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Understanding the Ties that Bind: Early Marriage in Yogyakarta

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Abstract

In Indonesia, socioeconomic status is one of the key factors in determining marriage age and partner choice. Adults and youth alike view religious and *adat* values as the 'fortress' or 'filter' countering all of society's ills, including hedonism, consumerism and exploitation. Problematically however, the values associated with religious faith and local belief systems are not sufficient to equip one to deal with the complexities of contemporary social life. The increasing liberalisation of attitudes towards sexuality in popular culture, through access to digital media and virtual technologies and among peers, positions youth in an incredibly vulnerable position, one which requires them to have the tools to critique what they experience and to protect themselves against risks. In effect, this means an increase in the number of dispensation requests, greater scope for their abuse by local officials and an increase in the number of abortions.

Keywords: youth, early marriage, *adat*, abortion.

Introduction

Sexual politics in Indonesia operate within a complex matrix of normative discourse, Islamic ideology, local custom and a sexually liberal and exploitative market and media. Generally speaking, the only publicly acceptable expression of female sexuality is within heterosexual marriage for procreation purposes; virginity is held sacred. Despite the relatively recent rise in middle class affluence and the accompanying shift to more liberal attitudes to sex and sexuality, early marriage (known as *nikah/kawin muda* or *pernikahan dini*) among children, teens and young adults is increasingly the subject of moral panic, not least because it is associated with pre-marital sex (*seks diluar ikatan perkawinan* or *seks pranikah*).¹ Situations of unplanned

or pre-marital pregnancy (KTD)² and MBA (*Married by Accident*),³ therefore, as evidence of female sexual deviance, are considered shameful (*aib*) and are highly stigmatised, as is

marriage is also equated with underage sex (*seks di bawah usia*). I must point out that the terms *pernikahan dini* and *nikah muda* are distinguished, specifically among academics and human rights activists in that the former relates to child marriage (under the legal age of 16, particularly for girls), while the latter refers to marriages that occur when the youth involved are over 16 (late teens to early twenties), and therefore of legal marriage age, yet not mature, independent, or psychologically or physically prepared for marriage and family. For a detailed deconstruction of the discourse of *pergaulan bebas* see, T. Wright Webster, 2010, *Pergaulan Bebas and Gendered Youth Culture in Yogyakarta, Indonesia*, PhD. Dissertation, University of Western Australia, Perth.

² Indonesian acronym for *Kehamilan yang Tidak Dihendaki/Direncanakan/Diinginkan*.

³ The English language acronym MBA is often used

¹ The general term for the moral panic is *pergaulan bebas*, and more specifically in relation to sex is termed *seks bebas* or *free sex*. Early

abortion.⁴ In this paper I draw on findings from ethnographic fieldwork, including in-depth interviews with married females aged 17-29,⁵ conducted in 2011 and subsequent observations in the period 2012-2015 in Yogyakarta on early marriage.⁶ I highlight some of the cultural and legal circumstances surrounding early marriage specific to Yogyakarta, the incitement to sexuality in popular culture and legal inconsistencies in relation to marriage age.

In relation to the moral panic surrounding youth sexuality, Utomo and McDonald (2009: 133) pose the problem as:

The sexual and reproductive health values and behaviors that are emerging among single people in contemporary Indonesia are conditioned by a political context that allows the conflicting forces of traditional Indonesian values, Westernization, and the strong emerging force of fundamentalist Islam to compete for the allegiance of young people.

In the context of this friction, youthful Indonesian bodies are vulnerably positioned as contradictorily exposed to discourses of liberal sexuality, particularly since the explosion in digital telecommunications media, while being educated within a national education system which panders to conservative religious / Islamic doctrine. As a result, the education system continues to fail to acknowledge the ways in which youth are engaging with and subjected by these discourses, and therefore, fails to provide the moral 'filter' or 'fortress' that many Indonesians suggest children and youth require to be able to navigate the rapidly evolving context in which they live. As Parker (2009: 65) explains, the fear underpinning this disjuncture is based on the misconception that 'sex education will encourage students to have premarital sex, by giving students the means to experiment with sex and "get away with it"'.

