well I thought the teachers in regular class are not mean, they’re just normal. But because children are used to being spoiled by us, they see other teachers [who are more
straightforward] as mean. So this is our responsibility to get them ready academically and mentally. There will be more students in regular class, so children would not get as much attention as they used to get here.” (Personal communication, October 25, 2010)

Regular classrooms in Cimandi Elementary School and Bima Elementary School represented the typical classroom in urban Indonesian Public Schools. About thirty to forty students were assigned in each classroom. One homeroom teacher was in charge of each classroom and was responsible for teaching all subjects excluding Physical Education and Religious Studies. In grade one to three, subject matters included Indonesian Language, Sundanese Language, Math, Natural Science, and Social Science. Grade four to six learned similar subjects except that they had specialized teachers to teach subjects such as Math, Natural, and Social Sciences. With regard to the school duration, first to third grades learnt for two and a half to three hours a day. Fourth to sixth graders, on the other hand, attended school for an average of five hours daily. Given the class size and responsibility the regular classroom teachers -- especially those teaching the advanced elementary grades -- had to deal with the attitude and approach of the Special Service teachers they regarded as “caring,” could be considered as atypical, and even considered by Mrs. Y as “too much.”

The concern of “too much caring” which was viewed as presenting students with negative impact however was not experienced by Mrs. P in her regular classroom in Bima School. While I did not delve further into the issue of children’s reluctance to engage with friends and teachers by investigating the advanced Elementary grades in Bima – as the children who worked in the street were not reported to be found in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade in Bima -- Mrs. P’s students openness in interacting with classmates might be due to the fact that they never experienced dropping out from school previously.
The Enactment of Caring in the “Culturally Responsive” Instructions

Mrs. P’s first grade classroom in Bima Elementary School was subjected to the implementation of the government’s thematic curriculum intended for first to third grade classrooms. By “thematic,” the curriculum should be organized around macro themes, which then would be explored when discussing the basic subjects such as math, language, social, civic education, and life science. Mrs. P explained about this “thematic curriculum” when I asked her about her class schedule. “No, we do not have a fixed schedule because according to the new curriculum, first to third grades now have to implement the thematic curriculum. So the schedule can change everyday.” I did not understand the relevance of “the absence of the class schedule” with the thematic curriculum until I came back the next day. It appeared that Mrs. P interpreted “thematic curriculum” as simply random instruction as no theme was used to structure the instruction. Having no schedule, Mrs. P shifted from one subject to another once children accomplished their assignments.

Shifts between subjects were often marked by the use of the blackboard as Mrs. P delivered class lectures. In math, for instance, Mrs. P explained the lesson by modeling steps to solve math problems in the blackboard and then assigned the children to do some problems in the math textbook. Indonesian language, civic education, social, and life science instruction were basically organized to follow the textbooks as well. The nature of instruction was generally similar: individual assignment would follow the class lecture.

In Mrs. Y’s Special Service Class, the nature of learning tended to be more personalized. Mrs. Y and two other teachers, Mrs. A and Mrs. B, divided students in the classroom into three groups proportionally. Mrs. Y was in charge with teaching a group of seven first graders. Mrs. A taught five of second and third graders, and Mrs. B taught five of fourth and fifth graders. Being
a second grader, Siti learnt with Mrs. A. All teachers taught all subjects, ranging from Indonesian language, math, Civic Education, social, and life science. Islamic Study and Physical Education were taught by other teachers. Similar to the organization of Mrs. P’s class, the teachers in SSC did not follow a fixed schedule. During two hours of instruction, each teacher usually managed to teach two subjects each day. First graders in Mrs. Y group used to do the same assignments, while each student in the other groups was provided with one-on-one assistance in doing the problems in their textbooks. Given the variety of the grade level – there was only one or two students in two to fifth grade -- the nature of instruction in Mrs. A’s and Mrs. B’s group tended to resemble private tutoring.

Mrs. P and Mrs. Y acknowledged that they did their best in incorporating students’ background and experiences in classroom learning, a discourse they admitted to be obtained from the government-sponsored teacher development trainings. I found the idea of “incorporating students’ experiences” endorsed by the Basic Competence Curriculum (which was also justified by the 2003 National Education Law article 23) adopted the spirit of “Funds of knowledge” (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that started to gain popularity in Indonesia (Idros, 2006).

“I know that it is part of the Basic Competence [Basic Competence Curriculum was the title of the most current Indonesian National Curricula that promoted a culturally responsive education] that you have to adjust teaching to children’s backgrounds. It’s like, children can’t afford the workbooks here, so no workbooks are used here. I made them by myself. It’s okay. Then, what children experience everyday, you have to include that [in teaching]. Like, ‘how long do you ngamen everyday?’ [in teaching about clock in math], or about parents’ jobs [in teaching Indonesian language], ‘How many of you whose parents are civil servants?’ Nobody raised their hands. [Then I asked] ‘How many of you whose parents work as the tofu sellers?’ A few raised their hands. ‘How many of you whose parents work as the tofu packers?’ Many raised their hands [laughing]. It was like that!”
What Mrs. P was trying to describe was the class structure her students’ parents could be categorized into. Although some of civil servant jobs were low-paid, they attained the respected social status because the government paid a small amount of pension after the retirement. Workers in tofu home industries definitely were given status lower than the civil servants, and yet within the industry there were hierarchies according to the income and the complexity of the work. Not only did the tofu packers earn the least income in the industry, they did not possess bikes such as those owned by the sellers, which in this regard, symbolized the family’s economic capital. In presenting the examples of how she included the parents’ jobs in teaching, Mrs. P also demonstrated her awareness of the significance of incorporating students’ family background in her teaching.

My observational note revealed that Mrs. P included street intersection and neighborhoods in which her students lived when she discussed about directions. During the discussion, she asked children to identify the places and sites that were familiar to them. Along these lines, Mrs. Y also agreed that it was important to recognize children’s personal experience and incorporated it into the classroom teaching. Mrs. Y additionally noted that she felt the need to teach her students, particularly, about the risk of early marriage, based on what she perceived regarding the sexual behavior of the poor families.

“For example I have a student whose mother was just born in 1987 but she has eight children! The children are really slow but because they’re diligent they eventually can read... You know these people. You have to teach them since when they are very young so they can be very careful with sex [that she viewed as resulting in young marriage]. Because these kids seem to understand about what sex is. It looks like they are sexually mature, they know this thing. Maybe because they live in a house with no separated bedrooms, so everyone [children and parents] just sleeps in one room, so, you know. It seems like once they reach puberty they want to marry.” (Personal communication, October 8, 2010)
Mrs. Y’s assumption regarding the sexual attitude of children of poor families lied within the cultural beliefs of Indonesian society that tended to view sexual activities as taboo. Parents were not used to talk about sex to children openly, and children, particularly prior to the age of puberty, were regarded as innocent with regard to sex-related issues. In his analysis of Ruby Payne’s description of poverty, Bomer et. al. (2008) recognized that sexual-related behavior had served as a cultural feature with which the people living in poverty compensate their lack of wealth. While Ruby Payne’s stereotype was centered on the poor women’s use of sexual ways to accentuate parts of body as the characteristic of poverty, Mrs. Y’s claim highlighted the lack of parental awareness in controlling their children’s knowledge and behavior related to sex in poor families. What lied between both judgments was the existence of the middle-class standard in evaluating how sex should be approached and handled by the poor families. Mrs. Y’s intention to influence her students’ attitudes and beliefs through what she considered “incorporating students’ background” demonstrated how school was viewed as a means of transforming children from the moral deprivation often associated with the “culture of poverty,” as also pointed out by Ladson-Billings (1994/2009).

