Cheating for the greater good?
Understanding academic cheating in senior secondary schools in Indonesia

Brian Arieska Pranata
(21769544)
B.A. (Brawijaya University, Indonesia)
M.A. (Ohio University, USA)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The University of Western Australia
School of Social Sciences
Asian Studies
2019
I, Brian Arieska Pranata, certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in this degree.

This thesis does not contain material which has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

In the future, no part of this thesis will be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of The University of Western Australia.

This thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text and, where relevant, in the Authorship Declaration that follows.

This thesis does not violate or infringe any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

The research involving human data reported in this thesis was assessed and approved by The University of Western Australia Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval #: RA/4/1/8521. Written participant consent has been received and archived for the research involving participant data reported in this thesis.

This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Signature:

Date: 19 July 2019
ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, the lively public discourse on academic cheating is focused on the National Examination, which is basically a standardised test for year 9 and year 12 students. While extensive attention has been given to cheating in the National Examination, unfortunately other behaviours that have developed into a pervasive cheating problem have been overlooked. This thesis explores the prevalent forms of cheating in schools in Indonesia. To explain the pervasiveness of the problem, this thesis examines the dynamics of the social relationships of the students.

Fieldwork was conducted in two senior secondary schools, one in Bandung, West Java, and another in Semarang, Central Java, from November 2016 to March 2017. I employed participant observation as the main technique in collecting the data. Every school day, Monday to Friday, I spent approximately seven hours at school, immersing myself in the daily life of the participants. I had the opportunity to carry out impromptu informal conversations with students and teachers during school hours. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 34 participants. To analyse the data, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, the various forms of capital, field, practice, and cultural reproduction.

The data show that cheating in schools in Indonesia is indeed beyond cheating in the National Examination. It ranges from students copying their classmates’ homework to teachers leaking exam questions. The government expects that technology will be a major part of the solution to the cheating-in-exams problem, but students were always able to turn the technology to their own benefit. This can be seen from the high frequency with which students use their smartphone as a cheating tool.

This thesis finds that students acquired comfort and safety from their peer group, which shows the strongly collectivist pattern of Indonesian young people’s social behaviour. Students highlighted the important role of cheating in establishing and maintaining their social group, and in securing their position in their social hierarchy. In Bourdieu’s terms, cheating in academic work has become a source of both social and symbolic capital. This thesis also finds that students were constantly negotiating the acceptability of the cheating behaviours for two reasons. First, they were strongly influenced by the dominant social structure that they had actually created with their collectivism. Second, students were contesting the immorality of academic cheating with the positive moral values, such as helping one another, that are significant in their social relations, and the latter proved to be more dominant.

The government has suggested that academic cheating in the National Examination could be one of the causes of the country’s major corruption problem. This research tried to find a causal relationship between the two problems. While the thesis could not find substantial tangible evidence for such a link, it did find that the reproduction of a culture of opportunism and the practice of collectivism in the two schools have become elements that enable corruption to flourish.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Declaration.................................................................................................................................................. ii
Abstract ................................................................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................................. iv
List of Tables........................................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................................... ix
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................................... x

## Chapter One - Introduction

- **Background of the Study** ............................................................................................................................... 1
  - Academic cheating: a global challenge ............................................................................................................ 1
  - Academic cheating in schools in Indonesia ................................................................................................... 3
  - The government’s idea to relate corruption and academic cheating ................................................................ 6
- **Research questions** ......................................................................................................................................... 7
- **Structure of the thesis** ................................................................................................................................... 8

## Chapter Two - Theoretical Framework

- **Introduction** ................................................................................................................................................... 11
- **Bourdieu’s theories** ........................................................................................................................................ 12
  - Habitus ............................................................................................................................................................ 12
  - Capital ............................................................................................................................................................ 13
  - Fields .............................................................................................................................................................. 15
  - Practice .......................................................................................................................................................... 16
  - Reproduction ................................................................................................................................................ 17
- **Personal experiences and reflections on academic cheating** ...................................................................... 18
- **Explaining the logic of (my) cheating using Bourdieu’s concepts** .............................................................. 20
- **Conceptual Framework** ............................................................................................................................... 23

## Chapter Three - Research Methodology

- **Introduction** ................................................................................................................................................... 27
- **The rationale for qualitative research** ........................................................................................................... 27
- **Research design** ............................................................................................................................................ 28
- **Setting** ........................................................................................................................................................... 30
- **Participants** .................................................................................................................................................... 39
- **Challenges in gaining entry** .......................................................................................................................... 41
  - Research permit ............................................................................................................................................ 41
  - My employment status .................................................................................................................................... 42
  - The gatekeeper and the access-giver/blocker ............................................................................................... 44
  - Introducing my project: the trust issue .......................................................................................................... 46
Data collection.................................................................................................................. 48
Observations ...................................................................................................................... 48
Interviews ......................................................................................................................... 53
Document analysis ........................................................................................................... 56

Triangulation of data ........................................................................................................ 57

Data analysis and coding procedures .............................................................................. 58

Ethical considerations ...................................................................................................... 59

Strengths and limitations of the research ....................................................................... 62

Chapter Four - An overview of academic cheating practices in schools in Indonesia

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 64

Defining academic cheating in schools in Indonesia ....................................................... 64

Menyontek (cheating) ....................................................................................................... 65
The (Indonesian) iGen ....................................................................................................... 70
Teacher absenteeism ........................................................................................................ 75
Menyontek: right or wrong .............................................................................................. 77

The quest to solve the problem: the schools ................................................................. 79
Schools’ dirty laundry: the issue of acknowledgment .................................................... 79
The efforts ......................................................................................................................... 82
Implementing sanctions ................................................................................................. 85

The quest to solve the problem: the government ......................................................... 86
Addressing cheating in the National Exam .................................................................... 86
The National Examination Integrity Index ..................................................................... 87

Incorporating ‘integrity’ into schools ............................................................................. 91
The case of SMA Semarang ............................................................................................ 91
The case of SMA Bandung ............................................................................................. 92
In both schools: the statement of honesty .................................................................... 93

What to do ....................................................................................................................... 94
Giving punishments ......................................................................................................... 94
Addressing the stress factors ....................................................................................... 95
Solving the resources problem ..................................................................................... 96
It is working! .................................................................................................................... 97

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 98

Chapter Five - The Habitus of cheating in a high achieving school and
a non-high achieving school: a comparison

Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 99

Finding the patterns ....................................................................................................... 99
Students menyontek on homework at school ............................................................. 100
Teachers misusing their authority in grading students ........................................... 106
Distribution of cheating materials by students and teachers ............................. 110
Chapter Seven

Comparing and analysing the patterns using Bourdieu’s theories

Chapter Six - The social relations of academic cheating

Introduction

Teman (friends)

As long as we are together, we will be fine

The need to have a group
Collectivism
The popular kids

Academic cheating as symbolic capital

Social acceptance
How students accept academic cheating: All of us are doing it
How the adults accept academic cheating: It is a learning process
How the adults accept academic cheating: We know what’s best
Ignorance is (not) bliss

How students negotiate the acceptability of academic cheating

The two schemas
Schema one: The symbolic violence of academic cheating
Schema two: I’m just being helpful – moralities in conflict
Academic cheating – is it a form of resistance?

Academic cheating: a source of distinction

Academic cheating: a source of recognition
The other popular kids: the helper

Conclusion

Chapter Seven - Academic cheating and corruption – is there a causal relationship?

Introduction

Defining corruption

Corruption in Indonesia

Its history before the 20th century
Its history after Independence to the end of the New Order era .................... 186
Corruption in contemporary Indonesia ................................................... 190

Corruption, academic cheating, and the suggested solution for the two problems
...................................................................................................................... 193
Mental Revolution in the education sector ................................................... 197

Reactions to the suggested causation ............................................................ 199
How did my participants perceive corruption? ........................................... 199
Disagreeing with the causal relationship suggestion .................................... 202
Support for the suggestion that cheating causes corruption ...................... 204

Corruption in schools – the World Bank’s suggestion .................................... 207
What students knew ................................................................................... 208
What teachers knew ................................................................................... 211

First possibility on the causal relationship of academic cheating and corruption:
the reproduction of a culture of opportunism .............................................. 213
Opportunism in academic cheating .......................................................... 213
The case of honesty canteen .................................................................... 212
The case of underage and unlicensed students riding motorcycles to school... 216
Reproduction of opportunism ................................................................... 218

Second possibility on the causal relationship of academic cheating and
corruption: individual collectivism practices .......................................... 220
Is it a causal relationship? ........................................................................ 223

Conclusion ............................................................................................... 224

Chapter Eight - Conclusion
Thesis summary ....................................................................................... 226
Limitations ............................................................................................... 230
Contributions to the literature .................................................................. 232
Future research ........................................................................................ 233

Reference list ........................................................................................... 235

Appendix ................................................................................................. 247
Number of students in the two schools ..................................................... 247
Number of teachers and education personnel in the two schools ............ 248
Exam Procedure ....................................................................................... 249
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Overview of participants ................................................................. 39
Table 3.2: Overview of interviewees ................................................................. 41
Table 4.1: Students’ academic cheating practices ........................................... 67
Table 4.2: Teachers’ academic cheating practices ........................................... 68
Table 4.3: Academic cheating practices revealed by the school principal .......... 68
Table 4.4: Academic cheating practices revealed by parents ........................... 69
Table 4.5: SMA Bandung’s list of misconduct and sanctions ........................... 79
Table 4.6: Actions carried out to stop or prevent academic cheating ............... 82
Table 4.7: Students’ misconduct and how teachers penalise it ......................... 85
Table 5.1: Stigmatisation of pro and contra cheating students in both schools ..... 136
Table 7.1: Indonesia’s CPI 2012-2015 ............................................................... 190
Table 7.2: Defendants in KPK as of September 2009 ...................................... 192
Table 7.3: Indonesia’s most corrupt institutions in 2013 ................................. 195
Table 7.4: Particular funds that are susceptible to corruption in the education sector ................................................................. 196
Table 7.5: Varieties of corruption in education ................................................. 200
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Map of Java showing field sites ................................................................. 32
Figure 3.2: Example of students’ seating places in SMA Semarang ...................... 34
Figure 3.3: Example of students’ seating places in SMA Bandung ..................... 34
Figure 3.4: Students’ white-and-grey uniform ............................................................ 36
Figure 4.1: Examples of leaked exam materials from Alanka ................................. 72
Figure 4.2: My Line chat with Gendhis on leaked exam materials ...................... 73
Figure 4.3: My Line chat with Gendhis on leaked exam materials (continued) ....... 74
Figure 4.4: My Line chat with Gendhis on a teacher asking for money ............... 75
Figure 4.5: Example of the National Examination Integrity Index award ............ 92
Figure 6.1: The in-crowd boys’ friendship pyramid (SMA Bandung) ............... 152
Figure 7.1: Education stakeholders and their possible corrupt practices .......... 207
Figure 7.2: Transparency International’s Survey Findings of Teacher Absenteeism 210
Figure 7.3: Advertisement of Essay Mill Service ......................................................... 219
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many people.

I realised that the journey to complete this dissertation would not be easy. In fact, during the four years of this study, there were times when I thought I would not be able to finish this dissertation. However, I was lucky to be able to work with an inspirational supervisor. She continuously challenged me to develop myself, to take off my bureaucrat hat, to find my writing style, and to sharpen my analytical thinking. Professor Lyn Parker did that and much more. You helped me make sense of Bourdieu’s theories! You gave me rich feedback on my drafts. But most importantly, you understood my low self-esteem issue and gave me confidence when I needed it most. I am so grateful to work under your supervision, Bu Lyn.

I am also indebted to my second supervisor, Associate Professor David Bourchier. Thank you for your feedback, time, and support throughout my study. Your professionalism and humbleness impressed me. Your jokes in emails and feedback kept me sane. Thank you, Pak David.

To the students, teachers, and parents in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, thank you for allowing me to be part of you. Thank you for trusting me and opening yourself to me. Especially to the students, I enjoyed getting to know each and every one of you. All the very best for your exciting future.

I have been privileged, not only to learn, but also to receive inputs, suggestions, and assistance from various academics in the School of Social Sciences: Doctor Greg Acciaioli, Professor Mark Israel, Associate Professor Farida Fozdar, Doctor Laura Dales, and Associate Professor Steven Maras. Thank you. I also thank the Graduate Research Office, especially Doctor Michael Azariadis, and from the International Sponsored Students Unit, especially Debra Basanovic and Celia Seah.

I would like to acknowledge the scholarship for my study from the Australia Awards Scholarship, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My gratitude to Astrida Upitis, Claudina Milawati, Noviana Noor Aisyiah, and Irene Pingkan Umboh from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta for their amazing support. I also appreciate the Bureau of Planning and International Cooperation, Secretariat General, Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, for allowing me to continue my study.

I must thank other fellow graduate students. To the mbak-mbak room 154A in the Arts Building who survived this journey before me: Ezmieralda Melissa, Endah Prihatiningtyastuti, and Ella Syafputri, thank you for the discussion and support. Also, thank you to Catriona Stevens and Petra Elias, who noticed and shared articles that were related to my topic.
To the friends that I made during my stay in Perth. My two favourite Australian mates, Rosa De Gois and Shay Lagan, thank you for all the fun. My cycling buddies in Indonesian Bike Enthusiasts: Hendrix, Syukri, Abo, Adit, Yusfi, Panji, Irdham, Arief, Aziz, Febri, and Ridho, thank you for the healthy friendship. Mbak, mas, teh, and kang in Maroonah: Juwita, Yusron, Sita, Indra, Mila, Elis, Zidnie, Esti, Tine, Dila, Gilang, Mayang, Ary, and Dinaher, thank you for treating me (and my family) like your own family. Also, thank you to the bunch of nice, kind, and helpful Indonesians in the Warga Nedlands community.

To my mother Sugiarti, my father Handoyo, my late mother-in-law Endang, my father-in-law Djoko, my sister Dita, my nephew Rafif, my brother Adam, my brother-in-law Dika, and my brother-in-law Fajar, thank you for all of your prayers and love.

To my beloved wife and best friend Ajeng, thank you for always standing beside me through this whole journey. Thank you for being the ‘opposite’ of me, ensuring our life balance. To our lovely daughter Lala, thank you for being awesome. You are the greatest gift for ayah and bunda. I love you two, and let us embrace our next adventure.
Chapter One
Introduction

Background of the study

Academic cheating: a global challenge

Academic cheating is an open secret in many countries in the world. Evans et al. (1993) and Teixeira & Rocha (2006) found that cheating has become an international issue and can be found in countries as diverse as Austria, Costa Rica, Germany, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the United States. A more recent cross-national study conducted by Miller et al. (2015) on 35 countries that took part in the 2007 Trends in International Math and Science Studies (TIMSS) assessment supports the argument. Although there is a difference in the levels of complexity between developing and developed nations, the study reveals that academic cheating is problematic for all.

Academic cheating occurs in most education levels. Although not much has been said about cheating in primary schools, clear evidence has been collected from junior and senior secondary schools, as well as tertiary education institutions (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Craig & Evans, 1990; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; Schab, 1991; Strom & Strom, 2007). While the frequency of cheating in tertiary education institutions is alarmingly high (McCabe et al., 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1993) and indications have been found in junior secondary schools (Craig & Evans, 1990), reports show that the prevalence of cheating peaks in senior secondary schools (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Craig & Evans, 1990; Finn & Frone, 2004; Schab, 1991).

Research also suggests that due to various kinds of pressures, cheating is committed not solely by students who are not performing well in their study, but also by students with good achievement. Under-achieving students tend to cheat because they are afraid of failing particular subjects or their class (Finn & Frone, 2004). Bright students tend to cheat because they want to maintain their good grades (Finn & Frone, 2004), fulfil their parents’ expectations (Strom & Strom, 2007), maintain their dominance over other students (Crittenden et al., 2009), and enter the best college (Davis et al., 2009). In numerous cases, cheating has even been regarded as an ‘accepted practice’ because of the urgency in progressing to a higher education level (Davis et al., 2009),
the scarcity of higher study and work opportunities (Eckstein, 2003), and the high-stakes nature of an enforced test (Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Strom & Strom, 2007). Considering the above evidence, it is understandable if the problem of academic cheating has resulted in what Crittenden et al. (2009) call a ‘cheating culture’: a condition where people are tolerant of the misconduct since everyone seems to do it for the sake of success. This is a situation that drives Davis et al. (2009) to regard cheating as one of the critical problems in education in the twenty-first century.

Much of the research completed in the US (e.g. Craig & Evans, 1990; Davis et al., 2009; McCabe & Katz, 2009; Schab, 1991) has revealed that the most common students’ cheating behaviours are: being dishonest in examinations, committing plagiarism, and collaborating in individual assignments. As for the methods, Davis et al. (2009) found that two of the most common cheating techniques are glancing through someone else’s paper and preparing a cheat sheet for a test. Other less popular techniques include communicating answers by pre-arranged signals and finding copies of exam papers. Faucher & Caves (2009) take a further step by classifying cheating methods into three main groups: trading of information, using prohibited resources, and avoiding coming on test day. Strom & Strom (2007) revealed several cheating techniques that are potentially engaged in by teachers, e.g. providing test answers to students, modifying students’ answers after they finished the tests, and allowing students more time to work on their tests.

To date, solutions to the academic cheating problem can be divided into short-term and long-term (Davis et al., 2009; Faucher & Caves, 2009). Several short-term deterrents are: maximising surveillance methods, limiting students’ access to technology (while optimising it at the school’s end), and giving clear explanations about the distinction between individual and collaborative assignments (Davis et al., 2009; Faucher & Caves, 2009). Long-term measures are related to the fostering of academic integrity, with honour codes as the main instrument that is utilised (Kessler, 2003; McCabe & Katz, 2009; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; Strom & Strom, 2007). Dukes (2012) found that there is abundant research on academic integrity in tertiary education institutions. However, research on this issue in senior secondary schools is
still lacking, especially on how schools address the problem other than by using honour codes.

**Academic cheating in schools in Indonesia**

As with any country, Indonesia does have a problem with academic cheating in its schools. Miller et al. (2015) pointed out how more than 80 per cent of Indonesian school principals that they surveyed, reported cheating to be very problematic in their schools. An explanation of why it is so difficult for schools in Indonesia and other developing countries to restrain cheating practices is related to their shortage of resources. When schools are already struggling with basic needs such as materials and facilities, they might not have capable staff and effective policies for dealing with students’ cheating behaviours (Miller et al., 2015).

Discussions of academic cheating in Indonesia revolve mainly around the implementation of the National Examination, currently administered for students in years 9 and 12. Indonesia first introduced the National Exam in 1965, and since then it has undergone several changes in its nomenclature, organisation, and role in students’ graduation (Hartanto, 2015; Syahril, 2007). After the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) stipulated that the National Exam would be a key factor in students’ graduation in 2005, each year the implementation of the examination became a live issue. Data from 2005 to 2013 (MOEC, 2013) show that students’ graduation rate never reaches 100 per cent, with 79 per cent as the lowest percentage of students graduating. The public regards the National Exam’s function as an exit exam as controversial, primarily doubting how three days of examination can actually measure three years of education and arguing that a failure to graduate can severely impact students’ future (Syahril, 2007). With its high-stakes nature, the Indonesian National Exam is vulnerable to cheating practices.

Much of the evidence concerning cheating practices in the National Exam is anecdotal. From media reports, the main forms of cheating in the National Exam are the leaking of exam papers, individual cheating by students, and systemic cheating by schools. In the recent 2015 National Exam, for instance, The Jakarta Post (Jong, 2015) and Tempo
(Tarigan, 2015) published news of a finding made by the Federation of Indonesian Teachers’ Associations about leaked exam materials in several cities and how students tried to smuggle those materials into classrooms. The media’s coverage of cheating in the National Exam is intense, but other forms of cheating, such as plagiarism and prohibited collaboration, do not receive similar attention. Even if there is a report on plagiarism, it is mostly in relation to higher education institutions. Tempo magazine (Evan, 2014), for instance, in their coverage of plagiarism, only mentioned nine cases that they believed to be major and scandalous for Indonesia. Among them are allegations of plagiarism by two former ministers, the famous poet Chairil Anwar, and academics from reputable universities.

So far, efforts to address academic cheating in Indonesian schools have focused on the National Exam. The National Exam has an important part in the policy-making process. Based on data from the 2015 National Exam (MOEC, 2015), a total of 7.3 million students participated in the exams: 3.8 million students in junior secondary schools, 1.7 million in senior secondary schools, 1.2 million in vocational secondary schools, and 0.6 million from non-formal education. Those students came from around 79,000 schools all over the country. There were also 35 million exam papers distributed and 700,000 exam supervisors involved. A total of Rp 560 billion (approximately AUD 57 million) was needed for the operation. According to Law Number 20/2003 on the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas 20/2003), a regular evaluation (i.e. the National Exam) is needed to assess how education programs are progressing for students, teachers, schools, and the government. The government uses the results of the evaluation as one of the considerations in mapping the country’s latest education quality and in devising a policy to improve the quality of education. The government believes that cheating in the National Exam has disrupted the attainment of the objective of the evaluation. Since school and student achievement may have been compromised and real conditions cannot be captured, it is difficult for the government to determine appropriate interventions for the improvement of quality.

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the National Exam, issued annually by the National Standards Education Board, can be regarded as one of the strategies to
prevent cheating in the national examination. The SOP explains rules and regulations for exam supervisors and students sitting the examination as well as several technical aspects such as students’ seating arrangements and the administration of multiple versions of a test. The MOEC claimed that two policies recently applied in 2015 would also prevent students from cheating in the National Exam. The introduction of a computer-based test (CBT) in several qualified schools is expected not only to reduce the production and distribution cost of the exam papers, but also to minimise the possibility of exam leaks (Linggasari, 2015). The decision to exclude the National Exam from consideration when adjudicating on students’ graduation from high school will not only abolish its status as an exit exam, but also, it is believed, encourage students not to cheat (Afrian, 2015).

Another policy introduced in 2015 that was designed with integrity as its foundation is the National Examination Integrity Index (NEII). The NEII is basically MOEC’s initiative to evaluate schools’ honesty in conducting the National Exam. Honesty scores are obtained by analysing unusual patterns of answers on exam items to observe whether students received assistance from any parties. The aggregated scores are published and can be used by the general public to assess how honestly the National Exam has been conducted in their province (for year 9) and in their city/district (for year 12).

The media emphasis on reporting cheating in the National Exam while overlooking other forms of cheating, and the government emphasis on efforts to prevent cheating in the National Exam, suggests two possibilities. The first is that cheating in the National Exam dominates the practice of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. The second is that there is a cheating culture, such that certain behaviours apart from cheating in the National Exam are not seen as academic cheating. The studies of Eckstein (2003) and Strom & Strom (2007) help to explain why cheating in the National Exam seems to dominate the practice of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. As explained before, the National Exam falls into the category of high-stakes testing. Eckstein (2003) found that cheating in high-stakes testing is actually the most common form of academic misconduct, involving different kinds of education practitioners. The reason why cheating in high-stakes testing is not exclusive to students, as Strom &
Strom (2007) explained, is because the result of the examination will not solely be used to evaluate students, but will also be used to evaluate other components of the system, such as teachers and principals.

The government’s idea to relate corruption and academic cheating

Over the last few decades, Indonesia has been known as a country with a systemic corruption problem (Transparency International, 2014; Transparency International, 2015). Many researchers have been busy analysing the different factors that have made corruption prevalent in Indonesia. To mention some: Webber (2006) looked into the characteristics of the country’s patrimonial democracy; Blunt et al. (2012a & 2012b) focus on patronage networks in government institutions; Crouch (1979) and Rinakit (2005) explored the role and involvement of the Indonesian military; Robertson-Snape (1999) examined the country’s political, economic and cultural conditions. Other researchers have studied how the country is dealing with the problem. Dick (2013) and Schutte (2012) looked into the progress that the Corruption Eradication Commission had made and the obstacles they had experienced; Butt (2013) discussed the challenges that the Anti-Corruption Courts had to deal with. In 2015, Anies Baswedan – the Minister of Education and Culture – added another twist to the discussion of Indonesia’s corruption problem. He suggested that academic cheating in the National Examination was one of the causes of the country’s corruption problem (Wicaksono & Alfath, 2015).

Minister Baswedan’s approach in relating academic cheating to corruption may well have been intended to indicate the pervasiveness of the misconduct and to raise public support for its eradication. After all, the public expect campaigns against corruption and dealing with corruption was one of President Joko Widodo’s main platforms (Dick, 2013). As it turns out however, researchers around the world have also been suggesting a possible relation between academic cheating and corruption. Sim (cited in Bretag, 2013) argues that students who cheat in school may retain similar habits when they are at work. From 50 countries that his research measured (including

---

1 President Jokowi appointed Anies Baswedan as the Minister of Education and Culture in 2014. In 2016 President Jokowi appointed Muhadjir Effendy to replace Anies Baswedan.
Indonesia), Huang (2008) suggests that those with high corruption rates score low in TIMSS and UNESCO’s school life-expectancy assessments. Nichols & Berliner (2005) believe that academic cheating is the most obvious corruption behaviour in education since it compromises and spoils indicators. However, there is one gap in Minister Baswedan’s statement: none of the existing literature supports his causal relationship idea.

President Joko Widodo – better known as Jokowi – and Minister Baswedan highlighted the NEII initiative as the answer to the academic cheating problem that would also help to eradicate the country’s corruption culture (Bahari, 2015b; Hartono, 2015b). The NEII is intended to reform schools to become ‘anti-corruption zones’, where students are expected to develop their academic ability with integrity (Bahari, 2015a). What the government has in mind is actually in accordance with the study of Transparency International (2013) that recommends education as a key to influence children’s principles on integrity, protecting them from becoming corrupt. Academic integrity, along with good governance and proper social control, are deemed to be three interconnected factors that could eradicate corruption (Hallak & Poisson, 2007). Whether or not the NEII initiative is working has not been discussed yet.

**Research questions**

Considering the lively public discourse on the academic cheating issue in Indonesian schools and the importance of corruption as an issue of great significance in Indonesian democracy over the last decade, this study will try to answer the following questions:

- What are the prevalent forms of cheating in schools in Indonesia?
  - How do educators and students in schools in Indonesia define ‘cheating’?
  - In what ways is cheating addressed in schools – by school leaders, teachers and students, and by the government?
  - What factors account for the differential effectiveness of these measures?

- What are the reasons behind the prevalence of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia?
- What are the structural factors that drive academic cheating?

- In what ways are academic cheating and the rampant culture of corruption in Indonesia related to each other?
  - How does the government relate academic cheating in schools in Indonesia to more generalised corruption?
  - How are efforts to address academic cheating in schools in Indonesia related to efforts to control broader corruption in Indonesian society?
  - In what circumstances has academic cheating caused corruption?
  - How can improvements in academic integrity deter corruption?

**Structure of the thesis**

There will be a total of eight chapters in this thesis. Chapter One has provided the background of the study and the research questions. It introduced academic cheating as a global challenge and noted that it has become a widespread problem in Indonesia. The chapter also mentioned the kinds of methods that the Indonesian government has initiated to deal with academic cheating, including by suggesting its causal relationship with the country’s corruption problem.

Chapter Two provides a conceptual framework for the study. I used Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, capital, practice, and reproduction to analyse the data that I gathered in my fieldwork. Many researchers use Bourdieu’s theories to connect what happens in society and the particular context of schools. I am confident that it has also helped me to understand why students, teachers, and the society in general believe that cheating in academic work is an acceptable practice.

Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study. By design, it is an ethnographic study, and the chapter explains the rationale for choosing this qualitative research method. The chapter also describes the research design, settings, participants, data collection process, data triangulation process, data analysis and coding procedures, and the strengths and limitations of the research. In this chapter I also share two of my biggest challenges in researching this ‘sensitive’ issue, which were the process to gain entry and some ethical considerations.
Chapter Four outlines my findings on the most current condition of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. It also serves as an answer to the research question of the prevalent forms of cheating in schools in Indonesia. There is a long list of daily academic cheating behaviours that I present in this chapter. The length of the list implies two things. First, it indicates the ubiquity of the problem. Second, it shows that academic cheating in Indonesia is beyond the scope of the National Exam. The chapter also introduces ‘menyontek’ as the most accepted term for academic cheating in schools in Indonesia and technology as a factor that changes the face of academic cheating in Indonesia.

Chapter Five discusses my discovery of the different academic cheating patterns in the two schools where I conducted my fieldwork (i.e. SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung). Comparing three features of the schools – competitiveness, the motivations of students and teachers, and the structures in each school – and analysing them using Bourdieu’ theories, it became apparent that the two schools’ different academic status – SMA Semarang as high-achieving and SMA Bandung as less-achieving – was a significant factor in explaining the differences in academic cheating practices. The chapter also discusses two similarities. In both SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung, academic cheating was partly caused by how teachers adapt to the culture of teaching in public schools and various external pressures. In both schools, students stigmatised their classmates who did not belong to their social group.

Chapter Six answers the research question as to the reasons for the prevalence of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. I found that academic cheating strongly influences the dynamic of students’ social relations with their friends. I also discovered that friends had a major impact on students’ decision to cheat. It should be noted, though, that in schools in Indonesia, every student in a class and every student in the same year are all ‘friends’. Indonesians’ understanding of ‘friends’ is very different, for instance, to Australians’ concept of friends. The chapter explains how students in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung interpret friendship and how they use its values to
rationalise the acceptability of academic cheating practices in their environment, contributing to the pervasiveness of the problem.

Chapter Seven tries to answer the question about the possible relation between academic cheating and the rampant culture of corruption in Indonesia. This chapter traces back why the government would suggest a cause-and-effect relationship between academic cheating and corruption. To accomplish that, I looked into the history of corruption in Indonesia and how the current government under the leadership of President Jokowi is addressing the problem. Although there is literature that suggests a correlation between academic cheating and corruption, none of the literature argues that academic cheating causes corruption. I found that the task to find a causal relationship between the two problems is very challenging. But my findings on opportunism and individual collectivism might provide an alternative explanation. In the two schools, I witnessed how students, teachers, and parents ignored and even nurtured opportunistic and collective behaviours. Studies suggested that these two behaviours could potentially encourage corruption.

Chapter Eight summarises all the previous chapters. In this chapter I argue that there is an indication of cheating culture in schools in Indonesia. Students, teachers, parents, the general public, and the government ignored and normalised daily cheating behaviours. I believe that only by understanding why they normalised cheating could one could address the problem properly. This chapter also discusses the study’s limitations—specifically the number of schools that I observed and the exclusion of a particular potential participant. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the study might contribute to the literature and opens possible future research.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter discusses a conceptual framework for understanding why individuals in schools in Indonesia decided to cheat in their academic work. In particular, this chapter explores how students, teachers, and the society (including myself) normalised the practise of cheating in academic work, hence contributing to the pervasiveness and persistence of the problem. I have found that Bourdieu’s so-called ‘practice theory’, particularly his concepts of ‘habitus’, ‘field’, ‘capital’, ‘practice’, and ‘reproduction’, are useful tools with which to evaluate and analyse the data that I gathered during my fieldwork.

Bourdieu developed his theories while working within various social structures, including the French education system. In their work, Bourdieu & Wacquant (as cited in Grenfell, 2006, p. 225) quote Bourdieu’s description about his life experience moving from one French school to another:

I spent most of my youth in a tiny and remote village in south-western France, a very ‘backward’ place as city people like to say. And I could only meet the demands of schooling by renouncing many of my primary experiences and acquisitions, and not only a certain accent.

Bourdieu’s theories connect what happens in society and in the context of schools. Using his concepts, several researchers have analysed how social life significantly contributes to what teachers, students, and parents experience in school. Meo (2011) researched how middle-class students at secondary level play the ‘game’ to deal with educational demands. Ingram (2011) researched how working-class boys in a grammar school were experiencing difficulties in reconciling their identity with educational success. Other researchers have analysed how school significantly contributes to the broader society. Webb et al. (2002) analysed schools as one of the institutions within society that reproduce social inequalities over and over, reproducing intergenerational
inequality. On the other hand, Horvat & Davis (2011) studied how schools can potentially alter students’ habitus and break the social inequality problem. Forbes & Lingard (2015) explored how schools produce the desired habitus to prepare their students for global futures.

I will start this chapter by defining habitus, capital, field, practice, and reproduction, especially in the context of the school environment. I will then share my personal experience of academic cheating and reflect on it using Bourdieu’s concepts. Last but not least, I will then discuss the possible application of those concepts to my research.

**Bourdieu’s theories**

**Habitus**

Bourdieu (1977) defined habitus as a system of durable and transposable dispositions, tendencies, propensities, or inclinations. We could consider habitus as a strong element that constructs our knowledge and defines our personality (Webb et al., 2002). The internalised habitus influences how we perceive, comprehend, and respond to the current situation in our social world (Bourdieu, 2013).

We initially acquire habitus from our personal history, especially in our family or in our home (Bourdieu, 2013). But habitus is not static, we can change it (Bourdieu, 1977). In Horvat & Davis’s (2011) study, for example, high school dropouts joining a multi-site educational program must change their habitus in order to avoid social inequality traps. So as we go across various social contexts, such as in classrooms and schools, we will experience a transformation in our individual habitus (Webb et al., 2002). The transformation is a sort of strategy that we carry out when coping and reconciling with new and changing contexts that we are unfamiliar with (Bourdieu, 1977). The transformed habitus of the people who share one or similar social contexts generates what is known as a collective habitus (Webb et al., 2002). It is in this kind of situation that habitus shows its other characteristic, a form of reconciliation between personal and collective interests (Maton, 2008).
Bourdieu (1977) argued that the habitus of a social field is a product of the existing capitals. Therefore, how easily we can adapt to a social field is related to our personal conditions, such as the amount of money that we have, the status of our extended families, or the academic degree that we hold. Habitus is reflected in both conscious and unconscious states. How we think and the language that we use show our consciousness of our habitus; how our body instinctively acts and reacts may represent the combination of our consciousness and unconsciousness (Webb et al., 2002).

*Capital*

Bourdieu (1986) defined capital as resources accumulated from labour. These resources are valuable and highly sought after because we can use them in our social relations to fulfil our needs and purposes, as well as to modify our habitus (Webb et al., 2002). Bourdieu mentions three main types of capital in his theory: economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital – and as I explain later, there is a fourth, which is symbolic capital.

Economic capital is resources in the form of money or property that is convertible into money (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Bourdieu (1977) believed that people from different social class structures comprise a society, and economic capital is one of the most basic elements that determine in what social class or economic groups a person belongs. In other words, economic capital often becomes the factor that determines where we belong in a socioeconomic stratification. Using Meo’s study (2011) as an example, there were three groups of students in her fieldwork site based on the capital of their parents’ economic background: the elite students, the middle-class students, and the poor students. People with economic power could do many things, while others without had to deal with many restrictions. However, Bourdieu (1977) also argued that economic capital alone could not determine a person’s social status. A shift of social classes is possible if a person can bring her or his social and cultural capital into play.

Cultural capital refers to how proficient and familiar a person is with the dominant cultures in her or his social field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Edgerton & Roberts,
2014). These cultures can be as broad as taste, consumption patterns, attributes, skills, and awards (Webb et al., 2002). To value cultural capital objectively is a hard thing to do. As long as people in the social field highly value it, these cultures are dominant, and a person who is competent in a culture has more cultural capital. Cultural capital can be tangible and intangible, but basically comes in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised capital. An example of the application of these three forms in the field of education would be: manners and skills taught by parents to their children (embodied), the expensive textbooks and clothes that students use in school (objectified), and academic qualifications and specialisation (institutionalised). The following is another example in the field of education:

[Dumais, 2002] suggested that there is a strong belief that students with more cultural capital, who are more likely come from upper-class families, are more likely to do well in school compared to students with less cultural capital, who usually belong to lower-class families. Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) suggested that educational credentials are one of the most powerful capitals as they enable individuals to rise above others of their rank. They claimed that particular groups of people are in fact using this institutionalised form of cultural capital to maintain their social status and control our society.

Bourdieu (1986, p. 51) defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Social capital can be in the form of connections, contacts, or associates (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). For a person’s affiliates to have a value in a network, they must be known and acknowledged by the members of the network. Bourdieu (1986) believed that a person is constantly investing in social networks. If a person could benefit from the relationship that she or he develops from the networks, either in the short or longer-
term, it means that the person is gaining social capital. Thus, two initial ways for a person to obtain social capital are by becoming a member of a group or making a group. A group needs a standard to distinguish whether a person could become a member. It is common for a group to use a certain economic capital or cultural capital as the standard (Bourdieu, 1986).

It is important to note that the three capitals are convertible. For examples, money can be converted into qualifications, social status into manners, and jewellery into ‘friends’ or networks. Each of us has our own sets of capitals when we enter a social field. Some people might have all three of them, while others might have less. Bourdieu (1977) believed that we are basically trying to preserve or acquire more of the three capitals as they benefit us in our effort to maintain or improve our status in our social field. Bourdieu (2011) also stated that we could avoid being trapped in a certain stratum of a social structure if we are able to secure sufficient capital. When a person’s capitals are recognised or legitimated by others, her or his capitals become symbolic capital, often illustrated using prestige and honour (Bourdieu, 2013; Webb et al., 2002). Thus, two persons with a similar economic, cultural and social capital would not be considered as equally honourable or prestigious if one of them failed to use it for what the public deems as legitimate.

Fields

Bourdieu (1977) defined field as an area where we interact with each other. It is “a particular social sphere of activity” (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 195) that can take many kinds of forms. Fields can be in the form of places, such as a school or classroom; relationships, such as family and friendships; and events, such as a prom dance or examination. The field is also a social space where we are distributed to different positions according to the amount and composition of capitals that we have (Bourdieu, 1985), and where we compete in a game to take control of various types of capital (Dumais, 2002; Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Meo, 2011).

Capital can be considered as a sort of power, so individuals who own particular capitals prior to the game or who can secure various capitals from the game have domination
over others who own less or do not own the necessary capitals. The powerful individuals, however, are unaware that they have been enforcing their domination to others, undermining others’ belief system (Bourdieu, 1977). Powerless individuals are also unaware of the unfair treatment they have been experiencing, believing that it happens because of their mistakes or inadequacy (Webb et al., 2002). When individuals are in a disadvantaged position without them realising it or while considering it as appropriate or acceptable, they are experiencing what is known as symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2013).

Despite the contradiction in their positions and roles, neither the powerful (i.e. dominating) and powerless (i.e. dominated) individuals question their position. Bourdieu (1977, p. 164) claims that doxa is the cause of this “taken for granted” condition. Doxa is a sort of truth with no other alternatives. Believing that there is an alternative could potentially trigger social disorder. With regard to school, doxa could be in the form of “limited access for the parents in the area, parents’ obligation to sign their child report card, and wider access to higher education for specific students” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 119-120).

**Practice**

Habitus is *practice* internalised in our mind and body (Dumais, 2002). Our individual and collective practices are the manifestation of our habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). Since in our day-to-day lives we repeat practices constantly, we can tell each other’s habitus such as from the words that we choose, attire that we wear, and arguments that we accept as true (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Practice is not only connected with habitus. Bourdieu (1984, p. 59) offers this following equation so we can have a glimpse of what he means with practice: \((\text{habitus}) \times (\text{capital})\) + field = practice.

From the equation we can see that practice is more than just habitus: it is in fact multi-layered. Besides habitus, there are layers of capital and field that shape practice. The equation also indicates how Bourdieu wants to show that practice is not something given. There needs to be a process involved to make what we routinely do our
practice. To me, the combination of the four concepts suggests that if we can deconstruct practice, we can better understand capital, habitus, and fields.

Several researchers have tried to unfold the concept of practice in their work. Let us take these three works as examples. Dumais (2002) believes that Bourdieu considers practice a result of an interactional process between habitus and capital within a social field. Edgerson & Roberts (2014) suggest that practice involves our daily activities in our social fields as we attempt to control the existing capitals. Webb et al. (2002) highlight how Bourdieu argues that it is in moments of practice that we can always find habitus, particularly when our dispositions come across a problem or a choice. There is one common thing that these three explanations offer to us. When we develop a logic of practice, we then adapt. We adjust our habitus and capitals so they are compatible with the regularities of the field. In other words, we develop our sense of ‘feel for the game.’

Reproduction

Our habitus, and our knowledge or perception about it, are continuously and unconsciously passed down from one generation to another by ourselves and people closest to us. The process of producing and reproducing habitus and its practices through ‘legitimacy-giving redistribution’ in a system of domination – hence the continuity and unconsciousness experienced by many people – is what Bourdieu (1977) called ‘reproduction’.

Schools are known as sites of reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Willis, 1977). If we connect the social relations that happen in schools to other social groups from different levels, such as the students’ families and the broader society, we realise that each group or level influences and is influenced by others. By observing their interactions, particularly where symbolic violence appears, we might uncover and better understand their concealed or overlooked reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).
I am familiar with academic cheating. I started to cheat in my academic work when I was in junior secondary school (year 7 to 9), and was doing it more frequently when I was in senior secondary school (year 10 to 12). There were two cheating behaviours that I performed most frequently. The first was copying homework. I did it especially in the morning before the first lesson started. The practice was that either I borrowed my classmate’s homework so I could copy it, or I lent my homework to my classmates so they could copy it. The second was sharing multiple choice answers with my classmates during an exam. Once in a while, I would cheat on exams that were organised by teachers – especially on those which were invigilated poorly – and on school exams held every quarter of the academic year.

Copying homework in the morning was something usual; it was an integral part of the schooling experience. When I forgot to do it at home, or when I did not know how to do it, at school I would copy a classmate’s homework. My classmates would not be surprised when I was doing it, and vice versa. Usually, I would only be stunned by one thing: a classmate who refused to share her or his homework. ‘Pelit’ or ‘stingy’ was how I would think of them, and I thought that most students would not want to be friends with a stingy classmate. Sharing answers during exams was trickier, and it often made my heart race. My classmates and I would try to do it as discreetly as possible to avoid being caught by the teacher. There were several teachers that I considered to be strict. They closely invigilated the exam and had told us about several kinds of punishment that they would give us if we were caught cheating. I would avoid cheating on exams that these teachers organised, but some of my classmates – and I often wondered why they would take the risk – kept doing it no matter what.

I never, however, cheated in the National Examination (at that time it was for students finishing years 6, 9 and 12). Before the National Exam, teachers would tell students that anyone caught cheating during the exam would automatically be dismissed from the room and risk their chance to graduate. Because the proctors for the National Exam in each school would be teachers from other schools or lecturers from nearby universities, it was hard for me to know whether they would invigilate the exam.
strictly or not. The only thing that I knew was that, if I got caught, I was ‘done’. The thought of not being able to graduate frightened me because my parents would be so upset. There was also the motive of competition. I did not want to ‘help’ my classmates in the National Exam because just like most of them, I needed a better grade than others to enable me to secure a place in the public school or public university where I wanted to study.\(^2\)

My classmates in the senior secondary school considered me to be good at English. I did constantly receive good grades for the English subject at schools, and that was one of my considerations in majoring in English Literature at university. But I never bragged about it to my classmates, nor claimed that I could help them with their English homework, assignment, or exam. It was hard for me to recall, but I felt that everything happened naturally: I became the provider when my classmates needed to copy my English homework; and when it was possible, my classmates would wait for me to share my multiple choice answers in an English exam. Because of that, my classmates took good care of me during the exams of other subjects. They, though they were not necessarily the students who had initially provided the answers, would share some of the exam answers with me.

I do not think that I ever cheated during my university time. I guess it all came down to how different university life was compared to school life. While some of the students in my junior secondary school were students from my primary school, and some of the students in my senior secondary school were students from my junior secondary school and primary school, my classmates in university came from different cities, and they brought with them their diverse cultures. For me, cheating did not come easily when the classroom was composed of ‘total strangers’. At school, it was easy to know which students were smart and willing to take part in cheating (i.e. sharing homework and exam answers) and which ones were not. Some of us, as I said, knew each other from our previous schools. At university, it was not that simple. I, as well as my classmates, did not know who would be willing to cheat in our academic work. It was

\(^2\) My parents’ concern was that if I ended up in a private school, I would not get a good quality education (see Suharti, 2013, p. 34), and if I studied at a private university, it would be too costly.
not for a while that some of my classmates, who I believe had developed close friendships, started to cheat in exams. In practice, it was harder to cheat in university than in school. Assignments in university were often in the form of essays, and each student had a different topic. So copying was rather useless, and I do not think that I had ever heard of an essay mill service at that time. Once a classmate decided to use a poem that she found on the internet for an assignment. The lecturer knew it and made her fail the class. The number of students in class at university was not as large as in classes at school. In exams at university, I believe that the proctors were able to invigilate students better. As mentioned, I do not think that I ever cheated during my university time, but my wife – who was studying English Literature at the same university, and we had several similar classes – said that we had. She told me that it was an Indonesian language exam involving students from several faculties. It was held in a massive auditorium with almost a hundred students and only one proctor, and lots of students, including our friends and the two of us, were cheating.

**Explaining the logic of (my) cheating using Bourdieu’s concepts**

I believe that the problem of academic cheating in Indonesia happens across generations. I have mentioned that I had cheated in my academic work, starting in junior secondary school, and it became a frequent practice when I was in senior secondary school. I stopped – or at least I thought I did – when I was at university. When I told my mother about the research that I am doing, she said that the practice of copying classmate’s homework at school or cheating in an exam was also a regular occurrence in her time.

Students are not the only ones who cheat in academic work, and it happens in different regions in Indonesia. A friend of mine, a Buginese, can still vividly remember how the principal and teachers in his primary school in South Sulawesi helped him and his classmates to work on their National Exam for three consecutive days. Another friend, a lecturer, who was sent to invigilate a National Exam in a school in a remote area in Central Java, told me that on the exam day the school prepared a feast to keep him and his colleagues away from the exam rooms. The school asked him and his colleagues to relax and eat what had been specially served for them while several of
the school’s teachers replaced them as invigilators of the exam. The problem is also massive in number. In a study conducted by Miller et al. (2015), more than 80 per cent of Indonesian school principals that they surveyed, reported cheating to be very problematic. When I asked a group of Indonesians, who are currently studying in universities in Perth or living in Perth, if they had cheated in their academic work in school in Indonesia, almost all of them said “yes”. All of these shared experiences lead to one argument: that there is a cheating habitus in schools in Indonesia. The behaviours have been strongly normalised, and on top of that, I believe that there is a reproduction process involved in academic cheating that has made the problem seem to be pervasive.

I remember that the society where I used to live – and I guess this could still be relevant in many places in Indonesia nowadays – would stigmatise young people who failed to progress to the upper level or to graduate, as well as their parents. Neighbours would think that the children were naughty students and had failed their parents. They would also think that the parents had failed to educate their kids. My parents never told me to cheat. But I did not want to obtain low grades and then fail to progress or graduate. I did not want to put my parents and myself in a position where we would be stigmatised. So, when an opportunity to secure better or higher scores appeared, either from cheating in homework or exams, the most logical action for me was to take it. Obviously, I cannot tell if my classmates’ parents had not or had asked their child(ren) to cheat in academic work. But at school, almost all of us cheated in our academic work. Cheating in academic work felt normal when everyone else was doing it. I would argue that cheating in academic work was a collective habitus for my classmates and me.

When I was in secondary school, my mother worked as a civil servant, and my father was a farmer. They always told me that I must be enrolled in good public schools and a public university because they did not have enough money to send me to good private institutions. My father would say, “I would prefer to buy you a goat than send you to an expensive [private] school and university.” My father thought that a goat was cheaper than the cost of education in a private institution, which was true, and that I
could learn farming skills from taking care of a goat. To deal with the limitation of my family’s economic capital and the demand to get good grades in order to secure a spot in a good institution of public education, I cheated in some of my academic work. As I previously said, I never cheated in the National Exam because it was too risky. If I got caught cheating in the National Exam and was then expelled or failed to graduate, I was worried that it would affect my record and limit my opportunity to continue to a good public school and university. My parents could not afford to send me to good private schools and university. Also, when some of my classmates in the senior secondary schools offered me to take part in buying leaked materials for the National Exam, I had to refuse. I did not trust the validity of the materials, and I did not have the amount of money that they asked.

Bourdieu’s concept of capital is useful to explain my experience in becoming the provider for English homework and exam answers for my classmates. I thought that these were some of my best moments in senior secondary school. Although I was not part of the group of ‘popular students’, I had my own popularity spotlight. Whenever there was English homework or exams, it opened an opportunity for me to invest in my social capital. To hear some of my classmates saying, “Nanti aku nyontek [pekerjaan rumah/jawabanmu] ya?” or in English “Will I be able to copy your [homework/answer] later?” meant so many things to me: that my classmates needed me and they acknowledged my ability. Most importantly, I felt that many of my classmates included me in their social networks. My investment went well. As I have mentioned, on many occasions, my classmates would share their homework and exam answers on subjects other than English with me. As time went by, our transaction of capital became more mutual. They needed me, and I needed them. I was transforming my cultural capital into social capital, and perhaps even moving up the social stratification ladder.

