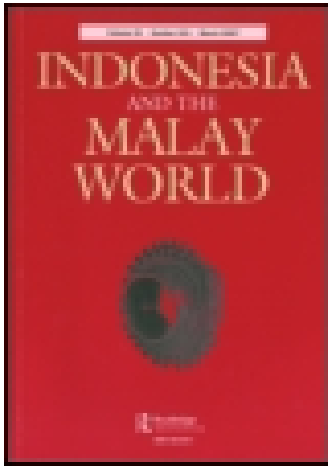


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Pam Nilan

## CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITIES AND YOUNG MEN IN INDONESIA

*This article is on three kinds of contemporary young masculinities in Indonesia. Proceeding through a discussion of three composite profiles of young men assembled from fieldwork data, the argument is made that these three identifiable discourses of lived masculinity correspond to some dominant images of men circulating in the Indonesian media. Theoretically, these seem to be new or alternative constructions of masculinity, if considered against the men's studies literature. Yet there is evidence that these persuasive new forms of cultural leadership for young Indonesian men still constitute a configuration of hegemonic masculinity, even though the patriarchal bapak stereotype is challenged. It is concluded that young men in Indonesia are under various kinds of pressure: to become a good citizen and dependable provider for the family on the one hand, and on the other hand, to match the fantasy images of global 'hypermasculinity' – tough, hard and heroic. To a certain extent this applies in both the secular and religious domains.*

### Introduction

This article presents three contrasting composite profiles of young men assembled from fieldwork conducted between 2003 and 2009. The purpose is to interrogate these 'styles' of Indonesian masculinity against contemporary theorising of masculinity in men's studies. The three profiles depict a culturally and historically specific configuration of youthful masculinities in Indonesia today. These styles of youthful masculinity, broadly speaking, match media depictions of persuasive new forms of cultural leadership for young Indonesian men. The question of whether this new configuration challenges the national, mediated image of hegemonic masculinity in the archipelago is carefully considered in the article's conclusion.

A few studies that focus specifically on contemporary Indonesian masculinities have been undertaken, for example, Elmhirst (2007), Noszlopy (2005), and Robinson (2008). Other publications have considered masculinity from with gay, lesbian or transgendered studies, for example Blackwood (1999), Boellstorff (2004), Oetomo (2000) and Graham (2001). Clark (2004a; 2004b) has considered Indonesian masculinities from the film and media studies perspective. Masculinity is also often mentioned in studies of youth and sexuality, for example Utomo (2002) and Beazley (2003), and in studies of violence, for example Wilson (2008). Yet overall, masculinity *per se* has been little studied in the Indonesian context (Boellstorff 2004; Clark 2004a; Oetomo 2000).

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The term masculinity has appeared most often in studies of gender that focus on women and the experiences of women. Inevitably, given the necessary focus on women, the notion of masculinity has tended to remain rather unexplored as a gender category. Masculinity as a term is ‘either unmarked (the assumed “norm”), or at best one-dimensional (the patriarch)’ (Elmhirst 2007: 225). As masculinity theorist Kimmel (2000) points out, we know little about the masculine ‘half’ of gender politics in the Asia-Pacific and our understanding of non-western masculinities is incomplete. This article seeks to make a contribution to that knowledge by looking at new – or perhaps not so new – youthful masculinities in Indonesia. It also seeks to inform the field of Indonesian studies by offering some insights into the contemporary mediated construction of gender for young men.

### Youthful masculinities in Indonesia

In order to illustrate some contemporary multi-dimensional signifiers of youthful Indonesian masculinity, three composite profiles of informants are presented below. As contrasting snapshots, they represent young middle class men ‘for whom the construction and integration of masculinity’ seems to be ‘under pressure’ (Connell 1995: 90). In one direction, the pressure on Indonesian young men comes from familial and pedagogic discourses that call them towards the role of the steady worker and reliable provider. In another direction, compelling discourses of heroism and macho bravado deriving from both local and global sources create pressure to construct their identity in terms of quite different kinds of masculine cultural practice.

Popular media sources, especially prime time television, indicate at least three common ‘types’ of Indonesian young men. The first is the bearded devout young Muslim *santri* in white cap and white flowing shirt (for example Fealy 2004: 104). From film clips of *nasyid* bands<sup>1</sup> to Muslim tele-evangelists, to footage of anti-western demonstrations, the media image is everywhere. However, on an average working day such iconic male signifiers are hard to find at street level. Indonesia is the world’s fourth most populous nation, yet relatively few young men are devout Islamist radicals who make the religion their whole life. The profile of Husni below indicates the practical difficulty of maintaining such a position outside a *pesantren* or dedicated NGO.

Also common in popular media is the secular image of the ‘cool’, but sensitive young man (see Sen 2003: 151; Clark 2004a). An urban ideal, he may be a *cowok trendi* or a troubled soul. Examples of such young men include the protagonists of recent films like *Kuldesak* (1998), *Arisan* (2003), *Ada apa dengan cinta* (2003) and more recently *Ayat-ayat cinta* (2008). Many of the early evening *sinetron* on commercial television also feature central characters of this kind. The profile of Ramli below illustrates the financial and emotional cost of maintaining the fast-living *cowok trendi* lifestyle.