The teachers’ attempts to transform students’ values and behaviors took place within their expressions of caring. Mrs. P and Mrs. Y realized that in order to get students to listen to them, they needed to reach them out. “I treated them like my own children,” Mrs. Y and Mrs. P pointed out. In reaching out, they addressed them sayang (honey), bageur (good boy/girl), or geulis (pretty). They also include the terms in an angry tone when they lost the patience in teaching them, as evidenced in the interaction between Mrs. A and Siti below.

Mrs. A asked Siti to write s-a-s-a-p-u-p-u.
Siti writes “p” on top of the notebook’s line. Mrs. A tells Siti that the p’s feet should be crossing the line.

Mrs. A: Not on top of the line, it’s crossing the underline, Siti honey! [in angry tone, while erasing Siti’s “p” with eraser].

A moment later, Mrs. A complained that Siti was careless.

Mrs. A: Don’t be in a rush! You’re careless! [still in angry tone].

However, then Mrs. A is mad again because she thinks Siti is too slow.

Mrs. A: Why are you so slow, pretty Siti? Arrgh! [in a high, angry tone].

Mrs. A often lost her patience in assisting Siti especially when the SSC was scheduled in the afternoon, after her regular class was finished. She complained to Siti that she was tired. “I lost my voice for teaching since morning, and now I have to teach you. Oh please, think, Siti!” After complaining Mrs. A seemed to give up teaching Siti, who was at that time solving an addition problem. “I don’t care anymore, now you do it yourself!” She went outside, leaving Siti who did not seem to be offended. During Mrs. A’s absence in classroom, Siti chatted and laughed with her friends.

Mrs. A’s unstable emotion however did not influence Siti’s enthusiasm in attending school. Even though Mrs. A was caught pulling her ear, pinching her, or slapping Siti with a book, Siti comfortably asked questions, and initiated conversations with Mrs. A. Siti seemed to belief that although being mad at her, Mrs. A was a nice person after all. One day, Siti’s wrong answer to a life science question in her textbook invited Mrs. A’s laugh. Mrs. A poked the book on Siti’s head while laughing out loud, and then asked herself, “Ah, why do children have to learn about this difficult stuff these days?”
Although teachers talked to students in harsh voice and high tones, and often gave physical punishments such as pinching, slapping students with a book, or pulling ear in front of classmates, the frustrations seemed to be directed to the conditions that enabled the class tension. Responsibilities in teaching the regular class, children’s absences from schools that teachers perceived as allowing the learning difficulties, perceptions, parents’ ignorance of their children’s learning, poverty, the high-stakes test that the children should take in sixth grade in order to earn the formal school diploma, were among a few that complicated their good intentions of educating the children of the poor. In interviews the SSC teachers revealed how they loved the students dearly and how they wished to witness them to achieve a better future. Mrs. Y. Mrs. A, and Mrs. B were not paid for teaching the SSC class, so their contributions -- which ranged from looking for interested students in slums, persuading parents to allow their children to return to school, to teaching -- were completely voluntary works.

In appropriating the “mother role,” the SSC teachers provoked children’s emotion to get them to listen to or to obey the teachers, such as by giving physical punishment, arising students’ shame – for instance, by saying, “If you keep skipping school, you will be left behind. All your classmates would have been able to read. Shame on you” – or expressing direct appraisal (“You are so slow,” or “You are careless”). Straightforward advice was also often delivered when teachers addressed what they perceived as students’ bad habits. One of habits that Mrs. Y often addressed was cleanliness. One day, the first question Mrs. Y asked students before starting the lesson was, “Did you take a bath this morning?” to which children replied, “Yes!” Mrs. Y then added, “Always remember to take a bath before coming to school.” With regard to taking a bath, Mrs. P in Bima School also questioned a student, “Why are you so stinky? Did you take a bath?” When the student said yes, Mrs. P replied, “Make sure you take a bath three times a day.”
Another habit often brought up was the thought that parents had sold books the school provided children. One day Mrs. Y asked a student about the new notebook she just gave him, “Where is your book? Is it sold again? I told you, it’s not to be sold!” Mrs. Y then turned to me and said, “I hate this habit of selling books” (Observational note, October 28, 2010).

Despite all these harsh words and treatments, parents and students I mentioned above still considered Mrs. P, Mrs. Y, and other SSC teachers nice, as compared to teachers in other regular schools or previous schools. “Being nice” in this regard entailed accepting and caring about students’ personal situations, and expressing sympathy about them. For Mrs. Y and other teachers in SSC, being strict to students would help students’ transitions to regular classrooms, where children would be socialized into interacting with more peers and “stricter” teachers. Although teachers’ harsh attitudes to students often represented their frustration toward the challenges in SSC, teachers acknowledged that they used strictness to keep a balance so that the cultivated children’s self-esteem in SSC would not present children with “psychological vulnerabilities” (Miller, Wang, Sandel, and Cho, 2002) that could curtail children’s socialization into the regular classrooms.

In recognizing students’ cultural practices, teachers perceived as “incorporating students’ experiences” however, teachers did it in a critical manner. By assuming students’ bath habits and suspecting parents for selling the notebooks, teachers established their moral authority in building their assumptions of poor children’s and their family’s cultural practices. Although teachers expressed their good intentions and caring, the messages delivered to students through questions and scolding could otherwise reproduce children’s insecurity and shame. Despite their attempts to adjust to and to conform to school culture (as I have demonstrated in Chapter 5, poor families take school seriously and really emphasize that children should take a bath before
coming to school), children were categorized with the “street attributes” such as stinky, slow, careless, and tricky (for secretly selling the notebooks). In so doing, teachers reproduced the dominant ideology that marginalizes children who work in the street within the school practice.

The teachers’ attempts to recognize and incorporate the students’ experiences were directed toward the interpretation of “culturally responsive teaching” implied in 2003 Indonesian National Education Law article 23. Gay (2000) defines that culturally responsive teaching as including “personal caring, mutual aid and assistance, use of cultural anchors and mediators in instruction, and creating a sense of community among students and teachers” (p. 13). I propose that personal caring and teachers’ intention to address students’ daily experiences in the classroom is far from sufficient to create a mutual respect and trust in which students and teachers can constitute a conducive environment for learning. The expression of caring in this regard did not create a mutual respect, but rather, reproduced the operation of power that marginalized children if the dominant ideology embedded in the caring enactment was not to be deconstructed.
Chapter 8

Redefining “Street Children’s” Learning and Societal Responsibility in the Intersection

Summary and Directions

“It’s not that I do not want to work. I’ve tried. I have electronic repairing skills, and I’m willing to take any jobs. I’ve tried [to apply] jobs in factories, security jobs, nobody wants to accept me because of my tattoo. I regret for what I’ve done in the past, but people still see me as bad. I don’t blame them though.”

