MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Research Portfolio of Hanny Savitri Hartono

Collated for Examination for PhD (Posthumously) by Supervisors:
Graeme MacRae, Massey University; Sharyn Graham Davies, Auckland University of Technology; and Barbara Andersen, Massey University

The attached portfolio includes the chapters of Vitri's partially-completed PhD thesis, as well as several articles published in refereed journals, and other minor publications and unpublished work.

The PhD Thesis
The topic of the thesis is the way in which Muslim mothers in Java, Indonesia, negotiate a media landscape dominated by un-Islamic material and values, while trying to live their own lives and bring up their children in a properly Islamic way. Research was conducted both in the city of Semarang and by way of a closed Facebook group. The topic lies at the intersection of media studies and anthropology, Islamic studies and parenting studies, and is informed by wide reading of literatures from all these fields.

We estimate the PhD thesis to be around around 80% complete:

- Six substantive chapters are complete, amounting to a total of approximately 70 000 words.
- The introduction is partly written and the conclusion is not written.
- Abstract and references are included.

We have presented this material as it stands, rather than proofread and edited.

Publications
The primary publications included are four journal articles, directly related to her PhD research. Three are published in peer-reviewed journals, the fourth is under review:

1. "Muslim mothers and Indonesian gossip shows in everyday life", *Indonesia and the Malay World* 43 (126), pp. 298-316. 2015.
2. "'How Funny (This Country Is)': A Moral and Religious Debate Through the Lens of an Indonesian Film", *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 17 (1): 79-96. 2015.
3. (co-authored with Sharyn Graham Davies) "The Pretty Imperative: Handcuffing Policewomen in Indonesia", *Intersections: Journal of Gender and Sexuality*, issue 37. 2015
4. "Virtually (Im)moral: Pious Indonesian Muslim womens' use of Facebook". Under review for forthcoming special issue of *Asian Studies Review*.

Secondary works include:

1. Another article in *NZ Journal of Asian Studies*, written and published during the period of her PhD but based on her MA research.
2. Two published book reviews. A list of presentations at conferences, ranging from local student conferences to international anthropology and Asia studies ones.

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Abstract

Since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, the Indonesian media landscape has been radically transformed. The country is now a densely saturated media space in which people are exposed to numerous media from television programming to social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Although Indonesia is the country with the highest Muslim populace in the world, its media do not necessarily reflect the growing resurgence of Islamism in the region. With heavy media exposure, which is mainly secular, Muslim women, consciously or not, seek to negotiate the media they are exposed to in the context of their everyday lives within the frame of their Islamic understanding. As media become increasingly contested, their engagement with media becomes more critical.

This thesis explores the centrality of Muslim parenting and media in the everyday lives of Muslim mothers in Semarang and Jakarta and seeks to unravel the meanings of media and their strategies for dealing with these media. The focus is on Muslim women and mothers and their negotiations with media around them and how their parenting and Muslim-ness are not merely influenced by the media they use but also impact the media they embrace. In the process, they too are struggling to mediate the media around their children. Hence, reflexive media engagement takes centre stage.

In this research, I combine ethnographic fieldwork in Semarang, Central Java and online discussions on a closed Facebook group of which participants mostly reside in Jakarta. Through in-depth interviews, diary studies, conversations, online discussions, field notes and other pertinent resources, I delve into the ways in which Muslim women and their children deal with television, especially celebrity gossip shows, and children's programming, social media particularly Facebook, and billboards.

By considering the notions of agency and piety through the lens of Islamic tenets, and the particularities of Muslim women in Semarang and Jakarta, this study takes a close look at the daily dealings with media of urban mothers. The discussion falls into four main topics: an investigation of the experiences of Muslim mothers who are exposed to television gossip shows and how they negotiate these programmes in terms of their

understanding of the Islamic prohibition of gossip; an examination on how Muslim women are actively shaping piety through Facebook in the midst of the debate surrounding its use by Muslim clerics; an investigation of how Muslim women who are surrounded by street billboards cope with their possible effects on their children; and an exploration of the way Muslim mothers negotiate their children's media consumption within the context of their religious and moral appropriateness. At the core, this is a study of Muslim mothers' engagement with media in their everyday lives as mothers and as women. I argue that active agency and constant negotiations have led many participants to examine their piety as Muslim women and mothers since the space around media, in their consumption and media talk, provides a platform for engaging with public discourses of religion, gender, and motherhood. Media become sites in which Muslim mothers discuss Islam, voice their views and Islamic understandings, embrace their piety, as well as give judgements to others whose opinions or experiences are not similar to theirs. There are indeed multiple ways of understanding Islam in Indonesia, which have coexisted within a secular context for centuries and these women are negotiating their way through Indonesia's opposing forces of secularism and Islamism.

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Alternate Titles:

Mediating Piety in Contemporary Urban Indonesia: Muslim Women, Parenting and Media
Media Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia and Everyday Life: Muslim Women, Parenting and Media
Muslim Women, Parenting and Media Consumption in Everyday Life in Contemporary Urban Indonesia

Total word count: 71, 000 (approximately)

Reflexive Media Engagement

We live in a world where media are very much of part of our everyday life. As Silverstone (1994) underlines media are profoundly and intimately embedded into the fabric of our daily lives (p. 2). With the availability of electronic media, and more so with the Internet, mass media and other traditional media "transform the field of mass mediation" because they offer new resources "for the construction of imagined self and imagined worlds" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). "Because of the sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they appear (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). In this sense, everyday reflexivity becomes a significant part of media engagement since it is through media reflexivity that one could imagine selves and imagine worlds.

In this regard, Kim (2008) also explains that media play central roles in everyday reflexivity due to their omnipresent nature although media are not the sole resources. She defines the reflexivity as "the capacity to monitor action and its context to keep in touch with the grounds of everyday life, self-confront uncertainties and understand the relationships between cause and effect yet never quite control the complex dynamics of everyday life" (2008, p. 8-9). With the increased flow of media in their different forms, media become the important resources of everyday reflexivity (Kim, 2008). In this sense, media affect "the meaning-making of everyday life" (Kim, 2008, p. 10) through their knowledge laden nature. Through reflexive capacities which are provoked by media engagement people can become aware, informed and knowledgeable about certain issues, such as gender empowerment, sexuality, and even religion. As Kim (2008, p. 9-10) explains "it is not just media' ubiquity in everyday life, but its unique and plausibility powerful capacity to affect the meaning-making of everyday life experience, its capacity to trigger a heightened reflexive awareness of the world, which is arguably a key cultural dynamic and challenge". I argue that this is the first component of media reflexivity which is involved in media engagement, yet it is not the entirety of media reflexivity. Hence, I would like to propose another kind of media-reflexive engagement that entails a different component. Following Foucault's The Care of the Self (1986), Lembo (2003) suggests that "individuals can make reflexive judgments regarding the representations and images that they routinely encounter and

deal with, but that they should do so because this kind of reflexivity is crucial to people knowing who they are, how they are located, and how them locate themselves, in everyday life" (p. 93). He further elucidates that "people usually relate what they are watching to one or another aspect of their own lives or to things that they have seen and heard elsewhere" (p. 168). In my opinion, Lembo's offers a different perspective on media reflexivity. Unlike the first component of reflexivity, which emphasizes the meaning making, Lembo's concept seems to be about framing the representation or portrayal of media by using knowledge and past experiences. Yet, whatever the form of media reflexivity involved the consumption of media "often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and in general, *agency* (Appadurai, 1996, p. 7, italic in the original text).

My fieldwork with Muslim mothers in their everyday engagement with different types of media—television, social media, and billboards—showed me the different ways their media reflexivity played out. Their media consumption revealed the use of both components of media engagement reflexivity. On the one hand, they were informed by the media about what is proper and inappropriate according to Islamic tenets. At the same time, their religious understandings framed the way and what media they watch and use. This is not to say that these two components of media reflexivity are separate and discreet. Rather, they both exist simultaneously while these women watch, read and use media. Hence, I argue that media reflexivity involves a simultaneous dual component. I assert that media engagement is not merely an activity that generates meaning-making about the world but is also an activity in which media selectivity and resistance are framed by existing religiosity and other past and current knowledge. It is interesting to note that other media audience research discusses the meaning-making reflexivity without explicitly acknowledging how audiences' background and experiences framed their media engagement (see for example Tambunan, 2013). Based on my study, however, I would like to make it clear that my participants incorporated their religious understanding and experiences as Muslim mothers to frame the media they were engaged with as well as used media as their resources to enhance their religiosity. My object of study is not on the media text or discourse *per se* but the emphasis focuses more on the actual people in an actual situation in which media are present and ubiquitous.

The reception of media products should be seen as a routine, mundane and practical activity (Thompson, 1995, p. 38-39) instead as a dichotomy of passive versus active

engagement. It is a situated activity in which the audiences are always "located in specific socio-historical contexts" that "depends on the power and resources available" to the audiences (Thompson, 1995, p. 39). It is basically a "hermeneutic process" (Thompson, 1995, p. 40) which involves interpretative activity. In this regards, Lembo (2003) suggests "a continuum of mindfulness" when one engages in media activities. This continuum spans from habitual, escapist, playful to reflective (pp. 122-123). At one end is habitual which happens when one approaches activities in a habitual way without thinking. Escapist is when people have a light awareness of approaching activities. Whereas, playful is an orientation to activities in which people are thinking to separate themselves from what they are doing and turn to a creative and imaginative frame of mind. Janning and Menard (2006) give an example of women who watch home decorating shows on television and use the ideas from the shows to create something useful in their own home. At the other end of the spectrum is reflective which is the most mindful way of approaching activities, "when people monitor and evaluate their present thoughts and feelings, trying to anticipate how they might think or feel if they were to choose one activity over another, and in general, trying to be conscious of where and how the activity might fit into the larger context of their free-time activities" (Lembo, 2003, p. 123). His notion of "inner mindfulness" could explain the way my participants engage with television, with gossip show programming for example (see Chapter 4) or social media engagement (see Chapter 5), yet it needs tweaking to explain billboard viewing (Chapter 6). The fact is that watching television differs from viewing a film on screen, using social media or seeing a billboard on the side of a road. The content and act of watching, which the two are inseparable (Fiske, 1987, p. 75), are somehow differ for different types of media. Lembo's concept of "a continuum of mindfulness" (2003) is well-suited for television watching activities because the nature of television with its many programming and channels and place in the domestic realm, usually. Yet, it would not be perfectly befitting to apply Lembo's concept to cinema or billboard viewing or even social media engagement. The nature and place of media engagement for these types of media are dissimilar to television. Viewing cinema is an intentional activity and significantly public (Fiske, 1987). I never knew anyone to go to the cinema without any intention of seeing the movie, unless going to a cinema is part of another social act, like dating. Comparatively, viewing a billboard is somehow "forced" by nature. The passer-by has no choice except to see the billboard on the roadside (Rosewarne, 2007). Social media engagement, on the other

hand, can be considered mobile and deliberate activities. Yet, despite their variations in terms of content and act of watching there is a significant similarity between these media engagement which I found in my study. Media engagement with television, social media, and billboards all involves audience reflexivity, both on the level of meaning-making as well as framing. Muslim mothers' media engagement sparked meaning making which they linked to religious tenets, such as informing them about how to be a good Muslim mother or about "proper" Islamic dress. They simultaneously framed their media engagement according to their religious understanding and other knowledge—for example, when they viewed a billboard which portrayed female models in revealing clothes they resisted and argued using their understanding of Islamic tenet around modesty.

Indeed, these two modes of reflexivity are not discreet or separate. The "meaning-making" and "framing" forms of reflexivity always occur together, simultaneously. Yet, for some media contents or/and act of engagement the meaning-making reflexivity is more apparent and tangible through these Muslim mothers' utterances than the framing reflexivity, and vice versa. I argue that the dual reflexivity cannot exist without one or the other. The person's background—her gender, religion, and religiosity, role as a mother, education, and socio-economic condition—always, consciously or not, influence the way she frames and makes meanings from her engagement with media in her everyday life. The methods used in this study—diary study, interview and discussion on Facebook—allow the participants to reflect on their media engagement in their everyday life. The diary study, particularly, is important to draw out participants' reflexivity. As Couldry, Livingstone and Markham (2007) suggest "if participants' reflexivity … was a key part of what we were trying to understand, it seemed important to allow participants to reflect so far as possible *without us, as researchers, being there*" and "diaries allow for the regular tracking of participants' reflections over time" (p. 47, italics in the original text).

I borrow Lembo's (2003) concept of sociality which includes interiority, mindfulness, reflexivity, and self which is useful to explain media-reflexive engagement. He elucidates that "sociality … designates both an awareness, an inner reflexivity, regarding one's constitution by objective social realities, and social action itself" (2003, p. 96). I am not interested with the ritual use of television in conjunction with other activities, unlike Lembo (1997), but similar to him I am keen to know about "the

mindfulness that emerges" (p. 203) from media engagement, not just television viewing. Through my participants' mindfulness by means of their reflexive media engagement, I learn that their religion and religiosity play significant roles in the way they interact with media. This is even more apparent, critical and problematic when (their) children and their roles as mothers are "part of the equation", so to speak. These Muslim mothers select, accept and resist media contents according to their religious understandings. Their religious understandings frame the way they talk about and do with media. Simultaneously, the media they use, watch and view also inform and enhance their knowledge on Islamic tenets. Thus, I assert that Islamic knowledge and religiosity bear some significance in reflexive media engagement.

Chapter Two

Fieldwork at 'Home'

"While it may be the case that reflexive 'self-regarding' has been frowned upon in anthropology and dismissed as mere narcissism (Babcock, 1980,p. 1), it does not necessarily follow that a reflexive approach will be any less rigorous than a putatively 'objective' one. … By placing issues of familiarity against issues of unfamiliarity or difference, I am suggesting that a wholly comparative approach (that is, one that does not prioritise difference above similarity) will engender a more sophisticated representation of cultural interaction and, ultimately, a more critical understanding of culture" (Madden, 1999, p. 269).

I woke up this morning around 2 am and barely could sleep again. I knew that since this was my first night in Indonesia after coming from Auckland last night I was sure I suffered from what they called jet lag. I only slept around an hour on the plane on my way here since this was the first time I travelled by myself without my husband and children. Traveling by myself did not give a peace of mind to sleep undisturbed, apparently.

Yesterday was interesting. I was so surprised to see there were so many Indonesian passengers aboard Qantas from Sydney to Jakarta. It was literally a hundred of them. When I boarded the plane I could see that Indonesians outnumbered other passengers, including Westerners. While I was waiting to board the plane, I overheard a group of women of disparate ages (in their mid-twenties or early thirties to their forties and fifties) talking among themselves how they shopped in Sydney. Each of them carried, at least, a bag of merchandise, presumably from an expensive shop. One of them told the others how she recently went shopping to Europe while the other was checking her mobile phone. A couple of middle-aged (seemingly) husband and wife whom I met when I was waiting to board the plane in Auckland airport joined this group not long after and told them that they just came back from sightseeing in New Zealand. Meanwhile, Indonesian young men sat at the other side of the room charging their mobile phones. As I was browsing the Internet on my laptop, a middle-aged man

approached me and asked me how to connect with free Wi-Fi available for passengers because he said his mobile phone lost the connection to the Wi-Fi.

Once I landed in Jakarta I took a taxi from Cengkareng airport to my hotel not far from the Istiqlal mosque[1]. I took the taxi from a taxi stand in front of the International airport building. So the driver knew I came from overseas. When we passed the many high-rise apartment buildings in Kemayoran and I expressed my amazement of the newly build apartments and how Kemayoran has been developed from once a bare and open land of used old airport zone to a well-developed and stylish residential area, he explained that Indonesia was no better for him and other people like him. Even though, he and his family could claim for their health insurance when they were sick with the introduction of *Kartu Sehat* (Health Card), famously established by Joko Widodo the new elected Indonesian president when he was the governor of Jakarta, he still could not afford to buy a place for himself and his family to live. He was still renting. He said. "*Jakarta melebar Bu, tapi nggak berkembang*" (Jakarta has been expanded but not developed) in which he explained that the development was not equally felt by every resident of the city. It seems that the gap between the haves and have-nots in Indonesia, particularly Jakarta, becomes more prevalent and wide. He effortlessly told me about the rampant corruption in the tax department and how people were reluctant to pay tax because they were not sure whether the taxes they pay were used for public services or merely go to individuals' pockets due to non-transparent tax management by the government. I was amazed at how well informed he was with all the latest news about this country.

My day yesterday ended with a lovely note. As soon as I arrived at the hotel and when I was about to send a text to my eldest son, there he came through the hotel entrance. He looked slimmer in his office clothes as he diligently goes to a gym to do his exercises. He gave me a *salim*[2] while jokingly exclaimed that he looks more handsome these days. Soon after we settled in our hotel room, he organised my mobile phone so that I could use a local number to text, call and use the Internet. Soon afterwards I sent messages to my husband and children in Auckland to tell them that I had arrived safely at the hotel

[1] Istiqlal mosque is the largest mosque in Indonesia and located closed to the presidential palace.
[2] *Salim* or *cium tangan* is a greeting offered between Muslims from a young person to an older individual like parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. This greeting is considered more polite and proper than a handshake or a hug. It is done by taking the older person's right hand to the young person's forehead or lips.

and met our son. Before going to sleep we spent time catching up with a few stories of his job and experience attending his friend's wedding last Sunday to a 20-year-old female celebrity who played a few *sinetrons* (television dramas). He showed me from his mobile phone a couple of photographs of him and his friends who came to the wedding. These friends went to New Zealand to study at some stage and this was where he knew these people. Before we realised it we already fast asleep because we had to wake up early for him to go to work and for me to go to a number of offices to collect some papers for my research permit.

As I wrote my first paragraphs in my field notes just before daybreak in a quiet hotel room, suddenly I realised that it was going to be the first day of few months of fieldwork in Indonesia. As I did not want to waste time to do other things not related to my research, like visiting the many relatives I have in Jakarta, I was ready to put myself into 'research mode'. Everything I saw, heard and experienced on my way to and in Jakarta, to some extent, have something to do with media—Wi-Fi at the airport enabled passengers to access a myriad of websites and social media; the information about Jakarta that the taxi driver shared with me was presumably gathered from various media, both print and electronic; my mobile phone with Indonesian SIM card was ready for accessing different websites and social media. Indonesians are never far from their mobile phones and are definitely surrounded by countless media, not just online but also the many television channels, which I tried to watch without much success last night. Remembering that very early morning sitting on my bed, alone, it reminded me of the feelings I had—the anticipation, worry, excitement—which filled my mind.

In this chapter, I convey the field sites and my field experiences with my personal history as a backdrop. Uncovering my personal biography and interactions with people during fieldwork, hence being reflexive, throughout the text is crucial to provide the readers with information necessary to assess how I analysed my findings. The first section deals with my reflexivity as a researcher to present myself at centre stage. In the second part, I explain the field sites and my field experiences. This section is divided into three parts—Semarang, Central Java, the fieldwork, and Facebook closed group. The third section explores Semarang and its Muslim community where I spent two months conducting my fieldwork.

The Agent of Scholarship

When people ask me where my home is, Auckland is my direct and short answer. Although I was born in Jakarta, Indonesia I have been residing in New Zealand for more than fifteen years. For me, this is where I have been bringing up my children and planning to spend my old days with my husband. We came to Auckland as postgraduate students with our two children who were nine and five at the time. However, as my husband received a job offer two years after we arrived, the plan to go back to Indonesia changed drastically. We left good jobs and promising careers as lecturers in a prestigious university in Indonesia to grab the opportunity to raise our children in a more child-friendly and secured place of New Zealand. I even gave birth to our youngest son who always proudly says to anyone who asks him that he was born in New Zealand. I think he wants to have something different and unique to his older siblings who 'just' grew up here.

Although I was born in Jakarta, I have lived in several places in Indonesia and overseas. When I was a teenager I lived in the UK for a few years because my father was assigned to work at its branch office in London by the head office in Jakarta. It was there that I began to notice that people outside Indonesia had a very dissimilar view about Indonesian government and Suharto, the president at that time. Negative reports on the president and his wife and their corruptions were scattered on many print media welcoming them on their official visit to Britain. Not to mention the more publicised demonstrations at the front of the Indonesian Embassy in London. Soon after my nuptial I lived with my husband in West Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Barat) for three years as my husband worked in a primary healthcare centre in Sumbawa and in a hospital in Lombok as a medical doctor. It was here that I realised that there were other ways of understanding Islam unlike mine. In a wedding party in Sumbawa, I had to sit in an area designated especially for women while my husband sat on the other side of the field. This was a new experience for me as a wedding ceremony in Jakarta at the time was never gender segregated. A couple of years before we came to New Zealand I resided in Australia with my husband and two children as my husband was studying for his postgraduate qualification. It was in this space that I found myself praying and breaking

fast with Muslim migrants from various ethnicities. These experiences certainly gave me a whole new meaning as an Indonesian Muslim woman.

My parents' household was a typical urban *priyayi*[3] Javanese family. My mother was originally from Yogyakarta with royalty ancestors behind her and born in a small town in East Java as all her other siblings. My father was born in East Java and lived there until he worked in Jakarta when he was a young adult. His father and grandfather were all *ambtenaar*[4]. My maternal and paternal grandparents spoke Dutch with native fluency. My mother only left her hometown to live in Jakarta when she married my father. Since I was young my parents always used Javanese (*kromo madya*[5]) to communicate between them and a mixture of *kromo madya* and *kromo inggil* to their parents. Yet they spoke to me and my siblings in a mixed language of Javanese *ngoko* and Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*). My siblings and I always spoke in the Indonesian language to my parents and grandparents. They forbid us to communicate in Javanese to our grandparents as we could not speak *kromo inggil* or *kromo madya* properly. It would be considered rude if a grandchild speaks in *ngoko* to a grandparent. Since I heard my parents communicated in the Javanese language everyday with each other and other people including the domestic helpers[6], I could understand *kromo madya* and *ngoko* very well. Every year when I was young I always visited my grandparents in East Java for a few weeks at a time while holidaying with my family. This annual family ritual only ended after my grandparents no longer with us. My maternal grandmother who lived until in her eighties moved to Jakarta and resided with my mother's oldest sister after my grandfather passed away.

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[3] According to Daniels (2009, p. 48*) priyayi* refers to upper-class nobles, aristocrats, the bureaucratic elites and people of royal heritage. They are similar to *abangan* in terms of their embodied religious values, yet as Javanese gentry, they are in contrast with *abangan* in their behaviour, demeanour and spoken language as they are more refined and polished. *Abangan* and *priyayi* are vastly fascinated with traditional rituals and neglect the importance of "true" Islamic values (Geertz, 1968; Ricklefs, 2012; Woodward, 1989, 2011).

[4] *Ambtenaar* is a Dutch word for a high-ranking government official during the Dutch colonialism in Indonesia (Williams, 1991).

[5] Javanese language has three registers namely *kromo inggil*, *kromo madya* and *ngoko*. *Kromo inggil* is spoken to superiors or much older persons to show respect. *Kromo madya* is usually used between people of equal standing or similar age, while *ngoko* is spoken with children, or someone equal (normally has a close relationship). As Woodward (2011, p. 16) elucidates "differences in age, gender, social status and educational attainment and the social context is which a conversation is conducted influence the selection of the speech level appropriate for both self and other".

[6] They talked in *ngoko* with the housemaids.

My mother was a housewife and never worked in her life and she enjoyed being a stay-at-home mother. Meanwhile, my father was the sole breadwinner who had an excellent career as a banker with his law degree. Of course, our family had its ups and downs. There were times in the early years that money was scarce, particularly when my father just started his career in banking. Nevertheless, overall I had a happy childhood and grew up to have a very close relationship with my parents, especially my mother. They both taught me to aim high academically and aspire to be a good person and mother. They were strict in many aspects, though. I remember my sister and I were not allowed to learn Javanese dance because my father said dancers usually changed their clothes together in one room. He did not like the idea that his daughters would share a changing room with other people during performances. When I was a student at a university in Jakarta, I had curfews if I went out with my friends on weekends. Although sometimes I felt that they were overprotective towards their children at the time, when I became a parent myself, I understood the way my parents raised me as they were concerned for my safety and well-being. I learned a lot from them as individuals and as parents[7].

As a Muslim mother, I have been asked several times by Muslims in Indonesia, including my participants, and Indonesian Muslim students who recently arrived in Auckland how I have raised my children in a non-Muslim country. They seem to have these preconceptions that living in a secular place means being exposed to many different facets of everyday life which are un-Islamic, from illegal drugs to unsolicited media. I ponder do they forget that they encounter similar challenges in Indonesia although the country is known as a state with the most Muslim population in the world? Don’t they watch or read news about the rampant drug abuse among Indonesian youth or the many seminars organised by Elly Risman, a psychologist who is passionate about fighting the spread of pornographic comics among primary school children in some cities in Indonesia? Yet, these things were never my problems and still aren't. I never see New Zealand television as a threat to my children in a way the Indonesian television programming would. I have a great trust towards my children's schools. I always believe that they could give a safe environment for my children. Of course, I did not merely rely on schools to provide secure and morally sound surroundings for my

[7] See Hartono (2011) on how my parents and grandparents were very much devoted to their Javanese culture and only later when they were middle-aged that they embraced Islam and practiced the religion as pious Muslims.

children to grow up as religious inculcation has been a crucial ingredient in our parenting practices.

Since they were young, my children have been taught how to pray and fast during the month of Ramaḍān. We took them to mosques to pray and break the fast with other Muslim migrants from diverse ethnicities. My husband always goes to the mosque for Friday prayer, which is compulsory for Muslim men, and take our sons on school holidays. When my eldest son was at the university he always prayed at the university mosque for his Friday prayer. We have taught them through examples—we do not drink alcohol, eat pork or even smoke; we pray and fast—which they mindfully follow. Also, there are always discussions about Islamic tenets and why certain things have to be obeyed while others have to be abandoned. Indeed, it has been a journey with some challenges. There were always a few bumps here and there. As they have been exposed to other ways of life at their public schools and through their friends, I am certain they have to deal with feelings of being 'different' as a minority, not just as a migrant but also as a Muslim. However, so far that I could see, my older children have become morally upright adults who value their Islamic upbringing and follow religious guidance. My youngest son has always been proud to call himself a Muslim at school, even though he is the only one or two Muslim students at the school. Having said that it does not mean I am fully satisfied with every aspect of my parenting. If I could go back I wish I could teach my older children to read the Qur'an much earlier. I had to learn again how to read Arabic in the first few years I was in Auckland because I had forgotten and neglected the knowledge I acquired in my childhood. I prayed and fasted when I was growing up but never read the Qur'an in Arabic[8] until I live here.

Being pious (*taqwa*) is a life long journey for every practicing Muslim, including me. To be born as a Muslim does not guarantee "perfect piety". Piety has to be earned and aimed for. What I have become now as a Muslim woman and mother have taken me years of reading and learning Islamic tenets, and embracing the religious practices. And my journey will not finish until I leave this world because there are many other Islamic practices and knowledge I want to achieve and aim for. Piety also needs constant

[8] I used a Qur'an with Indonesian translation and transliteration, instead.

maintenance and nourishment which means consciously seeking for a religiously guided life.

There are always questions in the back of my mind which shape the way I interact with people, do my work and go through my everyday life. This is not an obsession. Rather, it is simply a 'background noise' which guide me to become a better person, a better Muslim. Going to university in the morning, for example, I always start my day with a saying of *bismillahi rahmani rahim*[9] so that my day will run smoothly without many impediments. I started wearing a *ḥijāb* as my daily attire in 2002 following the birth of my youngest son after I consciously learned for two years about the meaning of *ḥijāb* according to Islamic tenets. Also, in my encounter with media as a Muslim woman and mother my understandings of Islam affect how I engage with media and, vice versa, the media I watch, read and use also shape the way I understand my religion.

Being reflexive[10] is paramount as I was an integral part of my research process. I draw on my personal data like my observations and interactions with my participants in Semarang, on a Facebook closed group and my feelings in particular situations as I believe these were all "invaluable sources of data" (Brigg, 19709, p. 6). By revealing my own feelings, assumptions, personality, actions (Briggs, 1970), and personal biography (Davies, 2008; Nazaruk, 2011) the reader of the ethnographic report would have the necessary information to assess this text. As Nazaruk (2011, p. 74) points out "reflexivity is a process as well as *a regard en arrière*, or *regard vers/sur soi-même*, which has imbued post-structural anthropological discourse with a focus on the narrator's proverbial *self*: self-examination, self-strategies, self-discovery, self-intuition, self-critique, self-determination, selfhood" (italics in the original). Hastrup (2005) also emphasises that it would be impossible to understand people without taking into account "one's own experience and power of imagination" (p. 174-175). Okely (1992) underlines that "in its fullest sense, reflexivity forces us to think through the consequences of our relations with others, whether it be conditions of reciprocity,

[9] The meaning in English is "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful". The Basmalah is used extensively in everyday life by Muslims as a start point of an action to receive blessings from God.

[10] Reflexivity is broadly defined as "a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (Davies, 2008, p. 4). Davies (2008) further explains that "in the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediate obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (p. 4).

asymmetry or potential exploitation" (p. 24). Hence, reflexivity is used throughout the text due to its importance.

Media Engagement: A Self-reflexive Recollection

I keep wondering how Muslim women and mothers in Indonesia deal with media in their everyday life, particularly after my visit in 2012. After residing in Auckland I seldom go to Indonesia for a holiday. There was a time when I did not even fly there for eight years. Indeed, the airfare was never cheap, not to count other costs like local transportation and meals. Of course, I could stay with my relatives when I go to Jakarta or other cities. But there were always other things to consider. Also, since my parents passed away some years ago, there was never a good enough reason for me to go back. My husband went to Indonesia more often than me, though, mostly for teaching and visiting his mother.

My first visit after a long absent came in 2012. It was then that I watched Indonesian television. I was never an avid viewer of Indonesian television programmes—from *sinetron* to infotainment—although I watch films and dramas, mostly British and Korean because I like the story and the acting. From a few weeks of watching television, mostly in the midst of chatting with my mother-in-law, and reading captions of tabloids on newsstands, I realised that Indonesian media landscape has changed considerably. There were so many inappropriate programmes, age wise for example, on television on prime time. Indonesian celebrities with their misconducts parading on public media were in contrast to the more modest, subdued television I once knew. I was worried thinking how children cope with these kinds of media exposures every day. How do their mothers deal with these challenges? Do they accompany their children while watching television? Or don't they watch television altogether?

My experience with television in New Zealand was comparatively easy[11]. When my children were growing up, as much as possible, I sat beside them while they were watching television. Since New Zealand television only aired adult only content

[11] I remembered when I was young, even with only one available TV channel my parents did not allow their children to watch television often. They asked us to choose a one-hour programme a week that we wanted to watch which aired before 9 pm.

programming after 8.30 pm, I was not too concern because my children already slept or stayed in their bedrooms without a TV set at this time. Yet, I still felt the need to mediate their media consumption. For example, I forbid them to see The Simpsons, a famous American animated sitcom, because of its contents. Bart Simpson, the ten-year-old main cast, is a poor role model for children. His delinquencies and inappropriate dialogues were not something to be desired for and imitated by my children. I explained to them about portrayals on television which did not conform to our religion, for example, sexual relationships before marriage or illegal drug usage, violence or even a kiss[12]. Remembering those days, I think it was not difficult for me to discuss with them the permissible and unacceptable behaviours according to Islam. The fact that these programmes showed misbehaviours (according to Islam) portrayed by Westerners or Maori/Pacific Islander and non-Muslims provided me with solid justifications that what they did on television was not Islamic. They were not Indonesians and what they did on television was not wrong here because their 'culture' allowed them to do so yet they were deemed impermissible from the perspectives of Islam. This does not mean that Indonesians are never depicted this way[13]. If so, it would be difficult to explain to my children why Indonesians, supossedly Muslims, show conducts which are religiously inappropriate[14]. Without having this problem, I felt fortunate because a simple rationalisation was enough for my children when they were young. Of course, our discussions became more complex once they were older. Television programming then turned into my point of departure to explain to my children about ethics and religious tenets. We also encouraged them to read religious books or websites and listen to Friday sermons. We went to weekly religious sermons (*pengajian*) for Muslim migrants of diverse ethnicities or Indonesian community in Auckland. My husband told them stories about the Prophet and his companions to illustrate good deeds and morally acceptable demeanours.

Only until recently the family computer was always placed in the living room. The aim was so that as parents, my husband and I, could see what my children were doing with

[12] When there was a kissing scene in a family drama or movie I asked my children to close their eyes or to look the other way. This does not mean that I consider a kiss or a hug is a taboo. As a family, I hug and kiss my children. However, I consider a romantic kiss as a conduct in a private realm which becomes unsuitable if it is displayed publicly and is seen by children.

[13] Indonesian movies nowadays show actors and actresses, Muslims and non-Muslims, kissing on screen.

[14] See Hartono (2011) for discussions on a mother's perception why other Muslims are actually the bigger threat than non-Muslims as it would be more difficult for her to explain any misconduct by Muslims.

the computer and the Internet—the websites they opened, read and watched—while at the same time we discussed about the consequences of being exposed to unsolicited media. The basics of our parenting, including the way we managed the media surrounding us, was giving them understanding that everything we did had its consequences, good and bad, desirable and detrimental. Since they were very young we always talked to them, gave them choices with the overview of their repercussions. We also explained that they have to bear every consequence from each act and decision they make. The rest we give them our trust. Parenting was never easy nor difficult. It is *gampang-gampang susah*. It can be easy at one time and in a specific situation but it can also be difficult at other time or in another circumstance.

As a Muslim woman, my religious knowledge and understandings have been shaped by the media, to some extent. With the advent of Internet, I have been reading and learning various topics on Islam and Muslim women from YouTube, Facebook, iQur'an and other sources. Indeed, the Qur'an and *aḥādīṯ* are the quintessential resources for practicing Muslims, including me. If there was an issue appeared on Facebook, for example, it triggered my curiosity to learn more about it and to search for it in the Qur'an and *aḥādīṯ* to look for guidelines on the matter. Like the discussions on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) which becomes a hot issue nowadays and are posted by my network on Facebook nearly every day prompted me to gain more knowledge from the perspectives of Islamic tenets.

The Field Sites and Field Experiences

In this section, I explore the field sites of Semarang and a Facebook closed group which I intentionally set up for this research. Also, I elucidate the field experiences I encountered in these two sites during my fieldwork. I start with the off-line site of Semarang in Central Java and conclude with the online site of a Facebook closed group with sub-sections on the fieldwork in between.

Semarang, Central Java

My choice of a field site was by no means unintentional. As Jakarta was my home where I worked for a long time, I have many friends, relatives and colleagues in this city. So it would be easy, actually, to ask their assistance for introducing me to potential participants, which would be beneficial for my fieldwork. However, there were a few impediments which might slow me down during fieldwork. Due to Jakarta's appalling traffic jam and the size of its city, I was reluctant to do my fieldwork in Jakarta. Its horrendous inner city travel time would cost me a lot of time to reach my particpants. The next place I considered was Bandung. However, this city also experienced the same problem as Jakarta in terms of its traffic gridlock, although Bandung is much smaller than Jakarta. Then when I visited Indonesia in 2012 and went to Semarang I had a chance to pitch my research idea to my aunt who lives and works in Semarang. She was delighted to have me stay with her and her family for a few months and offered her support to be a gatekeeper. As she has been living in Semarang for more than three decades she also has insider knowledge as a Semarang resident. Her presence as the gatekeeper who provided me with access to my participants facilitated the process of gaining entry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) to the Muslim community in Semarang. In terms of city size, Semarang is not too big nor too small with almost no traffic congestion[15]. Finding a suitable field site in which I could do my fieldwork without many challenges but which, at the same time, could satisfy my curiosity in the research topic was imperative. I believe that taking care of oneself during fieldwork is critical.

So it was decided that my offline field site would be Semarang as it also has a very interesting history of its Muslim community (see below on a section on Semarang and its Muslim community). Moreover, Semarang and its Muslim residents were never chosen in anthropological research about Javanese people, as far as I know. Most of the ethnographic studies in Java were conducted in either Yogyakarta (for example Williams, 1991 and Woodward, 1989) or East Java (for instance Hildred Geertz, 1961 and Clifford Geertz, 1969). However, before entering the field site there were some paperwork I must complete. As a New Zealander who no longer have an Indonesian

[15] During my stay in Semarang my host mother came back home from work late and was trapped in a traffic jam because of a construction work on a bridge. The journey which usually took her fifteen minutes strecthed to two hours. In general, the traffic was much better than Jakarta. Even with a lot of cars and motorcycles the vehicles could still move. In Jakarta, the traffic could just stop for hours because of the gridlocks in many parts of the city.

passport [16] I was required to apply for a research permit designated for foreign researchers.

My journey from the hotel to Menristek[17] in a taxi was smooth although we needed to find the exact address. It only took us about thirty minutes to get there. This was not bad considering the notorious Jakarta traffic jam. I arrived at the office around 8.30 am. So I just waited in the waiting room since the service for foreign researcher only started at 9 am. I was sitting by myself for a while until I entered the room to see the department head, the person who made contact with me by email, apparently. He asked me whether I already notified him about my visit on an email. Fortunately, I made a copy of his email and my reply in September saying that I would see him on 2nd October. He was, rather frantically, trying to find my email on his computer. He was really apologetic that he and his team had not prepared my documents prior to my arrival. So he asked me to wait again in the waiting room to give his staff time to type my documents, which I needed for my visit to Mabes Polri[18] and Depdagri[19] the next day.

Soon after I sat in the waiting room I saw a young European woman walking back and forth from the waiting room to the head office's room. It seemed like she was trying to find someone. She then sat not far from where I sat. I started the conversation with her and she replied back with a warm smile. We had a short conversation and then she excitedly introduced me to her colleague, Ben[20], a New Zealander who has been living in Australia for a few years. Apparently she was waiting for Ben, who just came out from the head office's room. When she introduced me to Ben she emphasised the fact that I am a New Zealander, just like him. Ben showed a bewildering look on his face but amused at the same time. Before he could say anything I said to him that I am originally from Indonesia but have a New Zealand passport, and that explained my appearance. He showed me his big smile in response to my 'proclamation'. He then sat next to me. The three of us had a very pleasant conversation about what we were doing in Indonesia, our

[16] Indonesian government does not allow its citizen to own another citizenship besides Indonesian. So when one has another citizenship she/he has to give up her/his Indonesian citizenship.
[17] Menristek or Ristek for short is an abbreviation of Kementrian Riset dan Teknologi (Ministry of Research and Technology). It is where foreign researchers apply for their research permit when they are in their home country and as soon as they arrive in Indonesia.
[18] It is an acronym for Markas Besar Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Police's Headquarter).
[19] It is an abbreviation for Departemen Dalam Negeri (Department of Internal Affairs).
[20] His name is altered to protect his privacy.

research and their experiences during their first year in the country. With no hesitation, they told me their experiences in East Indonesia, particularly on how the regional government mistreated the local people and the long wait they endured for their research permits to be approved. Both of them told me that they read Sharyn's journal article[21] on her experience getting an Indonesian research permit and they felt better prepared after reading the article. We were soon joined by a male American journalist turned researcher whose field site was in Yogyakarta and a female American researcher on a Full Bright scholarship who was in the middle of her research in Bali trying to extend her research permit. These two American researchers bonded very quickly. I guessed because they found themselves as countrymen in a foreign soil this feeling brought them closer together. They even exchanged mobile numbers before the male American said his goodbye to us because he already got the form he wanted. I also found Ben to be extra nice to me. I assumed the feeling of having the same citizenship (and shared a few similar stories about New Zealand) brought us a sense of ‘closeness'.

The feelings of being an outsider/insider started to creep in right there and then. I was simultaneously an insider and outsider in relation to my participants and the field site. Yet, following Narayan (1993) I was not too concern with the dichotomy between outsider/insider since “the loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux” (p. 671). As Narayan (1993) elucidates factors attached to an anthropologist like “education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts” (p.672) may be more important at one time or the other than the cultural identity which we base our insider or outsider status.

I may consider myself as “halfies”, “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed

[21] See Sharyn Davies (2013) for detailed descriptions of Indonesia’s bureaucracy for gaining research permit for foreign researchers and its complexities. The fact that Sharyn is one of my supervisors made these two researchers happily shared with me their experiences about getting their research permits. Throughout this whole journey of visiting offices to do my research permit, I sensed a vibe of accountability and trustworthiness. All people I met at these offices showed their professionalism. If the services did not involve payment, they never mentioned about money. I asked the staff at Mabes Polri and Depdagri whether I needed to pay some fees. But they all said that the services they provided for foreign researchers are free of charge. I even saw a poster in the waiting room at Mabes Polri asking for anyone to avoid encouraging corruption, nepotism and collusion. I also sensed the head of Ristek to be very cautious with his words so that I would not misinterpret him in any way to come to a conclusion that there was a corruption in dealing with foreign researchers. He told me that all the income that Ristek receives from foreign researchers is audited every year. Hence, there was a change in policy not long ago to ask their clients to pay the fee in rupiah instead of US dollar due to a fluctuating conversion rate of US dollar to rupiah.

by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage" (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 137). I have similar backgrounds with my participants; such as we share our identities as Muslim women and mothers with Javanese ethnicity background and university education. However, there are a few differences between us, like our age and our children's ages, and the fact that I have been living as a Muslim minority overseas for a number of years. My participants are younger than me and their children are much younger than mine. According to Ronaldo (1984) age, gender, and one's lived experience—ethnographers' positioned subjects—could "enable or inhibit particular kinds of insight" (p. 193). Even though similar experience is not a prerequisite[22] for empathizing and understanding the participants, I agree with Hastrup (1992), that ethnographers' personal history plays a significant role in the construction of ethnographic work.

I regard my research as 'anthropology at home'. The term is used to refer to conducting fieldwork as part of an anthropological research on one's own culture (Mughal 2015; see also Jackson, 1987; Madden, 1999; Munthali, 2001; Peirano, 1998). The definition of home is varied ranging from "a territorial classification, such as a country or a region, to legal and political categories, such as citizenship and identity of anthropologists and the communities they work in" (Mughal, 2015, p. 122). Unlike anthropology abroad which I need to learn a new language, I shared a common language with my participants as I am a native speaker of Indonesian language and had no problem understanding Javanese *ngoko* and *kromo madya* (see Okley, 1984). People in Semarang, generally, converse in a mix of Indonesian and Javanese language, mostly *ngoko* and *kromo madya*. My participants talked to me mainly in the Indonesian language during the first few weeks of my fieldwork but they used a mixture of Indonesian and Javanese language later on in my fieldwork. My rusty Javanese spoken language also became more polished with time. I changed a little of my mannerism like most Javanese I met and altered the way I carried myself. For example, upon meeting another person I tended to lower my upper body part in a slight bowing movement and use a certain hand gesture. My Indonesian dialect became a little bit thicker with Javanese accent, although

[22] Rosaldo (1984) explains that without having the experience of his wife's death he would not be in a position to grasp Ilongots' experience of anger in bereavement. Yet, I do not agree with the statement that an anthropologist has to have a similar experience to be able to observe and appreciate the participants' experience. As human beings, we are capable of having empathy towards other people without the need to experience similar happenings.

I always had it and never lost it even after I have been living overseas for many years. When I met a Javanese person in Auckland, unconsciously, this accent appeared and the other person usually noticed it. I suppose this accent switch happens because of the desire to be accepted by the other person in a conversation.

Although I never live in Semarang I visited the city a few times to see my aunt and her family. Doing fieldwork in Indonesia means returning to the place where I was born and grew up, to a lot of familiarities—culture and daily rhythm[23]—and to a shared 'emotional understanding' (Narayan, 1993, p. 674). Yet, a feeling of familiarity constructed by past experience and similarities in our personal backgrounds were juxtaposed for me against the unfamiliarity of social and emotional differences. The fact that I have been away from Indonesia for nearly two decades with sparing visits in between created a sense of strangeness during fieldwork (Coffey, 1999). As Coffey (1999) elucidates "strangeness and distance" are crucial for the ethnographer to gain insight and grasp a better understanding of the cultural facets (p. 22). I was amazed by the numerous billboards, big and small, around the city, for instance. I was struck by the fact that people hardly said thank you (*terima kasih* in Indonesian or *matur nuwun* in Javanese) to convey appreciations. Yet, it seems that the strangeness ran both ways. My participants were curious about me since I have been living overseas for a long time. They asked me questions about why I moved to New Zealand and how I have brought up my children in a foreign country. I was somewhat an outsider, too.

The Fieldwork

My fieldwork in Semarang encompassed several methods from in-depth interviews to diary studies. Through the generosity of the gatekeeper, I could get in touch with a number of Javanese Muslim women who worked at a university[24] in Semarang or alumni of the same university. They are mothers of children, mostly two in a family, with a wide range in age from a few months old to young adulthood. Only one

[23] I use the term daily rhythm to refer to the pace of everyday life and the way people embracing their daily routines. I feel more relax in Auckland because the schedules that I make are easily met without any problems. Meanwhile, going about my daily schedule in big cities in Indonesia is difficult due to traffic jam and unforeseen obstacles. For example, I had to wait for one and a half -hour to meet my cousin in Jakarta after the scheduled time, which would never happen if the meeting happened in Auckland.
[24] This is one of eighteen universities in Semarang (Metro Semarang, 2014).

participant had a young adult and teenager children while most of other participants' children were school aged. These mothers were mostly in their thirties with one or two who were in their late twenties or early forties. All, except one, wear *ḥujub* (plural for *ḥijāb*) as their daily attire. Most my participants have a Master's degree from universities in Semarang or Yogyakarta, but all were at least hold a Bachelor degree.

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with fourteen Muslim mothers whom ten of them agreed to do the diary study. The questions for the interviews focused on their media consumption with national and regional television programming, particularly Islamic *sinetron* and infotainment (celebrity gossip shows), the Internet (especially Facebook), movies (mainly Islamic films) and how they negotiate and appropriate these media in their everyday lives as mothers. Issues of encouragement or disapproval of media used by their children were also explored. The line of probing was closely linked with their understandings of Islamic tenets and their role as Muslim mothers. Meanwhile, diary studies were applied for some participants who were willing to do it. I gave them a booklet to fill out for a week. In this diary, they were asked to write what media they and their children read, watched and used during the week. They were also asked to write their feelings and thoughts about these media and what kind of negotiations, insights and/or arguments they had with their children in regard to these media. After a week or so had passed I collected the diary and had another interview with them on what they had written. The purpose of having the diary study was to gather more data on their engagement with media and to elaborate and fill the gaps of information which I might miss in the first interview. It also provided me with the opportunity to understand the complexities of everyday media use of these Muslim mothers[25]. Most of these interviews were recorded. If not recorded due to unforeseen reason, such as no more memory space in the recorder, I made a few notes during the interview and wrote everything I gathered from the interview in my field notes as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. Each interview lasted around one hour or more. Only a few interviews were conducted in their homes while others were carried out at their office. The choice of place for interviews was decided by my participants. As they worked between 7 am and 4 pm from Monday to Friday they preferred to have

[25] Horst (2010) and Horst, et al. (2010) explain that the use of a diary study with youth in the context of homes, families and neighbourhood proved to be beneficial to understand their daily digital media use, especially when it would be impossible for the researchers to ‘be there’ due to various reasons.

the interviews at their office. Outside these formal interviews, I had informal conversations with other people who live in Semarang, such as my aunt, uncle, cousins, niece, a housemaid where I stayed in Semarang, and a DVD vendor which took place at their homes or public places. Out of these participants, I became close to one of them—my key participant—with whom I had many conversations besides interview and diary study. These conversations could be as short as between five to fifteen minutes or long ones of between half an hour and an hour.

Furthermore, I had an interview with an Indonesian media expert. Pak Sunarto teaches at Diponegoro University, a public university in Semarang. As a communication studies lecturer, he has been studying Indonesian media, particularly Indonesian television.

It was through my key participant that I knew about a parenting seminar for Muslim parents which was held on a Sunday. A few days before the seminar she sent me a picture of its poster (Figure 1.1 below). Apparently, two other participants also attended the seminar. I met one of them before the seminar started and had a long conversation with her. The other one told me about attending the seminar the next day. Other participants shared with me Islamic parenting books they read as guidelines for them in raising their children.

Figure 1.1: A poster of a parenting seminar for Muslim parents held in Semarang which a number of participants and I attended. Photograph by my key participant.

In addition, I gathered numerous printed materials like tabloids, *ḥijāb* (head covering)

tutorial magazines, Muslim women magazines, and Muslim parenting books. I took photographs of billboards and other materials, which might be useful.

Since they preferred to have the interviews in their office and their daily schedule was mostly spent at the university, I tailored my fieldwork to suit their day to day routine. So every morning I came to their office and only left when they finished working. I spent my days with conducting interviews and diary studies, teaching in one of their classes and having English language meetings with a number of my participants and other lecturers who were not my participants. As I always felt indebted towards my participants as they willingly gave their time to help my research, since the beginning of my fieldwork I offered them some assistance. They asked me to help them improve their IELTS scores[26] because of their dream to study at a university in an English speaking country by means of a scholarship. Another participant invited me to talk to her students who belonged to an English study club and share my experience learning English. As they knew I was a child psychologist in my past life, from time to time they enquired about parenting practices, especially about how they should overcome a few challenges at home. Moreover, there were times when I watched television with them in their office room whilst there were interesting programmes they wanted to watch, met them on their way to pray at the *mushola* (prayer room) at the office or on our way to the mosque at the university ground, and had lunch together. I also watched an Indonesian movie at a cinema with my key participant and discussed it over lunch. At home where I stayed I watched television every morning with my host father catching up on the first news of the day while talking about the current Indonesian politics. On weekends I regularly sat on the porch with my host mother sharing stories. I visited houses, malls, restaurants and other public spaces around Semarang and viewed how media, in various forms, played out in Semarang and in the everyday life of its residents. These less formal everyday encounters and experiences added to the whole understanding of living in the city surrounded by a myriad of media as they are crucial for aiming deep and thick meanings of the lives of Muslim mothers in Semarang.

[26] IELTS (2016) or the International English Language Testing System is a test used to measure the English language proficiency of people who want to study or migrate to an English speaking country. There are two formats of the test, namely academic and general. The one that we did in our meetings was the academic IELTS.

My relationships with my participants in Semarang, however, did not end when I left the city. I kept in touch with a few of my participants through emails and Whatsapp. We exchanged personal news and experience. It was also a convenient way for me to discuss with them about media related issues which happened after I came back to Auckland, for example regarding selfies on Facebook which turned into a trending topic on Twitter in 2015 or a certain Korean actor who was involved in a scandal and Korean celebrity culture in Indonesia.

With the advancement of information and communication technology I have realised the power of the Internet in an ethnographic research long before I started my off-line fieldwork. Hence, I set up a Facebook closed group in 2013 especially for this study. My aim of using a Facebook closed group was to better prepare myself before going to the field site in Semarang. By having data from the Facebook discussions I, at least, could map out the preferences among Muslim mothers and their children of popular Indonesian media nowadays. This was particularly salient for me to do since I left Indonesia more than a decade ago so I had practically no first-hand experience on Indonesian media during these past years. Having a Facebook closed group also expanded my fieldwork to cover online data collection, which could add to the richness of the data. Furthermore, by having Facebook participants who live outside Semarang could increase the variety of data I gathered since Semarang, like other medium and big sized cities in Indonesia, has its own local television stations, newspapers, and media culture besides sharing the national media. In this group we discussed a number of media related issues in Indonesia. For example, I asked my participants about the proliferation of Korean drama on Indonesian television, and discussed national films, particularly *film Islami* or Islamic films. We also talked about celebrity gossip shows and religious programmes on television, especially during the fasting month of Ramaḍān, and the importance of the Internet, among other topics. In general, we have been exchanging experiences, thoughts and opinions on these topics. However, not all participants have the same degree of participations in the discussions. Some were active and became my key ‘informants’ while few others were more in the background as ‘observers’.

After obtaining the necessary ethics approval from the university ethics committee, I invited Muslim mothers who are 'friends' with me on my personal Facebook account to participate in the closed group discussion and twelve women joined the group. My friends who agreed to participate are my childhood friends, my university friends back in Indonesia, a mother whom I met in New Zealand and had returned to Indonesia, and a friend of a friend I met here in Auckland. We share the same backgrounds as Muslim mothers and university graduates (see Hartono, 2015). Most of these women don a *ḥijāb* as their everyday attire. The characteristics of my Facebook participants are more similar to me than the participants in Semarang in terms of our age and children's age. Their ages were mostly around mid-forties to early fifties. All of these mothers have tertiary education, at least a Bachelor degree from top universities in Indonesia. More than half of these mothers have a Master's degree from local or overseas universities. They have children from one to more than three, mostly teenagers and early adults. Their ethnicities are varied and mostly live in Jakarta. Most of them hold formal occupations and work outside their home. Mothers who do not have job are quite active in their communities or have a casual job from home. There was no time limit for 'friends' to participate in the discussions and no obligation for them to participate in the discussions. The Facebook closed group account is set up for 3 years (for the research purpose only). As my Facebook participants are also my Facebook 'friends' I could observe the way they used Facebook in their everyday lives. When I found interesting discussions in their Facebook page I asked their permissions to use them in my research which they usually agreed[27].

One of the advantages of Internet ethnography, which could enhance its validity, is off-line contact with some of the participants (Davies, 2008). I was fortunate because I have personal relationships outside Facebook with most of my Facebook participants prior to this research. Our friendships, for some, have been more than one or two decades. My knowledge about their family and personal lives was an invaluable asset as it added to the 'wholeness' to the meaning of statements they posted in the discussions on Facebook.

[27] For example discussions on *ḥijāb* and *jilboob* (see Chapter 5) were posted in my participants Facebook pages. They gave me their permissions to use it in my research.

Facebook Closed Group

For me, a Facebook closed group is rather like a field site although not all together the same. This kind of ethnography can be classified as "internethnography" (Tapper, 2001), "virtual ethnography" (Hine, 2000), or "digital ethnography" (Pink, et al., 2016; Underberg & Zorn, 2013). In this closed group I had discussions with my participants, very similar to conducting a Focus Group Discussion where a researcher asks questions and discusses certain topics with a number of participants (Davies, 2008). Yet, Facebook is akin to delayed discussions as the responses to the researcher's question are posted later by the participants. But if discussions are conducted through Facebook chat, then it becomes like a private conversation because of its privacy and immediacy. However, I found that a Facebook closed group is not the same as off line fieldwork. Since it is not a face-to-face meeting that I had with my Facebook participants, it lacked the ability to observe how my participants reacted to certain questions. It is true that there are emoticons which are pictorial representations of facial expressions to replace the absence of the real facial expressions. It may help somewhat but it is far from replacing direct observation, I suggest. Direct observation remains to be one of the best methods to gather data on mood, facial expressions, gestures, body language and setting, in my opinion. Yet, Garcia and her colleagues (2009) suggest that the nature of observation in an online setting changes. Observation in this setting involves watching text and images, and having direct contact with the social world the ethnographer is studying, which means that the researcher has "personal experience with the central problem being discussed by group participants" (Walstrom, 2004, p. 175). This is called "participant-experiencer" instead of "participant-observer". Tapper (2001) also suggests that the level of credibility in internethnography is similar to a 'standard' ethnography, if not more so (p. 16).

Facebook has been used by social researchers both in studies regarding its impacts on users as well as it being a space for gathering data. Baker (2013) in her article on the use of Facebook in ethnographic research, suggests that Facebook can be considered as a tool, as data and as context. Facebook can be used as a communicative medium between the researcher and the researched. It provides a network that connects all participants as co-participants, and the researcher across time and distance. It also serves as a valuable

source of data in which researcher can have access into participants' thought and attitudes towards certain topics being discussed (Davies, 2008). Baker (2013) also states that Facebook is a shared space between the researcher and the participants in which the researcher can conduct participant observation which is essential in ethnographic research. Similar to a classic ethnography, virtual ethnography allows "follow-up and more in-depth discussion" (Davies, 2008, p. 154). In my Facebook closed group I also followed and had more discussions with one or two participants by means of private messages on Facebook.

However, there were a few concerns which I was reflecting on and negotiating throughout my online fieldwork. Firstly, how do I position myself? Do I position myself as a researcher, a friend, a mother or all three? I had to take these matters into consideration because the way I presented myself would be reflected in the words I used in my postings and responses. For example, do I use the word "*aku*" the informal word for "I" in Indonesian language or "*saya*" the more formal one? I sticked to the word "*aku*" at the end to convey the more friendly "I". Secondly, how much do I need to reveal about myself and my children? It would not be fair, I thought, if I did not reveal myself and my children while I asked them to share their and their children's everyday experiences, opinions and thoughts on Indonesian media. The way I posted my questions, statements and responses had something to do with how much I wanted to reveal about myself and this could also affect how fruitful the discussions would be. By portraying myself as a not-so-perfect me, it would make my participants less hesitant to open up to me. Thirdly, regarding their responses I always wonder how open they are in telling me their opinions, experiences and thoughts. Do they have any reservations because they are afraid to be judged by other participants or by me because I am their friends? As Markham (2004) elucidates the construction of self and other through interaction is more evident in the text-based computer mediated social spaces. Porr and Ployhart (2004) also emphasise the increased levels of self-disclosure among participants in computer-mediated communication and when the researchers reveal more about themselves. Yet, there were times when a participant only wanted to share the information with me alone for some reasons. A mother who responded to my question through a private message said that she did not want to write her answer "publicly" because she was afraid that there would be other participants who would feel

offended by her answer. There are certain topics in which we had fruitful discussions. However, other topics which somehow link to Islam seem to garner very few responses, for example a topic about religious programmes on TV during the fasting month of Ramaḍān.

It is acknowledged that the issue of privacy is crucial not only for ordinary people but also for researchers. This is even more so and is somewhat problematic in an online research. Thus it is essential to determine what is considered 'public' and 'private' to better judge the appropriateness and ethical soundness of a research (Sveningsson Elm, 2009, pp. 69-70). The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) provides general guidelines to protect the privacy of all parties involved in online research. Yet, in spite of the availability of such recommendations, there are still unanswered questions due partly to the fast ever development of the Internet. Nevertheless, the AoIR guidelines (Markham and Buchanan, 2012) can serve as a frame for researchers in overseeing online ethical accountability. Gal (2002) proposes that the notion of 'private' and 'public' is culturally specific and 'dependent for part of their referential meaning on the interactional context in which they are used' (p. 80). According to Sveningsson Elm (2009, pp. 74-75) the concepts of 'public' and 'private' in online environments cannot be considered as a dichotomy like offline communities. Rather, they are a continuum in which researchers need to ask themselves questions pertaining the exclusiveness and restrictions of membership in the online community they study. In conclusion, Sveningsson Elm (2009, p. 75) suggests four specifics Internet environments with different degrees of private and public positions, namely a public environment, a semi-public environment, a semi-private environment and a private environment. A Facebook closed group is considered a private environment, which is unavailable to most people; restricted to creator and invited guests (for instance 'friends' list in social media accounts) (2009, p. 75). Sveningsson Elm (2009, p. 75) asserts that 'a private online environment is one that is hidden or unavailable to most people and where access is restricted to the creator of the content and his or her invited guests'. With the Facebook closed group that I set up, I have invited my 'friends' from my personal Facebook account who fit the criteria of Muslim mothers who live in Indonesia to join the group. I sent a personal message through Facebook personal message box prior to the invitation to the would-be-participants of the closed group. Following Kozinets (2010, pp. 147-148) who outlines the need for a researcher to follow certain ethical guidelines in

Internet research I too keenly adopt these procedures. He states that it is essential for an Internet researcher to openly and accurately identify self, avoiding all deception, openly and accurately describe research purpose, and provide an accessible, relevant and accurate description of research focus and interests. I also sent a message to the Facebook management stating the purpose and scope of research and providing information on the research activity (see Kozinets, 2010, pp.148-152).

Semarang and Its Muslim Community

Semarang is unique in terms of its history particularly in regards to Islamic influence and in terms of its population's make-up. Its one-and-a-half million population[28] are dominantly Javanese with significant numbers of Chinese descents including Chinese Muslims[29]. About 86 per cents of Semarang population are Muslims (see table 1). More than 92 per cent speak *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) although Javanese language is popularly and widely used in daily conversations in the city. About the same percentage of people in Semarang have either finished schooling or are at school with around 41 per cent have secondary and tertiary education as their highest education (see table 2). In terms of family, around 62 per cents of the population are married (see table 3). Semarang is the eighth most populous city in Indonesia after Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Bekasi, Medan, Tangerang and Depok.

Table 1.1: Religion (Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010)

Religion	Islam	Christian	Catholic	Hindu	Buddha	Kong Hu Chu	Others
Numbers	868,084	32,060	22,064	311	4,884	63	512
Percentage	86.78	6.91	4.97	0.10	0.64	0.07	0.01

[28] According to BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik or Statistics Indonesia) the total population of Semarang in 2010 was 1,555,984. All demographic data of Semarang are taken from Badan Pusat Statistik website based on their 2010 census.

[29] Chinese people in Semarang, like in other cities in Java, have been very much part of the local community since hundreds of years ago as they identify with Javanese culture and speak Javanese language with native fluency. Many Indonesians of Chinese descent have no skill in Mandarin or Cantonese and no opportunity to keep their Chinese names due to the ban put in place by the government during the Suharto New Order authoritarian administration (Chan, 2013).

Table 1.2: Education (Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010)

Education	No Schooling	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Numbers	64,267	435,026	318,182	36,785
Percentage	7.52	50.92	37.25	4.31

Table 1.3: Marital Status (Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010)

Status	Not Married	Married	Widowed
Numbers	225,445	487,861	61,151
Percentage	29.01	62.77	7.87

In terms of its area, Semarang is the fifth largest city in Indonesia after Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and Medan. It is located on the central north of Java Island with Java Sea on its north side, Demak Regency to its east, Kendal Regency to its west and Ungaran in the south (Pusdatinkomtel, 2013). The city is basically divided into two major areas, namely *kota bawah* (downtown), which is flat and close to the sea, and *kota atas* (uptown), which is hilly and situated on the south side of the city. Due to frequent surge of sea water (tidal flooding) the downtown area is prone to flooding (Harwitasari, 2009) and people tend to avoid this space as their home. In recent years the uptown becomes densely populated because of new development in housing projects. Clusters of new residential including public facilities like supermarkets and schools have been built in some parts of the uptown area, like in Candi, Mijen, Gunungpati, Tembalang and Banyumanik districts to meet public demands[30]. Public universities in Semarang, such as Universitas Diponegoro and Universitas Negeri Semarang, also develop their new campuses at *kota atas* while still retaining their old campuses at *kota bawah*. Close to 50 per cent of the area consists of urban space with the rest of the region comprises of a mix of rural urban space (Soetomo, 2004).

[30] Facts about Semarang today and in the past are partly taken from Wikipedia Bahasa Indonesia (n.d.) unless stated otherwise.

Map: Indonesia with Semarang in Central Java (Source: World Atlas http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/id.htm).

Regarding its past, Semarang has a long history since it was set up around the ninth century as a coastal town with the name of Bergota and part of the Old Mataram kingdom. As a seaport Semarang became a major port during the Dutch colonial period and remains to be an important port nowadays. Historically, there was a well-known person, named Zheng He (Figure 1.2 below), who has been considered to have great influence on the spread of Islam in Semarang among local Chinese as well as *pribumi* (indigenous) Indonesians. Liem Thian Joe, a local Chinese historian (Suryadinata, 2005) proposes that Zheng He docked in Semarang around 1416 and Sam Po Kong temple[31] (Figure 1.3 below) is believed to be built on the location where Zheng He landed in Semarang from Nanjing in China (Figure 1.4 below).

[31] The temple represents the syncretism of interconnections of Javanese *abangan*, Islam, Buddhism and Taoism (Safitri, 2011).

Figure 1.2: A statue of Zheng He at Sam Po Kong temple in Semarang

Figure 1.3: One of the buildings at Sam Po Kong temple with Chinese architectural design

Figure 1.4: A full sized replica of one of Zheng He ships used in his expeditions held at the Treasure Boat Shipyard site in Nanjing, China, the location where his ships were built 600 years ago.

Similar with other major cities in Indonesia, people in Semarang have the opportunity to watch TV programming from eleven national and six regional television channels, and subscribe different pay television channels in Semarang. In order to keep track of local daily news Semarang offers plenty of regional newspapers to read. Trendy and old music of by gone era can be heard from numerous local radio stations. If going out is the idea of having a good time, people in Semarang can enjoy their spare time by watching national films and movies from overseas, mostly Hollywood, on cinemas which are dominated by 21 Cineplex, the largest cinema network in Indonesia[32]. Internet cafes are abundant in Semarang while Internet access by means of smartphones or Wi-Fi at public spaces such as retaurants or café are available since there are a number of internet providers in Semarang.

Similar to many other cities and towns in Indonesia, there are abundant of mosques in Semarang. At the university where my participants work there are at least two mosques

[32] 21 Cineplex owns 691 screens in 138 locations throughout the archipelago. In Semarang there are two theatres under 21 Cineplex management, namely Citra 21 and Paragon XXI (http://www.21cineplex.com/21profile). The only theatre not owned by 21 Cineplex in Semarang is E-Cinema at E-Plaza which shows similar movies to the ones play at Citra 21 and Paragon XXI.

with *mushollas*[33] in different buildings. My participants prayed at the mushola or mosque at the university during their working hours for their Ẓuhur and ‘Asr prayers[34]. After the *adhan*[35] is called from the mosque, people who work at and around the university come to the mosque to pray. When I visited the *masjid* (mosque) at the university the *khutbah* (sermon) was delivered using Javanese *kromo inggil*. Yet not all mosques in Semarang use Javanese *kromo inggil* in the sermon. The mosque in front of the house where I lived presented their *khutbah* mostly in Indonesian language. My host father told me that only one *khotib*[36] used Javanese *kromo madya* to deliver his *khutbah* at this mosque.

Figure 1.5: Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah (Great Mosque of Central Java) is located in Semarang.

