“CRITICAL READING OF OUR WORLDS”: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF DIALOGUE AS PRAXIS IN A COMMUNITY-FOUNDED SCHOOL IN INDONESIA

BY

YUNI SARI AMALIA

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Marilyn Johnston-Parsons, Chair
Associate Professor Karla Moller
Professor Michael Parsons
Assistant Professor Bekisizwe Ndimande, University of Texas at San Antonio
ABSTRACT

Community-founded schools are part of the schooling system in Indonesia, yet the role of these schools is rarely recognized. When the economy crisis hit Asia, Indonesia was greatly affected. Many public and private schools were forced to shut down. Consequently, there was a drastic increase in the student dropout rate. Community-founded schools that existed at this time received specific attention as one of the solutions for providing quality preschool education in Indonesia.

This one-year ethnographic study explored a community-founded preschool that has been offering education for underprivileged children for almost 30 years. The research was guided by an overarching question, “How does participation in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) in a community-founded school?” In delving into this question, I initiated a dialogue group with the teachers. The primary data derived from those meetings.

The data from our weekly dialogue sessions were triangulated with observations, interviews, teacher and researcher journals, and other documents such as the school’s archives and the Indonesian government’s policies. Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy provided the theoretical framework.

The findings describe the journeys in which the teachers and I engaged in critically reading our worlds (Freire, 1970, 1987). Our efforts in critical reflections afforded us a deeper understanding of our identities. We critically reflected on the cultural, historical, political, and religious norms and policies that shaped our perceptions of our identities and positionalities in Indonesian society. We also unpacked our fears. The teachers showed bravery and inquisitiveness throughout the dialogues. These dialogues were also a conduit for the teachers to
voice their opinions. The dialogue meetings functioned as a support system for the teachers at this community-founded school. Within these complex discussions, the perceptions toward students living in poverty, expectations toward these students, and the effects of the newly implemented government initiatives on early childhood programs toward their school were also discussed.

This research provides a case study of a dialogue group with the teachers in one community-founded school in Indonesia from August 2013 to July 2014. The findings have implications for educators and policy makers.
For my family
and
For all who in the name of love, strive for a more just, democratic, and loving world.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been a labor of love for me and would not have been possible without the support from so many people.

First, I would like to send my highest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Parsons, whose support has been incredible. If I could imagine a picture of an angel in the best possible version, she would be the one in my mind. She has not just been a phenomenal academic advisor, but also an amazing educational parent. She supported me throughout my studies and has been responsible for all the achievements I have obtained thus far. She is the best academic advisor a student can ever hope for! From the bottom of my heart, thank you!

I also would like to thank Dr. Karla Möller for her unwavering support. It has been a dream come true to have a mentor like her. She has given me incredible support since my master’s program and encouraged me to be the best I can be. I deeply thank her for believing in me. She is the epitome of an inspiring educator! I will be forever grateful for her phenomenal support.

I would like to deeply thank Dr. Bekisizwe Ndimande for his untiring support. Through his thought-provoking guidance, he helped me find “the one” in the world of theories. Through his classes I learned much about Freirean theory. I deeply thank him for his encouragement.

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Parsons for his willingness to serve in my committee. His familiarity with global issues has been significantly helpful for my dissertation. I thank him so much for his support, encouragement, and advice.

I would like to send my highest thank you to the stars of the research, Mrs. Matahari, the teachers at Semanggi School, and all the stakeholders, for all their willingness and commitment
to be part of the journey that was deeply meaningful to me. I also would like to thank everyone at Pelangi Neighborhood for their kind welcome.

I would like to extend my huge thanks to Dr. Sarah McCarthey who has been so supportive throughout my studies. Thank you for your encouragement and for believing in me. I thank all my professors for the thought-provoking classes, for their encouragement, for teaching me the knowledge and wisdom of life lessons. Thank you for inspiring me to be a better student, teacher, and person.

My master and doctoral degrees would not be possible without the support from several foundations. I would like to thank the Fulbright Foundation that gave me their prestigious scholarship. Thank you for opening the door of educational opportunities and life changing experiences. I would like to thank the Philanthropic Educational Organization for their scholarship. To the PEO sisters, thank you for your invaluable support in helping me reach for the stars! I would like to thank Dr. Arthur Baroody for hiring me to be one of his research assistants. Thanks to the Graduate Colege for the fellowship/scholarships you awarded to me. I also would like to thank the Department Secretary, Myranda Crist, for her untiring and remarkable support. I would like to extend my gratitude to Airlangga University in Indonesia for all their continued and solid support for my academic development.

I thank my family in Indonesia – mama, Sandy, Ayus and Titin and my little star niece Laetitia, and the Hunt family in England – Barbara and Geoff, Suzanne, and Julie, and my lovely nieces and nephews. Thank you all for your love, care, and everlasting support. Being away from my families was hard, but seeing each of their smiles in photographs gave me the energy and determination to complete this journey. I also felt that my father was with me throughout this
voyage. Thank you, Papa, for inspiring me with the love and wisdom of kindness and everything that you taught me to always seek to be a better person!

This dissertation was also possible because of the support of so many wonderful friends. I thank you all so much. I thank all the Indonesian community for their warmth and marvelous support.

Last, but, most importantly, I would like to dedicate my dissertation to the love of my life, my husband, Andrew Hunt. He has always carried me through the toughest times in my life. Thank you for sharing laughter and positive energy, your boundless support and for your love. Thank you for believing in me even at times when I did not. You are the biggest inspiration in my life! I cannot imagine my life without you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................................... ix

List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................ x

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................... 11

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................... 56

CHAPTER 4 SCHOOL CONTEXT .................................................................................................................. 88

CHAPTER 5 CRITICAL READING OF OUR WORLDS ............................................................................. 137

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ...................................................................................... 198

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................................................... 224

APPENDIX A ........................................................................................................................................... 250

APPENDIX B ........................................................................................................................................... 251

APPENDIX C ........................................................................................................................................... 254

APPENDIX D ........................................................................................................................................... 257

APPENDIX E ........................................................................................................................................... 258

APPENDIX F ........................................................................................................................................... 262
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>James Banks’ Early Conceptions of Multicultural Education (Banks, 1975, 1979)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Education System in 1945-1950</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Numbers of Participants</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The teachers and the Principal’s Information</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Summary of Data Collection Methods and Data Analyzed</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Teachers’ Responses on PAUD Policy</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Definitions of Multicultural/Social Justice Education</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Teachers’ Responses on Students Living in Poverty</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my rationale for choosing this dissertation topic, my research question, a brief overview of the study’s theoretical framework, and definitions of key terms. I will also provide historical information, in particular the global influences of *Education for All* policies that motivated initiatives made by the Indonesian government. I will then briefly describe my research focused on a dialogue group with the teachers at a community-founded preschool in Jakarta, Indonesia.

**Rationale**

Federal, state, and local governments are often unable to provide full financial support for public education, whether in developed or developing countries. Local groups typically must step in to engage the community in addressing unmet needs, often through voluntary efforts. Such community engagement is considered a highly beneficial type of social capital (Putnam, 1995). For instance, community engagement in voluntary programs across Illinois in 2011 was equivalent to a $7.4 billion dollar contribution to the state’s economy (Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, 2013). Studies of community engagement in the United States suggest that such efforts have positively impacted teaching, learning, and educational outcomes in schools (Ferguson, 1998; Fox, 2001).

When the economic crisis hit Asia in late 1998, many public and private schools were forced to shut down. Because of the crisis, families faced the difficult choice of whether to keep their children out of school due to their financial situation. Community-founded schools like the Semanggi Preschool [pseudonym], Pesantren (Islamic schools), and after-school programs run by NGOs that were established before the economic crisis emerged were able to stay open. The
people began to take notice of these types of schooling for their children (Bangay, 2005) especially during the crisis. Thus, the need for community-founded schools increased because they were more affordable alternatives compared to the expense of the regular school system.

In developing countries such as Indonesia, community engagement is especially important in positively impacting areas where government support is limited. In Indonesian culture, the importance of community engagement is frequently emphasized. The importance of this value is reflected in the Indonesian “Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi” [Three Pillars of Higher Education]. These pillars emphasize the significance of education, research, and community service (DIKTI, 2015). Studies of community engagement in the United States suggest that such efforts have positively impacted teaching, learning, and educational outcomes in schools (Ferguson, 1998; Fox, 2001).

While there are numerous studies about community engagement in public and private schools, studies of community-founded schools, especially in Indonesian contexts, are scarce. My study includes issues related to poverty, diversity, and education and thus adds to the literature on these topics related to a community-founded school in Indonesia.

**Research Questions**

I studied a community-founded school in a low-income neighborhood in Jakarta, Indonesia. One of the premises for my research was that although community-founded schools are not much recognized within the Indonesian educational system, this type of school has helped many children move off the streets and into schools (Carneal, 2004; Fox 2001, Miller-Grandvaux & Yoder, 2002). Many of these children would not have been accepted in the “regular” system because of their lack of access to preschool education in areas of poverty. Although public schools offer some scholarships, many families cannot afford the costs related
to their children’s education. These children are typically left out of the public education system and are more often found on the streets than in schools.

I visited the school in this study in 2010 and was so impressed by what I saw occurring between the school and community that I wanted to learn more about it. My research was conducted between August 2013 to January 2014.

My research question and sub-questions were:

- How does participation in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) in a community-founded school?”
- How is the Semanggi School situated within larger communities and cultures?
- How does participating in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of their identities, issues of poverty and education, and national policies?

In answering my research question, I initiated a dialogue group with the teachers at the Semanggi School and conducted a weekly meeting with them to discuss issues related to social justice. Such discussions are given little room or are absent from the school curricula (Bjork, 2004; Boediono, 1990; Bucciarelli, 2013).

The discussions ranged as follows:

- Perceptions of students living in poverty
- Issues surrounding ethnicity
- Teachers’ roles
- Students’ rights to dream for further education
- Gender roles
- Parents’ involvement
- Community commitment
Theoretical Framework

Freirean theory undergirded my research, from selecting the topic of the research to data analysis and interpretations. These theories resonate for me in many ways. I read a range of theories during my doctoral studies; however, Freire’s perspectives speak to me most deeply. My first encounter with Freire was his depiction of banking education, the roles of the teacher, and the value of dialogue. His descriptions addressed important issues in Indonesian education. His call to critically “read the world,” to arrive at conscientization, and the importance of history and pedagogy of hope pushed me to learn about myself as a person, a teacher, and a citizen of Indonesia and the global world. Freirean theories connect the personal with the professional. Thus, I employed these theories in understanding the teachers’ voices and other issues related to this study. Critical reflection and action are the praxis of Freirean theories that I embraced throughout conducting this study.

Definition of Terms

In this section, I will provide the definition of relevant terms used in this study.

- **Social justice education (SJE)**, inspired by Freirean principles, refers to philosophies and pedagogies that embrace dialogue and action for social justice. The term is discussed in more detail in chapter two. As the result of our dialog, I used the term ‘multicultural/social justice education’ (M/SJE) to refer to both the teachers’ perspectives and mine throughout the dissertation.

- **Community-founded school(s)** -- refers to the school where I conducted the research and other schools that are organized or founded by communities. This includes for profit and non-profit schools. The school in this study is a non-profit school. As a note, I will be using the term community-founded school throughout the chapters,
instead of community-based school because a group in the community founded the school and it operates as a non-profit. Community-based schools may be founded by the State or private institutions, not necessarily founded by the community, and may or may not reflect community-based values.

- **Stakeholders:** In this dissertation, I used this term based on Abott’s (2014) definition of stakeholders. The term signifies,

> anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives…. In a word, stakeholders, have a “stake” in the school and its students, meaning that they have a personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern…. the term is commonly used in a more general and inclusive sense. (Abott, 2014, n.p)

In this case, the stakeholders of Semanggi School included the founders of the school, the principal, teachers, students, parents, and other community members in the surrounding Pelangi Neighborhood. Furthermore, the role of stakeholders is also influential in the teaching materials. In this sense, the stakeholders in Semanggi School projected the values of community-based learning in the teaching and learning processes.

Stakeholders may also play a role in community-based learning, which refers to the practice of connecting what is being taught in a school to its surrounding community, which may include local history, literature, and cultural heritages, in addition to local experts, institutions, and natural environments. Community-based learning is also
motivated by the belief that all communities have intrinsic educational assets that educators can use to enhance learning experiences for students, so stakeholders are necessarily involved in the process. (Abbott, 2014, n.p.)

- **Low-income families** -- those who socio-economically live on the border having incomes below their country’s established poverty line (World Bank, 2013). According to World Bank (2013), one of the criteria is that a household that has a monthly income of under $60 is considered as living on the poverty line in Indonesia.

- **DIKTI** -- the Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education (Bahasa Indonesia: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi). This Department within the Indonesian Ministry of Education that oversees all matters, i.e., policies, regulations, scholarships, funding systems, and beyond related to higher education in Indonesia. The Department works under the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (IMEC).

- **Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture** (IMEC) -- This ministry oversees all matters related to education and cultures in the Indonesian educational system.

- Other terms such as diversity, multicultural education, social justice for all and critical thinking are explained more in the literature review (chapter 2).

**Education for All**

In 1990, UNESCO formulated a worldwide policy in *Education for All* (Brock-Utne, 2001). The policy was established at the World Conference on Education for All in Thailand. Six goals were set within this framework (a) universal access to learning; (b) a focus on equity; (c) emphasis on learning outcomes; (4) broadening the means and the scope of basic education; (5)
enhancing the environment for learning; (6) strengthening partnerships by 2000 (UNESCO, 2013).

In 2000, these goals were revisited and evaluations showed that many countries were struggling to achieve them. Thus, the goals were redefined and the participants of the Dakar Framework for Action recommitted to achieve the following goals by 2015.

The goals include:

1. Expand early childhood care and education
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
3. Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
4. Increase adult literacy by 50 percent
5. Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015
6. Improve the quality of education

Indonesia is a member of UNESCO and has been committed to achieving these goals. In 2011, in response to meeting Goal 1 (expanding early childhood care and education), the Indonesian government proposed more support for education in these areas. In late 2012, DIKTI issued guidelines for establishing schools in early childhood education fields. Thus, movement toward early childhood care and education sponsored by the government is very recent in Indonesia.

Brock-Utne (2000; 2001) looks critically at these movements and problematizes the words and definition of “Education for All.” She raises questions such as: Whose education for all? On whose terms is “globalization” defined? She questions the equality and equity of access, languages, contents, and agendas that are “promoted” in this schema. In looking at the Indonesian government’s efforts in meeting these goals, especially Goal 1, my study addresses similar questions (Brock-Utne, 2000, 2001), interpreted through a critical pedagogy lens (Freire,
1970; Freire, 1998). The early childhood education goal particularly related to my preschool research site. The new instructions for early childhood education in Indonesia and how they affected the teachers and/or the school were related to one of the major findings of this research.

**Initiating/Nurturing the Dialogue**

Faced with complex global challenges, I argue in this study that the Indonesian educational system needs an ideology that embraces the diversity that shapes the society. Teaching for social justice in education is not only needed but also fundamental for transforming the Indonesian educational system toward a more just and democratic education. I used critical pedagogy, particularly Freirean theory, in framing the dialogues that I conducted with the teachers. Freirean principles guided these dialogues. Freire (1970) defines dialogue:

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. (p. 76)

Freire characterizes dialogue as a space to explore our thinking and recreate new knowledge and vision together, based on the commitment to respect, love, and humility. Dialogue means no imposition of ideas and that the relationship amongst each member is horizontal and equal. In this sense, the right to speak and express thoughts and ideas are equal.

To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the other; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must
question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created. (Freire, 1998, p. 79)

I formed a dialogue group with my teacher participants. I hoped to offer a safe space for exploring educational issues in relation to teachers’ positionality in their school situated in larger social systems. For instance, we discussed issues such as teachers’ beliefs and identity, students’ achievements in relation to their prior knowledge, cultural values, and competences. As a group, we were also learning Indonesian history; learning history was a way to learn about our identities. Confronting our past paved a way to engage in the present and a way to construct the future. Together we discovered more about who we were as individuals, as teachers, as learners, as members of society, and as citizens of the global world. In a broader context, understanding who we were hopefully led to more profound comprehension on where we should go and what we can do to be part of a transformative process for a social justice change now and in the future.

**Organizations of the Chapters**

This section offers a brief overview of the study. In chapter two, I provide a review of literature surrounding social justice education in the United States and globally. I explore the concepts of social justice education historically and its changes. In chapter three, I describe the qualitative methodology employed within the study. I conducted observations within dialogue meetings and interviews to gain data. I also analyzed teachers’ journals, school’s archives, and my researcher’s journal to triangulate the data. I also provide information related to my study participants, i.e., the teachers, principal, parents, and other founders of the school. Although my participants varied, the teachers were the primary focus of my research. In chapter four, I provide a rich description of the school and its context. This context includes descriptions of the major stakeholders, such as the principal and another founder of the school. I also provide details of the
parents’ involvement and the local community’s commitment to the school. In chapter five, I present the findings related to my research question. The findings include: (a) the changes in understandings and uses of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) term from the perspectives of teachers, the principal, and me, (b) the teachers’ definition of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE), (c) perceptions about students living in poverty from the teachers’ perspectives and the principal, (d) perceptions about the new instruction for early childhood education in Indonesia, and (e) changes in curricula and teaching materials. In chapter six, I provide an analysis of the data using Freirean theories in more detail. This includes (a) why I chose dialogue as praxis in understanding the teachers’ perspectives and to promote social justice issues, (b) how dialogue is perceived by the teachers, (c) changes, or rather, the seed of change in teachers’ perceptions and teaching, and (d) a critical view of poverty and education in Indonesia. I conclude the chapter with a call for engaging in critical reflection and action in Indonesian education.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I will explain the framework of my research. In this review, I did not intend to present models of community schools; but rather, I sought to understand how education affected, and was affected by the larger political systems. As Freire (1970) pointed out, education is political. Critical pedagogy embodied my study and I used dialogue as praxis within my research. Through this critical pedagogy, I sought to shed light on the development and implementation of social justice education (Noguera & Torres, 2008) in the Indonesian educational arena, in particular, a community-founded school in Jakarta. The literature discussion includes: (a) an overview of the history of multicultural education, or social justice education, (b) studies surrounding poverty and education, and (c) Freirean perspectives that provide the theoretical framework for my study. These studies and theories offered a foundation for understanding my participants’ voices and guided the development of my study. They were also used to further interpret the findings.

History of Multicultural Education: An Overview

Human existence is, in fact, a radical and profound tension between good and evil, between dignity and indignity, between decency and indecency, between the beauty and the ugliness of the world . . . it is impossible to humanly exist without assuming the right and the duty to opt, to decide, to struggle, to be political. All of which brings us back to the preeminence of education experience and to its eminently ethical character, which in its turn leads us to the radical nature of “hope.” In other words, though I know that
things can get worse, I also know that I am able to intervene to improve them. (Freire, 1998, p. 53)

Understanding these tensions, multicultural educators views human beings as equal and thus individuals should have equal opportunities to grow (Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2004) and “re-invent” (Freire, 1970) themselves to the best of their potential.

Multicultural education is often defined as an education that embodies principles, engagement, and movements toward social justice (Freire, 1985; Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). According to the National Association for Multicultural Education (2003), multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents, such as the United States Declaration of Independence, constitutions of South Africa and the United States, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. It affirms our need to prepare student for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice [emphasis added]. (National Association for Multicultural Education, Feb 1, 2003)

The earliest conceptualization of multicultural education can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 1979; Banks & Banks, 2004; Gorski, 2008). It has roots in the civil rights movements branching out from numerous oppressed groups. For instance, the women’s movement protested inequalities in the US educational system and they critically analyzed how education contributed to systemic sexism (Banks, 1979). Multicultural education is also rooted in
ethnicity studies, especially African-American studies (Gorski, 2008) where African-American movements sought rights for desegregation, voting, and education (Allis & Frederick, 1954; Bates, 1962). The work of Dr. Martin Luther King was fundamental to many changes in the US, inspiring and disrupting the cycle of discrimination and striving for more equality and equity for oppressed groups (Banks, 2006; Cahn, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2001).

Later in the 1980s, concerns within educational settings, related to areas such as standardized tests, culturally oppressive teaching approaches, gender, racial identities, inequality in employment, lesbian and gay issues, and disabilities were exposed more (Banks 2004; Gay, 2004; Grant, Elsbree & Fondrie, 2004; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004).

**The seeds of multicultural education.** James Banks was one of the early proponents of multicultural education. He views schools as part of the social structures reflecting multicultural issues (Gorski, 2008). This view became one of the core tenets of multicultural education. Banks (1975, 1979) in his early proposal for “multiethnic-multicultural education” proposed that consensus toward the definitions and missions for this field of education was needed. It appears that efforts to initiate dialogue on issues and ideas towards multicultural education, encountered immense challenges in the early days. Banks (1979) wrote,

> Despite the conceptual confusion that haunts the multicultural education movement, some of my colleagues feel that it is an academic luxury to devote intellectual energy to conceptual and definitional issues. Others have suggested that, in this emergent stage of the development of multiethnic-multicultural education, each theorist should have the freedom to define his or her terms to his or her satisfaction. This is an argument for a kind of "conceptual democracy." I, of course, reject these claims and believe that conceptual clarity is needed in the field and that one of our major aims should be to attain
some level of conceptual consensus. . . . . We will be unable to develop scientific statements that explain and predict as long as conceptual chaos exists in multiethnic-multicultural education. (p. 238)

In this proposal, Banks (1979) defined multicultural education and multiethnic education. Banks explains that multicultural education has its foundation in cultures. It signifies a form of education that is connected, to some extent, to a variety of cultural groups. Banks further explained that this concept aims to “educate students so that they will acquire knowledge about a range of cultural groups and develop the attitudes, skills, and abilities needed to function at some level of competency within many different cultural environments” (p. 238). Banks pointed out that another multicultural education goal should be school reform that aspires to achieve equal opportunities in education.

In addition, Banks (1975, 1979) elaborated his definition of multiethnic education as a form of multicultural education that should strive to help “students develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities needed to relate to a range of ethnic groups and to function in ethnic group cultures at some minimal level of competency” (pp. 239-240). Creating more positive experiences and equal opportunities for ethnic students or minority groups is another mission for multiethnic educators. Banks concluded that multiethnic education “is an essential part of, but not the total of, the more global concept of multicultural education” (p. 240). See Table 1.1

In his later writings, Banks (1991, 2004, 2006) broadened his definition of multicultural education to be an on-going process of life-long learning, and hence continuous efforts are key to bringing about a more just, democratic education system.
Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. As an idea, multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within a society and within the nation's classrooms. Multicultural education is a process because its goals are ideals that teachers and administrators should constantly strive to achieve. (Banks, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rooted in/Foundation</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Multicultural Education | Culture              | A type of education that is related in some ways to a range of cultural groups | • Educate students so that they will acquire knowledge about a range of cultural groups and develop the attitudes, skills, and abilities needed to function at some level of competency within many different cultural environments  
• Total school reforms that aim for equal opportunities for students |
| Multiethnic Education | Culture              | A type of multicultural education that is related to a range of ethnic groups | • Students develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities needed to relate to a range of ethnic groups and to function in ethnic group cultures at some minimal level of competency  
• Provide more positive experience for ethnic students                                                                 |

**Table 1.1**

*James Banks’ Early Conceptions of Multicultural Education (Banks, 1975, 1979)*
Banks (2004) also offers five dimensions of multicultural education including content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration is concerned with the way diverse cultures are infused into the curricula. These cultural aspects should represent a complex understanding of various ethnicities and identities. Knowledge construction process emphasizes the importance of the teachers’ role in helping students to critically examine the concepts within which the knowledge is constructed. In this regards, teachers help their students to be critical thinkers. Teachers facilitate students’ ability to deconstruct values, assumptions and frames of references implied within the concepts. Equity pedagogy means that teachers employ strategies that allow students from diverse backgrounds to achieve. Prejudice reduction promotes teaching and learning materials and methods that can be modified and directed to reduce prejudice and help promote students’ understanding of diversity in the society. An empowering school culture means conducting a total reform of the school culture that embraces multicultural values and principles for social justice, thus empowering students from diverse cultural groups.

These dimensions should be utilized coherently because these dimensions will allow teachers, educators, and individuals from various personal and professional backgrounds to understand and advocate for the multicultural systems of teaching and learning. In an interview (NEA Today, August 3, 2011), Banks suggested that these dimensions should all be present in order for one to implement meaningful and transformative multicultural education. Banks’ conceptions of multicultural education were the seeds, which stimulated questions, debates, and discussions around the movement toward the implementation of multicultural education.

Conceptions across the spectrums. Multicultural education has evolved since its initial introduction. The nature, aims, missions and scope of the fields have been further expanded and
debated between multicultural education theorists. In the late 1990s, although many differing stances were proposed, there was a notably high consensus over the aims and scope (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000). In this respect, the theories that arose in the 1990’s based their ideals on equality and equity for every human being and a social transformation toward a more just and democratic society (Banks, 2006; Gorski, 2008, Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Geneva Gay (1995), another prominent scholar in multicultural education, however, identified a “gap between theory and practice in the field” (p. 3). She argued that theory development “has outpaced development in practice, and a wide gap exists between the two” (p. 3). Sleeter (1996, 1999), confirming Gay’s findings, found that celebrations of diversity often tended to appear as “tokenism” and “exclusion” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Instead of being critically understood, cultural “differences” were regarded as exoticism.

These types of “celebrations of diversity” have the potential to further the cycle of “othering” (Spivak, 1988). The concept of “other” means a perception and attitude of differentiation of people outside the dominant population. It is a process by which imperial discourse creates its other (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). The colonizers create and name “the other” to maintain their power. Thus, the members of the “other” are usually people from minority groups and their cultural, economical, social, political, and educational opportunities are “colonized.” As Freire (1970) also suggests, the colonized, or the “oppressed” as he called them, are situated to sustain an oppressive system that serves the oppressor’s agenda. Thus, taking a Freirean approach, multicultural education should serve to challenge, problematize, and disrupt the cycle of injustices that are structurally embedded in the society.

Sonia Nieto (1992, 2008) defines multicultural education as an “antiracist education.” Anti racism and anti discrimination is at the core of this conception. These characteristics should
be carried out with the spirit of critical thinking, respecting languages, cultures, and the experiences of all students. Nieto also shares the worries of other multicultural education advocates concerning the tendency to reduce multiculturalism to the mere celebration of cultural traditions. Nieto asserts that multicultural education should move beyond this type of practice. The core issue in her view is the need to disrupt discriminatory practices within educational systems. Thus, Nieto argues that it is crucial to confront racism and other biases openly and directly through content, approaches, and pedagogies.

Sleeter (2006) sees multicultural education as a social movement toward raising awareness of white privilege. She problematizes the privileges that White or European descendants have been provided through the social systems and advocates to put in place a more equitable way of life in the US. She also poignantly argues that racism is not only an individualized phenomena but is supported by policies in the United States. Sleeter warns about this institutionalized racism. Thus, she insists that we need to look critically at the structures that uphold inequality and inequity and that these structures should be challenged and reformed.

According to Carl Grant, multicultural education offers a humanistic concept that regards a “culturally pluralistic society as a positive force and welcomes differences as vehicles for better understanding the global society” (1977, p. 3). In this approach, multicultural education facilitates teaching diverse students and includes issues of diversity within the education system.

Multicultural education also includes culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992) or culturally responsive pedagogy (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Gay, 2000) in the teaching and learning process. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) suggests that culturally relevant pedagogy be implemented through multicultural education. In her studies, she describes teachers of color who successfully use culturally relevant pedagogy and details of how their students achieve
academically. In this pedagogical approach, teachers deconstruct perspectives presented in the reading canons and critically engage in approaches that are relevant and responsive to students of color. In her study *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), she reported that students from minority groups obtained better academic achievements under teachers who lived and worked in the school’s cultural community. Ladson-Billings also criticizes the beliefs embraced within the educational system that equates diversity with deficiency, rather than seeing diversity as a resource and a uniqueness that shapes American society.

Geneva Gay (2000) also emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive teaching in response to the increased diversity. She explains that a major part of transformation is reflection. In this respect, teachers should engage in critical analysis of their own beliefs, assumptions, and values and reflect on how these impact their engagement and perceptions of others. In this manner, teachers think of themselves as cultural beings and learn to develop positive attitudes toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Conceptions, values, and approaches have been presented to define and support the movement toward multicultural education. Regardless of their variations, these conceptions share a similar ideology: the commitment toward “cultural pluralism” (Gay, 2000) and ethnic diversity (Banks, 2006).

**On the Path of Social Justice Education**

Over the past decade, multicultural education has developed a sharper direction moving toward the teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2013; Gay, 2004; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004; Noguera & Torres, 2008). The ideals of striving for social justice are emphasized in many conceptions to further enlighten the meaning and contexts of multicultural education.
I chose the term *multicultural/social justice education* (M/SJE) to describe the data from our dialogues. In this chapter, I explain the term M/SJE, which is rooted in Noguera and Torres (2008) definition of social justice education. I also describe the social, historical, economical, political and educational contexts of its principles within the United States and globally. The term social justice education refers to the philosophies and pedagogies that embrace dialogue and action for social justice (Noguera & Torres, 2008). This type of social justice education has its roots in a pedagogy for social justice (Freire, 1987; Freire & Araújo-Freire, 1997).

Noguera and Torres (2008) argue that social justice education is transformative justice learning that “calls on people to develop a process of social and individual conscientization” (p. 7). This principle challenges theories and practices that undergo inequalities and inequities. Democratic education is also at the heart of this social justice education. In this respect, active participation in a democratic citizenship is necessary. The agents in the democratic process should critically analyze the leadership of authorities. This democratic education involves a process of “cultural nurturing, involving cultivating principles of pedagogic and democratic socialization in subjects who are neither tabula rasa in cognitive or ethical terms, nor fully equipped for the exercise of their democratic rights and obligations” (p. 6). In this regard, social justice education means a call for an active participation in democratic citizenship.

Social justice education requires a commitment to grassroots social change (Noguera & Torres, 2008b). This means an advocacy for those who historically, socially, and politically have been marginalized and made to be powerless. In social justice education, this acts as a liberation of their oppression (Freire, 1970; Nieto & Bode, 2008). In this view, the voiceless engage in critical reflection that enables them to break free from their oppression. According to Noguera
and Torres (2008) social justice education is intended as a bottom-up empowerment of the poor and powerless.

In responding to a variety of conceptions of multicultural education, Sleeter and Grant (Sleeter & Grant, 2006, Sleeter & Bernal, 2004) added to their typology by offering the concept of critical multiculturalism. In this concept, action for social justice is the key to transformative multicultural education. It also views cultural competence from a social justice perspective that attends to issues related to power relations and oppressions embedded within social structures. The goals of this type of multiculturalism are to gain awareness, develop critical inquiry, and remove oppressive conditions.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2001) also advocates for teaching for social justice. In the study that Darling-Hammond conducted with her students, she reported that reflection was a major part of becoming more socially aware of injustices that took place around the study participants’ lives. The study suggests that both the teacher and students should engage in “difficult” dialogue. The dialogue should address the voices and experiences of marginalized students. She explains that engagement in dialogue about inequities is also key to transformative teaching for social justice.

Correspondingly, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2013) also articulates the significance of critical multiculturalism in teacher education. According to her, multicultural teacher education should delve into critical questions from a social justice standpoint. One aspect of this is that teachers and educators should openly demonstrate their attitudes and persistence toward social justice and social change.

In summary, multicultural education is an ideology, a philosophy, and an educational reform movement that aims for equality and equity for all students; particularly so that
marginalized students can attain academic success and equal access to education (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2003; Grant, 2009; Sleeter & Grant, 2006). It also aims to challenge the institutional policies that sustain unjust systems (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Noguera & Torres, 2008).

Multicultural education aims for social transformation. The principles of social justice are at the heart of multicultural education and hence, social justice education.

**Poverty, Diversity and Educational Policies**

“I have got a chair, I think now I am allowed to study,” said a thirteen-year-old Indonesian boy. He was reported to have come to school bringing a plastic chair. The news went viral, as this was an unusual event. A local newspaper reporter asked him why he did so and he said “my mother said we needed “chair” money so I could continue to go to school. We don’t have the money, so to help my mother, I brought our chair from home to school. I have already got a chair, so I think I can go to school now.”

The boy was on the waiting list to continue his study. It usually means students can have the possibility to join/continue their studies by giving some amount of financial contribution to the school. This financial contribution is what’s called “uang kursi” or “chair money.”¹ The boy translated his mother’s explanation literally as a “chair.”

Public schools are mostly for those who want cheaper tuition costs because they are subsidized by the government. Admission is based on the national examination scores and is highly competitive. The little boy would have nowhere else to go if his parents, as a low-income family, could not provide this “chair” money. Understanding the importance of this “chair,” this boy offered a brilliant solution. Everyone knows and so

---

¹ “Chair money” is a term referring to a common legal policy in Indonesian educational settings. It is the school’s autonomy to decide the amount. This policy helps public schools maintain their operational costs that are not covered by the Indonesian government subsidy.
does he, his fate is hanging on this “chair.” (This narrative is restoried and inspired by a true story)

It is a complex and multilayered matter, indeed. This story underlies, at least, two major problems in the Indonesian education system--the issues of national policies and of poverty. Although this incident happened in Indonesia, it motivates me to look more deeply into studies on how poverty impacts education in the United States and globally.

Poverty is the elephant in the room about which policy makers often seem reluctant to acknowledge, especially in relation to the educational issues. Meanwhile, narratives roar from those living in poverty. There is a plethora or literature to support the contention that poverty affects and is affected by education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Freire, 1970, 1998). Educational policy makers, however, often overlook conditions sustaining poverty.

Poverty is connected to diversity because it often affects minorities or underprivileged groups. Diversity has been a focal point for issues surrounding equality and equity in education and diversity is at the heart of multicultural education. These matters are interconnected. I will delve into the perceptions and policies about diversity related to a social justice orientation. These philosophies and pedagogies undergird the framework of my study.

Issues Related to Diversity

Diversity is defined as “[a] structure that includes the tangible presence of individuals representing a variety of different attributes and characteristics” (Reason, Broido, Davis, & Evans, 2005, p. 8). In social justice education, multicultural attributes in diversity are not only associated with cultures and ethnicities but also correlated with gender, social class, race, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, and ethnicity (Banks, 1991; Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

---

2 Some excerpts were translated and adapted from the original news presented in several newspapers; Surya and Tribunnews, July 16, 2011; Kompas newspaper.
The value of diversity was argued louder and louder in the US in 1990s. The meaning of diversity was also expressed in poetry. One of the strong voices on diversity is the US poet, Dr. Maya Angelou. At Bill Clinton’s inaugural in 1993, she read a poem, “On the Pulse of Morning,” that voices the meaning of diversity, an acknowledgement of the beauty of difference.

If you will study war no more.

Come, clad in peace,

And I will sing the songs

The Creator gave to me when I and the

Tree and the Rock were one.

Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your brow

And when you yet knew you still knew nothing.

The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to

The singing River and the wise Rock.

So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew

The African, the Native American, the Sioux

The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,

The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,

The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,

The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.

They hear. They all hear

The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the first and last of every Tree
Speak to humankind today.

(“On the Pulse of Morning,” Maya Angelou, 1993³)

In this poem, Dr. Maya Angelou identified diversity as a celebration of differences in religions, social classes, ethnicities, genders, and roles in societies. In her view, learning about human beings means understanding the diversity that shapes humankind itself.

Issues of diversity have been challenging in many countries (Freire, 1998; Krisberg, Marchianna, & Baird, 2007; Green & Cherrington, 2010). Diversity can be seen as a threat, it can be denied, or it can be embraced. For instance, a melting pot concept suggests that diversity in the United States is seen as a variety of differences that are “melting” in a pot to become one identity (Archdeacon, 1983). One of the consequences is that immigrants and their descendants were encouraged to break off ties with their home cultures in order to assimilate into the American way of living (Goodfriend, Schmidt, & Stott, 2008). Assimilation is at the core of this concept, assuming that there is “one” American identity. Many scholars (Gates & Higginbotham, 2004; Nathan & Moynihan, 1970; Adams & Strother-Adams, 2001) who support the concept of multicultural identities have problematized this melting pot concept.

A second framework was proposed – the salad bowl concept, which embraces multicultural identities in the United States. It symbolizes the convergence of diverse multi-cultures and ethnicities and sees integration yet with the recognition of the uniqueness of cultures and ethnicities within American society. In Canada, a similar concept was proposed: the Canadian cultural mosaic. It was first termed by John Murray Gibbon (1938). In this concept, diverse ethnicities and cultures are expected to live side by side in harmony with the recognition

³ Born in April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, Dr. Maya Angelou is a United States legend. She worked with Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King. Her poems voice the past, present, and the hope for the future of humanity. Her message of diversity is expressed in her works. She was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. For the complete version of the poem, see Appendix E.
that they bring uniqueness and that they are important parts of the Canadian identities (Wayland, 2003). The Canadian government issued the Canadian Multiculturalism Act to indicate their commitment toward the pluralism that shapes their society (Day, 2000).

Despite efforts to embrace diversity, colorblind or color mute approaches to race and culture enter into multicultural conceptualizations in the United States. This perspective was also evident in discussions in the multiculturalism movements in Britain and France (Bleich, 2001). In this perception, race and culture are not seen as important factors that influence policy or social relations, rather ignoring color as a difference is a way to ignore problems. A criticism of this conception is that instead of embracing the differences as precious contributions to the society, they are unseen. In other words, they do not matter and should be avoided. Many proponents of critical multiculturalism argue that this perpetuates racism and prejudices (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Bell, 1987; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, and Ambady (2010) found in their study that students who were introduced to colorblind approaches had difficulty acknowledging stereotypes and biases. Additionally, they were not critically aware of social injustices within a particular social problem. The findings of the study were that stereotypes and biases were sustained within this view. Diversity in this colorblind or color mute approach is not embraced or celebrated.

A recent study by Killen and Rutland (2011) on the race perceptions of children found that children were “aware of race very early” and this supported the notion that colorblind attitudes may become the seed of further stereotyping actions and prejudices. In this study, two groups of children – White kids and African American kids – were shown two pictures and asked three questions. One picture showed a White child standing behind a swing and a Black child sitting down in front of the swing looking a little uncomfortable. Another picture depicted
similar features except that the races of the kids were reversed. The questions were: What is happening in this picture? Are these two children friends? Would their parents like it if they were friends? The children in the study were first graders (6-7 years olds) and 13-14 years olds. There were 145 children tested in the study, of which 72 were 6-7 year olds and 73 were 13-14 year old children. The study was conducted in three schools: a school with a majority of European-American students (37 students were studied), a school with a majority of African-American students (50 were studied), and a diverse school with African-American and European-American students being the majority (58 were studied). Part of the study was to investigate children’s evaluations of peer encounters.