Having spent his youth in the street, Danti’s father finds himself struggling to convince the potential employers of his true capabilities. The tattoo in his arm stamps him with a “street identity” that can never be erased, as Bu Sri and Mrs. P advised the children (see description in Chapter 5 and 7). The dominant perception is that tattoo indexes that one has committed crimes and thus may not be trustworthy. While not working on electronic repairing orders, Danti’s father works as a street musician in Pasundan intersection. He really wishes to step out of the street life, but his rejection from the job market seems to have trapped him in a never-ending cycle of poverty.

Danti’s fathers’ reflection on his experience in the job market suggests that an “invisible hand” has worked in constituting poverty. The invisible hand extends beyond one’s limited exposure to educational experience or lack of access to the distribution of capital. In this chapter, I refer to the “invisible hand” as the societal discourse that has operated to construct the ways that the society views the norms, attitudes, and practices of families living in urban poverty. The societal discourse serves as one of the themes that concludes the construction of narratives about the life in the intersection and the narratives that are produced by children and adults who live, work, and participate in intersection activities in this study. As a qualitative researcher, I do not intend to look at the causal relationships that relate the societal discourse and other variables.
such as poverty or “street children’s” enrolment in school. Rather, as I present in this concluding chapter, this study tries to understand the complexity of how this discourse may figure into the power relationship the society constructs in interacting with children who work in the street, and then to see how the complexity may inform my participants’ constructions and experience of schooling and learning. Furthermore, in presenting the discourse, I do not aim to disregard the empathy and good intentions expressed by the society through individual, and collective charity acts, as well as through the government’s intervention in order to assist these underserved children. My intention is to unpack the discourse undergirding the enactment of “caring” as it is expressed by the government, and the society members interacting with children in the street, which in this study are represented by teachers and the orphanage ladies.

I summarize the findings of this study by, first, presenting the ideology of caring as an example of how power operates in producing knowledge about poverty and in constructing identity within poor families. I then discuss the Islamic belief, as an instance of discourse the Indonesian society uses in perpetuating beliefs regarding poverty, and then summarize how literacy is enacted in the observed events and how children exercise agency across literacy settings. Next, I present how my identity and role as researcher may situate the participants’ responses, which I find significant in informing the findings. To conclude this chapter I discuss the contributions of this study to the theoretical framework, and then present the limitation of this study and some directions for further studies. To follow the directions, I also propose some reflections for “street children’s” literacy learning practice, and then bring this summary back to the notion of the intersection that organizes the whole study.
Taking Care of the “Children of the Society”

According to Valencia (2010), one of elements that characterizes deficit thinking is “victim blaming,” that is, associating students’ poor schooling performance with their alleged cognitive and motivational deficits. I find the deficit-thinking notion useful in summarizing the societal beliefs toward the street community’s attitudes and decisions that prefer working in the street over participation in schooling. The community’s parenting practice has become a space where the rest of society intervenes and takes over. Children work in the street are "cared for” as the children of the society. By addressing the “rights” and the “needs” of these children, state agencies and the society appropriate “child care” through the enactment of laws, policies, and practices in ways that subject children to state control.

State institutions however could not be seen as exercising the highest control in the power hierarchy of caring toward these underserved children. The state control embodies the international pressure and the universally accepted conception of childhood formulated through – to name a few – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or UNCRC (Fink, 2004) and the International Convention of Child Labor. White (1994) points out that such pressure exists in various forms of economic sanction and boycott in order to threaten developing countries into ratifying the international conventions of child labor and rights. Hence, the so-called street children in developing countries are under the gaze of the international society through discursive practices that Foucault (Rabinow, 1984) considers “disciplinary techniques” consisting of institutionalized regulations, administrative measures, scientific statements, as well as societal perceptions embedded in the interactions with them.

The stereotyped perception that views children in the street as representing homogenous, singular cultural practice has even in some ways informed the dominant society’s charity
activities. Some middle-class communities are hesitant to allocate donations to these “street children” because of the popular notion that they are being “controlled” by authoritative adults. Some people are also worried that children would spend the money for “pragmatic” purposes such as buying glue for *ngelem* and playing video games in rented computer kiosks. Even prior to the enactment of the government’s policy that discourages money giving directly to these children, some people tended to be more comfortable in giving donations to Muslim institutions-organized orphanages.

“How can we be sure that our donations would change the behavior and the mindset of those wild kids in the street? With donating money to Muslim orphanages, it’s clear that our money will help those kids with their schools and things they need. Besides, the kids there are in good hands” (personal communication with one of the orphanage ladies, August 1, 2010)

The deficit perception toward the attitude of the poor families demonstrates the power that operates in perpetuating the complicated cycle of poverty. Power is also enacted within the street communities for instance, in the way that Parung community members consider themselves better than Pasundan members in that they look cleaner and have more children who go to school (as I have displayed in Chapter 4), or within the Pasundan community – such as in that children who do not *ngelem* regard themselves as better than those who do. This confirms Foucauldian point of view of discourse that discourse is not imposed by the powerful other to those who are powerless. Rather, the discursive practice, that is the way the discourse is enacted in the society, involves the powerful’s and the powerless’ negotiation of agency in producing and reproducing knowledge and perceptions about an object (Rabinow, 1984). The object here is the conceptualization of the attitude and practice of childcare and poverty, which the society has used to create the “bad others.” In so doing the discourse enacts the way the society distinguishes themselves and thus, construct their own identity as better human beings. By reproducing the
discourse of childcare, not only the dominant society evaluates the parental practices of the poor families, but they also marginalize the poor families by creating a way of perceiving themselves. Poor families’ othering using the discourse of childcare thus represents a means of enacting the discourse and at the same time, resisting it. This also serves as a way the street community gains control within a societal context where they are marginalized.

**Negotiating the Religious Discourse**

To begin with, I present my reflection note which I wrote after one of my visits in Pasundan neighborhood in Ramadhan month.

Ramadhan passes in Pasundan in a different rhythm. Adults are fasting, and children learn to fast, even in the intersection older children insist on fasting although they keep walking around under the sun. While the grocery stores and malls are packed with people shopping for the Eid festive, in Pasundan however people’s tension seems to be getting high. Bu Sri told me parents abuse their children more during Ramadhan. Some parents followed her around asking if they can borrow the school’s money to cover the *mudik* (traveling to hometown to celebrate Eid with extended families) expenses. Parents complained they would not able to celebrate Eid because they do not have money to buy new clothes for the children, or beef to eat on Eid day. Some students in the Center came to school looking sad and unusually quiet during the school day due to the tension and the parental fighting they witnessed at home. “Don’t be overboard,” preached an *ulama* in television I happened to watch one day, “Eid is not a superficial celebration. What is important is what we spiritually achieve through fasting.” In televisions, newspaper, and Ramadhan evening prayers, *ulamas* preach about the need for spiritual exercise through fasting. They said that we develop spiritually by limiting our attachments to food and
other physical materials in order to gain control of passions and bad desires. Ramadhan thus is idealized as a moment of spiritual and emotional purification, a sacred moment where human beings should contemplate in order to better deal with the challenges in life.