The pugnacious criminal or gang member is also a common media stereotype of the young man. He might be a *preman* (thug), a drug user or dealer, a pimp, or just a

<sup>1</sup>A male ensemble *a capella* genre, *nasyid* (Arabic) means song, hymn or anthem, often traced to the religious verse *thola’al badru ‘alaina* (finally the moon has risen amidst us) attributed to the period spent by the Prophet in Medina (Barendregt 2006: 175).

collective participant in the gambling, drinking, whoring 'fight club' culture that characterises inner city street life after midnight (for example Berman 2003; Noszlopy 2005; Elmhirst 2007; Baulch 2007). Commonly, he treats women badly, shows no respect for authority and constitutes a threat to law and order (Wilson 2008). The profile of Doni below sets out the complex nature of such a lifestyle trajectory, involving injury and incarceration.

It can be argued that all three media images are inflected by mediated hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity describes persuasive forms of masculinity that circulate in the global popular media where male heroes and villains possess (often superhuman) physical strength, cunning, bravery, sex drive and aggression. Sporting reports also promote this ideal. Accordingly, where it is produced as an aspirational identity by men in everyday social life: 'hypermasculinity is an exaggerated expression of traits, beliefs, actions and embodiment considered to be masculine' – framed up actively to demonstrate 'opposition to femininity' (Levy 2007: 325; see also Ling 1999). It is understood that media icons of global hypermasculinity are synthesised with local and national masculinities as they are taken up or not by various kinds of men in countries like Indonesia.

As Horrocks (1989) argues, male stereotypes in media operate as important points of reference for boys and young men constructing a sense of their masculine self as they grow up. The three informant profiles presented below all imply this kind of influence. Notably, although the composite informant data below comes from just five cities, mediated icons of youthful masculinity are distributed right across the archipelago, implicitly shaping the constitution of subjectivity for young men in all urban and rural settings.

## Methodology

This article uses a perhaps unusual form of fieldwork analysis. In my many encounters with young Indonesian men since 1996, it has often struck me how much they either resemble or contradict characters seen nightly on TV or in films. Each of the three young male profiles below is a composite of between three and five young Indonesian men of that kind, aged between 18 and 28, who were encountered, interviewed and observed in the past five years. Each composite represents a different, distinctive subject position. The three composite profiles offer a concise, yet rich picture of trend phenomena in the evolution of youthful masculinities as a discursive configuration, while maintaining a necessary economy of scale that permits a detailed theoretical discussion to take place in here.

I have successfully employed this technique in previous publications on Indonesian youth (for example Nilan 2008: 66). The advantage of assembling fictionalised narratives or vignettes lies in the opportunity to synthesise a number of different, complex stories into a small number of profiles that exemplify common features of informants' lives (for example Cashmore 2008), while retaining the 'lived' quality of ethnographic data. Drawing on the prior analytical work of Clough (2002) and Sparkes (2002), qualitative researcher Rea (2006: 9) states: 'when I merge or amalgamate my observations of participants I find I have far richer data. I represent this in narrative form through a number of "characters". This is not fiction because data comes from observations of real participants, not from researcher imagination'. The success of this analytical technique rests on

the reader's faith in the ability of the author to choose appropriately from the mass of informant engagements that take place during fieldwork. I am confident that the issues, characteristics, situation and attitudes of the composite profiles below do appropriately capture three significant directions in the constitution of youthful Indonesian masculinities. The fieldwork data was collected during periods of time spent in Bali, Sulawesi, Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Solo.

The profiles of Husni and Ramli constitute contrasting religious and secular exemplars of middle-class young masculinity. The Husni profile was developed from three informant accounts collected in Makassar, South Sulawesi. The profile of Ramli was developed from conversations with five young male informants in Jakarta, Bali and Yogyakarta. The profile of Doni relies primarily on one Javanese lower middle class young man in Solo 'gone bad' - as his father put it, and two other young men from a different *kampung* in Solo who were involved in gambling, petty crime and going to prostitutes. I became aware of the first young man through his father, a security guard, who blamed himself that his third son had got into trouble with the police. The other two young men lived near a house I visited. They were feared by local householders. Their main aim in speaking to me was to demonstrate what hard men they were.

The composite profiles are derived from young men from middle to lower class backgrounds, representing the focus of my youth research since 1999. The analysis offered below does not bear directly upon poor or marginal masculinities, or gay masculinities. Nor are Chinese Indonesian, or Christian or Hindu male youth mentioned. Soccer stars and sportsmen are also missing. This is not to deny the importance of considering those kinds of mediated masculine identities. However, the focus here is on three kinds of commonly-encountered young men who seem to correspond to key icons or exemplars of youthful Indonesian masculinity in the mainstream media, in advertising and in news bulletins. It is argued that they resonate with new forms of cultural leadership in the configuration of contemporary masculinities in Indonesia.