This study, commissioned by Anderson Cooper, a CNN news reporter, found a gap of perceptions on race between the White students and the Black students. The African American children showed more positive opinions about what was happening in the pictures and that White and Black children can be friends. It appears that African American children are more prepared to talk about race than their White peers. Killen (2011) suggests that this was perhaps due to the parents’ involvement in preparing these children on issues related to race and identity. African American parents prepared their children “for the world of diversity and also for the world of potential discrimination” (CNN Press Room, 2012). On the contrary, White children perceived that something negative was happening in the pictures. Killen states, “White parents often believe their children are socially colorblind and race is not an issue necessary to address.” Talking about race might mean that white parents were acknowledging issues regarding race. The study found that these children were aware of race and issues surrounding race at an early age. The study promotes the value of teaching students about issues related to race as early as possible.
Sleeter (1999, 1996, 2004, 2009) also states that pretending not to see someone’s race and cultural differences is also implying that the individual’s cultural knowledge and practices does not matter. She stresses that racism exists and is embedded in the social systems. In her view, access to a quality education is a constant struggle for students of color. Thus dismissing racial differences can only sustain the “deficit” assumptions about students of color and will further widen the gap of achievements of these marginalized students. Sleeter calls for social justice activism to counter such discriminative systems.

**Freirean Concepts of Social Justice for All**

Critical pedagogy undergirds the conceptualizations of social justice education (Noguera & Torres, 2008). Freire (1970) is one of the leading figures of critical pedagogy. Social justice education has its roots in Freirean perspectives. Freire problematizes the banking concept of education where the power relationship between the teacher and students is characterized as (a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught; (b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; (c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; (d) the teacher chooses and the students comply; (e) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects (p. 54). Freire questions what defines knowledge, what values should be taught, whose perspectives are represented, who is empowered to teach, and who will receive the access to education. These questions are embodied in critical perspectives.

Freire (1987) advocates for critical reflection that leads to action for social change. In this sense, engagement in critical reflection generates in a critical “conscientization.” It is a process of gaining critical understanding and transforming the influences ascribed by the dominant, oppressive perspectives into empowerment of the voiceless. This signifies a primary step to initiate change. In addition, Freire argues that deepened personal awareness, resulting from
reflection upon practice, values and belief, and understandings of the world, is a characteristic of ‘conscientization.’ This critical reflection, however, should not stop at the level of ideas, but should be put into action. Further, Freire suggests that in order to move beyond personal reflection, one should engage in dialogue and collaboration, which will channel people to promote better understanding and co-construct new visions. Nevertheless, it takes persistent commitment and critical engagement to achieve this vision. In this sense, Freire advocates for agents of change. Mutual respect, empathy, humility, sincerity, and openness to the possibilities and ideas presented by others are some of the characteristics of dialogue and collaboration. Freire’s work is grounded in critical reflectivity, questioning, dialogue, collaboration, and praxis to gain critical consciousness and social transformation.

**Indonesia: From Past to Present**

In this section, I present information about Indonesia, in regards to its historical and educational perspectives. I describe this in four major parts. First, I provide general facts about the country. Second, I portray the history of Indonesia starting from the kingdom era onto the independence era. Third, I discuss the concept of diversity in Indonesia, which includes its changes from the first presidency to the reformation era. Fourth, I provide information on education in Indonesia. This information is crucial in understanding the context that shapes Indonesia, both historically and educationally.

**General Facts**

Surrounded by the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia is located in the continent of Asia. It shares land and sea borders with Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Other neighboring countries include Australia, Thailand, and The Philippines. Indonesia is an archipelago country that has a chain of about 17,508 islands, in
which only about 6000 islands are inhabited (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Washington DC, 2015). Situated in the Southeastern part of Asia, Indonesia is crossed by the Equator. Indonesian islands are spread out above and below the Equator. The average temperature across the archipelago ranges from about 26 to 28 degrees Celsius, with just a dry and rainy season.

Figure 2.1 Map of Indonesia
Source: International Council for Open and Distance Education (2008)

Most populations reside on the five main islands (Jawa, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya) and across 30 smaller islands. The capital of Indonesia is located in Jakarta, which is in Jawa (Java) Island. Having the capital city in this island attracts business and socioeconomic opportunities. This means that about 70% of the population lives on the island of Java (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Washington DC, 2015).

Indonesia is home to 238 million people, making this republic country the fourth most populous country in the world after China, India, and the United States. Indonesia has about 300 ethnic groups and 700 languages and dialects. Apart from the ethnic languages, all Indonesian people speak Bahasa Indonesia, which is the national, and official language. Indonesian people assume religions such as Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, along with a minority of other faiths. Moslems represent the biggest religious population in the country.
Journey to the Past

In this section, I will take a journey to the past. Indonesian history is very complex and filled with both glorious paths and also long and painful roads. Freire (1970) argues that understanding the past is important to understand one’s identity. Thus, learning Indonesian history and having a critical view on its aspects are crucial to understanding one’s identity as an Indonesian. This makes teaching and learning that is based on social justice principles, not only vital but also an area that needs constant and focused consideration and application into the Indonesian educational system.

Historically, Indonesia comprised of many kingdoms. However, the existence of life in Indonesia was present long before these kingdoms were established. It has been established that life existed around four million years BC across Indonesia. Paleoanthropologist and geologist Eugene Dubois found some fossils of the first Hominids in Java Island. He later referred to the Pithecanthropus Erectus (ape-human that stands upright) fossils (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015; Mudyahardjo, 2009) as “Java Man”. Eugene Dubois went on a search of these fossils after the news that a human skull had been found by a mining engineer at Wadjak in 1888 (Shipman, 2001). Historians predict that these Java men lived on the island from around 2 million to 500,000 years ago (Swisher, Curtis, Lewin, 2000).

Centuries later, Buddhism and Hinduism were introduced throughout the islands of Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and other smaller islands. With the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism, the kingdoms were primarily run based on the philosophies and ideologies of these two religions. One of the powerful kingdoms, Sriwijaya (Srivijaya), contributed to the growth of Buddhism. The existence of the kingdom dates back to the seventh century. The Kings or Maharajahs of Sriwijaya traded with neighboring areas. This brought about influences in beliefs
and trading systems, and the introduction of agricultural tools. The Sriwijaya kingdom ran areas such as Jambi, Lampung, and Palembang in Sumatra Island, Bangka Islands, and areas in Central Java (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

Another powerful kingdom was the Majapahit Empire, which was founded in the East of Java (1293-1500). The Majapahit kingdom is considered as a Hindu empire. It was one of the very few kingdoms that had a female figurehead, the Queen Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewito, as the leader of the sovereignty. The kingdom controlled most areas of Java Island, Bali Island, and parts of the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua (Irian Jaya). The Majapahit Empire gave Indonesian people, and the world, one of the greatest gifts with the building of Borobudur temple (Kahin, 1952).

In the early thirteenth century, Muslim traders from Gujarati and Persian visited Indonesia. Historians found cemeteries with Islamic names in Sumatra Island and Java Island (Whitten, Soeriaatmadja, & Suraya, 1996) that indicated the presence of Muslim merchants in Indonesia during this century. With this trading relationship, Islam was introduced. The religion developed greatly in the later centuries. There are still, however, a lot of debates and questioning in regards to why Islam became so popular and thus gained many followers in Indonesia. As previously stated, Indonesia is considered to be the largest Muslim populated country.

After the glory of the kingdom periods, there was a huge gap in Indonesian history that has yet to be discovered. Hundreds of years after the kingdoms and prior to Independence, Indonesia experienced one of the darkest periods in its history as several countries occupied and controlled Indonesia.

As stories and information about Indonesia (which was yet to be named Indonesia) had become more popular in European countries, the position of the country became fragile to the
influence of other countries. The fact that Indonesia was, and still is, rich in natural resources including spices, oil, gold and other forms of minerals, led Portugal, Spain, Holland, and Japan to travel to and trade with Indonesia (Mudyahardjo, 2009). Initially, the intention was to trade. Along the way, greed and the lust for power took over the initial trading intentions and these countries then invaded various parts of Indonesia and took over the production of spices and other natural resources. The Dutch occupied many regions and islands of Indonesia and used the country, and its people, as its natural trading resource. During this colonial period, Indonesian people suffered a great deal physically and psychologically.

After the Dutch occupation, the suffering did not stop. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan advanced to Indonesia, which was known as The Dutch East Indies at the time. The Japanese troops came and took over Indonesia, which at the time was seen as a Dutch colony and was therefore viewed as the “property” of the Dutch government (Brown, 2003).

Indonesia’s position leading to Independence was interconnected and influenced by a series of global wars. In the 1940s, even though the Netherlands positioned themselves to be “neutral” when the Second World War broke out, German troops entered the Netherlands and bombed several cities. This forced the Netherlands to surrender. Following this, on December 8, 1941 under German occupation, the Dutch declared war on Japan in alliance with the American, British, and Chinese forces. The American involvement in this alliance was perhaps spurred by Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Japan had also invaded China in the late 1930s. With the aim of expanding its empire, Japanese armed forces arrived in Indonesia in 1942. Indonesia was seen as a Dutch colony and thus it would have been considered a strategic victory to take and possess the country. Additionally, it was viewed that Indonesian’s natural
resources would benefit Japan as it had the Dutch. The Japanese invasion of Indonesia during the Second World War signified the end of the Dutch rule.

Initially, the local villagers of Indonesia saw the Japanese forces as liberators from the Dutch colonists. As time unfolded, the Japanese occupation was filled with brutality and this led to severe hardship across Indonesia. The occupation led to the loss of at least 4 million Indonesian lives as people died of illness and starvation and shootings during the enforcement of Romusha – Manual Labor for Japan. The laborers were forced to build roads, fortresses, and houses for the Japanese armies and representatives.

As the Japanese arrived in 1942, they needed the local people to help them to fight against the Dutch. Therefore, some Indonesian people recognized the common interests and agreed to provide young people to be trained as soldiers to help end Dutch occupation. Amongst these soldiers was Soekarno, an Indonesian nationalist, who later became Indonesia’s first President. During the Dutch occupation, Soekarno was imprisoned for four years due to his political views and activities. When the Dutch occupation ended, the fight for freedom continued during the Japanese occupation. Soekarno took advantage of the military training that he and a number of his fellow citizens had received from the Japanese military and inspired these soldiers to fight in the name of Indonesia instead (Friend, 2003). In this period, many ethnic groups had become more focused and were unified in battles against the colonists. Under the leadership of individuals such as Budi Utomo, Sukarno, Tan Malaka, and Setiabudi, many ethnic groups spread out across the country had a more organized agenda for obtaining Indonesian Independence. The feeling of shared goals and unity inspired more people to join the fight. Despite the regional differences, they fought hand in hand to get the motherland free from the colonizers – the Dutch and Japanese.
In 1945 when America bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered. This meant that the Japanese troops in Indonesia were also forced to surrender. Realizing the circumstance of this opportunity, the Indonesian people, who had tirelessly fought for their freedom for centuries, saw a vacuum in authority. With the support of many local organizations, Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945. However, the Dutch were not willing to let go of their control and acknowledge this independence. After a Round Table meeting in The Hague in 1949 the Dutch government was eventually “strongly encouraged” by the international committee to agree to acknowledge Indonesian sovereignty. However, we have to realize that this sovereignty was not without a catch. The Round Table meeting was headed by representatives from the United States of America and consisted of the United Nation commission and delegates from the Netherlands and Indonesia. All the parties, except the Indonesian delegates, suggested that, as a colony of the Dutch, Indonesia had to agree to pay the Dutch debt of 4.3 Billion Guilders for the war they were involved in. This payment of the expenses the Dutch had incurred during their occupation would entitle the Indonesians to their freedom. The Indonesian delegates were pressured to sign the agreement if they wanted to have their Independence recognized in the International communities (Kahin, 1952). With so much pressure and the will to be recognized as a country, the Indonesian delegates at the time signed this unjust agreement. This meant that the colonized citizens had to pay their colonists in order to be free.

**National Identities: The Concept of Nusantara**

The concept of “Nusantara” is important in order to understand the issues related to Indonesian identity and nationalism. According to Taylor (2003), the phrase was, arguably, first termed by Gajah Mada, a military general and the Prime Minister of the Majapahit kingdom.
This Sanskrit phrase was used in Gajah Mada’s dedication oath called “Sumpah Palapa” (Palapa Vow) to the kingdom in 1336, found in ancient Javanese manuscripts Pararaton and Negarakertagama. Indonesian historians Kartodirjo, Poesponegoro, and Nutosusanto (1990) explain that the phrase first appeared earlier than 1336 and was described by the King Kertanagara of Singasari kingdom in 1275. The words used were “Cakravala Mandala Dvipantara” which also have a similar meaning to the word “Nusantara.”

The concept of Nusantara in the era of the Majapahit Empire and Singasari is interpreted as follows:

1. Negara Agung means the core kingdom or the Grand State. In the era of the Majapahit kingdom, this means the area within East Java and its surrounding areas.

2. Mancanegara means the areas surrounding Negara Agung. This includes the islands of Java, Madura, Bali, and Sumatra.

3. Nusantara means areas outside Java Island, or areas that were yet to be governed under the Majapahit Empire. This includes Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei, East Timor and Thailand. (Friend, 2003)

The concept of Nusantara was redefined during the era of Dutch occupation. The concept was then reintroduced by Ernest Francois Eugene Douwes Dekker with a new meaning. Ernest Francois Eugene Douwes Dekker, also known as Danoedirdja Setiaboedi, was an Indonesian-Dutch descendent who was actively involved in fighting for Indonesia’s freedom during the Dutch occupation. He was stationed in Java Island, where he interacted closely with the local people. He saw first hand how the local laborers were badly treated by the Dutch colonists. The Setiaboedi is the name given to Eduard Douwes Dekker, who was also known as Multatuli. He is the writer of Max Havelaar which revealed the abuse of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.
Setiaboedi used the word Nusantara to refer to the whole region of Indonesia. The phrase was accompanied with his inspiring message calling out for Indonesian independence. In Dutch history, Setiaboedi is illustrated as a “tragic and misunderstood historic figure” (Kahin, 1952) but in Indonesian history he is considered a national hero. Soekarno, the first President of Indonesia, regarded him as his mentor and teacher. The concept of Nusantara is based on the description of Setiabudi and has since been widely used in many government documents and newspapers.

Indonesian history is very complex and complicated. Unfortunately, this complexity is not represented in history books taught in schools (Mudyahardjo, 2009). In addition, the school curricula pay limited attention to critical issues and give little room for development of identities for both teachers and students in regards to their history. The process of understanding one’s history is as important as changing one’s present and future identity. From a critical point of view, when we learn history, we learn how a piece of “evidence” is presented. From this, we can learn which perspectives are represented, and can understand the tensions that surround it. We then learn to ask critical questions. For instance, Setiaboedi is described as a tragic figure by the Dutch government, but a hero according to the Indonesian government. School curricula should include the tensions and complexity that are embedded in Indonesian history.

In critical pedagogy, the efforts in redefining the word Nusantara and using it as a means to unify the country and fight against the oppression can be seen as renaming the word and the world (Freire, 1970). This praxis is derived from a critical reflection and results in the commitment for social change and the courage to inspire others to fight for freedom. Setiaboedi does not only change his own thinking but also others - resulting in social change. Many fought with Setiaboedi to break the cycle of Dutch occupation. While risking their lives, these people
understood the value of freedom and dignity to live as a free human being. Thus, when we learn history, we should learn aspects beyond just memorization of dates and events. In this case, learning history means a realization that we are part of history and that we have the ability to make history. This means that we have the power to change the oppression that takes place around us. Setiaboedi’s action is an important example of how one can contribute to social change in order to fight against the social injustices. Additionally, social justice education (Noguera & Torres, 2008) is a crucial conduit for learning these issues and is a thread that links the past, present, and future through critical thinking and a social justice agency.

**Diversity in Indonesia: A Threat or A Resource?**

With 700 languages and 300 ethnic groups, Indonesia is a diverse nation. The society is built upon multi ethnicities and multi cultures. Thus the diversity of the nation is, in fact, very real and not a mere perception. There have been many debates around the concept and nature of this “multiculturalism.” One side posits that Indonesia is a homogenous population. In this sense, the majority of people of Indonesia consist of one race, Asian - Indonesian people. The other side suggests that Indonesia is a diverse society (Mukhtar & Iskandar, 2009; Vatikiotis, 1993). Another position recognizes the position of the diversity and sees the need to be one, as suggested by the Indonesian motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.” The motto means unity in diversity or many but one. The Indonesian pioneers understood through history and struggles for the independence of Indonesia, that the fabric of the society is sewn upon diversity in cultures, ethnicities, politics, social classes, economics and educational backgrounds. Thus, following independence, the nation agreed upon the motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. This concept has been explored throughout Indonesian history. The way the leader views this concept impacts the way the country is run. The conception has experienced many defining and redefining moments.
Defining a national identity or identities is an unfinished process for a nation and it should continue to be so if they want to grow.

**Onto the Indonesian Independence: The Concept of Many But One**

The journey to achieve its potential to be united in this diversity, however, has been a huge challenge. It had taken hundreds of years for the Indonesian people to finally come together and pledge that the diversity was not a threat but a resource for the movement fighting for Indonesian Independence. In 1928, during the Dutch occupation, the youth from many ethnic groups secretly got together and made a pledge as one entity for one motherland, one nation, and one language. Although the unity would consist of many varieties of people, they were one. The pledge inspired many people from other parts of Indonesia and the feeling of unity was proliferated. The need to be “one” big identity was perceived as a major factor in the efforts in fighting for the Independence (Vatikiotis, 1993). In 1945, Indonesia, indeed, proclaimed its Independence.

Following the country’s independence, the issues of diversity, however, have continued to be an ongoing challenge. This ranges from issues related to the distribution of financial support, taxes, natural resources, education, representatives at the Congress, and beyond (Vatikiotis, 1993). Although the Indonesian people have accepted the fact that Indonesian society is built upon many ethnicities and differences, the implementation of the concept of diversity in “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” is still focused on *many* instead of one in this era.

**New Order Era: Being One**

After the death of the first President of Indonesia, President Soeharto came to the presidency. His presidency plays an important role in Indonesian history. He led the country for thirty-two years. He called his presidency the New Order Era (Era Orde Baru, 19).
In the New Order era, when the second President of Indonesia, Soeharto, took leadership, the concept of diversity was redefined. The meaning of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika was emphasized in the One-ness. In this sense, Soeharto saw from the past that, in his view, diversity could be a threat to the nation’s integration. Thus he strongly suggested that the only way to be united in this diversity was to leave behind any aspects of differences. Within his leadership he initiated a government policy which banned the people from discussing issues related to race or ethnicity, religions or faiths, or any group-related matters (In Indonesian language known as SARA – Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Grup). One of the premises of this decision, perhaps, was based on the fear of differences. In this case, fear of differences that would increase the challenges towards integration of the country. In addition, fear of conflict might also be the foundation of the issuance of the policy. In this case, differences are seen as the seed of conflicts that will tear apart the country. According to this view, the only way to save this hugely diverse nation from falling apart is if the people are concentrated solely as one on the efforts of nation’s integration. Thus the concept of unity in diversity, or many but one, is stressed on “being one” and assuming one identity – the national Indonesian identity.

Being an Indonesian national in this era means that each individual needs to understand his or her place in the local and larger society. Unfortunately, in this case, it means that every person is both on the front line of the government’s agenda and a small compartment of the country. Thus, the country’s needs and agendas have to go beyond personal and group interests. This concept derives from one of the verses of the Pancasila and is also found in the 1945 Constitution. The principle discussed in both ideologies is a reminder that the building of the nation falls onto every Indonesian’s shoulders, not just onto the government (Vatikiotis, 1993). Additionally, it is a reminder that the government is the people, in the sense that it works for and
with the people. In this case, each Indonesian is reminded to prioritize the country’s needs more than the individual or group’s desires and wants. It also signifies that an Indonesian also has a duty to be ready to sacrifice for the greater good or for the country. It is one of the responsibilities an Indonesian assumes.

Apart from the responsibilities, an Indonesian also has rights that must be protected by the government and society. Amongst the rights described in the Pancasila and 1945 Constitution are having the right to education, freedom to express their opinions, thoughts and ideas, freedom to implement their religion or faith, the right to live and live freely from fear and discrimination, and to be seen and treated equally in the eye of law. Interestingly, in 1945 Constitution, the duty to defend the country is listed as the rights and obligation of each Indonesian, with the word “rights” being written before the duty. It may mean that the country recognizes the importance of the citizen’s rights before the obligation in regards to defending the country.

**Indoctrination.** The implementation of this nationalism concept during the New Order took on new meaning and became a doctrine. This new nationalism became more than a recommendation of another way of viewing the citizen’s duties for their country. It went further and became a doctrine to be followed by all the Indonesian citizens. The indoctrination includes (a) putting forward ideas (with consequences if not followed) that Indonesians should always prioritize the country’s agendas and plans, (b) prohibition that Indonesians should never discuss any issues related to religions or faiths, ethnicities, social class or groups, (c) prohibition of attempts to rewrite history and that Soeharto should be seen as the most important hero of the nation, (d) glorifying the actions of armed forces, (e) the disappearance of Soekarno’s leadership information in the history books taught in schools and the reproduction of history books based on
the government’s “truths”, and most of all (f) “integration” is seen as the only and most important way to unite the nation (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003).

This indoctrinated integration during the New Order era worked for a short time. In the 1980s Indonesia reached its economic peak. Indonesia was also considered the “tiger of Asia” (Bünte, 2009). Although politically suppressed, the country’s economic growth was roaring in the first half (for about 15 years) of Soeharto’s presidency. The availability of jobs was quite high and the prices for fuel, foods, and the cost of education were low. The advancement of technology was also prioritized. This is perhaps one of the reasons that the Indonesian people “nodded” towards Soeharto’s continued leadership in the early periods of his presidency.

This quasi philosophy on integration efforts, however, had become a machine to manipulate the system and limit Indonesian people’s rights to freedom of speech and political, social, cultural and economical actions. Although the law and foundations of the nation – The Pancasila and 1945 Constitution – protect these rights, they were not easily implemented without “permission” from the government during the New Order era. There were consequences awaiting those who would dare to break this government “recommendation.” The focus of integrating the nation explicitly means that the government is vital to everything for the Indonesian citizens. It also underlies the message that the President holds absolute power and can ask for anything from the citizens. This means, therefore, that people are obliged to sacrifice in the name of the country.

The concept of diversity in the New Order era turned into something that was originated by the government and for the government, instead of for the people. In the name of the people and the country, the government used the authority to indoctrinate the voters to elect the political party that would extend Soeharto’s reign (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). As a result, Soeharto held the
presidency for 32 years. Another indoctrination in this leadership was the government’s campaign for the people to fully accept and believe in the government. In this view, this is because the government is the people, is the voice of the people, and has the people interests at heart. Unfortunately, the reality contradicted the purpose and intention.

**Absolutism.** In this era, Soeharto gained many both voluntary and involuntary supporters and followers. The spokesperson of the President of Indonesia at the time [Moerdiono, 1988-1998] stated that the government was indeed by the people because they represent the people and people’s voices (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). Another side of the opinion suggests that the people were often disconnected from their government. Structurally and ideally, a government is a representation of the people’s voices. There is, however, a big difference between the position of a government and people. A government is the people *with* power, authority and resources that can enforce and affect all aspects of their people. This puts the position between a government and its common people in a different position with the common people being powerless most of the time. In Soeharto’s era, there was a time when Soeharto’s authority was considered an absolute order and his wishes were the people’s command; rendering people at his service. In his latter years of leadership, Soeharto turned into a dictator. As previously stated, it appears that when there is power, there is also potential and opportunity to abuse it. The Indonesian government under Soeharto’s leadership became heavily corrupt and abusive of their power. For instance, the government shut down the Indonesian branch of “Time Magazine” because the magazine printed a picture of Soeharto that the government (read: the President) considered mocking and critical of Soeharto’s leadership. The office was shut down within 24 hours of this article’s publication (Bünte, 2009). In this leadership era, the government strictly controlled public information. The censor system for media was strong. Newspapers, TV, and radio were
also strongly supervised. The government convinced people that all of these efforts were necessary for peace and to hold the nation together.

**Ethnic blind approach.** Under the New Order cabinet, the government held the view that diversity had created many problems in the past. Therefore, in their view, it was critical to avoid seeing differences or even perhaps try to ignore the differences. Soeharto chose the “color blind” concept (Vickers, 2005) or in this case the ethnical and cultural mute approach to overcome the problems that rose due to issues of diversity. Studies have reported (Anderson, 2007; Awad, Cokley, & Ravitch, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Killen & Rutland, 2011) that the color-blind approach only further sustains stereotypes, prejudices and injustices. In the political arena, this approach has also caused the nation to regress in its efforts to talk about differences, the richness of ethnicities, languages, and the social classes that shape Indonesian society.

When the economy crisis hit Indonesia in the late 1990s, the Indonesian people, who had long been politically suppressed, also then experienced huge economical suppression. Unemployment was high and it was a tough for everyday people to put food on the table. The costs of education were continually increasing and poverty was high. A series of human rights violations were executed by Soeharto’s regime, which in turn led to the people’s movement. The military was then used to encounter these people movement (Purdey, 2006). Indonesian college students, professors, workers, and a large number of pockets of communities across many Indonesian regions got together and protested on the streets. A number of people were killed as they fought for freedom out of the tyrannical leadership (Purdey, 2006). After a series of protests, Soeharto finally resigned. It was a victory to many Indonesian people who longed for a more democratic government.
Reformation Era

The Reformation era (1998-present) started with the fall of Soeharto. This major change in governance led to Habibie, who was the Vice President during Soeharto’s era, being appointed as the next President. Habibie led Indonesia for one year only. He was blamed, and impeached, for his failure to settle the matters in East Timor (now Timor Leste), which resulted in the parting of the region from Indonesian unified regions (Lloyd & Smith, 2001). From 1999-2004, Indonesia impeached their presidents two times and elected four presidents during this period (Von Luebke, 2010). Gus Dur, the fourth President of Indonesia (who was the head of the largest conservative Muslim party), proposed pardoning the people related to this crime. Gus Dur also opened up relationships with China and Israel during his presidency. These controversial decisions perhaps led to his impeachment. To many people, he was a modern thinker and it was seen as unfortunate that he was impeached. After experiencing this political roller coaster, the country started to stabilize in 2004. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected and is the President of Indonesia, at the time of this research. He has held the presidency for two terms. Congress amended the 1945 Constitution during this Reformation Era and stated that the period of the presidency was to be five years and would be limited to two terms. The concept of diversity in the reformation era has been more focused on the development of democracy and a shift of power from the central government to the local governments. In this case, diversity means to give more authority to local governments.

The meaning of diversity has experienced changes in its focus and conceptions. Each leader interprets the conception differently. In the wish to make the right choice, the conception of Many But One evolves from one reign to another. The issues of power underlie the way the conception is utilized. For instance, understanding that Indonesia is highly diverse, Soekarno –
the first President of Indonesia – used the concept of diversity as a resource to encourage the building of national identity. Soekarno also directed the nation away from western imperialism or monopoly ideology. In this case, he chose socialism to bring the diverse nation together. Soeharto, the second President, learned that the differences could be a possible threat to the nation’s integration. Thus, he insisted that the conception of *Many But One* should be emphasized on being *one*. Unfortunately, in focusing on one-ness, Soeharto chose to apply the ethnic-blind approach. In this perspective, Indonesian people were banned from seeing other people as different and banned from any discussions related to differences such as ethnicity, race, religion, and regional groups to maintain integration. The conception of diversity and how it is interpreted and employed in each leadership is different. This relates to power issues such as control and authority. These two examples show that the way we view diversity impacts the way the country is run. Thus, we as Indonesians should critically view the conception and continue to do so. This also means a critical examination of how power is used, how diversity is viewed by those in power, and how this affects the powerless. This is another premise why social justice education (Noguera & Torres, 2008) should be a vital component to be integrated in our teaching and learning process.

These political changes indicate that Indonesian people are learning to redefine their identities and continue to learn and grow from the mistakes of the past. Nevertheless, these issues are not given room for discussions in the school curricula. It seems that the curricula further disconnect students from past and present issues. Learning political, social, educational, and cultural issues is vital to construct one’s identity as an Indonesian. It is also fundamental for preparing students to be future leaders in a world full of complex local and global challenges.
Education in Indonesia

Historically, Indonesian education has gone through several major changes. In this section I will describe briefly the Indonesian educational system since the era of Independence in 1945 and onward to provide a bigger picture of the efforts, challenges, and complexities the country has faced and continues to struggle with.

Education Under Soekarno’s Leadership

In this section, I will provide a brief portrait of education under Soekarno’s leadership. The first period under Soekarno’s leadership was called the “Unified Era.”

In 1945, the Indonesian people elected Soekarno as the first President of Indonesia and Moehammad Hatta as the Vice President. Soekarno was President of Indonesia from 1945-1967. He led Indonesia for twenty years and after his death during a military coup, the country was then led by one of his generals, Soeharto. Soekarno was an inspiring president. Politically, Soekarno was a Marxist follower. He founded the Marhaenism [based on the name of a farmer he met “Marhaen”] paradigm that underlies the fight for powerless people. Soekarno was perhaps the only president who ever walked out of the United Nations because he thought the United Nations was the puppet of the powerful countries and in protest of Malaysia’s admission (Taylor, 1960). Soekarno suspected that Malaysia was “formed” to protect British imperialism and feared for more colonization going into Indonesia (Taylor, 1960). Unfortunately, Soekarno’s vulgar acceptance toward socialism backfired and resulted in an allegedly CIA-military coup in 1965 (Mortimer, 2006) to dismantle the communism ideology led by the Indonesian communist party [Partai Komunis Indonesia - PKI]. In Indonesian historical teaching, the military coup [Soeharto’s era] was believed to be sponsored by the PKI.
Prevailing world opinion today would have us believe that the real source of international tension and strife is ideological conflict between the great powers. I think that is not true. There is a conflict which cuts deeper into the flesh of man, and that is the conflict between the new emergent forces for freedom and justice and the old forces of domination, the one pushing its head relentlessy through the crust of the earth which has given it its lifeblood, the other striving desperately to retain all it can, trying to hold back the course of history. (Soekarno’s speech as quoted in Kahin, 1952).

Under Soekarno’s leadership, the Indonesian people fought hard to rise from the painful past and define national identities. However, Indonesia at the time was in such despair from the residue of colonialization and the massive debt resulting from the unjust agreement of the Round Table meeting in 1949. Therefore, Soekarno’s leadership faced great challenges both domestically and internationally.

Regulations and policies about the educational system began to form in 1946. The Minister of Education initiated a general guide that Indonesian national education was based on its philosophies of Pancasila and Undang Undang Dasar 1945 (the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia), which are the foundations of the Republic of Indonesia. In the Unified Era, education was primarily aimed for the Indonesian citizens to offer the country their ideas and service for the building of the new nation (Mudyahardjo, 2009).

Pancasila derives from Sanskrit language, which means Five Principles. Soekarno, the first President of Indonesia, introduced this ideology during an initial congress meeting and it was approved as the guiding ideology for the nation. The Five Principles include: (a) belief in God, (b) a just and civilized humanity, (c) the unity of Indonesia, (d) democracy guided by inner
wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations within the people and amongst the representatives, (e) social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

These five principles contain verses that explain in more detail the desired way of living for Indonesians.

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia contains the basic rights and responsibilities of the Indonesian government and of the people of Indonesia. For instance, the Constitution states that Indonesia is a republic and that the Congress elects the President. The Constitution also regulates basic rights and responsibilities of the President of Indonesia. The rights of the people of Indonesia include the rights to live, to speak freely, to assume and practice a religion and faith, to be seen as equal in the eyes of the law, the rights to have education. The responsibilities of the Indonesian people include the duty to defend the country when needed.

The capital city in this era was in Yogyakarta, Central Java. In 1950, the Minister of Education issued a decree on national education (UU No. 4 Th 1950). In this decree, four main views are depicted:

1. The decree states that Indonesian education and teaching aims to create civilized, competent humans and aims to shape democratic, responsible citizens who will contribute to the society and the country (Paragraph 3).

2. The education and teaching are based on the ideology and philosophy explained in Pancasila (Paragraph 4)

3. Bahasa Indonesia is to be used as the official and national language in school settings in Indonesia (Paragraph 5)

4. In addition to Bahasa Indonesia, ethnic languages may be used in schools from kindergarten to the third grade settings.
In this era, the Minister of Education decided that the national education was divided into three stages: elementary education, middle education, and high education.

Table 2. 1

*Education System in 1945-1950*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Level Education</th>
<th>University, Advanced Schools</th>
<th>Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Level of Middle School</td>
<td>Technical Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Level of Education</td>
<td>First Level of Middle School</td>
<td>First Level of Technical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State School of Special Skills (i.e. Carpentry etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Folk School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is reported that although only having a small number of members, the women’s’ movement was present during this era (Bourchier, 2007; Lloyd & Smith, 2001; Martyn, 2004). Most female teachers taught in elementary schools and male teachers taught more in middle schools and high schools. The Women’s Association was established in 1926 to support the movement for Indonesian independence and The Women Teachers Association was a branch of this organization (Martyn, 2004). Although teaching professions were available for women at the elementary schools, the roles of men predominate in almost every aspect of education and governance (Sullivan, 1995).
Education Under the New Order Era

Under the New Order era, education did not receive great attention. Although tuition costs were relatively affordable in the first half of Soeharto’s leadership, the national budget for education was very low (Bjork, 2004). The central government controls the assessment and evaluation of teachers. This includes rotating teachers, promoting teachers, hiring and firing teachers (Mukhtar & Iskandar, 2009). Schools were used as a place to sustain the status quo. Teachers were obligated to vote for “Golkar”, Soeharto’s political party (Jenkins, 2010). The central government maintained so much power over the regional governments.

In 1994, in attempt to boast local potentials, the central government suggested that a local content lesson was to be added into the school curricula. A researcher, Bjork (2004, 2005), carried out an ethnographic study on the Indonesian local content curricula and found a big gap between the written set of goals and its implementation. The local content curricula were developed in 1994 to include more local resources in the curriculum and link the materials taught in class to suit the local community’s needs. These local content curricula were the seed of the competence-based curricula issued in 2004. The study suggests that although the committee of the National Board of Education encouraged the teachers and local reformers to communicate with their local community and engage them in the making of local content curriculum for their regional schools, teachers did not seem to be very enthusiastic to offer input. According to Bjork (2004), one of the premises is the civil service culture. In most western countries, the teaching profession is acknowledged as an independent or individual occupation; in Indonesia it is considered a civil servant position. In this view, teachers are regarded as government officers, whose duties are to “serve” the government and the country (p. 190). Thus, although changes are highly promoted, the fundamental idea and belief that grounds the teacher-government
relationship does not change. Teachers are still very much “reminded” of their duties and responsibilities to the central government. Further, teachers are still evaluated based on their loyalty, obedience, and cooperation, apart from their work performance and initiatives and creativity (p. 204). This type of evaluation was used prior to 1994 and still presently takes place in schools and universities. The reform that includes increasing teachers’ authority is limited by these boundaries. Teachers are conflicted between the choice to expand their autonomy and influence within the schools or perhaps damage the security of their jobs. Teachers’ unresponsiveness toward the reform can be understood in that they would prefer the security of their job than being encouraged to become critical thinkers. It could be said that the teachers may be critical thinkers, but fear the outcome of any actions to which these thoughts may lead.

The Education System Today

In the Indonesian philosophy of education, teachers hold vital roles and responsibilities. The philosophy adopts three key principles; “Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodho, Ing Madya Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani.” In 1949, the first minister of Indonesian education, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, initiated these famous principles. The principles are translated as “at the front giving an example, in the middle giving encouragements and at the back giving support and assistance.” Teacher education institutions employ the last phrase “Tut Wuri Handayani” as their symbol to describe their philosophy of “supporting” teachers in Indonesian education (Aqib, 2002). The three principles underscore the importance of teachers in the educational realm and imply a holistic approach surrounding teachers’ roles.

Within these principles, teachers are expected to be good role models and leaders, not only for their students, but also for their peers and their surroundings. Teachers are expected to be active participants, be it in educational settings or in the society at large. Active participation
involves creativity, innovation, and persistence. Behind the scenes, teachers show their wisdom by giving their support to their students and social institutions. With the high expectation on teacher roles in schools and within society, teachers hold high responsibilities to not only transfer the knowledge, but also shape the moral values and persona of the students.

**Education in decentralization era.** Indonesia experienced a major shift in national governance in early 2000. The Indonesian government, which was a heavily centralized government for 55 years, underwent a significant change—the implementation of a decentralized system in governing. Changes in the political arena paralleled subsequent changes in the educational system. The centralized education system was decentralized. In this system, regional governments would have more authority in funding decisions and governing education. In 2004 the Indonesian government issued instructions for a decentralized curriculum to be implemented in all schools across the nation. With this more decentralized decision-making about curriculum, the Indonesian government hoped to achieve the goals of “education for all” (Brock-Utne, 2000).

In response to the decentralization, the Indonesian government proposed a competence-based curriculum.

According to the Minister of Indonesian National Education, the competence-based curriculum encompasses a set of plans containing methods, selection of materials and objectives to implement the goals [formulated by the National Boards of Education]. It also embraces local values and equips students with certain competencies as the result of learning. It should prepare students with skills ready for present and future challenges.

(Ministry of Indonesian National Education – MINE, 2004)

The competence-based curriculum was perhaps selected on the influence from the neighboring countries. In early 2000, several neighboring countries such as Thailand, Hong
Kong, and Malaysia had utilized the competence-based curriculum, also known as the outcome-based curriculum (Deneen, Brown, & Bond, 2013). The Ministry of Indonesian National Education brought up the discussions over this curriculum in Indonesia and promoted that the curriculum would offer space for creativity and freedom to include ideas and thoughts for teachers (Ministry of Indonesian National Education, 2000). The competence-based curriculum was perhaps regarded to be the most suitable follow-up to the decentralization movement. In 2004, the competence-based curriculum (CBC) was then initiated to offer curriculum reform as a result of the decentralization. The emphasis of the competence-based curriculum was intended to move beyond rote memorization to competence as the goal of learning. The Indonesian government formulated a guide for the implementation of the competence-based curriculum. It contains the purposes and standards of competences for students. It also required teachers to expand their roles and teach in new ways. They are expected to exercise more professionalism in their teaching.

In 2006, the Ministry of National Education in Indonesia introduced a new curriculum model that was expanded and refined from the competence-based curriculum. The new model of curriculum was called “Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan” [KTSP – Autonomous/Local-Based Curriculum]. It carried out similar aims to competence-based curriculum with more emphasis on the local contents of each school/region. Some studies (Amalia, 2009; Muhaimin, Sutiah, & Prabowo, 2008; Muslich, 2007) suggest that in many educational aspects, competence-based curriculum and autonomous/local-based curriculum were conducted without a sufficient preparation and provision of strong support for teachers. In 2013, the government launched another curriculum reform. It is a common to see a newly elected government usually propose new educational reforms, although in this case, the government led by the President Susilo
Bambang Yudhoyono [also known as SBY] was at the end of his leadership (2009-2014). In critical pedagogy, Brock-Utne (2000) problematizes the imposition of educational reforms/policies. The effects of the newest reform(s) proposed by the Indonesian government remain to be seen.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodology in my study. I will: (a) provide a brief research overview, (b) rationale for choosing qualitative inquiry, critical ethnography, and narrative approach, (c) briefly discuss the context of Indonesia, Jakarta, and the school, (d) explain the data collection, (d) data analysis, and (e) researcher’s stance.

Research Overview

Community-founded schools are often overlooked in formal educational systems (Carneal, 2004; Miller-Grandvaux & Yoder, 2002). This is certainly the case in the Indonesian educational system. Community-founded schools in Indonesia, especially for students from low-income families, are not much recognized. Although the Indonesian government put forward its recommendation for education for young children in 2011 and produced their first modules/guidelines in late 2012, the guidance, support, and commitment for these community-founded schools remains to be seen.

