Youth, Identity, and Romantic Relationships: Negotiating Uncertain Futures in Pontianak, West Kalimantan¹

Wenty Marina Minza
Faculty of Psychology Universitas Gadjah Mada

Introduction

Romantic relationship is often viewed as a prelude to marriage, but it may also be seen as a form of youth cultures of sexuality. As prelude to marriage, romantic relationships function as part of the growing up process. On the other hand, when it takes form in youth cultures of sexuality, it functions as a part of forming a youth identity. I argue that long term relationships are a form of negotiation that young people undertake to strategize between the tensions of growing up and being young. Romantic relationships are not seen as a prelude to marriage, but neither is it seen as part of a youth culture of sexuality. Instead, they think of having long term relationships, meaning that they want the relationship to last even without the certainty of marriage. It means that long term relationship is similar to youth cultures of ‘waiting’. Unlike youth cultures of sexuality that focuses on the present identity and status, youth cultures of waiting involve structural constraints that inhibit young people to enter marriage.

Growing up and Being Young: Two Contrasting Perspectives in Youth Studies

I use two main perspectives in youth studies which will help understand youth’s experiences and behaviour. These perspectives will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter, but it is useful to summarise them here. The first is the “growing up” perspective which position youth as in the process of becoming an adult (Wyn and White, 1997; Lesko, 2002: 31-33). There are three core life domains that are often used to indicate a successful transition to adulthood: education, work, and marriage (Furstenberg, 2000: 898). Education is assumed to open opportunities for formal jobs in the urban economy. Formal jobs in turn, are expected to generate enough income for achieving financial independence and form a new family through marriage.² From a generational perspective, successful transition in these life domains becomes a base for social reproduction and upward mobility. This normative line of thinking only shows part of youth’s life story. It helps explain what

---

² In non Western developing countries, income attained from work is often also expected to provide social security for young people’s parents.
is expected from youth in their process of growing up. It does not, however, help understand why they are behaving in contradictory ways. Youth do not always seem to take education seriously, many educated youth are working in dead-end jobs and youth who are involved in romantic relationships do not necessarily see it ending in marriage. Using this perspective a person will be said to have a problem in growing up. He/she is considered problematic either because he does not want to progress towards adulthood or because he is incapable of doing so.

The second main perspective in youth studies, focuses on young people’s experience of “being young”. In this perspective, youth are seen as individuals and a social group in their own right. This means that we need to understand how youth think about themselves, how they relate to other youth (not just to adults), and how social identities as youth structure their ideas and behaviour. Youth’s subjective experiences are often emphasized in this approach, thus providing a lens to see the reality of young people’s lives (Wyn and White, 1997). From this perspective, we can expect that education might be for plenty other reasons than merely obtaining a job, work is not necessarily for the sake of making money per se, and involving oneself in a romantic relationship may be for other reasons than for the purpose of marriage. In this respect, young people is seen as enjoying their youth and simply living the present. This perspective then, also only partially portrays youth’s life experience. It seems to ignore that youth are conscious that they will sooner or later become an adult. It also seems to suggest that present identity formation is youth’s primary focus in life – as if to say that they do not put much thought into their future as adults.

The growing up and being young perspective are each partially useful in understanding youth. However, understanding young people’s lives and identities requires an approach that considers both perspectives. This study will take an approach that combines both perspectives in order to better understand youth’s life experiences. The combination of the two approaches will enable us to see youth as in the process of transition (growing up) and being young (living in the present) together, and through it we will be able to acknowledge the tensions and continuities between the co-existing dimensions of young people’s lives.

However, we also need to understand these two dimensions and the dynamics between them within the social and cultural context in which youth live their lives. For instance, in the context of growing up, Western youth studies bring to the surface issues of autonomy and independence as requirements for a proper transition (Arnett: 1998: 301-302, Horowitz and Bromnick, 2007: 2), while

Western youth studies tend to focus on how home leaving and employment facilitates the achievement of independence. Youth are described to leave home at a later age, continue to move in and out of their family’s house, or co-reside with their parents (Kins et al, 2009: 1425-1427, White, 1994: 92-93, Guerrero, 2001: 3-5, Seiffge-Krenke, 2009: 239, Celik, 2008: 433-435). In these studies, late and circular patterns of home leaving is often linked to failing state welfare system (Cote and Bynner, 2008:258-259; Miller and Gangl, 2003: 10-17; Plug et al, 2003: 128, Mendes et al, 2006: 110, Mizen, 2004: 67-68). Though home leaving has become one of the important issues in Western youth studies, it may not be of much relevance for youth in non Western developing countries. Living in the natal home until marriage is an accepted condition for most youth in non Western developing countries. In some cases, married couples are even encouraged to stay in the natal home.