The absence of cheating behaviours that I witnessed during my early time at university might indicate a process in which my classmates and I were adapting to our new field. The process needed a relatively long time because, unlike at school, classmates at

---

3 I will discuss more about popular students in Chapter Six.
university were like total strangers. Many of us came from different cities and never went to the same primary or secondary schools. Each of us was trying to figure out our position in the new field as well as where others should belong. Who were the dominant and who became dominated? We also tried to find out what kind of competitive ‘game’ and strategy we should play, including whether cheating in academic work was going to be part of it.

**Conceptual Framework**

My own experience in academic cheating and the way it can be explained using Bourdieu’s theories and concepts, helped me to build the conceptual framework of this study. I will interpret cheating in academic work as the habitus. The fact that my parents and I, who came from different generations, all experienced academic cheating shows that the behaviour is durable and transposable. There are indications of the durable and transposable characteristics of academic cheating in other contexts. For instance, in a series of three surveys involving several high schools in the United States that were conducted a decade apart over three decades, students participating in each of the surveys admitted that they had cheated in their academic work (Schab, 1991). In fact, the percentage of students cheating continuously increased, from 73.8% in 1969, to 88.7% in 1979, and finally to 93.4% in 1989 (Schab, 1991).

An explanation of why academic cheating is durable and transposable might come from the point where many people consider it as acceptable. An example of a study that discusses the acceptability of academic cheating is Davis et al. (2009). Their study provides statistical proof of how academic cheating is considered less morally disagreeable than other forms of misconduct that students possibly perform at school. The majority of their respondents preferred to admit that they had cheated in academic work to admitting that they had stolen other students’ belongings or cheated in sport. A group of psychologists from Midwestern State University offers what they called ‘neutralisation’ to explain their findings. In ‘neutralisation’, students justify their cheating practices mostly by questioning how cheating could be wrong if
everyone is doing it (Davis et al., 2009). An indication of the acceptability of academic cheating practices also comes from people’s favourable reception of it. The following are some opinions from students that I gathered from three studies:

- “Cheating is no big deal; it’s a victimless crime” (Davis et al., 2009, p. 84);
- “I don’t feel guilty. I feel good because I’m going to get a good grade” (ibid.);
- “If someone says that I can cheat off their paper, it’s not wrong” (ibid.);
- “I know it’s wrong to cheat, but it’s wronger [sic] for me to get an F” (ibid.);
- “It was so easy to get away with. It seemed stupid not to do it” (Kessler, 2003, p. 57);
- “Cheating is... a kind of daily thing that’s out there, almost kind of acceptable. Teachers know it and students know it” (McCabe, 1999, p. 682);
- “It’s almost a big deal if you don’t cheat” (ibid.);
- “I guess the first time you do it, you feel really bad, but then you get used to it. You keep telling yourself you’re not doing anything wrong...” (ibid.).

This study is concerned with exploring how students, teachers (including principals), and parents in schools in Indonesia individually and collectively engage with academic cheating. This emic study of their beliefs, attitudes and practices around academic cheating, as well as the schools’ structures, explains why the behaviours have been legitimated and reproduced across generations in schools in Indonesia.

Speaking of academic cheating practices, although earlier I mentioned my cheating practices as a student, it is important that we do not consider students as the only possible cheaters. Teachers, principals, staff, and parents are all potential members of the cheating circle (Davis et al., 2009). Some examples of how teachers are cheating in their academic work can be seen from the works of Davis et al. (2009), Schab (1991),

---

4 Crittenden et al. (2009) in a different study came up with the term ‘cheating culture’ to refer to a condition where people are tolerant of the academic misconduct since everyone seems to do it for the sake of success.

5 In Chapter Four, Seven and Eight, I briefly discuss that this is not the case. As an example, cheating violated teachers’ and governments’ rights to assess students’ learning progress and the country’s latest education achievement, respectively.
and Strom & Strom (2007). They point out that there are indications that teachers are providing test answers to students, modifying students’ answers after tests have been completed, and allowing students more time to work on their tests. The most discussed misconduct of teachers is ignoring their students’ cheating practices (e.g. McCabe, 1999; Murdock et al., 2001; Strom & Strom, 2007). As for parents, there are indications that some of them use money and middlemen to ‘help’ their child(ren) to be accepted in reputable schools (Davis et al., 2009). As noted above, Bourdieu offers the equation of: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice. So, when students, teachers, or parents cheat in their academic work, the kind of cheating practices that they choose and how they do it is the product of how they make use of their habitus and capital. Beyond that, how teachers, parents, and the governments deal with academic cheating is also a reflection of their habitus and capital.

I cheated in my academic work because I wanted to avoid the stigma of failure, to obtain good grades so that I could attend public education institutions, to maintain a good relationship with my classmates and to make my parents happy with me. Previous researches have revealed various motives of students and teachers when they cheat in their academic work. In general, students mainly need to obtain good grades so that they can: avoid failing a particular subject or their class (Finn & Frone, 2004); maintain their academic success (Finn & Frone, 2004); fulfil their parents’ expectations (Strom & Strom, 2007); maintain their academic lead over other students (Crittenden et al., 2009); and enter the best college (Davis et al., 2009). As for teachers, there is an indication that they ignore cheating because they are in a dilemma. While parents have high expectations for their children to excel in their study, they also intimidate schools if their children are reported cheating (Strom & Strom, 2007). So, ignoring the problem is a sort of win-win solution for teachers: they can defend themselves from the parents as well as the school leadership because they are ‘not aware’ of anything untoward happening (McCabe & Katz, 2009). In addition, the pressure to show success in tests and exams that teachers have to deal with, becomes an incentive for them to illegally upgrade their students’ grades (Davis et al., 2009). The examples of cheating motivation from my experience, along with those from students and teachers as shown in several previous studies, indicate that individuals
are competing for an objective. The objective, I would argue, resembles Bourdieu’s capital. This study explores the kinds of capital that people are eager to acquire in academic cheating, even if it means that they have to normalise going against objective rules and regulations.

In this study, I will interpret school and classroom as the ‘field’ for one obvious reason: it is where academic cheating mainly occurs. But I will also be looking at more specific fields. As players move from one field to another, developing their sense of ‘feel for the game’, I expose their habitus, and their desired capital, to understand the logic of what they do (their practice). Based on my experience, academic cheating as a habitus was a way for me to navigate through the dynamics of friendship and the concerns that I had with my parents. For my classmates back in my school days and for students in this current era, it could mean more. Therefore, in this study, I will consider the relationships among students, between students and parents, between students and teachers, and between parents and teachers as a further field that I need to explore. To consider the schools, the classrooms, and those relations as a field means that there are rules, regulations, and norms that students, teachers, and parents have to navigate. Davis et al. (2009) define academic cheating as an attempt to mislead the effort to measure a student’s knowledge and skills. Rules and regulations concerning academic cheating (e.g. the honour code in the United States, see Dukes (2012) and McCabe & Katz (2009)) are obviously designed to stop the problem. But I do not think that such rules and regulations are working. Even if academic cheating behaviours conflict with moral values such as honesty and integrity, they prevail. This study is thus also concerned with exploring the rules of the game in academic cheating that have overpowered the moral authority of rules and regulations.
Chapter Three
Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the prevalent forms of cheating in schools in Indonesia and to analyse the reasons behind its prevalence. A secondary purpose of this study is to find possible relations between academic cheating and the rampant culture of corruption in Indonesia as suggested by the government. In order to achieve these objectives, my project takes a qualitative ethnographic approach. I conducted fieldwork in two senior secondary schools in Indonesia: one in the city of Bandung and another in the city of Semarang. This chapter provides reasons for choosing ethnography, illustrates the research design and procedures, and reveals some issues and limitations.

The rationale for qualitative research

LaBeff et al. (1990) claimed that there is no single explanation of what is cheating and what is not. Understanding cheating is complex and context bound. I knew I could not just come to school, bombard the participants with questions, and interpret the information without understanding the context. Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative research is ideal for explaining social phenomena. Utilising qualitative research, I could be in the location where the phenomena take place and uncover them using one or more of the method’s research designs. By immersing myself for some time in the school, I could obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cheating culture in it. By becoming part of the school, I could interpret and analyse the daily experiences of individuals in it.

Qualitative research methods are commonly used by researchers who recognise that their inquiries into an issue can only be answered if they observe and interact with people who experience it (Creswell, 2007). The methods are also useful when people’s interpretation of their experiences is a primary source of research data (Merriam, 2009). Bearing in mind my intention to generate a contextual understanding of academic cheating, employing qualitative research methods meant that I could have
direct day-to-day interactions with students, teachers, school principals, and parents in their shared setting.

Another rationale for choosing a qualitative approach is my curiosity regarding participants’ reactions to the integrity programs initiated by the government (e.g. the National Examination Integrity Index). The government is essentially political, or not independent. I doubted that they would assess their integrity program objectively. Thus, I believe that an assessment of the program from individuals (e.g. students and teachers) who are directly affected by it should provide a sense of balance and proportion. Creswell (2007) stated that qualitative research methods are appropriate for research that is looking at how participants genuinely respond to an issue. As I tried to get closer to my participants, I was hoping that our closeness would have a significant impact on how they would respond to my question: providing an honest and elaborate answer that could be used to assess the program.

I doubted that individuals in schools would be fully open in expressing their opinions to ‘the authorities’ (i.e. local governments or related Ministries) as they might have more incentive to display their successful execution of the programs than to criticise them. I hoped that my outsider status (I will explain the dilemma about my employment and student status later on in this chapter) would make me a person who could be trusted with information without any negative consequences for the school officials, such that participants would be open and genuine with me. More precisely, I wanted to explore a hypothesis made by the government that was also the reason behind the academic integrity initiatives: that the culture of corruption in Indonesian society is caused by, among others, the pervasive cheating practices of students and teachers.

**Research design**

According to Fetterman (1989, p. 11), “ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture... [it] may be of a small tribal group in some exotic land or a classroom in middle-class suburbia”. Ethnography is considered a suitable strategy for research on “many learning, teaching and educational issues” (Walford, 2008b, p. 7). In their work, ethnographers try to find patterns of behaviour, language, interaction, and
thought shared in a social group to make sense of what the members of the group are doing (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1989; Walford, 2008b). My project involved observing the culture of classrooms in schools in Indonesia. More specifically, I looked at patterns of action and belief related to academic cheating and academic integrity shared by individuals in those classrooms.

The main interest of the ethnographer is to collect information about a social group and their culture using the lens of the insider, or an emic perspective (Fetterman, 1989). The value of an emic perspective is that it helps clarify why a certain practice is ‘natural’ or accepted social practice for a social group. As an emic perspective is exclusively based on the point of view of the social group, ethnographers then use their theoretical framework to balance the emic perception, or they pit the emic perception against the existing knowledge (Fetterman, 2008). It is this balanced knowledge that ethnographers then deliver to the public.

I was aware from the outset that gaining access to the participants’ emic perspective would not be an easy job. There was the possibility that individuals in schools may feel uncomfortable discussing academic cheating openly. Ethnographers can use a variety of procedures to overcome such issues, and one that was effective for my problem was outcropping. Rather than relying on human interaction to collect my data, I could draw it from observing ‘physical’ evidences in my surrounding.

Outcropping is a geological term. In inner-city ethnographic research, outcroppings include skyscrapers, burned-out buildings, graffiti, and syringes in the schoolyard. The researcher can quickly estimate the relative wealth or poverty of an area from these outcroppings. (Fetterman, 2008, p. 10)

Employing the observation of outcropping, ethnographers can avoid obtrusiveness that may affect participants’ behaviour. Employing outcropping, I could avoid asking my participants the question, “Are you a cheater?” which would apply pressure and possibly intimidate them. Instead, I was able to get the answer by witnessing the cheating acts that took place in the school.
My task in finding patterns and obtaining participants’ perspectives had to be done in their natural setting (i.e. their school). It involved me immersing myself in a new place for a long period of time. In other words, I had to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. I allocated five months for my fieldwork. Since all participants involved in the study are Indonesian, I was confident that I would not need a long adaptation period. I speak Indonesian and I also understand the local culture, beliefs, customs, and laws. Although others could argue that that amount of time was not long enough for ethnographic fieldwork, I believe that the time fitted well with my “personal, biographical, financial and academic reasons” (Delamont, 2008, p. 42). I had to consider the overall time that I had for completing my doctoral study. Walford (2008b) recognises that the current period of doctoral study is significantly shorter compared to the ‘olden days’. Nowadays, it is hard for doctoral students to extend their study period if they need to do more fieldwork or to do more analysis. I was entitled to a four-year scholarship; the chance to secure an extension was only rarely granted. Coming from a non-English speaking country, I predicted that the biggest challenges in my academic journey would be reading, analysing and writing in English. I needed to allocate most of my four years of study time to those purposes. In the end, as Delamont (2008, p. 54) pointed out, “there is no point in doing research unless it is turned into a report, a thesis, an article.”

The importance of fieldwork for ethnographers is well summed up by Fetterman (1989, p.12), who called it “the heart of the ethnographic research design.” As an ethnographer, I made use of my time during fieldwork to collect details by observing events, taking detailed field notes, interviewing participants, and collecting relevant documents. Combined, the four data collection methods were useful in constructing a holistic understanding of (Merriam, 2009). Field notes, interview transcripts, and important documents gathered from those activities were then analysed inductively to find patterns and themes (Creswell, 2007).

**Setting**

I selected senior secondary schools (in Indonesian often abbreviated to ‘SMA’) for three main reasons. First, research on academic integrity at the senior secondary
school level is still lacking (Dukes, 2012). Second, studies show that the prevalence of cheating peaks at that particular level of schooling (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Craig & Evans, 1990; Finn & Frone, 2004; Schab, 1991). Third, most SMA students in Indonesia are in the age range of 16 to 18 years. Young people of this age are mature enough to understand the meaning of their participation in the study, to express their feelings, and to articulate their opinions.

The ethnographic study took place in senior secondary schools in Bandung and Semarang, in the island of Java. The two cities have some features in common. For instance, they were both colonised by the Dutch for a long time; they are both provincial capitals; and they are both cities with more than 1.5 million inhabitants. In some ways, the two are different. For instance, Bandung is an inland city, albeit these days with a significant industrial and manufacturing sector, while Semarang is a coastal port city. The dominant ethnic group (and language) in Bandung is Sundanese while in Semarang it is Javanese. A more particular reason why Bandung and Semarang were chosen for this study is that these two cities have implemented strategies to reduce the propensity for academic cheating. Inaugurated as the pioneer of the Southeast Asia Digital Class in Indonesia (MOEC, 2015), Bandung is using an online examination program as a solution to the problem of academic cheating. As for the local government of Semarang, they claimed that they have been implementing a cheating detection system for the National Examination since 2011 (Hartono, 2015a). Taking practical concerns into account, such as the five months that I had for my fieldwork, this research was carried out only in one senior secondary school in each city. After taking time to obtain research permits from central and local governments, as well as traveling to a couple of cities to interview several resource persons (see below), in practice I only spent two months in each SMA.
In Semarang (red box on the map), Central Java, the SMA that I selected (from here on referred to as ‘SMA Semarang’) is a high-achieving school. It is known as one of the best schools, not only in the city but also in the country. Students from this school regularly win national and international academic competitions. In 2015, SMA Semarang was among the 503 schools that received an Integrity Index Award. The Ministry of Education and Culture gave the award to schools considered to have successfully organised a clean and honest National Exam during the implementation of the National Examination Integrity Index program.

In Bandung (blue box on the map), West Java, the SMA that I selected (from here on referred to as ‘SMA Bandung’) is not as academically high-achieving as SMA Semarang. A friend of mine, a native of the city who lives close to the school, described SMA Bandung as “a third tier school that is moving to the second tier bit by bit”. Students from this school are known as promising athletes, such as in soccer, softball, and badminton. Some of the female students regularly win modern dance competitions. In 2016, the Mayor of Bandung selected SMA Bandung to pilot the Edubox Smart School program along with 24 other senior secondary schools in the city. The Edubox program promotes digital learning, and the government upgraded the schools’ infrastructure (e.g. installing WiFi routers, providing a main computer as a server, etc.) for the implementation of the program. One of the features of Edubox is digitalised examination, where students use their gadgets (e.g. smartphone, tablet, laptop, etc.)
to access the exam questions. The local government and the program developer claimed that Edubox could prevent cheating in exams for two reasons. First, students would randomly receive a different set of questions. Second, students would not be able to use their gadgets to access the internet for finding answers since the Edubox program is hosted on an intranet (Basu, 2016).

My first impression on the physical features of SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang was that they were not too different to my SMA in Malang back in 1998-2001. In fact, looking at what Parker (1992a, p. 48) had observed, the two schools even had some similarities to elementary schools in Bali in 1980-1992: “...a national flag in the school yard... classrooms are decorated with posters, flags, photos of national leaders, insignia and mottoes, all of which proclaim that this is Indonesian territory.” Some features might not change, but some others had changed a lot. When compared to my old SMA, the presence of technology and electronic equipment in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang was the most striking difference. In both schools, classrooms, halls, and corridors were decorated with overhead projectors, WiFi routers, and CCTV cameras. In both schools, students told me that teachers would only activate the WiFi routers when they had online exams. The CCTV cameras were working properly in SMA Bandung, but in SMA Semarang most students told me that the CCTVs in their class were not functioning.

The arrangement of classrooms in both schools was similar. Photos of the President and Vice-President, as well as the national emblem, the Garuda, were displayed in the front of each classroom along with a projector screen that completely concealed the photos and symbol when being used. Generally, two students shared a one-metre-long desk, and these were arranged in rows facing the teacher at the front of the room. In classes where the desks were a half-metre long, two desks would be arranged as if they were one desk, and students sat in pairs. Usually boys shared a desk with boys

---

6 The majority of students in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang owned a smartphone instead of a cellphone (cellular phone), and that is why I will use the term in this thesis. The following link provides an explanation of the difference between the two: https://www.lifewire.com/cell-phones-vs-smartphones-577507. In short, smartphones can be considered a hybrid of cellphones and mini-computers.
and girls with girls. The following are two examples of students’ seating places based on their genders, one from each school:

Figure 3.2. Example of students’ seating places in SMA Semarang

Year 12 Natural Science, sketched on 9 January 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s desk</th>
<th>Front of the class</th>
<th>Front (main) entrance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk (D)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3. Example of students’ seating places in SMA Bandung

Year 11 Social Science, sketched on 24 February 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s desk</th>
<th>Front of the class</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk (D)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

7 A classroom with empty desks was common in SMA Bandung because many of the students, as promising young athletes, had to attend routine training.
In terms of rules and regulations, students from both schools had the freedom to bring and use their smartphones outside and inside classrooms. Several teachers expressed their concern with students using smartphones in class. But I felt that their concern would not be resolved soon because teachers themselves seemed to have difficulty ‘unplugging’ or distancing themselves from using smartphones in class. Many students used a motorcycle as their means of transportation to and from school. SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang only allowed students who already had their driving license to park their motorcycles inside the school area. Both schools controlled the appearance of their students. In SMA Semarang, I was not able to find a written document regarding student dress and appearance. The only lead that I had was when a student told me that they had to wear mainly black shoes. Regarding daily uniforms, students wear white-and-grey on Mondays and Tuesdays, batik on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and Scouts’ uniform on Fridays.\footnote{In Indonesia the most common uniform for students is: red shorts/skirts and white shirts in primary schools, blue shorts/skirts and white shirts in junior secondary schools, and grey pants/skirts and white shirts in senior secondary schools.} For their white-and-grey uniform, SMA Semarang, and all other public senior secondary schools including SMA Bandung, followed the Education and Culture Ministry Regulation (\textit{Permendikbud}) No. 45/2014. The following picture is the sketch from the \textit{Permendikbud} No. 45/2014 for the white-and-grey uniform:
Figure 3.4. Students’ white-and-grey uniform
Shiraishi (1997) argues that the mandatory uniform is intended to efface any differences among Indonesian students. Because of the uniform, all students are equal in the eyes of the teacher. Although students might come from a variety of social, economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, their uniform classifies them as a representative of their ‘new’ social collectivity (Anderson, 1996).

Unlike SMA Semarang, SMA Bandung had a written document that explained students’ dress and appearance. Among the rules and regulations are:

1. Shirts must have all of the required badges.
2. Shirts must be tucked in.
3. No fitted/close-fitting shirts allowed.
4. Black belt without ornaments.
5. Skirts should follow the PermenDikbud No. 45/2014.
6. Daily uniforms: white-and-grey on Monday and Tuesday, Sundanese traditional clothing on Wednesday, batik on Thursday, and Scouts uniform on Friday.9
7. Black sports shoes.
8. No excessive makeup allowed.
9. No nose, tongue, or ear piercings allowed. Female students cannot have more than one piercing on each earlobe.
10. Male students’ hair: must not fall below ears (sides), eyebrows (front), and shirt collar (back); must not be coloured; must be combed properly.
11. Female students’ hair: must not be coloured.
12. No tattoos allowed.
13. No fitted, pencil, cutbray (similar to flares or bell-bottoms), and ripped pants allowed.
14. Students can only wear school caps in the school ground.
15. Female students wearing jilbab must use a white jilbab for white-and-grey, batik, and traditional uniforms; and a dark brown jilbab with Scouts’ uniform.10

---

9 Sundanese: ethnic group native to Western Java.
10 Mulder (1994, p. 13) describes jilbab as Muslim women’s headgear that exposes only the face. Formerly jilbab was only part of the uniform for female students in Muhammadiyah (one of the Muslim associations in Indonesia) schools. When Mulder came back to Indonesia in 1980, jilbab had been admitted in public schools, but has been both in and favour at various times.
Compared to when I was in senior secondary school in the late 1990s, the number of Muslim female students wearing *jilbab* at both schools has increased significantly. During my time, there were only one or two student(s) in each class. Nowadays, the majority of Muslim female students wear the *jilbab*, although most of them only wear it at school.

In the current Indonesian education system, first-year senior secondary students choose one out of three *jurusan* or study paths (a term used by White & Margiyatin, 2016): social sciences, natural sciences, or language. Although students have the freedom to choose, in reality, they are subject to an assessment by the school. Teachers will look into students’ academic reports from junior secondary school and the results of an interview before they take a decision on which study path a student should follow. It is common knowledge that the natural sciences study path is the most popular and high status. Teachers always advise students with the highest marks to take the natural sciences study path. Correspondingly, most parents want their child(ren) to be in the natural sciences study path.

One of the reasons why many people prefer the natural sciences study path has to do with access to higher education. Graduates of the natural sciences study path are able to do cross majors and apply for most social sciences (and language) majors in universities. Graduates of the social sciences and language study paths can also theoretically take a cross major at university, but there are a very limited number of natural sciences majors to choose from. Some universities do not even have a cross major option for the social sciences and language study path graduates. SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang only have the natural sciences and social sciences study paths. In both schools, each year, the number of natural sciences classes was double, and in some cases triple, the number of social sciences classes.

---

11 The government started to implement the study path system from the first year onwards in 2013. Before that, study paths were for second year onwards. During my time in senior secondary school, in the early 2000s, I started a study path only in the third year.
Participants

At first I was eager to have specific individuals as my participants. Students in year 12, who were about to face the National Examinations before graduation, were one of the target groups I was keen to capture. According to the literature, and the public furore over cheating in National Exams in Indonesia, they are the ones most prone to cheating practices. Another target group was the teachers who verbally encourage students not to cheat but did not really put their words into practice. These teachers are part of the reasons for the pervasiveness of the problem. But as my fieldwork progressed, I realised that the criteria for my main participants did not have to be that limited. The best informants were the ones who came back to me after our early conversations, demonstrating an interest in this study; it was they who showed trust, and thus shared their perspectives with me. The following table contains brief information on the participants:

Table 3.1. Overview of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMA Semarang</td>
<td>Nov 2016-</td>
<td>1 year 10 natural science, 1 year 11 social science, and 1 year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 2017</td>
<td>natural science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of classes: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98 students, 21 teachers, and 1 principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of participants: 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMA Bandung</td>
<td>Jan 2017-</td>
<td>2 year 10 social science, 1 year 11 natural science, and 6 year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mar 2017</td>
<td>natural science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of classes: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>365 students, 22 teachers*, and 1 principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of participants: 388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) including two practice teachers

In SMA Semarang the vice principal allocated me to a particular year 12 natural science class to observe. There was no specific reason why the vice principal chose this class, except for the fact that it was on the top of a random list of classes. I was allowed to choose any year 10 and 11 classes – as many as I liked. I did not want to be overwhelmed by the amount of data. So I settled on one year 10 natural science class and one year 11 social science class. In SMA Bandung, I was assigned six year 12 natural science classes. I was expected to become a substitute teacher for a week when the English teacher for these classes went abroad to attend a workshop. As for
year 10 and 11 in Bandung, I had the freedom to decide how many and which classes I wanted to observe. The number of classes, participants and interviewees grew as I shifted from SMA Semarang to SMA Bandung. I believe that this process was somewhat parallel to how I gradually developed confidence in doing fieldwork and showed that I was adapting and working more efficiently in conducting fieldwork.

In Indonesia, most teachers are part of the civil service, and the government continuously reminds teachers about their position (Bjork, 2003, 2004 & 2013). Teachers wear the same uniforms, attend the same meetings, and share a similar categorisation (i.e. PNS, stands for Pegawai Negeri Sipil or civil servants) to other members of the government ‘family’. Inspectors rarely observe teachers in their classrooms, and when they did, the inspectors did not pay much attention to teaching and learning (Bjork, 2004). Thus, as civil servants, teachers are evaluated for their loyalty and obedience to their principal and government’s directives. They are not evaluated based on their ideas, skills, and instructional abilities in the classroom (Bjork, 2003, 2004 & 2013). Considering the nature of bureaucracy, I had anticipated that the school principals or teachers of the observed schools would nominate strong or well-behaved students to be interviewed, such as those who were members of OSIS (like a Student Council). This did not happen, so I was able to use my observation and informal discussion with students and teachers to help me identify potential interviewees. I selected one teacher and seven students from SMA Semarang, as well as two teachers and twelve students from SMA Bandung. These interviewees were among the participants who often engaged in informal talk with me and who expressed interest in my topic. I also interviewed two parents from each of these groups of students as soon as I received their confirmation. In relation to gender, in SMA Semarang, I had more male students show their interest in this study, and in SMA Bandung I had more female students show their interest. This pattern was reflected in the gender composition of the student interviewee group. While I was only able to interview one female (out of seven students) in SMA Semarang, I managed to interview nine (out of twelve) in SMA Bandung. In my effort to understand the cheating detection system that the local government of Semarang claimed to have, I interviewed one of their officials. In order to explore the possible use of the National
Examination Integrity Index data, I interviewed two officials of the Ombudsman, Central Java. The following table contains brief information on my interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated with</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMA Semarang</td>
<td>Number of interviewees: 11 • 7 students (1 female and 6 male) • 1 (male) teacher • 1 (male) principal • 2 parents (1 female and 1 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMA Bandung</td>
<td>Number of interviewees: 16 • 12 students (9 female and 3 male) • 2 teachers (1 female and 1 male) • 2 parents (1 female and 1 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Government of Central Java</td>
<td>Number of interviewees: 1 1 (male) official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman Central Java</td>
<td>Number of interviewees: 2 2 officials (1 female and 1 male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Challenges in gaining entry

I realised that the combination of the words ‘cheating’ and ‘corruption’ could present me with several challenges. For instance, the local education authorities and my participants might feel intimidated and reluctant to take part in this study. The following are some of my experiences in navigating the challenges that I came across when I was in the process of gaining entry. It should be noted, though, that before I could leave Perth to begin my fieldwork in Indonesia, I needed to secure Ethics approval from the University of Western Australia (UWA) Ethics Committee. I will discuss the process and the challenge in obtaining the approval, and of gaining my ‘exit’, at the end of the chapter.

### Research permit

My first task to gain entry was to obtain a research permit from the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs in Jakarta. A research permit is basically a recommendation letter that grants Indonesian researchers access to a specific location or institution under the coordination of the Ministry of Home Affairs.\(^\text{12}\) The senior secondary schools

---

\(^{12}\) The procedure to obtain a research permit for foreign researchers is more complicated and has more steps than for local researchers. Foreign researchers need to apply for the permit through the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education in Jakarta. The pre- and post-arrival procedures can be seen from the following link: https://frp.ristekdikti.go.id/index.php/info/general/procedure.
that I wanted to observe are under the management of their respective Provincial Governments (i.e. SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang are managed by the Provincial Governments of West Java and Central Java respectively), and the Provincial Government is under the coordination of the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs. To obtain the permit, researchers need to submit an application, a research proposal in Indonesian, and a statement letter from the main researcher. A committee in the Ministry of Home Affairs will review the application and decide after six working days. No ethics matters are discussed in the review process.

I did not encounter any major problems with the process in Jakarta. Timing problems occurred in Semarang. The local office that deals with research permits did not have a timeframe for how long the process would take. The first time I went back to check the progress, the office could not find the documents that I had submitted to them a couple of days before. There was no way for me other than to follow the process. I came to the office every two days and was able to get the approval after ten working days. Learning from this experience, I started the process for my permit in Bandung earlier. When there was a semester holiday in Semarang, I went to Bandung to submit my request. The permit was processed in good time in Bandung.

*My employment status*

Although I am currently doing research as a Ph.D. student at the UWA, I am also a civil servant for the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. My office granted me four years of leave so that I could continue my education. As soon as the permission expires in mid-2019, I will be working again in the Ministry for the next 20 to 25 years. While I was waiting for my research permit from the Ministry of Home Affairs, I used a desk in my office (a colleague was using my old desk) to prepare my fieldwork. On one occasion, upon learning about my research, my Head of Bureau encouraged me to draft a reference letter that she was willing to sign. She believed that the reference letter might be useful for me in convincing the local governments in Bandung and Semarang to allow me to conduct my research in their schools. After all, many of the education matters that schools in Indonesia are dealing with are policies and programs initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. I always included the reference
letter among my documents (i.e. research permit, research proposal, and participant information form) whenever I submitted my request to the local governments in Bandung and Semarang, as well as to the two schools. While I could not tell if the reference letter had a positive impact on the responses that the local governments and schools gave to me, they all approved my requests.

My employment status was more of an issue in Australia. I applied to the UWA Ethics Committee to conduct research on cheating in schools, and the committee had many reservations. Among them was that the Committee wanted me to declare my status as an employee of the Ministry of Education and Culture up front. At first I had wanted to declare my status only if participants asked because I was afraid that my status might be misunderstood: i.e. that I was monitoring or evaluating the local education offices or schools on behalf of the central government. However, obeying the advice of the Ethics Committee was actually helpful since I felt that several times during fieldwork I was able to access institutions and gain information because I had declared my employment status. On my first visits to both schools, for example, introducing myself only as a student of an Australian university would only have granted me access as far as literally the school gate. Answering “The Ministry of Education” to the question of “Where do you come from?” – which actually means “Who do you work for?” – granted me access to the school’s vice principal, hence securing my field sites.

As a researcher trying to collect data I had to locate and approach potential participants. But knowing that I was working for the Ministry of Education and Culture meant that sometimes it was the participants who took the opportunity to make contact with me. Participants that had a shared interest with me were happy to participate as informants. Several students and teachers approached me to ask for information about scholarships, and some asked whether I knew high-ranking officials that they had met before. A teacher in SMA Bandung even asked me if I knew someone ‘powerful’ to help him win a teachers’ competition held by the Ministry. A
different teacher in SMA Bandung seemed to have an urgent need to share his suspicions of the school funding mechanism with someone from the Ministry.\textsuperscript{13}

So, both schools knew my employment status, and that was quite productive in terms of access. However, I received different treatment with regard to access to the classroom during the exams. I am not talking about exams administered individually by teachers, as I was given access to observe those tests in both schools. The exams that I want to highlight are the ones administered by the schools or jointly by the school and the government (i.e. the end of semester exams, the school exams, and the national standard school exams). In SMA Semarang, I was allowed to be in the classroom and observe the exams. In SMA Bandung, I was not allowed to be in the classroom and could only stay in the teachers’ room or the school hall. A vice principal in SMA Semarang told me that I was allowed to enter the exam room because in the end what I wanted to do was to map out the possible cheating problems so we could understand it and perhaps find a solution. In SMA Bandung, a vice principal told me that I could not enter the classroom during the exams because that was the rules. Fortunately, despite that prohibition, I could still observe some students working (and cheating) in their exams, since the school asked students who came late or who needed to retake their exams to do them in the school hall.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{The gatekeeper and the access-giver/blocker}

There are two typical issues that researchers have to deal with in the early stages of their fieldwork. The first is gaining access through the gatekeeper, and the other one is gaining the confidence of informants (Creswell, 2007). I had to deal with the same issues.

In the current education system, senior secondary schools in Indonesia have three or four vice principals. There is a vice principal for curriculum, vice principal for student affairs, vice principal for facilities, and a vice principal for public relations. Although the

\textsuperscript{13} Before I did my fieldwork, my supervisor had shared with me her experience in going to schools and meeting people who try to make connections out of very slim contacts.

\textsuperscript{14} Some students need to retake their exam because the computer server failed to save their exam answers. They were tackling the same questions as before.
principal sits at the top of the school’s hierarchy, one vice principal in each school was
the gatekeeper of my research. During my early visits to both schools, they were the
only person that I could talk with.\textsuperscript{15} I realised that it was only by convincing them that
they would allow me to access their school.

Bu Emma was the gatekeeper in SMA Semarang.\textsuperscript{16} \textsuperscript{17} She wanted me to secure a
permit from the local Education Office while she reviewed my proposal. I found her
request reasonable as that was the procedure that I also knew. Bu Emma was
concerned about the topic of my study but was convinced of my intention to protect
anonymity, as well as to focus more on understanding the cause of the problem rather
than to expose it. However, the permit and the focus of my research were not enough
to convince Bu Emma. It was only after she was able to confirm that none of my
research data would end up on the commercial news media that she opened ‘the
gate’. To seal the deal, I had to sign an agreement to this effect. Pak Solih was the
gatekeeper in SMA Bandung.\textsuperscript{18} When I submitted my proposal to Pak Solih, I already
had the permit from the local Education Office. I had already completed ‘procedure’.
Similar to Bu Emma, Pak Solih had concerns about the topic of my study, but was
convinced of my plan to keep the data confidential and to focus more on the ‘why’
instead of the ‘what’. Pak Solih appeared convinced with my explanation. But this was
not the key to open the gate in SMA Bandung. Personal deals granted the access. Pak
Solih asked me to cover some of his classes when he went abroad for professional
development. Pak Solih also asked me to share information on scholarships to
students in classes that he taught.

My relationships with Bu Emma and Pak Solih developed over time. An important bond
was formed when I mentioned the name of a person that we knew from a scholarship
program (in the end, both of them were able to continue their education using the
scholarship). That man also happened to be an alumnus of SMA Semarang. The man’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[15] Thus, I was only able to meet the principals in person after I started my fieldwork: first week in SMA Semarang and second week in SMA Bandung.
\item[16] ‘Bu’ is a title commonly used to address women, usually older ones. Almost similar to ‘mam’ or ‘missis’.
\item[17] All names in this thesis are pseudonyms, as it is conventional in ethnographies and part of the Ethical
permission granted by the UWA Ethics Committee.
\item[18] ‘Pak’ is a title commonly used to address men, usually older ones. Almost similar to ‘sir’ or ‘mister’.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
name then acted as a referee for me (Walford, 2008a). After the appearance of that name, I could sense that Bu Emma and Pak Solih became more approachable.

During my early days in the two schools, I always sat alone at the back of the classroom. One of the questions that always came to mind at that time was how I should approach the students. I felt that I could only commence my fieldwork once I could start building a relationship with them. Aside from me trying to start a conversation with students – by asking random things such as their lesson schedule, the name of their teacher or of a book that they had on their table – in all classes that I observed, there was always this one, or sometimes more than one, student who took the initiative to approach me, sit next to me and start to ask me more about myself, my research, or about scholarship opportunities to study abroad. These students were important for my data collection because for me they were access-givers.

Most of these access-givers seemed to be popular students (I will discuss them more in Chapter Six). Once they talked to me, other students would come (mostly in a group) and chat with me. It was these at-the-back-of-the-class talks that enabled me to gain much of my data. I mainly had the talks during the intervals between classes. More ‘serious’ and long conversations were only possible if teachers were absent from their classes, which ironically is also one of the common corrupt practices in education – the jam kosong or ‘empty hours’. These access-givers, however, sometimes created a problem. There were moments when they interrupted my conversation with other students. Since the access-givers were the ones who knew me first, it seemed that when other students wanted to share their stories, they thought they had the right to be part of the conversation. This tendency sometimes caused my new potential participants discomfort (some of them were telling ‘secrets’ to me), leaving me with an unfinished story or incomplete information. The access-givers, in a sense, became access-blockers.

*Introducing my project: the trust issue*

I had anticipated that the schools might have more interest and eagerness in highlighting ‘good examples’ rather than bad ones – in other words, that the schools’
interest in putting themselves in a flattering light might endanger the project; I needed a better, softer way to present it. Therefore, instead of introducing the project as ‘an effort to identify academic cheating behaviours and their relation to the country’s corruption problem’ I introduced it as ‘an attempt to understand schools’ efforts to solve academic cheating problems and how schools may support the government’s greater agenda in eradicating corruption’. By changing the introduction, I wanted the schools to feel that I acknowledged possible efforts that they may have made to address the problem. It should be noted that in adopting this approach, I did not conceal anything, including telling all of my participants that I intended to identify overlooked academic cheating behaviours.

Nevertheless, the introduction that I gave was not able to cover all possible issues. When I was in SMA Semarang, a teacher told me that some of his colleagues were gossiping about my research in their WhatsApp chat group. Those teachers were worried that I would expose academic cheating practices in their school to the commercial news media. To stop the rumour, Bu Emma (my gatekeeper) raised the issue during a teachers’ meeting. She explained how I had signed a statement letter, promising that all of my findings in the school would only be used for the sake of science and were not to be commercialised. Any publications would be in academic journals, not in commercial news media.

A typical first day for me in both schools consisted of me introducing my project to the teachers. Introducing my research to the teachers as early as possible was important because they held the key to my access to the classrooms. In the initial meeting, to avoid any misconceptions, I also convinced teachers that I was not evaluating their teaching methods. With regard to students, the strategy that I adopted in introducing the study was to show them that I had been in their shoes. Every time I had the chance to introduce myself and my research to a class, I would deliver the question, “Who in this class has ever cheated in an exam?” while raising my hand. In all classes, from both schools, the majority of the students raised their hands in response to my question. The ‘I have been in your shoes’ strategy worked really well for my case. I was able to develop a good rapport with many students, leading to open communication
and discussions. Also, a teacher in SMA Bandung even decided to raise her hand, admitting that she had cheated before when she was a student. Another teacher was so drawn into my interaction with students that he even told us a story of how several teachers in the school had cheated during the certification exams.

**Data collection**

In ethnographic research, observation has a pivotal role in the data collection process. Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) believe that ethnography and participant observation go hand-in-hand. They, however, do not suggest that observation is the only data collection method for ethnographic research. Data collection in ethnographic research can be done by a mixture of “watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 2). By combining those methods, ethnographers are able to appreciate their participants’ experience and opinions from various points of view (Walford, 2008b).

**Observations**

Creswell (2007) defined participant observation as a technique that requires ethnographers to immerse themselves in their research site and the daily lives of the participants. Upon this immersion, ethnographers will receive the reward of a chance to gather first-hand information of the phenomenon being studied. The plan that I adopted for my immersion process was to join the school’s programs and activities as often as possible, whenever I had access.

I came to both schools on school days, from Monday to Friday, from morning (i.e. 07:00 in SMA Semarang and 06:30 in SMA Bandung) to afternoon (i.e. 15:30 in SMA Semarang and 15:00 in SMA Bandung, except on Fridays, when schools ended around three hours earlier). I routinely came to school unless I had to go out of town for a meeting with other resource persons who were unrelated to the school. Before the lessons started, I mostly stayed in the teachers’ room, trying to connect with teachers through conversations on random topics, but mostly on their teaching experience. Once in a while, teachers invited me to their desk so that I could share some of the
food that they had brought from home for breakfast. During the lessons, I spent my time in the assigned classes taking notes in my notebook. My very first impression of the students in both schools that I had from observing the classrooms was their high level of interaction with their classmates. During lessons, most of the time students were busy discussing their assignments and some other non-study-related topics. Apart from the learning sessions, every so often students were busy chitchatting, singing, watching music videos or movies in their smartphones, or playing cards with their classmates. When there was an opportunity, I carried out impromptu informal conversations with students and teachers during school hours. Conversations with teachers mostly took place in the teachers’ room. Opportunities with students were more abundant. As I have mentioned before, most of the time the discussions were at the back of the class, during the intervals between classes. These ethnographic methods enabled me to collect students’ and teachers’ emic perspectives, which was important in this research.

I preferred spending my lunchtime in the school canteen, although every now and then I would stay in a classroom or the teachers’ room. Eating or just sitting at the canteen provided me the opportunity to ‘advertise’ my presence and to engage with students who dared to talk to me outside the classroom setting. One lunchtime at SMA Bandung, I joined a group of year 12 students who were playing soccer in the school’s basketball court. It was a rather short game, but my decision to show interest in the students’ activity (Merriam, 2009) had a significant effect on my immersion process. Early on at the school, the students had seemed distant and very shy. But after that one game, I felt that I received a warmer welcome, especially from the year 12 male students. Apart from the activities that took place inside the school, I participated in school activities that were conducted outside the premises (e.g. study visits) and non-educational activities in which schools were participating (e.g. carnivals).

Access and trust must be understood as a “moment-by-moment process of negotiation” (Walford, 2008a, p. 16). In order to further develop my relationship with students, I always refused if they wanted to do salim or hand-kissing. Salim is not only a gesture of introduction but is also an expression of subordination and honour to the
person whose hand is being kissed. Typically, children salim their parents’ friends, colleagues, or extended family, and students salim their teachers. As described by Parker (2016a, p. 20), in Indonesia “there is an established tradition of filial respect (hormat) towards parents... and from younger people to older people generally, regardless of kin ties.” Someone like me, who is twice the age of the students, will most likely end up as a salim target.

I believed that if I allowed students to kiss my hand, my status would be no different from that of their teachers. To be in such a teacher-student power relation could be risky for me since the students might not want to share their ‘secrets’ with me. My refusal to participate in salim often raised a question from students and teachers, but I believe that it was quite an effective strategy since I was able to be very close to several students. Although it is not necessarily an indicator, some students in SMA Semarang called me ‘mas’ or ‘bro’ in English, and some students in Bandung would come to me to share stories about a competition they had just had, their weekend, and even their problems with their boyfriend or girlfriend. It seemed that students felt comfortable with my presence in the class and that I had managed to reduce the possible power differentials with them. In classes, my presence did not stop them from doing things that they might not do candidly in front of their teachers, such as eating, sleeping, playing with their smartphone, putting on make-up, and cheating.

The main benefit of having developed trust in my relationship with the students is that the data that I obtained from them are more likely to be useful and valid (Walford, 2008a). However, ethnographers need to be very careful in managing their engagement with a social group or culture. As Fetterman (1989) reminds us, the success of a participant observation rests on the ethnographer’s ability to maintain a professional distance from the people under study. In the field, despite the fact that I needed to have a close relationship with my participants to build trust, I also needed

19 Salim to teachers could be a gesture that is common in the island of Java and several other islands, but not in some others. I do not have exact locations, but could suggest two examples. In Bali, my supervisor told me that she never encountered salim during her stays there in the 1980s. My Balinese friends confirmed what my supervisor said and that is still the case until now. My friends who came from North Sumatra also told me that salim was not a habit among the students there. Only a handful of teachers would ask their students to do salim.
to be able to loosen it, to allow me to observe and take notes. In employing participant
observation, ethnographers are both participating and observing. As a participant,
ethnographers are insiders who take part in the activities of the social group being
studied and contribute to it. As an observer, ethnographers are outsiders who do not
necessarily take an active role in the social group. O’Reilly (2009) believes that
combining these two responsibilities is not easy in practice. Yet, she emphasised that
ethnographers must be able to do it. After all, ethnographers are participating in order
to observe, finding clues and answers.

In my fieldwork, although I worked hard to conduct productive observations, I believe
that I gained my observer or outsider status relatively easily. ‘The stranger who eats
(mostly) alone in the canteen’, ‘the person who does not wear a uniform’, or ‘the
researcher from X university’ – these identities instantly separated me from the
members of the school. However, I realised that I needed a strategy to achieve a
participant status. I definitely could not participate as a student. However, I took part
in several activities that schools designed for their students, such as joining a study
visit to Jakarta and participating in school carnivals. Participating as a teacher or
contributing to students’ learning activities were more do-able for me. On several
occasions, teachers asked me to become their substitute teacher or at least to keep an
eye on their class while they were away. The teaching activities could potentially put
me back in the category of one who should be salim-ed, the one with power. After all,
teaching and refusing salim are contradictory identity-making actions. In dealing with
this matter, I tried to avoid behaviours that would reflect the image of a teacher, so I
would not sit in the teacher’s chair, avoided being the centre of the lesson, and spared
some of the lesson time to discuss scholarship opportunities or my research.

In the classrooms, I always sat at the back. Sometimes I sat alone on one of the unused
chairs, and at other times with a student who had no classmate to share a desk with.
My observational activities were mainly taking notes on what I saw, what I heard, and
what people said to me, as quickly and as accurately as possible. As explained by
Delamont (2008), it is imperative for researchers to use all of their senses in
performing observation. The very first note that I usually wrote were details on the
date, time, site (school and class), teacher, and subject (Fetterman, 1989). I put this information at the top of the page of my field notebooks. So every time I moved from one class to another, or when I stayed put but the lesson changed, I updated this information. My next general note would be on the physical appearance of the classroom (Delamont, 2008). On my very first visit in a classroom, I took note of what was displayed on the walls, and the location and condition of the furniture that the class had. I also made a sketch of students’ seating arrangements. The sketches helped me to memorise students’ names. Since they often moved, I regularly updated the sketches. As for more irregular notes, I tried to pay attention to different aspects such as the classroom ambience, the interaction between teacher and students, and interaction among the students.

I wrote my notes mostly using Indonesian and sometimes using English. However, and this is where I had a problem, it was hard for me to always jot down direct quotations. Many of my notes were paraphrases of what my participants had said or of our conversations, but I tried my best not to change the meaning. On information that really caught my interest, I wrote my personal thoughts and opinions about it. At first, I put my observation notes and my personal notes together, one sentence next to another. When I shared an example of my notes to my supervisor, she advised me to separate them. My supervisor warned me that quoting such combined notes in my thesis could make the description less objective. So I drew a line in my field notebooks, allocating three-fourths of the paper for notes of my observations and one-fourth for my personal notes.

I did not use my field notebooks to store only my data. My books also had a role in collecting data and reducing possible power differentials between me and the students. Occasionally, students and teachers were curious about what I was writing in the book. That curiosity was enough to attract potential participants to come and sit with me. Next thing I knew, we were talking about various subjects, whether or not it related to the research. An important aspect of my fieldwork was making my participants trust me. But it was also important for me to show that I trusted them. Frequently I would allow some students who were really close to me to read my books
as long as they consulted me if there were points that raised a question. I also interrupted if they showed a peculiar reaction. These ‘special’ participants would then share their comments on my notes, enriching them.

During my observations, I could not help but identify the differences between senior secondary schools nowadays and the way my SMA had been back when I was a student. One particular difference that surprised me was the ubiquity of smartphones. I doubt that in the two schools there were any students who did not have a smartphone. Smartphones had become an essential part of students’ learning process. One time a teacher in SMA Semarang asked her students to find various kinds of plants in the school area, to take pictures of those plants using their smartphones, and then to present their findings in the next meeting. Almost every morning, before the first lesson started, students in SMA Bandung read the Quran from their smartphones. Students from both schools used their smartphone to take Online Based Tests, to receive assignments, to get lesson materials, and to Google for answers. On the other hand, during the lessons students also used their smartphones to listen to music, to play games, to record short videos, to take self-portraits (selfie), to watch movies, to watch music videos, to play with social media applications, and to silently chat with others. I will discuss how students used their smartphones to cheat in Chapter Four.

Interviews

Researchers can obtain information about what cannot be observed by conducting interviews (Merriam, 2009). Fetterman (1989) suggested that researchers could use interviews to further develop the information that they had obtained from observations. He also mentioned four basic types of interview: structured, semi-structured, informal, and retrospective.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this project for two reasons. First, consistent with my intention to gather participants’ insider perspectives, using open-ended questions provided enough freedom for the interviewees to share their thoughts and feelings. Although I had prepared several questions before I conducted my fieldwork, I reviewed the questions based on my observations. The process was necessary so that I
could ensure that my open-ended questions fitted the context. Second, the fact that I could prepare the questions before the interview helped me with the consent process and time management. Most of my interviewees were students. By reading the list of questions before the interview, they could find out which questions were sensitive and could be more focused on those that they were willing to discuss.\textsuperscript{20} To give the interviewee freedom to choose the questions, I wanted them to feel involved in the research. Also, I wanted to help them avoid uncomfortable situations during the interview. I believe that those two factors contributed to the trust between the interviewee and myself. Preparing the list also meant that I could prioritise my questions, ensuring that I could get the information that I most needed in a limited time.

