

LYN PARKER

Religion, class and schooled sexuality among Minangkabau teenage girls

Introduction

This paper examines the meanings attached to sexuality and femininity by Minangkabau teenage girls in schools in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Although schools in West Sumatra do not teach sex education in the curriculum, I will argue that schools nevertheless have effects upon girls' knowledge, understanding of and practices around sex. Schools in West Sumatra communicate to students a hegemonic, normative understanding of womanhood, and a moral consciousness of the female sexual body, but different types of schools cater to their constituencies in different ways. Each type of school – academic, vocational and Islamic senior high schools – has a different 'curriculum of the body' (Lesko 1988) and differently disciplines bodies and shapes sexuality.¹ The ways schoolgirls articulate their understanding of sexuality and their practice of it are characteristic of their class, gender and religiosity, mediated by their schools.

The school is an important institution of class, gender and sexuality construction and reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Branson and Miller 1984; Connell 1987; Willis 1977). However, schooling is also an open-ended process involving the positive and creative nature of power. The school

¹ Lesko (1988:123) used the idea of the 'curriculum of the body' to refer to 'the total set of intended and unintended school experiences involving knowledge of the body and sensuality'. Her ethnography was conducted within a single Catholic school in the US and she used this analytical tool to demonstrate the diversity of responses of girls within this school. She suggested that the curriculum of the body be taken as 'central to the schooling experiences of young women and to the perpetuation of gender identities and inequities in contemporary American society' (Lesko 1988:123).

LYN PARKER is Associate Professor at the School of Social and Cultural Studies, the University of Western Australia. She holds a PhD from The Australian National University. Dr Parker has specialized in the study of contemporary society and culture in Indonesia, with a particular interest in gender relations, and has conducted long-term fieldwork in Bali and West Sumatra, areas chosen for their contrasting cultures within the Indonesian nation-state. She is the author of *From subjects to citizens; Balinese villagers in the Indonesian nation-state*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2003, and editor of *The agency of women in Asia*, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005. Dr Parker can be reached at lparker@arts.uwa.edu.au.

student 'self-induces' the characteristics and inequalities of class, gender and sexuality, but is simultaneously an active agent of cultural production (Levinson and Holland 1996; Parker 1997, 2002, 2003: Chapter 10).

I want to emphasize from the outset that in taking the body, and the disciplining of the body, as a focus I am not suggesting that the body is a blank slate or 'mute facticity' (Butler 1990:129), nor that it is somehow prior to signification. The force of the anthropological study of the body is that masculine and feminine bodies do not exist apart from culture. The body is a primary site and source of identity and subjectivity construction. By definition the body implies the social – it is the point of interface with the Other – but the body is also intensely personal. Bodily appearance and style signify consciousness and engagement with the social environment; however, I would note that the absence or containment of bodily movement or expression can also signify agency – active modesty, repression or non-engagement, for example.

In Indonesia, some of the most fervently Islamic cultures, such as those of the matrifocal Minangkabau and Acehnese, support comparatively high levels of female educational access and attainment.² The high level of female education in Minangkabau, combined with the matrilineal kinship system and female control of inherited land,³ have produced a society where the relative status of women is held to be very high and the position of women strong. However, in contemporary Minangkabau, Islamization, the reinvention of *adat* (customary traditions), and moves towards decentralization and regional autonomy have not been seen as advantaging women.⁴ The age of first marriage in the province of West Sumatra is probably rising and is one of the highest in the country.⁵ It was already over 25 years for young women in urban

² Jones 1976:43; Oey-Gardiner 1991:61, 64. This comparatively high level of female education has been consistent over time. For instance, using 1980 census data, Oey-Gardiner showed that the Minangkabau female:male ratio of the school-attending population aged 16-18 was 99:100, while nationally it was 66:100. Much of the difference was probably due to the propensity of Minangkabau parents to send their daughters to religious schools.

³ The phrase 'in Minangkabau' borrows from the way Indonesians talk – for example Minangkabau is both a place inhabited predominantly by members of the Minangkabau ethnic group, and the group itself. 'Minang' is a common abbreviation.

⁴ Afrizal 2002; Noerdin 2002. For instance, in 2001 and again in 2005, there were attempts to legislate a 10 p.m. curfew on women. In the last few years most state high schools in West Sumatra have made the *jilbab* or Islamic veil a compulsory part of the school uniform for girls (Parker 2008).

⁵ The Minangkabau are renowned for their habit of '*merantau*', or migrating, which means that many Minang are temporarily or more permanently living away from home, sometimes still within the province of West Sumatra and sometimes elsewhere in Indonesia (for example see Kato 1982). The anthropological and historical literature often distinguishes a heartland of Minangkabau culture in the highlands of West Sumatra and opposes this to a peripheral area, which includes the capital city of West Sumatra, Padang, the coastal strip, and areas of more recent migration such as the northern and southern reaches of the West Sumatran highlands. There is a substantial Minang community in Jakarta.

areas of the province in 1990.⁶ Minangkabau girls are now experiencing a very prolonged period of educated adolescence, extending well beyond ten years. During this period they increasingly participate in a wider world beyond their Minang homes – a world of schools and universities, mosques and social clubs, globalized mass media, commercial markets, work places and the nation-state. Indonesian adolescents are experiencing a complex social world.

It was this conjunction of rather contradictory-seeming social ‘facts’ that led me to choose this site for anthropological fieldwork in 2004. I hypothesized that teenage girls in Minangkabau would be feeling ambivalent, if not conflicted and confused – buffeted by competing discourses.⁷

Although Indonesian governments have long been ‘in denial’ about active adolescent sexuality, they are becoming increasingly conscious of their responsibility to meet adolescent reproductive and sexual health needs. In 1994, the Soeharto government signed up to the Cairo Conference commitment to ‘Protect and promote the right of adolescents to sexual and reproductive health information and services, and reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies’ (Ford and Siregar 1998:23). After regime change, a Directorate for Adolescent and Reproductive Rights Protection under Badan Koordinasi Keluarga Berencana Nasional (BKKBN, National Family Planning Board) was established in 2000, as was a division responsible for adolescent reproductive health at the State

Use of the term ‘Minangkabau’ is conventional in anthropological writing, but in historical writing it is also conventional to use the term ‘West Sumatra’ (Kahin 1999). Hadler (2003), in a recent note, praises the eminent local historian Rusli Amran for his ‘insistence on using the name “West Sumatra” rather than the ethnically-defined “Minangkabau” in all of his writings. [...] This reinforces his important interpretation of West Sumatra as a multi-ethnic society and its history as one of interactions among Europeans, Chinese, Javanese, Batak, and Minangkabau.’ By defining my subject as the Minangkabau, I do not want to suggest that this is not a multi-ethnic society, though the province of West Sumatra is one of the most ethnically homogeneous in Indonesia. Rather, for this project it seems more relevant to see my subject as people rather than place, and as a society rather than an administrative subset of the nation-state.

⁶ Hull 2002:11, Table 2. The same trend is noted by Blackwood (2000:87) for the rural village where she worked: the age at first marriage for women born in the 1920s and 1930s was 17.5 years and was 19 years for those born in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁷ In this paper, I use terms such as adolescents, teenagers, youth and young people interchangeably for the Indonesian terms *remaja* (*putra* and *putri*, male and female respectively) and *cowok* and *cewek* (male and female respectively in the informal register). I do not define an age cohort for these terms, but during fieldwork I usually introduced my research as being about ‘*remaja*’; ‘*remaja*’ is commonly used for young people of junior and senior high school age, 13-15 and 16-18 years respectively.

This picture I paint is one in which sexuality is always assumed to be heterosexuality. Among the school-age teenage girls I knew, heterosexuality was hegemonic; some older boys had heard about ‘homo’ and ‘gay’. At this stage my assessment follows Boellstorff’s conclusions (2005:68, 70-71, 94, 100), that knowledge of the possibility of alternative sexuality usually comes via discovery of the idea of same-sex attraction in the mass media, such as in magazines, and recognition that that concept fits oneself, usually in the late teens or early twenties.

Ministry of Women's Empowerment (Parawansa 2002). However, the Family Welfare Law no. 10/1992, which states that family planning services are only to be made available to married couples, is still in force. For this reason it is illegal for unmarried people to access family planning services.