The Islamic nuance at the university is transparent. Most of the female staff members of the university don *jilbab*[37] as their work outfits and around half of its female students

[33] Musholla is a space or room which is designated as a prayer room. However, it cannot be used for Friday prayer unlike a mosque.
[34] Muslims are commanded to do the obligatory prayers or *ṣalāt/ṣalawāt (plural)* five times a day. Ẓuhur is a daily obligatory prayer performed from noon until afternoon, while ‘Asr is done between around three and before six in the afternoon.
[35] The call to prayer recited before prayers commence. It is done to make people aware that the prayers are about to start.
[36] It is the person who delivers the sermon.
[37] Jilbab is used interchangebly with *ḥijāb* and *khimār* to refer to a clothing which covers the head and the whole body except hands and face.

wear *ḥujub*[38]. Although there was no requirement for Muslim female employees and students to wear the Islamic dress, many women and young girls adopt *jilbab* as their daily attire. A number of my participants explained that the clothes has become a fashion trend in Semarang, especially among the youth. This does not mean that every single person wears it because of the 'pressure' to conform to their peers. Indeed, there are people who choose to wear it for religious reasons. For my participants wearing a *ḥijāb* is to abide to Islamic tenets. There was also a regular weekly *tafsīr* class[39] for female staff members at the university. The class was not compulsory and was organised by PKS[40] women section for Muslim women who were interested to join. A number of my participants attended this class when they were not busy teaching or doing other tasks. The teacher and a number of attendees are PKS members even though not all my participants who took part in the class are PKS members.

[38] *Ḥujub* is the plural form of *ḥijāb*.
[39] It is a class for Qur'anic exegesis. Elucidation, explanation, interpretation and commentary carried out to understand the Qur'an and its commandments.
[40] According to Rinaldo (2008, 2013) women members of PKS or Prosperous Justice Party simultaneously embody a certain type of middle class subjectivity in which piety and modernity could be embraced side by side.

_____*Chapter 3: Parenting and Parenthood*

The weekends started slower than any other working days. On weekdays my host family[1] and I usually left home to do our daily activities around 7.30am. That Saturday we only went out to buy ice cream after we had lunch at home. We went to Toko Oen, a traditional ice cream parlour, which took me back to the colonial time and has been modernised to meet the need of the current market and customers. It did not look much from the outside. The shop was located at the corner of a big road and a narrow street. Yet when we came inside I could clearly see the reminiscence of the olden days. With a very high ceiling, tall doors and windows in dark colours, and white walls and dark wooden arc on the ceiling it reminded me of the architecture during the Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. As soon as the front the door was opened I saw a glass display full of delicious local snacks and Western cakes. We were seated at the back of the room because the room was full with customers and the adjacent room was closed for a private party. Many people eating with their families and seemed to enjoy their family lunch gatherings. When we were seated I saw on the wall a photograph of Toko Oen in the olden days, presumably during the Dutch colonialism. The photograph was in faded black and white yet clearly depicted a lot of horse carriages in front of the shop and the ambiance was a contrast to its current stage. The quiet and empty spaces with a few shops next to Toko Oen in the picture was nothing like the traffic I just witnessed outside the shop a few minutes ago with many cars, motorcycles and crowded shops along the road. Unfortunately, there was no date on the picture so we could not ascertain when the picture was taken. Toko Oen has been well-known for its delicious food. There was a nice selection on its menu with traditional Indonesian food and Dutch

[1] My host family consisted of my mother and father, both in their mid-sixties, sister and her husband, both in their mid-thirties and two nieces aged 13 and 6 years old.

influenced dishes. Although my host family planned to buy ice cream, they ended up buying other food as well after a few negotiations between them. My host father asked for an oxtail soup while my young niece preferred friend prawn as snacks. My host mother asked me if I wanted to try Lumpia Semarang, traditional spring rolls, which I delightedly accepted and shared with her. My host sister was in charge of ordering the food and telling the waitress our order after she asked her eldest daughter what food she wanted to eat. As soon as my host brother-in-law joined us she told him what she had ordered and he accepted it without any complaints. He just came from his office as he had to work on Saturdays until early afternoon. Soon after we finished eating and my host father paid the bill we all went home on separate cars yet to a same house as they all lived on the same address.

With the vignette above I would like to show a glimpse of a family dynamic in Semarang on a Saturday afternoon to illustrate some points I make in this chapter. This chapter starts with a section on a historical background of studies in anthropology of parenting. I feel the urgency to explain it to give the overview of past studies in the field of anthropology in regards to parenting and to provide a justification that my own research is quite unique in a way that only a few other ethnographic studies thus far have been focused on certain issues of mothering and motherhood. These earlier studies used ethnographic approaches although they were not always conducted by anthropologists. However, they are warranted to be mentioned in this chapter as they provide me with a framework to work with. The second section is dedicated for a discussion on family dynamics in Indonesia, particularly in Java. I draw from ethnographic texts on parenting pioneered by Hildred Geertz in 1961 and current investigations on Javanese parents and their roles as parents to support my fieldwork in Semarang. In the third section I seek to discuss the conception of good mother in the

light of being pious. I use my field notes, data from the interviews and other pertinent references to illustrate my point that pious Muslim women strive to be good mothers in which I underline the process of 'becoming' rather than the 'end product'. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

The Anthropology of Parenting: A Historical Overview

Anthropologists have long recognized mothering as crucial to the transmission of culture, the development of enculturated persons, the constitution of kinship, family, and household, and the reproduction of society (Barlow & Chapin, 2010, p. 324).

What is "parenting"? The term which became popular only since the 1950s among psychologists, sociologists and self-help practitioners in North America has spread beyond the US and used widely since then (Faircloth, Hoffman and Layne, 2013). Faircloth, Hoffman and Layne (2013, p. 1) state that as anthropology gives emphasise on cultural variability, "parenting" from an anthropological perspective "might be seen as a particular historically and socially situated form of childrearing, a product of late twentieth century ideological shifts around family, kinship, risk and social morality. As underline by Faircloth, Hoffman and Layne (2013) the ideologies of parenting are intimately tied to more traditional kinship studies in anthropology and hence the discussion about parent-child interaction generally come under the rubric "kinship" (p. 6).

Indeed, early ethnographic studies on parenting were mostly found in research of childhood (LeVine, 2007) and kinship (Faircloth, 2014), which were conducted in remote areas and faraway places among non-Western societies as well as among the more familiar communities in Western countries. It is believed that customary practices regarding children and their activities to have direct connections with childrearing

particularly on how parents regard and treat their children (Chao and Tseng, 2002). Child-rearing practices in all cultures involve imparting skills, norms and behaviour patterns from one generation to the next. Parenting also means inculcating and patterning attitudes, motivation, perceptions, values, and belief to the children so they are able to function and adjust well in the society (Nanda and Warms, 2007). In fact, anthropologists have taken interest in parenting as they consider it "crucial to the transmission of culture, the development of enculturated persons, the constitution of kinship, family, and household, and the reproduction of society" (Barlow and Chapin, 2010, p. 324). Different ethnographic studies of parenting have been conducted using anthropological lens, however some − especially the earlier investigations − are part of a bigger picture of how children grow up in a particular society. For example Margaret Mead in her book *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930/1967) in which she describes about Manus children and the way they grow up on the island, the narratives about parenting are practically embedded within stories about the children. As Walks (2011) states in her book on anthropology of mothering that it is true "mothering" has been studied by anthropologist, yet it was mostly conducted implicitly and not until the publication of Kitzinger's *Women as Mothers* (1978) that the study of mothers, mothering and motherhood received more attention. Kitzinger (1978, p. 13) argues, "social anthropology has, for the most part, neglected the private world of women and communication within the family to concentrate instead on larger issues in the public arena of tribal life". Yet recent ethnographic publications are more explicit in which parent in a particular society takes the centre stage in the narratives and is discussed as the main point of reference. For example Brigg's work (1991) on Inuit child-rearing practices describes how skills for solving problems are passed down from the elders to children. Having said that, my point in this section is to explain the studies of parenting

that are scattered on pages in which children's stories are a part of and to collect investigations of child rearing offered by anthropology as opposed to the more commonly used approaches of psychology.

It was as early as the 19th century that records of children were made in the forms of literary and journalistic texts focusing on the plight faced by children amidst the harsh reality of life due to economic exploitation, and aiming for the betterment of children's health and education (LeVine, 2007). As LeVine (2007, p. 248) states that "from about 1880 to 1920, childhood was increasingly formulated in what might be called *pediatric* and *pedagogical* terms" (italics in original) since the newly expanded medical and educational institutions gave rise to interest in investigating and improving the care and learning of children. By 1920, influenced by Sigmund Freud's writings, which claimed that parenting had huge impacts on young children − bad and good − there were extraordinary attention to the subjective experience of children and increased public scrutiny on the best way to raise a child, stages of child development and what is considered the normal child (LeVine, 2007, p. 248). Around the same time, missionaries and colonial administrations − followed later by missionary ethnographers such as Henry Junod (1912) − showed in their ethnographic literature of diverse societies that the concepts of good parenting and normal child development are varied across cultures (LeVine, 2007).

By 1928 professional anthropologists like Margaret Mead (1928/1975, 1928) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1929), based on their fieldwork in Samoa and Trobriand Islands respectively, ventured different portrayals of childhood, which contrasted sharply with earlier claims on generically human concept of child and sexual development (LeVine, 2007). Even though Mead (1928)[2] and Malinowski (1929) did

[2] Freeman (1983), based on his own ethnographic research in Samoa, refutes the findings published in Mead's book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). Yet it is not within the scope of this text that I discuss

not start their ethnographic fieldwork to counter the propositions of psychologists of universal child development pathways, their quests to describe child rearing and the activities of children offered different realities in the societies they studied. For example, Mead (1928) found out that contrary to the experiences of adolescents in the United States at the time who underwent turmoil youth and claimed to be a human universal by Hall (1904), Samoan children lived a fairly relax life with ease. As Mead (1928, p. 301) elucidates "the children grow up, acquainted with the rhythm of life and death, accepting life as simply and as unrebelliously as do their parents". Malinowski (1929) also argues that Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex in young children is not present among the Trobriand Islanders with matrilineal family dynamics. He explains that both parents − mother and father − have equal status and same responsibilities in infant care and although parents disciplined their children yet children also beat their parents "quite as often" (Malinowski, 1929, p. 45).

Later on other universal propositions of psychological theories were subjected to cultural critiques by anthropologists. LeVine (2007) in his article on historical background on ethnographic studies of childhood explains that anthropologists refuted Jean Piaget's childhood cognitive development (for example Greenfield, 1966; Shweder and LeVine, 1975); Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development cognitively based model (Shweder, Mahapatra and Miller, 1990), and John Bowlby-Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory (Harwood, Miller and Lucca-Irizarry, 1995; LeVine and Norman, 2001) to name but a few. Hence, LeVine (2007) suggests that these anthropological studies emerged as cultural critiques of developmental theory and developmental formulations in psychology.

Freeman's book or Shankman's publication (2009) on his analysis on Freeman's and Mead's works and the controversy surrounding them.

In particular anthropologists who study childhood have focused their research on a number of topics, including the meanings of parenting in different cultural contexts in order to achieve a scientific understanding of childhood in a myriad of cultural settings (LeVine and New, 2008). Margaret Mead in her book *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1930/1963) shows that cultural variations in child rearing are worth studying to understand human development across cultures. Parenting style in Manus society is starkly different to the one is commonly used in the United States. Manus fathers are the principle caretakers of their children, who provide tender and affectionate guardianship while mother takes the secondary role in the child's affection. After a Manus mother gives birth she has the obligation to help her brother so she leaves the care of her baby to her husband. It is a common sight to see children clinging to their fathers and sleeping with them. Hence, children seemed to be drawn away from their mothers and are more attached to their fathers. The contrast in parenting with America, Mead (1963) suggests may explain the dissimilarity in the ways a child grows up in these two societies.

Similarly, Aka fathers (Hewlet, 2011b; 2008) also have close relationships with their children. Aka infants are always in a very close distance to their fathers as they are the ones who provide care more so than their mothers. This happens, as Hewlet states (2011b; 2008), not merely because fathers assist with caregiving while mothers preparing food or collecting wood, rather Aka fathers in general do immensely look after their children in camp as well as out of camp.

Likewise, Malinowski (1929; 2008) observes Trobriand husbands share the care of the children with their wives. They feed, bathe, carry and caress their baby and enjoy their duty as fathers. Trobriand fathers have a loving relationship with their infants as they carry their children for hours and look into their eyes with affection and pride.

Meanwhile, Trobriand women have the duty to cook and carry water from the water-hole where women gather and gossip among them. It is in this site that women share secrets with other women without revealing them to their husbands, just as the men have secrets which they keep between them.

In other cultures, mother and father interact differently with their children. For example !Kung mothers have a close bond with their infants for long duration and with limited restrictions (Konner, 1977; 2005; 2008). !Kung infants are constantly breast-fed whether they are visibly anxious or not. It is apparent that mother-infant bond is characterised by high level of indulgence. Skin-to-skin physical contacts between infants and their mothers take place very often in which the mothers carry their new born in a sling pressed against their sides that become lessen when the children turn two. Mothers and their infants are within a very dense social context where they never alone and often surrounded by their relatives and friends. Although !Kung mother is the primary care giver this does not mean that !Kung father has a distant relationship with his child. He holds and fondles his children although when they cry the mother takes his place instead (Konner, 2005). !Kung parents acknowledge the importance of closeness with their children as this attachment serves as the base for developing sense of security and emotional stability later on in life (Shostak, 1981). In parents' eyes being children is to be irresponsible in terms of their conducts and emotional expressions in which growing up means learning to act with sense. !Kung children can become cooperative, generous and hardworking with or without deliberate training because these qualities emerge "simply as a result of maturation, social pressure and the desire to conform to group values" (Shostak, 1981, p. 49). Although !Kung parents believe that children need to be disciplined yet in reality parents indulge their children no matter their age is and physical punishment is rarely used (Shostak, 1981). It is interesting to note here that

for some communities, like !Kung, parents' roles in child rearing are not considered significant in shaping children's personality and behaviour.

Conversely, contrary to !Kung who emphasise maturation, social pressure and the desire to conform to group values as key factors to develop well-adjusted children, Fulani society of West Africa stresses the importance of having a "good mother" for the child to turn out well (Riesman, 1992). However, "good mother" according to Fulani is far from the meaning of women with excellent mothering skills which is common to our understanding of being a good mother, instead she needs to be "simply a woman who comes from a 'good' family, that is prestigious and influential family" (Riesman, 1992, p. 162). Her character or parenting behaviours is not considered to be the primary aspect in determining how the child turns out. The basic premise of child rearing for the Fulani is to shape and maintain the relationship between parents and children instead of creating their children's character (Riesman, 1992). Riesman (1992) suggests that for the Fulani parents' actions or the parent as model has nothing to do with the development of child's personality as they emphasise either lineage or mother's milk as the contributor of child's bad or good character. Good or bad qualities in a child are believed to be transmitted naturally without learning as they are to be God-given.

A more recent anthropology publication focusing on child rearing is an ethnographic research of the high Peruvian Andes Chillihuani community (Bolin, 2006). Based on her extensive fieldwork among the herders in the highland, Bolin (2006) shares fascinating narratives of children's lives from birth to adulthood and describes amazing strategies of child rearing which allow fertile and conducive environment for learning, sharing, and developing self-esteem. In spite of the grinding poverty and environmental stress, children in Chillihuani have a happy childhood and become adults with high moral values. Bolin points out that parenting style used tends

to be permissive in which children are “loved, cuddled, fed on demand, and allowed to explore anything that does not prove dangerous or fragile” (2006, p. 151). At the same time children learn the behavioural norms showed by adults and older siblings and accepted by family and community. These norms are based on reciprocity in which respect is the core. Maintaining an egalitarian society in which everyone is equal and an overly competitive environment is absence, and where children are respected and appreciated, seems to be the key to building sense of self-confidence and self-reliant in Andes children (Bolin, 2006).

Meanwhile, other recent studies from an anthropological gaze are focused on mothering and fathering as a separate entity, for example investigations compiled by Liamputtong (2007), Taylor, Layne and Wozniak (2004) and Ragoné and Twine (2000) in their anthologies of motherhood or by Hewlet (2011a) in his compilation of studies on fatherhood. Special attention towards motherhood and fatherhood seems to be warranted since academics recognise the importance of understanding cultural aspects of the mother’s and father’s roles separately due to their distinctive parent-child relationships. The study of mothering has been conducted within the domain of sexual-biological aspects, such as breastfeeding, pregnancy and birth or within the scope of mother’s social engagement, which include their everyday tasks as the persons who are responsible for their child’s health, education, spiritual development and language learning (Walks, 2011; Smyth, 2012). As Hays (1996) emphasises the moral education in raising virtuous children has become mothers’ principle responsibility replacing fathers since the nineteenth century. More specifically, psychological anthropologists have been particularly interested to study mothers’ behaviour and feelings (Longabaugh, 1973; Volk, 2009), sociocultural variation in maternal discipline

(Tulviste, 2004) and concepts of “good” and “bad” mothering (Barlow, 2004; Whitting, 1996), to name but just a few.

Yet, there have only been a few studies on parenting conducted in Indonesia since the early twentieth century and even less which use anthropological lens as their underpinning methodological approaches. For example research on parental demands (Danzinger, 1960), child care of working mothers (Khisbiyah, 1992), and mother-child interactions in play setting (Zevalkink and Riksen-Walraven, 2001) were conducted from the perspectives of psychology. Only a handful of ethnographic investigations in Indonesia in which parenting is the core subject of the research. One example that lightly touches the topic of child rearing is Hildred Geertz’s (1961) ethnography on Javanese family, which I explain in more detail below. Another one is a collection of articles based on anthropological studies in Indonesia on motherhood (Swasono, 1998) yet this anthology ‘merely’ covers the pre-natal period until the first period of babies’ lives particularly the first few months. The extent of areas being covered is vast from Java to Lombok and Sulawesi. However, the issues discussed do not go beyond women’s health, reproduction and baby care. This is just to say that my current study on parenting, Muslim mothers and Indonesian media is uniquely situated among other, apparently few, research on parenting in Indonesia.

Overall, this brief note on a historical overview shows the progression of interest in anthropological research of parenting and parenthood from being a part of a larger study on kinship and childhood to being a more explicit and focused study in its own right on motherhood and fatherhood.

Family Dynamics in Java

Sometime after his fifth or sixth year the child becomes aware that his parents, especially his father, seem no longer to have the degree of permissive, indulgent warmth

that he has been used to; instead, they increasingly expect him to be obedient, self-controlled, and polite. (Geertz, 1961, p. 109)

Nurul[3] has three children between the ages of 6 and 14 years old. She said that in terms of parenting, her husband seems to be the one who is more lenient towards their children. Sometimes they disagreed on whether to give permission for their teenage son to go somewhere. When she refused to let her children do something, sometimes her husband agreed to their requests. Recently her eldest son asked them to buy him a pair of shoes and a mobile phone for him. Nurul asked her son which one he needed the most. Since her son said he preferred the shoes the most if he had to choose one out of the two, they bought him a pair of shoes. However, her husband was looking for a mobile phone for their son, because he wanted him to have it as well. Reluctantly Nurul gave in to her husband's plea as she knew that her husband did not have the heart to refuse his children's wishes. Also, she said that she was amazed that I could let my adult son to live and work in Jakarta while I reside in Auckland with my husband and other children. I told her that my husband and I already promised our children that after they have finished their bachelor degree in Auckland they could go overseas for their job if they wanted to. She could not understand because when she let her young son went camping for two days she could not bear the longing. She wanted to see her son even though his teachers were there to look after him and other children.

The above excerpt[4] shows different relationships between mother and father towards their son and how each family may have its own values, anxieties and hopes for their children. Nurul's and her husband's relationships with their children may not be similar to how my husband and I interact with our children even though all of us are of

[3] All names have been changed to protect the privacy of my participants.
[4] The excerpt is taken from my field notes based on my interview with Nurul. Although most of the interviews were recorded yet a few of them were not possible to be audio taped for some reasons (see Methodology section for further discussion on this issue).

Javanese background. However, Hildred Geertz (1961) found out from her fieldwork in Java that there are some similarities among Javanese in their relationships with the family members.

In the early 1960s Geertz published *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialisation* (1961) which became a stepping stone to a few other studies and discourses on gender and kinship in Java (such as Harley, 1990; Schröder-Butterfill, 2005; Stoller, 1977). The issue of parenting in this ethnographic text is embedded within the narratives of kinship and socialisation among Javanese people in the Central and East Java. The basic premise of parenting in Java according to Geertz (1961) is based on an understanding that before a child turns five or six, he or she is said to be *durung jawa*, which literary means "not yet Javanese" (p. 105) and to be *durung ngerti* or "not yet understand" (p. 105). These imply the child is in a state of impulsivity in which emotional control is lacking and comprehension of matters around him/her is absence and these related notions of being *jawa* and *ngerti* will be reached through maturity and learning.

There was an 'incident' one evening in my host family's home. When I was watching news on Metro TV in the living room my host sister and young niece came and joined me after my niece finished her bath and was going to do her Kumon[5] homework. There was news on two female Indonesian workers stabbed to death in Hong Kong by an English man at an affluent apartment. I suddenly realised that my niece was there. Even though she was busy reading her homework she definitely could hear the news. I asked my sister whether I should change the channel because I could see from the corner of my eyes my niece seemed to listen to the news as well. But my

[5] Kumon is an extracurricular mathematics course for children between pre-school and high school age. The Kumon method of teaching was first introduced in 1954 by Toru Kumon, a Japanese high school mathematics teacher and due to its success it has been taught in 48 countries, including Indonesia, and to more than four million children world-wide (based on June 2013 data) (Kumon, 2015)..

sister said there was no need to switch the channel since her daughter has no attention to this kind of TV programme. So for about tens of seconds the news was still on as my sister joined me watching the newscast. However, as soon as my sister went towards the dining room I quickly clicked the remote button to a quiz programme. I could see the dilemma that is faced by mothers in Indonesia. While news programme often broadcast news on criminal acts involving Indonesians in the country and overseas, their children could be there just at arm's length to the TV set doing their homework or something else. Parents have to be on alert all the time if they do not want their children to be exposed by these kinds of news as usually TV broadcasts criminal news simultaneously with other news such as political and business news. My sister calmed demeanour in contrast to my tense reaction in this whole escapade may be due to her view that her six year old daughter *durung ngerti*, and hence she may not understand what was portrayed on the television.

I also suggest that being *durung jawa* and *durung ngerti* are also the reasons which made my sister did not take any action toward her young daughter when her rabbit urinated in the living room. Since they have a domestic helper (*pembantu*) who did the chores – cleaning, cooking, laundry, and ironing – she relied on her to clean the mess left by the rabbit. However, my mother was worried the *pembantu*[6] wanted to leave the house as at the time there was no other *pembantu* in the house except her and there were too many errands needed to be done. Since it was difficult now to find a good and trustworthy domestic helper, my mother did not want to jeopardise the situation by adding a few more tasks for her to the already stressful and tiring condition. Hence, she asked for my advice on how to solve the problem as she remembered that I used to be a child psychologist. Looking back at what I recommended my clients in a

[6] Usually my mother has more than one domestic helper who shared the house-holds chores between them. Not long before I came to the house and until the first week of my second month in the house there was only one *pembantu* who was then joined by another female *pembantu*.

similar situation I revealed a few tips based on behavioural modification techniques[7], which the family could use, and my mother gladly accepted to pass them to my sister. A few days later she told me that after she had a conversation with her daughter about the matter, my young niece suddenly had a change of heart. So instead of being neglectful and did not clean the rabbit's pee, she took the initiatives to clean the mess herself. I asked my mother what happened and she told me that my sister talked to her young daughter and explained that if she let the *pembantu* to clean the mess while she already had loads of tasks to do my niece would drive her to despair and she would leave the house for good, and since my niece was really close to her[8] she could not bear to be apart from her and so she understood the consequence of her action. In this context my sister seemed to encourage *wedi* (fear) (Geertz, 1961) in her daughter that she would lose the *pembantu*'s attention and care if she was misbehaved. Since the rabbit was hers and it was her responsibility to take care of it, then if undesirable consequences happened to the *pembantu* it would be because of her own doing. Teaching *wedi* is the first step towards learning *isin*[9] and *sungkan*[10] which are essential in grooming the child to understand the Javanese value of respect. As Geertz (1961) explains "*Wedi* means 'afraid' in both physical sense and in the social sense of apprehension of unpleasant consequences of action" (p. 111). Thus by encouraging *wedi* in her daughter she, in fact, was starting to impart respect towards others in her child.

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[7] The tips involve making a simple 'contract' between the child and her parents by giving her some rewards for her expected good behaviours, similar to one of the six techniques applied to Javanese children to control their behaviour mentioned by Koentjaraningrat (1985, p. 241).

[8] Although *mbok mban* (female servant) whose sole duty is to look after a child is no longer exist in Java nowadays and is replaced by a baby sitter in a well-to-do *priyayi*'s house (Koentjaraningrat, 1985), yet in a family with a child the task to care for the child in the absence of the mother, due to work or other reasons, is assigned to *pembantu*, usually a female one with which the child develops a close relationship. *Mbok mban* is different to *pembantu* because *mbok mban* becomes a part of the family and usually resides in the house for all her life (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). I may add that there is a sense of loyalty from *mbok mban* towards her employer's family which may be lacking in *pembantu*.

[9] *Isin* is similar to shame, shyness, embarrassment and guilt (Geertz, 1961, p. 111).

[10] *Sungkan* is particularly Javanese and there is no translation in English. *Sungkan* is similar to *isin* yet without having the feeling of doing something wrong (Geertz, 1961, p. 114).

As my sister and her family resided with her parents since the beginning of her marriage, her parents had, to some extent, opportunities to influence how she and her husband inculcate normative cultural as well as Islamic values in the children. Even though in the vignette above her mother had little to say about the matter as my sister took a different path in solving the problem, yet the talk they had regarding the rabbit issue sparked my sister's willingness to say something to her young daughter. As Geertz (1961) mentions the process of socialisation – "the maintenance of normative continuity from generation to generation" – are maintained "by the very structure of the kinship system itself" (p. 3). In Javanese culture kinship within the nuclear family takes the centre stage although household may take different forms. Several of my participants' household comprised of a father, a mother and their children. They might have a *pocoan*[11] or a relative to look after the children when the father and mother went to work. The relative could be the mother's sister as in Nisa's case or the father-in-law as in Vina's situation. Living with parents-in-law of the wife is quite uncommon in Java as the custom seems to be more of having parents-in-law of the husband. There were a few times that I heard Vina's colleagues praised her for her willingness to take care of her sick father-in-law in the absence of his wife who already passed away a few years back. Vina told me how she managed to have her father-in-law at her small house and the demanding tasks she needed to do for him health wise as he had been ill for years[12]. However, she took these responsibilities as her way to *mengabdi* (serve) him as a good daughter-in-law. As Subandi (2011) suggests the most common practice among Javanese families in terms of living arrangement is uxorilocal residence in which the

[11] A *pocoan* (Javanese) is a housekeeper who does not live in the same house as the employer. She comes in the morning before the mother goes to work and goes home when the mother already comes back from work. Her duties may involve housework and cooking with the main task to look after the children while their parents are working. Having a *pocoan* becomes common in Semarang as it is difficult to find a *pembantu* who wants to live in.

[12] A few months after I came back to Auckland, Vina told me that her father-in-law passed away a week before she wrote her email to me.

new family tends to reside in the house owned by the wife's parents which is believed to be due to minimising frictions and tensions between a wife and her mother-in-law over household matters. Hence Vina's virilocal household arrangement is considered unique and rare, and that was why her colleagues gave her so much praise. Meanwhile, Erna lived with her daughter and parents on weekdays and joined her husband during weekends. Since the house which she shared with her husband was far away from her place of work and close to her husband's office they decided to go with such an arrangement as her parents' home was only a few kilometres away from her work place and a good school for her daughter to go to. When parents reside in the same dwelling as their adult child it does not necessarily mean that they are the one who seek security and comfort from their child since the situation can be reversed. As Koentjaraningrat (1985) suggests *priyayi*[13] in towns and cities, and peasants in villages in Java have "the same emotional feelings about children whom they consider as the bringers of warmth and happiness" (p. 233), although "the security aspect of children as an investment for old age is a consideration among the *priyayi*" (p. 233) while the peasant household regards the direct economic function of children more important. Yet, due to financial pressures for the young married couples and strong economic stability of the parents it is relatively common to see adult children live with their parents nowadays. This is not to say that the parents take no advantage of having their adult children living with them.

[13] *Priyayi* refers to upper-class nobles, aristocrats, the bureaucratic elite, and people of royal heritage and the descendants of aristocratic nobles (Daniels 2009:48). It is Java's gentry in contrast to *abangan* as Java's peasantry; is similar to *abangan* in terms of their embodied religious values yet they are more refined and polished in their behaviour, demeanour and spoken language. *Abangan* and *priyayi* are very much fascinated with traditional rituals defying the importance of "true" Islamic values (Geertz 1969, Woodward 1989, 2010). However, Koetjaraningrat (1985) elucidates that *priyayi* refers to the white-collar civil servants which is known later as *pegawai negeri*. Previously *priyayi* were comprised of two groups of people. The first was the *priyayi* who owed their title of *priyayi* to their ancient aristocratic origin and had the opportunity to work as government officials due to their titles of nobility. This was the most prestigious category of the *priyayi* (Koentjaraningrat, 1985, p. 232). The second group was the people who acquired their position in the civil service due to their education, even though they originally came from the rural or the lower class of the town population (Koentjaraningrat. 1985, p. 233). Nowadays, the word *priyayi* "primarily connotes ethical values and modes of behaviour rather than official position" (Anderson, 2007, p. 38).

As my host father told me that he would be ‘lost’ if his daughter and her family took up the offer of promotion to work at the head office in Jakarta. Thus, it can be said that the centrality of family for Javanese is paramount. Feelings of *tentrem* (peace), *hangat* (emotional warmth), and *kasih sayang* (unconditional love and giving) exude amidst the family members (Geertz, 1961; Shiraishi, 1997, p. 57). As Subandi (2011, p. 333) elucidates “the importance of family is reflected in the proverb: *mangan ora mangan waton kumpul* [even if there is no food to eat, being together is the most important thing]”.

Good Mother = Pious Woman?

Seorang anak tumbuh sesuai dengan tarbiyah dan pendidikan yang diberikan kedua orang tua. Sifat-sifat orang tua menurun kepada anak [A child grows up according to upbringing and education provided by both parents. Parents’ characters are passed down to their children].
(Ihsan & al-Atsari, 2014, p. 19)

On a Saturday morning my father dropped me off at the place where my participants worked because I was going to attend a seminar on Muslim parenting. Nisa told me about the seminar and she sent me a photograph of its poster as she knew that I might be interested to attend. The seminar was called *Anak Shalih Aset Luar Biasa Dunia Akherat* [Pious Children are Incredible Assets of the Hereafter] given by a presenter who came especially from Jakarta. He is a national trainer of Qur’anic Parenting whose job is to give presentation on Muslim parenting throughout Indonesia at the invitation of local event organisers. When I arrived in front of the building I saw on the wall two signs with “male” and “female” printed on them. So they separated the space for women and men, I thought. It was quite uncommon when I lived in Indonesia more than fifteen years ago to have an event in which male and female participants or guests to seat in different parts of a room although such practice has become more

frequent nowadays in certain places. However, I only saw a desk for the registration with three men in front of the "male" door and there was no desk in front of the "female" door. Since it was still early and the female section seemed to be empty from the outside, I asked the men where I could pay for the registration and pick up the seminar material. One of them told me to go inside the "female" door. So I did and saw the desk with two women behind the wall of the entrance door. The two young women wore *hijab syar'i*[14]. I also observed a few women who were still talking with their friends outside or already seated inside were wearing similar outfit. I thought I might be the only audience wearing trousers and my guess was confirmed when more women came. Some of them brought their young children with them. The space for women, which was larger than the space for men, was full while there were only eight men attending whom four of them came with their wives. Most of the audiences were young mothers and fathers and young women and men. A few of the men had beard.

Figure 1: Qur'anic parenting seminar in Semarang (2014). Photograph by Nisa, a participant.

[14] *Hijab syar'i* is a term commonly used nowadays to describe a large head covering which cover the bosom and loose long garment *('abāya*). The term *syar'i* is used to indicate the style of the attire and head covering which is believed following the guidance based on Islamic texts of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* (Affan, 2015).

Figure 2: The difference between* hijab syar'i *and the more stylish hijab which is called* jilbab gaul *which according to the blogger is more expensive than hijab syar'i (gizanherbal, 2012).

Before the event started there was a video on the screen with audio explaining about *akhlaq*[15], purification of soul (*pensucian diri*)[16] and taking care of orphans with verses from the Qur'an supporting the explanations. I was becoming a little impatient as the seminar which was scheduled to start at 8 am had not started after more than a quarter an hour past eight. As I was anxiously waiting and told myself to get used to *jam karet*[17] that I often experienced in Semarang, suddenly someone from behind called me and put her head forward towards me. It was Yanti, my participant. I stood up and greeted her and she kissed me on the cheek. She then moved to sit beside me as I moved

[15] *Akhlaq* (Arabic) or *akhlak* (Indonesian) means trait of characters (Islamicity, n.d.) or morals and good manners (Alkhuli, 1989), or ethics (Esposito, 2014).
[16] Purification of soul or *tazkiah* (Arabic) means purifying oneself from erroneous tendencies and beliefs and aiming for piety (Ghauri, 2009).
[17] It literarily means rubber time and refers to the common practice in Indonesia in which people and schedules seldom run on time.

my snack box to my lap. I was excited to see her and we chatted until the seminar started[18].

The speaker, who wore a batik shirt and a pair of dark coloured trousers, tried to enlighten the overall mood by using jokes throughout his speech. He said what motivated him to start a parenting seminar was due to the existing gap between parents and teachers in terms of teaching children the *adab*[19] of Islamic behaviours. For example teachers have encouraged their young students to use right hand to eat but at home their parents do not reinforce it or even give them example of eating using their left hand. Hence the children are confused which one is the right way. The speaker explained and emphasised that it was the responsibility of the parents to teach their children. Teachers are only there to reinforce the teaching at home.

Around fifty people attended the parenting seminar which showed how important Islamic parenting knowledge was for Muslim mothers and fathers. The parenting seminar then becomes a space in which Muslim parents seek to become knowledgeable and better parents for their children. This is not to say that parents who come to this type of events or read Muslim parenting magazines have no prior knowledge of child rearing, yet their presence show that they are open to any novel information. As Nisa, who also attended the seminar, told me that some of the materials discussed in the seminar were not new for her and she, in fact, has been instilling these values in her children, such as using the right hand to eat and receive or give something to others. However, there was other advice she heard in the seminar which she and her husband[20] were contemplating to do yet found it challenging to apply at home, for example waking up before the *adhan*[21] for *fajr* (*subuh*) prayer at dawn and with the

[18] Two of my other participants also attended the seminar.
[19] It refers to the prescribed Islamic etiquette and proper conduct (Esposito, 2014).
[20] After the seminar she shared and discussed the material with her husband at home.
[21] The call to prayer recited before prayers commence. It is done to make people aware that the prayers

children listening to the *adhan* together or doing the late night prayer (*tahajud*) together (*jamaah*).

The above vignette shows that the responsibility of being a Muslim mother is not simple since she is required to make sure that her children could grow up as good Muslims who uphold Islamic belief and take the right path, both generally speaking and for Islam in particular. Al-Joyyousi, Roy and Al-Salim (2014, p. 43) underline the duty of a Muslim mother as not solely for "reproduction and generational continuity, but she also is responsible to educate her children about Islamic values". Islamic canonical texts acknowledge the struggles and complexities of motherhood[22] and hence they state that mothers deserve the highest respect. According to the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*, mothers are identified as being venerated or highly respected (Oh, 2010). Mother earns more respect than father[23] even though both parents are entitled to be treated with high regard by their children. As one *ḥadīth* states[24] "the reason for giving the mother preference is due to her exhausting efforts for the sake of her child; her compassion; her service; the great difficulty of pregnancy, delivery, nursing, and rearing of the child; her service and care for the child when it is sick; and so on" (Schleifer, 2007, p. 93).

Most Javanese married couples expect to have children soon or later after they are married. They even try their hardest to have children if after a few years the wife

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are about to start.

[22] The Qur'an (46:15) asserts: "And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months. [He grows] until, when he reaches maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years, he says, 'My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to work righteousness of which You will approve and make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims'." Verse 14 of chapter 31 of the Qur'an also acknowledges the physical hardship of being a mother: "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination."

[23] *Hadīth* al-Bukhārī Volume 8, Book 73, Number 2: Narrated Abu Huraira: A man came to Allah's Apostle and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man said. "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man further said, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man asked for the fourth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your father." (http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/)

[24] Sahih Muslim bi-sharh al-Nawawi vol. 16, 102.

shows no sign of pregnancy[25]. Only a very few couples decide not to have children for one reason or other[26]. According to Geertz (1961) when they have children mother is the most significant person during the first two years of a child's life – until the child is weaned and able to walk − in which nurturance, unconditional emotional support and love are paramount in their relationships. The role of Javanese mothers is described as *trisno* (love) whereas fathers are expected to enjoy (*seneng*) their children and are to be treated with respect by their children. It is mothers who discipline and comfort their children, and guide them in their social life (Geertz, 1961). This explains why Nurul was more adamant not to spoil her son than her husband who tried to please his son by buying a mobile phone.

I met Oci when she was recently returning to work after the birth of her son around three months prior. Even though her working hours started from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon she had the permission from her superior to go home during lunch time to breastfeed her baby son. She could just stay at home the rest of the afternoon or come back to her office if she needed to attend a meeting. One day Oci came to the room where I was doing my work. Looking a little worried and concern she apologetically asked me if she could pump her breast milk in the room as she could not go home due to an unexpected meeting around midday[27]. I happily welcomed her to sit in the room and said to her to make herself comfortable. She sat very close to where I was sitting and doing some writing on my computer notebook. As I was about to leave

[25] One of my cousins sought medical treatment when she was not yet pregnant a few years after she was married and only stopped trying after a number of years she and her husband went for treatment with no success.

[26] Among my and my husband's Javanese friends only one couple that we know of who decided from early on after they just got married in early 1990s that they did not want to have children because they did not want to make their children suffer and live in Indonesia where there is no security and guarantee that their children would live a happy and comfortable life, even though this couple have good jobs and educational backgrounds. This pattern may or may not change today as young married couples are facing more financial burdens due to economic uncertainties, although Nurmila (2014) suggests that among urban educated women the tendency of not wanting children is still very unusual.

[27] She has no privacy in her own office as her desk was in one of the cubicles at a large office space.

the room and made an excuse so that she could have some privacy, she interjected and persistently asked me to stay in the room to continue what I was doing at the time. Since she was not prepared to stay at the office for a long time she left her breast pump and milk bottle at home. In the spur of the moment she used an empty Aqua[28] bottle to replace the milk bottle and her hands to massage the milk out under her *ḥijāb* [29]. I did not dare to look at her for giving her some space, however after she finished she showed me that she had half a bottle of milk, which she said she would put in a fridge and bring it home later. Oci's determination to breastfeed her son at all costs shows her nurturance attitude towards her baby son as she is the most crucial person in his life at this stage of his development. Vina, a working young mother who had a one-and-a-half year old son also told me, "*anak saya kan itu masih ASI ya, dua jam tiga jam kan bangun … saya sampekan sampai dua tahun. Insha Allah*" [my son is still breastfed, (every) two three hours (I) wake up (to breastfeed him) … I will do it until he's two. God willing]. Infant feeding by means of breast milk is believed to be the best compare to formula feeding and is defined as the practices of "good" mothering (Apple, 1995; Lee, 2008). As Murphy (1999) underlines the intention to breastfeed is always linked to the concept of "good mother" as mother is seen as prioritising her child's need over hers. This is especially true when the mantra "breast is best" (Stanway and Stanway, 1978) dominates the culture surrounding the women in their decision to breastfeed or formula feed, like in Indonesia.

Contemporary Indonesian discourses of motherhood suggest the importance of breastfeeding as part of cultural standards of "exclusive mothering" for which breast milk is paramount for children's health as well as the attachment and bonding

[28] Aqua is the brand name of one of water bottled companies in Indonesia.
[29] *Ḥijāb* or used to be popularly known as *jilbab* in Indonesia is a Muslim women's head covering (veil).

processing between mother and child (Blum, 1999). *Ummi*[30], a well-known Muslim women magazine which has been published for more than twenty five years (Hidayatullah.com, 2014), writes hundreds of articles on breastfeeding include replying readers' questions on issues of breastfeeding. Based on the premise that Muslim women have the opportunities to have active public lives outside their home besides following their *kodrat* as mothers according to Islamic tenets (*syariah*), *Ummi*'s articles discussing topics from how to 'survive' breastfeeding while fasting during the month of Ramadan (Ummi, 2013) to fathers' involvement to support their wife to provide exclusive breastfeeding to their children (Ummi, 2014). A 'secular'[31] popular family magazine *Ayahbunda* is also keen to share tips on how to breastfeed successfully including for working mothers (Ayahbunda, n.d.a). Both *Ummi* and *Ayahbunda* magazines cater for mothers, working and stay-at-home, with their similar articles and tips yet they are different in their emphasis and approach. The usage of verses from the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*[32] is essential in *Ummi* in contrast to *Ayahbunda* which relies particularly on psychological, health and educational knowledge to back up its articles. For example in an article on the importance of breastfeeding for child's growth *Ummi* (2015) cites a verse from the Qur'an: "*Para ibu hendaklah menyusui anak-anaknya selama dua tahun penuh, yaitu bagi yang ingin menyempurnakan penyusuan* [Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing (period)]" (Qur'an 2:233). Meanwhile *Ayahbunda* (n.d.b) prefers to quote the finding from a

[30] *Ummi* is an Arabic term for mother.
[31] I use the term 'secular" to denote that the magazine is not made particularly for Muslim readers. See also Yulindrasari and McGregor (2011) for discussion on Ayahbunda as a middle class Indonesian parenting magazine with contemporary discourses of motherhood and fatherhood.
[32] *Hadīth* is the recollections of individuals, including the *sahabah* (closest companions of the Prophet), about the Prophet's spoken words and deeds and that of other early Muslims. It is read in conjunction with the Qur'an. The *ḥadīth* is the implementation on how to do the Islamic tenet stated in the Qur'an. *Aḥādīth* (plural of *ḥadīth*) were collected, transmitted and taught orally for two centuries after the Prophet Muhammad's death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. Compilers were careful to record *ḥadīth* exactly as received from recognised transmission specialists.

health research centre in Australia to support its claim that breastfeeding is best to discourage later behavioural problems in children. A number of my participants read *Ummi* and Muslim parenting books or belong to a Muslim parenting group on Facebook especially to guide them in their own parenting practices.

Figure 3: Ummi (Source: https://twitter.com/ummimagazine) and Ayahbunda parenting magazines (Source: http://www.ayahbunda.co.id/majalah/ayahbunda.edisi.01.2015/170)

In Indonesia the pressure to be a (good) mother, let alone a good Muslim mother, is huge. Recalling my own experience, as soon as I was married many people, and not just my family, asked me when I would have children. As Nurmila (2014) elucidates questions such as “Have you had any children?” or “How many children do you have?” for a (newly) married woman unquestionably put her on the spot as she could feel uncomfortable and pressured by what the society expected. Despite the fact that for some women these questions seem to be annoying and go beyond the common sense of decency, yet for many Indonesians these queries are considered normal and they are as mundane as asking someone at a bus stop about the time. Mulder (1992) also explains that it is a fact of life and an obligation to marry and become parents, and deviating from this path is considered “*aneh*” (strange) and “unjavanese” (p. 24).

The social construction of motherhood in Indonesia places the duty of taking care of the children and educating them in the hand of mothers as can be seen from state law during the Suharto New Order era and many contemporary texts in the media which underline the importance of women's roles as wife and mother (Nurmila, 2014). The Marriage Law 1974 states that a husband is the leader of a household while a wife is a housewife (Article 31, point 3); a husband has the obligation to protect his wife and provides her with all the necessities for the household in accordance with his capability (Article 34, point 1); a wife is obliged to manage the household as well as possible (Article 34, point 2). In the New Order Suharto regime, the concept of gender in Indonesia was largely influenced by the state. Prescribed gender roles were set in which Indonesian woman had the duty to "support her husband, provide offspring and care for and rear children, be a good housekeeper and be the guardian of the community" (Sunindyo, 1995, p. 135). The Indonesian state upheld the notion of *kodrat* (Blackburn, 2004, p. 11) and *fitrah* (Dewi, 2012, p. 118). According to Umar (1999) *kodrat* derives from an Arabic word *qudrah* which means "the ability to do a particular thing within the bounds of appropriateness" (Dewi, 2012, p. 118). Whereas *fitrah* denotes different roles ascribed to women and men due to their respective biological structures which implies appropriateness and boundaries for both women and men (Dewi, 2012). This ideal concept of womanhood, which entails the notion of being a good mother and wife who fulfils her *kodrat*[33] (Blackburn, 2004) and *fitrah*, was disseminated in the much controlled media during this era (Brenner, 1999) and was also largely embodied by Javanese women (Dewi, 2012). In regard to Javanese culture, ideal womanhood is defined in terms of public/private division in Javanese social life and their assumed power. For middle-class Javanese women who embody *priyayi* values their

[33] *Kodrat* puts its heavy emphasis on marriage and parenting (Blackburn, 2004).

public/private division is fluid – between dominance and subordinance (Hatley, 1990, p. 179) and their status tends to be tied to that of their husbands (Srimulyani, 2012). Sullivan (1991, p. 74) asserts that the consensus thesis is that Javanese men and women are separate but equal[34]. She argues that differences in roles between men and women do not mean that men have the monopoly of power in formal structures and processes. Rather, it is acknowledged that this segregation is aimed to organise society according to the 'natural' order of things (Sullivan, 1991, p. 74), although *priyayi* women conventionally embody submissive attitude within their private space in relation to their husbands. Traditional Javanese proverbs such as *konco wingking* [serving in the back] and *swargo nunut neroko katut* [to heaven by your leave, to hell by your command] imply the submissiveness of women by being obedient towards their husbands (Doorn-Harder, 2006). According to Islamic tenet, the role of a husband is to protect and serve as the breadwinner, whereas a wife's responsibility is to bear and bring up the child (Ali, 2004) with love and affection to instil good behaviour and attitudes in her children ('Alī Al-Hāshimī, 2000). In the New Order Indonesia, the concept of 'good' and 'bad' mother was always tied with her role as nurturer of her children, husband, community and the state (Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1987; Sunindyo, 1996; Suryakusuma, 2011). This notion of state *ibuism* which was initially introduced by Suryakusuma (2011)[35] may remain unchanged today as it is suggested by Boellstorff (2012), but it may shift to

[34] The Qur'anic verses on the position on women declare the equality of spiritual level and the same rights of rewards from God for both women and men (Surat Al-'Aĥzāb 33:35; Surat Al-Ĥujurāt 49:13; Surat An-Nisā' 4:124; Surat 'Āli `Imrān 3:195) (Ali, 2004). In terms of relationship between husband and wife, Surat An-Nisā' (4:34) states the role of husband as protectors of their wives in which moral guidance and caring are the basic notion of this verse. This verse has been interpreted differently by some Muslims to indicate Muslim women as having lost their independence over their husband's superiority (see Ali, 2004 for a discussion on how different scholars interpret this verse). Yet, with the new trend of having women scholars interpreting the Qur'an Muslim women are empowering themselves with a different take on Islamic understandings (Ali, 2004; Friend, 2012).

[35] Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis (1987) is the one who coined the term *ibuism* to explain the concept of housewifisation which describes women as dependent of their husband income. Then Suryakusuma (1996) extends the term into state *ibuism* to include the role of the New Order government which encompasses economic, political and cultural elements (p.101).

some extent due to the advancement of technology and information in the current era of globalisation and to the change of political climate. Yet, Blackburn (2004) and Yulindrasari and McGregor (2011) argue that even though the identities of Indonesian women have become more complex and increasingly diverse due to the current Islamism and gender mainstreaming, their core identity remain deep-rooted in the idea of their *kodrat* as mothers.

In regards to Islam, the highest respect given to the mother does not occur in a vacuum as explained by Schleifer (1986) based on *aḥādīth*. Mother's participation in the affairs of her family takes the central stage as well as her natural attributes as the person who gives birth and embraces positive emotion[36]. The two most crucial emotions of the mother mentioned by *aḥādīth* are affection[37] and generosity[38] (Schleifer, 1986). Without revealing affection and generosity towards one's child, a mother is considered showing abnormal behaviour and being selfish according to Islamic thought (Schleifer, 1986). When I was sitting at the chief's office Nisa's came to see her superior to discuss some work and in the middle of their conversation Nisa suddenly said her apology to her superior because she wanted to answer the phone call she received on her mobile. I could not hear the ring as she might put the mobile on vibrate. Apparently it was her daughter who called her to ask about a recipe. She already came home from school and wanted to cook and asked her mother how to fry a fish. With patience and a gentle voice

[36] "Narrated Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet SAW said: Each of you is a guardian and is responsible for his ward. The ruler is a guardian and the man is a guardian odf the members of his household; and the woman is a guardian and is reposnsible for her husband's house and his offspring; and so each of you is a guardian and is responsible for his ward" (*Hadīth* al-Bukhārī Volume 7, Book 62, Number 116; Sahih Muslim Book 33 *Hadīth* 24; as also cited by Schleifer, 1987, p. 47).

[37] "Salman reported that Allah's Messenger said: Verily, Allah created, on the same very day when He created the heavens and the earth, one hundred parts of mercy. Every part of mercy is coextensive with the space between the heavens. and the earth and He out of this mercy endowed one part to the earth and it is because of this that the mother shows affection to her child and even the beasts and birds show kindness to one another and when there would be the Day of Resurrection, Allah would make full (use of Mercy)" (Sahih Muslim Book 50, Hadith 25).

[38] "Umm Salama said: I asked the Messenger of Allah whether there is a reward for me if I spend on Abu Salama's sons, and I am not going to abandon them in this state (of helplessness) for they are my sons. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. For you is the reward for what you spend on them" (Sahih Muslim Book 12, Hadith 57).

she explained in details on what to do to the fish which has already been marinated earlier in the morning. Nisa's superior, who is also a mother, was impressed and expressed her praise to Nisa because Nisa's daughter was still in her early teen and yet she was very familiar with cooking for herself when her mother was not yet home. Nisa's attentiveness towards her daughter and her superior's understanding show their affection and generosity towards one's child as recommended by the Islamic tenet, and a wife's duty in managing the household as best as she could in the midst of her daily busy schedule as a mother who works outside the home.

Hooker (2003) proposes four sources of prescription for Indonesian Muslim women in regards to their status and obligation, namely the *fatāwā*[39], state law, publications of instructional literature from Indonesian publishers and other media, and the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*) delivered at mosques in Indonesia[40]. Similarly, my participants utilised *fatwa*, parenting books and magazines, Facebook pages and social discussions with their husbands and friends to inform them about parenting practices. Hence, it is understandable that social and religious constructions of motherhood influence how Indonesian Muslim women perceive themselves and embody their roles as good mothers. My Muslim participants have inevitably embracing social and religious constructions of good mother as Javanese women whose lives have been coloured with knowledge from various sources about being good mothers and who deliberately seek pertinent information from *pengajian* (Islamic study circle), Muslim parenting books, magazines and webpages on Muslim parenting so they could become good Muslim mothers.

[39] Singular *fatwa*: opinion on a point of law or dogma given by a person with recognised authority/*ijāza* (Hooker, 2003).
[40] In his book, Hooker (2003) focuses on women's rights and duty in terms of marriage, divorce, and property, including inheritance since the *fatāwā* define family in terms of property (p. 151).

I argue that pious Javanese Muslim women with children would strive to be good mothers as prescribed by the Qur'an and *aḥādīth* and naturally in accordance with their *kodrat* as the persons who nurture and inculcate Islamic way of life towards their children. Yet, the reverse is not necessarily true – good mothers are always pious Muslims. Good mothers may embody diverse level of piety as the knowledge and know-how of good mother could be passed down from one generation to the next or available in a myriad forms from parenting books to a Saturday morning family TV programme. Regardless of their piety many women take care of their children in a favourable environment in which children could grow up to be responsible adults. Moreover, irrespective of one's religion, belief and culture, a woman could become a good mother as commended by her culture who cares for her children as I have shown in the first section of this chapter. Mothers who live in different corners of the world, in their own ways, follow what have been passed on by their parents to the next generation and proofed to be effective to bring up children to be morally upright citizens expected by their society. However in this ethnographic text my focus is on pious Javanese Muslim mothers and their everyday dealings with media in which morality is the core. The Muslim women I talked to, who strive to be pious, are keen to provide media environment best suited for their children as well as for themselves as Muslim mothers.

Figure 4: Parenting books which my participants used: Mencetak generasi rabbani: Mendidik buah hati menggapai ridha Ilahi [Making rabbani generation: Teaching children to aim for God's contentment] (left); Yuk, jadi orangtua shalih!: Sebelum meminta anak shalih [Lets be pious parents!: Before asking children to be pious].

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a myriad of investigations on parenting from the perspective of anthropological lens. Every culture has its own way to care for the children and to inculcate ethically meaningful values to the children so they could become sensible adults expected by the community. However, the pressure to be a good mother in Indonesia seems to be more profound than the societies I described in the first section of this chapter. As Mulder (1992) explains Javanese parents are judged by the performance of their children and hence it is customary to hear people ask a child "Whose child are you?"[41] (p. 27). The compelling demands for Islamicisation in

[41] In a social or reunion gathering often people ask (teenage/young adult) children, who accompany their parents to this meeting, about their school, job and other accomplishments. The friends or relatives of the parents marvel at excellent achievements made by these young people by expressively saying "*Pinternya anak Ibu/Pak X*" [It's so clever Mrs/Mr. X's children] or something in this line. A few days ago I received a Whatsapp message for my extended family group saying that my niece in Tokyo has given birth to a baby girl. At once every one in the group conveyed his/her congratulations. Most of them wrote "*Selamat atas kelahiran putri pertama. Semoga menjadi anak yang sholeha. Aamiin*" [Congratulations for the birth of the first daughter. Hopefully she will be a pious girl] with a few adding the words "*Semoga menjadi kebanggaan orangtua*" [Hopefully she can be the pride and joy of her parents]. These show how

Indonesia are adding to the burden of the existing surmountable mothering responsibilities and obligations dictated by the state and Javanese culture. It is not an easy task for Javanese Muslim women to become good mothers especially in the midst of the persistence competing secular ideas of modern identity. Muslim mothers with whom I spoke showed me how they use different means and media to abide to Islamic and Javanese traditions of being a good mother and wife as in the case of Nurul who gave in to her husband's wishes to buy their son a mobile phone which showed the insistence of obedient wife. Although Indonesia is no longer ruled by the New Order regime since 1998, yet state *ibuism* remains unchanged and due to the current Islamism and gender mainstreaming the identities of Javanese Muslim mothers become more multi-layered in which the notions of *kodrat* as mothers and piety take centre stage.

Households in Semarang may take different forms, from a small unit of parents and children in one house to a larger unit which include people from three generations with house maids in a dwelling. Whatever the size of a household it affects the family dynamics within which each member participates to build a home with *rasa* (feeling) *tentrem*, *hangat*, and *kasih sayang*. Vina, Erna, Nurul, Nisa or my host family particularly chose to or must live in their different forms of households with dissimilar family dynamics to accommodate the needs of family members. The family dynamics can also be seen in the ways these mothers deal with media in their everyday lives which I will explain in the next chapters. How do they negotiate celebrity gossip shows within the frame of their Islamic understanding since infotainment shows have become contested within the realm of the Indonesian television landscape and have created a sense of ambivalence for some Muslims? How do they negotiate Korean and Indian television dramas as avid viewers in the current Islamism? How do their use of

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children's performances are attached to parents and their parenting. Any achievements whether they are academic, employment or piety, to some extent, are due to the parents, especially mother and how good they have been caring and inculcating values to their children.

Facebook shape their own piety and religious practices? How as users does Facebook influence their parenting practices? How do their identity as Muslim women and mothers evolve due to their exposure to and use of Facebook? To which extent does Facebook provide a platform for shaping pious self-understandings? Do they find motherhood challenging due to the influences of media they read, watch and use which reshape their understanding of Muslim motherhood? Do they become more pious, or on the contrary, more 'moderate' in their mothering because of their media engagement? It is these questions which I will explore in the next chapters.

Chapter Four

Muslim Mothers and Indonesian Gossip Shows[1]

"The domestic presence of television for ordinary women is not simply a means of escaping from boredom or deriving pleasure, but it also serves as a tool for the reflexive exploration of their lives, for their expression of the reflexivity of the self" (Kim, 2005, p. 196).

For more than a decade of living in New Zealand I had no interest in Indonesian television until I watched it during a visit to Indonesia in 2012. What struck my family was how infotainment has dominated the screen and how 'vulgar' they have become. For my teenage daughter who has been brought up as a Muslim it was incomprehensible to find a country with a majority Muslim population allowing numerous gossip shows to be broadcast in which celebrities unhesitatingly air their private affairs on television. She was stunned by what she watched because she understood that according to the Islamic tenet[2] gossiping is not permissible, yet Indonesian Muslims have gossip shows on their plate every day. Then I began to ponder what living in Indonesia as Muslim mothers would entail. How do they negotiate the Indonesian media, especially television, in their busy lives as mothers? How do they appropriate the abundance of infotainment[3] programming on television? It is with these questions in mind that I started my research journey and paid particular attention to Indonesian media.

Shortly after I arrived in Semarang I went to the local immigration office to have my New Zealand passport stamped with an Indonesian special visa for foreign researchers.

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[1] This chapter is based on a journal article I wrote for Indonesia and the Malay World (see Hartono, 2015). A few revisions have been made by adding data from my fieldwork in Semarang and inserting more discussions. The journal article was based on the discussion on Facebook closed group I set up especially for this research. Overall, it has been tailored to suit a chapter of a thesis.

[2] *Sūrah* (chapter) Hujurat (49) verses 12 in the Qurʼan stipulates the condemnation of gossip in Islam for Muslims and its advice to avoid any forms of gossip: "O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is accepting of repentance and merciful" (The Noble Qurʼan, 2015).

[3] According to Oxford Dictionaries (2016) infotainment is television programme which contains news and serious subjects presented in entertaining way. However, gossip shows on Indonesian television are popularly known as infotainment, which is a portmanteau of information and entertainment. In Indonesia, the label 'infotainment' is especially used for gossip shows. No other television programme with information and entertainment content is categorised as infotainment.

As soon as I entered the room I saw there were two flat-screen television sets. One of them was turned on. The immigration officers behind the long L-shaped desk kept working with an infotainment programme on the screen in the background. While I was waiting for my turn to talk to one of the officers, I watched celebrities were being interviewed before and after a communal prayer to commemorate the ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā[4] the day before which fell on a Sunday. The short interviews took place both amongst their families on their way to the prayer and when these celebrities came to the slaughter area at a mosque in Jakarta after prayer. It was impossible for me to clearly listen to their conversations because the volume was not loud enough for anyone to hear. It was quite inaudible. These celebrities, female and male, all wore expensive-looking and proper Muslim dresses and outfits, similar to what most people in Jakarta wear during the ʻĪd al-Fiṭr[5] prayer. The women, who usually wear Western style clothing without veil, donned a long dress with a matching *ḥijāb*. The men dressed in a *koko*[6] and a *kopiah*[7]. I looked around and there were a number of people waiting in the immigration room. However, none of them seemed to take notice of the infotainment programme. They were occupied with their own activities. A man sat beside me was checking his mobile phone and scrolling down its menu. A group of three people —two women and a man— on my right were busy talking among themselves. Yet this lack of attention from the audience does not mean infotainment is no longer popular. Many television stations in Indonesia never cease to air gossip shows as they believe these programmes captivate huge viewers, including many Muslim women.

This chapter explores Indonesian infotainment on television and the debate surrounding their content which incites public disputes particularly within an Islamic framework. My discussion is based on infotainment programme viewings, Facebook group discussions with Muslim mothers, fieldwork in Semarang and public discourses on

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[4] It is written as Idul Adha in Indonesian language or Eid-al-Adha. It is a festival of sacrifice celebrated every year on 10th Dhul Hijja of the Islamic calendar to honour the willingness of the prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son as an act of submission to God's command.

[5] In Indonesian language is known as Idul Fitri. It is also written as Eid-al-Fitr. It is a festival celebrated to mark the end of fasting month of Ramaḍān, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

[6] *Baju koko* is a shirt with Chinese collar. It is usually worn by male in Java during the ʻĪd al-Fiṭr and ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā. The name 'koko' presumably came from the word *gòhgō* or brother in Hokkien. According David Kwa, an enthusiast of Chinese Indonesian culture, *baju koko* is a recreation from Chinese outfit known as 'tui-khim' and was typically donned by old Chinese male (http://www.anneahira.com/baju-koko.htm).

[7] *Kopiah* or *peci* is a cap, mostly worn by Indonesian, Malaysian and Brunei male. It is also known as *songkok*.

Indonesian infotainment on YouTube and in the Indonesian media. A glimpse into the history and the nature of Indonesian television and infotainment is provided to serve as a backdrop to celebrity culture in Indonesia and oscillating opinions of gossip shows. Rather than focusing merely on the debate between infotainment as entertainment programme versus hard news, this chapter also underlines the fact that Muslim mothers seem to be entangled in the controversy of celebrity gossip shows in the context of their propriety.

Indonesian Television Landscape

The Indonesian television landscape went through a major facelift when Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI) became the first commercial television network alongside the national television Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) in 1988 (Sen 1994). TVRI had no competition from any other television network since 1962 (Hollander et al., 2009; Kitley, 2000) until Bambang Trihatmojo, the son of Suharto, the ruling Indonesian president at the time, established RCTI as part of his major conglomerate (Sen and Hill, 2000). This was soon followed by four other privately owned television networks, namely Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV) in 1989, Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI) in 1990, ANTV in 1993 and Indosiar in 1995 (Sen & Hill, 2000).[8] From 2000, other television channels have also broadcast nationally, such as Metro TV (2000), Trans TV (2001), TV One, Global TV and Trans7 (all in 2002). These television stations were owned by Suharto's family and his associates, which was made possible by the privileges they gained from being inside the inner circle of the palace. These private television networks secured national access via the Palapa satellite through a government deregulation in 1993 and the Broadcasting Act 1996/1997 (Sen & Hill, 2000).

After the fall of the Suharto regime, the Broadcasting Act 1996/1997 was renewed in 2002 to include the newly and purposefully set up KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia/ Indonesian Broadcasting Commission) as an independent regulatory body that would represent public interest (Hollander et al., 2009). The formation of the Broadcasting Bill

[8] Data of television history in Indonesia from Saroso (2011) differs slightly from Sen and Hill (2000).

2002 and KPI was of the utmost importance in terms of public governance in the Indonesian broadcasting sphere. It replaced the previously much controlled Department of Information which covered the media during the authoritarian New Order administration. With its basic aims to diversify the media content in Indonesia as well as their ownership, KPI took over the exclusive rights of the government to control, censor and regulate the country's media (Hollander et al., 2009; Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia, 2009). However, the liberalisation of the Indonesian media was short lived since the government and the broadcast media owners gained some means to nullify the Broadcasting Act 2002 so they could regain control over the media for their mutual benefit (Sudibyo & Patria, 2013). By establishing the Governmental Regulations in 2005, the previously removed Department of Information was reinstated and took over KPI's authority to oversee media ownership, consequently influencing the diversity of content.

In regards to current media ownership in Indonesia, Sudibyo and Patria (2013) note that there are five major business conglomerates which own ten existing national television channels (see Table 1).

Media Group	Television
MNC	RCTI, Global TV, MNC TV
Trans Corp	Trans TV, Trans7
Bakrie & Brothers Group	ANTV, TV One
Surya Citra Media	SCTV, Indosiar
Media Group	Metro TV

Table 1: Indonesian media groups and their television stations[9]

Sudibyo and Patria (2013), using the concept of 'spatialisation' formerly introduced by Mosco (2009, pp. 157–68), suggest that expansion and concentration of ownership of media capital is in fact practised by these conglomerates in Indonesia. Besides owning television stations, these business groups have also spread into other media industries such as newspapers, print and radio, or expanding their existing media ownership in print and radio to television. As Sudibyo and Patria (2013, p. 266) elucidate, "spatialisation is thus related to the nature of the media industry that always seeks to enlarge its scope of operations in order to reach a wider audience in the most efficient way possible". Since media spatialisation has been embedded within the Indonesian

[9] See Sudibyo and Patria (2013) for a comprehensive table of Indonesian conglomerates and their holdings of media businesses including television stations, radio stations, print and online media.

media industry, it can be predicted that the diversity of ownership and content once envisioned by KPI is merely an unfulfilled dream. Monopoly ownership of Indonesian media enterprises is shown by a number of acquisition and merger activities in the past decade involving major media business groups in which they took control of television stations and/or established suzerainty over other media productions like radio stations, online and print media. Duplication of media content across different media platforms as well as across different television channels can be expected since this would allow the capturing of a large number of viewers and readers without having to elevate the production cost.

The lack of variation in programming throughout the national television stations can be seen as one of the indicators in which media content fails to diversify. Unabashed imitations of a television programme with a high rating is a common practice in Indonesia. For example, a highly popular television mystery show that showcased a horror theme within the context of Islamic reality called *Kisah Misteri* (mystery tales) was broadcast on RCTI in 2001. Due to its success, it was followed soon afterwards with similar programmes on ANTV. These include *Percaya nggak Percaya* (Believe it or not) and *Oh Seraam* (Oh scary) and Trans TV's *Dunia Lain* or (Another world), all screened in 2002 (van Heeren, 2007). Similar programming across television stations does not end here since replications of content and format of television shows cover a myriad of genres, such as television drama or soap opera (*sinetron*) and infotainment.

The proliferation of infotainment programmes in the Indonesian television landscape has evoked a sense of unsettling discontent within the Muslim community since their inception. It becomes contested within the public sphere in which various Muslim organisations, governmental bodies and individuals promulgate their opinions openly by means of public debate on the Internet, issuing *fatwā* and press releases. Yet, in spite of these *fatwā* and numerous complaints from the public, infotainment remains one of the highest grossing TV programmes in Indonesia with high ratings.