Here, in Pasundan, it takes one a lot to “purify one’s heart.” People outside Pasundan may talk about spiritual purification when they do not need to worry about new clothes to wear or nice food to eat on Eid Day. “Don’t be overboard,” one could tell the Pasundan people. I could have easily told myself and my children that Eid is not all about new clothes and good food. Yet when I asked Bu Sri about what she thought of what Eid meant for Pasundan people, her answer broke my heart. “Of course it means everything. Eid is the only time of the year where kids can get to wear nice clothes and to get together with their cousins and extended families. Imagine when all your families are there in the village and you’re the only one who’s not there then people would think that you’re not successful in town.”

That made me realize that Eid serves the Pasundan community a symbolic participation in society’s religious and cultural practice. Wearing new clothes and participating in mudik travelling provides the community one of a few means in which they can associate themselves with the rest of Muslims across the nation. By participating in Eid celebration the way the rest of society members do, the street community try to attain their identity as Muslim. Additionally, through mudik travelling, the community wishes to obtain the successful identity of the urban migrants and proves it to their family in the village.

Being embraced by 88.2 % percent of Indonesian population, Islam serves a significant discourse embedded in the society’s way of thinking. It is through the Islamic discourse that the
Pasundan community practice is disvalued (“If you send your kids to the street, you’ll be asked about your responsibilities in the hereafter” as one of the orphanage ladies said, or “If you *ngelem*, then your spirit will neither go to the hereafter or back to the earth,” as the teacher said to a child). Parents also use the Islamic discourse to conceptualize a good parenting practice. Some mothers idealize education in Islamic boarding school for boys and send their sons to Quran recitation class in the afternoon after returning from street activities (see explanation in Chapter 4). Although struggling with daily needs, parents usually keep Muslim outfits for their children to wear on special occasions such as Eid celebration or Fridays at school, or the afternoon Quran recitation class participated in by most of the Early Childhood Center’s students.

Even though spending almost the whole day in the street and thus having missed the obligatory afternoon prayers – many Indonesian Muslims would not do – parents and children try hard to maintain their Islamic faith. For instance, they are aware that their poverty may be taken by the Christian missionary groups as an advantage for “imposing” Christianity to them. “Today they bring you food, tomorrow they will teach your children, and then they will bring kids to their shelter, and next, you’ll feel guilty if you don’t convert into Christian,” Bu Sri told me one day (personal communication, September 24, 2010). Bu Sri added that she had to be careful when bringing in “White” (“White” or *bule* commonly applied to all foreigners including Japanese donators who visited the Center previously) visitors to Pasundan neighborhood. “I had to always explain that the donation is not for the missionary or conversion purpose. Otherwise, the residents would not accept.” Due to the common notion that the minority Christians, Catholics, or Chinese-Indonesian are wealthier, residents are aware that their poverty could serve them as a reason for losing Islam to another religion as a result of charity acts conducted by non-
Muslims. In this regard, conversion to other religions is seen as the biggest sin one can commit. Those who converted from Islam are usually subjected to community gossip.

Other practices that are considered as against the Islamic laws such as skipping the obligatory prayers, drinking alcohol, not fasting, and other practices that are not “visible” in the public sphere, are taken as private matters and not to be discussed openly. Thus getting a tattoo, given its visibility, somehow is seen as a sign of disobedience to Islamic practice – tattoo is one of factors that explains why the ablution for obligatory prayers is considered not valid because it blocks water from fully penetrating the skin pores -- which can give the owner consequences such as rejection in the job market.

This shows that although the street communities are struggling in practicing Islam according the to idealized norms (i.e. conducting the prayer five times in a day, and fasting the whole month in Ramadhan), the Muslim identity is being taken seriously. To conclude, I argue that Islamic discourse plays a significant role in the ways the street community are being othered by the dominant society – for instance, by being considered as not being a good Muslim for sending children to the street – and the ways the street community distinguishes themselves from other members of the community – such as criticizing other children who were bad-behaving and then comparing them to own children who were about to be sent to Islamic boarding school. Being a “good Muslim” – as conceptualized by the society -- has been a challenge for the street community due to their activities in the street, but they strive to maintain their identity as Muslims.

**Literacy, Power, and Children’s Agency**

I summarize the literacy-related findings by finding patterns that connect the enactment of literacy in three literacy settings: the Pasundan Early Childhood Center, street literacy...
activities, and formal classrooms. I categorize the discussion into two themes, which are; 1) the meaning of literacy and the exercise of power in the local context of Pasundan, and 2) the larger curricular context that situates literacy practices.

**Power relations and literacy practices.** All literacy practices and events organized for children who work in the street that were observed in this study were geared toward maintaining children’s enrollment in formal schooling. For the Indonesian government, children’s enrollment in schooling would represent the government’s attempts in improving the national literacy rate, in a paradigm Street (1984) would deem the “autonomous literacy”, that is, the decontextualized literacy practices as demonstrated by the mechanical reading, math, copying reading, as I have explained in Chapter 5 and 7. For the community, children’s enrollment entails a pragmatic purpose, that is, to obtain the graduation diploma which further allows children access to the job market. In developing children’s interest in learning, the community, NGO, and teachers create an environment that is “enjoyable” for children while also accommodating the government’s curricular expectation centered on the high-stakes national examination. In so doing teachers and tutors pay attention to students’ everyday experiences and try to address them in order to make teaching relevant to students. Additionally, teachers and tutors express their caring by developing personal relationships with students.

Adults’ organizations of learning leave a limited space for a meaning-making process, yet, as evident in Pasundan Early Childhood Center and the street literacy event, children manage to interweave various forms of peer play to create an imaginary world of their own in composing (writing and drawing) events. As children enter the formal classroom however, the emphasis on the high-stakes test preparation is getting more apparent as teachers structure the learning activities around worksheet assignments. With the tensions constituted by the curricular
demand, the number of students, and teachers’ limited knowledge of the students’ background, the formal classrooms resemble a tight space in which children are subjected to teachers’ exercise of power and emotional frustrations. While some teachers noted that the “tough approaches” to students were intentionally used to help students to adjust to the “reality” of Public School settings, teachers’ impulsive emotional reactions toward children’s performance in classrooms were too apparent to ignore. In this regard, the NGO tutors’ testimony about students’ nervousness as they proceeded from Special Service Class to regular class should be taken into account in exploring the possibility that teachers’ attitudes – both in Special Service Class and regular class -- may somehow figure into why students could not manage to stay in formal schooling for the expected length.

The fact that school cannot retain children longer also demonstrates formal schooling’s failure in serving the means of vertical mobility, as pointed out by Willis (1977). In this respect, children’s engagement in school may not only be confined by the unaffordable High School’s tuition, but be also by the power relations in formal classrooms that have marginalized “street children” in certain ways as well as the decontextualized subject matter as I will explain below.

