Youth culture and Islam in Indonesia

PAM NILAN AND MICHELLE MANSFIELD

ABSTRACT
Indonesian youth culture is sometimes depicted through a moral panic discourse about mixed sex socializing. In this article, the authors challenge that view by presenting some ethnographic material on young Muslim Indonesians of both sexes socialising in an internet café and gathering during Ramadhan in a mall in Solo, Central Java. Young Indonesians enact everyday youth culture through the negotiation of space, time, and technology within the strong discourse of moral propriety and gender separation advised by contemporary Islam. The intense social bonding between same sex age peers provides security and reassurance for young men and women in the transition to adulthood. Technology is now integral to this bonding.

KEY WORDS
Youth culture, internet café, mall, technology.

INTRODUCTION
This article addresses a common practice in contemporary Indonesian youth culture: young Muslim Indonesians of both sexes socializing in the internet café and the shopping mall. The internet café and the shopping mall are public/private spaces which differ markedly from their predecessors: the warung (small shop) and the traditional open-air market. Shopping malls are ostentatious consumerist spaces offering a multitude of novel opportunities to young Indonesians (Atmodiwirjo 2008; Ansori 2009; Pratiwo 2003; Rustan 2010; Van Leeuwen 2011). Internet cafés in 2007 offered Indonesian youth online access to the world (Utomo et al. 2012). Ramadhan encourages social

\[1\] Van Leeuwen’s book *Lost in mall* offers an extensive discussion on the characteristics of new Indonesian shopping malls and how people use them.

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