Indonesian Infotainment: History, Format and Content

The inception of infotainment was in some ways unintended. It was created when Ilham Bintang, of the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI), produced the first entertainment show called *Buletin Sinetron* (soap opera bulletin) in 1994 as a space in which *sinetron* and the Indonesian *sinetron* festival[10] could be promoted (Yulianto, 2008). *Buletin Sinetron* ran for a decade and during its course Bintang created *Cek & Ricek* (Check & Recheck). The latter was the first celebrity infotainment show on the Indonesian television scene in 1997 which came about as a result of request by Alex Kumara, a former director of operations of RCTI to produce a gossip show about celebrities. Bintang warmly accepted the idea as he was aiming to set up a medium on television which could broadcast information about celebrities' careers and personalities and this could become a platform for them to clarify rumours surrounding their lives. Thus, *Buletin Sinetron* helped pave the way for the launch of *Cek & Ricek* since it triggered the interest to produce tabloid media in an audio-visual format. As *Cek & Ricek* gained popularity, other television stations and production houses were eager to follow suit. Celebrity gossip shows have become the top grossing television programmes in Indonesia due to their reportedly high ratings by Nielsen, a global marketing research firm responsible for ratings measurements for Indonesian television programming.[11]

It is more cost effective to produce an infotainment show than to create other local content programmes like talk shows or *sinetron*. As Sternheimer (2011) suggests, unscripted programming such as reality and game shows can hugely reduce the production cost due to savings in the costs of hiring actors, scriptwriters, sets, costumes, and conducting research – some or all of which are required for making *sinetron*, news, and talk shows. Yulianto (2008, p. 131) implies that an infotainment show is a documentary which depicts "the 'real' domestic and familial details of artists' lives".

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[10] It was an annual event where films made for television compete for awards. It is currently organised as part of the Indonesian Film Festival.

[11] Viewers' ratings conducted by Nielsen are known to be 'scientifically' questionable. There is no assurance whether it really measures audience viewing habits due to the nature of its measurement. It does not gauge viewers' opinions on television programmes and commercials. As Butler (2009, p. 392) explains "Nielsen data are exclusively quantitative measurements, indicating how many viewers watch and who they are by aggregating them into demographic groups". In Indonesia, Nielsen gathers its data from ten different cities including three major cities, namely Jakarta, Surabaya and Medan (Nielsen 2010). However, their sample is usually small. In Indonesia its sample includes 2,423 television households (Nielsen, 2011). In spite of their limitations, Nielsen data is still widely used for advertising purposes as the exchange rate by which advertisers buy airtime for airing their commercials on certain television shows (Butler, 2009; Coutas, 2008).

Thus infotainment, unlike a show such as *Big Brother*, is not staged. In terms of production costs producing an infotainment show would be comparable to or even less than making a reality show.

In 2013 there were 25 infotainment shows on eight national television channels.[12] Their screening times start as early as 6am until dusk, and lasts for half an hour to an hour, from Monday to Sunday. It is logical to assume that the content of these gossip shows are similar across the board, especially when a television station produces more than one infotainment. Since 2008, there has been a slight decrease in the number of television channels and infotainment programmes due to mergers and acquisitions (Yulianto, 2008).[13].

The vast number of infotainment programmes could potentially open up the possibility of diverse content and formats, yet in effect, imitation within the gossip show genre has prevailed. The setting, the manner in which the presenters articulate their speech and the content of the programme is unvaried across different infotainment shows. *Cek & Ricek* has become the template for other celebrity shows to replicate. Since its commencement, *Cek & Ricek* has steadily maintained high ratings and has been commercially successful, attracting other infotainment producers to duplicate the programme in its entirety. By simply having a different presenter and altering the logo and slogan, another similar infotainment programme is born on another television channel.[14]

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[12]A terrestrial television channel called NET, launched in May 2013, also screens a gossip show called Entertainment News. It is aired from Monday to Friday at 9am, 11am, 6pm and 11pm and on Saturday and Sunday at 11am. Besides broadcasting information on Indonesian celebrities, it also covers overseas celebrities. NET's content is also available on YouTube and social media platforms. Other national televisions like TVRI, TV ONE and Metro TV have no infotainment programmes. Indonesia also hosts numerous local and network television channels throughout the country. See Appendix C for a list of infotainment programmes on national television (2013).

[13]Yulianto (2008), citing Santoso (2005), states that in 2006 there were more than 30 separate infotainment programmes on all 13 television stations.

[14]This is true for many celebrity gossip shows except *Infotemen* (basically meaning information from friends (*temen*) on Trans TV which combines the concept of a talk show and infotainment. It claims to be an infotainment show with almost accurate information because of its close relationship with celebrities. However, its talk show seems to dominate the infotainment aspect of its format and the overall package deviates from most infotainment shows in Indonesia ("Infotemen Trans TV, n.d.).

The format of an infotainment show includes a female presenter or two presenters, usually a male and a female,[15] in glamorous clothes, talking to the audience while showing clips of interviews with celebrities or their significant others at their houses or in public spaces like cafes, hotels and music show venues. The host's presentation is theatrical to enhance the dramatic tension of the story. Often a story on a particular celebrity on a given day is inconclusive so as to generate suspense for the audience. The concluding narration may be aired days or weeks later depending on how the story is unfolding in real time, although there are follow-up stories in between. A clip is replayed when there is not enough visual material to cover the whole narration of a story. The overall impression is an informal presentation on a glitzy stage. The setting, speech, and the whole format, which are called media's ritual acts, are central to the celebrity culture (Nayar, 2009) of infotainment on Indonesian television. This media culture was first introduced by *Cek & Ricek* and has hardly changed in other gossip shows as they emulate *Cek & Ricek*'s long-standing success. However *Silet*, an infotainment show from the same television station (RCTI) has been gaining more viewers than *Cek & Ricek* in the past few years although the latter remains high on the rating board (Nielson, 2010; Yulianto, 2008).

The content of Indonesian infotainment shows are always about celebrities' everyday lives and their families. This could include who is dating whom, their marriages, newly built luxurious houses, break ups and divorces, family disputes, and arguments with other celebrities. As Sofjan (2013, p. 28) suggests, infotainment contains "a mixture of truths, half-truths and untruths" which in fact makes it more appealing to the audience. Celebrities who are involved in legal cases on corruption, drug abuse or an acrimonious divorce, have more sensational news to offer than other celebrities with more mundane stories. Since a number of actors, actresses and singers have recently been participating in political activities and have been chosen by their parties to be their representatives at the Indonesian regional or national level, these celebrities as political elites have also been exposed on national television in their party roles including any misconduct. The Indonesian celebrities are singers, actors and actresses, filmmakers, political elites, well known religious teachers and people of newfound fame such as winners of reality shows like *Indonesian Idol*. However, the people being interviewed for these programmes

[15] Yulianto (2008) states that with previously female only presenters, since 2006 the trend for many television networks has been to employ male infotainment presenters as well.

extend from the celebrities to their spouses, children, parents, other family members, housemaids, security guards, and neighbours.

With the advent of new media like YouTube, MySpace and the Internet in general, as well as reality television shows such as *Indonesian Idol*, the meaning of celebrity has been stretched. Sternheimer (2011, p. 2) defines a celebrity as "anyone who is watched, noticed, and known by a critical mass of strangers". People with no talent and skill can become a celebrity and be part of infotainment programme and this is also evident in Indonesian gossip shows in which people who have a familial or close relationship to certain celebrities appear to happily oblige to a request for an interview on infotainment to have their 15 minutes of fame.[16] An example is that of an ordinary woman who became the centre of media attention in her role as spokesperson for her son whose conduct and relationship with a famous singer attracted much publicity. This is what Turner (2004, p. 79) identifies as a new media democracy, "where ordinary people now have greater access to media representation". Yet, their celebrity fame is short lived as indicated by a popular Indonesian expression for portraying this phenomenon – *hanya seumur jagung* ('only as old as corn' namely only for a very short time).

As Nayar (2009, p. 53) explains, these talk shows "emphasise the celebrity-hood of the guests while seeking to unmask them" with their own stories of private dealings with their daily lives which makes them ordinary, yet still accentuates their uniqueness as a celebrity. Likewise, the gossip show becomes a space in which the ideology of intimacy is deeply embedded. The audience are able relate to the celebrities' private lives on television as individuals rather than as actors and actresses on *sinetrons*, or as singers. However, the infotainment shows are packaged such that the audience are reminded that the person on the show is a celebrity and not someone ordinary. The simultaneous switch between immediate and hyper-mediated image is intentionally played (Nayar, 2009) to capture the attention of the audience and heighten attraction. There are undoubtedly soap opera features in infotainment such as emotional outbursts of celebrities or their significant others that enhance the viewing attraction for the programme. Rage, sobbing, and even extreme physical gestures such as shoving,

[16] A saying made famous by Andy Warhol more than 40 years ago which is even applicable today (Devlin, 2010; van Krieken, 2012).

emulate moments of drama in the soap opera genre, although some celebrities present a calm facade.

To further illustrate it, an example is that from the most watched gossip topic of the year that involved a *dangdut* singer named Zaskia Gotik, famous for her iconic *goyang itik* (duck moves – *gotik* for short) ("Infamously indecipherable", 2013) and her then fiancé Vicky Prasetyo. On 6 September 2013 *Cek & Ricek* aired an interview with Zaskia Gotik and Vicky Prasetyo at their extravagant engagement party at Jakarta's five-star Hotel Indonesia Kempinski. What started as a mundane interview about how they met, their relationship and future plans turned into something that people talked and joked about on social media and discussed within the academic realm of Indonesian linguistic studies. A segment of the interview showed Vicky using peculiar terms which resemble Indonesian and/or English words but was overall a speech that sounded pompous but made no sense. Thus, viewers were somewhat lost in translation. On 12 September 2013, *Cek & Ricek* reported that Vicky's interview which was uploaded on YouTube was watched by more than half a million Internet users with more than 5,000 comments in just over a few days. Vicky rose from relative obscurity to Internet celebrity in a flash. The phenomenon, which was popularly referred to as *Vickynisasi* (Vickynism), dominated social media via Twitter and Facebook platforms. There was a great interest from the general public and from the media sectors to find out who this Vicky is since he was barely known before show. Soon the gossip show revealed that he was a failed politician with an apparently village head candidacy in Bekasi, West Java. A video clip was uploaded on YouTube which showed him speaking gibberish English to the villagers in his electorate, assumingly to appear better educated and more worldly than his naive audience. The story continued with another surprising clip shown on television and social media which depicted a woman with a starkly contrasting appearance to Zaskia, as Vicky's wife for the past few years. Other stories continued to surface in gossip shows including Vicky's illegal involvement in fraudulent land deeds in Bekasi which was followed by his arrest and very public trial. Zaskia soon announced on an infotainment show that she was no longer engaged to Vicky and has been contemplating her future without him. The stories revolved around Vicky kept appearing in the media with more intricate details, including a Eurasian woman who flew from France just to visit Vicky in jail, slap his face while saying she has his child and wanted him to be accountable (Edward, 2013). In all this mayhem Vicky's mother became his knight in

shining armour, lying through her teeth ("Ibu Vicky", 2013) while blaming others for his extramarital affairs. She even denied his track record of lying about his supposed PhD from a university in the United States and his dubious business deals. And since Vicky has been in custody, his mother has been followed by infotainment reporters in the hopes of gaining more salacious material on Vicky and his significant others. His mother turned into 'news' in her own right because of her arrogant and snobbish attitude (Selebrita Siang, 2013), and rumours that she asked for a substantial amount of money for an interview about her son. She seemed to have enjoyed her brief moment of fame, parading in front of media reporters. The whole story unfolded within weeks and was broadcast in various infotainment shows.

As Yulianto (2008) suggests, Indonesian celebrity gossip shows whilst uniquely Indonesian also share some similarities with the celebrity industry overseas. The everyday life of celebrities becomes more interesting for viewers to watch than their day job as actors or singers (Sternheimer, 2011). With or without their consent, celebrities' private lives are the focus of public attention and they are the selling point of any media, including television.

The (Moral) Debate

The debate surrounding infotainment starts with the argument whether it can be classified as journalism or mere entertainment. Open public discussion on media as well as at universities (Purwantoro, 2008) seek to offer peace of mind for the public whose everyday lives have been subjected to contested television programming. Most agree that infotainment is far from hard news and more closely resembles entertainment due to its lack of respect towards the journalism code of ethics.[17]

In 2006 the largest Indonesian Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) issued a *fatwā* which stated that television gossip shows are 'sinful' and 'morally distasteful' and

[17]Indonesian journalism code of ethics consists of 11 articles which include respecting the privacy of the informants, providing accurate and fair news, and avoiding untrue, defaming and sensual news and pictures (Dewan Pers, 2011).

urged Muslims to stop watching infotainment (Osman, 2006). Following this, Indonesia's highest Islamic authority Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) also declared gossip shows to be unsuitable as they tend to expose and exploit the intimate details of people's private lives which according to the Islamic tenet are *ḥarām* for Muslims to engage in (Wardany, 2009; Kuswandini, 2010). A senior leader of NU, Masyhuri Naim explained in his interview that the fatwa was issued out of concern that gossip shows could detrimentally affect viewers as they depart from the teaching of the Qur'an (Osman, 2006). Meanwhile, MUI official Asrorun Niam Soleh added that only infotainment with *ḥarām* material showing shameful details about people need be banned. He further elucidated that gossip shows are only permitted if they "uphold the law, warn the public and help people" ("Indonesian clerics", 2010). This religious norm applies equally to the Muslims who produce the shows and the viewers (Abdussalam, 2010). NU and MUI also underlined the negative impacts of gossip in general as they may provoke family arguments and public disputes, and further emphasised the Islamic tenet which forbids Muslims to discuss shameful deeds of others or gossiping and disclosing publicly individuals' private lives (Wardany, 2009). Even the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs in his recent meeting with a group of Muslim women, reminded them to reduce the amount of time watching gossip shows because there is little to gain by such programmes (Amrullah, 2013). Yet, in spite of these *fatwā* and numerous complaints from the public, infotainment shows remain very popular among Muslims and television stations show no attempt to alter or stop such shows.

It is interesting to note that studies have found gossip to be somewhat useful in social settings. Jones (1980) implies that gossip is common among women in which they share common experiences to enhance solidarity and intimacy. Informal gossip entails a moral or normative function by means of controlling (Levin & Kimmel, 1977) and negotiating social mores and norms (Johansson, 2006). Thus, gossip is a powerful mechanism, which supports group cohesion. For the subject of gossip who is socially approved, public recognition will be granted, whereas disapproved gossip will cause public condemnation (Levin & Kimmel, 1977). Yet, gossip can also harm the reputation of the individual at the centre of discussion (Davis, 2011). As Hunter (1990) explains, the range of gossip is extensive, from mere talk with no malicious intent, such as swapping minute details of one's life with a friend, to sharing personal secrets as a way of catharsis. This includes talk which is deliberately abusive and intentionally trying to

hurt the person being talked about, driven by feelings of jealousy, envy and resentment (Wert & Salovey, 2004). In the new era of digital media, gossip has become more intense due to the nature of new media being able to disseminate information in a matter of seconds. As Solove (2007) notes gossip, malicious or not, spreads like contagious disease once it is uploaded on the Internet. So it is understandable that NU and MUI caution Muslims to stay away from gossip, including infotainment, to protect them from any unfavourable consequences caused by the rumours.

On the other side of the fence, Ilham Bintang who is often described as the 'king' of infotainment because he was the pioneer of television gossip shows, insists that infotainment is journalism (Karana, 2010). He asserts that most infotainment shows follow the journalistic code of ethics, although he acknowledges that not all infotainment shows abide by them. His opinion is endorsed by PWI, although it was rejected by AJI (Indonesian Independent Journalists) for not complying with the journalistic code of ethics and regulations (Sofjan, 2013). Since Din Syamsudin, the deputy head of MUI, underlines that the target of MUI's *fatwā* is the content of infotainment which includes gossip, slanders and any information that reveal people's shameful deeds, Bintang concludes that as long as the 'news' could be in anyway benefit the public – such as paving the way for a legal prosecution or legal process – they are not considered *ḥarām*[18] (Winarno, 2010). A communication studies academic also supported Bintang's claim stating that only the content of one or two infotainment shows are considered unethical and deviate from public norms of propriety (Abdussalam, 2010). If Bintang and the communication academic fervently justify infotainment as news, consequently gossip shows can be classified as sensational news. Wang and Cohen (2009, p. 126) elucidate that "the sensationalisation of news can be defined as the displacement of socially significant stories by 'tabloid' news topics and the use of flamboyant production styles that overpower substantive information". Esposito (1996) further describes that sensationalism may lead to news which is superficial, dramatic, fast-paced in its presentation and simplistic in its explanation due

[18] Bintang mentioned one of the most watched scandals in infotainment in 2010, which involved Luna Maya, an actress and singer, and Nazriel Irham of a pop band called Peter Pan who is better known as Ariel. Their sex video went viral on the Internet and their popularity rocketed for all the wrong reasons ("MUI official", 2012). Ariel was detained for distributing pornographic material while Luna lost her lucrative advertising endorsement and TV appearances literally overnight ("Luna Maya", 2011). Bintang argued that Ariel's prosecution was necessary to uphold the law. Yet similar exposures of sexual encounters on the Internet involving politicians are not prosecuted (Aspinall, 2014).

to its focus on personalities, personal relationships, physical appearances and idiosyncrasies for the sake of attracting large audiences. Hence, infotainment, in my opinion, cannot be under the same category as television hard news, such as *Indonesia Pagi* (Morning Indonesia) of TVRI, as the former can be classified as sensational news as described by Wang and Cohen (2009) and Esposito (1996). This is not to deny the fact that some television news programmes, especially the ones produced by private national television stations, like RCTI and SCTV[19] for example, incorporate soft news which blurs the boundaries between hard news and entertainment shows.

Infotainment reporters have even suggested that celebrities need infotainment as a space for them to have public exposure and gain a higher profile for themselves. According to two infotainment reporters interviewed by *Jakarta Post* ("Indonesia: Celebrities", 2006), many people have benefited from infotainment. The producer of the show gains substantial profit from producing a low cost television programme with high returns from expensive commercials (Kuswandini, 2010), and so do celebrities who crave popularity, including being discussed on gossip shows. It is presumably better for them to appear on infotainment for some reason or other than to have no media exposure at all for a long period. As Braudy (1986, p. 562) eloquently elucidates, "fame promises acceptability, even if one commits the most heinous crime, because thereby people will finally know who you are, and you will be saved from the living death of being unknown".

With easy accessibility and immediacy, gossip shows have become a platform in which celebrities can gain more exposure in the media, however with the inevitable consequences of damaging their star image if their portrayal derails from the public's sense of morality and religious norms. The massive proliferation of infotainment may also transform a commoner into an overnight celebrity. However, infotainment has become contested within the realm of the Indonesian television landscape since they have created a sense of ambivalence for some Muslims, including the Muslim mothers with whom I spoke.

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[19] RCTI with its *Seputar Indonesia* (About Indonesia) news programme and SCTV with its *Liputan6* (Coverage 6) news segment involve soft news or soft features which are stated in their programme content (see https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG-5tic8t1p_aF1UgfAnMlg and http://video.liputan6.com/).

Muslim Mothers and Infotainment Shows

I heard the sound of *adhan*[20] for *dzuhur*[21] prayer so I went to the bathroom to take my *wuḍū'*[22]. As I came back to the office to do my prayer I passed the lecturers' room and I saw five women standing in front of a flat-screen television. I was wondering what they were watching and seemed so keen. Yet I went straight to the room in which a few other staff members usually used it to pray, as I did not want to be distracted. As soon as I finished my prayer I approached the women who were watching the television. As I was walking towards them one woman told me to join. A few of my participants were also in the group. So I came and sat down between two women. Apparently, they were watching the wedding procession of Raffi Ahmad, a very famous presenter, singer and actor, and his girlfriend Gigi. Nagita Slavina or Gigi for short is also an actor, producer, television host and singer, although she was not as celebrated as her husband-would-be. The wedding procession, clothes, settings and every ornament were set up according to Javanese traditions as Gigi is Javanese. Trans TV had been airing the wedding ceremony in Jakarta since seven that morning[23] and relayed it to other cities, including Semarang. There was a shot which showed a reporter in a traditional Javanese costume sat on the back seat of a car and a couple of middle-aged man and woman, presumably Gigi relatives, were sitting on the front seat of the car, both in traditional Javanese costumes. They were on their way from Gigi's house to Raffi's family home to deliver a bucket of water to be used for Raffi's *siraman*[24]. Seeing this scene one woman in the group joked if the car these people were in was trapped in Jakarta's horrendous traffic

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[20] *Adhan* in Arabic or *azan* in Indonesian language is a call for prayer before the commencement of the prayer. Every mosque in Indonesian call out the *adhan* five times a day in accordance with the daily compulsory prayers, traditionally from a minaret, at prescribed times of the day.

[21] *Dzuhur* prayer is part of the five times daily prayer, which starts from just before noon until around 3pm.

[22] Wuḍū' is ablution or the Islamic procedure of washing parts of the body as a requirement before doing formal prayers.

[23] Raffi's and Gigi's wedding were conducted at Hotel The Ritz Carlton, Pacific Place, a posh hotel in Jakarta and Hotel Alila Villas Soori Tabanan Bali, a luxurious resort in Bali ("Lokasi resepsi", 2014). Trans TV was broadcasting the wedding ceremony for two full consecutive days and reprimanded by KPI for not rightly serving the general public (Ramadhan, 2014).

[24] *Siraman* is required in a traditional Javanese wedding. In this event both the bride and groom have their own *siraman* in their respective family house. It symbolises cleansing of the body and soul of the couple before they proclaim their *ijab qabul* or *akad nikah* the next day. *Akad nikah* is the marriage ceremony based on Islamic rulings. In *siraman* besides the bride's and groom's parents who pour the water onto their daughter or son, other family elders also have their turn (see http://users.skynet.be/sky86158/E_siraman.htm)

jam, it would take a very long time to arrive at their destination at Raffi's house. We all laughed at this possible scenario. These women were also saying about how much the cost of the wedding in billion rupiah[25], which were likely paid for by sponsors, advertisements and merchandise placements *(iklan terselubung*)[26]. Another woman was sceptical about this whole wedding as she said that they might soon get divorce as Raffi was known for his unscrupulous personal life prior to his marriage. This extended version of infotainment was eagerly watched by many Indonesians out of curiosity, not just in offices but also at private homes[27].

Many studies on television, particularly those using psychological or medical approaches (for example Mitu, 2011; Sharif & Sargent, 2006) investigate the effect of certain television content on viewers. However, other research including those with an anthropological approach argue differently. Ruth Ayaß (2012, p. 2) underlines that media recipients are actively appropriating the media they are exposed to in their everyday lives in "that media recipients are no empty vessels into which media content can simply be poured" because the audience make sense of it when they interpret what they see, hear, read and listen to. Since television has been part of the Indonesian community, especially the middle classes, for many decades, it has become what Ayaß (2012) calls 'everydayification' which connotes a media that gradually becomes part of everyday life. She elaborates that "the longer a medium is 'in use' the more it is 'domesticated'. Its presence is taken for granted, and it begins to become part of the everyday inventory" (Ayaß, 2012, p. 3). This is also true with television in Indonesia. Yulianto (2008) reports that many women in Indonesia watch television as part of their daily activities and that many female university students spend from eight to ten hours daily on watching infotainment. However, my later findings suggest that women

[25] "One thing that stands out today worth noting is Raffi's and Gigi's wedding party tonight at The Ritz Carlton Pacific Place Jakarta for 6,000 to 7,000 guests. The wedding party is broadcasted live by RCTI since 2pm today until the party is finished, presumably at 9 or 10pm. Different to *ijab kabul*, the Islamic ceremony and Javanese ritual of Raffi and Gigi's wedding which was held last Friday at the same place which was aired live by Trans TV, this time RCTI has the right to broadcast it. I watched this live programme for a while out of curiosity of how lavish the party was. I could see from the place, decoration, music and food, it was a very expensive party indeed. Guests wore expensive clothes, Western style as well as what so called 'Islamic' clothing. Women, especially Indonesian celebrities, in Western clothes seemed to be comfortable in their backless or low cut dress in see-through fabric. Meanwhile, the ones with *ḥijāb*, donned very fitted outfit with heavy make-up. Is this what Islamic clothes supposed to be? What do they understand about Islamic dress?" (Field notes, 2014, October 19).

[26] My son who works as a digital marketing specialist in Jakarta whose clients were big brands in Indonesia told me about the sponsors behind Raffi's wedding, including the new car gift for the best dress guest in his wedding which was provided by a sponsor.

[27] My host mother watched the wedding celebration at home that evening out of curiostity

watched less television now as interesting programmes are rare. Yet for some Muslim mothers, infotainment remains on their list of programmes to watch.

The profusion of infotainment in Indonesian television channels has created uneasiness among Muslims, including my informants. Their predicament is about the nature of infotainment in its public discussion of celebrities' intimate details which are often considered embarrassing or even shameful. Some Muslims understand the religious notions that prohibit them from watching these shows. The Muslim mothers I spoke to acknowledged the derogatory nature of gossip shows, but offered several reasons to justify their viewing of the programme.

Some of my participants watched the programmes as a form of relaxation after work and claimed they were too busy to pay much attention to the gossip. As Yanti wrote:

> They (my children) said watching gossip shows is a sin, because it is *fitnah* (sedition), not necessarily true … oh dear … but I want to watch it just for fun …[28]

Hesti also gave a similar reason:

> During (the glory of) Cek & Ricek I often watched it for pleasure.

My argument is that celebrity gossip serves as a platform for the audience to satisfy their interest in celebrity bodies. As Nayar (2009, p. 62) suggests, "celebrity culture demands a body", in which the celebrities' faces and bodies are commodified for the audience's voyeurism. Viewers are interested in celebrities and their behaviour, which entail what they do, who they do it with and what they ought to do (Nayar, 2009). Departing from the construct of voyeurism utilised in the psychiatric domain, voyeurism is considered 'normal' if it is satisfied by means of more acceptable forms such as watching reality television, films, webcams and gossip shows (Koskela, 2004; Ytreberg, 2002). With the advent of popular culture, voyeurism becomes a common practice through which pleasure is accomplished from accessing the private details of other people (Metzl, 2004), celebrity or not. The pleasure, in fact, derives from the nature of the content watched which is typically forbidden or private (Calvert, 2000;

[28] Indonesian language is used in the discussions, because it is the first language of all participants and the researcher. To protect the identity of participants I use pseudonyms for the participants and due to powerful search engines, such as Google, I left out the original Indonesian language version of their responses and use the translation of the texts in English so that it cannot be traced back to the original page on Facebook (see Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Metzl, 2004). If the content of the media is not private or forbidden, then I assume, the thrill of watching will diminish somehow. As Calvert (2000) explains we now live in a society in which curiosity in the private lives of others has become a central part of everyday lives.[29] Baruh (2009) reveals that scenes which take place in private settings and contain gossip appeal to viewers the most. As mothers and working women, my participants used infotainment as an antidote to their daily stress. Although they faced the dilemma of suppressing guilt from viewing television programmes deemed contested in the realm of Islamic understanding, the daily and extensive exposure of gossip shows from dawn until dusk is too tempting to be missed. As Yulianto (2008) also mentions, Indonesian viewers have little to choose from in terms of television programmes since quality shows are few and far between. Through infotainment my participants could gain access into the private world of Indonesian celebrities, including their misconducts or illegal ventures which are not extensively covered in news programmes.

As television sets are placed at nearly every office and work space I visited in Semarang, the opportunity and temptation to watch any programmes on television is huge. As long as there is an interesting show the television can be turned on[30]. As Oci explained sometimes she watched infotainment at her office when there were hot news on celebrities which she and her colleagues then discussed the content from the perspective of ethics ─ for example why certain celebrities did certain misconducts while they should not have done them, and about the celebrities' past stories ─ for instance she/he used to date or marry someone else. She did not agree with *ulama* (clerics) who considered infotainment as *ḥarām*, because it all depends on the content of the infotainment programme and as an audience she could select the ones which are simply informative hence suitable, from the ones with malicious contents (*menghasut dan fitnah*). So for her watching informative gossip shows were acceptable.

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[29] Calvert (2000) classifies the mediated voyeurism in four categories, namely video vérité voyeurism, reconstruction voyeurism, tell-all/show-all voyeurism, and sexual voyeurism. Watching gossip shows can be categorised as tell-all/show-all voyeurism.

[30] The television at offices I visited, like the Ministry of Research and Technology in Jakarta, showed news programme from one of the public television stations. When explosions blasted Starbuck Café at Sarinah Mall in Jakarta on 14th January 2016 at around 10am local time, my son and his colleagues watched the latest news on television at their office.

For Niar, who never intentionally watched gossip shows, infotainment was merely sensational news surrounding celebrities which have nothing to do with her. If she happened to watch an infotainment programme at home most of the times were due to 'unintended' viewings – when she turned on the television, infotainment happened to be the programme the channel was on. Yet since she had a glimpse of the celebrity on the television at that time her curiosity got the better of her common sense which made her stayed on this channel to watch the whole programme. She even suspected that infotainment is a kind of staged show in which the setting was made somehow for celebrities' faces to be aired many times so they become famous. It is true that she assumed the problems faced by these celebrities were not made up, yet the whole package of the infotainment show seemed to be dramatic. She wondered:

> May be they just want to look for fame (*sensasi*).

In regards to the huge and much publicised wedding of Rafi and Gigi, Niar said that it was '*lebay*' (too much):

> It might be due to the influence of media because he (Rafi) is famous (and) thriving … (his marriage) was blown up (by the media). In reality the norm is when (someone) wants to get married (he/she) just get married (with no fuss) … Wedding certainly has its private and public domains. But it seems that everything about it (Rafi's wedding) was turned into public domain. Everything became public consumption … Overexposed in my opinion … even though we enjoyed (and) liked watching a wedding which could be like that … wow (glamorous) like that.

Meanwhile, other mother said that infotainment serves as a diversion from the bustling news of national political escapades. As Yanti explained:

> There are many tabloids with similar content (as infotainment such as Cek & Ricek, Femme, etc.), sometimes I am not interested in reading magazines which are full of political news … so I buy gossip tabloids instead for fun.

This is similar to Yulianto's (2008) findings which reveal watching gossip shows as a form of escapism in the midst of major news of corruption with no satisfying ending such as the prosecution of the corrupt and confiscation of their assets. However, a few of my participants remain hopeful of the political climate in Indonesia as they still enthusiastically watch news on television, especially about KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) and its recent dealings with corrupt politicians and business people. Like Nia who revealed:

> It's been a long time since we watch TV at home … we only watch it when there are interesting programmes on, for example news on the arrest of (political) figures by KPK.

Yet, it remains unknown whether their expectations will be gratified by the yet to be prosecuted figures involved in corruption who are still hiding behind their political power.

Muslim mothers with whom I spoke acknowledged that the content of the infotainment programmes are heavily focused on gossip rather than information. They recognised the nature and format of infotainment in which unethical celebrities' conducts are displayed within the framework of legal/illegal cases and stories of love affairs. They also realised that it is easier and more cost effective for the producers and television stations to produce such programmes than other local talk shows like Kick Andy[31] which requires more production cost for research. They were despondent that infotainment shows have little creativity and are similar across the board. They were concerned the public are exposed to low quality programmes every single day and felt that viewers need to be more assertive and take charge of what they watch on television. It would not work to rely on MUI and NU to declare a *fatwā* on certain television programmes or KPI to change the Indonesian television landscape. So the change has to start from the family, said one mother. My participants asserted that there has been no improvement since NU and MUI declared a *fatwā* on infotainment in 2006 as gossip shows continue to be of low quality. Although active viewers are deemed critical in negotiating television programmes, in my opinion they are also bound by the availability of the programmes. While viewers can choose to watch a certain show or change the channel when they do not want to see a particular image, however their choices are restricted to programmes that are available on television at any one time. As Fifi explained:

> When the content (of gossip shows) is just showing a celebrity being narcissistic about himself while his daughter is kidnapped, I quickly change the channel before I have sore eyes and have sins due to mocking him.[32]

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[31] Kick Andy is a talk show broadcast by Metro TV. Its guests include individuals from well known celebrities to ordinary people.

[32] She referred to a kidnapping case involving a step daughter of a *dangdut* singer named Nassar (Obsesi Global TV, 2013). Some people believed that she was kidnapped because Nassar enjoyed showing off his wealth publicly ("Penculik tidak suka", 2013).

It is interesting to note that not all gossip on infotainment shows receive similar attention from viewers. The topic on Vicky's supposedly posh yet unintelligible speech at his engagement party to Zaskia Gotik seemed to grab the most public attention. It became viral on social media as soon as it was aired on an infotainment show. As one of my participants claims, viewers become the extension of interesting gossip on television with many of them relaying the content through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. As Hesti explained:

> If the topic is interesting we become the extension (of the information). For example Vicky and his jumbled speech, once it was aired on television, the 'news' was immediately spread by its viewers through social media. And when media initiate more fascinating stories, the viewers will follow suit, of course.

While circulating celebrity gossip among friends and acquaintances seems to represent 'companionship' [33] (Yulianto, 2008) for women and men during their everyday activities, it definitely supports NU and MUI's concerns about exploiting the intimate details of people's private lives, which according to the Islamic tenet are *ḥarām*. Raffi Ahmad's drug scandal and arrest also increased the viewing of infotainment programmes. A number of Muslim women I spoke to said that they intentionally watched gossip shows to fill the gap in information about Raffi Ahmad, whose story was not fully disclosed in formal news programmes. As Fifi wrote:

> Honestly, although I know infotainment contains more gossip than information, sometimes I watch them because they cover stories which are not covered by ordinary news programmes. For example in the case of Raffi Ahmad, the news only dig up the topic superficially while the infotainment covers a whole lot more, so my curiosity as a viewer is satisfied.

Asih also said:

> Hmm, they are celebrities news after all … sometimes there are some benefits to gain (from watching them) but mostly (they) only sell popularity … I watch them usually to watch cases which I need to watch, like Raffi Ahmad, because it's a legal case on drug abuse.

However, topics which may impinge on religious issues seem to provoke less interest such as the case involving two actors of different religions who claimed to be married.[34] As Hesti stated:

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[33] Yulanto (2008) finds that women and men in Jakarta and Yogyakarta use the information they obtained from infotainment to build and maintain their social network.

[34] Asmirandah, a Muslim actress, and her boyfriend Jonas Rivanno 'Vanno' Watimena, a Christian actor hit the headlines when they both claimed to have married in Depok, West Java, since it is impossible for a

> Regarding Asmirandah's case, most of my friends were not as excited as when Vicky's case surfaced. Maybe this is because Asmirandah's case is religious-related, so only a small group of people will discuss (this topic).

A topic on religion seems to be a sensitive issue and a discourse which most people appear to avoid, since religious plurality is the existing reality in Indonesia where Muslims are the majority and religious harmony is the aim in social relationships between friends, co-workers and relatives of various religions. Nonetheless, infotainment fuelled the story that surrounded Asmirandah and Vanno.

For Niar the gossip surrounding Asmirandah and Vanno as something that is not extraordinary since they are celebrities. Even though personally she did not agree with mixed religious marriage yet she could understand their marriage became such big news on infotainment. She underlined that what happened to celebrities did not concerned her. As she explained:

> Yes, whatever … Celebrities who are like that is common … Even though in reality there are people who get married with someone of different religion, or people who convert to different religion (due to marriage), or who are unmarried but having relationships. But since (they are) public figures they were being scrutinised (and) the reporter got the news … I don't feel I have to make judgement (about them) … For me it (mixed religious marriage) is wrong. My principle is against it. But it could happen in real life. It's only natural.

Within their own home, the Muslim mothers I spoke to are continuously negotiating and appropriating the media they and their children watch, read, use and listen to. While they understand and accept the religious rulings behind MUI and NU's *fatwā* on infotainment, they still watch the programmes, albeit for fun and stress relief. However, these same mothers would not want their children watch such shows and feel blessed that their children even warn them to stop watching the programmes. This is particularly so during the fasting month of Ramadan, considered by all Muslims as a holy month in which people seek to acquire the abundance of good deeds available to them if they

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couple with different religions to be married in Indonesia. This is due to a regulation issued in 1974 stating that a marriage is deemed valid only if it is conducted under legal procedures of each belief and religion. Since NU issued a fatwa in 1989 based on the ruling stated in the Qur'an (Surat Al-Baqarah 2:221), and in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 7:3) for people of different religions to be united in marriage, it is forbidden in Indonesia for a mixed religion couple to be married (Ruslan, 2010). It was reported that Vanno converted to Islam but he then claimed that the 'news' on his conversion was false. Their marriage was later annulled because it was proven that Vanno had not converted to Islam when he married Asmirandah ("Pernikahan batal", 2013). The latest 'news' suggests Asmirandah has converted to Christianity, although such news has yet to be confirmed ("Guess what?", 2013).

follow the path of Islam. Thus, it is understandable that my participants' children eagerly caution their respective mothers to avoid gossip shows on this very meaningful month for Muslims so they can be spared from making mistakes. Contrary to Yulianto's (2008) findings, my participants' teenage children rarely watch programmes on national television stations and are more interested in watching Japanese pop culture on GINX TV, a paid television channel dedicated exclusively to video games. According to these mothers' observations, their children and other Indonesian youth prefer to watch Korean boy bands and girl groups whose fashion has become an icon of Indonesian middle class youth. The recent trend of accepting non-western media products and pop culture in Indonesian television began in the early 2000s with the broadcast of television youth dramas from Korea, Taiwan and Japan. These are popular with local viewers (Ida, 2008; Shim, 2006). Korean girl groups and boy bands have also gained popularity in Indonesia in the past decade and attracted many local fans (Jung, 2011). Rather than watching gossip shows for pleasure or as part of voyeurism, for my participants' children infotainment is a space where their mothers are able to discuss with them about the unethical conducts of celebrities and the avoidance of non-exemplary behaviour. The articulation of propriety and transgression in the realm of infotainment reflects the idea that gossip serves as social control which cultures employ to regulate their members' behaviour (Baumeister et al., 2004). As Fifi underlined:

> As a mother I feel grateful that my children are not tempted by celebrities' unrealistic lifestyle. When I have discussions with my children, I often use the improper behaviour of celebrities as examples of conducts they should not imitate, while explaining to them all the consequences (of those misconducts), so they can learn from the disgrace of these celebrities. Conversely, if there is a well-known figure who excels I will use this person as a role model so my children have the right idol.

Arguably from gossip shows, lessons and useful information can be learned as Baumeister et al. (2004, p. 115) state that "gossip provides a mechanism for learning the local culture's implicit rules and regulations" and the sanctions of breaking those rules and regulations.

Conclusion

What seems to be the democratisation of media, reflected in the growing number of television stations and infotainment shows for more than a decade in Indonesia, undoubtedly causes casualties along the way. The collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime gave hope to many that television in Indonesia could change for the better. However, the public governance of media did not last long as media conglomerates returned to dominate the broadcasting domain resulting in the focus on business profit at the expense of content diversity. The effect can be seen in the duplication of media content, including broadcasting similar infotainment shows with low production costs across many television stations to capture huge numbers of viewers. It might be acceptable if the programmes do not involve gossip, but it becomes disputable when airing intimate details of celebrities' private lives is the staple of the show. Although religious groups and Muslims in general have complained and objected to the content of these programmes, their efforts have made little headway. Television stations have their own profit agenda in promoting and producing infotainment shows. It would be impossible, in my opinion, for celebrity gossip shows to change their format and content or to be removed from broadcasting, because television stations rely heavily on infotainment ratings for increasing their revenue from commercial advertisements. The polemic surrounding infotainment will always remain.

Infotainment in its existing format and content have substantial numbers of viewers in major Indonesian cities. Television stations are adamant that change is not needed, as they believe that infotainment has loyal viewers and its content does not overstep the boundary of religious rulings since it is a product of journalism with its code of ethics intact. The only change would be for families to boycott such programmes, as suggested by one of my more optimistic participants. However in Indonesia, this is not a simple move as the alternative is more of the same. When most television stations air similar infotainment shows every day for hours, the choices for other types of programmes are very limited as there are few quality television programmes. Unless most television viewers spurn infotainment shows for a sufficiently significant period for the rejection to impact on ratings and alarm the management and owners of television stations, there is unlikely to be any change.

In terms of media consumption, infotainment becomes guilty pleasure for Muslim mothers. It is true that my participants are not avid viewers of infotainment programmes

who sit in front of a television just to watch a gossip show. Nevertheless, they experienced a self-conscious pleasure in watching it despite its drawbacks of inciting gossips. Even though Muslim women know that gossip shows may contain unpleasant and slanderous contents, they believe that they have the ability and sensibility to choose and watch infotainment programmes which provide them with information to simply satisfy their curiosity. As some of them see infotainment as something outside themselves and takes place in the public domain, they consider it as something with no bearing on their religious adherence. As Gidden (1991) asserts many events broadcast on television "might be experienced by the individual as external and remote" (p. 27). The bottom line is media, in this case infotainment programmes, are central to everyday reflexivity. Being reflexive, which is an everyday practice, means that these Muslim women routinely and actively, although by no means always consciously, keep in touch with their personal understanding of Islam — who they are as Muslims, what they have become and what they aspire to be — as practicing Muslim women[35]. Their engagement with infotainment is never a passive process as they always make their own justifications — why watching a show which deems detrimental is allowed. Watching infotainment does not necessarily mean committing a sin as they do not consider talking about celebrities' private lives as gossiping. Muslim women used infotainment as a starting point for discussing morality with their teenage children or coleagues, instead. Their pious everyday lives, indeed, serves as an anchor which guide the way they use media. There may be doubt that the content of infotainment they watch falls into a "grey area" of permissibility according to Islam, although they seemed to be adamant that they did not overstep the boundaries of religious tenets. Yet precisely for these uncertainties in the "ambivalence of modernity" (Bauman, 1991) that reflexivity operate more intensively (Kim, 2008).

[35] See Giddens (1991) and Kim (2008) for discussions on reflexivity in mediated everyday lives.

Appendix C

List of infotainment programmes on Indonesian national television station (2013)

Television station	Infotainment Programme	Screening Time
RCTI	Cek & Ricek	Wed & Fri – 2.30pm
	Intens	Every day – 11am
	Go Spot	Every day – 6 am
	Silet	Every day – 4pm
	Kabar Kabari	Mon & Thu – 2.30pm
Global TV	Obsesi	Mon to Fri – 10am
	Fokus selebriti	Mon to Fri – 2.30pm
	Seleb on Cam	Mon to Fri – 3pm
MNC TV	Tuntas	Every day – 3.30pm
	Pose	Mon to Fri – 9am
Trans TV	Insert Pagi	Mon to Fri – 6am
	Insert Siang	Wed to Sun – 11am
	Insert Investigasi	Every day – 2.45pm
Trans 7	Selebritas Pagi	Every day – 7.30am
	Selebritas Siang	Every day – 12 noon
	Seleb Expose	Sat & Sun – 3.15pm
ANTV	Seleb@Seleb	Mon to Fri – 8am
	SOS	Mon to Fri – 12noon
SCTV	Was	Mon to Thu – 6am
	Hallo Selebriti	Mon to Thu – 9am
	Hot Shot	Fri to Sun – 9am
	Status Selebriti	Fri to Sun – 6am
	Kasak Kusuk	Every day – 1.30pm
Indosiar	Kiss Pagi	Mon to Sat – 10.30am
	Hot Kiss	Mon to Sat – 2pm

Source: Data compiled by author.

Chapter Five

Social Media and Muslim Mothers

"Although there is still a regional and social gap concerning the use of the Internet in big cities compared to villages and mountainous areas, the increased number and quality of internet cafés side by side with mosques and schools, mostly in big cities, have resulted in new development: Islamic information has become less centralized, widespread, and popular, and people have felt freer to contest and accept or reject particular religious interpretations and ideologies" (Ali, 2011, p. 103).

The first thing I checked when I arrived at my host family's house was the Internet connection. The internet was my life line to my family whom I left behind in New Zealand. After I went inside the guest bedroom at my host's house, suddenly it hit me that this was going to be my bedroom for the next few months without my husband and children. I felt lonely and missed them already, especially since my host family was in Jakarta to attend a wedding when I arrived at their house and only came back two days later. Adding to this sudden realisation, the Internet connection using my mobile phone was very slow and not stable. It was quite difficult for me to send a message using WhatsApp and Line or open a Facebook message board. This meant that my communication to my family by using Skype, and other social media applications would be affected. The house was actually really comfortable. How it could be otherwise when the house was huge in comparison to an average house in Semarang or Jakarta, with air condition in every bedroom. Also, it was located not far from the city centre. Yet I had left my comfort zone behind and the Internet was my link to what familiar to me for many years. Unlike many homes in Auckland with Wi-Fi connections, houses in Semarang very rarely had Wi-Fi connections. Hence, people tend to use their mobile phones or computer at their work places with Wi-Fi to access the Internet and social media. The scenes I observed in restaurants, malls and the train station or on the streets

in Semarang in which people, old and young, from all walks of life clicking and tapping their mobile phones to read, chat, and share through social media were common sights not only in Semarang but also in Jakarta and presumably in other big cities in Indonesia. With the availability of affordable mobile and smartphones as well as fierce competition among Internet service providers (ISPs), the Internet is within reach of many (APJII & PUSKAKOM, 2015).

In this chapter I would like to show how social media has become an important part of the everyday activity of people living in Indonesia. The focus of the narrative is Semarang in Central Java where I conducted my fieldwork and also discussions on Facebook. The first section of this chapter places the Internet within the context of Indonesia by giving particular interest in the growth and spread of the Internet in Central Java. The second section looks at Facebook in Indonesia and the debate surrounding its use from the perspectives of Muslim clerics. The third section explains the evidence that support the clerics' claim regarding the negative impacts of Facebook and the arguments surrounding selfies. The last section discusses how Facebook is used by pious Muslim mothers[1] as a platform for shaping pious self-understandings and for informing them on how to improve their parenting practices. Even though Islamic clerics discouraged Muslims to use Facebook for its temptations to lure users into inciting gossip and participating in talks, which could jeopardise their marriage, my Muslim participants utilise Facebook to improve their roles as Muslim women and mothers, instead. I argue that Facebook becomes a site where Muslim mothers define, negotiate and (re)define their roles and identity as Muslim women and mothers. It is

[1] Pious Muslim mothers who were involved in my study can be considered as 'mainstream' Indonesian Muslim women as opposed to Muslim women who belong to particularly ultra-orthodox groups such as Salafi (see Hasan, 2007, Nisa, 2012b) and Tablighi Jamā'at (see Amrullah, 2011). Even though Muslim women in Salafi movement regard Islam practiced by mainstream Muslim in Indonesia as inauthentic (Nisa, 2013), I argue that my participants are pious as they observed Islamic personal practices, such as praying, learning and reading the Qur'an, and most of them wore *ḥijāb* as their daily attire.

through this space that they shape and refashion their piety. A conclusion is provided at the end of the chapter to summarise the findings.

Mapping Social Media in Indonesia

It was around nine in the evening and I was waiting at Semarang Tawang railway station for the train to Bandung to come. My eldest son who has been working in Jakarta since two years earlier after finishing his Bachelor degree in Auckland sat beside me. He took a few days off from work to accompany me to visit my very sick sister in Bandung. Since he was organizing a burger stand at Grand Indonesia, a very posh mall in Jakarta, in a fortnight, he was busy checking the Internet on his mobile phone for the best deal of containers, tables and other things he needed for the Saturday bazaar. Next to him, a young couple with their toddler and a middle-aged mother were busy talking while the husband browsing the Internet. After my son finished phoning his friend in Jakarta to accept the delivery of goods he already purchased through a website a few minutes ago, he posted a few photographs he made earlier that day at different tourist sites around Semarang on his Instagram. While a young woman besides me was attentively reading her Facebook page. The sight I saw that evening was just a glimpse of the everyday activities of people in Java in which Internet and social media are part of. Mobile phones and smartphones have become necessary gadgets for common people in the cities and are no longer luxurious accessories for the very few.

Since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, the media landscape of Indonesia has been radically transformed. The country is now a highly saturated media space in which people are exposed to numerous media from television programming to social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Indonesia has been seen as an emerging

market in e-commerce with a rapidly growing numbers of online population. APJII and PUSKAKOM (2015) state that 88.1 million people had access to Internet at the end of 2014 whom 52 million of them reside in Java and Bali[2], and this number is still growing. As suggested by Hill and Sen (2008) the trajectory of Internet growth has been impressive since 1995. Even though prior to 1995 only a handful of science students in major universities in Indonesia used the Internet, yet by the end of 1995 five commercial ISPs and university-based network provided their services to an estimated of 15,000 Internet users. By 2013, 280 ISPs had registered as members of APJII (Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association) (Putri, 2013). In addition, the Internet penetration has been increasing steadily – from around seven per cent in 2005 to 34.9 per cent in 2014 of the total Indonesian population of around 252.4 million. The concentration of Internet users is mainly in larger cities with people in Java and Bali having the most opportunities to be connected to the Internet due to availability of ISPs. 78.5 per cent of Internet users live in the west part of Indonesia and mostly in urban sites. In Central Java half of the Internet users are female. In terms of age, nearly half (49%) of users are the digital native who are in the age bracket of 18 to 25. This generation is called digital natives because the Internet becomes part of their daily lives since they were born. Meanwhile, the rest of the Internet users belong to the older generation who is known as digital immigrant − people who only become acquainted with the Internet and digital media when they are already grown up (APJII & PUSKAKOM, 2015). More than 88 per cent of Internet users are people with high school diplomas or higher who access the Internet for gathering information as well as entertainment. The fact nowadays is the Internet is no longer the privilege of the very few amongst the Indonesian academics since it has become the everyday staple of

[2] The survey report does not separate its findings for Java and Bali.

people with different jobs and daily activities − 55 per cent employees/self-employed, 18 per cent university students, 16 per cent housewives and 5 per cent primary and secondary students (APJII & PUSKAKOM, 2015).

In Central Java, out of its entire urban population, around 10.7 million or 32 per cent are users of Internet (APJII & PUSKAKOM, 2015). In Java and Bali 92 per cent of users accessing the Internet through their mobile phones, while only 24 per cent use laptops, 12 per cent use desktop computers and only 8 per cent use tablets[3] (APJII and PUSKAKOM, 2015). The abundance of Internet facilities is also made possible by the emerging popularity of *warnet* (short for *warung* Internet or Internet kiosk) since 1997 and by the end of 1998 *warnet* could be found in more than a hundred cities and towns in Indonesia (Hill & Sen, 2008). Particularly when mobiles and smartphones were not as technologically advanced as today, *warnet* were booming across Indonesia, especially in Java and major cities outside Java. Yet, there was a slight drop of *warnet* customers from 83 per cent to 64 per cent due to the availability and affordability of mobile gadgets with Internet access in recent years (Dyah & Theresa, 2010). Although such decline was not yet alarming to drive them out of business since *warnet* owners use alternative marketing strategies to attract customers, for example by providing online games (Dyah & Theresa, 2010). Gaming at a *warnet* is still popular among children and youth in Java. When he was younger Nurul's son used to live with his grandparents in a different town in Central Java and spent most of his free time at *warnet* playing computer games. My niece told me after we came back from a *warnet* to print her sister's homework that people went to an Internet kiosk to do their homework or play computer games. Asih's daughter also visited a *warnet* next door to find information on the Internet for her homework with her friend. The convenience of a

[3] In this survey respondents are allowed to tick more than one gadget.

warnet a few meters away from Asih's front porch was indeed a blessing yet it posed some problems as well since Asih needed to make sure that her daughter was in fact only visited the *warnet* to work on her homework and did not play computer games[4]. Ironically, according to Tribune News (2013), Internet café with cubicles in Semarang tend to be misused as a place for romantic rendezvous of secondary school students.

Most of Internet users (84 per cent) in Indonesia access Internet at least once a day and for an average of between one and three hours a day (37.7 per cent). The latest survey suggests that 87.2 per cent Internet users in Java and Bali tend to access the Internet for social networking, 72.3 per cent for instant messaging and 71.6 per cent for browsing the latest news (APJII & PUSKAKOM, 2015). The most popular social media networks in Indonesia are Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter (Kemp, 2015). According to a research firm eMarketer (2015) Indonesia is the third largest country behind the US and India in terms of mobile phone Facebook audience with 62.6 million people accessing mobile Facebook at least once a month. Facebook has even opened an office in Jakarta recently to "work closely with the country's businesses" (Dewi, 2014). According to Kirkpatrick (2010), Facebook in Indonesia gained its popularity since Internet usage shifted to mobile phones and Friendster, which had been the local dominant social network, was not equipped with good mobile app.

Facebook and the Debate in Indonesia

[4] Asih and the *warnet*'s owner are friends, so she could monitor her daughter while she was at the *warnet* through the owner.

What *is* Facebook[5]? According to Morrison (2013), the answer to this question seems problematic because it depends on the position of the users "relative to this ever-shifting platform" (p. 114). She asserts that "Facebook 'is' an advertising medium, a public square, a place to play games, a place to nurture and maintain friendships, a digital photo album, a broadcast medium, and a place to document your daily doings" (p. 114). Users' 'relationship' with Facebook starts when they sign up for an account by providing an email address, a proper name, information about their age, gender, relationship status, work and education and their preferences in movies, music and books to create a 'profile' (Morrison, 2013). Sundén (2003) suggests that a profile on a social network site like Facebook is a page uniquely set up to "type oneself into being" (p.3). The extent to which this information is given may differ from one person to another. One person may gleefully offer all the data requested while others may restrain from giving unnecessary information and provide as little information as required[6]. Yet keeping ones' privacy within the boundary of ones' own limitation in Facebook is complicated because Facebook is persistently coaxed its users to update their status by clicking 'likes' on pages on other webpages. For example sharing postings which are automatically shown on the 'News Feed', keying 'likes' or giving comments on 'Friends' postings, or by adding and tagging photographs and making our own postings for whatever reason. The News Feed, which is the home page of Facebook, is continuously updated with postings from 'Friends', webpages in which users become 'Fans' (from celebrities to social organisations and from products to politicians) and our

[5] Mark Zuckerberg and his classmate Eduardo Saverin found Facebook and launched it with the name of Thefacebook in February 2004 as a platform that connects people through social networks at Harvard University among its students and it was expanded further into the Ivy League in March 2004. It was then renamed as Facebook and by September 2006, anyone of 13 years old and older with an email address could join (Kirkpatrick, 2010). It has become viral since its inception with the current daily active users of 936 million worldwide in the first quarter of 2015 (investor.fb.com, 2015).

[6] See Nosko, Wood, and Molema (2010) for a vast array of personal information that can be shared by users on Facebook personal profiles.

own postings (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Morrison, 2013). Apparently, users' continuous status updates are paramount for the livelihood of Facebook in terms of attracting and selling advertising spots (Morrison, 2013).

In this section, I explain how Facebook has become a space in which Muslim clerics encouraged Muslims, including Muslim women, to be cautious as it could incite misbehaviours, like gossiping, according to the religious teachings. Photographs on Facebook could also prompt some problems as taking and uploading selfies may cause inappropriate conducts among Muslims.

Facebook as a social networking hub shares the characteristics with other social network media like Twitter, namely it allows individuals to "(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Meikle and Young (2012) add a critical point, which I suggest, instigate the concern made by some Muslim clerics in Indonesia a few years ago. Meikle and Young (2012) highlight that social media network "blur the distinction between personal communication and the broadcast model of messages sent to nobody in particular" (p. 61). Around seven hundred Indonesian Muslim clerics in East Java gathered and discussed the importance of having an edict (*fatwā*) on virtual networking, as they believed that Facebook could encourage extramarital affairs. They considered making guidelines forbidding their followers from going online to flirt or engage in practices they believe could encourage illicit sex (CNN, 2009; Harsaputra & Karmini, 2009). The outcome of the meeting concluded with a statement that "'Facebook is forbidden' if it is used for gossiping, flirting, spreading lies, asking intimate questions, or vulgar behavior" (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p. 286). They forbade excessive communication between a male and a female

who are not *muhrim*[7] (unmarriageable kin) by means of Facebook or other social networking apps (Liputan6, 2009). Yet the clerics' statement merely served as a recommendation for the Nahdlatul Ulama, the Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars, which was then responded by confirming that the way people use Facebook, which makes it sinful, or not (CNN, 2009). Umar Shihab, the head of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulama Council) reaffirmed in his interview[8] with Liputan6[9] (2009) that Facebook is not *ḥarām* (forbidden) and even useful as a tool to encourage friendship and proselytise the teaching of Islam (KebangkitanBangsa, 2009).

Early this year Indonesian cybercitizens were surprised by a tweet on Twitter, which then sparked a huge debate in Indonesia. On 19th January 2015 'selfies'[10] or taking pictures of oneself using own hands or a tool, suddenly became a trending topic on Twitter. The commotion was started by Felix Siauw, an Indonesian Muslim *ustadz*[11] of Chinese descent, who suggested that uploading selfies could encourage pride (*ujub*)[12], attention-seeking (*riya*)[13] and even arrogance (*takabbur*)[14], which are forbidden according to Islamic tenet. Actually, he already posted on Facebook six months earlier on 22nd June 2014 about the same issue. This post alone had around 182 thousands likes, 91 thousands shares and 17 thousands comments, which were mostly in

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[7] It is *mahram* in Arabic.

[8] "*Facebook itu baik. Dalam rangka silaturahim, misalnya. Memperkenalkan diri atau mengembangkan suatu pengetahuan atau dalam menggunakan Facebook itu sebagai da'wah, media da'wah, itu semua boleh. Cuma mungkin ada kekhawatiran orang bahwa Facebook itu bisa digunakan untuk sesuatu yang negatif*".

[9] Liputan6 is a flagship television news program of the Indonesian TV station SCTV.

[10] Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) defines selfie as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media". It was picked as the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the year 2013 (Infographic: A closer look at 'selfie', 2013).

[11] It is al-`Ustādz in Arabic or teacher. The term is mostly used for a religious teacher who teaches Islam. In Indonesian language is pronounces as *ustad*.

[12] Felix Siauw states that ujub is when someone admires oneself for being beautiful, handsome or cool (Alfatih 1453 Channel, 2015; Siauw 2015a).

[13] Someone is said to be *riya* in the context of selfie, according to Felix Siauw, is when he/she uploads the picture of oneself on social media and his/her friends like the picture and post positive comments about it and the person feels great. Or the person uploads his/her own picture on social media for the purpose of having others click "like" or post positive comments (Alfatih 1453 Channel, 2015; Siauw, 2015a).

[14] The worst of all, said Felix Siauw, is when someone considers oneself as the best and no one is better than him/her and this means that the person is *takabbur* (Alfatih 1453 Channel, 201; Siauw 2015a).

agreement with the written statement. Yet it was only after his tweet received re-tweets from selfie lovers in Indonesia with the tag #Selfie4Siauw that it became a trending topic in Indonesia (Zhang, 2015). It even turned into news outside Indonesia such as the one published by Huffington Post in United Kingdom (Barrell, 2015). It is interesting to note that responds received on Facebook on Siauw's postings[15] on selfies generally a lot more positive than the ones on Twitter. Siauw in his blog (Siauw, 2015) blamed the media online for their articles with eye-catching titles suggesting that Siauw stated in his tweet that selfies are *ḥarām*[16] (for example Barrell, 2015; Kapanlagiplus, 2015; Thornhill, 2015) which was then protested by selfie lovers in Indonesia by posting their own selfies as a way to ridicule Siauw's tweet.

Different reactions on Twitter and Facebook on the same issue are quite intriguing. Although I cannot pinpoint the exact cause, I assume that the message limit of 140 characters on Twitter makes it prone to misunderstanding, as there is no enough space to explain about an issue as delicate as selfies, unlike Facebook post with its unlimited word space. This is adding to the fact that media online fuelled the debate with their statements that selfies are *ḥarām*. Thus, I suspect, this is the reason why comments on Facebook tend to be a lot more positive than on Twitter.

How Muslim women I talked to used Facebook? Did they encounter experiences that were cautioned by Muslim clerics? How did they manoeuvre their way through the constraints put forward by Muslim clerics? How do their uses of Facebook shape their own piety and religious practices? How as users does Facebook influence their parenting practices? How do their identity as Muslim women and mothers evolve due to their exposure to and use of Facebook? To which extent does Facebook provide a

[15] Felix Siauw posted another text on Facebook about selfie on 19th January 2015 with around 99 thousands likes, 26 thousands shares and 8,300 comments.
[16] Siauw (2014, 2015a, b) never stated that selfie is *ḥarām*.

platform for shaping pious self-understandings? In the next section, I discuss Muslim mothers' on-going reflexive performance and articulation of selfhood on Facebook and the effect on their pious self-understandings and mothering practices.

From Gossip to Selfies

It seems that the vague line between personal and public communication in Facebook worries religious clerics. They are concerned that Muslims are caught up in conveying private information or pictures to the public arena. For example, exposing someone's 'dirty laundry' or making accusations and exposing them to the wider Facebook audience could jeopardise one's marriage or trap users into misdemeanours according to Islam. As Solove (2007) explains, "according to the general rule, if something occurs in a public space, it is not private. But a more nuanced view of privacy suggests that this case involved taking an event that occurred in one context and significantly altering its nature-by making it permanent and widespread … That's what the Internet changes" (p. 7-8).

Did Muslim clerics' concerns happen amongst Muslim women I talked to? Apparently, yes. There was one time when Oci had an unpleasant experience with Facebook. Her husband's ex-girlfriend bullied her. The former girlfriend wrote some mean things on Oci's wall on the social media because she was upset that Oci married to her ex instead of her. Feeling helpless Oci gave no response to this abuse and instead she 'un-friend' this person. Actually, the ex-girlfriend was the one who first asked Oci to accept her friend request on Facebook and since Oci had no clue about her, she asked her husband. Although she had no ill feeling towards her before this incident, she only accepted the friend request after her husband explained about this woman as she was

always careful about who she invited and accepted as her Facebook friends. After the incident she felt she must delete the ex-girlfriend from the friends list because this woman made her irritated (*memancing emosi*). She even more furious due to the fact that her other Facebook friends could read the ex-girlfriend postings on their News Feed. A friend on Facebook was even curious to what was going on after she read the post and asked Oci some questions. However, the jealousy attack did not end here. The ex-girlfriend sent text messages to her husband soon afterwards. Oci became even more upset by these messages as she read them. Consequently, her husband told her not to open his messages because it only bothered her. He persuaded her not to worry because he never replied his former girlfriend's text messages.

This vignette shows that Muslim clerics' apprehension regarding the effect of Facebook is valid. If not used properly, Facebook could become a site in which marriages could go astray. Even though it is nearly impossible now to imagine life without Facebook and other social media, they undoubtedly have double-edged sword qualities. As my participant's experience suggests, Facebook nearly ruined her marriage. Clayton (2014) elucidates that social media like Facebook and Twitter "have provided a relatively new platform for interpersonal communication and, as a result, have substantially enhanced and altered the dynamics of interpersonal relationships" (p. 425). A research, which was commissioned by a UK law firm, Slater and Gordon, suggests that one out of seven married individuals have considered to end their marriage due to their spouse's postings on Facebook or other social media. According to this survey inappropriate pictures and posts on Facebook have potentials to provoke arguments between married couples (Doughty, 2015). Valenzuela, Halpern and Katz (2014) also assert that social network sites (SNS) like Facebook "may reduce marriage well-being through habituation or addiction, sparking feelings of jealousy between

partners, or facilitating having extramarital affairs" (p. 99). A number of studies validated Muslim clerics' concerns about the negative impacts of Facebook on human behaviour and relations, such as Internet addiction, anxiety, and jealousy (Clayton, Nagurney & Smith, 2013; Das & Sahoo, 2011). Yet I would like to argue that the nature of jealousy experienced by Oci is different to the one reported by other research. Instead of Facebook created feeling of distrust between her and her husband in a sense that she used it to make surveillance on her husband's Facebook profile and postings, rather his ex-girlfriend provoked feelings of jealousy in her by bullying her on Facebook. As Fox, Osborn and Waber (2014) state Facebook has significantly altered the way people relate to others romantically. They point out that as Facebook provides a platform in which people could broadcast their relationships to a much wider audience, it allows social network members greater access to the relationships of others. Yet with this visibility, connectivity and persistence, it is likely that Facebook is misused as a tool to monitor one's former partner (Chaulk & Jones, 2011; Fox, Osborn & Warber, 2014; Lyndon, Bonds-Raacke & Cratty, 2011; Marshall, 2012). It becomes possible as "Facebook allows self-generated and other-generated information to be tied to one's profile via posting, tagging, and apps" (Fox, et al., 2014, p. 528). Hence "by looking at posts, events, or locations check-ins" (Fox, et al., 2014, p. 528) a user may be able to track down his or her former partner "even if one is no longer Facebook friends with an ex-partner" (Marshall, 2012, p. 521). Even more so, in the case of Oci, her husband's ex-girlfriend out of her own jealousy could trace and find Oci's Facebook and befriended her for the sole purpose of stalking her and rocking her marriage.

Tiwi had a different issue with Facebook. A couple of years ago there was a disagreement between her and a friend, and without any hesitation this other person divulged her feelings on Facebook. An argument which supposedly harmless and could

easily be solved between the two of them then became worse because others interfered without knowing the cause of the problem. Feeling dejected she posted her response on Facebook to clarify the matter. Yet nothing good came out of it until she decided to keep quiet and ignored the whole thing as it already made her life unpleasant. Nowadays she restrains herself from making any personal comments or postings on Facebook except to make birthday wishes and read other people's postings and comments.

The narrative above shows that the public nature of social media, including Facebook, enables negative information like gossip and other disinformation to spread fast (Wen, et al., 2015) like a contagious disease. The vignette conveys that gossip online could jeopardise friendships offline. I consider the postings posted on Facebook by Tiwi's friend as gossip. It is true that gossip can be a simple idle chitchat without malice yet it can also be used to chastise and criticize others (Davis, 2011). However in this regard I imply on the latter. Dunbar (2004) underlines that "to engage in gossip is to speak ill of one's fellows, to interfere with the smooth running of the social relationships within which we are all embedded" (p. 100). Hunter (1990, p.300) emphasises that "gossip requires a public setting to be effective", such as in the market or gathering ─ although two persons can be grossly engaged in gossip on the phone ─ and today nothing can be more public than the Internet (Davis, 2011; Solove, 2007). As Solove (2007) notes, "the Internet can be used as a powerful tool to launch malicious attacks on people and ideas" (p. 35). It is through Facebook's "Status Update" that Tiwi's friend poured her heart out to her friends on the social network to gain sympathy. Yet, I argue, the outcome of gossip on Facebook is more damaging than through conventional means, because of its speed and extensive impact. Hence, the Muslim

clerics' concerns can be justified since they want to protect Muslims from adverse effect of improper use of Facebook and other social media[17].