The school where I conducted research has helped many children move off the streets and into this school [personal communication with a founder of the school, 2010]. The school was founded in 1984. Many of these children would not have been accepted in the “regular” education system because of the parents’ level of poverty and thus their inability to pay the tuition. Although public schools offer some scholarships, the families could not afford other costs of their children’s education such as books, uniforms, transport, and other resources. Children in impoverished areas are typically more often found on the streets than in schools (Carneal, 2004; Miller-Grandvaux & Yoder, 2002).

For these reasons, I chose Semanggi School as my research setting to learn from its
successes and struggles. In addition, learning how the school was contextualized in the community helped me understand the voices of the teachers in my dialogue group, which was the focus of my research. I visited the school, located in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2010, and was so impressed by what I saw in the school and community that I wanted to learn more about it. In essence, I wanted to see what I could learn from the teachers in Semanggi School if we talked about social justice issues using a dialogue group. Dialogue is one of the most transformative ways of promoting multicultural education (Dolby, 2000; Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 2004). This dialogue forum was intended as a medium where the teachers and I could talk and learn from each other about issues related to multicultural/social justice education.

With 300 ethnic groups, 700 ethnic languages and dialects, multi faiths, and landscapes (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Washington DC, 2015), Indonesia is highly diverse. With this diversity, there is a vital need to express unity. This is pledged in the national axiom, “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (unity in diversity). Multiculturalism is valued in Indonesia but it is not much found in the schools’ curricula (Amalia, 2009; Muhaimin, Sutiah & Prabowo, 2008; Muslich, 2007). Thus, the study, in a way, intended to provide the teachers a conduit to delve into issues surrounding multiculturalism in Indonesia. Further, the new national educational policy regulated by the Indonesian ministry of education requires teachers to develop critical thinking, which is an aspect of teaching for social justice that presently is not much given room in the schools’ pedagogies (National Curriculum Center, 2010).

My research question was:

- How does participation in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) in a community-founded school?”
- How is the Semanggi School situated within larger communities and cultures?
How does participating in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of their identities, issues of poverty and education, and national policies?

As previously stated, I used the term *multicultural/social justice education* (M/SJE) to refer to both the teachers’ perceptions and mine in my study. The teachers were familiar and comfortable with the term multicultural education. My further use of the term ‘social justice education’ (SJE) is tied to the philosophies and the pedagogies that embrace dialogue and action for social justice (Noguera & Torres, 2008). SJE reflects my way of thinking about these issues my study. I applied a Freirean approach to frame my research. I used this lens in developing my research questions, thinking about the philosophy of dialogue, conducting the dialogue group, and in analyzing/interpreting the data.

**Qualitative Inquiry**

In this section, I will describe the methodology and methods I used to design this study: (a) qualitative inquiry, (b) critical ethnography, (c) case study, and (d) narrative approach.

Pertinent to this study, these methodological approaches can be described in the diagram below. I used a case study method to design and study a dialogue group in a community-founded school in Indonesia. A narrative approach was used to collect stories from my participants as they described their experiences in the school and community. I used critical ethnography, as a type of qualitative research, to focus on the cultural aspects of the research site seen from a critical perspective (Denzin, 2001; Hitchcock, 1993; Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004; Thomas, 1993).
Figure 3.1 Methodological diagram

I applied qualitative inquiry in exploring the research questions, collecting, and analyzing the data, based on several premises. First, qualitative researchers seek to “understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 118). Qualitative inquiry allowed me to portray the lived experiences of my study participants. Teachers were the major focus of my study. I formed a weekly dialogue group and conducted in-depth interviews with the teachers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). With a qualitative methodology, I was able to describe teachers’ personal and professional experiences and how these values overlapped and/or often conflicted. In addition to the teachers, I also conducted interviews with the principal, the parents, and the founders of the school. Second, qualitative researchers search for “understanding the complex interrelationship among all that exists” (Stake, 1995, p.8). Understanding voices from multiple perspectives and through in-depth interviews and dialogue group meetings were an essential part of my study. Third, qualitative inquiry aims to understand people’s interpretation (Denzin, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Madison, 2005). I wanted to
understand how my study participants constructed meaning, how they negotiated these meanings, and how these meanings influenced their teaching and/or their perspectives. For these reasons, apart from dialogue discussions, I used teachers’ journals and interviews as my data. Qualitative methods enabled me to capture multiple perspectives while remembering that participants’ voices are unique as well as culturally embedded. Thus, my analyses of their perceptions were not intended for generalization; although, in qualitative research, transferability (Denzin, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995) is possible. Fourth, a qualitative inquiry gave me the tools I needed to portray the complexity of the cultural, political, economical, and social contexts of my study. For instance, the teachers and I explored themes related to social justice matters, such as colonialization, gender roles, poverty, and education. Thus, qualitative inquiry was most suitable for capturing the teachers’ thoughts and ideas in depth.

Critical Ethnography

Because of the extensive nature of my study, the length of time I spent in the site (one year), and the framework of my study, critical ethnography was appropriate to use for this study. Critical ethnography stems from ethnography, a study of aspects of life that influence action and experience a specific group or culture (Boas, 1928; Fetterly, 1978; Fetterman, 2010). According to Carspecken (1996), ethnography researchers understand that social systems are formed based on the interactions of the individuals and groups and thus, multiple realities are constructed. In conventional ethnography, researchers provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1995) that explicate negotiated meanings and interpretations constructed by members of a particular social system. Conventional ethnography adopts a more detached, “objective,” and value-free approach to knowledge. In critical ethnography, a researcher “begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison, 2005, p. 5).
According to Madison (2005), critical ethnographers problematize “neutrality” and seek to challenge preconceived assumptions and disrupt the dormant setup of power and control, or the status quo.

The basic assumptions of critical ethnography are that thought is fundamentally mediated by socially and historically constituted power relationships; facts can never be removed from ideology, nor isolated from dominant values; social relationships are not stable and fixed; and language is central to the formation of subjectivity (Carspecken, 1996, 12).

Critical ethnography analyzes relationships between society, knowledge, and political action (Thomas, 1993). Researchers of critical ethnography understand that knowledge presented to individuals or members of society is influenced by larger social structures. This type of analysis recognizes how power and privileges are sustained or how these oppress certain individuals, groups, or classes.

In critical ethnography, instead of avoiding biases, researchers in this genre acknowledge that biases are part of the research standpoint. Fetterman (2010) argues that the closer the researcher to the subject of the study or issues investigated, the more profound results she or he will obtain. Thus, addressing the researchers’ positionality and demonstrating reflectivity are imperative. Critical ethnographers engage in critical scrutiny of their intentions, methods, puzzlements, and interpretations as they arrive to analyses. Dialogue, or otherness, is one of the themes that is deeply examined. It reveals the intricacy of relationship between the researcher and participants as part of an on-going, non-linear, and fluid dialogue (Thomas, 1993).

Representing the voices of the study participants critically means that “critical ethnographers capture the voices, emotions, and actions of those who are studied as complex beings” (Denzin, 2001, p. 8).
In my research, I intended to examine education critically, particularly in terms of how poverty affects and is affected by education. According to Merriam (2009), “education is considered to be a social institution designed for social and cultural reproduction and transformation” (p. 4). Thus, in critical ethnography, researchers offer “an ideological critique of power, privilege, and oppression in the areas of educational practices” (p. 4). In my study, analyzing education critically meant that I understood that certain groups or social classes in any society are more privileged than others. I sought to challenge my participants’ perceptions when they accepted their subordination in the society as something “natural.” Freire (1970) points out that when such acceptance happens, it sustains a status quo and a recipe for oppressive systems. I intended to see that engaging in deeply reflective conversations with the study participants would result in a social awareness or increased consciousness. In understanding the dialogue with my participants, I was reminded that, “critical ethnography is always a meting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among others, one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others’ worlds” (Madison, 2005, p. 5). Through the discussions that identified disempowerment sustained in Indonesian society, I hoped to empower the teachers’ voices. Embarking on this dialogue journey, I hoped to encourage the teachers’ bravery, as well as mine, in challenging our perceptions and actions.

Case Study

My research was a case study of a dialogue group in a community-founded school. Although I included data from other participants, the teachers were the primary data of the research. A case study method was a suitable approach to present both the uniqueness and commonality of the study participants within the context of this school. A case study method uses in-depth data collection from multiple sources with the understanding that the data is
contextualized and bounded as part of both particular and larger systems (Stake, 1995). In the study, a particular theme or question was often viewed from multiple perspectives. For instance, a topic related to early childhood education initiated by the Indonesian government was explored from the different perspectives of the teachers as well as the principal. The data were also triangulated with the school’s administrative documentation and publicly available documents and policies.

Stake (1995) explains that particularization is a key aspect of case study research. Particularization means that the case study is a study of a particular case within particular contexts. The case’s contextuality should be well explored and developed. In this regard, I provided the school’s context to give a better explanation and comprehension of the teachers’ voices. The school and the dialogue group possessed uniqueness and particularity in their characters. The school’s context was distinctive because of its relationship with the community. The dialogue group in itself was a particular case because of the processes, i.e., struggles, resistance, and liberation that emerged. The teachers had never attended such discussions prior to our dialogue. Tensions and complexities were part of the portrait of the case.

The study may or may not draw similarities and/or differences with another case. According to Stake (1995), a case can differ from other cases in the same context; however, it should not be viewed primarily in comparison to other cases.

[A case does not show] how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (Stake, 1995, p. 8)

In doing a case study, the researcher assumes the role of teacher (Stake, 1995) in which the intention of the research is to “inform, to sophisticate, to assist the increase of competence
and maturity, to socialize, and to liberate” (pp. 91-92). Case study researchers are also thought of as having the role of advocates.

The teacher is also an advocate, the exemplar of a way to see, the persuader of a road to follow. So too the researcher. Even the dispassionate researcher dedicated to presenting only the facts presents them in ways that attract and repel. . . . The teacher is aware that usually teaching is more effective when the learners seem to be comprehending. . . . The same is true regarding those that case study researchers are trying to teach, their readers. . . . The main thing is approaching the task of case study with a certain dedication to the readers – with the purview of good teaching. (Stake, 1995, pp. 92-93)

In this study, I wanted to learn from a dialogue process with teachers in a community-founded school. Together we learned to be advocates for the development of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) through dialogue. Through the dialogue, I also learned about the school’s successes and struggles in providing education to the students from low-income families.

**Narrative Approach**

Stories are part of human life. People tell their lived experiences through stories. In educational settings, stories are part of teachers and students learning. Because much of the data shared by the participants were narratives, I kept in mind the principles of narrative inquiry in interpreting the participants’ narratives in this study.

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities. What
feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006, p. 35)

Understanding experiences is one of the core tenets of narrative inquiry. Stories illustrate lived experiences. Thus, these stories can be a powerful tool in understanding experiences – human life.

Thinking about experience requires reflexivity. In integrating narrative methods, researchers should be mindful of the reflexive process throughout the study. In this process, “Narrative inquiry follows a recursive, reflexive process of moving from field (with starting points in telling or living of stories) to field texts (data) to interim and final research texts” (Clandinin, 2007, p. 1). In my data, i.e., in interviews, dialogue group, teachers’ journals, I had narratives storied by my study participants. Thus, narrative inquiry principles were useful in interpreting and re-storying the teachers’ narratives.

In analyzing the narrative data, I took a narrative inquiry approach. According to Riessman (2008), narrative inquiry is a method for analyzing and/or interpreting texts that have a storied form in common. Narrative inquiry is imperative in understanding a collaborative effort where dialogue is at the heart of this process. Hence, it is helpful to apply this in my study.

We understand inquiry to include all forms of questions and searching related to individuals in social contexts. We see narrative inquiry as a natural process of asking questions and making interpretations, and as a set of research methods reflecting research epistemologies and controversies. The former occurs through the telling of stories; the latter through more systematic procedures and the of building more general interpretations. (Johnston-Parsons, 2012, p. 11)
In analyzing the narrative data, I looked at the stories for their micro and macro aspects. Micro aspects deal with “what is said, written, or visually shown” (Riessman, 2008, p. 53). I also used my cultural intuition to detect what is implied or not said. Macro aspects relate the narratives to broader contexts. In this sense, the analyses go beyond the in-text stories and allow the researcher to connect to structural values such as social contexts and power relationships. These approaches are aligned with my aim in using a Freirean lens to frame the research.

**Research Topic and Site Selection**

A case study has intrinsic values (Stake, 1995). In this view, the research should derive from the researcher’s intrinsic interest toward a particular case. This is true for my case study. My intention in selecting this community-founded school as my research site derives from my personal interest and curiosity about how this school operated: what motivated the community to establish the school, how the teachers were selected, who was involved in the school, what their challenges were, and so on.

As previously stated, I visited the school in 2010. I saw many wonderful things that were going on in the school in terms of the community or neighborhood involvement, parental involvement, the teachers, and teacher-volunteers. I was impressed. I have always been passionate to learn more about efforts to help students from low-income communities. This school appeared to do that. This particular case chosen and studied based on my own intrinsic valuing of this particular school and its community.

**The Context: Jakarta and the School**

In this section, I will describe the contexts surrounding the school. I will also provide a brief description of Indonesia and Jakarta, the capital city, to connect the social, economic, cultural, and political contexts of the larger social system to the school.
Jakarta

The school in this study is a community-founded school located in Jakarta, Indonesia. Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, is located on the island of Java. Jakarta is one of the most populated cities in Indonesia and the home of 28 million people (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

As the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta is saturated with businesses. Jakarta attracts many newcomers who want to better their lives economically. This has been a major concern for the last few decades because the growth in the number of people moving to the city is concurrent with the increasing amount of unemployment and poverty. Amidst the skyscrapers, live the poor and homeless.
Despite government efforts, the level of poverty in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, has risen from 2008 to 2011. Although information and technology are abundant, the accessibility of such resources for the homeless and the poor is extremely limited.

The Center for Welfare Studies reported that the number of poor people in Indonesia increased by 6.7 percent over the last three years to 43.1 million. The report showed the number of Indonesians living in extreme poverty was 40.36 million in 2008, 44.83 million in 2009, and 43.07 million in 2010. (Handayani, 2012)

The School

The Semanggi School is located in East Jakarta. It was founded in 1984. The school is located in an upper scale neighborhood. In contrast, not far from the neighborhood, there are small villages (Kampongs). Some of the habitants of these Kampongs work in low-wage jobs such as Pedicab drivers, house cleaners, gardeners, cleaning staff at the traditional markets, street food sellers, and those who work in factories. Many, who are not so fortunate to find any forms of employment, become beggars. The school’s children live in this area.

The school currently has about 160 students and 6 teachers. The students’ ages range from pre-school to early elementary age (3-8 years old). The lessons taught include literacy and basic numeracy skills, e.g., the Indonesian alphabet, spelling, colors.

Data Collection

I collected a variety of data for this study including:

- Conversations’ transcripts:
  - From dialogue meetings
  - From one-on-one interviews
  - Informal conversations i.e. hallway conversations
• Teacher’s journals

• Researcher’s fieldnotes (and/or researcher’s journal/diary)

• Artifacts/archives:
  o Student work brought by teachers to dialogue group sessions
  o Documents, e.g., books, videos, school curricula, guidelines, newspapers, etc

These types of data are commonly gathered in an ethnographic study. Multiple data sources are helpful for obtaining multiple perspectives on a particular subject matter (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Fieldnotes are fundamental especially to qualitative researchers or ethnographers. In these fieldnotes, a researcher keeps track of the details of what was happening. I took fieldnotes during the dialogue meetings, interviews, and whenever I interacted with my study participants. For instance, in understanding a conversation, my fieldnotes also included notes on the participant’s gesture or expression of hesitation and so on that might not be captured in audiotape recordings. Thus, the fieldnotes can provide information for a better portrayal of the conversation.

Fieldnotes are contemporaneous notes of observations or conversation taken during the conduct of qualitative research. Depending on the circumstances, the notes taken can be full (e.g. verbatim transcripts of conversations taken by hand or recorded by a tape recorder) or brief notations that can be elaborated on later. (Thorpe & Holt, 2007, p. 97) In addition to the fieldnotes, Thorpe (2007) also suggests a researcher’s diary (Borg, 2001), or as I called it, my “Researcher’s Journal,” as a useful way to record data. Although the line is often blurred, a research diary/journal somewhat differs from fieldnotes. Fieldnotes may contain descriptions of a particular situation, a record of logs of dates or times, a record of certain procedures and so on. A research diary/journal records a researcher’s notes on puzzlements,
comments, questions, and reflections (Newbury, 2001). Thus, it serves as a substantial component of the data if the study is to include a reflective component (Thorpe & Holt, 2007). Newbury (2001) further explains,

> The reason for keeping a research diary is to facilitate the research process through recording observations, thoughts, and questions as they happen, for later use by the researcher, and to stimulate reflective thinking about the research. (Newbury, 2001)

I wrote details such as my questions, puzzlement, hesitation, or sometimes just a reminder to myself to check on something related to what was happening. It was important as a data source in this study. I labeled my notes as fieldnotes and researcher’s journal to differentiate the voices from the teachers’ perspectives and my own reflections. Differentiating between these different kinds of data was not always easy and I acknowledge the interchangeability and flexibility in my data.

**Participants**

The participants of my study were the teachers, the principal, founders of the school, and the parents. For the dialogue group, the primary participants were the teachers. The principal sometimes joined and/or observed our dialogue sessions. Getting to know the participants, i.e., spending enough time with the participants or at the school before beginning the data collection, fostered rapport and trustworthy relationships between the researcher and the participants (Stake, 2006). I spent 3 weeks volunteering at the school before I began the interviews and dialogue group discussions. I became the assistant for teachers in the classrooms. I also helped with the grading of the students’ work. I helped the teachers preparing routines before and after the classes. I learned from my master thesis research (Amalia, 2009) that this early process of
slowly/gradually building relationships with the participants is the key to obtaining honest and open opinions from the participants. (See Table 3.1)

The school has six teachers\(^4\) and they all agreed to participate in my dialogue group. (See Table 3.2). Five of the six teachers participated until the end of the study. One of the teachers left the job just several weeks after I left the school but I kept in touch with her. She needed to take a full time job with a better salary to help her family. I met the teachers outside of school and met with some of the teachers’ families. I took trips with the teachers during the public holidays. I have kept in touch with them since the completion of the research.

Table 3.1

**Numbers of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Data</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Data</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of the school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the teachers had high school education and one of them completed a year of PGSD but did not finish the whole program. Mrs. Matahari stated that she took courses in the area of PGSD after she had been running the school for 5 years. She was looking for PGTK (a teaching

\(^4\) All names in the study are pseudonyms. Although the teachers were quite proud to be in my study and wanted me to use their real names, as required by the IRB, I explained that I had to use pseudonyms.
education program for pre school teachers) but she could not find one available nearby. Thus, she went into PGSD in the effort to develop her skills in teaching her students.

In terms of ethnicity, the teachers self-identified as Javanese and Betawi people. The students’ ethnicities range from Javanese, Betawi, Madurese, and Balinese. All six of the teachers were the primary participants of the dialogue group that I initiated. Mrs. Matahari, sometimes joined in our dialogue meetings. Mrs. Matahari was one of the founders of the school and the principal. Although there were several women involved in the inception and founding of the school, Mrs. Matahari was the only one who had consistently remained since the beginning and she worked full time in the school. Because of her commitment, other founders of the school stated that the school was Mrs. Matahari’s. However, Mrs. Matahari insisted that the school belongs to the community as much as her. Mrs. Matahari, in several occasions in the interviews, acknowledged the support of the community toward the school.

I was able to obtain an interview with another founder of the school. Other founders, identified by Mrs. Matahari, who were also involved as major stakeholders did not want to be interviewed. Although I talked to some of these people in the local neighborhood meetings, they did not want to be part of my study. My interview with Mrs. Alia, one of the founders who did agree to talk to me, did not take place until almost the end of my research time. Many of the people in the neighborhood were important people with little extra time for interviews and so it was understandable that very few would agree to participate. One of the residents in the neighborhood was a former Minister of Environment in Indonesia. This community was considered a very private and close-knit community. I also attended a meeting where they raised funding for the school and the communities in impoverished areas, including communities beyond this upscale neighborhood. The invitation to this meeting also did not happen until late
January, midway through the study. Nevertheless, I sensed that the invitation was a sign that, over the semester I had been at the school, I had built their trust.

Table 3.2

The teachers and the Principal’s Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Teaching Experience prior joining Semanggi School</th>
<th>Time with the School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Matahari</td>
<td>F/P</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Took some courses in PGSD</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1984-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lisnadi</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>First year in PGSD</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2006-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Basmia</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>2010-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ranti</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>2010-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Fatima</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2011-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Aisah</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2011-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sutinah</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F – Founder of the School
P – Principal
T – Teachers

On one hand, I felt that many people were very welcoming and wanted to be in my study.

A number of people in the community talked to me, invited me to their homes, and introduced

---

5 PGSD stands for Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar (in English translation: Foundational Education for Elementary School Education). Colleges with teacher education majors offer this degree.
me to other educators in the areas. On the other hand, I felt that the community was sometimes “tough” to approach. In this sense, there were a few key individuals with whom I wanted to talk, but they were never available. This included the committee of women organization that Mrs. Matahari often went to see for consultation about matters related to the school, and a local psychologist who volunteered a lot in the school.

Conducting more informal interviews, in addition to the formal ones, was another approach I used for data collection so that the participants could more freely express their thoughts and ideas. The informal conversations were non-scheduled conversations that took place outside of the interview and/or dialogue group meetings. These included hallway conversations, phone calls, and so on. With the participants’ permission, I documented the informal conversations in my researcher’s fieldnotes or journal.

**Research Timeline**

Originally, the research was planned to take place for a semester from August 2013 to January 2014. The study was then extended to a one-year study ending in July 2014. Although I had much data by January, I felt that I was only just beginning to understand the voices of the participants. I felt that something was missing. It was like I was looking at a sandy beach on the shore. I saw the beauty of it, but I was missing the coral further out and underneath because I had not yet gotten into the deep sea. My understandings deepened every day. I felt like the more I learned the more I did not know. I thought a lot about my role as a researcher and the dialogue I was trying to have with the teachers. In one instance, I was reading the teachers’ journal responses when I asked them to write about a school goal that they had for their students. A couple of teachers stated, “To love the students and provide a safe environment for them.” In the beginning, I did not think much about this, apart from contemplating how all teachers should
think about their students. In one of the trips I took with the teachers to the students’ homes and villages however, I suddenly realized what the teachers meant by the importance of the school being a loving and safe place for the students. As shared by the teachers, several of the students came from abusive homes and/or had no choice but to help their parents with their work. Family life for them was no picnic. Given these situations, the teachers appeared to want to provide an escape from these hardships and to offer a safe, loving environment at the school.

My experiences outside of the school provided me with a growing understanding of the context and further insights to better interpret my data. In addition, with the dialogue group, I wanted to see whether there would be changes in the teachers’ perceptions if they were given more time to talk with each other and me. In addition, during my stay there was a flood and a volcano eruption that resulted in the school closing for a few weeks. During the month of Ramadan [in Islam], the school also closed for 6 weeks. The time extension allowed me to learn more from my participants in this unique and close-knit community.

**Interviews**

The interview is a commonly used method in qualitative studies. I conducted interviews with multiple constituents to obtain their diverse perspectives related to the school. With the participants’ permission, I audiotaped the interviews. In these interviews, I used a semi-structured interview procedure. I asked mainly open-ended questions. In order to understand my participants’ perspectives more deeply, I also included questions that encouraged participants to give narrative accounts. In these interviews, I adopted an informal style of interview, leaning more toward two people talking about life in general, rather than as if it was a job interview. Asking personal questions to someone we’d just met would be considered impolite in the United States; in Indonesian culture, however, it is often a door that can be opened to allow individuals
to be more intimate when conversing. Thus, people often ask personal questions to me on the
first meeting without hesitation. After being in the United States for several years for my study,
although I knew where they were coming from, I felt a little awkward. I struggled throughout the
study to navigate my sense of positionality. Being exposed to other cultures outside of Indonesia
had given me more perspectives from which to interpret the study participants’ voices.

I always started my interviews or talks by asking how they and their families were. I
understood well the power of small talk when initiating/engaging in conversations with my
participants. Small talk is not only a common courtesy in Indonesian culture, but also a way of
sending a message that “I care about your well being.” The participants and I often exchanged
tips on little things such as health and beauty care, sales information, places to eat, and more. It
was through these “small” and “mundane” talks (Delpit, 1994) that we bonded. We often shared
our deepest, most touching stories. I listened to their stories and empathized; I struggled with
them.

Scheduled interviews took place twice with the teacher participants: one at the beginning
and another toward the end of the study. The first scheduled interview included survey questions
on the demographics and the teachers’ personal data in addition to the interview questions. The
second one explored the teachers’ thoughts about their learning and teaching and what they had
learned from the dialogue group. During the study, follow-up interviews took place when
needed. In the follow-up interviews, I asked for clarification and explored further responses from
the teachers. After the interviews were conducted, I transcribed in two ways--verbatim and/or
summaries of the content.

In doing the interviews I stayed mindful of the several principles of interviewing (Garrett,
1982), which included (a) prepare the questions on a theme carefully, (b) allow the participants
to induce or talk freely, (c) pursue or develop further if a more important theme progresses, and (d) listen and watch attentively and respectfully. As previously stated, I kept in mind that the stories the participants shared with me were the experiences in which they have lived. Thus, being cognizant and deferential about their voices and narratives was especially important for me.

**Dialogue Group Data**

In addition to interviews, I also asked teachers to participate in a *dialogue group*. All of the teachers agreed to join the dialogue group. I met weekly with the teachers to talk about their teaching and to discuss issues that were related to social justice. As previously stated, prior to starting the weekly meetings, I spent time around the school and with the teachers to build rapport. Building rapport, indeed, helped the participants to feel at ease. It also heightened my cultural sensitivity/awareness toward what they had to say (Patton, 1990). I also conducted the dialogue meetings in a less formal way to generate a more conducive and safe environment for these teachers to speak their minds. Being Indonesian, I understand that less formal meetings are often more effective in encouraging the teachers to be more engaged and open toward each other and in the discussions. Frequently, after the dialogue meetings, the teachers would be “hanging out” and chatting. The conversations often became so interesting, I would turn the recorder back on.

The purposes of the dialogue group:

1. to provide a space for dialogue and sharing for the teachers
2. to discuss ways to increase to multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) issues
3. to talk about new ideas that they implemented in their classrooms from the dialogue group discussions.
The dialogue group was the major focus of my data collection and analysis. With the participants’ permission, I audiotaped the meetings. My aim was to identify teachers’ understandings of multicultural/social justice issues and to see if the dialogue would lead to any changes. I assumed a facilitator role in these dialogue meetings. I repeatedly reminded the teachers that each of us possessed an equal right to express our thoughts and ideas. According to Freire (1970; 1998), in order for a dialogue to work, it should be based on love, mutual respect, trust, humility, equality, and hope. Thus, I shared these Freirean principles with the teachers and said that they would be our dialogue norms. I made sure that participants were aware that I was documenting our conversations and that they could ask to have the tape recorder stopped or talk “off the record” if they requested.

Because there were multiple constituents connected with this school, I was able to explore a particular topic with others outside the dialogue group. I had discussions with the principal, parents, and another founder of the school. Thus, a particular question was explored from multiple perspectives, which helped me better understand the teachers’ perspectives. For instance, in learning about the role of the school in the community, I talked to the teachers, principal, and parents to understand what the school meant to them and to identify their roles in the school’s development.

Conversation data. This data includes data from the dialogue and other conversations, e.g., followed up conversations after an interview, hallway conversations. Sometimes teachers would come individually to me to ask questions or comment on something we talked about in the dialogue meetings. Sometimes a teacher would suggest a topic for a dialogue discussion or talk to me to get things off their chest. With their permission, I would record and/or take notes of these conversations.
Teacher journals. I asked the teachers to keep a journal. I provided a notepad for them. The journal included the teachers’ reflections. I often asked them to write about a particular topic or question. For instance, after our first dialogue meeting, I asked the teachers to share their opinions on the questions, “What do you think about multicultural education? Is it relevant to you?” The journal questions were intended to act as a conduit to review and reflect on the dialogue discussions and share their individual opinions, perhaps with less peer pressure than they might feel from dialogue in the group. From the journals, I gathered the teachers’ stories, learned how they perceived themselves, and ascertained how they read their positionality within the school and larger social structures. The teachers were asked to write their thoughts, ideas, questions, comments, and feedback related to the dialogue discussions, i.e., social justice issues, teaching practices, student learning, and beyond.

The journals also provided a medium for the teachers to express their opinions about particular things that were happening in the media or their surroundings. If a teacher suggested a topic, we would then discuss journal entries in our dialogue group meetings. Other entries we might discuss individually. For instance, a teacher suggested that we should discuss the role of women in relation to Kartini’s Day (National Woman Hero Day). Other teachers agreed and it became one of our discussion topics. I provided some examples of my personal reflections to give some sense of what it meant to write a reflection. Although these writing samples were provided, I reminded the teachers that these were only examples and that their journals did not need to follow the same format. The journal was intended to give the teachers a sense of freedom for expressing their individual thoughts and ideas outside the group, and it provided a tool for teachers to record their questions and comments that we could revisit later.
**Researcher’s fieldnotes.** As previously described, fieldnotes are fundamental in qualitative research. Carefully constructed fieldnotes benefit researchers in gaining detailed information.

In some studies, fieldnotes are regarded as the essence of a study (Burgess, 1981; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Newbury, 2001). In others, they are viewed as secondary data. Spradley (1980) in Mulhall (2003) expresses, “Observations that are only descriptive are both time-consuming and ineffective” (p. 308). From Spradley’s point of view, being a participant observer and writing fieldnotes more loosely is a better way of capturing moments, conversations, and dialogues. Mulhall (2003) suggests that if a researcher dedicates too much time to writing detailed notes then “the deeper, intuitive experience of being within a culture will be lost” (p. 310). Being aware of this tension, I tried to do both -- write detailed fieldnotes when possible and then more loosely when the situation warranted it.

**Researcher journal.** In my researcher journal, I included reflective notes on the dialogue meetings. I wrote my thoughts, ideas, questions, and comments about a particular topic or sometimes about striking things that happened earlier. These reflections were used to increase the “reflexive validity” (Waterman, 1998) of my data. I used the term of researcher’s fieldnotes and researcher’s journal interchangeably.

**Artifacts/archives.** I included artifacts/archives in my data collection and analysis. I used artifacts/archives i.e., documentation that the teachers shared with me individually and/or in the dialogue group. These artifacts/archives included student work such as drawing, photos, reports, and so on that the teachers brought to the dialogue group. Students' work was used in this research, primarily in the dialogue group. The sharing of student work was not intended for evaluation of the students or teachers, but to determine the inclusion or integration of
multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) aspects within the classrooms. I did not conduct any interviews with the students. The students' work served as a learning tool for teachers and the researcher, particularly related to multicultural issues. See Table 3.3 for a summary of the data collected and the methods used in collecting these data. I also included the data analyzed for each participant.

Table 3.3

Summary of Data Collection Methods and Data Analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Data Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Interview (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Conversations’ transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal conversations (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Teachers’ journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue group (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Researcher’s fieldnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher’s journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Artifacts/archives:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Student work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Interview (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Conversations’ transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal conversations (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Researcher’s fieldnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher’s journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Any artifacts shared by the principal, e.g., guidelines, curricula, newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Interview (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Interview transcripts and fieldnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal conversations (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Artifacts shared by the parents, e.g., photos, child’s work, school reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founders of the school</td>
<td>Interview (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Interview transcripts and fieldnotes. Any artifacts shared by the founders of the school, e.g., photos, newsletters, newspapers, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

In this section, I explain how I incorporated and analyzed the data within my study. The predominant mode of analysis was to develop codes from my data using typical methods in qualitative data analysis (Atkinson, 2007; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Data Preparation

Data preparation is essential in qualitative research. One of the steps in preparing the data is transcribing audio or refining fieldnotes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I prepared the data before beginning the analysis by transcribing and organizing all the transcriptions. I code-switched between Bahasa Indonesia and English in transcribing the recordings. I conducted all my analyses in English. The data was primarily in Bahasa Indonesia; occasionally I added notes in English. During the coding I kept the data in its original language in order to capture subtle meanings and complexities of cultural phraseology in the conversations by being reflective of lingual aspects. For purposes of writing the dissertation, I translated the data into English.

Coding

Coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act (Saldana, 2009, p. 4). Organizing the notes from the fieldnotes and documents analysis is an essential step prior to coding (Creswell, 2007). Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers should familiarize themselves with the data by reading and examining all their data and notes.

In coding the data, I triangulated my data through multiple data constituents and sources. I coded the data using thematically organized categories. To do this, I examined the data from multiple sources and then identified commonalities or patterns that arose from this multiple data. Additionally, I explored a particular topic across multiple constituents and sources to find similarities and differences within this specific topic. In this coding phase, I labeled and
classified the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I also developed substantial themes (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and conducted multiple editing and refining of these themes.

Figure 4 shows that the dialogue group data was the primary data examined in the study. In analyzing this data, I read the data repeatedly. Coding in qualitative data take places interactively and simultaneously with data collection/analysis (Saldana, 2009). I transcribed the data of the dialogue group meetings, interviews, and informal conversations shortly after they occurred and began coding them immediately. Some of the data were in the form of long stories told by the participants. Thus, I incorporated a narrative analysis approach in coding the data. In this sense, I looked at stories being told and critically thought about the message implied. I also analyzed the stories within micro and macro aspects that contributed to the stories. The transcribing process of the data was indeed time consuming; thus, when possible I would transcribe it verbatim and when this was not possible, I would summarize. Initially, I divided the data into three categories: dialogue group, interview, and informal conversations. Then I examined the patterns that emerged and developed major themes within each category. Afterwards, I looked at the themes that emerged across these three data sets. The data were revisited and re-categorized several times after that.
For my researcher’s journal, I coded the notes/texts for description and themes. The data were useful to illustrate the settings, for instance, the descriptions of classrooms, the school, neighborhood, and so on. After the themes were developed, I revisited them continuously. This step allowed me to look at the overlapping issues and classify major themes. In addition, revisiting the themes also provided me with the opportunity to see if there were any anomalies. In this regard, anomalies helped me to reflect further on my preliminary findings and other data sets. For instance, there was an instance where a teacher’s response contradicted the major findings; I constructed an additional theme to include this particularity. This hopefully helped to capture the complexity of the data overall.

Interpreting the data. Interpretation takes place throughout the research processes. In (re)presenting the description and themes, the researcher’s interpretations are central to the analysis. In this process, the researcher’s process of thinking and interpretation are fluid, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.
Interpretation took place throughout my research journey. I describe the journey as a fluid, non-linear, and complex process. Because researchers’ interpretations of the data play a very important role in qualitative research, it is important to be mindful of the researcher’s stance (Creswell, 2007; Wolcott, 2009).

**Credibility.** As previously explained, one of the methods of building credibility is by acknowledging the researcher’s stance. Additionally, data triangulation and member checking can be utilized as a mode of validating the findings. In my data collection, triangulation involved obtaining data from multiple constituents and this offered multiple perspectives. I conducted multiple follow-up interviews to ask for clarity and further responses. The purpose of this corroboration/member checking was to clarify and verify meaning conveyed by the study participants. Wolcott (2009) suggests that raising further questions and being reflective of our methods and analyses will help warrant qualitative findings.
Researcher Stance

Qualitative research...crosses the humanities and the social and physical sciences... Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach... committed to the naturalistic perspective, and to the interpretative understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethical and political positions. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p. 576)

The researcher's positionality, i.e., whether as an outsider and/or insider, is important and should be acknowledged within qualitative research. In qualitative study, the role of the researcher is fluid and thus, the complexity of it is influential in interpreting the data (Denzin, 2008). For this reason, I will discuss my positionality within my study. This includes my roles and the relational tensions that emerged in my research.

I was born in Surabaya, Indonesia. Surabaya is a metropolitan city and is the second largest and most densely populated city in Indonesia. My family lives on the outskirts of the city. Both my parents have always been actively involved in many voluntary programs at local schools and the surrounding neighborhoods where we lived. Thus, I was always accustomed to being engaged in voluntary activities from a young age. Being involved in the community has always been my passion. In the United States, apart from my study, I have also been involved in voluntary programs.

I used a Freirean lens to frame my research. My love for Freirean theories derives from the strong connections I felt in applying his concepts to the world. Learning about his theory was a mind-opening process for me. Although Freire is Brazilian and what he described was developed within South American contexts, his portrayal of the world is relevant to me as an
Indonesian. His theory has given me the language and tools to read my positionality in the world, my existence as an Indonesian, a student, a teacher, and a woman. In essence, it has been an empowering journey for me.

As an Indonesian, I had the advantage of insider knowledge and an understanding of Indonesian cultural values. For instance, I understood how to determine appropriate cultural personal space and communication styles that I was able to use to build rapport with the participants. Since the participants and I spoke the same language, Bahasa Indonesia, I did not have a language barrier, and thus, I was able to better interpret the participants’ voices.

I was new to the school and the surrounding communities. Thus, I was inevitably also an outsider. Given my role as a researcher and a graduate student in the United States, the study participants considered me an outsider. Being aware of this challenge, I attempted to build rapport with my participants and maintain open communication with them. I also frequently encouraged the participants to see me as a facilitator and, most importantly, as a co-learner. I reminded them that their voices mattered to me and that the goal of my research was to tell their stories.
CHAPTER 4

School Context

In this chapter, I describe the context of the Semanggi School to provide background information on how the school was situated within the local community and nationally. This context provides descriptions and information useful to understanding the findings presented in chapter five.

Semanggi School

“Do you know where Semanggi School is?” I asked a coconut seller on the street. I was on foot visiting the school from my boarding house [where I rented a room]. As it was almost 100 degrees Fahrenheit outside, drinking coconut water seemed like a good idea as I asked directions to the school. “Oh, Mrs. Matahari’s school?” the coconut seller confirmed my question. “My daughter went to the school. Let me take you there!” She kindly showed me the block where the school was located. Several motorbikes were compactly parked outside of the school. A couple of food carts, bakso [meatball soup] carts and traditional crepe carts, were also parked there. It was recess time [just after 9 am]. Some students were leaving and others were arriving. Some parents were talking to their children, helping them with their school bags and their leftover snacks, and saying goodbyes to the teachers. The children kissed the teachers’ right hands. I came through the entrance door that linked to the garage. This area functioned partly as the playground, parents’ seating area, and children’s space for doing their routines before entering their classrooms through the pantry area. In this pantry area, some teachers were sitting, having some snacks or talking to some parents. People were coming up and giving the
impression of “organized messiness” as people flowed in and out of the school.