Unlike home leaving, un/underemployment is a global topic that connects youth studies from different parts of the world. However, in Western settings, issues of un/underemployment are related to the functioning of the welfare state (like in the case of home leaving). This includes issues such as provision of unemployment benefits (Jacobs, 2008) and the failure of the welfare state in integrating youth to society via the labour market (Malmberg-Heimonen and Julkunen, 2006: 575). Family assistance in Western settings is seen as inhibiting proper integration to the labour market, as the function of the family as a safety net encourages youth to quit their job voluntarily rather than to stay employed (Jacob, 2008: 157). In non Western contexts un/underemployment is seen as a consequence of failed state policy in education, training or labour market policies (Manning and Junankar, 1998: 49-51). The issue of welfare state in the context of under/unemployment (and home-leaving as a consequence of it), is not central in non Western developing countries. This is because many of these countries do not even recognize a welfare state system. Aside from that, families in non-Western settings are assumed to have always functioned as a social security net in times of crisis - due to the cultural value of the family (Gough, 2008: 139; Kiem, 1988: 34). Thus, the role of the family as a social security net is not seen as inhibiting the transition to adulthood. This means that different societies face different challenges and issues in growing up.
Studies focusing on the experiences of “being young” conducted in the West and the non-West share similarities of focus, mainly dominated by issues of lifestyle and identity. However, in Western settings, lifestyle is generally seen as a part of youth identity formation and less likely linked to strategies of livelihood. Focusing on Western settings, Johnstone and Katz (1957) and Bennet (1999) for example, discuss how the youth identity is constructed through music and style preferences. Johnstone and Katz argue that music preference is related to young women’s residence, popularity among peers and personal relationships. Suggesting the importance of neighbourhood cultures, the authors state that young women in lower class neighbourhoods were more likely to enjoy sad songs rather than happy ones. The authors also suggest that those who have more experience in dating (indicating their popularity) also tend to prefer listening to sad songs, as an effort to add excitement to the relationship, provide support to end a relationship that is too serious. Four decades later, Bennet also conducted a similar study which focuses on the formation of youth culture as an effort to construct youth identity per se. However, instead of looking at structural determinants in the shaping of youth’s identity, Bennet uses a post modern approach. Studying dance music in New Castle, Bennet underlines the prominence of agency and fluidity in the construction of youth identity, rather than identity being determined by structural categorizations such as class.

In non-Western settings, studies on “being young” is related to present livelihood opportunities. Scheld (2007: 235) and Weiss describes how youth lifestyles in Africa are not only ways in which young people try to take part in globalization through their youth identity, but also a way in which they fulfil their present economic needs. In Dakkar, Senegal, youth cultures are linked to the informal economy of producing and distributing clothing. She argues that youth cosmopolitanism provides the feeling of being part of the global fashion trend, yet it also facilitates the running of the local economy and supports the present livelihood of young people there. Sharing a common perspective, Weiss (2009) in his study on youth in Tanzania also shows how global-local cultures are expressed through the set up of barbershops managed by young men. The barbershops not only portray effort in taking part in the globalization process, but also a way to earn money.
I will now briefly introduce themes on “growing up” and “being young” in studies carried out among young people in Indonesia. Most of literatures on growing up among Indonesian youth discuss the disruptions in making a smooth transition. Young people are often viewed in the context of risky behaviour or juvenile delinquency (usually termed *kenakalan remaja*), such as sexual behaviour leading to unwanted pregnancy/abortion (Khisbiyah, 1994; Faturohman, 1996, Bennet, 2007; Lubis, 2006; Supriati and Fikawati, 2009; Harding, 2008), smoking/drugs (Ng et al, 2005), and involvement in illegal migration (Liow, 2003). Otherwise, they position youth as a social problem in cases of underachievement, un/underemployment (Manning and Junankar, 1998).

