Growing up and being young in an Indonesian provincial town
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Citation for published version (APA):
Minza, W. M. (2014). Growing up and being young in an Indonesian provincial town
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This study has explored the experiences of young people in the provincial town of Pontianak. It sought to understand the various patterns of relations between being young and growing up by focusing on how social relations of interdependence are embedded within this process, and how it is experienced by different segments of the youth population. I have done this by building on ideas drawn from various disciplines of social science, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology. I suggested that ‘being young’ is related to concepts of social identity and youth culture, which means that being young is a construction of a social identity based largely on age, through practices of youth culture. At the other end, ‘growing up’ relates largely to concepts of youth as part of human development, in which it is considered as a stage of transition to adulthood.

By trying to understand how young people navigate between being young and growing up as two co-existing dimensions of their lives, this study offers an alternative approach to dealing with the limitations of both the growing up perspective and the youth culture approach, which are often separately discussed and deployed in research. Focusing on an educated youth population coming from the lower middle class, it has explored how the tensions and continuities
between growing up and being young are experienced in three life domains: education, work, and romantic relationships. It has also shown the interweaving of life domains that young people have to negotiate in their lives, which are also often dealt with separately in studies on youth.

Pontianak, the site of this study, is ‘peripheral’ in relation to a bigger ‘core’, and at the same time, a ‘core’ to other smaller towns and the countryside. This magnifies the contradictions between images of endless possibilities and the reality of limited opportunities for young people. Instead of constructing hyperbolic dreams as a way of compensating this gap (Kjelgaard and Askegaard, 2006: 239-240), young people in Pontianak are relatively realistic. Young people’s ambiguous attitudes and behaviour, which piqued my curiosity at the beginning of the study, actually demonstrate their effort to be grounded with regard to their situation. This ambiguity is evident in how they want to grow up by fulfilling family expectations, and how they try to move on with their lives at present. Yet, their behaviour often seems to portray that they want to be young forever.

The findings of this study suggest, on the one hand, that growing up for young people in Pontianak means internalising their parents’ aspirations, claiming them as their own, and working towards pursuing that dream. Acquiring middle-class symbols such as completing university education, entering government jobs, and marrying a partner with (at least) the same qualifications, is a significant step in making these dreams (in some cases) come true. This cultural transmission of values constitutes an important part of the social reproduction process. On the other hand, young people in Pontianak try to affirm their youth identity through their engagement with urban youth cultures. Affirming youth identity does not necessarily mean that
they are practicing a form of resistance against the adult world, as suggested by the youth subculture perspective. Instead, it is about living a life as a successful young person, without necessarily having to resist adult culture.

The continuities and tensions between growing up and being young are captured by identifying two main patterns of relations: ‘being young while growing up’ and ‘growing up while being young’; the difference between them being a matter of different emphasis along what is basically a continuum. I have suggested that, besides experiencing the dynamic tensions between them, a person can engage with the two patterns at different times in their lives. As this study is not a longitudinal one, data from groups of young people in different life domains and life stages (some still in education, others already graduated), were used to substantiate this claim. Also, the findings suggest that ‘growing up’ and ‘being young’ are experienced differently based on gender and ethnic background, as I will elaborate below.

**Being Young While Growing Up: Hanging out for the Future**

In Pontianak, this pattern of growing up and being young is most observable in the education domain. For example, I have shown in Chapter 3 that school counter cultures, such as perceiving studying as unimportant, exist. However, grades and the diploma granting the *sarjana* degree are still considered crucial for future transitions to work. As such, the youth culture of *arisan nilai* (paying for grades) is one of the strategies young people use to negotiate these contradictions.
University education also provides space for the emergence of particular urban youth cultures of hanging out on campus and at malls, alcohol consumption among young men (especially beer, as opposed to traditional forms of alcoholic drinks), and various kinds of consumptive behaviour, which are more acceptable to the adult world, as they are associated with the lifestyle of an educated person. Adults often consider hanging out by university students to be a way of relaxing after a hard day's work at school, rather than assuming it is a general way of life young people employ (associated with irresponsible behaviour, laziness or a resistance to growing up).