This disjuncture exists despite widespread

recognition of rapid changes in media, products, youth cultures and consumerism in the period of 'cathartic release' (Gillespie 2007: 210) that characterises the post-Suharto *reformasi* period and which shares similarities to changes observed in China (Farrer 2002), Vietnam (Ngyuen & Thomas 2004) and other non-Western countries. In particular, the changes in sexual cultures which are being increasingly homogenised through the impact of globalising discourses of liberal sexuality, together with hyper-sexualised constructions of femininity.

Changes in postcolonial and postmodern subjectivities, specifically those that act to reinforce highly sexualised and commodified forms of femininity as the only option for girls,⁷ have been critiqued by feminist sociologist Angela McRobbie (2009: 71-2). In her conceptualization of the 'postfeminist masquerade', McRobbie implies that feminism is not a *fait accompli* and now redundant, but rather that the vigilance of feminist critique of globalising trends to the liberalisation of sexuality in the global capitalist economic/cultural model is critically lacking. McRobbie's feminist contemporaries and activists in the social mediascape are mounting increasing criticism of neo-liberalism in asserting that discourses of self-liberation, self-expression, gender and notions of agency require deeper analysis in terms of social class, material constraints and cultural context,⁸ especially in relation to the fashion, style and sex industries, their consumption, and formulations of gendered desire inherent in the media products of these industries.

Changing Marriage Trends

Similar to other postcolonial societies, delay of marriage in Indonesia has coincided with prolonged education, steady urbanisation and the preference for choice marriages based on romantic love, particularly in cities.⁹ As Pam

4 Pre-marital pregnancy is often precipitated by young women's inability to access safe and affordable abortions. For a detailed analysis of Indonesian policy on abortion see Claudia Surjadja, "Political Analysis of Abortion in Indonesia: The Dynamic of State Power, Human Need and Women's Right," *Institute of Development Studies* 39 (2008), 62-71.

5 Three of the informants were divorced by 25, two of whom were remarried within a year of divorce.

6 The 2011 research was funded by a 6 month Australian Endeavour (Postdoctoral) Research Award.

7 Commodified forms of femininity are implicit in the rapid encroachment of the Arabisation of fashion and representations of female piety in the last decade, see Dewi Candraningrum (2012), *Negotiating Women's Veiling: Politics and Sexuality in Contemporary Indonesia*, Occasional Paper No. 22, Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia.

8 See, for example, Melinda Tankard Reist and Abigail Bray, eds., *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2011).

9 For further reading on marriage trends see, Gavin W. Jones and Bina Gubhaju, "Trends in Age at Marriage in the Provinces of

Nilan (2003: 45) observed over a decade ago in Bali, university students are 'very much "in love" with the idea of romantic love'. The western model of romantic love has become the idealised model for permanence in intimate partnered sexual relationships: the model of a secure relationship (Borneman 2005). With choice marriages based on romantic love seen as the alternative to arranged marriage, they are idealised as the preferred and expected marriage option for many Indonesian youth. Choice-based marriages are deemed an entitlement among generation *gaul* – urban, media savvy, educated middle to upper class youth and early adults (born mid 1980s – 1990s), and normatively involve a courtship period of getting to know each other as *pacaran*.

Marriage, however, remains a social contract not entirely in the hands of the marriage partners, primarily because marriage initiates an ongoing relationship between two families. Indeed, in 2008 Nilan found that marriage among the educated middle classes is still largely predicated on the compatibility of the partners in terms of 'faith, family and finances'. These criteria are a contemporary version of the Javanese criteria for ranking a prospective son-in-law according to quality, rank and origins (*bobot, bibit, bebet Jv.*), among which faith was not prioritised. It follows that the conditions in which marriages are entered into are not limited solely to the desires of the partners as idealised in the notion of marriage based on romantic love, but are negotiated through hierarchical webs of power within which individuals are highly constrained to put family first.