### Contemporary gender issues – some background

New Order policies governing civil life until 1998 were emphatically gendered (Robinson 2000: 141). The cultural diversity of indigenous gender orders in the archipelago was homogenised into a nationally-promoted binary of masculinity and femininity: *kodrat pria* and *kodrat wanita*. State-sanctioned gender roles were integral to the project of nation-building (Anderson 1990; Simon and Barker 2002). Smoothing out regional and cultural gender variations in acceptable maleness and femaleness was part of this nationalising process.

Since the end of the New Order in 1998, matters of cultural leadership on gender issues have become more complicated. Recent trends and shifts have been influential for gender relations. They include rapid urbanisation, later age of marriage, fertility control and the rise in women's labour force participation (Jones 2005). Indonesia has also seen upward credentialling of the labour market (higher and higher credentials/qualifications needed to get basically the same job) combined with economic downturn since the late 1990s (Elmhirst 2007: 232); growth in the service and knowledge-based sectors of the labour market (Bayhaqi 2000); and extraordinary expansion of access to global media and information/communication technologies (Nilan and Utari 2007: 225).

Other influences on contemporary masculinities include: global media hypermasculinity (Ling 1999); extraordinary growth in the production and dissemination of locally produced pornography (Suryakusuma 2000); Indonesian feminist theorising (for example, Aripurnami 1996); and *wahabi*-influenced Islamic asceticism in mosques and *pesantren* (van Bruinessen 2002). Perhaps most influential of all though, has been the heavily promoted ideal of the urban middle-class male breadwinner and consumer. He has one wife, well-educated children, servants, a 4-wheel drive vehicle, widescreen television and a new house in a secure outer suburban residential complex.

The combination of challenges and affirmations to the state-normative role described above has significantly challenged and reshaped Indonesian masculinities in the last ten years. This signals a 'crisis' for Indonesian masculinity represented in many contemporary films, novels and theatre productions (Clark 2004a). While alternative masculinities have emerged, Boellstorff (2004: 469) suggests that 'norms for Indonesian national identity may be gaining a new masculinist cast', driven by a changing labour market, Islamist discourse and mediated global hypermasculinity.

It is important to be clear about how men engage with mediated images and messages of masculinity. As Ging (2005) points out, 'most academic studies of masculinity in the media employ feminist critical analysis and have tended to focus on the textual representation of men and masculinity. By and large, they conclude that the majority of mainstream media texts perpetuate dominant ideologies of gender'. However, more recently, gender in media analysts have interpreted 'contemporary images of machismo not as reasserting or valorising hegemonic masculinity but rather as articulating anxieties about the impossibility and redundancy of the hypermasculine' (Ging 2005: 30; see also Horrocks 1995).

Yet Ging's study of young males aged 15 to 17 in Ireland engaging with media representations of men found that 'while participants were often critical of the constraints imposed on boys to suppress emotion and act hard, they also seemed to derive considerable pleasure from the performance of tough, blokeish masculinity' (Ging 2005: 41). Furthermore, the most 'laddish' of the texts 'seemed to provide the boys with another means of publicly performing and affirming their heterosexuality, by emphasising their interest in women, beer and cars. If anything, they were perceived as feckless and fun spaces, free from the pressures, responsibilities and complexities of "real life"' (Ging 2005: 43).

In Clark's work on representations of masculinity in Indonesian cinema, he concludes that,

Just as the Indonesian nation has found itself in a deep crisis in the years following the fall of Suharto, as a constructed category the Indonesian 'man' is also undergoing a period of fluidity. Cultural icons such as the landmark film *Kuldesak* suggest that the contemporary image of the Indonesian male is torn between outdated and archetypal images and 'alternative' or non-traditional masculinities. The alternatives themselves, as seen in recent fiction, television advertisements and cinema, are contradictory and ambiguous.

(Clark 2004b: 131)

This suggests a reflexive engagement between the gender identities of young Indonesian men and the ambivalent archetypes of contemporary masculinity they encounter in the

media. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, as Vickers (2005: 3) points out, giving any generalised account 'of modern Indonesia is difficult because a country as huge and heterogeneous as this does not have a single narrative'. Media usage and taste varies widely across different parts of Indonesia. Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, the data that contributed to the three composite profiles here were gathered in different cities in Indonesia, indicating that there are certain urban commonalities in mediated constructions of masculinity.

### Indonesian hegemonic masculinity?

The specific term 'hegemonic masculinity' is usually attributed to R. W. Connell (1995). However, fellow Australian sociologist Donaldson (1993) has also written significantly on the topic. The concept of masculinity as 'hegemonic' derives from Gramsci's theorising (1988: 260) of the state where one group claims and sustains a leading position in society during a given historical period. Domination by this group is achieved by consensus even while the cultural leadership is invariably contested. Hegemonic masculinity must therefore be understood not as a single discursive entity but as 'the *configuration* of gender practice' at a given point in time that shores up the 'legitimacy of patriarchy' (Connell 1995: 77, my emphasis). In other words, hegemonic masculinity arises in a discursive struggle – a dynamic state of play in which any one form of dominant male identity is contingent and open to challenge.