In regards to selfies, how did Muslim women I spoke to deal with them? Was Felix Siauw is the only cleric who warned against selfies? In fact, there were other *ustadz* who cautioned posting selfies on social networking[18]. Two Muslim clerics in Lucknow, India went even further than merely alerting Muslim women. They issued a *fatwā*[19] in 2013 especially for young Muslim women commanding them to stay away from uploading their photographs for social media like Facebook as they consider social networking as un-Islamic, although this ruling was then refuted by other Muslim clerics in New Delhi (Mishra & Basu, 2014). Yet Tiwi and much feedback on Facebook supported Siauw's opinion that selfie can encourage people to brag on their physical beauty and wealth as explained by Tiwi:

> *Selfie bisa menjebak Muslim ke arah riya dan sombong, yap saya setuju dengan pendapat tersebut, karena ada unsur pamer karena menonjolkan hal-hal yang mereka punya baik itu kecantikan, ketampanan, kemampuan misal berlibur ke mana-mana* [Selfies can entrapped Muslims into becoming *riya* (attention-seeking) and arrogant, yes I agree with this opinion, because there is an element of showing off by pointing out things that they possess like beauty, handsomeness, wealth such as (by showing that they) went for holiday to different destinations].

[17] In spite of negative impacts, which can be generated from Facebook, Singaporeans have utilised Facebook to promote romantic relationship. Leo Burnett and Arc Singapore Worldwide designed and implemented the "Beautifully Imperfect" campaign on Facebook as one of the platforms aimed at young Singaporeans to cherish their "special someone" and to see beyond their spouses' imperfections and flaws. This government-led campaign was made to encourage marriage and parenthood amongst Singaporeans, since there is a decline in marriage and fertility rate. One-third of men and women in Singapore are single (Lee, 2014).

[18] See Göran (2011), particularly Chapter 2 of his book, for discussion on Islamic theological opinions on the debates regarding representational and visual arts, including photography.

[19] *Fatwā* (plural *fatāwā*) is a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

One of the responses from a Muslim woman in Siauw's Facebook page was also in agreement with the posting by saying:

> [You are right, *ustadz*. My friends who wear *ḥijāb*[20] often change their profile pictures on their Facebook and other social media. They even share their photos without wearing their *ḥijāb*[21] with provoking poses. I am not wearing a *ḥijāb* yet, but seeing my friends with *ḥijāb* and showing off their beauty like that it is an irony[22].]

Siauw (2015b) implies that posting a selfie is significantly related to narcissism if it is performed many times. As Carpenter (2012) explicates "grandiose exhibitionism was predicted to be related to Facebook behaviours that afforded extensive self-presentation to as large an audience as possible via status updates, photos, and attaining large numbers of friends" (p. 485). Ackerman, et al. (2011) also point out that grandiose exhibitionism is an aspect of narcissism that is manifested in the form of a sense of superiority, self-absorption, grandiosity, vanity, and a tendency of exhibitionistic behaviour. A number of studies confirm that posting a selfie is a mechanism through which narcissistic needs are expressed through social media (for example Barry, et al., 2015; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Carpenter, 2012; DeWall, Buffardi, Bonser & Campbell, 2011) and there is a positive correlation between selfie and narcissism (Fox & Rooney, 2015; Sorokowski, 2015). Indeed, it is not within the scope of this study to investigate the link between narcissism and selfie. Rather I would like to argue that the concerns of some Muslim clerics on selfie are supported by some research. While

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[20] A *ḥijāb* (plural *ḥujub*) is a head covering or veil wear by Muslim girls and women.

[21] *Ḥijāb* is known in Indonesia as *hijab* or *jilbab*. In this text I use the two terms interchangeably in accordance with the situation in Semarang and Jakarta in which these terms are also used in the same way.

[22] Indonesian language is used in the posting and discussions on Felix Siauw's Facebook page. I intentionally leave out the Indonesian language written text from Facebook to protect the identity of the users and due to powerful search engines, such as Google. So that it would be difficult to trace back to the original page on Facebook (see Markham & Buchanan, 2012) even though there are some possibilities. See Chapter Two for discussions on privacy and the use of data from Facebook.

Muslim women are encouraged to lower their gaze and protect their honour[23], yet some of them posting selfies on Facebook to gain attention from others.

Meanwhile, Vina offered me a very different answer. For her, a selfie can be permissible if it is used within the boundary of Islamic tenet, as she explained:

> *Selfi itu menurut saya sah-sah saja asalkan tidak membahayakan diri sendiri dan orang yang diajak selfi*[24] *serta tetap dalam batasan agama. Misal: selfi bareng suami atau anak itu sah, tetapi kalau selfi bareng laki-laki yang bukan muhrim, tentu tidak sah* [In my opinion a selfie is lawful if it is not harmful to the person and the other person involved in the picture and is within the religious boundary. For example, a selfie with one's husband or child is lawful, but a selfie with another man who is not (your) *muhrim* of course is not lawful].

Moreover, other Muslim women with whom I spoke also support this opinion. While Tiwi agreed with Siauw's view on selfies, Nia and Hesti did not see posting a selfie as a problem for Muslims. Nia explained:

> *Terus terang saya melihat pendapat ustad Felix itu agak menyederhanakan masalah ya. Tentu saja ada jenis-jenis pengguna fesbuk [sic] yang melakukan selfie sebagai wujud aktualisasi diri, memenuhi egonya untuk diperhatikan dan dipuji, tetapi sebagai sebuah media, media sosial seperti facebook [sic] juga memuat kaidah tentang selfie sebagai berikut: 1) selfie adalah penanda utama bahwa sebuah akun adalah otentik, bukan akun palsu/kloningan, sehingga orang akan merasa terjamin dalam berinteraksi dengan pemilik akun tersebut; 2) selfie secara langsung atau tidak langsung memperlihatkan kualitas dan otoritas dari si pemilik akun, sehingga orang bisa menghubungkan secara langsung atau tidak langsung dengan kualitas postingan status-statusnya,*

[23] And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.(Yusuf Ali, n.d.: Qur'an, Surah An-Nur Ayah 31).

[24] She acknowledged a tragic accident that happened when a student took a selfie with a background of Mount Merapi's peak in Java.

> *misalnya orang mengaitkan oh pantes postingannya kritis, wong aktivitasnya juga sebagai aktivis LSM, misalnya; 3) selfie di medsos juga sangat berguna bagi lembaga-lembaga survey pemasaran atau riset ilmiah untuk melakukan kajian-kajian tentang public behavior terkait konsumerisme, kecenderungan politik atau hal-hal lain yg bisa diidentifikasi dari sebuah selfie.… Karena ustad Felix mengaitkan pendapatnya dengan 'penilaian Tuhan' yaitu soal dosa atau tidak dosa, maka berbeda jadinya dengan saya. Saya melihat ini sebagai bentuk kebebasan individu (free will).* [Actually, in my opinion ustadz Felix tend to oversimplify the problem. Of course, there are Facebook users who post selfies as a way to self-actualised, to fulfill their ego for attention-seeking and praise, but as a medium, social media like Facebook also has selfies with these characteristics: 1) a (posting of) selfie (which is used) as the main sign that an account is authentic, not a fake one, so other people feel secure to interact with the owner of the account; 2) a (posting of) selfie, either directly or indirectly, shows the qualities and authority of the account owner, so other people can relate with the quality of its (Facebook) status, for example people can see the link between her/his critical postings (and the pictures which show) her/his activities as an NGO's activist; 3) (posting of) selfies on social media also very usefull for market survey or academic research to investigate public behaviour related to consumerism, political tendency or other aspects which can be identified from selfies … Since *ustadz* Felix draws his opinion from 'God's judgement' namely whether it is a sin or a virtue, (his view) is different to mine. I see it as a form of individual freedom (free will)].

For Nia uploading a selfie is not merely about a polarised moral excursion between virtue and misdemeanour according to Islam. Rather it serves as a mean for identity representation. Uimonen (2013, p. 124) emphasises that "the profile photograph validates your identity, it 'shows' who you are". Kujath (2011) also states that Facebook enables individuals to identify and validate other users that makes it a reliable and secure identity to others. In addition, a selfie, for Nia, can be used to frame oneself in a cultural setting as the example she suggested of an activist. Indeed according to Banks (2001), when reading photographs, the content (internal narratives) and context

(external narratives) of the pictures provide meaning. Back, et al. (2010) and Buss (2012) discover portrayal of individuals on Facebook reflect their true personality instead of the idealised image of themselves, although Miller and Slater (2000) imply that identity construction in Facebook is more of dynamics objectification of "expansive realisation" and "expansive potential" which allow individuals to show who they think they are and who they could be. Uimonen (2013), in support of Goffman's (1959) view on impression management, states that Facebook becomes a platform for a reflexive process when users select and upload photographs to portray certain aspects of selfhood by focusing on particular features while ignoring or masking others. Whether a picture reflects one's true self or ideal self, the underlining argument for Nia is a selfie is part of individual's freedom to express him or herself online.

Peek (2014) elucidates that in the digital era, taking and posting selfies are not always negative. Indeed selfies are often linked to the expression of narcissistic personality of the millennial generation or believed as a sign of low self-esteem or attention-seeking behaviour. However, Peek (2014) and Wilcox and Stephen (2012) propose that selfies in fact can be used as a tool to enhance self-esteem and well-being in adolescents, as people tend to use their best image, which would receive positive feedback from their networks. Nia also indicated selfies might be a saviour for introvert people as a way for them to interact with others. As Nia stated:

> *Saya masih melihat bahwa selfie seekstrim apapun (kecuali masuk kategori pornografi atau SARA) tidak berbahaya. Bagi pelaku selfie, boleh jadi aktivitasnya itu merupakan katup penyelamat, merupakan wujud keterhubungan dia dengan dunia luar*. [I still see selfies, however extreme (excluding the ones which contain pornography or SARA[25]), as not dangerous. For a selfie user,

[25] SARA is an Indonesian acronym, which stands for *suku* (ethnic group), *agama* (religion), *ras* (race) and *antar golongan* (inter social group). See Crouch (2010) for discussions on SARA conflicts within Indonesian archipelago during the New Order and post-Suharto era.

> these activities (of taking and posting selfies) may become (her/his) saviour (as they) serve as her/his link to the outside world].

Some studies suggest that Facebook has the potential to breakdown social barrier for individuals who are shy or with low self-esteem as it can be used as a vehicle for increasing social connections (Ellison, Steinfield & Stampe, 2007; Orr, et al., 2009; Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten, 2006), although they may not reap social rewards due to the way they write their postings (Forrest & Wood, 2012).

Meanwhile Hesti underlined the importance of *niyya*[26] (the intention behind an action) which separates between a selfie as a form of *riya* and as self-expression. As she explained:

> *Tentang riya, bisa saja, karena itu kembali ke niat masing-masing. Kalau niatnya pengen diakui dan dapat pengakuan kemungkinan muncul sifat kesombongan itu ada. Buat saya apa-apa itu ada porsinya, naaah kalo melebihi porsi, biasanya cenderung jadinya negatif. Sebaiknya apa-apa itu secukupnya*. [Regarding *riya*, it can be (*riya*), because it depends on one's intention. If the intention is to be acknowledged and to seek approval, then there is a possibility of arrogance there. For me everything has its portion. Well if (something) is more than (its) share, then (the outcome) tend to be damaging. (Thus) the best is to have everything in moderation].

I propose that Hesti's opinion provides a new light on how selfies are perceived by social media users. While other studies found the links between selfies and narcissism, self-expression or self-esteem my research reveals that there is another factor behind the debate about selfies. *Niyya* or *niat* in Indonesian language is usually discussed in its relation to ritual acts such as prayer (for example Bowen, 1997) and fasting (for example Powers, 2004)[27]. As Bowen (1997, p. 163) explains "the intent associated with

[26] It is *niat* in Indonesian language.
[27] Bowen's (1997) research in Gayo, Indonesia found that there is a dispute surrounding *niyya* in Islamic ritual contexts whether to verbalise the *niyya* or it is enough that the *niyya* in is the *qalb* (heart or mind) as

an act defines it: an act of sacrifice, worship, or pilgrimage to Mecca counts as such only if one undertakes it for the sake of God (rather than in hope of gaining wealth or prestige)". Yet based on Hesti's view *niyya* is used beyond the confinement of religious practices. This is not unusual or peculiar amongst Indonesian Muslims. There are Muslims, including Muslim women, who proclaimed that an act, any conduct in fact, is defined by its *niyya*. There are a number of *ahādīth* on *niyya* and one particular *hadīth* underpinning the importance of intention in any conduct states that actions are defined by intentions[28] (see also Goldziher, 1981). Hence, for Hesti as long as the *niyya* for posting selfies is honourable or at least is not to gain approval and acknowledgement from others then uploading selfies are permissible in the eyes of God. It is true that *niyya* is individual, "internal", and subjective in nature. It is between an individual and God because it is done by the heart/mind. So direct assessment by anyone other than the individual him- or herself would be impossible (Powers, 2004). The crux then, indeed, lies with how one treats posting selfies on Facebook. It is only the individual him- or herself who knows the intention behind uploading selfies on social media.

In essence, my participants agree that the guideline for posting self-portraits on social media is Islamic rulings. In general, they uploaded photographs on Facebook but seldom posted selfies. Their Facebook photos are all about family and friends in a myriad of settings from family gatherings to reunions with old friends. Some took pictures of their daily activities as mother, writer, environmentalist or lecturer, to name

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God knows what is in the *qalb*. Powers (2006) elucidates that the verbalisation of *niyya* is based on the notion that verbalisation is to amplify the *niyya* even though *niyya* is essentially silent. "*Niyya* must be done with the *qalb* (heart/mind), as an essential interior, subjective, nonverbal (mental) act, and it may at times also be accompanied by verbal pronouncement" (2006, p. 37). However, my point here is not about whether *niyya* is verbalised or not. Rather it is about *niyya* outside religious practices, which many Indonesian Muslims believe to be the foundation of ethical conducts.

[28] Narrated 'Umar bin Al-Khattab: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he emigrated for" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 1, Hadith 1).

a few. Other Muslim women uploaded their pictures in Mecca when they performed hajj or in China when they visited the country for a holiday. For their profile pictures on Facebook, most of my Muslim women participants uploaded their photos by themselves wearing *ḥijābs* or with their families, and only one woman who posted a picture of wild flowers as her profile photograph. I believe that her choice for a picture other than herself is not due to her view that a picture of oneself is un-Islamic[29]. She uploaded her photos in different settings and posted them on her Newsfeed. Recently she even 'advertised' a batik long skirt she wore by posting a picture of herself wearing the skirt so she could help promote her friend's home business and encouraged her networks to buy an attire or two from her friend. It is interesting to note that one mother even encouraged her children experimenting with taking selfies. Yet she discouraged them to post their selfies with 'sexy' facial expressions on social media. She wanted her children to experience taking them and to discuss them amongst her family within the confinement of their private space. The aim was to fill the void of taking selfies in public, as she cautioned her children about selfies. Since her children are teenagers who are inclined to have similar experiences as their peer group, she felt that the discussions at home about selfies would answer their curiosities.

Therefore, I argue that selfies have become another site in which Muslim women define, negotiate and redefine their Islamic understanding. I also suggest that any photographs on social media, not just selfies, are parts of the debate within the religious sphere about virtues and misdemeanours. Taking and uploading photographs on Facebook or other social media become a platform for Muslim women and mothers to discuss what is appropriate and inappropriate according to Islam. It is true that a

[29] More conservative Muslims and Muslim clerics voiced their disapproval of taking and uploading photographs of human beings as they considered them un-Islamic. See Janson (2014) on her account on her young Muslim participants in Gambia who declined to be photographed. A leading Muslim seminary in India called Darul Uloom also issued a *fatwā* stating that photography is unlawful and a sin (The Times of India, 2013).

photograph in itself as a medium is not haram. Yet the content and context of the pictures provide meanings, which can be debatable among Muslims in Indonesia. Indeed, I consider the way Muslim women negotiate Facebook as a form of piety. As Mahmood (2001), points out many aspects of social life are part of pious living, which include what is deemed proper media for adults and children.

Shaping Piety through Social Media

Indeed Internet, including social media, is a fertile ground to spread a myriad of information, from *da'wa*[30] (proselytization, Eickleman & Piscatori, 1996) to cyberporn (Lim, 2013). Beyond the use of print, radio, and television a variety of cyber Islamic environments have become available since mid-1990s as tools for spreading the words of Islam (Campbell, 2010). As Campbell (2010) explains "for many Muslim webmasters the desire to offer an alternative and more accurately informed view of Islamic beliefs and way of life has been an impetus for going online" (p. 31). However, communication in Islam is not a new phenomenon. As Sardar (1993) elucidates the proliferation of Islam, which is intrinsically related to the deep-rooted Qur'anic concept of *ilm*[31], has been practiced for centuries[32]. *Ilm* goes beyond the meaning of knowledge

[30] In Indonesian text the word *da'wa* is written in multiple ways as *dakwah*, *da'wa* or *da'wah*. The term *da'wa* is mentioned in the Qur'an (3:104; 16:125 for example) and in Hadith (Sahih Muslim Book 33, Hadith 195; Sahih Muslim Book 47, Hadith 30).

[31] The word *ilm* is written more than 800 times in the Qur'an, which suggests its importance. The first verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad contain the words *iqra* (read) and *qalam* (pen). As Sardar (1993, p. 44) explains "the first verses of the Qur'an thus lay the foundations of a culture and society based on reading and writing, research and penmanship, communication and transmission of knowledge and information".

[32] See Sardar (1993) for detailed descriptions of the three major periods of transformation in Islamic culture. Firstly, it was when Islamic knowledge, with the advent of technologies of paper and book production, shifted from desert religion to a world civilisation. Secondly, it was a period when *ulama* or recognised religious scholars became the exclusive few who had the authorities to set the criteria for interpretation of knowledge. This was marked by change of hands in knowledge management of words of Islam from community to official interpreters. Thirdly, with the availability of information and

since it contains the idea of communication and all forms of communication – knowledge, ideas and information – that are an integral part of the concept of *ilm* (Sardar, 1993). The crux of the Internet for Muslim public is that they use it to reach out to each other and to publics outside the Muslim community, which enable interpretation of Islam beyond the boundary of Islamic scholars (Anderson, 1999).

Facebook is deemed value laden, I argue. It is not merely a neutral medium for communication. As Lim (2013) affirms Internet is societally constructed and is does not operated in void. Muslim women who use Facebook do so for various reasons. Facebook as a social medium does not serve as a replacement for face-to-face interactions; rather it compliments and extends social relations, whether for maintaining existing friendships or building new interpersonal relationships (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011; Kutjah, 2011; McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). Some studies suggest multiple motivations trigger individuals for using Facebook such as interacting with friends, searching for social information about others, and as a way to entertain as well as to express oneself (Baek, et al., 2011; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Wise, Alhabash & Park, 2010). Facebook, for my Muslim participants, is a site in which they could share and discuss their opinions and experiences about matters they were passionate about like issues relating to Indonesian environment, Indonesian legal and political occurrences and turmoil[33], religious understandings as well as their achievements and daily lives. It is true that they did not follow the injunctions, which emphasise Muslim women's online engagement for the sole purpose of *da'wa* or searching for and posting

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communications technologies (ICTs) such as databases and CDs, making it possible for ordinary people to access the most comprehensive Islamic texts which enable readers to perform *ijtihad* (Islamic independent reasoning). Campbell (2010) underlines that the new era of the Internet brings back Islam to the first period in which the formation, interpretation and spread of Islam are in the hands of individual Muslims.

[33] Discussions about the new President Joko Widodo, or Jokowi as he is popularly known, were suddenly mushrooming on Facebook during his candidacy. Nowadays my Facebook Newsfeed is never free from postings of government officials and their exemplary or corrupt conducts.

religious knowledge alone (Nisa, 2013), yet seeking for better understanding of Islamic tenets and *da'wa* were parts of their online activities.

In this section I explore the meaning of Facebook for pious Muslim mothers in which morality is the core. I especially underline how these women utilise Facebook to shape and strengthen their understanding about Islam, particularly regarding the issues of *ḥijāb* and Muslim parenting. Even though Islamic clerics discouraged Muslims to use Facebook due to its alluring nature in inciting gossip, which could jeopardise their marriage, my Muslim participants utilise Facebook to improve their roles as Muslim women and mothers, instead.

In spite of the debate surrounding Facebook, my research also shows that Facebook can be used as a space in which Islam and its teachings are discussed widely and not merely within "religious spaces" of mosques, Qur'an interpretation classes or Muslim schools. Recently, there have been discussions on Facebook amongst my participants about the *ḥijāb*. Desi, who wears a *ḥijāb syar'i*, posted a picture (Fig. 1) with a statement saying that wearing a *ḥijāb* is compulsory[34] for Muslim women and received nearly two dozen likes for her posting. She stated on her wall:

> Thank you to my friends who have given your thumbs up (for this post). Please forgive me if anyone feels offended (by this posting). I just convey God's command. I hope my friends who have not donned a *ḥijāb* are enthusiastic to wear it. For those who have dressed in a *ḥijāb* would be *istiqomah*[35]. *Barakallahu Fiikum* [May Allah bless you]. *Aamiin ya robbal 'alamiin*. Have a nice weekend with your family.

[34] See footnote 23 for the verse, which explains about *ḥijāb*. The same verse entails the description about the command for Muslim women to lower their gaze and wear a *ḥijāb*. Sūrah Al Ahzab (33:59) focuses on covering women's body to be proper: "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful." See also Tarlo (2010), El Guindi (1999) and Bullock (2002) for discussions surrounding *ḥijāb*.

[35] *Istiqomah* or *istiqama*h is Arabic for standing firm on straight path of Islam.

***Figure 1: A posting about* ḥijāb *on Facebook made by one of the participants.*[36]**

Desi's posting was responded by positive remarks by her friends who have worn a *ḥijāb*. In her reply to one of her friends, she explained that wearing a *ḥijāb* is a process to aim for donning a *ḥijāb syar'i* as a daily dress. Meanwhile, Yiyi, who also wears a *ḥijāb*, and other Muslim women I know liked a different picture on how to wear a *ḥijāb* step-by-step (Fig. 2). This kind of *ḥijāb* tutorial page is very popular on Facebook and these tutorials are available on YouTube and in Muslim fashion magazines as well[37]. The aim of posting such pictures on Facebook was to remind themselves about the importance of wearing *ḥijāb* and to encourage their Muslim friends to wear it. I suggest that this is a part of *da'wa* in which they inspired other Muslim women who have not

[36] The translation of the posting is as follows: "Wearing a *ḥijāb* for a Muslim woman is more important than *tarawih* and *tahajud* prayers, fasting in the month of Syawal and fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as other non-obligatory fasting. Because wearing a *ḥijāb* is WAJIB (compulsory) according to (Islamic) law, whereas *tarawih* and *tahajud* prayers, fasting in the month of Syawal and fasting on Mondays and Thursdays are SUNNAH (optional). However, many people are more inclined to do the SUNNAH while leaving out the WAJIB. Let's keep doing the SUNNAH as well as the WAJIB". Religious conduct is considered *wajib* if it is compulsory for Muslims to do it, such as praying five times a day and fasting in the month of Ramadan. Meanwhile, other practices are deemed *sunnah* which means that they are virtuous when Muslims completed the practices yet they are not compulsory. If Muslims do not do the *sunnah* there are no penalty whatsoever according to Islamic tenet.

[37] See Jones (2007) for discussion on the rise of Islamic fashion in Indonesia within a context of national debates about modernity and piety.

worn a *ḥijāb* to wear it, or to at least understand more about the meaning of wearing a *ḥijāb*. Since they see Islamic clothing as part of being pious, they want to strengthen their conviction by wearing the attire as well as to stimulate their Muslim female friends' interests to embrace *ḥijāb* as part of their daily dress. Veiling in Indonesia, especially in Java, is part of a new phenomenon of becoming pious. Wearing a *ḥijāb* was never a part of the local past (Brenner, 1996; Smith-Hefner, 2007), unlike in some other countries (Hoodfar, 1991; Mule and Barthel, 1992; Zuhur, 1992), and is part of the construction of modernity (Bowen, 2012). Moreover, in contrast with Brenner's (1996) study on veiling in Java at that time, donning jilbab nowadays in Java does not incur disadvantages of being perceived as *fanatik* (fanatical) (see also Jones, 2010) or denied for job opportunities. Most of my participants wore jilbab and held an occupation either in public sector, organisation or self-employed.

Figure 2: A ḥijāb tutorial picture posted on Facebook by my participant. It was sourced from www.clozette.co.id

These discussions on *ḥijāb* indeed did not happen in a vacuum. Last year Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) issued a *fatwā* against

jilboob. This is a common term coined by Indonesian Muslims and media to refer to women who wear Muslim veils with tight clothes showing their boobs. The reason behind this *fatwā* is that *jilboob* does not cover *'awrah*[38] or the intimate parts of the body, which must be concealed by clothing according to Islamic tenet except to their husbands or *mahram*. For adult females, the *'awrah* is the whole body except the face and hands. It is true that *jilboob* covers the intimate body parts but it is quite skin tight so it shows the curves of the body including the boobs, hence the name *jilboob* from *jilbab* or veil, and boobs. *Jilboobs* are worn by some Muslim women, particularly young women, including by Muslim youth I saw in Semarang, a city in Central Java where I did my fieldwork and in Jakarta where most of my online participants reside. The discussions on Facebook focused on whether *jilboob* is a fashion trend among Muslim youth nowadays and whether the trend changes or it is here to stay; and whether the *jilbabs*, which my participants wear, are appropriate enough according to Islam or whether their aim is *jilbab syar'i* (see Fig. 1). As illustrated by Nia's comment on Facebook:

> *Jilboob*? I see it as a process, which is temporary in nature, because clothes, which are fashionable nowadays, used jersey fabric. When later on the fabric used is dominated by cotton, baggy style for the blouse and pants will be popular. Actually, I often feel moved by young girls who wear skin-tight or rather revealing clothes and they are crammed in a small *mushola*[39] in a mall so they could pray on time. My heart just melts looking at this scene.

[38] *'Awrah* (Arabic) is *aurat*/*awrat* in Indonesian language. Leaman and Ali (2008) and El Fadl (2014) discuss the notion and issues of *'awrah* for Muslim men and women and its complexities. Yet in this text, I will not discuss it further beyond its meaning as parts of the body, which are forbidden to be exposed, except to their husbands (Nasir, Pereira and Turner, 2010).

[39] *Mushola* is a prayer room or a small mosque. In contrast to a mosque, it cannot be used as a space to hold a congregational Friday prayer. Malls in Jakarta and Semarang offer *mushola* for Muslim customers and shopkeepers to pray (see Jakarta Post, 2008). I prayed at a *mushola* in one of the malls in Semarang. The place is very cosy and pleasant. It is tailored to suit male and female worshipers.

When I prayed at a *mushola* at a mall in Semarang, I had a similar experience as Nia. I was praying for my *dzuhur*[40] prayer with two young women in *jilboob*. It is clear that wearing *jilboob* does not necessarily mean a person is not or less pious than someone who dons a *jilbab* or *hijab syar'i*.

In fact, Indonesian Ulema Council encouraged Muslim women to cover themselves modestly in *jilbab syar'i*. *Jilbab syar'i* is a name derived from the term shari'ah or Islamic law. It is understood as attire which follows the guidelines of the shari'ah. It is a loose-fit garment with a long veil to cover the head, neck and breasts. The bottom line for *jilbab syar'i* is that the garment can be used for prayer without having to add another layer of prayer clothes or *mukena*. Some pious Muslim women on Facebook, although they wear *ḥijāb*, are striving to dress in *jilbab shar'i* while others are already content with the way they dress as they consider it as proper Muslim clothing for women. As Mandel (1989, p. 45) elucidates "the decision to wear a scarf or not to wear one impinges on the encompassing social relations as it expresses specific preference for affiliation and differentiation with or from social groups; it states decisively where one stands on an 'us versus them' continuum".

Nasir, Pereira and Turner (2010) propose that the spread and revival of religion in any society, like the Islamic "consciousness"[41] in Indonesia, can be seen from its pious acts. It is through mundane and daily practices, such as dressing and eating, which otherwise secular yet have been reformed as they embed a religious significance, that

[40] *Dzuhur* prayer is part of the five times daily prayer, which starts from just before noon until around 3pm.

[41] I would like to call it as Islamic "consciousness" instead of Islamic "resurgence" or "revival". In accord with Brenner (1996), I agree that the term "resurgence" and "revival" have the connotation of recapturing the old spirit of embracing Islam as a way of life, instead of embarking upon a new venture. The spirit of practicing Islam in Indonesia is not a mere cyclical process of revitalisation as is the case in other countries, such as Egypt (Hoodfar, 1991; Zuhur, 1992). Rather it is a kind of a new phenomenon in which ordinary Muslims eager to learn to be good Muslims, although Islam has been introduced in the region since centuries ago (see Ricklefs, 2006; 2007; 2012). Sakai and Fauzia (2014) suggest that Islamic orientations in contemporary Indonesia are increasing towards cultural Islamism instead of political Islamism. Islamic values become the guiding light of ethical self-improvement.

piety is expressed. Nasir, Pereira and Turner (2010) underline the importance of body and embodiment in religious belief and ritual in which piety is aimed in the practice of religion. In Indonesia, piety and clothing have become closely intertwined (see also Rinaldo, 2013). Most of my participants wear *ḥijāb* as part of their daily attire. However, I would like to suggest that *jilbab* is not the only indicator of one's piety, although it is used as a "visual cue" (Hannerz, 1980) by others to identify Muslims as it is very obvious. It would be mistaken to rely solely on *jilbab* as a marker of piety among Javanese women. Niar told me that she was surprised to meet one of her female students outside university because she did not wear a *ḥijāb* meanwhile she always donned it when she was at the university. Niar did not even recognise her until the student greeted her. Another time, my mother and Niar revealed a story that a young woman whom they both knew lamented that she was trapped into a practice of giving sexual favours for money for the sake of having some luxurious material things, like an expensive mobile phone. What makes it even more shocking was that this beautiful girl was wearing a *ḥijāb* as her everyday dress. Contrary to this narrative, one participant who was not wearing a *jilbab* explained that for her a modest dress was a necessity although she was not ready to don a *ḥijāb*, yet. I met her a few times on her way to a *mushola* to do her afternoon prayer in the midst of doing her job. However, for most of the women I talked to donning a *ḥijāb* is paramount as an expression of piety. As Amrullah (2011) explains that in order to be valued as good and pious Muslim women, they seek to cover their *'awrah* by dressing in proper attire. Saba Mahmood (2005, p. 29) affirms that "the body is not a medium of significant but the substance and the necessary tool through which the embodied subject is formed" to aim for piety. Also, Deeb (2006; see also Rinaldo, 2008) argues that piety is made visible through its public expression, especially through women's clothing. As Arthur (1999, p.1) underlines that

"while a person's level of religiosity cannot be objectively perceived, symbols such as clothing are used as evidence that s/he is on the 'right and true path.'

Thus, piety has to be tied to other religious rituals besides clothing. Piety, indeed, is also very much connected to one's personal practices (Nasir, Pereira and Turner, 2010; Rinaldo, 2013), such as performing prayer, fasting, and abstaining from eating pork and drinking alcohol, to name a few. In addition, it is interesting to note, that for my participants being pious also means striving to be good Muslim mothers (see also Tong & Turner, 2008). This entails giving their children an appropriate and supportive environment, at home, school and public spaces, which could help shape their children to become good Muslims and responsible citizens. As Nisa (2012a) states the responsibility of Muslim women mainly is toward their own children, particularly their religious education. Since Facebook is a place where these women could gain Islamic knowledge, voice their concerns, and discuss topics related to their roles as Muslim women and mothers, Facebook becomes a platform in which these women could improve and refashion themselves appropriately according to Islamic tenets.

As Muslim mothers, my participants are very much involved in educating and disciplining their children so their children can embody Islamic values. However to impart the religious dispositions they have to start from themselves. Thus, they equipped themselves with Islamic knowledge, which they gained, not only from religious sources, Muslim parenting books and Qur'an classes, but also from Facebook. They engaged with different Facebook pages, which relate to Islam mostly in Indonesian and a few in English. A few of these pages are dedicated particularly for Muslim women such as *Khusus Muslimah* and *Pengajian Muslimah*. Others are aimed for general Muslim audiences like *Kajian dan Tafsir Al Qur'an*, a Facebook page in which the Qur'an is studied through its meanings. They also liked Facebook pages

which could inspire them as Muslim wives and mothers. A few of them read Facebook pages about breastfeeding and children's Islamic education. For example, Oci shared her experience on breastfeeding with mother alike on Facebook, while Nurul learned about Islamic teachings she read on Facebook.

Many Muslim women, including my participant, enjoy reading Ummi, the most popular Indonesian Muslim parenting magazine. This magazine set up its Facebook page in 2009 (Majalah Ummi, n.d.) and since then it has provided online parenting guidelines for many Muslim mothers. By reading its postings, Muslim parents could obtain useful information to help them to be good mothers and fathers within a harmonious and loving marriage. For example, one of its postings was about the characteristics of a good Muslim mother. It is true that most of these attributes are shared by many other secular parenting values such as a good mother has to encourage her children's self-confidence and abilities, or she needs to promote good manners in her children. The only difference, and the most significant I suggest, is that Muslim mothers should teach their children about God, the Prophet and the Qur'an. The postings on Ummi and other Islamic related Facebook pages indeed serve as reminders for Muslim mothers on how to be good Muslim women and mothers, and they may or may not agree with the views, yet these discussions could add to their already acquired knowledge on Islam and its teachings.

Contrary to the so-called 'secularisation' thesis of modern industrialised society that considers religious belief to be in decline with a result of diminishing influence of religion in social and cultural life (see Ross-Sheriff & Nanji, 1991), for pious Muslims parents in Java religious education deem as vital, not just for themselves but also for their children. As Piela (2012) elucidates in her research on Muslim women online activities, women's role in the family is central with the aim to raise good Muslim

children. Similar to Ryan's and Vacchelli's (2013) study with British Muslim mothers, the women I talked to also draw upon Islamic tenet as a framework to inculcate their children with religious teachings and values. As Rozario and Samuel (2012, p. 29) eloquently state, "Islam (as a set of ideas, practices, ideal dispositions, etc.) structures people's behaviour, but it also provides a body of resources which, along with other non-Islamic resources, are used by women and men as they engage with the practical problems and issues of everyday life".

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to underline a few points. It is true that Facebook undoubtedly has double-edged sword qualities. It is a vehicle for harm (Wheeler, 2002) as well as a tool with which to maintain and improve piety. Facebook has essensially become a space outside mosques, Qur'an classes and Muslim schools where Islam is widely discussed by ordinary people including Muslim women. With or without the authority of Muslim clerics[42], Muslim women are free to express their opinions and discuss amongst themselves. Of course, there is an issue related to the construction of authority of Islamic knowledge since it depends on the sources utilised and referred to on Facebook. Yet, Facebook is a place where Muslim women's voices are heard. No one has the power to stop whatever these women say on Facebook. This is a space in which they could learn, share, debate, and give judgements about others whose opinions

[42] Cyber Islamic Environments, borrowing Bunt's (2000) term, is filled with a myriad information and knowledge about Islam "in a variety of context from a spectrum Islamic perspectives and affiliations" (p. 105). In spite of its nature which provides a space to make *ijtihād* (independent judgment based on Islamic sources) much easier, it is also prone to mistakes since anyone with a computer and an Internet connection could post any information and knowledge relating to Islam and Muslims, regardless of their credibility (Bunt, 2000).

or experiences are not similar to theirs[43]. Facebook is no longer a space for passing time or entertainment alone. Rather it becomes a tool for shaping and refashioning piety. It is evident that piety is a journey and truly complicated. Donning a veil does not necessarily mean embodying virtue and piety without adherence to religious practices, and vice versa. I also would suggest that piety is always simultanously 'becoming' and 'being'. I suggest it intensifies the objectification of Islam. Objectification that entails basic questions about their faith: "What is my religion?" "Why is it important to my life?" and "How do my beliefs guide my conduct?" (Eickleman & Piscatori, 1996, p. 38), increasingly shape the discourse and practice of Muslims as they perpetuate in the consciousness of most Muslims. Through objectification that involves self-examination, judging others and judging oneself (Melcalf, 1996), these Muslim women strive for piety through various means; including the way they dress and bring up their children. Not only as minorities, but practicing Muslims in countries with majority Muslim population, like Indonesia, are confronted with ways of life, images, films and media as a whole that are heavily influenced by secular values (Roy, 2004). The permeable boundaries of cyberspace give rise to new forms of religious interactions and communication as well as reinforce allegiance to the previous religious understandings. Their uses of Facebook – their postings, comments, the discussions they involved with, and the Facebook pages they liked and read – are acts of piety. Hence, Facebook becomes a site where Muslim mothers define, negotiate and (re)define their Muslim-ness and their Islamic understandings how to be good and pious women and mothers. The discussions on Facebook amongst Muslim women show the fluidity of religious

[43] I have seen and listened to my participants' stories on how they un-friended, argued with and apologised to their Facebook friends because they disagree with certain Islamic understandings, such as making birthday and Christmas wishes. For some Muslims these congratulatory remarks are un-Islamic and considered *bid'ah*. *Bid'ah* is unwarranted innovations, belief or practices in religious matters, which are therefore best avoided (Mahmood, 2005, p. 87) since usually it goes against the text of the Qur'an and *aḥadīth* (Grunebaum, 2007, p. 279).

space, religious discourse, religious authority and religious social networking (see Ali, 2011). There are indeed multiple ways of understanding Islam in Indonesia which have coexisted within a secular context for centuries and these women are navigating and negotiating their way through Indonesia's secular and religious frameworks.

Chapter Six

Billboards and Muslim Mothers

"If outdoor advertising attempts a kind of "call and response" engagement with people, it is a dialog that is often resisted, ignored or reworked. The grammar of desire and ownership marked on spaces by advertising is one which is fractured by the everyday messiness of people's visual and material encounters with cities" (Cronin, 2013, p.275).

On a Saturday afternoon on our way home from a shopping mall in Semarang our car stopped at a traffic light at a very busy junction. I was sitting behind the driver while my host father sat beside his son-in-law who drove the car. My host mother, sister and her children occupied the other passenger seats. Suddenly, my mother, who was sitting closed to the window, pointed to a fascinating yet peculiar A4 poster pinned on an old tree on the pavement. The text read "200 beautiful young women and widows are looking for husbands" with a mobile phone number underneath for interested party to call. My mother and I were giggling at the idea of such an advertisement flaunted for everyone to see. How come the flyer of women looking for husbands was displayed in an "inappropriate" public space? Were these women in their right mind to "proclaim" such a private matter publicly, let alone at a junction where anyone could see? My teenage niece, drawn by our giggles, looked at the same advertisement, read it aloud and found it very amusing. Suddenly, my mother realised what was happening and immediately gave her a certain look and told her in English to stop talking about it so that her younger sister could not understand what was going on. This kind of flyer, indeed, was not appropriate for children, I thought to myself.

I pondered how Muslim women in Semarang dealt with the ubiquitous billboards of different advertisements from instant noodle to cigarettes placed around the city. Did they take notice of such omnipresent outdoor advertising and their messages? Did they resist, simply ignore or rework the visual images and their portrayals? Did their religious understandings clash with the billboards surrounding them in their everyday lives?

In this chapter, I first elucidate billboards in Semarang and their relation to urban space and government policy. The next sections focus on outdoor advertising on wedding

exhibitions and cigarettes which profusely decorated the city. The third section explores the way Muslim mothers negotiated these types of media. .

Billboards in Semarang

The first thing I noticed in Semarang was the countless outdoor advertisements, big and small, throughout the city. These outdoor advertisements can be in the form of huge billboards, posters, flyers, banners or stickers. In the central city square, Simpang Lima, tens of billboards were competing for space as well as attention from passer-by. The pervasive and towering presence of billboards seemed to dominate the view. The general appearance seemed chaotic, disorderly and messy (Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below). Even the governor of Central Java and the mayor of Semarang both agreed that billboards at Simpang Lima Square and its surroundings need to be well managed and placed so that the central city would be visually pleasing (Wali kota, 2016; Hutan reklame, 2016).

Figure 6.1: Huge billboards at one of the corners of Simpang Lima, the central city square in Semarang. The billboards showed advertisements of different products and events—from cigarette, drink, traditional herbs, mobile phone and motorcycle to movies, music on iTunes and a Jazz show.

Figure 6.2: Billboards along the road around the Simpang Lima Square—instant noodles and car advertisements.

A myriad of products, events and businesses used billboards and other outdoor advertising and occupied public spaces. There were drinks, traditional herbs, instant noodles, mobile phones, radio stations, newspaper, jazz and wedding shows, motorcycles and cars as well as cigarettes vying to capture public interest. The pre-history of billboards started in 1450 when a German blacksmith and printer Johanne Gutenberg invented a movable type printing which was then perfected in 1796 in the form of lithography by a German actor and playwright Alois Senefelder (Shea, 2015). A large American poster was made in 1835 measuring more than 50 square feet (more than 15m^2) (Shea, 2015). In the early nineteenth century in London outdoor advertising could be glued in any available space without the owner's consent and only after a London act was passed in 1837 that pasting paper posters were regulated (Wharton, 2013). Advertising in general and billboards specifically, very much rely on the development of technology (Wharton, 2013). Nowadays, outdoor advertising can be seen in the forms ranging from traditional paper posters to billboards and digital screens (Wharton, 2015).

In Indonesia, advertising in public spaces is regulated by local government decrees. Semarang has its own local regulation for outdoor advertising (Peraturan Daerah Kota Semarang, 2012) which is currently being revised. It is expected that the new decree will be implemented in 2017 (Laeis, 2015). The reason behind the new law is to increase revenue from outdoor advertising for the city. With the current legal act which was established in 2012, the target of ten billion rupiah (more than one million New Zealand dollars) has never been achieved. In 2014 revenue from outdoor advertising was around six billion while by mid-2015 only four billions has been received (Laeis, 2015). According to current legislation major urban areas like Simpang Lima and Siliwangi are not under Semarang City jurisdiction. They are both under provincial and national authorities, respectively. Hence, the taxes paid for billboards at these two principal areas are not managed by the local government.

On the other hand, local government is trying to spruce up the city by creating a new regulation to ban outdoor advertising on government land (Wali kota, 2016) as well as enforcing the law by taking down outdoor advertisements which violate the regulation (Melanggar Perda, 2015). It seems there is a conflict between seeking more revenue from outdoor advertising and tiding up urban spaces. Yet, there is no discussion surrounding the ethics of billboards in Semarang other than the aesthetics of their

placements throughout the city. What about the many huge cigarette billboards on the main thoroughfare and neighbourhoods of Semarang[1]? How did my participants respond to advertisements they deem controversial? Several billboards, including cigarettes, have stirred controversy and evoked feelings of concern among Muslim women I spoke with. Did their religiosity play a part in the way they engage with billboards? Next, I explain about outdoor advertising of cigarettes and other billboards with sexual appeal which my participants talked about.

From Cigarettes to Wedding Shows

A number of studies indicate that religion plays a significant role in how people perceive advertisements of products deemed controversial (see for example Fam, Waller & Erdogan, 2004; Farah & El Samad 2014). Similarly, the Muslim women I talked to also described their complaints about certain outdoor advertising, particularly cigarettes and sexual appeal billboards. Their presence were overwhelmingly contradicted with the way their understand Islam. However, not all resistances are based merely on religion. Health risks could also be the underlying reason behind certain advertising like cigarettes. In this section I elucidate the representations upon which these advertisements conveyed. I start with a discussion on cigarettes ads and then move to a wedding show billboard as an example of advertisement with sexual appeal.

Tobacco Advertising, Health Risks and *Fatwā*

In 2010 the world was shaken by the news about a two-year-old boy in South Sumatra, Indonesia who smoked forty cigarettes a day and threw massive tantrums when his demands for cigarettes were not met (Too unfit to run, 2010). The disturbing truth of his difficulty to run due to his debilitating habits, opened eyes not just in Indonesia but all over the world on the fact that Indonesia was the worst country in terms of the rates of

[1] The same situation can also be found in other major cities in Indonesia, like Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara or Depok, West Java, a city on the southern border of Jakarta. Although, there were less outdoor advertisements in Central Business District in Jakarta compare to Semarang.

active smokers with 67 per cent of its adult males smoking[2] (Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2012). Worst of all, he was not the only toddler in Indonesia who smoked. In a tiny fishing village in East Java there was another two-year-old who puffed away, sometimes two packs a day, with his grandfather (Meyersohn & Harris, 2011). This was certainly not an exception since reports suggest Indonesian children as young as two, and youth smoke (Meyersohn & Harris, 2011; Smoking among minors, 2013). Indeed, the rampant tobacco advertising and cheap cigarettes are blamed for the world's highest per capita rates of smoking among youth (Tobacco burden facts, 2013) not to mention parents who smoke. Around 32.1 per cent Indonesian students of 13-15-year-olds smoke with more boys smoking than girls. Nearly half (43.2%) started smoking when they were 12-13 years old, while 19 per cent started before they even reached ten years old (World Health Organization, 2015).

Since the "smoking baby" became world news and caused worldwide outrage, Indonesian government started to pay more attention to problems of child smokers (Hall, 2013). However, this has not been easy as different forces, particularly from cigarettes manufacturers—local as well as international—are still trying to get hold on huge profits they collect from Indonesia. Undeniably, the country is well-known as a haven for tobacco industries (Meyersohn & Harris, 2011). World Health Organization's treaty to restrict tobacco advertising as a way to limit cigarettes industries' influence is by no mean successful in the country. This situation coupled with weak government regulations turn Indonesia as a "Big Tobacco's smoking giant" (Harsono, 2011). The evident was clear. Until the end of 2014 when I conducted my fieldwork in Semarang, cigarette billboards and sponsorship were on display throughout the city (Figures 6.3 and 6.4 below). Even in the first half of 2015 it has not changed (Figure 6.5 below).

There were bridges in Semarang where a series of huge tobacco billboards were the main decoration (Figure 6.3). As a way to attract more consumers other outdoor advertisement candidly inscribed the price of a pack of cigarettes which is very cheap[3] compared to New Zealand (Figure 6.4). The space used to exhibit these billboards could be anywhere beside bridges, from the roof of a police guard house (Figure 6.1—bottom

[2] World Development Indicators (2016) states slightly different percentage of 72 per cent. The data is for 2011-2015 on health risk factors and future challenges. The prevalence of smoking for adult males and females is based on 2012 data. For adult females in Indonesia the data shows 4 per cent of them were smokers.

[3] A pack of Dunhill was only 14,000 rupiah (around NZ $1.5). The price of cigarettes in New Zealand is more than $20 (Davison, 2014).

left corner) and junctions of busy streets (Figure 6.4) to the front yard of someone's house (Figure 6.5). The images portrayed on the billboards could be written text (Figure 6.3 and 6.4) or a visually attractive picture of models in a scene which exude "coolness" (Figure 6.5). As if to depict that the person who smokes this particular tobacco could become this "cool" (*keren*). Indeed, tobacco companies and their advertising agencies seek to endorse "lifestyle attributes" (Reynolds, 1999, p. 85) like masculinity and modernity (Figure 6.5). According Ng, Weinehall and Öhman (2007), based on their research with male youth in Java, "smoking portrays the image of potency, wisdom and bravery, which they described as 'machismo' and 'self-confidence'" (p. 798). Smoking is part of becoming a man for these teenage boys.

Figure 6.3: A series of cigarette billboards along a bridge in Semarang.

Figure 6.4: A cigarette billboard in a corner of a junction in Semarang with texts saying "Beware: Smoking kills" and 18+ at the bottom of the board.

Figure 6.5: A cigarette outdoor advertisement at a junction in one of the neighbourhoods in Semarang. Photograph by Sasya Wreksono. A picture of skulls on the bottom left-hand corner emphasises the message that "Peringatan: Merokok membunuhmu" [Beware: Smoking kills].

Certainly, every cigarette billboard has to include a text saying "beware: smoking kills", an 18+ logo and a picture of skulls at the bottom part as disclaimers. The meaning behind these texts is obvious—smoking is only allowed for people who are 18 years old or older since they are supposed to understand the health risk of smoking. Yet, compare to the whole space of the advertisement these warnings are relatively small and dull.

Does the tobacco industry really keen to warn its (will-be) consumers of the health risk involved in smoking? Do (will-be) consumers actually understand the health risk messages displayed on billboards and what they entail? How far has the government taken control of cigarettes and their advertisements? Health and anti-tobacco activists and campaigners believe that the government is not serious in tackling the problem as tobacco is very much tied to every element of the society including politics, sports, arts and media (Harsono, 2011).

In his book *Membongkar Gurita Cikeas* [Uncovering Cikeas[4] Network], George Junus Aditjondro (2010), a scholar who is passionate about disclosing corruptions in Indonesia, exposes the connection between Yudhoyono, the previous president, his family and Sampoerna, a major tobacco company in Indonesia. The company financially supported a national newspaper which became the instrument for publishing articles in favour of Yudhoyono and his party (2010, pp. 21-26). The same company even provided a whole floor for Yudhoyono's son for his business in its building in Jakarta (Harsono, 2011) although since the end of 2013 his business no longer occupied the office space (Perusahaan diduga milik Ibas, 2014). Moreover, a social business institution which is affiliated to Sampoerna is set up in 2001. Putra Sampoerna Foundation has been dedicated to empowering underprivileged Indonesians through education by means of scholarships and upgrading schools (Putera Sampoerna Foundation, n.d.), including funded a few Indonesian high achiever students who come from low socio-economic families to New Zealand universities to study for their undergraduate degrees[5]. Djarum Foundation, another philanthropy organisation which is connected to other huge cigarettes company, has been actively engaged with communities in health sector, such as assisting the poor with free cataract surgeries, free medical examination for fishermen or providing medical equipment for a health institute in Semarang (Djarum Foundation, n.d.). As Todung Mulya Lubis[6] said these social responsibility campaigns which vigorously publicised by these two foundations could make people feel reluctant and hesitant to criticise them and the tobacco industry they are linked with (Harsono, 2011). This is, indeed, a paradoxical and dilemmatic situation faced by the country. On one hand there was a glimpse of hope when the Minister of Health, Nafsiah Mboi, urged to ban cigarette sponsorships for any music and sport

[4] Cikeas is the suburb in which Yudhoyono's private residence is located.
[5] One of them was like a "nephew" to my husband and I as he became a good friend of my eldest son.
[6] He is a senior and prominent lawyer who is an avid anti-tobacco activist.

events by 2014 (Ramadhan, 2013). Yet, Indonesian youth are captivated by the associated images that cigarette advertisements bring, like success and other positive imageries (Sujatno, 2011). Meanwhile, the tobacco industry's charities for the disadvantaged have been seen as noble and advantageous.

Furthermore, most smokers in Indonesia, who are predominantly male, prefer *kreteks* instead of conventional white cigarettes (Barber, Adioetomo, Ahsan, & Setyonaluri, 2008). *Kretek* is a traditional Indonesian tobacco with clove flavour which is wrapped in cornhusks or white, black or brown paper and marketed internationally (Kretek in Indonesia, 2009). According to Indonesian folklore, it was first introduced in 1800s by a resident[7] of Kudus, Central Java, and was used to alleviate chest pain (Arnez, 2009). It was promoted as an effective cure for asthma since he successfully used it for himself. Another Kudus local, Nitisemito, who saw the opportunity, was then marketed and mass-produced *kretek* in his factory called Bal Tiga (History of kretek, 2016)[8]. Due to its unique history and clove ingredient, *kretek* enthusiasts believe that *kretek* is totally different to cigarettes and needs to be protected to preserve our past legacy (Komunitas Kretek, 2012). However, no study to date claims the favourable effect of *kretek*. Polzin et al. (2007) find that *kretek* is not a safer alternative to cigarettes due to its contents which could induce health risks similar to regular cigarettes.

Ironically, despite Minister of Health recommendation to forbid tobacco sponsorship in Indonesia, community in Pekalongan, a town in Central Java, is looking forward to its new elected mayor who is adamant in changing its local regulation on cigarettes advertising restriction. His aim is to revive and invigorate music shows in this town since tobacco sponsorship could financially back-up this kind of events (Alex cabut Perda, 2016). In contrast, in Jakarta with the new regulations banning outdoor and indoor tobacco advertising (Governor Ahok signs bill, 2016), the local administration has been taking down billboards from public spaces (Tarigan, 2015) and not renewing expired billboard licences (Nearly a year after, 2015) which irate tobacco companies by responding that the ban violates the constitution that stipulates that as legal products cigarettes have the rights to be advertised (Faizal, 2016). It is true that in Semarang, particularly in Universitas Diponegoro, the public university, there has been a change of

[7] His correct name is unknown as his name was cited slightly different by a few texts—Haji Jamahri (Hanusz, 2000) or Hadji Djamasri (Castle, 1967) and Hadji Djamhari (Harahap, 1952) or Haji Jamhari (History of Kretek, 2016).
[8] *Kretek* industry is mainly located in Central and East Java (Castles, 1967).

policy—from accepting sponsorship and scholarship from tobacco companies (Undip[9] tetap terima, 2010) to designating certain parts of its campus as smoke-free zones (Ellya, 2016). Yet, in public spaces and roads throughout Semarang, cigarette billboards were very much present at the end of 2014 when I conducted my fieldwork and few months after[10].

The Minister of Health's concern on tobacco sponsorship for a myriad of music and sport events is justified. Not just local music shows which were financially back-up by cigarette companies but also international bands and singers. For example Bon Jovi's concert in Jakarta on 11 September 2015 was sponsored by Gudang Garam (Big tobacco, 2015). Its huge billboards advertising the show were placed in strategic places around the city (Figure 6.6. below). It was regrettable that such a big star who has huge influence on young people said nothing about this escapade. The billboard itself sent mixed messages of cigarette as harmful substance for children yet the show of the much anticipated international icon was supported by the industry. Indeed, there were other well-known singers who declined to be sponsored by tobacco industry for their concerts in Indonesia, such as Kelly Clarkson and Maroon 5, who performed in sold out shows without a single cigarette advertisement (Siregar, 2011). However, this is not the case with local music events at schools, for example, which I observed in Semarang.

Tobacco companies seem to be approachable and willing to financially support different events, including local music shows and sport competitions, big and small. As Joko Driyono, the CEO of Indonesian League said cigarette companies were the ones which contributed significantly towards sport events, unlike other huge non-tobacco companies (Siregar, 2011). Yudiarto, the head of Indonesian Motor Association agreed that without cigarette sponsorship sports in Indonesia would die (Wibowo, 2013). Out of around fifty events every week of cart racing, rally and motocross thirty of them are back-up by tobacco industry (Wibowo, 2013). It is important to note that the sponsorship for music and sport events is usually advertised using billboards, banners, posters, and advertisements on TV and printed media.

[9] Undip is the abbreviation of Universitas Diponegoro.
[10] My daughter visited Semarang and stayed for a week in 2015 and photographed a number of sites in the city with cigarettes billboards.

Figure 6.6: Signature from Gudang Garam, used the concert to promote its brand
Source: Big tobacco, 2015. Retrieved from
http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/tobacco_unfiltered/post/2015_09_04_bonjovi

From the religious perspective, smoking has been part of debates in Indonesia. In 2009, after a very tough deliberation on smoking the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) decided to issue a *fatwā*[11] for Muslims to rule against smoking. The command stated

[11] A *fatwā* is "a formal answer to (a) an interrogatory of (b) an issue of principle on dogma and law given by a person with authority to do so" (Hooker, 2003, p. 1)

that smoking is prohibited and classified as a conduct between *ḥarām* and *makrūh* (Fatwa MUI, 2009). Under Islamic law there are five categories in which all actions can be classified—*ḥarām* (forbidden), *makrūh* (discouraged), *mubāh* (permitted), *mustaḥabb* (recommended), and *farḍ* (obligatory) (Glassé, 2002, p. 31). Therefore, according to these categories smoking stands between discouraged and forbidden. The National Fatwa Council of Malaysia even had a ruling for banning smoking earlier in 1995 and harsher which states that smoking is *ḥarām* (Don't take, 2013; Ruban, 2016). The countries in the Middle East also followed suit. The ruling in Saudi Arabia[12] (Husain, 2014) and Egypt (Radwan, et al., 2003) for smoking is *ḥarām*. However, PBNU (Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama) disagreed with the *fatwā* issued by MUI by exclaiming NU clerics would never rule smoking as *ḥarām* ("*sampai kiamat ulama NU tidak akan mengharamkan rokok*" [until doomsday NU clerics would never rule cigarettes as *ḥarām*], Fatwa haram MUI, 2014). According to NU smoking is *mubāḥ*, which means the action is religiously neutral, so it is permitted (Hooker, 2003).

The general Islamic principle on conducts is "everything is permitted, except that which is explicitly prohibited" (Ghouri, Atcha & Sheikh, 2006, p. 292). Hence, it is understandable that until 20th century there was no ruling on smoking based on Islamic perspective (Ghouri, Atcha & Sheikh, 2006) as there is no explicit mention in the Qur'an on the subject (Farah & El Samad, 2014). Only until the link was found between smoking and health risk that clerics in Muslim countries issued *fatāwā* and urged their followers to stop smoking or discouraged them to do so (Ghouri, Atcha & Sheikh, 2006). The underlying reason for the prohibitions is the instruction for Muslims not to harm themself which is stated in the Qur'an[13]. Other rationales cited include the obligation to avoid wasting money[14] and to protect other people from harm[15], which is interrelated with the health risk for passive smokers (see also Ghouri, Atcha & Sheikh, 2006).

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[12] The injunction is valid in two holy cities of Mecca and Medina only. Instead of banning smoking for the whole nation only two cities were declared as free-smoking zones.

[13] "And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good" (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2:195). "O ye who believe! eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will: nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful" (Qur'an, An-Nisa 4:29).

[14] "Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful" (Qur'an, Al-Isra 17:27).

[15] "And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly bear (on themselves) a calumny and a glaring sin" (Qur'an, Al-Azhab 33:58).

A number of studies show that religion and religiosity influence the way individuals perceive advertisements, especially on controversial products (Bayraktar, 2012; Fam, Waller & Erdogan, 2004; Farah & El Samad 2014). Wilson and West (1981) identify controversial products, services or concepts as "unmentionables" (p. 92). They define unmentionables as "products, services, or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality, or even fear tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offence, or outrage when mentioned or when openly presented" (1981, p. 92). These goods are also known as "controversial products" (Farah & El Samad, 2014; Rehman & Brooks, 1987), "decent products" (Shao, 1993), "offensive products" (Barnes & Dobson, 1990), and "socially sensitive products" (Fahy, et al., 1995; Shao & Hill, 1994). De Run, et al., (2010, p. 27) and Fam, Waller and Erdogan ((2004, pp. 549-552) classify these products into four categories, namely gender/sex-related products, social/political products, addictive products, and health and care products. Indeed, the addictive products include cigarettes, alcohol and gambling (Farah & El Samad, 2014). Fam, Waller and Erdogan (2004) conclude from their research that people with stronger religious adherence show more aversion toward advertising of addictive products although Muslims report similar feelings of low offence as Christians toward smoking (Farah & El Samad, 2014). De Run et al. (2010) in their study with Malaysian Muslims explain that the difference in the level of negative response between those with high and low on religiosity toward offensive advertising only significant for six products—gambling, racially extremist group, religious denomination, condoms, female contraceptives, and charitable organisation—which does not include cigarettes. This may be caused by "no direct prohibition of the matter" (Farah & El Samad, 2014, p. 362) in the holy book.

How did Muslim mothers I spoke with view tobacco billboards? What were their experiences with cigarette advertising? Is their resistance based on health risk alone or merely for religious reason or both? I explain their negotiations in the next section. Yet, cigarette billboard was not the only outdoor advertising these Muslim mothers had some opinions on. A few of my participants felt that other billboards in Semarang were not appropriate from the perspectives of their Islamic understanding. These billboards may not advertise controversial products, like cigarettes, yet the way that these advertisements portray female models are considered indecent.

Wedding Show Billboard and Sex Appeal

On my way from the university to where I lived while conducting my fieldwork I saw a huge outdoor advertising in front of a hospital. It was interesting in a way that I did not realise that Semarang had this type of show considering that it is not a major city compared to Jakarta, Surabaya and Medan. A billboard showing a wedding expo was really appealing and certainly attracted passer-by for different reasons (Figure 6.7 below). For my participants the same billboard and another outdoor advertising which exposed a woman in a tank-top and legging provoked discussions with their children about modesty. In this sub-section I describe gender representation in advertisement, particularly about the portrayal of women.

Figure 6.7: A poster of wedding exhibition in Semarang. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10204509167036667&set=gm.833459633343096&type=3&theater

A number of studies on advertising in magazines and on television inform that portrayals of women become more sexualised than men and more frequently so (for example Lin, 1998; Soley & Reid, 1988; Reichert, et al., 1999; Reichert, 2003a; Varney, 2003). Yet, research on outdoor advertising focusing on sexuality is scarce. Conveniently, by taking points on studies from other media some useful analysis can be gathered as nowadays there are plenty of "crossovers" between advertising in magazines and billboards (Rosewarne, 2007 p. 11). It is important to note, though, the exposure of advertising between media platforms differs because there is the essence of choice with advertising in magazine whereas with outdoor advertising such choice is non-existent. As Rosewarne (2007) elucidates "by engaging in normal daily activities, a person is forced into exposure to images that they did not choose to see" (p. 11). Although this is a unique feature of billboard in which it can be viewed by many people for a few seconds to process the message (Lang, Wise, Lee & Cai, 2003). Muslim women I talked to also have no option but to see the wedding show billboard on their way to and from where they work every day. Viewing the billboard for a few second each day for several weeks means the probability of having the image in the mind is high as one is reminded every day by the same picture (Lang, Wise, Lee & Cai, 2003). It became more problematic when they passed the same billboard with their children and questions were raised.

Research shows that advertising in magazines (Schorin & Vanden Berg, 1985; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986; Soley & Reid, 1988; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988) and commercials on prime time television become "sexier" by the year (Lin, 1998). It is true that these studies were conducted in the US, yet this does not mean that other countries are free from advertising with sex appeal. For example, Metro Manila is reported to be cluttered with billboards with images of women in underwear, "elements of nudity and other sexual innuendoes" which incite criticism from the public and religious leaders (Cornelio, 2014, p. 70). Printed advertisements with sex appeal are considered offensive in Malaysia (Ismail & Melewar, 2014). Meanwhile, advertisements in Indonesian teen magazines are not free from images of young female models with a "Western" physical appearance to depict modernity, such as wearing a pair of short pants (Handajani, 2008) or an off-the-shoulder top.

Reichert, Heckler and Jackson (2001) broadly define sexual appeals as "messages, whether as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in social

marketing contexts, that are associated with sexual information" (p. 14). The forms of sexual appeals used in advertising can be varied—visual, verbal and music, or even smells in "scent strip" advertising—and to differing degrees (Gould, 1994, p. 73) which becomes more explicit nowadays (Ismail & Melewar, 2014). Also, people from diverse countries, like Singapore, China, India and the US, perceive sex appeal advertising significantly differently (Ford, LaTour, & Clarke, 2004). A study in Malaysia suggests that religion, in this case Islam, has a significant influence on how people view advertising with sex appeal. Muslims have unfavourable attitude towards high sexual appeal advertising with female and male models (Ismail & Melewar, 2014). Reichert (2003b) divides sexual content advertising into five categories—nudity/dress (revealing display of the body), sexual behaviour (body language and acts which are considered intimate, such as hugging, kissing, and flirting), physical attractiveness (from facial to general physique), sexual referents (objects and events which contribute to sexual meaning, such as setting, music and lighting), and sexual embeds (content which can subconsciously be seen as sexy, such as body parts and people) (p. 14). Undeniably, the aim of using sex appeals in advertising is to entice and attract attention to the product or event being advertised (Lin, 1998) despite the fact that some people may feel appalled by the images.

Semarang has been seen as a profitable city to market wedding dresses and apparel. For the past few years at least a couple of event organisers have arranged wedding expos to introduce Semarang residents with places to buy wedding dresses and inspire them with various styles of wedding attires from different designers (Nastiti, 2014; Yulianto, 2014). The huge annual affair also becomes a hub in which a will-be-bride and groom have the opportunity to get in touch with people in the wedding business—from florist and hair salon to cake decorator and entertainment. Indeed, the focus has been more on Western style wedding in Semarang. If there was a traditional wedding show in this city it was more modest and in smaller scales (Java Mall gelar, 2014). However, in 2014 a well-known wedding show organiser in Semarang tried to fuse Western and traditional wedding in its show entitled "When East Meets West" (Figure 6.7). Its billboard and poster portrayed an image of two female models, one on the left in a Western wedding

gown while the other is clad in a modern Javanese *kebaya* and *jarik*[16]. It was this image and another similar one that sparked controversies for my participants.

Both models have white skin, are slim and posing "seductively". Their clothes are skin-tight and opened at the shoulders. The woman in a contemporary *kebaya* even shows part of her breasts. The image is indeed sexy. Yet, what is it trying to convey? Is it the fact that a bride could look gorgeous and sensual if she just dressed like the models? If indeed beauty is the aim, what does the concept of beauty entail? Does it have to include slim, tall physique and white skin? Why do their dresses have to be revealing? Javanese *kebaya* for a bride in olden days used silk, velvet or brocade and lace fabric, and it is tightly tailored. Otherwise the bride and groom wear *dodot*[17] which is four times *jarik* in length (Wrońska-Friend, 2006). It is wrapped around the body covering from above the breast to ankles for the bride or covering over the navel to ankles for the groom. Yet, unlike the image on the billboard these traditional attires do not expose part of the (female) breast. The overall impression is the modern adaptation seems a lot more sensual than the old version.