**Learning to survive.** The following transcript is taken from my interview with Bu Nina’s first daughter (ND), who was fifteen years old. Yuma, a Rainbow staff, was also present.

ND: I got my diploma, I passed the [Elementary School] equivalency exam. Now I will look for a job.

SD: Oh, it’s good that you passed.

Yuma: She got help. We helped her. Usually we provide help [to children who took equivalency exams]. Otherwise it would be impossible for them [to pass]. It’s too difficult.
By “help,” Yuma was referring to assistance given to children in doing the exam. The tutors were present next to the children, and then they helped the children in finding the answer, or dictated the answers to them. The assistance was provided because the exam was seen as beyond the competence of the dropped out children who work in the street whom the Rainbow Foundation assisted. Having received some months of tutorial as the exam preparation, Bu Nina’s daughter still considered exam too difficult for her.

Examining children’s understanding in five subject areas: Indonesian language, Math, Social Science, and Natural Science, the equivalency exam Bu Nina’s daughter took was similar to those taken by all other sixth grade students in private and public schools throughout the country. The exam questions were written by the National Ministry of Education, and then were distributed to all schools. It serves as the only means through which children’s graduation from six years of Elementary School is decided upon. The exam questions are generally decontextualized and most questions in the five subject areas consist of multiple choices questions intended to test student’s knowledge through data or information recall. Prior to the exam date, students prepare themselves through memorizing facts, formulas, and information. Students from middle-class and upper families usually manage to get additional help by participating in after-school test-preparation private tutoring courses.

Despite being criticized as too decontextualized and ignoring the cultural diversity as well as social economic status gap that marked the Indonesian students population (Driana, 2009), the Indonesian government insisted on using the centralized national exam as the only instrument for students’ graduation (Kompas daily, May 17, 2010). The decision definitely has ignored complaints expressed by teachers, especially those teaching students in underprivileged areas. A critique that the national exam was not relevant to the lived experience of students in
various places in Indonesia was also expressed by a friend of mine who lived and taught in a
Middle School in a remote village in the southern part of West Java province.

“For example, in the Civic Education text book there is a discussion about [the political] rally. My students [who never had a chance to even go to the nearby city] cannot relate to it, and it is hard for us, teachers, to explain it to them because their vocabularies are not like those the city kids have and they rarely watch news on TV. So when this thing comes up in the national exam, along with other foreign issues [children never experience in real life] for example, in Social and Natural science, we help them by giving them the answers. Otherwise the whole school would fail. It’s impossible [for them to deal with exam without any help]” (personal communication, September 8, 2010).

The whole high-stakes test oriented education has not only challenged children marginalized from economic resources and educational facilities in urban, rural, or other remote areas in Indonesia. More specifically, it has situated teachers in complicated moral dilemmas. Teachers feel that they have betrayed the moral integrity they taught their students by initiating the cheating. On the other hand, while teachers realize that formal schooling has provided the only means for marginalized students to deal with poverty, they see no possibilities for students to survive the school graduation system without participating in the “systemic cheating mechanism.” By the “systemic cheating,” I intend to note that these teachers’ “helping” students in the national exam tend to occur extensively throughout the country and are reported widely in the media (Kompas Daily, April 21, 2009) as they often also involve local government officials, parents, and school administrators. The society’s anxiety toward the enactment of the national exam demonstrates that instead of empowering children and the rest of society (Freire, 1970), the present education system reproduces an oppression in which members of the society are contributing to the oppression in some ways and are being oppressed at the same time.

Participants’ disengagement from school thus can be understood within the complicated picture of the education system in Indonesia. Fini’s complaint, “I do not fit in school” (as I have presented in Chapter 4) and some children’s decisions to quit school by the time they reach forth
or fifth grade may relate to the sense of diffidence children may acquire as the grade level gets higher and as national exam in sixth grade is approaching. Children from poor families may come to school feeling helpless and stupid as they are exposed more to subject matters that are decontextualized and detached from their lived experiences. Children’s lack of confidence in learning has also been one of issues expressed by Bu Sri in the Pasundan Early Childhood Center. “It’s easy for children to say, “I can’t. It’s like they don’t have confidence in learning.”

Being asked to teach students in the Center a few times myself, I observed that children acclaimed, “I can’t” or “It’s difficult,” every time they were given assignment related to composing activities such as drawing, and copying writing. However, I also found that in Cimandi and Bima Elementary Schools, older children responded in the same way when asked to work on worksheets. Somehow, the diffident attitudes unfortunately were interpreted by teachers as children’s “low motivation” as evidenced in Mrs. Y remark. “They are easily distracted and also easy to give up. That’s why we keep coaxing them and giving them motivation.”

Therefore the burden goes to the teachers. In addition to the obligation of preparing students for the exit national exam, teachers are also assigned the challenging task of raising children’s confidence in learning. Teachers were encouraged to incorporate students’ background into teaching (as I have discussed in Chapter 7), yet the centralized national exit exam that served as the main aim for elementary education was far from being “culturally relevant.” Within this circumstance, children’s low performance and their teacher perceived “disinterest” in learning, however, were never seen as a result of the decontextualized curricula and the high-stakes-oriented teaching. Instead, the “low-motivation” was associated with what the teachers viewed as a “street children’s culture,” embedded in perceptions such as “because they know how it feels to work for money, they lost interest in learning,” as stated by Mrs. Y. I
found Mrs. Y’s account of children’s low motivation too simplistic when compared to the hope for schooling children expressed in my interviews with them. It appears that children keep their beliefs of schooling and are lacking confidence, as evidenced in their low performances and hesitance to return to school. For the children who dropped out, financial constraints may have limited their access to schooling in the past. Yet, even after the school tuition waiver policy was recently launched by the government for elementary and middle schools, the attempt to reach out to “street children” and engage them in schooling seemed meaningless without total education reform, which would include, to name a few, societal ideology deconstruction, the establishment of culturally-relevant educational assessment, and culturally respectful teaching.

**Researcher’s Role and Participants’ Resistance**

Being a qualitative researcher I believe that my identity and my role inform the way my participants responded to and interacted with me. Some Pasundan neighborhood parents’ denial about their activities in the street – for instance, by lying that they ever went to the street or by secretly going to an intersection far away from Pasundan area -- and appropriation in responding to my questions related to schooling – by enthusiastically explaining their efforts in supporting children’s schooling while the Rainbow staff members testified differently – demonstrate their awareness of the discourse they perceive as inhabiting in me. Additionally, their appropriation of responses indicated how they negotiated their identity in relationship to me, that is, they tended to construct an “adequation” (Bucholtz, 2009; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) by conforming to what they perceived as my belief regarding children working in the street. The appropriation of responses shows that participating in street activity tends to be handled with shame, and parents appear to conceal it from outsiders, especially those they view as representing the middle-class society.
With respect to children’s responses to my identity and roles, although children were generally nice, open, spontaneous, and enjoyed conversing with me, they demonstrated reluctance when asked questions related to experience with schooling. Silence, long pauses, hesitant gaze, smiles or brief unelaborated answers marked their resistance in talking about schooling. While my fieldwork duration did not allow me to investigate such questions through a different approach, their resistance tends to imply that they were hesitant to share their unpleasant experiences in schooling. My questions therefore set a distance among the children and me. It seems as if the issue of schooling has associated me with the other authoritative figures trying to exercise control over their life.