It is characteristic of patriarchy that privileged older men hold authority over younger men. In any struggle for hegemony, counter-hegemonic positions and leaders emerge to challenge the status quo of the time (Gramsci 1971: 495). In the dynamic gender configuration from which a hegemonic masculinity emerges, challenges to cultural leadership from other kinds of masculinity evolve, and are routinely depicted in contemporary cultural texts. So for example, the image (and reality) of the ascetic young Islamist in Indonesia at present provides a counter-hegemonic discourse on how men should be that challenges the residual hegemonic ideal of conservative, secular, consumerist masculinity promoted under the New Order. The icon of the ascetic young Islamist also challenges the trendy, sexualised young male consumer extolled by globally-inflected advertising. New cultural leadership for youthful Muslim masculinity is provided by dynamic young preachers such as evangelist A.A. Gym (Watson 2005; Hoesterey 2008), who recently took a second young wife with the apparent consent of the first, and Ustad Jeffry (*Al Buchar*), who has just released his acclaimed fourth album of devotional rock.

The elevated Javanese discourse of masculinity – *bapak* – was significant for hegemonic masculinity during the New Order period. *Bapakism* blended feudal traditions of patron-client with a modern development paradigm. In a striking example, Suharto made himself known as *Bapak Pembangunan*, the father of development (Rahim 2001; Scherer 2006). In principle *bapak* always rules over the family; but often also over the business, the town, and the nation-state. He is entitled to exercise dominance because of his God-given wisdom, self-control and mastery of emotions. These qualities grant him authority over women, children, and male underlings. He achieves hegemony through the exercising of 'refined' power embodying 'emotional self-restraint' (Clark 2004b: 118; Brenner 1995). His calm and passive demeanour demonstrates the



triumph of *akal* – reason and control (Peletz 1995: 88–91) over base passions – *nafsu*. Writing of traditional gender relations in Asia, Moghadam (1993: 104) maintains that ‘senior men of a family have authority over everyone else in that family including younger men and women, who are in turn subject to forms of control and subordination’. Even today, when Indonesians speak of the ‘proper’ role of a husband/father – *bapak* remains the point of reference. There is a *bapak* figure (or more) in every prime time *sinetron*.

Young unmarried men (*pemuda*, *remaja*, *cowok-cowok*) present a challenge (Scherer 2006) to the authority of older men in authority – *bapak*. Their behaviour is not refined but is often depicted and condemned as *kasar* (coarse, flamboyant, playful, outrageous, animalistic). They are ruled by passion rather than reason. Their operation of masculine power is of a different, less refined order. In the cultural history of Indonesia it is signalled by a different hegemonic ideal of Indonesian masculinity – *pemuda* for example. The term *pemuda* connotes a young male activist or fighter. Semantically, the heroic masculine ideal of *pemuda* leads us to Husni, who takes his religion very seriously and is more than prepared to defend it.

### Husni

The son of a prosperous farming family in South Sulawesi, Husni was in his late twenties in 2004. He had been educated from the age of five in a *pesantren* in Makassar. He was a university graduate, a devout Muslim and member of Muhammadiyah, the nation-wide ‘modernist’ Muslim organisation. A civil servant, Husni had already completed the pilgrimage to Mecca (*haj*) organised by his boss. He was married to a similarly devout young woman – Hidayat. Their adored first child was called Muhammed.

While at university during his early twenties, Husni had been a member of KAMMI (an inter-varsity Muslim student activist group) and took part in anti-western demonstrations and events, for example, publicly burning an effigy of George W. Bush, and taking part in ‘sweeping’<sup>2</sup> operations at western hotels along the Makassar waterfront. He spent much of his youthful spare time in prayer and discussion groups at Al-Markus mosque. For a short period after 9/11 he had proudly worn a t-shirt sporting the triumphant face of Osama bin Laden. He had also gone through a stage of refusing to shake hands with non-Muslims and avoiding even speaking contact with unrelated women.

In 2004 Husni said he still wanted Indonesia to be under shar’ia law and part of a regional Muslim caliphate. He remained keen on Islamic punishments – *hudud* – such as stoning, flogging and amputation of the hands of thieves, since he believed this was the way to establish proper rule of law and restore public security. Husni admired radical Muslim leader Abu Bakar Ba’shir for speaking out against the west, but now disagreed with violent jihad because ‘we are not at war’. He believed Islam would ultimately triumph in Indonesia through the spiritual jihad of winning hearts and minds –

<sup>2</sup>‘Sweeping’ refers to groups of radical Muslim male youth visiting places such as hotels frequented by westerners and telling them they are unwelcome, or attacking them. ‘Sweeping’ is also targeted at local venues where alcohol is consumed, or venues where activities are considered to invite sexual thoughts or practices, such as bars, brothels, cinemas, female *dangdut* performances, gay dance parties or certain magazine publishers. ‘Sweeping’ is most common during Ramadan.



popular devout practices assisted by technology. During the fasting month of Ramadan he had started to lead *pesantren kilat* (fast-track Koranic schooling) at the local mosque, gathering in street boys for teaching about the Koran during the day and free meals at night. With the assistance of his laptop he joyfully shared his devotion to the Koran and his grasp of Islamic orthopraxy with the illiterate boys.