The domain of romantic relationships also illustrates continuities between adult and youth culture, especially in how adult-constructed views of ethnic group status often frame young people's modes of exploration in romantic relationships. Various ‘styles of appropriation’ (Jeffrey et al., 2008: 62-77), such as physicality or language related to another person's ethnic background become a basis for choosing or avoiding the formation of a romantic relationship (relative to one's own ethnic group membership). Making public appearances that show connections to (ethnic) group of a perceived higher status lends a positive image to one's social identity. For example, Malay young men are often attracted to ‘white’ skinned Chinese young women, who are also assumed to come from a higher socio-economic background. Fixation on images of beauty based on physicality (the body), public appearance, and material transactions show how expressions of love in romantic relationships are commoditised through processes of global capitalism (Padilla et al., 2007). As an exploration, romantic relationships are seen as a way to attain material goods, find someone to hang out with, and engage in
physical sexual exploration. Young men and young women are aware of future uncertainties, and these explorations facilitate ways of participating in society in the present.

Aside from confirming that cultures of youth sexuality show continuities with adult culture, this study also illustrates another dimension to this pattern. It finds that youth cultures also function as a productive domain – as way to facilitate, and at other times stall, growing up. Many young men and women believe that youth cultures in university facilitate the making of a modern identity, breaking away from structural constraints of ethnicity, class and geographical marginality. Ideas of tolerance, nationalism, optimism, and competitiveness are part of the young modern identity that they want to build. This applies particularly to Dayak migrant youth, often portrayed as uneducated and backward, who come to Pontianak to study as they try to become part of the urban scene.

Though a youthful modern identity emphasising individual capacity is believed to support the process of growing up, young people in Pontianak are very much aware of the role social networks play in making their transition. That is why hanging out is a central resource that young people use to construct their youth identity, but at the same time, to grow up. Youth cultures of hanging out while still studying facilitate inclusion within the peer group in a new university environment. This includes engaging in both leisurely and ‘serious’ campus activities that enable them to acquire and expand their networks for the future. Thus, intragenerational interdependent relationships are also significant.

These patterns are experienced differently by young women and young men, and by young people from different ethnic groups. The
centrality that hanging out plays is equally important for young men and young women, but young men often have more opportunities than young women to hang out in a variety of public places that provide them information and contacts to form social networks. Young women prefer to hang out with just a few friends, and in more private domains, with the exception of campus grounds and malls.

Young people tend to prefer hanging out with others from the same ethnic group, as they acknowledge the importance of familial and ethnic ties has become more prominent since the advent of decentralisation. Migrant youth feel more connected to young people from the same region and class, though still within the same ethnic circle. Thus, the making of an urban-educated young (wo)man with a belief in fair competition through individual capacity seems contrary to the significance of constructing a Malay, Dayak, Chinese, and Madurese identity to ensure future mobility.

Aside from hanging out, some young people draw upon youth cultures and manage to find a place in a business sector, mostly linked to global youth cultures that are locally defined. These types of jobs, including being a member of an MLM company, opening a distro or Muslim fashion outlet, or an internet café, facilitate a form of resistance towards adult culture, which sets a normative standard for what jobs are considered ‘appropriate’. Young people want to grow up in their own way.

Yet, young people do not always want to grow up. Instead, they ‘choose’ to stay young while growing up. In these situations, certain ways of being young can foster the image of fulfilling family expectations, and at the same time, stall the process of growing up. For non-Chinese youth, going to university is a strategy to avoid facing the
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consequences of gender-based appropriations of growing up. For young men, university education is a safe haven: it gives a sense of moving forward that is important to parents, but without the pressure of having to find work, which is often an indicator of manhood. It is also a strategy to avoid early marriage (the fast track to adulthood). This applies especially to young women, who are often forced to grow up via work or marriage. Chinese young men and women, as explained above, see university as a starting point in their careers rather than as a safe haven from having to grow up. Combining education and work in the formal sector provides better chances of continuing a linear career path within the same work domain.