(Fieldnotes, August 21, 2013)

The school was established in 1984 in Jakarta, Indonesia. It was initially a gathering place/event for mothers and their babies and/or toddlers. The event was hosted by a group of women from Anggrek Bulan neighborhood for the residents of the adjacent Pelangi village. Anggrek Bulan is an upscale neighborhood, while the majority of Pelangi Village’s residents live in poverty. As previously explained (in Chapter 3), similar to the realities of many capital cities, the poor and homeless often live nearby upscale neighborhoods. This situation was also true in this case. According to the founder of the school, Mrs. Matahari, who was also the leader of the women’s organization in the area, the early gatherings became bigger after time. As part of the gathering agenda, Mrs. Matahari incorporated games and some mini teaching sessions for the children. This biweekly event was usually filled with provisions for information sharing on nutritious food for mothers and children. Then the attendees ate together and the mothers were given healthy foods and nutrition packages to take home. In these meetings, the host sometimes invited medical staff such as doctors, nurses, and dentists, to provide free health checks for the mothers and children.

In response to requests from the parents to increase the meeting/learning sessions to more than biweekly meetings, the founder of the gathering event, Mrs. Matahari, took the initiative to start teaching the children at her home. She began by teaching spelling, coloring, and other general motor and life skills such as the children learning to tie their shoes on their own. Later on, the number of preschool students increased and she therefore needed more teachers. Two members of the women’s organization volunteered to teach and several members often
volunteered as assistants in the classrooms. Mrs. Matahari commented on this evolving need for teachers:

Because we constantly needed teachers who could dedicate their time steadily, I decided to hire teachers. So we identified the volunteers into two groups: the full time teachers and others are volunteer teachers/assistants. The teachers who were not the members of Anggrek Bulan neighborhood [the upscale neighborhood] received a monthly salary.

The learning group for the students continued for 10 years (1984-1994). The number of the students in attendance grew from seven to about 100 students and the number continued to grow. The parents and the local community then encouraged Mrs. Matahari to make the schooling official. The school was “reborn” in June 1994.

At the time [mid 1986], I had two volunteers for 20 children. We started with only seven children and the number of students grew. Because the classes continued to grow bigger, I was encouraged by my friends in the neighborhood and the parents to make the school official, like a real school. I was not sure at the beginning. I do not want to have tons of complicated things because all who’s involved are volunteers. I don’t want to give extra work to anyone. So when we had our monthly neighborhood meeting [Anggrek Bulan neighborhood], I told the forum, I would be okay to officiate the school, but, only if the community supported it. I mean with their continuous support. I didn’t want “no action and talk only.” I told them that I needed the community support and commitment.

In terms of funding, there had previously been no cost for the parents to pay until the past eight years (since 2005). The funding mostly came from Mrs. Matahari’s personal funds and some from donations from the women’s organization and local neighborhoods in the area. The school also received material donations such as toys, papers, picture books etc. According to
Mrs. Matahari, and some of the teachers who had been with the school for a long time, the idea to accept donations came from the parents. One of the premises was that the parents wanted to contribute toward the school’s expenses especially towards the teachers’ salaries. Additionally, by giving donations, it implied that parents were responsible for taking their children’s learning seriously. They were held accountable for their parental monitoring of their heir children’s attendance and task completion.

The Neighborhood: Anggrek Bulan Community

The school is located within Anggrek Bulan neighborhood, an upscale part of the area, in East Jakarta, Indonesia. The school is not the only one in the district. There are quite a few private and public schools close by. Semanggi School is the oldest one to serve in the community amidst other non-public schools.

The school is run in a home of one of the founders of the school, Mrs. Alia, and the other classes are held in Mrs. Matahari’s home. The home has four bedrooms that are used as classrooms, a bathroom, a dining room that functions as a teachers’ room, and a garage that was used as a play area.

“This painting on the wall, it’s done by a local artist. He kindly did the work for free,” said Mrs. Matahari as I was admiring the beauty of the painted walls. Pictures of dolphins and sea creatures colored the wall in the garage area. The walls in the middle area of the house were painted with pictures of airplanes and high grass silhouettes. Children were playing in these areas. The walls throughout the house were painted with themes.

“Details are important to make children know that school is a fun place. I want our children to have a desire for learning, not being enforced to do it” continued Mrs. Matahari. She shared her childhood schooling experience. “The schools looked like a
hospital or military camp. Walls were painted uniformly white or gray and no children’s work were displayed. I felt it was kind of rigid and cold. So, I wanted rooms in our school to reflect warmth, cheerfulness, and happiness.” (Fieldnotes, 8/22/2013)

*Figure 4.1 Children at play*

Photos taken by Yuni Sari Amalia
School Hours and Classes

The school ran on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. On some Tuesdays, the teachers were invited to join meetings with the community. The classes ran from 7 am to 12 pm. Each teacher taught two classes each day of the school. The first class was from 7 am to 9 am. The second one ran from 9.30 am to 11.30 am. There was a 30-minute recess time within a class period and another 30-minute break before the next class began. During the recess time, the teachers supervised the students completed their routines i.e., washing their hands before eating their food and saying prayers. The students ate together in the classroom. Afterwards they played in the schoolyard. Students were taught to independently tie their shoe laces, put their books back in their bags, place the chairs under the tables, go to the restroom, and so on. Independence was an important skill taught by the teachers.

The students’ ages ranged from 4-8 years old. Each class consisted of approximately 15-25 students. The school accepted students with mild learning disabilities. Although the school was primarily for preschoolers, aged 4-6 years old, occasionally they accepted children who were 7 years old and above. These older children were supposed to be in an elementary school but had not been accepted due to their disabilities, both physical and learning disabilities. Most elementary schools did not have relevant support for these students or parents didn’t have the ability to pay the school fees. Since the school’s opening, Semanggi School had never rejected children who were in need of education. There was a case, however, where a student with a severe mental disability had to be withdrawn and referred to another school after consultation with a local child psychologist. The student experienced tantrums where he could harm himself and other students. The teachers were not professionally trained to deal with these extreme situations. Thus, after several meetings with the parents and a local child psychologist, Mrs.
Matahari, and the teachers, suggested to the parents that the student should be withdrawn and referred into another school that could provide better educational and psychological support. The local child psychologist took the student’s case pro bono and worked with the student and the parents.

The school year consisted of two semesters: the first semester ran from mid-August to the end of December, and the second from the end of January to early June. The school closed for public holidays and during the month of Ramadan. Because Ramadan is based on the lunar calendar, the actual holiday dates change each year. The school had flexibility in its time of operation. Because the majority of the students were Muslims, the school did not operate during Ramadan and the Iedul Fitri\(^6\) celebration. In 2013 and 2014, the school followed a regular timetable because the month of Ramadan fell during July to early August. During the periods of these school years, the school has had to close several times however due to natural disasters such as the floods and volcanic eruptions in Jakarta.

**Getting to Know the Community**

I rented a room in a house, which was approximately three blocks away from the school. I shared the kitchen, dining room, restroom, and washing area with the family I stayed with. Indonesians call such an arrangement as a “kos” [boarding house]. I also shared the housework, e.g., washing dishes, washing clothes sometimes by machine but often by hand, and general housework. I did not have to do this as much as I did, but culturally it was the right thing to do. I also sometimes babysat for the family’s granddaughters. The family I stayed with was very kind,

---

\(^6\) Muslims conduct fasting from dawn to dusk for a month during Ramadan. When Ramadan is complete, they celebrate Iedul Fitri. The fasting symbolizes observance to spirituality, empathy towards the poor and each other, dis-attachment toward materialism, and returning to the values of higher purpose i.e. God’s love and humanity.
and welcoming and they trusted me. They respectfully asked however that I should not include
details of their family life as part of my research. I agreed and respected their wish.

I moved two times before settling in this boarding house. The first few days I stayed in a
bed and breakfast to get myself acquainted with the area. Then I stayed in an area where many
factory workers or department store staff “temporarily” lived. I rented a room there. The room
was very small with just a tiny window and it was equipped with just a single bed, a fan, a little
desk and plastic chair. I made a few friends but it was hard to do my work because I worked
different schedules than most of the residents staying there. I decided to move because it was
also too far from the school and I had to take public transport every day. Traveling in Jakarta was
often painful because of its severe traffic jams. If I wanted to arrive at the school in sufficient
time to settle before classes, which started at 7 a.m., I had to be on the road by 5 am at the latest.
So, I moved out to be closer to the school. Mrs. Matahari helped me find a room in the Anggrek
Bulan Neighborhood where I stayed for the rest of the study period.

As a newcomer in the area, I went to see the community leaders. It is a common courtesy
that new residents visit those in charge of the neighborhoods. Mrs. Matahari introduced me to
RT, Bapak Samono, and RW, Bapak Daud, the leaders of Anggrek Bulan community. Pak RT
[Pak short for Bapak means Mr.] was the leader or coordinator of Rukun Tetangga (RT
hereafter) or Household Units and Pak RW was the leader or coordinator of Rukun Warga or
Neighborhood Hamlets. One RT consisted of 30-50 households and One RW had approximately
5-10 RTs.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the governmental system in Indonesia according to “Peraturan
Pemerintah No. 41 Tahun 2007” [Government Regulation No. 41 Year 2007], and Figure 4.3
shows the positionality of RT/RW in the social/governmental system. In Figure 4.2, the word
UUD 1954 means the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, is the principal constitutional law in Indonesia. The position of BPK (Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan – Supreme Financial Audit Board), MPR (Majelis Permusyawarahan Rakyat – People’s Consultative Assembly), Presiden dan Wakil Presiden (President and the Vice President), Komisi Yudikatif (Judicial Committee) are the major government’s offices body that assume equal power in this type of governance. The smallest government offices are “desa/kelurahan” (villages/districts). A village or district that consists of several RWs. Figure 8 explains the organization of RWs and RTs.

Positions like that of Pak RT and Pak RW were voluntary\(^7\). They did not receive any salary from the government or their neighborhoods. If they did receive some salary, it was only a fraction of the money and funds that came from the local communities, not paid by the government. Pak RT’s duties included, but were not limited to (a) producing information for identification permits [ID] for members, (b) approving events in the local areas, (c) resolving conflicts if needed, and (d) passing information/announcements from the authorities in the local government offices. In this sense, Pak RT and Pak RW were liaisons for the local government to the local residents. The duties of Pak RW were similar but on a bigger scale. Pak RW’s roles included being the liaison to the Pak “Lurah” [district leader]. RW coordinators were responsible for several RTs, as described in the diagram. RT and RW were the smallest semi-administrative units and their coordinators served as voluntary government’s officers. The roles of Pak RT and Pak RW can be seen as community aides/coordinators

\(^7\) The position of Pelangi Neighborhood and Anggrek Bulan Neighborhood are separated and comprised of several villages or household units.
**Figure 4.2** Governmental system

**Figure 4.3** Organization of RWs and RTs
Going to see Pak RT and Pak RW was a courtesy gesture as a new member or a “guest” in the area. In return, the RT and RW would welcome and introduce the newcomers to the whole community membership (usually in the next neighborhood meeting). In this neighborhood, I received a friendly welcome. Many people talked to me and sometimes some of the residents invited me to their houses for a chat.

**Community Activism**

The founder of the school, Mrs. Matahari, was instrumental in the continued development of Semanggi School. In understanding the school better, it was vital that I learned more about the founder as a person and an administrator. I was interested to learn about what inspired her to have founded the school and what kept her involved. Through the voices of Mrs. Matahari and other members of the school and community, I learned about the founder and the community.

I just moved here [pause] my husband’s job [pause] we went wherever he was assigned. My husband is retired now. I remember when we were new here. I have always been active in social activities so once we were settled; I looked for information on some
activities in the local areas. I went to Pak RT and RW to introduce our family and report ourselves as a new member in the area. Both Pak RT and Pak RW were very welcoming to us… I got the information on some activities that I could be involved in. I first joined the choir group… soon after, the group trusted me to lead it. We followed several local and regional choir competitions and won some awards…. After that, I became increasingly involved in the community. My family was supportive… all of us involved in the community’s activities. For instance, I initiated environmental cleaning day where all of the family members can join in and do something in our community. We cleaned the water sewage, trim trees, tidied the front part of our gardens for the day… I know the people in our neighborhood hired someone to do all these, but I proposed that for one day we all, the residents, do it for fun for togetherness, just to show we care about our environment… the response was very positive… since then we have our neighborhood tradition to do this periodically. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/2/2013)

Mrs. Matahari seemed to have been interested in social activities in the community ever since she and her family first moved into this area. She expressed that she had always engaged in social endeavors in every neighborhood in which she had lived. She had lived in different cities prior to settling in Jakarta.

When my husband retired, we decided to just stay. Wherever we lived, our families were always socially active and engaged in the community. I had been the head of a women’s organization in different offices. Mostly, it was due to my husband’s position that I inherited the position. I was “Ketua Dharmawanita” [the head of an organization for Civil Servants’ Wives] in my husband’s offices in three different cities. I was very active in this organization. However, after my husband retired, I was pleasantly surprised that the
people in our current neighborhood entrusted the position of “Ketua PKK” [the head of PKK organization – Family Welfare Development organization] also to me. The work I had done in Dharmawanita prepared me for my position in PKK. I know they both are not a real job, they are not by any means prestigious, and both are just voluntary, but I take my responsibility and the people’s trust seriously. I know many people often feel burdened with their “inherited” position like “Ketua Dharmawanita” [Head of Local Women Organization – usually consisted of wives of governments officials] and look down on people who are involved in PKK, but I think it all depends on what we do. I believe that if we do many good things for the community, we achieve the goals. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/2/2013)

Both Dharmawanita and Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK here after or in English Family Welfare Development organization) are non-profit organizations that are sponsored by the Indonesian government. These programs were an attempt to offer a conduit for women to be involved in the community, supporting the government’s goals and missions. The work involved in this is voluntary. Dharmawanita [Civil Servants’ Wives organization] organization was founded on August 5, 1974 by the first Lady of Indonesia’s Second President, Raden Ayu Siti Hartinah Soeharto (also well known as Ibu Tien Soeharto to Indonesians). It became a tradition that the first lady was also the head of Dharmawanita. This tradition also trickled down so that the wife of the head or director of government’s offices becomes the head of Dharmawanita in their regions. The vision and mission of the organization included (a) supporting the nation’s agenda, (b) a support the system for civil servants’ wives and families, and (c) recognition of the importance of equality for women (Persatuan Dharmawanita, 2014). The PKK [Family Welfare Development organization], was organized by the wife of Central Java Governor, Isriati
Moedani. It was initially named the Family Welfare Education program. She was motivated to act by the severe cases of malnutrition and hunger in remote villages. She then proposed the program in 1967 and this organization’s work significantly reduced such cases of hunger (PKK, 2014).

The work that Mrs. Matahari had done in her years with the Dharmawanita organization had inspired her labor in PKK. In fact, the idea of establishing a school began with a program she initiated in support of the women and children in the area as part of her PKK work (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga – Family Welfare Development organization).

One day I took a long walk and I was lost and ended up in one of the Kampungs [small villages]. The area was not far from our complex but the condition of this Kampung [named Pelangi village] and its surrounding area was far from clean and prosperous. Clothes were hanging outside of the houses, the houses were dense, and the streets were so small, more like alleys. I had never been to these areas before my walk. I was very surprised! I talked to my husband about it and we discussed about my intention to initiate a program that would involve the people in the area. I also talked about this to other women in our housing complex [Anggrek Bulan neighborhood] and they supported the idea of having monthly meeting for mothers and their children for residents at Pelangi village. We would also give the kids some food and other goodies during these meetings. We also wanted to teach the mothers about keeping their families well and healthy. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/2/2014)

Mrs. Matahari expressed that the Nutrition Day program was the seed for the school to be established. This was not without challenges.
When I started the nutrition day program here [in Anggrek Bulan neighborhood], I never thought it was going to become much more. At first, I faced a big challenge. In the first months, there was very little attendance. Even though we provided food for the children and mothers, and they would get small gifts from us, very few families attended. We invited residents of several villages nearby. We only had five or seven families joining. Even though we went to see the Pak RT/RW in their neighborhood several times, we were not able to increase the number of our participants for the Nutrition Day program. So, I kept thinking about it and thought there must be another way to promote our program.

The program Mrs. Matahari initiated was not taking off as she had hoped. She faced a big challenge but she did not give up. She tried to find a better way to promote the program. I asked myself, “Why didn’t people want to come to our program?” I then thought maybe I should explain the program better. Then it struck me that I did not really know the people that I invited to attend. Why would they want to come if they don’t even know me? I was a stranger to them and they to me. . . I made it my mission to get to know the residents in the villages nearby us. Because quite a few of them work in our households as cleaners, gardeners, drivers, and so on, I thought I should talk to them too.

Mrs. Matahari showed that people mattered to her and that getting to know them was important before introducing the program. After several visits to the local authorities in the villages, she took a different approach in promoting her program.

“What happened next?” I first talked to my house helpers and asked permission from my neighbors if I could talk to their helpers. I told our organization members about my plan and they agreed with me and supported me. . . At first, the people I talked to found it a
bit unusual that I’d talk to them to ask about their opinions. They thought I’d only want to promote the program. I told them, “No, I just want to know you and your families and neighbors. Can I come and visit you at your home?” My helpers were shocked that I would do that. However, they were very happy! So, yes, I made appointments to see them and their family at their homes.

When Mrs. Matahari decided to talk with her house staff and other workers in the neighborhood, they responded positively. Mrs. Matahari chose a more personal approach to get to know the people she invited to the program, and their neighbors.

I learned from my visits that a few of the residents are street entrepreneurs, like, street food or beverage vendors. They sell water by the gallon, foods like gado-gado [mixed veggies/Indonesian salad], satay, fried rice, and so on. In my first visit, the family I was visiting prepared so much food I felt so guilty. However, they told me that they felt “honored” because they never had a home visit from Anggrek Bulan neighbors. I was glad that our effort for “silahturahim” [a concept of visiting each other to strengthen brotherhood/sisterhood/family hood in Islam] was responded well to. I went with another female friend. Not only the family but also many of the family’s neighbors were present. I was truly touched. A few days after, I went to the neighborhood again, but this time I bought food and drinks that they were selling. They were very surprised that I would actually eat the and drink their foods! Of course, I would!! From then on, I am a regular visitor to their vendors. Not only that, I also convinced my neighbors to come with me. They, too, were surprised when I took them there and we ate there together.

Because many of Pelangi village’s residents were “street entrepreneurs,” aka street vendors, these sellers did not expect residents from the upscale neighborhood to buy their products. Street
foods are part of Indonesian culture and can be found on many corners of the cities/villages. They are popular as they present ethnic foods and provide authenticity in tastes. There might be, however, some hygiene concerns related to street foods/beverages. Mrs. Matahari suggested to the food sellers that if they showed cleanliness, i.e., washing hands before touching the foods, wearing gloves, and using clean products, she would come with more neighbors to try the foods they were selling. A lot of the food was cooked clean and fresh. As a result, many residents of Anggrek Bulan became regular customers. I was a regular there too.

The steps Mrs. Matahari took to help her learn about the people in the adjacent neighborhood resulted in a positive response from both sides. Her actions had removed some of the barriers between two distinctively different neighborhoods. She seemed to be able to bring people together on her journey to help those around her who were less fortunate.

One time, I went “ngabuburit” with a neighbor by visiting our friends at Pelangi neighborhood. My neighbor is a doctor and teaches at a medical school. She was shocked to learn about the conditions of several Kampungs [villages] that we visited. Soon after that, she initiated a workshop on cleanliness and was joined by some of her medical students who provided free health check ups for the residents in these Kampungs.

*Ngabuburit* stems from the word “burit” in Sundanese, a West Javanese language. The root means dusk but the phrase can be roughly translated into “activities while waiting for the dusk to come.” Today, the word popularly means spending time with families or friends usually while waiting for the time to break fast during the month of Ramadan in Islam. Mrs. Matahari’s efforts had motivated her friends and neighbors to engage more in their community. She had provided a conduit for Anggrek Bulan residents to contribute to the people [in Pelangi village] living in poverty close to their neighborhood.
Community Perceptions of Mrs. Matahari

I talked to the teachers and some residents in Anggrek Bulan neighborhood who were also “host parents” of some students in the school about the founder of the school. Host parents sponsored children so they could receive education. They paid for school tuition and additional costs related to students’ education. Several people in the neighborhood were educational sponsors of students, not only for students in Semanggi School, but also in other schools in the area.

Mrs. Matahari is always active… she is a homemaker but she is extremely busy in the community. Our community consists of many working people and retirees. Many of us, retirees, want to get involved in the community but we often don’t know how or what to do… we do have social activities in place, but Mrs. Matahari brought new energy and excitement through existing programs and new ones she initiated. . . . I think the key to the success of her programs is her commitment to them… she visits people and invites many people even though they’re unlikely to join. . . it’s like she just welcomes everybody to join. (Mrs. Yuli, a contributor to the school, interview, 9/22/2013)

Another resident commented on Mrs. Matahari’s leadership:

Mrs. Matahari, in my opinion, is a provocateur, but in a good way… she makes us feel good about being involved in the community… we had programs before, but it was more like something routine. . . . When Mrs. Matahari joined our program [neighborhood], she initiated a play for our community that involved our youth and the fathers. . . . They are groups that rarely joined our activities because we are a women’s organization . . . mostly our activities only involved women. . . . I remembered the play was comedic and it was so funny that everybody was talking about it. . . . We were very proud of it because lots
of people were involved. Her son and her husband dressed in women’s clothes for the play!! So entertaining that we made a similar play the year after and many more people were involved!! After many programs were successfully initiated by Mrs. Matahari, the community trusted her to be the head of PKK [Women’s Organization in the local area]. She is a creative person and in many ways she is our partner in crime in making things happen in our community. (Mrs. Ratih, 4/17/2014)

“It Takes a Village to Run a School”

When talking about schooling, especially in non-public arenas, inevitably, one cannot avoid discussions of its financial support. Schools of all sizes require financial support to operate. Being a non-public school, Semanggi School received no funding from the government. The funding came from donations from its founder, mostly from Mrs. Matahari’s personal funding, and other stakeholders in the community. “The community’s commitment to the school’s financial support has been unwavering” (Mrs. Matahari, 9/22/2013).

In the beginning, the school was a mere get together event for mothers and their children. The women in our neighborhood raised some money for the snacks and nutritious food for the participants of our gathering. Then when the school started, we had our monthly meeting to raise money for it. The funding comes from my personal contribution mostly, but the community tremendously helps. Many people have contributed to the school in many different ways. It does not have to be in the form of money. Yes, it takes a village to run a school! (Mrs. Matahari, 9/22/2013)

Even though most of the funding came from Mrs. Matahari, “the school is still in need of financial support from the community.” Fund raising was a big part of this community’s activity to demonstrate their commitment to the school and to other social endeavors.
Twice a month on Tuesdays, Anggrek Bulan community had a religious meeting. It was intended as a “get together” event outside of the school time. “Our physical being needs food and so does our spiritual being. We learned a lot from them,” said Mrs. Matahari about these religious meeting. In these meetings, the participants also conducted fund raising activities for social activities in the area, including raising funds for Semanggi School. These religious meetings took place bimonthly but the major fundraising took place at the beginning of the month. The meetings started at 8 a.m. and finished around noon. They were usually held at Mrs. Alia’s home. Mrs. Alia is one of the school founders. She was the owner of the second house being used for the school. The attendees were the Muslim woman residents in the neighborhood.

I attended only one meeting where they had a major fundraising event. I attended other religious meetings in the neighborhood, but no fundraising activities took place in them. I also attended about six other neighborhood meetings, i.e., RT meetings. These meetings were not religious meetings. The meetings were open to all residents of Anggrek Bulan neighborhood. The discussions were primarily focused on the neighborhood’s well being such as preparation for the rainy season, financial allocation for programs. Jakarta frequently suffers from continuous floods during the heavy rainy season. Mrs. Matahari stated that her RT also allocated some financial support for her school. For financial distribution, they already had a system of accounting containing details of fund allocation and how much money should be spent. If there was nothing new to be considered, they followed the same, consistent expenditure model. The residents discussed and decided together what to do if new proposals arose. Regarding the financial support for the school, I was not able to obtain the exact amount allocated but I gathered that the school more or less received the funding monthly.

I wrote in my researcher journal about meeting Mrs. Alia:
I met with Mrs. Alia once in 2010 when I first visited the school on a trip to Indonesia, but I was not clear about her involvement with the school, other than she owned the house used by the school. I had expressed that I wished to interview her for my study but never received a “yes” response from her. I understood that she was very busy or perhaps she had reservations about meeting with me. Later I found out that she was a quite well known figure in the Indonesian entertainment business. She and her husband traveled abroad a lot and her children were educated in the United States. I finally received an invitation for an interview close to the end of my research study. Due to her travels, she was not able to be interviewed until several weeks after agreeing to the interview.


The religious meetings held at Mrs. Alia’s home resulted in significant financial support for Semanggi School. It was a long-standing tradition that fund raising for a variety of social purposes would be a major goal in the religious meetings in this neighborhood.

Mrs. Alia welcomed Mrs. Matahari and me, “Please take a seat. I am so glad that you could come.” Mrs. Alia’s home had an open concept, the outside and inside were separated by gigantic, beautifully crafted Javanese wooden doors. In accommodating this meeting, the door was opened to create an open space. The floor was covered with patterned fabric mats for the attendees to sit on. There were about fifty women attending this Islamic religious meeting. Most of them were sitting down on the floor but the elderly were sitting on the chairs. People left their shoes tidily at the front door.

(Fieldnotes, 4/22/2014)

It is part of the Indonesian tradition that people sit on the floor when having parties. The floor is usually decorated with mats/traditional carpets. Because of this tradition, many beautifully
crafted, ethnic patterned mats and carpets are available for sale in the markets. Another part of the tradition is for guests to leave their shoes outside of the house or outside the door. As people arrived, Mrs. Matahari introduced me to them. The host of the house, Mrs. Alia, was also the Master of Ceremony of the event. She welcomed the guests. She began the meeting with greetings and some announcements of what was going on in and around the neighborhood. Because the meeting was a religious meeting, the religious leader (Imam) was present. He sat on the provided chair and was given a microphone. The Imam had come all the way from Bandung, which was about 4 hours away from Jakarta (excluding the traffic jams). Mrs. Alia began the meeting (4/22/2014):

Today we have a couple of things. . . . Let me see, ok, first, I’d like to announce that our neighbor Mr. Parjo [who usually sells Gado-gado, Indonesian salad] has been unwell . . . so you know, if you are craving for his food and wondering why you haven’t seen Mr. Parjo, he’s ill. Maybe we could arrange something and visit him. Let me know who wants to come so we can organize it. Second, we have a couple of things to sell here. We have rempeyek [traditional crackers] made by Mrs. Bun. Please buy as many as possible and put the money in the moneybox [a transparent plastic jar was placed next to the food]. Third, please hand out the recycled materials to Mrs. Suli and don’t forget to sign in for today’s attendance as well. Here we have our goodies from our children and the mothers. Please help our friends and share the love by buying these items. May God bless your kind hearts! (Fieldnotes, 4/22/2014)

Anggrek Bulan community appeared to have a close relationship with other communities in the area, particularly villages in the Pelangi neighborhood and its surrounding areas. In some areas of the neighborhoods, there were food sellers in the streets. These vendors used carts to sell their
foods and they went around the neighborhood selling. In these gated neighborhoods, not many food sellers were allowed to come and sell due to security reasons. Some were able to come in with the “invitation” or recommendation of some residents. They were given special tags to show at the gate. There was a traditional market just around the corner. Mr. Parjo was one of the food sellers. He went around and then parked his cart nearby the neighborhood park. He lived in one of the villages close by [Pelangi Village]. His child had attended Semanggi School. Through its women organization, the Anggrek Bulan community also offered small loans for conducting home businesses, such as running food carts. This was done as a way to financially empower the residents in the villages nearby. Many families from the upscale neighborhoods frequently bought food from these vendors. The community showed their support by promoting street vendors in their neighborhood. Some residents became regular costumers of these vendors.

During this particular religious meeting at Mrs. Alia’s home, the topic of preaching from the Imam was related to the message of fund raising. The Imam discussed the roles and responsibilities of Muslims in society, particularly towards others who were in need. The Imam also said that spiritual rewards from God should be the ultimate purpose for the good deeds.

The Imam said, “When we die, we do not bring our material world with us. We do not bring our cars, clothes, and shoes or other materialistic things with us. What should we bring with us? What should we leave behind? He paused and looked around the audience. “The legacy of kindness” the Imam continued. “If we think about it, our concept of giving is not logical. In math, if you have five candies and you give three away, you end up with two candies left. In our religion, when you give away some of your gains, you will gain more, because there are God’s blessings in the midst of our good deeds. God will return our good deeds into good health, prosperity, and safety for our children, and
us and beyond. . . . We, as taught by Quran and our prophets, *should leave a legacy of kindness*, he emphasized.” He finished the lecture with prayers in Arabic. (Fieldnotes, 4/22/2013)

Leaving a legacy of kindness is an Islamic concept, rooted in the belief that immaterialism, caring for others, particularly those in need, should be the most rewarding achievement to be attained in life and should be passed on to families and others. Within this notion, good deeds are at the heart of this legacy. Kindness to others is a principle that should be upheld as a way of showing gratitude toward what one has, e.g., good health, family, safety. Additionally, in this concept, an achievement would not be possible without direct or indirect help/support from others. Thus, giving back is considered a social responsibility of a Muslim.

During the religious part of the meetings, the attendees conducted an auction for goodies or handy crafts produced by the women and some teens from low-income families of local villages. This auction was an activity to raise funds for Semanggi School and other social outlets. Mrs. Matahari pointed out that the auction was a way to help the local economy within the Pelangi village without offending its local residents. Although the majority of residents in Pelangi village lived in poverty, they often prided themselves for not taking charity.

Mrs. Alia led the auction, “Ladies, as we have just heard from our Imam that we are all temporary in this world… but there is something that we can leave behind… to be the role model to our children and families, and our neighbors… nothing is more powerful than leaving the legacy of kindness… this will last forever… Shall we begin our auction today? Today we have some knitted bags, headscarves, socks, and totes made out of recycled materials. These are craft products from our classes. We are thankful to our
neighbors in Kampung Pelangi and Kampung Kerang.” At this point, another woman came up and explained the products and what the processes involved in making them. “Shall we now start our auction?” Mrs. Alia continued. “So, who’d like to buy this lovely bag… I’ll start with Rp. 100,000 [$10]… it’s a gorgeous bag and as Mrs Suli explained that it was time consuming to make and it’s all handmade… remember as our Imam said, all what we give today will return multiple times in good things in our lives…I see 300, anyone for 350? … okay the bag’s sold for 500 ($50) to Mrs. Wina! Thank you!” (Fieldnotes, 4/22/2014)

The auction went on until a number of the items were sold. Other items that were not sold were put on hold to be offered for sale again through their local social media group. The attendees raised approximately $600 on the day. Apart from the funds raised from activities such as the auction, the group also receives weekly/monthly donations from members and non-members. The participants all discuss and decide together on future expenditure and social endeavors. Semanggi School was one of the primary recipients of the fund raising activities.

The crafts promoted during the religious meeting at Mrs. Alia’s home were the products of collaborative work between PKK [the family welfare development organization – a women’s organization] of Anggrek Bulan neighborhood and women in Pelangi neighborhood. The women of this organization opened free craft classes for women and female teens in the villages nearby. The members of the craft classes included some parents of students in Semanggi School. Mrs. Alia was one of the craft teachers. She explained why they chose to teach crafting skills. “We need to share skills that enable our friends [referring to women in Pelangi neighborhood] to be able to provide financial benefits for themselves. That way, they can improve their quality of life,” The crafts included knitted bags, totes made from recycled materials, tissue holders,
tablecloths, and so on. The recycled materials came from bags/containers of coffee, old cloth, and containers for softener soap, and liquid dish soap. The products were sold among the members and to markets in the area. (See Figure 10.)

Our members collected the recycled materials. They are household waste. Our members give their collected recycled materials when we meet biweekly. Because of the carnival we do and word of mouth, many people who are not our craft class members, have become familiar with our program. They too donated the materials. Frequently, our class would go around the villages and visit the street vendors. We asked them to keep the recycled materials and we pay them for the materials.

I asked Mrs. Alia about the idea of re-creating crafts from recycled materials. She explained, “I learned from my children about eco-friendly products. They said we needed to do our part to save our planet. So, I thought of enjoining my love for crafts using recycling materials.”

Mrs. Alia shared, “I wear the tote bag everywhere I go, and so do my children. My children are my inspiration. I am proud that they wear the crafts I have produced.” Occasionally, Anggrek Bulan community held a carnival day for children and women to promote their craft products. During this carnival, they would exhibit the arts and crafts they produced. Some women and children would wear outfits from recycled materials. “We want to teach our children to be proud of our local products, to learn how we should be friendly to our mother earth, and to appreciate the hard work of their mothers and/or their sisters to produce these things. In a way, the carnival is a celebration of our collaborative commitment,” Mrs. Alia explained. Students of Semanggi School were participants of this carnival. (See Figure 11.)
Commenting on the arts, Mrs. Alia shared, “These days, many people are only proud when the products they wear are imported, instead of being made locally.” By wearing the crafts they reinvented, Mrs. Alia, along with other women like Mrs. Matahari, wanted to be an example to their own children and other children to be proud of local products and to care for their environment.

Jakarta is flooded every year and this is because I think we, humans, are too greedy. We only build and build, skyscrapers, roads, without thinking more deeply about the environmental consequences. I think that mother earth is angry because we abuse our environment. So, every year we [Jakarta residents] get flooded. Do not get me wrong, I am not against modernity, but I think we should balance it with caring for our green
environment. It is also our Islamic belief that we [as Muslims] should care for it. (Mrs. Alia, 5/22/2014)

The commitment shown by Anggrek Bulan community was influenced by cultural and religious values. This community commitment helped Semanggi School to survive and continue its social and educational goals. In the next section, I explain characteristics of Semanggi School that were unique.

**Semanggi School’s Unique Characteristics**

Semanggi School had some characteristics that were unique compared to other preschools in the area. One of the characteristics was the school’s policy about homework. They had a *No Homework Policy* (NHW hereafter). I asked Mrs. Matahari and the teachers about this. Based on the interviews from Mrs. Matahari and the teachers, I gained the information below.

**No Homework Policy**

Mrs. Matahari told me that the NHW policy started because the teachers, as well as the parents, had reported to her that they were having problems with homework. She believed that when there was a problem, it should be responded to immediately. Thus, Mrs. Matahari had held several meetings with the teachers about this particular issue.

Mostly the teachers told me about the homework problems. I also got some complaints from the parents. Some parents told me it was difficult to get their children to do the homework that the teachers had assigned. Some other parents also said that they did not have time to monitor their child’s homework because it was too much work. So, I talked to the teachers and we had a number of meetings about it. We came up with some solutions. It was like a system of trial and error and we tried to implement every solution that we came up with and then reflected on how it went. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/16/2013)
As seen from this example, Mrs. Matahari had a close relationship with the parents. From her explanation, it seemed that the parents felt comfortable talking to her about their children and their experiences in the school. From the parents’ point of view, it was the content of the homework that made it difficult to complete.

In one of the dialogue sessions with the teachers (9/19/2013), I heard these responses:

Ms. Lisnadi: We had conversations about the homework problems several times. My students did not turn in their homework.

Ms. Ranti: We also had problem with parents doing homework for their children!

Me: Did you talk to the parents?

Ms. Ranti: Of course. A few parents did the children’s homework. They wanted their children to do well. I understood that. I think some did not have the patience so they did it for their children.

Ms. Aisah: Some parents though did not really care about their children’s homework.

From the teachers’ point of view, it was perhaps a lack of the parents’ commitment and patience that caused the problems related to homework. When I asked Mrs. Matahari if the teachers and parents had different thoughts on the problems, she stated that it was not uncommon for them to have different opinions. Her role was to bridge the differences and discuss them with both parties. Nevertheless, Mrs. Matahari stated that the teachers and parents generally had a strong bond.

The homework problems continued to bother the teachers for some time, so Mrs. Matahari and teachers had some additional meetings to discuss the problems. Their solutions included:

1. Talking to the parents and the children
2. Reducing the homework load

3. Consequences/punishment for not doing homework. (A reward system had been in place for those doing their homework; for instance, teachers drew stars in the children’s’ homework books).

After applying the solutions above, however the problems still did not disappear, so Mrs. Matahari and the teachers came up with another solution – the no homework policy. Many of the decisions of the school were decided in consultation with the parents.

Mrs. Matahari and the teachers held a meeting with the parents to discuss the new policy. The initial result was that the majority of the parents were concerned and they rejected the idea.

Some of them, however, were willing to try it. We [Mrs. Matahari and the teachers] told the parents to sleep on it before making any final decision. We took a vote at the following meeting. In the next meeting, the majority of the parents voted to have homework still in place and rejected the idea of no homework policy. It was quite a heated meeting because the parents became polarized due to their own preferences. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/22/2013)

According to Mrs. Matahari, because the majority of the parents rejected the idea of a no homework policy, the school did not implement it. The parents’ rejected the No Homework Policy because they did not want their children to become “lazy,” and “forget their lessons,” and that “the parents with the problems should be more responsible for their children” (Mrs. Matahari’s report, 9/22/2013). After some time the problems related to homework seemed to be reduced. However, the same problems occurred again off and on.

I knew it was not possible that we would eliminate all of the problems related to homework. However, when about 20% of the approximately 160 students did not often do
their homework, this was a problem. I think that the parents should be more involved with
the students’ work. They should pay attention to their children more. The teachers felt a
little frustrated because a lot of homework turned up incomplete or missing and some
other parents kept doing their children work because it was hard for them to get the
children do the homework. At that point, we were back to square one. (Mrs. Matahari,
9/2/2013)

After the problems continued, Mrs. Matahari and the teachers held another meeting with the
parents. This time, they asked the parents to think about the solution together. The members of
the meeting seemed to be going back and forth in their opinions.

I told the parents that it was their responsibility to guide their children’s learning. From
the very beginning . . . I told the parents that this is our school. Therefore, whatever we
do, we will be doing it together! I reminded the parents and the teachers in the meeting
about this too. So I needed the parents’ help to invest their time and energy to their
children’s learning. (Mrs. Matahari, 9/22/2013)

With the spirit of solving the problem together, a parent came up with a suggestion that they
should have optional homework. The idea was discussed and together they decided that
homework would still be implemented but the parents and the children would decide on what
they would work on for their homework. For instance, the parents and children could work on
the readings, or phonetics, or drawing, or singing, and so on if they chose to do so. The parents
would then write a brief report and sign the homework report page. Each student had a
homework book/report. If the parents could not read or write, then they would just give their
signature or indicate with a check mark on the page on which they had been working.

Alternatively, the parents could talk to the teachers in the morning or at the end of the school day
about the children’s homework, if none of the written report styles worked for them. The teachers shared the parents’ projects, especially the ones that were unique, with other teachers during their weekly meetings. The teachers kept a number of homework assignments that the children had produced and organized them in a portfolio. Every child had a student portfolio, which would then be returned to the parents when the child completed a class.

Since the new policy was adopted, the problems in regards to homework significantly decreased. The parents became much more motivated to help their children’s study and there was a feeling of shared ownership of the learning. In interviews with the parents, I heard the following typical comments about the homework policy:

I don’t feel burdened with homework because my child and I decided together. I feel appreciated [as a parent]. (Mrs. Kasmi, 9/23/2013)

My daughter is happier doing homework that she can choose! She even completed more pages on her own initiative. (Mrs. Rukiah, 9/23/2013)

Some parents like to compare their child with others, like, how they are doing and so on. With the No Homework Policy, we don’t need to compete because every child and their parents will do something different, something more relevant to themselves. I like the policy! (Mrs. Turi, 9/23/2013)

This type of shared policy making is unique in the Indonesian schooling system. Typically, teachers assign the homework and every student does the same assignment. By implementing this No Homework Policy, the parents are not only held accountable but also given the autonomy to work with the children on subjects related to the children’s interests. This type of policy was meant to foster the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s learning and boost the children’s confidence in their study. It gave students not only the freedom to learn but also taught
about responsibility and commitment in completing their choices of homework. The No Homework Policy was a good example of the ways the Semanggi School principal, Mrs. Matahari, and teachers worked together to strengthen the connection between the home and school.