Indonesian school curricula still do not teach students about HIV/AIDS, the importance of safe sex or indeed anything about sex. The Grade 7 (junior high school) biology textbook has a few pages about the anatomy of the reproductive organs and the biological changes associated with puberty, but there is no curricular requirement to teach about sexuality and reproduction in a social studies or even health context.⁸ The failure to institutionalize sexual and reproductive health education in Indonesian schools is traceable to the common 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'. The government appears to be happy to leave it to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver their commitment to the Cairo Conference Convention. This means that for the adolescents in West Sumatra who were the focus of my research, sexual and reproductive health education was almost nonexistent. Where there was 'sex education', it was patchy, minimal and ephemeral. Most girls had not known about menstruation before having their first period and most were still hazy about the biology of it. Most had heard of 'AIDS' and associated it with having sex with multiple partners; many had heard that it was associated with the use of drugs. The possibility of 'safe sex' through condom use was perhaps not a message that those in authority cared to disseminate.

In many ways, then, adolescent sexuality was a silence. However, parallel to the official silence on sexuality in schools, there was an unofficial and informal discourse that amounted to a 'moral panic' about teenage girls: most of all their dress, but also their mobility and socializing (*pergaulan*).⁹ Particular targets were girls and boys holding hands in public, and girls wearing tight or revealing clothes and especially hipster jeans. The local newspapers were full of panic, for example 'Condom found in student's schoolbag' (*Singgaling* 28-9-2004); it continues today, with the mayor of Bukittinggi banning the

⁸ The content of classes and indirect messages from teachers and school administrators about behaviour that surrounds sexuality are beyond the scope of this paper. These messages were generally moralistic, rather than educational. I decided to focus on the out-of-classroom practices and opinions of teenage girls partly because they were more interesting; my data on out-of-school sexual culture are richer than in-school culture; and it is in the out-of-school context that the contradictions and 'grey areas' become obvious. Also, it was a challenge to explore a silence, using the notion of the 'curriculum of the body'.

⁹ The term 'moral panic' was coined by Cohen (1972) to refer to the creation of a mass panic about deviant youth by the mass media. More recently, Stivens (2002) has used the term for Malaysia. I cannot say if the role of the media has been seminal in West Sumatra, but the society-wide 'panic' is the same and is fuelled by the media.

celebration of Valentine's Day in 2008.¹⁰ Parents and teachers, market sellers, shop owners, waiters, and community leaders would 'tut-tut' over the socializing of teenage girls. Furthermore, teenage girls themselves, in interviews, discussions and essays, overwhelmingly identified the main problem facing Minang teenage girls today as *pergaulan*. This identification was invariably followed by a comment on the way their morals were 'rotting'.

Thus, there was both silence and heated concern about what I, as a western academic, would call the sexuality of young women.¹¹ In this paper I do not presume the nature of that sexuality, and indeed the aim of writing this paper was partly to find out. In particular, I was intrigued by something that was said to me by a schoolgirl very early on in fieldwork: 'Holding hands is just the same as having sex.' This paper is an attempt to work through the configuration of meanings surrounding sex so that I can see how those words make sense. I am not talking about actual sexual practice so much as how sex is thought about, talked about and constructed, and who has the authority to define what and who is silenced. In this sense I am focusing on 'ideal' sexuality, but not because I am interested in the contrast between ideal sexuality and actual sexuality. Utomo and McDonald (1997:185) note that 'the public expression of [sexual] behaviour will be different to private behaviour'. I am not disputing this, but private behaviour is by its nature secret and we can only know about it if people choose to tell. However, prior to concerns about honest disclosure should come questioning about language, meaning and classification. I do wonder why a survey that asks teenagers, for instance, if they are sexually active, is presumed to present the truth about teenage sexual behaviour. What does 'sexually active' mean? Does masturbation 'count'? – or sexual fantasizing? – or first fumbings? Given the great ignorance of Indonesian teenagers about sex, for example, about how 'virginity' is defined (Bellows 2003), I did not ask my research participants if they were sexually active, if they were virgins or 'how far they go' in sexual activity. I did not want to ask about actual sexual practice, partly because I doubted I would get realistic or honest

¹⁰ Bachyul 2008. Bachyul reported in *The Jakarta Post* that the deputy mayor justified the ban on the grounds that 'The Valentine's Day celebration is not our culture as it usually relates closely to immoral acts where, during the celebration, young couples tend to hug and even kiss each other. This is an immoral act, right?' He urged parents not to let their sons and daughters go out that night and instead urged schools to have their students attend mosques to listen to sermons 'for the sake of improving their morality'.

¹¹ Here I am using sexuality in the wide sense of 'the quality of being sexual' (Oxford English Dictionary), which covers a constellation of possibilities (gender identities, bodily differences, reproductive capacities, needs, desires and fantasies (Weeks 1986:15)), rather than the narrow sense of sexuality as sexual orientation or erotic desire. Anthropologists have shown that in many non-western societies, sexuality is not necessarily a 'thing in itself' and that the connections between sexuality and gender are culturally specific (see for the Indonesian world, Bellows 2003; Bennett 2005; Blackwood 1998; Davies 2007, 2009; Idrus 2003; Jennaway 2002).

answers to questions such as 'Have you ever had sex?', given the prevailing norms. Another reason was that asking such questions seemed to require definitions and classifications of sexual behaviour that are predetermined. A tick-the-box questionnaire for 'holding hands' would have different boxes for 'holding hands' and 'having sex' and thus miss the fact that some informants think these are 'just the same'. My point is that answers to surveys always exist within a discursive context. I am interested in 'dissecting the paradigm within which sex is thought and talked about' (McMillan 2006:1-2).

Since my fieldwork began in 2004, there has been a moral panic nationwide about increasingly liberal attitudes towards sexuality, and in particular sexuality among young people. The draft Anti-Pornography and Pornographic Acts Bill (RUU APP), originally drafted in 1992 and squashed then, was revived in 2006. Parliamentary and media discussions triggered huge street demonstrations in opposition to, and even larger demonstrations in support of, censorship. If passed, the new law would make it an offence to, for instance, kiss in public or display 'sensual body parts', such as women's breasts, navel, hips and thighs. Supporters of the Bill say that it is needed to protect the innocence of Indonesian children and teenagers from negative outside influences, particularly 'western' influences.¹² These and other nationwide 'sexuality' issues, such as the publication of Indonesia's first issue of *Playboy* magazine, Indonesia's first gay film and the government initiative to install condom-vending machines in some public places, are a part of the national context of the moral panic I found in West Sumatra, from 2004 to 2007. It seems that in contemporary Indonesia, sexuality is always a moral discourse and public authorities feel that they have to take a prohibitive and protectionist stance.

Sexuality and gender, adat and Islam in Minangkabau

Matriliney is the basis of Minangkabau *adat*. The mother has the central role in the education, affective life, economic security and prosperity of the family. Minang people are always quoting the aphorism, *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*, meaning *Adat* is based on Islamic law and Islamic law is based on the Qur'an. *Adat* and Islam are perceived to 'follow complementary paths' but together form 'an inseparable unity' (Abdullah 1971:5).

In *adat* teachings there is a strong emphasis on the need to protect and supervise adolescent girls. Blackwood (2000:77-8) explains:

¹² The Bill is supported by a number of more hard-line Islamic groups such as the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Islamic Forum (FUI) and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS, with Yusroh a paediatrician spokeswoman for PKS) (Pandaya 2006; Yoyoh Yusroh 2006). An article in the Islamic youth magazine *Annida*, which is popular among some of my informants, instructs Indonesian Muslim teenagers to oppose pornography and pornographic acts (Dee 2006).

Because the future viability of the sublineage rests with the women, senior women (and elder brothers) carefully watch young women and make efforts to keep them within easy reach. Unmarried daughters are expected to be chaste, decorous, and modest, ideals encapsulated in the term *malu*. This expectation reflects Islamicist and *adat* ideals for young women.

Although this is a discourse of protection of young women, the image of women in Minang society is not one of weakness or gentleness. Women generally are seen as strong, vigorous and forthright, and have an elevated position. Women are described by male and female alike as the 'central post of the house': they are the centre of the family and the extended family, and significant players in village life (Van Reenen 1996).