In the context of being young in Indonesia, life styles and identity in a modernizing world become the main topics discussed in the literature. Some of the studies emphasize youth identity as a form of rebellion against the adult world, and some (though to a lesser extent) look into youth identity as a strategy to fit within the peer group, or within the adult world. Various arenas of youth culture – music (Barendregt and Zanten, 2008), fashion (Uttu, 2006), movies (Sulistyani, 2006), language (Smith-Hefner, 2007a), drugs (Nasir and Rosenthal, 2009), and group fights (Nilan, 2011) are seen as a facilitating the construction of a youth identity, cutting across gender, class, religion and ethnicity. This perspective helps to understand that youth are not always thinking about pathways of growing up. However, most of the studies about youth identity still seem to portray youth as *always* busy within their own youth world, as if without any concern on how to become future adults. Aside from that, the studies above seem to focus on diverse context, but rarely mention how youth culture develops in the context of education and work. Only in the domain of sexuality or romantic relationships are these discussions more extensive.

*Long Term Relationships as a Strategy to Negotiate Uncertain Futures*

This section will deal with empirical data that shows how long term relationships function as a way that young people negotiate between growing up and being young. I start with three cases that show how masculinity is understood in this process and how inhibitions to forming masculinities make young people hesitant to think of their relationship as a pathway to marriage. Young men often consider the significance of becoming the future breadwinner in the family. In the current situation where widespread youth unemployment and underemployment is common, this sometimes brings tensions and conflicts to a couple’s relationship. Young men often feel that they are unfit to fulfill this future role, and thus, prefer to see their relationship as a long term relationship. Kaka is a
30 year old Malay young man who works by contract in several local NGOs. Instead of being pressured by the family like in the case of Iwan above, Kaka himself felt the need to find a secure job to continue his relationship with his girlfriend, Diana. However, like in Iwan’s case, Diana’s family also did not approve the relationship because he does not yet have a permanent job. Kaka has been with Diana, a free lance writer, for 2 years. Diana, who originally came from East Java, agreed that she would move to Pontianak if they got married. However, Diana then landed on a permanent job at a bank in East Java. She expected him to follow her to Java. Kaka refused, because he was uncomfortable with the idea that Diana would be the breadwinner of the family. He was not confident that he would be able to find a job in East Java. He claims that he is disappointed with his relationship with Diana. Diana insisted that he stay in East Java, but he is reluctant to do so. It hurts his masculinity to think that Diana will be the breadwinner of the family if they actually marry in the future.

I am disappointed about (my relationship) with Diana. She said ‘you should stay here (in East Java)’, I replied ‘what will we eat, how am I going to provide (for the family)?’ ‘I will work, you can find another job.’ ‘I am a man, why should I beg for food from my wife?’. There should be no domination of course, there should be balance (between husband and wife). But I still think that a man should be responsible (for securing his family’s economy), that is the adult way (of forming a family). Her family wants her to marry somebody else, I don’t know. I think someone in the army.

Some young women seem to see gender roles and masculinity in a more flexible manner. They find it acceptable that women be the breadwinner of a family, though they prefer that both men and women contribute to the household economy. According to Aras (28), it is unfair to have young men bear the weight of having a permanent job on their shoulders. Currently she is teaching as a temporary teacher in a pre-school while her boyfriend performs with his band in various cafes. They are serious about their relationship and both parents have approved, but they are still reluctant to think about marriage.

I don’t have a permanent job yet. Neither does my boyfriend. He is in a band, but (the band) doesn’t seem to be going anywhere. So I have to be responsible (to get a permanent job). My parents don’t mind (him not yet having a permanent job). Either one should be responsible (for the future economy of the family). It’s hard to find a permanent job these days. So expecting our partner to have a steady job is unrealistic. However, he still thinks that it is his job. (Our relationship) sometimes becomes tense (because of this).

Whether a person is still in education or not also affects how judgments of masculinity is placed upon them. Still being in an education institution may work to a young man’s advantage to
continue his relationship, because he is still a mahasiswa (tertiary education student). Being an unemployed mahasiswa is different from being unemployed after graduating, since there is no expectation that a mahasiswa has the obligation to combine education and work. On the contrary, unemployed young men such as Iwan (30) feel the tension arising in his relationship because of being unemployed. He remembers that when he was a mahasiswa, he was free to come to his girlfriend’s house. However, after graduating and not being able to secure a job, he was no longer allowed to visit his girlfriend, unless he is able to secure a job. His own mother also supported his girlfriend’s parents’ decision to temporarily halt the relationship under this condition. His mother feels that it is shameful to date a young woman when he is still unemployed. Iwan also mentions that having a girlfriend is important for him, because it gives him the feeling that he is progressing towards marriage when he is ‘stuck’ in the transition to work. Thus, he is also making sacrifices by halting the relationship with his girlfriend, without actually breaking up with her.