Once I had approached participants to be interviewed, I gave them the list of questions and the Participant Information Form, which explained the nature of my study. After they agreed to be interviewed, we discussed when and where the interview could be conducted. For teachers and school principals, it was rather easy. Both teachers in SMA Bandung and the principal of SMA Semarang preferred school for the location, when they had no class to teach or meeting to attend. One teacher in SMA Semarang wanted to do it in a café after he had kindly shown me some of the city’s tourist attractions. Three parents, who all worked as government officials, preferred to be interviewed at their offices during working hours. One mother, who worked at home, had a second thought about the interview and preferred that I give the list of questions to her daughter so that she could give a written answer. Participants from outside of the two schools were interviewed either in a café or in their office, according to their convenience.

Interviewing students proved to be the trickiest of all. I did informal interviews with them, as well as teachers, in the classroom, canteen, mosque, or basketball court. However, to have a long discussion, with notetaking, consent forms to be signed, and a voice recorder, was almost impossible in those places. Taking the topic of this study

\textsuperscript{20} Actually, all interviewees did not mind the questions, except for one who refused to mention her parents’ names and occupations.
into consideration, if the interview took place at school, there was a risk that the interviewed students may be seen by other students as a ‘dobber’.\textsuperscript{21} Another factor to consider was the CCTV cameras, especially in SMA Bandung. I wanted to avoid, even if there was only the slightest risk, the problem that schools might be able to identify the students that I interviewed. I am not suggesting that the two schools would do it, but I could not risk teachers interrogating students that I interviewed because they wanted to know if students had revealed something ‘bad’ to me, and so I often interviewed students in a café or a food court in a mall.

Before I started an interview, I went over the Participant Information Form with my interviewees in case they had questions to ask or concerns to clarify. When I asked, it turned out that most of my interviewees had not read the Participant Information Form. It seemed that my explanation to students and teachers, and words from students to their parents had provided enough information. The form was not really necessary. After the participants confirmed whether or not they would allow me to audio-record the interview, I asked them to sign a consent form. Each interview lasted from around 15 minutes (the shortest) to about 130 minutes (the longest). All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into Word documents and interviewees were given a code and a pseudonym. Overall, not including the informal interviews, I conducted 22 interviews.

As suggested by Creswell (2007), after each interview, I refined my questions and my approach to make my next opportunity more effective. By replacing one question with another or changing the wording of my questions, I accommodated new themes, facts, and stories that appeared and disappeared in the previous interviews. In approaching the interviewees, I always asked them how I could make the process comfortable. While people who were not students did not mind having a one-on-one interview, most students preferred to do it in a group. From a total of 19 students, only four students were willing to be interviewed alone; 15 other students were interviewed in groups of two, three, and four.

\textsuperscript{21} Dobber: informal Australian English for a person who secretly tells someone in authority that someone else has done something wrong (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dobber). A similar word in informal American English would be ‘snitch or ‘tattletale’.
All interviews went well, although there were a couple of challenges in the process. Although I always reminded my participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and asked them to relax, some were nervous. I understand that being nervous is natural, but some of my interviewees, especially students, tried to solve this problem by over-preparing. They tried to memorise their answers to my questions. The issue with memorising was that sometimes students completely forgot a certain point that they wanted to share. As I said before, interviews with students were mostly done in groups. The problem with group interviews was that there were moments when, after one student had provided his or her answer, other(s) would say that they had similar answers. This limited the variety of answers that I could potentially obtain from interviewees.

Document analysis

I used a number of documents in this study. Most of them can be categorised as public documents. Since academic cheating in the National Examinations and corruption cases in many sectors has become a lively issue in Indonesia, the mass media is full of debates and discussions about this topic. Considering the fact that I spent most of my study time in Australia, it was hard for me to collect and obtain Indonesian print media. So the most accessible mass media for me is the online media. Using online media, it was also easier for me to retrieve news from previous years. I gathered some information from those mass media and kept updating it throughout my study. In selecting the enormous quantity of documents that I acquired from those mass media, I chose those that were most useful, fulfilling one or two criteria. One criterion was helping me to better understand the issue, and the second was providing supportive evidence to my arguments.

At schools, I also collected documents such as the schools’ vision and mission statements, their rules and regulations, students’ lesson schedules, students’ examination schedules, lists of teachers, the blueprint of the school buildings, and so on. With regard to the Integrity Index policy, I collected several government documents, either taking them from the internet or asking for them directly at the
appropriate office. At the moment, the only non-public documents in my possession are the exam leaks that I obtained from my participants during fieldwork.

**Triangulation of data**

Data gathered by researchers is “a foundation on which to build a knowledge base” (Fetterman, 1989, p. 19). Triangulation is a process to ensure that those data are valid and not biased. Triangulation can be done in several ways, but it is all basically done by cross-checking information from one source against that of another source (Fetterman, 2008).

As explained, the data collection methods used in this study were observations (including conversations), interviews, and document analysis. All three methods can be used for internal cross-checking (e.g. information from one interview can be checked against information from another interview), or for external or cross-method checking (Merriam, 2009). There are several ways I used to externally triangulate my data. I was able to corroborate claims made in the mass media and literature by finding evidence during observations and interviews. I was able to clarify what I heard and witnessed by asking further, specific questions of the interviewees. I confirmed and questioned claims that my interviewees made by seeing what they meant with my own eyes and checking my field notes. An example of this was when a teacher told me that she condemns cheating practices. When I accompanied her to supervise an exam, she did not take any action when students cheated, thus suggesting inconsistency. Another example was when I heard rumours about exam leaks. It was not until I received the leaked exam from one of my participants that I was able to confirm the truth of the rumours.

Another tool for data triangulation was the different times and places of my observations, as recorded in field notes (Merriam, 2009). As an example, a student in one class told me that two teachers had been asking for money from students in exchange for good scores. It was not until students from other classes and different years had told me the same information that I was convinced.
Unfortunately, there was also some information that could not be cross-checked and confirmed – thus, potentially, this data could be said to be biased. For example, in interviews, teachers tended to see students as the sole perpetrators of academic cheating. In discussions with teachers, fishing for the possibility that teachers were also perpetrators was almost impossible. However, simple observation was useful here – as noted in the paragraphs above.

In general, I believe that participant observation yielded better data than interviews. In the interviews, there were some moments when my participants did not reveal much detailed information. This may be because they deliberately concealed the information, because I failed to convey my questions properly, or because the participants were not aware of the issue that I had raised or had not thought about it. I rarely experienced any disconnection problem in my observations as the information I sought was embedded in the classroom practices that I observed.

**Data analysis and coding procedures**

I tried to digitise all of my documentary data (e.g. scanning a hardcopy into a pdf file) so that I could store them in my external hard drive. I mainly kept data from the observations in a book (I ended up with two at the end of the fieldwork). I made comments or personal notes on my field notes during or immediately after an observation and revisited them at the end of the day. I tried to transcribe my interviews as quickly as possible but was overwhelmed by the process. Despite my best efforts, I was only able to finish the transcribing about a month after fieldwork.

Qualitative research is characterised by its inductive process and rich descriptions (Merriam, 2009). My approach in analysing my data was also inductive. Once I was done transcribing my recordings and reviewing my field notes, I generated a matrix for data analysis (Parker, 2002). In a landscape-oriented Word file, I divided the matrix into four columns consisting of: theme, source, quotes, and notes. For data that seemed to go together, I looked for possible themes to cluster them together; I inputted the transcripts and field notes, writing the code of the interviewee and line numbers if the source was a transcription or a page number if from field notes; lastly, I
jotted down additional comments if there were any. As the analysis proceeded, new themes emerged and were added to the matrix (Parker, 2002). This whole process of developing themes and making notations on the gathered data is known as coding (Merriam, 2009).

In naming or deciding the wording for the themes, I was inspired by the literature and documents that I had read, notes that I had written, and comments that the participants had made. In categorising the themes, Creswell (as cited in Merriam, 2009) prefers to initially work with 30 categories and then reduce them to five or six themes. I did exactly what Creswell had done before. First, I expanded my initial themes to accommodate the data. I started with a hefty 80 categories. I realised that I had to combine several categories into one, not only for the sake of reducing the numbers, but also to strengthen the argument of each theme. I ended up with around 25 to 30 themes.

**Ethical considerations**

Obtaining approval for my study from my University’s Ethics Committee was not easy, and took a considerable amount of time. One of the main problems was the Ethics Committee’s difficulty in understanding the pervasiveness of cheating in schools in Indonesia. Most of them thought that in my fieldwork I would find a few miscreants, who would be exceptional characters. The Ethics Committee was afraid for my safety as well as for the well-being of any research participants who would be identified as cheats. They imagined the involvement of police, the court cases that would eventuate, and possible headlines in the commercial news media about ‘whistle-blowers’. My supervisor and I were lucky to be offered the chance to explain about this matter to the Ethics Committee directly. Using an excerpt of field notes made by one of my supervisor’s former Ph.D. students, who had also done research in schools in Indonesia, but on another topic, we showed the Ethics Committee that cheating in schools in Indonesia is ubiquitous, normal and a common every-day occurrence. It is not something hidden – it is on the surface. Indeed, it is this very ordinarness that the research intended to explore: the reasons behind the ubiquity and normality of the problem. To accommodate the Ethics Committee’s request for protection for myself, I
established a relationship with the Head of the Education Assessment Centre of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, as the official who has the responsibility to manage the National Examination Integrity Index policy.

Apart from the delay in processing the Ethics approval, there were three ethical issues addressed in the Ethics Committee’s approval process. The first was related to the potential harm to participants. In this study, observation of cheating behaviours was focused on how cheating was being conducted rather than on the identity of those doing it. Interviews with participants were not focused on making them confess their misconduct. They were focused on their strategies, revealing their ‘latest’ cheating practices, exploring motives and reasons for the misconduct. On that note, while participants in this research were not exposed to legal sanctions, there were potential risks. One was that interviewed students might have been seen by their classmates as a ‘dobber’ or ‘snitch/tattletale’, and ‘tidak setia kawan’ or considered to be disloyal to their friends.\textsuperscript{22} A second was that different understandings of academic cheating – such as what kinds of activity were considered to be cheating and what kinds were not – might have started arguments between parents and children, teachers and students, among the students, among the teachers, etc. Thirdly, teachers and lower officials could be in danger if the higher authorities regarded those people as the reason for the ineffectiveness of their programs. Last, another possible harm to participants would have been the identification of teachers who cheat. To minimise the potential risk, neither schools nor individuals are identifiable. Interviewed students and teachers were not chosen because they were habitual cheaters – rather, they were chosen because of their expressed eagerness to participate in the study.

The second issue identified during the Ethics process was the involvement of children in this study. As explained before, this research involved senior secondary students in the age range of 16 to 18 years. They were considered mature enough to understand the meaning of their participation in this study. Prior to observations and interviews with students, I discussed with teachers and the school principals the most appropriate recruitment mechanism. Both schools, beyond my personal expectation, permitted me

\textsuperscript{22} I will discuss the meaning of ‘friend’ in the Indonesian context in Chapter Six.
to choose any students to become my participants. To avoid any possible tension, I continuously checked their consent to participate in this research. Every time my participants gave me sensitive information, I reminded them about my position as a researcher who was eager to find information. I would then ask them if I could use the information that they had just shared with me. Most of the time, my participants did not mind, as long as their identity and those of the persons related to the information were confidential or anonymous.

The third issue was potential problems arising from an unequal relationship that I may have with my participants. As explained, I work for the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). Although the country has implemented decentralisation policies which give local authorities a considerable degree of autonomy over education, my presence in the field might have been construed by the local Education Offices and schools as an attempt on the part of the central government to monitor or evaluate their activities. I had to carefully manage this issue to avoid any misconception. In general, I was open about my status as an employee of the MOEC. However, I always emphasised that my research was not commissioned by my employer, that I had devised the project by myself, and that the aim of the study was not to condemn local stakeholders for academic misconduct. I also convinced schools that since the government is currently encouraging schools to improve their academic integrity, my study would help schools to understand the potential risks that threaten their reform efforts.

The one time I was doubtful about my decision to declare my MOEC staff status was when SMA Semarang punished 11 students who were caught cheating in the 2016 End of Semester Exams. I suspected that the whole idea of penalising cheating students was new – and might have been because of my presence. In the morning, the Exam Committee decided that the case would be solved by teachers, probably by deducting points from the grades of the cheating students. In the afternoon, the Committee changed their mind and decided that parents of the students would be asked to come to the school to discuss the problem. When school ended that day, the Committee changed their mind again. The final decision was then to ask students to make a
statement in a letter, promising that they would not cheat again. They had to sign the letter, and so did their parents or guardians. I did not think that it would be ethically correct if I were the primary reason why those students were punished. However, I had no control over the situation and had to let the school resolve the issue.

Strengths and limitations of the research

After one interview, a participating parent encouraged me to expand my research to different schools using different selection criteria, such that I would study a rural school, or a private school, or a religion-based school. By doing that, he said, I would have a wider perspective on the problem that I am studying and be able to develop recommendations for policy that could be applied directly to other schools. He believed that the decision to look at only two schools was the main limitation of this study.

I understand that the parent’s idea of ‘menyeluruh’ or of being as inclusive as possible and thus of finding results of more general applicability, was that I should incorporate as many schools as possible. But how many is ‘many’? I collected my data only from two schools, and both are in the island of Java. Indonesia is a large country with thousand of islands. Indonesia’s population is large (more than 250 million) and diverse, including social, cultural, economic, ethnic, religious, and other aspects. We can expect that the schools across the country also vary significantly. Once again, how many is ‘many’? I explained to the parent that this study was not designed to be comprehensive, nor to enable the development of generalisations.

This study is intended to better understand academic cheating specifically in two schools in Indonesia. I am doing it by closely examining the problem, including the people who are an inseparable part of it. I wanted to know, among others, their very basic reason to cheat, what motivates them to cheat, and what they associate their cheating behaviours with. I do not believe that a survey or other quantitative data-collecting instrument could help me to obtain these data. Since cheating could be a sensitive issue, something that one does not usually share with random people, I knew I needed to have a trust-based relationship with my participants. Qualitative research
methods enabled me to build the trust. Earlier in this chapter I mentioned my note books in which I stored my observational data. Even from this data-collecting instrument, I was able to build trust with my participants. As I showed trust by allowing them to read it, they responded by opening up their ‘secret’ cheating stories to me.

Also, my research is exploratory. To the best of my knowledge, no one has done research on academic cheating practices in schools in Indonesia beyond cheating in exams. I needed to establish some really basic issues such as the types of cheating behaviours that are occurring on a regular basis in schools in Indonesia. I could only be exploring this through observation. Thus, I believe a qualitative method was suitable for my research.

Considering the relatively short timeframe in which I must complete my study, I believed two is an appropriate number of schools. All public SMA in Indonesia are under the same national education system. My findings in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang indicate that some of the motivations (of both teachers and students) to cheat would apply to teachers and students in different parts of the country – e.g. students want to pass a subject or improve their grades, or get into top universities, teachers need to impress their principal, local leaders, and parents with good percentages of high marks. So even with a sample of two schools, this study was able to reveal structural and systemic reasons for academic cheating, and it is very plausible that these same reasons will apply in other public SMAs in different locations.
Chapter Four
An overview of academic cheating practices in schools in Indonesia

Introduction

Several students participating in this study asked me if academic cheating practices occur in Australia. I mostly replied to this question by saying that research had indicated that academic cheating happens all over the world. A common follow-up question from them was if it was normal for Australian students to cheat in exams. I told them that I did not know exactly what kind of cheating practices occurred in schools in Australia, but that at the level of higher education plagiarism was one of the main problems that Australian universities have to deal with.

When I mentioned ‘plagiarism’ to the students, they looked confused. Even though some of them nodded their heads, they did not appear to understand what I was talking about. Student reactions to my answer about plagiarism suggest that academic cheating behaviours may very well be different in each country and at each education level. It is therefore important to provide an overview of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia in order to situate it in context. I will set clear boundaries around the kinds of cheating behaviour that will be discussed in this study and describe the terminology relating to academic cheating that I will be using. To do that, I explored my participants’ definitions of academic cheating, the kind of practices that fall into their description, schools’ acknowledgement of the problem, and the responses that have or have not been put in place so far.

Defining academic cheating in schools in Indonesia

I understand why students in schools in Indonesia would find it hard to comprehend what plagiarism is. As I tried to recall my own high school experience, I realised that I had not been familiar with the discourse of ‘plagiarism’ (or plagiarisme in Indonesian) either. For my classmates and me, examples of activities that we considered as cheating were collaboratively working in exams and copying each other’s homework on a daily basis. Although what my classmates and I did could potentially fall into the
spectrum of plagiarism, the label of ‘plagiarism’ was unheard of.\textsuperscript{23} Also, the issue of plagiarism has not been widely exposed in the Indonesian media even to this day.\textit{Tempo} magazine (Evan, 2014), for instance, a serious weekly magazine, only mentioned nine plagiarism cases that they believed to have been major and scandalous between 1949 and 2014. Among them were allegations of plagiarism by two former ministers, the famous poet Chairil Anwar, and a number of academics from reputable universities. So, if plagiarism is not the cheating issue receiving attention in the Indonesian academic system, what is? What does academic cheating in schools in Indonesia currently look like? Based on my exploration, the discourse revolves around the concept of ‘menyontek’.

\textit{Menyontek} (cheating)

Davis et al. (2009, p. 2) define academic cheating as “acts committed by students that deceive, mislead, or fool the teacher into thinking that the academic work submitted by the student was a student’s own work.” This definition seems to have a functional, practical, or consequential consideration since it comes more from the perspective of education providers who have the responsibility of assessing students’ academic performance. In several ways, this definition also disapproves any comments (I mentioned one in Chapter Two) that claim academic cheating as a victimless crime. For instance, where teachers have to grade to a predetermined scale or spread, a cheater’s grade would upset the spread or distribution. Another example would be where the places in a university or other education institution are limited, when one person (a cheater) gets in, another person does not. However, aside from this definition, I believe that there should be another way to understand academic cheating -- one that is less instrumental and considers students’ point of view.

\textsuperscript{23} My campus, UWA, suggests that the range of plagiarism practices may include: paraphrasing that is too similar to the original, deliberate cheating such as buying or selling assignments, presenting someone else’s work as your own, missing or incorrect referencing, excessive editing by a paid or unpaid editor, submitting the same work for more than one assignment, submitting as your work an assignment written by someone else (even if they have given you permission to use their work), and working together with another student if it’s not a group assignment - individual assignments should be only your own work (https://guides.library.uwa.edu.au/plagiarism).
Every time I started my observation in a class, I had the chance to explain my research to the students and teacher on duty. As part of the explanation, I asked my participants to mention forms of academic cheating practices that they knew, or that they had done.\(^\text{24}\) The first answer that always came up was *menyontek*.\(^\text{25}\)

According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (the Indonesian Language Dictionary), *‘menyontek’* means ‘to cite (in the form of writing and so forth) similar to the original; to plagiarise’.\(^\text{26}\) However, my participants tend to define *menyontek* as the act of looking or peeking and then copying or cribbing another person’s work, ranging from homework to exam answers. As long as it is supposed to be an individual assignment, but is not done accordingly, that practice is *menyontek*. During the interviews and discussions, my participants also extensively used the word *‘menyontek’*. It made me think that *‘menyontek’* is the terminology or concept that best represents ‘academic cheating’ in Indonesia.

In the day-to-day cheating practices in schools in Indonesia, the term ‘plagiarising’ is rarely used. Almost all of my participants would consider practices that would elsewhere come under the rubric of plagiarism as *menyontek*. The only exceptions were one teacher (Pak Hendro, SMA Semarang) and one student (Hanafi, SMA Semarang). In separate interviews, Pak Hendro and Hanafi differentiated *menyontek* from plagiarism. However, as I tried to dig more, Pak Hendro could not explain it further. As for Hanafi, although he did share his opinion about what plagiarism is, he told me that he separated the two only because I had mentioned it in one of our early conversations in the class:

\(^{24}\) Other questions included whether students and the teacher in the class have ever *menyontek*. In delivering this question, I always raised my hand, admitting what I had done when I was in senior high school. By admitting that I had *menyontek*, I was trying to be open to my participants so I could gain their trust.

\(^{25}\) ‘*Menyontek*’ is the correct oral and written form of the word. However, my participants and I tend to say ‘*mencontek*’ as we are more familiar with it.

\(^{26}\) I am using the online version provided by the Language Centre of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (link: https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/menyontek). The translation is by me, but I have tried to make it closest to the original meaning.
The most common [cheating] practice is menyontek in exams; it could be by keeping a [text or note] book under the desk, or by asking for answers from our friends... It could also be in the form of plagiarism – you mentioned about it before. What I mean by plagiarism is sometimes we are busy, do not have any other option, and then “let me borrow your homework”, and then we copy it... In my opinion, plagiarising is also when we submit our assignment without any references. (Hanafi, SMA Semarang)

Crittenden et al. (2009) argue that people need to expose the details of academic cheating if they want to understand the pervasiveness of the problem. So I explored the daily practices of academic cheating in the two schools. The list of cheating practices is alarming. It is long and more than just a bit of students copying or peeking at their classmates’ work. The following are the practices that I was able to reveal, either by directly observing my participants (indicated with ‘O’), to have it described by my participants (indicated with ‘D’), or a combination of both (indicated with ‘D+O’).

Table 4.1. Students’ academic cheating practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM OF CHEATING</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Menyontek in exams</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Using exam ID card as a cheat sheet (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whispering to share answers (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Glancing at another student’s work (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Switching answer sheets (D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flipping or holding the answer sheet up so others can see and copy (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sharing answers with sign language or body gestures (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Smuggling and using a smartphone to browse for answers (D+O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Opting for make-up exams because of weaker invigilation (D+O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exchange of exam information between classes (D+O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Making a cheat sheet and hiding it in the school bathroom (D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Menyontek a classmate’s homework</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Borrowing a classmate’s homework to copy it (D+O)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Taking a picture of a classmate’s homework using a smartphone and distributing it using messaging apps so all students can copy (D+O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A male student asking a female student to copy the homework on his behalf (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students working together on their individual homework (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Distributing leaked exam materials using messaging apps in a smartphone (D+O)</strong></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Menyontek in computer-based exams</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Creating a messaging app in the schools’ computer (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Using a flash disk as a cheat source (D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. Menyontek in online/network-based exams</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hacking the program’s lockdown system, enabling access to Google for answers (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Bringing two gadgets (i.e. smartphones, tablets) to class: one for the exam and one for Googling (D)

F. Hiring students that are known as ‘assignment jockeys’ to work on an assignment (AU$2-10 per work) – also known as ‘contract cheating’ (D)

G. Korupsi waktu (literally translated as ‘time corruption’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coming late to class (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher absenteeism: not teaching (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Skipping class/playing truant (D+O)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. Ignoring cheating students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Too occupied with a smartphone (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Too occupied with checking students’ work (D+O)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Upgrading students’ grade (D)

J. Selling grades for AU$10-20 per student (D)

K. Leaking exam materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Telling students specific parts of the lesson that will be tested (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sharing exam leaks to students who are joining private tuition (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L. Conducting a shady remedial system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Allowing students who did not redo their work to receive a passing grade (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easily giving students a higher grade on the remedial (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M. Prioritising certain students to get direct admission to public universities (D)

N. Cheating on public school admission processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents bribing school for their child to be accepted (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents fabricating their economic status so their child could use special access for students from underprivileged families (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Teachers’ academic cheating practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM OF CHEATING</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. ‘Time corruption’</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coming late to class (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher absenteeism: not teaching (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ignoring cheating students</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Too occupied with a smartphone (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Too occupied with marking students’ work (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Menyontek in exams</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sharing exam answers (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Menyontek in teacher certification tests (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Borrowing a classmate’s assignment to copy it (D+O)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Hacking the online/network-based exams (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Buying leaked exam materials from the school’s alumni (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. Academic cheating practices revealed by the school principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM OF CHEATING</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Menyontek in exams</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Making a cheat sheet and hiding it in the school toilet (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Buying leaked exam materials (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Sharing exam leaks to students who are joining private tuition (D)  
C. Teacher absenteeism (D+O)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM OF CHEATING</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Menyontek in exams (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Menyontek friend’s homework (D)</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Exam leaks business (D)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Upgrading students’ grade (D)</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Academic cheating practices revealed by parents

From the four tables, it can be seen that ‘menyontek’ was mentioned repeatedly. Students identified various kinds of cheating practices that involved teachers, the school, parents, and also themselves. Teachers mainly mentioned cheating practices perpetrated by students. An exception was made for one teacher, who told his students a story about how some of his fellow teachers menyontek in their certification tests. The lesson that the teacher wanted his students to take from the story was how teachers who decided not to cheat, like himself, could also pass the test. The principal mentioned cheating practices where both students and teachers were involved. Parents discussed cheating practices that could be committed by students and by schools. It should be noted that some of the practices described by my participants as academic cheating, such as coming late to class and skipping classes, might not be called that in other countries. Nevertheless, the long list of academic cheating practices that I found at school clearly indicated that the problem in schools in Indonesia is indeed beyond the scope of the National Exam.

Students and the principal were more elaborative than teachers and parents in explaining the cheating practices that they identified. Students’ openness in mentioning their teachers, parents, and their school as part of the problem was also indicated by Anderman et al. (1998). Students in the study by Anderman et al. even claimed that the society, parents, school, and teachers were the external factors behind their decision to cheat. In my study, students were the only group of participants who would readily identify themselves as possible cheaters. On the other hand, teachers, principals, and parents seemed to ignore their role in the problem. Students, teachers, and principals were open about the fact that some individuals in their social circle in the school are the perpetrators of academic cheating:
• **Example from students**
  - When I get lazy, I will just borrow Dara’s homework (Sally, SMA Bandung).
  - [Regular cheating practices] in my school? I guess it is menyontek (Dhesta, SMA Semarang).

• **Example from teacher**
  - [E]ven when the school uses an application [for an exam], with multiple passwords and many [security] layers, the kids can still menyontek. Just like in the last school exam, there were students who did it; it is just beyond teachers’ expectation (Bu Ainun, SMA Bandung).

• **Example from principal**
  - [T]he most important thing is teachers must set an example for students. Obviously, I must continuously remind teachers not to come late or be absent (Pak Wahidin, SMA Semarang).

Parents, however, refused to identify their child(ren) as cheaters. Although parents did mention cheating practices where students are the culprits, they never attributed those behaviours to their own sons or daughters. Throughout this thesis, occasionally I will still use the term ‘menyontek’. However, in order not to confuse readers with what my participants were actually doing when they cheated in their academic works, I will also be using English verbs.

*The (Indonesian) iGen*

Students participating in this study were mostly born in the late 1990s up to the early 2000s. As I have briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, they are strongly attached to their smartphones. Students used their smartphones for entertainment purposes, such as listening to music and playing games, for communication purposes, such as chatting with friends and calling their parents, and for studying purposes, such as taking Online Based Tests. Jean Twenge (2017) called this demographic – who were born after 1995 and grew up with smartphones – the ‘iGen’.

Even in their academic cheating practices, iGen students utilise their smartphones. In the two schools that I observed, there was proof that students smuggled smartphones.
into the exam room and used it to browse for answers. Students used their smartphones to take pictures of their classmate’s homework and distributed it via messaging apps so everyone in the class could copy. Last, students used messaging apps in smartphones to distribute leaked exam materials. When students use smartphones to communicate cheating materials, either for homework or exams, it was beyond teachers’ supervision. Smartphones have clearly made cheating easier and more pervasive.

To maximise the use of their smartphones, students installed many applications, including ones designed for messaging. While WhatsApp is the most popular free messaging application in Indonesia, students in both schools use Line. When I asked why they preferred Line, some students told me that it has cute and cool stickers they could use when chatting. Some others like Line because the application has a news feature (i.e. Line Today). But the most basic reason is because their friends, their classmates, and people of their age are using it.

I have had a Line account and its application in my smartphone for several years. However, after installing and using it for a relatively short time, I never really used it again. As I said before, my circle of networks is using WhatsApp to communicate. So I tried to familiarise myself with Line again since the application looks and feels different to the last time I used it. My efforts paid off. Not only did Line help me to build and maintain my relationships with students participating in this study, but also students shared information about academic cheating to me through this platform.

In Semarang, around two weeks after a School Exam, Alanka told me that his friends from a different school had shared leaked exam materials. When I asked for more details about the leaked material, he used Line to send me several pictures, including these two:

---

27 An application that almost all of my participants have is Instagram. It is a social media application that allows users to share their photos and videos.

28 Based on similarweb.com’s analysis of Google Play Store’s free applications in 2019, WhatsApp messenger is the most installed and used app in Indonesia. Line messenger ranked 16 in all categories and 6 in communication. See https://www.similarweb.com/apps/top/google/app-index/id/all/top-free for updates.
Figure 4.1. Examples of leaked exam materials from Alanka

29. Perhatikan kesempatan – kesempatan berikut!
   A. Struktur mahasiswa dari Universitas Indonesia.
   C. Ditandai sebagai petunjuk Anakta.

Berdasarkan ketentuan, kesempatan tersebut, mahasiswa yang dimaksud adalah:
   A. Rakhmat Reza
   B. Rendiawan Si
   C. Hart Hartanto
   D. Malang Lihat Lisensi

30. Langkah pertama yang dilakukan oleh jenius jenius Sosialis dalam menggalakkan diri sebagai kesempatan keluaran nasional adalah:
   A. Mencari kelemahan detek
   B. Menyempurnakan Kabar 100 rencana.
   C. Memanfaatkan PKI dan semu-renyawa.
   D. Menyelesaikan PKI.
   E. Mengambil membantu.
   F. 20 SOP.

31. Dampak disiplinnet Supervisi sebagai Tap MPRS No. IX/MPRS/1966 memicu pelarian keputusan pusat, hal ini dikarenakan:
   A. Keterbentukannya kekhasan Sosialis sebagai pengawas Supervisi.
   B. Rakyat semakin kita pikirkan kepada Sosialis.
   C. Semua kekuasaan kembali kepusat MPRS.
   D. Seruan Rakyat Sosialis memanggil kekhasan yang sama dengan Sosialis.
   E. Kekhasan MPRS dengan Sosialis semakin buruk secara formal.

32. Diterbitkan peraturan tentang pengawasan pemeringatan: Oleh Lima ke pemeringatan Oleh Lima di Indonesia adalah:
   A. TAP MPRS Nomor IX / MPRS / 1966
   B. TAP MPRS Nomor XIX / MPRS / 1967
   C. TAP MPRS Nomor XX / MPRS / 1969
   D. TAP MPRS Nomor XII / MPRS / 1968
   E. TAP MPRS Nomor XLIV / MPRS / 1968

33. Landasan operasional untuk mencapai tujuan pembangunan nasional pemeringatan Oleh Lima adalah:
   A. GSHIN
   B. Pancasila
   C. Kristen MPRL

34. Menaikkan peringkat Semarang, Urusan
   A. Pada tanggal 17-21 Desember 1965 dilakukan mengawasi karyawan untuk
   menghadiri gerakan.
   B. Berdasarkan ketentuan ketentuan tertentu, gerakan DII / TII yang dimaksud adalah:
   A. A. Dhikir
   B. K.I. Teknologi selatan
   C. Jawa Barat

35. Tugas gerakan APRIL yang dipimpin oleh Wesoeraden adalah:
   A. Menggali masalah penutara di Ratu.
   B. Memperlihatkan Negara Jawa Barat.
   C. Memperlihatkan makna negara di Indonesia dan memperlihatkan kekuasaan negara bagi negara – negara RI.
   D. Memerintah BEM disiplin.

36. Perhatikan kesempatan keluaran berikut:
   1. Memerintah pembentukan pemeringatan APRIL di bawah urusan TNL.
   5. Mengasup peringkat keluaran pemeringatan Indonesia tanggal 8 April 1950.

Berikut kesempatan keluaran berikut, tindaklanjut yang ditentukan gerakan dapat ditinjau pada urusan:
   A. 1, 2, dan 3
   B. 2, 3, dan 4
   C. 2, 3, dan 5
   D. 2, 3, dan 5
   E. 6, 5, dan 5

37. Sebab urusan Karhutia Melkoni meluncurkan pemeringatan di Sekitar Sekitar adalah:
   A. Menaikkan KNEL menjadi APRIS.
Alanka told me that almost all of the leaked materials were accurate. When I cross-checked this information with the principal, he confirmed it and told me that the Provincial Government of Central Java had formed a team to investigate the case. In SMA Bandung, one day after the School Exam, Gendhis told me that the leaked exam materials had been shared in her class messaging group. These two pictures captured our chat in Line application:29

Figure 4.2. My Line chat with Gendhis on leaked exam materials

Translation

Me (green): It is really up to you
Me: I am okay if you do not wish to share it… hahaha I cannot force you
Gendhis (white): (sharing the leaked exam materials)
Gendhis: There you go, sir
Gendhis: Its history [subject], today’s [leaked] materials successfully help my rekan (colleague) (smiling icon)30
Gendhis: All [leaked materials] are accurate
Me: You decide to share (amazed)
Me: Thanks
Gendhis: There are 2 versions for each subject and [2] backups. In total, there are 4 versions for each subject.
Me: Did you receive 2 or 4?

---

29 Translation by me and I made it as close as possible to the real meaning. The white marks are to cover Gendhis’ real name and her profile picture.
30 Rekan is a synonym of teman.
I was surprised by how open students could be on social media. Aside from the possibility of the bond and trust that we had created, it could be another characteristic of the iGen. The flow of information that I obtained from Gendhis was so smooth. In fact, the discussion that I had with her on Line regarding cheating practices went beyond the exam. She also told me about her concern when one of her teachers asked for money if students opted not to do their final assignment:
Teacher absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism is a common problem in many developing countries, including Indonesia (Al-Samarrai & Cerdan-Infantes, 2013). In general, teacher absenteeism significantly reduces instructional time that students could have. Specifically, in remote areas in Indonesia, teacher absenteeism is considered as one of the main reasons for low enrolment rates and high dropout rates (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Looking at the list of cheating practices in Table 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, teacher absenteeism could be among the most pervasive cheating practices next to menyontek. Out of 220 class sessions (97 in SMA Semarang and 123 in SMA Bandung) that I observed, 28 sessions (9 in SMA Semarang and 19 in SMA Bandung) were completely without any teacher. If I included sessions where: (i) teachers came significantly late, and (ii) teachers left the class significantly early and never came back,
there were 60 class sessions with an absenteeism problem. Some students criticised teachers’ absenteeism for neglecting their obligations and corrupting time:

Because teachers were paid... my school principal said that he [the absent teacher] is a civil servant that received payment [from the government], [and must teach] unless he is sick, cannot walk, or [died and] was buried today, then that is fine... (Adinda, SMA Semarang).

It is a corruption of time... [teachers] must come on time, but some of them come late... (Deborah, SMA Bandung).

To relate it to Davis et al.’s (2009) explanation on how cheating disrupts the effort to measure students’ progress, I believe that teacher absenteeism has a similar impact. Teacher absenteeism deprives students of in-the-classroom learning opportunities, handicapping them compared to others, at least in terms of the quantity.

Although some students condemned their teachers’ absenteeism, it seemed that most of them also take benefit from it:

Maybe they just wanted to please their students (laughing) because students also need a break (laughing). When teachers do not show up to teach, we also enjoy it, one or two jam kosong (empty hours) in a week are not that bad. (Hanafi, SMA Semarang)

(Telling me her busy school schedule)... we consider empty classes as a break (laughing). At school, we only have 15 minutes [recess] and 30 minutes [lunch break]. When teachers are absent, we use it to rest ourselves. (Adinda, SMA Semarang)

[Teacher absenteeism] brings joy, a bliss for students. I feel happy when I have an empty class because I am getting bored with school. [I guess] year 12 is my limit, I am fed-up with studying. (Alisa, SMA Bandung)

31 Literally translated as ‘empty hour’, jam kosong is a common term that students use to name the situation when a teacher is absent from their teaching duty.
[Teacher absenteeism] is a blessing in disguise. (Reza, SMA Semarang)

For me, it seems that many of the students consider teacher absenteeism like an oasis in the desert. When they were stressed out by the high academic demands, tired of the hectic studying schedules, or bored of the monotonous teaching, students found their well-deserved break in teacher absenteeism. In response to my questions about whether students look for their missing teacher or report the situation to the school, these are the answers I received:

My classmates preferred to “let it go, if teachers want to come, they will come”. But some teachers did ask me [as class captain] to “come and find me”... Once in year 10, my classmates condemned me because I went [to the teachers’ room] to get the teacher. (Hanafi, SMA Semarang)

[If someone gets the teacher,] it feels that we have lost our freedom... I do not mind if someone tries to find the teacher, but, I mean, we should be smart in managing our time [laughing], our free time. (Adinda, SMA Semarang)

I guess the class captain actually wanted to find the teacher, but who has the guts to leave the classroom and do that? That student might end up not able to go to school tomorrow (laughing). (Alanka, SMA Semarang)

If anyone decides to ‘disrupt the break time’, as you can see from the above three excerpts, there is a consequence. As a start, they will make their classmates upset and disappointed. There could also be a confrontation (I am not sure how big it could be though) between the student who tries to do the right thing and the rest of the class who enjoy some unexpected free time. Even the class captains experience a dilemma. Which of the two actions yield more benefit or cause less harm: finding the ‘missing’ teacher or letting it go?

Menyontek: right or wrong

Students participating in this study did not show much hesitation in revealing their cheating practices to me. Almost all of them were more than willing to share their
experiences. Almost all of my participants had become familiar with academic cheating when they were in primary school, but only a few of them had done it at that stage. Hanafi (student, SMA Semarang), for instance, had his principal in primary school advise him and his classmates that it was all right to cheat in the exam as long as they were not noisy.\(^\text{32}\) Most of my participants started to cheat in academic work when they were in junior secondary school, when they realised that more and more of their classmates were doing it. The cheating practices that they first did were to crib in exams and to copy a friend’s homework.

A lot of my back-of-the-classroom talks and interviews with students were in a group format. As these encounters allowed me to observe students in their discussion, it turned out that not all of them agreed with menyontek. Whereas some students considered menyontek as justified or acceptable, some others considered it as wrongdoing, although they admitted that they were still going to do it nevertheless. The following conversations that I had with three students from SMA Bandung illustrate the point:

Brian (researcher): What kind of academic cheating practices occur daily in school?

Danu: Usually, it’s menyontek.

Tarra: Menyontek.

Gendhis: Working together on exams.

Tarra: Yes, that is menyontek.

Gendhis: No, it is not (giggling). Working together in exams means you also give feedback.

Danu: It’s a simbiosis mutualisme (i.e. symbiotic mutualism).

Gendhis: Yup, symbiotic mutualism. If it is menyontek then it only benefits one side, for example, only me peeking at my friend’s work but that person does not look at mine.

\(^{32}\) Several Indonesian students in UWA shared similar stories from their own experience studying in Indonesia.
From the excerpt, we can see how Gendhis was ambivalent about the practice of ‘working together on exams’. She considered it as ‘academic cheating’ but denied that it was ‘menyontek’. I would argue that Gendhis made this point because she was eager to highlight the ‘working together’ feature, attaching a positive value to the students helping each other. It needed to be separated from the negative connotations of menyontek. Even Danu bought this argument, and suggested the term ‘symbiotic mutualism’ (discussed later in Chapter Six).

But it may well be the case that questioning the appropriateness of cheating behaviours is not limited to only one or two students. A study conducted by LaBeff et al. (1990) suggests that each individual student could disapprove of cheating while offering excuses because there are times when they need to do it. I will discuss the reasoning behind this double standard in Chapter Six.

The quest to solve the problem: the schools

Schools’ dirty laundry: the issue of acknowledgment

If students openly revealed the practice of academic cheating in their schools and even admitted their involvement in it, schools were more reluctant. No documents in either school addressed the issue. SMA Bandung had a detailed list of misconduct that they expected their students to avoid, along with the sanctions if students were found guilty of misconduct:

Table 4.5. SMA Bandung’s list of misconduct and sanctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Type of misconducts</th>
<th>Sanction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Wearing a uniform without all the required badges</td>
<td>Direct warning, recorded as an infringement, students to make a statement letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Wearing a tight and short skirt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Untucked shirt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Wearing a tight and short shirt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Wearing a non-black belt or a jacket without permission</td>
<td>Direct warning, belt or jacket will be confiscated, students to make a statement letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Not wearing a uniform based on rules</td>
<td>Direct warning, students to make a statement letter, school will notify parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Not wearing a school cap during the flag ceremony</td>
<td>Direct warning, recorded as an infringement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8. | Muslim female students not wearing hijab in the class and other school areas on Friday | • Direct warning, recorded as an infringement.  
• Second time did it, students will receive counselling.  
• Third time did it, students to make a statement letter, school will have a meeting with parents. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Not wearing black sport shoes</td>
<td>Direct warning, shoes will be confiscated, only parents can reclaim them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Female students applying excessive makeup</td>
<td>Direct warning, students to clean themselves, recorded as an infringement, students to make a statement letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Male students having nose, tongue, and ear piercings</td>
<td>Direct warning, accessories will be confiscated, recorded as an infringement, students to make a statement letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Female students having nose, tongue, and more than one ear piercing</td>
<td>Direct warning, recorded as an infringement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 13. | Hair  
- Too long and inappropriate style (male)  
- Coloured (female and male) | School will remind students to cut their hair. If students fail to do so, school would cut their hair.  
School will remind students to properly re-model their hairstyle.  
Direct warning, recorded as an infringement. |
| 14. | Not wearing Scout’s uniform on Fridays | Students to make a statement letter.  
On the third count, school will send students home. |
| 15. | Absent from school for three days without any letter from parents or doctor’s note | First time: counselling.  
Second time: students to make a statement letter with materai (i.e. stamp duty).  
Third time: school will expel students. |
| 16. | Playing truant from a lesson | Direct punishment from the related teacher. |
| 17. | Leaving school without permission | Temporary expulsion (3 days), school will have a meeting with parents.  
If receiving 3 temporary expulsions, school will expel students. |
| 18. | Bringing/smoking in the school area. |  |
| 19. | Damaging school’s facilities |  |
| 20. | Bringing books, magazines, VCD/DVD, smartphones with pornographic content |  |
| 21. | Stealing |  |
| 22. | Climbing school walls |  |
| 23. | Engaging in a public display of affection |  |
| 24. | Exposing others to risks | First time: warning and counselling.  
Third time: temporary expulsion (3 days). |
| 25. | Lighting up firecrackers, bullying, provoking |  |
| 26. | Insulting teachers or school administrators |  |
| 27. | Fighting in or outside the school |  |
| 28. | Persuading others to skip school |  |

---

**Note:** The term **materai** refers to the payment of stamp duty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bringing, using, and distributing drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Getting involved in crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Enlisting in an outlawed motorcycle gang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Doing immoral acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sex in or outside school area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pregnant before marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unregistered marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Bringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Car to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Motorcycle but they do not have a license yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School will expel students.

- School will remind students and will have a meeting with parents if students keep repeating.
- Not allowed to park in school area, and will have a meeting with parents if students keep repeating.

SMA Bandung expects their students to avoid drugs, to behave, and to avoid criminal activity. The school puts a lot of effort into ensuring that their students dress appropriately since it is often an area where some students show their resistance to authority, attractiveness to the opposite sex, and distinction to other kind of students that they do not like (Willis, 1977). Yet, SMA Bandung does not explicitly expect their students not to cheat in their academic work. I believe that as long as schools in Indonesia are not interested in openly acknowledging the problem, academic cheating will be their common dirty laundry.

This form of rejection or unwillingness to acknowledge the problem of academic cheating was not only happening at schools. It apparently also happened in the universities, which are responsible for preparing future teachers. I had two opportunities to observe how practice teachers administered an exam. To put it simply, the situations were chaotic. Students shared their answers and cribbed throughout the exam, and the practice teachers did not do anything. The practice teachers were clueless; they did not know what to do. When I talked to them, they said that they were not prepared for this. None of their lecturers had told them how to handle cheating students. No class discussion was ever conducted on the problem of academic cheating. So it was not their fault that they did not know how to deal with cheating students. At this stage, it is impossible to expect that these future teachers would bring any positive changes to the cheating problem.
**The efforts**

In uncovering the cheating behaviours in schools in Indonesia – again, I need to mention that some of the practices described here might not be called academic cheating in other countries – I also try to identify actions that have been taken to stop or to prevent them. On each of those actions, I clarify whether it was described (D) by my participants, observed (O) by myself, or a combination of both (D+O):

Table 4.6. Actions carried out to stop or prevent academic cheating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misconducts</th>
<th>Action taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students <em>menyontek</em> in exam</td>
<td>1. A teacher puts a mark on a student’s paper, as a sign that the student will receive score reduction (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Before the exam started and during the exam time, teachers asked students not to cheat (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. A teacher warns cheating students that their paper will be taken or will be torn up (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Some teachers rarely use multiple choice any more, switching to essays (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. A teacher reminds students that even if she does not know that they cheat, <em>Allah</em> (i.e. God) knows (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. A teacher tries to convince students that the most important thing for them is to understand the lesson, not to memorise it. If they understand, it would not be difficult for them to work on the exam (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. A teacher initiates a learning contract with students that covers several agreements and rules, including not to cheat in exam (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Teachers ask students to put their smartphone in front of the class, either in their bag or on a desk (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Teachers move students’ seating position in the room (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Teachers walk around the classroom (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. A teacher divides the students into two groups. When one group is working on their exam, the other group waits outside (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. A teacher administers an open book exam and all questions are essays. If there are students who have similar answers, everyone must redo the exam (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Using CCTV camera to catch cheating students (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. School administers network-based exam (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. A teacher stops the exam and reschedules it if students cheat (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students coming late to school</td>
<td>School asks them not to repeat it because there is a consequence if they do (D+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students playing truant</td>
<td>School asks them not to repeat it because there is a consequence if they do (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students *menyontek* others’ homework | 1 | A teacher would ask why students’ work is similar and warns them not to do it (D) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A teacher wrote on a student’s book/paper: “Next time you copy your friend’s work, try to modify it a little bit!” (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The efforts to address cheating practices were centred on *menyontek*, especially during exams. This tendency once again indicated two things. First, the system identified students as the only accused cheaters in schools, ignoring other potential perpetrators. Second, the system is preoccupied with exam cheating to the extent that it neglects other cheating behaviours. To sum up, there is a lack of awareness in the Indonesian education system that makes it fail to recognise the culture of everyday cheating, either by students or other groups such as teachers and parents.

I could not measure the effectiveness of the actions that I listed. However, I did observe how some of those approaches failed to have an impact, such as:

- In both schools, once students found the opportunity to cheat, teachers’ warnings and the change in their sitting arrangements were ineffective.

- In SMA Bandung, teachers used CCTV cameras to monitor students’ cheating behaviours during the mid and end of semester exams.\(^{33}\) Cheating students would be scolded and moved to the school hall to continue their exam. Ironically, since the hall had less surveillance, students had more opportunity to continue their cheating.

- In SMA Bandung, students were able to outsmart the browser lockout system programmed in the network-based exam, making it possible for them to use their devices (i.e. laptop, smartphone, and tablet computer) to browse for answers (details explained in Table 4.1.).\(^{34}\)

Most of the students believed that the ineffectiveness of the actions was due to the school’s lack of commitment to the execution. One action that received many comments regarded the use of CCTV cameras. Although students were not suggesting

\(^{33}\) In Chapter Three I mentioned that CCTV Cameras in SMA Semarang are not working.

\(^{34}\) Burnett et al. (2016) suggest that a similar situation also happens in college. Students creatively develop a way to cheat the anti-cheat system.
that things needed to change, as they were fine with the current situation, they doubted that the school was making the best of the CCTV cameras to deal with academic cheating. Sandy (student, SMA Semarang) and Jeremy (student, SMA Bandung), for instance, did not think that their teachers were actually keeping an eye on all the classrooms through the CCTV monitor. In addition, due to limited funding, schools were in some cases not able to operate the CCTV’s recording function. Thus, students did not believe that the CCTV camera could provide evidence for schools to prove students’ cheating practices and use this to punish them.