Growing up While Being Young: Transition to Somewhere

By taking the perspective of young people, this study finds that young people who are often assumed to be stuck in their youth and in ‘transition to nowhere’, actually feel that they are experiencing a ‘transition to somewhere’. The second pattern of ‘growing up while being young’ stresses the structured experiences of growing up, where young people are forced to grow up quicker than they intend to (on a fast track to adulthood), or are inhibited in their process of growing up and are forced to stay young longer than they expect to (in transition to nowhere). Being young is often a consequence of not being able to successfully grow up – of not being able to make a smooth transition to adulthood. Here, young people’s subjective standards, rather than a normative time table in the human life course, are the indicators of a ‘fast track to adulthood’ or a ‘transition to nowhere’.
In this pattern, interdependence through intergenerational relationships is more dominant in the process of growing up, while intragenerational relations are a coping strategy for the construction of a youth identity. The relationship between the three life domains is shown in the ways that the education and work domains structure the dynamics of romantic relationships.

As mentioned above, growing up for young men and women in Pontianak often entails fulfilling family expectations. For non-Chinese young people, fulfilling family obligations includes providing financial assistance as a long-term social security net for their parents, even though they are yet to secure their own financial needs. The Chinese are expected to give back to parents only when they have managed to secure their own financial independence. This means that education-to-work transitions are prominent in determining how young people fulfil these obligations, and thus, grow up. The dominance of the service sector in the Pontianak economy has required both young men and young women to invest in longer periods of education if they want to join the skilled labour force in this sector. In the education domain, going to university means young people raise the family status by obtaining a university degree (*ijazah sarjana*) and create an image of having prospects for future work and marriage. For young women, higher education often places them in an ambivalent position in relation to finding a marriage partner with the same level of education. The fulfilment of these family expectations and the pooling of family resources to finance a young person’s education, reinforces intergenerational interdependent relationships. Fulfilling family expectations by going to university promotes the feeling of growing up, for young men and young women equally.
For non-Chinese young men and young women, a university education is expected to enhance the chances of acquiring a civil service job. However, not many young people are successful in securing a skilled position in the (government) service sector of their choice. This has made the period of education-to-work transition longer and more uncertain. Only a minority of youth are able to enter the idealised government jobs. Most young people endure quite long periods of unemployment while waiting for the opportunity to enter a job they find meaningful. Many end up settling for underemployment, basically taking on casual informal, low-paid, and/or insecure types of job for which they are overqualified. The condition of ‘transition to nowhere’ often results, usually among unemployed young men with few resources to either find work or get married. But taking a closer look, Pontianak youth are rarely caught up in this dead-end situation. Young people try their best at making the transition to somewhere; no matter how limited their mobility to somewhere is. In most cases, young men try to make the transition to somewhere by taking up work in informal sectors, such as politics, through the forming of patron-client relationships. For most young men and women, entering into business in the informal sector is an alternative way of making the transition to somewhere. Temporary jobs include contractual formal jobs in the modern sector such as mall jobs, which are considered more acceptable to parents in indicating a transition to somewhere. The formal nature of the mall and its physical, concrete presence (a form of ‘office’) supports the construction that a mall job is a real job. The role of global consumerist lifestyle has lubricated the dynamics of the youth market, by providing room for the emergence of these types of temporary job. However, in reality, malls provide more work opportunities for young
women than for young men (see also McDowell, 2000), and most young
women are able to work in these types of jobs for a limited period only.
Age, marriage, and pregnancy are factors that lead to the termination of
mall jobs for most young women.