Traditionally, post-pubescent girls were closely guarded, and kept busy in the home; their forays into the fields and village were closely watched by those who had a vested interest in their good reputation and a good marriage. It was felt that 'adolescent girls should not leave the house unaccompanied' (Whalley 1993:67). Young women virtually never ventured outside of the family home at night. Parents, teachers and community leaders explicitly link the protection of young women to the dangers of '*free seks*', explaining that if a girl got pregnant outside of marriage and there was no one to marry her, she would be 'thrown away'. Similarly, if a girl married the wrong person (a non-Minang or non-Muslim) she would be lost to the family, and the survival of the family and lineage would be threatened.

In this discourse of protection, seclusion and supervision of adolescent girls, *adat* and Islam cannot be disentangled: the two agree on this. In Islamic teaching there is the concept of *akil balig*, which means being responsible for oneself when adult. It means that adolescent girls, after they have begun menstruating, are responsible for their own sin (*dosa*). Before that, parents take on the sins of their children. Girls routinely describe this responsibility for their own sin in terms of guarding their modesty (*menjaga aurat*) or of covering their nakedness (*menutupi aurat*).¹³ For young women, the concept of *balig* is tied up with Islamic teachings about the identity of those with whom one may socialize. There is a group of males around each female who are called *muhrim*. *Muhrim* consists of father, brothers, husband and uncles. According to orthodox Islamic teachings, female adolescents may not be alone with any males who are not *muhrim*. Thus, female adolescents may not date, nor may they walk home from school with a boyfriend.

¹³ *Aurat* is a difficult term, and can be variously translated and interpreted. A female preacher taught me that for women, the *aurat* extends from the top of the head (including the hair but not the face) to the wrists and ankles (and sometimes the tip of the toes – hence some women wear stockings with sandals). For men, she said, the *aurat* extends only from the navel to the knees. Others, however, quote the relevant *sura* in the Qur'an which require only that people of both sexes dress modestly, or that women cover their breasts.

Ethnography

I was mainly working in a town which is an educational centre in the heartland of the Minang highlands.¹⁴ As noted above, Minang teenage girls enjoy one of the highest rates of educational attainment for Muslim females in Indonesia, and indeed in the whole Muslim world. This is evident in the town where I worked: girls dominate the top academic schools and achieve ‘above their weight’. For instance, at the town’s two top academic schools, girls outnumber boys 481 to 306, and 522 to 384.

There are three basic types of senior high schools in Indonesia: general (sometimes called academic), vocational and religious, with private and state schools in each of these categories.¹⁵ Although the local Education Office was

¹⁴ Fieldwork was financed by a research grant from the University of Western Australia and a Discovery Grant from the Australia Research Council, and was conducted under the auspices of the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia. My thanks to Victoria Randa Ayu, my hard-working research assistant. Personal names of research participants in the text are pseudonyms, to protect privacy.

Fieldwork was conducted intermittently from 2004 to 2007, focusing particularly on young women, but including all teenagers and young adults, as well as parents, boarding-house parents, teachers, principals, counsellors and community leaders. The quotations below come from interview transcripts – I have conducted more than 200 interviews of differently-identified adolescents. Participant observation entailed making detailed notes of time spent in and around schools, ‘hanging out’ at cafés and parks, the market and shops. I lived with a local family, travelled by public transport and attended such social events as I was invited to (weddings, pop concerts and so on), observing adolescents and talking informally to anyone who would talk to me.

¹⁵ This table shows the types of school and numbers of students enrolled in the town where I conducted fieldwork.

Type of school	Number of state / Private schools	Number of students	Number of students (% of column)
SMA (general/academic)	5 state schools 4 private schools	3,701 731	4,432 (38.9%)
SMK (vocational)	2 state schools 10 private schools	2,539 3,299	5,838 (51.2%)
MA (Islamic)	2 state schools 2 private schools	1,031 101	1,132 (9.9%)
Total	9 state schools 16 private schools	7,271 4,131	11,402 (100%)

Source: District Education Office records.

Note: Because most private Islamic schools are out of town, and so are not included in the table, the numbers and distribution of students cannot be taken to represent choice of school. It is quite common for parents in this town to send daughters to Islamic boarding schools even within half-an-hour’s drive from town, and some children are sent to Islamic boarding schools in Java and

adamant that students are not streamed academically, the different types of schools attract different sorts of students and offer their students quite different experiences. They are very different in their objectives and in the ideals and teaching they offer.

School choice and types of school

High-achievers and high-aspirers most often go to the state academic schools (Sekolah Menengah Atas, SMA), but the five SMA are not equally favoured: the age of the school has a lot to do with academic reputation. The most favoured schools are the two oldest schools; the oldest school goes back to colonial days and is located in a leafy, solidly upper-middle-class suburb dominated by professionals and public servants, and the other is near the main market. These top or '*favrit*' schools, as they are called, were a revelation to me. Generally the education system in Indonesia entrenches gender inequality and restricts opportunities for female students (Leigh 1994; Logsdon 1985; Parker 1997, 2003). However, in the top academic schools in this town, there is strong encouragement of female students to achieve high marks, to go to the top universities in the country, and to aim for really interesting careers.¹⁶ This tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: these students want to be in this school because of its reputation; their parents are teachers, professionals and public servants; and parents support their daughters in their ambitions.

Students from lower socio-economic groups typically attend vocational schools. Vocational schools aim to equip their students to be able to get a job immediately after finishing school. Their students often come from working class, trading and farming families. I asked a school councillor at a business school about the biggest problem faced by students. She answered, 'Economic problems. Their parents can't pay the [fees].'¹⁷ Parents and students choose vocational schools on the basis of hopes for future occupations

elsewhere, so the figures for the comparative attendance at different types of school are potentially misleading. Islamic schools are much more important than they seem from the table.

¹⁶ However, there is also institutionalized pro-male discrimination. For instance, I attended a maths class for the 'superior' class of 25 girls and 9 boys. In 45 minutes of teaching, the teacher asked six boys to work through problems on the board and only two girls. The boys demand and get more attention than girls.

¹⁷ She refers to the SPP or school fee of Rp 25,000/month (US\$2.64 or AU\$3.42 on 4 April 2005). Another teacher reported an SPP of Rp 36,500/month, but this included the costs for tests and other school activities. She explained without being asked that because this is a vocational school, the economic situation of parents is weaker than those of students in SMA, and the education of the parents is also not so high. Because of economic problems, students' concentration is weak – they can't study. There are also those who work while studying, helping their parents with farming chores or in the market.

which are strongly gendered: 'technical' high schools are for boys who want to learn about car mechanics or tools; 'business' schools are dominated by girls who want to learn office procedures and typing; 'tourism' schools are more gender-equal. In the vocational schools, the disadvantages of class and gender inequalities are freely reproduced; many students are subsidized by the state or the school, with scholarships and reduced fees.

Enrolment at Islamic schools confuses a neat association by class because parents who want their children to have a specifically religious education are not confined to a particular class. Nevertheless, students in Islamic schools generally come from lower socio-economic groups. Some Islamic schools are boarding schools (generally called *pesantren*) and some are day schools (*madrasah*); some are both Islamic and vocational; some have an excellent academic reputation and others do not. The *madrasah* are under the control of the Department of Religion, but must use the curricula of the Department of National Education for secular subjects, which constitute 70% of class time; *pesantren* are all private institutions, nominally administered by the Department of Religion; the diversity and degree of autonomy within this group are considerable (see Jackson and Parker 2008).

These schools can be tiny (such as the one that has just 39 students) but are usually neither small nor marginal. Two schools examined here had 490 students each; a couple of Islamic boarding schools near this town are known and attract students nationally and even internationally. Although *pesantren* have the reputation in Indonesia generally as second-class, backward educational institutions, in some respects they surprise: for example, three of the large boarding schools have a rule that students in their dormitories must speak English three days a week and Arabic three days a week. Two of the large *madrasah* were numerically dominated by girls. The reasons that students and parents choose religious schools are various. Many students, especially day students, are there simply because their marks on leaving junior high school were not sufficiently high to enable them to enter SMA. Islamic schools are thus not always the first choice of parents and students. However, there are also many students who attend religious schools for religious reasons. Many parents send their daughters to board at religious schools which are within commuting distance from town – such parents are usually very committed to the strict discipline and religious ethos of the religious school.

Private schools in town are generally considered poor schools academically – that is, they are poorly resourced and not desirable. Students often attend Islamic, vocational and private schools because their marks in junior high were not high enough to allow them entry to state SMA.