**Parent Involvement**

Mrs. Matahari and the teachers always encouraged the parents’ involvement in the school. They stated that the majority of the decisions were made in consultation with the parents, for instance, the decisions related to student expenses. For almost two decades (1984-2004), the school did not charge student fees. According to Mrs. Matahari (9/16/2013), the parents wanted to contribute and show their commitment to their students’ education. They knew the teachers were not paid much and they wanted to show their gratitude to the teachers by contributing some money towards the salaries or school expenses. Mrs. Matahari told the teachers that she agreed only if the parents did not feel burdened by it and that the parents would decide on the amount amongst themselves if they all signed up for it. The parents had meetings and all agreed to the idea and to the amount they would contribute. Ms. Lisnadi (9/18/2013), one of the teachers, shared her opinions about the parents’ idea in contributing to the school.

In a way, the parents are held more accountable when they pay for their children’s education. Most parents care about their children’s education and they are grateful for what we try to do. Some, I feel, need to be held accountable to pay more attention to their children’s welfare and willingness to go to school. Because the tuition and costs were 100% free before, some parents let their children miss school. They would bring them to the market where they worked instead . . . The students’ attendance was up and down. It is not good for other students who were serious about studying and working hard. Their
study sometimes was interrupted because some students missed quite a few of the lessons. It also sends out a wrong message from parents to the children that it is okay to not pay attention to schoolwork. Therefore, in a way, it is a great way to make the parents accountable for their children’s attendance. (Ms. Lisnadi, 9/18/2013)

In Semanggi School, the parents were part of the major decision making process. They were accustomed to being consulted about school decisions. During my research, the school had quite a number of meetings with the parents on plans for school events such as fieldtrips. The parents were part of the committee and some of them came on the fieldtrips too. The parents also volunteered and took turns maintaining the school’s physical cleanliness and tidiness. A couple of times a year, the school provided food for the students and the parents were the primary cooks. In terms of teaching materials, some parents often contributed their recycled papers, old fabric, dried leaves, and bottles to be used as craft/teaching materials.

Mrs. Matahari was very talented in her crafting skills and she shared with me some teaching resources that she had made from recycled materials. All the teaching materials came from what was already found in the surrounding area. She shared this method of using recycled materials to create teaching materials with her teachers. They had been using such materials since the school’s inception. Some materials included ingredients used in Indonesian kitchens. Students learned about different spices and their individual benefits for health. They also tasted some cooked dishes in which the spices were used. Many parents and/or their teenage children would collect plastic bottles of coca cola, sprite, and so on and then exchange them with the local recycling agents for cash. However, the teachers and Mrs. Matahari used some of these bottles and lids to teach numeracy skills, alphabets, and coloring. Mrs. Matahari and the teachers creatively designed their lessons based around the materials that were readily available.
In this chapter, I have provided a description of the school, participants, and school activities as a background for the data analysis described in the next chapter. This information offers insights on how the school is contextualized.

**The Introduction of Newly Implemented National Policy in Semanggi School**

In this section, I will describe our efforts in *reading* (Freire, 1970) Indonesian national policies, particularly the policy on early childhood education. The policy on early childhood education, newly implemented by the Indonesian government at the time of this study, was aimed at schools like Semanggi School. The teachers and Mrs. Matahari utilized our dialogues to examine the new policy critically and think about how it was affecting the school.

**Teachers’ Perceptions on the Early Childhood Education**

In this section, I will present our efforts to understand the national policy on early childhood education, which provided a way to help the teachers better understanding this policy. I gathered publicly available information on the policy and shared this with the teachers and Mrs. Matahari. In general, the teachers perceived the new policy as a potentially positive change in the field of early childhood education. The benefits they saw included (a) the possibility for increases in salary, (b) professional development opportunities, and (c) assistance for students with special needs.

Early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini – PAUD hereafter) in Indonesia was newly implemented in Indonesia at the time of my research (2013-2014). The introduction for PAUD had been intensely covered in the media and in educational settings in Indonesia, especially in big cities such as Jakarta. PAUD was introduced at the end of the second term of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The initiative for reforming PAUD was supported
by the First Lady Ani Yudhoyono. The former government had allocated some funding for schools to develop early childhood education. This resulted in many schools applying for the funding. Consequently, there were many newly emerging preschools and kindergartens. Semanggi School was also affected by the new policies. The teachers’ frequent questions and comments regarding PAUD showed their curiosity, enthusiasm, hopes, and angst in response to the new instruction and how it might affect their school and their future.

The Indonesian government’s decision to provide more funding and increase the teachers’ salary was political. During the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (hereafter Mr. SBY), especially during his first term, teacher salaries increased immensely from previous levels. One of the premises was because the teachers’ votes initially sent Mr. SBY to victory (Jawapos, 2008), and he wanted to maintain their support for a potential second term. His party (Partai Demokrat – Democracy Party of Indonesia) was considered a new party and was, at that time, without major seats in the Congress in Indonesia. His party was an underdog and so it was a smart move to tap into the teachers’ voices to help him win the presidential election. Mr. SBY did increase the teachers’ salaries and he won a second term. In the second term, the President implemented the certification programs for teachers and the certified teachers received high increases in salaries (approximately $200-700 more than the standard wage of $200/month). He also budgeted 20% of the Indonesian national income to be for education, which was the biggest increase in Indonesian educational history (Jawapos, 2008).

Early Childhood education in Indonesia is part of a larger government pledge to education that stemmed from the meeting attended by Southeast Asian nations during the World Conference sponsored by UNESCO, Thailand, 1992. The previous goals for education were revisited and renewed in 2000. The renewed goals included:
1. Expand early childhood care and education
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
3. Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
4. Increase adult literacy by 50 percent
5. Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015
6. Improve the quality of education

In 2009, the Ministry of National Education in Indonesia issued a bill regarding early childhood education [Permendiknas no. 58, 2009 – Ministry of National Education Regulation no. 58, 2009]. Within the bill, the government would provide funding for early childhood schools that qualified. The recommendation received large-scale attention and stimulated the development of early childhood programs within new preschools and kindergartens across the country. As of 2013, there were 23,379 of these schools across 30,355 towns and villages (Indonesian Statistic Institute, 2015). This was a fifty percent increase on the numbers since 2009. In order to be eligible for funding, a preschool/kindergarten has to be registered as a government-oriented school and comply with all of the requirements that go with that. The requirements included meeting certain standards of students’ competencies thorough documentation and financial reports. Thus, if Semanggi School wanted to be eligible for such funding, it has to register the school under the program as a public/state head start/preschool/kindergarten.

We began our dialogue group by sharing information about what we knew about PAUD. Seven of us attended our dialogue meeting on 11/1/2013; all six teachers and me. We were sitting in the pantry area of the school that was used as the teachers’ room. There was a round table with chairs around it. The teachers often joked about this and called our meetings the
“round table” dialogue meetings. The title is a pun based on a dialogue meeting that took place between Indonesia and the Dutch during the Indonesian Independence era called the ‘round table meeting.’ Our meetings sometimes took place at other places such as Mrs. Matahari’s house.

Mrs. Matahari sometimes joined us. Sometimes she just sat on a chair nearby to observe our meetings. Usually, however, she did not attend because of her other duties. Mrs. Matahari’s presence sometimes influenced the teachers’ willingness to speak their minds. This may be because of cultural norms in that the teachers felt pressured by her hierarchical position as the principal. The teachers shared with me that they felt okay with her presence during the dialogue meetings. However, they often wanted to show respect to Mrs. Matahari and therefore they were unwilling to disagree with her opinions (Interview with Ms. Lisnadi, 9/16/2013). Although some time after our dialogues on gender roles (12/20/2013, 4/18/2013), in which Mrs. Matahari shared her personal and family stories, the teachers seemed to feel more relaxed expressing their opinions around her.

I posed three questions for the teachers to help me understand the teachers’ perceptions.

1. What do you know about PAUD?

2. Should the school join the program? Yes or no? Why?

3. What do you hope from the program if offered to the school?

The teachers’ responses are summarized in Table 4.1. Based on the data summary in Table 4.1, the teachers had split opinions about whether or not the school should join the new program.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Nominal (teachers who answer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you know about PAUD?</td>
<td>• Education about or for preschoolers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides funding</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sponsored by the Indonesian government</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare students for elementary schools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sponsored by DIKTI(^8) (National Education Department)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaches character building</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should the school join the program?</td>
<td>Answer: “Yes”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons included:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better funding</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Possibility of becoming PNS(^9) (Civic Workers/Civil Servants)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More free training for teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better funding means better school supply for kids</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better funding means teachers could have an assistant in the classroom especially class with kids with special needs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Answer: “No”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons included:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Too much responsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lengthy bureaucracy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Many evaluations will be conducted</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Answer: Yes and No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One teacher answered “yes and no”:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Yes because of it might give better funding for the school so the salary for teachers will be increased. Also no, if the teachers need to have better qualifications to be eligible for the program. (“I want to pursue further education, but I don’t have the money, if there’s funding for it I think it’s good for teachers. If not, the school should not join because we may not be eligible to teach within the new program”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you hope from the program if offered to the school?</td>
<td>Answers included:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase in salary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More funding for teacher training</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers can become PNS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assistants for classes with special need kids</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide more school supply</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scholarship for teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Network with many other teachers in the area and beyond</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appreciation for variety of skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) DIKTI (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi – Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education), this institution works under the Ministry of Education. It oversees policies and funds and other matters related to higher education issues and education in general in Indonesia.

\(^9\) PNS [Pegawai Negeri Sipil] in English, civic workers or civil servants. People in this position are considered government officers and most of them receive benefits such as structural career ladders and pensions.
I wondered if perhaps this was due to the lack of information that the teachers had received so that it was hard for them to decide. They did seem to perceive however that the new program would mean more funding for their school. With more funding, the teachers hoped for more opportunities for their professional development, better salaries, opportunities to be considered as a government officer or civil servant, more appreciation of their skills, better networking with other teachers, and increased assistance in dealing with special needs students.

In an effort to better understand the teachers’ responses, I listed the 8 items from the journal entry data and asked them to rank them in the order of what was most important to them. The top three responses were:

1. Increased salary
2. Professional development opportunities
3. Assistance in class especially for children with special needs

(Dialogue meeting, 10/18/2013)

I later asked them about how they learned about the new program. The answers included: (a) from their fellow teachers, (b) from other teachers in the area, and (c) a few discussions they had during the monthly meeting with other schools in the district (dialogue meeting, 10/18/2013).

The teachers and I discussed these top three answers to better understand their perceptions about the new policy.

Possibility for increased salary was the first top answer for the teachers. They expressed their critical need for a better salary in Semanggi School.

Me: Based on the teachers’ journal that you submitted, all of you associated PAUD with more funding. Would you like to talk more about this?
Ms. Basmia: I heard that one school that is in the program receives funding. It would be nice to have some increase in salary if we have some funding. I can use this to dedicate my time for better teaching planning.

Ms. Lisnadi: Although we are not paid much, I am still grateful that I’ve got the job that I love. I just hope that we can have some increase so we can dedicate more hours into the school. When I visited my students’ homes, these hours were not paid. It would be helpful if we can have more income so we can also do much more for our students. I take extra private tutoring to earn more income after school.

Ms. Ranti: Yes. Our salary is about Rp. 350,000 per month (equal to USD $35) plus some transport wages Rp. 80,000 (equal to USD $8). So in total, I receive about Rp. 430,000 (equal to USD $43). This, I think, is more than what some new preschools pay their teachers. . . . I heard they are paid like Rp. 200,000 monthly (equal to USD $20) but of course it’s not nearly enough to live in Jakarta. . . . The living standard in Jakarta is about Rp. 2 million rupiahs (equal to USD $180)...we all have to have second jobs and more…so the funding could really help.

Ms. Fatima: I wanted to do more home visits to my students but I am limited because I have to work extra job. My work with students outside of the school hours is not paid. If I help tutoring students, I do not ask them to pay me. If the parents can pay me, I accept whatever they give me. I consider this as my “amal” (good deed). (Dialogue meeting, 10/18/2013)

Based on the teachers’ responses, an increase in their salaries was an urgent need, because what they currently received was far below minimum wage. The teachers spent less hours working than what is regarded as regular working hours (40 hours), as they worked on average 20-25
hours at week the school. However, they would have preferred to spend more time at the school and focus on this as their one job if it provided a sufficient living wage. In addition, they sometimes conducted home visits to their students, but the school did not pay them for these extra hours. A teacher connected their extra help to students as “amal” (good deed), an Islamic religious concept of helping others.

I talked to the teachers about their other forms of income. Four teachers stated that they did private tutoring for some students in class, especially in the subjects of reading and math. The payments varied from 50 cents to $1 per lesson. The school policy did not prohibit the teachers from outside work. Mrs. Matahari said, “The tutoring benefits both teachers and students. It gives much needed extra income to the teachers and extra attention to the students so they would be more prepared to go to elementary school” (Interview with Mrs. Matahari, 10/21/2013).

Mrs. Matahari: We have teachers coming and going… I appreciate what they all have contributed to the school. I understand it is not easy to stay in our school. We run a non-profit school. We pay the teachers but very little from what they should deserve. Therefore, most of our work, including the teachers’ work, is considered mostly voluntary. I have emphasized this from the very beginning when I accepted a teacher in our school. I also encourage them to take better opportunities when they arise. Therefore, our teachers are coming and going… but we do have teachers who have stayed with us for three to six years… in previous years, we had more teachers…. They had been with us for less than a year and left… I understand everyone deserves to do the best thing in their lives so I encourage the teachers to do that… all the teachers have shown their hardest effort in teaching the students. (Mrs. Matahari, interview, 10/21/2013)
As described in Chapter 3 and 4, the school ran four days a week from 7 am to 12 pm. The teachers gathered and had a teaching-planning meeting on Fridays. Apart from teaching at Semanggi School, all teachers had to take on extra jobs to help them survive at Jakarta’s basic living standard. For instance, a teacher helped her parents in selling garments in the afternoon; others tutored in their homes to students from the school or outside of the school. Two teachers also initiated a mini classroom in the neighborhood where they live. A teacher commented,

Mrs. Matahari inspires me to do the same – to contribute to my neighborhood. Therefore, I started a classroom for children in my area. At first, I only teach the kids how to read Quran but then the kids asked to learn more. I only taught for 30 minutes, then we increased to an hour, and now it has become a two-hour lesson a day. I teach reading, math and writing to these kids, in addition to religious lesson. The school runs two days a week. The classes are free until the last several months. The parents insisted that they contribute so I can afford to buy chalks, papers, and so on. The parents insist to pay Rp. 2,000 (equal to 18 cents USD) per lesson and I insisted only if they are able to do so. The classes keep me busy, but I am happy to do it. (Ms. Basmia, interview, 10/21/2013)

Although the teachers received a small salary, five had been with the school for two years. One teacher had been with the school for more than five years. In comparison to public school salaries in Jakarta (approximately $180/month in 2013), these teachers’ salaries were far below the current standard. The Indonesian government had increased certified teacher salaries nationally by almost 100% during the last five years. The Ministry of Education implemented a program to nationally certify elementary teachers who did not have certification. Certified teachers received a significant increase in their salaries and rank. A teacher could receive up to $200-700 each month depending on their subject area and their expertise. Although the minimum
wage in the private sector had increased several times, increases in teacher salaries in private and public preschools had been slow to follow.

Despite the small salary and limited resources, the teachers were motivated to be part of Semanggi School. Ms. Ranti shared that “it was an amazing opportunity that she was accepted to be a teacher at the school.” She viewed Semanggi School as a great school. This was not only because it was located in an upper class neighborhood, but also it gave high school graduates like her and her colleagues a chance to be a teacher for children in the area (Ms. Ranti, 10/21/2013).

Professional Development Opportunities

In regards to the professional development opportunities, the teachers stated that they hoped to have more opportunities for teacher training and workshops. There were some workshops provided for the teachers in the local area that were provided free or at a low cost. The experts were residents in the neighborhood--for instance, psychologists, doctors, and artists. The training sessions and workshops included topics on child psychology, reward and punishment systems, hygiene and so on.

Ms. Basmia: Going to workshops is important to me. I feel I learn what is new in the teaching field and learn how to manage my class or my students better. However, I cannot go unless I can afford the workshops. There are a few free workshops available but they are not regular.

Ms. Sutinah: You know, with the new program, I feel like, this is a new opportunity, you know, for us to better ourselves, to be recognized as a teacher. Teachers at this school come and go, because we do not know what comes next [career wise]. I mean, as a new teacher, it was exciting and we learned new things, but after awhile, we want to know where we go from here. I love teaching and want to be in the field for a long time, but I
also want more if possible, like maybe a career in teaching, if it is possible at all. The new policy is like a new wind of opportunity. A teacher can dream, right? (Dialogue meeting, 11/1/2013)

The teachers indicated that there was a priority given to teachers who had worked longer or were considered more senior by Mrs. Matahari; this was considered a disservice to teachers in more “junior” positions. In addition, more financial support was needed for the teachers to attend workshops and teacher training sessions. This hierarchical decision-making system is quite common in other educational settings, even in some public universities and government offices. Leadership is strongly hierarchical. This usually means that seniority takes priority when professional development opportunities arise. On one hand, it is fair to provide priority to teachers who have been with the school longer. On the other hand, less senior or “junior” teachers could be the ones who need, and would benefit from, the training more. Providing equal opportunities to all teachers in the school, despite their seniority, is not something that can be easily accomplished in Indonesia.

**Assistance for Students with Special Needs**

The third most important issue for the teachers indicated in my survey was the need to have assistance in dealing with special needs children. During the study, the school was understaffed; one teacher was responsible for 15-25 kids. The school admitted children with disabilities and this year had approximately four children with severe disabilities. In addition, many children had mild behavioral and social disabilities. The school also had gifted children. The teachers wanted more support with the special-needs children; specifically a teacher assistant who would sit with the children or have them in special programs so that their individual needs could be better met.
Ms. Fatima: I have a child with special needs in my class and I really hope that we’d have another teacher to help me manage the class… it’s hard to teach the class especially when the child has a tantrum.

Ms. Aisah: I had the child in my class from the previous year and it was really tough because the child was sometimes disruptive with the other children… although we all teach the other students to be tolerant and understanding of the child’s condition, it’s just hard to teach without help from another teacher. (Dialogue meeting, 10/18/2013)

Mrs. Matahari had consulted a psychologist in the area to provide this child with free consultations. The child’s behavior showed that he could be harmful to himself and others. The child sometimes threw a chair at other children and poked another child with a pencil. He also got into fights with other children. For the sake of his own safety and that of others, Mrs. Matahari reluctantly requested that the parents withdraw the child from the school. She also requested that they agree for the child to attend psychological sessions with the psychologist that we had talked to. As previously discussed, the need for assistance in the classrooms was later tackled through reinstatement of the parent-volunteer program. The program seemed to help the teachers. However, it did not provide a consistent/regular support for them. Thus, the teachers asked for more reliable support within the new PAUD program.

After listening to the teachers, I talked to Mrs. Matahari. There were at least six schools that ran childhood education programs in the area. More schools were being established as the new PAUD policy received greater attention. Semanggi School was the second oldest preschool in the neighborhood. More schools had emerged in the area, and in Indonesia in general, because (a) there had been a strong recommendation from the government, (b) intensive coverage by the media, and (c) some visits from supervisors to promote the new programs to the local schools.
Mrs. Matahari: I had two visits from one of the supervisors in the area. He suggested that our school should be listed as a government-oriented school. We could have more funding if we do that. We will also have more guidance from them.

Me: Guidance?

Mrs. Matahari: Yes, like the curricula, assessment, examples of books, and so on.

Me: So what do you think? Are you thinking about joining?

Mrs. Matahari: I am not sure… from the supervisor’s explanation, it seems that we would need to do a lot.

Me: What would you have to do?

Mrs. Matahari: For instance, the teachers will need to provide daily reports, make many evaluations of students, follow the topics provided, and do peer reviews on the classes they teach and so on.

Me: Doesn’t your school already do peer review and mentoring?

Mrs. Matahari: Yes, in some tasks, we already do that, but I don’t know it’s just seems a lot and so many tests for students too…I don’t agree with giving students so many tests. We don’t even give students homework in our school. After a couple of visits from the supervisor I asked Pak RT and Pak RW if I should be registered or not.

Me: What did they think?

Mrs. Matahari: They told me that our school does not have to join if we don’t think we should… I told them about my concerns and I am relieved that we have the right to not join the government’s program. I am not a college graduate; I am concerned about the requirements that are entailed in the new policy. (Mrs. Matahari, interview, 1/12/2014).
Mrs. Matahari suggested that more funding from the program would bring increased responsibility as a government-oriented early childhood program. Although at first, Mrs. Matahari was leaning toward not joining the new program, when the study took place, her opinion changed and she wanted the school to join the program. Her opinion was influenced by wider discussions with the teachers, her former academic coordinator, and another principal of a similar school in the area. Mrs. Matahari’s decision later changed again into not joining the program.

I talked to some people in the area and some said that schools must show high achievements. One of the requirements was winning competitions. We also have to compete with other schools to get funding. The government allocated the funding regionally. They have some quotas regarding how many schools could receive funding in each region/district. Thus, only the best few schools will be able to receive funding. The school that already has good facilities and qualified teachers won that. They were funded. Well, we are not that kind of school. My students never followed a competition because we never held or joined any. Therefore, I do not think we have the chance. Additionally, it would be too much burden for the teachers to comply with all of the requirements. I cannot ask them to do this! (Mrs. Matahari, interview, 5/2/2014)

During the study, I attended local meetings held with other schools in the area (a local school association with approximately 15 schools from different neighborhoods) to help me better understand the context of the new PAUD policy. There seemed to be huge confusion about the new policy since the teachers and administrators had vastly different interpretations about it. As indicated by the teachers’ responses above, they seemed to know little about it. Additionally,
only one school was eligible and had successfully received funding. At the end of the study, Mrs. Matahari’s final decision was to not join the new PAUD program.

**Summary**

Getting to know the stakeholders at the school and its surrounding area was particularly helpful in mapping the neighborhoods and in understanding the relationships between Semanggi School and its community. The descriptions of meetings and interviews provided a context for the stakeholders’ commitment to the school and describes the processes involved in how the community raised funds and made decisions for the school and the neighborhoods. The stakeholders engaged in regular and continuous meetings that allowed them to connect and support each other individually and collectively. Through such continued support, the community showed their commitment so that the school was able to stand tall for almost three decades since its inception in 1984.
CHAPTER 5

Critical Reading of Our Worlds

In this chapter, I will discuss the journey that the teachers and I took in critically reading our worlds. Inspired by Freirean praxis (1970, 1987), reading our worlds is one of the ways to promote and better understand of the concept of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE). According to Freire, critical reflections are part of the praxis in our efforts to read of our worlds. In this journey, I will describe the understandings that emerged. We shared personal stories, we questioned, pondered, resisted, changed our minds, and raised more questions. I have categorized the findings into different areas of our reading of our worlds. First, I will describe our critical reading of our identities. We attempted to unpack our fears and define what multicultural education/social justice education (M/SJE) meant for us. Second, I will explain our critical reading of poverty related to education. In this section, I present the parents’ perspectives of Semanggi School as well as the principal and teachers’ understandings of students living in poverty. I conclude with a broader interpretation of our journeys in critically reading our worlds.

Changes in our understandings were part of our dialogue experiences. These changes indicated our reflectivity as we embarked on our journeys in reading our worlds. These changes, however, were messy; they did not follow a linear path. For instance, a teacher showed changes in her perceptions in one area but not in others. Additionally, the time when changes took place also varied from teacher to teacher and from one area to another. The changes in the teachers’ perceptions also moved back and forth; being significantly reflective while also showing hesitance about change. These changes in perceptions sometimes resulted in actions, and at other times did not. Thus, the changes that were part of our dialogues showed the complexity of our efforts in reading our worlds.
Critical Reading of Our Identities

In this section, I describe my efforts to understand how our identities have been shaped by the historical, political, and cultural norms situated in Indonesian society. First, we attempted to unpack our fears, as we began our dialogue. Second, I portray our struggles in defining multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE). We grappled with the idea of change; particularly in how we perceived the cultural, historical, political, religious norms that had been taught to us. Shifting between roles of a tradition keeper and challenger added complexity to our critical reflections. Changing the terms we used to represent multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) was part of our dialogues. We revisited our early definition of M/SJE and came to a more complex perceptions of multicultural education. Our reflections led to deeper understandings of our journey to read our identities.

“Dangerous Zone”: Unpacking Our Fears

Are we really talking about SARA? Isn’t it prohibited? Aren’t we entering a dangerous zone here? (Ms. Lisnadi, dialogue meeting, 10/4/2013)

In this section, I will discuss our efforts in understanding our identities as we reflected on the historical, cultural, political, and religious norms that shaped our perceptions about our identities.

The excerpt above occurred in an early dialogue meeting with the teachers in October (10/4/2013). Ms. Lisnadi was one of the six teachers. Her fear, shared by other teachers, perhaps derived from a ban during Soeharto’s era (1966-1998) on talking about diversities of any kind; talking about SARA was prohibited. Additionally, Indonesia experienced military coups by the Indonesian communist party [Partai Komunis Indonesia or PKI] in 1948 and 1965. These coups

\[\text{SARA (Suku/Agama/Ras/Antar Golongan) includes ethnicities, religions/faiths, races, and cultural groups including social class distinctions.}\]
caused many casualties and left behind many victims. After 1965, any teachings that were considered “left” ideology, or related to socialism, were banned in Indonesia. The ban has not been lifted to this day. I discussed the history of Indonesia and its conceptions of diversity in more detail in Chapter 2 and I will discuss more about the teachers’ fear and reluctance later in this section.

In my researcher journal, I reflected on what Ms. Lisnadi said. I understood the teachers’ fear and worry about our incoming conversations. I had promised the teachers that we would not do anything that would harm them or me, and that what we were going to talk about was within the norm of the Pancasila [Five Principles/Pillars], which is Indonesian national ideology. Our dialogue was a safe zone in which to discuss these matters. We needed to discuss these issues so that we could learn from each other and be better teachers for our students. Principally, we should view our diversity as a strength, rather than as a threat.

In respecting the teachers and Mrs. Matahari’s feelings, I did not use the word “social” justice education and, instead, I used the term ‘multicultural education’ to discuss issues related to social justice education. I also did not want the teachers to shut down our opportunity for dialogue before they truly understood what I meant by social justice education. I use the term *multicultural/social justice education* (M/SJE) throughout the chapters when representing both the teachers’ perspectives and mine.

I began my dialogue group (9/20/2013) initially by brainstorming what the teachers knew about multicultural education.

Me: What is multicultural education?
Ms. Lisnadi: I know multicultural means many cultures, but what is that “multicultural education?” I am not sure. Is it about studying other people’s cultures, like Javanese, Batak, Balinese?

Ms. Fatima: Is it like “Pendidikan Pancasila?” [Education on the Indonesian five principles/pillars] where we study values about how to treat other people?

Ms. Aisah: I think it’s knowing that we live in many different cultures?

Ms. Sutinah: Are we going to learn about dances, songs, and clothes from other ethnicities?

The teachers’ responses indicate that they associated multicultural education with (a) norms within Pancasila, (b) ethnicity knowledge/backgrounds, and (c) exotic values related to diversity such as dances, songs, and traditional outfits. Prior to my dialogue group, the teachers and Mrs. Matahari in Semanggi School had not heard of the exact term of “multicultural education” (translated into Bahasa Indonesia as Pendidikan Multikultural). Instead, they used concepts related to diversity (translated as budaya). This term for diversity is used frequently in the media and daily conversations in describing the diversity within Indonesia, but ‘multicultural education’, as evidenced in the dialogue group data, was a somewhat foreign concept.

The word “Pancasila” is derived from Sanskrit language and means five principles or pillars. As a national philosophy, these five principles promote how Indonesians should live their lives. For example, one of the pillars promotes values in support of democracy. Each pillar comprises norms that reflect the cultural, historical, political, social, economical, and religious philosophy of citizenship. In this belief, these pillars should be upheld holistically because they are interconnected.
The complete pillars, as stated in the 1945 Constitution\textsuperscript{11} of the Republic of Indonesia are described as follows:

1. Belief in the one and only God, (in Indonesian, \textit{Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa}).
2. Just and civilized humanity, (in Indonesian, \textit{Kemanusiaan Yang Adil dan Beradab}).
3. The unity of Indonesia, (in Indonesian, \textit{Persatuan Indonesia}).
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives (in Indonesian, \textit{Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan, Dalam Permusyawaratan dan Perwakilan})
5. Social justice for all of the people of Indonesia (in Indonesian, \textit{Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh Rakyat Indonesia})

The norms of the Pancasila used to be taught in schools (elementary school to high school). They were part of school curricula during the First and Second Presidencies. The philosophy of Pancasila is widely considered as “guidance” to Indonesians’ way of living. This philosophy is embedded in the national emblem of Indonesia, The Garuda Pancasila.

The implementation of Pancasila as a way of living was also endorsed under Soeharto’s era. However, the approach employed in introducing the values of Pancasila to the Indonesian society had turned into dogmatization. The focus of the teaching of Pancasila was diverted into the message that the government [under Soeharto’s leadership] held an absolute and all powerful position. Unfortunately, without a strongly democratic system to monitor the government’s policies, the Indonesian people’s voices became vulnerable and oppressed. Many people faced

\textsuperscript{11} The 1945 Constitution or Undang-Undang Dasar (usually referred to as UUD ’45) was produced when Indonesia was removing itself from Japanese control following World War II, and declaring its independence from its former colonizer, the Netherlands. The Constitution was revoked by the Federal Constitution on 27 December 1949, replaced by the Provisional Constitution on 17 August 1950, and restored on 5 July 1959 (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). Today, the Constitution is the supreme legal authority and requires the deference of all governmental actors. Since 1999, amendments to the Constitution have increased its size from 37 articles to 73 articles
“consequences” because their actions were considered subversive by the government during President Soeharto’s era.

For a three-year period (1998-2001), schools no longer taught the Pendidikan Pancasila [Education on Pancasila] after the fall of President Soeharto (Gismar, 2002). After the 1998 unrest that forced Soeharto to step down, the value of teaching Pancasila was questioned (Fearnley-Sander, Effendi, Moeis, Basri, & Gistituati, 2008; Gismar, 2002). However, despite the misuse of Pancasila as Indonesian ideology during Soeharto’s era, it is still regarded as a national philosophy, as stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Continuing the discussion above (9/20/2013), I asked the teachers whether they felt that multicultural education should be taught in the schools. Two teachers stated “no” and four said “yes.”

The reasons for saying **no**:

- Ms. Ranti: We know it [Indonesia is diverse], so why do we need to learn it? If we are to teach all of those [different cultures], I think it is just too much. Teaching other subjects are more important to students.
- Ms. Sutinah: We are all different, but I never look at others as different. We are all the same.

The reasons for saying **yes**:

- Ms. Basmia: We want our students to know.
- Ms. Fatima: I think it is important because we indeed live in a multi ethnic society
- Ms. Lisnadi: I want to learn new things.
- Ms. Aisah: I feel it is important to understand our students’ cultures.
The teachers’ answers for saying no imply perceptions that multicultural education (a) would be another subject to teach to students, (b) posed priority difficulties in selecting different cultures to present in the curricula, (c) conflicted with other subjects that were considered more crucial to teach for students, and (d) implied the concept of “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” [Unity in Diversity]. The teachers’ responses [for saying no and yes] reflected the current debates about multicultural education in the schools.

An assumption that multicultural education was perhaps another subject/course to teach in schools was somewhat expected. This was perhaps because the teaching of several ideologies, e.g., Pendidikan Pancasila [Education on Pancasila], Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan [Civic Education], had been introduced in schools as required subjects. There have been efforts by the Indonesian government to infuse aspects of multicultural education into education. These efforts primarily included dedicating a few hours to what was termed “local values credit hours” (Bjork, 2004; Bucciarelli, 2013). The hours were designed to include local or regional values to support the diverse students’ needs in the many varied regions across Indonesia. Unfortunately, because of the standardized, high stake testing policy, these hours were typically reduced or replaced by preparation for the national examination (Amalia, 2009; Bjork, 2004; Bjork, 2005; Bucciarelli, 2013). Thus, it makes efforts for integrating multicultural education in educational settings even more challenging.

The conception of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika [Unity in Diversity] is the official national motto of Indonesia, derived from Sanskrit or an ancient Javanese language, which translates as unity in diversity. It was taken from a quotation from a poem written by Mpu Tantular during the Majapahit Kingdom reign in the 14th century to promote tolerance between the Hindus and Buddhists (Kartodirjo, Poesponegoro, & Notosusanto, 1990). The motto has been adopted as a
political motto and an array of interpretations emerged in Indonesian political arenas [see Chapter 2 for a more in-depth discussion of this motto during the first and second presidency in Indonesia]. The teacher’s response, “We are all different, but I never look at others as different. We are all the same,” indicated the adaption of the national motto during the New Order era (Soeharto’s era), emphasizing the significance of “sameness” in upholding the Indonesian national identity.

In the dialogue group, we continued to explore the teachers’ responses. I frequently reminded them at the beginning of each meeting that they should not be worried about providing right or wrong answers and that everyone had an equal opportunity to speak their mind. I also reminded them that I was with them to learn from them and I would struggle and dive into the questions with them. In one dialogue meeting (9/20/2013), I gave them a personal example to stimulate discussion:

Me: I have a question, I am both Javanese and Sumatranese, and let’s say I am a teacher. What if my students’ families are from other ethnicities that I do not know much about, would learning a bit more about them and their cultures help me as a teacher?

Ms. Fatima: Yes, because we deal with parents a lot.

Ms. Aisah: I can also learn more about my students.

Two teachers responded to my question and others were quiet (dialogue meeting, 9/20/2013). In my researcher journal I wrote about the teachers who were “being quiet.” There were moments in my conversations with the teachers that I noticed “silences” and these moments intrigued me.

When this happened, I thought about what the silence meant. Was it because the teachers were just trying to digest what I had said? Alternatively, was it because they wanted to say something more but did not? (Research journal, 9/20/2013)
As I came to know the teachers more, I learned how to “pick my battle.” I relied on my cultural intuitions to know about when to ask for further information and when to wait for the right moment to delve into these questions further. I did not want to push too hard because I knew from experience that this would cause a total shut down, silence and/or resistance. I also used my “cultural instincts” to try to interpret gestures, for instance, facial expressions, that sometimes told me more than words.

I continued the conversation in the next dialogue meeting (9/27/2013) by asking teachers to recall instances pertaining to cultural practices that they saw in the school setting.

Me: Can you remember things that happened to you or in the class that might be related to students’ family customs or cultures?

Ms. Basmia: My students kiss my right hand at the end of classes. I think this is a Javanese tradition to show respect from students to teachers.

Ms. Lisnadi: I had a student who always never stopped moving when sitting on a chair. I thought he was just restless. He was also disruptive to other students when we had individual work. After talking to his parent, I found out that the family almost all the time would sit on the floor. They have chairs and stuff but almost never sit on the chairs unless they have guests. So, this student was not used to doing things while sitting on a chair. Once I gave him a matt, he was sitting quietly and doing his work.

Ms. Ranti: My students always say, “Salaam” [greetings in Arabic] to me.

By asking for examples of cultural practices that were familiar to the teachers, I was hoping to make the idea of “multiculturalism” less abstract and more related to customs we see and do everyday.
Me: Can you give me examples in your daily lives about other cultural practices that we do or see?

Ms. Sutinah: I leave my shoes outside when I come into my home or people’s homes.

Ms. Aisah: I always bargain when I buy my groceries in the traditional market.

Ms. Fatima: I pray before I cook for my family. (Dialogue meeting, 9/27/2013)

As the teachers gave the examples, I commented that these examples were part of their multicultural knowledge.

Me: In all of the examples that you have just given me, you described many different cultures. You have described the culture of ethnicity, of home, and of religion. Therefore, when we talk about cultures, we are talking about all of these, just like your answers when I asked you about multicultural education.

Ms. Basmia: So, many things we do are cultural practices?

Me: Yes, they are influenced by our cultures.

Ms. Lisnadi: Oh so, if I was not born Javanese, I would do things differently, right? Like, I always give the plate to my father to eat first when we eat together.

Me: Can you think of a reason why you do that?

Ms. Lisnadi: Because I was always taught to respect the elderly and my father is the leader in our family so he should go first, then my mother, then us the children.

Ms. Ranti: But, why do we need to know these differences anyway? (Dialogue meeting, 9/27/2013)

Some teachers linked the examples they gave to their understandings of how these practices were influenced by cultural values. The teachers began to connect how the cultural norms we held might influence the way we act. However, I sensed some apprehensiveness related to the
premises in talking about differences, posed by Ms. Ranti (9/27/2013). Ms. Ranti indicated in the previous meeting (9/20/2013) that multicultural education should not be taught in schools. I wanted to learn more about this in the next meeting (dialogue meeting, 10/4/2013) to see if there might be more to her question.

Me: Ms. Ranti posed a very important question in our last meeting. Let us talk about this.

Ms. Ranti, do you mind telling us again your question?

I had talked to Ms. Ranti prior the meeting to check whether she would be willing to present her question again for discussion because it was important. We delved into the notion of similarities and differences in our diversity.

Ms. Ranti: Well, I just wanted to know, why we should talk about the differences we have. Shouldn’t we just talk about our similarities instead?

Me: Why do you think we should talk about similarities instead?

Ms. Ranti: I mean, differences can only make us divided. When we discuss differences, it can only hurt people. For instance, we often hear about conflicts between two different ethnicities. When we talk about differences, we only divide us more.

Me: That’s true; it could be one of the effects of discussing differences.

Ms. Aisah: I agree. Since we were children, we were always taught that we are the same. Discussing differences is causing discomfort and problems.

Me: Can you clarify, who taught you those things?

Ms. Sutinah: Everyone, like our parents and our teachers.

Ms. Fatima: Also, our religious leaders [Imams].

Me: In what way, when we talk about these differences could it divide us more?

Ms. Ranti: What do you mean?
Me: Well, there is more than one way of looking at things. So, we have been taught that differences are bad to talk about. That’s one way of looking at things. What could be another way of looking at these differences?

Ms. Ranti: I’m still not sure about what you mean.

Ms. Lisnadi: Isn’t it because we are so different we should not discuss them? Are we really talking about SARA? Isn’t it prohibited? Aren’t we entering a dangerous zone here?

Me: Is avoiding talking about them going to change the fact that we are different?

Ms. Fatima: No, surely not.

Ms. Basmia: What about all these conflicts we have had between many different ethnicities like the Madurese and Dayak communities? They fought because of these differences.

Ms. Fatima: Then religious communities fight against each other like the Muslims and Christians in Ambon Island. The fights had caused many victims on both sides.