For Husni, his *pesantren* education, attending prayer groups at the mosque and joining Muhammadiyah seem to have signified sacral ‘spaces’ in which his youthful Muslim masculinity was affirmed, reaching a peak in his campus activism. Once married and working though, he found he had much less time for mosque-based and radical activities. He had also toned down his behaviour towards Christians and unrelated women because it was inappropriate in his workplace. In keeping with tradition (see Asmussen 2004: 317–22), as a male child and youth he had been a follower of older men. Even while living out the ideal of Islamist *pemuda*, he had been guided by older preachers and activists. However, in his late twenties he had a family to guide and some ‘followers’ of his own to lead towards salvation. Husni was moving rapidly away from the masculine identity discourse of Islamist *pemuda* towards the subject position of a senior Muslim male. Ustad Jeffry and Rhoma Irama were his folk heroes and he listened only to their songs and to Koranic recitation on his iPod. Popular preacher and singer Ustad Jeffry is a ‘handsome ex-film star and reformed drug addict, he embodies and trades on the possibility of redemption, a theme that has powerful appeal for well-to-do teenagers and young adults’ and his songs and sermons dispense advice on how to be both ‘socially active and pious’ (Fealy 2008: 25–26) a position that matches Husni’s. Time-honoured *dangdut* pioneer Rhoma Irama’s song lyrics express themes of ‘everyday life, love, social criticism against class inequality, and Islamic messages’ (Weintraub 2006: 414), and this too seems appropriate. It is possible Husni will eventually become a preacher.

### Islamist *pemuda*

As Husni’s profile illustrates, in the style and purpose of their activism, Islamist male youth in Indonesia strongly resemble devout Muslim youth elsewhere. Shahabi (2006) reports that hardline Muslim male youth in Tehran (*basijis*) organise their lives around mosques, *pesantren* and military units. They come mainly from Tehran’s lower class and traditional middle class. Their aim is to make people obey the law and thereby to ‘re-Islamise’ Iranian society (Shahabi 2006: 117) where there is increasing urban resistance to forced orthopraxy. Husni’s origins and current social position are both clearly middle class, defying the stereotype that Islamist activists come primarily from poor, barely educated families. Fealy (2004: 110) noted that of radical Islamist group members surveyed in Jakarta only ‘35 % of respondents were unemployed or experiencing socio-economic difficulties’. There is a prevailing argument that poverty may draw embittered, economically marginal young males into radical fringe religious groups (Bruce 2008). Yet middle-class, university-educated youth like Husni have long been involved in radical Islamist groups in Indonesia (van Bruinessen 2002: 136). Religious chauvinism, anti-western rhetoric, control of not only female but male sexuality, and the danger for men of interactions with unrelated women are key foci (see Ouzgane 2006; Boellstorff 2005).

Islamist ideology in Indonesia since 1998 has had mixed effects on gender (Bennett 2005) for Muslim men. On the positive side, theological emphasis on education for both sexes, and the complementary partnership of marriage as the basis for social life means men find their moral roles as dedicated husbands and fathers considerably emphasised. On the negative side, censorship and the emphasis on public piety and formal marriage limits the expression of non-marital sexuality. There is strong condemnation not only of homosexuality (Boellstorff 2004; 2005) but of pre-marital sex and adultery – realised in recent anti-pornography legislation. For Indonesian Muslim men *zina* is the sin of having any sexual activities or even sexual thoughts outside marriage. So now, rather than tolerating the casual daily interactions between the sexes long common in Indonesia, interactions by Muslim men with unrelated women are regarded as fraught with danger, because they can lead so easily to sinful thoughts or acts (Smith-Hefner 2005: 442). The answer for young Islamist men like Husni is to pattern his middle class married and social life on strict Koranic teaching, even while working in a culturally mixed modern institution that demands secular and tolerant forms of behaviour.

### *Ramli*

Ramli was in his mid-twenties in 2005. He lived in the suburbs of Jakarta with his non-devout Muslim family. Ramli's father was a business man and his mother a teacher. His older sister worked in a bank. Ramli was working as a sound engineer at a music recording studio. He loved music and had been an avid fan of *Slank*<sup>3</sup> in his teens. In 2005 he was playing keyboards in an R&B band and listening to hip-hop. He used to play *basket* (NBL basketball) when he was at university but no longer has the time. He went to the gym at least twice a week. Much of his monthly income was spent on paying off his motorbike, on cigarettes and clothes. Ramli liked to dress well, especially at music industry launches patronised by celebrities, and when he attended international rock concerts. On the weekend Ramli went regularly with male friends to nightclubs and discos where he drank scotch, danced, flirted with girls and sometimes took recreational drugs.

Ramli had taken up with two short-term girlfriends from the music industry and enjoyed sexual relations with both of them. However, each in turn had dropped him when courted by a more prestigious man. This caused Ramli a great deal of anxiety since he had expected his post-university life to be 'like the best', but so far it wasn't. His job was undemanding and his band was going nowhere. He had no proper girlfriend and was still living at home, where he quarrelled with his father. Ramli dreamed of moving to Malaysia or Singapore where he felt his life would 'open up'. He was often rather depressed and given to dwelling on his problems – '*introspeksi diri*'. He was looking beyond the music industry for a well-educated 'professional' young woman.