**Contributions to Theory and Previous Studies**

In this section I relate the summary of findings of this study to the ongoing conversations of theory of childhood, a sociocultural view of development, and sociocultural literacy studies.

**Theory of childhood and children’s sociocultural development.** The findings of this study conform to the contemporary childhood theory in that childhood is not singular (James and Prout, 1990), but rather, is shaped by the cultural practices and beliefs into which children are socialized. Even within this socialization process, childhood cannot be viewed as an empty space waiting to be filled by adults’ values. Children construct their own culture by internalizing surrounding values, exercising agency, and in the process they actively construct their identities by associating with and distinguishing themselves from others. In the process that Gaskins, Miller and Corsaro (1992) deem “interpretive development framework,” the children’s work in the street show what it means to “participate” in street activities, which, as I have presented through findings in previous chapters, entails social control and collective responsibilities children share within the street community. Children protecting each other, children taking
responsibility for their family’s poverty by willingly offering their contributions in earning to the family income -- these are among some of the ways that constitute children’s participation in the community’s cultural practices. In developing a sense of responsibility in this cultural participation, children do not only adopt moral values expected by parents, teachers, and NGO tutors. Rather, they also create moral boundaries with which to protect themselves from what adults consider the “potential dangers” of street life.

This is where the intersection is constructed. What children and the street community perceive as the way of participating and protecting childhood is not what has been considered by the rest of Indonesian society as the “expected childhood.” Through policies, interventions, and the formulation of “children’s rights,” the government, international agencies – as represented by for instance, institutions such as the United Nations institutions like UNICEF and ILO – the society attempts to impose schooling as the way of protecting childhood and the only means children can participate in “developing” and maintaining the dignity of the nation state. The intersection complicates the notion that children develop through participating in cultural practice (Rogoff, 2002). The contesting discourse of participation versus protection in the case of children who work in the street shows how the participation of underprivileged children has been challenged by the dominant society.

**Children’s constructions of self through narratives and literacy.** Looking closely at children’s production of narratives through drawing and writing, we can define literacy as a way to mediate children’s construction of self in a “school-like” domain. Through literacy, children project themselves as entering into the realm of schooling, a space which they imagine as ruled by certain linguistic conventions and discourse. Being aware of such discourse, children present themselves in a way that they view as acceptable by tutors, teachers, and other possible
audiences – which can be other Rainbow staffs, or me, the researcher. The school-like activity has marked the presence of a “literacy sponsor” (Brandt, 1999) which characterizes the aim, the structure, and the organization of literacy practices in Pasundan.

Given its distinctive nature, children’s presentations of selves in this study show a different pattern from the narratives produced by Indonesian street children, such as those displayed in Berman’s study (2000) in which children describe how they position themselves when experiencing violence at home and in the street. In another study, Beazley (2002) explains how children talk openly about their experiences in dealing with crimes and how they survive in the street. Those typical “street narratives” as presented in previous studies are not apparent in this study. Instead, through creating stories children demonstrate themselves as symbolic meaning-makers by interweaving popular resources such as television shows, popular songs, and the community’s superstitions which relates to children’s “play” with literacy in the United Stated Bay Area (Dyson, 1997, 2003). Additionally, children use writing and drawing to establish their identity as a friend, a student, and a family member.

The whole distinctive presentation does not suggest that children in this study do not experience violence and abuse at home and in the street. Rather, children’s constructions of narratives show the way the children interpret, and select part of their stories to be presented in order to conform to the aim and the nature of literacy event. In so doing children negotiate the situated identity (Bruner, 1990; Wortham, 2001), that is, the emergent identity constructed in a situated relationship. In the intersection where diverse voices are dialogized and contested, children are aware of how to situate, appropriate, and contextualize their voices. In so doing children demonstrate their communicative competence (Hymes, 2001) that entails children’s
understanding and awareness of the contexts and the audience of literacy events they participate in.

Other than serving as a means of establishing children’s connections to their sociocultural domain through the interweaving of popular culture (i.e., superstitions, television shows, and street folk songs) as well as relationship with peers and adults, literacy functions as a way through which children attain the identity of the “educated person” (Levinson & Holland, 2007), in that one’s experience with formal schooling activities, or possession of reading and writing skill, along with other attributes associated with “school culture” (i.e., the habit of cleanliness as well as snack money) would determine children’s status in social relationships, as evidenced in the rough relationship between the dropout Pasundan children and the schooled Parung children.

Additionally, the findings of this study added to the discussion of children’s socialization of shame and self-esteem through narratives (Fung, 1999; Miller, Wang, Sandel, and Cho, 2002). Through adults’ conceptualization of “caring,” the caregiver, in this regard the teachers specifically, use narratives to balance the children’s shame and self-esteem in order to help children survive the heterogeneous formal classroom setting in which children will eventually participate in. The narratives are embedded in teachers’ transfers of moral beliefs intended to teach children how to behave well in the street. In addition, parents and NGO tutors actively guard children’s moral boundaries as well, by supervising children’s street activities. Children’s conceptualization of shame embedded in their constructions of street behavior and social control – for instance by constructing moral boundaries in the street and reminding their friends if they suspect the boundaries have been crossed – thus can be seen within the context of socialization norms.
**Funds of knowledge: the need for culturally respectful teaching.** I bring up teachers’ conceptualizations of “culturally relevant teaching” to highlight the extensive influence of the interpretation of “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992) in teacher professional development in this case of study. The notion of funds of knowledge explicitly underlines that teachers should see beyond the stereotypes by, first, unpacking the prevailing and accepted preconceptions about the students’ cultural background that is somehow perceived in a deficit way, and second, trying to understand the lived experience of students through conducting an ethnographic approach to document the student’s families cultural practices, and third, by figuring out ways to include the students’ families funds of knowledge into classroom teaching.

Teachers in Bima and Cimandi Elementary School however noted their attempts to understand their students’ cultural background by conducting several home visits and by incorporating aspects of the students’ experiences into teaching in order to help students’ understanding. The purpose of what teachers perceived as “incorporating students’ experiences” does not appear to be to understand how the families situate their cultural practices within the families’ cultural frame. Rather, it is used by teacher to confirm the preconceived deficit notion about the families’ cultural practices. This study thus adds to the discussion of the enactment of funds of knowledge in classroom teaching across contexts by demonstrating an example of superficial interpretation in which teachers’ attempts in finding classroom-home relevance may not result in the development of funds of knowledge the theory has expected. In this regard, the discussion of funds of knowledge should be extended to include children’s cultural practices that are discussed with tension and are being regarded as “controversial” such as the practice where the families endorse children’s participation in income-generating street activities.
Reflection on “Culture:” Children’s Subjectivity within the “Subculture”

Ethnographic studies of “street children” have acknowledged the children’s agency in producing cultural practices in responding to the idealized childhood the dominant society has conceptualized. The cultural practices, as some studies have noted, include, for instance, the collaborative use of language that marks the group norms, ways of behaving, style of clothing, music taste, and the use of drugs or glue sniffing to establish a communal identity (Beazley, 2003; Davies, 2008; Naterer & Godina, 2011). Scholars define the cultural features as a “subcultural identity,” with which children negotiate their agency to resist the dominant culture that views childhood in certain ways.