Temporary jobs at a government office are often viewed as a
step towards transition to the ideal government job (also noted in
Kupang, Indonesia by Tidey, 2012). Very few young people actually have
the opportunity to secure these jobs. As most temporary jobs in
government offices are administrative and clerical, young women are at
an advantage when it comes to accessing these jobs, as they are often
assumed to be more suitable in dealing with administrative work
(Pontianak Post, 10 January 2008). Temporary work in a government
office also tallies more with the ideal of transition to work that results in
the feeling of having really made it further in the transition to
adulthood, because they are one step closer to securing the idealised
job in a government office (despite no guarantee of being able to secure
a permanent position).

Young people in these temporary types of work try to
rationalise their ‘failure’ to secure government jobs by expressing the
importance of any kind of work experience in starting the process of
growing up. Young people also claim that through these jobs, they are
able to fulfil some of their financial obligations to the family. At the same
time, they also emphasise the youthful (fun) parts of their work that
support the construction of a modern youth identity. As also shown in
this study, play and having fun for young men often means having the
opportunity to hang out, often breaking the curfew their parents set. For
young women, having fun is about physical beauty and of having a
‘good reason’ to ‘look pretty’. Thus, these young people want to grow
up by getting a stable job, fail to do so, and find other ways that give them the feeling that they are progressing towards adulthood. Sometimes efforts to fulfil family obligations mean that some young people experience a fast track to adulthood. This is seen in cases in which working is a matter of economic survival in order to continue their education, or to back up the family economy due to the loss of a parent.

Ethnicity has always played an influential role in processes of social reproduction through work in Pontianak. However, the ethnic work domain is currently being challenged. Young people acknowledge that decentralisation has opened opportunities for all ethnic groups to have the chance to seize opportunities, especially entering the civil service. This has changed not only the work aspirations of young people from marginalised ethnic groups, but also the ways in which they try to fulfil these aspirations. Government jobs have tended to be the work domain of the Malay, but now more Dayak, Madurese, and a minority of Chinese young men and young women are aspiring to secure government posts in the future. As securing a government post requires a university education, higher education is even more important for these young people. At the same time, most Chinese youth still aspire to starting their own businesses, replicating their parents’ occupational domain. Chinese young men and women try to make the ‘transition to somewhere’ from early on in their life, as they often combine education and work. They start working in private companies through peer networks while they are still at university. Sometimes with parental support, they open their own business, believing that these experiences will lead to a promising future.
Growing up also means finding a future spouse who meets the standards of the family. Viewing romantic relationships as a form of courtship is often considered the norm, even as many young people are aware that it takes more than love to make the journey to marriage. On the one hand young people, especially young women, hold the image of romantic relationships as individualised intimacy that will ideally end in marriage. For a young woman, it is important to uphold the family's reputation by being involved with one partner until she marries that person. On the other hand, young men and young women are equally aware that forming a new family entails securing processes of production and reproduction through the household economy. Many young men are especially insecure about their capability to fulfil the financial demands of a new household. This condition seems to be a background to the ambiguous meanings given to romantic relationships. Most young people in Pontianak imagine that their relationship will end in marriage, but they are also often unsure whether they can fulfil the family obligations a marriage entails.

Some young men and young women still at university view romantic relationships as being about growing up while being young by differentiating between the concept of pacar (boy/girlfriend) and calon (future spouse). For both young men and young women still at university, having a pacar is about learning how to grow up through this youthful practice. These young people argue that by being involved in romantic relationships, they learn about values of self-control and sacrifice which they believe will be of benefit when they enter marriage. Partly as an effect of global consumerist ideas, sacrifice for today's youth refers to the material contribution that each individual brings to the relationship, ensuring the couple’s ability to consume. Young men are
especially sensitive to the idea that they should make the main financial contribution in the relationship. On the other hand, the older generation refers to sacrifice in the relationship as *suppressing* the urge to consume (especially to eat out) to save up for their future together.

The ideal image of relationships bound within personal intimacy changes as young people move from education to work. For young men and young women who have graduated but have not yet found ‘proper’ employment, having a romantic partner often makes them feel that they are moving on in their transition, that they are making the transition to somewhere. They start thinking of their *pacar* as their *calon*. The family becomes more influential in the relationship.