Secular, middle-class male youth in Indonesia like Ramli share many 'fractured' transition life stage characteristics (Furlong and Cartmel 1997) with youth in other

<sup>3</sup>*Slank* has been Indonesia's most popular band for 19 years. *Slank* fans ('Slankers') number in the millions. *Slank* songs criticise social inequality, calling for peace and tolerance. *Slank's* majority fan base is poor and disenfranchised young men (Berman 2003: 4).

Southeast Asian cities, and in most cities of the world. In his mid-twenties, Ramli was earning a wage, but was not independent of his family. Even before starting his career he had been casually employed in the music recording studio. In his mid-twenties, he had no steady girlfriend, and still lived in the comfort of the family home under the rather lax authority of his parents. Although he had a motorbike, he often borrowed his father's 4-wheel drive to visit friends, since his father would not let him drive it to nightclubs. Ramli was located uneasily between the status of child and adult – a common experience of contemporary middle class youth in transition to adulthood.

Ramli's practice of smoking unfiltered clove cigarettes reflects the strong semantic link between secular Indonesian masculinity and smoking. For example, PT Gudang Garam's advertising slogan used to be *kretekeknya lelaki* – the man's cigarette. In Indonesia 'smoking is almost entirely restricted to men, and is seen as a luxury item men pay for outside the household budget that is controlled by women. Smoking therefore celebrates both modernity and maleness' (Reynolds 1999: 85). Ramli was aware of health risks from smoking. He aimed to give it up when he got married.

Although there is always a gap between what people say and actually do, devout Muslim men do not favour smoking, at least in theory, so the consumption of cigarettes is one practice that separates the performative discourses of secular and Muslim masculinity. Other dividing practices are alcohol, gambling, and sex. Religiously devout young men maintain that they hold themselves back from pre-marital sexual activity (*zina*), while secular young men like Ramli do not. Despite the anti-pornography law, there is much in contemporary Indonesian secular popular culture that encourages casual sex, either explicitly or implicitly. Moreover, traditionally, 'there was little if any anxiety about adolescent men's sexuality and, as a result, far fewer restrictions were placed on young boys' movements' (Smith-Hefner 2005: 444). So despite the Islamisation trend, there remains a general attitude of sexual permissiveness towards young men. Despite the ban on pornography they can readily experience vicariously the overkill of sexualised global and local popular culture just through logging on to the internet, which is not controlled by the state at present.

Nevertheless, 'young men may also experience emotional trauma and depression (*depresi*) from failed romances' (Smith-Hefner 2005: 452). Young men are meant to play 'the more active role in courtship. This role is captured in common phrases used to describe adolescent male activities such as *suka hunting* ('[he's always] chasing [girls]') and *cari cewek* ('[he's out] cruising/looking for girls') (ibid). Since young men in Indonesia are supposed to be in control of the courtship process (and the girl), when they are repeatedly dumped by girlfriends – like Ramli – this implies there may be something lacking in their masculinity. Given the nature of his job, popular culture surrounds Ramli, replete with images of heterosexual male virility. He is in daily contact with 'global society' (Connell 2000: 33) in which transnational tropes of masculinity circulate (Pringle and Pease 2001). The globally mediated, western, sexualised 'playboy' ideal of masculinity now plays very strongly in Indonesian urban male culture, implying the hegemonic effect of a global hypermasculinity that 'sets the standard' (Ling 1999: 278); bearing out Donaldson's point that 'hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media' (1993: 645). Ramli as a man is supposed to be virile and uncaring, yet in 2005 he was keen to find a respectable and responsible girl and settle down. Like Husni he is moving away from the excesses of his youth towards the mature masculine identity of a successful family man.

*Doni*

In his mid-twenties, Doni came from a hardworking family in Solo, Central Java. He was the only one of his siblings to have 'gone bad'. In junior secondary school he was a member of a violent *geng* (gang) and drifted into gambling and using *narkoba* (drugs). By the age of 16 he had discarded a string of *bakstrit* girlfriends. His neck was badly scarred from a knife fight. Doni left school and graduated from merely using drugs to dealing drugs at the *warung* (food stall) opposite his old school gate. With minor drug and gambling profits, and the assistance of a moneylender, he put a first payment down on a powerful racing motorbike and started competing in illegal street racing. He kept racing despite repeated warnings from the police, to whom his father paid bribes. Eventually he was involved in a crash and seriously injured.

At home during his recovery he used drugs even more often, becoming addicted to heroin, even while he still owed money to the moneylender. Once mobile again (but limping), he came under the influence of local crime boss Mister D. Along with some members of his old *geng*, Doni took part in a robbery with violence at the home of a wealthy Chinese businessman in Solo. Doni was identified and charged, but he would not name Mister D. Doni spent two years in prison, during which time his heroin habit worsened. By 2007 he was living intermittently at the family home and on the streets. He obtained money for *putaw* (heroin) from gambling and minor drug dealing. He and his friends extorted protection money from street stall-holders. His family gloomily predicted that he would soon be caught and sentenced to jail for a longer period.