Indeed, while rapid social change exacerbated by new technologies characterises the new millennium, Buttenheim and Nobles (2009) have shown that marriage (familial structures and their relations) in Indonesia are influenced by local *adat* – systems of social norms and unwritten laws for negotiating everyday life – as much as by religion, the state and the processes and discourses of development and modernisation. As they suggest '*adat* norms are strong predictors of marriage behaviour, both over time and net of large increases in

educational attainment' (Ibid: 277). Difficult to define or quantify, *adat* norms are perceived, determined and negotiated by individuals within the specific and highly variable contexts in which they are subjected. Even within cities, local *adat* custom acts as a 'lens' or 'conduit through which control is exercised' and marriage choices made (Ibid: 281).

In the period 1971-2000, average marriage age for females in Indonesia increased from 18 years to 20 years of age. According to the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS),¹⁰ 20 percent of female youth are marrying under 20 years of age, with 9 percent marrying between the ages of 15 and 19 (Jones & Gubhaju 2008: 4), with only 1.5 percent of males marrying in their teens (Ibid: 8). '[M]ore than one third of all young women were still marrying in their teens, and 1 per cent before reaching their 18th birthday' (Ibid: 7). While marriage is universal throughout the archipelago, in more cosmopolitan cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Surabaya people are choosing to extend their time in education and work prior to marrying (Ibid: 1) such that 20 percent of women aged 25-29 are never married (Ibid: 5).

As Linda Bennett (2005: 2) has suggested, it is commonly expected that middle class Indonesians be married by 30. The 2007 Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia (AAI) survey confirmed this expectation.¹¹ The survey found that 99 percent of youth aged 16 (across class groupings) in Yogyakarta aspired to marry by the age of 25. This preferred age at marriage may in part explain why 'early marriage' is generally considered to be marriage before 25 years of age, an age preference that ideally (and for those who can afford it) allows for completion of an undergraduate tertiary qualification.

Although early marriage is generally conceived of in international development 'speak' as teen marriage before the age of 20, and associated with health risks for the mother during gestation and labour, and for the embryo, newborn and infant under 5, conceptions of

¹⁰ Based on data collected throughout Indonesia from people born between 1934 and 1964.

¹¹ The 'Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia' study, to which my PhD research was linked, was funded by the Australian Research Council, and involved a team of six researchers in nine Indonesian cities .

what constitutes early marriage in Indonesia have varied considerably over time. At the turn of the twentieth century for example, concerns about early marriage focused more specifically on forcible child marriage by parents and the consequences for girls (as young as 6), such as in the practice of *kawin gantung* (suspended marriage) (Blackburn & Bessell 1997). Girls were rarely consulted on timing or choice of marriage partner; rather, these decisions were made by parents. Blackburn and Bessell have suggested three broad reasons for parents marrying their daughters off young, based on,

certain common motives and shared assumptions: parental desire for gain through marrying their daughters, a conviction that childhood was brief, and a fear of the sexuality of girls

(Ibid: 113).

The Dutch, although critical of the practice of child marriage, deemed that the outlawing of child marriage would pose a potential threat to both Islamic and *adat* practices which support early marriage (*Ibid: 116*). Child marriages (under 16 for girls and 19 for boys), although not legal under the 1974 Marriage Law, continue to be sanctioned in Indonesia today, largely influenced by the obscurity of notions of *adat* from region to region and tolerance for Islamic marriage (*nikan siri*) and polygyny. We see, therefore, a continuing tendency among the poorer and lower working classes, though not exclusively, both urban and rural, to marry young. Apart from the reasons cited above, in the contemporary context among the lower to middle classes parental consent to early marriage is often strategic in reducing the financial burden on the primary family unit, particularly in the case where there is no money to fund a child's continued education. If a daughter or son has reached puberty, is of marriageable age and not studying, they must work to contribute to family income rather than be idle and drain family funds. Once married, the lack of adequate reproductive and sexual health education combined with the social and gendered expectations to reproduce mean that pregnancy often follows swiftly.