Probably the majority of high school students in this town commute to school each day from home; some are from out-of-town and board with fam-

ily; some board in houses and boarding-houses (*rumah kos*) in the town;¹⁸ and the rest live in dormitories (*asrama*) associated with the boarding schools. This difference among students feeds a symbolic hierarchy of students: students who live in dormitories are thought to be the most religious and the most disciplined, while those who board in houses or *rumah kos* are considered the least disciplined, least controlled, least devout and potentially most troublesome.

This is an impressive choice of types of school, but for the purposes of this paper what is perhaps striking is that all the schools are formally open to both genders. Given concerns about mixed-gender socializing, it was surprising to me that the private Islamic schools were not single-gender schools. One large *pesantren* and the state *madrasah* boarding school teach boys and girls together. However, one of the *pesantren* just out of town effectively operates as two separate, single-gender boarding schools, physically separated by a road and gardens. Many of the vocational schools are in effect single-gender schools.

Classes in all schools, with the exception of the *pesantren* and the self-selected students at gendered vocational schools, are for both sexes. Boys and girls usually sit in desks clustered by gender, usually but not always with boys on the right side of the room from the teacher's perspective, and girls on the left; sometimes with girls at the front and boys at the back. They are allowed to talk to one another. I was often told by students that this talk should only be about schoolwork or school activities. Students usually adhere to this unwritten rule, and for the most part boys interact with boys and girls interact with girls. But in all schools with both genders, there is an easy and relaxed interaction between boys and girls, with occasional teasing and joking. In my experience, there is not a great deal of sexual innuendo and flirting.

I turn now to an examination of the disciplining of the body that school rules, routines and discipline instil in students. I begin with school uniforms, then move on to issues of mobility and the organization of time and school-based activities. While not concerned directly with 'sexuality', these regimes of the body habituate girls to self-control and self-awareness.

¹⁸ In this town, *rumah kos* are almost always part of a family home – usually a couple of small bedrooms left vacant after the children of a family have grown up. There are also some *rumah kos* which are purpose-built, dedicated wings to a family home. In all but one *rumah kos* of the many that I visited, there is an *ibu kos* (boarding-house mother) who supervises the boarders, often simply by virtue of the fact that the boarders are constantly traipsing through and occupying the living rooms and kitchens of their houses. In some cities, such as Yogyakarta and Jakarta, *rumah kos* can be much larger dormitories, not part of a family home, sometimes with tens or hundreds of boarders, and without an *ibu kos*.

Disciplining bodies

Discipline is a key word in the public discourse of academic schools and in the discourse of their students. One student noted that her parents had chosen the *favrit* school for her because of its 'strong discipline'; she described her great sadness because this had meant leaving her junior high school friends. Discipline can be seen in school rules, in the busyness of school routines, and in dress codes.¹⁹ During my fieldwork, the gateways to schools came to be key symbols of the disciplines and controls imposed by the different schools. The entrance to the old colonial-era school was shut fast during school hours, with a long sliding steel gate; inside was a sentry-box staffed by a military-style uniformed, braided guard, who always opened the gate to me, but not to late students. Once at school it was physically impossible for students to leave the premises. A second barrier to entry and exit was the '*piket*' – a table on the front veranda staffed by teachers. These teachers had class timetables and directed visitors to the appropriate rooms, accepted notes from students who had legitimate reasons for lateness or early exit and marked them off in attendance books.

Discipline was explicit in the discourse of the religious schools too, though generally much more so in the *pesantren* than the *madrasah*. Students and teachers alike emphasize the value of the strict discipline that life in the dormitory imposes. One teacher said: 'Yes, here their freedom is limited by religious teaching, by customary law (*adat-istiadat*) as well as social control and also supervision from families and kin, especially supervision of girls is indeed rather tight.' Students and teachers constantly allude to this strict school routine, punctuated by prayers, as a praiseworthy feature of the school. I asked one girl if there was a contradiction between discipline imposed from outside and discipline from within. She answered:

To me, there is no contradiction, but rather they should be one path. We must discipline ourselves, for instance getting up to bathe early in the morning, but this is an everyday discipline that we must develop for ourselves from the rules propounded by school – so self-discipline and discipline from school must become one.

¹⁹ Most schools have detailed, written school rules. In the rules for the top academic school, for instance, a page on school uniforms prescribes that from Monday to Thursday boys must wear white shirts complete with the appropriate name tags, insignia and other identifying labels, that shirts must be tucked in, they must wear white singlets under their white shirts, a tie, underpants, and that their shoe laces must be black. The uniform for girls of *jilbab*, tunic and skirt is similarly detailed, though underwear is not mentioned. School rules at this school are noticeably short on 'rights' (there are only three) and very long on 'prohibitions' (there are 21).

The dormitory group has a collective conscience, and polices the virtue of its members. The group has no hesitation in criticizing its members – for all kinds of faults ranging from stealing food delicacies to reading the wrong sort of magazine – and if necessary will call meetings to decide on group disciplinary action. Occasionally, a girl cannot stand it any more and will escape, but in the main they appreciate that there is always someone who will help them and they make friendships that will last a lifetime. They value the skills and independence, as they see it, with which life in the dormitory equips them: not only the domestic and time management skills, but also organizational and leadership skills. In fact, the girls learn to live a disciplined, moral and virtuous life away from home and family.

By contrast the vocational schools were notably lax in their control of students. On the way to one of the large technical schools, which specialized in automotive studies, I was always able to chat with boys who were chatting and smoking in groups at coffee stalls which had mushroomed in the vicinity of the school. At most, but not all, of these schools, students could wander in and out at will; lateness, truancy and empty classes (either no teacher or no students) were perennial features. One of the students at a tourism school characterized her school as follows:

There are no cleaners. The school is not clean and is less than beautiful. The financial resources of the school are inadequate. It lacks discipline, there's the problem of the starting time, and staff and students are often late.

At this school I was more likely to find students outside than inside.

Uniform jilbab

One obvious way the types of school differ is in the uniform codes for girls.²⁰ The new school uniforms for girls generally consist of the Islamic headscarf or veil (*jilbab*), a loose, long-sleeved tunic (*baju kurung*) and a long skirt. The top academic schools in this town made the *jilbab* compulsory for female students in the period 1999-2003, but the private schools have not followed; one state vocational school (the main business school) brought it in,²¹ but others, and

²⁰ After Independence was declared in 1945, the Islamic veil or *jilbab* was not part of school uniform in state schools in Indonesia. This uniform policy was based on the principle of religious diversity inscribed in the Constitution as part of the new nation's unification agenda. The government allowed the wearing of the *jilbab* in state schools for the first time in 1990. This trend towards uniform *jilbab* is treated briefly in Parker (2005) and in detail in Parker (2008).

²¹ This vocational school formed an exception in other ways too: the school was very conscientious in enforcing school rules, which operated on a points system, and even though it did not have the 'policeman' at the gateway, it had the *piket* which made conscientious efforts to control lateness and truancy. It was the only large 'business' school in town, and the student body was

private vocational schools, have not. Female students in Islamic schools have always worn the *jilbab*.

The *jilbab* imposes its own discipline. Because the *jilbab* restricts head movement, it constantly makes the wearer aware of her own body. It encourages girls to be more careful, devout, polite and respectful, and less flirtatious. One student put it this way:

If we wear the *jilbab*, it's just a piece of cloth, but it's heavy. If we wear it, we change drastically. We have to be responsible for ourselves if we wear it. The *jilbab* – it's not just a symbol, it constrains us. The *jilbab* is not just on the outside, but in our hearts.

In mandating correct and incorrect attire, the top schools legitimize Islamic constructions of femininity and associate these with other desirable 'feminine' characteristics such as being restrained, devout, chaste and disciplined. The visual effect of the uniform of *jilbab* and long skirts is that the female body is shrouded, featureless and contained; the effect on the wearer is an embodied awareness of one's movements, and a constant reminder that one must be well behaved: it is like a portable conscience for the body.

In contrast, after my first visit to a private tourism vocational school I noted: 'most girls not wearing *jilbab*, [...] no boys are wearing ties and most have their shirts out'. I asked one of the girls there:

LP: What do your parents think about the *jilbab*?

Suzie: In Minang, if possible girls should wear the *jilbab*. But at this tourism school, where we will soon be working in a hotel, in the waiting department, we won't be able to wear the *jilbab*. The *jilbab* makes one less free to work. My parents? Nothing at all. If I don't want to wear a *jilbab*, it doesn't matter. The only thing is that my clothes have to not be too revealing and not too tight. For instance, the sleeves of my top can't be too short, and my pants can't show my thigh or my midriff.