On a day-to-day basis, CCTV cameras were indeed not being used to monitor whether students were cheating. In the morning, students could copy their classmates’ homework without having to worry that teachers would watch and catch them because of the cameras. In SMA Bandung, the CCTV cameras were mainly used to monitor if students were standing during the national anthem that was played every morning. But other than that, the cameras were largely decorative. There were many times when I had to sit and observe a classroom without a teacher. Small numbers of students were independently studying. But most of the students were doing anything that they wanted, copying their friends’ homework, playing card games, watching YouTube on their gadgets, singing, eating, sleeping, going to the cafeteria, and many others. I am positive that teachers could see what was happening in the class from the CCTV monitor, but there was rarely any concrete response. Once in a while, a substitute teacher would be sent to give an assignment. But once the teacher left the classroom, students were back doing what they did before. Again, the teachers were in a position to monitor all this via the CCTV monitors.

Discussing the effectiveness of CCTV cameras, Miller et al. (2015) suggest that when a school has a large student body, technology like CCTV cameras may not be able to prevent problematic behaviours, including academic cheating, effectively. This would appear to apply to SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, which had approximately 1,200

35 When I did my fieldwork, Sandy was in year 10. Most students in year 10 are new to the school and do not know that the CCTV cameras in their classroom are not functional.

36 Several students told me of their disappointment that the CCTV cameras could not provide useful information, e.g. when they had lost their belongings in the classroom, including money.
and 1,400 students respectively. Students also reminded me to take a look at other factors that made the surveillance technology ineffective. Jeremy (student, SMA Bandung) argued that as long as there were no efforts to change teachers’ mindsets, CCTV cameras would make no difference. Teachers would keep ignoring cheating students. Andaru (student, SMA Bandung) criticised the absence of firm action. He saw no point in the CCTV cameras if students knew that there was nothing daunting or punitive waiting for them if they got caught cheating.

Implementing sanctions

Andaru’s statement was not entirely accurate. I did see some teachers punish their students who were caught cheating in an exam. I also witnessed some students being punished because they had committed misconduct other than academic cheating. The table below compares those punishments:

Table 4.7. Students’ misconduct and how teachers penalise them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misconducts</th>
<th>Punishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students coming late for school (observed in both schools)</td>
<td>Students were not allowed to come to class for the first session, and their name was recorded in a book. After waiting near the school gate for approximately 30 minutes, they were allowed to go to their class. If students repeat the infringement (e.g. 3 times in SMA Bandung), schools will impose a heavier sanction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students caught sharing answers in an exam (observed in SMA Bandung)</td>
<td>Students were removed from the classroom to the school hall, where they could continue working on their exam (but with less surveillance).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are not standing during the national anthem (observed in SMA Bandung)</td>
<td>Using the school’s loudspeakers, teachers called students to come to the office. They received a briefing from teachers, and their names were recorded in a book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students caught using a cheat sheet in an exam (observed in SMA Semarang)</td>
<td>At first, the school had a plan to reduce students’ scores. The plan then changed such that the school would ask students’ parents or guardians to come to school. The final punishment was to ask the students to make a statement letter, expressing their regret and promising not to do it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students smoke in the toilet (observed in SMA Bandung)</td>
<td>Students were suspended for three days, and their parents (or guardians) were asked to come to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students’ hair does not conform to school’s rule (observed in SMA Bandung)</td>
<td>Teachers cut their hair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students’ pants do not conform to school’s rule</td>
<td>Teachers ripped the lower part of the pants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Female students bring their hair straightener tool to school (observed in SMA Bandung)

Teachers took it away.

To be clear, this study is not intended to find the most appropriate punishment for academic cheating practices. Nor does it argue that severe punishments would be the best solution to the problem. But from what I saw in both schools, it seemed that teachers knew what to do and knew what kind of punishment should be given if they encountered students who committed misconduct other than academic cheating. But if it came to cheating in academic work, teachers, and in fact schools, were not well prepared. In schools in Indonesia, students who do not stand during the national anthem or who have a chat during a flag-raising ceremony might be seen as more problematic than those who routinely cheat in academic work.37

The quest to solve the problem: the government

Addressing cheating in the National Exam

As I have mentioned, it appears that the Indonesian education system recognises the daily academic cheating behaviours only half-heartedly. So far, systematic efforts to address academic cheating in schools in Indonesia have focused on the National Exam. Firstly, there is the Standard Operating Procedure for the National Exam, issued annually by the National Standards Education Board. The procedure contains rules and regulations that exam supervisors and students must follow, as well as several technical aspects such as students’ seating arrangements and the administration of multiple versions of a test. Secondly, the introduction of a computer-based test in numerous qualified schools is expected not only to reduce the production and distribution cost of the exam papers but also to minimise the possibility of exam leaks (LinggaSari, 2015). Thirdly, the decision to exclude the National Exam from consideration when adjudicating on students’ graduation from high school is expected not only to abolish its status as an exit exam but also to encourage students not to

37 The government and schools in Indonesia believe that flag-raising ceremonies have an important role for the development of the nation’s spirit and identity. It is one of the ways to teach citizenship and the ideology of Pancasila to students. Every Monday morning students wear their school uniform, sing the National Anthem, and recite the five principles of Pancasila (Parker, 1992a).
Last but not least, the introduction of the National Examination Integrity Index to evaluate schools’ honesty in conducting the National Exam is expected to encourage the public to appreciate schools’ integrity level.

The National Examination Integrity Index

In general, solutions to the academic cheating problem can be divided into short-term and long-term (Davis et al., 2009; Faucher & Caves, 2009). Several short-term deterrents are: maximising surveillance methods, limiting students’ access to technology (while optimising it at the school’s end), and giving clear explanations about the distinction between individual and collaborative assignments (Davis et al., 2009; Faucher & Caves, 2009). Long-term measures are related to the enactment of academic integrity, with honour codes as the main instrument that is utilised (Kessler, 2003; McCabe & Katz, 2009; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; Strom & Strom, 2007).

In 2015, the Indonesian government introduced the National Examination Integrity Index – I will call it the ‘Index’. The government claimed that the Index was designed with integrity as its foundation and was intended to evaluate schools’ honesty in conducting the National Exam for students in year 9 and year 12 (Bahari, 2015a; Bahari, 2015b; Hartono, 2015b). With the Index, the government seems to have adopted a long-term approach to tackle the problem of academic cheating. In its first implementation, 503 schools (junior and senior secondary) which scored 92 or more received an award from President Jokowi (Maulipaksi, 2015). Considering that the program had been in place for a year when I did my fieldwork, I was keen to discover how my participants were accepting it and how they saw the whole idea of academic integrity.

It turned out that many of my participants do not know about the Index – the few who knew only had scarce information about it. Many students said that the very first time they heard about the Index was from me, when I introduced my research to them. This lack of information was also apparent among the education personnel. Of all the teachers I interviewed, none could explain the program. Not even the school principal...
of one of the schools which received the Index award comprehended the idea behind the Index:

Not everyone understands what the Integrity Index is. I do not even know the formula used by the central [government] to calculate the integrity score. I heard that the formula is related to the pattern of answers distribution. That the central government has evaluated the level of the exam questions, and they expect that [students from] some areas or schools can answer it while others cannot. If the result is different from the evaluation, that indicates cheating. But again, until now, I do not know if that is how it works. (Pak Wahidin, principal, SMA Semarang)

Knowing that most of my participants had limited knowledge regarding the Index, it was rather hard for me to believe that others would know more. But the Ombudsman of Central Java Province apparently knew much more about it. In an interview that I had with the Ombudsman representatives, they explained that their office had received the results of the 2015 Index for all secondary schools in Central Java. Using the 2015 report, the Ombudsman of Central Java Province had done a small sampling during the 2016 National Exam. They went to several schools in Central Java, either those with high or low integrity scores, to check for possible fraud practices. Unfortunately, they could not share any information with me. At the time I visited their office, they were still in the early stage of analysing the findings to be submitted to the central office as a part of a national report.38

The unfamiliarity that most participants experienced indicates that the government did not have an effective and efficient strategy to disseminate the explanation of the Index policy. This form of disconnection is a massive challenge for Indonesia and follows the country’s decision to decentralise many of the ministries, including Education, at the

---

38 A year after my visit to the office of the Ombudsman of Central Java, I found an article written by Andana (2017) that contains the Ombudsman’s findings on the 2016 National Exam. Violations of the National Exam rules that the Ombudsman were able to find included: some proctors brought their smartphones to exam room; some proctors spent much of their time reading the newspaper instead of supervising; some students were able to obtain leaked exam materials’ some students were able to smuggle their smartphone into the exam room; and some students were sharing crib sheets. Unfortunately, from the Ombudsman’s 16 school samples in two cities and one district in Central Java, Andana’s article does not specify whether these cheating findings were discovered in schools with high or low integrity scores.
beginning of the twenty-first century. Schools, inevitably, are one of the institutions that are struggling with the transformation, which has often ended with failure (see Bjork, 2004).

Despite their limited knowledge about the Index, some of my participants voiced their optimism about the program and its impact:

The Index shows whether the result of the National Exam in a particular school is real, I mean that there has been no cheating involved (Hanafi, student, SMA Semarang).

I believe that the Index is important. The presence of the Index means that we are not only focusing on grades but also on whether the National Exam has been implemented the right way. (Bu Dini, parent, SMA Bandung)

Maybe this Index is intended to see the progress of our high school students. However, I guess the effect is on how it increases the numbers of students who want to study in this school because more of our alumnae were admitted to public universities. (Bu Ainun, teacher, SMA Bandung)

We [in Central Java] have not done our best, but we will always try. We need to prove that students in our cities and districts are honouring their integrity and being honest during the National Exam... The Index is important because an evaluation must be done honestly. How can doctors decide on a correct treatment if their patients lie? How can we help students if they are covering their weakness with cheating? (Pak Basuki, civil servant, Central Java Education Office).

But the opinions above do not represent the overall view on the effectiveness of the Index. A more negative or pessimistic opinion was offered by Reza (student, SMA Semarang). He said that his school did not care about the policy. Reza believed that his teachers cared more about their institutional reputation:

---

39 The government claimed that public universities would consider the result of the National Examination Integrity Index in accepting new students (see Anbarini, 2015). This could be the reason why Bu Ainun thinks that more of the alumnae in her school were admitted to public universities. However, SMA Bandung actually was not among the 503 schools which received the NEII Award in 2015.
It is only about [building] public perception: “Oh, this is a favourite school, it is good, even if there is cheating in the school then it is not much,” so it only represents the outer layer of the school. But when someone sees what’s happening inside, just like this research [that you do], this school is no different from others.

Considering the lack of familiarity of the research participants with the program, I believe that the opinion of Pak Wahidin (principal, SMA Semarang) is the most realistic one. He argued that to date the Index had encouraged schools to implement computer-based testing. For the calculation of the Index, the government will automatically give schools that have implemented the computer-based test more points than those who have not. Whether students, parents, and teachers were really not cheating remains unclear.

After 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture continued to assess schools’ Integrity Index after every National Exam. But no more awards were given to schools after 2015. However, there is an update on the program that I cannot help but question. The Ministry decided not only to award extra points to schools which implemented a computer-based-test for their National Exam but also to consider them to be cheating-free. Those schools had the right to earn 100 points (the highest possible) in the Integrity Index because the Ministry considered that students at those schools had zero chance to cheat. Based on what I saw in the two schools, however, students were one step ahead of their teachers in terms of adapting and then using the technology.\textsuperscript{40} In Table 4.1., I explained how students hacked their school’s online/network-based exam. This is not to say that students will do it for the National Exam, but I believe that they have the skills to do it.

Another concern that I have in relation to the Index was the government decision to give points advantage – whether just some extra or 100 – to schools who could implement a computer-based-test in their National Exam. I believe the strategy exacerbated inequality. In many of his projects, Bourdieu found that schools tend to

\textsuperscript{40} Their precocity with Information and Technology (IT) was evident in matters unrelated to cheating. For example, teachers in both schools were surprised by their students who could use their smartphones to replace missing remote controls for the class’ electronic appliances, such as the air conditioner and the overhead projector.
reproduce social inequalities rather than encourage transformation (Webb et al., 2002). I am afraid that those schools which do not have electricity and computers, which are already lacking in their capital to begin with, will be even more behind.

**Incorporating ‘integrity’ into schools**

Does the word ‘integrity’ (integritas in Indonesian) itself exist in the schools? Did schools introduce the idea of integrity before the national implementation of the Index? According to the Indonesian Language Dictionary, ‘integritas’ means “a quality, a characteristic, or a condition of being complete which radiates credibility; honesty”. Based on my observation in the two schools, the word was there, but the idea was not well-defined. This is how ‘integritas’ is being interpreted in the two schools:

**The case of SMA Semarang**

When I went through some of the school’s documents, I found that SMA Semarang proclaims six core values. They are: (1) being competent, kind, and exciting; (2) having a customer-oriented focus; (3) being creative and innovative; (4) honesty and integrity; (5) religiosity; and (6) sustainable learning. The document specifies that ‘integrity’ should be the value that needs to be prioritised, especially in the event of these three scenarios: (1) when there is a disagreement among members of the school; (2) when a member of the school experiences a disaster or misfortune; (3) when the school holds competitive events.

It seems unlikely that the first two scenarios represent situations in which students, teachers or anyone else in the school would cheat. Competitive events require integrity, but schools rarely hold them. The language of the document suggests that integrity is something situational and student-centred. The system appears to consider students as the only group of people who need to learn about ‘integritas’ and that it should be applied to specific situations.

---

41 I am using the online version provided by the Language Centre of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (link: https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/integritas). I translated it, and I tried to make it close to the original meaning.
None of the signs hanging on the walls of the classrooms mention the word ‘integritas’. A sign requests everyone: to turn off their mobile phone, to turn off electronic equipment if not being used, to keep the room clean, and not to eat and drink. Yet, there was nothing about cheating. The only sign that specifically addresses ‘integritas’ is the Integrity Index Award that the school received from the government in 2015.

Figure 4.5. Example of the National Examination Integrity Index award

The sign hangs on the wall behind the school’s reception desk. Signed by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, the size of the Integrity Index Award sign is the largest compared to their other award signs.

The case of SMA Bandung

The one place where the word ‘integritas’ is to be found in SMA Bandung is in the school’s code of conduct. Under the heading of General Requirements, it is stated that students “must have loyalty, solidarity, and integrity to the school”. I believe that the school does not have the intention to use the word ‘integritas’ as a counterpoint or remedy to academic cheating. Although others might interpret it differently, I would argue that the sentence is more of a reminder for students that they are part of the school, so it becomes one of their responsibilities to protect the school’s reputation. A search for other words closely related to ‘integritas’, such as ‘honesty’, in the school’s vision, mission, work plan, and code of conduct, drew a blank.
In both schools: the statement of honesty

Both schools, like almost all schools in Indonesia, must use a particular answer sheet for their mid- or end-of-semester exams. The paper is specially designed so that students’ multiple-choice answers can be scanned and checked using computers. In the answer sheet, there is a small box with a statement that says, “I’m working on the exam honestly” printed in it. All students taking exams must copy that statement with their handwriting. I cannot find any literature that explains when the requirement was started and the reason behind it. But I remember that more than 15 years ago I did this in many of my exams. I interpreted the requirement to write the sentence by hand so that it was as if we were promising not to cheat in the exam. If we cheated, then we would have failed to keep our promise and our handwriting was evidence that could be used against us. I brought this matter to the attention of students participating in this study to probe their opinion.

Adinda and Pandu (students, SMA Semarang) told me that they honour the statement. For Adinda, the statement was a self-reminder of a promise that she has made. The statement might not fully stop her from cheating, but she believed that it had restrained her from doing careless actions to get some answers. Others like Sandy and Hanafi (students, SMA Semarang) believed that the statement had had no impact whatsoever. Hanafi doubted the real function of the statement:

(Laughing) We just copy the statement, and that is all. We signed the answer sheet, but for what? I have seen students cheating in an exam, but none of them got caught and processed.

Alanka, Dhesta, and Reza (students, SMA Semarang) said that the statement did create a kind of pressure. Breaking the agreement made them believe that they had sinned. However, they found a way to deal with this pressure:

Alanka: (laughing) When I wrote the statement, my heart said, ‘I’m not going to be honest.’ Sometimes I even wrote a very tiny ‘not’ in the statement.
Dhesta: In my heart I also say ‘not going to be honest’ (laughing)...
Reza: (laughing) I wrote the statement at the very end of the exam. That meant that I did not break the agreement (laughing).

What to do
So, if what has been done so far has not been working well, what kind of strategies do the participants in my study believe would work to stop or prevent cheating? Some of them proposed three strategies: giving stern punishments, addressing the stress factors (i.e. family and the education system), and solving the resources problem. Some students claimed that they had witnessed an effective strategy, discouraging them from cheating in academic work.

Giving punishments
Hanafi (student, SMA Semarang) believed that students have been cheating in their academic work since primary school. Thus, he thought it was important for teachers in elementary school to start educating their students as to why academic cheating must be avoided and how real the punishment could be for those who were caught doing it. Hanafi vividly remembered a classmate in his primary school who received a punishment because that person had been caught cheating in an exam. The punishment was rather simple: Hanafi’s classmate was asked to stay in the classroom when other students could go home. Later Hanafi knew that the teacher gave his friend advice, without being angry. Yet, it was enough to make the person cry and promised not to repeat it.

I guess that kind of punishment gives a kind of moral burden. When in primary school, students are more receptive to advice. In junior and secondary schools, most likely students will ignore it. (Hanafi, student, SMA Semarang)

According to Dara (student, SMA Bandung), the importance of giving a punishment was that it could be a wake-up call for the students. But the punishment must be well thought-out. For example, Dara believes that suspension is useless. Students think of suspension as just like receiving extra holidays from school. The punishment given
should be educative. Students need to know what kind of impact they will face if they keep cheating, although it was difficult for Dara to suggest an example of this educative punishment.

Since some of the participants in my study were suggesting punishment as one of the strategies to deter academic cheating, I asked Pak Wahidin (principal, SMA Semarang) if this was something that the school had considered. Pak Wahidin explained that punishment could be one of the solutions. One criterion that needs to be fulfilled by the punishment was that it must encourage students not to do it again. I followed up my inquiry with a question of whether the school had found a punishment that suited the criteria and if so, had it been implemented. Pak Wahidin said, “Not yet”.

In contrast to those who are pro-punishment, Andaru (student, SMA Bandung) and Dhesta (student, SMA Semarang) did not believe that punishment would be useful for solving the problem of academic cheating. They argued that academic cheating is a behaviour that has turned into a culture. Almost all students were doing it. They believed that the most important thing to do was to make students realise that academic cheating was wrong. Similar to Andaru and Dhesta, Khansa (student, SMA Bandung) did not think punishment was necessary. But unlike the other two, Khansa’s argument was simply because students were not doing it all the time. Sally (student, SMA Bandung), on the other hand, argued that students needed their teachers to set good examples rather than to give punishments. Students needed to know how being honest could be a good thing for their academic life.

*Addressing the stress factors*

Many researchers have suggested that students cheat because of various kinds of pressures. Parental expectations (see Strom & Strom, 2007) and the high stakes of getting good grades (see Davis et al., 2009) were among them. Some of my participants argued that by addressing those pressures, we could solve the problem of academic cheating.
Pak Subangkit (teacher, SMA Semarang) believed that the school has the potential to help students’ development, preparing them to be good persons who will do good things. The challenge that the school has to deal with, he argued, came from the students’ families. If the families only care about grades and ignore the process, for instance, by not accompanying their child(ren) when studying but then demanding good grades, Pak Subangkit said that “menyontek will always occur.”

Adinda (student, SMA Semarang) emphasised the importance of understanding why students cheat in the first place. Only by understanding that could we find the best measures. She believed that students cheat in their academic work because they were forced by their parents and the education system to learn something that they were not interested in. Parents want their child(ren) to choose a study path that fits their imagination of how their child(ren) will be in the future. The education system gives students a lesson package that is fixed and inflexible. For Adinda the solution was quite straightforward: parents need to have a two-way discussion with their child(ren). Also, the education system needs to be altered, making it possible for students to choose only those subjects that they are genuinely interested in learning.

**Solving the resources problem**

Bu Korry and Bu Asri (teachers, SMA Semarang) considered the need to improve several educational aspects related to academic cheating during the mid- and end-of-semester exams. Bu Korry argued that multiple-choice exams were too prone to cheating. It was about time that exam questions were made essay-only. Bu Asri, on the other hand, criticised a shortage of teachers. Because of the insufficiency, it was hard to have more than one proctor in each classroom. When there is only one proctor, she believed that students were more likely to dare to cheat. But Pak Waskita (teacher, SMA Bandung) had a slightly different opinion to Bu Asri. Based on his experience, one proctor is enough as long as teachers have a strong commitment to being attentive to every indicator that students are cheating. He believed that allocating two teachers to

---

42 Some studies believe that Indonesia has too many teachers in urban areas and a shortage in remote areas (see OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015).
an exam room would most likely be counterproductive. Teachers, he thought, would spend most of the exam time gossiping rather than supervising.

It is working!

While some participants suggested solutions that they believed might be working, others told me about strategies they consider to have worked. Since the discussion of academic cheating by my participants was often centred on cheating in exams, the two strategies that students shared with me were related to that particular misconduct.

The first strategy was described to me by Danu and Tarra (students, SMA Bandung). In one exam, they and two other students were sharing their answers. In the middle of the exam, their teacher suddenly called it off. She was not happy because students were cheating and so she decided to reschedule the exam. Danu, Tarra, and their two friends felt guilty and that they had caused a problem for the whole class. They thought that their teacher had decided to re-do the exam because she knew that the four of them had been sharing answers. Later Tarra found out that most of her classmates also thought the same. It turned out that most students in her class felt it was their fault that others must re-do the exam. In the next exam, Tarra said that no students dared to cheat.

The other strategy came from Sally (student, SMA Bandung). She told me that a couple of her teachers reduced the scores of students who assisted others in their exam. Sally mentioned that this kind of punishment made her, and her friends, hesitant to cheat. She did not want to hurt someone who had tried to help her. “It just does not feel right,” she said.

I believe that those two strategies were effective because they targeted students’ most cherished capital: friendship. In both schools, friendship has a significant value. Friendship and friends were mentioned in almost all of my interviews and discussions. The prospect of students losing their friends or of being isolated from the rest of the class because they did the ‘wrong’ menyontek was terrifying. (I will discuss this more in Chapter Six.)
Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of academic cheating in the context of schools in Indonesia. One word in Indonesian that is used to cover many kinds of academic cheating practices is ‘menyontek’. When an individual assignment was not done individually, then that would be ‘menyontek’. Academic cheating practices in schools in Indonesia could be as varied as students copying classmates’ homework, teachers selling grades, students playing truant, and students hacking exam papers. The presence of technology – especially smartphones and social media – also determines how participants in my research cheated in their academic work. It is important to note that what is deemed as academic cheating in Indonesia might not be considered the same in other countries.

Numerous academic cheating practices that I found in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, with every category of participants as the perpetrators, indicate the ubiquity of the problem. There is an urgent need to realise that academic cheating in Indonesia is beyond the scope of the National Exam and other forms of exams. Moreover, students should not be treated as the only cheaters in schools. Unfortunately, considering how the schools and the government are currently dealing with the problem of academic cheating, the efforts to date have been far less than effective. Exam-focused strategies alone will not work if there is no effort to understand why people cheat in a wide range of academic work. That is what I would like to examine in the following two chapters.
Chapter Five
The habitus of cheating in a high-achieving school and a non-high-achieving school: a comparison

Introduction
Studies suggest that the prevalence of cheating peaks in senior secondary schools (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Craig & Evans, 1990; Finn & Frone, 2004; Schab, 1991). As we have seen, there was abundant evidence of cheating practices in the two senior secondary schools that became the fieldwork sites of this study, SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. Based on my observations and the discussions that I had with the participants, I discovered that each school had their own cheating pattern. The academic cheating pattern that I detected in SMA Semarang was associated with intense competition and prestige as a dominant motive rather than money, and involved exclusive groups, while the pattern found in SMA Bandung was associated with moderate competition and money as a dominant motive rather than prestige, and involved inclusive groups. In this chapter, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital, field, and practice to develop an understanding of the different cheating patterns of SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung, as well as some similar points that they shared.

Finding the patterns
As we saw in Chapter Four, it was possible to make a very long list of academic cheating practices in the two schools. A hint of the complexity of the problem is suggested by the fact that those practices mostly happened on a daily basis. This was of course quite paradoxical, as the attention of the government, the public, and the media was focused more on the National Examination, which only occurs once a year for students in years 9 and 12.

SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung had several similar academic cheating practices. Among others, three of those similar behaviours were: students menyontek on homework at school, teachers misusing their authority in grading students, and the distribution of cheating materials by students and teachers. It was from those three
cheating practices that I was able to discover a different cheating pattern in each school.

Students menyontek on homework at school

A morning activity that I routinely saw in both schools before the class started was students working on their homework. Someone with no experience of coming to a classroom in Indonesia might think that the students were very diligent, studying even before school time. But it is not like that. Those students were not making an early start on their study. Many of them were cheating in doing their homework.

Another prime time for students to cheat on their homework at school was during a recess or break time. However, even during lessons, a few students were busy cheating. In other words, students get used to cheating on homework all day during school time until they can finish it. When I asked several students to explain why cheating on homework is wrong, this is what they said:

Because it means we look at our friend’s work, we copy it... It is menyontek because the homework [which is not our original work] will be counted into our grade... (Tarra, SMA Bandung).

All students’ work becomes similar. It means that they are too lazy to think, too lazy to search, they prefer an end product (Dara, SMA Bandung).

Students believed that the practice of cheating on homework has its consequences. It ruined the fairness of the grading system. Also, since some students were benefiting from others effortlessly, cheating on homework ruined the fairness of students’ workload. The explanations given by the participants might sound like an expression of disagreement with the practice, as if they had become the victim of the misconduct and would like to convey their protest. But throughout my fieldwork, not a single student actually expressed a complaint about the practice of cheating on homework.

For the students of SMA Semarang, day-to-day academic activities generally consist of going to school, going to les or private after-hours tuition (a term used by Parker,
2016a) – either organised by teachers, individuals (e.g. university students) or private institutions – and studying at home.\footnote{At home, students’ studying activities would include reviewing notes, reading lesson materials, preparing for exams, and doing homework.} As senior students, their workload is expanding. They spend more and more time at school to have additional lessons, and the frequency of going to private after-hours tuition is increasing. The change usually results in students experiencing difficulty in managing their time. As a solution, doing homework at home is the last item on their to-do list. Students preferred to do it at school.

I do my homework at school when I cannot do it at home. You know, our full day of school ends at 3.30 pm. When I arrive home, I still need to study (i.e. reviewing notes). Not to mention if there is an exam the next day, I need to study (i.e. preparing for the exam) all night long... Most of the time it’s just better to do it at school (Adinda, SMA Semarang).

I like to study (i.e. reading lesson materials). I often study until late at night and then I go straight to bed after that... Sometimes I have no option other than to do my homework at school (Hanafi, SMA Semarang).

Nevertheless, students in SMA Semarang did not belittle the meaning of their homework. They perceived doing homework at school as part of studying. I did observe that students in SMA Semarang were involved in serious discussions when they did their homework at school. Most of the discussions and the work were done around the desk, although some male students preferred to do it while sitting and lying on the floor. But no matter where students did their collaborative homework, I could witness how they argued about the correct way to solve a problem or the correct answer to a question. Most of the students in SMA Semarang did not take their homework for granted. For them, doing homework was more than just finishing an assignment. Doing homework was also about understanding the questions as well as knowing the process of getting the (correct) answers.
What students were doing seems to be a legitimate and useful exercise. But it is in fact problematic and could be considered as one of the forms of cheating on homework in SMA Semarang. The reason is because students’ collaborative effort contradicts the fact that homework is most of the time an individual assignment. Unless teachers specify a homework as a group project, it is intended to be individual.

Another form of cheating on homework in SMA Semarang is copying classmates’ work:

Most of the time, [doing homework at school] was more of us studying together and we only copy our friend’s work if we do not understand it (Adinda, SMA Semarang).

Copying a classmate’s homework was considered the last resort. A situation where students would consider copying would be when they did not know how to do something and they were running out of time. Students in SMA Semarang realised that copying their classmate’s homework was a risky action. Teachers might notice the similarity of their homework and this could affect the grade that they received, and so, students who decided to copy had to be creative to avoid the possible risks. Editing was a common strategy that they applied. A unique editing strategy that I noticed from many students in SMA Semarang was to add more content to the homework that they copied:

If it is 100 per cent [similar], then it means we have copied. So what I did was, when my friend’s homework was, for instance, A, B, C, D, I would make it into A, B, C, D, E. So I added more [content] to my friend’s, and I would also change the wording (Hanafi, SMA Semarang).

In SMA Semarang, students work on their homework at school either individually or in small groups. Students who worked individually wrote their homework silently at their desk. Their communication was limited mostly to another student with whom they shared a desk. Students who worked together usually worked with a group of four to six students. Discussions were frequent, but only among the group. These were closed groups, in the sense that their members did not change, it was always the same students.
Two reasons that students in SMA Bandung often offered to me when explaining their reason for doing their homework at school were ‘I forgot to do it [at home]’, or ‘[simply because] I have not done it yet’. In contrast to their counterparts in Semarang, none of the participants in SMA Bandung argued that other studying-related activities or their busy academic schedule had caused them to not be able to do their homework at home. They also hardly ever argued that doing homework at school was part of studying, except for a couple of students who claimed that when they copied or duplicated their classmates’ homework, they were actually studying. These students told me that sometimes they did the copying-but-learning when they cheated at homework, but only if the homework was about a subject or a specific material that they were interested in. If the homework was a subject that they did not like, they did not care if they could not understand it. Unfortunately, it was hard for me to validate this claim as I was not able to notice much discussion between students when they were copying.

Copying classmates’ work is the most common form of cheating on homework in SMA Bandung. The practices involve a big group of students, and on many occasions, all students in the classroom. Students who had finished working on their homework (usually it was a female student), either at home or at school, would enthusiastically lend their work to their classmates to be copied. Likewise, students who had finished copying would be more than willing to lend their work to others. This chain reaction of copying was even accelerated with the presence of smartphones, a technology that students are familiar with and that all of them owned.

When a student had taken a shot of some homework from a classmate with a smartphone, this student could easily post the picture using a group messaging application (i.e. Line) designated for all students in the class. Every student received the picture, and then everyone could copy it. In the platform, there was no discussion about whether the answer was right or wrong. No one dared to question the ‘gift’ that their classmates had given. The only time students raised a question was when the picture of the photographed homework was blurred, meaning that they could only
copy certain parts. I should mention that students in SMA Semarang also had a group messaging application (also using Line) dedicated to all students in the class. However, no one ever used this platform to share their completed homework with their classmates.

Just like students in SMA Semarang, students in SMA Bandung understand that teachers will notice if their copied homework looks too similar, so they also applied an editing strategy to deal with the problem. A strategy that I noticed from many students in SMA Bandung was to change the sequence of the content or omit something:

When I am lazy, I will just borrow Dara’s homework. If the sequence of her work is A-B-C-D, then I need to change mine into B-D-A-C or just omit something from it (Sally, SMA Bandung).

A form of cheating on homework in SMA Bandung that I never encountered in SMA Semarang was the way that students delegated their responsibility to their classmates. For some male students, doing homework was like ‘a walk in the park’. However, it was not because they understood how to do the homework. Rather, doing homework at school was easy because those male students had their female classmates write their homework for them, while they did other activities such as playing poker. On their willingness to write for their male classmates, these female students said to me that they ‘had nothing to do’ and that the male students ‘were my friends’. I was curious about the female students’ compliance and whether it was because the male student had applied some kind of pressure. Indeed, I never saw the male students threaten or pressure the female students to do the homework. However, as I will explain more in Chapter Six, there was a dynamic of power relations between the male students and their female counterparts.

The practice of delegating responsibility for doing homework entered a different domain with the involvement of money. It was as if students were subcontracting their homework to their classmates. Some students have regularly received financial benefit from working on other students’ homework or assignments. A nickname given to those students is the ‘joki tugas’ or ‘assignment jockey’:
Dara (SMA Bandung): There is this thing known as ‘assignment jockey’: basically students who are too lazy to do their assignment will ask other students (i.e. the assignment jockey) if they want to do it [for money].\footnote{Dara’s explanation about assignment jockey fits what is known as ‘contract cheating’. The term was introduced by Thomas Lancaster and Robert Clarke. Contract cheating is ‘the outsourcing of assignments by students to have work produced on their behalf’ (Lancaster & Clarke, 2006, p. 145).}

Brian (Researcher): How much is it for the services of an assignment jockey?

Dara: It depends, if it is a lot of work it could be around 100,000 rupiah, but if it is only a little assignment, for example a short essay, it will be around 20,000 rupiah.\footnote{One hundred thousand rupiah equals approximately AUD 10, while 20,000 rupiah equals approximately AUD 2.}

Brian: Have any of you paid or received payment for this kind of service?

Sally: I have received it [smiling].

Khansa: I have paid for Sally’s service [giggling]

Brian: What assignment was it?

Khansa: Mathematics.

All the students that were identified to me or claimed to have been ‘assignment jockeys’ were female. Other students recognised ‘assignment jockeys’ as capable students. Their work was always considered as good even if their mood was not. The ‘assignment jockey’ was also known by their friends as a nice and helpful student. The ‘assignment jockeys’, on the other hand, never identified themselves as smart students. They never claimed that they knew how to do all of their homework or assignments. They say they do it because they like it:

Many students underestimate drawing and are too lazy to do it... Me? I like it... In year 10, I did the drawing assignments for all the female students in my class. It was actually a very easy assignment, so I did lots of improvisations... I received 7,000 rupiah for one drawing... (Sally, SMA Bandung).\footnote{Seven thousand rupiah equals approximately AUD 0.70 (70 cents).}

I had a friend who was doing this assignment jockey thing. She had a lot of orders to do, so I offered her my help. She agreed. Besides, I could get some money from doing...
it. I like to draw and could earn some money from it. I was happy (Defara, SMA Bandung).

Each of the jockeys has their area of expertise, and they prefer to work on homework or assignments that were their specialities. When the jockeys worked on what they liked, they seemed to have fun with the role that they took. The money that they received is also an obvious cause for happiness.

Students in both SMAs tend to complete their homework at school. A common practice of cheating when students worked on their homework is the copying of their classmates’ work. In comparison, only a small number of students in SMA Semarang copied their classmates’ homework. When they had to do it, students would do it with their closest friends. In SMA Bandung, with the help of smartphones, almost all students in a classroom copied their classmates’ homework. They did not mind sharing their homework. When working on their homework at school, which then led to cheating, students in SMA Semarang claimed that they were studying. As for students in SMA Bandung, working on their homework at school and all the cheating activities that it entailed, were perceived as both a normal activity, and as having fun.

*Teachers misusing their authority in grading students*

Academic cheating misleads the effort to measure a student’s knowledge and skills (Davis et al., 2009). Teachers are that part of the education measurement system that have the closest position to students and who conduct students’ evaluations more often than anyone else. But studies also show that teachers have become part of the academic cheating problem through two kinds of involvement. First, there are some indications that teachers have become external factors that facilitate students to cheat (Anderman et al., 1998), such as by ignoring misconduct (McCabe, 1999); ignoring students’ character development (Strom & Strom, 2007); and showing lack of competency, commitment, and respect (Murdock et al., 2001). Second, there are also some indications that teachers have cheated in their assessment of academic work, such as by providing test answers to students, modifying students’ answers after the
tests are completed, and allowing students more time to work on their tests (Strom & Strom, 2007).

Several studies (e.g. Al-Samarrai & Pedro Cerdan-Infantes, 2012; OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015; World Bank, 2010) have suggested that teacher absenteeism is a widespread problem in Indonesia and has become a major obstacle in the country’s education development. My observations in the two schools supports their suggestion: the practice happened on a daily basis. Other cheating practices that involved teachers were more concealed. I believe they happened partly because teachers tend to refuse the fact that they can also be the perpetrators of academic cheating. Thus, in conversations that I had with them, teachers never identified themselves or other teachers as potential cheaters. Nor did they mention cheating practices that they could possibly do. But as I observed more, and from the conversations that I had with the students, I had the chance to uncover what had been concealed: specifically, teachers’ fraud in managing students’ grades and assignments.

In Indonesia, people often judge the quality of an SMA by the number of their graduates who are accepted into public universities. Basically, the more the better:

Of course all [senior high] schools want their students to be accepted in public universities, it’s going to be wow! If a school could send hundreds of their students [to public universities], becoming the most in the country, they will be proud (Hanafi, student, SMA Semarang).

I think people’s interest [in sending their child] to this school is because we could have more of our students in public universities (Bu Ainun, teacher, SMA Bandung).

A path that some students can choose in order to get admitted into public universities is by the non-exam selection process, known as ‘undangan’ or ‘invitation’. In this process, students basically are assessed based on their grades from the first to the fifth semester. Many students in SMA Semarang indicated that some of their teachers had been upgrading grades for this particular purpose. Students believed that they had been receiving grades that were higher than they deserved:
My final grade for Mathematics last semester was 98. It surprised me since I received 70 in one of the assignments... There should be an explanation as to why teachers upgraded our grades... (Hanafi, SMA Semarang).

Hanafi, known as one of the smartest students in the school, was chosen as class captain by his classmates several times. In fulfilling his role, he often went to the teachers’ room, including when the teachers were having a meeting or a briefing. Hanafi told me that in some of those briefings, he heard that teachers were encouraged to be more generous in grading their students, a request that according to him has harmed the integrity of the school. Hanafi believed such behaviour was no different to some big corruption cases, where the suspects marked-up their office budget lines.

In SMA Bandung, an indication of teachers’ involvement in tampering with students’ grades was reported from the practice of a ‘remedial exam’. Basically, the idea of the remedial exam was to give students another opportunity if they failed to pass on their first exam. Before the remedial exam takes place, teachers had an obligation to ensure that students were able to study the materials that they had not understood and failed to answer in the first exam. Thus, the remedial exam was an evaluation of both the students’ and their teacher’s performance.

Teachers did not and could not guarantee that students who took the remedial exam would receive grades above the passing rate. However, what happened in SMA Bandung was quite the opposite. All students who took the remedial exam always received the required grade:

Danu: It is okay to get a bad grade on an exam, we can get 80 [out of 100] in the remedial... (Laughing).

Brian: So remedial is crucial?

Danu: Yes
Gendhis: In fact, many of my friends even said ‘Bu, can we just have the remedial exam now?’ to the teacher... (Laughing)

Brian: Why? Wait, can you always (emphasising) get a good grade in the remedial?

Danu: Yes

Tarra: Yes

In SMA Bandung, many students also told me that teachers’ cheating practice in managing students’ grades and assignments involved money. Three male teachers were mentioned, each with different cases. In the first case, the teacher claimed that he could, or he had, upgraded the students’ grade beyond the required passing rate, and for that ‘service’ students must pay him:

[The teacher said to the class] If you want to receive a grade that is at least equal to the passing rate, then you have to pay a certain amount of money (Jeremy, SMA Bandung).

It was after the first semester break holiday. We met again with that teacher, and when he was teaching, he suddenly said, ‘Okay, now let us talk about the price. [Last semester] I upgraded your grade. For those who were below the passing rate, bapak [I] have even upgraded your grade to 80 or 90. Now discuss among yourselves, how much you will give me?’ (Sally, SMA Bandung).

In the second case, the physical education teacher refused to grade students because they were absent from the swimming lesson session. However, he would give them a grade if the students paid him a certain amount of money:

Most of us do not like the swimming lesson, so we did not come. But then the teacher asked us for some money. If we do not pay, we will not receive our grade and [during physical education hours] we must run around the school seven times (Gendhis, SMA Bandung).

---

47 Organised by the physical education teacher in public swimming pools.
48 Around AUD 10 - AUD 20.
49 Some students said that one of the reasons was because the lesson was conducted after school hours.
50 Twenty for male students (Danu, SMA Bandung)
As for the third case, the teacher told students that he could exempt them from doing an assignment as long as they were willing to pay a certain amount of money:

The teacher said that he could make students who did not do the [250 questions] assignment unable to graduate [from year 12]. However, students who do not want to work on the assignment can opt to pay. It was one million rupiah for one group of [four] students, so each has to pay 250,000 rupiah. Some of my friends decided to pay (Gendhis, SMA Bandung).

In all three cases, the teachers were using their authority as assessors as leverage so that they could ask their students to pay a certain amount of money. In discussing their feelings about those three teachers’ behaviour, students claimed that they were ‘shocked’ (Sally, SMA Bandung), and that the money that they spent was such a ‘waste’ (Gendhis, SMA Bandung).

There are several indications that teachers in both SMAs had tampered with students’ grades. In SMA Semarang, some students told me that they had been receiving grades that were higher than they deserved. Students believed that teachers did it so more of the school’s graduates could be admitted to public universities, hence maintaining the school’s reputation. Meanwhile, in SMA Bandung, students told me that their teachers always allowed every student to pass the remedial exams no matter what. They also told me that some of their teachers asked for money if students wanted to skip their assignments or get better grades.

Distribution of cheating materials by students and teachers

Also revealed from my discussions that I had with students was teachers’ cheating practice in leaking exam questions. In SMA Semarang, it was reported that teachers leaked the materials at school and at a place where they organised private after-hours

---

51 Around AUD 100 or AUD25 each.
52 To ensure the triangulation of all of the three cases, I always asked or clarified it to at least three students.
53 This mostly refers to exams that are individually organised by each teacher, and sometimes to exams set at the provincial level.
tuition for some of their students (usually the teacher’s house). When a teacher leaked
the exam questions at school, students who receive the information have the
‘responsibility’ to share it with all of their classmates:

The Biology teacher called my friend, Roby, and then the teacher gave him [a list of]
several questions... The teacher asked Roby to share it with everyone in our class... All
the questions in the list were used in the exam (Hanafi, SMA Semarang).

On the other hand, when a teacher leaked the questions at private after-hours tuition,
the information was intended only for those students in the private tuition class. It
would be suspicious if students shared with their classmates and then too many of
them obtained high marks in their exams. Yet, some students did share the leaked
materials with their closest friends.

As for students in SMA Bandung, it was reported that they regularly shared exam
questions with their friends from other classes. Taking turns, students whose exam
was scheduled earlier than those for other classes would share the questions with
their friends in other classes. The principle of the practice that keeps its continuity was
‘barter’ (Sasha, SMA Bandung) and ‘give and take’ (Sandrina, SMA Bandung).

Another cheating practice related to exam materials, but not necessarily to do with the
leaking of materials, was teachers’ illegal possession of government confidential
documents. Procedurally, one month after every National Examination, schools must
destroy all question papers that they have used.54 However, some teachers in SMA
Semarang decided to illegally keep some of the National Exam papers from the
previous couple of years. Besides the ‘undangan’ or ‘invitation’ procedure that I have
mentioned, another way for students to get admitted to public university is by doing
well in different kinds of exams. Teachers’ purpose in keeping the question papers was
so that they could use them as material for their students’ exam drills.

54 This is according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the National Exam, issued annually by
the National Standards Education Board.
Students in SMA Semarang also obtained leaked exam materials from their tutors who happened to be their teachers at school. Students then shared the materials only to their close friends. Distribution of leaked materials in SMA Bandung, on the other hand, was between and among students. They did not limit themselves to ‘give and take’ only with their classmates, but also with friends from other classes.

**Comparing and analysing the patterns using Bourdieu’s theories**

The above three types of academic misconduct that I found in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung taught me one thing: each school has a pattern that uniquely differentiates them. The pattern consisted of three components: competitiveness, motivation, and structure. I asked my participants to share their opinion about my findings on the cheating pattern and its possible relationship with their school and home life. Analysing their explanations with the help of Bourdieu’s theories, my objective was to create a framework that would help me to make sense of participants’ decision to cheat, and perhaps to understand the pervasiveness of the problem. With that said, I expected that the insight would enable me to establish the logic behind the practice of academic cheating in each of the two schools.

Analysis showed that those three components were related to the two schools’ academic status, SMA Semarang as a high-achieving school and SMA Bandung as a lesser one. The typical academic cheating pattern in SMA Semarang was highly focused on competition, was prestige-oriented in most cases, and was usually conducted within a small exclusive group. To represent that sort of pattern, I will use the term ‘High Achieving Habitus’. On the other hand, the typical academic cheating pattern in SMA Bandung was barely focused on competition, was money-oriented in most cases, and habitually conducted in a large inclusive group. I will use the term ‘Non-high Achieving Habitus’ to represent that type of pattern. I believe it was imperative for me to compare the behaviours and examine what actually happens in each of the schools, in its various social spaces.

It should also be noted that in both schools I tried to make a simple categorisation of the students based on their academic achievement: ‘academically strong students’ and
'academically weak students’. In SMA Bandung the division was more apparent. Typically, the academically strong students are those who finish their assignments faster than others, the ones that teachers would ask to answer questions when others do not want to raise their hand or cannot answer correctly, and those who are busy studying before an exam. The academically weak students of SMA Bandung were quite the opposite. In SMA Semarang, almost all students fall into the category of ‘academically strong students’. One of the reasons is that the school’s admission standard that students need to achieve or exceed is always really high. An exception, however, should be made for transfer students. There were indications that the academic achievement of some of these students was actually below the school’s admission standard. It was their influential parents or families who were able to convince the school to accept them. In daily class situations, these students often appeared to struggle when the teachers asked them to answer a question or do a task. For that reason, I categorise them as the academically weak students of SMA Semarang.

Comparing academic competitiveness

High academic competitiveness in SMA Semarang

In a study of academic cheating conducted by LaBeff et al. (1990) on college students, it was suggested that context determines what is and what is not cheating. Therefore, it was not surprising if most students in SMA Semarang were reluctant to recognise the practice of doing homework collaboratively at school as cheating. According to the context of students in SMA Semarang, it is not academic cheating. The perceived acceptability of collaboratively doing homework at school occurred from its association with the limited time that the students had and their studying activities. For many of them, doing homework at school was a rational response to their ‘full day of school’, ‘private after-hours tuition’, and ‘extracurricular activities’. These activities take a significant portion of their time, and they had no other option than to do their

55 The officials of Ombudsman Central Java shared to me their findings about this matter. They told me that while the procedures for admission at the start of an academic year are clear, unfortunately that is not the case when schools have an opening in the middle of the year (e.g. if one of their students has had to move to another city to follow his/her parents). Schools do not have the budget to, for instance, make an announcement in a newspaper that they have a slot to fill and to organise a selection process. So schools tell their close stakeholders, usually influential people, about the opportunity.
homework at school together. The students also believed that since there was a learning process involved in the activity, collaboratively doing homework at school should not be a problem. After all, learning was the main objective for them when going to school.

Students of SMA Semarang were more willing to use the label of ‘menyontek’ or ‘cheating’ when their classmates were only copying homework. But there were some particular ‘rules of the game’ that seemed to be understood by all of the academically strong students to avoid being labelled. When some of the students decided just to copy, I noticed that many of them often asked their classmate how they came up with the answers, before starting to copy. Questions such as ‘In what page [in the textbook] is the topic discussed?’ and ‘What formulas or equations should be used to answer the question?’ were common and seemed to be necessary if students wanted to avoid, or at least to minimise the risk of others labelling them as ‘cheating’. But this was not the case for the academically weak students. They attached themselves to the academically strong students, copying without asking questions. They were the ones who were often labelled as ‘cheating’.

Whether the academically strong students were working collaboratively on the homework or just copying it, I believe that they had a similar aim. The academically strong students wanted to be recognised by their classmates not only because they had done their homework, but also because they had understood the homework. In the academically competitive environment, students who were perceived by classmates as having ‘understood’, could maintain their cultural capital as smart and capable students. Being recognised as having made an effort to learn and to understand kept them safe from being labelled a ‘tukang contek’, translated literally as ‘copier’ or more figuratively as ‘plagiarist’. This cultural capital was crucial as the label could have a major impact on the self-confidence of these academically strong students, disrupting their chance of keeping up with the competition.

The homework editing strategy that was preferred by the academically strong students of SMA Semarang also signified the academic competitiveness of their social spaces.
When copying, it is important for students not only to avoid being caught by their teachers – because they could receive low grades for this – but also to show that they could do more or better than their classmates. So students’ preferred editing strategy, when copying classmates’ homework, was by adding more content to the work. By having more content, students were hoping that they could get good grades, maybe even higher than their classmates. When students received good grades for their homework, it would elevate their overall grades. In a competitive academic environment, good grades could mean more opportunities. Students with good grades – even better if higher than those of other students – can enter the best or favourite class, obtain scholarships, and go to their desired public universities (Alanka, SMA Semarang). The academically weak students’ editing strategy was much simpler. They skipped sections of the assignment that they found difficult to answer.

Low academic competitiveness in SMA Bandung

Students in SMA Bandung were more open in acknowledging that the homework they submitted to their teachers was not their individual work. However, since the practice has been so normalised, they did not see anything wrong with it. One could claim that the students are cheating, but the kind of response that students would give to that claim is somewhat similar to “so what?”.