Ms. Ranti: Yeah, we all know we are different. They know they are different from each other. What they [the people in conflicts] don’t know was perhaps that we are all the same. That’s why we should talk about similarities, instead of differences.

Me: So are you saying that feeling the same is more important than feeling that we are different? When you said the “same,” what do you mean by it?

Ms. Ranti: Yes. I mean, the same! You know, basically, the same, like you and I are not different. I don’t see you that you have a different ethnicity or religion. I see you as you are an Indonesian and as a person, like seeing your personality is more important than the differences.
Ms. Fatima: I think perhaps, like, I know you and I are different but our differences don’t matter.

Ms. Basmia: Maybe like we are one, we are Indonesians.

Me: So we have one identity, Indonesians?

Ms. Lisnadi: Yes, we are all the same and one under Indonesian nationality.

Ms. Ranti: From Sabang to Merauke\textsuperscript{12}, we are one. That’s how we should be.

These discussions gave me the opportunity to understand more about the teachers’ perspectives. Six teachers were convinced, based on what they were taught to believe, that thinking or talking about differences was not helpful and it was not helpful to see the diversity in the society (dialogue meeting 10/4/2013). The notion of being “the same and one” in perceiving others seemed to mimic the indoctrination initiated during President Soeharto’s regime\textsuperscript{13}.

“Sound familiar?” I wrote in my researcher’s journal, “I am familiar with the notion that differences can tear us apart as a nation.” (Research journal, 10/6/2013)

The notion of being the same and one, despite all the differences that shape Indonesian society, suggests that Indonesians hold “one” national identity. According to this belief, this national identity, amidst multiple identities that an Indonesian has, should take the highest priority. From the teachers I learned about how certain existing values were introduced/socialized. I wondered if the teachers knew where their fear came from. Since it was a big deal for the teachers, I wanted to learn more about how they felt about it personally, and so I asked them to write some brief comments in their journals.

\textsuperscript{12} The phrase from Sabang to Merauke refers to the entire nation, and is similar to the phrase \textit{from coast to coast}. Sabang city is located in the northernmost and westernmost part of Indonesia and Merauke city is located in the easternmost area of Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{13} See Chapter 2 for a more detailed historical explanation.
My questions were (for dialogue meeting 10/11/2013):

1. How do you feel about the fact that we are talking about this notion that “differences can tear us apart”?

2. What do you personally think/believe about the notion? (You are free and safe to agree or disagree about it and please tell me why)

The teachers wrote about their understandings of the notion of differences indicating three different ways of thinking about this in their teacher’s journals (10/11/2013). The first understanding was that everyone is the same and we should respect each other without discussing differences.

I was taught to think that people are the same; that we are no different than others, no matter where they come from. That’s how we should respect others. I agree with this because it makes me feel uncomfortable to discuss differences. (Ms. Lisnadi, teacher’s journal, 10/11/2013)

A second understanding was shown when Ms. Ranti (teacher’s journal, 10/11/2013) wrote about differences in the context of being a native in the region versus being a new comer/immigrant from another region. She understood diversity in terms of her own experiences with conflicts with immigrants.

We [Indonesians] see that differences cause conflicts. It can make people feel suspicious toward each other if we think we are different from others. I know this. For instance, my great grandparents and my family and I have lived here for a long time, for many generations. We are native [Betawi] in this region. At one time, we were suspicious about new comers, immigrants from other regions. Our lands became smaller and businesses shrunk. I mean business grew like never before, but no longer ours, and we are struggling
like never before to survive. We had conflicts and we know it is because others don’t understand us. I am not sure why we talk about differences. I feel sad thinking about this. Talking about differences can only pull us further apart. (Ms. Ranti, teacher’s journal, 10/11/2013)

A third understanding was more balanced, seeing the viability of both similarities and differences.

It is disrespectful to see differences, but I think diversity is not just about similarities. It is not easy to think about diversity or how we should look at differences. Maybe we need to have some balance in looking at differences and similarities. (Ms. Basmia, teacher’s journal, 10/11/2013)

I think both similarities and differences are good. Therefore, we should learn to appreciate both. (Ms. Fatima, teacher’s journal, 10/11/2013)

The teachers shared their opinions in their dialogue meetings (9/20/2013; 9/27/2013; 10/4/2013) and journals (10/11/2013) about what they thought concerning diversity, particularly the notion of differences and similarities. A teacher also shared a family story dealing with changes in her region, i.e., relationships and perceptions related to new immigrants into parts of Jakarta. From the teachers’ responses, it could be seen that families and other members of the community, e.g., parents/elders, religious leaders, teachers, participated in instilling the ideas of how diversity should be viewed.

The teachers’ perspectives of similarities and differences were a major part of the views on diversity and these reflect past Indonesian governmental policies. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, historically, the idea of similarities or differences in the Indonesian context has been continuous (Pepinsky, 2009). The first President, Soekarno, emphasized the view of unity in
diversity as the national identity. Despite the differences, Indonesians were considered to have the same values as a nation. It was a way to unite differences, and a way of living amidst differences beginning from the era of Indonesian independence (1945-1965). This approach seemed to have been successful in building Indonesia’s national “integrity.” As previously explained, Indonesia had two military coups in 1948 and 1965, led by members of the Indonesian communist party (Partai Komunis Indonesia). The first President allegedly “flirted” with a communist ideology and his term ended due to this allegation (Hering, 2001; Kahin, 1995). Indonesian students and the public were introduced to a film — Gestapu of PKI (The Coup d’état of Indonesian Communist Party)—that had to be watched for decades during one week every year. The film showed how the Indonesian communist party orchestrated the military coup in 1965 and how President Soeharto conquered the coup and saved the nation. Since then, the teaching of socialism or anything related to this ideology has been forbidden in Indonesia. As previously stated, the ban has not yet been lifted.

The second President, Soeharto, translated the notion of unity in diversity into a prohibition on talking about differences. The prohibition started as a strong recommendation by the Indonesian government and later became the norm. Some people were jailed or exiled because of their attempts to voice their opinions. These actions were considered subversive and so it was “justifiable” for the government to take measures “accordingly” (Kahin, 1995). The principle behind this “recommendation” was the perception that diversity is a threat to the nation’s integrity (Kahin, 1995; Pepinsky, 2009). Diversity means differences and so to “respect the differences” the government strongly required people not to discuss differences in race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and social class. According to this regime, this norm was integral to maintaining the “integrity” of the nation. Slowly, the doctrine set in and it became the belief of
many people that they must avoid discussion of SARA [diversity] (Antlov & Tak-Wing, 2000), otherwise, they would be entering a dangerous zone. This fear is reflected in Ms. Lisnadi’s reservations about our dialogue on multicultural education. It has been 17 years since Soeharto’s fall, however, the teachers’ opinions about diversity and their fears of talking about issues related to it reflect the teaching of being a “good” Indonesian under the New Order era (1966-1998). Issues such as these were not commonly discussed in educational settings. I delved more deeply into the teachers’ underlying fears in discussing matters related to SARA. In the dialogue meeting (10/25/2013) we talked about their fears:

Me: I understand that, on more than one occasion, you had concerns about our talks. You are somewhat afraid. Can we talk more about why you are afraid?

Ms. Lisnadi: Well, I felt a bit uncomfortable talking about the issues.

Me: Why is that?

Ms. Fatima: I think because some issues we are not allowed to talk about.

Me: Who doesn’t allow you?

Ms. Ranti: Many people like our parents, teachers, and our colleagues. I think we are always taught to not cause conflicts or offend people or be confrontational. More importantly, I also felt it might be a dangerous discussion.

Me: Can we think about what you mean by a “dangerous” discussion? Are you feeling afraid if we are talking about things related to SARA?

Ms. Ranti: Yes. I felt that we should not discuss it. It’s forbidden.

Ms. Lisnadi: Isn’t it dangerous too if we discuss communism? I think it’s against the law.

Me: No, it’s not against the UUD 1945 [1945 Constitution of Republic of Indonesia], but it has been banned since Soeharto’s era. However, we are not talking about communism.
As I promised, I will not endanger your positionality or mine. What we are discussing is in the norms of Pancasila.

Me: Do you know where your fears come from?

I identified three aspects underlying the teachers’ responses above: (a) cultural tenets of avoiding confrontation and being respectful to the leaders and the elders e.g., religious leaders, teachers, and parents, (b) the belief that thinking and seeing differences are generally “not allowed,” and (c) the fear of a connection to the idea of communism. The teachers showed complex fears in discussing issues of multiculturalism/social justice.

It is a standard value in Indonesian culture that being polite requires one to stay quiet when disagreeing with others. Indonesian society, perhaps like other Asian cultures, is a hierarchical society. As described in Chapter 2, Indonesia was previously formed into Kingdoms (Nusantara – Indonesian archipelago) before being declared as the Republic of Indonesia in 1945. In many ethnicities, the importance of respecting the elderly and others’ opinions more than individual opinions is stressed (Bourchier, 2007; Koentjaraningrat, 1993). Such values are also reflected in Pancasila.

In our dialogue meeting (10/25/2013), we discussed differences in perspectives:

Me: Do you always agree with their [teachers, parents, colleagues] opinions? Can we always agree on everything?

Ms. Basmia: No, that’s impossible. Some opinions I don’t agree with.

Me: Is disagreement bad?

Ms. Fatima: No, it just made me feel uncomfortable. I don’t really know how to talk about the issues [disagreement & multiculturalism].

Me: Why do you think you feel that way?
Ms. Sutinah: I don’t know.

Ms. Basmia: I don’t know.

It is challenging too for both adults and children to learn to ask questions and challenge their own perceptions if this is not supported by cultural norms. In Indonesian society, being quiet conflicts with teaching critical thinking or even fostering teachers’ inquisitiveness. The teachers showed reluctance to disagree with the values that their own parents/teachers taught them.

As shown above, the teachers expressed that they were worried about discussing multiculturalism (Dialogue meeting, 10/25/2031). There had been many changes in the Presidencies after President Soeharto. For 53 years, from the period of 1945-1998, Indonesia had only two presidents. After the fall of President Soeharto, within less than two decades, in the periods of 1998-2015, Indonesia elected five presidents in four presidential elections\textsuperscript{14}. The notion of diversity has been somewhat redefined over time to project the new governments’ leadership. With all the changes, however, the teachers still did not feel free to talk about things openly. It had been two months since our discussions (Sept-Oct 2013). Despite their fears, they continued to participate in our dialogue meetings and talk about issues related to multiculturalism.

At the request of Ms. Basmia, I conducted an individual interview with her, outside of the dialogue time (11/18/2013).

\textsuperscript{14} During Soeharto New Order era (1966-1998), there were only three political parties that participated in the “elections.” In 1999, Under President Joesoef Habibie (former Vice President of Soeharto), the first election was held after the fall of President Soeharto. There were forty-eight political parties that joined the election. President Abdurrahman Wahid was elected as the next President and Mrs. Megawati [daughter of the first President Soekarno] as vice president. Later, Mrs. Megawati was elected to lead the country, after President Wahid was removed from office in 2001 (Heiduk, 2014). President Wahid [who was the leader of the biggest Islamic organization “Nahdatul Ulama” in Indonesia] was removed allegedly for proposing to lift the ban related to communism. He was famous for his forward thinking, i.e., opening up relationships to the Republic of China and Israel.
Ms. Basmia: I am not sure about the answer to your question [“Where do your fears come from?”] but I thought hard about it. I felt the fear is, like, something invisible but so strongly wrapping around me. I felt if I did not do as I was taught, I would face a consequence. I felt like, I was being watched. I thought, yeah, where does my fear come from? I realized I never thought about it until you asked us. Then, I asked myself, “What am I afraid of, truly?” I think I was perhaps afraid of the consequences if we do talk about SARA. I heard many horror stories how people were arrested, lost their jobs, or even, were killed because they did not comply with this norm. I heard my parents and others talk about the 1998 unrest [Soeharto’s fall] here in Jakarta where quite a few people were shot or went missing. I was too young to remember much about this but I was just familiar with such stories. My parents reminded me that obedience is the best way to live life safely [“Urip wis susah, ojo neko neko, sing penting manut” – Javanese language – details will be explained below]. Therefore, I found it uncomfortable when we are talking about it [challenging existing norms]. I am feeling like I am perhaps going against the values my parents taught me. It surprised me though that for something that I feel so familiar with, I actually don’t know much [about the prohibition in talking about SARA]. “Why was the prohibition [related to SARA discussions] introduced? Why am I feeling afraid of something I don’t really know?” I am puzzled.

Other teachers also shared the sentiment of Ms. Basmia related to noticing their conflicted feelings about critically reading (Freire, 1970) the existing norms as discussed in the dialogue meeting on November 22, 2013:

Ms. Ranti: I know my parents, elders, teachers and others who told me the values of seeing differences as a threat, I am sure, have my best interest in their hearts though. I
feel, would I, perhaps betray my values, you know, my family values and my tradition, if I question or challenge what I have been taught?

Ms. Aisah: I am confused that you [referring to me] said that often times it is good to change, but what about tradition? How do we keep our existence, I mean, culturally, if we are changing many of our values? I think that the whole purpose of tradition is to maintain its values even if it means against anything new that is coming.

Over time, the teachers engaged in our dialogues and critically reflected on their fears and their conflicting feelings about traditions and change. The teachers came to realize that the values they held were taught to them by their families, their teachers, and religious leaders. These values were socially constructed. As the teachers embarked on our journey to read our positionality and the values embedded in their social, cultural, political arenas, they experienced an array of complex strains.

The teachers’ statements about their fears can be theorized using Foucault’s theory of surveillance and space (Andrzejewski, 2008). In this view, control is gained structurally through a surveillance system where those being controlled feel they are being watched/observed, even if they are not. They act as if they were being watched at all times. Ms. Basmia felt that her fear was invisible but strongly engrained. It was as if she was invisibly controlled. Similarly, Freire (1970, 1987) explains that control is sustained to silence the voices of the powerless. Critical reflection is a way to move from being powerless to being empowered. This is difficult to achieve in a system that is hierarchical and intent on maintaining the status quo. This is strongly reflected in Ms. Basmia’s parents’ statement in Javanese, “Urip wis susah, ojo neko neko, sing penting manut” [life is hard, do not do anything out of the ordinary, the most important thing is obedience]. Influenced by a kingdom type of governance, social stratification was an important
part of Javanese tradition. As such, social orders and hierarchies continue as structures that uphold this social stratification. Obedience is currently highly valued and often translated as loyalty. For instance, the norm of leadership in Javanese tradition is described as “mikul dhuwur, mendem jero” [carrying up, burying down]. Because it is a leader’s duty to consider the welfare and well-being of his/her subordinates/staff/followers, and then the subordinates will then, in return, support and carry their leader(s) up. In efforts to be loyal and support their leaders, the subordinates/staff/followers should protect the leaders by covering over any wrongdoings of the leaders that would disgrace them. Preserving a “good image” is underlies this belief. Apart from President B.J. Habibie, all Presidents of Indonesia have been from Javanese ethnicity. Consequently, their Javanese values and traditions have been adopted into government policies.

This conception is also similar to the Islamic norm of “Aib” [shame, disgrace] where a Muslim should not disclose any shameful actions or traits that would humiliate others. In this concept, there is a higher level of nobility when one chooses to look past the shame/disgrace/errors of others and forgive them. These political, cultural, and religious norms and beliefs may have contributed to the teachers’ fears and struggles with the idea of change. In general, the data showed that questioning existing norms, especially those that were taught by the teachers’ religious leaders, parents, and teachers, was in conflict with their cultural norms. This was, therefore, extremely difficult for them to do. These political, cultural, and religious norms posed challenges as the teachers engaged in critically reading their positionality in the school and in society more generally.
Defining Multicultural/Social Justice Education: Perceptions as a Tradition Keeper or Challenger

In this section, I will describe our efforts in developing our understandings of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE). The teachers’ understandings were complicated by their conflicting perceptions of being a tradition keeper versus a challenger. Despite the challenges, the teachers demonstrated that they were increasingly willing to engage in critical reflections. As the teachers and I continued our dialogue, changes, struggles/reluctance, and inquiries were part of our experiences.

In dialogue meetings during November and December 2013 we discussed national heroes and gender roles. This was because on November 10 Indonesia celebrates “Hari Pahlawan” [National Heroes Day\textsuperscript{15}] and on December 22 “Hari Ibu” [Mother’s Day\textsuperscript{16}]. Many schools planned their lessons around these themes and included related resources into their lessons. Accordingly, in our dialogues, we discussed our nations’ past (Indonesian history, e.g., the colonization era, the independence era) and reflected on how we as a nation had evolved. We noticed progress and stagnation in our development as a country as we observed these important national celebrations. In these dialogues, we delved more into the idea of change, norms, and policies that should contribute to social justice.

Ms. Ranti: How do we know a value/norm needs to be changed?

\textsuperscript{15} National Hero Day is a remembrance day, commemorating the 1945 Battle of Surabaya, where pro-Independence Indonesians fought against the British and Dutch troops. The battle symbolized an Indonesian national revolution (Koentjaraningrat, 1993).

\textsuperscript{16} Indonesian Mother’s Day is observed on December 22, commemorating the anniversary of the 1928 Indonesian Women Congress, intended as a celebration of Indonesian women’s spirit in their efforts to improve the life of the nation (Martyn, 2004).
Ms. Sutinah: I am not sure, but perhaps, we can categorize some values based on their goodness or badness?

Ms. Basmia: How do we know it is good or bad? What if it is good for you but not bad for me and vice versa?

Ms. Lisnadi: How about good values mean good for individuals and people in general. For instance, like the example Mrs. Sari gave before, about the expansion of women’s roles. Therefore, it is not only good for one person but also many women.

Ms. Fatima: What about fair or unfairness? So we say it is good if it is fair not only individually but also socially? (Dialogue meeting, 11/29/2013)

From these dialogues, the teachers came up with a list of what defined a social norm that is oriented toward social justice. The teachers were conflicted between their roles as a tradition keeper and being a challenger/agent of change. The teachers suggested criteria fundamental to their critical examination of the existing norms and policies.

Their list from dialogue meeting 11/29/2013 included:

1. Promote fairness (treat individuals and others fairly).
2. Be inclusive (consisted of one or many values).
3. Be respectful toward others’ cultural/religious/social beliefs.
4. Provide space for musyawarah [dialogue].
5. Consider that one value should not be more superior to others; just different.
6. Flexible (not rigid), changeable.
7. Think about or orient toward “small” people or communities in poverty.
8. Fight for underrepresented groups, i.e., children, women, people from poverty, people with disabilities.
In this list, the teachers identified characteristics for what should be considered when they were reflecting on certain norms and policies (dialogue meeting, 11/29/2013). They used vocabulary that indicated they were thinking about social justice principles, e.g., the notion of fairness, equity and inclusivity. The teachers also thought about social issues in a larger structural system such as the need to fight for underrepresented groups.

The characteristics in the list above were discussed throughout several dialogue meetings. The teachers revised and added more traits to their list during our dialogue meeting of April 25, 2014.

This addition included:

- Offer a safe space for equal responsibilities and rights.
- Provide more space for gender equality.
- Be respectful of traditions, but grow with time, reflective of new changes.
- View cultural/religious/political/social class differences as part of the uniqueness and strength of society, not as the cause of conflicts.

While discussing the above criteria at the dialogue meeting on 11/29/2013, the teachers discussed the need for musyawarah [dialogue] as a medium for discussing these issues. The concept of musyawarah, embedded in the national ideology of Pancasila, is widely accepted in Indonesian society. Some of the principles of musyawarah include: (a) be respectful, even though one disagrees with other people’s opinions, (b) humility, (c) understanding that the participants have an equal right to speak their minds, and (d) listening to what others have to say. Dialogue has been a cultural norm and been practiced since the kingdom periods (Antlov & Tak-Wing, 2000). According to Koentjaraningrat (1993) based on the study of two villages in Yogyakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, “musyawarah” functioned as a way to gain better
understanding, facilitate collaboration, tackle disputes, and share the goals in people’s daily lives. The concept of musyawarah was also adopted in political fields, as stated in Pancasila. “Musyawarah mufakat,” is translated as dialogue and consensus. This provides a way of achieving agreement, adopted as the casting of votes within Parliament in Indonesia (Gismar, 2002; Morfit, 1981). The concept of musyawarah is intended to offer a space for citizens, or pockets of communities, to come together to form agreement and discuss matters within a hierarchical society. It also has the potential to disrupt the hierarchies in Indonesian society (Bourchier, 2007). There have been challenges to the implementation of musyawarah in Indonesia because of political indoctrination from the policy makers. Similarly, our dialogue group exhibited such challenges. The teachers, however, were willing to continuously participate in our dialogues.

Although dialogue, as a cultural custom, has always been part of Indonesian lives, its practices are often restricted within educational settings. Many, if not all, of the educational policies have been top-down leaving teachers and stakeholders with little room to participate in decision making processes or help determine policy implementation. A teacher shared her opinion of the structure of these educational policies, particularly related to the early childhood education programs that were newly introduced.

Ms. Lisnadi: I felt that schools like us [non public or non state-funded schools] who are not supported by the government are often left behind…. We are not given much information other than what we could find out for ourselves from the media or local meetings. We are not invited to any workshops to learn about new policies [early childhood education]. We lack the dialogue that could help us to better understand the
new policies. If we have dialogues, we can also give feedback about the on-going policies. (Dialogue meeting, 2/7/2014)

Ms. Aisah: The government policies affect us in some ways because we have to align our teaching so our students can have the chance to be accepted in elementary education. Unfortunately, we are not given much time to learn or digest the changes from the government. If we have meetings locally, we are usually just told what to do. I feel like our voices do not matter. (Dialogue meeting, 2/7/2014)

The teachers desired more dialogue so they would have the opportunity to better understand the policies through discussion and feedback.

Related to their desire for more dialogue with the government policy makers, Ms. Sutinah expressed her opinion about our dialogue meetings.

Our dialogues, I feel, are different from other school meetings I have attended. I am not sure what makes them different, but I feel that they are not typical of our formal meetings. I guess, maybe, because we always ask each other’s opinions and delve further into what we say. It is not like, someone tells me, “You are wrong! This must be the way to go, or you must not do that!” I feel that even though I do not have a college degree, my voice matters in our dialogues. (Dialogue meeting, 2/7/2014)

Some teachers expressed their opinions about our dialogues and the dialogue’s functionality. The excerpts below were taken throughout the dialogues and interviews from November 2013 to May 2014. On November 29, 2013, Ms. Basmia stated that our dialogue meetings encouraged her to think reflectively. This resulted in an awareness that she had some power to decide whether to accept the values taught to her or not. She showed inquisitiveness as she unpeeled her fears and puzzlement.
I have learned more about reflecting on my fears. I have just realized that I have always felt like this but never really noticed the reasons. I mean, you [referring to me] said it is important that sometimes we pause and ask questions to ourselves about what we are feeling and thinking. I recently did that and I learned that I have even more questions and I do not know the answers to my own questions. However, I realize now that I never really questioned things that my parents, my teachers, or others, told me, I just accepted them. I am now, perhaps, aware that I can choose. (Dialogue meeting, 11/29/2013)

Another teacher, Ms. Aisah, stated that the dialogues gave her a way to learn and talk about differences and issues [related to SARA or diversity] that she previously considered as “not allowed” for discussion. Her reflections allowed her to arrive at better insights about her fears and the complexity of her roles.

When I reflect I learn a lot about what I am thinking and feeling. I had never been asked so much about self-reflection before our dialogues. I feel like my thinking, my opinion matters. I was worried before that discussions about differences would only make us think about separation/disintegration and it would pull us apart, even between those of us in our dialogue team. I learned through our many dialogues, I believe, that differences should be viewed as a strength. We were taught to believe otherwise that they were the cause for conflicts and thus dialogue about these differences would be a recipe for disaster. Well, our dialogues proved that wrong. I know, at first, I felt awkward and uncomfortable because I never knew how to talk about these issues. Regardless, I kept going and I am learning how to discuss issues related to SARA and about differences. Learning about these through dialogue gives me a better understanding about other people. I also learned about myself better. I learned to think deeply and appreciate much
more about my students, my cultures, as well my roles as a teacher, a citizen, and a
woman through our dialogues. (dialogue meeting, 4/25/2014)

Another teacher [Ms. Ranti] connected her reflections to doing something different in her
teaching, to introduce the value of diversity to her students.

**Teaching about religions, not just Islam.** The teachers and I discussed teaching about
religions to the children. Mrs. Ranti proposed an idea to Mrs. Matahari about inviting parents
who practiced other religions, e.g., Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, to come to Semanggi
School, to share their insights. These religious groups were the minority and only make up about
10% of the local religions. The majority of students in Semanggi School were Muslims. Mrs.
Matahari responded positively to the teacher’s request. Other teachers supported Ms. Ranti’s
ideas.

In terms of the policy on religious lessons, Semanggi School had undergone some
changes. For almost two decades (1984-2002), the school did not offer any religious lessons.
Mrs. Matahari stated that initially she wanted her school to be a “national” school. In this regard,
the term *national* in many educational settings or in political arenas in Indonesia is often
contextualized as non-religious. Thus, Semanggi School did not provide any religious teaching.
When a new teacher, who later became an academic coordinator, was hired in 2002, she
proposed (in 2003) that the school should offer Islamic teaching because most of the students
were Muslims. Mrs. Matahari was not convinced in the beginning but later changed her mind
because she saw the proposal as an effort to meet the needs of her students. Thus, she
implemented the idea in 2004. Although the academic coordinator left the school, the
demographics of the students remained mostly the same, and Islam continued to be taught.
these students, when Islamic lessons took place, the non-Muslim children had the option of staying in the classroom or doing something else, e.g., drawing, reading, going outside to play.

Ms. Ranti: In our dialogue, we discussed putting ourselves in other people’s shoes and challenging ourselves out of our comfort zone. I thought about my students who are non-Muslims. I have a student whose parent told him to stay outside of the class, in order to not disturb the class’ Islamic religious teaching and to play by himself. I feel that I might be alienating this student from his friends. Sometimes he would just stay inside the class because he did not like to play alone. If we are teaching one religion, why not introduce the major religions in our society? That way, both my Muslim and non-Muslim students would learn the beauty of religious diversity. (Interview, 5/1/2014)

The teacher further explained that Mrs. Matahari bought some teaching artifacts related to other religions to show her support (see Figure 11). As part of our dialogues, the teachers and I discussed teaching pedagogies to incorporate the ‘learning about our diversity’ (multicultural education) to the students. Learning about religions is an aspect of multicultural education.

The teachers believed that “The earlier the children learn, the better understanding/foundation they will have [to be multiculturally educated].” As described above, the teachers were enthusiastic about the new inclusion of teaching about multiple religions in their curricula. The implementation, however, was not without challenges. They reported that some parents were not pleased with this decision.

Ms. Ranti: Some of the parents in my class disagreed with our plan [to include teaching about other religions]. They did not see the need to learn about other religions. They were worried about religious conversion efforts from the non-Muslim parents, but, of course, I explained to them that we should also think about other people. I asked them, “What if
the other parents thought the same thing about it [teaching about Islam]?

Figure 5.1 Religious Teaching Materials

Photos taken by Yuni Sari Amalia

If it is okay to teach our religion, why can’t we also learn about other religions?” I mean, I tried to talk to these parents, but they were still not convinced.

Me: Dialogue takes time. Just as ours has shown, changes and understandings do not come automatically. They often need a long time to happen.
Ms. Ranti: I know I need to be patient, but I am too excited about my idea. I hope I do not have to wait too long for them to come around. I think the parents have not yet understood with what I meant.

Ms. Sutinah: I think perhaps you could gradually explain to them, about the importance of learning this knowledge. Have you told them that ‘Islam should be rahmah’ [a blessing] for others, so we [Muslims] should be appreciative toward others [including religious differences]? (Dialogue meeting, 5/16/2013).

The teachers had several meetings with the parents to obtain a consensus and then they voted on the teaching of multi-religious lessons. The majority of the parents supported the teachers’ idea to change the curricula. This new curricula was to be implemented in the fall 2014 semester (August-December). However, I was not able to observe how this curriculum change was going because my research was concluded before the fall semester started.

In sum, this shows that the teachers demonstrated some changes in their understandings during our dialogues, and these changes were reflected in their teaching pedagogies. Teaching religious diversity was a significant change. All the teachers and Mrs. Matahari were on board with the new idea. Lack of insights and dialogue about differences and similarities as the fabric of Indonesian society may have contributed to misunderstanding about other religions and further sustained negative stereotypes (Bourchier, 2007). This was a big change that shows that the teachers were thinking about other students, e.g., Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, who were the minority in Semanggi School.

**What term shall we use?** The terms used to talk about multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) went through some changes. As previously discussed, the term carried
cultural/political meanings and was seen as more than just a label. The dialogue group also affected the teachers’ opinion about the term social in social justice education.

The dialogue meetings had taken place for almost half a year (from August 2013 to January 2014) when the above conversation about terminologies occurred.

Me: I showed Ms. Basmia that I have used different terms when discussing the concept of multicultural education in my writings. I used ‘multicultural/social justice education’ [M/SJE] to refer to our responses. I combined your perspectives and mine into this new term. What do you think?

Ms. Basmia: I think it is good to have a new term to accommodate all of our perspectives.

Me: Are you okay with us using the word ‘social’?

Ms. Ranti: We discussed a lot about it and I understand about it more now. We have discussed things that I am part of, like, our tradition, family values, and our students. I guess it is actually quite nice to have our own term to reflect our perspectives.

Ms. Lisnadi: I was worried that you might be talking about something that was illegal. I feel that I have learned so much from our discussions, not just about our students and our country, but also about myself. I learned new things even from something that I already know.

Ms. Sutinah: Yes, I was worried about that too. However, I learned that the word social in ‘social justice education’ was associated more toward “Keadilan Sosial dalam Pancasila” [Social Justice in Pancasila].

Me: What if we use the original term of social justice education (SJE)?

Ms. Ranti: Can we keep the new term [M/SJE]. Just, because I feel like it was dedicated for us.
Ms. Lisladi: I agree with Ms. Ranti. I am comfortable with M/SJE, but not sure about using solely SJE. This is also because as you [referring to me] also said that the ban [related to teaching/discussion of communism ideology] has not been lifted. Every government changes its policies occasionally. I know we are not discussing anything against the law. However, you know, just to be safe, we could use the new term [M/SJE].

Me: Would it be okay if I used SJE instead of M/SJE in my own reports though? Our discussions are indeed protected by our constitution “UUD 1945” [1945 Constitution of Republic of Indonesia] because we have been talking about efforts to promote social justice [in Indonesia], which are our responsibilities and rights [as citizens and teachers].

Ms. Basmia: It is okay to disagree. I am okay with it [me using SJE in my reports].

Ms. Fatima: I think that would be no problem. I think using M/SJE in our dialogues is already good enough.

Me: You all show bravery and inquisitiveness in dealing with your fears and in considering the new term [M/SJE]. (Dialogue meeting, 1/10/2014)

All of the teachers seemed to think positively about the new term [M/SJE] that emerged from our dialogue. They appeared to consider M/SJE as a step forward in dealing with their fears and in understanding the principles of social justice education. The teachers’ decision to use M/SJE for our dialogues remained the same until the completion of the research [July 2014]. The slash included in the title was not meant to show separation but rather to symbolize a space that acknowledged the perspectives of both the teachers and mine.

At the beginning of our dialogues, I asked the teachers what they knew about multicultural education. Their answers showed a somewhat traditional and beginning perception of the term. They associated the term with learning about songs, dances, outfits, and they spoke
of this as diversity in cultures or the teaching of norms within Pancasila. Almost at the end of the research time (May, 2014), the teachers and I discussed what multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) meant to the teachers. We revisited the earlier definitions that the teachers gave at the beginning of the research. The teachers revised their definitions of multicultural education.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the changes in the teachers’ definitions and use of vocabulary from the beginning of the study (September 2013) and towards the end (May 2014). The definitions that the teachers provided were locally and personally contextualized based on their journeys in reading their worlds (Freire 1970, 1987). One teacher, Ms. Ranti, who at the beginning of the research stated that multicultural education should not be taught in schools, changed her attitude. She not only began to engage in critical reflection, but also became an agent of change. She proposed teaching a multi-religion curriculum to her students. As previously stated, this proposal was considered a big change in the school and was not without opposition from some parents. The dialogue groups provided a conduit for the teachers to delve into matters that were otherwise not given much attention in the teachers’ educational setting. When the teachers were given opportunities for dialogue and received support for expressing their different ideas, changes occurred for these teachers.

I thought about the contributing factors related to changes in the teachers’ perceptions and there was a thread that connects thee changes. As I previously discussed, changes in teachers’ perceptions varied across individuals and occurred in different times and/or topics of discussions. The similarity was that each teacher engaged in reflections that required them to revisit their personal lives on the matters that were meaningful to them. The teachers examined their journey starting with when and why they became a teacher. They revisited their family
stories to understand the roles of women and of teachers in their mother’s and grandmothers’ era.

They thought about the roles and expectations of a teacher, they talked to their families about being newcomers/immigrants to Jakarta or being native Betawi people in Jakarta.

Table 5.1

**Definitions of Multicultural/Social Justice Education (M/SJE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Many cultures, e.g., Javanese, Batak, Madurese</td>
<td>• It is about our efforts to gain new understandings in looking at the customs that we already knew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowing that we live in many different cultures</td>
<td>• It is about confronting our fears and having deep reflections about who we are as Indonesians, teachers, and women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dances, songs, traditional outfits</td>
<td>• It is learning about others through similarities and differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pendidikan Pancasila [Education on the Indonesian Five Pillars/Principles]</td>
<td>• It is about our understanding that diversity is a strength, a resource, not a threat/danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is about having more musyawarah [dialogues] and giving other people [from diverse backgrounds] a chance to be understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is about being more aware of what and how we see other ethnicities – whether our perceptions and actions support fairness/just norms or if they sustain negative stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is about understanding that we can do something to change, even on a small scale, e.g., related to teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They also unpacked their fears as if they were ‘watched’ and ow they acted accordingly based on what they were taught and what was expected by the political and cultural norms. The teachers’ openness in examining these ideas and their persistence in engaging in the dialogue showed to be a contributing factor in changing their perceptions. The teachers became actively engaged in
asking questions and questioning their own notions of perceptions. These processes seemed to enable the teachers to arrive at their new, more complex understanding of multicultural/social justice education.

**Critical Reading of the Poverty and Education**

In this section, I describe our efforts in understanding issues related to poverty and education. First, I present the parents’ perceptions on what Semanggi School meant to them and the influence of poverty on the parents’ perceptions. Second, I discuss the dialogues that the teachers and I conducted to understand the issues related to poverty. As part of our dialogue on these issues, the teachers restarted a voluntary program for parents to be the teacher’s assistants. Our dialogue group was a supportive place where teachers could talk about the challenges in their teaching.

**Understanding the Parents’ Perceptions about the School**

The parents at the Semanggi School played an important role. The school involved them into many of the decision-making processes and activities. Thus, I will describe the parents’ perceptions of the school in this section.

I would often “hang out” with the parents as they were waiting in the schoolyard for their children. In the beginning, they automatically knew I was new at the school, but they were very friendly and welcoming. I spoke to a few of them who agreed to be interviewed. Some of them sold foods at the traditional market nearby and some sold foods from carts in the nearby neighborhoods. I often ate and talked with them at their vendor carts. Initially, I planned to include only four parents, however, more parents wanted to be included. After the IRB amendment was approved, I added twelve more parents to make a total of sixteen. In this section, I will present the parents’ perspectives about the school.
Appendix F summarizes the parents’ responses to my interview questions. The parents provided positive responses on the role of the school for their families. They also stated some features that they categorized that set the school apart from other schools, i.e., public and private schools, and other similar community-founded schools in the area. I also asked them about their perceptions of their children’s learning at Semanggi School. The parents provided many positive responses on this. The responses included the school’s willingness to accept children with disabilities who were turned down from other schools. See Appendix F for more detailed responses.

The majority of the parents (15 parents) stated that the school was important in their children’s learning. One parent disagreed with the popular opinion. Mr. Karto disagreed with the skills taught to his son. He repaired bicycles and worked nearby the traditional market in the area. His son was in Class C in Semanggi School. He implied that he wanted his son to drop out of the school.

I know the teachers do not like me because my son is often absent in school. Why should he [continue going to school] now? He will not be going to elementary school. I do not have the money. I want him to help me with my work [repairing bicycles]. He can learn that from me. Learning to draw is not going to help him survive. Life is hard. Drawing skills are not giving him any benefits. I cannot read and I survive because I know other skills. I did not learn my skills through schools. Why should he spend time for something not useful? What my son needs is learning all about bicycles then he can earn money as early as possible.

Based on Mr. Karto’s story, I wanted to know more about the drop out rate of students. The teachers informed me that about 10-15% of the students dropped out each academic year. The
teachers stated that Mrs. Matahari and other residents of Anggrek Bulan dealt with this issue delicately and sensitively. They discreetly helped with clothes, free tuition, and school supplies, and provided care packages for the parents. These packages included basic supplies such as rice, coffee, tea. However, sometimes, there were too many students who were in need. Some parents felt too much shame to receive such help.

Understanding Perceptions toward Students Living in Poverty

Today, I saw a child faint at the school. Ms. Aisah helped the student. When the student came around, she asked, “Have you eaten yet?” The boy said, “Not yet.” Ms. Aisah gave some biscuits and tea to the boy. Is this happening a lot? I am wondering. (Researcher’s journal, 10/3/2013)

In this section, I will discuss some findings related to poverty that affected the school and teachers. Students of Semanggi School were predominantly from low-income families. I created five statements to use in a survey with the teachers and the principal to help me better understand their understandings of how poverty affects education, particularly in Semanggi School. The five survey statements were chosen based on the teachers’ constant concerns about their students. I also saw some cases where children passed out, were sent home, or were brought to the hospital because of their hunger and health issues. I also asked a question related to support that the teachers needed. Because of the issues that the teachers faced, they explained that providing a safe and loving environment was of the utmost important to them and the students. As shown in the data, the teachers’ indicated ways that poverty affected these students: (a) Hunger, (b) health concerns, (c) behavioral problems, (d) academic performance, and (e) lack of parental performance. See Table 5.3. Because of these issues, the teachers voiced their need for:

1. more support for their students, e.g., more provision of free food/lunches
2. [volunteer] assistance in their classrooms, particularly in the classrooms that had students with disabilities

3. more training in dealing with their students i.e., with behavioral issues and disabilities.

Hunger was one of the conditions faced by students at Semanggi School that were living in poverty. The teachers and Mrs. Matahari reported that many students often came to school hungry. To deal with the problems that resulted from students living in poverty, Semanggi School put several initiatives in place. For instance, during my study period, they held a nutrition day program, continuing on from the original event initiated by the women’s organization led by led by Mrs. Matahari [see chapter 4 for more detailed explanation].

Table 5.2

*Teachers’ Responses about Students Living in Poverty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hunger affects students living in poverty</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Students living in poverty face high health concerns</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Students living in poverty frequently show behavioral problems, e.g., emotional and social instability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Poverty affects their students’ academic performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>For students living in poverty, there is a lack of parental involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What kinds of support would you like to have to deal with these problems?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers (n=6); principal (n=1)SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree
Once, every two months, the teachers, Mrs. Matahari, and the parents would cook and provide nutritious food for all the students [approximately 120 students]. During the research time [August 2013-July 2014], however, the programs were interrupted because of Mrs. Matahari’s health issues. It was only implemented 4 times during the school year. This nutrition day was: (a) a gathering day for parents and their children, (b) implemented as a way to educate them about nutritious food, and (c) an effort to reduce the hunger problem. Another initiative involved collaboration from a local supermarket in the area. One supermarket sometimes donated packaged foods and beverages for the children. Although this was not a regular event, it was an effort to help the children.