Doni favoured a style of swaggering bravado, and talked tough. Yet this was true of a great many young men frequenting Solo streets who were not convicted criminals. We may productively consider his gang membership though, as emblematic of a wider social formation of disenfranchised male youth in Indonesia (see Kristiansen 2003) who go about in threatening groups. Unemployed or under-employed, they resemble the young Australian men from blue-collar backgrounds described by Connell (1995: 92–119) as 'live fast, die young'. Being a gang member gains not only a strong sense of belonging but a great deal of *gengsi* (status) for the young men involved. *Tawuran* (fighting) between gangs in Solo is endemic, over issues of honour and loyalty ranging from soccer finals to girlfriends, to territorial motorbike parking. School bullying of younger and marginal boys is also very common, leading some to drop out of school rather than suffer the daily abuse.

At the level of civil disorder in Indonesia, collective male violence is exemplified in the activities of *preman* militias (Wilson 2008; Scherer 2006). *Preman* are primarily men from poorer backgrounds under the age of 30 (Nordholt 2002) – 'disenfranchised urban youth' (Wilson 2005: 6; Scherer 2006). While some are loose bands of thugs on hire to any political or religious cause, others have formed 'organizations, often along ethnic or religious lines, that have gradually established control over public space such as bus terminals, markets and food stalls' (Wilson 2005: 3). *Preman* gangs match what Connell (1995: 109–12) calls 'protest masculinity' – exaggerated claims to masculine potency deriving from a sense of economic powerlessness. They are often employed by political or religious groups for protection or to incite disorder. Being part of a feared gang offers 'legitimacy and a sense of identity and empowerment' for unemployed youth, especially where this is linked to the status of political parties. For example, political party PDI-P specifically conducted 'recruitment drives amongst unemployed

senior high school graduates' (Wilson 2005: 6; Supriyanto 2002: 16) to gain instant (paid) followers who would intimidate opposition candidates in local elections. Participation in male group violence unquestionably establishes the masculine credentials of young men on the margins of the labour market, and perpetuates both misogyny and homophobia. Mrazek (2005: 263) comments that 'in Javanese society today, there is a tendency to see a man who is strongly masculine as "normal" and any effeminate marks as somewhat abnormal or deviant'.

Further evidence for distinctive 'protest masculinities' around economic powerlessness is offered in Elmhirst's study of contemporary labour conditions in a Lampung village. Due to employer preference for females in manufacturing, young women have become economic migrants, while young men are left behind, unemployed. Elmhirst (2007: 234–35) finds two kinds of 'bad boy' masculinities have emerged. 'Gangsters' engage in illegal gambling, and 'tigers' follow and subject the few remaining young women to low-level sexual harassment. Both types of young men are:

Modern masculine subjects in unexpected and sometimes threatening ways. At issue is how young men can challenge the fact that they have been 'left behind', culturally, economically and geographically.

(Elmhirst 2007: 235)

Elmhirst (2007) and Berman (2003), among many other commentators, draw attention to the fact that violent male youth cultures in contemporary Indonesia now seem to be less driven by defined political or jihad goals and more by the reactive leisure/pleasure principle of collective violence, drugs and petty crime.

### 'Bad boys' in Indonesian popular culture

In considering the story of Doni it is instructive to look at the heroes and villains of locally-produced media. Some popular Indonesian television genres suggest supernatural or metaphysical causes for the bad behaviour of men. Causes may include: sorcery, curses, demon possession, devious female shape-changers fooling innocent young men and so on. In these genres, the 'bad guys' are usually defeated by 'good' magical young warriors. Possessed or ensorcelled youth can be saved or redeemed by older male mystics (van Heeren 2007: 213), especially by sprinkling of Muslim holy water and placing a special Koran on the body of the afflicted young man, enacting a discourse of redemption and salvation. In short, the iconic 'bad' young male character, 'realistic' or otherwise, is frequently depicted as behaving badly for reasons largely outside himself. Parental neglect and peer pressure are not the only represented causes, often negative guidance from corrupt older men, and/or demonic or macro cosmic influences are implied. It is therefore not surprising that the father of Doni purchased potions and charms from the *dukun* (traditional healer) to combat evil in his son, although this seemed to have had little effect.