Being unemployed is a serious matter, especially for young men. They are more vulnerable to experiencing a transition to nowhere (not being in education, not having any work, and not having a girlfriend), as they often face constant pressure to continue their relationship to marriage. Parents are not eager to marry off their unemployed son, or marry off their daughter to an unemployed young man. Young women are also reluctant to form a relationship with young men who have no economic future. In these situations, practical notions of marriage as an economic unit to ensure future security for the new family and the natal family override ideal notions of intimate/passionate love. Unemployed young women find their pathway to adulthood through forming relationships to find a future husband (*calon*). Gender roles secure a woman’s position in contributing to processes of social reproduction in the private domain, despite their state of unemployment. Ethnicity and religion also form structural constraints to transiting to marriage. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships occur among many young people, despite family disapproval. The
uncertainties that youth in Pontianak have to face in forming a firm path towards marriage through these relationships sometimes drive young people to construct the idea of having long-term relationships, without necessarily envisioning them as having to end in marriage. Even when they do, they are often unsure whether they can fulfil the family obligations a marriage entails.

In some cases, explorations in the domain of romantic relationships lead to an unplanned fast track to adulthood. Young women are often forced to marry if unwanted pregnancy occurs. Young men are also usually pressured to marry their partner if she becomes pregnant; but caring for the baby is often left to the young woman and her family. Other young women seek methods of pregnancy termination when unwanted pregnancy occurs. In this case, peers play a crucial role in facilitating this practice. Peers’ opinions, often influenced by media images of love, are influential in shaping the standards of appropriation of romantic relationships. On the other hand, parents’ involvement in the relationship is relatively limited at this stage.

**Theoretical Reflections**

Having elaborated the main empirical findings of this study, in this section I will reflect on some of its theoretical implications. The findings of this study are in line with the general view of other studies on youth transitions (Grant and Furstenberg Jr, 2007: 426; Atal, 2005: 15; Dalsgaard et al., 2008: 63-70), which demonstrate the importance of family, state institutions, and global processes in shaping young people’s lives. This study shows that families, in particular, play a crucial
role in the process of social reproduction and cultural transmission by the older to the younger generation (Mannheim, 1952). As argued in most growing up perspectives, my findings show that financial independence is one of the significant indicators that define entrance into adulthood. But that is only half of the story, as this study adds another way of growing up. Contrary to the idea that being in education denotes a state of youth as proposed by scholars such as Furstenberg (2000), this study has shown that entering higher education is also a pathway to growing up. It represents a way of fulfilling family expectations and strengthening the bonds of interdependence. This is in line with various studies in the Global South, such as those by Magazine and Sanchez (2007) and Punch (2002), which emphasise the significance of interdependent relations in the process of social reproduction.

This study also confirms studies suggesting that global processes have intensified the changes young people go through, resulting in differences between young people and their previous generation and the variations existing between different groups of young people in understanding the meaning and experience of growing up. Various studies on global youth transitions have shown how transitions to adulthood are becoming more insecure and uncertain, both in the Global South (Welti, 2002: 276-306; Jeffrey et al., 2008; Khan, 2005; Brinton, 2011), and in the Global North (Muller and Gangl, 2003; 2006; Celik, 2008; Malmberg-Heimonen and Julkunen, 2006).

This study has also found that gender and ethnicity play a crucial role in how young people face insecurities, employment being one of the significant issues young people have to deal with. While
young men are often in a more disadvantaged position than young women when it comes to getting secure work in the context of the feminisation of the workforce (McDowell, 2004; Kenway and Kraack, 2004), young women who do find employment in the expanding service sector often face difficulties keeping their jobs, due to increasing age, marriage, or pregnancy. This finding echoes a study by Chisolm and Du Bois Reymond (1993) who suggest that young women in the Global North expect to take breaks from work when they have children and re-enter the work force later in their life time, rather than work continuously.