I was actually close (to my girlfriend’s family before graduating). It was only in the beginning (that everything went smoothly). Now there are many conflicts (kles-kles), especially after graduation. Now I am unemployed, her parents are demanding (that I work), (get) a stable job. I have never talked to her parents, I only know (their demands) through her. I can only come and visit her if I have a job. My mother has no disapproval of our relationship, but she also told me ‘there is no in-law who wants an unemployed (son) in law’. But for me, it’s good to have a girlfriend. Being unemployed and without a girlfriend is worse. At least I have a girlfriend.

[Sacrifice in Long Term Relationships]

Sacrifice is considered a key to maintaining a long term relationship, especially sacrifices that involve financial resources. Ibu Ita (48), a Malay woman points to how consumerism is currently guiding romantic relationships. She finds that youth who are seeing someone are now “pressured” to fulfill a consumer lifestyle. Both young women and young men spend money to buy their partners dinner or lunch (jajan). She also feels that all the dinners and lunches are not really the proper way of getting to know one’s future spouse. These dinners or lunches become an inseparable part of current dating practices that she does not appreciate. She feels that it is just about having fun and wasting money.

“during my husband’s time, he never asked me to do ‘fun’ things (bura-bura), like jajan (eating out). That is a waste of our time and money. And even that time, my
husband was already working in a bank, but never did he ask me out to eat in a restaurant or even a warung. Yet during that time, there were already many places where we can eat. But he never took me out.”

But for youth, the ‘fun’ things that Bu Ita are pointing to is not seen in a negative perspective. The act of jajan (eating out) is not seen as merely a part of consumerism. Instead, jajan is seen as a part of growing up. It shows how far one is willing to share and to sacrifice what material belongings they have with their partner. Thus, for this generation of youth, jajan is a way of knowing their ‘future spouse’, and not just about having fun. So what Bu Ita sees as a positive character in her husband is seen as a negative character among today’s generation – an act that is referred to as stingy (masin) and not willing to make sacrifices for their partner. Ina (21), a Malay young woman says,

When teenagers (ABG) date, they are spoiled, they don’t pay attention to their partner’s needs. When I am with my boyfriend, I like to hang out, go places, but most importantly, we like to eat out (jajan). My boyfriend has an internet café at his parents’ house. His parents don’t give him a salary, but only him ‘eating out money’ (uang jajan – basically meaning that the amount of money is quiet limited). We take turns treating each other, but it he who mostly treats me. That shows that he pays attention to me, that he (makes) sacrifices (for me), that he is not stingy (masin).

Ina’s mother, Bu Jay (44), complemented Bu Ita’s experience of how dating practices used to not be about jajan. During those times, not only was jajan considered expensive, but girls were also not allowed to go out. There was not much electricity and parents feared about their daughters going out. She, however, said that sometimes they quietly went out, shivering with fear that they would get caught as they came back to the house. At the same time, she realizes that times have changed. Electricity is everywhere, the streets are not dead quiet at night, and one can find many people in in the city. Therefore, she does not mind that her daughter goes out and jajan. What’s important for Bu Jay is that Ina’s boyfriend cares about Ina and, thus she does not make a big deal about jajan.

I tell Ina, that if she looks for a boyfriend, he has to be loyal. He has to be caring, he also has to take care of you. You are both adults, so I will give you the freedom to go out, to jajan, to hang out. But you have to take care of each other.

The meaning of sacrifice constructed by the younger generation has exacerbated the need to construct romantic relationships as long term relationships rather than a prelude to marriage. As secure jobs are more difficult to attain, young men have to deal with the question of whether they
will be able to afford being married. Thus, young men without the appropriate financial resources have to sacrifice in other ways to maintain the relationship. Wiwin (25) is a Malay young man who is working as a freelance wedding photographer while finishing his studies in a private university. Wiwin has a girlfriend who he has been seeing for two years. In the last couple of months he noticed that she was withdrawing from him, but did not know why. It was not long before he knew that his girlfriend’s family had arranged her marriage with another man. Wiwin says that he lacks confidence to approach his girlfriend’s family because he says he has ‘nothing’ (ndak punye ape-ape) in comparison to the man that his girlfriend is to marry. He has not yet finished his school and has not yet obtained a stable job. He points to these two aspects as the requirement to approach his girlfriend’s family, since his family cannot offer anything. He mentions that he is ‘only’ a son of widowed teacher. However, this does not mean that the relationship has to end. He tries to make sacrifices to make his girlfriend happy in the hope that she will eventually choose him over the other man.