I would argue that students’ willingness to share their homework to all classmates, their tendency to copy homework without looking further as to whether it was right or wrong, and some students’ willingness to do their classmates’ homework, were indicators that academic competitiveness was low in SMA Bandung. For the academically weak students, homework is a burden that needs to be disposed of as soon as possible. The fastest and most effortless way to do it is by copying their classmates’ homework. For the academically strong students, grades from homework did not seem to be their priority. They could demonstrate their academic competency by getting good grades in schoolwork or exams. Academically strong students also had consistency in getting good grades. So even if they shared their schoolwork and exam answers with their classmates, it was most likely that they would end up with higher overall grades compared to those of the academically weak students.
The homework editing strategy that was preferred by students in SMA Bandung – that is, omitting elements and changing the sequence – also did not show any sign of competitiveness in academic matters. For them, editing was more about creating homework that appeared to be different to other students. As long as they could trick their teacher, allowing them to get the necessary grade, it was good enough.

But the lack of academic competition among these students did not mean that there was nothing to be contested. Several pieces of evidence pointed to ‘friendship’ as the particular social capital at stake. Evidence could be discerned from how the female students were willing to spend their time and energy writing the homework of their male classmates (I will provide details on power relations between the two in Chapter Six). The status of ‘friend’ that they could obtain from those male classmates seemed to make it worth the sacrifice. Further, some of them told me that they were proud of how their classmates needed them and that they enjoyed the feeling of being needed, being important.

Classmates characterised the helpful students as ‘baik’ (or ‘kind’ in English). This portrayal made them even happier as they were on the right track to becoming popular. For these students, the competition was more about ‘who is the friendliest’ or ‘who is the kindest’ among them. The winner would have a better chance to acquire many friends, that is, to have more social capital.

*The nature of competition in schools in Indonesia*

I must make it clear that I was only comparing SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung on their academic achievement because it was the context that enabled me to discuss cheating in the two schools. Thus, although in my writing I showed how SMA Bandung is not as academically competitive as SMA Semarang, there were other areas where SMA Bandung stands out. To be specific, SMA Bandung is really competitive in the area

---

56 Answering my question as to what they could achieve when they become more popular, some of these female students told me that it would become a ‘plus point’ for them in the eyes of the boy that they like.
of sports and performing arts. So generally speaking, the two schools are both competitive, and I will attempt to explain the reason.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Indonesian government started to massively sponsor ‘lomba’ (i.e. tournaments or contests) across the country. For students and schools, the annual Olympiads are perhaps the most prestigious lomba. In these Olympiads students are competing in a particular school subject. The winner of the city/district level will have the opportunity to compete in the provincial level, and if they win that, they can compete in the national level (Long, 2013b). The government’s purpose was to equip the people with the idea of ‘prestasi’ (i.e. achievement) as something that they need to accomplish in life. If Indonesians had this competitive mindset, it was expected that in the long run, they would be high-quality citizens, and high-quality ‘human resources’, who are high-achievers, and who can support the country’s ambitious development plan (Long, 2013a).

In 2004 the government explored the possibility of further immersing prestasi within the education sector. When preparing the 2006 education curriculum, the government wanted it to have a component that “stressed students’ duty to identify opportunities for prestasi and approach these with due preparation and enthusiasm” (Long, 2013a, p. 179). It was not hard for me to track down how SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung represent ‘prestasi’. In their official documents and policies, SMA Semarang encourages students to compete for prestasi fairly, and says it will reward them for their prestasi, and will support them to maintain their prestasi. As for SMA Bandung, it is stated that the school will strive to create an environment where having prestasi becomes their underlying quality.

To let their guests know that their students had the prestasi quality, and to motivate other students in the school to do the same, both schools prepared a shelving unit in the school’s corridor in which to store and show off trophies won by their students (and teachers). The importance of trophies, as Long (2013b, p. 86) argues, is “its capacity to denote the recipient’s ‘achiever’ identity over a period of time that helps create a ‘social life of achievement’ in which success is seen as enviable, and becomes
a source of pride and esteem.” To inform a more general public, both schools would occasionally put up a big banner at the front of the school. The name (and in some cases even the photos) of the student(s) who had just recently won a competition and the name of the school shared space on the banner. Inside the walls of SMA Semarang, they have a special class, designated to train students who regularly participate in various academic competitions. Inside the walls of SMA Bandung, they regularly allow their students to skip lessons if they need to attend trainings or rehearsals with their sports club or art studio. So *prestasi* is a key word in Indonesian education and to young people, it means “to achieve and to perform, and to gain some form of public recognition for both; and it can refer to a quantity of achievements as well as to individual awards” (Parker & Nilan, 2013, p. 93). Similar to SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, other schools in Indonesia indicate their quality by showing their most tangible *prestasi*: prizes, trophies, and awards. Other schools also coach and train their students for the purpose of winning *prestasi*, and thereby collecting cultural capital.

Successful students or *siswa berprestasi*, are those who are able to finish high in the class rank list, win local/national/international competitions, score high in the National Exam, and enter the best school/university. Parker (1992b) argues that there is a contradiction between individual competitiveness and the nature of social relations in schools in Indonesia, which is predominantly collective (I will further discuss the issue of collectivism in Chapter Six). While students must pursue individual self-interests to be successful, the school culture (i.e. Parker mentions textbooks in her article) encourages students to “learn and study in groups... help disadvantaged students with their schoolwork, and... work in mutual help groups on community advancement projects” (Parker, 1992b, p. 114). However, academic cheating bridges the contradiction between individual performance and group participation. To finish homework, to pass exams, to get good marks, to graduate, students were willing to collaborate.
Comparing ‘motivation’

Motivations in SMA Semarang: the importance of prestige

At the end of every semester, teachers in schools in Indonesia hand out students’ academic report book personally to the parents. A common practice during the report-giving is the ranking of students based on their academic achievement. Parents (and students) can see where their child is ranked in the class. In 2016, the Provincial Government of Central Java encouraged schools not to rank their students since they believed that each student has their particular type of intelligence. SMA Semarang tried to implement the suggestion from their local government, but my observations during the report-giving in the school showed that it did not work.

The fact that SMA Semarang still printed out the rank of the students and gave it to all the teachers means that the ranking still existed and was accessible. The school principal urged teachers to keep the grade list to themselves, and teachers did try to convince parents that there was ‘no ranking’ and that ‘children had a unique intelligence’ at the start of the report-giving session. But when it came to the one-on-one session, no teacher was able to resist when parents demanded to know, ‘Who is the best in the class?’, ‘What is the highest grade in the class?’, or ‘Was my child in the top 10?’ Eventually, these parents could still figure out the position of their child in the class ranking.

The ranking is part of a tradition in Indonesian schools. It can be found across different levels of schooling, from primary to senior secondary, and has been experienced by several generations. Parents demanding good grades and a high rank from their child are common in the community and are part of the family habitus. Therefore, despite the good reasons provided by the provincial government and the school’s policy on no-ranking, it was hard for parents and teachers of the high-achieving school to adapt.

When I discussed this habit of ranking with two parents of students in SMA Semarang (i.e. Pak William, Dhesta’s dad; and Bu Dini, Hanafi’s mom), they told me that they did not send their child to school for the pursuit of prestige or only for the sake of finishing
high in the ranking. They wanted their child to study without having to worry about the grades that they would receive at the end of the term.

Hanafi confirmed his mother’s claim. His mother never set a target for him. She never asked Hanafi to get the highest grade or finish a term in the top rank. As long as he ‘tried to do his best’ it was more than enough for his mother. Despite his mother’s laid-back approach, Hanafi routinely finished a term as one of the three top achievers of all the students in his year. But Hanafi’s story is very much an exceptional case. Most students in SMA Semarang shared a rather similar experience with Dhesta.

Dhesta told me a different story to that of his dad. Dhesta said that his dad’s main demand was for good grades. The argument built by his dad was always around the relationship between grades and his future, in particular how bad grades could land him in difficulties in finding a prestigious profession, such as a doctor. The discussions, as Dhesta said, mainly happened at home after the report-giving. Actually, Pak William was uncertain about good grades and this was noticeable during the discussion that I had with him. Although Pak William said that he was not overly concerned about whether Dhesta gets good grades, he was anxious because Dhesta’s cousin, who went to a different SMA, had better grades. For Pak William, SMA Semarang was the best quality school, and there was no way that other, inferior schools could have better students. He suspected that in his nephew’s SMA, teachers upgraded their students’ grades. Ironically this was a practice that happened in SMA Semarang, as revealed by my participants to me.

The familial habitus that Dhesta experienced was more common among the academically strong students of SMA Semarang. Adinda’s mother expected that Adinda would do well in all lessons so she would get good grades. A question that her dad always asked every report-giving time was whether she had achieved a high rank in the class. Alanka’s accomplishment in securing a place in the school’s favourite class when he was in year 10 did not satisfy his parents. Since he was only ranked twenty in his class, his parents were worried that he would be struggling for the rest of his schooling. Reza was a student whose parents did not compare his grades to those of
his friends. However, they often compared his achievement to that of his sister, who he admitted was smarter than he was.

The vision statement of SMA Semarang says that it is aiming to be the best SMA in the country. The school says it will do its best in supporting its students to excel in competitions (e.g. arts and crafts, science, sports, language skills), to score highly in school exams, and to be accepted by public universities. The teachers of SMA Semarang made this vision of pursuit of prestige clear to their students. In almost every flag-raising ceremony, a teacher who had the responsibility to give a speech would address how important it was for students in year 12 to do their best in the National Examination. Students’ excellent achievement in the exam, as the speaker said, would have a significant impact on the school’s excellent reputation. As actions speak louder than words, in all flag-raising ceremonies that I attended, the school announced a list of students who had just recently won a competition. These students, along with the teachers who had trained and accompanied them in the competition, were asked to come to the centre of the field where they and the speaker would then re-create the award-giving moment accompanied by a round of applause from the audience of students and teachers.

SMA Semarang’s long-standing reputation for sending their graduates to public universities was undeniable. Every year, hundreds of their graduates were admitted into top public universities in the country. Many students told me that SMA Semarang’s continuous success in public university admission was one of the main reasons why their parents were eager to have them study in the school. I would argue that it showed the congruity of SMA Semarang’s institutional habitus and the students’ familial habitus.

The pressure to maintain the school’s excellent reputation and to satisfy the expectations of the public (and those of (prospective) parents of students) are probable reasons why teachers developed the habit of cheating in performing their jobs. Since the pressure is too immense, and it is coming from many different parties,
teachers tampered with students’ grades. The practice was implied by two teachers of SMA Semarang:

Teachers cannot be separated from demands, such as the school’s prestige, students’ grades that need to be rising, and the improvement in the quality of the region’s education (Pak Majdi, teacher, SMA Semarang).

I used to give students ‘5’, ‘4’ [(on the scale of 1 to 10)] or even lower, based on my evaluation of what students deserved to receive. But now, no matter what, teachers will try to find a way so that none of their students gets a low grade, including by giving additional assignments. In the past, it was not unusual that some students failed to graduate. Now, almost everyone, or in fact, everyone, graduates (Bu Dyta, teacher, SMA Semarang).

On receiving the upgraded grades, students shared their opinions as to why their teachers did it. Some that were mentioned to me include ‘to relieve the pressure from someone [high up]’ (Hanafi, SMA Semarang), and ‘to make the school’s reputation (nama) even better’ (Alanka, SMA Semarang). Students believed that prestige, either of the school or of someone of high rank, was at stake. Although students never discussed this with their teachers, I was surprised by the accuracy of their opinion when I compared their opinions with what the teachers said to me.

Prestige was also reported as the main motivation for teachers of SMA Semarang to leak exam materials to their students, at school and at private after-hours tuition in their home. As I have mentioned before, at school, teachers leaked the materials to all students, whereas at home they leaked the materials only to the students who belonged to the private tuition class. I would argue that the difference in distribution means that the teachers had different purposes. The leaking of questions to all students was because the teachers had two concerns: the need to maintain the prestige of the High Achieving school and the need to attract prestige for themselves as part of the institution. The more concentrated distribution of the leaked materials in the private after-hours tuition shows that teachers’ concern was their individual prestige as a capable tutor and owner of a ‘successful’ private tuition business.
It was in this private after-hours tuition that I could discover the financial motivation for the SMA Semarang pattern. Pak Wahidin (principal, SMA Semarang) argued that private after-hours tuition is a side job commonly chosen by some teachers to get more income aside from teaching at the school. There used to be another source of income for teachers when the use of the Student’s Workbook was still allowed. Book publishers would provide a commission for teachers when they favoured a certain Workbook and required students in the classes that they taught to buy it. But after the government banned the use of Student’s Workbooks, options for additional income from doing work related to education became limited. Teachers who want to retain their reputable private after-hours tuition business need to prove that students who join their private tuition are doing academically better than students who do not join or who join the big-name, private after-hours tuition businesses. One easy way to do that is to drill students with the exact questions that would be used for exams at school.

Motivations in SMA Bandung: money more than prestige

In SMA Bandung, the financial motivation was apparent from how students and teachers received money for academic services from their peers (i.e. assignment jockey or contract cheating) and their students (i.e. scores upgrading). However, students felt differently about giving money to their teachers compared to giving money to their classmates. Some of the students were reluctant to spend money for the benefit offered by their teachers. One reason could be the different amount of money that was demanded. Although the kinds of services provided by teachers and their peers were different in significance, the price was much higher for teachers’ services. Another reason could be that the service from peers was more of an alternative that students could choose if they needed it, while the service from teachers was more of an obligation.

The large amount of money and the obligation to pay did not necessarily make all students of SMA Bandung object to what their teachers did. As Gendhis (student, SMA Bandung) reported to me, some of her friends would hastily choose to pay their
teachers, if the option was available. This pattern, I believed, was associated with the wide access that those willing students had to economic capital, which is the large amount of pocket-money that they received from their parents. As suggested to me by Zivana (student, SMA Bandung), whether or not students had access to money, also strongly influenced their decision to take part or not in a group effort to buy leaked exam materials. Based on her own experience, it was easy for Zivana to refuse her classmates’ invitation to put in some money when they had a plan to buy leaked exam material as she did not have the money. But if she had had the money, she was not sure if she could have easily said ‘no’.

Although students of SMA Bandung disliked what their teachers did, it seemed that they could not find a good reason to refuse it. Instead, during our discussion, it was easier for them to find a reason not to stop it, such as ‘to avoid any commotion’ (Sally, SMA Bandung), or ‘let him be, that teacher will retire at the end of the year’ (Gendhis, SMA Bandung). I would argue that students’ familial habitus became a significant factor that influenced how they dealt with the problem. It was reported that some of the parents actually knew about the teachers’ practices since their children told them. However, instead of taking action about the misconduct, parents told their children that ‘they could understand why the teachers did it’ (Sally, SMA Bandung).

Bjork suggests that the tight control implemented by President Soeharto during the New Order era and the economic development that occurred has made “most citizens willingly sacrificed freedom and autonomy in exchange for stability and a more comfortable standard of living” (2003, p. 193). Bjork’s explanations are useful in understanding why parents did not take any action on what I believe could easily be called an act of corruption. Parents seemed to believe that it was better for them not to disrupt the stability of their child in the school. After all, their child still benefited from what the teachers did, which was in the form of good grades. Parents’ submissiveness influenced how students reacted to the practice as well. Jeremy, for instance, regularly used his own pocket-money every time the ‘obligation’ to pay arose. For him, it was simpler to do it that way, causing less commotion than asking his parents for money.
With regard to the students who worked as an ‘assignment jockey’, they told me that they never advertised their service or tried to find classmates who needed their service. It was always other students who took the initiative to approach them first. Although they did not want to be seen as making money or profit from ‘jockeying’, they admitted that they received a good amount of money and were happy because of it. In my opinion, becoming an assignment jockey was a very effective way for these – usually academically strong – students of SMA Bandung to acquire economic capital. Playing it right, they could invest their economic capital into another type of capital. The money that the jockeys received from their service enabled them to buy more snacks and stationery in the school cafeteria. When they shared these materials with their friends, they transformed their economic capital into social capital. The money also enabled the jockeys to hang out more often with their friends in their favourite café. Once again, they successfully transformed their economic capital into social capital.

Even with the involvement of money, the jockeys’ willingness to help their friends resulted in others trying to get the jockeys into their circle. If the teachers let students choose their partners for a group assignment, the jockeys were a ‘hot’ commodity as students tried to be in the same group as the jockey. Thus, the jockeys’ kindness had become a source of social capital. Last but not least, the jockeys’ competency in working on the assignments made other students perceive them as the smart students, awarding the jockeys significant cultural capital. At the end of the day, the jockeys are among the popular students in the school. I will discuss more about popular students in Chapter Six.

In discussing how the use of money in cheating practices could affect academic life, some students of SMA Bandung, such as Sally, realised that it was just making bad things worse:

Students learn, we learn from our environment. Students who have studied hard, when they realise that others who did not study could get similar grades [by paying], it discourages them. As for students who play truant, knowing that there is an
opportunity to pay [for grades], it encourages them to do it more often. Students learn from the experience.

Sally’s concern regarding the possible greater negative impact of money is reasonable. In fact, two teachers reported that students did try to play tricks on some aspects of the school’s system with the help of money. Bu Sasa told me that she had caught students red-handed as they paid random pedicab drivers to pretend to be their guardians or parents so that they could collect the students’ evaluation report. These students did not want their parents to know about their results. Further, Bu Imel told me that she was able to persuade one of her students to confess that he and some of his classmates had chipped in some money and bought leaked exam materials from alumnae of the school for six million rupiah.\(^57\) I believe that the crucial point from Sally’s, Bu Sasa’s, and Bu Imel’s explanations was how aware the students are about the power of money: in this case, its ability to cheat the system. Moreover, in the stories being told to me, money seems to have a corrupting influence on students as well as teachers.

The motivation for cheating in SMA Bandung was not only the acquisition of economic capital. The motivation of prestige that I had found in SMA Semarang was also to be found in SMA Bandung, and was reflected in the practice of the remedial exam that the school implemented. In discussing this remedial practice, Bu Endita and Bu Ratih (teachers, SMA Bandung) believed that their students were losing their focus and seriousness about the normal exam. Students preferred to do the remedial exam because they had realised the existence of the loophole. What Bu Endita and Bu Ratih meant by ‘loophole’ was how they and the rest of the teachers seemed to have an obligation to grade above the passing rate when students took the remedial exam (as discussed above). They argued that it had happened because the concept of ‘remedial’ had been politicised by schools, local leaders, and even the education system. After the implementation of decentralisation – which is basically a system of shared responsibility between central and local governments – in early 2000, there were many local leaders who used high-quality education as one of their political promises.

\(^{57}\) Around AUD 600
during the election. Candidates for elected political positions, such as *bupati* or district heads, would make academic promises such as ‘100% students’ graduation rates’. Since school principals were appointed directly by those leaders, as subordinates they were obliged to fulfil those promises (Pisani, 2013). If no students failed their remedial exam, no student would have to repeat a year and no student would be unable to graduate, so schools and local leaders could claim the good quality of the education that they provided.

That is why I argue that the motive for schools and local leaders to politicise the remedial exam is prestige. The results that students achieve in their remedial exam is seen as a manifestation of the education quality that schools, local leaders, and the system provides. Thus, there is no option for teachers not to support or not to take part in the effort to show the success of their institution to the wider public. Although Bu Endita and Bu Ratih did not mention it, I would also argue that they were not only positioned as ‘victims’ of the politicisation, but also they were ‘politicised’ by their students for the sake of their evaluation.

**Comparing the group: exclusive or inclusive**

*The exclusive cheating group in SMA Semarang*

Differences in the competitiveness and the motivation went hand-in-hand with differences in the composition of the group of students who did the misconduct. As I have explained before, for students of SMA Semarang, doing homework at school was perceived as an opportunity to study. Since the activities often included a discussion, the tendency of these students was to work on their homework in small exclusive groups. When working in their group, students did not need to worry if they had some difficulty understanding the assignment. Students had their close friends to help them.

The work of the exclusive groups was obvious during the oral question-and-answer sessions in class. Even though the teachers asked students to answer the questions individually, students’ loyalty to their close friends was prioritised over their concern to comply with the teachers’ request (and even threatened to reduce their scores). When one of the members of their group had difficulty answering a question, other
members would whisper the answer or inform them where in the book the answer could be found. Looking at the students’ gestures and listening to what they were saying, it should be easy for the teachers to know what their students are doing. But, as I observed, most of the teachers did not ask the students to stop their sharing activities. It seemed that as long as the students were actively participating in the question-and-answer session, the teachers were satisfied.

The way students of SMA Semarang shared leaked exam questions also reflects the exclusivity of academic cheating in their school. Students who obtained leaked materials from their private after-hours tuition or les would mainly share it with their close friends:

I am not taking part in any les organised by our teachers, but because I have a friend who is [giggling and looking at Dhesta]... I get the source [of leaked exam questions] needed for gaining the [good] grades (Alanka, SMA Semarang).

Dhesta and Alanka had attended the same junior high school. They were classmates in year 9, and since then have become friends. The fact that they have known each other for a long time influenced Dhesta to share the leaked exam questions to Alanka. As their ‘group’ grew in SMA Semarang with the presence of Reza (most of the time the three always sat close to each other in the classroom), the leaked materials were then shared among the three. From them I could see that for the academically strong students of SMA Semarang, ‘friendship’ was also an important social capital that must be maintained, and, if deemed necessary, could be expanded. Sharing of exam leaks was one effective way to do it.

The inclusive cheaters in SMA Bandung

Whilst the students of SMA Semarang tended to be exclusive in their cheating activities, students of SMA Bandung tended to be inclusive. With regard to working on homework at school, most students in SMA Bandung did not recognise it as work that needed to be done in small groups. I have mentioned how students in SMA Bandung used a group messaging application (i.e. Line) to share one of their friends’ homework
so that others could copy it. That is probably the best example to illustrate how academic cheating practices by students of SMA Bandung are so inclusive. One cheating ‘source’ material was enough for all the students in the class: everyone could use it.

I believe that the Line application is an effective platform for three purposes. First, Line records students’ involvement in academic cheating. When a student comments on a shared cheating material in the messaging group, classmates recognise her or him as part of the majority who support the academic cheating habitus. Second, Line validates students’ contribution in academic cheating. When a student shares homework or leaked exam materials in the messaging group, classmates justify her or his contribution in academic cheating and will appreciate the student with symbolic capital. Finally, Line excuses academic cheating from being regarded as a socially sanctioned activity, at least by its members. All members of the messaging group, including those who might represent themselves as non-cheaters, could access the cheating materials shared in the application. Thus, by only becoming a member, everyone in the group could easily be considered as taking part in and approving the cheating activities.

Taking the inclusiveness of the academic cheating to another level, some students of SMA Bandung told me that they have cheated in their end of semester exams while assisting or being assisted by their seniors:

When I was in year 10, we had to share our desk with students from year 12 during the exam. At first, I thought that it would be hard to menyontek since we will not have the guts to ask the year 12 students, and the year 12 students would be ashamed to do it in front of us. But it turned out to be the opposite. I mean, no one was jaim (jaga imej or cared too much about their self-image). We were all helping each other (Sally, SMA Bandung).

58 More discussion on symbolic capital in Chapter Six.
59 This was a common practice even during my time. Schools seem to believe that the ‘distance’ created by mixing students of different years would prevent students from cheating.
Sally’s hesitation to ask her seniors is a sign of power relations. Shiraishi (1997) argues that power relations in Indonesia are highly defined by age and generation. Year 10 students will not address year 11 and 12 students only by name. They will address their seniors with the title kak – a shorter version of kakak (elder brothers/sisters).[^60]

That is why most young Indonesians find friends among their classmates: they are predominantly in the same age group (Parker, 2016a). But in academic cheating, the gap caused by the power relations seems to be narrowing. Some students of SMA Bandung told me that they learned how menyontek or cheating with their seniors could actually bring positive values. Some of them learned about ‘solidarity’ (Dara, SMA Bandung) and others learned about ‘supportiveness’ (Sally, SMA Bandung). I believe that the perceived ‘positive values’ were the result of students’ similar feeling towards the exam. For students, no matter what their year, the examination was their common enemy, a problem that needed to be solved (by cheating) together.

I believe that among students of SMA Bandung, there was a kind of reward and punishment scheme with regard to the inclusiveness of academic cheating in their classrooms. Students who allowed others to copy or to look at his or her work received the labels of ‘kind’, ‘smart’, and ‘cool’ kids (Debora, SMA Bandung). This type of student tended to be really popular. On the other hand, students who did not want to share tended to be unpopular, and had to deal with the label of being ‘smart but arrogant’ or being mocked with ‘smart student suddenly becoming deaf during exams’ (Fasha, Zivana, & Sisil, students SMA Bandung). Their action was considered to be inappropriate since they undermined the meaning of togetherness among classmates.

Besides the labelling and mocking, acting exclusive in an inclusive environment could have a collective impact:

> It was like a war. A few students got their hands on leaked exam questions but decided not to share them with everyone. Students who did not get the leaked material received a lower score compared to ones who got it (Jeremy, SMA Bandung).

[^60]: Some students in SMA Bandung prefer to use kang (Sundanese for elder brothers) and teh (Sundanese for elder sisters), while some students in SMA Semarang prefer to use mas (Javanese for elder brother) and mbak (Javanese for elder sister).
Jeremy mentioned that the conflict between two groups of students in his class happened because one group blamed the other as the reason why they received lower exam grades. The group with the lower grades believed that if the group who had acquired the leaked questions were willing to share, there would not have been a gap (of grades) between all of them. I do understand why some students got upset with the non-sharing decision made by the students who had the leaked materials. For some of them, it could mean that they missed an opportunity to get better grades. But whether all of those students would make the best of the opportunity (i.e. the leaked exam questions) is questionable. Throughout my period of observation, I usually knew when most, if not all, students in a class had ‘got their hands’ on leaked exam materials. However, not all of them would follow it up. The academically strong students would try to find the answers to the questions using their notes or using Google, to study based on the leaked materials that they obtained, and even to prepare a cheat sheet. The academically weak students, in contrast, would do nothing. They expected their friends to help them during the exam.

In saying that, basically not all students came well prepared, even when they had the leaked materials and so the differences in grades – the gap – was unavoidable. An important part of Jeremy’s story was that the conflict happened when he was in the early weeks of year 10. There is a possibility that at that time, his classmates had not fully adapted to the concept of inclusiveness, which apparently was the habitus of their new environment. The longer the students were in this habitus, the more likely that the sharing of leaked exam materials became more natural and more extensive, leaving no one behind.

**Similarities within the differences**

Amidst the differences regarding the competitiveness, motivation, and group of academic cheating between the two schools, I was able to observe two similarities. The first similarity falls under the theme of institutional habitus. The second similarity concerns how students labelled their classmates.
Despite the differences in academic competitiveness between the two schools, I would argue that for both patterns the pervasiveness of cheating in doing homework was caused in part by a similar factor, which is the culture of teaching in public schools in Indonesia. Bjork provides insights into how Indonesian teachers’ priority in performing their academic activities at school was mainly to obey and to be loyal to the government:

> Since the time that the Indonesian public school system was formed, teachers’ duties to the state were emphasised over their obligations to students and parents... [and] to the national cause. That stress on the teachers’ duties as civil servants produced a culture of teaching that values obedience above all other behaviours. Educators are not recognised for their instructional excellence or commitment to their craft. Instead, they derive rewards from dutifully following the orders of their superiors... (Bjork, 2004, p. 252).

As a result, teachers were evaluated more on aspects such as their punctuality during the flag-raising ceremony, rather than on the quality of their teaching, and were not assessed for their presence or absence in the class (Bjork, 2004).

This is not to say that nowadays teachers in Indonesia would all have the habitus that Bjork mentions. His data are based on his fieldwork conducted during the 1990s. Since then, there has been two different curricula (2006 and 2013) and more development on democratisation and decentralisation. In addition, there are many non-PNS teachers in schools now (see Suharti (2012) for more information on this). There is a new generation of teachers who are better trained and less concerned with being obedient civil servants. However, I believe Bjork is right in how the culture of obedience has been really institutionalised in schools in Indonesia. It is rather hard for the old generation of teachers to disengage themselves from this habitus.

In SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung, the culture of obedience was also one of the main characteristics of the schools’ institutional habitus. As expected, during the flag-raising ceremonies, teachers’ meetings, and teachers’ briefings, almost all teachers attended and most of them came on time. However, when it was about coming to
class for teaching, many teachers often came late and were even absent. Even when the principal in the two schools sometimes randomly checked the classrooms, it did not change anything. The teachers also disseminated the culture of obedience to their students. Reflecting on the use of CCTV cameras in schools, I believe that the habit of ‘obedience’ had made teachers ignore students’ habit of cheating when they were doing their homework at school.

All classrooms in both schools were equipped with CCTV cameras. How the teachers used the CCTV cameras exhibited the schools’ intention to nurture the value of obedience to their students. From the CCTV monitor located in the vice principals’ office, teachers routinely observed and then warned students using the loudspeaker if they did not stand up when the national anthem was being played, did not hustle to come to the field when the flag-raising ceremony was about to start, or if they smoked in the toilet. Without any recording as evidence, teachers who witnessed the incidents via the CCTV monitor would not hesitate to issue a certain punishment to students. From the same CCTV monitor, sometimes a teacher observed students who played guitar or played card games when there was no teacher in their classes and then warned them not to do it. Rarely though, it ended up with a substitute teacher being sent to these classes to handle the situation, which ironically made the students repeat what they were asked not to do. From the same CCTV monitor, in the morning teachers could see that their students were collaborating in doing their homework or copying their classmates’ homework, but no action was ever taken.

There were other aspects of the institutional habitus in the two schools that I believe could also be part of what caused the pervasiveness of academic cheating. Two that came up during my period of observation were related to students’ seating arrangements and the preference for group work. What I mean with students’ seating arrangements is how students were always paired so that they could share a desk. In a

61 During my fieldwork, most of the CCTV cameras in SMA Semarang had been turned off due to a technical problem. However, when they were working properly, none of my participants was ever in trouble because of the CCTV cameras. They were never used to monitor whether students do their homework at school or individually.

62 While I was in SMA Bandung, students who were not standing during the national anthem got a demerit point. Students who were caught smoking in the toilet got a 3-day suspension.
regular classroom, two students shared a one-metre-long desk. In the school’s laboratories, five or six students shared a two-metre-long desk. When a classroom had smaller desks, approximately a half-metre long, two desks would be put side by side, effectively making a one-metre-long desk. Even when there was a chance to have the students sit one by one in their own smaller desks, the school would not do it. What happened then was, whenever teachers asked their students to work individually, whether it was for routine day-to-day basis assignments, monthly exams, or end of semester exams, it was practically hard to do. Students always had others sitting in very close proximity to them. With the very limited space that two students had in a desk, it was hard not to look at each other’s work, even if it was unintentional. Students always had their classmates nearby that they could turn to if they had difficulty in working their assignments.

I also noticed that teachers and students in both schools had a strong preference for group work instead of individual work. Teachers often requested students to work in a group. When teachers asked students whether they would prefer individual or group assignments, students always opted for group. The inclination for group work was so strong that even when a teacher had originally decided that an assignment should be done individually, students would try to persuade the teacher to change it into a group assignment. Students were often able to make this happen as many teachers felt that they were overloaded with work, and it was less work to mark a group assignment than an individual assignment. The cheating problem entailed in group work was the fact that not all members of the group took part equally in the work. The active members did not know how to make the passive students take a role; the teachers also had no idea how to determine which students were working and which ones were not.

Regarding the motivation to cheat, I found that teachers from both schools were under certain pressures to perform. Teachers in SMA Semarang had the pressure of maintaining the prestige of their High Achieving school, their prestige as part of the High Achieving school, their prestige as High Achieving teachers, and the prestige of their private after-hours tuition business vis-à-vis additional income. Teachers in SMA
Bandung had the pressure of ensuring that the evaluation of their school and their teaching performance was going according to their local leaders’ ambitions.

As for the second similarity, the ‘labels’ that students give to others, I would argue that students have been stigmatising their classmates. Parker’s (2016b) article on widows and divorcees provides an example of how stigmatisation works in Indonesian society. There are some general points on stigmatisation from her work that I found applicable to the context of academic cheating in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. First, she mentioned ‘labelling’ and ‘stereotyping’ to be among the elements of stigmatisation. As I have indicated before, labelling took place in both schools. Students of SMA Semarang labelled classmates who failed to show that they were learning or that they understood when cheating homework as a ‘tukang contek’ (i.e. ‘copier’ or ‘plagiarist’). Students of SMA Bandung labelled classmates who refused to share their works, either homework or exam answers, as ‘smart but arrogant’ or ‘smart student suddenly becoming deaf during exams’. The different types of students being labelled in the two schools bring me to the second point that I noticed from Parker’s (2016b, p. 8) article:

[S]tigmatisation works when the dominant who stigmatisate the minority, stereotype them in ways that other dominant people find useful and that hurt the minority. Stigmatisation is an exercise of power, and the nature of stigmatisation depends upon the socio-cultural context.

Because of the pervasiveness of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia, students who reject cheating are atypical. In other words, they are the minority, and they are prone to stigmatisation. As you would expect, students who approve academic cheating are more dominant. This particular nature of stigmatisation is relevant for the context of SMA Bandung, but not for SMA Semarang. There were two minorities in SMA Semarang. The first should be obvious: students who opposed cheating. The other is students who are pro-cheating but failed to show strong academic performance. The two minorities received different treatment from the dominant (i.e. those who are pro-academic cheating and are strong students). In the academically competitive environment of SMA Semarang, the former – those who oppose cheating and are usually the smartest of the smart (high cultural capital) – maintain respect
from their classmates. The latter minority – perceived to be academically weak – is more prone to stigmatisation. So, as Parker (2016b) mentioned, the socio-cultural context determines the nature of stigmatisation.

Table 5.1. Stigmatisation of pro- and contra-cheating students in both schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ stance on cheating</th>
<th>SMA Semarang</th>
<th>Risk to be stigmatized</th>
<th>SMA Bandung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academically strong</td>
<td>Academically weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>I’m ‘learning’</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I’m ‘not learning’</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contra</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contra</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In SMA Semarang, students who are both pro-cheating and academically weak belong to the out-group. Some of them are perceived to have only been admitted to the school because of their influential parents. They often ended up with the social identity of an ‘anak nakal dan kaya’, which more or less translates to ‘spoiled brat’. In SMA Bandung, students who are both contra-cheating and academically strong belong to the out-group. They were often considered as ‘nerds’ and were often seen only with a small number of student friends (weak social capital).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an explanation that helps us to understand the different academic cheating patterns in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. Comparing three elements – ‘competitiveness’, ‘motivations’, and ‘groups’ – in each school, and analysing them using Bourdieu’s theories, it became apparent that the two schools’ different academic status was a significant factor in explaining the difference. In SMA Semarang, a high achieving school, the competition was more for cultural capital. When collaborating or copying in doing their homework, students tried to show to their classmates that they comprehended it. To be perceived by classmates as having ‘understood’ helps them to maintain their cultural capital as smart and capable students. The familial habitus that caused the pervasiveness of academic cheating in SMA Semarang focused on academic achievements. Although parents would argue that they sent their child(ren) to school for knowledge and not for the prestige of a
high ranking, in reality, most parents showed great concern about where their child(ren) ranked at the end of the term. In SMA Bandung, a non-high achieving school, the competition was more for social capital. When doing homework at school, some students were willing to offer their service to finish their classmates’ work or their work for others to copy. Classmates characterised them as helpful students, giving them more opportunities to get lots of friends, building stronger social capital. The familial habitus that caused the pervasiveness of academic cheating in SMA Bandung was more about not causing a commotion. Although parents knew that some of their child(ren)’s teachers were selling grades, they kept silent. Parents were not willing to risk their child(ren)’s wellbeing at school over doing the right thing.

In this chapter, I also highlighted two similarities in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. The first similarity is related to teachers’ involvement in the discourse of academic cheating. I argue that although the pattern was different, academic cheating in both schools was partly caused by the habitus of the teachers who mainly appreciate obedience over other possible values. In addition, I noticed that teachers in both schools had to deal with certain external pressures that made them cheat. These pressures included defending the school’s reputation for academic excellence, the expectations of parents that their children would gain entrance to the top public universities, and many others. As for the second similarity, I found that students in both schools were stigmatising others who did not belong to their dominant group. In SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung, the ‘pro-cheating and academically weak’ minority, and the ‘contra-cheating and academically strong’ minority, respectively, were being stigmatised by the dominant group, which supported cheating.

In elaborating these differences and similarities, I found that students raised the issue of ‘friendship’ many times. In the following chapter, I will explore how the dynamic of social relations between the students caused the pervasiveness of academic cheating in both schools. Using Bourdieu’s theories, I will show how the value of friendship plays a significant role in influencing students’ cheating behaviour.
Chapter Six
The social relations of academic cheating

Introduction

In the discussions that I had with participants, I noticed how often they brought up the word ‘teman’ (i.e. friends).\(^{63}\) It seemed that students considered academic cheating practices as part of the dynamic of their social life with their friends at school. It also appeared that friends had a major influence on students’ cheating behaviour. Previous studies on academic cheating have long suggested that the attitudes of friends significantly influenced students’ decision to cheat in their academic work (McCabe & Trevino, 1993 & 1997).\(^{64}\) In this chapter, I explore students’ academic cheating practices in the context of their social relations. Specifically, my aim is to understand how students in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung interpret friendship and how they use its moralities to rationalise the acceptability of academic cheating practices in their environment, contributing to the pervasiveness of the problem.

Teman (friends)

Shiraishi (1997) argues that in a classroom, children’s relationship with their family are temporarily disconnected. In the classroom, students are limited to two kinds of relationships: hierarchically with their teachers (hence the use of pak (father/sir) and bu (mother/mam)), and horizontally with their classmates. Students’ horizontal relationships are connected by the word teman or friends. Let me start with an anecdote to shed some light on the words.

During the time I am writing this chapter, my daughter is currently in her fourth year of studying in an Australian primary school close to where we live in Perth, Australia. One day, after school, my wife asked my daughter whether a boy she shares a table with had returned to school after he had been absent for a couple of days: “Did your friend [name of the boy] come to school today?” This was how my daughter answered her

\(^{63}\) Other words for ‘friend’ like kawan, sahabat, rekan, etc. were rarely used by my participants.

\(^{64}\) Beside friends, McCabe and Trevino also mentioned societal and school norms as well as teachers’ attitudes.
mom’s question: “He came. But [name of the boy] is not my friend. He is my classmate. My friends are [mentioning the name of two girls that we knew] because I play with them at school”. My wife and I, for a moment, did not understand her answer. There is definitely a kind of cultural mismatch between how the Indonesians (us as parents) and the Australians (my daughter in her school) are using the word ‘friends’ or ‘teman’.

The answer to the mismatch puzzle can be drawn from Parker’s (2016a) explanation about the word ‘friend’ in Indonesian society, especially about how teachers and students in Indonesian schools use the word:

['Friend’ can] gloss a very large catchment group—people who are actually related in a very shallow way. For instance, school teachers always assume that all the students in the class are “friends”: a student will be directed to bring along his or her friends – and that means everyone. I have been in classrooms of 60 students where everyone is considered a “friend”, and they would be shocked to know that it is typical in Australian schools to only have a small group of friends within any one class (Parker, 2016a, p. 98).

I could easily relate Parker’s explanation to the context of SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang. All students who are in the same class and all students who are in the same year, are all a big group of – in Parker’s word, ‘shallow’ – friends or teman. The only way I could tell whether two (or more) students are ‘close’ friends was by paying attention to how much time they spent together at school and if they continued outside school. An alternative way that helped me to identify the ‘close’ friends, as I will discuss later in this chapter, is when students literally told me about their ‘teman baik’ or ‘good friends’. Nevertheless, teman or friends, whether they belong to a close or a shallow category, constitute an important part of social capital for students.
As long as we are together, we will be fine

The need to have a group

In secondary schools, there is more than learning. This is a period when young people start to develop concerns on their lifestyles, status, and friends (White & Margiyatin, 2016). Interviewing university students in Indonesia, Robinson (2016) discovered that at school, students built strong friendships that could last even after they graduated and lived in different cities for the pursuit of higher education. Friendship is crucial in supporting young people to get through their transition to adulthood (Parker, 2016a). I did see signs of this relationship-building process in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. Throughout my period of observation, I noticed how students in both schools habitually showed a strong attachment to their peers. It was as if students were meant to use and spend most of their time at schools in groups, whether it was a small group of friends who shared a special and close relationship or a big group of classmates who simply shared a classroom. Some students recognise their small group of friends as “a close-knit geng” that was “started because they were sitting close to each other” and because they had a lot in common (White & Margiyatin, 2016, p. 63).

During lessons, whenever a teacher asked a question, students had a tendency to answer it together. Even if their teacher addressed the question to a specific student, other students would also try to answer, either to help this very friend or to simply take part in the activity. During recesses, students went to the canteen in crowds. Not only did they share a table or a bench there, they also often shared their food and drink. A bag of crackers, a bowl of meatball noodles, and three glasses of fruit juice was a feast for five or six students. When students need to go for a toilet break, they mostly went in pairs and sometimes in groups. During my period of observation, I only witnessed two teachers clearly ask their students not to go to the toilet in pairs.

I believe that the habit of doing things in a group was one of the reasons why many students in both schools were lacking in self-confidence when they had to do their academic work individually. These two cases represent what I often saw in classrooms:
Students uttered the Japanese words at the same time. They said them loudly, almost like screaming. Sometimes Bu Upik found it hard to distinguish which students said the words correctly and which ones were incorrect. For a couple of minutes the class was so alive. But when Bu Upik asked students to repeat the words individually, they seemed nervous and lost their confidence. Students were not as enthusiastic as when they did it together (Fieldnote, SMA Semarang).

When the teacher asked Maya to write her answer on the whiteboard, Maya looked doubtful. She walked to the front of the class really slowly while asking several of her classmates if her answer was similar to theirs. Other students were no different; they also looked uncertain (Fieldnote, SMA Bandung).

Students rejected my opinion that grouping had hindered the development of their self-confidence. Students argued that by grouping, they could perform better in their study. Alisa (SMA Bandung) overcame her fear of answering incorrectly by comparing her work to that of other students. Defara (SMA Bandung) believed that working in a group reduced her anxiety about assignment deadlines, as there would be other students who could remind her. Debora (SMA Bandung) preferred group to individual work because she could have other students address the class, as she never felt comfortable being under the spotlight. Ironically, I saw in their arguments that these students actually touched on learning opportunities that they had missed, such as how to learn from their mistakes, how to manage time, and how to develop presentation skills.

Students’ inclination for grouping can be further identified from how most of them were rarely seen alone. It was hard for students not to be part of what others were doing and not to be present where their friends gathered around. It appeared that students did not want to suffer from FOMO. The several computer-based exam simulations for year 12 students that took place in SMA Bandung provide a clear

---

65 Abbreviation of ‘fear of missing out’. Oxford English Dictionary defines FOMO as: anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fomo).
illustration of this matter. When some students started to leave the exam room, other students would rush to finish their simulation. They answered the multiple-choice questions randomly. As I talked to some of them outside the exam room, students told me that when they saw their classmates leaving the room, they felt a kind of pressure that forced them to rush and finish the simulation as soon as possible. When I asked why they would ditch the simulation when it could help them to be better prepared for the National Exam, students said that they did not really consider that factor. Students preferred to be with their friends at the canteen, at the basketball court, or anywhere else, but not be ‘alone’ in the computer room. Parker (1992a) also notices this collectivism habit of Indonesian students. In her study on citizenship that involved several primary schools in Bali, Indonesia, she observed how children, often in a group of four or five, usually shared a textbook. When studying (either at school or at home) and doing extracurricular activities (such as Scouts), students also did it in groups.

Students indicated that to have a group, or to belong to a group, is almost a necessity when they were at school. Sisil (SMA Bandung) said she did not mind if she had to go to places like a mall, a shopping centre, or a restaurant all by herself. But once Sisil entered her school, she felt the urgency of finding a group (of friends) who could make her feel safe and comfortable. But what kind of risks did students have to encounter that they even need ‘safety’? Fasha (SMA Bandung) explained to me:

I used to go to the canteen alone because sometimes I like to do things all by myself. But now I do not want to do that [going alone] anymore. Only because I often went to the canteen alone, students from other classes gossiped about me. They said that my classmates shunned me or that I am an arrogant person. Students [from other classes] think that I am weird.

One of the risks that applied to students who did not have a group or were rarely seen to be with a group was that they were more likely to be talked about behind their

---

66 I also observed several computer-based exam simulations in SMA Semarang. However, in Semarang all students stayed in the exam room until the simulation time ended. This could be related to the high academic achieving culture of the school (see Chapter Five).
So it turned out that to have friends, or, more practically, to be seen with friends, when going to the canteen, toilet, or the library has more implications than just to have a companion when students needed to go to places around the school. It also protected students from being labelled as ‘ anak aneh ’ ( i.e. a weirdo), as ‘ sombong ’ ( i.e. arrogant), and many other epithets. In a sense, students could avoid the risk of becoming an object of bullying if they had enough allies on their side. Students will not prey on others who have their group or allies to protect them.

An example of a situation that Sisil mentioned as ‘when students were in need of comfort’ would be when students experienced difficulties in understanding a lesson or in understanding a teacher’s explanations. As I noted in one of my classroom observations:

Students who sat close to me looked confused. They asked each other if they understood what the teacher had been explaining. Some said ‘no’, some shook their head to indicate ‘no’, and some others could only grin. They obviously found it difficult to understand the lesson. When the teacher had done writing on the board, he asked the students if they had understood his explanation. Just like a choir, all students said ‘YES’ in a loud and convincing tone (Fieldnotes, SMA Semarang).

Students’ way of comforting each other when they had to deal with learning problems was by playing with their perception. Instead of attending to the negative aspect ( i.e. their learning difficulty), students were interested in finding the silver lining of their problem: they found it in the fact that almost all of their classmates also did not understand the materials or the explanations. Students reassured themselves that, ‘We all realise that the material is difficult,’ or ‘We all realise that the explanation is confusing’, so the common agreement could be ‘It is understandable if we fail to comprehend’.

Mulder (1994, p. 71) identifies the following challenge of growing up in Indonesia ( i.e. in a Javanese environment): “People mutually control each other, poking their noses into others’ affairs... It is the eyes and ears, the opinions of others that need to be managed... they can cause loss of face, shame...”
The comfort that students managed to create has its own risk. On a daily basis, students let some lesson materials slowly slip away as their main concern was to have the boring session end quickly. Since they had decided not to focus on the issue, their learning problem remained. Only some students who were lucky enough to go to private after-hours tuition would actually have another chance to re-learn the lesson material, although there was no guarantee that students would understand it even from that position of privilege. What I believe to be more problematic from this habit is how the students were restraining themselves from being critical of their situation. As they lived in their ‘comfort zone’, they did not even care about finding a solution to their learning problem. For instance, although they were confused by the teachers’ explanation, they would hardly ever ask their teachers to explain the material using a different method or at least to repeat the explanation one more time. I would argue that students’ tendency to be passive in responding to teachers’ explanations was another reason why the rote-learning model keeps existing as one of the characteristics of Indonesia education system despite many efforts to change it.68

Other examples of how students felt content if their ‘problem’ was shared equally among the members of the class could be seen from their reaction to low grades and their attitudes to unfinished homework. At first, students would feel anxious when they received poor marks. However, they would have a sudden switch of feeling, and feel relaxed, as soon as they knew that their friends had also received low grades. Students also looked nervous when they had not done their homework. However, once they knew that others had also not done it, students loosened up. The bond that students established and the safe and comfortable feeling that they sought from their peers could be identified as a practice of collectivism.

Collectivism

Various authors have noted the propensity of Indonesians to do things collectively, rather than individually, and various reasons have been adduced. For example, van der

68 Some efforts by the Indonesian Ministry of Education were delivered under the criticism and the funding scheme of the World Bank. See this report as an example: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080063795/Transforming_Indonesia_teaching_force.pdf
Kroef (1953) argues that the nature of collectivism in Indonesian society can be explained from social-psychological, cultural, and social perspectives. Particularly on the social-psychological factor, van der Kroef highlights how extreme permissiveness in Indonesian early childhood has resulted in children’s instability:

The general absence of formal discipline leads to a high degree of psychological instability... The collective pattern of behaviour provides a haven in need, in which the individual almost gladly submerges himself. Eagerly, even desperately, some form of cohesion is sought, and it is found in the severely communal form of existence (van der Kroef, 1953, p.196).

Van der Kroef believes that the combination of children’s insecurity and the communal characteristic of Indonesian society have made children develop collectivism as one of their principles. Among the signs of the children’s collectivist pattern, according to van der Kroef, is how they constantly try not to be different and immerse themselves in a particular group. I regularly witnessed such signs during the period of my observation in the two schools. As I have mentioned before, most students do almost all of their activities in groups, even for something as private as going to the toilet.