In Indonesian media, including advertising, the notion of beauty is always tied up to a westernised ideal image of beauty. The image of being tall with white skin and quite often complemented with Indo-European facial features is the epitome[18]. As Handajani (2008) and van Leeuwen (2011, p. 191) lucidly explain height and whiteness are closely associated with hygiene, purity, wealth, affluence, success, superiority and modernity and they become the norm of beauty for Indonesian girls and women. When one is "unfortunate" to be blessed with darker complexion, *rasa malu* (shame) is inevitable (Prasetyaningsih, 2007; Saraswati, 2013). Images of white, tall and slim Indonesian girls and women are the standard of advertising as they are believed to be the aspiration and attract the opposite sex (Arimbi, 2011).

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[16] *Kebaya* is the top whereas *jarik* is the "skirt". Usually batik is used for *jarik*.

[17] *Dodot* was originally worn by Javanese aristocrats. Yet, common people have the opportunity to wear it on their wedding day as it is considered as a very special day for the bride and groom (Wrońska-Friend, 2006).

[18] Yulianto calls this phenomenon as "*pesona Barat*" [Western charm] (2007). In her book Yulianto (2007) suggests that the history of colonialization by the Dutch influences the way Indonesians view about skin colour as part of being inferior. With the increase popularity of East Asian popular culture, such as Korean and Japanese television dramas and boy- and girl-bands, ideal beauty nowadays includes East Asian beauty (Arimbi, 2011).

Wangsit party and event organiser, the one behind this billboard, is a local event organiser which has been in the business for more than a decade (Wangsit Party, n.d.). It seems that his clientele mainly Indonesian of Chinese descents or non-Muslims. Non-Muslims, particularly of Christian and Catholic faiths, mostly select Western style wedding dress and they are the target customers of this event organiser. Hence, it is understandable that the advertising displayed a model with a Western wedding costume. Semarang with its many affluent Indonesians of Chinese origin is an ideal place to market this type of show. Another event organiser in Semarang even bold enough to target its wedding expo transactions of eight billion rupiah[19] because its earning the year before reached more than seven billion rupiah (Nastiti, 2014). When my host family passed a suburb called Candi, an elite area in Semarang, my mother pointed out several grand houses owned by Chinese Indonesians[20]. I also met with many Chinese Indonesians in Paragon Mall, a posh mall in the city. I do not imply that every single Chinese Indonesian in Semarang is rich. *Pecinan* (Chinatown) in Semarang is filled with very modest shops and dwellings. Rather than trying to mark the difference between Indonesians of Chinese descent and *pribumi* (native) in aspect of economy, I merely want to point out that these event organisers were on the ball so to speak in targeting wealthy Chinese Indonesians clientelle.

However, Wangsit's move to incorporate traditional wedding concept into its original show in an attempt to attract different market segment might not be successful. Although Javanese wedding attire has gone through some modifications in style in the past few years, nonetheless the image in the billboard was too revealing and immodest for some and struck a chord with some Muslim women, albeit unpleasantly. In this light, Malaysia brings ingenuity in its dealing with advertising. As the Malaysian government imposes a strict control on advertising activities[21] due to its majority Muslim population[22], there are variations in commercials using female models. For example, in promoting Sunsilk shampoo there are two different advertisements for the same product. One advertisement uses a female model wearing a *ḥijāb* whilst the other advertisement shows the model without a veil (Ismail & Melewar, 2014). Despite the

[19] It is more than NZ$ 880,000.
[20] Chinese Indonesians in Central Java have been very much part of Indonesian community and adapted to Javanese culture. Their everyday demeanour is similar to the locals. They also have native fluency of Javanese language (Harahap, 1952, Suprapti, 1993; Tan, 2008).
[21] The guidelines for advertising in Malaysia include prohibition of intimate scene, sleeveless dresses, matters of elusive indecency and taste (Hussin, Yusoff & Mohd Yusof, 2015).
[22] 61.3% of population in Malaysia is Muslim.

existing different religions in Malaysia advertisings with sexual appeal are restricted (Waller & Fam, 2000).

Indeed, not all outdoor advertisings in Semarang are problematic. A few was set up as public announcement. For example, the one placed above a police guardhouse closed to the Bunderan Tugu Muda [Tugu Muda Roundabout] (Figure 6.8. below) is designed to relay public information and appeal about police department and corruption. Yet, other billboards and posters of various products and events are practically cramming the city landscape.

How Muslim mother I talked to play out their resistance toward sexual appeal billboards? Why sex appeal advertising upset them? When modesty is the core of the way my participants dressed, how advertising which accentuate sex appeal means for them? In the next section I discuss their negotiations with billboards in Semarang, particularly cigarette billboard and outdoor advertisings with sex appeal.

Figure 6.8: A digital billboard on top of a police guardhouse at a busy roundabout in Semarang. In the foreground a mobile billboard on a car which displayed an advertisement of a wedding expo.

Muslim Mothers' Reflexivity: "Mindfulness"

The nature of billboard which is publicly exposed on the streets creates resistance for some Muslim women I talked to when the product advertised is problematic or the portrayal of their female models oversteps the boundary of modesty. The daily exposure of media, in this case billboard, for Muslim mothers suggests the significance of embeddedness of media in the fabric of everyday life (Silverstone, 1994). As Lembo (2003) explains "people usually relate what they are watching to one or another aspect of their own lives or to things that they have seen and heard elsewhere" (p. 168). Although Lembo's study is focused on television viewing and in selecting television programming, I found in my research that Muslim mothers also took into account their knowledge and experiences of everyday life when they engaged with media, including billboards. I argue that regardless of the nature of media presence, Muslim mothers with whom I talked to tend to relate what they see, watch and use to their Islamic understandings and other knowledge. Since billboards are omnipresent in Semarang and inescapable, Muslim mothers became mindfully engaged with the message. They were aware of the corporate hegemonic messages behind the billboards and suspicious of the corporate intention. For example the cigarette billboards provoke a sense of uneasiness for my participants as they portrays double and contradictive messages about goodness yet implicitly contains adversity. As Niar elucidates:

> On the left hand side, on the bridge there is a billboard with a text saying "Nation Building". This is really stupid. The brand is Djarum. This is a cigarette (company). Then it claims it builds the country! That's foolish. But this is the way Djarum tries to maintain its existence so no one would bother to sue. So it emphasises on the fact that it has built (the country). It gives scholarships to university students … Usually the amount (of the scholarship) is larger than scholarships from the government. This is upsetting. The company earns its revenue from selling "addiction" especially to the youth. So the youth are encouraged to smoke. And then the youth are also urged to protect Djarum because these youth are indebted to the company, aren't they. (They are) given scholarships, facilities and in a situation when they need to have critical mind that this is a problem for the nation but at the end they will defend (the company) by saying "this is for the farmers, for the manual labourer, *rakyat kecil* [common people]". So what I've found in the campus there is a conflict between (the side which proclaims) that (smoking) cigarette is a serious health problem which cause a huge lost to the country but on the other side for student activists (they) stand by with the workers (and) farmers.

For Niar a simple billboard on the side on a bridge which she passed everyday on her way to work was problematic. The message of "Nation Building" does not simply means that the tobacco company has an "innocent" part in helping to empower the disadvantaged by providing scholarships. It is true that Djarum has been one of the important elements, as also Sampoerna, which involves in creating opportunities for students, especially from low socio-economic backgrounds, to achieve equality in education. Yet, this move is never without undercurrent motive and Niar rightly insinuated it. The industry's attempt to "cover up" the health impacts of smoking behind its scholarships scheme just goes plainly in vain, in spite of using the English language to raise desirability and prestige[23]. The billboard which seeks to disperse the idea of nationhood, social commitment and generosity fail to mask the addiction and serious health problems caused by the product advertised.

In this sense I would like to borrow Lembo's (2003) concept of "inner mindfulness" (p. 120) and extend it to explain how people view billboards. Inner mindfulness entails what individuals think and feel when they are engaged with television (Lembo, 2003), which Lembo claims to be ignored by other scholars. Yet, I find this notion to be useful to explain about the media reflexivity involved in viewing billboard. Niar's comment on a tobacco billboard shows her inner thoughts and dilemma on the reality faced by mothers like her. As a public health expert she has a sound knowledge of the effect of cigarettes and is fully aware of the prevalence of smoking among Indonesian youth. On the other hand as a university lecturer she has seen the protests and demonstrations by student activists in the name of *rakyat kecil* to protect their livelihood yet these students are actually backing up tobacco industry, intentionally or not.

A small study conducted in a high school in Semarang (Ariani, 2011) shows that there is a tendency for some youth to be attracted to cigarette advertising which also influence the way they perceive smoking. This study also reveals the number of students who smoke—from relatively low to heavy smokers. While this finding is just the tip of the iceberg, the real problem presumably is much bigger than this. Niar told me her experience in which she witnessed tobacco industry treated every audience to a free pack of cigarettes to a music show sponsored by the cigarette company regardless of the age of the audience, although its billboards clearly show the disclaimer of the age

[23] See da Silva (2014) for discussions on the role of English language usage on billboards in Indonesia.

restriction. She even knew a school production in a primary school which was financially backed up by a cigarette company.

I found Niar to be really upset about tobacco advertising and the related dilemma surrounding it. She divulged her experiences regarding smoking in her diary which she then elaborated in my interview with her later on. It is important to note that the diary entry and the subsequent interview enabled her to be reflexive[24]. As the billboard was placed on a bridge she passed every day, it nagged her conscience and triggered her to say something about it to me. Months later, I noticed on her Facebook page her pictures participating in a peaceful demonstration at Simpang Lima Square in Semarang to commemorate World No Tobacco Day. It is true that her reasons for protesting against the billboard were mainly based on health risks involved in smoking. Yet, for Hesti smoking is also related to the religious tenet:

> For me, I look into the religious ground whether something has a lot of benefits or *mudarat* (harms). I consider cigarette to have a lot more bad effects than benefits. … Actually, I applaud cigarette advertisements for their creativity to lure people, but (what they do are encouraging people) towards bad conducts … I'm concern with the children who are exposed to these pictures everyday (which) can influence their mind.

Hesti applies her religious understandings to frame her argument against cigarette billboards. Despite her knowledge on the existing *fatwā* on smoking, she relies on her own judgement and knowledge on Islamic tenet that it is forbidden for Muslims to harm themselves. Having an excellent educational background gives her the provision to critically analyse the consequence of smoking from religious perspective and the effect of images for children. She spoke about her young son who remembers the slogans of cigarette billboards across the city and how visually attractive the billboards in terms of their colours and texts. She believed that continual exposure of images such as billboards could have a huge impact on the mind, which could detrimentally influence children since they are still naïve[25].

My research reveals the critical thinking that Muslim mothers employ while they view

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[24] The nature of diary studies in which the participants had time to explore and think about the media in their everyday life which interest them (can be positively or negatively appealing to them) also allowed them to reflect about their daily engagement with the media.

[25] She illustrated her reasoning with a film she watched. The film entitled Focus (2015, http://focusmovie.com/) which starred Will Smith, shows that a man can be influenced to pick a certain number on a gambling table because he has been subconsciously prompted throughout the day with the image of this particular number.

images on billboards which is framed by their understandings and experiences on health and religious tenets. Framing billboards using religious knowledge is not just about tobacco and smoking, outdoor billboards portraying sexual appeal also incite comments from Muslim women I talked with. Vina made a comment about the wedding expo billboard, the same billboard I saw at a different site in Semarang:

> There is a billboard in front of an intermediate school[26]. It's a wedding expo advertisement. There are two women (on the picture). One of them wears an off-shoulder dress, a dress, beautiful dress but her breasts are shown. The other woman wears a *kebaya* (and) exposes more than half of her breasts. The off-shoulder dress is actually not showing (too much breast). … It's up to here (pointing to the line of the off-shoulder dress just above the breasts). … It's at the front of an intermediate school! Certainly the children there can see it. It's really inappropriate. I've been *mbatin*[27] about it for quite a while.

She elaborated her concerns about this outdoor advertisement and said:

> The billboard is huge … People who pass by and see it are not only adults, right. It should be a picture for 18 plus (years old). My friend's daughter asked about it (to her mother), "Why is it like that, Ma? Why is it being shown? Is it good?" So I ask myself, if my son was around her age, children who are active and reactive to their immediate surroundings, he bound to ask me the same question. That (picture) is forbidden to be shown. It's an *aurat*[28] of a woman. According to the religion is not proper as well. For children who have critical mind (they will wonder) "Oh, apparently it's permissible. Why (*aurat*) can be seen by many people?" She is definitely a woman, not a mannequin. (It) provokes questions.

Vina even suggested a solution:

> So billboards need to be carefully selected. Placing billboards can't be carelessly done. It's okay if the aim is to attract people to come. But it can be done differently. It can use better *kebaya* and text. It doesn't need to show *aurat* which should actually be covered.

The focus of Vina's resistance towards the wedding show billboard is certainly framed by her understanding of Islamic tenets around *aurat* and modesty. As *aurat* and

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[26] She mentioned the name of this particular intermediate school in Semarang.

[27] *Mbatin* is a Javanese word with the core word *batin* which means heart or emotion. There is no exact meaning in English or Indonesian language. It is somehow similar to "thinking" with the heart instead of brain.

[28] *Aurat* is Indonesian (or 'awrah in Arabic) for the intimate parts of the body, which must be concealed by clothing according to Islamic tenet except to their husbands or mahram (Nasir, Pereira & Turner, 2010). It is a complex word as it is explained by Ahmed (1992), "the word *'awra* is one of those words whose complicated layered meanings and range of possible referents are richly suggestive of the androcentrism of dominant Arabic culture and of the connections it made between women, sexuality, and shameful and defective things. Its meanings include blind in one eye; blemished, defective; the genital area; general parts of the body that are shameful and must be concealed; women's bodies; and women" (p. 116).

modesty according to Islam is closely linked and contradicted with the image portrayed by the advertisement, consequently the billboard provoked disapproval from her. The pervasiveness of outdoor advertising combines with the increasingly sexualised images of its women models (Rosewarne, 2007) creates problem for Muslim women as it clashes with their religious understanding of covering up the *aurat* and being modest. Rosewarne (2007) underlines that "outdoor advertising presents a unique case in that unlike advertising in other media, an individual's capacity to avoid exposure is prevented" (p. 9). The fact that Vina could not escape from the sexualised image upset her; even more so since the same picture could be seen by children who went to the intermediate school. It provoked questions about *aurat* and modesty between a child and her mother. The very same question could also be asked by other children. At least, the image incites discussions about propriety surrounding dressing and woman's body. For Vina who wears a *ḥijāb* as her daily attire, very fashionable I may say, showing breasts in a transparent and fitted dress or *kebaya* is beyond her sense of style and outside her conviction of modesty according to Islamic tenet. For her being stylish is part of how she wore her veil. In one of our conversations she told me how that morning she tried to wrap her *ḥijāb* differently as she found a new way to do it from a book on *jilbab* tutorial. However, being fashionable does not mean forfeiting modesty.

The image itself may not be a problem for other people, but for Vina and her friend and her friend's daughter it was problematic. The dilemma is two folds, I argue. Firstly, the portrayal is conflicted with the concept of women's *aurat* and modesty corresponding to the religious tenet in which they hold dearly. Secondly, the image seems to trigger debate about the concepts of *aurat* and modesty between what is taught at home and school, and what is displayed on the billboard. Vina's friend instilled in her daughter that woman's *aurat* includes the whole body except the face and the hands. Yet, the image showed parts of the body which are supposed to be covered. The conflicting ideas surrounding this issue between home and public space and between school and public space create confusion for children who are trying to understand the essence of *aurat* and modesty taught at home and school. When Islam is the core of "education" at home and school, conflicting images outside these spaces create "moral panic" for Muslim mothers. They are helpless in a sense that they do not have a say about the inappropriate images at public places and, indeed, they do not have the power to change them. Although they can rely on their agency as mothers to refute the messages behind

these images and make their children understand about what is proper and inappropriate according to Islam, regardless of what is out there in public spaces. It is not easy, of course, as can be sensed from Vina's concern.

Dani had similar apprehension about a different billboard which was placed closed to her daughter school, an IT or Islam Terpadu school[29]. The outdoor commercial advertised a music show with a female DJ who is dressed in a tank-top and legging. It might be an image which had no significant meaning for some, but for Dani and her daughter it exuded sexual appeal which was inappropriate to be publicly displayed, let alone at vicinity closed to a school. As Dani explained:

> There is a billboard in front of the plaza with a picture of a beautiful DJ. It's always there, a picture of the DJ (who will perform) that night … she only wears a tank-top. Meanwhile, my daughter goes to a school, an Islamic school. So she commented, "Ma, shouldn't be a tank-top an underwear? Ma, why not (she) *dirangkepi* (covers) it? See, the legging is also underwear, right." According to what she learns legging is underwear, tank-top is also underwear. Why are they shown (on the billboard)?

Her daughter became curious as to why a woman with a tank-top and legging could pose on a billboard. I asked Dani what was her response and this is what she said to her daughter:

> According to our belief, it is like that. So we need to decently dressed, which covers the *aurat*. But they have their own believe (and) knowledge … Our belief it's actually like this. Her school uniform is a Muslim dress, with a *ḥijāb* … For our teachings, our religion it's like this, everything is covered.

It is not surprising that Dani's daughter was compelled to ask a few questions about an image which, indeed, conflicting with the knowledge she learned from school and home. It is interesting to note that Dani was one of the very few of my participants who has not embraced a *ḥijāb* in her daily life. Yet, despite the fact that her mother had not adopt a *jilbab* as her daily clothes she always knew that her mother would not dare to only wear a tank-top and legging outside the house. She even asked her mother regarding the reason for not wearing a *ḥijāb* especially because Muslim attire is part of her school uniform. Dani told me about the conversation she had with her daughter:

[29] IT or Islam Terpadu is a type of comprehensive school in Semarang which combines both Islamic and regular teachings.

> "Mama, why you haven't *berkerudung* (worn a veil), yet?" … Although I haven't worn a *ḥijāb*, I always dress *sopan* (appropriately), Kak[30]. You see yourself I go to (your) school, to collect your (school) report or other things, wearing a pair of long trousers, with a shirt, although not *berkerudung*. One day I will definitely wear it. … At the office I also dress appropriately. Kakak never see me wear a tank-top like people who walk around at Simpang Lima[31]… Mama always dress neatly, always covered. Although not yet *berkerudung.*

Contradictory images in public spaces to the knowledge that has been taught at school and instilled at home by parents seems to spark resistance towards the billboards and discussions between Muslim children and their mothers. Muslim women I talked to framed their media engagement with billboards using their religious understandings around *aurat* and modesty.

Although wearing a *ḥijāb* is part of covering the *aurat* according to Islamic tenet, for some, *aurat* simply means concealing the whole body (but not the hair) with proper (*sopan*) outfit, not revealing or fitted. For Dani, wearing proper clothes outside the home without donning a *jilbab* was appropriate enough for her as a good Muslim woman, for now. At least for the time being since her ultimate goal will be incorporating the *ḥijāb* as her daily attire. As piety is a life long journey for Muslims, including Muslim women I talked to, they are striving to fulfil their 'obligations' as Muslim women step-by-step. However, this does not mean that not wearing a *jilbab* is construed as not pious. It is not an all-or-none situation with *ḥijāb* and piety. *Jilbab* is not the only marker of piety for Dani[32], but praying daily is part of being pious for her. I met her a few times on her way to a prayer room after finishing the ablution. Moreover, as a Muslim mother she purposely enrolled her daughter in an Islam Terpadu school to provide religious milieu outside the home. Her Islamic schooling is also meant to fill the gaps of or complement the religious education at home. With this kind of religiosity it is obvious that the billboard with sexual appeal struck a chord for Dani and her daughter as they framed their viewing engagement according to their religious belief and

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[30] Kak or kakak is the used by Dani to call her daughter. Its actual meaning is older bother or sister in Indonesian language. It is a common practice in Java to call your children by the term 'mas' (male), 'mbak' (female) or 'kak' (male and female) for a first born child or a child who has a younger sibling, and 'dik' (male and female) for a younger sibling.

[31] Simpang Lima Square in Semarang is known as a place where people gather, usually in the evenings and weekends, to relax and play. There are many food stallers around the square with bustling customers. Children can take their bikes to the square to play. Others can rent a bike to cycle around the square.

[32] Parker (2008) also found from her research in Minangkabau that girls who had not don a *jilbab* "establishing that wearing the *jilbab* is only one aspect of Islamic practice and devotion" (para. 36).

understandings which are very much in contrast to the image portrayed on the advertisement.

Nevertheless, the sexual appeal image on the billboard enables the agency to give importance to proper femininity and sexual morality. The containment of the female body in proper (*sopan*) clothes symbolises the identified shared Islamic propriety and public virtue. By contrasting their religious understanding on *aurat* and modesty and the image of sexual appeal, Vina, Dani and the others legitimise Islamic constructions of femininity, good Muslim woman and modernity. As Dani underlined in her talk that unlike others walking around Simpang Lima who dressed with tank-top and legging, she marked and drew the line between her and the other who supposedly have a different understanding of Islamic tenet or/and less "Islamic" than her. The emphasis on wearing appropriate (*sopan*) dress to cover the *aurat* seems to be creating "a superior female moral identity in opposition to a morally suspect Other" (Parker, 2008, para. 70). Hence, as Vina recommended, public display of woman's body in advertising needs to be carefully managed in terms of clothing and billboard placement to dissuade unwanted disapproval and resistance from viewers.

At this point I would like to mention that for Niar, Hesti, Vina and Dani their agency as Muslim mothers play out in the way they engage themselves with media, in this case billboards. Adopting certain opinions and practices around health, *aurat* and modesty are expressions of religious agency through which they frame their interactions with billboards. By being mindful in framing the billboards they viewed, these women and their children are also affected, to some extent, by the discourses around them, like health risks of cigarettes, *fatwā* on smoking, religious teachings at home and school around *aurat* and modesty. Yet, whatever the corporate hegemonic messages from the tobacco industry and event organisers are portrayed on the billboards, and the moral injunctions from religious authority, they are steadfast and adamant of their own religious understandings and convictions. The narratives above indicate that the "forced" public viewing nature of billboards drive viewers to frame their engagement using their religious and other knowledge and to discuss these understandings and their resistance within private realm, with children and friends.

Summing Up

This chapter has shown how the corporate hegemonic messages profusely penetrate the everyday life through billboards around the city and how Muslim mothers engaged with these messages. The product advertised and/or the content of billboards have provoked unsettling feelings for these women. Through the practice of reflexivity guided by their understandings of Islam and other knowledge they frame these billboards. While these Muslim women engage in a process of self-analysis and resistance through continues engagement with billboards, they also demonstrate the capacity to critically reflect the messages against their own (religious) convictions. They become morally panic when they realise that the same messages can be viewed as well by children, their own or others. The content and images seems to be more problematic when children are involved as they believe children have no capacity yet to process the meanings adequately. It is true that the conflicting messages depicted by the billboards incite discussions with their children about religion and the way they understand Islam which may differ from others. This in itself creates opportunities for these Muslim mothers to emphasis their teachings to their children and to explain what is important for them as Muslims. Yet, it also generates an "us versus them" continuum (Mandel, 1989, p. 45) which set "us"——who wear appropriate (*sopan*)/Muslim clothes or have opposition attitude towards smoking——apart from "them"——who dressed in revealing attire or are supporting the tobacco industry as the livelihood of *rakyat kecil*.

Following Kim (2008)[33], I would like to propose that what makes a difference in the media engagement of Muslim women nowadays is the deepening of reflexivity in which their religiosity plays a part. The same images on billboard may or may not be framed by one's religious understanding before the global Islamic "revival"[34] hit the Indonesian shores. The heightened awareness of religious identity combined with good education

[33] Youna (2008) discusses the deepening reflexivity of young Korean women in relation to their media engagement with global television.

[34] I would like to call it as Islamic "consciousness" instead of Islamic "resurgence" or "revival". In accord with Brenner (1996), I agree that the term "resurgence" and "revival" have the connotation of recapturing the old spirit of embracing Islam as a way of life, instead of embarking upon a new venture. The spirit of practicing Islam in Indonesia is not a mere cyclical process of revitalisation as is the case in other countries, such as Egypt (Hoodfar, 1991; Zuhur, 1992). Rather it is a kind of a new phenomenon in which ordinary Muslims eager to learn to be good Muslims, although Islam has been introduced in the region since centuries ago (see Ricklefs, 2006; 2007; 2012). Sakai and Fauzia (2014) suggest that Islamic orientations in contemporary Indonesia are increasing towards cultural Islamism instead of political Islamism. Islamic values become the guiding light of ethical self-improvement.

background and rising enthusiasm to seek piety shape their media engagement and agency. I follow Mahmood (2001) in thinking about agency "not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (p. 203). In this regard, Parker and Dales (2014) elucidate that "agency is this capacity to negotiate with power in whatever form – as complicity, compromise, deviance or resistance – and with whatever motivation – whether it be intentional or unintentional, voluntary or involuntary, self-expression, self-interest or group interest" (p. 165). Shaped by their religiosity and past experiences, these Muslim women show their capacity to negotiate with the existing billboard presence in the city and the multiple inter-related elements of the society, which influence public policy on billboard. Similar to Parker (2008) the agency I am referring to is inclusive which is defined as "a capacity for identity- and meaning-making, a capacity for pragmatic response, and in some contexts, as the ability to act" (para. 9). These Muslim women 'produce' their own moral subjectivity through their media engagement with billboards. For them cigarette and sexual appeal billboards which are embedded with opposing values and imagery 'tease' their sense of (sexual) morality, propriety and public virtue. In the case of Niar, who opposed Djarum billboard, she even acted on her opposition by involving herself in a peaceful parade on World No Tobacco Day.

Hence, it can be said that the focus of media reflexivity involving billboards is more on "framing" than "meaning-making" although this mode of reflexivity occurs as well. For example, with cigarette advertising of Nation Building, since Niar already had knowledge about the scholarship scheme provided by Djarum[35] her media reflexivity is mainly "framing" in nature. Yet, for someone who has no prior knowledge of Djarum's philanthropy organisation "meaning-making" reflexive media engagement ensues when by viewing this billboard new information is acquired. The interplay of this dual reflexivity enables Muslim women to play out their religious, sexual and gender agency as pious Muslim mothers dealing with media in their everyday lives whose main priority is to raise their children as good Muslims.

[35] Niar told me about her experience several years ago when she was involved with Djarum scholarship award event.

Chapter Seven

Children and Media

"…parenting should involve pedagogy rather than prohibition; *that good parenting should involve training children to become active media consumers (Hoover & Clark, 2008, p. 117).*

In April 2015 people were shocked to learn that a seven-year-old boy in Pekanbaru, Sumatra, Indonesia died after being beaten by his friends. According to his parents the trigger was simple. They were playing around and imitating the action scenes from a *sinetron*[1] [television drama series] called "7 Manusia Harimau" [The 7 Human Tigers] which was aired by RCTI, one of the many national public broadcasting systems. The victim's friends hit him with broomsticks and kicked him in exactly the same way as the fighting images depicted on the television. Consequently, the boy was treated at a hospital with concussion and later died ("5 Kasus kekerasan," 2015). It is a very tragic story of how children copying portrayals of violent acts on television and considering it as cool without ever thinking about the devastating consequences. Actually, this was not the first time that the same *sinetron* had some issues with its content. About five months prior to the accident, KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia [Indonesian Broadcasting Commission]) sent a written warning regarding the series telecasts in November 2014 which showed male youths in school uniforms fighting with fists and kicks, an adult male assaulted a teenager by attacking the throat using two knives, and other explicitly violent acts. This popular television programme was on air daily at 9 pm[2] when most children had not gone to bed. At the time, KPI gave a forewarning if there was no improvement in the content in the future it would take further and harsher penalty ("Muat tayangan," 2014).

Indeed, the underlying relationships between violent images on television and actual violent acts in everyday lives are complex, messy and not straightforward. Yet, a

[1] *Sinetron* is a truncation of *sinema elektronik* or electronic cinema and was first invented by Ishadi SK in 1985, the then director of the national television broadcasting TVRI (Kitley, 2000, p. 104). It is similar to television series or soap opera.

[2] At the time of writing (2016), the 7 Human Tigers is broadcast later at 10 pm daily from Monday to Sunday (RCTI, 2016).

myriad of investigations into the violent media effects over five decades conclude that "exposure to violent media increases aggression and violence" (Bushman & Huesmann, 2012, p. 233). It is true that violent media is not the only factor causing aggressive behaviour. It would be too naïve to blame it all on violent media for hostile acts of children and youth, but there is "an important risk factor that cannot be dismissed as trivial or inconsequential" (Bushman & Huesmann, 2012, p. 234) from violent scenes children and youth watch on television and other screens.

It is this precise nature of violent media, among others, that my participants were concerned about when their children's exposure to media is at the heart of family media consumption. Throughout my fieldwork in Semarang and online fieldwork on Facebook mostly with participants in Jakarta, I heard many stories about the way their children used media including the Internet in their everyday lives. Most of these narratives focused on their apprehensions towards Indonesian media, which has become *terlalu bebas* [too loose] with no proper censorship and are unsuitable for children. Indeed, since the Reformasi era in 1998 there has been declining media control from the new government. Meanwhile, there is heightened awareness of religious identity among Indonesian Muslim women nowadays in which they are keen to live pious lives and be good Muslim mothers. Hence, Muslim mothers are quite cautious about their children's media engagement. So I was wondering how did my Muslim women participants deal with the ubiquitous media in their daily live especially when their children were at the centre of the predicament. As pious Muslims how did their religious understandings and morality guide them in their media engagements in relation to their children?

Previous studies on children and media, indeed, have looked into mothers' role in managing their children media consumption, including within Indonesian Muslim families (for example Rahayu, 2013 and Rahayu & Lim, 2016)[3] albeit only a handful. Rahayu (2013) in her research in Yogyakarta about parental mediation practices of children's television viewing found that the term *ḥarām* [forbidden] and *dosa* [sin] were frequently used for television shows deemed inappropriate, such as *sinetron* which depicts romantic scenes. Meanwhile, for those parents who had low religious

[3] Rahayu (2013) and Rahayu and Lim (2016) studies are the only available investigations on children and media in Indonesia in which religious tenets are the focus of discussions. Others researches by Hendriyani, Hollander and Beentjes (2011), Hendriyani, Hollander, d'Haenens and Bentjees (2012, Hendriyani, Hollander, d'Haenens and Beentjes (2014) and Sekarasih (2016) do not place religion as their point of discussions.

understandings or did not belong to a particular religious institution, the term *tidak pantas* [inappropriate] and *tidak mendidik* [have no educational value] were uttered for similar programmes, or they cited that the content were not in accordance to *budaya ketimuran* [Eastern culture] (Rahayu, 2013, pp. 40-41). The same conclusions were also discovered with the Internet mediation among Muslim families in Yogyakarta (Rahayu, Lim, 2016).

In this chapter, however, I argue that the meanings of television for Muslim mothers are varied depending on the content of the programme and their children's ages. For television programmes or Internet games which are embedded with educational, religious and moral values or merely used for the purpose of pure entertainment, Muslim mothers showed positive responses. Yet, on the contrary, when the content is filled with violence or improper behaviours they encouraged their children not to watch although sometimes it was difficult to do so since most of them are working. Muslim mothers I talked to, armed with their religious understandings, endeavoured to be their children's media regulator by accompanying, selecting, and explaining their children's media exposure with the hope that their children become more proficient in dealing with the media. However, these pious mothers, unlike previous research conducted by Rahayu (2013) and Rahayu and Lim (2016), also used moral discourses besides their religious convictions to frame their media engagement especially when children were involved. My ethnographic research also fills the gaps of previous studies by providing nuances and detailed accounts of family viewing in Indonesian Muslim family context.

I start this chapter with the media landscape, especially in regards to children's television and the debates transpire between the positionality of KPI as the watchdog of television programming in Indonesia and television stations, which mostly pursue profits based on ratings alone. It is followed by a section which explores the situations in Semarang in regards local government's intervention and family television viewing practices. The third section deals with how Muslim mothers navigated their media engagement which was related to their children's television viewing and these mothers' reflexive media engagements. This chapter is concluded with a summing up.

Setting the Scene

I came back from a government office to where I lived while I was in Semarang on a Wednesday around mid-day. As I arrived home, I went straight to the back of the house and found my seven-year-old niece was chatting with Atun, the housemaid, in front of a television near the kitchen. It looked like Atun was frying banana fritters for evening snacks while watching a short film with my niece. So Atun stepped out of the kitchen many times to watch the television with her. My niece, who was mostly quiet, laughed and smiled a few times because she found the Indonesian non-animated movie funny. Watching her captivated by the onscreen images I was wondering about what kind of children's programming broadcasted on television and when these programmes were aired every day. As children's shows are part of the overall daily television programming, I pondered what has been offered by the broadcasting companies for children to watch and what kind of disapprovals from KPI around children's television.

At the time of my fieldwork in 2014 in Semarang there were more than a dozen of TV stations and even more so in the capital city, Jakarta with only one being government-owned, TVRI. Most of them are public national broadcasting channels owned by huge media companies, like RCTI, Indosiar, MNCTV, SCTV, AnTV, TransTV, Trans7, TVOne, GlobalTV and MetroTV with their headquarters in Jakarta and are transmitted to different regions in Indonesia using Palapa satellite (Kitley, 2000). A few others are local television stations like TVKU, ProTV and SemarangTV which also air daily[4]. TVKU was set up by students of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, one of the private universities in Semarang first as a "laboratory" TV studio for the university's communication students which focused its programming on education (Dian Nuswantoro University, n.d.). In spite of the many available television stations, unfortunately, only a few of them aired programmes for children, such as film series or educational shows, which informed young viewers. Usually on weekdays as early as 6 am a few channels showed animated children series, most of them are made overseas, like Masha & the Bear, Penguin of Madagascar, SpongeBob SquarePants, Tom & Jerry, and Upin & Ipin. Most of these animations are dubbed into Indonesian, except Upin &

[4] Jakarta has more regional TV stations such as DAAI TV which focuses its programming on peaceful and harmonious relationships between different ethnic groups, nations and religions (DAAI TV, 2016), JakTV that is targeting twenty-year-old plus segment (Jak TV, n.d.), and Elshinta TV which concentrates on topics related to social, cultural and educational issues in Jakarta (Elshinta TV, 2015).

Ipin which is subtitled into the national language as the original format uses Malay[5] which to some extent shares similar linguistic and cultural features to Indonesian. The morning shows include an Indonesian made animation called Keluarga Somat [Somat's Family] which is aired in Indosiar. The children portion only last one or two hours or until 9 am at the most. Around mid-day and in the late afternoon for an hour or so there are other animated films, similar series to the ones showed in the early morning with a few additions of different animations such as a locally made Adit Sopo Jarwo and Japanese animation Naruto. On the weekends more animations and children shows are shown. It is true that children's television programmes have increased since 1970s, when shows for children first aired in TVRI, from 6.8 hours per week to 137.7 hours per week in 2009 (Hendriyani, Hollander, d'Haenens & Beentjes, 2011). However, on primetime which is from 7 pm to 9 pm[6] Indonesian televisions mainly screen *sinetron* which are not designed to be child friendly as they contain violence and/or romantic scenes. Ironically, this is also the time when most people spend their time in front of the television—between 30.5 per cent and 32.1 per cent—compared to other times of the day (Austin, Barnard & Hutcheon, 2015[7]). This is understandable since it is a time when families usually have dinner while relaxing in front of the television. So it is unavoidable that children watch *sinetron* with other family members, unless mothers put strict measures not to watch TV at this time or change the channel to other programmes, which are more suitable, like the television channels especially for children aired by pay TV.

KPI states that 40 per cent of television audiences are children who spend 35 hours weekly of their time for watching television ("Penonton usia," 2013). However, children watch other shows as well outside television programming specifically made for them (Hendriyani, et al., 2011). As television (95%) remains the main device for accessing the media in Indonesia compared to the Internet (33%), newspaper (26%) or cinema (11%) ("Nielsen", 2014), parents are cautioned by KPI to become wise media intermediaries for their children. From their research Hendriyani, d'Haenens and Beentjes (2012) suggest that Indonesian children in Jakarta watch television around 5.5 hours per day on schooldays and around 7.4 hours during holidays. A survey conducted

[5] Upin & Ipin in its original format use Malay, English and Mandarin (Les' Copaque, n.d., http://upindanipin.com.my/v7/info.php). The one shown in Indonesia is the Malay version.
[6] Primetime television programming in Indonesia is between 7 pm and 9 pm but extended to between 6 pm and 10 pm during the fasting month (Rakhmani, 2014).
[7] The data is based on AGB Nielsen Media Research in 2014.

by YPMA (Yayasan Pengembangan Media Anak [Children's Media Development Foundation]) in 2009 in conjunction with Diponegoro University in Semarang discovered that children of the age between six and twelve in Central and East Java spent around four hours daily on weekdays and more than six hours per day on weekends in front of television. This fact suggests that Indonesian children watch television more than children in other ASEAN[8] countries who spend two to three hours of television per day ("Anak Indonesia," 2012). This situation to some extent is worrying because the longer children watch television the more susceptible they are to be exposed to other programmes not designed for them.

KPI, whose role is to monitor television programming, is well aware that television has become a regular "baby sitter" for children at home as children have been "trained" to watch television since they are very young ("Anak Indonesia'", 2012), especially in households with busy parents (University of Cincinnati, 2012). KPI has been giving warnings to television stations for children's programmes and *sinetron* that contain violence, supernatural elements, explicit sexual acts or dialogue, improper behaviours or advertisements with adult content and are shown during children programming ("Penonton usia," 2013). Yet, television stations are more interested in accumulating profits without much consideration about children's psychological welfare. The higher the rating of a television show, the more likely it will be aired on primetime and will be shown for months or even years.

In its latest issue of the Broadcasting Standard, KPI organises television shows into five categories based on age-appropriateness—programmes for preschool children between the age of two and six-years-old (P [*pra-sekolah*] classification); for children from seven to twelve-years-old (A [*anak-anak*] classification); for teenagers between thirteen and seventeen-years-old (R [*remaja*] classification); for adults of eighteen-years-old and older (D [*dewasa*] classification); and for all ages (SU [*semua umur*] classification) (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia, 2012). Yet, even when a show is classified as a programme for children there is no guarantee that it is free from unsolicited content. For example, in 2014 KPI issued a warning for an animation series Tom & Jerry aired on AnTV, RCTI and GlobalTV, and SpongeBob SquarePants on GlobalTV because they contained violent images and portrayals of unsafe behaviours which could be dangerous

[8] ASEAN is Association of Southeast Asian Nations which includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar and, Vietnam ("ASEAN member states'", n.d.).

when children imitate these acts ("Siaran pers", 2014). KPI penalised the television stations with administrative sanctions and pressured them to make necessary censorship besides urging parents to be vigilant and to discourage their children to watch these cartoons. However, this warning means nothing for the television stations to change the cartoons series into different and more suitable shows as by 2016 the two animations remain on the television channels' schedules. It seems that the media industries do not see the urgency to place more suitable shows for the benefit of children viewers.

With the current media landscape in Semarang, the regional government was trying to help family by making an appeal for families to use their time in the evening for more purposeful aim than merely watching television which could have detrimental effects for children for various reasons. Although this move was not successful, I would like to show in the next section how local authority "intervened" with family personal time in the midst of mothers' concerns about their family media consumption.

Local Government's Appeal and Family Media Consumption around Television

One evening I went to Citra's house not far from the house I stayed in Semarang. As promised I came just after the *maghrib*[9] prayer. It was not hard to find her house as she already gave me a clear description on where to go and the signposts. We chatted in her living room, which was full with well-made wooden furniture. From where I sat I could see a space that was used as a prayer room with a large colourful *sajadah* (prayer mat) spread on the floor and a few copies of the Qur'an on top of a low bookshelf. The overall ambience was really homey.

Citra, in her late forties, who has two grown children, told me the predicament faced by many mothers in regulating children television viewing. On one hand during primetime there were a number of *sinetron* on different channels, which might entice families to watch. Meanwhile, at the same time children had so much homework to do from schools that would be impossible to finish properly if they used their time to watch television, instead. Also, between 7 pm and 9 pm is a family time when the whole

[9] The *maghrib* prayer is one of the five compulsory daily prayers for Muslim which is conducted just after sunset.

family gathers to have a chat while having dinner and/or watch television. Citra explained to me in front of her seventeen-year-old daughter:

> The soap operas are on primetime. Definitely there will be some impacts. First, the time for learning is reduced. Second, whatever in the *sinetron* becomes "oh this is what I must do." Maybe it's like that for young kids. For people like her [pointing to her teenage daughter] is the same (she is) studying while watching (TV) [laughing] (and) even more so when there are romance (in the *sinetron*). For people her age what they watch is the romanticism (in the drama). For young children like my four-years-old nephew is the acting.

Citra's daughter who was interested in our conversation smiled and agreed to what her mother told me. Fascinated with her nephew, Citra told me a story when she visited her nephew and was about to leave his house, her nephew said his goodbye by roaring and growling just like the actors in the *sinetron* 7 Manusia Harimau [The 7 Human Tigers]. She was certain that her nephew was captivated by the drama and trying to imitate the sound and action in the drama. However, she could see that parents have some difficulties to regulate their children's television viewing as she elaborated:

> This time (between 7 pm and 9 pm) is a time when parents take a rest at home (because they are) tired (and) want to entertain themselves by watching (television). Meanwhile, (at the same time) their children have to study from Monday to Friday.

With this kind of dilemma in 2012 the local government in Semarang felt the need to issue an appeal for its residence, particularly parents and their children, to avoid watching television during primetime. Citra, who was an active member of her local neighbourhood community, explained:

> There was a time when the government encouraged (people) to turn off the TV from 7 until 9… There was an appeal… from local government through women in PKK[10], from the city to districts to sub-districts and to RT (and) RW. This was an appeal from the Mayor. This happened around 2012.

Yet, it was not easy to comply with this request as the temptation to watch *sinetron* was too big to conquer for some. At the end this plea was never heard again after a year. It seems that outside plea from PKK women has no substantial effect on the ways families

[10] PKK is the abbreviation for Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga [Empowerment of Family Welfare] is a women organisation which focuses its activities on empowering women through maternal and neonatal care, and family programme. PKK was , previously known as Pembinaan Kesejateraan Keluarga [Guidance for Family Welfare] during the New Order (Robinson & Bessell, 2002) which stressed more on top down "supervision" from the government in its management. Nowadays, its membership is no longer compulsory as it was in Suharto era (Robinson, 2009). In Citra's neighbourhood specifically and Semarang in general PKK is operated from city level to grassroots sector like in RT and RW (local neighbourhoods). Its main role is to improve *kesejahteraan rakyat* [the welfare of the people] ("Walikota lantik," 2016).

watch television within their home. Indeed, it is the home environment that shapes the media exposure for children and their family around television.

However, Yanti, mother of three, felt that government's involvements on media exposure in Indonesia are still needed, particularly in providing strict censorship for unwarranted television programmes and films. Similarly, Citra felt that KPI and television stations have to take charge in regulating media exposure for children by means of programme scheduling. Regulating media exposures does not merely lie on parents' shoulder. Yanti, in her forties, became nostalgic when she praised the media scene during the Suharto era in which severe control was imposed by the censorship body to movies and television to avoid showing inappropriate images. At the time it would be impossible to show a kissing scene on a film or *sinetron*, let alone on primetime when the likelihood of children watching is high. Imported films were also never immune from similar treatment by the censorship body. Meanwhile, romantic scenes, nowadays, are staple for primetime television dramas and local movies to spice up a story or increase ratings. According to Yanti, KPI has no significant power compare to the censorship body in Suharto era to alter the current Indonesian media landscape. The nature of KPI as an independent organisation and the government owned of department of information seems to be the reason behind their different impacts on regulating Indonesian media. The dilemma for working mothers like Yanti was not having enough time to mediate children's media exposure while acknowledging the need for outside control to regulate appropriate media. Relying on children themselves to pick and choose their television shows and films, especially when they are underage, would be unwise. Likewise, Niar believed that children need guidance and time to develop their sense of media appropriateness.

Although Muslims women I talked to aware of the debilitating effects of some *sinetron*, one or two of them could not shun away from certain soap operas, because there was no better show at the same time for their children. Asih, in her late thirties, admitted that there were times when she watched *sinetron* with her eleven year-old-daughter, even though she put some measures in her negotiations with the shows. She acknowledged that there are scenes, such as romantic parts, which are not ideal for her daughter to watch. One of the *sinetron* she occasionally watched while doing her ironing was Diam-

Diam Suka [literally, Secretly Fancy][11]. The 90-minutes duration television drama was produced by Screenplay Productions and aired daily by SCTV from around 6.30 pm. It is a coming-of-age *sinetron* with the story revolves around youth, female and male, who are studying in a high school and then starting their university, their love stories and family affairs. Asih explained:

> Sometimes, (I watch) Diam-Diam Suka [laughed]…at SCTV… while my daughter watching this (*sinetron*) I always accompany her, when there is this (romantic) scene I divert her (from the show)… (but) if there is Upin & Ipin, she watches Upin & Ipin , instead. So it depends…Sometimes children imitate (what they see). *Diam-Diam Suka* is for teenagers. There are hugging scenes (between female and male actors). I don't like that because these (scenes) can be seen by children. So I immediately change the channel.

Niar, equally concerned about *sinetron remaja* [soap operas for teenagers] aired during primetime:

> *Sinetron remaja* like *Ganteng-Ganteng Serigala*[12] is not suitable for children. There are a lot of *pacaran* [dating] (scenes). The theme is not suitable. The language is not *sopan* [appropriate], which is frequently imitated by children…*Kayaknya nggak sreg* [It seems not suitable, Javanese].

Fani, a young mother with two pre-school aged boys shared the same sentiment as Asih. She was adamant that the only television programme that her children could watch was Upin & Ipin, besides selected DVDs which she personally chose for them. She said:

> If I turned the TV on we only watch Upin & Ipin. I don't watch *sinetron*.

For the sake of their children, Fani and her husband preferred not to watch any programmes on television, such as *sinetron* and news, which could adversely affect their children. She stated:

> I didn't really like watching TV and then I have children so I never watch TV. I just watch cartoons with them…I also don't like watching *sinetron*. So my children asked why their friend can watch Mahabharata[13] and why they can't

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[11] Diam-Diam Suka was aired by SCTV between 11th November 2013 and 22nd February 2015 and consisted of two seasons of 452 episodes ("Diam-Diam Suka", n.d.). It's duration is 90-minutes per episode and aired three time weekly around 6pm.

[12] Ganteng-Ganteng Serigala was a 90-minutes *sinetron* aired daily by SCTV between 21st April 2014 and 9th August 2015 at 7.30 pm. It consists of two seasons of 472 episodes ("Ganteng-Ganteng Serigala, n.d.).

[13] Mahabharata is a television series aired on ANTV around 8.30pm-9pm on Saturdays and 9am on weekdays. It is produced in India based on a Mahabharata mythology surrounding two families in a kingdom which revolves around their family conflicts and power struggle for the throne. The *sinetron* is dubbed into Indonesian language as the original used Hindi.

> watch it. They claimed that their friend can watch it as his mother permitted it. I replied that was what their friend said. But in my opinion they can't yet watch it. (Even though) other mothers said there is no (inappropriate) scene (in this TV series)…But since I can't accompany them properly when they watch TV so I'm afraid that there are (inappropriate) scenes which they can imitate.

While for Niar the theme and language used in *sinetron* are inappropriate for children to watch, for Fani, *sinetron* is unsuitable for children due to its story and images depicted. She elucidated:

> Nowadays, *sinetron* are too *lebay* [too much], exaggerating. If I watch *sinetron* my children definitely watch it as well. (In the *sinetron*) there are women wearing too revealing clothes, and sometimes there are kissing scenes, dating scenes.

When Fani's children saw on television a woman wore in appropriate dress, they would make a comment because they already understood the concept of *aurat* for women:

> The children already know about (propriety of) dressing. For example when they watch TV, and saw a woman who wore a tank top (they said), "That girl is *saru* [Javanese: indecent], her *aurat*[14] is exposed. She doesn't wear any clothes!"

Pious Muslim women I talked to believe that a mother's role is crucial in determining what programmes their children watch as they acknowledge the influence of media on children. However, as workingwomen, they were not always present to regulate their children's engagement with media. They then relied on others at home, such as grandparents, housemaids, or their sisters, to take care of their children when they were not yet home. One participant even trusted her neighbour with her children after school before she and her husband came home. Although they gave guidelines to these substitute guardians about suitable TV programmes for their children, they were not sure how far these guidelines were followed. They knew that this was not a perfect arrangement, as other people might not have the same boundaries in terms of what is appropriate and what is not for their children to watch. Meanwhile, other participants provided after school activities for their children to do, like Qur'an classes. Besides the

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[14] *Aurat* is Indonesian (or 'awrah in Arabic) for the intimate parts of the body, which must be concealed by clothing according to Islamic tenet except to their husbands or mahram (Nasir, Pereira & Turner, 2010). It is a complex word as it is explained by Ahmed (1992), "the word *'awra* is one of those words whose complicated layered meanings and range of possible referents are richly suggestive of the androcentrism of dominant Arabic culture and of the connections it made between women, sexuality, and shameful and defective things. Its meanings include blind in one eye; blemished, defective; the genital area; general parts of the body that are shameful and must be concealed; women's bodies; and women" (p. 116).

obvious aim of improving their children's Islamic knowledge, these activities also enabled the children to have the opportunity to watch TV only when their mothers were home. Thus, mothers in these situations have a lot of control on their children's media consumption.

Why Upin & Ipin Leading as Morally and Religiously Appropriate Children's Animation?

A number of my participants appreciated one or two children television programmes, like *Upin & Ipin*, in shaping pious being and inculcating religious and moral ethics into their children's mind. My participants agreed that *Upin & Ipin* is like a breath of fresh air in the midst of other discouraging and some appalling broadcasts on Indonesian television channels. They were disappointed that no local television productions could match *Upin & Ipin*'s popularity for its down to earth portrayals of everyday lives and for its moral messages. *Si Unyil*[15], a children series, which was broadcasted weekly from 1981 for a decade on TVRI, had the same accolades as *Upin & Ipin* although the messages behind these series are not the same. *Si Unyil*, the original version, was a take on Pancasila[16] and its metaphors of shaping and guiding nationalism for children's consumption (Kitley, 1999). My participants were longed for a local television programming like *Si Unyil* and *Keluarga Cemara*[17] which could assist them in shaping children's moral values because current local programming are caught in a cycle of consumerism with the sole aim for profit alone.

Upin & Ipin is developed by Les' Copaque, a Malaysian company and is a short animated television series about five-year-old twin brothers named Upin and Ipin and their family, school friends and neighbours (Figure 7.1 below). The story revolves around their day-to-day lives and the fun and tribulations of going through their normal

[15] There are two versions of Si Unyil. The old version started in 1981 and finished in 1991. The new version started in 2002 with some modifications on the stories, messages it conveys and central figure (Si Unyil) (Imanda, 2004). In this text I refer to the original version of Si Unyil. Unyil is the name of the main character.

[16] Pancasila is the state ideologies of Indonesia which was established by Sukarno, the first president, and is contained five principles, namely belief in God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, representative government or consent, and social justice for all Indonesian citizen (Bertrand, 2004).

[17] Keluarga Cemara [Cemara Family] is a *sinetron* aired between 1996 and 2005 and known for its moral values embedded within its stories. It was about a family who lived a harmonious life and their everyday lives with moral values interweaved in each episode (Henz, 2016).

days. Upin and Ipin are portrayed as curious and inquisitive children who like to help others around them. The series was created in 2007 and has been shown on MNCTV in Indonesia since 2009. Each episode lasts around six to seven minutes and a full story is usually completed in three episodes. Upin and Ipin live with their teenager sister Kak Ros and grandmother Opah (Figure 7.2 below) in a traditional Malay village called Kampung Durian Runtuh [Fallen Durian[18] Village]. The twins, who go to Tadika Mesra, a village kindergarten, have several close friends from different ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Tamil and Malay which definitely depicts the reality of the multicultural Malay community. The characters also include an Indonesian young girl named Susanti who used to reside in Jakarta (Les' Copaque, n.d.).

Figure 7.1: Upin & Ipin poster. In this poster Upin & Ipin are shown as having a laugh with their friends, Jarjit, Meimei, Ihsan, Mail and Fizi. Upin & Ipin is an animated TV series for children produced by Les' Copaque based in Malaysia (courtesy of Les' Copaque, www.lescopaque.com).

[18] Durian is a big fruit with distinctive and strong odour, and spikey outer husk. It is well-known in Southeast Asia as the "king of fruit" (Tan, 2014). The name itself is originated from Indonesian/Malay languages "duri" which means thorn.

Figure 7.2: Upin's and Ipin's older sister Kak Ros and grandmother Opah (courtesy of Les' Copaque, www.lescopaque.com).

Figure 7.3: Upin & Ipin are dressed in traditional hats (*songkok*) for their Ramadan shows (courtesy of Les' Copaque, www.lescopaque.com).

Figure 7.4: Upin & Ipin are reciting* doa *(supplication) before breaking their fast (courtesy of Les' Copaque, www.lescopaque.com).

For stories specifically made to commemorate the fasting month of Ramaḍān, Upin and Ipin are occasionally dressed in traditional clothes of *baju Melayu* (Malay outfit) complemented by *songkok* (hat) (Figure 7.3 above) or wearing a pair of long trousers, a long-sleeved shirt with *peci* (hat) (Figure 7.4 above) especially for *hari raya* or Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramaḍān festival. The shows during Ramaḍān are particularly designed to show a number of religious rituals and their meanings, such as fasting, *sahur* or *suḥūr* [pre-dawn meal], and *pahala* [reward from God]. It is true that the animation is focused on Upin and Ipin and their Muslim ways of life, but the series also depict other cultural festival like Chinese New Year which is celebrated by Mei Mei, one of Upin's and Ipin's friends to portray the colourful and harmonious lives of multi-ethnic groups in Malaysia[19]. Each episode is crammed with "lessons" on universal values of responsibility, honesty and loyalty (Siregar, 2010). The animated series is enjoyed by people of different ages, mostly children (see also Siregar, 2010).

Erna, a mother of an eight-year-old girl, told me that her daughter likes *Upin & Ipin* the most out of all television programmes. She shared her daughter opinion that *Upin & Ipin* is a good children show:

> The first one is *Upin & Ipin*…It is true that *Upin & Ipin* is aired on MNCTV three times daily. In the morning before going to school. When she goes to

[19] See the many Upin & Ipin videos posted on YouTube, for example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdzZFn4UcrE (about the Chinese New Year) or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLKSmQ_RlKQ (about fasting during Ramaḍān).

> school and is already dressed, she always watches the show first, while I'm still busy doing housework. Then it is aired in the afternoon and just before *maġrib* [dawn]. Every day from Monday to Sunday, three times daily. I also think that it is a good series. The story is good. It's about children's world, happy, (with) no violence (and) no conflict. If there was a problem, it is definitely being solved peacefully. I think this is good. (My daughter) likes *Upin & Ipin* because the story is exciting (about) friends playing, is fun and a story about school.

Meanwhile, Ella, a mother of two school-aged boys, explained about the reason she preferred her children to watch *Upin & Ipin* than another Indonesian animated series:

> The one I like the most is *Upin & Ipin*. If I compare *Upin & Ipin* with *Adit Sopo Jarwo*, Indonesian made, *Upin & Ipin* is good. Why? Because the language used in *Upin & Ipin* is good…there is no blaming…Children are taught to respect their elders. But in *Adit Sopo Jarwo* there is (a character named) Adit who enjoys *ngerjain* (harassing) an elder named Jarwo. Jarwo is jobless, lazy but Adit as a child has the nerve to harass him, (he is) being *jail* (mischievous). Actually, this is not a good education because there is no respect for the elders. So I like to compare and realise that media (products) made in Indonesia can't portray the *ciri khas* [uniqueness] of Indonesian (culture). Its educational content for children is lacking. They only concern with the story but without educational values. My children like *Upin & Ipin*, *Masha the Bear*. From my point of view *Upin & Ipin* is the best…Jarwo who is jobless is portrayed as having tricks to gain profits from what he does. (He does things) only if there is money. This is not a good teaching…that means children are taught that if they are asked to help others there have to be money in return. Younger children can imitate this behaviour.

Moreover, Erna shares these kinds of sentiments about Indonesian animation on a different animated series called *Keluarga Somat* [Somat's Family]. It is true that not all animation series received similar accolade as *Upin & Ipin*. One of the cartoons, which is criticised by Muslim mothers is daily series *Keluarga Somat*. *Keluarga Somat* is locally made in 2013 by Dreamtoon for Indosiar channel. The story revolves around a family of simple means called Somat and their everyday problems. The family consists of the father named Pak Somat, who works in a factory, his wife Inah and their two children Dudung, a boy, and Ninung, a girl. Unlike Upin and Ipin who are courteous and full of energy, Dudung is lazy and mischievous although has a lot of ideas, while his sister Ninung is obedient and polite. Viewers see Dudung being reprimanded by his parents and sister often (Keluarga Somat, 2015). Also, Dudung, who goes to a primary school, is never far from being told off by his teacher for not doing his schoolwork diligently. Erna wrote in her diary about her disappointments with this animation:

> The story is *khas* [uniquely] Indonesian. It shows women who are gossiping while doing their shopping and children, especially Dudung, who are naughty. It lacks kindness. Dudung, the main character, is naughty (and) mischievous in

> order to cheat/deceive other people, not smart, failed at school and doesn't want to do his homework. This is very different to *Upin & Ipin* characters.

Erna also elaborated Pak Somat's uncommendable trait:

> This film also often portrays children who easily outsmart their parents, for example when Pak Somat lies to his wife and asks Dudung to keep silent about it, he gives some money as the rewards. So I very much don't recommend this film to be seen by children.

Both of these series are similarly about children, family and friends yet they received very different responses from Muslim mothers I talked to for their portrayals of moral and religious values. By exercising their agency, pious Muslim mothers I talked to tried to frame the children's shows using their religious understandings and moral discourses and found that *Upin & Ipin* contains highly praised attributes like seeking for peaceful relationships with others of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, respect towards older people and avoiding conflicts and violence unlike *Keluarga Somat*.

Regarding violent acts on children's programme, Ella elucidated the conversation she had with her eldest ten-year-old son:

> We seldom watch *Tom & Jerry*. But yesterday we watch *Tom & Jerry*. "Kak, you see *Tom & Jerry* is a bit rough, isn' it," I said to him. Because he's older he knows. I mean he understands. (He answered,) "Yes, I know. Hitting is not allowed." If I try to tell him, he proclaims as if he knows it all [*sok tahu*] (laughed). (I said to him), "Yes, yes Kakak understand. They like to quarrel (and) punch each other. Is that allowed? Of course, it's not allowed. What about between older brother and younger brother? Is it like that?" He laughed. (Then I said) "You can't be like that. Don't imitate. Just copy *Upin & Ipin*, the twin (who) like to help each other." I explained to him like that. "Yes, yes, I know," (he replied). Actually he already knew (about it) but I need to *cereweti* [remind him a few times, Javanese] (laughed).

Erna explained the differences between *Upin & Ipin* and *Adit, Sopo, Jarwo* in her diary:

> In contrast to *Upin & Ipin* which is full of moral messages, children's world which is fun, with good friends, play and learn together without any conflict, *Adit, Sopo, Jarwo* always full of conflicts and dramatization, of characters who always have bad intention, hot-tempered, often lying and characters who are being bullied. *Alhamdulillah*, my daughter doesn't like this series.

Essentially, Muslim mothers tend to be reflexive in their media engagement including when children are involved. They exercise agency by framing their media engagement using their religious understandings and moral discourse to set limits on what is proper

and what is not. The media trigger dialogues with their children about religious understandings and moral discourse, such as violence, modesty and proper behaviours between opposite sex. The aim is to protect their children from unwarranted media and to develop their children's sense of media appropriateness. Yet, this is not easy. As long as ratings are more important for Indonesian TV stations in setting up their TV programming and KPI has no significant power to alter the current media landscape, Muslim mothers have to work hard to regulate their children's media engagement.

Being Reflexive: Children as the Focus

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MUSLIM MOTHERS AND INDONESIAN GOSSIP SHOWS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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MUSLIM MOTHERS AND INDONESIAN GOSSIP SHOWS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Television gossip shows, popularly known as infotainment, have become a daily staple for Indonesian viewers for more than a decade. However, due to its nature of publicly airing the supposedly dirty laundry of Indonesian celebrities, infotainment has been under attack since its inception. Religious, professional and social organisations have publicly debated its content to little effect since infotainment remains one of the most watched television programmes. This article seeks to explore and analyse the infotainment landscape in Indonesian television and to examine the experiences of Indonesian Muslim mothers, who are exposed to infotainment, and how they negotiate these programmes in terms of their understanding of the Islamic prohibition of gossip.

Keywords: infotainment; celebrity gossip shows; Indonesia; television; Muslim mothers

Introduction

For more than a decade of living in New Zealand I had no interest in Indonesian television until I watched it during a visit to Indonesia in 2012. What struck my family was how infotainment has dominated the screen and how 'vulgar' they have become. For my teenage daughter who has been brought up as a Muslim it was incomprehensible to find a country with a majority Muslim population allowing numerous gossip shows to be broadcast in which celebrities unhesitatingly air their private affairs on television. She was stunned by what she watched because she understood that according to the Islamic tenet[1] gossiping is not permissible, yet Indonesian Muslims have gossip shows on their plate every day. Then I began to ponder what living in Indonesia as Muslim mothers would entail. How do they negotiate the Indonesian media, especially television, in their busy lives as mothers? How do they appropriate the abundance of infotainment programming on television? It is with these questions in mind that I started my research journey. Part of the journey is finding answers through a Facebook closed group which I set up especially for this research. In this Facebook group I have

[1] *Sūrah* (chapter) Hujurat (49) verses 12 in the Qur'an stipulates the condemnation of gossip in Islam for Muslims and its advice to avoid any forms of gossip (Yusuf Ali n.d.).

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opportunities to hold discussions with middle class Muslim mothers who mostly live in Jakarta on various topics related to Indonesian media. Part of these discussions is in regard to infotainment programming on which this article is partly based.

This article explores Indonesian infotainment on television and the debate surrounding their content which incites public disputes particularly within an Islamic framework. My discussion is based on infotainment programme viewings, Facebook group discussions with Muslim mothers[2] and public discourses on Indonesian infotainment on YouTube and in the Indonesian media. A glimpse into the history and the nature of Indonesian television and infotainment is provided to serve as a backdrop to celebrity culture in Indonesia and oscillating opinions of gossip shows. Rather than focusing merely on the debate between infotainment as entertainment programme versus hard news, this article also underlines the fact that Muslim mothers seem to be entangled in the controversy of celebrity gossip shows in the context of their propriety.

The Indonesian television landscape went through a major facelift when Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI) became the first commercial television network alongside the national television Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) in 1988 (Sen 1994). TVRI had had no competition from any other television network since 1962 (Hollander et al. 2009; Kitley 2000) until Bambang Trihatmojo, the son of Suharto, the ruling Indonesian president at the time, established RCTI as part of his major conglomerate (Sen and Hill 2000). This was soon followed by four other privately owned television networks, namely Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV) in 1989, Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI) in 1990, ANTV in 1993 and Indosiar in 1995 (Sen and Hill 2000).[3] From 2000, other television channels have also broadcast nationally, such as Metro TV (2000), Trans TV (2001), TV One, Global TV and Trans7 (all in 2002). These television stations were owned by Suharto's family and his associates, which was made possible by the privileges they gained from being inside the inner circle of the palace. These private television networks secured national access via the Palapa satellite through a government deregulation in 1993 and the Broadcasting Act 1996/1997 (Sen and Hill 2000).

After the fall of the Suharto regime, the Broadcasting Act 1996/1997 was renewed in 2002 to include the newly and purposefully set up KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia/ Indonesian Broadcasting Commission) as an independent regulatory body that would represent public interest (Hollander et al. 2009). The formation of the Broadcasting Bill 2002 and KPI was of the utmost importance in terms of public governance in the Indonesian broadcasting sphere. It replaced the previously much controlled Department of Information which covered the media during the authoritarian New Order administration. With its basic aims to diversify the media content in Indonesia as well as their

[2]The group started in June 2013. This group is part of my existing PhD ethnographic research on Muslim parenting, Indonesian media and piety in Central Java, Indonesia, which entails online and offline fieldwork. I invited Muslim mothers who are 'friends' with me on my personal Facebook account to participate in the closed group discussion and 12 women joined the group. My friends who agreed to participate are my childhood friends, my university friends back in Indonesia, a mother whom I met in New Zealand and has returned to Indonesia, and a friend of a friend I met here in Auckland. We share the same backgrounds as Muslim mothers and university graduates. I simultaneously position myself as a researcher, a friend and a mother. In this group we share and discuss our experiences with Indonesian media as Muslim mothers.

[3]Data of television history in Indonesia from Saroso (2011) differs slightly from Sen and Hill (2000).

ownership, KPI took over the exclusive rights of the government to control, censor and regulate the country's media (Hollander et al. 2009; KPI 2009). However, the liberalisation of the Indonesian media was short lived since the government and the broadcast media owners gained some means to nullify the Broadcasting Act 2002 so they could regain control over the media for their mutual benefit (Sudibyo and Patria 2013). By establishing the Governmental Regulations in 2005, the previously removed Department of Information was reinstated and took over KPI's authority to oversee media ownership, consequently influencing the diversity of content.

In regards to current media ownership in Indonesia, Sudibyo and Patria (2013) note that there are five major business conglomerates which own 10 existing national television channels (see Table 1).

Sudibyo and Patria (2013), using the concept of 'spatialisation' formerly introduced by Mosco (2009: 157–68), suggest that expansion and concentration of ownership of media capital is in fact practised by these conglomerates in Indonesia. Besides owning television stations, these business groups have also spread into other media industries such as newspapers, print and radio, or expanding their existing media ownership in print and radio to television. As Sudibyo and Patria (2013: 266) elucidate, 'spatialisation is thus related to the nature of the media industry that always seeks to enlarge its scope of operations in order to reach a wider audience in the most efficient way possible'. Since media spatialisation has been embedded within the Indonesian media industry, it can be predicted that the diversity of ownership and content once envisioned by KPI is merely an unfulfilled dream. Monopoly ownership of Indonesian media enterprises is shown by a number of acquisition and merger activities in the past decade involving major media business groups in which they took control of television stations and/or established suzerainty over other media productions like radio stations, online and print media. Duplication of media content across different media platforms as well as across different television channels can be expected since this would allow the capturing of a large number of viewers and readers without having to elevate the production cost.