(I sometimes) take her to the mall, (Some people) go to the palace (keraton) to hang out. But the image (is bad). I have never taken her there. I just try to go to places she likes, like the mall. I also try to ‘control myself’ (nahan dirik). She likes that. Her parents have arranged her marriage, but if the daughter does not agree, usually the parents will comply (to their child’s wishes). I am trying to make her happy, so she will choose me. I also go to her friends, to put on a good image.

Wiwin’s case shows how he tries to minimize the influence of his girlfriend’s family by strengthening his bond with his girlfriend and her peers. Strengthening the bond involves practices that are viewed adult-like – lessening sexual practices (saying that he tries to ‘control himself) and showing that he prioritizes her needs (by taking her to a place ‘she likes’). He seems to be aware that peers are also important in supporting his relationship, as an alternative strategy to approaching her parents. Putting on a ‘good image’ in front of her friends include willing to chit chat with them or buying them drinks or lunch when he happens to meet them.

Ethnicity and Religion

Young people’s social position, especially ethnicity and religion, also influences the way they view romantic relationships. Ethnicity, as described above, is often regarded as an important factor in process of attraction and choosing romantic partners. There is a tendency to prefer a partner from the same ethnic circle, though some seek a partner from a higher status ethnic group. Those that choose to become involved in inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships often have to deal with
uncertainties of marriage. Thus, viewing their relationship as a long term relationship become a strategy they apply to deal with this situation.

Asti (24), a Dayak young woman describes how she chose to end her relationship with a Nandar, a Malay young man. But while she was dating Nandar, her aunt who took her in after the death of her father, arranged her to be married to Budi, a Javanese Christian. Her family was insistent upon this arrangement. She explained to me that her aunt's family opposed her relationship with Nandar, because he is a Moslem. Her mother has no say in this matter, because Asti has practically been raised by her aunt and her financial necessities has also been taken care of by her aunt’s family. In her family’s view, it is harder to pull him into her Dayak circle, unless he is willing to give up his religion. Nandar refuses, but she still has hopes that her family will accept him despite him refusing to convert. She compares it to the relatively easier process for a Dayak to become a Malay rather than a Malay becoming a Dayak.

(When a Malay) marries according to the proper (Dayak) custom, his/her existence has to be explained (to the local people), that she/he is from a different religion, from a different ethnic group, and that he/she is going to follow his/her spouse (becoming a Dayak, but still a Moslem). Then there are requirements, like having pork (*potong babi*). Pork is tradition, it has symbolic values to make the conversion official. The pig is not only eaten, the blood also has meaning because it is used for prayer (*dijampi-jampi*). That is the requirement to be acknowledged by the people. That is why it is hard for a Malay (who insists on keeping his/her religion) to become a Dayak. But for Dayak to become a Malay is easier, because many Dayak don’t mind converting to Islam… We hope to get married, but that is still a long way. We will see.

The same view is expressed by Opal, where religion becomes an important factor to having ideas of marriage in the future. Instead of focusing on how his partner’s religion may become an inhibition to practice Malay customs if she does not convert, his emphasis on the importance of religion is based on seeking family approval – whether or not she practices Malay customs. For Opal, family acceptance is based on his partner’s religion and not her ethnicity. Opal (27), a Malay has been dating non-Moslem women – from Christian ones to atheist ones. He has had some Moslem girlfriends in between, but there weren’t that many as his non-Moslem ones. His current girlfriend is a Christian. Opal has long left his religious practices as a Moslem, but still holds on to the notion that if he marries, he wants a Moslem wife. This is one of the reasons why he has stayed unmarried until now. For Opal, his girlfriend’s willingness to convert to Islam shows an act of
sacrifice, which he believes will smoothen the journey to marriage. But until the day that his girlfriend actually converts, he does not have the courage to say that the relationship will end in marriage.

Both young women and young men seem to take it for granted that it is the young women who will be obliged to “follow” (ikut) into the young men’s ethnic group and/or religion when they decide to marry in the future. This view is shared by both Dayak and Malay men. Opal’s case above shows the importance of having a Moslem wife – not necessarily a Malay one. The same view is expressed by Nus (24) a Dayak young man from Sanggau who is seeing a Malay young woman. He considers it important for his girlfriend to “follow” him – as a Dayak and as a Christian.

If we plan to get married, then automatically it will depend on her (whether or not she decides to convert). We all know that (a woman) usually follows her husband. She has to comply (to her husband). I will keep my religion, my ethnicity (customs). It does not seem right for a husband to follow his wife. We have talked about it. She is considering (to convert). If she decides not to, well, I don’t know. It is hard to end (the relationship). We are compatible with each other. I will think about it later.