LP: Why don't you wear a *jilbab*?

Suzie: It will cause trouble when I'm looking for work, it's hot, and it restricts movement.

LP: When do you think you will wear a *jilbab*?

Suzie: I have the desire. After I find a permanent job. If I wore a *jilbab* now it would be meaningless. I'm still ABG [just a teenager]. I'm

predominantly, but not exclusively, female. It may be that its similarity to the SMA in terms of discipline is due to its female gender in combination with its identification with white-collar future careers for its students – it was 'female' and 'middle class'.

still often lazy in my prayers. Why would I wear a *jilbab* with behaviour like that!

The girls in schools which had not made *jilbab* compulsory used the practical issue of future workplace demands as the reason for their not wearing it. This emphasis on future work served to emphasize class differences between girls, and coloured class differences with a moral tone. One of the problems with the *jilbab* as symbol is its simplicity: it is either off or on. If wearing the *jilbab* is a sign of neatness, chasteness, virtue or devotion, then not wearing the *jilbab* is easily assumed to mean the opposite: untidiness, sexual activity, lack of virtue and lack of devotion. Indeed, Suzie seemed to have internalized this evaluation of her own non-wearing of the *jilbab*.

Thus, one effect of these different uniform codes is that schools, and students, can be hierarchized. A university student described to me the different schools in town and said that one of the newer state schools used to be thought very poor: 'They used not to have *jilbab* compulsory and their uniforms were not neat, but now they are improving their reputation: they have made the *jilbab* compulsory and have good discipline.' In this, the different types of school reinforce gender, religious and class divisions among students. The curriculum of the body that they institute confers legitimacy on certain constructions of femininity (Lesko 1988).

Controlling bodies in space and time: mobility and morality

There is a strong proscription against night-time mobility for unmarried girls. I know of no unmarried women who are free to go out at night on their own; most schoolgirls had never slept over at friends' houses. This is a very puritan town. Until very recently, the town at night was like a ghost town: it was not like some cities in Indonesia where people spill out of their hot little houses and overflow into the *gang* (pathways) and streets at night, where young men gather around pool tables or motor bikes and young women window-shop and hang around in large single-sex groups. There were no discos, no shops, no market and no *warung* (stalls) open at night. Only on some Saturday nights or special occasions like New Year's Eve were some young people allowed to *nongkrong* ('hang out') with their friends at the central town square – though most of my female informants were not allowed to and indeed I rarely met them there. Poppy, a student at one of the *favrit* schools, explained:

- LP: What do your parents think about you going out at night?
 Poppy: Mama strongly disagrees with going out at night [...] Come *magrib* [sunset prayers], I have to be home [...] Girls – they are something that has to be guarded [...] I agree with Mama [...]

For girls – we have to think about other people's views, and moreover, at night there are lots of risks [...] We must consider the opinions of others if a girl goes out at night. It is as if she has done something very strange.

However, late in 2007 a modern shopping centre or mall opened in this town, and it stayed open till 9 p.m. This had an immediate effect in opening up night-time socializing, though for many young people the absence of public transport at night automatically meant they could not go out.

Academic schools encourage students to lead full and busy lives, not only six days a week at school but also with a full programme of private tuition classes (*les*) and extra-curricular activities after school and on Sundays. A typical SMA day runs from 7.30 a.m. to 1.45 p.m., except on Fridays, when boys and men go home at 11.15 a.m. to attend the mosque. Good schools enforce these hours. As noted above, the *favrit* schools have an impressive security and attendance system. These schools are unusual in their small number of empty (*kosong*) classes, when lessons are scheduled but the teacher does not turn up. (In my experience, *kosong* classes are ubiquitous in schools and universities in Indonesia.) At the good schools, lessons actually occur when they are timetabled, and the school day is full. Students then rush off to private *les* – tuition classes that run from 2 p.m. till 6 p.m. in two shifts. There is a flourishing industry in private colleges offering classes that augment the state school system as well as offering tertiary diplomas in subjects like foreign languages and computing. Students who go to *les* do not have spare time: by Sunday most girls are ready for a day at home, to sleep, watch TV, do homework, washing and ironing, and often help with younger siblings.

The school day for students of state religious schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri, MAN) is longer than for regular state school students, ending typically at 3.15 p.m.: the religion subjects are additional to the 'secular' subjects offered in academic schools.²² Students at MAN rarely have after-school private tuition classes. MAN schools in Indonesia are day schools and there is one special MAN out of town that is a 'model' boarding school. The boarding schools are seen as much more seriously committed to Islam because both parents and students have to make sacrifices. The Islamic boarding schools present girls with an even more rigorous 'curriculum of the body' in their 'home away from home'. Schools often have two fasting days a week. Every day, students get up at 4.30 a.m., about 30 minutes before Subuh prayers, and have a cold wash. This is universally identified as the major discipline

²² The religion component consists of five subjects: Arabic language, Qur'an and Hadiths, Fiqh (jurisprudence), History of Islam and *Aqidah akhlak* which consists of morals, ethics and values education.

of dormitory life. After Subuh, there is a short lecture, by students, in Arabic or English, then other activities for 15-30 minutes, usually involving interaction between younger and older students (for example second-year students teaching the first years). Then they get ready for school, have breakfast and get dressed, then study in school until 2 p.m. Then they have a break for lunch in the mess, and at 2.30 p.m. they go to school for study until 5.30 p.m. Then they go back to the dormitory and prepare for Magrib prayer. At this time they may also get dinner. In some schools they have to cook their own food; other schools pay staff to cook. They pray together, then there is a lecture or speech, then they study together in groups in the dormitory, doing homework. They go to bed about 10 p.m. after prayers.

When they enter boarding school they are dreadfully homesick and are forced to rely on one another for support, companionship and intimacy. They have virtually no privacy, though that is not mentioned by students as a disadvantage. (Many of the participants in my research did not have their own bedrooms, and almost all who lived away from home were sharing rooms and sometimes beds.) In one school they sleep in cubicles that house eight girls; each cubicle has four bunks, a small shelf for each girl for personal articles such as photos, and a rod for hanging clothes; in the common area each has a share in a cupboard. In another school, the girls have no space or place they can call their own: they sleep in dormitories housing 40 girls, and each night roll out their thin foam mattresses. The girls live en masse: they eat, sleep, bathe, pray, and work within a devout group. Most boarding schools do not allow their students to go home every week: students have to apply for permission to leave the premises, and home visits may occur once a month or once a term. These schools can be classed as 'total institutions' (Goffman 1961).

As noted above, the academic and religious schools strictly controlled student mobility in and around town. Most of the vocational schools implicitly allow their students much greater mobility, not having military-like entrances and *piket*. I had my indirect introduction to the small, private, vocational school that specializes in tourism one Saturday morning (a school day). I was 'hanging out' at a park popular with teenagers and courting couples. I met a small, mixed-sex group of students there, the group composition itself being noteworthy. They were wearing uniforms, and the girls did not wear the *jilbab*. They told me they were students at this private tourism school. I made appointments to interview some students outside of class, but none showed up – eventually I saw that this was a pattern: girls, and especially boys, at vocational schools rarely kept appointments, while students at academic schools did.²³ In this school there were lots of *kosong* (empty) classes,

²³ Students at the best schools even sought me out for English discussion groups on Sunday mornings and volunteered for interviews in English!

no written school rules, and no guard or locked gate. Many were still coming to school at 9 a.m. and by 11 a.m. most mornings, students had straggled out to buy food or leave. It was students from these schools that I was most likely to see out and about, in shops and at the market, during school hours. Thus, vocational schools are characterized by lack of discipline, less emphasis on rules, and laxity of dress codes.

The schools are active enforcers of a curriculum of the body which habituates girls to self-control and self-awareness, though to differing degrees according to type of school. Further, this discipline is not just about students' appearance, mobility in place, and organization of time. I would argue that the schools' control and disciplining of the body express a larger discursive context which is both moral and religious: control and containment of the female body express modesty, virtue and virginity, while freedom and mobility express suspect sexuality. This can be seen in schoolgirls' talk about having boyfriends and about sexual practices such as holding hands, hugging and kissing, and premarital sex.