Also using a psychological approach in their study of the Balinese – one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia – is Bateson & Mead (1942). They suggest that Balinese children immerse in collectivism because of fear. The children mainly develop this internal fear from the relationship that they had with their mother. For instance, when the children were old enough to wander alone, the mother would scream and mention scare symbols (e.g. fire, faeces, tiger, and white man) as a possible sanction if the children misbehaved, for instance, meddling with other people’s belongings or playing with the cooking on the fire.

Another example, Shiraishi (1997) suggests that Indonesians have unique human relationships based on the idea of family. She believes that Indonesian children specifically understand the importance of “learn[ing] how to be good members of their immediate families and their ‘family’ networks”, such as the relatives, neighbours, and friends (Shiraishi, 1997, p. 32). By becoming part of a ‘family’, children will have
warmth and security when they need to overcome powerlessness and vulnerability. Indonesians’ effort in maintaining collectiveness in their family can be seen from their use of a car:

“...I found myself in the white Honda with the two brothers, Eko and Endi, their old mother, and their wives... Their normally vivacious and shrewd mother was seated with her mouth tightly shut and her body fastened to the seat as if she had turned into an inanimate object...” (Shiraishi, 1997, p. 23).

As Shirashi experienced herself during her stay in Jakarta, Indonesians would rather go to places as a group (of family) rather than individually. A family that she made friends with would try very hard to travel together, even if it meant they must squeeze themselves into a car.

Beside cars, Shiraishi (1997) also considers classrooms in schools in Indonesia as a communal space where collectivism emerges. She made her point using the example of how students use their classmate’s or friend’s stationery. A student’s toy-like pencil-case would travel around the class so other students could have the chance to play with it. A student’s plastic ruler would freely circulate from one student to another so that those who needed it could work on their assignments. No one actually asked the owner of the stationery if they could borrow the items. In the communal space of a classroom, private ownership seems blurred.

In further examples, Mulder (1994) and Parker (1992b) found that the principle of collectivism is actually embedded in the country’s school curriculum. The 1975 school curriculum, particularly in the subject Pendidikan Moral Pancasila (PMP) or Pancasila Moral Education, promoted the subordination of individual self-interest to the community’s and the country’s common good or kepentingan bersama. “If the common good is attained, so also are all individual goals” (Mulder, 1994, p. 47). Textbooks convince students that cooperation is good and that common interest should be above self-interest (Parker, 1992b). In practice, while a good student does her or his schoolwork, a better student helps their disadvantaged classmates with their schoolwork.
As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, all classmates in schools in Indonesia are all friends. Classmates then, are the expansion of children’s ‘family’ network when they are at school. The same rule applies: students can establish their presence and identity among their group of friends if they become good members. Thus, although each of them comes to school as a powerless and vulnerable individual student with a unique background, they find themselves as safe and powerful members of a collective once they are among their friends.

The popular kids

The dynamics of collectivism in schools are not only about whether and how students are part of the in-group or the out-group, and how cheating helps students improve or maintain their status in the in-group. It is also about two other matters that stand out in relation to grouping: the existence of the ‘popular’ students and the in-crowd, and the power relations between the students.

In both schools, I noticed that students tend to sit close to the other members of their group. Students who become members of a group usually have one thing in common. I have identified some commonalities shared by some of the groups: a group of quiet students (observed in both SMA); a group of all-boys-who-are-promising-athletes (SMA Bandung); an all-girl group of Christian students (SMA Semarang); a group of extracurricular-activist students (both SMA); and an all-girl group of Korean-pop-culture-fans (both SMA). It is understandable if students want to group with classmates that they consider ‘similar’. Bourdieu (1985, p. 726) believes that the carefully constructed similarity could be the basis of a more stable and durable group:

[G]roupings grounded in the structure of the space constructed in terms of capital distribution are more likely to be stable and durable, while other forms of grouping are always threatened by the splits and oppositions linked to distances in social space. To speak of a social space means that one cannot group just anyone with anyone while ignoring the fundamental differences, particularly economic and cultural ones.
The similarity (e.g. hobby, personality, or passion) that students had is their cultural capital. When students can draw on their cultural capital to better understand each other, to value each other, and to feel comfortable with one another, they create their group: they gain social capital.

Generally, it was not easy for a student who had settled in a specific group to move to another group. However, that is not the case for a few students who were perceived by other students as populer or popular. In her work on the Class of 1958 of the Weequahic High School in New Jersey, America, pioneering anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner (2003, p. 99) suggests several general traits of popular students:

[U]sually students with more capital – who have parents with more money or more education, or some other sort of sophisticated background... They tend to be the kids who are widely liked and/or admired (at least within certain circles), who generally have good (or good-enough) grades, and who occupy most of the class offices and seats on the student council.

In my study, the ‘popular’ students were those who could easily hang out with everyone in the class (including with me). Their classmates, reciprocally, were happy if those students would hang out with them. Unless the classroom teacher had asked students to change their seating arrangements (e.g. some teachers asked their students to rotate every week), the popular students would regularly sit in one of the seats located half-way to the back of the room, as if those spots were meant for them.

A particular characteristic shared by many of the popular students is their possession of economic capital. Bourdieu (1977) explains that economic capital alone is not enough to define someone’s social status. However, economic capital can determine someone’s social circle (Ortner, 2003) and influence someone’s movement in social fields (Bourdieu, 1977). One of the reasons why many of the popular students in both schools were confident about moving between groups was their high accumulation of economic capital.

69 Other than populer, two other words that I notice from my participants when they indicate popular students are terkenal (i.e. the student has many friends or others know who the student is) and fames (i.e. pronouncing ‘famous’).
Identifying students with economic capital was tricky but do-able. I did it by observing the consumer goods that students have to determine their level of wealth (Ortner, 2003). Some of my earliest attempts were unsuccessful. I could not tell from their attire, since all students were dressed in similar uniforms. I could not allocate enough time to regularly observe the kind of vehicles that students used to go to and from school for the sake of appraising their level of family wealth. Nilan et al. (2016) suggest father’s occupation as one of the variables to indicate the socio-economic status of Indonesian youth, so I thought about collecting information on parents’ occupations. But I was never really able to ask a lot of students about this, and both schools did not want to share this data with me since it was considered confidential. Rather desperately, I thought about collecting information about how much pocket-money students have every day. But I was not sure how intrusive this would be for my participants. I suppose if I knew which bags or shoes were expensive and which ones were not, I could have used those items as indicators. Unfortunately, I do not have the necessary cultural capital for doing that!

I was lucky that nowadays students have a particular consumer good that I felt I could appraise to differentiate their wealth: their smartphones. A survey by the Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia Project (AAI) in 2007 suggests that smartphones, along with TV and DVD viewing, is a common modern consumer culture for high school students in Indonesia (Nilan et al., 2016; Robinson, 2016). Just as in many other high schools in the AAI survey, smartphones have become a sort of primary need for students in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang. I hardly encountered any students who do not have a smartphone in those two high schools.

A study by White & Margiyatin (2016) reveals that Indonesian teenagers consider smartphones a representation of a person’s lifestyle and that it subtly influences their

---

70 Ortner observes clothes (i.e. cashmere sweaters) for girls and cars for boys.
71 The survey said ‘mobile phone’ instead of ‘smartphone’, but I believe that does not change the content that I want to express.
lives. In their quite recent observation on the use of smartphones by Indonesian teenagers (2014), they write:

Teenagers are nearly all in possession of advanced smartphones and active in social media, preferring Facebook to Twitter because it can be used to share photos... Sharing photos and making new friends are the main uses. When teenagers meet, it’s an occasion to show off phones and motorbikes... now young people differentiate between high-status models (especially the popular Samsung Galaxy), lower-status but still desirable Chinese brands like Lenovo, Advance and Cross, and poor-quality Chinese brands like MITO (White & Margiyatin, 2016, p. 62)

Similar to the observations of White & Margiyatin, classrooms in both SMA were like a display rack of students’ smartphones and their economic status. The more high-end a student’s smartphone, the higher the economic status that the student has. The most famous Chinese brands were OPPO and Xiaomi. Samsung still exists, but I do not think they were the most desirable smartphone any longer. Students consider iPhone as the coolest, most high-end, and most expensive brand. Many of them wanted to have an iPhone. Some students had older versions of iPhones, but it was the popular students who owned the latest version. Students believe that the iPhone produces the best quality photos and videos. Whenever the popular students take a selfie or self-portrait, their classmates get excited just to be in it. The iPhone in the context of popular students is evidence of how economic capital can be converted into social capital and cultural capital. The iPhone facilitates the engagement of the popular students and so facilitates the accumulation of social capital. The iPhone as cultural capital distinguishes between the popular students and the rest of the class.

In SMA Semarang, the popular students actively participated in extracurricular activities and/or the student council (OSIS). While they could move freely from one group to another, their closest affiliates were other students who had a similar commitment to the extracurricular activities and student council. In SMA Semarang, those friendly and outgoing students formed the in-crowd. In SMA Bandung, some of the popular students were talented singers, talented dancers, and promising athletes.

---

72 In their study they used the terms ‘smartphone’ and ‘mobile phone’ interchangeably.
As in SMA Semarang, I could quickly identify them from their iPhones. Because of their busy schedules, they needed to rehearse, to practise, to perform, or to compete, so these popular students were rarely in their classroom. (They were absent with permission from the school.) Despite their stardom, the popular, talented students of SMA Bandung could only be part of the in-crowd if they had a good relationship with the ‘real’ in-crowd: several boys who routinely sat at one of the back corners of the classrooms.

The in-crowd boys of SMA Bandung have a lot in common with a type of student that Ortner (2003) categorises as the hoods, the smokers, or the burnouts. She describes them as coming from a more deprived or disadvantaged class background, and having wild personalities. They exhibited “bad behavior, bad dress, and bad attitudes” (Ortner, 2003, p. 101). When joking or playing around, the in-crowd boys of SMA Bandung often incorporate yelling, and sometimes friendly punching and grappling. They gave nicknames to teachers that they do not like. They also shared dirty jokes. Every time teachers did an inspection to check students’ uniform and appearance, it was these boys who were the main target. The in-crowd boys did not seem interested in lessons and assignments. They seemed to be happiest when their teacher was absent and they got to play – most of the time, their game of choice was poker. They ignored the presence of practice teachers, who often came to replace the absent teachers, and opted to sleep or to chat rather than to pay attention. After school, the in-crowd boys rode their motorcycles to a nearby warung (a small family owned convenience store) or one of the big convenience store chains that offer free Wi-Fi services (e.g. 7-Eleven), where they spent their time nongkrong (hanging out). For one to two hours and sometimes more, these students would chat about random topics, often while smoking.

In Chapter Five, I mentioned several female students of SMA Bandung who were willing to do their male classmates’ homework. To be more specific, those male classmates were the in-crowd boys. Although the female students said to me that they did it because the in-crowd boys were their friends, and despite the fact that I, indeed, never witnessed the in-crowd boys threatening them, I would argue that there was an
issue of power relations between the male and female students. The corner where the in-crowd boys sat was like their private sanctuary. Several male classmates would come to this corner, joining the in-crowd when they were copying homework, playing poker, or hanging out. Other male classmates would sometimes come and talk, but just standing – they never seemed comfortable enough to sit down and hang out. I do not think that most female students would even think to hang out at the in-crowd’s sanctuary. An exception should be made for the female students who often ‘helped’ the in-crowd boys with assignments. When the in-crowd needed a person or two to play poker, they even allowed these female students to ‘help’ them make up their numbers. The following pyramid diagram should give a visual explanation of the friendship hierarchy that the in-crowd had with their classmates:

Figure 6.1. The in-crowd boys’ friendship pyramid (SMA Bandung)

As previously said, the in-crowd boys had their routines when hanging out and playing around in class. Sometimes they yelled to each other, shared dirty jokes, and sometimes it involved ‘friendly’ punching and wrestling. Special or close male classmates did not mind participating in the in-crowd’s routine, granting them a spot in the top of the friendship pyramid. Other male classmates, on the other hand, could not be on the top because they were uncomfortable with the in-crowd’s playfulness. The in-crowd boys never asked them to do their homework.
I would argue that in some classrooms, the pyramid could simply consist of three sections: special male classmates, male classmates in general, and female classmates in general. However, in some other classrooms, the in-crowd boys were able to persuade a few female students to help them (e.g. writing homework and, yes, playing poker) for the reward of an extra stratum in the pyramid between the male students. I guess the female students did not mind ‘helping’ if that would, in return, help them to be part of the in-crowd, who were the central power in the classroom. But I also think that those helpful female students were actually intimidated by the power that the in-crowd boys had. I often notice how they did not say anything or show any displeasure when the in-crowd boys addressed sexual jokes to them.

**Academic cheating as symbolic capital**

*Social acceptance*

On many occasions, students showed me the important role of academic cheating for the purpose of their inclusion in peer groups and to maintain their position in them. An example of the close association between students’ desire to be included in groups and academic cheating was pointed out to me by Sisil (SMA Bandung) in one of our back-of-the-classroom interactions during the absence of a teacher:

> My sister challenged me not to cheat in exams, but I did not accept it. I never want to be like her. You see, my sister is an introvert. If she does not cheat, that is not a big deal. She does not have many friends anyway.

Sisil presented a story in which a decision not to participate in cheating could be risky. She believed that cheating in exams, and most likely in other academic work, is a must. It is a way to make sure that she always has friends. Cheating for Sisil was not an option; it was a necessity.

Hera (SMA Semarang) was one among a few students who have stopped cheating in their academic work. She revealed that the loss of friends was the main challenge that she had to deal with when she gradually quit cheating. In addition to that, Hera had to deal with acts of bullying from her classmates. Once in a while, they would tease her
by reading aloud the leaked exam materials that they had obtained so that she could hear them and be tempted. Hera, however, was able to maintain her relationships with some of her friends as she could create capital of her own. Hera explained to her friends that although she does not want to cheat, she welcomes anyone who wants to learn from her. She would not let anyone borrow her homework, but she was willing to guide them when they were working on it. I need to mention that she was one of the top three academic achievers among students in her cohort. In addition, she had won several science competitions at the national level. According to Ortner (2003, p. 125), students with “various successes put less weight on friendship as contributing to their being happy or unhappy in school.” Thus, there is the strong possibility that Hera could overcome the loss of friends because of her exceptional academic ability.

So how could a decision to cheat or not to cheat be so powerful? How could cheating behaviours determine whether a student could have friends or not? And why would students let their friendship circle be defined by academic cheating? To answer the questions, I found Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic capital applicable and useful.

I would argue that the answer as to how academic cheating could be so powerful is because it has become a source of symbolic capital. Some examples of symbolic capital would be prestasi (achievement), reputation, and status. Bourdieu (1977, p. 195) defines symbolic capital as “the unrecognisable, and hence socially recognisable, form of the other kinds of capital”. So as symbolic capital, academic cheating is tacit. It is considered powerful by individuals who are involved in it, but is not being expressed openly because essentially, they feel that there is no need to talk about it. For them, cheating goes without saying, there is no need to make it explicit – it is the natural way to act. It is safe to say that naturalness is academic cheating’s power. My part in this study was trying to reveal the unspoken, showing the reason why students, teachers, and parents accept academic cheating as natural.

*How students accept academic cheating: All of us are doing it*

In my early days in SMA Bandung, Dayat told me that it was not necessary for me to know who among the students are cheating and who are not. He believed that all
students will eventually cheat in their academic work, because there is something worth pursuing for everyone. That something could be good grades, a pass from a lesson, or a pass from a certain level. Dayat admitted that he cheats in his academic work, while pointing out that a lot of his classmates did the same thing. For many students like Dayat, academic cheating is natural because they and all of their classmates, are doing it.

As for Debora (SMA Bandung), either when she was in primary school, junior secondary, and, of course, right now in senior secondary school, she said that there were always classmates who came in the morning and asked: “Can I see [and copy] your assignment?”. Thus, Debora said to me, “Why would I not want to do it too?” And it was not only Debora who could not resist the temptation of cheating when other students were doing it. Jeremy (SMA Bandung) said to me: “I started to cheat because I was curious. My classmates seemed to enjoy cheating. [After I tried it] I did think it was enjoyable”.

A common pattern from the three students was how they were driven to cheat by the fact that everyone in their class cheat. With the habitus of cheating and school as a field interacting in these ways, cheating was perceived as a normal practice rather than problematic. The habitus of cheating in academic work seemed to align well with the conditions in school, or in Bourdieu’s words: it is like a fish in water (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014).

How the adults accept academic cheating: It is a learning process

The indication of the social acceptance of academic cheating did not come exclusively from students, but also from teachers and parents. Bu Caris (teacher, SMA Bandung), for instance, believed that academic cheating “definitely exists” and “definitely happens” at school. No schools are free from academic cheating practices. In fact, as she told me, some teachers let their students cheat because that is how they show their kasih sayang (love) to the students. After all, as Bu Caris argued, society is being

---

73 Kasih sayang is parents’ unconditional giving to children. It is highly represented in Indonesian literary works (Shiraishi, 1997). By saying that she lets her students cheat because she loves them, I believe Bu Caris was trying to fulfil her motherhood role.
permissive to the problem of academic cheating. So why would she marginalise her students from the common practice? Bu Caris was not sharing these arguments in a private interview session with me. Rather, she delivered it in front of a class, to me as well as to all of her students. Interestingly, Bu Caris even tried to defend her students’ habits by challenging the exogenous morality system (I will explain this in detail later under the subheading of ‘Schema two: I’m just being helpful – moralities in conflict’). Referring to the most common Indonesian term for academic cheating, which is ‘menyontek’ or ‘to copy’, Bu Caris argued that copying should be considered as one of the earliest steps of a learning process after ‘seeing’, ‘hearing’, and ‘feeling’. Only after people introduced ideas such as ‘copyright’ or ‘plagiarism’ did copying start to be associated with negative meanings and considered to be wrong. If people just focused on how copying could create positive results, she believed there would be less stigma. To back up her argument, Bu Caris asked her students and me to reflect on how the Korean Pop culture or K-Pop could reach its global fame when they had actually started their journey by imitating Japanese Pop culture or J-Pop.

In a similar way to that of Bu Caris, Pak Edi (parent, SMA Bandung), played with the word ‘menyontek’ or ‘to copy’, to argue how Japan’s technology could be as advanced as that of the U.S. only because initially they sent their scientists to copy the U.S.’s technology. He added how Samsung at the start was pretty much copying the iPhone, but now the two brands are competitors. As long as it results in the perfecting, or improvement of the initial work, Pak Edi argued, ‘menyontek’ can and should be allowed.

From Bu Caris and Pak Edi, I learned that teachers and parents displayed a relatively tolerant attitude toward cheating. In her observation on Indonesian society, Shiraishi (1997, p. 105) interprets tolerance as:

[A] way of giving people what they want without changing or challenging the order, its laws, regulations, or systems that actually prevent them from getting what they want. Those who are tolerated submit themselves personally to the one who tolerates their acts and disowns, in conspiratorial silence, the order and regulations which remain intact on paper.
Bu Caris and Pak Edi did not think that their students and children violated the social order. They believe that *menyontek* is proportional to what society has been doing. People, countries, cultures - they all copy one another. The tolerant attitude is what Shiraishi (1997, p. 106) then calls a “gift”, commonly given by the boss (in this case teacher or parent) to subordinates (in this case student or child).

*How the adults accept academic cheating: We know what’s best*

Students realised that some of their teachers gave them the ‘gift’ of letting them cheat, or pretending to be unaware when students cheated in their academic work. In discussing this matter with me, students like Jeremy, Tarra, Safana, and Khansa (SMA Bandung) argued that the reason was that teachers had done the same thing when they were students. Much like themselves, teachers believe that their students will eventually stop cheating when they, for instance, go to university or get a job. Commenting on this ‘cycle of cheaters’, Defara, Debora, and Alisa (SMA Bandung) labelled it as a ‘tradition’. In other words, they suggest that school has become a place of reproduction of academic cheaters. Some other students argued that the reason that teachers would let them cheat was because otherwise their workload would increase, as they would have to organise another exam, create an extra assignment, or do more grading: “When students must take remedial classes [for not getting the required grades], it means more work for teachers. So teachers let us cheat” (Andaru, SMA Bandung); “It is easy for teachers to upgrade students’ score to 8 if students cheated and received 7.9. If students do not cheat and receive 6, it means teachers must come up with an additional assignment” (Reza, SMA Semarang). Another reason that students shared with me is that teachers gave the ‘gift’ for the sake of their own prestige as a ‘competent’ and ‘qualified’ employee (Reza, SMA Semarang).

Apart from those three reasons, there is another motive that not only explains why teachers let their students cheat, but also why parents excuse their child(ren). That particular reason is that adults know what’s ‘best’ for adolescents. Hanafi (student, SMA Semarang) literally said this to me when I asked his opinion as to why his teachers let him and his friends cheat. Parents also believe they know what’s best for their
children. Bu Ainun (teacher, SMA Bandung) told me that once she had caught a student, who she knew to be smart and obedient, cheating, using a cheat sheet in an exam. The cheat sheet was basically a leak of exam materials. When she questioned the student as to why he would do such a thing, the student told Bu Ainun that his mom had asked him to do it. When the student was still in junior secondary school, apparently he had decided not to contribute (by chipping in) when his classmates decided to buy leaked exam materials. His decision proved to be costly for him. Because of the leaked materials, many of his friends received high scores, leaving him as the only student with a low score. With his low score, the student could only be admitted to SMA Bandung, which in his mom’s opinion was not one of the city’s prestigious high schools. The student’s mom basically did not want him to experience that again. Thus, he was encouraged by his mom to do what is best for his future (read: to be admitted to a public university), which was to get the leaked exam materials.

Indonesian children are accustomed to their parents making decisions for them (Shiraishi, 1997). Since parents are their source of nurture and protection, Indonesian children show their gratitude by accommodating their parents’ decisions. They may not agree with their parents’ decision (e.g. parents decided that their children would ‘choose’ the natural sciences study path while the children wanted to learn social sciences), but Indonesian children rarely disrespect their parents by refusing to take what has been regarded as the ‘best’ for them. So it should not be a surprise if Bu Ainun’s student followed his mother’s advice to find and use cheating materials. Since teachers are regarded as students’ parents at school, it should also not be a surprise if Hanafi accepted the decision that his teacher made to let his students cheat.

*Ignorance is (not) bliss*

If cheating behaviours have existed since teachers were students, did their experience help them to better understand their students? Did teachers encourage the school to set up a policy to deal with the behaviours? Was there even any constructive effort
initiated by the school or the government? Apparently, the only time that teachers addressed the issue of academic cheating was during exam periods; to be specific, immediately before the start of an exam and only to remind students not to cheat. There was little evidence that the school acknowledged the problem in a tangible way. So I tried to track back whether the topic of academic cheating was something that teachers had explored when they were studying for their teaching qualifications. Unfortunately, no one had had that experience:

We were never particularly taught about how to prevent academic cheating. There was no special subject [about it]. How to deal with the problem was based on individual teacher knowledge (Pak Dirham, teacher, SMA Bandung).

What Pak Dirman said would partially explain why several student teachers who were invigilating exams looked clueless when students cheated. They could not stop students from cheating. Thus, even the education institutions, including those that are responsible for training teachers, do not really bother to recognise the academic cheating problem.

That the problem is not acknowledged properly, also happens in the student’s family. Of all students participating in this study, only Hanafi and Adinda (students, SMA Semarang) clearly stated that their mother encouraged them not to cheat. However, the discussion that these two students had had with their mothers was limited to exams and did not extend to other academic work. Adinda also told me that her father never addressed the issue and was only concerned about her grades – a story similar to those of other students. When I asked around as to why this matter was not being discussed, the main reason suggested to me was ‘trust’: “[We] never [had a discussion], my parents trust me” (Andaru, SMA Bandung); “I am not an expert on religion... I trust the school to deal with things such as honesty” (Pak William, parent, SMA Semarang).

---

74 As indicated above, the government strongly acknowledges the widespread problem of academic cheating, but only with regards to the implementation of the National Examination. Preventative measures, such as the computer-based exam, online-based exam, and the exam’s Standard Operational Procedure, have been introduced. Despite initiatives taken, my observation suggests that the current day-to-day education systems at the school level have not really been affected.
Even if the students were being active, e.g. by starting a discussion about cheating practices at home, parents were passive. Sally (student, SMA Bandung), as an example, tried to inform her mother (Bu Nungki) about the fees that a particular teacher regularly asked for in exchange for a good score. Sally was told by her mother to let things stand as they were because she believed that the teacher knew what he was doing. In this, Bu Nungki represents how the adults belittled the problem and their children. Bu Nungki avoided the discussion of morality, of right or wrong, deferring to a figure who is generally expected to be a source of moral authority: the teacher. Bu Nungki’s response also illustrates how she as an adult would prefer to believe in the teacher – also an adult, rather than to believe in her daughter, an adolescent.75

How students observed their teachers’ (and parents’) stance toward behaviour regarding the practice of cheating in academic work is likely to play a significant role in shaping their ethical worldview. In his interpretation of Emile Durkheim’s work on moral education, Giddens explains that:

Habit can become moulded into moral discipline. But the teacher must also establish himself as a moral exemplar, who conditions the child’s behaviour through his demeanour as well as through direct instruction (Giddens, 1978, p. 74).

What teachers (and parents) expressed, and, most importantly, practiced, could influence students. If teachers (and parents) did not consider cheating in academic work as unethical or if they kept allowing their students to cheat, then why would students want to stop? Whatever the reason that teachers (and parents) might actually advance, their wilful ignorance was another indication of the social acceptance of the practice, as well as a sign of how the problem has been passed down from one generation to another.

---

75 As previously stated in Chapter Five, Bu Nungki and other parents did not challenge this act of corruption because they wanted to maintain ‘stability’. Reporting the teacher might cause trouble for their child(ren).
How students negotiate the acceptability of academic cheating

The two schemas

The social acceptance shown by students, teachers, and parents does not mean that they considered cheating in academic work ethical. My participants still believed that the behaviour was “morally reprehensible” and “morally disagreeable” (Davis et al., 2009, p. 47). Representing the students, Hanafi and Alanka (SMA Semarang) said that academic cheating practices are “supposed to be an unacceptable behaviour”. Pak Wahidin (teacher, SMA Semarang) explicitly stated that academic cheating practices are “bad habits”, while Bu Dini (parent, SMA Bandung) spelled out that “everyone knows it is wrong”. However, parents did not do anything specific to discourage or prevent it from happening. Teachers’ efforts to prevent cheating were limited to exams, and there was no meaningful action as a follow-up. As for the students, they were constantly negotiating the acceptability of the behaviours. Students in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang believed that there is a logic as to why cheating in academic work should be acceptable. The following excerpt of an interview that I had with three students of SMA Semarang could be an example:

Alanka: I believe it is actually unacceptable, but, I cheat, and so does everyone else.

Reza: So it is [an] acceptable [practice]?

Alanka: No, it is still unacceptable, but it has become a misconduct that is performed together, common and widespread.

Dhesta: Are you being pretentious? (laughing)

Reza: (laughing)

Alanka: It is supposed to be unacceptable (laughing), but somehow we [students] need it.

I believe that Alanka was suggesting that there was a mutual interaction between the habitus of cheating and the field of academic work. When the education system appreciate students mainly for their good grades (e.g. students with good grades have

---

76 Campus Review magazine (Smith, 2018) made a report on how university students question the morality of academic cheating, specifically on plagiarism.
a better chance to get into a good public university, or students must get good grades in exams to pass a subject or to graduate), students know they need to get good grades at any cost – even if they have to cheat. The society, since it also recognises, for instance, that higher study and work opportunities are scarce (Eckstein, 2003), and that some exams have a high-stakes nature (Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Strom & Strom, 2007), considers academic cheating as an accepted practice. So it is not really surprising if cheating is pervasive in students’ regular academic work, and considered to be normal rather than problematic. Another example can be seen in this discussion with three students of SMA Bandung:

Brian (researcher): Would you consider copying a classmate’s homework as academic cheating?
Tarra: Yes, we see our friend’s work and we copy it, so yes, it is cheating.
Gendhis: I do not think that it is academic cheating, we are helping each other (laughing), that is how a friend helps another friend (laughing).
Danu: It is a form of collaboration, we [students] complement each other, and we finish [the assignment] together.

From those two excerpts, I argue that students negotiated the inexcusable character of academic cheating by proposing two schemas. First, they argued that they were under the influence of the social space and so it would be foolish for the students not to accept and take part in what everyone else is doing. Second, they offered moral values such as ‘saling membantu’ (i.e. helping each other), ‘kerja sama’ (i.e. collaboration), and ‘saling melengkapapi’ (i.e. complementing each other) as a justification for their cheating behaviours. Students tried to argue that cheating in academic work should be recognised for its greater good, which they perceived was mainly to maintain students’ relationships and academic achievements, instead of its inexcusable characteristics.

**Schema one: The symbolic violence of academic cheating**

In the first schema, which is how students felt irrational if not agreeing and taking part in academic cheating, I would argue that they were under the strong influence of their social space. With its dominating power, students’ classmates, friends, gang, and
group, as well as the in-crowd, forced each of the students to believe that refusing to cheat or rejecting the idea of cheating in academic work would not be an appreciated social behaviour. The ultimate consequence in failing to appreciate academic cheating is materially significant: students will be at risk of not being socially accepted and therefore of not having any friends. The dilemma that Alanka experienced, whether to call academic cheating “unacceptable” or “acceptable”, is important in understanding how the behaviours have become a source of domination in students’ social space. As a collective habitus, academic cheating is a schema that controls how individual students perceive and value things and people.

Bu Korry (teacher, SMA Semarang) said that her son Roby (student, SMA Semarang) was labelled as a ‘terrorist’ by his friends because he did not want to share his homework and to get involved in cheating during exams. Roby’s name came up a few times in my discussions with the students of SMA Semarang. His classmates praised him for his cleverness, but also criticised his rigidness, that often reached a point where he seemed to disrespect other students. Roby’s classmates would characterise him as a childish and selfish person, and that is why others hesitated to befriend him. I had an opportunity to directly observe Roby’s infamous selfishness when students in Roby’s class were asked by an English teacher to swap their assignment randomly and help the teacher to check it. Ambar, who knew that her work was being checked by Roby, said that she was feeling hopeless. Ambar told me that Roby would consider an answer that was not one hundred per cent the same as the teacher’s as incorrect. Even if the mistake was a word that was missing a letter, Roby would not care—it would still be wrong. Other students sitting in front of Ambar and me overheard our conversation and nodded their heads: they agreed with Ambar’s comment.

Hanafi (student, SMA Semarang) told me the challenges that he had when he wanted to encourage his classmates to avoid cheating in their academic work:

It is such a dilemma… When I notice misconduct [in academic work] and I know it was my friend who did it, I always feel bad. Should I [remind them] or should I not?… Sometimes I tried to remind them [not to cheat]… but they said that it was their work,
not my work... After a while I was not really into [reminding them] again, especially because I knew what [kind of response] I would receive.

Hanafi’s idea of the correct thing to do apparently was not received well by his friends. He was rejected and was told that what they did was none of his business. As trying to do good only disappointed him, Hanafi decided not to remind his friends any more. He seemed to be quite settled with the harmony (rukun): being able to avoid conflicts with his classmates. But of course, Hanafi had to pay a price. He had to deny the existence of the academic cheating or the problem (Mulder, 1994).

In Bourdieu’s theory, the kind of power relations that Roby and Hanafi experienced can be regarded as symbolic violence. People did not get hurt physically or directly because of symbolic violence. However, people were treated in such a way that they believed that they as an individual would be less acceptable or less liked by others if they failed to respond to the demands coming from the social space, which in this case was to accept cheating as not only normal but also valuable behaviour. In the face of the dominant power, students were forced to adapt to the norms and rules of cheating instead of to challenge it.

At school, students were vulnerable to becoming the object of symbolic violence on many occasions, and that was probably because symbolic violence was produced and reproduced subconsciously by the students themselves. The craftiest part of symbolic violence is how people would rarely realise that they were threatened with being treated as inferior or being restricted from thinking and acting differently. Instead, people believed that what they experienced was “the natural order of things”, and it was actually “the way of the world” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 25) or doxa.

I believe it was not only students who did not cheat who had to experience symbolic violence (i.e. they were made to feel bad because they were not nice to their classmates). Others who had shared their work to be copied by their classmates also

---

77 Exception can be made for Sisil (SMA Bandung) and Hanafi (SMA Semarang). Sisil realised that if she did not cheat, she might lose friends. Hanafi knew that his decision to encourage his classmates to curb cheating, ironically put him in a disadvantaged situation and made him feel bad.
experienced it. It seems that these students did not realise they were actually being cheated of their (presumably) hard or good work. They would never say no to their classmates who wanted to borrow and copy their work. In fact, often these students had to ask approval from their classmates/friends when they wanted to submit their work. Not until they received an approval from their classmates/friends would these students march to the teacher’s desk without feeling troubled. None of them felt that they had been mistreated by their classmates/friends in the process.

Schema two: I’m just being helpful – moralities in conflict

As for the second schema, which is how students justified their cheating behaviours using the values of ‘saling membantu’ (i.e. helping each other), ‘kerja sama’ (i.e. collaboration), and ‘saling melengkapi’ (i.e. complementing each other), I would argue that students were actually experiencing a conflict of moral values. While the general norms of academic cheating imposed on them, again borrowing Davis et al.’s terms (2009, p. 47), were “morally reprehensible” and “morally disagreeable”, I believe students counteracted these norms with other moral values that were based on their social relations. The term ‘moral’ that I am using in understanding the conflict is referring to “the human belief in the possibility of telling right from wrong and in the necessity of acting in favour of the good and against the evil” (Fassin, 2008, p. 334). My approach on the issue is “not to decide who was wrong but to understand why and how social agents acted as they did” (Fassin, 2008, p. 338).

An occurrence at the earliest stage of my observation period made me realise the need to open this study to the vast system of students’ morality. Two students of SMA Semarang got caught in the act of cheating in an exam. The two students, who used their student’s ID card as a cheat sheet, were Adinda’s classmates. When I discussed the incident with Adinda, she told me that she felt sad. She said that many students were doing the same thing as her two unlucky friends and that she knew what her friends were going through. There was strong pressure for students like them, mainly from parents, to get good grades or to pass the lessons. Adinda showed signs of empathy about the plight of her unlucky friends. I believed that her sadness was how she acted in line with the doxa of the cheating game. Adinda strongly believes that
parents should not put too much pressure on their child(ren), it is just wrong. So if students cheat, she does not think that it is as bad as what initially ‘forced’ them to cheat: their parents’ excessive demands. Adinda’s argument suggested an alternative morality: the morality of parental power over children and children’s perceived need to please their parents. This suggestion showed me that what students did or said was simply how they committed themselves to certain moralities, how they shaped their ethical choices, and how they used them for their social relationships.

Students did reveal themselves. They showed me the coexisting moral values that they believed to be significant in their social relations, and that they deemed reasonable to be pitted against the moralities of academic cheating. Aside from helping each other, collaboration, and complementing each other that I have pointed out earlier, students mentioned two more values: ‘solidaritas’ (i.e. solidarity) and ‘symbiotic mutualisme’ (i.e. symbiotic mutualism).

Khansa (student, SMA Bandung) and Alanka (student, SMA Semarang) suggested that generally students hesitated to stop cheating in their academic work because no one else in their friendship circle was trying to stop it. I guess this was not surprising, considering the large portion of students who cheated. A discussion that I had with Pak Dirham (teacher, SMA Bandung) reflected on the absence of a no-cheating group:

Pak Dirham: If we observe a class, if most of the students did not cheat, then no one in that class would cheat.

Brian: Is it possible for us to have that?

Pak Dirham: Well, I think it is impossible. The fact is, students who do not cheat are the minority [of the classroom’s members].

So it was a regular occurrence for students to reflect on what their classmates, in this case the majority, were doing or not doing. The moral values that students proposed most often when they espoused cheating behaviours like those of their peers were ‘solidarity’ and ‘symbiotic mutualism’.
In students’ moral system, the decision not to cheat in academic work may not bring a positive consequence, first of all, to their value of ‘solidarity’. Students suggested that the connection is pretty straightforward: they cheat in their academic work because they support (and are supported by) their peers: “It is more about [showing] solidarity. If others are cheating, I am also cheating” (Tarra, SMA Bandung). So, what did students believe to be at stake if they did not display their solidarity?

Danu (SMA Bandung) believed that “cheating is an act of solidarity, it strengthens our friendship”. Referring to Danu’s opinion, one possible impact if students do not cheat in their academic work would be the weakening of the bond that students had. Another possible loss could be foreseen from what Alanka (SMA Semarang) said: “Solidarity... if I know and I help other students, maybe one day other students will help me” (Alanka, SMA Semarang). Alanka’s opinion gave a more tangible meaning to students’ loss than Danu’s. It sounds transactional. If no one takes advantage of his work, of the resources that he has, Alanka will not have someone in debt to him at a time when he needs help with his academic work.

The second value in students’ moral system that might be compromised because of the virtue of not cheating in academic works is ‘symbiotic mutualism’. Students believed that practising academic cheating would benefit everyone who was involved. Debora (SMA Bandung), for instance, said: “Cheating is like symbiotic mutualism... everyone wins”. Based on Debora’s argument, cheating should guarantee that everyone will win. Students label this condition using a term that they learned from their natural science lessons: ‘symbiotic mutualism’. Again, the question that remains is how the cheating situation could be better than the non-cheating one, particularly in relation to ‘symbiotic mutualism’?

Alisa (SMA Bandung) criticised her classmate, although not directly, when she knew that he did not help other students: “That is crazy. If he understands how to do it (i.e. an assignment), why does he not help others a little bit (i.e. by allowing classmates to copy the assignment). He will not lose anything; it’s supposed to be symbiotic mutualism”. Alisa’s opinion is that cheating is better than not as it gives students a
chance to help each other. Being helpful is an effective way for students to maintain relationships with their friends. So most students would be more than happy to help their classmates. In schools in Indonesia, whenever students have difficulties with understanding a lesson or an assignment, they turn to their classmates instead of – and only if deemed necessary – to their teachers.

Another possibility can be considered from Safana’s (SMA Bandung) answer to my question as to whether teachers who are selling grades need to be punished: “It’s like symbiotic mutualism, everyone benefits from it. I doubt someone will make a formal report”. Safana explained that the practice of selling grades by teachers has been around for quite a while. Her seniors and juniors both experienced it. From what Safana said, I would suggest that the practice of selling grades is not something that would be easily stopped. Efforts to stop the practice could disrupt the existing state of affairs. It could end the reciprocal relationship between the teachers and the students, who are in need of money and good grades, respectively.

Aside from the idea of how cheating or not cheating in academic work could affect students’ social relationships, I also found some evidence of how it may affect students internally. Debora (SMA Bandung) opened up to me and said that:

I am happiest when my best friends cheat using my work. If my best friends did not ask for my homework when I have done it, I would feel disappointed... When someone copies my work, sometimes I feel proud. I look at them, well, I am the one who has done the assignment. I watch how everyone else is still working on it while I am relaxing.

Alisa (SMA Bandung) told me that: “When someone that we have a crush on looks [and copies] our work, it’s like, oh my God. I feel proud. I left a good impression on him”. What the two students have shared to me indicates how cheating behaviours can uplift students’ confidence. Students felt appreciated by their best friends, by their classmates, and even by someone whom they secretly liked. Thus, if they did not cheat, it could also mean that students might lose some moments that enhance their self-esteem. Would that be enough to make students feel useless, worthless, or
unwanted in their social relations at school? I believe it could be an area to be researched.

**Academic cheating – is it a form of resistance?**

In analysing the second schema above, I indicated how nearly all of the students neutralise the reprehensibility of academic cheating with other moral values such as helping each other, collaboration, complementing each other, solidarity, and symbiotic mutualism. Earlier in this chapter, I also pointed out how some students, including the in-crowd boys in SMA Bandung, were not worried about their inability to understand the teacher’s explanation since they were bored by the lesson. Comparing these findings to Willis’ (1977) discoveries on the counter-school culture of the twelve boys of Hammertown Boys’ School that he observed, known as ‘the lads’, it may seem that students in my study were imposing a similar resistance. However, I would argue that they were not.

Willis (1977) suggests several points regarding the resistance that he found from ‘the lads’. They believed that the systems, including education, had and would, let them down: even with schooling and qualifications, they would still end up on the shopfloor of a factory. So the lads developed a counter-school culture to show their resistance and to build their confidence. For instance, they bullied the obedient students, known as the ‘ear’oles’, to gain respected (i.e. feared) status from the rest of the students. But more significantly, the lads tried to retaliate against the system that had failed them. They smoked, fought other students, refused to do homework, pranked teachers, and in other ways broke school rules.

The two schools that I observed, especially SMA Bandung, had students who similarly misbehaved. SMA Bandung had a detailed list of misconducts (see Chapter Four) that their students must try to avoid. Among those misconducts, there were: not wearing a proper uniform, playing truant, smoking, insulting teachers, fighting, and enlisting in an outlawed motorcycle gang. If students in SMA Bandung or SMA Semarang did one of those misconducts, there was the possibility of adding to the misconduct, or combining misconducts, or of ‘ad libbing’ with new misconducts, to build a narrative
that students were resisting the school culture. Maybe students would remodel their uniform and boys would start wearing long hair because they did not agree with the idea of uniformity. Or maybe students would play truant because they felt bored with a lesson. But I see a different pattern with academic cheating. I would argue that the doers (i.e. the students and the teachers) cheated because they, on the contrary, were accepting the school culture.

That the natural sciences study path is considered superior to the social sciences major, and that both are considered better than the language major; that students with higher grades have a better chance to be admitted in public universities; that the number of students unable to graduate, among other factors, shapes a school’s reputation – these are some aspects of the school culture that students and teachers are immersed in. Amongst the students participating in this study, some of them told me that the natural sciences pathway was not the study path that they preferred. Their parents, who believed that the natural sciences path was a better study path for the ‘future’ of their child, made the decision. These students then told me that they struggle with some of the lessons. To be able to keep up with their classmates, they cheated. These students did not resist their parents’ decision, nor the system that ranked the majors. They accepted, adapted, and acted accordingly.

**Academic cheating: a source of distinction**

In discussing symbolic violence and moral conflicts, I tried to address participants’ individual perspectives as well as how they were influenced by the surroundings in which they are embedded. I was able to draw two points from the discussion. First, cheating in academic work is a dominant practice in the school, socially accepted by students, teachers, and parents. Students, in particular, constantly accommodate and reproduce the practice within their friendship circles. Second, students highly valued the practice of cheating in academic work. So powerful and pervasive is the practice that it is considered the natural way to socialise. Looking at those two facts, I imagine academic cheating as a vicious circle. Students cheat because everyone else at school, especially their peers, is cheating. So for them, the doxa, or the natural way to act, is to
cheat in their academic work. Challenging this doxa of cheating is almost unthinkable since it will also challenge the established social relations (Webb et al., 2002).

During the period of my observation, initially students provided me with the names of their friends who they suspected did not cheat in their academic work. However, Andaru (SMA Bandung) was different. He made a ‘confession’ to me that he had decided not to cheat any more. At the beginning of my interview with him, he said:

Andaru: ...cheating, actually I feel that I was compelled to do it, since I was in year 10. But as time went by, I realised that there is no point in me cheating to get high grades, I should just be honest. If I cheated, it would not reflect my effort. If I get low grades [because I do not cheat], at least I know what I should be improving.

Brian: Who had the biggest influence in your decision?
Andaru: Myself.

Andaru’s decision could be crucial for my study in understanding academic cheating. I wanted to know what motivated him to challenge the doxa, how did he actually break the vicious circle, and what kind of consequences, if any, did he have to deal with. After all, he said that the decision came solely from himself. However, just when I thought that Andaru did not cheat any more in his academic work, the following conversation occurred:

Brian: Wait, so you still share your answers to your friends during exams?
Andaru: Only with a few people.
Brian: A few, who are those people?
Andaru: Well, they are those I am comfortable with.
Brian: People from your friendship circle?
Andaru: No, it could be anyone that I am comfortable with.

---

78 This only happened in SMA Semarang. No students in SMA Bandung made such a suggestion.
Andaru was schematically playing around with ‘cheating’. In the beginning, he wanted to distinguish himself from the other students: Andaru, ‘the one who is not cheating any more’ and the other students, ‘who are still cheating in their academic work’. In the end, Andaru’s plan was not working. He revealed to me that he still cheated. But it was not the last play that Andaru had for ‘cheating’. Andaru realised the value of the behaviours as a type of capital. By creatively playing with ‘cheating’, Andaru retained his position in his friendship circle. He might even have gained more benefits. Notice how he said that he shared his answers to “[people] with whom I am comfortable” instead of “friend”. His statement showed how he was actually opening himself to a wider group of people, and it all depended on the situation that he had to deal with.

I trained a spotlight on Andaru because of how he tried to distinguish himself from other cheating students. In his theory about Distinction, Bourdieu explains that:

Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make... in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. Although they do not create or cause class divisions and inequalities... [they] contribute to the process of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 2).

Students consider academic cheating as behaviour that is necessary. Many of them, like Andaru, know that cheating provides a chance to collect symbolic capital. Academic cheating, in any of its forms that are legitimised by the members of society, could be an important source of distinction for students.

While Andaru tried to convince me that he distinguished himself by not cheating, as if he considered cheating an unacceptable behaviour, other students showed me the importance of considering the behaviours as a collective practice. An example of this was what happened in Jeremy’s class in SMA Bandung. Some of Jeremy’s classmates received leaked exam materials from another class but decided to keep it a secret and not share it with the rest of the class. When the secret was revealed, the mood in the class was bad. The condition worsened when the students who had obtained the leaked materials received better grades than the rest who did not get them. For some
time, the in-crowd and the rest of the class outcast their disloyal members by not speaking to them.

To cheat alone could be offensive to other students in a friendship circle and the whole class. To cheat with students in a friendship circle was understandable, but could be offensive to the rest of the class if not done correctly. The general rule is that there will always be pressure from a bigger group. The in-crowd, which is powerful although small in number, could also become the source of pressure for other groups of students. Nonetheless, their view and approach regarding academic cheating tends to match the majority of the class. In the end, the bigger the group involved, the more acceptable the cheating behaviours becomes.

The acceptability of cheating could also be determined from the impact that it has on the members of a group or the class as a whole. I believe that students were not very clear and specific about cheating behaviours that they could or could not accept. It could be one thing one day and another on a different day. However, as long as it had a negative impact, or at least did not bring any good to others in the group or the classroom, then it was unacceptable.

An example of unacceptable cheating behaviour based on the impact it had on the other members of a group can be seen from the following dialogue between two students of SMA Bandung:

Debora: A friend of mine... so we had this group assignment. Usually we would have a discussion before we started work on it, but no, the next day she said: “Here it is, we only need to do the presentation”. When it came to the presentation day, she did great while the other group members were reading the slides.

Defara: I hate that kind of person. She does not prioritise her friends. She will be the only student who stands out. Teachers will realise it even though they do not know that the presentation [material] was prepared by that one person. Other students will receive grades lower than her. That is selfish, that is cheating.
At first I thought that Debora’s friend would be among the likable students in the class. I thought that other students would like her since she showed a strong willingness to ‘sacrifice’ herself and what she had done to please others, or in this case, to cheat for the sake of the dominant peers. But I was wrong. Since the other students ended up with a negative consequence (i.e. a lower score) because of what she did, they expressed their objection. Her cheating practice turned out to be misconduct according to the collective values of the dominant group.

Another example of how students were observing their peers’ academic cheating behaviours and reviewing them based on the impact that they had, can be seen from the following passage:

Adinda: Remember that new [transfer] student?
Brian: Yes, I remember him.

Adinda: He is so annoying… He is reckless in all of the exams. He used his smartphone [to cheat], even during the midterm exam.
Brian: Aren’t students required to put their smartphone in their bag and to put the bag in front of the class?
Adinda: Yes. Instead, he kept his smartphone in his pocket… he needed it so that others could take a picture of their work for him [so then he could copy it].
Brian: Sounds very risky… He also asked you to do it?
Adinda: He asked Abrar to do it because my exam questions were similar to his. I refused his request. He turned his body and snapped a photo of Desi’s work, which also has similar questions to his exam.
Brian: So you and Desi were put ‘at risk’.
Adinda: Yes… Also when we had the Japanese exam. He asked me for my answers, twenty-seven numbers… so annoying.

Thus, there are some ethical evaluations made of academic cheating behaviours. This can be seen from how Defara (SMA Bandung) labelled a classmate as ‘selfish’ and, ironically, as ‘cheating’, as well as Adinda (SMA Semarang) who considered the new
transfer student ‘annoying’ and ‘reckless’. It shows that students need to have a sharp awareness of cheating behaviours: which ones are ethically approved by the dominant group and which ones are not.