The combined factors of limited economic capacity within the parental family and inability

to continue with education precipitated early marriage for the three of the research participants. Of these three young women, one was offered a scholarship to complete high school but refused as it would mean further separation from her parents who had lived and worked in Yogyakarta all her life while she was raised by grandparents hundreds of kilometers away in Lomangan. The alternative to her taking the scholarship was that she was voluntarily married off (*dijodohkan orang tua*) at 16 as her parents also were (though at a younger age). She explained that, 'it is easier to face hardship as a couple than alone' (*lebih baik susah berdua daripada susah sendiri*). Another participant from this group, raised in a peri-urban farming community where a young unmarried woman of 17 is considered an old maid, married at 16. This meant she had to pay her way to eligible age of marriage or '*beli umur*' through claiming dispensation. She explained that 'to have a family is the main priority in life. Since I could not afford to go to school, I had to get married and have a family of my own. My life is hard. I cook, clean, wash and iron for everyone in my family. That is what I do, that is all I do, that is my life.' Another, after leaving school at 12 and working in factories in Jakarta and east Java for several years married at 16 for 'economic reasons.' She is full of 'regret' with five children under 12, an underemployed husband, no extended family and no assets.

Blackburn and Bessell's (1997) suggestion that parental pressure to marry is often based on fears surrounding female sexuality, and the sanctity of virginity persists. One young high school graduate from Magelang, who worked in hotel administration in Yogyakarta for a year after graduating, married at 18 due to pressure from her boyfriend's parents after three rather innocent visits to their home. One couple (both 18) was married a week after being caught alone together by the girl's parents. Having been caught was public knowledge within moments of it occurring. To save face, the parents met and the decision was made that in their best interests they marry as soon as possible.

Conflict with parents over the right to choose a partner who does not conform to parental expectations while youth are still dependent on their parents is common, though to rebel against

parents brings heavy sanctions. One participant in senior high school ran off with her boyfriend who was rejected by her step-father, a prominent public figure, for refusing to stop gambling – the couple married by *nikah siri* (which does not require parental consent) so that they could live together, and distanced themselves from the girl's family. Another young woman, a tertiary student from Sulawesi, whilst boarding in the home of a poor family in Yogyakarta, fell for their son. After watching a pornographic video with her boyfriend and his friends, she was cajoled into re-enacting what they had seen – and she fell pregnant. Her boyfriend's family did not consider abortion, saying they could not face (*gak tega*) an abortion, and welcomed the child lovingly. Her wealthy parents were not impressed, did not attend the wedding or visit her in Yogyakarta. As a mother, she was unhappy and often frustrated with the child. She did not continue her studies once pregnant, was ostracized by her family and no longer received her monthly subsidy from afar that she received while studying. For four years, she and her husband's family raised her son in poverty. Finally, she visited her parents in Sulawesi alone and did not return. She divorced her husband and, leaving her son in his care, continued her education with family support.

Three other informants married after becoming pregnant. Due to the social stigma against pregnancy outside of marriage and the shame this brings to families they attempted abortion unsuccessfully, using 'traditional', non-surgical methods, before informing their boyfriends of their pregnancy in their second trimester. Of these four young women, one, a university student, was expelled from the family home after reluctantly announcing that she was four months pregnant. Her mother disowned her and her father relocated her to Sulawesi where she and her boyfriend were married. When the time came for her to deliver, her father moved her to Yogyakarta so that he could assist her. He later funded accommodation for the couple and their return to education. In the years that have passed, her mother still has not communicated with her or her child. The family of one young woman was so embarrassed at the news of her pregnancy that they sent her and her boyfriend to live in a village in peri-urban Yogyakarta with distant cousins who were

not well off. Their living together unwed was not tolerated in the village and they were pressured to marry. Their lack of education, access to information, money, resources, family support and, at last resort, knowledge of how and where to be married according to *nikah siri*, however, meant that they were always on the move. The last case is that of a young woman who fell pregnant to a married man whose first wife started a two year contract in a factory in Taiwan weeks after they were married. The young woman was unaware that her new husband was married. That she had become pregnant prior to marriage and that her husband was already married resulted in her being alienated by her family. She was forced through poverty and isolation to live in a makeshift house made of bamboo and plastic tarpaulins at the back of her husband's parents' home.

