

Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to comprehend the "Street Children" phenomenon with respect to the aspect that generally has been ignored in society. The discourses of Street Children, which are normally perceived by the public, often discriminate them from ordinary children being considered innocent. The status of street children is still illegal in that they are not looked after by their own parents. Besides, from different angles, they are inclined to commit crime bringing about social annoyance and danger. Eventually, these discourses result in social treatments satiated with violence and disparagement, thereby pushing them to "the marginal" or "the wastage" of society.

The researcher attempts to be acquainted with a group of Street Children in Hualumpung Area through the connection with "Better Life of Children Foundation" which has provided them help and care in the same area. In the field research, the researcher plays the role as a "teacher". After having been familiar with them through many activities, e.g. conversation, and participation in common activity for a long time. The researcher, as a result, "knows" Street Children from different point of view other than so-called discourses. The emphasis of this study is on their living conditions which correlate to an environment composed of groups of people, foundations and organizations for children. Therefore, the research tries to understand the specific context giving rise to the "community" of Street Children, and to comprehend how they define themselves, react to the surrounding "world".

This thesis lies in the way society defines "Street Children" categorized into three dimensions. The first dimension indicates that society or public has a monopolistic authority to define "public space" for common interest of everyone except for Street Children as they are regarded as "pollution" of space. Also, this research argues that they have their own notion of "public space" in harmony with their ways of life. The equivocal definitions represent the phenomenon that reflects disparate power relations that sometimes incur violence.

Second dimension is that "Street Children" usually have rough and aggressive behaviors resulting from never without undergoing suitable process of socialization, thereby predisposing to be juvenile delinquents. However, this research does not reject

most of the definitions in this dimension, but attempts to understand particular conditions that influence children to be possessed of such characters. The definition of the society, from the researcher's point of view, does not cover all aspects of "Street Children". The participant observation of their everyday life suggests that they are not different from other children who adapt themselves to varied situations. Nevertheless, the situations, they have to confront, prone to be more diverse. Street Children, therefore, need to be aggressive in hostile surroundings, be a "good child" of their teacher, be kind to animals, and be the "pity" child on the street. etc.

The final dimension is the society's treatment of Street Children by providing accommodations and living necessities, which is considered to be an appropriate and humanitarian solutions. This research finds out that the studied group of Street Children does not value or pay attention to any help. Many factors, for instance, their exclusion from the group by "Kha Yai" (a big man), as well as their successful adaptation to street living (according to their own definition), lead to the construction of meanings and self-esteem incompatible with living in these charity organizations or foundations

Finally, this study may not result in any concrete suggestions for solving "Street Children". In contrast, this study points out complicated socio-cultural dimensions underlying this problem. As a result, the solution may not be achieved by pushing them to "the marginal" or "the abnormal", which require criteria employed to alienate them from "the normal" of the society.