Courting bodies

We have seen that in academic and religious schools, 'discipline' is a key word. Another key word is 'morals'. I asked Poppy, a bright student at a *favrit* academic school, what ideals her school instils in its students. She answered, 'Perhaps morals. Morals continually "flow". They don't ever stop talking about moral problems (*masalah moral*) here.' She expressed some boredom with the constant hectoring and lecturing that go on at school. Poppy is a good student with a busy schedule of *les* outside school hours. She used to have a boyfriend, but he was just a classmate and they didn't go out '*berdua*' (as a couple). Poppy gets on well with her mother, who is a chemist. Here are some of her thoughts about courting behaviour.

- LP: What does your mother think about holding hands?
- Poppy: Possibly Mama would explain by using verses from the Qur'an. The problem is that in the Holy Book we are not directed about boy/girlfriends. On the contrary, we are ordered to marry [...] Usually, it's the girl who will be seen, even though it's the guy who has ruined her – what guy? It's the girl, what's the public opinion of her? For sure, even though she might be clever, or rich, for sure in people's opinion she's already low, that girl can have no self-respect (*harga diri*).

The instant recourse to an Islamic authority is typical of schoolgirls' discourse. Poppy is quite gender-sensitive and sees clearly the gendered double stan-

dard under which the guilt burden for illicit sexual behaviour is borne by the girl. Poppy implies that 'holding hands' is behaviour that would 'ruin' a girl.²⁴ The importance to her of *harga diri*, self-respect or honour, is also clear.

- LP: So what do you think about having a boyfriend?
 Poppy: Well, according to me, having a boyfriend is fine, but it depends. For me personally, he would disturb me because I'm a person who has trouble putting her problems in boxes [...] I'm not the type who should have a boyfriend because I have so much trouble concentrating. But according to me, having a boyfriend is OK [...] It's healthy.

Poppy wants to become a psychologist. She is typical of girls at this high-achieving school in thinking that having a boyfriend would interfere with her studies.²⁵ This is consistently given as a good reason not to have a boyfriend, and should not be discounted: the main goal of many girls is to get good marks in the final examinations, and they see this as the key to a bright future. Many are stressed and anxious about their studies and their exams; students can always tell you about their class ranking, and many accept their teachers' and parents' warnings and admonitions not to let a social life get in the way of exam success. One of the standard questions I asked girls was what was the happiest time or day in their life. General answers about the happiness of childhood were the most common response, but the second most common response among girls was an academic one: they identified days when they had been told of excellent marks in exams or a prize or high placement that they had won, and they were very proud to tell their parents. Also typical is Poppy's self-analysis and self-criticism: girls were always telling me that they are too moody, too easily frustrated, or too easily distracted. High levels of external scrutiny and social control have been internalized, and girls actively took measures to work on their faults or deficiencies.

There is also the problem of anonymity in a small town, and the density of the adult net of puritan morality. Girls who did not wear the *jilbab* outside school often described how they would always check before they went into a shop or market to see if any of the teachers were there. Many parents are

²⁴ Another student at this school clearly identified holding hands, kissing and embracing as 'already *zina*' (fornication). This is discussed below. She noted, 'Sometimes I go with my friends to the park to enjoy the view. But the view is not good if there are couples there holding hands and making love. Even looking at someone who is not *muhrim* can be said to be *zina*.'

²⁵ It is important to suspend assumptions about the meaning of 'having a boyfriend'. Sometimes having a boyfriend only involves carrying around a passport photo of a boy with whom one rarely physically interacts; sometimes it just means fancying a particular boy from afar.

teachers or know teachers, so those in authority at school form part of the social world of parents. Students such as Fitri noted that if she had a boyfriend, the teachers would *'menyindir'* (mock or make fun of her) in class. Further, many of the *ibu kos* (the 'mothers' of the boarding-houses) are teachers, and their out-of-town boarders, who provide income, are directed to their *rumah kos* by their school/employer, so their boarders are subject to a double layer of surveillance. *Ibu kos* see their role as *'in loco parentis'*. One *ibu kos*, who runs a *warung* and large *rumah kos* just near an Islamic school, used to teach at Diniyah Putri, a famous, long-established *pesantren* for girls (see Whalley 1993). She says she only takes students whose parents want her to supervise (*mengawasi*) their children, and she has expelled students in the past because of inappropriate *'pacar'* (boyfriends/girlfriends).

Students in Islamic schools are usually fervent in their piety and devotion, though some in day schools manage to 'hang out' on the way home from school. Fatima is a day student at a state Islamic school. She says that religion 'catches all of [her] life'. She is very devout and espouses attitudes towards having a boyfriend that are not uncommon in religious schools:

Fatima: According to me, Ma'am, it's forbidden in law because, from what I studied when I was in Islamic junior high, a relationship of a male with a female without there being a tie [of kinship] is forbidden. That's *zina* in Islam, a major sin. It can be included as *zina* because looking with an intention that is not good, that is punishable as *zina*. For me, having a boyfriend, in Islam if you go out as a male-female couple there is a third who is Satan, Ma'am. That Satan always orders humans to do things that aren't good. So according to me having a boyfriend is forbidden.

Fatima is referring here to an important Islamic category of sin, *zina*. The antithesis to marriage is sex outside marriage, *zina* (Bouhdiba 1985), often translated into English as fornication. Many Minang Muslims take seriously the proscription against 'approaching' *zina*, such as verse 34 of the Sura Isra (The Night Journey): 'And approach not fornication (*zina*); surely it is an indecency and evil as a way.' This issue is sometimes taken up in the Muslim novels and the Muslim magazine, *Annida*, that some Minang girls read: an advice columnist, for instance, might describe how carrying on a romance through SMS-texting or letter-writing, or even the exchange of lustful glances, could be considered as 'approaching *zina*'. Fatima is also referring implicitly to *muhrim*, the only males with whom an unmarried woman should consort.

LP: So if having a boyfriend is forbidden, how can you meet someone who could become your soul-mate (*jodoh*)?

Fatima: In Islam the ones who marry you off are your parents, Ma'am. It's best for a bride if she meets her soul-mate exactly at the time she marries [...] For sure my parents will choose what's best for me [...] I will agree if I am married off by my parents because it's not possible for a parent not to want what's best for their child [...] And if I am married off then I will feel very happy. I will feel that my parents care for me.

The first time one of these girls earnestly explained how they would be quite happy for their parents to arrange their marriage, even to an unknown groom, I was quite shocked, but I soon realized, from the number of similar responses, that arranged marriages are far from dead and gone in Indonesia, and that from the perspective of a 17-year-old, an arranged marriage partner is not necessarily terrifying. Girls who live in the dormitories of Islamic schools have very little opportunity to have a *pacar*, appropriate or inappropriate, and some are much more scared of the prospect of their own inexperienced and potentially unwise choice of a stranger than they are of the husband selected by their parents, who are presumed to have their daughter's interests at heart.

The 'everyday discipline', sequestration and busy routines of boarding schools conspire to keep girls from approaching *zina*. However, one young woman managed to slip through. I asked Nuri another of my standard questions: What was the saddest day of her life? She answered with the long story of the time she had to confess to her parents that she had a boyfriend, a fellow-student at the *pesantren*. At the time, she was a boarder at a famous *pesantren*, a school that her parents and older brother had attended. It is a school that has produced national leaders and scholars and has an international reputation for high scholastic achievement. Nuri's brother is in Egypt for his tertiary education – in fact, as she was telling me this story, we were walking back into town, to a *warnet* (an internet café), so that she could email him. She had tears in her eyes as she described her embarrassment at having shamed her family. Perhaps this does not seem much of a crime to a westerner, but an indicator of the severity of her action in this context is that she only narrowly escaped being expelled from school (due to the pleading of the parents) and instead was downgraded to day student status.

The issue of openness with parents is a tricky one in a context where people are quick to leap to conclusions, where holding hands can constitute 'ruining' a girl, and where suspicions of illicit sexual behaviour can lead to shot-gun marriages. Some girls who have boyfriends do not tell their parents, assuming that their parents would neither approve nor allow any boyfriend contact. As far as I could ascertain, they do not know the term '*pacaran backstreet*', used in some parts of Indonesia (Bennett 2005:75), but the management of a secret boyfriend, or indeed any boyfriend, can be difficult.