Students could avoid the dilemma of guessing which cheating behaviours are ethical and which are not. It could be as simple as having more control over their behaviour to avoid the negative consequences, such as being caught by the teachers. In Adinda’s case, she did not refuse the idea of cheating. However, to use a smartphone must be avoided since it involved too much risk. The new student’s individual habitus had become a liability and he must change his cheating practice into something that is more measured. Even if his way of cheating had worked well in his old school, his practice must be transformed as he had moved to a different school setting (a different habitus).

Once students make a mistake in reading the situation, in understanding the ethics of cheating, and in adapting their strategy, their status in the field is in danger. They could easily be excluded from the structure. In the case of the new student, his classmates will avoid being in the same group with him since he demonstrates illegitimate cheating practices. Academic cheating can be a symbolically significant practice that determines students’ position in the social hierarchy and the relationships they have with their peers.

**Academic cheating: a source of recognition**

Because Roby (SMA Semarang) did not want to take part in cheating practices, he was called a ‘terrorist’ and considered to have a selfish personality by his friends. But there was actually one moment when he was associated with academic cheating:

> Alanka: That time when we had that Chemistry [exam materials] leak, it was in our class group messaging, [right]?

> Reza: It was Roby who shared it.

> Dhesta: Yes, it was Roby.
Alanka: Roby shared it, “Questions for tomorrow’s exams are this, this, and that”, and he was right, those were the questions.

On a different occasion, Hanafi told me this:

“The Chemistry teacher called Roby. Roby received [information about] the subjects that will be asked in the exam... Roby shared it to the whole class. Everyone was asking if the information was true. I did not see any harm if I tried to learn [based on that information]. Eventually, all the questions were there. [Cheating] for collective virtue?” (Hanafi, SMA Semarang).

Alanka, Reza, and Dhesta were talking about Roby positively, so different from when other classmates had commented on his selfishness. This proves that when students come up with categories:

[It is] not only for purpose of labelling, “identifying” the self and others... although that is one of their functions. They are also little packages of motivations and desires, fears and anxieties... as well as little packages of guidelines for fulfilling those desires... The categories, then, are both systems of classification and systems of desires, with related notions – virtually “rules” – about how to go about fulfilling those desires (Ortner, 2003, p. 110).

As expressed by Hanafi, it was clear that Roby’s classmates appreciated what he had done for them. Roby was seen to be able to follow the ‘guideline’ to find a position amongst his classmates, not being the kind of selfish student that his classmates feared, and finally able to recognise the collective values that his peers desired. Roby’s classmates rewarded his action and personal accomplishment by not (I would argue temporarily) excluding him, considering him as ‘one of us’.

Roby’s story also illustrates how students’ status in their relationships with their friends is never fixed. Students can expand their symbolic capital if they are willing to do it. Practices like providing exam leaks, providing homework others can copy, and participating in cheating during an exam, are respected practices that provide students an opportunity to compete for more capital. Leaked exam materials and homework
were more than just goods that students shared to get high scores. Students could use them to be recognised by others and gain more symbolic capital.

Students expand their social relationships beyond the physical world. Using their smartphone, students were strongly connected to each other in social media and messaging applications. Interactions on messaging applications were common. Students would laugh at their desks not because a student came to the front of the class and told a joke, but because one of them had posted a funny image or meme in a messaging application, where all students in the class were members. So the effort to gain capital does not have to be tangible. Technology allowed it to happen in cyberspace. Students could communicate their involvement in cheating by sharing pictures of their assignments, homework, or information about leaked exam materials in the messaging application. In an environment where students are closely connected, and where communication can be recorded, recognition can be obtained more effectively.

A challenge does exist in students’ efforts to gain recognition. There were indications that students’ opportunity to obtain symbolic capital also depended on the initial capital that they owned. Students with wealthy parents (i.e. those with economic and cultural capital) had more opportunity to go to a les or private after-hours tuition that could help them with their homework. This gave them a resource that could strengthen their relationships with friends who might copy the materials from the private tuition. If the tutor of the private after-hours tuition was a teacher from their school, students would have an even larger chance to receive leaked exam materials. Students with friends in different classes (i.e. social capital) also had more opportunity to get (and to give) leaked exam materials.79

Particularly in the case of Roby, I would argue that the Chemistry teacher’s decision to choose and to trust him in the distribution of a leaked exam material was Roby’s social

79 It should be noted that I need to observe students’ consumer goods – especially their smartphone – in order to identify the wealthy kids. But it seemed that even without the iPhone or the les (private after-hours tuition), students knew who the rich kids were – and that immediately gave the rich students ‘popular’ status that preceded the advantages that iPhone and les gave.
Roby’s mother is a teacher, a good colleague of the Chemistry teacher. Besides Roby’s reputation as a trustworthy student, the Chemistry teacher might have considered Roby a worry-free option. I guess the only disadvantage for Roby himself was how his idealism not to cheat was pointless when compared to his status as a ‘student’, who, in the perspective of the Chemistry teacher, would surely be happy to receive and pass on the shared information.

Students, even those who constantly weighed the harms and benefits of cheating in academic work, realised that participating in the game of cheating could increase their capital and make others recognise their presence in the social hierarchy. Hesitant students knew that they could not directly snub or confront those who were part of the cheating culture. Thus, some of them opted to fake their participation by providing wrong answers to their classmates during the exams. However, faking participation could also backfire on those who did it. Sally (SMA Bandung) told me that once a classmate shared her answers (to multiple choice questions) in an exam to other students. However, when the exam results were announced, that classmate received a score that was way higher than those who had received answers from her. These other students believed that Sally’s classmate had lied to them, and they excluded her from their friendship circle. Although it is not impossible, I believe that Sally’s friend will find it hard on her next effort to collect the needed capital.

**The other popular kids: the helper**

Evidence from both schools indicates that students who emerge ‘glowing’ from the distinction process and are highly recognised by their peers will end up in one place - the top of the social hierarchy. If students are able to reap the power of symbolic capital from the practice of academic cheating, they will be among the popular students. This was the case for students like Sasha (SMA Bandung) and Imran (SMA Semarang).

---

80 At the same time this also shows that the ‘immorality’ of the Chemistry teacher outweighed her morality.
Sasha and Imran represented the smart student: performing well in their study, consistently receiving good grades. Before an exam, I would find Sasha trying hard to memorise the lesson that would be tested. She sat in her desk recalling notes that she had read, muttering to herself. Imran’s reputation speaks for him. At the time he enrolled in the school, Imran was on the top of the list. The number of points he had collected from the combination of his National Exam grades in year 9 and his achievement in many academic competitions was extraordinary.

But intelligence as cultural capital was inadequate to enhance students’ popularity. Students need another quality to round off the capital:

I do not think everyone is ecstatic if we ask them for cheating materials. Usually those who are willing to share would be ‘teman baik’ (Zivana, student, SMA Bandung).

Zivana used the word ‘teman baik’ or ‘good friends’ to refer to students who show a disposition to help their classmates, even if it means they have to cheat in their academic work. Sasha and Imran also fall into this ‘teman’ category.

Sasha would finish her homework at home or school, usually before the class started. She would allow other students to copy her work as long as they made some adjustments in order to trick the teachers. Sasha would try to find information on exam questions from students in other classes, find the answers to those questions, and share with her classmates. Imran, on the other hand, would initially refuse his friends’ requests (mostly from girls) to help them with their computer programming project. But once he was done with his own work, he would do some other students’ work. Sasha and Imran are popular among their friends. Every time there was a group work project and students could decide the members by themselves, they would compete to include their ‘friend’ Sasha and Imran in the group.

Sasha and Imran might not realise that they are popular. But I would argue that the two students’ popularity, particularly with regard to how their classmates always welcomed them, boosted their confidence in performing social interactions. When Sasha strolled around the classroom, she could easily join any group of students and
get involved with what they were currently doing. Sasha would occasionally sing loudly
in the class. Her classmates would make fun of her voice or tease her, but no one
would get annoyed or angry because of her cheeky act. When I had a discussion with a
group of students during a break, other students who did not have a close relationship
with the group or who did not sit near to where the group were seated would hesitate
to join our chat. But Imran proved to be different. Self-assuredly, he would routinely
come to my discussions. One of the students who was with me from the start would
make a space in his chair, sharing it so that Imran could also sit. More social
interactions meant wider networks and greater social capital for Sasha and Imran.

Another type of student that is also popular, as I have mentioned in Chapter Five, is
the assignment jockey. Appearing only in SMA Bandung, these students regularly
received a financial benefit from working on their classmates’ homework or
assignments. These jockey-students are considered nice and helpful by their
classmates. Whenever teachers allowed students to choose their own partners for a
group assignment, students wanted the jockey to be in their group – in a similar way to
the easy social acceptance extended to Sasha and Imran.

For Sasha, Imran, and the assignment jockeys, being able to share homework and
leaked exam materials, as well as finishing their classmates’ work, was a source of
symbolic capital. The homework, the leaked materials, and the completed assignments
were more than just a commodity. Those were powerful symbols that gave them a
chance to establish their dominant status and to enhance their position in social space
as ‘the popular ones’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to understand how the practice of academic cheating could play a
significant role in students’ social relationships. Exploring the dynamic of the students’
social relations, I found that students develop a strong connection to their peers,
stimulating them to form groups. From their groups, I argue that students acquired
comfort and safety, which is also a sign of the collectivist pattern of Indonesian
children.
To maintain their position in their groups, students highlighted the important role of practising academic cheating. Cheating in academic work has become a source of symbolic capital. As symbolic capital, cheating gained its value from social acceptance. Evidence that I gathered showed that the recognition of academic cheating as an acceptable practice came not only from students but also from teachers and parents. Students highlighted the pervasiveness of the behaviours and the stakes for them if they did not do what everyone else was doing. Teachers and parents implicitly and sometimes explicitly supported cheating – they might belittle children who did not cheat, and ignored and neglected academic cheating as a serious problem.

I also found that students constantly negotiate the acceptability of cheating behaviours. There are two possible reasons why students would do that. First, students were under the strong influence of the dominant values and system that they had created and reproduced with its emphasis on the friend group: on the need to do things in groups, to be loyal to the group and to be behave in ways that were acceptable to the group. Second, students were experiencing a conflict of moralities. They contested the universal, external morality of academic cheating with the moral values (e.g. collaboration, solidarity, and mutualism) that are significant in their social relations – and the latter proved to be more dominant. Academic cheating has become a source of distinction and recognition for students, enabling those who are able to make the most of it to emerge at the apex of the social hierarchy.
Chapter Seven
Academic cheating and corruption – is there a causal relationship?

Introduction
The National Examination and the academic cheating that surrounds its implementation always attracts a great deal of attention from the Indonesian public and media. The government has responded to the issue by delivering several policies and programs to curb the misconduct. The problem of academic cheating in the National Exam entered a new level of complexity when the government suggested that it could be one of the causes of corruption in the country (Wicaksono & Alfath, 2015). I found the suggestion intriguing. It was unclear how academic cheating and corruption could have a cause-and-effect-relationship. The government never actually explained the logic behind their argument. There are two main discussions in this chapter. First, I track back possible reasons why the government initiated the idea of causation between academic cheating and corruption. Second, I examine the real connection between the two problems that occurred in my two field sites.

Defining corruption
There are broad understandings of the meaning of corruption. In their effort to fight corruption on a global scale, several international organisations such as Transparency International and the Asian Development Bank have offered their view of the phenomenon. Transparency International (2019) defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs.” The Asian Development Bank (2019) defines the term as “any behaviour in which people in the public or private sectors improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those close to them, or induce others to do so, by misusing their position.” The definitions from these organisations echo what some of the well-known philosophers wrote about political corruption. Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Montesquieu – yes, concerns about corruption have been around at least since the time of these philosophers – all consider corruption as the product of rulers who fail to act according to the law and moral principles. These philosophers believe that instead of using their authority in the
public interest or for the common good, corrupt rulers exploit it for the sake of their individual or collective self-interest (Miller, 2018).

Economist Jacob Svensson (2005, p. 20) defines corruption as “the misuse of public office for private gain”. Observing the works of other economists (e.g. Mauro, 1995; Shang-Jin Wei, 1998), I see that they tend not to dwell much on definition and focus more on its negative impacts on a country’s economic growth. Among others, the impact could be in the form of international companies’ reluctance to invest their money in countries with weak governance and corruption problems. In sociology, the discourse on corruption during the 1950s and 1960s was not as ‘negative’ as in economics. In fact, scholars in this field mainly discussed the ‘positive’ functions of corruption for political and economic development (see the history of the discourse in Osrecki, 2017). A more recent study that explains how corruption or patronage make sense in one society is the work of anthropologist Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (1994) concerning guanxi or gift giving practices in China. She explains that in the official discourse, guanxi is considered as a negative phenomenon, exclusively related to corruption. But in the popular discourse, guanxi also has an image that tends to be positive, e.g. as a practice where “people are helping one another” and a way “to penetrate an impersonal and powerful bureaucracy” (Yang, 1994, p. 63). Although sociologists nowadays tend not to use their counter-intuitive perspective to argue the positive roles of corruption, we do have researchers with a feminist perspective who continue a more positive discussion of corruption in the social world. They (e.g. Pertiwi, 2016) apply the theory of care ethics to understand the particular context that makes corruption seem sensible for some societies.

Etymologically, the word corruption comes from the Latin corruptus, meaning to break. We could use corruption to describe situations in which morals or manner deteriorate; if something (e.g. fruit) goes rotten; if the correct version of something (e.g. files or programs) are altered; or if something (e.g. money or wealth) for personal advantage is obtained by improper conduct (e.g. bribery).81 In all of these descriptions, the person who commits the corruption deviates from some standard or path that is

---

81 See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/corrupt#etymology.
supposed to be good, correct, and original. In behaving in this way, the person manages to gain personal advantage, and that can be in many forms, including, in my field, better exam marks. In this sense, academic cheating could be considered as a corrupt act.

In the Indonesian language, a loanword for corruption is korupsi. The word means the embezzlement of the budget of the state (or a company, organisation, or foundation) for personal gain or for the advantage of others [who are close to the perpetrator]. So in Indonesia, corruption seems to have a narrower sense than the original meaning; it relates to monetary gain. Later in this chapter, I will discuss my participants’ perceptions of the meanings of corruption. As for addressing corrupt people such as corrupt bureaucrats and cronies or someone who is guilty of corruption, the standard Indonesian word for it is koruptor. Because there is no single word in English that could have the same meaning (e.g. the word corrupter means someone who corrupts others), I will mainly use koruptor in this thesis.

**Corruption in Indonesia**

*Its history before the 20th century*

Corruption in Indonesia dates back to pre-colonial Java. The ‘kings’ and sultans of agriculturally-based kingdoms retained their power by practising agrarian patronage systems. Javanese kings bought the loyalty of their local officials – who also had the interest of retaining control in their specific area – by allowing them to enrich themselves: mostly by asking farmers to pay exactions (Anderson, 1990; Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Crouch, 1979; King, 2000). As long as the local officials did not disrupt the economy and upset the farmers, their practices were not considered ‘corruption’ (Crouch, 1979). It was then normative for the thankful officials to pay an appropriate upeti (tribute) to the kings, and, most importantly, to be loyal to them (Anderson, 1990; Carey & Haryadi, 2016).

---

82 Explanation from the online Indonesian Language Dictionary provided by the Language Centre of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (link: https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entry/korupsi). It is my translation, but I tried to make it close to the original meaning.
The Dutch Empire arrived in Indonesia in the sixteenth century. Mainly by force, they successfully established trading posts in Java, Maluku and Sumatra. They also drove off their European competitors, such as the Portuguese, Spanish, and English from Indonesia (van der Kroef, 1948). In the seventeenth century, corruption struck the archipelago. The corrupt practices were mainly conducted by high-ranking officials in the Dutch East India Trading Company (VOC). Because the salaries that they received were too low, these officials turned their attention to graft and fraud (van der Kroef, 1948). Their decision to commit corruption proved to be costly. For example, during the leadership of Governor General Speelman (1681-1684), the VOC’s textile sales dropped by 90 per cent and their trade monopoly – including in opium – was collapsing. As it turned out, Speelman had committed massive embezzlement by selling free men as slaves, authorising payments for non-existent soldiers and for work not done, and underpaying Indonesian pepper suppliers. This was a *modus operandi* that many of his VOC personnel – even the lowest junior clerk – imitated, resulting in the suffering of many Indonesians. For most of the eighteenth century, the Dutch Empire in Indonesia experienced financial crises and the VOC went bankrupt in 1799 (Ricklefs, 2008).

Early in the nineteenth century, King Louis assigned Marshal Herman Willem Daendels as the Governor-General in Java to reform what was left after the VOC’s failure (Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Ricklefs, 2008). Not all of Daendels’ reform agenda was successful, but his relatively short governing period (1808-1811) seemed to be enough for him to change the relationship between the colonial government and the Javanese lords, making the governance of the colony more centralised. Daendels laid the foundation of what was then known as the *Tanam Paksa* or *Kultuurstelsel* or Culture System to be implemented in Indonesia after 1830 (Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Ricklefs, 2008).

In the *Kultuurstelsel*, the Dutch did not consider the Javanese lords as the nobles of the society any longer. The Dutch reduced the lords’ powers and incomes, and made them into administrative officials called *bupati* or regents (Ricklefs, 2008). The regents and the Dutch officials were responsible for ensuring villages’ crop production and were paid percentages upon delivery of crops. The system encouraged corruption: “[y]ields
were underestimated, a private trade in government crops grew up, and shady deals proliferated among indigenous administrators, Dutch officials and Chinese entrepreneurs. The colonial government in Batavia was never in a position to monitor…” (Ricklefs, 2008, p. 155).

*Its history after Independence to the end of the New Order era*

Carey & Haryadi (2016) argue that January 1946 to May 1949 could be the period when post-Independence Indonesia had its lowest level of corruption. In that period, the Dutch attempted two military invasions to regain its colony lost to the Japanese and to the Independence movement, and there was no opportunity for people to mismanage the government’s money or to seek personal pleasure. In 1950, corruption problems started to creep in. Specifically, the government turned the civil service into a political force. They gave office jobs to around 420,000 former bureaucrats, as well as to many former guerrillas, graduates, and political supporters. These bureaucrats were not skilful and received low salaries. They were inefficient and often involved in petty corruption (Ricklefs, 2008).

Under Soekarno’s leadership, Indonesia had a successful national election in September 1955. Over 39 million people, or 91.5 per cent of registered voters, exercised their civil rights (Ricklefs, 2008). But the election was held under the shadow of various political disputes over economic matters. Among others, the army believed that the cabinet under the *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI) or Indonesia National Party was corrupt. In the so-called Ali-Baba scandal, there were indications that PNI figures (‘Ali’) had become the ‘front men’ of Chinese (‘Baba’) entrepreneurs, while they were also campaigning for the ‘Indonesianisation’ of the economy (Ricklefs, 2008).

Amid the political and security unrest, in 1957 Soekarno declared martial law. This was the moment when the Indonesian Armed Forces took a strategic approach by expanding their influence in the bureaucracy and business. They gained the most from Soekarno’s poor planning in nationalising foreign assets. The Armed Forces gained independent sources of funding and resources from many enterprises (e.g. in trading, shipping, plantations, and oil) and extorted or corrupted wealth from them (Bourchier,
2015; Crouch, 1979; Ricklefs, 2008). King (2000) considers the practices at this time as the origin of the Indonesian Armed Forces’ unconventional financing.

During the period of ‘Guided Democracy’, between 1959 and 1965, President Soekarno’s leadership became increasingly authoritarian. He suspended parliament, limited press freedom, nationalised more foreign companies, and established monopolies (King, 2000; Robertson-Snape, 1999). Soekarno’s main political challenges came from several contending factions, such as the Armed Forces, the Indonesian Communist Party or Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), and the big traditional parties (i.e. the Muslim and nationalist parties), with the Armed Forces and the PKI proving to be the most challenging. Soekarno’s plan to balance the power between the two (with him leaning to the PKI for their mass support (McVey, 1996)) did not go well. His inability to limit the dynamics of the two factions, to control their confrontation, to deal with the polarised political elite, and to deal with economic inflation that was running at over 600 per cent (while he lived his high life), made the public believe that his leadership needed to end (Crouch, 1979; King, 2000; Robertson-Snape, 1999).

The 30th September Movement marked the peak of the confrontation between the PKI and the Armed Forces in Soekarno’s era. On 30 September 1965, small teams of Armed Forces believed to be pro-communist killed six anti-communist generals and one lieutenant and seized strategic infrastructure such as the government radio station (Bourchier, 2015; Robinson, 2018). The incident ignited mass violence in many regions. The violence lasted for approximately a year. The Armed Forces, armed civilians, and militia arrested or killed PKI or communist supporters (Robinson, 2018). By March 1966, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians had lost their lives and the Armed Forces gained power (Bourchier, 2015).

Major General Soeharto triumphed. His most significant move was to crush the 30th September Movement (Bourchier, 2015). On 11 March 1966, Soekarno signed a document called Supersemar (which stands for Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret or 11 March Letter of Instruction) giving Soeharto full authority to restore order after the 30th September Movement (Ricklefs, 2008). Soeharto held his presidency for 32 years,
between 1966 and 1998. Comparing the Dutch colonial era to Soeharto’s regime, Ricklefs (2008, p. 320) has this to say:

Notably, both employed political imprisonment to remove opponents, but the latter did so on a far larger scale than the former, and furthermore allowed torture of its prisoners. And the centralisation of economic, political, administrative and military power in the hands of a small elite was probably greater under Soeharto than in Dutch times.

Corruption in Indonesia peaked during Soeharto’s time. Ranked with other countries in the world, Indonesia was among the most corrupt, and was judged top in the Southeast Asia region (Lim & Stern, 2002). Blunt et al. (2012a) believe that Soeharto was more successful than his predecessor Soekarno in implementing the patronage system. He used the Armed Forces – where he had built his career and gained his reputation – to eliminate the PKI (i.e. arresting and killing their supporters) and to intimidate the remaining political parties (i.e. forcing them to accept the new government), hence creating harmony for himself and his preferred elite (Crouch, 1979; Ricklefs, 2008).

Soeharto, as the patron, also strategically used the Armed Forces as his clients, distributing them to many sectors. He appointed some of them as part of the political elite, some in civilian posts, and others in business. By 1968, military officers governed in 17 out of 25 provinces, and by 1969, they comprised more than half of Indonesia’s regents (as bupati) and mayors (Ricklefs, 2008). In the 1971 national elections, the Armed Forces and other presidential appointees had 100 of 360 seats reserved for them (Bourchier, 2015). Soeharto distributed them to different places but for a similar purpose: to obtain their loyalty by ensuring that they gained material benefit (Crouch, 1979; Robertson-Snape, 1999). With the country’s vast and fast-growing economy, due to the rise of oil prices in 1973, and the flow of international investments, Soeharto
had the much-needed resources to expand and institutionalise his patronage system (Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Crouch, 1979; King, 2000; Ricklefs, 2008).83

When the oil prices declined in the mid-1980s, Soeharto outsmarted the crisis. To keep his patronage system working, while ensuring the financial security of his family and cronies, he skillfully increased the role of the Chinese-Indonesian minority entrepreneurs, particularly Liem Sioe Liong, Bob Hasan, and Prajogo Pangestu.84 Soeharto backed the three to monopolise the business sector and become the country’s foremost business tycoons (Robertson-Snape, 1999; Robison, 1986; Schwarz, 2000). In return, the tycoons shared their profits by financing his political operations and investing in the President’s family businesses (King, 2000; Robison, 1986).85 “[B]y taking [Soeharto’s] family members as sleeping joint venture ‘partners’ so that some profits could be distributed to them” and “by making charitable donations to yayasan, foundations established and run by Soeharto and his family members”, the cronies and tycoons enriched themselves and Soeharto and his family (Lim & Stern, 2002, p. 23).

It took something as devastating as the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 to finally end Soeharto’s regime. Many large businesses – including those of Soeharto and his cronies – went bankrupt. Some of the tycoons moved their capital offshore, mainly to Singapore, thus worsening unemployment (Carey & Haryadi, 2016). The government also had to deal with massive debt. The crisis dried up Soeharto’s patronage funds and the loyalty that his supporters formerly provided for him (Robertson-Snape, 1999). With no support to deal with domestic uprisings (e.g. massive demonstrations as well as ethnic and religious conflicts) and international pressures (e.g. from the International Monetary Fund), Soeharto had no option other than to resign.

83 At that time, Indonesia was number 15 of oil-producing countries in the world. The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) tripled the price of oil in December 1973 (Carey & Haryadi, 2016) following the Arab–Israeli war (Bourchier, 2015).

84 They and some other Chinese entrepreneurs were known as cukongs or ‘boss’ and ‘grandfather’ in Hokkien (Ricklefs, 2008). In the 1950s, when Soeharto was a commander of the army’s Diponegoro division, Bob Hasan and Soeharto had been involved in sugar smuggling activities. In 1969, Soeharto had granted Liem’s company, P.T. Bogasari Flour Mills, a monopoly on the import, milling, and distribution of wheat and flour (King, 2000; Robison, 1986; Schwarz, 2000). Unlike these two, Prajogo Pangestu became part of Soeharto’s crony late in 1991 (Schwarz, 2000).

85 Refer to Schwarz (2000, p. 141-143) for more details on how Soeharto’s children set up their corrupt business empires.
Corruption in contemporary Indonesia

The corruption problem in Indonesia can be considered to be lessening. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) – that scores countries over a range of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (no corruption at all) – issued by Transparency International, Indonesia’s corruption problem improved in the period 2012-15.

Table 7.1. Indonesia’s CPI 2012-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Score – Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>32 points, rank 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>32 points, rank 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>34 points, rank 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>36 points, rank 91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Global average score: 43 points
Source: Transparency International, 2015; Transparency International Indonesia, 2014

Although for the last couple of years Indonesia has shown progress on its CPI, the country is still behind the global average score of all assessed countries, classifying Indonesia as a country with a high level of corruption. Some researchers (e.g. Blunt et al., 2012b; Hadiz & Robison, 2005) believe that the patronage practices of the Soeharto era, as well as the network of oligarchs, have survived the transition to democracy and continue to thrive. Thus, the overall corruption level in the country still remains high. Other researchers, such as Dick (2013), argue that Indonesia’s poor performance in the CPI, which measures perceptions, may in part reflect the intensive media coverage of corruption cases. High levels of media interest and people’s increased awareness of corruption, they suggest, is a sign of growing transparency in the country that may, in fact, bode well for efforts to eradicate corruption.

The history of transparency in Indonesia is strongly related to the socio-political transformations that happened after the downfall of Soeharto’s New Order regime. When Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie inherited the presidency in 1998, Indonesia entered a new phase called the Era Reformasi or Reform Era. The democratic process that was initiated during the Reform Era resulted in freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of creed, and freedom of association (Kawamura, 2000). People were freer to air their opinions, including those related to corrupt practices in government offices.
For example, in a survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Development and Democracy in 1998, 78 per cent of the 1000 respondents criticised bribery practices in government institutions (Robertson-Snape, 1999). Also, newspapers were being openly critical of government officials and the army, which was different to the New Order era.

The campaign to tackle corruption in the bureaucracy is not a new agenda for the Indonesian government. Even during Soeharto’s time, the government promised to address the issue. One of his regime’s mottoes had been ‘not only good government, but also clean government’ (Robertson-Snape, 1999). Nevertheless, as researchers have discussed (e.g. King, 2000; Robertson-Snape, 1999), Soeharto’s presidency is considered to have been a regime where corruption became systematic, such that Korupsi (corruption), Kolusi (collusion), and Nepotisme (nepotism), commonly abbreviated to KKN, became a well-known acronym for a notorious institution and a legacy of the New Order. During the Soeharto era, a koruptor who had become part of the government’s inner circle was untouchable by law (Butt, 2013; King, 2000; Robertson-Snape, 1999).

Public expectations for tangible action, as a follow-up to the growing demand for clean government, saw a glimmer of hope when Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati were elected as President and Vice President in 1999. Their decision to investigate Soeharto’s wealth and the Bank Bali scandal were considered as a sign that even cases related to the most highly ranked officials would be put on trial (King, 2000). Unfortunately, the reality was far from the expectation since neither case was adequately resolved. A potential game-changer in the struggle to combat corruption appeared when the House of Representatives approved the establishment of the KPK or Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (Corruption Eradication Commission) in 2002. Reflecting on Law Number 30/2002 on the Eradication of Corruption, which stipulates KPK’s duties and responsibilities, it is understandable if people believed that the KPK would be able to deliver concrete action. With the extensive powers that the

---

86 It was suspected that Golongan Karya, the ruling party, was manipulating Bank Bali as a source of funding for President Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie’s election campaign (see Landler, 1999).
institution was given, the KPK was expected to take legal action against corrupt elites and bureaucrats, who had been untouchable by law enforcement during Soeharto’s presidency (Butt, 2013).  

The KPK has indeed successfully investigated and prosecuted high-ranked officials from the public sector, often along with their partners in the private sector. The KPK has tried to show that there is no more impunity for white-collar crimes (Schutte, 2012). As can be seen from Table 7.2., from 2002 to 2009, the KPK prosecuted 169 defendants from the public sector (Schutte, 2012). In the list, the most frequently charged categories of defendants were national civil servants (38), the corporate sector (29), and ambassadors, embassy, and consulate staff (20).

Table 7.2. Defendants in KPK as of September 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Number of Defendants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>National civil servants</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Corporate sector</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ambassadors, embassy and consulate staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Regents/mayors</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Members of the House of Representatives</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Local civil servants</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Heads/members of national commissions/agencies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Law enforcement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Governor of Bank Indonesia and Deputies</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>National SOE managers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Provincial governors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Local SOE Managers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Deputy regents/mayors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Councilors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Schutte (2012)

87 Cases that the KPK could handle: ‘[T]hose that involve law enforcement or government officials, attract significant public concern, or are thought to have resulted in at least Rp 1 billion in losses to the state. The Commission can also take over corruption investigations and prosecutions from ordinary police and prosecutors if police or prosecutors fail to respond to a corruption allegation reported by the community, or take too long to begin investigating the allegation; if the legislature, executive or judiciary interferes in the handling of a corruption case; if the handling of a corruption case is itself marred by corruption; or if the case is particularly difficult or complex. The KPK is not permitted to drop an investigation once it formally names a person as a suspect’ (Butt, p. 17, 2013).

88 A study by Blunt et al. (2012b) discussed how corruption can be pervasive among Indonesia’s civil servants.
The KPK’s efforts were not without challenges and resistance. To handle corruption cases in a country with more than 250 million people, the institution has only a few hundred staff (Carey & Haryadi, 2016; Butt, 2013). Questions surrounding the KPK’s integrity, especially when dealing with corruption cases in law enforcement agencies, have been raised by anti-corruption activists since the institution is largely staffed by seconded police officers and prosecutors (Butt, 2013). Carey & Haryadi (2016) and Mulholland (2016) record at least two main attacks on the KPK. First, institutional conflicts between the KPK and the police have resulted in several KPK commissioners having been found guilty of criminal offences. For instance, in 2009, Antasari Azhar, former chair of the KPK, was convicted of murdering Nasrudin Zulkarnaen. The public believed that the case had been manipulated by the police, especially after the former Chief of Police for South Jakarta, Williard Wizard, admitted that the Antasari Azhar case was a set-up to bring him down. In 2015, Abraham Samad, another former Chair of the KPK, and Bambang Widjojanto, former Vice-Chair of the KPK, were convicted of forgery. Again, many people believed that this case was manufactured by the police as revenge for the KPK’s decision to suspect Commissioner General Budi Gunawan on corruption cases, which had nullified his chance of becoming the Chief of National Police. The second attack came from the parliament. In 2015 they wanted to revise Law Number 30/2002 in order to strip away some of the KPK’s privileges. The public believed that the parliament would be KPK’s next target and that parliamentarians needed to do something before the KPK exposed their corrupt practices.

**Corruption, academic cheating, and the suggested solution for the two problems**

Under the leadership of President Joko Widodo (2014-2019) also known as Jokowi, the government has vowed to continue the effort to combat corruption.89 When Jokowi was running for president in 2014, he consistently highlighted corruption as the main threat to the country’s development and offered the idea of a ‘Mental Revolution’ as the answer. In his writing about Mental Revolution, published in Kompas media (Widodo, 2014), Jokowi acknowledged that governments, following the fall of the New Order era, have improved the country’s democracy and accountability through

---

89 During the finalisation of this thesis, Jokowi and his running mate Ma’ruf Amin won the 2019 election. They will be the president and vice-president of Indonesia for the 2019-2024 term.
innovations such as the establishment of independent commissions (e.g. the KPK),
direct elections, and decentralisation. However, Jokowi argued that none of those
innovations would change the mindset of the people who were becoming more
“intolerant, egoistic, opportunistic, and disruptive”. Since nation-building programs
during and after the Reform Era were only focused on institutional aspects and ignored
the people in the process, Jokowi said he was not surprised that a corrupt culture
persists as a stumbling block for the country’s development.

Observations by Rosser & Sulistiyanto (2013) and Pisani (2013) on decentralisation
help to exemplify Jokowi’s point. Decentralisation was implemented with the intention
to devolve some responsibility from the centre to local governments, and to improve
government accountability. Decentralisation was, in a sense, expected to change the
mindset of the local leaders to be more attentive and responsible to the constituents
in their region. But in many cases, it did not happen. One of the programs carried out
under the rubric of decentralisation was Universal Free Basic Education (UFBE).
Although the implementation of UFBE could potentially have expanded Indonesian
children’s access to basic education, not all cities, districts, and provinces agreed on
the initiative. One of the reasons, as Rosser & Sulistiyanto (2013) indicate, was that
some local leaders believed that UFBE did not fit their future political strategies. When
the majority of people consider, or are made to believe (e.g. by resisting business, the
middle classes, and teachers) that UFBE is unaffordable and would undermine the
education quality in their area, some local leaders would consider supporting UFBE as
a blunder.\(^{90}\) In their effort to mobilise votes during an election or maintaining
popularity when governing, supporting UFBE becomes a non-populist strategy. Rosser
(2018) even went further, arguing that the elites of the New Order still control the
state apparatus in the post-New Order period and that this has caused Indonesia’s
education to perform poorly. Among these state apparatus are teachers.\(^{91}\) Pisani
(2013) discovered that some mayors and heads of districts used their power to reward
their supporters at the election, by appointing them as school principals or teachers.

\(^{90}\) The logic behind the resistance is that UFBE nullifies citizens who are willing to pay for higher quality
educations. It also decreases business’ and teachers’ opportunities to earn more money.

\(^{91}\) Teachers are important political supporters because of their large number and their family and social
networks (Rosser, 2018).
The appointed principals and teachers often had to compromise rules and regulations in order to fulfil the political promises that their patron had made.92

The important feature of the Mental Revolution, as Jokowi explained, was not the creation of new qualities for the people; rather, he believes that the most crucial thing to do is to restore the positive qualities that Indonesians used to have, such as being respectful, friendly, and helpful. Jokowi argues that the absence of these qualities was the root of KKN and poor bureaucracy (Kuwado, 2014a).93 To ensure the restoration of these qualities, Jokowi highlighted the importance of the education sector. He wanted schools to give more attention to the character development of their students.94 The school curriculum should not only be about academic content, but also should help children to develop positive attitudes and good manners (Kuwado, 2014b). Jokowi’s idea to tackle corruption using education is in fact in accordance with the study of Transparency International (2013). That study recommends education as a key to influencing children’s principles on integrity, thus protecting them from becoming koruptors.

Assigning such a major task to the country’s education system is not without risk. As I have mentioned before, the sector is already affected by political contestation, and is not immune to corruption problems (Rosser, 2018). According to the data from Transparency International Indonesia (2013), the public categorises the education system as among the top ten of the most corrupt government institutions (i.e. they were scored over a range of 0 (no corruption at all) to 5 (highly corrupt)).

Table 7.3. Indonesia’s most corrupt institutions in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>4.5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>4.5 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

92 The Ministry of Education and Culture noticed that the promise was often of a 100 per cent graduation rate in the National Examination (Bahari, 2015).
93 Jokowi’s Mental Revolution is part of a trend in Indonesia where personal reform is considered a key solution for corruption. Another example of this trend is what Rudnyckyj (2009) called ‘Market Islam’. In the early time of Era Reformasi, many Indonesians took part in new forms of spiritual training (e.g. ESQ by Ary Ginanjar). They were convinced that corruption is more of a personal and ethical problem. Thus, spiritual reformation for increasing people’s low level of morality and piety is needed.
94 It should be noted that character education was introduced in the curriculum in 2011, predating Jokowi’s presidency.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special Allocation Fund</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Operational Assistance</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School Infrastructure</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Book Fund</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Block Grant</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teacher Wages</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Scholarship Fund</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Facility</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Support Fund</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>University Facility</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICW (2013)

ICW identified that the Special Allocation Fund was by far the most frequently misused fund with a total of 84 cases. It should also be noted that 20 per cent of the nation’s annual budget is allocated for the education sector. Without a significant improvement in the management of the budget, allocating more funding to the education system may also mean increasing the probability of corruption in the sector.

---

95 The Special Allocation Fund or Dana Alokasi Khusus (DAK) is a fund from the Indonesian State Budget that is transferred to local governments to fund their responsibilities that are considered as national priorities. In 2013 the education sector used DAK for, among other things, building new classrooms, renovating classrooms, building laboratories, building libraries, and buying handbooks (Direktorat Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan, 2016).

96 Law Number 20/2003 on the National Education System mandated the government to allocate 20 per cent of the annual budget for education. But it was not until 2008 that the government was able to fulfil the mandate. This percentage is extraordinarily high by international standards.
There were indications that corruption in the country’s education system goes beyond the practice of embezzlement. Chaudhury et al. (2006), for instance, found that corruption occurs early in Indonesian schools in the form of teacher absenteeism. A survey in that study revealed that one-fifth of Indonesian teachers were frequently absent from their teaching duties while still receiving their salary.

**Mental Revolution in the education sector**

On September 2015, the government launched the National Movement for Mental Revolution. Anies Baswedan (2015), who was the Minister of Education and Culture from 2015 to 2017, inaugurated the movement and mentioned seven plans that Jokowi had for the Mental Revolution in education. Those plans were: (i) changing the paradigm of competitive learning to individual and personalised learning; (ii) designing a curriculum based on children’s talent and regional needs; (iii) creating conditions that foster children’s eagerness to learn; (iv) providing full trust in teachers to manage children’s learning process; (v) empowering parents to become involved in their children’s development; (vi) assisting school principals to be leaders that serve the school community; and (vii) simplifying education regulations and bureaucracy supported with better assistance and supervision. As part of actualising Jokowi’s blueprint, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the National Examination Integrity Index. Explaining the reason behind the implementation of the Index, Anies Baswedan claimed that cheating in the National Examination is one of the causes of corruption. By stopping students’ cheating behaviours in the National Examination, the government believed that they would also prevent children from becoming corrupt (Wicaksono & Alfath, 2015).

Unfortunately, there was no further explanation from Anies Baswedan about his causal relationship claim, and I could not find any planning documents, policy papers or official statements from the Ministry. Anies Baswedan’s claim and idea may have been a response to Jokowi’s call; it was a suggestion or even a hypothesis that has not been proven yet. However, there is some literature that suggests a possible correlation between academic cheating and corruption.
Sim (as cited in Bretag, 2013) argued that students who cheat in school might retain similar cheating habits when they are at work. Huang (2008) found that there is a relation between corruption and countries’ education quality. Using three datasets – Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2003, the TIMSS 2003, and UNESCO’s measure of school life-expectancy (SLE) – Huang suggests that there is a relation between corruption and countries’ education quality and quantity. From 50 countries that the study measured, those with high corruption rates score low in TIMSS and UNESCO’s SLE. While a correlation does not necessarily indicate causation, potentially, if a country were able to compress its corruption problem to a minimum level, it might have a positive impact on education; alternatively, an improvement in education achievement might help a country to solve corruption. Teixeira and Rocha (2009) suggested that there is barely any academic cheating problem in countries which score well in education performance indices and which have a culture of not tolerating any forms of corruption (i.e. most Scandinavian countries).

Although there are many studies that have tried to prove a correlation between academic cheating and corruption, I could not find any that tried to prove a causal relationship between the two and so I wondered if my participants might suggest otherwise. When I asked them, almost none of my participants were aware that the government had made such a suggestion, with the exception of Pak Wahidin (teacher, SMA Semarang). Some students, however, remembered that in many of the exams that were administered by the government, the answer sheets that they used usually had a sentence that said, “Mencontek itu adalah bagian dari korupsi” or “Cheating [in exams] is a part of corruption.” I persisted with my approach by asking my participants: “Can academic cheating be associated with the corruption problem?” Some participants disagreed with the idea. Some others, like Reza (student, SMA Semarang), believed that it is too complex to choose, and told me that they both opposed and agreed with the proposition.
Reactions to the suggested causation

How did my participants perceive corruption?

Before I go further in discussing my participants’ response to the causal relationship idea, I thought I needed to be clear on my participants’ perception of corruption. The way they defined corruption was not dissimilar to the definitions offered by Indonesian dictionaries (see the beginning of this chapter): it revolves around money. Ambar (student, SMA Semarang) defined corruption based on her personal experience at school:

[C]orruption is (pause) corruption. When I was in year 10, the head of our student body was caught using the organization’s money for his personal purposes. The case caused quite a racket. What made me sad, is that he is now studying for a law degree in [[mentioned a public university known for its excellent reputation]]. I cheat [in my academic work], but that does not mean that I have ever used my authority as a funding coordinator [for student activities] to be corrupt. I often kept, managed, and brought more than ten million rupiah (approximately AUD 1,000) to school. Not once have I ever been corrupt in using the money.

Ambar uses ‘money’ to draw a clear line between cheating and corruption. My participants believed that in corruption, the koruptor is either illegally gaining money or illegally using money to gain what they want. Basically, corruption must involve money. They were quite specific in categorising academic cheating practices that involved money as ‘corruption’, so menyontek barely made it into the list. Teachers asking for money from students for their extra work, school principals embezzling the school’s budget for personal benefit, and the school/teacher marking up procurements were some examples suggested by students for how koruptors in education could illegally obtain money. Meanwhile, parents buying access to school for their child(ren) and parents rewarding teachers for giving high grades to their child(ren) were two examples of how a koruptor could illegally use money to secure something in the field of education.
My perception of corruption was not very different to that of my participants: corruption is always about monetary gain. Corruption for me was when someone cheated the procurement system, or if someone bribed others to get what she or he wanted. At a certain point, I wondered if my perception was related to my habitus as an Indonesian. I started to think that this was probably the case when I came across a study conducted by an Indonesian academic, J. Danang Widoyoko. He looked into corruption in Indonesia’s education system. Compiling his data from several other Indonesian academics, Widoyoko (2010, p. 175) suggests that corruption in the Indonesian education system could be mapped as follows:

Table 7.5. Varieties of corruption in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer of corruption</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Mode of operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| First layer         | Ministry of National Education officials    | • ‘Tendering’ education projects for local government or allocating projects without proper procedures to crony contractors.  
                       |                               | • ‘Buying’ political support by giving vouchers to politicians.                        |
| Second layer        | Local education authority officials         | • ‘Tendering’ government or donor-funded projects to schools. The schools that provide the highest bid in bribes will win the project.  
                       |                               | • ‘Tendering’ principal’s position to teachers.                                        |
| Third layer         | Principals and school committee members     | • Double budgeting. The principals request money from parents for activities that have been funded by the government.  
                       |                               | • Using school funds for non-educational activities, such as ‘coordination fees’ to be paid to bureaucrats and the police.                    |
| Fourth layer        | Teachers                                    | Teachers use their authority to collect additional payments from students, for photocopying, examinations and so on.                        |


Almost all of the corrupt practices indicated in Table 7.5. are related to money. In addition, Widoyoko does not consider students as actors or koruptors. He believes that it is only the adults who made the suspicious list as they are the only ones who have the motive to get their hands on money (which according to my findings on assignment jockeys, is not true).
In response to my participants’ definition of corruption, I then pointed out to students their inconsistency in applying the principle of monetary gain as the reason to consider a behaviour as corrupt. While they consider their teachers’ demand for money as corruption, they ignored their own practice of employing a joki tugas or assignment jockey – a practice that enabled some of them to obtain money (discussed in Chapter Five). Responding to my inquiry, students asked me to consider that in corruption, the koruptor violates the rights of others. One student (Alisa, SMA Bandung) gave an example of someone skimming funds intended for repairing public facilities and infrastructure. Students believed that teachers violated their rights when they asked for money. On the other hand, students’ feelings related to joki tugas were about satisfying mutual needs: some students need help to finish their assignments and some others could use the money. I was not really surprised when they rejected my suggestion and came up with that idea. Clearly, no student wants to be considered a koruptor. But to use their own argument on this matter, students who were involved in the practice of employing a joki tugas did violate the rights of others. They had violated the teachers’ right to be able to assess students’ learning progress and the right of their fellow students to get a fair ranking. It was hard for teachers to do these because students had not worked on their assignment by themselves.

Many of my participants considered korupsi waktu, literally translated as ‘time corruption’, as the most common corrupt behaviour in Indonesia. The term is mostly used by Indonesians to criticise other Indonesians who are unable to be on time. Examples of korupsi waktu could be teachers waiting for colleagues who were late, teachers waiting for a long-delayed meeting, students waiting for their teachers who were late, students waiting for their absent teachers, students coming late to a class, and students coming late for an excursion. But korupsi waktu is also seen as related to money. “Time is money” as some of my participants said, and people who could not be on time have corrupted or wasted other people’s money.

Some of my participants also mentioned two traits of the koruptor. Dinda (student, SMA Bandung) and Bu Caris (teacher, SMA Bandung) believed that koruptors are
greedy people. They cannot contain their selfish desire for wealth and love to boast about what they own to the public. Interestingly, many of my participants believed that koruptors, taking their cue from reporting in the mass media, are well educated and hold respectable positions. With their knowledge, koruptors know how to cheat the system and to use their networks to commit corruption. Reza (student, SMA Bandung) mentioned Rudi Rubiandini to make his argument. Rudi Rubiandini was the chief of the Upstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Task Force; he was also an alumnus of the reputable Bandung Institute of Technology. He was found guilty of accepting bribes from oil companies. Hanafi (student, SMA Bandung) mentioned Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq to build his case. Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq was the Minister for Agriculture and the president of the Justice and Prosperity Party or Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS). He received his higher education degree abroad. He was found guilty of accepting bribes from meat importing companies.

*Disagreeing with the causal relationship suggestion*

The first reason that my participants advanced for opposing the causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption is relatively simple: corruption involves money, while academic cheating does not. With the money from corruption, Defara (student, SMA Bandung) said, koruptors find pleasure, and Dara (student, SMA Bandung) said they were able to fulfil their ambitions. Students did not believe that any of those actions bore a resemblance to academic cheating. They claimed that they did not cheat for something as ‘unethical’ as money and self-indulgence. Students cheat in their academic work to ‘obtain knowledge, be able to graduate, and get self-esteem’ (Defara, SMA Bandung), things they judge to be ethical. Students cheat because they were under pressure from their environment to ‘get good grades, be smart, and come first’ (Dara, SMA Bandung). It seemed that students wanted me to consider them as victims: that they were the victims of excessive demands from their parents and the school system. I have to admit that their workloads were demanding, and parents asked a lot of them, but it was hard for me to accept their argument on money. Defara, for instance, seemed to have forgotten that she had identified herself

---

97 Hanafi mentioned that Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq is an alumnus of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. But according to the internet, he graduated from Punjab University in Lahore.
to me as a joki tugas – hence, she received money from her contract cheating practices. Would Defara then agree if I classified her as a koruptor using her own argument? I very much doubt it.

Another argument against the proposition that cheating will lead to corruption, came exclusively from the teachers – namely, that it was unlikely that cheating students would end up as koruptors. School-age children, as Bu Ainun (SMA Bandung) argued, are emotionally unstable and still in the phase of finding out who they really are. When they decide to cheat, it does not mean that they will be cheating for the rest of their lives. Academic cheating cannot be the trigger that set off students to become koruptors in the future (Pak Hendro, SMA Semarang). Both Bu Ainun and Pak Hendro argued that children’s attitudes and mindsets would change as they grew up. I had then expected that teachers wanted me to believe that corruption is more of an issue facing, and limited to, adults. On the contrary, they wanted me to believe that academic cheating is more of an issue facing, and limited to, young people, which is not true. As I have mentioned before, Pak Solih (teacher, SMA Bandung) once shared to his students that some of the teachers in the school cheated in their certification tests. So basically, teachers made a generational distinction: children cheat, adults are corrupt. There is no clear indication on where or when corruption starts.