One of the worst fears of Indonesian women is to bring shame upon the family and be ostracised by them as a result. To avoid bringing shame on the family of an influential businessman and Muslim, one young participant, 20, who fell pregnant while studying away from home, was pulled out of university, forbidden to speak to her boyfriend (who was considered not of the same social status as the young woman's family) and isolated within the family home as her pregnancy became visible. Her father's sister and her husband were implored by her father to register the child as their own, which they did. The child was then raised as the daughter of the young woman's parents, under the guise that she was adopted by the parents from the poorer family of her father's sister. Tragically, another young woman, 19, also studying away from home attempted abortion through a *bidan* (community nurse) through massage, but died of septicemia as a result of an incomplete removal of the foetus and placenta. All effort is taken to avert ostracisation from the family since ostracisation effectively severs all social networks and means of support to a young woman, limiting her access to the hierarchical social structure within which she, as a member of her family, is relatively positioned.

It is not surprising that, in the context of ambivalent messages in the media in particular in relation to sexuality, recent studies on youth attitudes towards pre-marital youth and early

adult sexual practices¹² unanimously call for policies of responsible and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, as well as rights education programmes in Indonesian high schools. Studies of marriage preferences prior to marriage (Bennett 2005, 2006), of middle-class university students (Nilan 2008) and of youth with Muslim sensibilities (Nancy Smith-Hefner 2005, Parker 2006), draw out the link between marriage age and education as a function of socioeconomic status. Education is vital also to understanding the complexities relating to the legalities of marriage and the conflicting laws in relation to age at marriage.

Legal Inconsistencies Related to Age of Marriage

According to the current Indonesian Marriage Law No. 1, 1974 Article 6 Verse 2, youth under 21 years of age require written consent from both parents to marry. Article 7 Verse 1 stipulates the legal marriage age for girls as 16 years and for boys 19 years. As a supplement, Article 7 Verse 2 states that in cases of request for marriage by underage parties, dispensation (*dispensasi*) can be sought from the Religious Courts (*Pengadilan Agama*) by the parents. The dispensation supplement makes allowances for the practice of underage marriage tolerated according to *adat* (customary) and Islamic law, ameliorates the social stigma towards families due to pre-marital pregnancy, and reduces the number of babies born illegitimately (*di luar/tanpa ikatan*, and referred to as *anak haram*). For underage persons, the dispensation law provides a legal alternative to the practice of *nikah siri*, a religious (Islamic) marriage, not necessarily registered with the religious courts, which confers no legal rights to the wife/s or child/ren in the case of marital disharmony, abuse or neglect yet may grant a reasonable level of social tolerance of the union

in the local community.

The 1974 Marriage Law, however, is complicated by local and regional *adat* laws, Islamic law, the colonial legal system, and newer civil laws introduced since independence through which subjects are positioned dependent on their legal situation. The current Regulations in Civil Law (*Undang-Undang Hukum Perdata, UUHP*) derive from the Dutch system of *Burgerlijk Wetboek* introduced in 1859, in which the age of adulthood is 21 years. In essence, the 1974 Marriage Law has overridden the basis of the former Dutch law yet maintained the need for parental consent for marriage under 21. More recently, the Compilation of Islamic Law (*Kompilasi Hukum Islam, 2001*)¹³ was revised to include Article 15 (1 and 2) which conforms to the marriage age stipulated in the 1974 law. In 2002, in accordance with the International Convention of the Rights of the Child 1990, Child Protection Laws (*Undang-undang Perlindungan Anak*) were introduced in Indonesia. Article 1 of the Child Protection Law (2002) extends childhood to 18 years, and contradicts the legal age of marriage for girls stipulated in the 1974 Marriage Law. Article 26 of the Indonesian Child Protection Law states it is the responsibility of the parents to prevent their children from marrying under 18 years of age. In practice then, the 1974 and 2002 laws, which specifically address the age of girls at marriage, may be applied on an either *or* basis.