The lack of variation in programming throughout the national television stations can be seen as one of the indicators in which media content fails to diversify. Unabashed imitations of a television programme with a high rating is a common practice in Indonesia. For example, a highly popular television mystery show that showcased a horror theme within the context of Islamic reality called *Kisah Misteri* (mystery tales) was broadcast on

TABLE 1. Indonesian media groups and their television stations[4]

Media Group	Television
MNC	RCTI, Global TV, MNC TV
Trans Corp	Trans TV, Trans7
Bakrie & Brothers Group	ANTV, TV One
Surya Citra Media	SCTV, Indosiar
Media Group	Metro TV

[4]See Sudibyo and Patria (2013) for a comprehensive table of Indonesian conglomerates and their holdings of media businesses including television stations, radio stations, print and online media.

RCTI in 2001. Due to its success, it was followed soon afterwards with similar programmes on ANTV. These include *Percaya nggak Percaya* (Believe it or not) and *Oh Seraam* (Oh scary) and Trans TV's *Dunia Lain* or (Another world), all screened in 2002 (van Heeren 2007). Similar programming across television stations does not end here since replications of content and format of television shows cover a myriad of genres, such as television drama or soap opera (*sinetron*) and infotainment.

The proliferation of infotainment programmes in the Indonesian television landscape has evoked a sense of unsettling discontent within the Muslim community since their inception. It becomes contested within the public sphere in which various Muslim organisations, governmental bodies and individuals promulgate their opinions openly by means of public debate on the Internet, issuing fatwa and press releases. Yet, in spite of these fatwa and numerous complaints from the public, infotainment remains one of the highest grossing TV programmes in Indonesia with high ratings.

Indonesian infotainment: history, format and content

The inception of infotainment was in some ways unintended. It was created when Ilham Bintang, of the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI), produced the first entertainment show called *Buletin Sinetron* (soap opera bulletin) in 1994 as a space in which *sinetron* and the Indonesian *sinetron* festival[5] could be promoted (Yulianto 2008). *Buletin Sinetron* ran for a decade and during its course Bintang created *Cek & Ricek* (Check & recheck). The latter was the first celebrity infotainment show on the Indonesian television scene in 1997 which came about as a result of request by Alex Kumara, a former director of operations of RCTI to produce a gossip show about celebrities. Bintang warmly accepted the idea as he was aiming to set up a medium on television which could broadcast information about celebrities' careers and personalities and this could become a platform for them to clarify rumours surrounding their lives. Thus, *Buletin Sinetron* helped pave the way for the launch of *Cek & Ricek* since it triggered the interest to produce tabloid media in an audio-visual format. As *Cek & Ricek* gained popularity, other television stations and production houses were eager to follow suit. Celebrity gossip shows have become the top grossing television programmes in Indonesia due to their reportedly high ratings by Nielsen, a global marketing research firm responsible for ratings measurements for Indonesian television programming.[6]

[5]It was an annual event where films made for television compete for awards. It is currently organised as part of the Indonesian Film Festival.

[6]Viewers' ratings conducted by Nielsen are known to be 'scientifically' questionable. There is no assurance whether it really measures audience viewing habits due to the nature of its measurement. It does not gauge viewers' opinions on television programmes and commercials. As Butler (2009: 392) explains 'Nielsen data are exclusively quantitative measurements, indicating how many viewers watch and who they are by aggregating them into demographic groups'. In Indonesia, Nielsen gathers its data from ten different cities including three major cities, namely Jakarta, Surabaya and Medan (Nielsen 2010). However, their sample is usually small. In Indonesia its sample includes 2,423 television households (Nielsen 2011). In spite of their limitations, Nielsen data is still widely used for advertising purposes as the exchange rate by which advertisers buy airtime for airing their commercials on certain television shows (Butler 2009; Coutas 2008).

It is more cost effective to produce an infotainment show than to create other local content programmes like talk shows or *sinetron*. As Sternheimer (2011) suggests, unscripted programming such as reality and game shows can hugely reduce the production cost due to savings in the costs of hiring actors, scriptwriters, sets, costumes, and conducting research – some or all of which are required for making *sinetron*, news, and talk shows. Yulianto (2008: 131) implies that an infotainment show is a documentary which depicts 'the "real" domestic and familial details of artists' lives'. Thus infotainment, unlike a show such as *Big Brother*, is not staged. In terms of production costs producing an infotainment show would be comparable to or even less than making a reality show.

In 2013 there were 25 infotainment shows on eight national television channels.[7] Their screening times start as early as 6am until dusk, and lasts for half an hour to an hour, from Monday to Sunday. It is logical to assume that the content of these gossip shows are similar across the board, especially when a television station produces more than one infotainment. Since 2008, there has been a slight decrease in the number of television channels and infotainment programmes due to mergers and acquisitions (Yulianto 2008).[8]

The vast number of infotainment programmes could potentially open up the possibility of diverse content and formats, yet in effect, imitation within the gossip show genre has prevailed. The setting, the manner in which the presenters articulate their speech and the content of the programme is unvaried across different infotainment shows. *Cek & Ricek* has become the template for other celebrity shows to replicate. Since its commencement, *Cek & Ricek* has steadily maintained high ratings and has been commercially successful, attracting other infotainment producers to duplicate the programme in its entirety. By simply having a different presenter and altering the logo and slogan, another similar infotainment programme is born on another television channel.[9]

The format of an infotainment show includes a female presenter or two presenters, usually a male and a female,[10] in glamorous clothes, talking to the audience while showing clips of interviews with celebrities or their significant others at their houses or in public spaces like cafes, hotels and music show venues. The host's presentation

[7]A terrestrial television channel called NET, launched in May 2013, also screens a gossip show called *Entertainment News*. It is aired from Monday to Friday at 9am, 11am, 6pm and 11pm and on Saturday and Sunday at 11am. Besides broadcasting information on Indonesian celebrities, it also covers overseas celebrities. NET's content is also available on YouTube and social media platforms. Other national televisions like TVRI, TV ONE and Metro TV have no infotainment programmes. Indonesia also hosts numerous local and network television channels throughout the country.

[8]Yulianto (2008) citing Santoso (2005) states that in 2006 there were more than 30 separate infotainment programmes on all 13 television stations.

[9]This is true for many celebrity gossip shows except *Infotemen* (basically meaning information from friends (*temen*) on Trans TV which combines the concept of a talk show and infotainment. It claims to be an infotainment show with almost accurate information because of its close relationship with celebrities. However, its talk show seems to dominate the infotainment aspect of its format and the overall package deviates from most infotainment shows in Indonesia (see YouTube 2013b).

[10]Yulianto (2008) states that with previously female only presenters, since 2006 the trend for many television networks has been to include male infotainment presenters.

is theatrical to enhance the dramatic tension of the story. Often a story on a particular celebrity on a given day is inconclusive so as to generate suspense for the audience. The concluding narration may be aired days or weeks later depending on how the story is unfolding in real time, although there are follow-up stories in between. A clip is replayed when there is not enough visual material to cover the whole narration of a story. The overall impression is an informal presentation on a glitzy stage. The setting, speech, and the whole format, which are called media's ritual acts, are central to the celebrity culture (Nayar 2009) of infotainment on Indonesian television. This media culture was first introduced by *Cek & Ricek* and has hardly changed in other gossip shows as they emulate *Cek & Ricek*'s long-standing success. However *Silet*, an infotainment show from the same television station (RCTI) has been gaining more viewers than *Cek & Ricek* in the past few years although the latter remains high on the rating board (Nielson 2010; Yulianto 2008).

The content of Indonesian infotainment shows are always about celebrities' everyday lives and their families. This could include who is dating whom, their marriages, newly built luxurious houses, break ups and divorces, family disputes, and arguments with other celebrities. As Sofjan (2013: 28) suggests, infotainment contains 'a mixture of truths, half-truths and untruths' which in fact makes it more appealing to the audience. Celebrities who are involved in legal cases on corruption, drug abuse or an acrimonious divorce, have more sensational news to offer than other celebrities with more mundane stories. Since a number of actors, actresses and singers have recently been participating in political activities and have been chosen by their parties to be their representatives at the Indonesian regional or national level, these celebrities as political elites have also been exposed on national television in their party roles including any misconduct. The Indonesian celebrities are singers, actors and actresses, filmmakers, political elites, well known religious teachers and people of newfound fame such as winners of reality shows like *Indonesian Idol*. However, the people being interviewed for these programmes extend from the celebrities to their spouses, children, parents, other family members, housemaids, security guards, and neighbours.

With the advent of new media like YouTube, MySpace and the Internet in general, as well as reality television shows such as *Indonesian Idol*, the meaning of celebrity has been stretched. Sternheimer (2011: 2) defines a celebrity as 'anyone who is watched, noticed, and known by a critical mass of strangers'. People with no talent and skill can become a celebrity and be part of infotainment programme and this is also evident in Indonesian gossip shows in which people who have a familial or close relationship to certain celebrities appear to happily oblige to a request for an interview on infotainment to have their 15 minutes of fame.[11] An example is that of an ordinary woman who became the centre of media attention in her role as spokesperson for her son whose conduct and relationship with a famous singer attracted much publicity. This is what Turner (2004: 79) identifies as a new media democracy, 'where ordinary people now have greater access to media representation'. Yet, their celebrity fame is short lived as indicated by a popular Indonesian expression for portraying this phenomenon – *hanya seumur jagung* ('only as old as corn' i.e. only for a very short time).

[11]A saying made famous by Andy Warhol more than 40 years ago which is even applicable today (Devlin 2010; van Krieken 2012).

As Nayar (2009: 53) explains, these talk shows 'emphasise the celebrity-hood of the guests while seeking to unmask them' with their own stories of private dealings with their daily lives which makes them ordinary, yet still accentuates their uniqueness as a celebrity. Likewise, the gossip show becomes a space in which the ideology of intimacy is deeply embedded. The audience are able to relate to the celebrities' private lives on television as individuals rather than as actors and actresses on *sinetrons*, or as singers. However, the infotainment shows are packaged such that the audience are reminded that the person on the show is a celebrity and not someone ordinary. The simultaneous switch between immediate and hyper-mediated image is intentionally played (Nayar 2009) to capture the attention of the audience and heighten attraction. There are undoubtedly soap opera features in infotainment such as emotional outbursts of celebrities or their significant others that enhance the viewing attraction for the programme. Rage, sobbing, and even extreme physical gestures such as shoving, emulate moments of drama in the soap opera genre, although some celebrities present a calm facade.

To further illustrate it, an example is that from the most watched gossip topic of the year that involved a *dangdut* singer named Zaskia Gotik, famous for her iconic *goyang itik* (duck moves – *gotik* for short) (*Jakarta Globe,* 13 September 2013) and her then fiancé Vicky Prasetyo. On 6 September 2013 *Cek & Ricek* aired an interview with Zaskia Gotik and Vicky Prasetyo at their extravagant engagement party at Jakarta's five-star Hotel Indonesia Kempinski. What started as a mundane interview about how they met, their relationship and future plans turned into something that people talked and joked about on social media and discussed within the academic realm of Indonesian linguistic studies. A segment of the interview showed Vicky using peculiar terms which resemble Indonesian and/or English words but was overall a speech that sounded pompous but made no sense. Thus, viewers were somewhat lost in translation. On 12 September 2013, *Cek & Ricek* reported that Vicky's interview which was uploaded on YouTube was watched by more than half a million Internet users with more than 5,000 comments in just over a few days. Vicky rose from relative obscurity to Internet celebrity in a flash. The phenomenon, which was popularly referred to as *Vickynisasi* (Vickynism), dominated social media via Twitter and Facebook platforms. There was a great interest from the general public and from the media sectors to find out who this Vicky is since he was barely known before show. Soon the gossip show revealed that he was a failed politician with an apparently village head candidacy in Bekasi, West Java. A video clip was uploaded on YouTube which showed him speaking gibberish English to the villagers in his electorate, presumably to appear better educated and more worldly than his naive audience. The story continued with another surprising clip shown on television and social media which depicted a woman with a starkly contrasting appearance to Zaskia, as Vicky's wife for the past few years. Other stories continued to surface in gossip shows including Vicky's illegal involvement in fraudulent land deeds in Bekasi which was followed by his arrest and very public trial. Zaskia soon announced on an infotainment show that she was no longer engaged to Vicky and has been contemplating her future without him. The stories revolving around Vicky kept appearing in the media with more intricate details, including a Eurasian woman who flew from France just to visit Vicky in jail, slap his face while saying she has his child and wanted him to be accountable (Liputan6 2013). In all this mayhem Vicky's mother became his knight in shining armour, lying through her teeth (Okezone 2013; Youtube 2013d) while blaming others for his extramarital affairs. She even

denied his track record of lying about his supposed PhD from a university in the United States and his dubious business deals. And since Vicky has been in custody, his mother has been followed by infotainment reporters in the hopes of gaining more salacious material on Vicky and his significant others. His mother turned into 'news' in her own right because of her arrogant and snobbish attitude (Youtube 2013e), and rumours that she asked for a substantial amount of money for an interview about her son. She seemed to have enjoyed her brief moment of fame, parading in front of media reporters. The whole story unfolded within weeks and was broadcast in various infotainment shows.

As Yulianto (2008) suggests, Indonesian celebrity gossip shows whilst uniquely Indonesian also share some similarities with the celebrity industry overseas. The everyday life of celebrities becomes more interesting for viewers to watch than their day job as actors or singers (Sternheimer 2011). With or without their consent, celebrities' private lives are the focus of public attention and they are the selling point of any media, including television.

The debate

The debate surrounding infotainment starts with the argument whether it can be classified as journalism or mere entertainment. Open public discussion on media as well as at universities (Purwantoro 2008) seeks to offer peace of mind for the public whose everyday lives have been subjected to contested television programming. Most agree that infotainment is far from hard news and more closely resembles entertainment due to its lack of respect towards the journalism code of ethics.[12]

In 2006 the largest Indonesian Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) issued a fatwa which stated that television gossip shows are 'sinful' and 'morally distasteful' and urged Muslims to stop watching infotainment (*Straits Times,* 31 July 2006). Following this, Indonesia's highest Islamic authority Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) also declared gossip shows to be unsuitable as they tend to expose and exploit the intimate details of people's private lives which according to the Islamic tenet are haram for Muslims to engage in (*Jakarta Post,* 28 December 2009, 4 August 2010). A senior leader of NU, Masyhuri Naim explained in an interview that the fatwa was issued out of concern that gossip shows could detrimentally affect viewers as they depart from the teaching of the Qur'an (*Straits Times,* 31 July 2006). Meanwhile, MUI official Asrorun Niam Soleh added that only infotainment with haram material showing shameful details about people need be banned. He further elucidated that gossip shows are only permitted if they 'uphold the law, warn the public and help people' (*Kompas,* 28 July 2010). This religious norm applies equally to the Muslims who produce the shows and the viewers (Antara, 28 July 2010). NU and MUI also underlined the negative impacts of gossip in general as they may provoke family arguments and public disputes, and further emphasised the Islamic tenet which forbids Muslims to discuss shameful deeds of others or gossiping and disclosing publicly individuals' private lives

[12]Indonesian journalism code of ethics consists of 11 articles which include respecting the privacy of the informants, providing accurate and fair news, and avoiding untrue, defaming and sensual news and pictures (Dewan Pers 2011).

(*Jakarta Post,* 28 December 2009). Even the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs in his recent meeting with a group of Muslim women, reminded them to reduce the amount of time spent watching gossip shows because there is little to gain by such programmes (Republika, 9 June 2013). Yet, in spite of these fatwa and numerous complaints from the public, infotainment shows remain very popular among Muslims and television stations show no attempt to alter or stop such shows.

It is interesting to note that studies have found gossip to be somewhat useful in social settings. Jones (1980) implies that gossip is common among women in which they share common experiences to enhance solidarity and intimacy. Informal gossip entails a moral or normative function by means of controlling (Levin and Kimmel 1977) and negotiating social mores and norms (Johansson 2006). Thus, gossip is a powerful mechanism which supports group cohesion. For the subject of gossip who is socially approved, public recognition will be granted, whereas disapproved gossip will cause public condemnation (Levin and Kimmel 1977). Yet, gossip can also harm the reputation of the individual at the centre of discussion (Davis 2011). As Hunter (1990) explains, the range of gossip is extensive, from mere talk with no malicious intent, such as swapping minute details of one's life with a friend, to sharing personal secrets as a way of catharsis. This includes talk which is deliberately abusive and intentionally trying to hurt the person being talked about, driven by feelings of jealousy, envy and resentment (Wert and Salovey 2004). In the new era of digital media, gossip has become more intense due to the nature of new media being able to disseminate information in a matter of seconds. As Solove (2007) notes gossip, malicious or not, spreads like contagious disease once it is uploaded on the Internet. So it is understandable that NU and MUI caution Muslims to stay away from gossip, including infotainment, to protect them from any unfavourable consequences caused by the rumours.

On the other side of the fence, Ilham Bintang who is often described as the 'king' of infotainment because he was the pioneer of television gossip shows, insists that infotainment is journalism (*Jakarta Globe*, 22 July 2010). He asserts that most infotainment shows follow the journalistic code of ethics, although he acknowledges that not all infotainment shows abide by them. His opinion is endorsed by PWI, although it was rejected by AJI (Indonesian Independent Journalists) for not complying with the journalistic code of ethics and regulations (Sofjan 2013). Since Din Syamsudin, the deputy head of MUI, underlines that the target of MUI's fatwa is the content of infotainment which includes gossip, slanders and any information that reveal people's shameful deeds, Bintang concludes that as long as the 'news' could be in anyway benefit the public – such as paving the way for a legal prosecution or legal process – they are not considered haram[13] (Detik Hot, 5 August 2010). A communication studies academic also supported Bintang's claim stating that only the content of one or two infotainment shows are

[13]Bintang mentioned one of the most watched scandals in infotainment in 2010, which involved Luna Maya, an actress and singer, and Nazriel Irham of a pop band called Peter Pan who is better known as Ariel. Their sex video went viral on the Internet and their popularity rocketed for all the wrong reasons (*Jakarta Globe*, 26 July 2012). Ariel was detained for distributing pornographic material while Luna lost her lucrative advertising endorsement and TV appearances literally overnight (*Jakarta Globe,* 11 January 2011). Bintang argued that Ariel's prosecution was necessary to uphold the law. Yet similar exposures of sexual encounters on the Internet involving politicians are not prosecuted (Aspinall 2014).

considered unethical and deviate from public norms of propriety (Antara, 28 July 2010). If Bintang and the communication academic fervently justify infotainment as news, consequently gossip shows can be classified as sensational news. Wang and Cohen (2009: 126) elucidate that 'the sensationalisation of news can be defined as the displacement of socially significant stories by "tabloid" news topics and the use of flamboyant production styles that overpower substantive information'. Esposito (1996) further describes that sensationalism may lead to news which is superficial, dramatic, fast-paced in its presentation and simplistic in its explanation due to its focus on personalities, personal relationships, physical appearances and idiosyncrasies for the sake of attracting large audiences. Hence, infotainment, in my opinion, cannot be under the same category as television hard news, such as *Indonesia Pagi* (Morning Indonesia) of TVRI, as the former can be classified as sensational news as described by Wang and Cohen (2009) and Esposito (1996). This is not to deny the fact that some television news programmes, especially the ones produced by private national television stations, like RCTI and SCTV[14] for example, incorporate soft news which blurs the boundaries between hard news and entertainment shows.

Infotainment reporters have even suggested that celebrities need infotainment as a space for them to have public exposure and gain a higher profile for themselves. According to two infotainment reporters interviewed by *Jakarta Post* (7 August 2006), many people have benefited from infotainment. The producer of the show gains substantial profit from producing a low cost television programme with high returns from expensive commercials (*Jakarta Post,* 4 August 2010), and so do celebrities who crave popularity, including being discussed on gossip shows. It is presumably better for them to appear on infotainment for some reason or other than to have no media exposure at all for a long period. As Braudy (1986: 562) eloquently elucidates, 'fame promises acceptability, even if one commits the most heinous crime, because thereby people will finally know who you are, and you will be saved from the living death of being unknown'.

With easy accessibility and immediacy, gossip shows have become a platform in which celebrities can gain more exposure in the media, however with the inevitable consequences of damaging their star image if their portrayal derails from the public's sense of morality and religious norms. The massive proliferation of infotainment may also transform a commoner into an overnight celebrity. However, infotainment has become contested within the realm of the Indonesian television landscape since they have created a sense of ambivalence for some Muslims, including the Muslim mothers with whom I spoke.

Muslim mothers and infotainment shows

Many studies on television, particularly those using psychological or medical approaches (for example Mitu 2011; Sharif and Sargent 2006) investigate the effect of certain television content on viewers. However, other research including those with an anthropological

[14]RCTI with its *Seputar Indonesia* (About Indonesia) news programme and SCTV with its *Liputan6* (Coverage 6) news segment involve soft news or soft features which are stated in their programme content (see <http://www.rcti.tv/programs/view/19/seputar-indonesia-pagi> and <http://video.liputan6.com/>).

approach argue differently. Ruth Ayaß (2012: 2) underlines that media recipients are actively appropriating the media they are exposed to in their everyday lives in 'that media recipients are no empty vessels into which media content can simply be poured' because the audience make sense of it when they interpret what they see, hear, read and listen to. Since television has been part of the Indonesian community, especially the middle classes, for many decades, it has become what Ayaß (2012) calls 'everydayification' which connotes a media that gradually becomes part of everyday life. She elaborates that 'the longer a medium is "in use" the more it is "domesticated". Its presence is taken for granted, and it begins to become part of the everyday inventory' (Ayaß 2012: 3). This is also true with television in Indonesia. Yulianto (2008) reports that many women in Indonesia watch television as part of their daily activities and that many female university students spend from eight to ten hours daily on watching infotainment. However, my later findings suggest that women watched less television now as interesting programmes are rare. Yet for some Muslim mothers, infotainment remains on their list of programmes to watch.

The profusion of infotainment in Indonesian television channels has created uneasiness among Muslims, including my informants. Their predicament is about the nature of infotainment in its public discussion of celebrities' intimate details which are often considered embarrassing or even shameful. Some Muslims understand the religious notions that prohibit them from watching these shows. The Muslim mothers I spoke to acknowledged the derogatory nature of gossip shows, but offered several reasons to justify their viewing of the programme.

Some of my participants watched the programmes as a form of relaxation after work and claimed they were too busy to pay much attention to the gossip. As Yanti wrote, 'they (my children) said watching gossip shows is a sin, because it is *fitnah* (sedition), not necessarily true . . . oh dear . . . but I want to watch it just for fun . . . '.[15] Hesti also gave a similar reason, 'during (the glory of) Cek & Ricek I often watched it for pleasure'. My argument is that celebrity gossip serves as a platform for the audience to satisfy their interest in celebrity bodies. As Nayar (2009: 62) suggests, 'celebrity culture demands a body', in which the celebrities' faces and bodies are commodified for the audience's voyeurism. Viewers are interested in celebrities and their behaviour, which entail what they do, who they do it with and what they ought to do (Nayar 2009). Departing from the construct of voyeurism utilised in the psychiatric domain, voyeurism is considered 'normal' if it is satisfied by means of more acceptable forms such as watching reality television, films, webcams and gossip shows (Koskela 2004; Ytreberg 2002). With the advent of popular culture, voyeurism becomes a common practice through which pleasure is accomplished from accessing the private details of other people (Metzl 2004), celebrity or not. The pleasure, in fact, derives from the nature of the content watched which is typically forbidden or private (Calvert 2000; Metzl 2004). If the content of the media is not private or forbidden, then I assume, the thrill of watching will diminish somehow. As Calvert (2000) explains we now

[15]Indonesian language is used in the discussions, because it is the first language of all participants and the researcher. To protect the identity of participants I use pseudonyms for the participants and due to powerful search engines, such as Google, I left out the original Indonesian language version of their responses and use the translation of the texts in English so that it cannot be traced back to the original page on Facebook (see Markham and Buchanan 2012).

live in a society in which curiosity in the private lives of others has become a central part of everyday lives.[16] Baruh (2009) reveals that scenes which take place in private settings and contain gossip appeal to viewers the most. As mothers and working women, my participants used infotainment as an antidote to their daily stress. Although they faced the dilemma of suppressing guilt from viewing television programmes deemed contested in the realm of Islamic understanding, the daily and extensive exposure of gossip shows from dawn until dusk is too tempting to be missed. As Yulianto (2008) also mentions, Indonesian viewers have little to choose from in terms of television programmes since quality shows are few and far between. Through infotainment my participants could gain access into the private world of Indonesian celebrities, including their misconduct or illegal ventures which are not extensively covered in news programmes.

One mother said that infotainment serves as a diversion from the bustling news of national political escapades. As Yanti explains, 'there are many tabloids with similar content (as infotainment such as Cek & Ricek, Femme, etc.), sometimes I am not interested in reading magazines which are full of political news . . . so I buy gossip tabloids instead for fun'. This is similar to Yulianto's (2008) findings which reveal watching gossip shows as a form of escapism in the midst of major news of corruption with no satisfying ending such as the prosecution of the corrupt and confiscation of their assets. However, a few of my participants remain hopeful of the political climate in Indonesia as they still enthusiastically watch news on television, especially about KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) and its recent dealings with corrupt politicians and business people. Like Nia who revealed, 'it's been a long time since we watch TV at home . . . we only watch it when there are interesting programmes on, for example news on the arrest of (political) figures by KPK'. Yet, it remains unknown whether their expectations will be gratified by the yet to be prosecuted figures involved in corruption who are still hiding behind their political power.

Muslim mothers with whom I spoke acknowledged that the content of the infotainment programmes are heavily focused on gossip rather than information. They recognised the nature and format of infotainment in which unethical celebrities' conducts are displayed within the framework of legal/illegal cases and stories of love affairs. They also realised that it is easier and more cost effective for the producers and television stations to produce such programmes than other local talk shows like Kick Andy[17] which requires more production cost for research. They were despondent that infotainment shows have little creativity and are similar across the board. They were concerned the public are exposed to low quality programmes every single day and felt that viewers need to be more assertive and take charge of what they watch on television. It would not work to rely on MUI and NU to declare a fatwa on certain television programmes or KPI to change the Indonesian television landscape. So the change has to start from the family, said one mother. My participants asserted that there has been no improvement since NU and MUI declared a fatwa on infotainment in 2006 as gossip

[16]Calvert (2000) classifies the mediated voyeurism in four categories, namely video vérité voyeurism, reconstruction voyeurism, tell-all/show-all voyeurism, and sexual voyeurism. Watching gossip shows can be categorised as tell-all/show-all voyeurism.

[17]Kick Andy is a talk show broadcast by Metro TV. Its guests include individuals from well known celebrities to ordinary people.

shows continue to be of low quality. Although active viewers are deemed critical in negotiating television programmes, in my opinion they are also bound by the availability of the programmes. While viewers can choose to watch a certain show or change the channel when they do not want to see a particular image, however their choices are restricted to programmes that are available on television at any one time. As Fifi explained, 'When the content (of gossip shows) is just showing a celebrity being narcissistic about himself while his daughter is kidnapped, I quickly change the channel before I have sore eyes and have sins due to mocking him.'[18]

It is interesting to note that not all gossip on infotainment shows receive similar attention from viewers. The topic on Vicky's supposedly posh yet unintelligible speech at his engagement party to Zaskia Gotik seemed to grab the most public attention. It became viral on social media as soon as it was aired on an infotainment show. As one of my participants claims, viewers become the extension of interesting gossip on television with many of them relaying the content through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. As Hesti explained, 'If the topic is interesting we become the extension (of the information). For example Vicky and his jumbled speech, once it was aired on television, the "news" was immediately spread by its viewers through social media. And when media initiate more fascinating stories, the viewers will follow suit, of course.' While circulating celebrity gossip among friends and acquaintances seems to represent 'companionship'[19] (Yulianto 2008) for women and men during their everyday activities, it definitely supports NU and MUI's concerns about exploiting the intimate details of people's private lives, which according to the Islamic tenet are haram. Raffi Ahmad's drug scandal and arrest also increased the viewing of infotainment programmes. A number of Muslim women I spoke to said that they intentionally watched gossip shows to fill the gap in information about Raffi Ahmad, a television presenter, actor and singer, whose story was not fully disclosed in formal news programmes. As Fifi wrote, 'Honestly, although I know infotainment contains more gossip than information, sometimes I watch them because they cover stories which are not covered by ordinary news programmes. For example in the case of Raffi Ahmad, the news only dig up the topic superficially while the infotainment covers a whole lot more, so my curiosity as a viewer is satisfied.' Asih also said, 'Hmm, they are celebrities news after all . . . sometimes there are some benefits to gain (from watching them) but mostly (they) only sell popularity . . . I watch them usually to watch cases which I need to watch, like Raffi Ahmad, because it's a legal case on drug abuse.' However, topics which may impinge on religious issues seem to provoke less interest such as the case involving two actors of different religions who claimed to be married.[20] As Hesti stated, 'Regarding Asmirandah's case, most of my friends were

[18]She referred to a kidnapping case involving a step daughter of a *dangdut* singer named Nassar (YouTube 2013a). Some people believed that she was kidnapped because Nassar enjoyed showing off his wealth publicly (YouTube 2012).

[19]Yulanto (2008) finds that women and men in Jakarta and Yogyakarta use the information they obtained from infotainment to build and maintain their social network.

[20]Asmirandah, a Muslim actress, and her boyfriend Jonas Rivanno 'Vanno' Watimena, a Christian actor hit the headlines when they both claimed to have married in Depok, West Java, since it is impossible for a couple with different religions to be married in Indonesia. This is due to a regulation issued in 1974 stating that a marriage is deemed valid only if it is conducted under legal procedures of

not as excited as when Vicky's case surfaced. Maybe this is because Asmirandah's case is religious-related, so only a small group of people will discuss (this topic).' A topic on religion seems to be a sensitive issue and a discourse which most people appear to avoid, since religious plurality is the existing reality in Indonesia where Muslims are the majority and religious harmony is the aim in social relationships between friends, co-workers and relatives of various religions. Nonetheless, infotainment fuelled the story that surrounded Asmirandah and Vanno.

Within their own home, the Muslim mothers I spoke to are continuously negotiating and appropriating the media they and their children watch, read, use and listen to. While they understand and accept the religious rulings behind MUI and NU's fatwa on infotainment, they still watch the programmes, albeit for fun and stress relief. However, these same mothers would not want their children watch such shows and feel blessed that their children even warn them to stop watching the programmes. This is particularly so during the fasting month of Ramadan, considered by all Muslims as a holy month in which people seek to acquire the abundance of good deeds available to them if they follow the path of Islam. Thus, it is understandable that my participants' children eagerly caution their respective mothers to avoid gossip shows on this very meaningful month for Muslims so they can be spared from making mistakes. Contrary to Yulianto's (2008) findings, my participants' teenage children rarely watch programmes on national television stations and are more interested in watching Japanese pop culture on GINX TV, a paid television channel dedicated exclusively to video games. According to these mothers' observations, their children and other Indonesian youth prefer to watch Korean boy bands and girl groups whose fashion has become an icon of Indonesian middle class youth. The recent trend of accepting non-western media products and pop culture in Indonesian television began in the early 2000s with the broadcast of television youth dramas from Korea, Taiwan and Japan. These are popular with local viewers (Ida 2008; Shim 2006). Korean girl groups and boy bands have also gained popularity in Indonesia in the past decade and attracted many local fans (Jung 2011). Rather than watching gossip shows for pleasure or as part of voyeurism, for my participants' children infotainment is a space where their mothers are able to discuss with them about the unethical conducts of celebrities and the avoidance of non-exemplary behaviour. The articulation of propriety and transgression in the realm of infotainment reflects the idea that gossip serves as social control which cultures employ to regulate their members' behaviour (Baumeister et al. 2004). As Fifi explained, 'As a mother I feel grateful that my children are not tempted by celebrities' unrealistic lifestyle. When I have discussions with my children, I often use the improper behaviour of celebrities as examples of conducts they should not imitate, while explaining to them all the consequences (of those misconducts), so they can learn from the disgrace of these

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each belief and religion. Since NU issued a fatwa in 1989 based on the ruling stated in the Qur'an (Surat Al-Baqarah 2:221), and in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 7:3) for people of different religions to be united in marriage, it is forbidden in Indonesia for a mixed religion couple to be married (*Republika*, 1 May 2010). It was reported that Vanno converted to Islam but he then claimed that the 'news' on his conversion was false. Their marriage was later annulled because it was proven that Vanno had not converted to Islam when he married Asmirandah (YouTube 2013c). The latest 'news' suggests Asmirandah has converted to Christianity, although such news has yet to be confirmed (*Jakarta Post,* 20 December 2013).

celebrities. Conversely, if there is a well known figure who excels I will use this person as a role model so my children have the right idol.' Arguably from gossip shows, lessons and useful information can be learned as Baumeister et al. (2004: 115) state that 'gossip provides a mechanism for learning the local culture's implicit rules and regulations' and the sanctions of breaking those rules and regulations.

Conclusion

What seems to be the democratisation of media, reflected in the growing number of television stations and infotainment shows for more than a decade in Indonesia, undoubtedly causes casualties along the way. The collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime gave hope to many that television in Indonesia could change for the better. However, the public governance of media did not last long as media conglomerates returned to dominate the broadcasting domain resulting in the focus on business profit at the expense of content diversity. The effect can be seen in the duplication of media content, including broadcasting similar infotainment shows with low production costs across many television stations to capture huge numbers of viewers. It might be acceptable if the programmes do not involve gossip, but it becomes disputable when airing intimate details of celebrities' private lives is the staple of the show. Although religious groups and Muslims in general have complained and objected to the content of these programmes, their efforts have made little headway. Television stations have their own profit agenda in promoting and producing infotainment shows. It would be impossible, in my opinion, for celebrity gossip shows to change their format and content or to be removed from broadcasting, because television stations rely heavily on infotainment ratings for increasing their revenue from commercial advertisements. The polemic surrounding infotainment will always continue.

Infotainment in its existing format and content have substantial numbers of viewers in major Indonesian cities. Television stations are adamant that change is not needed, as they believe that infotainment has loyal viewers and its content does not overstep the boundary of religious rulings since it is a product of journalism with its code of ethics intact. The only change would be for families to boycott such programmes, as suggested by one of my more optimistic participants. However in Indonesia, this is not a simple move as the alternative is more of the same. When most television stations air similar infotainment shows every day for hours, the choices for other types of programmes are very limited as there are few quality television programmes. Unless most television viewers spurn infotainment shows for a sufficiently significant period for the rejection to impact on ratings and alarm the management and owners of television stations, there is unlikely to be any change.

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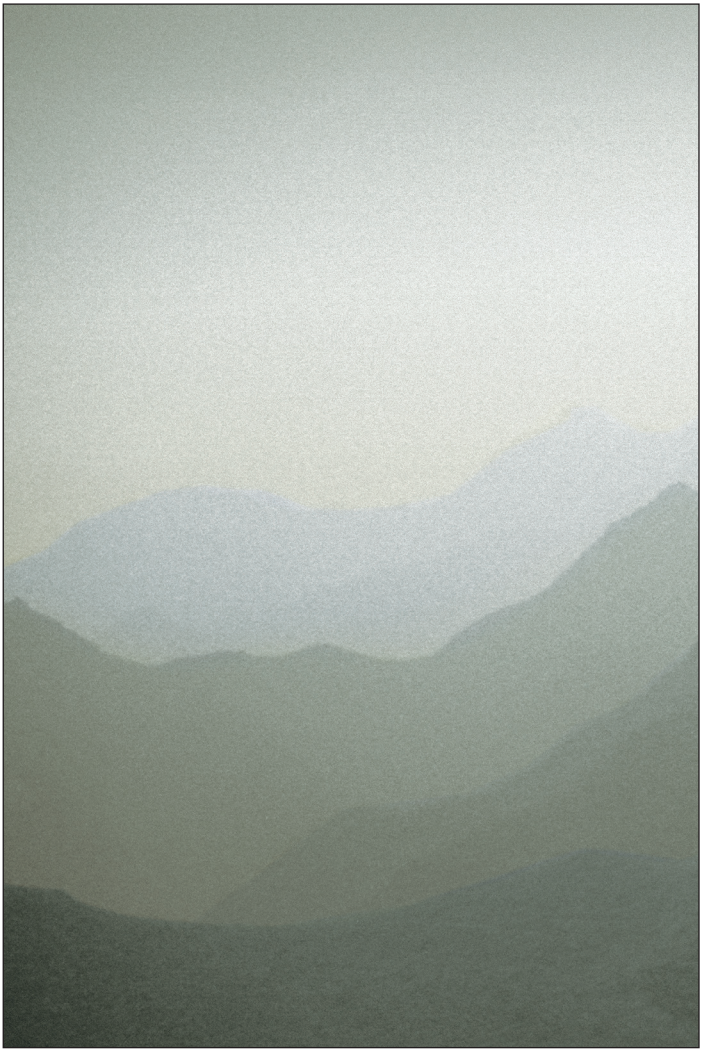

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'HOW FUNNY (THIS COUNTRY IS)': A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DEBATE THROUGH THE LENS OF AN INDONESIAN FILM

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Abstract

Islamic films gained their popularity after the collapse of Suharto's New Order in 1998. One film which took a different path in terms of its narrative and representations to most other Islamic films is *Alangkah Lucunya (Negeri Ini)*. Despite its content, loaded with social criticism, it was well received by its audience. This article seeks to analyse the moral debate on social inequality, corruption, and education represented in this Islamic film and how the film in its satirical comedic genre attempts to awaken its audience's sense of justice. As part of an 'ideoscape' the film inspires the audience to explore the issue of morality within the framework of failed State ideologies and a dream to have a better Indonesia. As a social text it reflects politics of hope within the shifting, dynamic yet resisting social spaces of the country. This article also shows fragmented consequences of Islamic understanding within the context of urbanised Jakarta and how religious rituals are somewhat detached from embodiment of religious piety as depicted in the movie. This claim may explain why in spite of being a Muslim majority country and despite apparent current resurgence of Islamism especially among the Indonesian middle classes, corruption proliferates amidst political elites and government officials.

Introduction

In the years following the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, the local film industry seemed to find a new lease on life. Diverse themes, including controversial films which depict the country's religious tensions and political turmoil, found their way into public screening in local cinemas and on television. Previous regulations and rules on filmmaking and censorship of the New Order government were questioned, contested and renegotiated under the new government. A leniency in film screening − although a strict ban is still imposed on films considered taboo in terms of their political views − offers opportunities for marginalised themes to be screened in major cinemas around Indonesia. *Alangkah Lucunya (Negeri Ini)* (*How Funny (This Country Is)*) is one of the films which would not have seen the light of day if it was made prior to 1998 due to its criticisms of the government.

The history of Indonesian cinema has come a long way, although it is minute compared to the long span of French movies since silent films were invented in the late 1800s (Abel, 2005, pp. 396-398). Hanan (2010) classifies the history of Indonesian movies since independence from Dutch colonisation in 1949 into three main periods: namely post-independence period from 1950s to mid-1960s, the Suharto New Order

regime between 1966 and 1998, and post-Suharto's resignation. Film production has gone through a strenuous journey throughout these periods in terms of the serious decline in number and creativity due to the unpromising climate of the national film industry and excessive power of the censorship board. Even now, film producers and directors are still struggling to put Indonesian movies on the map since they have to both win the heart of local movie goers and the approval of the government.

With a scheme for subsidising the national film industry put in place in 1967 and a quota of imported films introduced later in the mid-1970s, growing commercial cinema has set a new tone to the local film landscape. The emergence of a new generation of talent brought with it a myriad of film themes during the Suharto era. From a musical film *Si Doel Anak Betawi* (*Si Doel, Betawi Lad* 1973)[1] which depicts the celebrated culture of local indigenous people and children of Jakarta, directed by the legendary Syuman Djaya, to a historical film *November 1828* (1979), a portrayal of the Java war with a touch of cultural contrast of Javanese and Western values and body languages, created by the prominent director Teguh Karya (Hanan, 2010). However the local film directors' hands were tied as they were not free to creatively make motion pictures that could express the story they want to portray. As Hanan (2010) emphasises 'in New Order Indonesia no one could criticise either the state ideology, "Pancasila", or the government'. Handajani (2012) also suggests that images of poverty and social injustice would be considered disgraceful in the New Order as what was expected were images of prosperity and order, and this would give the illusion of a united and harmonious Indonesia[2]. One example is an international award recipient[3] Slamet Rahardjo's *Langitku Rumahku* (*My Sky, My Home* 1990) which although passed the censors, was withdrawn from cinemas by the leading distribution conglomerate due to its content and became a national controversy debated publicly among Indonesians. The story of a friendship between a boy from a wealthy family in Jakarta and another boy who lives in a slum strikes a chord with the audience as it raises the issue of the wide existing gap between the affluent and the underprivileged in Indonesian society (Hanan, 2010).

Within the Indonesian diverse cinema, only a small number of films portray Islamic issues as the main theme since the post-independence period. In 1951 Usmar Ismail, another leading director, in his film *Dosa Tak Berampun* (*Unforgiven Sin*[*s*]) placed Islamic ethos centre stage by framing the story on the eve of Idul Fitri, the end of the annual fasting month of Ramadan (Hanan, 2010). In the 1970s Rhoma Irama, the

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1 Si Doel is the name of the main character.

2 See Heider (1991, 1994) for a discussion on Indonesian's preoccupations with order and harmony, national unity and modernisation which can be seen in its movies. See also Sen (1994) for her argument on film produced in New Order. She points out that 'almost every film produced in New Order Indonesia – has a narrative structure that moves from order through disorder to a restoration of the order' (1994, p. 159).

3 In its website Monash University Faculty of Arts (1990) states that the film received 3 prizes at the Nantes Festival of 3 Continents in France, a UNICEF prize at the Berlin Film Festival and the Best Children's Film prize at the Melbourne International Film Festival.

icon of *dangdut*, a highly rhythmic Indonesian popular music style, starred in a handful of *dangdut* musical films crammed with Islamic dimensions (Hanan, 2010; Lockard, 1998). By portraying Muslim imagery through Arabian costumes and Islamic lyrics, his music is known as *dakwah* (Islamic sermon) music (Frederick, 1982; Weintraub, 2010). Films with Islamic themes continue to screen in major cinemas and gain a substantial number of unabashed imitations to the current Indonesia's cinematic repertoire. The popularity of films with Islamic themes gained momentum since the best-selling novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy[4] was adapted into a film. This highly successful melodramatic feature *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (*The Verses of Love* 2008), a love story between a young pious Indonesian Muslim man studying in Cairo and four young women of different ethnicities and religions set the tone and launched a new beginning for other movies with similar Islamic ethos in the post-Suharto period (Paramaditha 2010). The movie, which was directed by an aspiring filmmaker, Hanung Bramantyo, although well received seemed to invoke a protest from a religious group and stir up a heated debate among some members of the public − and his next film which was enigmatically titled '?' (2011) received a similar reception − (Making movies 2011). Pluralism, religion and tolerance in contemporary Indonesian society as film themes apparently are not easily and generally accepted by some Indonesian Muslims.

Towards the end of the New Order and the beginning of the post-Suharto *Reformasi* era was noted as the period in which there was a sharp decline in local film production. However it was also seen as a time when key figures in modern Indonesian motion pictures like Garin Nugroho and acclaimed female film makers[5], such as Mira Lesmana and Nia Dinata, made their mark on Indonesia's cinematic landscape (Hanan, 2010). Garin Nugroho, an internationally acclaimed director, through his films portrays indirectly via allegory major divisive issues in Indonesia during the Suharto period − such as his film *Surat untuk Bidadari* (*Letter for an Angel* 1993) which provides a glimpse into the life of a young boy in Sumba, a remote island in Indonesia, who is caught between tribal conflict and a State sponsored criminal group (Hanan, 2008, 2010). Subsequently he created more radical films criticising the existing callous reality of repression and political domination of the Java-centric State (Hanan, 2008) especially in marginalised regions previously barely touched by major commercial films like Aceh (*Puisi Tak Terkuburkan/Unburied Poems* 2000) and West Papua (*Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja*[6]/*Bird-Man Tale* 2003). With much controlled censorship during the New Order government I suggest that his later, openly critical movies would have ended up on the cutting room floor if they were made prior to the fall of the regime. Hanan (2010) elucidates that the *Reformasi* period created a space and opportunities for film themes that previously were considered taboo, such as homosexual relations and polygamous marriages, to be shown on major cinemas. Nia Dinatas's satirical comedy

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4 See Abdul Rani (2012) for a textual analysis of *Ayat-ayat cinta*, the novel.

5 See Hughes-Freeland (2011) on women film makers in Indonesian film industry and their creativity as directors, producers, trainers, publicists and distributors.

6 It literarily means I want to kiss you just once

Arisan! (*Gathering* 2003), the first Indonesian film which portrays gay relationships in positive light[7] (Kurnia, 2009), and award winning *Berbagi Suami*[8] (*Love for Share* 2006)[9] about a controversial theme of polygamous marriage are two examples of film features which cross the boundaries of previously long-standing constraints on media. As Hellwig (2006, p. 101) also observes, 'Indonesia entered a period of *Reformasi* (reform) which gave away to more democratic institutions and more freedom of speech for writers, filmmakers, journalists, and the public at large'. Weintraub (2008, p. 369) argues that post-Suharto Indonesia is a stage in which popular culture in Indonesia tries out or 'rehearse[s] an emergent democracy' which means testing the boundaries of the earlier stricter culture of censorship. This is not to say that every highly critical or delicate subject can be successfully transformed into a story on the silver screen. Hanung Bramantyo's features '*?*' (2011) and *Cinta Tapi Beda* (*Love but Different* 2012) were heavily criticised for their religious plurality contents. Different Muslim and ethnic groups voiced their protests due to depiction of religious conversion, religious plurality, an inter-religious marriage and to portrayal of a non-Muslim woman with Minangkabau (West Sumatra) ethnic background. It would be impossible, they claimed, for an individual from Minangkabau to believe in a religion other than Islam (Farouk, 2013). Even though the director has argued that the imagined woman is not of Minangkabau ethnicity but only happens to live in Padang (the capital city of Minangkabau) for several years, the people of Minangkabau descent still feel offended by the fact that Hanung Bramantyo is oblivious towards their cultural facets (Farouk, 2013).

One film in particular which was shown in major cinemas without any glitches is a multi-award winning film *Alangkah Lucunya* (*Negeri Ini*) (2010)[10] directed by an award winning actor-turned-director Deddy Mizwar. In spite of its explicit criticism towards the government and its debate on religious understanding, the film did not incite a public protest or cause a ban from the censorship board. I was drawn to analyse this film since, to my surprise, it has never been discussed in an academic text unlike feature films *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Berbagi Suami*. These two movies have garnered interest from academics of various disciplines including anthropology. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is considered important in leading the course of Islamic Indonesian films, whereas *Berbagi Suami*'s portrayal of polygamous marriage from the perspective of a female

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7 See Murtagh (2013) for a comprehensive discussion on how lesbian, gay and transgender subjectivities have been portrayed in Indonesian films.

8 It literary means husband sharing.

9 See Chin (2012), Imanjaya (2009) and Kurnia (2009) for detailed discussions on Love for Share (2006) and its representations of Indonesia's polygamous life.

10 The film won several awards in a number of film festivals, such as Indonesian Film Awards 2011 for Best Supporting Actor, Best Child Actor and nominated at the same festival for Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, Best Newcomer, and Best Child Actor. Other awards received including for Best Editor from Festival Film Bandung 2011 and nominations for Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Film from the same festival (Kineforum, n.d.). The film was selected as the Indonesian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rdAcademy Award 2010. Even though it passed through the preliminary phase it was not selected into the final shortlist (Sofyan,2010).

director incites academic discourses on the practice of such marriage in the context of Indonesian Muslims. *How Funny (This Country Is)* on the other hand takes a different narrative path to most Islamic films produced in Indonesia since *Ayat-ayat Cinta* due to its social criticism content which focuses on poverty and social injustice with a touch of corruption and education issues.

In this article I seek to examine how *How Funny (This Country Is)* ideologically and imaginatively situates its narrative within the scope of religious understanding, moral debate and democracy in the national space. Gray (2010, p. 104) points out that from anthropological perspectives cinema can be read 'in terms of the influence that society or cultural contexts have on cinematic output' because anthropology 'takes seriously the local constructions of meaning, power, and politics (context) *as well as* the actual content of the films being studied, for their analytical value (cultural embeddedness) and for their dialogue with the audience' (2010, p. 106). Hence I argue that *How Funny (This Country Is)* can be seen as a representation of the pervasive anxiety, fear and hope felt by Indonesian citizens within the current situation of post-Suharto Indonesia as the film directly taps into the inequities and lack of religious understanding that highlight myriads of social and political problems in the nation sphere. The film serves as a mirror of the current Indonesia within the niche of urbanised lower middle class and the underprivileged struggling to survive the hardship of living in a *kampung* in the hub of the metropolitan where financial capital means power and good education does not necessarily guarantee improve social economy. This article also tries to interpret the film's narrative, particularly in terms of its portrayal of politics of piety and its interpretations of religious embodiment among the marginalised citizens and corruptors. It proposes that religious rituals are not a mere reflection of embodiment of piety since religiosity is a multidimensional rather than a uni-dimensional phenomenon (Stark & Glock, 1968 cited in Hassan, 2007). In this text I explore how (lack of) religious piety could explain the reason behind the existing corruption and social injustice in Indonesia which is eloquently portrayed by the film.

How Funny (This Country Is): The Story

The film revolves around Muluk, a young man in his mid-twenties determined to find work after he graduated from a university with a Bachelor's degree in management. He has been looking for a job for two years but to no avail. Set in Jakarta's *kampung* neighbourhood and the not-so-pretty face of the capital, the story starts with Muluk's struggle to find a job and to deal with the pressure from Haji Sarbini, his father-in-law-to-be, as Muluk wants to have his blessings to marry his daughter. Reluctantly Muluk is compared by Haji Sarbini to another suitor, a dim-witted candidate for a local house of parliament who always takes a laptop with him just to show off to Haji Sarbini and his daughter the laptop's fish tank screensaver and packman game − because this is what he mostly uses it for. Muluk is not alone in his predicament of seeking employment. His friends and neighbours, Samsul and Pipit, who both have university degrees, are also without jobs. Muluk always finds Samsul playing cards with his friends, day in day out. While Pipit is never far from the television set at home as she tries to answer and win live quiz shows by calling the TV stations or sending the answer in by mail without much success.

In one of his job-seeking excursions Muluk meets with Komet, a boy who has just run away with a purse stolen from a woman at a flea-market. When Muluk confronts him, saying that he should ask people nicely if he wants some money, Muluk is left speechless as Komet replies that he is a pickpocket and not a beggar. Being precariously poor leaves him with next to no choice but to earn a living as a pickpocket. Next, Muluk finds himself trying to manage money earned by Komet and his pickpocket group who operate under the guidance and protection of their big boss Jarot. The aim is for Muluk to obtain his ten per cent fee while he endeavours to make these boys' lives better by providing them with basic education − reading, writing, mathematics, religion (Islam) and State ideology with the help of Samsul and Pipit − since these children have no schooling and are destitute. The children live in a rundown factory with a cracked roof above their heads and a dirt floor under their feet. Muluk also promises these children that he will invest their money to set up a new 'business' that is not as risky as being a pickpocket who is often chased around and detained by local authorities.

What seems to be a perfect happy ending to the story has a twist up its sleeve. Brought up by a deeply religious father and surrounded by religious voices and milieu, Muluk begins to question the morality behind his everyday dealings with the pickpocket group. He feels uneasy about earning money from the boys whose vocation is considered *ḥarām*[11] (prohibited or forbidden) in Islamic understandings. However at the same time he and his friends perform good deeds by teaching and assisting these children who are less fortunate than they are in the absence of education opportunities that the State promises in its ideology to provide for every child in the country.

From the first scene to the last, the movie takes the audience on a polarised moral excursion between good deeds and misdemeanours according to Islam, between the softer treatment of corruptors and the harsher treatment of pickpockets, and between the highly educated but without income and those with basic education but wealthy enough to spend money for *ḥajj*. Whilst an anchor woman on television broadcasts that illegal logging offenders successfully escape overseas due to corruption in the justice system, Komet tells Muluk that he has been detained four times by the local authorities for his misconducts. Viewers are also subjected to layers of different exposures of the existing injustice in Indonesia and the contrast between the State ideology and the realities faced by the Indonesian society. The film even portrays a poignant scene − in which Muluk, Samsul and Pipit show the boys the impressive parliament building in the capital − which tacitly suggests that corruptors may have a safe haven in this place where people's representatives supposedly fight for their welfare[12].

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11 Stealing in any forms is considered *ḥarām* which is stated in surah (chapter) Al Baqarah ayah (verse) 188 of the Qur'ān: 'and do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that[they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful]'.Also in sūrah Yusuf ayah 77: 'they said, "If he steals - a brother of his has stolen before". But Joseph kept it within himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are worse in position, and Allah is most knowing of what you describe"'.

12 See Firdaus (2013) for news on Indonesian members of parliament's high salaries and their involvement in corruption.

Moral Debate within a Nation Space

Half way through the film the audience finds Muluk, his friends and the boys singing the national anthem while raising the flag in the middle of a neglected field behind Jakarta skyscrapers. The song which was chosen as the national anthem for Indonesian Independence Day in 1945 supports the idea of a united Indonesia. It was composed by Wage Rudolf Supratman and is played regularly, usually on Mondays, at every flag-raising ceremony at schools throughout Indonesia and on every Independence Day commemoration. In this particular scene the characters end the song by saying '*ameen*' which profoundly alters the meaning behind the song. What is simply supposed to be a mundane exercise of a flag-raising ceremony becomes a prayer and a dream to have a country that they can be proud of – just like it is described in the lyrics.

In his interview with SCTV Liputan 6[13] (2010), when asked why the title of his film is *How Funny* (*This Country Is*) Deddy Mizwar replied with a chuckle that he would not name the film *How Scary* (*This Country Is*), even though that is the reality that Indonesians face in their everyday lives, because it would be too pessimistic. It is daunting, he continued, to be at the receiving end to witness through the media on a daily basis the conflicts between different groups and people, and the news stories on countless corruptors. Through the film − which is filled with social criticisms − he did not intend to discredit anyone. Instead he invites the audience to laugh at themselves because what they see is part of their lives. He also emphasises the importance of maintaining positive attitudes based on their love for the country. Musfar Yasin, the scriptwriter who also collaborated with Deddy Mizwar on the film *Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (*Doomsday Is Near* 2003),[14] said that the idea for the story came after the financial crisis in 1998 when many people became poorer due to unemployment and layoffs, and children turned to the streets for their source of livelihood (Salamah, 2011).[15] Musfar Yasin (Salamah, 2011) elucidates that the basic premise of the script is education with corruption and injustice as supplementary themes. He explains that being educated means that people could either use their knowledge to solve problems or harm other people such as the smart persons who misuse their power to corrupt (Salamah, 2011).

Central to my analysis in this article is Benedict Anderson's seminal work on his proposed definition of the nation as 'an imagined political community' with limited, finite and sovereign community (1991, p. 6). Anderson (1991, p. 6) claims that the nation is 'imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their

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13 Liputan 6 is a current affair programme produced by SCTV, one of the public TV stations in Indonesia.

14 Unlike *How Funny (This Country Is)*, this film revolves around a young man who falls in love with a pious young woman and strives to do Islamic rituals and adhere to the Islamic belief. *Nagabonar Jadi 2* (*Nagabonar Becomes 2* 2007) also scripted by Musfar Yasin and directed by Deddy Mizwar narrates similar story to *How Funny* in terms of its portrayal of nationalism and the feeling of restlessness towards the country's current condition yet it only lightly and implicitly touches the issue of corruption. Unfortunately, there are not many Indonesian films which convey such issues.

15 Salamah (2011) interviewed Musfar Yasin as part of her thesis about the film.

fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. He further elucidates that the development of mass communication by means of print technology laid the foundations for national consciousness (1991, p. 44). With the emergence of more communication tools this concept can be extended to other forms of media such as film, television and the Internet. As Appadurai (1990) suggests, with the rise of mediascapes, the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, provides a huge, complicated and interconnected repertoire of images and narratives to viewers around the world which undeniably affects their public and private lives. Like print technology, cinema through its discursive system of signs and representations also creates and shapes ideas. By means of its narratives and images, film assigns meanings and symbols which the audiences interpret (Chin, 2012) and is a popularly selected space in which national imaginary is articulated, sustained and reinforced. In his account of national cinemas, Higson (1995, 2000) draws his argument in the same vein as Anderson's concept of the nation. He argues that Anderson's theory provides an appropriate framework to discuss and conceptualise national cinema because 'films will construct imaginary bonds which work to hold the peoples of a nation together as a community by dramatizing their current fears, anxieties, pleasures and aspirations' (1995, p. 7). Gemünden (2004, p. 182) also asserts that cinema becomes the vital mass medium in the twentieth century for it 'participates – in both enabling and critical modes – in representations and discourses of community building'.

How Funny (*This Country Is*), as a creative product which explores 'reality' and imaginative interpretations of particular viewpoints and meanings, provides viewers with moral debates and interrelated meanings on certain religious understandings, social injustice and nation in its representations of poverty and State ideology. As Appadurai (1990, p. 9) states, mediascapes 'tend to be image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives'. I argue that the film's use of plot, characters, textual forms and music articulate and question the State ideology as merely empty promises with no action to solve the harsh reality of poverty. It provokes a sense of justice in its audience when they learn through its narrative that the boys who then change their occupation and become street vendors are still chased on the street by local authorities for disturbing the already chaotic metropolitan traffic. Meanwhile across the city, corruptors have the means to escape prosecution. Where is the justice when being a pickpocket incites problems from local authorities, while being a corruptor who unquestionably steals the public's money and makes a lot of people suffer can walk freely? Where is the justice when the boys strive to leave their prohibited profession of being pickpockets and acquire a new way of earning money that is acceptable in the eyes of God and with consequently a lot less income, while the corruptors parade on television like celebrities without any guilt? These moral questions presumably are intended by the filmmaker to awaken the ideas of welfare rights and democracy. Indeed the film creates a collage of morality, religious understanding and state ideologies that critically question the reality of inequality and injustice faced by the underprivileged. Hence I would also suggest that *How Funny* (*This Country Is*) is also in a sense part of an 'ideoscape' (Appadurai, 1990) in which the ideas of Western democracy, justice and

welfare rights are embedded and carried over in a local film. As Appadurai (1990, p. 9) states ideoscapes are 'concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it'. I also argue, reiterating Higson (2000), that *How Funny* (*This Country Is*) as a national film articulates people's anxieties and fears of the situation of the current Indonesia and carries their aspirations as citizens to have a more just society. As suggested by Appadurai (2007, p. 31), equality is the core value of democracy in which 'fundamental human sameness', 'the idea that all humans had a right to rule' and 'the elimination of poverty', are embedded in its meaning. It is true that by interpreting the hegemonic images of this film it may not provide a solution to the problem of poverty, corruption and injustice, but it may move Indonesia one step in that direction.

It is noteworthy to point out that every Indonesian citizen is familiar with the content of the State ideologies of Pancasila[16] and UUD'45 (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945)[17] because these ideologies are taught at every school in the country from as early as primary school. In essence the 'national' symbol of Indonesia as a state is a homogenous concept of 'a truly inclusive nation' which is depicted in its slogan 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' or 'Unity in Diversity' (Lloyd & Smith, 2001, p. 3).[18] Unfortunately Indonesia has been struggling since its conception to materialise its dream to unite in harmony the vast diversity of ethnic groups, religions, political views and other pluralities. As Lloyd and Smith (2001, p. 3) suggest, women, minority ethnic groups and the economically disadvantaged in Indonesia all experience inequality. The nation is also very sensitive to the idea of plurality in its myriad forms and sizes and apparently has paradoxical acceptance and rejection towards change (Lloyd & Smith 2001, p. 3). It is in this historical, political and social climate that *How Funny* (*This Country Is*) serves its purpose as an ideoscape. The film is peppered with scenes that remind viewers of the unfulfilled promises declared in the State ideology and constitution. For example, the audience is exposed to a scene in which a pickpocket boy recites a principle taken from Pancasila that declares social justice for all citizens of Indonesia. Also, at the very end of the film a particular statement is shown which is taken from UUD'45 which states that impoverished persons and abandoned children are to be taken care of by the State.

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16 Pancasila was established by President Sukarno in June 1945 and was based on five principles, namely (in its current order) 1) belief in the one and only God, 2) just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) representative government or consent, 5) social justice for all Indonesian citizen. See Bertrand (2004) for details on Pancasila and how it has changed its order with belief in God having placed in the fifth place and moved to the first order due to protest from Muslim leaders at the time.

17 UUD'45(Indonesian Constitution 1945) was written between June and August 1945 and has gone through a few amendments since the fall of Suharto in 1998 especially in the sections dealing with government branches and with the addition of sections on human rights (Asian Human Rights Commission n.d.).

18 See Roberts (2000) and Paramaditha (2011) for discussions on particular films, which ideally portray the unity of Indonesia, shown in Imax Theatre in Taman Mini Indonesian Indah (Beautiful Indonesia Mini Park), a theme park located on the outskirts of Jakarta.

Since the end of World War II the idea of democracy has been embodied with notions of participation, empowerment, and capacity-building in which reduction of poverty is the aim (Appadurai, 2007). Appadurai (2007, pp. 31-32) also emphasises that each of these concepts 'implies a general politics of hope, built on the premise that human suffering and misery require primary ethical and practical attention'. The underprivileged, who were previously thought of as docile victims of poverty, had virtually no other means to alter their fate except to pray and dream. However by means of the cultural flows that unlock human imagination, they open the doors of opportunities for '*rakyat*' (common people) to visualise a different life for themselves (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 3-7). Thus the ideoscapes of rights and democracy become sources of inspiration. What seems to be impossible becomes hope that they can turn their dreams into reality (Appadurai, 2007). Unfortunately, in spite of the hope that is placed on education as an instrument for empowering the common people to move upwards on the social ladder, it does not necessarily offer a full proof guarantee. The film in its satirical comedic genre reflects the flaws of education and political systems in Indonesia to provide promised employment for educated people. There is no assurance for university graduates of obtaining a good job (or any job for that matter), but as long as people have the right connections and financial back-up, even with minimal schooling, political power is in their reach (see also Handajani, 2012; Witoelar, 2002). The reading of the film as a social text therefore can be seen as interpreting the film's imagining of nation and democracy with its politics of hope within the shifting, dynamic yet resisting social spaces of the country. However the moral/political debate does not end here. Religious tenets are also placed on centre stage.

Religious Representations and Moral Ambivalence

Similar to Deddy Mizwar's other film *Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (*Doomsday Is Near* 2003), *How Funny* (*This Country Is*) is filled with Islamic nuances which makes it reasonable to categorise it in the so called *film Islami* (Islamic films). Hoesterey and Clark (2012, p. 208) explain that what constitutes as an Islamic film is when it 'breathe[s] Islam' (*bernafaskan Islam*). They elucidate by saying that 'the *film Islami* genre is especially remarkable in its capacity to articulate forms of aspirational piety that resonate with the anxieties, desire and frustrations of middle-class Muslims in Indonesia' (2012, p. 208) due to previously long suppressed social forces including overly controlled Islamic representations amidst the Suharto regime (Paramaditha, 2010). Islamic films become a public domain in which normative piety and Muslim modernity are expressed, constituted and contested (Hoesterey & Clark, 2012). The ever increasing popularity of products which 'breathe Islam' in post-Suharto Indonesia is owed to the eagerness of Muslim middle classes to adopt 'new forms of religiosity through consumption and public piety' (Hoesterey & Clark 2012, p. 209, see also Hasan, 2009). After the collapse of the New Order, media liberalisation quickly prompted unexpected mushrooming of sensational and sensual tabloids which consequently generated a moral panic among certain Muslim groups who considered these phenomena threatening to Islamic values (Widodo, 2008; Paramaditha, 2010). Widodo (2008) suggests that the context of global Islamic revivalism and a growing local Muslim middle class have created a conducive

environment for concerned Muslims to strike back by taking control of the production and consumption of media and popular cultural products. It was at this time that Islamic pop culture gained its prominence with *The Verses of Love* (2008) as the benchmark. Eric Sasono (2010) observes that Islamic-themed films in the post-Suharto era mostly articulate Muslims in their everyday life in which piety is the core, such as in finding a life partner, self-identification in which Muslim identity is part of symbolic marketing strategies, and personal achievement which is considered as manifestation of piety.

However I would like to point out that there is another take on Islamic film, unlike the narrative mostly used by *film Islami*. Instead of showing the model image of piety of Muslim middle class, *How Funny (This Country Is)* represents a different side of Muslim consciousness and subjectivities. Take for example a scene in which Samsul enthusiastically gives a compliment to one of the boys who comes back from praying at a nearby mosque and wears a nice pair of sandals. The boy gladly accepts the praise for his own initiative to diligently perform his prayer while at the same time explains that he nicked the sandals from the mosque. Shocked by the candid truth Samsul whispers to Pipit that no wonder people who pray and know Pancasila by heart are still corrupt. A polarising opposite continuum of good behaviour versus misconduct seems to be a method that Deddy Mizwar uses in the film to incite a sense of right and wrong in the audience. Yet there are certain circumstances which are not as 'black and white' as the example above. What about the pursuit of Muluk and his friends to empower the boys with education but at the same time earning their own 'salary' from a prohibited profession according to religious tenet? While it is religiously acceptable (and even encouraged) for them to leave the boys and no longer have any part in managing the boys' earnings, is it morally tolerable to stay aside and watch the boys struggle to deal with poverty and its consequences themselves? The film offers no solution to these dilemmas. Also, there is no happy ending to the story. If the audience was looking for an Islamic film with a standard formula as mentioned by Sasono (2010) they would be disappointed. There is no romanticism in the story of Muluk and his will-be-wife. The main cast are even portrayed as failures and far from reaching their personal goals. Indeed the Muslim identities represented in the narrative seem to be frustrated, anxious and hopeless − far from the ideal image of Muslim middle class depicted by many other *film Islami*.