Suzie, a student at the tourism vocational school, was the only girl I knew who had two boyfriends. She claimed that she had had a boyfriend since her second year of junior high, which made her the most precocious girl I knew. She said of boyfriends:

It's normal for teenagers [...] You can be 100% open to a boyfriend [...] Actually, I have two boyfriends, one is in Riau, at technical school, and the other is a policeman. They don't know about each other. I have to be clever with my scheduling. But there's no problem of loyalty. If we have two boyfriends, we're ready in case we split up with one. My parents know I have two boyfriends. They say I have to be careful not to play favourites.

But Suzie's boyfriends are a problem for her friends, and for her reputation, because her relatively autonomous boyfriend behaviour was interpreted by her girlfriends as transgressive and promiscuous. In fact her 'friends' at school were telling her secrets beyond their circle, enhancing their own social capital through gossip. When young women violate social norms of ideal femininity, sexual deviance is often imputed to them, regardless of the facts. When I asked Suzie, 'What is the most serious problem that you face at the moment?', she answered:

The problem of girlfriends, and boyfriends. I have three friends, and I'm trying to explain to them that I'm not as bad as they think because of my boyfriends.

Because boyfriends are often kept secret from parents, a girl's girlfriends are often the most troublesome obstacle to having a boyfriend. Sometimes girlfriends are jealous of the time and attention directed to a boyfriend, but often it is the puritan morality and concern of girlfriends that kicks in: they are worried that their friend will do herself damage (*hancur, rusak*) by having a boyfriend – in the form of lower grades at school or a damaged reputation.

Unsurprisingly, Suzie is also quite broad-minded about holding hands with her boyfriends:

- LP: What do you think about holding hands?
Suzie: It's normal, it's proof that we love each other. If you don't hold hands, it's not nice.
LP: What do you think about embracing (*memeluk*)?
Suzie: Embracing – it's something that can be said to be sex. It involves lust, it does. It's not usual, embracing can arouse sexual desire. But sometimes I hug someone, for birthdays or Valentine's Day.
LP: What do you think about kissing?
Suzie: Kissing is something that guys and girls need, only, if, how, yeah [...] Actually nowadays kissing is changing, guys and girls want

it, but in Minang, especially in the villages, which can be said to be really conservative, kissing is not OK. According to me, kissing is still unusual. What I mean is, we're still *ABG*, so it's not appropriate.

LP: What do you think about having sex?

Suzie: [Laughs]. We're not allowed to do it – it's not legal. It's only for husbands and wives.

LP: What sexual practices do you think are covered by the term 'premarital sex' [*seks pra-nikah*]?

Suzie: Holding hands and kissing – yeah, they're in.

LP: What do you think about having sex when you're engaged to be married?

Suzie: Before marriage, we can't have sexual relations, because we're Muslims.

Suzie (and implicitly the questions) are harking back to the notion of *zina* and the forbidden 'approaching *zina*'. To a westerner, questions that suddenly leap from holding hands to kissing to hugging and premarital sex sound odd, but they are not odd to these girls because in school and in the mosque and in magazines and newspapers they are told that it is a slippery slope from hand-holding to sex. When I asked Poppy, the bright young student who aspires to a career in psychology, what she considers the most important problem faced by Minang adolescent girls now, she answered:

Poppy: The problem of socializing [*pergaulan*]. By socializing I mean where the child lives, the environment that will influence the child's way of learning/studying [...] From there emerge problems of boyfriends, how she will face problems with her friends. Possibly for now most problems for adolescents are to do with boyfriends and free mixing [*pergaulan bebas*]. Possibly this is because of the influence of television. There are many sex scenes, the problem of kissing [...] I feel that the morals of teenage girls are very rotten [...] Free sex is like the beginning of smoking: if smoking is already considered normal, then it develops into dope, then into tattooing, drinking, with drinking you don't realize it turns into drugs, continues on to kissing. If kissing is considered usual, how will it be with free sex? All that because of the influence of the environment. The influence of TV.

In this answer Poppy is typical in her identification of free socializing as the number one problem causing the morals of Minang teenage girls to become 'very rotten'. Her representation of increasing momentum as naughty actions

accumulate down the slippery slope that leads to premarital sex is a common one. Poppy's one boyfriend experience might seem to indicate a female adolescence that is rebellious and independent, but on balance, her constant recourse to Islamic and *adat* sexuality morality and her attitudes towards sexual practice are typical of Minang schoolgirls.

Schools might not teach sex ed. but they are unrelenting in their discrediting of a host of 'outside influences' that are identified as the cause of 'rotting' morals; morals indeed flow into all subject areas, as Poppy complained. Western films and television are easy targets. For instance, a senior high school lesson in the subject 'Indonesian' was devoted to how to write paragraphs: it advocated using topic sentences and supporting sentences and conclusion. Students were asked to write a paragraph on a topic of their choice. The most commonly chosen topics were 'Thinking about God's creation', 'Western films' and 'Living in a dormitory'. A couple of students wrote about 'Wearing Islamic clothes'. The model paragraph on 'Western films' that the teacher put together, with input from students after they had written their own paragraphs, began by saying that there are many opinions about the influence of television programs. The positive influences include education, especially the use of Indonesian and foreign languages, we can learn about other ways of life, and technology. The negative influences include drugs and free socializing (*pergaulan bebas*), and not having respect (*hormat*) for parents and older people. The result of all these negative influences is that 'our morality and culture will decline'. The paragraph concluded that the negative influences outweigh the positive.

Fatima, a day student at the *madrasah*, identifies religion as the most important problem faced by Minangkabau teenage girls now, but it turns out that she means a familiar host of problems such as those identified by Poppy.

LP: What do you see as the most important problems faced by teenage girls now?

Fatima: Possibly the problem of religion. We now see teenage girls who are worryingly dressed. They don't respect the norms of *adat*, they don't follow the norms of religion [...] They've already run to modern fashions, possibly that is what is most worrying now. They have been ruined by socializing (*pergaulan*), without being able to filter themselves, or control themselves. They cannot judge if this is a good culture for them or not, possibly that is what is very worrying.

Talk of worrying clothing and socializing, and of neglect of *adat* and Islam, is common to parents, teachers and those in authority, but also to Minang girls. Words such as 'filter' and 'control' crop up again and again in answer to this question.

Girls at the vocational schools tend to be more ambivalent about the moral effects of mobility, television and free socializing, and tend to be exposed to far less moralizing in school. Possibly they are subject to less surveillance at home, with many having working mothers. Suzie's lower-class positioning gives her a different perspective on the issue of the most important problem facing her age and gender group. She identified 'the problem of education. If we don't have any education, we'll have trouble finding a job. And the problem of friends.'

However, others at her school identified boyfriends, going out at night, and conflicts with the older generation as the most important problems, but commonly for themselves, money was the biggest problem.

Discussion: When holding hands is the same as having sex

The schools evince varying levels of commitment to a curriculum of the body. The norms and values of the different types of schools are translated into rules and regimes regarding daily activities, mobility, dress and bodily expression. These have certain effects.

The prestigious academic schools encourage female students to achieve well scholastically and to develop as articulate, self-critical and self-confident individuals. These girls expect to travel, to study further, to end up in interesting careers, and to raise descendants who will be an 'ornament' to their mother's house and to Minang culture. For these girls, education is potentially empowering. However, the long years of schooling impose a full programme of activities: studying is their main occupation and preoccupation. Busyness has often been used to control women (Lesko 1988:125), and the girls in academic schools are largely tied to their schoolrooms and their desks. Their time is organized and their spatial mobility highly constrained.²⁶

In contrast, the vocational schools and private academic schools steer their working-class and lower-class students into jobs – though these days this task seems to be difficult. Various factors work together to render these students lesser ornaments of Minang culture: the lax discipline means that students wander in and out; students are more likely to spend time in the streets and parks; they are not very busy; they are sent on work experience for extended periods to offices, hotels, airlines, even away to Malaysia and Singapore; girls are not likely to be wearing the *jilbab*, and they are identified as working (in

²⁶ However, one could argue that their studious dedication and *jilbab* respectability enable and even legitimate potential future escape from the protection of their mother's house, for example, if they move to Jakarta for university.

the future) in offices, hotels and airlines.²⁷ This configuration affirms popular symbolic connections among lax discipline, free socializing, lower class, and questionable morality.