Ms. Basmia: Rusli, my student in Class C, he was having a bad day. He could not concentrate well. His mother forgot to pack his lunch, again. Rusli was disruptive and was fighting with Jamal. I do not think the mother listens to me.

Me: It is hard for the boy to concentrate when he was hungry.

Ms. Lisnadi: Where are the parents from? I mean, what’s their ethnicity?

Ms. Basmia: He is not originally from around here. I think they are not native here. Kenanga [pseudonym] ethnicity.

Ms. Sutinah: You should talk to the mother again.

Me: Does this happen to many students here?

Ms. Ranti: Yes, quite frequently. I think Rusli’s mother did not forget, but this is what happens when they [parents] don’t have anything to give to their children to bring for lunch. Children cannot study with an empty stomach. They get cranky and unruly.

(Hallway conversation, 10/14/2013)
The teachers shared that they dealt with behavioral problems on a regular basis. From the teachers’ survey and comments above, it implied, however, that five teachers perceived a lack of parental involvement with the children. The teachers implied that the lack of parental involvement was perhaps one of the causes for the children’s problems. Although, generally, the teachers showed empathy and understanding toward the parents, occasionally they expressed that the parents should be held accountable for their children’s individual growth. From one of the teachers’ comment above, however, it seemed perhaps the teachers understood that poverty restrained and influenced the parents’ involvement with their children.

The teachers shared that they dealt with behavioral problems on a regular basis. According to studies (Horgan, 2007; Ravallion, 1992; Narayan & Petesch, 2002), children from poverty are more likely to have poor nutrition. Poor nutrition affects brain development and general health. The children, according to the teachers, were prone to experiencing health concerns, as well emotional and social instability.

Sometimes I feel like I cannot deal with my students’ behavioral problems any longer. For instance, a student threw tantrums and others did not pay attention or did not follow instructions well. It made me want to give up sometimes because these events are frequently happening. When they are having a good day, I am over the moon. It makes it all worth it. I feel the best I can do is to give them much needed love. They [students] already experience too much hardship and some perhaps see violence in their homes too. I feel so helpless sometimes. They are so young but dealing with so much already. Yeah, I wanted to give them a lot of praises, big hugs, and lots of love. What more can I do?

(Ms. Basmia, interview, 10/14/2013)
Ms. Basmia shared her feelings about dealing with her students’ complex issues. She wanted to provide support, not only in their learning but also towards their emotional care. Providing a safe and loving environment was, for her, one of the key considerations for developing a broader range of healthy emotions, e.g., empathy, gratitude, and forgiveness (Jensen, 2013). According to Jensen, providing positive relationships also helps to build the students’ positive attitude about themselves and others.

A teacher also shared that showing caring and loving teacher behaviors was especially fundamental to these students.

Quite a few students come from abusive homes. These students face physical and emotional violence daily. We [teachers] often do not just deal with academic stuff, but also personal matters related to the students. We have a child who is violent toward other students because that is the only way he knows from his parents on how to deal with things. We had another child who passed out in school because he had not eaten since the day before! We also had have parents who were angry because we told them that their child should definitely go to the elementary school and they refused because it was not what their child was destined to do! You know, more than anything, our students need to be loved. (Ms. Lisnadi, interview, 10/17/2013)

Another teacher focused on their students’ needs for safety and security,

Providing love means to provide an atmosphere where our students will feel safe and loved. Despite their learning difficulties and behavioral problems, they know that they have their teachers who love them no matter what. They will learn things, but mostly they should know that no matter how hard life is at home, school can be their safe bubble,
their home too, where violence is prohibited and we learn the value of love for ourselves and others. (Ms. Ranti, 10/17/2013)

Issues due to living in poverty made teaching a much more challenging task for these teachers. Having insufficient support for dealing with challenges created an additional burden for them. For instance, they had no assistants in their classrooms. This made the teachers’ job harder, especially when dealing with children with behavioral problems. There were approximately 20 students in each class. The school used to have parent volunteers in the class to help the teachers. However, the initiative ended because there were a few incidents where parents were seen to be impatient or had conflicts with some teachers.

Me: Why not restart the parent-volunteer program?

Ms. Lisnadi: I think it could be a good idea. I know some teachers had quarrels with the parents. However, I think, we should not terminate it. We really need assistance in the classrooms.

Me: Would perhaps having some ground rules - like on expectations and what they can/cannot do - and then communicating these rules clearly to the parents, be helpful?

Ms. Lisnadi: Yes, I think that was the problem before. The parents were sort of taking over the class and undermining the teachers’ authority. Maybe we can think about some ground rules together.

Ms. Aisah: I think it would be helpful! I have a student with quite severe disabilities and it has been quite hard to pay attention to him and equally to the whole class. Ms. Sutinah is currently assisting me in the class when she can. I feel the difference with having an extra hand in the class. (Dialogue meeting, 10/18/2013)
Some parents were still helping students with routines outside the classroom, i.e., when they were washing hands and going through other morning routines before entering the classes. However, they were no longer allowed to volunteer inside the classroom or during teaching hours.

The teachers expressed the need for more assistance in the classroom, particularly if they have students with disabilities. In our dialogue meeting (10/18/2013), we identified preliminary ground rules that should be followed by teachers and parents, if they agreed to resume the initiative. The teachers subsequently had a few meetings with the parents about volunteering in the classroom. The parents appeared to support a resumption of helping the teachers in the classrooms. They also added some points to the ground rules. This change was put in place the following semester (January 2014).

The revised rules included:

1. The teacher should be respectful to the parent-volunteer e.g., asking politely [not commanding/demanding]
2. The teacher should provide clear instructions and communicate the lesson plan/agenda for the class beforehand
3. The teacher should communicate if there are any changes
4. The teacher should offer some training for parents
5. Parent-volunteers should respect the teacher’s authority
6. Parent-volunteers should be patient when dealing with the students
7. Parent-volunteers should be flexible toward changes
8. Parent-volunteers should be on time so it does not disrupt teaching/learning
9. parent-volunteers should not use violence e.g., pinching students, flicking at students’ ears, yelling at students

10. parent-volunteers should be respectful of students’ learning, e.g., not gossip about students’ learning or their parents

11. parent-volunteers should not just be helpers to their own children, but also other children

When the teachers’ assistant voluntary program restarted, approximately four parents were able to volunteer weekly. This meant that some classes still did not have any volunteer assistance. Thus, the voluntary program seemed only to help some classes. Although the teachers and Mrs. Matahari offered more encouragement to the parents to volunteer, and occasionally there were more parents who were able to do so, the teachers’ need for more regular/consistent assistance in the classes was not fully met. Nevertheless, our dialogues, in a way, had functioned as a support system for the teachers in dealing with their daily challenges.

Poverty and Fate

Our “reading of the world” (Freire, 1970) concerning poverty showed a complex, multifaceted description of the teachers’ understandings of the poverty, i.e., their own, in their families, and/or in the lives of their students.

The dialogues from November to February below describe the teachers’ understandings:

- Their initial perceptions on how the teachers perceived their own poverty.
- Their rejection of the idea that poverty was socially constructed.
- Their changing perceptions: On one side they believed that poverty was not socially constructed; on the other side, they all agreed that the government should pay more attention toward poor communities. Another change was that their fate did not
determine their destiny: they could do something to change their own conditions of poverty.

Changes in the teachers’ understandings were not linear. Changes sometimes took place in one area but not in others. Over time, we problematized the concept of fate and destiny in relation to understanding poverty. Initially, the teachers suggested that poverty was the result of their fate. In this sense, it was fate that their parents who were poor and thus they were born into poverty.

Both of my parents were poor and I was born poor. I cannot choose in which condition I was born into. Therefore, I believe that this is my fate. (Ms. Ranti, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2013)

I was born poor. This is something I have to accept. (Ms. Fatima, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2015)

Every person wishes to be born rich and prosperous, but that is not how the world works. We have our own fates and roles. I have to be at peace with myself because I was born poor. (Ms. Basmia, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2013)

Yes, I was born poor, but I am glad that I have an education that my parents never had. (Ms. Sutinah, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2013)

It is my fate that I was born poor. Each person has its own place in this world. (Ms. Aisah, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2013)

Sometimes, it made me upset to think that I was born poor. But, what can I do? I do not want to be disrespectful of my parents for being in our condition. I have to accept my fate. (Ms. Lisnadi, Teacher’s Journal, 11/15/2013)

Every teacher believed that their poverty was part of their fate. They also felt that they had to accept this fate. In a further discussion, I asked them:
Me: What do you mean by ‘fate’?

Ms. Ranti: It means something that you were born with.

Ms. Lisnadi: Something you need to accept.

Me: Does our fate also mean our destiny?

Ms. Fatima: Yes. Most likely, our fate is our destiny.

Me: Can you change your destiny?

Ms. Aisah: It is difficult to go against your fate or destiny though.

(Dialog meeting, 11/22/2013)

In understanding who can change our condition, we discussed more about the role of leaders and who was responsible to lead and help people move out of poverty.

Ms. Basmia: If you are destined to be an important person then you will be, but not everyone is born to be a leader. For example, out of many Indonesians, only one is destined to be the President. We have to accept our own destiny and that not everyone can be important people or leaders.

Me: Why can’t everyone be a leader?

Ms. Basmia: We all have roles to fulfill. Like I said, everyone wants to be rich and be the boss but who would do dirty jobs, like clean houses or be the janitors, if no one wants to do it. I think we should know our place.

Me: Isn’t it an Islamic value that every person has the potential to be a leader, that each person can be a leader in many different ways?

Ms. Aisah: Yes, but we should acknowledge that men are the leaders in the families [households]. A good husband will take care of the family and the wife is like the queen
in the family. This means that a husband will value the wife’s opinions highly. The wife’s role is to support the husband and the family.

Me: Whose role is it to get out/stay out of poverty?

Ms. Fatima: Each of us in the family, but mainly, the parents.

Ms. Sutinah: If we cannot change our situation, it is best to feel we are poor but be happy rather than poor but unhappy.

(Dialog meeting, 12/6/2013)

In initial dialogues, the teachers believed that their destiny was predetermined and thus less changeable. This meant that if one was poor, most likely that he/she would stay poor. In later discussions, three teachers suggested that they had hope in that their destiny could change.

Me: How do you see your students living in poverty?

Ms. Lisnadi: I think they are too like us. They were born into poverty. It is not their fault.

Me: Whose fault is it?

Ms. Lisnadi: It is not their parents’ fault. They, too, are striving and trying their hardest efforts to make ends meet.

Ms. Ranti: In our school, some parents did not care much about their children but most do.

Ms. Aisah: I don’t think we should blame anyone for our poverty. Each human has her/his own fate and destiny to fulfill.

Me: What is the government’s role related to the poverty in our society?

Ms. Ranti: I do not think poverty is the government’s fault, but I do think that they should pay more attention to poor communities, like ours.
Ms. Fatima: We cannot blame the government for our fate. However, I do think that the government should help us more.

Ms. Sutinah: If a parent got sick and could not work, the family most likely would not be able to afford the health related costs. Also, the family’s income would decrease immensely. That was why I said before, it would be difficult to change our destiny, like when we were born poor, it’s most unlikely that we would be rich and famous. Surviving is already hard to achieve!

(Dialog meeting, 1/17/2014)

As we continued with our dialog on fate and destiny, three teachers appeared to show some change in their understandings.

Me: If we were born poor, would we be destined to stay poor?

Ms. Ranti: It depends on the efforts of each person. I believe that if we work hard we can be better. Our parents certainly want us to be economically and socially much better than us.

Me: Does it mean we can create our own destiny?

Ms. Fatima: If we work hard and pray hard, we can succeed in life.

Ms. Aisah: If God’s willing and our hard work, it could happen.

Ms. Lisnadi: I am more pessimistic. If a student’s family is extremely poor, it is extremely difficult to support their child to continue education. The matter of their stomach will take number a higher priority than education. So, often the children’s education suffers and they become child laborers.

Me: What do you think about the role of education in setting up a child’s opportunity for a better life?
Ms. Ranti: I think education is very important. Especially these days, most jobs want high and good educational background.

(Dialog meeting, 1/24/2014)

The teachers suggested that working hard and praying hard were part of what was necessary to have a better life. On one side, they believed that their destiny was pre-written. On the other side, they believed it could change if God was willing. I asked the teachers about the students living in poverty. The teachers’ perceptions had conflicting opinions (Dialog meeting, 1/24/2014).

Me: Do you think students living in poverty have a chance to further their education, for instance college, and find jobs with good salary?

Ms. Basmia: Not really. Many of the students I know drop out in high school or they go to vocational high schools. For instance, my cousin went to a high school that specialized on the mechanic skills. So, when he graduated from such high school he can work in the car garage or mechanic.

Me: Does he earn a good wage?

Ms. Basmia: He earns better than his parents, who clean houses, but still much lower than the government’s standard wage for labor work, not enough to support his family just by working in one job. He has other jobs, like delivering goods from one store to another.

Ms. Lisnadi: I rarely know about our students going to college although I know quite a few are very talented and have received some awards. Graduating from high school would probably be already a big achievement for our students from low-income families.

Ms. Sutinah: I think a lot of us [the teachers] just feel blessed to have found jobs. Like me, I never thought I would become a teacher, had Mrs. Matahari not accepted me. Even
though the salary is not enough to support my daily needs and I have to find other jobs, I am grateful that I have a respectable job.

(Dialog meeting, 1/24/2014)

In further discussions, the teachers’ understanding of what initially considered as ‘their destiny began to alter. For instance, a teacher stated that their destiny was something that could be changed (Dialog Meeting, 2/17/2014).

Me: If you were born poor, can you change your destiny?

Ms. Lisnadi: You asked this several times. I thought about your question and I think we can. I mean, my parents were not teachers and I am. Although teaching does not pay much, it is a socially respectable position. My family and neighbors think highly of me being a teacher.

Me: What did you do differently than your parents?

Ms. Lisnadi: I guess, I did not give up going to school. I graduated from high school. I also had free tuition fees because of the government’s programs. I took other side jobs while in school to pay for my educational costs. I was diligent to find jobs available in the area. I got the job here. I am so grateful!

Ms. Basmia: I guess, if we were determined enough to change our condition, we could change it.

Ms. Aisah: We can change our destiny. It takes a lot of courage and certainly persistence.

Ms. Sutinah: I know reality does not always support poor people like us, but we also have a hope and dream that we can change our condition.

Me: If each of you were given better support in education, what would you do?
Ms. Ranti: I want to pursue further education in teaching. I want to learn more about dealing with children with disabilities. I certainly could become a much better teacher. The teachers’ perceptions about fate and destiny related to poverty showed that (a) poverty was part of their fate, but not entirely their destiny, (b) poverty was not socially constructed, (c) that the government should support economic and educational opportunities for poor communities.

**Issues Related to Ethnicity and Social Stereotyping**

Questions about the ethnicity of a child, a parent, or a family occurred frequently in my data. I was not aware of its importance until I also noticed the same pattern in Indonesia popular media. I wondered about how the teachers and I talked about ethnicity.

Several examples below suggested that asking for information about students’ ethnicity subtly or openly appeared in our conversations. For these examples, I focused on the conversations between the teachers and me.

**Instance 1:**

A teacher asked for a student’s ethnicity when he had tried to take another child’s crayons and then had hit the other child. (Fieldnotes, 9/2/2013)

Ms. Fatima: Bani was not behaving well today. He was fighting with another child and hitting the other boy.

Ms. Sutinah: Is he regularly disorderly? What’s his ethnicity?

Ms. Fatima: Not frequently, but lately, yes. He is Mawar [pseudonym] ethnicity. He is older than the other boy. I worry he is bullying the other boy.

**Instance 2:**

In the pantry/teachers’ room, the teachers were having their lunch (Fieldnotes, 9/13/2013)

Ms. Basmia: Dargo just smacked another boy and pushed him out of the chair.
Ms. Fatima: What happened?

Ms. Basmia: At the end of the class, he got impatient and was upset for not being chosen to lead the prayer session.

Ms. Fatima: You should talk to his mother. What’s the family’s ethnicity?

Ms. Lisnadi: Are they the Kenanga [pseudonym] ethnicity?

Ms. Fatima: Yes. I already told the child that violence is bad. I should tell the parents that again.

Ms. Lisnadi: I had the same talk with the mother when Dargo was in my grade. He often lost his temper and hit other children. His mother said that his father told him to stand up for himself and hit back if another child hit him. The thing was he was the one who usually started the fights.

Ms. Fatima: I think the parents did not think such action was wrong.

Instance 3:

Ms. Ranti: I just had a word with Ima’s mother. She was crying because the other girls teased her about her smelling bad.

Ms. Aisah: What’s wrong?

Ms. Ranti: Well, I know she has not changed or washed the uniform for a long time. Ima’s mother cleans for living. I am surprised she does not care about her child’s cleanliness.

Ms. Aisah: Are they Mawar [pseudonym] ethnicity? I know it’s tiring to clean everyday especially when it’s a struggle just to survive.

Ms. Basmia: Maybe their standard of cleanliness is just different. (Fieldnotes, 12/19/2013)
Instance 4:

Ms. Lisnadi: I came to Kesia’s home today. I needed to talk to the parents about Kesia and her behavior. She keeps stealing little things like a pencil, eraser, or sharpener.

Ms. Ranti: What is the family’s ethnicity?

Ms. Fatima: How was your visit?

Ms. Lisnadi: It was fine. The family is Melati [pseudonym for ethnic group]. Actually, they were quite receptive to what I said. I was puzzled about her behavior. The parents collected things to resell. Maybe she was copying what they do.

Ms. Fatima: Aren’t they quite religious?

Ms. Lisnadi: Yes. That was why I was puzzled because Kesia did not stop stealing. Her friends kept complaining about losing things. The parents raised their tones and told the child in front of me to stop stealing. I think I should talk to Mrs. Matahari about this if this does not stop right away. Maybe Kesia needs to work with a psychologist.

(Fieldnotes, 1/22/2014)

The question about a child or a parent’s ethnicity usually came after a negative incident. In this case, there seemed to be a need to mention an ethnicity when an incident happened. I was surprised, upon reflection, that some instances I asked the same question as if it was necessary to have information on ethnicity when something negative happened. This made me think about how the teachers and I talked about ethnicity.

Dialogue on Ethnicity (Dialogue meetings, 5/2/2014; 5/9/2014)

Me: I have important news to share. I was not aware of this until recently. Mostly, it was because I thought it was part of our every day’s lives. Like, all of us ask about a child’s ethnicity, a parent, or a family’s ethnic background a lot.
Ms. Ranti: What’s wrong with that?

Me: The thing is we seem to need to know the information on ethnicity when an negative incident has taken place. We do not ask about ethnicity information when a child or parent does something good. It feels as if we, or I, think that ethnicity is the cause or has something to do with any negative behaviors of a child behavior or parents’ attitudes.

Ms. Ranti: Is it wrong to think like that?

Me: What do you think? [There was a long moment of silence.]

Ms. Lisnadi: We hear negative stereotypes all the time. We make jokes about it. Many people do it all the time. Even when I was young, I heard all this stuff [negative stereotypes] a lot.

Me: Do you believe those negative stereotypes you heard?

Ms. Lisnadi: Well, some characteristics seemed to be true. Like, the Melati ethnic families like to work at certain jobs. They seemed to be tough people too, like very assertive when they ask for something, too assertive sometimes.

Ms. Aisah: But, I also heard stories about Mawar’s ethnicity. Like, negative stories. Contradictory to Melati’s ethnicity, they were always slow in doing work, like, not very efficient. They were not so assertive in what they said, like talking behind people’s back.

I noticed that and they sometimes were true.

Me: Negative stereotypes can often become a prejudice.

Ms. Fatima: My grandfather has some Mawar’s ethnic heritage. He is, however, not in anyway like the negative stereotypes I often hear people portray about the Mawar.

[There was another moment of silence.]
The teachers were themselves from Melati, Mawar, and Seruni ethnicities. Thus, the atmosphere became a bit tense.

Ms. Aisah: What is a prejudice? What do you mean?

Me: It’s like when we see a person based on our negative assumptions, then it affects the way we think and treat them. I mean, we are also thinking and treating the person negatively. Is there an example in our lives where this might be the case?

Ms. Basmia: Perhaps, when I was walking and saw a man with a tattoo on the street, so, maybe, I would stay away from him.

Me: Why is that?

Ms. Basmia: Maybe, a tattoo is identified with roughness. Therefore, like, I think people with tattoos look rough and so a bit like a troublemaker, like dangerous.

Me: So, how should we deal with negative stereotypes? Can we overcome these negative stereotypes with another way of thinking?

Ms. Fatima: Perhaps we could think, for instance based on Ms. Basmia’s example, we could look at tattoos as something macho or like an art. Yes, it can often look rough. But, I mean, is every tattooed man dangerous?

An extended discussion of the negative stereotypes they had about men with tattoos and whether those stereotypes applied to all men with tattoos. There were examples of men who fit and stereotypes and others who didn’t.

Me: Is it possible that if we conceive negative assumptions about something then it might affect our judgment, for instance, lessen our clarity about them?

Ms. Lisnadi: What do you mean?
Me: I mean, is it possible that we could cloud our clarity and thus we might generalize our judgments because of these negative perceptions? Like, when we think that people with tattoos are *all* crooks. What would happen if we have the same kind of thinking to our students or the parents of the students with tattoos?

Ms. Sutinah: I did have such experience. There was a parent with a tattoo and yes, I was hesitant and, perhaps, immediately thought he might not be a good parent.

Me: Has the child ever been in some trouble?

Ms. Sutinah: Not more than usual children’s behaviors.

Me: Were there moments when you, perhaps, would blame the father when the child was in trouble?

Ms. Sutinah: Honestly, yes. I blamed the father almost so quickly several times. However, I got the chance to know the family better and I know I was mistaken.

Me: Why did you blame him?

Ms. Sutinah: I guessed at the back of my mind I thought he might not be a good role model for his child.

Me: Because of his image/appearance?

Ms. Sutinah: Yes.

Me: Is there a chance that we are doing the same thing when we are talking about ethnicity? Like, why do we need some kind of information on a child or a parent’s ethnicity when an incident happens? [There was a moment of silence.]

Ms. Basmia: I did not realize I did that. I am not sure. I mean we live in a multiethnic society. Therefore, isn’t it natural to ask about someone’s ethnicity up front?
Ms. Lisnadi: So, yeah, maybe then we can find a common thread or similarities, like we connect, although we may come from different ethnicities.

Me: Absolutely. However, in our conversations, why is it that we want to know someone’s ethnicity, only or especially when an incident takes place? For instance, when Nina [pseudonym] obtained more stars [stickers] in a day for behaving very well, we rarely want to know her ethnic background?

Ms. Ranti: Because it is how it should be. We should tackle behavioral problems early.

Me: Do we, somewhat, suspect that ethnicity, the way we act, live, and see ourselves and/or others, might contribute to the negative behaviors of these children or parenting styles/attitudes?

Ms. Ranti: I never thought about this before. I think, perhaps yes, I do not know why, but maybe, because each ethnicity teaches certain ways of living. I heard the stereotypes about certain ethnicities all the time. Therefore, subconsciously, perhaps, I just see some of them the way I was taught to see them.

Me: Could this way of thinking cause a problem in our professional lives?

Ms. Fatima: I think so. I mean, what if my child was considered as a slow learner or disruptive one just because our family comes from a certain ethnicity.

Ms. Aisah: Like, I am not a good parent because of my ethnicity background?

Ms. Lisnadi: I am sure people would have some both positive and negative assumptions about me if I say I am a Betawi, or Minang, or Batak, or Papuan person.

Me: How should we deal with both negative and positive assumptions that we have stored in our mind?
Ms. Lisnadi: Perhaps, like what we have discussed thus far, like, being a reflective thinker, we reflect. We need to be more aware of this.

Me: Noticing things would certainly be one of the keys to eliminating or unlearn our negative assumptions.

Ms. Fatima: Yes, thinking wisely and looking at the bigger picture of a person or a family, rather than just accepting information we have had blindly, I think it could help too. I know when I said that I had Seruni [pseudonym] heritage, some people may quickly form an opinion about me, both positively and negatively. I feel, maybe more negatively though.

Me: Why is that?

Ms. Fatima: Because I heard more negative portrayals about certain ethnicities than their positive features, like Seruni ethnicity. They make jokes about us, like we were ethnically inferior. I felt uneasy every time I heard the jokes.

Ms. Basmia: But, we all do it! Have you *never* [stressed tone] joked about other ethnicities in your families?

Ms. Fatima: Yes, unfortunately, yes. I didn’t mean to. I guess we all do that.

Me: Although we are taught to live in harmony, we also somehow think negatively about other ethnicities.

Ms. Basmia: Therefore, whose fault is this?

Ms. Aisah: Perhaps, it’s all our faults. Like Ms. Lisnadi said, I think we can change this slowly, by being more aware about the information we have learned.

Ms. Ranti: Maybe we can also be more aware about the way we see other people, other ethnicities.
The findings about stereotypes about ethnicity made me think about what the underlying issues and it raised more questions about how much an ethnic background might influence the way we act. I also wondered about the positive and negative assumptions that are attached to particular ethnicities. The teachers came to understand these stereotypes as the result of what they had been taught. They recognized the jokes and insults that resulted from these social practices.

The teachers and I attempted to delve into some of these questions, but because this finding came near the end of the research time, with more time we might have explored this more deeply. The teachers, however, pointed to some of the key ideas about how to begin to stereotypic issues in their teaching. For instance, they discussed the need to be more aware and to become reflective. In this case, the dialogue proved to be a means to processing a new, more critical view, of normative assumptions about ethnicities and how we see ourselves and others as ethnic beings, living in a multicultural society.

Summary

Our efforts in the critical reading of our worlds (Freire, 1970) gave us deeper insights into our identities. We critically reflected on the cultural, historical, political, and religious norms and policies that shaped our perceptions of our identities and our positionalities in the society. We also learned more about our fears. The teachers took risks and were inquisitive throughout the dialogues. The dialogues provided a conduit for them to voice their opinions and they functioned as a support system for the teachers and Mrs. Matahari.
CHAPTER 6
Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will present analyses of my positionality, commitment to community, dialogue as praxis, and poverty and education. I will conclude with describing the challenges and significance of my study.

My Positionality

As an Indonesian doing my research in Indonesia, I was both an insider and an outsider. I was an insider because of my cultural background and knowledge. But I was an outsider as I was studying a school culture that was new to me. I did not initially know any of my participants nor had I worked in this school. My status as an insider/outsider moved back and forth, as I interpreted the voices of my study participants. Over time, my position expanded to include being a friend, assistant, and consultant as we (the teachers, the principal – sometimes the parents and I) were dealing with the day-to-day operations at the school. The line between my position as a researcher and a friend was often blurred as we were sharing our personal stories and as I interacted socially within the community.

The extended time I spent with my study participants, and the communal experiences in which I participated, afforded me the opportunities to co-construct understandings of our shared part of the world. In this sense, my deep yearlong engagement with my study participants created a sense of “advocacy, solidarity, and intervention” (Monzó, 2013; Monzó, 2014). It was through these relationships that I became privileged to be part of my study participants’ lives and to have access to information that would have been inaccessible to an “outsider.” Thus, aspects of
traditional research such as distance and “neutrality” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a) were not relevant in my research.

As described in Chapter 5, I used my “cultural intuition” (Delgado Bernal, 2001) in my interactions to decode the obvious and/or subtle cues that were present. Cultural intuitions gave me culturally sensitive ways to ask for clarification and enabled me to know when to challenge, listen, or intervene in diverse situations. Additionally, my long-term involvement with the participants especially with the teachers and principal, prompted a sense of responsibility to give back to my community. This feeling of responsibility, Monzó (2014) calls a “homegrown episteme.” From this perspective, one’s epistemology stems from a commitment to the community. Such commitments are then reinvented because I was positioned and re-positioned within this particular society in which I was learning and changing. Further, in regards to Monzó, my sense of responsibility to my research community was influenced by a strong ethic of service embedded within my culture.

From the beginning, I wanted my research to be more than “seeking to know” (Monzó, 2014). I wanted my research to serve my research community. Guided by Freirean principles (1970, 1998) and the wisdom of Delgado-Bernal (1998, 2001) on the “pedagogies of the home,” I attempted to be culturally sensitive in analyzing and presenting my research. Some scholars argue that research on minorities in the United States have often turned into a “colonizing project” because of an approach that was “aimed at commodifying for the purpose of owning” (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; Calderón, Delgado-Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Monzó, 2013). I wanted to learn but I did not want to own; I wanted to share but I did not want to use my research to colonize my participants. I struggled together with the teachers.

In my research journey, there was a moment where I “caught” a particular theme, which I
considered a breakthrough finding. I listened to the recordings repeatedly, read through my summaries, and reviewed my analyses many times. However, for some reason, I did not catch this particular “anomaly.” Then one day, I read some news in the Indonesian newspaper and the word “ethnicity” caught my attention. I guess this was a kind of “occupational hazard,” or rather, “occupational intuition” for noticing things in daily life related to one’s work; in this case, my role as a researcher on multicultural issues. The word ethnicity was often linked to a negative portrayal of the person/subject of the news. I then wondered if perhaps this was the case in my research. Were the teachers making negative assumptions about the ethnicity of their students? I began a search and, unfortunately, that was what I found. More surprisingly, I was doing the same thing as my teachers. Like the teachers, I was curious about a student’s ethnicity when the student did something bad. I previously had connected this curiosity to an interest in the child’s background. I assumed this was in order to understand their behavior better by knowing more about their background. On further reflection, I became aware that I was perpetuating negative stereotypes about the students’ ethnicities without even realizing it.

In analyzing the data, I found that the teachers in my study held certain implicit assumptions about ethnicities in general. Once I was aware of these instances, I had mixed feelings. I felt both ashamed and anxious. I was hit with the question, “How did I not realize this before?” This realization was important for me because it helped me understand that these findings from my study were part of a larger issue in Indonesian society. I explore this in more detail in the next section.

**Commitment to Community**

According to Mrs. Matahari, the school would not have been able to continue without the support of the teachers, parents, and the whole community. As previously stated, the support
from the community included financial and non-financial support. Since its inception (1984), the community had provided unwavering support. For instance, in funding the school, the neighborhood’s residents conducted monthly meetings to raise funds for the school. Some residents had also made commitments to donate money for the school. Non-financial support included donation of t-shirts, chairs, whiteboards, shoes for children who needed them, and teaching materials such as colored papers. Mrs. Matahari appeared to have done a great job in linking the school to the community. In monthly meetings, she talked to the forum about what was happening at the school. The information included descriptions of how the students were doing and their achievements.

The school had prevailed due to the long-term commitment of its community to sustain the school. The value of helping others is embedded in cultures that are socially constructed through religious and parental teaching. In the Anggrek Bulan community, religious meetings are run to support cultural norms. They seek to raise citizen awareness towards helping others as part of their commitment to their faith. The religious meetings were used to “mobilize” the attendees to increase their compassion toward others who were less fortunate. Community service as a civic virtue is widely accepted in Indonesian cultures. Civic virtue (Putnam, 1995, 2000) is often described as one of the constructs of social engagement in the society (Graham & Van Dyne, 2006).

For the Anggrek Bulan’s community, spiritual rewards, emphasized by the Imam, would be the motivation to implement this civic virtue. In their view, leaving a legacy of kindness is believed to be immeasurable in comparison to materialistic values. The belief that fortune and successes in life were never achieved “alone,” or never without other people’s support, was engrained as a part of the commitment to give back to the community.
This community service principle was also demonstrated through the teachers’ commitment to working with the school. Despite the small salary and hard work it entailed, the teachers remained loyal and tried their best to educate their students. Outside the school hours, they visited students’ homes and developed close relationships with the parents. They went the extra mile and demonstrated genuine concern for their students. This commitment, as shared by some teachers, was “just something expected of a teacher.” From their perspective, they were taught to believe that a “guru” [a teacher] is meant to be “di gugu lan di tiru” [a role model whose actions are to be learned and followed]. Such a belief stems from a Javanese philosophy that emphasizes the high morale principles of a teacher. A teacher is not only there to transfer knowledge, but also and more importantly, is there to be a good role model. Thus, teaching means showing a good example morally, academically, and professionally. Additionally, coming from similar social economic background as their students, the teachers understood what the students were going through. In many ways, the teachers became the students’ educational parents (Igoa, 1995). As Freire in the Pedagogy of Liberation (1998) suggested, experiences to which people can personally relate may trigger intrinsic motivation to be agents of change. The teachers’ commitment to the students’ well being and academic achievement also showed a manifestation of their internalized social responsibility. Deepened by cultural and religious beliefs, these teachers’ examples of care and actions to support their students, demonstrated advocacy for social justice. The cultural and religious values embedded in Anggrek Bulan’s community contributed to the continued support for the school and other social voluntary activities and programs.

The significance of collaboration is highly emphasized in Indonesian society, as well, mirroring cultural traits in other Asian countries (Bruffee, 1995; Burdett, 2003; Cheng, 1999;
Gupta, 2004). Research has shown that collaboration in educational settings, compared to competition (Gupta, 2004), promotes social skills (Burdett, 2003) giving space for others to be heard (Bae, 2004; Hodne, 1997), constructing positive attitude toward shared vision and mission (Cross, 1998), increasing individual accountability (DeVito, 2000) and fostering active participation (Gokhale, 1995; Holmes, 2004). The valuing of collaboration was evident in the teachers’ work together and the Anggrek Bulan community at large. Anggrek Bulan members regularly met to deal with matters in their neighborhood. They made decisions together. Semanggi School also had the same decision making culture. Parents were very much involved in decision-making procedures related to their children’s learning. In other education settings, however, this type of parents’ involvement was not common, other than decision making in regards to financial issues. The collaborative culture at Semanggi School had the potential to support the building of a commitment for social justice issues in the school.

On one side, the values described above can be read as a source of inspiration for social advocacy. On the other side, collaboration has its downsides (Holmes, 2004; Holter, 1995; Jarvis, 1998). In prioritizing a group’s voices, individual voices maybe suppressed, especially voices that are not supporting the majority’s opinions (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1992; Nieli, 2004). Thus, emphasis on collaboration can also be translated as a system of “social pressure” (Jung & Sosik, 2002; Quaddus & Tung, 2002). In the Semaggi School, Mrs. Matahari’s actions could be seen as advocacy for social change. Her neighbors saw her as a “provocateur in a good way.” Her courage paved the way for others to be more involved in their community. Mrs. Matahari’s active involvement in the school seemed to have ignited some inspiration for others to commit to the school as well. Her actions, on the other hand, could be interpreted as an “unspoken pressure” to others to also do the same for the community. She
insisted that the school “belongs to the community” and thus it was their responsibility to “raise the school” as well. Mrs. Matahari had always been the front liner for the school. She was the face of the school and the one who dealt with day-to-day operations, handling most of the school’s functions. Yet, she stated that the school was the community’s as much as hers. In a way, although her actions and perception of the school can be viewed as “social pressure,” her humility and sense of community shared by Anggrek Bulan’s members helped push forward the community’s social responsibility toward the school.

**Dialogue as Praxis**

The teachers asked, “Why is dialogue so important to you?” This was a hard question to answer. Dialogue is difficult to do, especially when there are tensions among the dialoguers or differences of opinion due to the controversial topics being discussed. As an Indonesian, however, I was taught to value musyawarah [dialogue] when solving problems. The Indonesian pioneers and other generations before me constructed this tenet as a significant aspect of Indonesian culture. Musyawarah as a means to discuss issues, find solutions, and resolve conflicts is one of the norms in the Pancasila, The Five Pillars/principles, which are accepted as a guide to an Indonesian way of living. Dialogue in this sense involves respecting one another and listening to each other, regardless of rank or social class.

Dialogue is also one of the foremost principles in Freire’s theory. For Freire, dialogue requires a profound love of the world, life, and others. It also involves equality, respect, talking with each other, and humility (Freire, 1998). These characteristics of a dialogue resonate in me and parallel Indonesian cultural understandings of dialogue. For Indonesians in a dialogue, one should show modesty, come into the dialogue with the willingness to listen, but speak their minds, and be respectful of what others want to say. In light of this norm, I argue in this research
that dialogue was the best option for me to study understandings about diversity in Semanggi School and in Indonesian society. Dialogue can be a conduit to talk about similarities and the vast differences in Indonesian languages and cultures.

The concept of dialogue, while embedded in Indonesian culture, is not easily practiced in our current Indonesian society because it is still quite hierarchical. This is also due to strong indoctrination that historically prohibited any discussions on issues related to diversity. I saw this at first in the teachers’ initial reluctance to talk about social justice matters. They felt it was a taboo subject and that we would be entering a “dangerous zone.” The teachers’ fear was real, although they were not explicitly aware of where it came from until we “traced” its history during one of our dialogue meetings. The avoidance of conversations pertaining to SARA/diversity and social justice matters, I argue here, is a disservice to us as a nation. Without dialogue, we lack a profound understanding of other people’s differences, which means we often rely on narrow stereotypes and prejudices toward others. If differences are invisible instead of celebrated, this is a form of discrimination. Studies in the United States (Fryberg, 2010; Nieto, 2000; Noguera, 2003; Tarca, 2005) show that this avoidance, or colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), only prolongs prejudices and unjust systems. Seeing diversity as a threat, instead of a strength and resource, is an assumption that needs revisiting and changing in Indonesia.

Studies (Amalia, 2009; Bourchier, 2007; Narayan & Petesch, 2002; Purdey, 2006) have shown that lack of multicultural contents in schools in Indonesia are problematic. When discussions about cultural practices, i.e., multi-ethnicities, are absent from the school curricula, opportunities for children to learn about them would also be lacking. It may indicate that we, as educators, do not see cultural knowledge as worthy knowledge. The message is in conflict with the fact that diverse cultures constitute the fabric of Indonesian society. Learning about the
multiculturalism that shapes Indonesia could function as a learning process for students to be more critical and reflective thinkers. For this to take place, however, the discussions would need to move beyond exoticism, othering, and rhetoric. It should function as a conduit to unpack, unsettle, unlearn negative assumptions, and disrupt the cycle of injustice in our society.

Indonesians have been given rhetoric that ethnicities are part of our cultures and should be appreciated, but we never really talk about what “appreciating these ethnicities” truly means. Most importantly, we were neither “allowed” or given opportunities to discuss issues related to ethnic differences. Without dialogue and understandings of differences, negative portrayals of other ethnicities were bound to happen. For instance, in my study, although the teachers and I “claimed” that we were “appreciative” of cultural diversity, many instances in the data showed that the question, “What’s the child’s ethnicity?” frequently followed immediately after a teacher’s description of a student who was disruptive in the class. When a problem came up with a student or parent, the teachers and I often asked about their ethnicity. This suggests an implicit blaming of an ethnic group related to particular kinds of problems. The findings suggest, however, that it did not matter which ethnic group was connected to a particular class or school problem.