This moral ambivalence is clearly shown throughout the narrative. It is true that Muluk and his friends end up deciding to oblige with the religious code by leaving the boys to their own devices. However this is by no means easy and without moral struggle. In his distress Samsul tries to bargain with Muluk that helping the boys is not as bad as the corruptors who rob *rakyat* of their rights to escape from poverty. However Muluk is adamant that they cannot earn money from the boys because everything they buy with the money will become *ḥarām* according to religious rulings. Samsul's outburst and nagging are not merely a spectacle, rather a reflection of anxieties and frustrations felt by the underprivileged. In desperation Pipit wishes that she is able to help the boys without having to earn her salary from them. A perfect solution is far from the realities of everyday life in a *kampung* in the hub of metropolis Jakarta in which the lower middle classes are also having trouble in untangling themselves from their

own predicaments. Nevertheless the film shows the intricate layers and fragmented consequences of Islamic understanding within the context of urban daily life.

Moreover, I want to explore another facet that is brought to the screen by Deddy Mizwar which I suggest reflects the depth of religious understandings and piety among Indonesian Muslims. The statement Samsul made in response to the boy who steals a pair of sandals, albeit subtly delivered, strikes a chord and questions the juxtaposition of religious understandings and religious practices of the corruptors especially and Muslim middle classes in general. It is true that there is a resurgence of Islamism in Indonesia particularly due to many Muslims' enthusiasm to express their Muslim identities by holding their faith amidst the secularising societies which is clearly indicated by the rising popularity of Islamic preaching (*pengajian*) and popular Islamic culture (Sakai & Fauzia, 2013). Soares and Osella (2009, p. 11) use the term *Islam mondain* to describe 'ways of being Muslim in secularizing societies and spheres'. As Paramaditha (2010) suggests, unlike Malaysia which puts pressures on its Muslim citizens by means of Islamic laws, social institutions and peer compliance to publicly reveal their Muslimness (Khoo 2009, pp. 115-116), in Indonesia such performativity is instead due to the desire to gain social acceptance and draw sympathy from the Muslim majority as in the case of public figures. Yet the increase of public Muslim persona does not necessarily mean embracing a deeper understanding of Islamic faith, I argue. Paramaditha (2010) points out that many non-practising Muslims admit to fasting (or pretending to do so) during the fasting month of Ramadan simply because they want to comply with their parents' wishes or to provide a good example for their children. It is common knowledge that Indonesian Muslim female celebrities parading in their *ḥijāb* (head covering) in Ramadan quickly remove their Muslim clothing and return to their secular attire once the fasting month is over (Paramaditha, 2010). Paramaditha (2010) considers this practice as a form of passing which Caughie (1999, p. 20) defines as 'the practice of assuming the identity of another type or class of persons in order to pass oneself off as a member of that group, for social, economic, or political reasons'. This is also evident in contemporary Indonesian societies in general and is accepted as 'normal behaviour' (Paramaditha 2010, p. 75). However it would certainly be incorrect to assume that public display of Muslimness is a sign of inner piety, in my view. In agreement with Paramaditha (2010) I would like to move a step further and extend this notion to include other religious practices such as prayer (*ṣalāt*), and move beyond passing. As Samsul wonders how conducting prayers and having knowledge of Pancasila do not deter corruptors to misbehave without any remorse whatsoever, I seek to explain this phenomenon in terms of the embodiment of religious piety. Performing prayers and fasting in this case seems to be in isolation of their understanding of right and wrong according to Islamic tenet. Religious practices and rituals of prayer and fasting are somewhat detached from other Islamic teachings of virtue, good deeds and immoralities. It may or may not be a form of passing but normative moralities within the context of religious piety seem to be fragmented and fluid. To put it in another way, Muslims who are pious would consequently and consciously perform the religious practices and rituals without hesitation, but not vice versa. People who conduct religious rituals, such as praying, fasting, attending *pengajian* or even going for *ḥajj*, do not necessarily embody true religious piety.

Building from earlier works of von Hugel, Stark and Glock (1968) identified five core dimensions which claim to signify religious piety and are shared by the world's religions including Islam (Hassan, 2007). These dimensions of religiosity are the ideological, the ritualistic, the intellectual, the experiential and the consequential. The ideological dimension consists of the fundamental belief in one's religion as expected and required by the religion. The ritualistic dimension consists of the specific acts of worship and devotion which can be private and public, such as personal and communal prayer, fasting and performing *ḥajj*. Meanwhile the experiential dimension involves feelings, perceptions and sensations experienced by an individual or a religious group in relation to God. Religious persons are considered to possess the intellectual dimension if they have some knowledge of the basic tenets of their faith and its sacred scripture. Although the intellectual dimension is related to the ideological dimension, they do not necessarily co-exist. 'Belief need not follow knowledge, nor does all religious knowledge bear on belief' (Hassan, 2007, pp. 439-440). The consequential dimension comprises of the effect of religious belief, practice, experience and knowledge on the believers in their everyday lives which include what they need to do and how they need to behave as a consequence of their religion. Along this line I suggest that embodiment of religious piety would have to include these five core dimensions as a full package. Lacking in one or two dimensions would mean lacking in religious commitment. So by performing communal prayer, fasting or *ḥajj* without having the knowledge of the basic tenets of honesty or caring for the poor as prescribed by the Qur'an could mean that Muslim corruptors or government officials have no understanding that their misconducts deviate from their religious teachings. In this case they possess the ritual dimension but they lack the intellectual dimension. Otherwise their public Muslimness can be a form of passing because they want to be accepted by the Muslim majority.

Furthermore, Hassan (2007, p. 442) elucidates that 'participation in religious rituals may, or may not, indicate religious commitment or piety' because piety depends on the devotionalism instead of the ritual dimension. He describes devotional dimension as akin to ritual dimension but private in its expression. Due to the pervasiveness of daily religious rituals in Islam a person can join a daily communal prayer without having achieved the devotional dimension which is private and often spontaneous.[19] Hassan (2005: 442) suggests that the devotional dimension is 'a good and meaningful indicator of religious commitment'. This would also explain why people who perform religious rituals or even belong to a supposedly 'Islamic' political party[20] have no

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19 Hassan (2007) used two measures of devotionalism in his study, namely consulting the Qur'an to make daily decisions and private prayers. In his article Hassan (2007) replaces the intellectual dimension from Stark and Glock (1968) with devotional dimension. However, I prefer to separate these two dimensions as Hassan (2007) and Stark and Glock (1968) assign different meaning into these two dimensions.

20 Former head of Islamic political party PKS (Partai Kesejahteraan Sosial/Prosperous Justice Party) Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq was summoned for a beef-import corruption case which centred on the Ministry of Agriculture and importer Indoguna (Setuningsih, 2013). This is only one of the many cases of corruption involving political elites and government officials, most of them Muslims, in the current Indonesia.

insight and regret when they misuse and corrupt public money because of their lack of devotionalism. Hence, the ironic portrayal of corruptors in the film as people with power who could overturn a legal verdict and as individuals shamelessly parading on public television is merely a reflection of the reality of the lack of religious piety among some Muslims in Indonesia.

Conclusion

How Funny (This Country Is) is uniquely situated among the majority of Islamic films in post-Suharto Indonesia. It deviates from the popular path of imagining the ideal piety of Muslim middle classes. Yet with its explicit social criticisms towards the State ideology and the nation as a whole, this feature film survives its nationwide screenings and even garners public appreciation.[21] Unlike other films which reflect pluralities, especially religious pluralities, its portrayal of polarised moral excursion does not incite protest from religious groups or invoke debate among the public.

Through the film's narrative and reception it can be said that the social criticism theme as a response to the reality of poverty and injustice may in fact emotionally move the audience, but whether or not it can empower them to take action remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the film has become a space in which the voice of the less visible acts of resistance by the underprivileged is heard as it challenges the failed state's promises of democracy and welfare rights.

The increase in Islamic popular culture certainly echoes the resurgence of Islamism in Indonesia particularly among the middle classes. However it is not necessarily embedded with a deeper understanding of Islamic tenets and profound piety. As this film shows, the fragmented and fluid nature of religious embodiment amidst secularising society is contested. It seems that another take on Islamic film to the common narrative has opened up a new perspective on the link between religious practices and piety. If piety is embedded within religious rituals and public persona of Muslimness is not merely a display or a form of passing then I conclude that the appropriate portrayal of pluralities, religious or otherwise, in (Islamic) films may well be welcomed.

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21 Deddy Mizwar was invited to speak about this film at different seminars which attracted many participants (MGMP Bahasa Indonesia SMP 2010).

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The Pretty Imperative:
Handcuffing Policewomen in Indonesia

Sharyn Graham Davies and Hanny Savitri Hartono

The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance.

Naomi Wolf[1]

Introduction

1. In the first week of September, 2013, the popular Indonesian news magazine *Tempo* ran an article entitled 'Pretty Policewomen engage Social Media.'[2] The report went on to state that 'pretty policewoman Eka Frestya' had 18,000 Twitter followers and almost as many Likes on Facebook. In contrast, 'pretty policewoman Bara Intan' had 3561 Twitter followers and 2985 Likes on Facebook. Yet by far the most popular was 'pretty policewoman Avvy Olivia,' with 7212 Twitter followers and 10,548 Likes on Facebook. Such was the fame of Avvy Olivia that her fans set up a Facebook account called 'Brigadir Avvy Olivia Fans.' Not to be outdone, though, the article noted that 'pretty policewoman Annisa Prima Silsilia' had 35,447 Friend Requests on Facebook. The *Tempo* article then provided photos of the pretty policewomen alongside Twitter handles and Facebook links so people could directly contact them.[3]

2. But before the general consuming public assumed that being a policewoman was a shortcut to celebrity status, *Tempo* interviewed the head of the policewomen's academy, Commissioner Sri Handayani, who revealed that it is actually quite difficult to become a policewoman. Handayani noted that only never-married virgins (hymen checks may be conducted) between the ages of 17.5 and 22 years could apply.[4] Moreover, officers must remain unmarried for at least two years. Prospective candidates also needed to pass a number of psychological tests, have strong religious beliefs, have graduated high school, cannot wear glasses, and be prepared for transfer to any region across Indonesia. Of upmost importance, though, was that candidates be over 165cm tall, have a body that is in proportion (*berat badan proposional*), and they must be pleasing to the eye (*pasti enak dilihat*). Handayani continued by reinforcing that being pretty was one of the most important requirements for becoming a policewoman (*kecantikan adalah salah satu prasyarat utama menjadi polwan*).[5] In a further article, Brigadier General Basaria Panjaitan, the current highest-ranked policewoman, also confirmed that being pretty (*tampang*) and having a good body (*fisik*) were key recruitment attributes for policewomen (*ada persyaratan-persyaratan yang memang harus dipenuhi*).[6] If a candidate fulfilled all of the above requirements, she would then become a fully fledge policewoman, with her own chance of becoming a celebrity.[7]

3. There is barely mention of policewomen in the Indonesian media without application of the prefix pretty (*cantik*). This symbiotic link between appearance and policewomen is revealed by typing 'Indonesian policewoman' into any search engine. Just one example of a search result is the site 'Do you want to know who are the 6 prettiest [*cantik*] and most popular policewomen in Indonesia?'[8] The clip shows photos of the pretty policewomen and asks 'Who wants to be arrested [*ditangkap*] by these pretty policewomen?' Other comments on social media sites such as Twitter reveal tweets stating 'Handcuffs miss, handcuff me (*Borgol mbak, borgol aku*) and 'Arrest me miss! Arrest me' (*Tangkap aku mbak! Tangkap aku*).[9] Such is the

popularity of policewomen that an Indonesian soap opera has been developed entitled *Polisis Cantik Pengojek Cinta* (A Pretty Policewoman Looks for Love). This soap opera, screened on SCTV, tells the story of a 'pretty young policewoman' who works undercover as a driver of a motorcycle taxi to bring down an illegal business; she ends up falling in love with the son of the business owner (See Figures 1–4).[10]

Figures 1–4. Images of pretty policewomen appearing on the site, 'Do you want to know who are the 6 most beautiful and popular policewomen in Indonesia?'
Source. *YouTube*, online: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnGfP0hLb_Y (accessed 1 February 2014)

4. In order to analyse in more depth the framing of policewomen around notions of beauty, we embarked on a content analysis of all articles published by *Tempo* magazine during the months of September and October 2013. We found ninety-three articles that focused specifically on policewomen. The selection of these months was made to include 1 September, as this is the anniversary of the acceptance of the first policewomen cadets in 1948. Our identification of articles thus reflects a higher rate of coverage over the first few days of September, with seventeen articles focusing on policewomen being published on 1 September. We found that the number of articles appearing over the remaining two months averaged one per day. We selected *Tempo* magazine because it is one of the most critical and widely read news magazines in Indonesia, with a weekly hardcopy circulation in 2010 of 300,000.[11] While the first edition of *Tempo* was published in 1971, it was banned during Suharto's New Order (1965–1998) on the grounds that it was a threat to national security; *Tempo* was resurrected in the Post-Suharto era. While both Indonesian and English versions are published in print and online we limited our analysis to articles in the Bahasa Indonesia online format. After we had identified all articles focusing on policewomen, and had translated and entered the articles into a database, we searched for key themes. We found eleven key themes including inter alia career opportunities, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and veiling. The theme we focus on in this article is appearance, with thirty-eight articles (or 41 percent of the total), specifically discussing the appearance of policewomen. We also draw on a few articles published in November and December 2014 to further illustrate a number of points we make in the article.

5. This article is divided into five substantive sections. First, we provide an overview of policewomen in Indonesia. Second, we present literature on notions of beauty. Third, we show how policewomen are framed

in *Tempo* magazine. Fourth, we analyse thirty-eight articles published in *Tempo* during our collection phase that focus on the appearance of policewomen. In the fifth section we conclude the article by arguing that the pretty imperative framing policewomen undermines women's contribution to Indonesia and reinforces the harmful stereotype that women are passive objects of beauty unable to contribute meaningfully to society.

Policewomen in Indonesia: An overview

6. Indonesia's police force was formally inaugurated in 1946 and units were quickly deployed to fight in the Indonesian National Revolution against the Dutch. In 1966, the police formally became part of the military and did not gain their independence until the final years of the twentieth century. At its inception, the police force was an entirely male domain, but within a few years the need for a cohort of women to handle cases involving women and children became apparent. In her coverage of the history of policewomen for *Tempo*, Hadriani notes that the case precipitating the inclusion of women occurred in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, during conflict between Indonesian nationalists and Dutch military.[12] Specifically, it was large groups of refugees leaving West Sumatra, who were then searched by Indonesian police with the ostensible aim of uncovering criminals or people illegally in Indonesia, that provoked a group of women to demand searches be conducted by women.[13] The Indonesian government thus saw the need for policewomen and subsequently asked the Police Academy (Sekolah Polisi Negara) in Bukittinggi to open a woman's training centre. On 1 September 1948, after a tight selection process, six young women were accepted to be trained as police officers. Each year this date is celebrated as the anniversary of the inauguration of the policewomen's corp. A decade after the establishment of the corp, an independent school of policewomen, Sekolah Polisi Wanita, was opened in Jakarta in February 1958. After completing a one year course, current graduating trainees become policewomen with the rank of Second Brigadier (Brigadir Polisi Dua). In order to become an officer, selected candidates then enrol at the Police Academy (Perguruan Tinggi Ilmi Kepolisian).

7. During Suharto's New Order period (1965–1998) there was limited media coverage of the role of policewomen. One article to report on the achievement of policewomen occurred in 1985 when policewomen in Pati, Central Java, prevented illegal logging by engaging directly with the illegal loggers and requesting them to stop their activities.[14] In the following year, another article appeared in the press noting that a delegation of policewomen from across Southeast Asia visited Indonesia to network with Indonesian policewomen.[15] In 1987, a newspaper article detailed the appointment of Dwi Gusyanti as the first woman police station chief (Kapolsek).[16] In 1990, the inclusion of four women in Gegana, an elite police Special Forces group, made the news.[17] While there are undoubtedly many more stories in the Indonesian media about policewomen during the New Order period, all indications are that there was limited reporting on their achievements.

8. In the post-Suharto era there is still limited reporting on achievements made by policewomen. Moreover, the few media stories that mention policewomen undertaking actual police work frame the story around the appearance of policewomen, and how appearance more than skill led to a successful outcome. For instance, in our sample a *Tempo* article noted that 'seven pretty policewomen [*polwan cantik*] infiltrated a high profile prostitute network,' with one of the women disguising herself as a prostitute in order to become one of the pimp master's girls.[18] The prettiness of the policewomen, as opposed to investigatory skills, is framed as the key to the success of the operation.

9. Very few women have managed to secure high-ranking positions within the Indonesian police force. The number of women police station chiefs (*kapolsek*) and regional police chiefs (*kapolres*) remains low.[19] Only one woman to date has been appointed to the position of provincial police chief (*kapolda*), an honour given in 2008 to Rumiah Kartoredjo from Banten province. The fact that so few women have been appointed to positions of power is not surprising given the small overall number of Indonesian policewomen. At the end of

2012 the official number of policewomen was 13,200 out of a total personnel of around 400,000. Policewomen thus represent just 3.6 percent of the entire force.[20] The current highest ranked woman, Brigadier General Basaria Panjaitan, has argued that the number of women is too low, especially as police aim to have policewomen constitute 30 percent of the force, in line with the quota set for women in parliament.[21] Not only is the number of policewomen low, but they are assigned limited duties. While a few policewomen are involved in criminal investigation, almost exclusively with cases involving women or children, the vast majority are engaged in roles associated with administration, public relations exercises such as performing dance routines to calm protestors, and presenting traffic reports on television.[22]

10. Perhaps the highest hurdle to be overcome in increasing both the number of policewomen and extending assigned duties is the dismantling of persistent stereotypes that work to restrict what women can and should legitimately do. One limiting stereotype concerns policewomen preferring to undertake office-based jobs. For instance, prominent criminologist Adrianus Meliala has argued that the role of policewomen remains peripheral and revolves around administrative jobs because policewomen prefer clean (*bersih*) office jobs. Meliala is quoted in *Tempo* stating 'As soon as policewomen get a nice [*enak*] job like that [desk job], they don't want to move. If they get accustomed to a desk job [*terbiasa di desk*] then they look neat [*rapi*], smell nice [*harum*], and they don't want to move [out into the field].'[23] Another limiting stereotype concerns tasks that policewomen do better than policemen. For instance, while efforts to increase the number of policewomen are no doubt well-intentioned, they are framed solely around the perceived need to have sufficient numbers of policewomen to handle cases involving women and children. This focus reinforces the notion that only policewomen can engage in such cases, and moreover, that these are the only investigative cases that policewomen should be involved in. The framing of policewomen as better able than policemen to perform certain tasks is just as restrictive as discourses about what policewomen cannot do.[24]

11. Indonesia is certainly not alone in stereotyping policewomen and research shows that policewomen globally are framed as suited only for particular policing tasks—generally non-confrontational ones.[25] Moreover, even when policewomen do undertake such tasks as chasing and arresting criminals, policewomen may still be framed as essentially nurturing and caring. For instance, in her analysis of *Female Forces*, a British reality television show, Cara Rabe-Hemp[26] shows how selective camera work and editing overemphasise policewomen as pretty, nurturing and caring. Indeed, media globally frames women as domestic beings regardless of actual undertakings.[27] The stereotyping of policewomen in Indonesia is thus not unique, but it is perhaps more obvious than elsewhere. It remains to be seen whether this obviousness makes it easier or harder for gender equality campaigns to make headway. One particular area that needs targeting is the literal requirement that policewomen be judged as 'pleasing to the eye'—no such requirement is made of men although both men and women have to be of a certain height and have a 'proportional body.' The pretty entry requirement for women is then used to define what policewomen can and cannot do.

Notions of beauty

12. Notions of beauty vary across time and place.[28] This variance was seen vividly in a segment on Oprah Winfrey's chat show that revealed idealised faces of beauty in seventeen countries, resulting in quite different looks.[29] We also see variance in beauty such as when model Esther Honig allowed companies in twenty-five countries to Photoshop pictures of her face.[30] In some societies, bronzed skin is favoured, with tanning products heavily featured in advertising; in other societies, porcelain white skin is favoured, with bleaching creams on sale to create this effect.[31] Notions of beauty also change diachronically. In some decades, voluptuous women are idealised, with advertising products promising women a fuller figure; in other decades thin women are idealised, with associated products guaranteeing weight loss.

13. Yet despite variations, there are many commonalities across the beauty spectrum, and indeed as Denis

Dutton has powerfully argued concepts of beauty have more to do with evolutionary psychology than cultural constructions.[32] Numerous studies have shown that symmetrical faces are perceived around the world as the most beautiful.[33] Moreover, global media shapes concepts of beauty through continually exposing audiences to certain looks that then mould perceptions of beauty and attractiveness, largely within a limited western framework.[34] Concepts of beauty that apply consistently across society include attributes such as large eyes, prominent cheekbones, full lips, shaped eye-brows, and a petite nose and chin.[35] The almost universal desire for such qualities suggests similar criteria for judging beauty.[36] The impact of this limited framing of beauty is seen in women from South Korea,[37] Egypt[38] and China[39] all undergoing procedures to attain similar ideals of beauty. For instance, up to 50 percent of young South Korean women undergo some form of cosmetic surgery, most popularly eyelid surgery (*sangapul*) to give the appearance of wide eyes.[40]

14. Much research has focused on the advantages accrued to attractive people. While there is no evidence that physical attractiveness correlates with intelligence[41] attractive people are more likely to have attention paid to them,[42] be engaged in conversation,[43] and have others initiate romance.[44]

15. In Indonesia, women are made aware of ideals of beauty from a young age. From the use of chemicals to produce fair skin,[45] to what type of women win beauty pageants,[46] to advertisements in magazines[47] and shopping malls,[48] women are presented with clear images of what constitutes beauty. If there was one feature within Indonesian culture that consistently underscores beauty it is fair skin, achieved by a having a modern indoor job that provides an income to purchase skin whitening products. Indeed, whiteness is considered femininity embodied.[49] While women actively submit themselves to such regimes of beauty, their agency is limited. Indeed, for prospective Indonesian policewomen beauty is not an optional asset, it is an entry requirement. To see the pervasiveness of the pretty imperative in Indonesia, below we analyse coverage of policewomen in *Tempo*.

Framing pretty policewomen

16. All ninety-three *Tempo* articles that mentioned policewomen in the months of September and October 2013 implicitly referenced beauty. Whether articles were discussing policewomen as feminine,[50] motherly,[51] caring[52] or gentle,[53] whether they mentioned that policewomen are best suited to office roles[54] or being the public face of the police force,[55] or whether articles mentioned policewomen posting naked photos,[56] being veiled[57] or their previous employment as flight attendants,[58] they all framed policewomen implicitly around appearance. The appearance of policewomen was then specifically discussed in articles in terms of the advantages their beauty accrued to: the police force, through increased public support; policewomen, through social media fame; and society, who felt happy being served by a pretty face.

17. We could have analysed these articles with a focus on the stereotyping of policewomen as: naturally suited to looking after victims of sexual crime;[59] being unlikely to accept bribes;[60] or as better able than men to calm protestors.[61] We could have analysed these articles in terms of their assertion that the motherly approach (*pendekatan keibuan*) employed by policewomen was both effective in preventing the escalation of violence[62] and in ensuring that policewomen did not need to compete against policemen.[63] We could have also analysed discourses around sexual harassment and discrimination. One case that received a great deal of media attention during our collection phase was the case of Sergeant Rani, whose ex-boyfriend posted naked photos of her on Facebook without consent. Articles covering this issue were printed with titles such as 'How Naughty Sergeant Rani was'[64] and referred to her as 'a pretty policewoman with fair skin.' High-ranking male officers were quoted in *Tempo* as exhorting policewomen to uphold their honour and accusing Sergeant Rani of shaming the police force and smearing the name of all policewomen.[65] In a separate and unrelated case involving Sergeant Rani, she accused her commanding officer of sexual

harassment before taking three months leave without permission.[66] At the subsequent trial, Sergeant Rani was fired for taking non-authorised leave, while her commanding officer, who was found guilty of improper behaviour but worryingly not guilty of immoral behaviour, was merely demoted.[67] While we hope to write further on these issues, in this article we specifically focus on the framing of the 'pretty policewoman.'

18. It is interesting to note that a key reason for the popularity of pretty policewomen in Indonesia is the nation's fascination with celebrities—those people who are watched, noticed and known by a critical mass of strangers.[68] Celebrity culture surrounds the lives of people in all urban contexts, indeed it invades life and shapes thoughts, styles and manners.[69] The proliferation of new media technologies has fostered the expansion of celebrity culture, enabling in the case of Indonesia ordinary policewomen to become famous not for personal achievement, but for merely being pretty. Indeed, outside the purely entertainment arena celebrities across the globe have emerged in arenas associated with politics,[70] food,[71] business[72] and academia.[73] In Indonesia, food celebrities are particularly idolised, such as Sexy Chef Farah Quinn.[74] While celebrity culture has devalued meritocracy in the sense that people are now famous merely for being famous, not for having demonstrated particular merit,[75] this decentralisation of celebrity status means that celebrities are in essence 'just like us'[76] and therefore anyone can undertake a DIY celebrity project.[77] Even by becoming infamous, rather than famous,[78] as Leo Braudy says, we are saved from the 'living death of being unknown.'[79] Fascination with celebrities is thus a key reason for the popularity of Indonesia's pretty policewomen. We turn now to specifically explore how *Tempo* frames policewomen.

To be a policewoman is to be pretty

19. Numerous articles in our sample from *Tempo* specifically referred to 'pretty' policewomen: 'Is it true that pretty policewomen are just decorations?';[80] 'Pretty policewomen may not have great careers';[81] 'Pretty policewomen also do push ups'[82] and 'Pretty policewomen are popular on social media.'[83] Appearance was also referenced as a safety net for policewomen looking to change careers: 'Sergeant Rani is indeed so pretty that she could become a singer if she doesn't continue with her police career.'[84]

20. In ensuring the public knew feminine beauty was a prerequisite to police recruitment, *Tempo* ran the story, 'Is it true that you have to be pretty to become a policewoman?'[85] The article concluded that yes this was the case, and to verify, the journalist visited the policewomen's academy and confirmed that all cadets were indeed pretty: 'Although their hair is cut short like a man [*dipangkas pendek seperti layaknya lelaki*] and they were sweating below the morning sun, the cadets still looked very pretty [*masih terlihat sangat cantik*].'[86] To confirm that having a 'pretty face and good body' was part of the selection criteria, *Tempo* interviewed Indonesia's highest-ranked policewomen, Brigadier General Basaria Panjaitan, who noted that as a 'policewoman's role is to serve the public, being pretty is essential; but while beauty is relative [*paras cantik ukurannya relatif*] beauty without a smile is meaningless, so in addition to being pretty the most important thing is to keep smiling [*hal yang terpenting dari paras cantik adalah senyum yang bisa terus dijaga*].'[87]

21. While articles in *Tempo* made clear that policewomen have always been required to be attractive[88] there was no discussion in any article of who decides if an applicant is pretty enough or by what criteria beauty is judged. Readers, however, are made aware of certain regulations: candidates must have their hair cut in a short bob, and there is to be no long hair, long nails or long earrings.[89] Policewomen must also have a beautiful smile and be able to communicate well to the public.[90] Moreover, a number of articles specifically noted that fairness of skin was the mark of a policewoman's beauty:[91] 'The face of policewoman Ranny is indeed pretty [*tergolong ayu*]. Her skin is white [*kulitnya putih*] and her black hair is in a bob [*rambut hitam lurusnya dipotong model bob nungging potongan*].'[92] Indeed, policewomen with darker skin may be entirely ignored in favour of policewomen with fair skin.[93]

22. Articles justified the need for pretty policewomen in a number of ways: pretty policewomen improve the image of police;[94] people feel happy when they see pretty policewomen on television;[95] and the duty of policewomen is to serve people and people like to be served by pretty policewomen.[96] Given the importance of appearance, some articles commented on the potential impact of allowing policewomen to wear the veil as part of their uniform. One article noted that 'if policewomen were allowed to wear the head veil they would look more beautiful because their *aurat* [intimate areas of their body] would be covered'.[97] Another article entitled 'Don't make wearing the head veil sexy,' quoted a high-ranking police officer arguing against allowing police women to wear the veil on the grounds that when worn with a tight fitting uniform policewomen would appear extra sexy and thus incite lust and sexual harassment.[98] Interestingly, this was the only article in our sample of ninety-three to assert that policewomen should downplay their beauty. As a side note, fifteen articles in our sample focused on whether policewomen should be allowed to wear the head veil, reflecting the debate Indonesia was having at the time. It was decided in late 2013 that policewomen would be permitted to wear the veil as part of their police uniform.[99]

23. A number of articles explicitly mentioned that while essential the possession of beauty was not enough to guarantee a successful police career.[100] For instance, it was reported that Brigadier General Basaria Panjaitan 'does not deny that beauty is important for policewomen [*tak menampik bahwa penampilan itu penting bagi seorang polwan*] but she argues that beauty is needed as well as intelligence.'[101] Articles to this effect also mentioned that 'beauty must be complimented by brains'[102] and 'a beautiful face is not enough—policewomen also have to be intelligent enough to solve crime.'[103] Articles also noted in surprised tones that even though they are pretty, policewomen are actually physically and mentally strong[104] and they can and do defend themselves on the job.[105]

24. Despite being continually discriminated against on the basis of gender, very few articles in our sample quoted policewomen reflecting on this state of affairs. One article quoted a policewoman angry at being assigned only tedious office jobs and at being considered nothing more than a pretty police decoration.[106] Another article asked 'Is it true that pretty policewomen are only decorations?,'[107] a question refuted in another article entitled 'Policewomen reject the idea of being considered decorations.'[108] One article mentioned that the masculine culture of Indonesia's police force meant that policewomen were not used to their full potential and as a result, policewomen reverted to femininity—no further discussion was given to what was this 'femininity.'[109] Another article exhorted the media to stop focusing on policewomen's appearance and instead focus on their policing abilities.[110]

25. Aside from these few articles raising the issue of gender discrimination, sixteen articles in our sample categorically denied policewomen faced discrimination within the police force, or within wider society. Articles suggested that policewomen who work hard are promoted at the same rate as policemen[111] and that a policewoman's career is defined solely by her own determination.[112] Such claims came from high-ranking policewomen and policemen who neglected to mention that this discourse of equality is negated by the specific use of appearance as an entry requirement, and by the fact that policewomen make up a mere 3.6 per cent of the entire force.

The pretty imperative: Policewomen's handcuffs

26. The extraordinary media attention focused on pretty policewomen in Indonesia has provided tangible benefits for many individuals and organisations in the country, not least for the policewomen who have achieved celebrity status and the media industry that has capitalised on the popularity of the pretty policewoman phenomenon. Benefits have also accrued to Indonesia's police force through both increased recognition of the existence of the institution, and on some level an improved public image. Indeed, international research

shows that perceptions of attractiveness elicit positive emotional responses from people and, moreover, if someone is attractive they are likely to be perceived as having good personal characteristics.[113] Given this tendency, it stands to reason that pretty policewomen convey a sense of a noble police force. In addition, procedural justice research reveals that the presentation of a friendly, polite and approachable police force, potentially delivered in Indonesia through the stereotypical portrayal of policewomen as nurturing mothers, can improve public support for police, particularly when contrasted with the presentation of a militant police force.[114]

27. Despite these ostensible positive effects, the wider repercussions of the pretty imperative framing policewomen have been wholly negative. The expectation that policewomen will conform to a highly stylised image of beauty means that anyone falling short is liable to be critiqued, often in a very public manner. Indeed, public backlash has been levelled at policewomen deemed not pretty enough, with negative and derogatory comments about policewomen being posted to various social media sites. For instance, one person posted the following comments in response to an interview with policewomen: 'Those policewomen are not really beautiful. My cousin's maid is more beautiful [*pembokat sepupu lebi cakep*]. They look beautiful just because they wear the uniform [*Jadi terlihat menawan kalau pakai seragam dong*]!'[115]

28. While the pretty imperative frames policewomen, there are hints that policemen are also judged in terms of appearance, although unlike policewomen the only official physical requirement demanded of policemen is that they be of a certain height and weight. There have been a number of newspaper articles published referring to 'handsome policemen' (*polisi ganteng*), with one article noting that in Indonesia 'there are a lot of handsome policemen.'[116] While again such focus on the appearance of police officers may help present a more humane side to Indonesia's police force, a focus on appearance has overall negative results. For instance, in 2011 a clip of on-duty police officer Norman Komaru lip-synching to an Indian song went viral. Komaru is now reported to be unsuccessfully pursing a singer career, with comments made that 'without his uniform Komaru appears just like any other regular guy.'[117] Komaru's qualities as a police officer, and latterly a singer, are devalued through attribution of appearance as the key criteria of evaluation.

29. Beauty everywhere is desired and revered, yet rarely is it so explicitly demanded as in Indonesian policing where being deemed pretty is a mandatory requirement for entry into the policewomen's academy. On a national scale, a policewoman is assessed not in terms of policing ability but by the fairness of her skin and how well she conforms to other restrictive models of nurturing femininity. She is reified as a passive object where her value is only as a decorative possession. She is expected to serve the public with a constant smile, content in the knowledge that society is made happy merely by gazing upon her. While she may be deployed in the front line in crowd control, she knows that if her dancing and gentle demeanour fail to pacify a rowdy crowd, a policeman is ready to come to her aid.[118] While all portrayals of her focus on her appearance, her beauty can only be presented in a limited number of ways—if any naked photos circulate she shames not only herself but dishonours all policewomen and indeed the entire national police force. Moreover, her beauty may be blamed for any mischievousness, and even choosing to wear the head veil makes her appear too sexy.[119] If she claims sexual harassment, she is put on trial, and that trial is often presided over by the man she is accusing of assault; the very strictures of beauty that she must conform to are used to frame her as guilty and newspapers report that the man found guilty of sexual harassment is the real victim because he was 'demoted for just playing a joke.'[120]

30. Handcuffed by sexist discourse that continues to privileged men and constrain women, policewomen in Indonesia deserve the right to be, and be seen as, effective police officers, not merely pretty police faces. If Indonesian police are serious about becoming a 'friend and partner of society' (*mitra dan sehabat masyarakat*), as their motto exhorts, this key security institution must implement policies that enable policewomen to be more than pretty faces reading traffic reports and making cups of tea. Indonesia needs to focus on improving relations between police and the public, but the tactic of framing policewomen within a

pretty imperative limits the contribution that women can make to policing specifically and society in general.

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Virtually (im)moral: Pious Indonesian Muslim women's use of Facebook

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Abstract

Since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, the Indonesian media landscape has been radically transformed. The country is now a highly saturated media space in which people are exposed to numerous media from television programming to social media. In this article, I explore the meanings of Facebook for Indonesian Muslim women in which morality is a core concern. Facebook becomes a platform in which they address and (re)work their understanding of Islam and ultimately voice their sense of piety. Based on ethnographic research with Muslim women and Indonesian media, I discuss the way they are actively shaping their piety through Facebook, especially around the issue of veiling. Although some religious clerics have concerns regarding Facebook, suggesting that it could incite gossip and jeopardise marriages, my participants utilised Facebook to share and discuss Islamic tenets with other Muslim women. Hence, Facebook is not merely experienced as a site for passing time or entertainment, but is also used as a medium through which Indonesian women shape and refashion their piety.

Keywords: Indonesia, Muslim women, Facebook, veiling, modesty, piety

Introduction

The media landscape in Indonesia has changed significantly since *Reformasi*[1] due to growing access to the Internet and, importantly, declining state control of media. Now, people from all walks of life have opportunities to access the Internet using affordable smartphones. As Hill and Sen (2008) assert, the trajectory of Internet growth in Indonesia has been impressive since 1995. A 2015 survey suggested that 87.2 per cent

[1] *Reformasi* refers to the period after President Suharto resigned. Reformasi signalled a move from authoritarianism to democracy (see Sato, 2003).

of Internet users in Java and Bali access the Internet for social networking, 72.3 per cent for instant messaging and 71.6 per cent for browsing the latest news (APJII & PUSKAKOM[2], 2015). The most popular social media networks in Indonesia are Facebook, Whatsapp, and Twitter (Kemp, 2015). According to research firm eMarketer (2015), Indonesia is the third largest country behind the US and India in terms of its mobile phone Facebook audience with 62.6 million Indonesians accessing mobile Facebook at least once a month.

In this article, I demonstrate how Facebook has become an important part of the everyday activities of Muslim women in Indonesia. The focus of the article is Semarang, Central Java, where I conducted fieldwork – I also include online discussions on Facebook. Semarang was chosen as the field site due both because it has a strong Muslim community and because I have existing contacts there. Fieldwork was conducted in between January and December 2014 and I undertook participant-observation, in-depth interviews, conversations and a diary study. After leaving Semarang I remain in contact with participants through email. I also set up a closed group on Facebook in 2013 and invited Muslim mothers who are 'friends' with me on my personal Facebook account to participate; eleven women joined the group. Most of these women live in Jakarta. All participants are wives and mothers of children who range in age from a few months old to young adults. They are all tertiary educated with the majority holding Masters Degrees.[3]

The research was driven by a debate surrounding Facebook that centred on some religious clerics in Indonesia claiming Facebook may cause misbehaviour among Muslims. For some Muslim clerics, Facebook poses significant threats for family and social relationships ("Ulama Jatim", 2009). Thus, I was pondering how Muslim women engage with Facebook and what their experiences are with the social media platform. How did Muslim women use Facebook? Did they encounter experiences that were

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[2] APJII and PUSKAKOM are acronyms for Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association) and Pusat Kajian Komunikasi Universitas Indonesia (Centre of Communication Studies University of Indonesia), respectively.

[3] Being cognizant about my position as an Indonesian Muslim woman with a veil I made clear that I was not the "moral police" and would not judge them for their views and experiences. As a Javanese woman who was born and brought up in Jakarta and educated in the capital city and overseas I share similar backgrounds with my participants, such as our identities as Muslim women, wives and mothers with a university education. However, there are a few differences between us, including that I have been living overseas for several years. Indeed, my simultaneous insider/outsider positionality enabled me with "particular kinds of insight" (Ronaldo, 1984, p. 193) to empathise and understand the participants.

cautioned against by religious clerics? How did they manoeuvre their way through the constraints put forward by Muslim clerics? How did their use of Facebook shape their piety and religious practices?

There is limited work on how Indonesian Muslim women use of Facebook. Nisa (2013), in her work on Internet subculture among veiled Indonesian Muslim women, discusses the advantages of using the Internet, but does not focus on Facebook. Other studies into Muslim women and the use of the Internet focus on non-Indonesian women and on other types of social media, such as blogging (Akou, 2010) or online groups (Piela, 2012). Meanwhile, a study by Omar, Hassan and Sallehuddin (2015) in Malaysia on the use of Facebook was conducted among male religious teachers. One area that has been explored in relation to Facebook usage by Indonesian women is Facebook as a tool for entrepreneurship (for example Utomo, 2016). Hence, the emphasis of this article is on Facebook as a space for shaping and refashioning Muslim women's piety, particularly on the topic of *hijab*[4], despite the possibility of misuse by some people, provides a different perspective.

There has been much debate among religious clerics surrounding the use of Facebook in Indonesia. I suggest, though, that Facebook is a tool for *dakwah*[5] and *saling mengingatkan* (reminding each other), despite its perceived potential to bring about undesirable outcomes. This article argues that despite fears among some Muslim clerics and others that Facebook incites immorality, pious Indonesian women actually use Facebook to promote and increase their own and other's religious morality.

The Facebook debate in Indonesia

Facebook is a social networking site used to engage with friends, play games, show pictures, do business through advertising and so much more, depending on the position of the users "relative to this ever-shifting platform" (Morrison, 2013, p. 114). Facebook as a social networking hub shares the characteristics of other social network sites like

[4] *Hijab* is from Arabic word *ḥijāb*, which literally means cover or curtain (Cowan, 1976). It is also known in Indonesia as *jilbab* which refers to veil, short or long, which covers all the hair. Wearing a *hijab* means covering all the hair unlike the traditional *kerudung* which does not always cover all the hair. The clothes for *jilbab* can be in the form of a loose-fitting long-sleeved blouse or tunic with long pants or a maxi skirt, or an *abaya* (a shapeless full-length cloak which covers the whole body). As long as the hair and the whole body, except the hands and face, are covered it is said that the woman dons a *hijab* (see Shihab, 2006).

[5] *Dakwah* is Indonesian for *da'wa* in Arabic, which means call, appeal (Cowan, 1976).

Twitter; namely it allows individuals to get closer to each other regardless of their physical distance. The nature of Facebook to some extent is public although users have some privacy control protection to adjust accordingly. It "blurs the distinction between personal communication and the broadcast model of messages sent to nobody in particular" (Meikle & Young, 2012, p. 61) and it is this precise nature of Facebook that concerned Muslim clerics in Indonesia.

In May 2009, around seven hundred Indonesian Muslim clerics (*ulama*) from various Islamic boarding schools for girls in East Java gathered and discussed the importance of having an edict (*fatwa*)[6] on virtual networking, as they believed that Facebook could encourage extramarital affairs ("Ulama Jatim," 2009). They are concerned that Muslims are involved in conveying private information or pictures to the public arena. For example, exposing someone's "*rahasia pribadi*" (personal secrets) or making accusations and exposing them to the wider Facebook audience could jeopardise one's marriage or trap users into misdemeanours according to Islam. They considered making guidelines forbidding their followers from going online to flirt or engage in practices they believed could encourage illicit sex. The meeting concluded with a statement that "'Facebook is forbidden' if it is used for gossiping, flirting, spreading lies, asking intimate questions, or vulgar behavior" (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p. 286) since social media "*mampu mengundang birahi*" (could encourage lust) which is *haram* (forbidden, Cowan, 1976) in Islam ("Ulama Jatim," 2009). Yet, the clerics' statement merely served as a recommendation for Nahdlatul Ulama the Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars to confirm that it is the way people use Facebook that makes it sinful, not Facebook itself as a form of social media ("PBNU", 2009). The head of Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)[7] reaffirmed in his interview on the national news program Liputan6 that Facebook is not *haram*. Indeed, he noted Facebook might even be a useful tool to encourage friendship and proselytise the teaching of Islam, even though there is some apprehension that Facebook can be misused (KebangkitanBangsa, 2009). It seems that there are multiple opinions regarding Facebook from different

[6] In contrast to other Islamic regions, in Indonesia *fatwa* is issued collectively by Islamic organisations, namely Persatuan Islam (Persis), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah and the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) (Gillespie, 2007; Hooker, 2003).

[7] MUI was established in 1975 through the government's initiatives in order "to control public expressions of Islam under state" (Hooker, 2003, p. 60). It is also state-financed hence the impartiality of its *fatāwā* is somewhat questionable. The members of MUI come from various "Muslim opinion" in which consultations with other experts with a myriad of expertise such as social science and finance are also sought (Hooker, 2003, p. 60).

segments of Muslim clerics. Nevertheless, it is critical here to emphasise that the problem is not Facebook *per se* as a platform, but the "social risk" which is embedded in the use of Facebook. Since *ulama* have both used Facebook and offered rulings on its proper use, I wanted to see how Muslim women engaged with Facebook in their everyday life and the problems faced by my participants surrounding the use of Facebook.

From jealousy to gossip

Apparently, the Muslim clerics' concerns were justified as a few of my participants were embroiled in predicaments involving Facebook. There was a time when Oci[8], in her thirties and has been married for more than six years, had an unpleasant experience with Facebook. Her husband's ex-girlfriend, Rita, bullied her. Rita wrote some mean things on Oci's Facebook wall because she was upset that her ex-boyfriend married Oci. Feeling helpless, Oci gave no response to this abuse and instead she "un-friended" this person. Oci only accepted Rita's friend request after consulting her husband, as she was always careful about whom she invited and accepted as her Facebook friends. After the incident, she felt she must delete Rita from her list of friends because this woman made her upset (*memancing emosi*). The fact that her other Facebook friends could read Rita's posts on their News Feed made her even more furious.

This vignette shows that the Muslim clerics' apprehension regarding the effect of Facebook may be valid in some instances. If not used carefully, Facebook can become a site in which marital harmony could be disrupted. Even though it is nearly impossible now to imagine life without Facebook and other social media, they undoubtedly have double-edged sword qualities. Oci's experience on Facebook warned her about its "danger" for the sanctity of her marital relationship. Although Oci's marriage remains intact, there are a few similarities between her story and the marriage plight that happened to one of Miller's participants in *Tales from Facebook* (2011) which ended in a divorce. The marriage which should be guarded within the boundaries

[8] In order to protect my participants' identities and privacy, I use pseudonyms and translated all discussions on Facebook used in this text into English.

of love (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*)[9] was vulnerable due to possible *fitnah* (dissension, Cowen, 1976). Rita's verbal abuse was, indeed, a *fitnah* and *ghibah* (slander, Cowen, 1976)[10], which could rock Oci's marriage, and the "attack" became more profound as it happened online under the watchful eyes of Oci's friends. Clayton (2014) elucidates that social media "have provided a relatively new platform for interpersonal communication and, as a result, have substantially enhanced and altered the dynamics of interpersonal relationships" (p. 425). Valenzuela, Halpern and Katz (2014) also assert that social network sites like Facebook "may reduce marriage well-being through habituation or addiction, sparking feelings of jealousy between partners, or facilitating having extramarital affairs" (p. 99). It is likely that Facebook is misused as a tool to monitor one's former partner (Lyndon, Bonds-Raacke & Cratty, 2011) as "Facebook allows self-generated and other-generated information to be tied to one's profile via posting, tagging, and apps" (Fox, Osborn & Waber, 2014, p. 528). In Oci's case, Rita, out of her own jealousy, could find Oci's and befriend her online for the sole purpose of stalking her and damaging her marriage. As Majelis Ulama Indonesia (2010) explains it is morally wrong and religiously impermissible to spread *ghibah* and *fitnah*, and as a pious Muslim woman, Oci did the right thing not to retaliate and found solace in her husband's support. Besides, by ignoring and deleting Rita as her Facebook friend, Oci tried to put her marriage back on track without being consumed by her own jealousy.

Tiwi, in her forties and works as a university lecturer, had a different issue with Facebook. A couple of years ago she experienced a disagreement with a friend. Without hesitation, Tiwi's friend divulged her feelings on Facebook. An argument, which was supposedly harmless and could easily be solved between the two of them, then became worse because others interfered without knowing the cause of the problem. Feeling dejected, Tiwi posted her response on Facebook to clarify the matter. Yet, nothing good came out of it so she decided to ignore the whole thing as it had already made her life unpleasant. Nowadays, Tiwi restrains herself from making any personal comments or

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[9] And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect (Qur'an 30:21).

[10] According to MUI (2010) *ghibah* is factual information about someone that is told to other people and disliked by the person being rumoured. Meanwhile, *fitnah* is similar yet refers to information which is untrue. Please note that Arabic loan words may have slightly different meanings in Indonesian context.

posts on Facebook except to make birthday wishes and read other people's posts and comments.

The narrative above shows that the public nature of Facebook enables negative information like gossip and rumours to spread fast (Wen, et al., 2015) like a contagious disease. The vignette conveys that gossip online could jeopardise friendships offline. I consider the posts on Facebook by Tiwi's friend as *ghibah*. It is true that gossip can be idle chitchat without malice, yet it can also be used to chastise and criticize others (Davis, 2011). However in this regard, I refer to the latter. As Solove (2007) notes, "the Internet can be used as a powerful tool to launch malicious attacks on people and ideas" (p. 35). It is through Facebook's "Status Update" that Tiwi's friend poured her heart out to her friends on the social network site to gain sympathy. Yet, I argue, the outcome of gossip on Facebook is more damaging than through conventional means because of its speed and extensive impact (see Solove, 2007). Hence, Muslim clerics' trepidations can be justified since they want to protect Muslims from the adverse effects of the improper use of Facebook and from entangling themselves in acts considered *haram*. However, Facebook is not merely a tool to spread *ghibah* and *fitnah* as others use it to learn religious tenets and remind Muslim friends about Islamic teachings. For some Muslim women, Facebook is a convenient space to share religious understandings about certain topics, such as veiling. It is at this site where they *saling mengingatkan* about the meaning of *hijab* as Islamic attire for women. Essentially, they conducted *dakwah* among themselves and in the process they negotiate and (re)define themselves as pious Muslims.

Piety, morality and womanhood in Indonesia

For some Indonesia women Islam has become the driving force which shapes the way they dress, eat, and conduct their everyday lives. Although Islam came to Indonesia in the 1300s (Ricklefs, 2007), the face of Indonesian Muslims has only drastically changed since the late 1970s due to the global Islamic resurgence (Brenner, 1996). In the Indonesian contemporary context, conflating moral discourses with most aspects of everyday life become common practice, which can be seen predominantly among the middle classes with their more pious[11] public presence (Rinaldo, 2011). This has

[11] Piety is a concept translated from *taqwa* (Mahmood, 2005, p. 145), derived from the Qur'an to denote the practice of piety and fear of God. Mahmood (2001, p. 212) elucidates piety as "the condition

become more apparent since the *Reformasi* because of the growing number of middle classes[12] who have access to liberal and conservative global Islamic discourses, and the loosening of state censorships on media (Rinaldo, 2011). As Islam is no longer marginalised in the post-Suharto era, Muslim women have more agency to express their religiosity; yet at the same time religious authorities have more say about what is *haram* or not. In this context, the body becomes a site inscribed with contested understandings about propriety of covering oneself, for example, and Facebook is the platform that modesty and "proper" Muslim dress is discussed amidst the clerics' role as moral watchdog.

Indeed, Indonesian Muslim women have historically enjoyed more freedom compared to their counterparts in the Middle East (Bennet, 2005), although decades ago arranged marriages were common, for example (Robinson, 2009). However, due to the influence of Muslim global feminism on Indonesian Muslim feminist discourse since the early 1990s, contemporary Muslim women have become empowered in their decision on choosing a husband or when to become pregnant (Nurmila, 2011) without feeling morally and religiously conflicted. This kind of gender empowerment includes wearing a veil that has grown in popularity since the mid-1990s (Ida, 2008) which "signifies a transformation of self for women in Java" (Brenner, 1996, p. 673) who choose to live abiding to God's law as it is prescribed in the Qur'an (Brenner, 1996). As Smith-Hefner (2007) explains, there is a growing awareness among Muslim women in Java regarding their religious duties which encompass embracing daily prayer, performing annual fasting during Ramadan and veiling. This veiling movement, which symbolises Muslim women's moral authority[13] and gender empowerment, occurred in

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of being close to God" that is attained through "practices that are both devotional as well as worldly in character". According to Mahmood (2001), piety also involves attention to one's entire self through "a simultaneous training of the body, emotions, and reason as sites of discipline until the religious virtues acquired the status of embodied habits" (p. 212). Rinaldo (2008) explains that among Muslims in Indonesia, pious practices "are producing a new kind of middle class habitus that distinguishes women by class and approach to religion" (p. 29). In short, morality is seen as the framework in which Muslims manoeuvre their everyday lives using the Qur'an and Hadis as their parameters to aim for piety.

[12] Ariel Heryanto (2003) proposes that the concept of middle class should be treated in the plural form because it consists of contradictory elements, such as there are progressive middle classes as well as very conservative middle classes in the same nation-state. Nevertheless, middle classes share common variants of any of the following combinations: urban residence; modern occupations and education; and cultural tastes (pp. 26-27).

[13] Hefner (1993) argues that the Islamic revitalisation among middle class Indonesia was sparked by the growing cynicism and resentment towards the political elites who unashamedly displayed their wealth and power, and their perceptions of the decline of "traditional mores and etiquette" (p.13).

the midst of some political parties trying to assert control to restrict women's clothing using violent regulations in the name of "Islam" (Robinson, 2009, p. 173).

Nasir, Pereira and Turner (2010) propose that the spread and revival of religion in any society, like the Islamic "consciousness"[14] in Indonesia, can be seen from its pious acts. It is through mundane and daily practices, such as dressing and eating, which are otherwise secular yet have been reformed as they embed religious significance, through which piety is expressed (Nasir, Pereira & Turner, 2010, p. 20). Certainly, in Indonesia, piety and clothing have become closely intertwined (see Rinaldo, 2013) and contested with a tinge of modernity in the foreground (Brenner, 1996). The tapestry of Muslim women clad in colourful veils and modest clothes becomes a common sight in Indonesian urban cities and the Internet has a significant role in this current display. As Lewis (2013) suggests this proliferation is empowered by the Internet and social media upon which Muslim women are able to express their identity through what they wear––disseminate, discuss and dispute about modest dress.

I argue that by using Facebook my participants showed their identity as pious women who experience the journey of "being" and "becoming" pious through the practice of veiling. While these Muslim women actively endeavour through repeated performance of virtuous actions, such as by donning *hijab* as their daily attire to achieve piety, Facebook is used to spread the words of Islam among their networks and discuss the reality surrounding them of various religious understandings around *aurat*[15]. I suggest that posts and discussions on Facebook are associated with their embodiment of piety by which the meaning of modesty is conveyed. In the process they have defined what it means to be morally good Muslim women, possibly, at the expense of putting "social pressure" on others to conform.

Shaping modesty and piety through Facebook

The Internet, including social media, is undoubtedly fertile ground to spread a myriad of information, from *dakwah* (Eickleman & Piscatori, 1996) to cyberporn (Lim, 2013).

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[14] I would like to call it Islamic "consciousness" instead of Islamic "resurgence" or "revival". Like Brenner (1996), I agree that the term "resurgence" and "revival" have the connotation of recapturing the old spirit of embracing Islam as a way of life, instead of embarking upon a new venture.

[15] *Aurat* or *'awrah* (Arabic) literally means genitals (Cowen, 1976). Later jurists explored the term in connections with covering bodies, especially women's, in which the greatest degree of covering for women is applied in the presence of non-*mahram* (marriageable kin) other than their husbands (Leaman & Ali, 2008, p. 13).

Beyond the use of print, radio, and television, a variety of cyber Islamic environments have become available since the mid-1990s as tools for spreading the words of Islam (Campbell, 2010). As Campbell (2010) explains, "for many Muslim webmasters the desire to offer an alternative and more accurately informed view of Islamic beliefs and way of life have been an impetus for going online" (p. 31). However, communication in Islam is not a new phenomenon. As Sardar (1993) elucidates, the proliferation of Islam, which is intrinsically related to the deep-rooted Qur'anic concept of *ilm*[16], has been practiced for centuries. *Ilm* goes beyond the meaning of knowledge since it contains the idea of communication and all forms of communication—knowledge, ideas, and information—that are an integral part of the concept of *ilm* (Sardar, 1993). The crux of the Internet for the Muslim public is that they use it to reach out to each other and to people outside the Muslim community, which enables interpretation of Islam beyond the boundary of Islamic scholars (Anderson, 1999).

Indonesian Muslim women who use Facebook do so for various reasons. Some studies suggest multiple motivations act as triggers for individuals for using Facebook, such as interacting with friends, searching for social information about others, and as a way to entertain as well as to express oneself (Baek, et al., 2011; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009). Facebook, for my Muslim participants, is a site in which they could share and discuss their opinions about environmental issues, legal and political occurrences and turmoil, religious understandings, and their daily lives. It is true that they did not engage online for the sole purpose of *dakwah* or searching for and posting religious knowledge alone, yet seeking for better understanding of Islamic tenets and *dakwah* were parts of their online activities.

In this section, I explore the meaning of Facebook for pious Muslim women in which they shared and discussed religious tenets. I especially underline how these women utilise Facebook to shape and strengthen their understanding of Islam, particularly on *hijab* and modesty.

Despite the debate surrounding the use of Facebook, my research also shows that Facebook is a space in which Islamic teachings are discussed widely and not merely

[16] The word *ilm* (Arabic: knowledge, lore, Cowen, 1976; Indonesian: *ilmu*) is written more than 800 times in the Qur'an, which suggests its importance. The first verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad contain the words *iqra* (Arabic: read) and *qalam* (Arabic: pen). As Sardar (1993, p. 44) explains "the first verses of the Qur'an thus lay the foundations of a culture and society based on reading and writing, research and penmanship, communication and transmission of knowledge and information".

within designated "religious spaces" like mosques or Muslim schools[17]. Recently, there have been discussions on Facebook amongst my participants about the *hijab*. Desi, a mother of two in her fifties, whose daily clothes were fashionable *hijab syar'i*[18], posted a picture of a woman wearing a *hijab syar'i* with a statement saying that wearing a *hijab* is compulsory[19] for Muslim women and received nearly two dozen likes for her post. She stated on her Facebook wall:

> Thank you to my friends who have given your thumbs up (for this post). Please forgive me if anyone feels offended (by this post). I just convey God's command. I hope my friends who have not donned a *hijab* are enthusiastic to wear it. For those who have dressed in a *hijab* would be *istiqomah*[20]. *Barakallahu fiikum* (May Allah bless you). *Aamiin ya robbal 'alamiin*[21].

Desi's post was acknowledged by positive responses from her *hijabi*[22] friends. In her reply to one of her friends, she explained that wearing a *hijab* is a process to aim for donning a *hijab syar'i* as daily dress[23]. Meanwhile, Yiyi, in her fifties and works as a general manager in a big firm, who wears a *hijab*, and other Muslim women I know liked different pictures and videos of attractive young women showing how to wear a stylish *hijab* step-by-step on Facebook.[24] The aim of posting such images on Facebook was to remind oneself about the importance of wearing *hijab* and to encourage their Muslim friends to wear it—to awaken "awareness" of conforming with God's law (Brenner, 1996, p. 684). Also, I suggest that Facebook enables them to reinforce their identity as pious Muslim women who can be modest as well as fashionable (see Beta, 2014). Facebook allows them to perform *dakwah* as they inspire other Muslim women

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[17] One of my participants regularly engaged with a *pengajian* (Islamic study circle) Facebook group based overseas to gain pivotal knowledge, which she used as reference, besides Qur'an and Hadis in religious talks she delivered in her neighbourhood. Hadis are the compilations of the Prophet Muhammad's spoken words and deeds which are read in conjunction with the Qur'an.

[18] While wearing a *hijab* or *jilbab* can refer to a woman wearing a short veil, long pants and a long-sleeved tunic, *hijab syar'i* or *jilbab syar'i* always implies an outfit with a long head covering with a loose long dress or *abaya*. *Jilbab syar'i* is a name derived from the term shari'ah or Islamic law. It is understood as attire that follows the guidelines of the shari'ah.

[19] O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Qur'an 33:59).

[20] *Istiqomah* is an Arabic loan word to refer to standing firm on the straight path of Islam.

[21] *Aamiin* is a saying to end a supplication. Hence, Desi's last sentence serves as a prayer for her friends.

[22] *Hijabi* is a woman who wears a *hijab*. The *non-hijabi* friends might or might not feel at ease, though, with this post.

[23] In another post Desi showed pictures of the way she used to be, not covering her hair entirely, and stated that it was a journey for her to don a *hijab syar'i* from her previous daily attire.

[24] See Jones (2007) for discussion on the rise of Islamic fashion in Indonesia within a context of national debates about modernity and piety.

who have not adopted a *hijab* to don it, or to at least understand more about the meaning of wearing a *hijab*. Since Muslim women see Islamic clothing as part of being pious, they want to strengthen their conviction by wearing the attire as well as to spark their Muslim female friends' interests to embrace *hijab* as part of their daily dress. They subtly reinforce notions of morality, particularly the ideal of Islamic modesty. It seems that they did not want to be perceived as morality police, yet they felt it was their "duty" as good Muslims to do *dakwah.* This can be seen in the responses that were given by Desi's and Yiyi's *hijabi* friends. Their *hijabi* friends appreciated[25] the postings because they all shared the notion of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*[26], which is part of *dakwah* (Omar, et al., 2015) and believed in the practice of *saling mengingatkan* (reminding each other) as good Muslims. Yet, this might also serve as "social pressure" for *non-hijabi* to veil[27].

These discussions on *hijab* indeed did not emerge in a vacuum. In 2014, MUI issued a *fatwa* against *jilboob* (Triono, 2014). *Jilboob* is a slang term coined by Indonesian Muslims and media to refer to women who wear Muslim veils with tight clothes showing their breasts. The reason behind this *fatwa* is that *jilboob* reveals the shape of the body and for some this means not covering the *aurat*, which must be concealed by clothing according to Islamic tenet except to their husbands or *mahram* (Nasir, Pereira & Turner, 2010). For women, the *aurat* is the whole body except the face and hands. It is true that while the *jilboob* covers the intimate body parts the skin-tight garment shows the curves of the body. The discussions on Facebook focused on whether *jilboob* is a fashion trend among Muslim youth nowadays and whether the trend will change or it is here to stay; and whether the *jilbab*, which my participants wear, are appropriate enough according to Islam or whether their aim is *jilbab syar'i*. Nia's comment on Facebook reflects the moral deliberation that goes on around the use of the *jilboob*:

> *Jilboob*? I see it as a process, which is temporary in nature, because clothes, which are fashionable nowadays, used jersey fabric. When later on the fabric used is dominated by cotton, baggy blouses and pants will be popular. Actually,

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[25] As Desi always stated in the beginning of her postings that she reminded herself first and then the others by posting religiously related contents, her *hijabi* friends did not feel offended. They knew that Desi did not position herself as the most knowledgeable and pious amongst them.

[26] The phrase is based on the following verse in The Qur'an: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity" (Qur'an 3:104). It is believed that "Islamic communicator should bring good and prevent evil" (Omar, et al., p. 44).

[27] Not all Desi's and Yiyi's Facebook friends were *hijabi.*

> I often feel moved by young girls who wear skin-tight or rather revealing clothes and they are crammed in a small *mushola*[28] in a mall so they can pray on time. My heart just melts (*meleleh*) looking at this scene.

For Nia, in her fifties and self-employed, who dressed in *hijab*, it is clear that wearing *jilboob* does not necessarily mean a person is less pious than someone who dons a *hijab syar'i*. Muslim youth may wear *jilboob* to be fashionable and assert their sexuality while also remaining faithful to their religious duties of praying and veiling. Nia[29] asserted that wearing a "proper" *hijab* involves a long process of understanding the religious tenets. For some, *jilboob* may not conform to Islamic standard of Muslim clothing because it is considered not modest enough. While MUI encouraged Muslim women to cover themselves modestly in *jilbab syar'i* (Aidilla, 2014), for Nia and others the *jilboob* is a good way to begin adopting more modest dress. No doubt the debates surrounding *hijab* will continue to transpire partly because Qur'an gives little guidance about it (Akou, 2010).

The verses from the Qur'an[30] which are used as guidelines for modesty and proper Islamic dress for Muslim women merely stipulate the importance for Muslim women to draw their head-coverings over their bosoms and wear outer garments in public and do not specify in detail styles, colours and the overall aesthetics of the clothes. Hence, different cultures, communities and Muslim groups have their own ways of wrapping their hijab and dressing modestly. Even within a country, like Indonesia, where *hijab* is part of daily attire of many Muslim women, personal tastes, various understandings of Islam around modesty, social class and education influence practices of *hijab* (Arthur, 2000). While *jilboob* worn by teenagers may be driven by fashion sense to appear trendy amidst the desire to be pious, covering from head to toes is not enough for some if the shapes of the body can still be seen. Dressing for Muslim women always attaches to moral discourses as the body is a site of tensions and judgements around morality and piety. Facebook provides space for conversations to disentangle these tensions and judgements. Since there was no consensus among Nia's friends in the discussion around *jilboob* the fatwa MUI on *hijab syar'i* is binding upon Muslim women, the conversations paved the way for a greater diversity of viewpoints.

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[28] *Mushola* is a prayer room. Malls in Jakarta and Semarang offer *mushola* for Muslim customers and shopkeepers to pray (see "Malls offer cozy," 2008).
[29] When I first met Nia more than two decades ago, she was not wearing a *hijab*. She "only" started to wear *jilbab* in the last decade or so ago.
[30] Qur'an 24:30-31, 33:53.

Facebook as a platform that creates an alternative for Islamic knowledge stretches the boundaries of normative tradition (Bunt, 2009) of *ilm*. Without citing scholarly opinions, the discussion amongst Nia's friends, sufficiently provide "reflective and reflexive moments" (Khalid & Dix, 2010, p. 210) about modesty and morality around *hijab*. Each and everyone involved in the discussion would consciously or not, to some extent, ponder others' opinions and Islamic understandings. This reflection could lead, I suggest, to making "allies" with others of similar opinions while feeling "alienated" from another who have different views.

In a sense these Muslims showed critical thinking around modesty in Islam amidst little guidance from the Qur'an and without necessarily complying with the views of the clerics. *Ijtihad* or "committed critical thinking based on disciplined but independent reasoning, to come up with solutions to new problems" (Ali, 2007, p. 445) is no longer a monopoly of the elite *ulama*[31]. Although there were times when *taqlid* (imitation), instead of *ijtihad*, was encouraged by clerics for the vast majority of Muslims by justifying it as the assured path to paradise (Ali, 2007, p. 447), in the new media age, a platform like Facebook enables Muslims to share Islamic knowledge and partake in conversations that critically examined the issue of modest clothing.

Yet, whatever veiling means for Muslim women who are engaged with Facebook, the social media has become a space in which *dakwah* surrounding *hijab* and modesty is debated and discussed amidst different clothing styles, like *hijab syar'i* and *jilboob*. At the core, through Facebook, Muslim women share and gain *ilm* around morality of dressing, and what it means to be pious as expressed through clothing. Muslim clerics and organisations may have different opinions on *jilboob*, *jilbab* and *hijab syar'i*, but Muslim women have opportunities to voice concerns, opinions and disagreements, and to learn from other about proper Islamic dress on Facebook. The traditional Qur'anic concept of *ilm* indeed continues to suffice albeit through a new platform. Through Facebook they built a niche of supportive Muslim women to maintain piety.

Conclusion

[31] See Akou (2010) for a discussion on how *ijtihad* becomes a crucial tool for ordinary Muslims to discuss about Islamic understandings such as *hijab* which are sparsely discussed in the Qur'an.