Problematically, inconsistencies between the two laws are often manipulated by village level officials (advising and assisting those applying to marry), particularly in cases of marriage for girls under 18 who are not aware of their legal position (as in the case of '*beli umur*'). As a result, there has been a steady annual hike in number of marriages requiring legal dispensation due to pre-marital pregnancy. Frequently, articles on the 'problem' of early marriage due to pregnancy pinpoint village level officials who assist in the process as charlatans.¹⁴ In accordance with Article 53, Verses 1, 2 and 3 of the *Kompilasi*

12 See, Tom Boellstorff, "The Gay Archipelago: Postcolonial Sexual Subjectivities in Indonesia," PhD diss, Stanford University Press, 2000; Augustina Situmorang, "Chastity and Curiosity: Attitudes and Behaviour of Young People in Medan Regarding Virginity and Premarital Sex," *Journal of Population* 9 (2003): 27-54; Brigitte M. Holzner, and Dede Oetomo, "Youth, Sexuality and Sex Education Messages in Indonesia: Issues of Desire and Control," *Reproductive Health Matters* 12 (2004): 40-49; Piper Crisovan, "Risky Business: Cultural Conceptions of Hiv-Aids in Indonesia," PhD diss, University of Toledo, 2006; and Claire Harding, "Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Indonesia: Investing in the Future?," Honours thesis, The University of Western Australia, 2006.

13 Direktorat Pembinaan Peradilan Agama Islam, Ditjen Pembinaan Kelembagaan Islam Departemen Agama, 2001. Source, <http://hukum.unsrat.ac.id/ma/kompilasi.pdf>, accessed 24.8.2011.

14 <http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/news/2011/04/11/82707-Dispensasi-Usia-Nikah-Meningkat-Tiap-Tahun>, accessed 12. 04. 11. I found many village level officials (*pak dukuh* and *pak RT*) who said they often raised the age of girls to 17 to enable them to marry, for a fee of around Rp 100 000 (AUD\$10).

Hukum Islam, the Religious Court (*Pengadilan Agama*) allows underage marriage due to exceptional circumstances, though, as in the 1974 Marriage law, there is no explanation of what these circumstances may include. Suffice to say, everybody falls into the exception category. Legal dispensation in cases of premarital pregnancy recognizes that pre-marital sex is occurring and is a legal measure for maintaining social harmony and establishing responsibility in the hands of individuals.¹⁵

Conflicting legal guidelines in relation to age at marriage, age of childhood and the simultaneous functioning of systems of civil and religious marriage are confusing to young people and their parents and guardians. I have pointed out situations in which this can lead to exploitation of the situation for financial gain by local village leaders, yet it is in relation to the unspoken social mores that more insidious consequences may result. One of these is suicide, which is the second highest cause of death for youth 10-24 years in Indonesia, with approximately a third of these said to be the result of failure to cope with the end of a love relationship.

News articles related to suicide among the 10-24 something age group are relatively common in the Indonesian print media. In these articles, matters of the 'heart' (love relationships) are constructed as causal of suicide, reinforcing the power of the notion of romantic love. Termination of a relationship, betrayal or unfaithfulness in love leading to 'broken heart' is represented as the main cause, and the lack of parental consent to the relationship as another. For example, in an article in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (21st Feb 2011: 22) entitled *Dilarang Nikah – Gantung Diri* (Forbidden from Marrying – He Hung Himself), it is reported that a young man (21) hung himself while his parents deliberated his request to marry his long term girlfriend, believing he was too young. In

15 Of those interviewed in this sample, one couple aged 16 applied for legal dispensation to marry on the advice of their school principal who agreed to allow them complete their high school education on condition that they marry. These students attended an SMA which catered to students who had been expelled from other schools due to difficult behaviours or failure to conform to school rules. The Catholic principal supported the view that female youth should not be educationally disadvantaged because of pregnancy. I found many village level officials (*Pak Dukuh* and *Pak RT*) who said they had raised the age of girls to 17 to enable them to marry, for a fee. For these powerful male village officials, it was a matter of protecting the 'good names' of people they knew who had come to them for help.

the case of Cicilia (15) it was reported that she hung herself after her boyfriend ended their relationship. She had little emotional support as her parents lived in Bandung.¹⁶