In accordance with the cultural 'principle of seniority' (Asmussen 2004: 322), older men are often held to account for the bad actions of younger men in popular culture texts. In traditional Indonesian cultures, young men look for patronage to older men, just as Doni did to Mister D. Mulder (2005: 87) describes male-male relations in

Indonesia as characterised by ‘authoritarianism, hierarchy, male prestige’. In the traditional male hierarchy young men are not individuals but collectively subordinate to father, uncle or boss. If a male leader or mentor is bad or corrupt there is every chance a young man under his guidance will also be ‘bad’. Salvation is always possible though. Narratives of redemption by virtuous older males are exemplified in *sinetron dakwah* – Muslim proselytising serials and films. Similarly, when civil or political disorder breaks out in Solo and young men take to the streets to commit acts of violence, this tends to be explained locally in metaphysical terms. In fact, ‘bad boy’ behaviour in Solo is often simply explained according to the age-old battle between good and evil for the souls of men. It was even whispered that because Doni had been in trouble most of his life, his mother might have been cursed by an envious neighbour while pregnant. In Indonesia sorcery is not understood to respect religious faith, income or status. Indeed, wealth and status are expected to attract envy, providing strong motive for the practice of black magic. For example, an Indonesian man will often wear a ring made from precious metals with a stone calibrated to his aura or temperament. It is believed to give him supernatural protection from misfortune and malign forces.

## Conclusion

The three contrasting informant profiles presented here depict a current configuration of youthful masculinities that are simultaneously under pressure, and yet constitute powerful new forms of cultural leadership. In the media, images of masculinity are, as Clark (2004b) emphasises, mixed to say the least. While some texts and images exemplify hard, macho masculinity – cigarette advertisements for example, and kung fu shows – other kinds of media texts depict ‘dominant masculinity under attack’ (Clark 2004b: 125) in the form of tortured young souls, weak men, comic fools, possessed lunatics and strutting transvestites. In everyday social life, as stated previously, the pressure on Indonesian young men comes from strong discourses that call them towards the role of the steady worker and reliable provider, even while compelling discourses of hypermasculinity create pressure to construct themselves as heroes exemplifying bravado and risk.

At the same time, the three composite profiles offered here, and the media stereotypes they implicitly refer to, constitute powerful new forms of cultural leadership for men. This is so not only because of their distinctive temporal representation of youthful masculine identity, but because of where they are moving in terms of the transition to male adulthood. Once a young zealot, Husni has dropped many of the extreme behaviours he favoured as a young radical Muslim activist on campus. He is making the transition to mature Muslim male, but he may well have to compromise his Islamist views further in order to be promoted to a management position, given the ethnic, gender and religious mix in the government office where he works.

Ramli is feeling the pressure in a variety of ways, unable to effectively occupy the subject position of the successful, confidently virile male celebrated in his masculine club culture, and reaching out for *bapak* conservatism in the form of marriage and a business career. Doni is under all kinds of pressure. His pursuit of ‘hard and bad’ gang masculinity has eventuated in debt, family shame, physical disability, a drug habit, criminal record and dire local reputation. As he gets older the most obvious outcome is for him to move into the position of a local petty crime boss.



In summary, the three profiles here initially seem to be antithetical, running on very different tracks towards widely divergent mature masculinities. However, not only do these three kinds of youthful masculinity in themselves all suggest hegemonic principles of patriarchal praxis, all three refer implicitly to older men, who still constitute the authoritative expression of patriarchal/paternalistic control of Indonesian civil society. Post-1998 the state certainly lost much of its formal authority to control the operations of patriarchy through a single hegemonic ideal of progressive, obedient secularity – *kodrat pria*. Yet even so, the patron-client or leader-follower hierarchical relationship between men remains strong, and fits well not only with a rise in criminal gang formation, but with the rapid growth of modern knowledge and information services and industries, and with the expansion of proselytising opportunities for charismatic Muslim preachers.

In this light we need to carefully consider the generational trajectories of the three young men. Husni, once a follower, has become a husband, father and Muslim spiritual leader of disenfranchised street boys. Smart, clean-living and an increasingly confident leader, he is rising through the promotional ranks in his office. This fits precisely with the generational renewal cycle of patriarchy. Hedonistic and secular cool-guy Ramli disagrees with his father on most points, but his father as role model and advisor will most likely prevail. Ramli is seeking a professional ‘partnership’ marriage like his father’s and is set to make a career in the sound business, repeating in a sense his father’s life, although in the field of new technology. Doni too, is likely to step into the shoes of the most readily available local model of powerful male adulthood, the crime boss Mister D.

In short, the three styles of youthful masculinity depicted above can be understood as constituting a ‘hegemonic’ configuration in the Gramscian sense that links a dominant style of masculinity to the authority and governance mechanisms of the state. On the one hand, as they move towards adulthood and leadership, middle-class young men, whether religious (Husni) or secular (Ramli), tend by their actions to create favourable conditions for economic progress. They are skilled workers on the right side of the law for the most part, and ‘cashed-up’ consumers. As fathers and leaders they will tend to maintain a conservative status quo.

Doni appears to offer a contrast. In constituting ‘protest masculinity’ through violence and crime, men like Doni apparently signify a threat to economic growth and sustainability by destabilising the climate for foreign investments and capital inflow. Yet in the end, moral panics over crime and lawlessness tend to support political arguments for encouraging economic growth through a strong military and police presence overseen by the ruling group in society of older, wiser men, thus enshrining key tenets of patriarchy. In conclusion, the youth transitions of Husni, Ramli and Doni towards the subject position of senior, authoritative adult male transcribe a discursive struggle in which some counter-hegemonic masculinities are being explored. The question remains as to whether these will ultimately challenge the status quo of Indonesian patriarchy.

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