The normative standard that encourages young women to ‘follow’ their future husband has made it difficult for youth who are involved in interethnic relationships to think about marriage. This especially applies in conditions where the young woman refuses to follow her partner’s ethnicity or religion. Nus’s ambivalence towards his situation also shows how difficult it is to comply to social expectations that is considered “proper” for one’s future and individual desires of staying with someone he sees as ‘fitting’ his personality. However, from the start, Nus seems to consider his relationship as a pathway towards marriage. In his perspective, ending the relationship will only happen when inhibitions to the accepted form of marriage occurs – that if his girlfriend is unwilling to convert to Christianity and is willing to comply to the Dayak customs.

Some youth like Stefanus (24) a Dayak young man, differentiates his “religious requirements” for his partner based on the seriousness of the relationship. He says that if he were involved in a serious relationship for the future, he wants a girl with the same religion. Otherwise, he does not really mind having a relationship with a young woman who holds a different religion (whether or not a person is willing to be involved in inter religious) relationships is based upon their own preference. I will not be a judge (upon that matter). But I have decided to look for a person who holds the same religion (seiman). It does not matter whether they are pious or not (they just have to be the same religion), unless the relationship is just for fun (main-main). When I was in high school, I used to date a
Malay (Moslem). Her parents were fine (bagos-bagos jak), they just reminded me to be careful (jangan sampai macam-macam). I only stayed with her for 5 months, then we decided to break up, not because of religion. Just because of differences in opinion. That’s fine with me, it wasn’t serious anyway.

Unlike Stefanus, however, many youth that are involved in these relationships often decide to just continue with the relationship, despite the challenges that they have to face. Senius (23) is a Dayak young man who is involved in a relationship with a Malay young woman who is originally from Pontianak. Senius is originally from a district in the interior of the province, so his parents do not know of his relationship. He does not consider it very important to tell his parents, even though he has been going out with his girlfriend for one year, because he has no plans of marrying her in the near future. He assumes that his parents are quiet loose, and thus, will trust his choice of girlfriend. On the other hand, his girlfriend’s parents know about the relationship because his girlfriend is originally from Pontianak. Senius says that her parents do not seem to mind him seeing their daughter.

I do have a girlfriend, from Pontianak. She is a Malay, a Moslem. About the (differences) in religion, I will think about later. That is for the future. For now, we both decided to just go with the flow (jalanin aja). It does not mean I am not serious, but I will think (of the future) later. I have introduced myself to her parents, I have to because I have to pick her up on Saturday night. Her parents don’t seem to mind. At least they don’t show (that they mind).

Oren (23), a Dayak young man has been involved with a Malay young woman for two years. In Oren’s account below, he expresses that there is consensual agreement among themselves that having different belief systems will not be an impediment to their relationship – even if they decide to get married. In Oren’s view, young women are not obliged to “follow” their husband’s religion or ethnic customs, but he has not discussed this with either side of the family.

There are many, many inter religious (romantic relationships) here. Like me, I have a Moslem girlfriend. We (youth with inter religious relationships) are able to meet because we join organizations. I am still considering whether to continue with the relationship or not. So far, we are just carrying on with it. It has been 2 years. If both parents are fine, then we ourselves do not really make an issue of our belief. She does not have to “follow” me.

---

3 Usually referring to restriction towards sexual acts
Conclusion

Globalization and neoliberal policies have changed the ways in which young people experience growing up and being young. It has changed ways in which they make the transition from education to work transitions, and how they navigate their life towards marriage. Youth face insecure futures as investment in education often does not guarantee a secure job. These uncertainties are dealt with by forming ideal images of romanticism coupled with consumerism. Local structures such as ethnicity and religion exacerbate the constraints young couples have in paving their ways towards marriage.

However, being in the periphery magnifies the contradictions between images of endless possibilities and the reality of limited opportunities. Instead of constructing hyperbolic dreams as a way of compensating this gap (Kjelgaard and Askegaard, 2006: 239-240), youth in Pontianak are relatively realistic. Young people’s ambiguous attitudes and behavior between growing up and being young actually shows their effort in being grounded with regard to their situation, including in seeing romantic relationships as long term relationships rather than a prelude to marriage.
References


Ng, N., Weinehall, L., & Ohman, A. (2007). 'If I don't smoke, I'm not a real man'-Indonesian Teenage Boys' Views about Smoking. *Health Education Research, 22*(6), 794-804.