There was also disagreement with the suggested causal relationship on the basis of the different situations that bring out the practices. It was exclusively teachers who expressed this view. From 2001 to around 2010/2011, most Indonesians were familiar with a television program called Sergap, or Raid, that mainly reported criminal news from all over the country. What was more famous than the program itself was one of its segments, called Bang Napi or The Con Man. Appearing at the very end of the program, this segment featured the character of a con man – hence the name – highlighting one or a few items of criminal news and delivering this message to the viewers: “Kejahatan tidak selalu terjadi hanya karena niat pelakunya, tetapi juga kesempatan. Waspadalah! Waspadalah!” or “Crime does not only occur because there is intention, but also because there is opportunity. Beware! Beware!” Teachers argued that academic cheating happened because students are in difficult situations,
especially when dealing with parental pressures to finish high in the class or to get accepted in public universities for instance. As for corruption, some teachers used Bang Napi’s persona and said, “Corruption happens because there is an opportunity. Beware!” Teachers tried to convince me that corruption is a criminal behaviour because it involves intention and opportunity, whereas cheating does not. Criminologists Felson & Clarke (1998) support the opportunity thesis argued by the teachers. They suggest that opportunity, along with personal and social factors, are the three principal causes of crime. However, it was difficult to reconcile the teachers’ arguments with my direct observations of two schools, where opportunities to cheat in academic work were abundant, such as: the availability of leaked exam materials in students’ messaging apps; students’ propensity to share homework; teachers’ weak supervision; and parents’ apparent ignorance about indications of cheating in their child(ren)’s school.

I also found that some teachers not only rejected the idea, but also criticised the government for making a connection between cheating and corruption. Bu Ainun (teacher, SMA Bandung), for example, said that she felt offended by the idea. It was as if teachers were now to blame for the presence of corruption. She believed the government had not thought it through thoroughly and was only making the argument on the basis of how academic cheating and corruption are both prohibited behaviours. If more teachers think the way Bu Ainun did, I believe that the suggestion of causation may even backfire on the government.

Support for the suggestion that cheating causes corruption

The first reason that my participants had for agreeing with the suggestion that there is a causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption was that cheating in academic work established a pattern that could lead individuals to take advantage of bigger opportunities in the future and become koruptors. Pak Hendro (teacher, SMA Semarang) and Dhesta (student, SMA Semarang) used the words ‘seed’ and ‘root,’ respectively, as a metaphor for the starting point. They believed that when a person cheats in their academic work, that person is nurturing and growing the ‘seed’ or the ‘root’ of corruption. Their argument was basically similar to that of Adinda (student,
SMA Semarang), Alisa and Debora (students, SMA Bandung), who considered that cheating in academic work is ‘small’ and corruption is ‘big.’ The three of them believed that when students cheat in their academic work and get away with it, they are more likely to engage in regular ‘small bad behaviours’. My participants seemed to believe that once students develop a habit of cheating, they will no longer consider it as ‘bad’ and discount any consequences that might follow. Eventually, students will go on to do bigger ‘bad’ things. This ‘big bad behaviour’ does not have to take place when students are still at school. It could be once students become part of the workforce, and the bad behaviour that they overlook could be corruption.

The next reason is related to the perception that academic cheating and corruption have similar characteristics. Before discussing conversations my participants shared with me, I wanted to briefly highlight research in the field of psychology that supports a link between academic cheating and corruption. Reviewing several cheating-related articles, Orosz et al. (2018), for instance, suggested that a link could be established, considering that the two practices: (1) involve more than one individual; (2) are prohibited; (3) involve people who hide their behaviour from authorities; (4) violate the broader community’s interest; and (5) involve punishment for the perpetrators. As for those that came from my participants’ point of view, there were at least three characteristics that academic cheating and corruption share.

First, Andaru (student, SMA Bandung) and Alanka (student, SMA Semarang) claimed that academic cheating and corruption were basically committed by dishonest individuals. However, as I have shown in Chapters Five and Six, students – including Andaru and Alanka – were in fact remarkably honest to me in discussing academic cheating. They shared with me their story that I believe illustrates the complexity of their motives to cheat, including how to maintain social relations with their classmates and retain their position in the social structure. It was rather hard for me to believe that koruptors would be willing to do what these students had done. I do not think they would be honest about their ‘corruption story’. They would probably try to prove that they were innocent.
Second, Pak Dirham (teacher, SMA Bandung) suggested that individuals who cheat in their academic work or commit corruption are feeling afraid: students are afraid of not being able to graduate, while koruptors are afraid of not getting the kind of life that they want. Pak Dirham’s opinion indicates that any behaviour would probably have multiple causes or motivations. Fear (e.g. fear of not being accepted to enter a public university, fear of losing friends, and fear of displeasing parents) is just one among many reasons or motivations to cheat.

Third, Debora (student, SMA Bandung) believed that both cheating, and corruption, provide a kind of shortcut: academic cheating for getting good grades, and corruption for obtaining wealth. Debora’s view of cheating and corruption as a shortcut was intriguing. She made a strong case that a shortcut is a hint of opportunism. At both schools I did experience this opportunism firsthand several times. Whenever I shared information on scholarships, students and teachers would ask me for ‘tips’ on how to get a scholarship. Knowing that I had been an employee of the Ministry of Education and Culture for several years, a teacher in SMA Bandung asked me if I had a high ranking official that I knew or was friends with to help him win a competition held by the Ministry. When I was not at the schools, I lost count of the times someone cut my place in the line when I was queuing to buy food in a warteg. I will discuss this matter of opportunism further below.

Although some of my participants expressed agreement with the government’s suggestion, they refused to put themselves into the equation. When I followed up the discussion by asking if they see themselves (as students) or their students (for teachers) as potential koruptors, on the basis that they have cheated in their academic work, all of them rejected the idea – which is good since I believe that no country would want their future generations to become koruptors. Andaru (student, SMA Bandung) claimed that he would not be one since he had stopped cheating in year 11.

---

98 As I have discussed in Chapter Five, an obsession with prestasi or achievement has characterised government propaganda since the 1970s (Long, 2013a). Scoring plays an important part in it since the highest and the lowest scores determine who becomes the berprestasi (high-achiever) and who does not (see Long, 2007).

99 As Long (2013b) indicates, many Indonesians believe that personal connections play a more determining role in winning competitions than merit.

100 Warteg is a small-scale, family-owned food stall that sells an array of dishes.
Alisa and Debora (students, SMA Bandung) argued that it depends on the students’ personality, and they were confident that they would not become koruptors. They reminded me again that for some students, cheating in academic work helped them to study. Alanka (student, SMA Semarang) said that he knew how horrible corruption is. Although he cheated in his academic work, Alanka said to some of his classmates and me, “Insyaallah (if God wills) I will never be a koruptor.”

**Corruption in schools – the World Bank’s suggestion**

Whether they agree or disagree that academic cheating causes corruption, it seemed that it was hard for my participants to accept the idea that each of them is vulnerable to corruption. As I have mentioned, in the context of Indonesia, the reason could be that most Indonesians exclusively relate corruption with money. Consequently, cheating practices that do not involve money are not considered as corruption.

Figure 7.1. Education stakeholders and their possible corrupt practices

Source: Patrinos & Kagia (2007, p. 68)
So I decided to revisit my data. Without having my participants label certain practices as corruption, I wanted to know whether they had mentioned academic cheating practices that could be categorised as corruption. I am using the chart from the World Bank (see Figure 7.1) for the basis of my assessment. In the World Bank chart, the two main participants of this study, students and teachers, were classified in different groups. Teachers, who belong to the ‘providers’ group, were indicated to be vulnerable to corrupt practices that occur in the upstream stage (e.g. favouritism and collusion) and the downstream stage (e.g. absenteeism and unofficial fees). Students, who belong to the ‘beneficiaries’ group, were indicated to be vulnerable to corrupt practices that happen only in the downstream stage. Interestingly, unlike the existing discourse in Indonesia, in Table 7.5, above, the World Bank includes rampant cheating as a corrupt practice.

*What students knew*

Adinda (student, SMA Semarang) suggested an academic cheating practice that could be classified as corruption in the World Bank’s upstream stage. She knew that her school had allowed a few students who had exam scores below the passing grade to enrol in the middle of the academic year. She suspected that the financial capacity of the parents of these students was the main reason why her school did not follow the rules.

Several students also mentioned academic cheating practices that could be grouped as corruption in the World Bank’s downstream stage. First, there was the issue of “unofficial fees”. Tarra (SMA Bandung) mentioned some overpriced copied materials for which she had to pay her teachers. She suspected that some teachers were making a profit out of it. Gendhis and Danu (SMA Bandung) revealed how the physical education teacher refused to grade students who had been absent from the swimming lesson. To get a grade, the students had to choose whether to pay the teacher a certain amount of money or take a physical punishment of running around the school for several laps.
Second, there was the issue of teacher absenteeism. Jeremy (SMA Bandung) argued that corruption happens in teacher absenteeism because absent teachers still receive a full salary even though they do not fulfil all of their teaching duties. Jeremy did not see the corruption of teacher absenteeism through the lens of how teachers have wasted time and attention that they are supposed to have used to educate their students (Lyn Parker, personal communication, February 25, 2019). Instead, he seemed to consider that teachers are working within a framework of hourly pay for hourly work.\(^{101}\) The term that Jeremy used was makan gaji buta, literally translated as ‘eating a blind salary’. A more generic term used for this habit of wasting time or being unproductive is korupsi waktu or ‘time corruption’ that I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. The problem of teacher absenteeism, or in the words of students, jam kosong or ‘empty hours’, are common in schools in Indonesia.

In 2003, teachers’ absenteeism rates in Indonesia reached 19 per cent (World Bank, 2010). Based on 2008 data, the figure dropped slightly, with around 15 per cent of teachers absent from their classes on any school day (Suryahadi & Sambodho, 2013). Comparing several countries, including Indonesia, on their teacher absenteeism problem from 2004 to 2011, Transparency International (Patrinos, 2013) came up with this chart:

\(^{101}\) This is actually true for guru honorer or honorary teachers. In several areas in Indonesia “some [are] being paid by the hour, others by the day, and others again a flat rate per month regardless of hours worked” (Rosser & Fahmi, 2016, p. 20).
Transparency International found that one-third of teachers in Indonesia were absent because of illness or legitimate leave. Since these absent teachers did not prepare any substitute method that would enable their students to keep receiving their lessons or instructions (maybe by preparing a substitute teacher) students were left with nothing and ran the risk of being unable to graduate (Patrinos, 2013; Suryahadi & Sambodho, 2013).

Third, there was the issue of score upgrading. Hanafi (SMA Semarang) suggested that score upgrading is similar to several corruption cases where the KPK arrested the perpetrators for marking-up procurement costs.\(^{102}\) Jeremy (SMA Bandung) believed score upgrading is corruption because some of the teachers demanded money for the ‘service’. In some cases, the parents had initiated the idea of score upgrading. Alanka,

\(^{102}\) One of the most recent and major mark-up cases involved an ex-speaker of the parliament (Costa, 2017).
Dhesta, and Reza (SMA Semarang) told me that they once found what they called a *titipan* letter addressed to one of their female teachers.103 In the approximately ten-year-old letter, the parents entrusted their child to the teacher and said they would compensate her for ensuring their child’s good grades.104 Alanka, Dhesta, and Reza said that the letter did not specify the kind of compensation that the parents would give to the teacher. They assumed that it would be in the form of financial assistance.

There was also the issue of the selling of leaked exam materials. For students to acquire such information, first, they needed to be enrolled in a les or private after-hours tuition offered by some of their teachers and to have paid the monthly fee. Besides the private tuition, teachers would occasionally provide leaked materials before the students had their exams (Alanka, SMA Semarang).

**What teachers knew**

Teachers in both SMA mentioned an academic cheating practice that could be classified as corruption in the World Bank’s upstream stage. Discussions that I had with them regarding the *kriteria kelulusan minimum* (often abbreviated to KKM) indicate the political interference that teachers had to experience. The KKM is basically a policy on the minimum pass requirement. Students are required to get a score for their assignments and exams equal to or greater than a certain standard to pass the KKM of a subject. If students are not able to get the required score, they are given time to relearn the materials, and then must take a remedial (i.e. redo the assignment or retake the exam). Students had found a loophole in the system. They realised that their teachers seemed to have an obligation to grade above the pass rate when students took a remedial, disregarding the students’ actual progress in relearning and the final quality of their work. In many cases, students were more interested in knowing the schedule for the remedial test, than knowing the content of the exam.

---

103 The word *titipan* is a noun and in this context refers to students: a precious belonging that parents wanted the teachers to look after.

104 Which sounds similar to Yang’s (1994) explanation on Guanxi in China, where people give gifts to the officials (upwards) in the hope of getting things done (downward).
When I asked some of the teachers about the loophole, they confirmed it. Bu Endita and Bu Ratih (teachers, SMA Bandung) explained that student failure in the remedial would call into question the quality of the education that the school provides, along with the quality of its personnel (i.e. principal and teachers), in the eyes of the public. Subsequently, when the quality of schools is being questioned, the reputation of local leaders responsible for administering the schools is at stake too. Pak Majdi (teacher, SMA Semarang) also admitted that he and his fellow teachers often have to deal with stressful requests. It could be those which are close to the teachers’ work, such as improving students’ academic achievement and maintaining the school’s prestige, or those which are as broad as improving the quality of education in the region where the school is located. Bu Ratih and Pak Majdi were, arguably, examples of what Rosser (2018) argues as the state apparatus working under the control of (New-Order-influenced) elites. Bu Ratih told me that the remedial provides a safety net for everyone who might be at risk if students failed to perform, or if the demands such as those that Pak Majdi had shared, failed to be met.

What Bu Ratih did not explicitly say to me was how teachers put the safety net into practice. Teachers did it by upgrading students’ scores in their remedial assignments and exams. As revealed by students, some teachers were behaving opportunistically to gain individual benefits from the situation. Acting as gatekeepers, these teachers reminded students that without them giving good scores, students would not be able to pass the class. Further, they shifted their ‘obligation’ to pass students to a ‘service’ of score upgrading for which students had to pay.

So students and teachers did mention academic cheating practices that the World Bank considers as corruption. But were they aware that those practices could or should be considered as corruption? I did not think so. Even if the discussion of those academic cheating practices led to talk of corruption, I could imagine that it would involve the topic of whether anyone gained monetary benefit from it. In other words, my participants’ conception of corruption did not seem to include behaviours that did not involve money.
First possibility on the causal relationship of academic cheating and corruption: the reproduction of a culture of opportunism

When trying to understand corruption through the eyes of my participants and what had happened at the two schools, I found a recurring theme that might explain a causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption. I would argue that SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang have become sites for the cultural reproduction of opportunism. Opportunism, and its acceptance as a fact of life, allows academic cheating and corruption at school as well as corruption in the general society to become rampant.

Opportunism in academic cheating

A practice that never fails to surprise my supervisor when she travels to cities in Indonesia is queue-jumping. Also, in many schools and campuses that she visits in Indonesia, she is amazed (by now she is probably less amazed) by how teachers, lecturers, and students regularly asked her to share some tips for success, e.g. on how to pass exams or how to successfully publish articles in international journals (Lyn Parker, personal communications, 2017-2019). Well my supervisor is not alone. I might not be as ‘surprised’ as her – maybe because I am Indonesian? – but it also happened a lot to me during my fieldwork. As mentioned above, I often had the experience of people cutting into my line when I was queuing for lunch in a warit. I had similar experiences when queuing in other places in Indonesia, whether it was at the cashier desk of a grocery store, at the check-in counter of a train station, or at the food buffet of a wedding. I would argue that these anecdotes suggest one thing: that there is a tendency towards opportunism among Indonesians, and this can also be found in many places in Indonesian schools. As for the ‘tips’, at SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, I had the experience of students asking for tips that would guarantee them getting scholarships and teachers asking for high ranking officials that I knew to help them win a competition.

105 Parker & Nilan (2013) argue that this habit of asking for tips might be related to the misconception of success. They often encounter Indonesian students who believe that success can be obtained if they know the tips for berprestasi (e.g. win awards, pass exams, and publish articles). These students rarely understand the importance of, among other things, hard work, knowledge, and higher degree to gain success.
As time went by, I observed more and more opportunism in academic cheating behaviours. Students who asked their classmates for exam leaks or homework to copy, students who demanded and provided the *joki tugas* service, students who cheated in exams, teachers who asked for money for their score upgrading ‘service’ – they were all acting in an opportunistic manner. Parents showed similar opportunistic behaviour.

At a parents’ meeting in SMA Semarang, a parent asked the principal about a rumour that said that the school had given recommendation letters to several students that might be handy when they are applying for entrance to a public university, but that the school would only give such recommendation letters to students whose parents had given donations. The principal denied the rumour, explaining that there was and will be no recommendation letter issued by the school. But the majority of the parents said that if it was true, they were willing to pay the donation to obtain the recommendation letter. I do not think that all of these opportunistic practices in the two schools are new. I believe they have been there across generations. Students, their parents, and teachers of SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang were not only producing those opportunistic behaviours, they were also reproducing what the generations before them had produced.

As I have indicated early in this chapter, opportunism stands out in the history of Indonesia. Before the country’s Independence, the local officials of the Javanese kings, Governor General Speelman and his VOC personnel, the *bupati* and local Dutch officials in the *Kultuurstelsel* era, were behaving opportunistically, committing corruption for the sake of their personal wealth. The endemic corruption during the Soeharto era not only provides more examples of the opportunistic culture, but also shows how the corrupt behaviours were gradually normalised. There is a high probability that the normalisation of corruption has affected many aspects of society, including in producing a weak rule of law. So the pervasiveness of students’ academic cheating, teacher absenteeism, and even the queue-jumping practices, could all partly be caused by the weakness of the rule of law in contemporary Indonesia. When the rule of law is weak, things happen ‘arbitrarily’. In an effort to steer things one’s way in Indonesia, one then relies on one’s patron (Shiraishi, 1997). So when students and
teachers (in my supervisor’s and my case) believe that their chance of publishing an article in an international journal, or of winning a scholarship or a competition is small due to arbitrariness, they saw us as potential patron, or at least important networks or contacts.

Shiraishi (1997) also explains that in the exercise of power, arbitrariness goes hand-in-hand with tolerance. The people in power – Shiraishi uses bapak or father or President Soeharto in her book – practice their power or authority by showing tolerance of their subordinates’ acts of irregularity. Upon receiving a favour, the subordinates then submit themselves to the one who tolerates their acts. A widespread practice that Shiraishi noticed was how a bapak such as a minister tolerate his subordinates’ absence from office the day after religious holidays (especially Idul Fitri), considering it an ‘irregular’ incident rather than a systemic and structural problem.

With regard to academic cheating, I would argue that many teachers are in the position of tolerating students’ cheating behaviours. In this way, they can escape dealing with the question of their, for instance, teaching performance. Aside from academic cheating, I was able to find two other cases that indicate the practice of opportunism and tolerance of irregularities. The two cases are: the bankruptcy of kantin kejujuran or ‘honesty canteen’ (found in SMA Semarang) and the way underage and unlicensed students drive motorcycles to school (found in both schools).

The case of honesty canteen

In 2008, the Indonesian Attorney General’s office initiated a program called kantin kejujuran or honesty canteen. The government expected the kantin kejujuran to nurture student’s characters so that they would become honest and responsible persons. Similar to the National Examination Integrity Index, the main intended result of the kantin kejujuran was for the country to have fewer or no corrupt persons among its future generations. The basic idea of the canteen is to have no shopkeeper, so students who buy something from the canteen must get it by themselves and pay, by putting the money in a designated box or container, based on the price tag. While the program has been around for approximately a decade, some schools are just starting
it. A few schools which implemented the program earlier were able to maintain the canteen, but in many others, including SMA Semarang, the canteen had to be closed down due to bankruptcy. All that was left behind in the school was a banner that says “Selamat datang di kantin kejujuran” or “Welcome to the honesty canteen” and an empty glass display cabinet.

In the end, some students decided not to play according to the rules of the kantin kejujuran. For these students, it seemed that the opportunity of getting ‘something for nothing’ as there was no one looking, was too good to be missed. I believe that for the school to label the problem of kantin kejujuran as “bankruptcy” meant that they were oversimplifying what had actually happened at the school: students were stealing! And stealing is a serious offense. Ignoring the stealing meant that teachers were showing tolerance and at the same time escaping from their responsibility to deal with an offense that could hurt their individual and their school’s reputation.

The case of underage and unlicensed students riding motorcycles to school

The regulation surrounding motorcycle use in Indonesia is clear: only those who are 16 years of age or above can apply for a C category (motorcycle) driver’s licence. Thus, most year 10 and some year 11 students would not be eligible as they are underage. In line with this regulation, many schools only allow students who own a C class driver’s licence to park their motorcycle in the school grounds. The number of students who actually use a motorcycle as their means of transportation to go to and from school far exceeds the number of those who park their motorcycle inside the school. Students without a driver’s licence park their motorcycle in alternative parking lots outside the school. Knowing the existing demand and the extra money that can be generated, parking management in hotels, malls, offices (in the case of SMA Semarang) and tenants of a property (in the case of SMA Bandung) located near the school take the opportunity to provide these extra or unauthorised parking lots. Students told me that the people working in the parking service do not care if the students do not have a driver’s licence. Hotels and malls (or people who manage the parking lot), which usually charge a higher parking fee compared to other businesses, even give students a special rate. The principal, teachers, and everyone else at the schools know about this.
But they said that they could not do anything about it. As long as students do not park inside the school area, it is not their concern. Students also told me that their parents are fully aware of the fact that they are underage and do not have a driver’s licence to ride their motorcycles. Obviously, teachers and parents – and arguably the police – were showing great tolerance on this matter. But they were also escaping from the responsibility of, among others, ensuring a safe and effective mode of transportation for their students or child(ren). They realise that it is a major task that needs coordination among several institutions and will most likely not do anything, unless someone or some institutions take the initiative to start.

The problem with the driver’s licence is actually more complicated than this because the process to obtain a licence from the police is rife with signs of corruption. The following is what Hanafi had to say to describe how corrupt the process could be:

I tried, but it was hard to believe [that I could get a] driver’s licence. It is supposed to be a test, but it was more like a very, very, difficult test (laughing). I tried to practise... [At the test site] we had to make a U-turn, an impossible U-turn... Although my parents taught me the importance of honesty, to save all the hassles, we decided to pay [the bribe to get the licence without taking the test]... If there is money, there is a way.

Hanafi’s experience was shared by many other students and their families. In a parents’ meeting, a mother suggested to the principal that the school should coordinate a collective driving license process for the students who meet the age requirement. By doing that, she hoped that the police could guide and advise the group, and the students could get their drivers’ licences more easily. Her suggestion received a warm welcome from the other parents. The principal told the parents that the school used to do that, but they had had to stop since the establishment of the Saber Pungli (a task force in the National Police specially assigned to tackle illegal levy cases). He could not promise anything to the parents, but said he would ask his friend in the city’s police office whether the practice would be considered as legal.
Reproduction of opportunism

Like Willis (1977) who saw Hammertown Boys’ School as a site of cultural reproduction, I consider SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang as sites for cultural reproduction, and a significant element in that culture is opportunism. The school structure (e.g. their rules that do not acknowledge and address academic cheating), the teachers’ attitudes, and the students’ behaviours, the cheating habitus, and the different capitals at stake, have made it possible. Without those factors, I do not think that the reproduction of opportunistic behaviours could happen. A proof to support the argument was how students behave differently when taking international language tests organised by private companies. Students extensively cheat in their exams at school but do not have the nerve to cheat when they take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exams or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams. Students were clearly more willing to cheat in schools because they knew that their teachers would protect them. They had no such expectation of the proctors of standardised language tests. This was confirmed by the students themselves. Students believed that it would be too costly for them, in terms of both the money and the risk if they got caught cheating in the TOEFL or IELTS exams. Obviously, the capital and habitus at the private companies which run the tests are different to what the students are familiar with at school.

I believe that the lack of action on the opportunistic behaviours of academic cheating at school encourages the reproduction of opportunism in other aspects of school – arguably on a greater scale – and accordingly, shapes how students, teachers, and even parents, function in school. There is a possibility that cases such as the kantin kejujuran in SMA Semarang and the riding of motorcycles to school by unlicensed students in both SMAs were the results of the reproduction of opportunism in academic cheating. Since some parents/teachers only care about the end result of their child(ren)’s/students’ study, their reputation, or their school’s reputation, they let their child(ren)/students take the opportunity to cheat. They do not care about the learning process that their child(ren)/students are supposed to experience. I do not think that parents/teachers with these attitudes would go out of their way to

---

106 Schools do not administer these international language tests.
encourage their children to be honest with the honesty canteen or to jointly discuss how to prevent their underage and unlicensed child(ren)/students from riding their motorcycles to school. But then why would they? Teachers and parents hardly see anything wrong with the two cases. In fact, parents are the ones who provide the motorcycles for the underage and unlicensed students.

Knowing that their school and parents will not take any concrete action, I believe that students will reproduce what has been done before. Via academic cheating, *kantin kejujuran*, and illegal driving practices, parents and schools share in preparing the child(ren)/students of SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang to become part of a society that reproduces the culture of opportunism. This kind of society is the structural factor that I believe has been encouraging and reinforcing corruption for so long. The prevalence of essay mill services confirms this. On several brief walks on the streets in Semarang I found many banners such as the one in Picture 7.3:

Figure 7.3. Advertisement of Essay Mill Service

The poster is an essay mill advertisement that offers a thesis writing service to people who are studying for their bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees.
Although thesis writing is specific to tertiary level students, I found the banner not only in the vicinity of universities and polytechnics. I also found the banner near SMA Semarang, near the Education Office of Semarang, near the Education Office of Central Java Province, near the office of the Governor of Central Java, near shopping malls, and near my boarding house. The banners were simply in many different places in Semarang. Opportunists hoping to benefit from the failed structures were clearly doing good business, and no one seemed to care about it. During my two and a half months of fieldwork in the city, to the best of my knowledge, none of those banners was taken down. No one appeared to be responsible for removing the banners or tracking down the perpetrators on the other end of that phone number. Society seemed to accept this opportunistic behaviour, and by its silence, reproduce it, encouraging corruption.

**Second possibility on the causal relationship of academic cheating and corruption:**

**individual collectivism practices**

An additional explanation for a causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption can be suggested from the practice of collectivism. This idea can be generated from a study by Seleim & Bontis (2009) that was conducted to understand corruption from the basis of national cultures. They incorporate a wide-ranging quantitative study of 18,000 individuals in the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) project that measured nine cultural values and practices including uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individual collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, human orientation dimension and institutional collectivism. One of their conclusions in the study was the suggestion that individual collectivism practices encourage corruption.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the collectivist values prevalent among Indonesian children mainly from the perspective of Shiraishi (1997). She believes that Indonesian children highly value their family and their family networks, such as relatives and friends. As good family members, Indonesian children will do anything that benefits their family. She also talks about their groupism – how they prefer to do
things in groups rather than individually, e.g. go out of their way to collect friends to go somewhere. Shiraishi’s explanation has a lot in common with how Seleim & Bontis (2009, p. 171) define individual collectivism. They describe it as “the strength of ties within small groups such as family and close friends.” The problem with individual collectivism is that “[the members of these groups] have strong expectations from each other... [and] can break rules and legal procedures to meet such expectation.”

To understand corruption better, Seleim & Bontis (2009) suggest that we differentiate between individual collectivist values and individual collectivist practices. Terms that I found to be more straightforward and applicable was to consider individual collectivism values as “Should Be” and individual collectivism practices as “As Is” (Frese 2015). The following practices are some examples of the individual collectivist values (Should Be) and individual collectivist practices (As Is) in the context of academic cheating that occurred in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang:

**Practice 1**: Students work on homework/examinations together.

**The “Should Be”**: (1) Homework/examinations are an individual assignment; (2) Being helpful is a good trait; (3) Providing mutual support creates solidarity.

**The “As Is”**: (1) Students are considered to be helpful, ‘cool’, supportive or more solid, able to get more friends, and be more popular if they share their homework/exam answers with classmates; (2) Students cooperate among themselves to deal with too many lessons, too many assignments, and long school hours.

**Practice 2**: Students remind classmates not to cheat in their academic work.

**The “Should Be”**: Being honest is a good trait.

**The “As Is”**: (1) Students who question or challenge cheating using moral values such as honesty are considered to be self-centred and selfish; (2) Students who cheat will prioritise values such as solidarity and being helpful rather than being honest.

**Practice 3**: Teachers witness students cheating in exams.

**The “Should Be”**: Teachers take concrete action to identify and punish the respective students.
The “As Is”: Teachers warn students not to cheat, but rarely follow up with any concrete actions. This happens for several reasons (e.g. teachers claim not to have the evidence, want to give students a second chance, do not know what to do, or believe that punishment is not educative).

Practice 4: Teachers evaluate students’ academic performance.
The “Should Be”: Evaluations are based on students’ performance.
The “As Is”: Some teachers compromise the evaluation for the sake of (1) money, since they perceive their income to be insufficient; (2) reputation, because the public and the government regularly evaluates them and the school where they teach.

Practice 5: Adults encourage/discourage students from cheating in their work.
The “Should Be”: It takes a village to raise a child (proverb).
The “As Is”: Parents think students cheat because schools (i.e. teachers) are incapable of providing a good education, while schools argue that students cheat because parents are ignorant of their child(ren)’s academic progress and demand too much.

Practice 6: Choice of study paths by parents (natural science or social sciences).
The “Should Be”: Students have their own desire and want or need to be listened to.
The “As Is”: (1) The natural sciences study path is more prestigious than the social sciences; (2) Schools provide more natural sciences classes and most parents want their children to take natural sciences; (3) Many students are not interested in the natural sciences or are only interested in some aspects; they cheat in order to cope with the lessons and match their classmates’ progress.

Practice 7: Teachers ask for money from students for score upgrading.
The “Should Be”: Students report their teachers to parents and the parents (and principal) reports cheating teachers to the higher authority.
The “As Is”: No reports are made because parents, students, and teachers benefit from the practice.

Practice 8: The use of CCTV.
The “Should Be”: CCTV can be for many purposes, including for invigilating exams and identifying cheating in class and in exams.

The “As Is”: (1) Schools use CCTV to nurture obedience among students (e.g., observing and warning students if they misbehave during the national anthem or flag-raising ceremony, or when students smoke in the toilet); (2) Schools do not use it to invigilate students who might cheat in their exams or work on their homework together.

Practice 9: Individual and group work.

The “Should Be”: Teachers assign their students both individual and group work to help them develop various skill sets.

The “As Is”: (1) Teachers rarely give individual assignments; when they do, they tend to allow students to work together; (2) Teachers often offer students a choice between having an assignment as individual or group work, and it always ends as group work; (3) Both students and teachers save lots of time with group work.

Considering the long list of cases that I was able to observe and the frequency and normality of these collective practices, it can be said that individuals in the school have been nurturing their individual collectivist practices. Students and teachers were prioritising their group or the values that their group collectively holds. They “interpret laws, rules, and regulations for the benefit of their groups and close friends” (Seleim & Bontis, 2009, p. 179). So if individual collectivism indeed reinforces corruption, then individuals at school had taken their first step to corruption, or at least inadvertently exposed themselves to be prone to corruption.

Is it a causal relationship?

In the end, I did not find a definitive answer to my inquiry on the possible causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption. The only time I got tempted to believe that the government’s causal-relationship idea could be true was when I received some anecdotes on how students seem to be aware of the power of money to cheat the system (e.g. students paid random pedicab drivers to pretend to be their parents to collect the students’ evaluation report). If these kinds of academic cheating
behaviours happen regularly, the combination of money and cheating may indeed have a strong corrupting influence on students. Obviously, further research needs to be done to prove this argument. Coming back to why I could not find a causal relationship, one possible reason may lie in the design of the study. To be precise, since the idea suggested by the government was that academic cheating (in the National Exam) could be one of the factors that causes corruption, maybe I should have included people who had been convicted as koruptors as my participants. But of course there would have been other challenges that I needed to deal with if I had included them. If they had agreed to be interviewed, a koruptor might have refused to admit her/his guilt and blame the system for what happened to them, or they might have refused to link their academic cheating to corruption. To triangulate my data, I would also have had to have had a control group of adults who were not corrupt and ask them if they had cheated at school. In other words, it could have been really complex.

**Conclusion**

This chapter tried to understand the government’s argument that academic cheating is one of the causes of Indonesia’s corruption problem. Also, it attempted to find an actual relation between academic cheating and corruption in SMA Semarang and SMA Bandung. I would argue that the government’s reason for suggesting a causal relationship can be traced back to the early post-Soeharto era. Since the fall of the Soeharto regime, the government has tried to confront the issue of corruption, mostly in the form of catching, arresting, and prosecuting koruptors. Jokowi’s presidential agenda in 2014 demanded more – something preventative. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture under the leadership of Anies Baswedan came up with a rather ‘quick fix’ idea. Anies suggested that academic cheating in the National Examination is one of the roots of corruption, and that it needs to be eradicated. Although there are researchers who have suggested a correlation between academic cheating and corruption, none of them has proposed that academic cheating causes generalised corruption. When I tried to find a causal relationship between the two problems directly in my two field sites, I was able to identify two important elements in the school culture that could potentially encourage and reinforce corruption. Those two
elements are the cultural reproduction of opportunism and the practice of individual collectivism.

In the cultural reproduction of opportunism, I noticed signs of weakness of the rule of law and the fact that rule avoidance was a habitus on the part of both students and teachers. Those who operate within this habitus respond rationally by abiding by its expectations (e.g. students must get good grades and teachers must uphold school’s reputation), thereby helping to routinise and reproduce cheating behaviours (e.g. students copying classmates’ homework and teachers upgrading students’ grades). As for the practice of individual collectivism, students and teachers are subjected to contradictory values. They had to choose the value of ‘impersonal’ honesty and integrity (not cheating) or the value of solidarity, helping, and caring for others. Amidst the moral conflicts, students and teachers would interpret rules and regulations for the benefit of their groups or affiliations. If the education system continues to nurture the two elements, it may have deeper causes in Indonesia’s political and legal culture.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion

Thesis summary

This study is an inquiry into cheating behaviour in schools in Indonesia. Since individuals in schools may have felt uncomfortable about openly discussing their stand on the practice of academic cheating, an appropriate method of investigation was needed. As shown in Chapter Three, an ethnographic methodology enabled me to closely observe interactions that appeared in the school and classroom settings, to build trust with students and teachers, and to obtain their emic perspectives on academic cheating. These perspectives helped me to understand and analyse why cheating in academic work is an everyday recurring behaviour, especially by, but not limited to, students.

Discourses of academic cheating in Indonesia revolve mainly around the implementation of the National Examination, which is basically a standardised test for students in years 9 and 12. The National Exam is a massive agenda for Indonesia. In 2015, the government spent approximately AUD 57 million to facilitate the participation of more than 7 million students from around 79,000 schools in the standardised test (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). From media reports, the main forms of cheating in the National Exam are the leaking of exam papers, individual cheating by students, and systemic cheating by schools. Because the government uses the results of the exam to assess the country’s latest education achievement, they believe that cheating in the National Exam has disrupted their attainment of the objective of the evaluation. Since school and student achievement have been compromised and the real learning of students cannot be captured, it is difficult for the government to determine appropriate interventions for quality improvement.

But no matter how large and meaningful the National Exam, it is only an annual event. While efforts to address the problem should be appreciated, the sole focus on the National Exam is, in my opinion, misdirected. It overlooks other cheating practices that are ubiquitous and occur every day. There is a pervasive culture of cheating, to the
extent that certain behaviours apart from cheating in the National Exam are not seen as academic cheating. In Chapter Four, I revealed that cheating in schools in Indonesia is indeed beyond the National Exam. Those cheating practices happened daily and involved students, teachers, and parents. Most importantly, cheating in academic work was considered to be acceptable. Some examples of cheating practices are students copying classmates’ homework, students performing ‘contract cheating’, teachers upgrading students’ grades, teachers selling grades to students, and parents bribing schools so that their child(ren) can be accepted. If the government and schools in Indonesia keep trying to deal with what appears to be a day-to-day problem only once a year, which is during the National Exam, it is hard for me to believe that there will be significant progress.

Current solutions that the central and local governments implement in dealing with cheating in the National Exam and other kinds of exams in schools, respectively, are centred on technology. Computer-based tests and online tests are two examples of technology-based solutions. Although they might sound promising, I found that the implementation of these technology-based solutions is problematic. The central government (i.e. the Ministry of Education and Culture) claimed that the computer-based test for the National Exam is effective. Students would not be able to share their answers for two reasons: students would receive slightly different questions, and the sequence of the questions would be random. The government considers that schools that have the resources to hold the computer-based National Exam, including SMA Semarang, are free of cheating. I could not prove whether or not that claim was true, but I could confirm one thing: that initiative could not stop the rumour of the availability of leaked exam materials on the internet. Over the three days of exams, students distributed and shared information of leaked National Exam materials using their messaging apps, even when they actually doubted the authenticity of the materials. As for the local government of Bandung, they believe that their online-based test system is unbreakable. However, students of SMA Bandung told me that they know how to beat the system and shared the strategies with me. Based on what I observed in both SMAs, I could not help but believe that students are always one step
ahead of the government, the teachers, and the parents in using the technology for their own benefit by cheating.

While many believe and suggest that technology is one of the solutions to the problem of academic cheating, ironically technology highlights the difference between current academic cheating practices and those that were practiced two decades ago, when I was in senior secondary school. During my school days, leaked materials for the National Exam were very expensive and not all students could afford them. When I wanted to copy a friend’s homework, I had to borrow her or his book, and sometimes could only do it at their desk. My friends and I would make a cheat sheet for an exam on a tiny piece of paper on which we tried to fit every important note. Students nowadays frequently use their smartphones to browse for leaked exam materials and then they share the materials with their friends in other classes and even other schools. They also use their smartphones to take pictures of a classmate’s homework and share it with the rest of the class so that everyone can work from their own desk. In an exam, if a student manages to use their smartphone, it becomes a gate to endless answers. I believe that the ‘face’ of cheating changes along with the advancement of technology.

The largest part of this thesis has discussed why the problem of academic cheating has become normal and pervasive. In order to do that, I found Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, the various forms of capital, field, practice, and cultural reproduction very useful. As I was trying to find cheating patterns to better understand the behaviours, I found SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang each had their own cheating habitus. I discussed the differences in Chapter Five. In SMA Semarang, known as a high achieving school, students showed their academic competitiveness when they participated in cheating practices. For instance, when students copied their classmate’s homework, they asked questions regarding the process of finding the answers. I believed that students were doing it to display their interest in learning, despite the copying. For the students of SMA Semarang, a competitive identity was their cultural capital. Students showed it so they could maintain their reputation and position in the social space. Cheating in SMA Semarang was also in line with students’ familial habitus. Most
students told me that their parents were greatly concerned about where they ranked at the end of the term, and cheating was one of the ways to cope with their expectation of a high rank. In SMA Bandung, a less achieving school, cheating was an arena for students to compete for the title of the ‘helpful’ friend. It was common for students to offer their work so their classmates could copy. I believed that students were doing it to display their kindness toward their classmates. For the students of SMA Bandung, a helpful identity was a way to gain social capital. Cheating in SMA Bandung was also consistent with students’ familial habitus. Although most students told their parents that some of the teachers were selling grades, nothing happened. Parents did not want to ‘make things right’ if it would risk their child(ren)’s wellbeing at school. Stability was very important for the parents.

I discussed why academic cheating is so pervasive and institutionalised in Chapter Six. The centre of the discussion was students’ social relations with their classmates and friends. I found that students develop a comfortable and strong relationship with their peers, motivating them to form groups. Cheating in academic work has become a source of symbolic capital that students can use to cement their position in their social group. As symbolic capital, cheating gained its value from students’, teachers’, and parents’ acceptance. Students constantly negotiated the acceptability of their cheating behaviours because of the existence of two principles. First, students were under the influence of their social networks, which forced them to believe that refusing to cheat was not an appreciated social behaviour. Second, students experienced a conflict of moralities: they accepted that moral values related to their social relations were more influential in their life than the ‘universal’, external moralities of academic cheating. Students who were able to play the social game without violating these two principles – either intentionally or not – had a better chance than others of being at the top of the social hierarchy, to be among the popular students. On top of that, teachers and parents tended to belittle the significance of academic cheating as a problem.

The government has suggested a possible causal connection between academic cheating and the country’s corruption problem. I discussed my findings and analysis regarding that matter in Chapter Seven. I believe that the idea of a causal relationship
can be traced back to the early post-Soeharto era, when the government typically tried to tackle corruption by catching, arresting, and prosecuting people who committed corruption. Because President Jokowi’s Mental Revolution rhetoric demanded a preventative measure, the Minister of Education and Culture came up with something of a ‘quick fix’. The Minister, Anies Baswedan, believed that academic cheating in the National Examination was one of the roots of corruption and that it needed to be eradicated. It was hard for me to show a clear causal relationship between the two problems directly in my two field sites.

However, my findings of opportunism and individual collectivism in both schools could potentially provide an alternative explanation. There is a high probability that opportunistic behaviours, such as academic cheating, are partly caused by the weakness of the rule of law. In the history of Indonesia, the weak rule of law created arbitrariness. Patron figures take advantage of the arbitrariness by showing tolerance of their subordinates’ acts of irregularity, including in committing corruption. As for the individual collectivism, there were indications that students and teachers would interpret rules and regulations for the benefit of their groups or affiliations. For instance, teachers were supposed to do evaluations based on students’ performance, but some of them compromised it for the sake of their school’s reputation. Therefore, there is a possibility that with their individual collectivism practices, students and teachers exposed themselves to the practice of corruption. It should be noted that opportunism and collectivism are often the basic motivation for crimes such as corruption. If society keeps ignoring and not addressing these two cultures, we could be nurturing the elements that enable corruption to grow: “It is like providing fertile soil in which corrupt practices grow and flourish” (Lyn Parker, personal communication, April 2, 2019).

Limitations

This thesis has several limitations. In general, the limitations are related to the number of schools that I observed and the exclusion of particular potential participants. If I had been able to address these limitations, this study might have been able to contribute more, both in its methodology and its findings.
In an interview, a participant lamented that this research would not have a wider perspective on the problem of academic cheating. Since the two senior secondary schools in this study are both public schools located in urban areas, I would miss out on the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents from, among others, rural schools, private schools, and religion-based schools. The fact that the two schools are located in Java could also mean that I had ignored the possible ‘difference’ of the problem in other islands. The idea of ‘only’ two schools seemed odd to this interviewee since he assumed the problem occurred in all schools in Indonesia. I have addressed this methodological issue by explaining that this study was not meant to be comprehensive, nor to enable the development of generalisations. Generalisation for a country as diverse as Indonesia is problematic, and has been identified by many researchers, including Clifford Geertz, who, in his study of social and economic change in two towns in Indonesia (i.e. Modjokuto and Tabanan), mentioned:

> Indonesia as a nation is not the village or the small town writ large. It is an autonomous social system with its own proper characteristics, its own dynamics, its own purposes and problems. One cannot, therefore, generalize in any direct way from a Modjokuto or a Tabanan to the country as a whole. To do so is to commit the fallacy of composition in an egregious manner; it is to confuse the elements of a synthesis with the synthesis itself (Geertz, 1963, p. 142).

That said, this study is intended to better understand academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. I had enough time and opportunity to explore the in-depth dimensions of academic cheating in only two schools. For instance, I was able to get to know the students and their social groups, and even to figure out the hierarchy in their social system. Also, I was able to develop relationships of trust with my participants, allowing me to acquire discreet information on academic cheating that would not have been obtainable via a survey or other quantitative data-collecting instrument. These relationships of trust allowed me to collect information such as parents’ aspirations for their child(ren)’s educational attainments, the kinds of pressures that students and teachers had to deal with, and the social vulnerabilities of the students.
In addition, all public and most private senior secondary schools in Indonesia are under the same education system. My findings in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang indicate that some teachers’ and students’ motivations to cheat would apply to teachers and students in other schools in Indonesia (e.g. students want to pass a subject and teachers must impress local leaders with good percentages of high marks). So even with only two samples, this research was able to reveal structural and systemic reasons for academic cheating.

An additional limitation presented itself near the end of this research. As it was difficult for me to find a definitive answer to my inquiry on the possible causal relationship between academic cheating and corruption, I started to think about incorporating people who had been convicted as koruptors as my participants. The idea was straightforward: I would ask the koruptors whether they had cheated when they were in school and whether they thought it had anything to do with their decision to commit a crime of corruption. But there would have been some obstacles that made the idea seem hardly do-able. For instance, a koruptor might not admit their guilt at having committed a crime or they might refuse to link their academic cheating to corruption, presenting me with another dead-end. If they turned out to causally link the two problems, I would then need to triangulate my data. I would need to create a control group of adults who were not corrupt and ask them if they had cheated at school. But since I was in the last year of my study, I did not have time to do this. In addition, considering the difficulties of getting Ethics Committee’s approval to do this study, I thought the idea would be considered too risky and most likely would not be approved.

**Contributions to the literature**

The existing literature on academic cheating in schools in Indonesia is almost non-existent. When I searched the topic using the UWA Library database, I could not find anything. When I searched the topic using the Google Scholar database, I could only find a very limited number of articles and theses about cheating in Indonesian schools, written by undergraduate students in Indonesian universities, such as from Astuti & Purwanto (2014), Purwanto (2015), and Rohma (2013). These three works are focused
on cheating in examinations, with students as the sole perpetrators. It should be noted that often such literature has very limited bibliographies and questionable methodologies. So by default, this thesis begins the literature on academic cheating in schools in Indonesia.

This research has tried to avoid treating students and teachers as ‘suspects’ that are the heart of the problem of academic cheating. Instead, this research wanted to allow students, teachers, and even parents to voice their opinions and motivations on academic cheating. Thus, a specific contribution that this research wants to make to the literature on academic cheating in schools in Indonesia is the introduction and inclusion of insiders’ perspectives to the discussion. This research has managed to do that. Chapter Four showed how students and teachers opened up to me about how unclear the whole National Examination Integrity Index idea was for them. Although SMA Semarang had received an award for their achievement in the Index, they did not just praise the program. Chapter Six showed how students revealed the clash of moralities that they experienced in academic cheating. So cheating does not always mean that students are choosing the wrong over the right – most of the time it is about choosing the most ethical options for them in their social system. In addition, Chapter Seven showed that students and teachers were the victims of structural problems that forced them to cheat.

**Future research**

This study should be considered only as a starting point for a bottom-up approach to understanding the problem of academic cheating in schools in Indonesia. There are at least three future research projects that I believe could potentially be a follow-up to or an expansion of this research:

- The research has captured students’, teachers’, and parents’ perspectives on academic cheating. However, the students’ perspectives have dominated the discussion. To have other researchers allocate more attention to teachers’ and parents’ perspectives would enrich the literature on this topic.
- The research could be used as one component in a comparative study. This research may illustrate similar or contrasting characteristics of students from other
high-achieving or low-achieving schools and how they perceive academic cheating in their social relations with classmates and friends. Furthermore, conducting research at schools with other characteristics, such as rural schools, private schools, vocational schools, religion-based schools, primary or junior secondary schools, or schools that are not located in Java would provide additional points of view to the problem.

- The National Examination Integrity Index and other top-down policies issued by the government (e.g. the Standard Operational Procedure & the Computer-Based Test) are methods to address cheating specifically in the National Exam. These policies cannot deal with other forms of academic cheating that happen daily. The country’s latest school curriculum (Kurikulum 2013 or K2013) has a strong emphasis on character education, with honesty as the main character trait. So compared to other policies, the curriculum actually has more potential to help in suppressing academic cheating in class routines. It would be fruitful if other studies could verify whether the implementation of K2013 is having an impact on students’ honesty.

- This research was only conducted in SMA Bandung and SMA Semarang, but it is hard for me not to suspect that all schools in Indonesia have an academic cheating problem. As I have said earlier, the top-down approach from the government does not seem to be effective for addressing academic cheating. It would be very beneficial if other studies could find a school that has come up with a kind of in-house solution to the problem. It would open the possibility of having a ‘best practice’ standard from which other schools could learn.
Reference List


Butt, S. (2013) Indonesia’s anti-corruption courts: Are they as bad as most people say and are they getting better? *Is Indonesia as corrupt as most people believe and is it getting worse?* (pp. 17-24). Melbourne: Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society.


Appendix

Number of students in the two schools

1. Number of students in SMA Bandung 2015/2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>1269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Number of students in SMA Semarang 2015/2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>1435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of teachers and education personnel in the two schools

1. Number of teachers and education personnel in SMA Bandung 2015/2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Personnel</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Number of teachers and education personnel in SMA Semarang 2015/2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Personnel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exam Procedure

Students completing an exam.
(1) If the students' grade fulfils minimum completion criteria, then it is done.
(2) If fail to fulfil minimum completion criteria, then they go to the next step.
Teachers analyse students' work to understand why they cannot get the minimum completion criteria.
Teachers decide the appropriate remedial methods.
Methods:
(1) Individual tutoring
(2) Group tutoring
(3) Peer tutoring
(4) Re-learning
(5) Assignments
Remedial Exam

Source: Panduan Penilaian oleh Pendidik dan Satuan Pendidikan untuk Sekolah Menengah Atas (Direktorat Pembinaan SMA, 2017)