When the subcultural practices are taken by the dominant society to homogenize children labeled as “street children,” however, an intrinsic power operates within the subculture to resist and to seek to differentiate the self from the stereotyped others. “I’m not a street kid,” a remark by Amir, strongly suggests a sense of subjectivity, which further, offers an attempt to resist the collective identity. Scholars often acknowledge “street children” as establishing stable social groups in order to survive the street life (Davies, 2008). While confirming children’s agency, this notion may disregard the idea that culture is not a communal feature that can be associated with a static group, but rather, a site where agencies and subjectivities are negotiated and contested. In this regard, the “street children’s” social groups are not stable, but are stratified as the members construct boundaries in negotiating their subjectivities.

Children’s responses toward societal discourse in this study thus should be seen within the notion that views culture as active and constitutive. For instance, children’s attempts to conform to literacy expectations – for instance, in writing *cita-cita* in a way to follow the typical literacy norms – can be seen as a response to the societal view that street children are “slow” and
“uninterested in schooling” (as evidenced in a teacher’s remark in chapter 7). Additionally, children’s constructions of moral boundaries (see Chapter 4) can as well be seen as attempts to differentiate themselves from the established stereotypes that view “street children” as “wild” and “immoral.” The findings of this study thus extend the discussion of “street children’s subculture” by offering an emphasis on children’s subjectivities while, at the same time, acknowledging children’s role in their social groups.

Limitation of Study and Directions for Future Research

We need more empirical research involving children labeled as “street children” in order to provide an alternative to what the media has described about the “stereotyped” life of these children. More research is needed, for instance, to document the educational perceptions and experiences of children who are living separately from their families or those whose parents work as beggars. In doing the participant selection I had to exclude the beggar families, as they were not receiving assistance from the Rainbow Foundation. Thus gaining entrance through working with an NGO assisting other groups of street families or children will add variety to the descriptions of the life of children work in the street.

With regard to research methodology, a longer ethnographic study investigating the lived experiences and perspectives of all parties involved in the street activities and concerned about the life of these children would serve a great significance. The limitation of this dissertation lies in the duration of fieldwork that has figured into the development of my researcher’s role and interactions with participants. I admit that five months of fieldwork is far from sufficient for developing the sense of “insideness” which would allow me to reach out deeper into children’s narratives, stories, and the pattern of relationships within the community. A longer relationship with the participants may also be able to contribute to many significant findings. The
participants’ responses and attitudes which I have framed as resistance and denial may well shift my perspective of the “cultural shame.” Having been confined by five months of fieldwork, I was unable to document various venues of meaning-making and creative processes my participants have participated in. For instance, I have missed music and drama production workshop and performance organized by Rainbow Foundation that started in the week I left the field.

Finally, having examined children’s participations across literacy contexts may limit my analysis from investigating the detailed aspect of the meaning-making process that occurs in one literacy event. For instance, I was guided by what I viewed as contrasting power relations and the latitude of children’s agency across contexts and may have failed to pay attention to the detailed interactions and how meaning-makings are collaboratively shared within peer relationships. Specifically, I did not closely investigate how the learning process occur as well as how peer relationships are built in public school classrooms. In this regard, future research documenting such aspects will provide a useful contribution to empirical studies of classroom discourse and sociocultural literacy especially those looking at literacy practices participated by children from economic disadvantaged backgrounds. I conclude this section by proposing some questions worth asking in future research involving the so-called “street children” in Indonesia.

- In what ways do children in other street communities approach and perceive the issue of education and schooling?
- How does the transition process occur as children who are dropped out from school return to public school classrooms? How is the power relation shared and negotiated among the children and their peers? How do the teachers provide and expand the children’s possibilities for learning? What resources do teachers and the children share in the meaning-making process in the classrooms?
- How do children use literacy practices to construct their sense of community of friendship in the street? How does this sense of community figures into the way children create strategies of survival in the street?
• How are different venues of children’s composing such as music workshop, drama production, and writing for local publication organized by NGOs? How do children enact their agency and construct identities through participating in these varieties of venues? What kind of resources do children interweave in the production process?

Reflection on Educational Practices for “Street Children”

I argue that the first important step to be considered in advocacy practices toward underserved children is to recognize children’s subjectivities and allow them space to grow. Children inhabit a space where they are acknowledged as novice members of society. Underserved children in Indonesia specifically are situated within the public parenthood space where adults in the society may feel the right to educate and teach them in order to provide them the “protection” the adults think the children deserve. In obtaining the purpose of teaching children, adults often disregard the messages that may be conveyed unintentionally through the use of language and through the speaker’s positioning in relation to child audience that may in turn marginalize them. One of the messages adults may not be fully aware of is the possible children’s interpretations of the use of label “street children” in direct communications with them.

The definition of “street children” in Indonesia is somewhat murky. While the Indonesian government and the NGOs extend the definition to include all children who are raised by poor families and are exposed to street activities and address them in their policies, a popular notion that “street children” applies only to those who live in the street separately from their biological families – as one of the questionnaire responses stated – still exists. Given the commonly accepted notion that associates “street children” with criminal conduct and unaccepted behaviors (i.e ngelem, free-sex, pickpocketing, lying in order to earn money, wandering around dirty and rarely taking a bath), some children’s hesitance in accepting such a label can be viewed as a
denial to such stereotypes. In this regard, teachers’ and adults’ use of the label and children’s experiences – either in classroom settings or charity activities – of the way adults perceive as “caring,” would not bridge the distance as the adults have hoped, but rather, create a distance between middle-class adults and children because in some ways, those stereotypes are being acknowledged (i.e., by asking if they had taken a bath in the morning). Middle-class adults have perceived that children intentionally prefer to go to the street in order to escape their responsibilities as citizens or the “future generation” – to borrow Mr. B’s word in Chapter 4. In so doing, adults implicitly assume that all children work in the street and their families willingly accept the label of “street children” (as evidenced in interactions between Mr. B and orphanage ladies with Pasundan children and parents). On the other hand, the use of the label of “street children” in communicating with children and their families in educational settings or charity activities may reproduce the sense of inferiority and shame that has been inhabiting deeply within themselves.

With regard to literacy learning, I suggest that empowering literacy practices are needed to break down the “oppression” in Freirean (1970) terms, that is, educational practices involving reflection and political action to deconstruct ideology that has thus marginalized the underserved children in urban streets. It should be noted however, that oppression is not exclusive to the marginalized children alone. Teachers, the government, and the rest of society members are also subjected to the oppressive ideology undergirding the current educational policies and practices. One of the instances of the structural oppression is apparent in how the teachers deliver what they perceive as “culturally relevant” teaching. Teachers’ unintentional disrespect for what they consider as students’ habits (suspicion that they did not take a bath, and that their families had
sold the notebooks) when they are trying to address students’ culture shows the pervasiveness of the deficit thinking toward street communities.