Engaging with Facebook involves walking the fine line between propriety and misdemeanour according to Islam. Facebook can be a vehicle for harm (Wheeler, 2002) as well as a tool with which to maintain and improve piety. Facebook becomes a space to ascertain and strengthen their identity as pious Muslims and share understandings about proper Islamic dress for women with or without relying on the authority of Muslim clerics. Indeed, a few of my participants experienced the negative impacts of being public, which could jeopardise their marital bliss or friendships. Yet, overall Facebook was an important tool to *saling mengingatkan* about modesty and *hijab* amongst Muslim friends. Facebook also constitutes a space in which they can learn, share, debate, and give judgements about others whose opinions or experiences may not be similar to theirs.

By using Facebook as a platform, contemporary pious Muslim women in Indonesia have more freedom to express their identity and piety, and to share their religiosity regardless of *fatwa* or injunctions made by religious authorities. They form their own opinions about proper Islamic dress influenced by Muslim feminist discourses in Indonesia and are guided by their own experiences and understandings about Islam. These women acknowledge that piety, in which wearing *hijab* is part of, does not happen overnight. Instead, piety needs time and knowledge to cultivate. Hence, they see and create Facebook as a convenient moral space to nourish piety for themselves and their Muslim friends, but without realising that others with different religiosity may feel uncomfortable. At least, Facebook allows them the opportunity to remind each other about their religious duties and to cultivate a sense of Muslim sisterhood.

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THE MAKING OF MUSLIM SPACES IN AN AUCKLAND SUBURB

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Introduction

With the ease of transportation and advancement of technology, people and cultures are no longer confined in their own geographical space. Political upheavals and economic pressures also seem to amplify people's motivation to migrate from one place to another for the purpose of finding a better life. Yet in reality Muslims have been on the move for a very long time. In fact travel has been encouraged for a myriad of different reasons, from an annual pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*) in search of embodiment of piety and of enhancement in social standing (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990a: xiv) to emigration (*hijrah*) from places where religious public expression is repressed, to those that provide more freedom to do so (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990b: 5). Indeed Muslims have always moved for reasons of trade, warfare, proselytization, learning and pilgrimage. In the past few decades there has been a rise in labour migration among Muslim countries and from Muslim states to non-Muslim countries due to an upsurge of unemployment and invasive conflict in Islamic homelands. This immigration inevitably changes the demography, cultural and religious makeup of the host country.

For Muslims, as implied by Delaney (1990: 513-514), it is impossible to make a sharp distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' in terms of traveling. Migration and pilgrimage may both involve a secular dimension in which people move to a different place based on non-religious motives, as well as spiritual domain in which migration and/or pilgrimage are aimed to reinforce piety. This marked demarcation between sacred and secular mobility seems to be a delineation that is asserted by Western scholars to give meaning to Muslim mobile experience rather than by Muslims themselves (Delaney 1990: 514). The reality is that wherever and for whatever reasons a journey takes place, Muslims never leave behind their religious and cultural baggage. This is especially true for practicing Muslims. The consequence of such practice is that Muslim migrants have created Muslim spaces for themselves in places where they settle. The making of Muslim spaces is built upon the demand for amenities that could meet their religious requirements. Unlike other religions which tend to be more 'private' as their practices can be carried out by isolated individuals in their own private sites, Islam is more likely to require 'public' submissions (Gerholm 1994: 202). As Gerholm (1994: 202) suggests 'an authentic Muslim life demands an extensive "infrastructure": mosques, schools, butchers, cemeteries, etc.'

Muslim migration to the West, mostly to Europe and the United States, but also to some extent to Australia and New Zealand, has altered the face of public landscape

and prompted critical reaction from both non-Muslim community and secular state. As elucidated by Grillo (2004: 863) 'public visibility of Islam and its significance for Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe have certainly increased dramatically'. Lotfi (2001: 235-236) also notes the number of mosques and Islamic centres in the United States have drastically flourished particularly since 1980s. By the early twenty-first-century there are over 2,100 mosques and Islamic centres spread across the fifty states with higher densities in certain areas like in California, New York, Illinois, Michigan and Texas than in other regions. In England, Muslim schools are seeking firm ground to negotiate and compromise their spirituality-based education system within a secular, post-modern context (Castelli and Trevathan 2005). By inhabiting a new land Muslims come to realise that there are other ways of practising Islam and of being Muslim among a diverse Muslim community besides become more aware of the commonality of faith and goals that ties them as one *ummah* (community of believers) (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990: xv). They encounter the complexities of multiple religious interpretations and practices among multi-ethnic Muslim migrants. Hence in this transnational context Muslims endeavour to define, negotiate and (re)define their religiosity.

New Zealand has been chosen as a destination by Muslims from many corners of the world. Although Muslims have migrated to this country since around 130 years ago, only in the late 1980s rapid increase in Muslim migrants occurred due to political and economic mayhem in other parts of the globe (Kolig 2010: 24–25) and to a progressive change in New Zealand immigration policy introduced in 1987 (Nachowitz 2007). The recent influx of Muslim migrants has transformed not only public urban centres but has also converted ordinary New Zealand private houses into Muslim spaces. Muslim locales are created to aim for religious identity and piety yet they have become the focal points in which multiple Muslim discourses and practices collide with secular values.

One of these locales is Mt Roskill, a neighbourhood in central Auckland with a high Muslim population. Mt Roskill is a setting in which the sacred and the secular are simultaneously lived and experienced, and it is a locale in which innovative ways of being Muslim are emerging and embodied.

Mt Roskill was a natural choice for me as a field site. Although I have never lived in the neighbourhood, many of my Muslim friends and acquaintances live in Mt Roskill and have deliberately chosen the area as their place of residence. Their intention to live there always intrigues me. What seemed to be just another suburb for other New Zealanders might have different meanings for my informants as they intentionally decided to live in this neighbourhood. Fieldwork was conducted using participant-observation between April 2010 and February 2011 in Mt Roskill in which I visited pious Sunni Muslim mothers in their homes and attended *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes where Muslim women learned and discussed the meaning and the interpretation of the Qur'an and how to recite the Qur'an in its proper Arabic pronunciation. These mothers were of Southeast Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern and East African ethnicities.[1]

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1 For a detailed explanation of the methodology of this research including the research questions see Hartono (2011).

New Zealand's Muslim Migrants

The record shows that as early as 130 years ago the first Muslims set foot in Aotearoa. They were of Chinese descent and they worked as gold miners at the Otago goldfields near Dunedin (Kolig 2010: 21, Shepard 2006: 9-10). Unfortunately there is no detailed information on whether these men lived permanently in New Zealand or returned to their home country as soon as they had completed their job at Dunstan. However no Muslims are known among the present-day New Zealand Chinese community (Kolig 2010: 21).

Since then only a handful of Muslim men, mainly from India resided and tried to make their living in different parts of the country, like Auckland and Christchurch and it was only in late 1930s that their wives and female relatives came to join them (Kolig 2010: 22). As in 1920 the government adopted a 'White New Zealand' immigration policy, further migration of Asian descent was practically non-existent and the population of Muslims in New Zealand remained at a little above fifty in 1945. By this time Muslim mobility into the country was mostly from the Balkans, Turkey and their neighbouring countries which boosted the number of Muslims in New Zealand to 260 by 1961 (Kolig 2010: 23).

A sharp increase in Muslim population occurred since the late 1980s with a considerable influx of Fiji Indian migrants and significant numbers of Muslim migrants from the Middle East and Asian countries (Kolig 2010: 25). Since the early 1990s refugees from Somalia have made New Zealand, especially Hamilton and Christchurch, their home. Under a point system immigration law which favoured well-educated or wealthy migrants, a number of Muslim professionals resettled in this country. It is estimated that at present there are as many as 40,000 to 45,000 Muslims from around forty ethnic groups (FIANZ 2010) resident in New Zealand.

Adjusting to a secular society may not be easy for some Muslims yet others have little problem adapting to values that seem foreign to them. As noted by Willis (2010: 6) mobility to different places may 'expose individuals and groups to different social norms and resources, leading to longer-term change'. Language and cultural background may play a part in the level of adjustment experienced. English fluency and a strong community in New Zealand or a similar culture have enabled some Muslims of certain ethnic groups to adjust better than others. It is acknowledged that Fiji Indians and European Muslims such as Bosnians and the Kosovars have the least difficulty whereas Somalis are more susceptible to experience hardships in terms of their adaptations to the new environment (Kolig 2010: 26, 51). Recent research on New Zealand Muslim youth also indicates their successful adjustment to life in New Zealand despite facing discrimination and acculturation pressures (Stuart et al. 2010: 11). A strong Muslim identity and engagement in Muslim practices seems to significantly contribute to their well-adjusted being and positive adaptation in their new country.

Moving to New Zealand could mean a lifetime resettlement for some Muslims but for others it is just a stepping stone to relocate to a different country, especially Australia. On reflection, a number of Muslims of my acquaintance and their families have moved to different cities in Australia in the past few years to find jobs with better remuneration or that are more suited to their qualifications (see also Kolig 2010: 51). This is not to

say that Muslims are not firmly rooted in New Zealand, to borrow Shepard's remarks of New Zealand's Muslims (Shepard 2006: 38), since many South Asian Muslims have been here for generations.

Many Muslims live in Auckland with sizeable minorities in Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch and even smaller communities in Dunedin, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Hastings and other cities spread across New Zealand (Shepard 2006). One of the suburbs in Auckland that is inhabited by many Muslims and most popular among Muslims of different ethnicities is Mt Roskill.

Creating Muslim Spaces in Mt Roskill

Mt Roskill in the past was unlike its present state. Although its boundaries have not altered much since 1842 when it was first defined as part of Eden County (Reidy 2007: 12), its social and cultural makeup has changed considerably. Indeed, many physical developments have taken place. But what is intriguing is how a suburb that was once known as 'the Bible belt' has become a populous area in New Zealand in terms of Muslim residents.

As part of Auckland City Council, its electoral district includes Wesley in the west, Waikowhai and Hillsborough in the south, Three Kings in the north with Onehunga and Te Papapa in its furthest east (Reidy 2007: 12). Due to the volcanic nature of the mountain it is understandable that the area became fertile farmland with luscious crops of vegetables, grain and oats, and dairy farms of beef and mutton from the 1800s, and developed into one of the major providers of Auckland city's food supplies (Reidy 2007: 29). By the 1860s the very affluent had built large homesteads surrounded by park-like grounds around the suburb, like Monte Cecilia country estate in Hillsborough (Reidy 2007: 29-32).

A major local development in terms of building construction in Mt Roskill happened when there was a chronic housing shortage and a high unemployment rate due to the Great Depression in the 1930s. This expansion, in the form of the construction of state houses, was completed in Three Kings, Mt Roskill South, Waikowhai and Wesley. By the end of the war 26,000 families were on the waiting list for a state house (Reidy 2007: 70-71). In the late 1940s and early 1950s Mt Roskill turned into a thriving suburb with its own shopping centre on Dominion Road, an adequate transport system of trams and buses to and from the city centre and new schools (Reidy 2007: 55, 57, 77, 96-97).

Under the governance of Mayor Keith Hay, Mt Roskill was justifiably known as 'the Bible belt' due to its largest ratio of churches per head in New Zealand.[2] With the decline of Christian belief among the wider New Zealand community during the late twentieth century, the Christian vision of Mt Roskill suburban life (Reidy 2007: 93) was a marked contrast to the rest of the country.

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2 There were 26 churches for its 35,000 residents by 1988 in Mt Roskill.

However, with the recent rise in migrants and refugees the image of Mt Roskill has changed drastically. The percentage of Christians in the area is no longer higher than the country's average. Many Muslims and Hindus have made Mt Roskill their home. With a significant decline in Christian residents and substantial percentages of Muslims and Hindus the face of East meeting West in Mt Roskill becomes more apparent. Overall the percentage of Muslim and Hindus in Mt Roskill are much higher than the national average. Mt Roskill's population of 6.7 per cent Muslim and 11.9 per cent Hindu is far above the national average of 1.0 and 1.7 per cent respectively (Reidy 2007: 149, Mt Roskill electorate profile, July 2009). While Mt Roskill is perhaps an extreme case of ethnic and religious transformation, it should be seen within a wider pattern of a shift away from an explicit identification with Christianity and a move towards multiculturalism which mirrors the general public face of the new New Zealand.

Due to its proximity to the Mangere refugee centre and availability of state houses, Mt Roskill has in recent years become home to many refugees from East African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, and the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Kuwait. As New Zealand has been providing a safe haven for refugees from war torn countries, Mt Roskill has been selected as one of the 'ideal places' for refugees to rebuild their shattered lives and has housed the largest refugee community in the country (Reidy 2007: 138).

New migrants from Asian countries, including India, who are rapidly increasing in numbers also consciously seek Mt Roskill as a place to live. Quality schools such as Mt Roskill Grammar, which was chosen as the second best school in Auckland by *Metro* magazine's 2010 survey (Scoop n.d.), have enticed many migrants to reside in the suburb. On their website Masjid e Umar, a large mosque which is located on Stoddard Road also claims that the mosque has drawn many Muslims to live in the area (Masjid e Umar n.d.). Real estate agents intentionally use the catchwords 'close to or within walking distance of the mosque' to attract Muslim clientele to purchase or rent a house in the neighbourhood (Masjid e Umar n.d.).

The mosque itself was previously built as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa but was put up for sale in May 1996. The Mt Roskill Islamic Trust, which was established in 1989, took an interest and successfully bid for the property in an auction in June 1996. The trust, which previously operated in a garage that was used as a prayer room and for Qur'an classes to meet the needs of Muslim families in the neighbourhood, saw the opportunity to acquire a larger building for its activities. With the financial support from local Muslims and overseas donors the purchase price of $1.5 million was paid off in September 1996 and it was then converted into a mosque. The expansive building that could accommodate 1200 worshippers and a minister's residence is fitting to meet the growing Muslim community in the area. By 2002 the Trust had bought the adjacent properties to cater for a Muslim women's *madrassa* (Islamic religious school) (Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand 2005).

Despite the reality of having a mosque in the area, Mt Roskill, like other neighbourhoods with mosques in New Zealand, lacks the Islamic sounds of *adhan* (call to prayer) and the sound of Qur'anic recitation that are frequently heard in mosques

in majority Muslim countries (Metcalf 1996a: 8). The *adhan* is only recited inside the mosque without a loudspeaker so its sound cannot be heard from afar. This practice may thus create the realisation of a disparity between migrants' individual and collective pasts and their current transnational context (1996a: 9).

The mosque is open for five times daily prayers including Friday congregational prayer and *Eid* prayers for Muslim brothers. Unlike many other mosques in Auckland that cater to both male and female worshippers, this institution only provides a praying facility for males. In its *ṣalāt al-Jum'ah*[3] hundreds of Muslim men, young and old, from diverse ethnicities including converts in the vicinity, attend and make their prayers. This reflects the varied cultural backgrounds of people who make Mt Roskill their home and business site. Only Sunni Muslims pray in this mosque. It is common knowledge among Muslims that Masjid e Umar is managed by Muslims from *tablighi jama'at*,[4] although its attendances encompass many others outside the *jamaat*. *Khutbah* (sermon) for Friday prayer is conducted in English and Urdu. This reflects the dominant South Asian ethnicity of the group who manage the mosque. The mosque provides a weekly Qur'an class for women in the adjacent premises. A myriad of other activities is also offered by the mosque, including *madrassa* for children, Qur'an class and weekly lectures on Islamic tenets for men, marriage ceremonies and a *hajj* training programme.

On a Friday around noon Muslims, young and old, walk in groups of twos, threes or more toward the mosque or they come in cars that they park in the mosque grounds or around the vicinity. During school holidays some fathers come with their young sons and daughters, pre-schoolers and school-aged children. Some of the boys wear *shalwar kameez*[5] or *thobe*[6] and the girls in frock and *ḥijāb* (veil). Some Muslim men come out from their business premises and walk to the mosque. Many of the people look like South Asians and Middle Eastern people adorn in their best *shalwar kameez* or *thobe*. A few others wear plain Western clothing. A few are Africans, presumably Somalians, and even fewer Southeast Asian, Chinese or Western looking. Most of the old men have beards but they keep their beards short. Only a few of them wear their beards long. Most of the young men are clean-shaven. Hundreds of people come to the mosque to pray on Friday afternoon.

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3 *Ṣalāt al-Jum'ah* is congregational Friday prayer required of all Sunni men but not of women.

4 *Tablighi jama'at* is Indian reform movement founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas in 1927 in Delhi. It is popular with villagers and peasants. It is called for reform of personal religious practices and defence of Islam and Muslim minority populations. It is focused on religious, rather than political, aspects of Islam and spread throughout the Muslim world from 1950 on (Esposito 2003). See Dickson (2009) for ethnographic account on the *tablighi jama'at* movement in Canadian urban spaces.

5 It is a Punjabi-Urdu term (it is originally from a Persian word "*salwar*" and an Arabic word "*qamis*") for a traditional dress of South Asian women and men of loose pyjama-like trousers and a long shirt or tunic.

6 *Thobe* is an ankle-length tunic typically worn by Middle Eastern men.

Masjid e Umar has become a centre in which Muslims in Mt Roskill express their Islamic identity and embody piety. Although the mosque is visited by a Muslim community of diverse ethnicities it is still distinctly South Asian in terms of its religious and sociocultural facets. This is evidenced primarily in the way they do not allow women to pray in the premises. Although the mosque provides *tafsīr* class for women and *madrassa* for girls the two classes are placed in a different building. As Qureshi (1996: 59) points out, mosques in the South Asian region are attended only by men. The reality of gender exclusion creates a sense of contrast—a contrast with their past— for Muslim women and Muslims of minority ethnicities who live in Mt Roskill and its neighbouring suburbs. Some Muslim women, like Zahra, consequently, pray at a mosque in Blockhouse Bay that caters for women when they want to perform their prayer outside their home. Or like the Middle Eastern Muslim community around the area, they have established a new mosque in Mt Albert that welcomes both genders to pray on its premises. As Qureshi (1996: 59) explains, the participation of women in mosque worship is a standard practice of Arab Muslims, which is maintained in a transnational context. In this space multiple local religious understandings and practices collide and are contested within global Islamic discourse of the current migration context, and consequently accepting dominant discourses of Islam (D'Alisera 2004: 10-11). Different ways of dressing, facial appearance and mosque attendance create a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty as to the 'proper' religious practices and motivate a sense of urgency to re-examine previous experiences.

The Muslim women I worked with, by migrating to this country, have the opportunity to interact with Muslims from other parts of the world in the *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes they attend.[7] This encourages them to reflect on the ways that they understood Islam and practiced the religion in their country of origin. They conveyed their intentions to be better Muslims, perhaps more pious, than they used to be as a result of their encounters with a multi-ethnic and similarly displaced groups of believers. Conflicts of practice and understanding of religious tenets within the confines of the broader transnational community creates an urge to critically examine their prior Islamic practice and understanding. For instance discussion on the propriety of music has taken centre stage among Muslims, including in the *tafsīr* class I attended. The argument for and against listening to music and playing musical instruments could illustrate how my informants are caught between various local meanings and universal belief and practice of Islam. In the space of the *tafsīr* class they experience self-examination and a sense of contrast between their previous and current understanding of music and how their view may not be similar to other Muslims and that of religious texts. They objectify the way they use music in their lives. It is in these sites that Muslim women come to realise that there are multiple meanings of religious belief and practice among the transnational Muslim community. Traditional Islam that they bring from back home

7 These classes are held either at a specified location that is owned by an Islamic trust or at different domestic spaces in which Muslims reside. The language used as medium of learning, which could be either English or a particular ethnic language or both, depends on the ethnicity of the participants of the classes.

collides with universalistic Islam from the Qur'an and the *ahādīth* which consecutively creates a sense of contrast— discontinuity with a past or discrepancy with the rest of society—that shapes their religious style.

In addition, Muslim businesses which provide goods and services for Muslim clientele also add to the appeal to live in the neighbourhood. Opposite the mosque, Khyber Foods and Spices shop retails Eastern spices and *ḥalāl* meat. It occupies an unattractive warehouse-like building with a very limited car park in front of the premises. However, its extensive selections of Middle Eastern and Indian spices with their distinct aroma would definitely lure buyers to come and visit the shop. The *ḥalāl* butchery at the back of the shop also has a good range of fresh meat and chicken. The shop has been in the area at least since 1999. The *ḥalāl* butchery in Stoddard Road had a business competitor when Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats opened its store not long after on Richardson Road. With its own modernised separate factory for processing, packaging and storage *ḥalāl* meat products in Avondale, which are delivered to its retail outlets, to hotels, restaurants, rest homes and local suppliers, and exported internationally (Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats (NZ) Ltd n.d.), Mohammed's *Halāl* Meat is a sound business indeed. From one shop front in the early days it has expanded to its neighbouring shops in recent years and has opened a fried chicken outlet a la the famous Kentucky Fried Chicken but using *ḥalāl* chicken instead. In spite of having practically no parking space, this retail shop is never free of bustling customers. Unlike Khyber *ḥalāl* meat with its Muslim-men-only vendors, Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats has at least one or two Muslim women serving the customers with other Muslim salesmen around her. Muslim businesses in Mt Roskill seem to expand every year. Only recently Moshim's which has its shops in different parts of Auckland including in Mt Roskill opened its shopping centre on Stoddard Road accommodating different Muslim shops including a *ḥalāl* supermarket, *ḥalāl* meat shop, *ḥalāl* food court, Muslim clothing store with a Christian aid and development organisation as one of its tenants. The plaza was opened on 20th June 2009 under the management of Moshim's Discount House Group of Companies owned by a Muslim entrepreneur. The group owns 24 stores throughout New Zealand and two stores in Australia (Indian Weekender June 21, 2009).

The above narratives illustrate public expressions of Muslim life in Mt Roskill in which Muslims create places of worship and facilitate their religious belief and practice through *ḥalāl* goods and services. As elucidated by Orsi (1999: 43) 'industrial and post-industrial cities have been the ground of a unique religious creativity' in which distinctly and specifically urban forms of religious practice, experience, and understanding are embodied. The focus of the current context of Mt Roskill is to ease worship and sanctioned religious practice in urban transnational landscape. Indeed there is 'newness' of meaning (Metcalf 1996a: 12) which emerges due to different circumstances of the larger society to the one they encounter back home as is shown by the modification of *adhan* and provision of a men only mosque congregation, for example. As Metcalf (1996a: 12) suggests 'Muslim ritual and practice cannot be understood as mere continuity with an "Old World" past'. In this 'peripheral centre', the Islamic dimension of Muslims' life is 'far from a mere changeover from the migrants' previous experience' (Mandel 1996: 164). The transformation of Mt Roskill from 'the Bible belt' into a multi-ethnic society

with strong influence of Islam is only made possible by the nature of the majority society of New Zealand, the legal status of immigrant Muslims — whether they are treated as permanent settlers or as 'guest workers' like in Germany (see Mandel 1996) — and by relationship of state and religion (see Kolig 2010). As Muslims make claims on public space, they may encounter resistance to Islam, often defined by racism that in turn shapes their behaviour (Metcalf 1996a: 12, 14, Metcalf 1996b: 124, McCloud 1996: 68, 73). What about Muslims in Mt Roskill? How do they feel about living in an environment profuse with multiculturalism, particularly Islamic nuances?

There was a spirit of multiculturalism in the neighbourhood as Huda told me during my visit to her house. She was thrilled when the refugee centre offered her and her children the opportunity to live in Mt Roskill after refusing their recommendation to reside in Three Kings due to the fact that she had not seen any people of African, Indian or Asian origins in the area. She had requested to be accommodated in a multicultural neighbourhood and not too far from the mosque. She has been happily living in her present residence ever since. She liked the fact that she could take a short drive to the mosque to drop her children off to *madrassa* and that she felt and looked the same as others around her. Even the non-Muslims in the neighbourhood, she conveyed, were familiar with and appreciative of Muslims and their values. In Huda's road alone there were ten Muslim families of different ethnicities including Afghans, South Africans, Indians and Malaysians. On a different street yet still in the same neighbourhood, Zahra and Afifa, also have Muslim neighbours, with a few Maori and Pacific Island families. Huda even put off her decision to move to a suburb on the North Shore because Middle Eastern women (from a particular ethnicity) in the area tend to take off their *ḥijāb* once they live in this country. She explained that these women no longer wear *ḥijāb* because they were pressured by their family back home to wear it and had no proper understanding that wearing a *ḥijāb* is *fard* (obligatory) in Islam.

Muslim women I worked with prefer to live in some parts of Mt Roskill with high density of Muslim neighbours close by or which is relatively close to the mosque and to public schools with significant numbers of Muslim children attending in which Muslim values are respected. These secular schools endeavour as much as possible to accommodate Muslim practices and life styles that may seem foreign. The often wide gap between 'the other' and Muslim values is bridged by negotiation and accommodation in many aspects of school life. Confronted with a different way of dressing, the public school tries to accommodate by having a special policy for their school uniform by allowing their Muslim female students to wear a *ḥijāb* and a pair of long pants or a long skirt. In the context in which gender segregation is needed, like in swimming lessons at the school swimming pool, this mixed gender school tries to follow the correct practice by having single gender swimming sessions. During this allocated time male and female Muslim students can comfortably swim in their swimming togs without having to worry about the opposite sex. With many Muslim children at the school *ḥalāl* food is served in many of the school functions and events. Likewise, a weekly 'religious' studies class that in other schools teaches about ethics and basic religious (Christian) values, in this public school it is tailored to suit Muslim students. A special Muslim teacher conducts a weekly meeting with Muslim students to explain about Islam and its

teaching. Mt Roskill Grammar School even provides a facility for its Muslim students to perform their Friday prayer in one of its classes.

In this new place, Muslim migrants have created for themselves spaces and a community on their own terms. They fit into the existing urban social and physical structure, sites and amenities that help them to refashion, express and strengthen their religious belief and practice. Since some Muslim migrants move to this country to stay, they manage to create and define a neighbourhood that gives them the means to feel secure and protected from the profanity of the 'outside world'. For my informants, living outside Mt Roskill would mean inviting more challenges for them to live as pious Muslims. Mt Roskill becomes an alternately constructed centre of Islam to the ones they have left behind in their home country. As Werbner (1996) suggests by transforming a mundane neighbourhood into a place in which religious belief is practiced Muslims have formed meaningful relationships with the spaces they occupy (see also D'Alisera 2010: 102).

As the Muslim community in the area embrace new meanings of their religious belief and practices through their engagement with multi-ethnic Muslims and the larger non-Muslim society, they too transform their domestic space into a Muslim space. How did my informants refashion the mundane space of home, in which they have more freedom and control, into a distinctive Muslim space?

Muslim Homes

One morning with clouds hanging over Mt Roskill coupled with some drizzle, I arrived in front of Zahra's house. The house she occupied with her husband and children was located at the back of a section. So I passed her front neighbour who was also a Muslim family. Approaching the front door, I could hear from the loudspeaker in her living room a man reciting the Qur'an. It was quite loud because the windows were slightly opened. Yet the sound was not audible from her neighbour's side of the section.

I said my *salām*[8] but I could not hear her reply. I knew she was home because I could hear her voice talking to her young daughter in Arabic. The curtains on the windows and front ranch slider door were closed. The white net curtains were thick with a big floral pattern all over so it was impossible for someone outside to see inside the living room.

She finally heard my greeting and peeked through the curtain. She welcomed me with a smile and asked me to come inside. Soon Zahra turned off the computer speaker from where the Qur'an recitation was coming. I saw a tall bookshelf with glass doors beside the computer table with a number of copies of Qur'ans inside.

Zahra's home illustrates a space of difference (McCloud 1996: 67-68) by means of the Qur'an recitation from the computer loudspeaker and copies of the Qur'an in the bookshelf. Similarly, Afifa also 'decorated' her house with the Qur'an in her bookshelf

8 It is the Islamic greeting "*Assalamu alaikum*", which means peace be upon you.

in the living room, while Aisha hung a number of calligraphies of Islamic texts, beside the Qur'an and religious books in her bookshelf. All the Qur'ans in Zahra's, Afifa's and Aisha's homes are placed on the highest shelf and are kept on one of the best pieces of furniture in the house to show a mark of respect (Qureshi 1996: 48). For them the Qur'an and any visual Islamic displays are not mere ornaments, rather as Qureshi (1996: 48) indicates, they are meant to initiate articulation and action of religious piety. In essence, Zahra, Afifa and Aisha use objects, images and sounds to create a Muslim space that provides them with a sense of Islamic identity and piety and to fill a void of imagined past. As Metcalf (1996a: 4) elucidates 'for a Muslim to feel at home or for a non-Muslim to recognise a Muslim space, the presence of certain spoken and written Arabic words is most telling'. The presence of the Holy book, the recitation and Islamic words dictate a certain attitude that Muslims live in this house in which prayer space is guaranteed.

The Qur'an recitation I heard at Zahra's house also transformed a physical space of an ordinary house into a site of religious identity. Indeed, Muslim ritual requires, at least in principle, no 'sacred place' (Metcalf 1996a: 6) as what is important for Muslims is the religious practice and not the site. But in practice my informants, like Aisha, Afifa and Zahra, were compelled to decorate their living room with Islamic texts and sounds that are mostly lacking in a largely non-Muslim environment. For instance, the sound of *adhan* and the sound of Qur'anic recitation that is usually heard from a mosque in a Muslim country are replaced by Qur'an recitation from a home computer loudspeaker, by Qur'an displayed in the bookshelf, the sound of *adhan* from an electronic *adhan* clock, and calligraphy on living room walls.

Zahra's, Afifa's and Huda's houses are relatively austere with no pictures or photographs on the wall or on the shelf. Aisha's home, on the other hand, is decorated with Islamic texts and calligraphy hung on her living room wall whereas such calligraphy was not present at Zahra's, Afifa's and Huda's home. They all recognise some shared Islamic values that pictures of animate objects including photographs of the occupants of the house displayed in the home are prohibited as prescribed by the Qur'an and the *hadīth*. Yet not all Muslims agree about the use of artistically calligraphied Qur'anic verses or other Islamic texts displayed as ornaments on the wall. Although Aisha has no objection on the matter, some other Muslims prohibit such practice on the grounds that such display may serve as an amulet, which incites *shirk.*[9]

The domestic space is viewed as a safe locale in which they have the freedom and control to practise their religion. It is in this site that Muslim women are free to unveil and wear any clothing they wish to, out of sight of their neighbours and visitors. In my visits to their home, some of my informants were not wearing their *ḥujub* or *niqāb* (face veil) although others still did. A Muslim female visitor is considered as a sister in Islam in which case a veil is not compulsory. When I came to Aisha's house alone she never put on her *ḥijāb* and *'abāya* although on other occasions when I visited her house with my husband on social visits she always wore proper Muslim clothing.

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9 *Shirk* is the sin of idolatry or polytheism (Woodward 1989:216).

Engaging in the embodiment of pious self in the confinement of home also means practising gender roles when guests come to visit. Some houses are consciously demarcated in terms of gender. On my visits to Aisha's home with my husband and children on the *Eid-ul-Fitr* festivity, my daughter and I were sat in the dining room adjoining the kitchen with the curtains between the dining room and the living room drawn close. Meanwhile my husband and sons were escorted to their garage that was already transformed, especially for the occasion, into a dining room. In some other Muslim homes I was guided to one portion of the house, their study or family room for example, by the wife while my husband was having a conversation with their husband in their living room. Yet not all Muslims in Mt Roskill have the same kind of gendered spatial segregation practice in their home. My Muslim friend who lives close to the mosque with her husband and children received all their guests, male and female, in the living room and had their lunch in the same space.

In the privacy of her home Afifa designated a room especially for performing *ṣalat*, for teaching her children about Islam and for weekly adult *tafsīr* class in which her neighbours from certain ethnicities came to discuss the Qur'an. The separate room for religious observance and education, as Peshkova (2009: 260) points out, 'enabled the occupants' socio-religious practices which, in turn, reproduced the meaning of domestic space for them as Islamic'. For Afifa a room particularly used for religious observance and education gives a sacred meaning to her and her family's religious experiences. Although my other informants have no special room in which they perform their religious practices or teach their children about Islam, they perform their prayer in their bedroom or living room where they can be without any disturbances and the space is large enough to place their *sajadah* facing the *qibla*. As also reiterated by McCloud (1996: 70) the minimal requirement for a Muslim space is a place for prayer in which Muslims can perform the prayer undisturbed while physically facing the *Ka'bah*.

Indeed the life in the house is characterised by 'words of Islam'. At the core of religious belief and practice are words: 'the words of qur'anic Message, words that explain and interpret the Message, words that praise God and his Messenger, words that express the believer's submission to Islam' (Qureshi 1996: 48). In my informants' homes, too, 'words of Islam' are used to imbue Muslim identity and piety in their children and themselves. Our family friends who live in Mt Roskill used a colourful poster for children with ninety-nine names of *Allah* in Arabic. Although their baby was only a few months old they have already hung the poster on their living room wall so that it will be the first thing their infant sees and learns when she starts to recognise shape, colours and letters. Aisha also placed a book on prayer for children in the bookshelf in her living room, low enough for her son to access when he needed.

Unlike most of the Muslim world, which welcomes television and radio (McCloud 1996: 72), a few of the Muslim women with whom I worked try to shut out Western values and open their door only to Muslim standards. In her house, Aisha especially installed a satellite disk that enabled her and her family to watch Middle Eastern television programmes. My Muslim friend who also lived in Mt Roskill never watched New Zealand television since she had a satellite disk to watch programmes from the many channels of Indonesian television. Despite their wish to invite Muslim beliefs into

their living room and shun the Western values of New Zealand television I was never convinced that they could totally protect themselves from the outside media influences that they considered *harām* (forbidden according to Islamic rulings).[10] Many of the Indonesian television *sinetron* (television dramas) shown outside the fasting month of *Ramadān* are never far from non-Islamic values, such as over exposure of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. As Ida (2008: 49-50) suggests, the *Ramadān* month is the only time when Indonesian television is crammed with Islamic cultures and identities which are normally marginalized. In the holy month the many Indonesian television channels try to capture their audiences' attention, who are mostly Muslims, by becoming 'religious channels' with a range of programmes from talk show programmes, sermons to quizzes, music and *sinetron* intensely full with religious content (Ida 2008: 49).

The above vignettes demonstrate how Muslims make their homes into a distinctive Muslim space through decoration, signage, gender partition and practice. In this space Muslim women create an environment in which they embody religious belief and practice, and imbue worship and sanctioned practice into their children to develop them into good Muslims. The decoration, signage and practice within the home are deliberately organised to convey and embody the teachings of the Qur'an and *ahādīth*. For my informants, the home becomes a space in which Muslim behaviour is learned and practised, and in which they have control to separate themselves from the larger society and to convey a certain attitude (McCloud 1996: 68). As Darke (1994) suggests, the private realm of the home is typically understood as a space that offers freedom and control (cited in Mallet 2004). It is here that they have a lot of control over what kind of and how much transmission of cultural and religious practices takes place in their home. Indeed it does not guarantee that secular influences of public television broadcast and the Internet, for example, are totally absent from their living room. Yet they have some degree of control to organise and select whichever information is available in their home. The control of domestic space is associated with the embodiment of piety of the occupants, I would suggest. Campo (1991 cited in McCloud 1996:69) also argues that a great deal of a house's sacrality depends on the reputation of its female occupants. In circumstances in which the occupants see the home as a focal place to impart and imbue piety they would make their home into a distinctive Muslim space that could facilitate their religious belief and practice. At least within the boundary of their home, Muslim women have some freedom and control to adopt, or on the contrary to abandon, whatever values and notions try to 'sneak into'

10 My research participants observed as much as possible what actions and demeanours are considered *halāl* and *harām* according to the Islamic tenets. While there is no argument that eating pork and drinking alcohol are prohibited according to the Islamic rulings, there are a few other actions such as playing and listening to music which are debatable among some Muslims including religious teachers. For my informants music is forbidden although many other Muslims, including some religious teachers, believe that there is no ruling against music in the Islamic tenets. As long as it does not distract Muslims from God's path and contains no immoral lyrics it is permissible. Yet my informants have to accept that their children used music in their everyday lives at school (see Hartono 2011 for a detailed description on this issue).

their home. Specifically, they have some freedom and control over how they would make their home a Muslim space in the midst of diverse religious understandings of the multi-ethnic Muslim community around them.

Conclusion

Muslim transnational mobility has certainly transformed the urban spaces in which these Muslims make their home. Like many other urban centres in the West, Auckland particularly Mt Roskill has altered into a multicultural cityscape with a dominant Islamic flavour. It is true, as suggested by Metcalf (1996: 3) that as Muslims are 'caught up in global movements…[they] carry with them a world of ritual, relationships, and symbols that creates some variety of Muslim space wherever they are present'. Indeed it is not difficult to identify the presence of Muslims through their clothing or facial appearance, for example, and through their places of worship, *ḥalāl* meat shop and food retailer or by means of 'Islamic' objects and ornaments in their home, yet these easily seen 'attributes' are not sufficient to claim a space as a Muslim space. Sanctioned practice, ritual and narrative are essential to inscribe meaning 'onto spaces that are not formally consecrated or architecturally Islamic' (D'Alisera 2010: 108).

For the women I worked with, their neighbourhood and home in Mt Roskill are 'spatial sanctuary' in which religious values and understanding are being articulated and embodied. They feel secure and protected from the outside forces of foreign and secular values. However they also realise that there are other ways of being Muslim. Through their engagement with other Muslims in Muslim spaces of *tafsir* and *tajwīd* classes and their children's *madrassa* they learn that other Muslims may not embrace, observe and understand identical religious values and practices. In the process they seek to objectify the way they practice and understand Islam in which they critically examine themselves and others, and consciously or not they define, negotiate and (re)define their religiosity. Mt Roskill then becomes a locale in which tradition, religion and secular engagement are simultaneously lived and experienced and in which innovative ways of being Kiwi are emerging and embodied.

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Biographical note

Hanny Savitri Hartono gained her Masters degree in Social Anthropology from Massey University. Her areas of interest are Muslim parenting, Muslim migrants and Muslim spaces. Currently, she is at the beginning stages of her PhD in Social Anthropology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand. Her current research focuses on Javanese Muslim mothers and the media.

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Between two worlds: women from *pesantren* appropriating private and public spaces

The history of women's emancipation in Indonesia has come a long way. In fact young underprivileged women have already had a taste of education since the early 1900s with the first established school for girls set up in Central Java by Kartini. Most Indonesians are well aware of the struggle of this women's rights champion in the midst of the patriarchal world around her. Brought up by a feudal aristocratic family,[1] Kartini managed to break down the wall that hindered young women to empower themselves with formal education and to escape from their fate of entering into an arranged marriage in their early teen years. However, not many know what is going on inside the gates of *pesantrens* in Java where young girls and female teachers negotiate their public persona amidst their conservative notions of women's roles.

Hanny Savitri Hartono

Reviewed publication:
Eka Srimulyani. 2012. *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Negotiating Public Spaces*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press,
ISBN: 978-90-8964-421-3 (paperback)

IT IS IN THIS LIGHT that this book serves its purpose. Eka Srimulyani seeks to fill a void of knowledge on how Muslim women, especially *nyais* (the wife or daughter of a *kiai*, the head of a *pesantren*) empower themselves with education, Islamic as well as mainstream, and as a consequence move between two worlds – private and public. This is not to say that they encounter no obstacles along the way, but these women have achieved tremendous milestones which could never have happened prior to Kartini's era.

Based on her fieldwork in Jombang, East Java between 2003 and 2004, Srimulyani starts her narrative with a brief account of *pesantren*, traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, particularly those in Java. She purposely frames her research within the agency of the *nyais* due to the lack of studies focusing on women in *pesantren*. Most of the studies on Islamic educational institutions thus far have been devoted to enquire about *kiais*, their leadership, traditions and intellectual transmission. Women from *pesantren* tend to be absent from the academic discourse although they play a significant part in this establishment and beyond. Srimulyani concludes that this trend to a large extent is influenced by "the patriarchal nature of *pesantren* leadership" in which a male descendant is the most likely replacement for a *kiai* when he passes away or is no longer in power. This is especially true not only in Java and Aceh but also in different parts of the Islamic world. The contribution made by the *nyais* in empowering young girls through education and leadership in *pesantrens* seemed trivial and insignificant, thus not worth investigating. However, with the recent social change in women's engagement in the public arena, Srimulyani is inspired to investigate how these women deal with the issue of negotiating public spaces amidst the domestically bound Javanese traditional women's roles. She points out that the social life of women who live, study and work in a *pesantren* cannot be compared to other Muslim women in Indonesia who live outside this institution, due to the unique cultural norms and principles embodied by the establishment and its members. Hence such study is necessary and long overdue.

This ethnographic text reveals the history, journeys and both the public and private lives of three chosen *nyais* from different generations by tracing back their paths. Srimulyani intentionally selected these women to cover a span of history from the early 1900s to the present. Her core argument is that despite the fact that patriarchal traditions are learned through *kitab kuning* and practised in the *pesantren*, these women can transcend the boundaries of the institution and assume public responsibilities not only in their *pesantren* but also in their community.

Srimulyani introduces the concept of *santri ibuism*, which derives from the notions of *priyayization* and *ibuism*, to describe the status of *nyais*. *Priyayization* pertains to a process in which Javanese women from a privileged middle-class background, assume power in the Western sense because of their class status. In this manner a woman embodies power because of her husband's status. Her social standing within the household and outside the home is greatly determined by her husband's notability. Whereas *ibuism* applies to a situation in which a woman accepts her role as a mother who takes care of her family, group members and country without expecting any reward, power or prestige in return. These Javanese ideals of womanhood were embraced and promoted by Suharto's New Order regime without any consideration of the existing vast diversity of cultures within the country. Srimulyani sees that these concepts are embedded in the *nyais* as they are mothers of their own children, 'mothers' for their pupils in the *pesantren* and they can also exercise their power to manage the boarding school, especially in matters that relate to their female students, through their engagement as a pesantren leader in their own right and/or as a *kiai's* wife.

What strikes a chord in this body of knowledge is the reality of having *kitab kuning* as the moral compass and teaching material used in the majority of *pesantren* under the wing of the Nahdlatul Ulama (the biggest traditionalist Muslim organisation in Indonesia). These textbooks contain interpretations of Islam not only from the Qur'an and the *ḥadīths*, but they are also fully charged with local cultural and traditional understandings that lead them to separate women's and men's roles in two very separate boxes, and place public and private spheres in the opposite continuum. Hence it is not too much to say that these *nyais* deserve all the credit since these women have weathered the predicaments they faced.

The value of this book lies in the richness of its narratives describing the history and private and public lives of the female leaders of traditional Islamic institutions in East Java that have barely been touched before. As a female Muslim of Indonesian descent who has no *pesantren* background, the book opens my eyes and provides me with a deeper understanding on what is going on behind the 'closed doors' of *pesantren* in East Java. One thing makes me wonder though. Will the future female leaders of *pesantrens* encounter fewer frictions since there has been a new movement to critically analyse and improve the *kitab kuning* for its patriarchal notions?

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Notes

1 For a detailed account of Kartini's life, dreams and struggles, see Raden Ajeng Kartini. 1921. *Letters from a Javanese princess* (A. L. Symmers, Trans). London: Duckworth & Co. Available from Project Guttenberg.

Below: Girls at a *pesantren* in Jakarta, at an assembly to meet U.S. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Kristen Bauer. (Photo reproduced under a creative commons license, courtesy flickr.com)

– BOOK REVIEWS –

SANCTUARIES OF THE CITY: LESSONS FROM TOKYO

by Anni Greve
Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, 2011.
216 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-7764-2 (hbk)

Reviewed by
Eleanor Rimoldi,
Massey University, Albany

This book is an interesting exercise in interdisciplinary thinking. It is published as part of the *Re-materialising Cultural Geography* series, the aim of which is to explore 'the dialectical relations which exist between culture, social relations and space and place'. The author is affiliated with the Department of Society and Globalization at Roskilde University in Denmark. Her research for this book was supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Scandinavian-Sasakawa Foundation and the Toyota Foundation. The book relies on contemporary English-language texts in Japanese studies. Disappointingly for a social anthropologist there is only occasional reference to her own first-hand empirical fieldwork to illustrate nine chapters of densely packed theory. However, in chapter ten, we are treated to 'several clusters of places alongside each other with sanctuary qualities' (Harajuku Station, the Meiji jingo Shrine, Street Dance and Free Jazz), and Greve's exposition of 'worldliness' and 'the cosmopolitan disposition' comes alive. As a teacher of urban anthropology, I would probably go directly to chapter ten to engage the interest of my students.

The author considers her contribution to be primarily reflections on theory and method, and the potential for social geography to contribute to an interdisciplinary debate on the concept of culture. For anthropologists, culture is a contested concept, which Greve does acknowledge. In particular, she critiques Ruth Benedict's 'othering' of the Japanese, which Greve sees as flawed not only in its political implications, but also because Benedict had never been there. However, Greve herself plays down the importance of the empirical stance. For example, she spends an inordinate time rethinking Durkheim, perhaps because she has also chosen the path of armchair anthropology, unnecessary as

Greve apparently had sufficient empirical experience to generate a grounded theoretical approach. Therefore, for an anthropologist, there is a certain disconnect between the theoretical eclecticism which makes up most of the book, and the examples of sanctuary presented.

However, it is the concept of sanctuary that is most interesting and the theme that holds the book together. Sanctuary is presented as a kind of liminal space; not the shrine but the space in front of the shrine. It is secular, and allows for the expression of free play. Various unexpected elements can be brought together, as in her example of 'free Jazz', where 'musicians [from all over the world] might not be able to talk together, but they can play together and improvise in a defined musical style' (p.177). Such spaces provide creative sanctuary in cities where strangers can practice a civility and 'worldliness' necessary in crowded cosmopolitan urban life. Sanctuaries can, and do, emerge in many ways, whether in pre-planned spaces, such as parks or squares, in crowded places that become empty at night, or as flash mobs that spring up in the midst of city streets.

In chapter 4 there is an interesting discussion of Hidenobu Jinnai's book *Tokyo, a Spatial Anthropology*:

> A city can be conceptualized in two ways (Jinnai 1995, 5), 'It can be seen as an artificial creation, following an urban plan based on the ideas of the rulers and the leaders'; or it can be seen 'as a space that its people actually inhabit. The varied activities of the people who live and work there give meaning to urban space and add to it an image of abundance'.... This involves the art of learning by walking its streets. (p.72).

By walking the streets following seventeenth century city maps, Jinnai came to understand that present day Tokyo, despite having been rebuilt twice (after the 1923 earthquake, and the bombing of World War 11), still 'followed the lines of the old symbolic order, ...the uses of asymmetry and of empty space' (73).

Whether in relation to sudden natural calamity, such as we have experienced in Christchurch, or the slow erosion of urban history in the built environment of Auckland or Wellington, this understanding of the relation between the 'natural flows of society and urban environment' is an important element in any attempt to create beautiful, livable cities. Cultural mapping of this kind is seen in the work of many urban anthropologists, such as Abu-Lughod's walk through the neighborhood of New York's lower east side (Abu-Lughod 1994).

Just as there is a tradition in New Zealand of calling on archeologists to carry out a site survey prior to development that might impact on Maori heritage, there would be significant value in establishing a tradition of urban anthropology that documents how we live in our cities. A first step might be to compile the work that has already been done, and then to encourage teaching and research in this area.

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HOLOCAUST IMAGES AND PICTURING CATASTROPHE: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF SEEING

by Angi Buettner
Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, 2011
210 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-0765-2 (hbk).

Reviewed by
Allen Meek,
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This book is a study of the role that images of the Holocaust play in symbolic and aesthetic responses to catastrophe. Certain images of the Holocaust have become iconic, and have influenced subsequent representations of other catastrophes, such as the Rwandan genocide. Buettner considers what is at stake in the cultural politics of these forms of representation. She proposes that the rhetorical uses of Holocaust images are a means 'to turn attention to violence, injustice and suffering' (p.4). In her introduction she invokes Walter Benjamin's figure of the angel of history as an enduring model for placing catastrophe at the centre of political understanding, along with his point that modern mass media serve a desire in the public to bring things 'closer' (p.11). Buettner proposes that the use of Holocaust imagery serves this need to make catastrophe somehow more familiar and accessible.

This is important territory in contemporary visual culture, and the book covers a range of compelling case studies and addresses issues of major aesthetic, ethical and political significance. The discussion of the photographs of James

Natchwey (chapter four) and the uses of Holocaust imagery by the radical animal rights movement (chapter six) are both examples of original and engaging research. The analysis of these and other examples leads Buettner to make the following proposition:

> At the heart of debates over Holocaust uses – and of Holocaust discourse – lies a paradox. The dominant Holocaust discourse has declared the universal relevance of the Holocaust. At the same time, however, Holocaust uses that apply this universal reference are lamented as controversial, improper, or as a form of abuse (p.134).

The book's exploration of this paradox is positioned at the intersections of Holocaust studies and visual culture studies, although it also includes extensive discussion of literary and philosophical texts. A review of the Holocaust as master theory in chapter seven might have been helpful at the beginning in order to stake out the parameters of this specific project. The book's methodologies are derived from cultural studies (the complex relations between groups and institutions in the social production of meaning) and the visual studies of theorists and critics, including W.J.T Mitchell and John Berger. Mitchell's work, in particular, probably stands as the most important precedent for Buettner's concern with the ongoing transformation of images across different media. Overall, however, the book tends to borrow freely from a range of theories and approaches, particularly the extensive literature on the Holocaust. As the principal interest of the book lies in tracing the rhetorical transformation of media images, it might have benefited from a greater number of illustrations.

The chapters analyze a series of case studies that includes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the events of September 11, the Rwandan genocide, and animal rights. Chapter two discusses the ways that the Holocaust has shaped the historical imagery of modern Israel. The perception of Jews as victims of persecution and genocide (p.19) has permeated representations of Israel. Depending on the political perspective, this has meant that Israelis can be stereotyped as either heroic survivors of Nazi oppression or, in a symbolic reversal, Nazi-style oppressors of Palestinians (p.26). The image of the victim can be used to justify acts of self-defense, aggression, and violent retribution toward perceived enemies, while the image of the Nazi can be employed to morally condemn such actions.

One of Buettner's key points is that it is no longer simply a question of Holocaust representation being evaluated in terms of its historical accuracy, because Holocaust images now permeate collective memory in diverse international

contexts. She also proposes, however, that a decisive shift occurred 'in the final decades of the twentieth century' (p.51) in which the Holocaust became 'the Holocaust'. One can question such a distinction insofar as the Holocaust has always been a term that included a complex set of historical events, and has been contested in a number of different historical accounts. For example, the term 'Holocaust' has been criticized for focusing exclusively on the Jewish victims of Nazism, rather than addressing what could be seen as the more fundamental problem of the responsibility of modern states (including Great Britain and the United States) for the mass deaths of civilian populations.

Buettner argues that representations of the Rwandan genocide in Western news media evoked Holocaust imagery, thereby tending to aestheticize and dehistoricize the events. Another perspective on this transfer of imagery, however, could be to understand the European colonial genocide in Africa as a forerunner of the Nazi genocide in Europe. By taking the Jewish Holocaust as the central reference point (what Jeffrey Alexander has called a 'moral universal'), cultural analysis – like media representations – may constrain our historical perspective on racism and mass murder. Debates about the 'uniqueness' of the Jewish Holocaust have played an important role in determining how we approach other instances of genocide. The case of famine under nineteenth century colonial rule discussed in the final chapter returns to this unresolved problem. This chapter considers the extent to which catastrophe remains beyond visual representation. At its close, then, the book opens out to a set of questions that may no longer require the Holocaust as its central point of reference, but would rather see the Holocaust as itself part of a deeper historical continuum that we are still only beginning to acknowledge.

NEW ZEALAND'S MUSLIMS AND MULTICULTURALISM

by Erich Kolig

Leiden, Brill, Muslim Minorities Volume 9, 2010.
272 pp. ISBN: 978-9-0041-7835-9 (hbk).

Reviewed by
Hanny Savitri Hartono,
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In this book, Erich Kolig explores and discusses the Muslim minority in New Zealand, and pays particular attention to how national multicultural poli-

cies and legislation, specifically those which relate to the freedom of religio-cultural expression (p.12), affect the lives of Muslims amidst the larger non-Muslim society. Based on more than ten years of research since the mid-1990s, beginning with a small community of Muslims in Dunedin, and subsequently extended to include Muslims from different parts of the country, he wrote this book to fill the gap in research on the Muslim minority.

The book discusses a myriad of issues of particular interest in relation to Muslims that were widely exposed in the media after the events of 9/11. Issues such as the public transport bombing in London on July 7, 2005, publication of Danish cartoons in a number of New Zealand newspapers, the Ahmed Zaoui case and the *burqa* case (in which two Afghani women refused to unveil their faces in order to give evidence in a New Zealand court) among others are discussed. These provide perspectives on how different policies and legislation on human rights, freedom of speech and of religious and cultural manifestation work for or against New Zealand's Muslims' ability to live peacefully in the host country, and multiculturalism to be accepted as part of the current New Zealand.

By highlighting circumstances in other countries, particularly Europe and the U.S., and their disparate policies and legislation regarding Muslims and multiculturalism, and comparing these, and their significantly higher number of Muslim migrants, refugees and converts, with those of New Zealand Kolig concludes that Muslims in New Zealand may be somewhat better placed than Muslim minorities in other countries. Although the portrayal of Islam in the media tends to discredit Muslims by association with radicalism, militancy and, fanaticism (p.62), Muslims in New Zealand appear to be treated with more tolerance by the wider community. Indeed, the majority of Muslims in New Zealand 'do not wish to share in the ideals of an extremist and fanatical minority who believes it has to defend Islam by violence' (p.262), yet they still carry the stigma of being the 'aggressor' instead of the 'victim' of unbalanced and unjust views about Muslims and Islam. So-called 'mainstream' New Zealanders sometimes tend to take a negative stand, or to show 'an uncharacteristic lack of empathy and interest' (p.262). This is not to deny that individuals and groups of non-Muslims support New Zealand's Muslims in defending themselves against antagonistic forces surrounding them. As is reiterated a number of times in the book 'New Zealand's Muslims, by and large, have enjoyed benevolent indifference from the state system' (p.9).

As a Muslim myself, I applaud Kolig's effort to provide a balanced and thorough discussion of Muslims and Islam. Indeed, the aim of his book is not to elucidate the general Islamic tenets, or to explain the beliefs and practices of

New Zealand's Muslims (p.12). However, by pointing out pertinent *āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'an and *ahādīth* to issues being discussed throughout the text, Kolig offers insight for the readers on why Muslims behave in certain ways, or adopt certain manners and understandings. His interest lies in how Muslims' 'interpretation of Islam guided their existence in a non-Muslim, highly secularised society' (p.15). Furthermore, he also clearly underlines that Muslims embody multiple religious discourses and practices, which gives new meaning and perspective to the often mistakenly-construed monolithic religion. I think this works both ways, for Muslim as well as non-Muslim readers. For non-Muslim readers, the text may enlighten them about the diverse interpretations of Islam and the effect of the available multicultural policies in different contexts of secular citizenship on Muslim minorities in New Zealand, and in the West generally. On the other hand, for Muslim readers this book may provide an insight into how the rest of the world, mainly the West and the wider society in New Zealand, perceive Islam, and how misunderstandings and intolerance may arise from isolated incidents overseas, deliberately exposed and exaggerated to otherwise relatively peaceful multicultural existence.

The text runs largely on 'a level of abstraction' (p.16) or analysis rather than narrative. Kolig's reason for taking this approach is understandable, as the number of Muslims in this country is relatively small. Hence, any story might be traceable to its source, and the intention of protecting the identity of the informant could be jeopardised. After explaining the current circumstances which Muslims in the West are experiencing, especially after the events of 9/11, elucidating the aim of the book and the field research in the first chapter, chapter 2 details the history of Muslim migration to New Zealand, Muslim organisations and their functions and programmes, and the make-up of the Muslim community in New Zealand, as well as the realities for Muslims of living in a secular country. Different disputes around the issues of language used in the *khutba* (sermon) on Friday prayer at mosques, or doctrinal division between conservative and more liberal Muslims, for example, alter the 'perfect image' of all Muslims as a monolithic bloc (p.42).

Chapter 3 discusses the issue of multiculturalism in the West, including New Zealand. Kolig shows that policies set up to accommodate a culturally multichromatic society so that different cultural values, beliefs and conducts can live side by side in mutual respect and common citizenship, do not always work for the benefit of all parties involved. However, New Zealand, with its Bill of Rights, Human Rights Act, and experience of Pakeha and Maori biculturalism seems to be more capable than its counterparts in Europe and the U.S. to 'manage' its Muslim minority. Although New Zealand officially proclaims its

secularization, multiculturalism in terms of various cultures and religions is acknowledged through the works and efforts of its Ministry of Ethnic Affairs..

In chapter 4, Kolig details integration and conflict discourses. He emphasises the importance of a sense of equality (p.135) embodied within the policy of integration, in which freedom of choice and equal standing of mutual interaction are assured. However, he cautions for a need to ascertain regulative limitations to ensure interaction and a social cohesion between multiethnic communities, as too much or too little cultural freedom could work against a minority community in many different ways. In this chapter Kolig conveys a number of conflict discourses to illustrate how religious communities, including Muslims, react to religious insults, such as the Danish cartoons affair, the Pope's faux pas and 'The Bloody Mary' controversy of the cartoon series *South Park*. In the subsequent chapters, issues of gender depicted by the *burqa* case, and of terrorism, elucidated by the Zaoui case, take centre stage with the aim of portraying how the reality of multiculturalism is complex and not easy to untangle.

With the current tendency of some European countries to 'restrict' the cultural-religious expression of their minority Muslim citizens by means of policies and legislation, Kolig's book is important, as it provides insight and better understanding of Muslims and their beliefs and practices, and shows that lessons can be learned from different outcomes of multiculturalism in different parts of the world.

POLICY WORLDS: ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY POWER

Edited by Cris Shore, Susan Wright and Davide Però
Berghahn Books, New York, 2011.
343 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8574-5116-3 (hbk).

Reviewed by
Grant Duncan,
Massey University, Albany

Not being an anthropologist, I can admit with a clear conscience to having never read Malinowski. But, sitting in my living-room, I can view satellite images of the Trobriand Islands that discern individual built structures, I can

look up WHO statistics on HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea, and I can read about what AusAID is contributing to PNG's development – all in the space of a few minutes. The sexual life of the peoples of those islands today is evidently a question of policy, both local and global. And it is also a question that is open to global inspection on-line, at any time, by anyone with internet access.

The 'policy worlds' of today are radically dislocated, fast-moving and unpredictable. Power/knowledge is dispersed across channels that cover the globe at the speed of light. Anyone can appear expert in five minutes. Finance, diplomacy and warfare occur increasingly in virtual spaces. Trade happens by the nano-second, making machine-operated algorithms more competitive than human beings.

For all the social sciences, such developments compel us into new directions of inquiry; and the present text illustrates how anthropologists can bring their expertise to bear on the complex local/global practices of policy-making.

The editors justifiably reject the technocratic flow-diagram imagery of policy-making as a rational linear (or cyclical) process with discernible stages, authorised actors and definable ends. One day as a fly on the wall in the Beehive (pardon the mixed metaphor) would be enough to convince anyone that textbook theory and practical reality are different worlds, so there can be little argument with this point.

Instead, the two qualities of policy-making that anthropologists can highlight for us, they suggest, are its 'messiness and ambiguity' and its foundations in meaning and subjective understandings. This, too, is a valid direction. Policy-making may sometimes need to follow regulated pathways with well-established technical methods (the annual Budget cycle, for instance), but, fundamentally, public policy is always a work in progress. It relies on ever-changing networks and exchanges of ideas, and it means making choices with unpredictable results that, it is hoped, will express and enact values shared by significant communities. Hence, there is certainly much messiness and ambiguity in real-world policy exchanges, reflecting the political nature of the process and the unpredictable outcomes; and contests over meanings and hegemonic understandings are intrinsic to the processes. Anyone listening to policy debates in the media can appreciate this.

The editors are also right to point out that there is not really a 'sovereign author'. If we see policy as a game of meaning-making, then there can be no meta-language (to borrow from Lacan). There is no master-text of technically exact,

value-free and lawful policy science; and there is no 'ideal legislator' overseeing anything. But there is a multitude of voices out there trying to work within or around relations of power, and trying to influence what gets done about complex problems.

Reading the individual chapter studies in this volume, then, I asked myself what fresh approach anthropologists bring to policy studies. Much of the analysis is fairly 'high-level', in that it relies on public documents, including media interviews. So, for example, the famous BBC 'bombshell' interview with Clare Short in 2004 is presented as 'ethnographic data'. That's fine, except that this is also 'data' that might be used by historians, political scientists, strategic analysts and investigative journalists. And I could not really see any methodology or analytical perspective being brought to bear that was either distinctively anthropological or unfamiliar to critical policy studies.

This is not to say that the case studies are not interesting or useful. It is merely to ask why it is suggested repeatedly in this text that an anthropological approach can offer something that would otherwise be missing. Studies in the public policy world that I inhabit are frequently interpretive, focused on the experiences of persons affected by policies – as well as the ideas of those who design them – and aware of irrational, messy processes and unintended outcomes.

A lot of the analysis in this text, then, did not really stand out for me as representing an identifiably 'anthropological' approach – if there is such a thing. Not many of the researchers use participant-observation within policy-making teams or networks, for instance. Those who do rely on some insider experience have not necessarily provided fresh methodological insights.

But there are nice examples, and the chapter by Kugelberg is one that I would refer students to. This study describes fieldwork with an association of immigrant African women in Sweden, and charts the ways in which official evaluation and funding systems affected the very aims and objectives of the association, and imposed preconceived criteria on their organization. It shows how public policy and grass-roots community associations affect one another, the power behind the former disguising itself in a supposedly (but not really) neutral technical rationality.

Let me turn to the theoretical orientation of this text as a whole. To get a handle on this, just go to the index of names and see which theorists get the most citations. In the lead are Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose – two theorists

who have influenced my own work. Bruno Latour is mentioned a lot. I don't like to force theorists into disciplinary pigeon-holes, but I wouldn't describe these fellows as anthropologists.

The authors in this text are certainly not slavish followers of Foucault, or of his governmentality thesis. But it does need to be pointed out that Foucault's 'archaeology' is *not* primarily aimed at elucidating the contested meanings of what was said and done in the political heat of the times. What he meant by 'discourse' was not 'a mere intersection of things and words… [but rather] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 2002: 53–54).

Rather than watch the game as a critic, Foucault chose to ask on what grounds the crowd and the contestants *and* their critics could get together, adopt their roles, and unquestioningly *know* what was going on. Anthropologists may or may not share such a methodology; but, although Foucault appears to be the most frequently cited theorist in this text, its contributors have not fully imbibed what he was teaching. To get to the level at which Foucault was working requires some critical reflection of one's present-day methods and disciplines.

Although there is a common misconception about this in much secondary literature, Foucault's analyses of discursive practices were not intended to lead to the uncovering of 'covert cabals' that 'subvert democratic accountability' (Shore, reviewed text, p.128). Critical literature inspired by Foucault is often reduced to this kind of task. It reads as if there were some covert intentionality behind the forces and strategies at play that must be identified, exposed and opposed in the name of democracy. And then it must also be the task of such a text to include narratives revealing how those who are the 'recipients' of the policies of the powerful 'contest and redefine' the terms of engagement (Però, reviewed text, p.223).

It is revealing, too, that Giorgio Agamben is referred to only once in the text, according to the index. His approach supplements Foucault very well, and would have helped some of the contributors in resolving the tension they perceive between the norms of law (and of policy-making) and the sheer force of law. Agamben dwells on the paradox of law that suspends the law, and thus he helps us to make sense of the exercise of power over matters such as national security or the administration of aliens.

This book-length exchange that I've now witnessed between the Policy-wonks and the anthropologists led me to re-read Clifford Geertz on Balinese men

and their cocks. He describes the cockfights as a form of 'deep play' that, in its most refined form, cannot be judged rationally because the participants stand to lose far more than they stand to win. But the drama can nonetheless be understood in meta-textual, interpretive terms as 'a story they [Balinese men] tell themselves about themselves' (Geertz 1972: 26).

Isn't the policy-fight often a game in which, partly due to the sheer complexity of the field, what you stand to lose may outweigh what you rationally stand to gain in a utilitarian sense – a game in which men's cocks and their social statuses take on a significance that cannot be accounted for by the monetary values of the exchanges? Locally, we can observe instances such as the nuclear-free policy, the privatisations and the dramas of elections – internationally, the 'shock and awe' as Baghdad fell, the apotheosis of greed in deregulated financial markets, the euro-crisis, failed climate-change negotiations, and the popular rage for constitutional reform in Tahrir Square. It is through such events that we learn how to 'read' our predicaments, how to know what we feel and why we feel it, in a world that has no universal lexicon for talking about meanings and feelings or about what happens next – let alone any applicable calculus.

One of the difficulties for an anthropology of the world of policy – especially an 'analysis of *contemporary* power' – is that the anthropologist is embedded in the game – possibly dangerously so. Geertz was an outsider looking in; Foucault chose historical examples. I believe it is possible, but I know it is very difficult, to lay bare the discursive practices or interpretive meta-narratives of the political world in which one acts – or suffers – here and now. And I don't think that the present text achieves that difficult task.

This book is to be welcomed all the same. Public policy, in academic terms, is not really a discipline in the traditional sense. It deals with complex problems that necessarily require cross-disciplinary intelligence. As a practical enterprise, policy-making is too important to be left in the hands of economists and politicians. And so the intervention of anthropologists is important.

In the Afterword chapter, Dvora Yanow helped to put the problematic of this text into perspective for me. While anthropology has expanded beyond its traditional, localized studies, to move also into realms that are urban, organizational and trans-local, North American public policy teaching has been hampered by 'a strongly entrenched realist-objectivist hegemony' (Yanow, reviewed text, p.301). She points particularly to the Harvard MPP.

Some Australasian public policy academic programmes do suffer from con-

servative outlooks; but the 'realist-objectivist' model is not hegemonic in this part of the world. Many now adopt a critical, cross-disciplinary perspective, using qualitative, interpretive and advanced theoretical approaches. So, the contribution of this text to policy studies seems 'mainstream' to me; whereas it may be a useful tool for students in other centres who need to break some molds.

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