However, and here I turn to neo-Marxist British studies of youth culture such as that by Willis, I would argue that in the Minangkabau case, such an approach is deficient in taking too literally and too exclusively the connections among gender, education and class. If we take the girls' narratives seriously, this theory does not fit. Although the Islamic schools are often associated with the lower socio-economic groups, the Islamic boarding schools cut across class to some extent. The cost of boarding schools is usually significantly higher than the cost of sending a child to a local state day school. Further, the number of girls in Islamic schools – especially the number of girls who board in Islamic schools – suggests that the choice of Islamic boarding school is often a religious, not an economic one. The girls in the Islamic schools share with the girls in the top academic schools a serious and studious commitment, a fully-packed daily schedule, the containment of the body in the *jilbab*, and restriction in physical space. On the other hand, they are in a class of their own for religious idealism and group commitment: their unquestioning faith, intimate group living, missionary zeal, and idealism mean that they are not focused on satisfying personal ambition or the crafting of self-identity. Girls in Islamic schools do not derive their primary identities from class positions or prospective positions in waged work: it is their Islamic-ness and their Minang-ness that dominates their discourse, their subjectivity and their identity. Girls at Islamic schools instantiate Islamic ideals of docile, devout and chaste femininity, fortified with Minang notions of strong, forthright and educated women.

Religion and *adat* so dominate the discourse and the thinking of the vast majority of Minang teenage girls that any discussion of sexuality almost at once references the morality taught in Islam and *adat*. I was surprised by this, and one of the reasons for my surprise was that the anthropological literature on Minangkabau is full of matriliney and matriarchy but largely empty of Muslim sensibilities.²⁸ Islam is 'a blueprint for a social order' (Gellner 1981:1) and provides its believers with a comprehensive moral code for behaviour. It was impossible for most Minang girls to talk about sex or courting behaviour without reference to Islam, and, to a lesser extent, Minang *adat*, though it's worth repeating that the two were not conceptually separate in their world-

²⁷ Such occupations, in hotels and the hospitality industry, are often seen as being of questionable respectability for women, much as working in the entertainment industry is frowned upon.

²⁸ The major exception to this claim is the work of Whalley (1993, 1998). Substantial anthropological monographs and theses such as those by Pak (1986), Ng (1987), Blackwood (2000) and Sanday (2002) typically 'cover' Islam in a few paragraphs or pages.

view. Most schoolgirls could barely utter a sentence about sexual behaviour without contextualizing it within an Islamic moral shell. Islam extends throughout their whole lives and shapes sexual morality.

Minang girls do not find sex dirty or polluting, but from their youthful viewpoint sex is dangerous. Adolescence is the time when children become morally responsible for their own behaviour. All accept that sex before marriage is a major sin. For this reason, sex for premarital adolescent girls figures largely as a danger. The girls accept that the body is a sexed body and potentially an erotic body. They assume the sexual attractiveness of the female body to men, and believe that physical contact between the sexes arouses sexual desire. They freely acknowledge female sexual desires and an active female sexuality. Sexual relations are an expression of individual desire but also of social relations, and therefore should be subject to the rules of social order. The girls generally accept that sex does not just occur between two individuals, but in Suzie's unusual double-boyfriend behaviour and in some girls' practice of having a 'secret' boyfriend there are moves towards individual autonomy. In their minds, sexuality should be controlled and regulated within marriage. All Minang girls that I interviewed view premarital sex as *zina*. Some consider that sexual behaviours that 'approach' *zina*, such as holding hands, are 'the same as having sex' – they constitute *zina*.

Minang notions of sexuality are completely tied up with notions of gender. The double-barrelled effect of Islamic and *adat* teachings about the need to protect young women, the night-time seclusion of young women, and the responsibility of young women to protect their own, and their family's, reputation meld femininity and chastity for unmarried young women. The girls accept that male sexual desire exceeds or is less controllable than female desire.²⁹

Butler's theory (1990) of the performativity of gender is relevant to Minang sexuality: the important thing is how one behaves, because conduct reveals virtue. In this sense, there should be no distinction between morality and social praxis,³⁰ and this is gendered. For instance, the clothes that one wears represent one's virtue: if a girl wears revealing clothes, this is taken to mean that she is immoral; if she is wearing a *jilbab*, this signifies that she is chaste.³¹

²⁹ This seems to accord with a Malay pattern, noted by Peletz (1995), that perhaps contradicts other Islamic notions of males as reasonable, in control, responsible, and associated with rationality (*akal*). Islamic gender ideology associates females with unlimited sexual desire (*nafsu*). Minang girls seem to think that it is at least partly their responsibility to help boys control themselves, by not putting themselves in situations of aloneness, by not wearing provocative clothing, and by wearing the *jilbab*.

³⁰ Similar observations have been made by other Indonesianists, for example Boellstorff 2005:162; S. Errington 1990:17. F. Errington (1984:162) makes it explicit for the Minangkabau: 'morality is reality'.

³¹ This view of the morality of wearing clothes is quite different to the view of contemporary

This explains how Poppy can say that if a girl goes out at night she is doing something 'very strange', or that when a girl does not cover her *aurat*, she is asking for trouble. As Melissa, a student at an academic school put it, 'If a girl shows her *aurat* and then is raped, probably she herself has done wrong. Why did she encourage male lust?'

Far from being confused about sexuality as I had anticipated, teenage girls generally espoused a received wisdom, a set of values that they accepted and did not question. They generally express great commitment to sexual purity and responsibility. Here we come to one of the more vexed areas of religious morality, for Islam clearly encourages the deployment of human intelligence, including critical rationality, in scholarship and learning, and allows for individual agency. Without the space created by individual agency there is no point in having a Paradise; Islam promises rewards in the Garden of Paradise to the virtuous. There are grey areas in Islamic teachings where multiple interpretations of meaning and contestation are possible. For instance, Minang girls are not uniform in their dress outside school, nor are they of one voice in explaining their understanding of the *jilbab*. Other grey areas identified by Poppy and Suzie are the matter of *pergaulan bebas* and the issue of boyfriends.

Before I went to fieldwork I thought that long years of schooling must surely lure Minangkabau girls from the protection of home and family. Instead, I found that the modern Islamic worldview is inextricably entwined with the education imperative: the two pull together and are not in opposition. To be a good teenage girl in Minangkabau society means being both a good Muslim girl and a good student. The image of the good Minang girl fits beautifully with the image of the studious, committed female student and the discourse of female protection, chastity and staying at home.³²

Conclusion

This paper argues that the schools in West Sumatra work with the other major social institutions in the Minangkabau world – the family, Islam and the community – to entrench gendered norms and values associated with social and moral virtue and hetero-normative sexuality. The schools do not explic-

western feminists who usually insist that the wearer's right to dress as he or she chooses outweighs other considerations. Western liberal feminists generally reject an identification of bodily exposure with sexual availability, arguing that patriarchal institutions such as police forces and the courts often wrongly interpret women's revealing clothing as an expression of sexual availability.

³² An important exception to this might be when young women such as Suzie board in another town or city without close supervision. It might also be the case that at the next stage, when good schoolgirls advance to university and more independent living, the close fit starts to rub.

itly teach lessons about sexuality, but they implement a symbolic, gendered 'curriculum of the body' – of busyness, dress codes, restricted mobility and inter-gender contact – that associates virtue and success for teenage girls with respect for authority, acceptance of dress codes, personal discipline, rules and hard work, and a willingness to sacrifice and bear responsibility. This curriculum of the body symbolically differentiates two genders, disciplines potentially erotic bodies, and assigns them sexual and moral meanings.

Schools in West Sumatra are important institutions of class and gender reproduction. Some schools also work in the other direction, providing girls with emancipatory resources, though these too effectively reproduce class inequalities. But in the West Sumatran context, an approach that attends solely to school and class is inadequate. Attention to the body as symbol, as invested with religious meaning, and to the narratives of the girls themselves, shows that schools articulate a religiously-ordained and gendered social order, and impose social control. The different types of school train girls to be chaste and virtuous to varying degrees. Although schools in West Sumatra are silent about sexuality, they are 'paternalistic organizations' (Lesko 1988:123) that instil a covert, moral 'curriculum of the body' in students. Through everyday practices, this curriculum affects girls' embodied experience of sexuality. Minangkabau teenage girls have a highly developed sense of their own sexuality, but, far from experiencing a sexual revolution as a result of globalization, most have developed a sexual awareness that is weighed down with cultural and religious burdens. Minang female adolescent sexuality is a moral sexuality based on Islam and *adat*.

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