Having said this, I do not intend to put the blame on the teachers. Teachers sacrifice their time and money to enact what they view as their moral responsibility as members of the society. Teachers in Indonesian cities in particular are struggling to cover the high daily expenses of living in the city with the earning they often consider less than the amount a street family can make. While many teachers occupy themselves with side jobs after teaching, Bima and Cimandi School teachers dedicate themselves to teach the “street children” voluntarily. Their efforts and sacrifices however were not being recognized and responded by the government through resources and supports with which they can improve their teaching approach, especially in dealing with children who work in the street. Current teachers development programs in Indonesia – and also elsewhere – are too decontextualized and removed from the heterogeneous classroom settings. With the pervasive deficit perceptions toward poor families embedded in the dominant society’s attitude, the emphasis of teacher development programs should not only be on the quantity and the exploration of current instructional theories and methods, but also on how to dismantle these deficit perspectives.

Regarding the professional development training, I suggest that it is important to include the appreciative voices of society members, ethnographers, or NGO staff who are involved with or have interacted with street children on a daily basis. Inputs are needed into classroom teaching discussions particularly with regard to how to communicate with “street children,” how to gain trust, how to express respect, and what would be the best way to develop their confidence in learning. It is also important for educators to understand how literacy should be lived by these “street children.” While the “banking model of education” (Freire, 1970) leaves students to be
considered as having zero resources and thus need to be “disciplined” into knowing, the empowering literacy should be able to give space for children to create their critical self through learning and then further, develop an ability to critically think about the implication of their own choices and actions. In this regard, knowing is nurtured through dialogues, which built upon a respectful relationship between students and teachers, and not is imposed through didactic narratives in ways the teachers perceive as “caring” communicative strategy thus far. Besides, my observations and interviews with children who work in the street revealed that children demonstrated their own moral constructs that guided their attitude so as to meet expectations set up by parents, NGO staff, and teachers. For instance, children expressed their affective stance when differentiating themselves from those who ngelem (as I have discussed in Chapter 3 and 6), and considered begging as prohibited (see an example in Chapter 4). Given the awareness children have displayed, dictated messages delivered by those “middle-class” adults, as represented by orphanage ladies and teachers (I presented in Chapter 3 and 7), appeared to be demeaning and redundant.

Conclusion

“Teh, she called her mom monkey. It’s so rude. Tell her it’s not right!” Rina, a fifteen year-old told me while pointing her chin to Nin, her fifteen year-old girl friend. “Is it true? Why [did you do that]?” I asked Nin. Nin just grinned back to Rina. “When her mom woke her up in the morning, she shouted at her mom telling her she’s monkey,” Rina explained.

Looking at Rina’s serious expression on her face, I knew that she was not joking. Rina’s concern about Nin’s attitude toward her mother seemed to stem from her caring about Nin’s relationship with her mother, which she also often told Ima, the Rainbow tutor. Children’s attentions in taking care of each other as well as their efforts to maintain the social control in
order to make the street a better place for them are not seen and heard by the rest of Indonesian street users. What are seen and heard are the disturbing sights of the “street children” portrayed in the news, television channels, and the “myths” passed down by the street users -- or the media consumers, which comprise the majority of Indonesian society -- from mouth to mouth. The homogenous portrait of the children who work in Indonesian streets has figured into the way the government, and rest of society, look down and “take care of” them through the enactment of educational policy and classroom literacy learning. Within the perpetuated deficit discourse that views street children as “abused” and “wild,” the approaches in literacy practices often neglect their feelings, subjectivity, agency, and competence in learning.

Having witnessed three literacy venues organized for and participated in by different groups of “street children,” I have argued that children demonstrate their ability to enhance the horizon of their learning in a setting where their subjectivities are recognized and given a space to develop. When children feel comfortable with and respected by their teachers or tutors, they show competence in interweaving symbolic knowledge they obtain from popular culture and their social world. Unfortunately, such latitude and the space for children’s agency are not found in formal public school classrooms, which as some interviews with children in this study find, has partially contributed to one of the reasons why children have failed schooling. In a context where formal schooling serves the only entrance to job market, children and NGOs create access to school graduation diploma by finding ways to survive the Elementary School’s national exit exam. The tangled web of street children’s literacy learning thus relates to the complex problem of the national education system, and the perpetuated discourse of schooling and poverty that has left the whole Indonesian society “unempowered,” to borrow Freire’s term.
To conclude this dissertation, I suggest that simply enforcing the Education for All policy alone would not be effective in untangling the complex web of poverty and high school-dropout rate that characterizes the issues of children who work in the street. Indonesian society should allow time and space to hear their voices, aspirations, and to understand how they frame their experiences in the street through stories. This needs an ideology dismantling, that children have the “rights” to define their participation in the intersection in a way that develops their responsibilities to their families and communities at large. Having said this, I do not intend to disregard the fact that children in the street have also been targets of crimes and activities that can threaten their mental, psychological, and physical health. The attempts and interventions to help children survive “the danger of street” in this regard should be conducted in a way that respects children’s voices and agency.
References


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Appendix A

Glossary

*Angkot:* Public minivan.
*Batik:* Indonesian traditional textile.
*Bu/Ibu:* Mrs/Maam.
*Bule:* Foreigner.
*Cangkeul:* Tired.
*Cita-cita:* Future career choice.
*Eid:* Islamic holiday.
*Gang:* Alley.
*Kuntilanak:* A female ghost with a hole on her back, usually is dressed in white.
*Mudik:* Travelling to hometown during Eid holiday.
*Ngelem:* Sniffing glue.
*Ngamen:* Playing music to earn income in the street.
*Ngelap:* Dusting cars to earn income.
*Pak:* Mr.
*Pocong:* Zombie wrapped in white cloth.
*Serabutan:* Miscellaneous.
*Sungkan/Isin/Saru:* Ashamed/Embarassed.
*Teh:* Big sister.
*Ulama:* An Islamic scholar.
Appendix B

Online Questionnaire Questions:

1. Are you male or female?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Less than High School, High School, Some years in college, College Graduates, Graduate program.
4. Do you agree with children working on the street? (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (extended response provided).
5. Do you agree with children begging on the street? (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (extended response provided).
6. What do you think about the government’s policies as follows:
   • Street children cleaning operation /roundup (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6
   • Providing shelters (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6
   • Fine to those who give money to children in the street (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6
   • Encourage people to not give money directly to children, but rather, to social organizations assisting them (Disagree to agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Extended response provided).
7. What would you rather give to children who are begging or working on the street? (a) money, (b) food, (c) others, such as..., (d) nothing.
8. What kind of job would you think it acceptable for children (under 18 years old) to do on the street? (a) Ngamen (b) Trading (c) Begging (d) nothing (d) Others...