In my attempt to understand this phenomenon, I asked the teachers about my interpretation of how we talked about ethnicities. All ethnicities, according to the teachers’ conclusions from our dialogue, might include children with negative traits and problems, i.e., a student’s behavior, parental control, family upbringing. According to the teachers, a student from any ethnic group might exhibit these problems. They seemed to have come to understand that to stereotype any group did not allow for the diversity within that group. Thus, it was not about
which ethnic group, but rather, the way we were talking about ethnic groups in general that was problematic.

Although the teachers and I “knew” the positive rhetoric about Indonesia as a multicultural society, our speech and actions implicitly projected negative assumptions. There were instances found in my study and many found in Indonesian media. The portrayal of ethnic groups in many media sources, e.g., newspapers, blogs, and magazines, were typically tinged with negativity. Similar to my teacher data, a positive portrayal of certain ethnic groups was rare. When a student achieved a grade/level to receive a student star sticker or made good progress, or when a parent dedicated a great deal of time volunteering at the school, there was seldom any curiosity shown about his or her ethnicity. In the dialogue group, we talked about the need for this to change, which would require a critical rethinking of personal and societal assumptions.

I came to understand that what I learned from this research was a symptom of a greater and chronic social problem. If our cultural knowledge had taught us that our diversity was our power, a resource--not a threat or weakness--and dialogue was our foundation for addressing this diversity, why was our speech contradictory? Freire would argue that the teachers and I should engage in reading the world critically. In this case, we should analyze these assumptions and stereotypes within our larger social structure and examine them historically. We did this by examining our history and thinking critically about the prevailing indoctrination – the belief that our nation’s “integration” could only be achieved through dismissing our differences in cultures, religions, and landscapes. The regime that initiated this slogan was likely fearful that Indonesian diversity could threaten national cohesiveness and thus wanted its citizens to absorb this doctrine. The teachers’ initial fear, reluctance, resistance, and continuing struggle in addressing differences in our dialogue group was evidence of this indoctrination.
Learning from the history and the literature on multicultural education, I argue here that diversity should be embraced through *multiple perspectives*. When I brought this perspective into our dialogues, the teachers brought up examples of recent conflicts associated with diversity. For instance, the clash between the Madurese (Madura/Java Island) and Dayak (Kalimantan Island) in Sampit, Kalimantan in 2001, and religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon Island (predominantly Christians) in 1999-2002. We discussed why we [Indonesians] have conflicts between ethnic groups, the way natives and non-natives to the Islands perceive each other, how the majority groups have treated minorities.

If our cultural values have taught us to believe that we should live peacefully and that diversity is our strength, then, “What caused these conflicts?” It is my argument that the lack of opportunities for dialogue has made these conflicts inescapable. Our voices were silenced for so long by colonizers and dictators, and now, dialogue is fundamental to better learn about each other and with each other. I propose that we create spaces for dialogue, through one of the best vehicles for social transformation/mobility, *education*. The findings of my study pointed out that prior to our dialogue meetings the teachers had “never attended meetings” dedicated to discussing diversity issues. Without dialogue about diversity, current and future generations will reproduce the current stereotypes and injustices. I argue for multicultural/social justice education to provide the spaces to reflect on teaching practices and to begin to build a social justice system within classrooms in the Semanggi School and nationally.

Promoting teaching and learning for social justice is not without controversy. In the United States, this paradigm has incited strong arguments for and against. One side suggests that teaching for social justice is a political agenda at the expense of “traditional academic learning” (Crowe, 2008). Schools should be a place “free” from political goals and promotion of certain
values and morals (Crowe, 2008; MacDonald, 1998; Will, 2006). From this perspective, the intention of teaching for social justice is questionable and regarded as neglecting students’ academic importance (Will, 2006). On the extreme side, some organizations in the United States criticize teaching for social justice as anti-American and a “code for communism” (Eagle Forum, 2015). The opposite perspective explains that teaching for social justice is crucial because it focuses on “education for all” (Brock-Utne, 2001), which problematizes and disrupts the power and privileges of the mainstream (Apple, 1995; Ayers, 1998; Grant, 2009; Sleeter, 2001) and advocates for marginalized groups (Darling-Hammond, 2010). For these reasons, multicultural/social justice education was an approach I used in working with my teachers in order to disrupt power and advocate for marginalized groups. My personal position throughout this study was that Indonesian educators should commit to teaching for change and social justice (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Ayvazian, 2004; Bigelow & Peterson, 2002) to disrupt the cycle of oppression and impede further ethnicity/religion/social class conflicts (Freire, 1970, 1987).

Dialogue is also considered a gateway to a more democratic system (Freire & Macedo, 1987). When the teachers and I engaged in dialogue, we explored our fears, we shared laughter, and we trusted each other. We shared painful memories, we questioned, challenged, and changed our minds, we resisted and reflected, and we came up with more questions. We may have not arrived at answers; this was not our ultimate destination. Rather, the strengths of our dialogue were in our efforts to unpack social justice issues by critically reading our worlds (Freire, 1970; 1987; 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Poverty and Education: Whose Dreams Are We Leaving Behind?

Poverty is socially constructed (Freire, 1970, 1987; Bauman, 2000) as well as politically structured (Apple, 1990; Freire, 1998; Bode, 2005). Poverty continues to afflict countries rich in
natural resources and educational, economical, and technological sources such as the United States, Brazil, and Indonesia (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Freire, 1983; Hadiz, 2004). The issues of poverty are no longer about merely increasing financial (Eitzen & Smith, 2003; Noguera, 2003); there are more complex issues and implications. Actions for social justice should take place at many different levels of governance to allow better access for disadvantaged groups. Taking a single action cannot cure poverty; poverty needs to be combated through multiple actions backed with social justice oriented policies. This includes tackling policies that perpetuate inequality and inequity (Freire, 1983; Payne, 1998; Noguera & Torres, 2008).

Freire suggests that education and economy are a two-sided coin. Thus, in looking at the issues within educational systems, we cannot ignore social, cultural, economical, historical, political, and educational values. For instance, valuing teachers and students means understanding both their individuality and social positionality in the larger system. Additionally, viewing educational policies from a critical pedagogical stance means a “critical reading” from multiple perspectives and inquiries. Critical questions would include: Who would be impacted by the policies (who would “gain” or “lose”)? Whose perspectives are represented in the policies? and, Who decides?

From a Freirean perspective, the issues of poverty should not be discussed in isolation from the educational issues. If policy makers do not consider poverty issues in relation to education, they will deny students living in poverty their right to an education. The slogan, education for all (Brock-Utne, 2000), inspires many countries but there is still a gap between the policies and their implementation in Indonesia.

The children from low-income families or no-income families have the same rights for good education as other children do. The teachers in my study argued that standardized, high-
stake testing further disadvantaged students living in poverty because it limited their chances for educational access and academic success. In many underserved areas globally, students go to school in physically damaged building (Brock-Utne, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Delpit, 1994) and lack qualified teachers. In my research site, children often came to school hungry. How can they study if they are hungry? Freire in the Pedagogy for Liberation (1987) described his personal experience of being poor and hungry and the difficulty of trying to study while hungry.

Too often, issues of poverty are purposely not discussed because the deficit thinking of politicians creates an embarrassment to the nation (Freire, 1998). Such problems are not a society’s disease or shame; policy makers, educators, teachers, parents, and local communities need to address these issues amongst themselves. After all, who creates poverty? According to Freire (1998), WE DO. In this sense, poverty is socially, historically, and politically constructed and we as a society are responsible for poverty.

Many policies in place in Indonesia, such as the educational funding systems, disadvantages those with fewer resources because they are based on competition. Eligibility for funding is often based on the standardized test scores, which also disadvantage those in under-resourced schools. Children living in poverty who have inadequate education experiences do less well on tests, and thus these effects assure that poverty in particular areas is sustained. In the United States, researchers find the effects of funding policies and standardized testing create unfair competition and result in ever widening gaps between student achievement of children living in poverty and children from higher resourced environments (Black, 1998; Holloway, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The same situation seems to be true in Indonesia. Schools that do
poorly, and in a parallel way are less successful in getting resources, thus fall further behind in this competitive system (Muhaimin, Sutiah, & Prabowo, 2008).

Issues experienced by the students in Semanggi School were similar to reports/studies regarding how poverty affects education. According to a study of students across the United States (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007), students from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to struggle in under-resourced schools. Studies in the United States (Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood, & Elliott, 2009; Basch, 2011; Blair, & Raver, 2012) include several premises that influence this situation. The first is that poverty affects health. Poor health interferes with learning.

A study by two prominent neuroscientists suggested that intelligence is linked to health (Gray & Thompson, 2004). The poor have more untreated ear infections and hearing loss issues (Menyuk, 1980); greater exposure to lead (Sargent et al., 1995); and a higher incidence of asthma (Gottlieb, Beiser, & O'Connor, 1995) than middle-class children. Each of these health-related factors can affect attention, reasoning, learning, and memory. (Jensen, 2013, p. 24)

According to Jensen (2013), children from low-income families are “exposed to food with lower nutritional value” (p. 24). Nutrition is a key component to good health. Poor nutrition affects students’ behavior (Robb, Simon, & Wardle, 2009), cognition (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002), and academic achievement (Taki, Hashizume, Sassa, Takeuchi, Asano, & Asano, et al., 2010).

Many students in Semanggi School had health problems due to living in poverty. The teachers shared that some students had difficulty concentrating, showed a lack of enthusiasm or hyperactivity, and demonstrated an inability to read properly or follow instructions due to sight and hearing problems. Vocabulary is important to knowledge building (Blair, & Raver, 2012),
memorization (Bracey, 2006), and reframing information (Buschkuehl, & Jaeggi, 2010) and these areas of learning suffer when children have health problems. These data indicate that children from poverty face more obstacles in their education. These were some of the many adversities faced by the students/parents/teachers in Semanggi School.

In my study, the new policy in early childhood education required schools to participate in a competitive process to be eligible for government funding. This presented more challenges to schools like Semanggi School that predominantly had students living in poverty. Social economic status (SES) of the students is often a major contributing factor in low students’ achievements (Delpit, 1998; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Moll & Amanti, 1995). Studies (Gollnick, 1980; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Sleeter, 2004) point out that poverty negatively weighs down underprivileged schools within a competitive system. In the United States, the competition under No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top unfortunately has left underprivileged children further behind (Ayers, 2008, Nieto, 2000). The use of competition has impeded the goal of equal education for all.

Despite the efforts of multicultural educators to assure access to education and to implement educational reforms globally, there are still criticisms that people are poor because of their laziness (Darder, 2013; Darder & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1987). This rhetoric has echoes in Indonesian political arenas as well. In addition, some Indonesian politicians claim that “fate” puts people into poverty (Kompasiana, 2012). Some have even argued that the society should focus on those who can be helped to make the dream of global modernization happen, instead of battling with issues related to minority groups or people in poverty.

In the Semanggi School, the parents worked two or three jobs to put food on the table. Parents were working very hard and were definitely not lazy. It shows class-discrimination to say
that the poor are where they are because of their laziness or fate. One of the teachers exclaimed, “Many people that don’t know think that we the teachers, parents and students are lazy because our students did not achieve much academically. It is not true!”

From what I learned during my observations, this “laziness” sentiment was far from true. The teachers, parents, and students, in fact, worked very hard. Despite multiple jobs and the limited time that they had, many parents were involved in their children’s learning and in the school. The no homework policy gave parents a way to be more invested in their children’s learning. Many parents volunteered at the school, doing jobs such as keeping the school clean and tidy and keeping the students focused when participating in school activities. Although these parents worked hard, they could not move out of poverty, and thus continued to be oppressed.

Freire argues that advocacy should to be part of what children learn, and thus it is crucial that teachers and students develop critical thinking. This includes a critical analysis of reform in the education. In this case, when we talk about education, we should not dismiss the fact that the educational issues are connected to history, culture, economy, and politics. For Freire, all aspects of life are interconnected and entail dialectical relationships. In this regard, Indonesian educational policies that affected the preschool were influenced by the national and global position. As described in Chapter 4, the new policy on early childhood education in Indonesia was influenced by the global policies that specified increasing education across Asia. The teachers in my study considered the new policy to be a fresh wind of change for their future. The wide aim of meeting the educational needs of all Indonesian children, however, required a critical examination to understand its full implications and to decide whether it would enhance the situation of Semanggi School or not.
Poverty is the product of a society and thus, it is our responsibility as part of the society – in the local and global world – to clean up “our mess.” Freire stated, that in our attempt to break free from oppression, we may get discouraged. We need to be courageous and willing to commit to action and reflection (praxis). In this sense, together as a global community for social justice, we as educators should take into account this responsibility and take actions towards transforming education systems around us into more just and more democratic systems.

My goal was to study whether multicultural/social justice education could be encouraged through dialogue about diversity issues in the Semanggi School. The teachers’ understandings were organized into themes reflecting what the teachers and I discussed, i.e., roles of the school in the community, goals/expectations toward students, gender roles. In social justice education (Noguera & Torres, 2008), individuals work collaboratively to “read” and “critique” their oppression in order to create a more just society (Freire, 1970; Nieto, 2008). In this sense, the dialogue that the teachers and I conducted was an effort to read the world and an attempt to identify disempowerment in our worlds. When the voiceless engage in critical reflection, it enables them to break free from their oppression (Noguera & Torres, 2008). I tried to embrace the role of social justice educator and together with the teachers unpack our unsettling puzzlements. Social justice educators advocate for grassroots social change (Noguera, 2008). This includes advocacy for those who historically, socially, and politically have been marginalized and made powerless. In this way, my study reflected my commitment to social justice advocacy. Along with the teachers, I personally grew from what I learned in this study.

**Social Transformation or Benevolence?**

Mrs. Matahari’s actions in opening the school and running it for almost three decades were an extraordinary commitment and showed a strong sense of social responsibility. The
teachers’ commitment to their students and the local community also exhibited transformative actions. Reflecting on these phenomena while writing the dissertation, I questioned whether their actions were intended for social transformation or were more human acts of benevolence.

In one of the interviews, I asked Mrs. Matahari about her motivation for being committed to the school.

Me: What motivated you to open and continue running the school?

Mrs. Matahari: I wanted every child to have the chance that they can dream for their future. I mean, if from a young age they are told that they do not matter, we are telling them that they have no future. Therefore, it is important, especially to the children living in poverty that we do what we can to help these children.

Me: When you said, “we do what we can,” whom do you mean by “we”?

Mrs. Matahari: I meant, we the adults surrounding these children. I also mean that we who live in more prosperous households…I believe that with God’s blessings I have received, I should be the hand that helps others in need.

(Mrs. Matahari, interview, 8/24/2013)

Mrs. Matahari’s actions were influenced by her interpretation of religious belief on benevolence. The importance of benevolence, according to my study participants, was learned from their parents, teachers, and religious leaders. Were their actions in and around Semanggi School mainly in response to the principles of benevolence taught to them?

Me: Did you realize you did wonderful things to the children and their parents by opening and running the school?

Mrs. Matahari: I mean, I try my best to provide education for the children, but I am not a formally educated teacher. I do not have a college degree. I just teach what I know and
what I have learned from other people, like the local psychologist in the area and so on. I do not know for sure if I am teaching the children the right way or not. I just tried my best. I am glad that you think we are doing a good thing.

Me: The children learned more than just lessons. You and the teachers give them learning skills and most importantly hope for their future. Did you realize that you are changing their lives?

Mrs. Matahari: I am happy that you see it that way. Some of the parents, whose children graduated from our school, sometimes talk to me and kept me updated about their children. I was so happy when several of the parents said that their children were doing well in school. Some children did so well that they won scholarships for their elementary and junior high schools and some even received a scholarship into high schools. I know a child, Susi, who is going into a diploma degree on a scholarship. It is the best feeling to see more children continue their education and see them doing well.

Me: With all you do, the school, being involved in the local women organization and more, did you have ‘changing the society’ in mind with all your social activism?

Mrs. Matahari: I am not sure what you mean. I am not political. I leave all the politics stuff to our politicians. I am just doing what I think is right.

Me: You took an action to realize what you believe and many children benefited educationally.

Mrs. Matahari: Changing society is a big word for me. I am glad what I have done is seen as something useful.

(Mrs. Matahari, interview, 11/4/2013)

In a further interview, Mrs. Matahari shared her personal experiences of education.
I was quite lucky growing up in a middle class family. In my high school year, however, my parents were in economic despair. I wanted to be a doctor but my parents could not support me taking medical school, so I applied to another college. I was accepted in the fishery department. After a semester, my father got sick. I dropped out because my family did not have the money for me to continue school. I am also the oldest child of seven siblings. So, I felt responsible. I decided to drop out and took a job instead. It was a bittersweet moment for me. I was sad to leave the school but also was glad I was useful to my family.

Me: Is that one of the reasons why you can relate so much with your students and the parents?

Mrs. Matahari: Yes, in many ways, yes. I can understand and empathize with what the students and the parents were going through.

(Mrs. Matahari, interview, 11/11/2013)

Mrs. Matahari’s personal experience allowed her to understand and empathize with the students’ experiences. On several occasions, she also stressed the importance of encouraging students to dream about a better life. In her daily life, Mrs. Matahari always dressed casually but neatly. She did not carry brand name or designer bags nor did she wear brand name clothes, even though she could have afforded them. She dressed in the same uniform as the teachers that they had bought at the traditional market. I went out to buy school supplies with the teachers and Mrs. Matahari in the local traditional market. The market was partly covered and concrete covered about half of the floor. In one of our trips, which was on a rainy day, all of us were soaked through and had muddy shoes after our efforts to find the supplies for the students’ graduation. Neither Mrs. Matahari nor the teachers were complaining and they joked that we would get a cold later on. For
someone who could easily buy supplies in the mall, I wondered why Mrs. Matahari did not propose going to a more convenient store. When I asked about this, she explained,

I have to be sensitive to the teachers and the parents. I asked them where they usually go shopping for daily stuff and where it would be best to buy our school supplies. They showed me several places. So the places we went were the choices of the teachers. That was why we always go there. I know it might be easier and convenient perhaps to go to the malls, but it would be imposing and disrespectful to the teachers’ choices. It was also like me saying, your daily life is not good enough for me. I do not want that. I eat and shop where the teachers and the parents go when I am with them. I often do so without them too though. I like the smells of traditional markets, they remind me of my childhood. (Mrs. Matahari, interview, 10/18/2013)

Cultural sensitivity was part of Mrs. Matahari’s approach to running her school. She showed that she lived by the principles she taught to others. Although Mrs. Matahari and the teachers never self-proclaimed themselves as social change agents, their actions clearly demonstrated their deep understandings of agencies for social change. The teachers were reflecting their socialization within Indonesian culture. They intended to be useful and benevolent and their actions consistently showed this. Some might see this as a goal to change society, but this was not their explicitly stated motive.

The notion of community service is an important cultural norm and one of the three pillars of Indonesian higher educational philosophy. In my opinion, benevolence may be the starting point for a social change and it might lead to social change. Mrs. Matahari and the teachers’ actions, in my opinion, went beyond benevolence, as they demonstrated a strong
commitment to community service and a sense of social responsibility. In this sense, they embodied a social transformative pedagogy even if this was not how they described themselves.

**Recommendations Regarding the National Policy on Early Childhood Programs in Indonesia**

As previously discussed, the Indonesian government’s national policy on early childhood programs was newly introduced as the research was taking place in 2013-2014. The government’s initial guidelines were issued in 2012. It was available online and introduced through DIKTI education staff visits to the local school districts. The guidelines were intended to regulate early childhood programs in Indonesia by setting national standards for preschools. The government allocated funding for schools that wanted to implement these guidelines. The schools would then be listed as government schools.

In a monthly meeting held by schools in the area, the teachers at Semanggi School and other schools in the area had positive feelings about the policy. In Semanggi School they interpreted the policy as a new “wind of opportunities,” i.e., professional development opportunities, the possibility of more funding or increased salaries, and additional assistance with students with disability. Many schools wanted to apply to be enlisted in the program. However, because of the lack of available information, interpretations of the policy differed widely. For instance, they were unsure about their school’s eligibility. An educational Superintendent visited Semanggi School and other schools in the area twice during the year (2013-2014) but this was not sufficient to clarify the policy implementation. Within the year, only one school in the area was able to secure funding from the program. Competition for the funding was high and based on the qualifications of the school, which included the school’s facilities, educational background of teachers, tests results of the students, demonstrated ability to implement this
government-funded school work. After a series of meetings and thoughtful consideration, Mrs. Matahari and the teachers, decided not to apply to the new program.

The new preschool policy was representative of the general phenomena of Indonesian reforms (Amalia, 2009). In this case, insufficient support for the introduction of the policy resulted in a lack of understanding and enthusiasm. My recommendations to make new policy include:

1. The Government should provide more time for the introduction of the policy.
2. The Government should provide more information that is accessible to teachers and all the parties, e.g., providing chat lines or free training sessions for staff and the public.
3. The local superintendents should offer more proactive visits to the schools.
4. The Government should offer room for dialogue, including input from teachers and other interested parties. The input could then be used to better implement the policy. With more communication between the government and local schools, the new policy would be better understood and more fully applied to meet the goals.
5. The government should involve many parties, i.e., NGOs, community-founded schools, in the introduction and implementation of the policy.
6. The government should support research that is aimed at investigating the policy implementation.

The government’s intention for implementing the early childhood programs in Indonesia can be seen as a breath of fresh air for preschool education. However, without strong and inclusive support for its implementation, its vision and mission may not be fully realized.
Conclusion

The study was not without challenges. I was uncertain about bringing Freirean ideas that were new and foreign to the teachers. I had to be aware of cultural differences talking about Freire with Indonesian participants in order not to impose ideas that were irrelevant or colonizing to Indonesian education. I was researching within a close-knit environment that was new to me and it took time to build rapport with my study participants. I worked with teachers who had diverse multiethnic ties and our “difficult” conversations contributed to some “silent moments” in the dialogue that were evident in my data. Acknowledging some of these challenges, I tried to be critically reflective throughout the process of embarking on the research.

Despite these challenges, the study is significant in several ways. Research on the implementation or development of multicultural/social justice education in community-founded schools in Indonesia is scarce. I hope my study will stimulate academic discussion on schooling for preschool children living in poverty and will provide additional awareness of social justice curricula and teaching in Indonesia. Second, the teachers’ dialogue group was developed to provide teachers a support system for teaching a social justice curriculum that included the promotion of critical thinking. The findings indicated that our dialogue group influenced teachers’ perceptions and resulted in changes in their teaching. Third, this was an in-depth study of a Freirean approach to encourage teachers to think more deeply about their identities and positionalities in the school and their communities. It describes the results of an attempt to promote teachers’ critical thinking about their students, themselves, and their community. As such, it may provide other researchers, administrators, and teachers with one approach to move toward transformative education for students who live in poverty.
Further studies could be done in the following areas: (a) how the new preschool policy affects schools situated in poverty areas in Indonesia, (b) how the practice of dialogue as praxis might influence other Indonesian educational settings, and (c) how using the community as an educational support system might influence preschool education.
REFERENCES


Indonesian politics: The deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism (pp. 113-129). London: Routledge.


Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, (2013). Retrieved from [http://www.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/default.aspx)


DOI:10.1080/1359866X.2013.787392


International Council for Open and Distance Education. Retrieved from http://www.icde.org/


and Practice, 6(2), 153-171.


Kompas. (2007, April 27). Air Mata Guru bongkar kecurangan UN Medan: Kecurangan UN SMA dan SMP direncanakan sangat sistematis [The teachers’ tears (group) reveals cheating practices in the national exam in Medan: The cheating in the national exams for
middle schools and high schools have been planned systematically]. (2007, April 27).

Kompas. Retrieved from


Ministry of Indonesian National Education. Retrieved from [http://dikti.kemdikbud.go.id/](http://dikti.kemdikbud.go.id/)


Noguera, P. A. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Fulfilling the promise of public*


Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Tentang Standar Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini [Regulations on Early Childhood Education issued by the Ministry of National Education in Indonesia]. Retrieved from


Pusat Kurikulum. (2007). *Laporan hasil pemantauan pelaksanaan Standar Isi dan Standar Kompetensi kelulusan* [A report on monitoring findings on the implementation of Content Standards and Graduate Competency Standards]. Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan, Depdiknas [Research and Development Board, Department of National Education].


Democracy, 6(1), 65-78.


Ward, C. & Masgoret, A. (2004). The experiences of international students in New Zealand:

Retrieved from:


### Appendix A

**Dialogue Group: (Three-Week Introduction) Weekly Agenda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>• The introduction was in the form of informal conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• About the researcher/my role</td>
<td>• The purpose and norms of the group were explained and this will be open for discussion and teacher input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What the group is about</td>
<td>• Teacher’s journal – I brought an example of my own journals (journal that was based on my observations in this school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dialogue philosophy</td>
<td>• This tentative three-week syllabus/weekly plan was provided as a suggestion to start the dialogue group. This was tentative and a suggestion only. As a group the teachers and I then made a new/revised weekly plan based on the inputs within the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher’s Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The tentative three-week syllabus/weekly plan was provided as a suggestion to start the dialogue group. This was tentative and a suggestion only. As a group the teachers and I then made a new/revised weekly plan based on the inputs within the group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open for any questions, comments, and suggestions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Teacher’s Journal</td>
<td>• Explored more examples of my journals that I wrote based on my observations of their school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers practiced writing a reflection this during this dialogue session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We discussed the journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>• We explored the notion of multicultural education, about what it meant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussion to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Themes of the discussion include: Independence era, New Order Era, Pancasila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>• All teachers had watched Laskar Pelangi. Discussion to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Themes for the discussion: identities, cultural, historical, political, religious norms/policies that shaped our identities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

List of Materials from Indonesia

Films

Two films below were used as an icebreaker. The teachers had watched three of these popular movies – Laskar Pelangi, Tjoet Nja’ Dhien, and Ayat-Ayat Cinta.

- **Laskar Pelangi**

  The movie presents the struggles of a school in highly poverty area in surviving to open their school. It portraits the students’ efforts i.e. determination, challenges etc to win the state’s competition in the hope to save their school. It also illustrates the struggles of the families and the life in remote areas.

  **Synopsis:**

  Laskar Pelangi (English: The Rainbow Troops) is a 2008 Indonesian film adapted from the popular same titled novel by Andrea Hirata. The movie follows a group of 10 schoolboys and their two inspirational teachers as they struggle with poverty and develop hopes for the future in Gantong Village on the farming and tin mining island of Belitung off the east coast of Sumatra. (Wikipedia, 2013


- **Tjoet Nja’ Dhien**

  The movie presents the life of an Indonesian female hero from Aceh who fought for Indonesian freedom during the Dutch occupation.

  **Synopsis:**

  Tjoet Nja' Dhien is based on the life of Cut Nyak Dhien, an Acehnese strategist, political mentor, and freedom fighter. Born to an aristocratic family in Aceh Besar in 1848, Dhien
married Teuku Cek Ibrahim Lamnga at a young age. After her father and husband died in separate attempts to repel the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army during the Second Aceh Expedition, Dhien swore revenge against the Dutch colonials. Dhien was captured on 4 November 1905 in Meulaboh, western Aceh. Imprisoned in Banda Aceh then exiled to Sumedang, West Java, Dhien died in 1908. Since her death she has become one of the most prominent fighters from the Aceh War, being declared a National Hero in 1964. (Wikipedia, 2013  [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tjoet_Nja'_Dhien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tjoet_Nja'_Dhien))

• **Ayat ayat cinta**

The movie presents the complexities of young Indonesian student in delving his identities as a Moslem in Egypt. It is a romantic religious film, which is based on best-selling novel with the same title by Habiburrahman El Shirazy. Ayat Ayat Cinta is the tale of a virtuous Muslim protagonist who tries to overcome obstacles in life while maintaining pure ideals.

**General questions to stimulate the discussions:**

• What do you think about the movie/story? What are the issues/topics/themes discussed/illustrated in the movie/story?

• Have you personally experienced issues discussed in the movie? Or do you know anyone experiencing similar struggles/issues?

• Have you taught any topics that are similar to these topics?

• As a teacher, do you think it is important (or not) to think about these topics/issues?

• How will thinking about these issues affect your teaching and learning?

**Specific questions to explore:**

• What is poor or poverty? What do you think about the kids in poverty – what are the
educational skills/competencies that they should have in order to succeed? Based on what you saw in the movie, what do you think about access to education in the poverty areas or in the islands where resources are very limited? What do you think of the role(s) of a teacher/educator in these places?

- What do you think about the role of women in the past – during the fights for Indonesia’s freedom – and today? Who/what is a hero?

- What is colonialization? What do you think about our lives today in comparison, based on the movie we just saw, during the colonialization? Is there anything today that you feel is the cause of colonialization?

- When you hear the word “Muslim” what comes to your mind? What do you see as Muslim identities? The main character of the movie is conflicted with his feelings and efforts to maintain Islamic “pure ideals” – what do you think about these values?

- Based on the movie and in your personal experiences, what do you think about the issues faced by Chinese Indonesians in the past and today? Are they considered as minority group? What do you think about the Indonesian government’s policies related to minority groups?
Appendix C

Interview and Dialogue Group: Questions to Explore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • How does participation in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of multicultural/social justice education (M/SJE) in a community-founded school?  
  o How is the Semanggi School situated within larger communities and cultures?  
  o How does participating in a dialogue group influence the teachers’ understandings of their identities, issues of poverty and education, and national policies? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teachers    | • Document analysis  
  o Documents  
  o Student work  
  • Interviews  
  o Semi-structured questions  
  o Open-ended questions  
  • Dialogue group  
  o Semi-guided discussions  
  o Open-ended discussions | **Demographic info:**  
  • How long have you lived in the area?  
  • How long have you been a teacher?  
  • How long have you taught in the school?  
  • What grade/level are you currently teaching?  
  • Could you please tell me about your experiences prior teaching in this school?  
  **School/Classroom:**  
  • What time does the school start and finish?  
  • What are the unique features of the school?  
  **Experiences as a Teacher**  
  • Could you please tell me stories about your experiences prior to teaching in this school? How did you come into teaching at the school?  
  • Could you share with me stories about your experiences as a teacher in this school?  
  • Could you share with me the high and low moments you have experienced in your teaching in this school?  
  • Could you please tell me what you think about the dialogue group? (How does it influence your way of teaching and/or learning?)  
  **Goals:**  
  • What do you hope to gain from the dialogue group?  
  **Classroom Material**  
  • What topics have you covered in your current grade? When you prepare the topics for your students, what kinds of materials do you use? For example, do you use children books/literature? How do you decide on the teaching topics? Did you talk
Supporting and Challenging Factors

• What are the factors that help you in your teaching?
• What are the challenging factors in your teaching?
• What do you think about the process of teaching and learning in your school?
• What kinds of support would you need if you could ask for anything?

Policies

• Which educational guidelines does the school follow?
• What is the school policy on the multicultural education?
• Are students provided with free lunch programs? If so, what considerations taken into account and who funds it?
• Are there any changes in terms of policies that have taken place in the school thus far?

Multicultural Concepts

• What kinds of curriculum do you use? Have you experienced any curriculum reforms in your school?
• How did you decide on implementing the curriculum? As an individual teacher or as a school?
• What do you think about multiculturalism in Indonesia? Are there any programs of multicultural education within the school’s policy and the curricula?
• Have you ever introduced or discussed issues related to this multiculturalism concept to students? If yes, how did it go? How did the children respond? What were your goals? What were the challenges, if any?
• How do you involve parents in your teaching? What kinds of diversity are there among the parents? Does any of this cause any challenges in the school?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Demographic Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Document analysis  
  o Documents       | • How long have you been a principal?                                                   |
| • Interviews       | • Could you tell me about your experience prior taking the role as a principal in this school? |
  o Semi-structured questions |
  o Open-ended questions |
|                   | School:                                                                               |
|                   | • When was the school established?                                                     |
|                   | • How long have you been with the school?                                              |
|                   | • How did you come into taking the principal role in the school? What motivated you to take the leadership role in the school? |
|                   | • What are the unique features of the school?                                           |
|                   | • What are the challenges that the school faces? How has the school attempted to overcome or cope with these challenges? |
|                   | • What do you think about the community involvement with the school? What are the characteristics of the community in the school’s neighborhood? |
|                   | • How do you encourage the community involvement in school?                            |
|                   | • What is the school policy on the students’ admission?                                 |
|                   | • How does the school fund its operations?                                             |
|                   | • Which educational guidelines does the school follow?                                 |
|                   | • What is the school policy on the multicultural education? What kinds of diversity do you have in the children attending the school? |
|                   | • Are students provided with free lunch programs? If so, what considerations taken into account and who funds it? |
|                   | • Are there any changes that have taken place in the school thus far? Who are all the founders? |
Appendix D

Banks’ Dimensions of Multicultural Education

**Content Integration**
Using examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalization, and theories in their subject area or discipline

**Prejudice Reduction**
Identifying the characteristics of students’ racial attitudes and determining how they can be modified by teaching

**The Knowledge Construction Process**
Helping students to understand how the implicit cultural assumptions within a discipline influence the ways that knowledge is constructed within it.

**Equity Pedagogy**
Matching teaching styles to students’ learning characteristics in order to facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social class groups

**An Empowering Educational Culture and Social Structure**
Examining group and labeling practices, sports participation, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines to create a learning environment that empowers students from all groups.
Appendix E

12 January 2009
On the Pulse of Morning
Maya Angelou’s 1993 inaugural poem and remarks

This document and its associated audio file (5:48) are distributed with permission of the Clinton Presidential Library.

(begun transcript)

Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Vice-President and Mrs. Gore,
And Americans Everywhere …

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Marked the mastodon.

The dinosaur, who left dry tokens
Of their sojourn here
On our planet floor,
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.

I will give you no hiding place down here.

You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness,
Have lain too long
Face down in ignorance.

Your mouths spilling words
Armed for slaughter.

The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand on me,
But do not hide your face.

Across the wall of the world,
A River sings a beautiful song,
It says come rest here by my side.
Each of you a bordered country,  
Delicate and strangely made proud,  
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.

Your armed struggles for profit  
Have left collars of waste upon  
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.

Yet, today I call you to my riverside,  
If you will study war no more. Come,

Clad in peace and I will sing the songs  
The Creator gave to me when I and the  
Tree and the rock were one.

Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your  
Brow and when you yet knew you still  
Knew nothing.

The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to  
The singing River and the wise Rock.

So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew  
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,  
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek  
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,  
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,  
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.  
They all hear The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the the first and last of every  
Tree Speak to humankind today. Come to me, here beside the River.

Plant yourself beside the River.

Each of you, descendant of some passed  
On traveller, has been paid for.  
You, who gave me my first name, you  
Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you  
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then  
Forced on bloody feet, left me to the employment of  
Other seekers--desperate for gain,  
Starving for gold.
You, the Turk, the Swede, the German, the Eskimo, the Scot ...
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought
Sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare
Praying for a dream.

Here, root yourselves beside me.
I am that Tree planted by the River,
Which will not be moved.

I, the Rock, I the River, I the Tree
I am yours--your Passages have been paid.

Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.

History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.

Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands.

Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.

Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out and upon me, the
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.

No less to Midas than the mendicant.

No less to you now than the mastodon then.

Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, and into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.

(end transcript)

Read more: http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/January/20090112155227berehellek0.2457697.html#ixzz1rWngM5lk
## Appendix F

### Parents’ Responses about the Semanggi School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Parents’ Responses (n=15; anomaly=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What does the school mean to you, to your family?    | • The school has been our savior for our children’s education.  
• It was a privilege to be part of this rich neighborhood.  
• Many of us work for people in this community, we are happy that they care for our children.  
• The school has the lowest tuition amongst other schools in the area.  
• Located in upscale neighborhood.  
• Not just the school, but also the whole community cares about us.  
• Mrs. Matahari and teachers often talk to us about many things happening at the school. They kept us informed.  
• Mrs. Matahari gave me free reading lessons so I could read.  
• Mrs. Matahari is a wise principal that I can talk to about my family’s or my child’s problems.  
• The teachers are very friendly. With Mrs. Matahari, they often visited us in our homes.  
• I am not from the nearby Kampung [village]. I live far away from this neighborhood but I sent my daughter to come here. I had to walk far and take public transport to take her here. I heard from my relative about the school. I believe the school is good at making the children learn well and be accepted in elementary schools.  
• The school has a money-saving system. I mean, like a bank, but it does not charge interests or fees. It’s strictly for putting our money aside. Many of us are not eligible for an account in the bank because of administrative restrictions [e.g., no legal “permanent” address]. Thus, this system is really good to prepare my child’s funds for his future expenses. We can take the money out when we need it. I also learned to be disciplined. Although it’s very little, my husband and I tried to put some money aside biweekly. We are very proud of ourselves. |
| What are the strengths or strong features of the school? |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| How do you see your child’s learning in this school?  | • My daughter went to this school before and she seems to be doing well in her schooling after that. She has a scholarship in her middle school. Therefore, I sent my son here. My son, however, needs a lot of disciplining to learn, but the teachers here are very patient. I hope my son will do as well as his sister.  
• My son is happy studying here. He is doing homework he likes. Not too much work, unlike other schools. My neighbor’s child was usually unruly when it was homework time. Although no homework is assigned, I think my son learns a lot here.  
• I heard from many parents that the reading program in this school
is very good.

• My relative’s daughter’s reading skill was better than my other niece’s who went to another school.

• My daughter reads better than my son who goes to another school. I am a divorcée and I have my daughter with me. My son is with his father. I only wish my son would go to this school too.

• My children have learned to be more independent. For example, during our field trips, apart from the parents who are on a committee, other parents are not allowed to accompany their children. This is helpful because I work three different jobs.

• My child is mentally disabled. I went to different schools and talked to their principals and no school wanted to accept my son. Only this Semanggi School. I know my son can never fit into the regular system. I don’t care what he will be taught, I just wanted my son to socialize with other children. Be part of the school. So, I am forever grateful and in debt for the school’s willingness to take my son.

What are the programs/lessons that you wish to see more in the school?

• I think lessons in math can be given more. My daughter learned how to do a simple multiplication from her older brothers, who is in elementary school and junior high school. When I told Mrs. Matahari about this, however, she said, “it’s not time yet and children should not be burdened too much with formulas or difficult math.”

• I like the field trips. I think though sometimes we can do other outing programs. For instance, my son said, his friend who went to another school joined competitions [drawing, spelling] a lot. I think Mrs. Matahari does not believe in competitions. My son here [at Semanggi School] has never joined any competitions. I think it would be a good experience for him to join some competitive events outside of the school.

• I used to be a helper of the teacher in the classroom, but the school terminated this voluntary program. I think this program is nice so parents can help their children and others in the classroom, not just at home. [The interviews took place before the teachers’ assistants voluntary program resumed]

What do you think about your role in the school?

• I meet a lot with the teachers and Mrs. Matahari. I like it, I can say hi to Mrs. Matahari whenever and she is very proud of my daughter. Unlike my son at the elementary school, when my husband and I talked to the principal, it was always because my son was in trouble. It is nice that when I meet Mrs. Matahari, we talked about nice stuff.

• My son has been with Ms. Lisnadi for two classes now. He is very comfortable in talking to her and so am I. I can talk to her directly to ask about my son. The teachers always keep me informed.

• The school always invited us to talk about what is going on with
our children. Also, if they want to implement other things and if they need our ideas. I never heard other parents in other schools asked about their ideas. Usually, they are told what to do.

- We, parents, take turn in cleaning and tidying the school. It was our own idea, that’s’ the least we could do.
- I like the no homework policy. I work together with my daughter to do her project. It makes me feel important too.