In such cases, heterosexual youthful love relationships (*pacaran*) are either prohibited by parents, and ended by the couple,¹⁷ entered into without parental awareness (*pacaran gelap/bakstrit*), or are more casual, experimental and physical (*cinta satu malam / pacaran sesaat*, one night stand), and less romanticised. Problematically, poor sexual and reproductive health education combined with negative attitudes towards purchase and use of condoms,¹⁸ inconsistent use of the female contraceptive pill due to lack of knowledge of the female reproductive cycle, and fear of engaging with health professionals leads to high numbers of unplanned pregnancies.¹⁹ In attempt to conceal the shame of pre-marital pregnancy, many result in premature marriage, (unsafe) abortion,²⁰ murder, and callous disposal of full term fetuses and newborns.²¹

Conclusion

In Indonesia, socioeconomic status is one of the key factors in determining marriage age and partner choice. While rapid change has brought about an increase in marriage age among the middle to upper classes, adherence to *adat* norms (which are also imbued with religious ideology)

16 In the area of Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, it is believed that the night before a person suicides a comet-like light is seen crossing the sky near the home of the victim, foretelling *mulung gantung* (suicide by hanging) as one's fate. The myth does not take into account the psychological, health or economic condition of the person.

17 I conducted a small survey among 20 university students (half female, half male) across disciplines with an average age of 20. One survey question related to what to do if parents do not consent to one's choice of pacar. 95% (19/20) responded 'find another one' (*cari yang lain*). One male suggested slowly bringing his parents around to accepting his choice as over time they would witness his genuine commitment to his girlfriend.

18 Recently, the Mayor of Surabaya, Sri Rismaharini, following the marketing of chocolate packaged with condoms by minimarkets for Valentine's Day, immediately enforced the removal of condoms from minimarket shelves in her jurisdiction.

19 This number can only be estimated through data on abortion.

20 According to BKKBN (National Family Planning Coordinating Board) statistics for 2012, 2.4 million abortions were performed in Indonesia, 800 000 among teenagers. The PKBI (Indonesian Family Planning Association) data suggests that of those seeking abortion 16% were unmarried. These statistics do not account for 'backyard' abortions.

21 <http://www.tribunnews.com/2011/05/17/bantul-gempar-dua-mayat-bayi-ditemukan-dalam-sehari>. Accessed 15 June 2011 and, <http://www.krjogja.com/news/detail/101902/Duh...Baru.Lahir...Bayi.Dibuang.Tempat.Sampah..html>, Accessed 5 Oct 2011.

and the sharing of economic pressures among the poorer classes mean that early marriage is often undertaken for moral and economic reasons. Adults and youth alike view religious and *adat* values as the 'fortress' or 'filter' countering all of society's ills, including hedonism, consumerism and exploitation. Ideally, this moral filter will enable one to distinguish between right and wrong actions and assist in not compromising one's own values. Problematically however, the values associated with religious faith and local belief systems are not sufficient to equip one to deal with the complexities of contemporary social life. The increasing liberalisation of attitudes towards sexuality in popular culture, through access to digital media and virtual technologies and among peers, positions youth in an incredibly vulnerable position, one which requires them to have the tools to critique what they experience and to protect themselves against risk. The question remains: if youth are to be self-protective without being selfish, and develop a high level of moral and social consciousness

suggested by the notion of '*benteng*' and 'filter', how are they to do this if not through responsible and reflexive comprehensive reproductive and sexual health and rights education that acknowledges the complex realities youth face? Further, the marriage laws have recently been reviewed and legislation introduced in alignment with international conventions on age of childhood with marriage age in Indonesia, that is, to raise the age of marriage for girls to 18. The legislation was defeated. The reasons for this are many and varied and may be said to reflect the conservative views of legislators in relation to pre-marital sex. In effect, a rise in the legal age of marriage would mean an increase in the number of dispensation requests, greater scope for their abuse by local officials and an increase in the number of abortions. When the time comes that the law does pass, one would hope it to be accompanied by a clause on consensual age of sex to avoid the problems potentially arising from perceptions of an effective increase in the age of prohibition.

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