In the previous section, it has been described how young men and women of ethnic minority have to deal with more challenges in securing a decent job than do the majority ethnic group who have already engaged in ethnic based networks with those in power. Economic, social, and political change often alter ethnic or racial dynamics, bringing new optimism to previously marginalised groups about their chances of experiencing social mobility. This is also experienced by second and third generations of immigrants in Britain, as noted by Rizvi (2004: 74) who argues that economic change and globalisation have blurred racial identities and provided more opportunities for inclusion among the previously marginalised immigrants. However, while in Britain it is the blurring of ethnic identity that has brought inclusion to ethnically marginalised youth, this study shows a strengthening of ethnic identity among young people as they compete to claim inclusion in West Kalimantan’s society, including in the labour market.

Rather than merely portraying a bleak picture of young people’s situation, as many previous studies have done, this study
supports a rather optimistic view about young people. This study shows how young people strategise and rationalise their situation, without trying to romanticise the uncertain futures they face. This was done by first, looking at the other side of young people's lives (that is of being young), which sheds light on how young people experiencing a ruptured transition resort to the peer group for support. Instead of taking political action such as staging collective protest like the educated unemployed men in India described by Jeffrey (2008: 745-746), this study shows a rather individualised and subtle strategy in coping with insecurity. In the work domain, young people strategise by constructing images of 'play' or of being 'free'. This is an effort to claim making progress towards becoming an adult, of making the transition to somewhere rather than nowhere (Herrera, 2010). One of the explanations for this choice of strategy is that political action and demonstrations are often associated with violence that young people in post conflict societies tend to avoid, even when the choice to distance oneself from collective political action may hinder the onset of change to the betterment of young people's situation. Moser and Mcllwaine (2001: 140-142) note that in post-conflict Guatemala, avoidance (including 'keeping silent') of situations assumed to trigger conflict, is also a common strategy applied. Despite this situation, young people continue to negotiate growing up and being young within the limited agency they have and the historical baggage that they carry.

Images of 'playful work', also introduced by Naafs (2012b) in the term 'work while playing', or the image of being 'free' (bebas) among young self-employed tourist guides in Lombok (Dahles and Bras, 1999: 275), confirm studies by other scholars that describe the significance of peers during times of uncertain transition to adulthood (Herrera, 2010;
Jeffrey et al., 2008), especially when families often cannot offer the support young people need (Wyn and Woodman, 2006). Naafs’ (2012b: 130-131) findings show how relatively educated young men in Cilegon (Indonesia) distinguish between various types of work to justify their participation in work they do not find appealing. This includes ‘work while playing’ (*pekerjaan sambil bermain*), where working in the mall denotes a growing up process, but left unsupervised, it becomes an arena for play as these young men chat and have coffee with their friends during work time. For young women, the image of ‘play’ sometimes refers to being able to ‘look pretty’ through mall jobs. In some cases, such as Pontianak, none of the young women worried about the dress codes of wearing short skirts, as Naafs noticed among young women working in malls in Cilegon (2012: 172-173). Instead, working in the mall justifies wearing clothes that would otherwise be deemed inappropriate outside the work context. The resort to the peers in uncertain times is also in accordance with the phenomenon of ‘youth cultures of waiting’ among young men in India as a strategy to compensate for being stuck in transition (Jeffrey, et al., 2008). Similar to the work of Holland et al. (2007), it shows the agency of young people in reproducing the values of the older generation via intragenerational relationships.

Second, using a lens that looks at the interweaving of the three domains in young people’s lives has made it possible to see that young people often compensate for a lack of success in one domain by claiming success in another. This is seen in the construction of ‘long-term relationships’, which show some similarities but also some differences to Arnett’s (2004) ‘explorations in romantic relationships’. The similarity lies in noticing that young people are currently
prolonging their relationships and delaying marriage. However, Arnett sees prolonging relationships as individual explorations to find the perfect partner, while long-term relationships in this study are often formed as a result of being stuck in the domain of work. Jeffrey (2009) argues that young men are staying longer in school to compensate for not finding the jobs they aspire to. This is slightly different from some young people in Pontianak, who stall growing up by entering higher education as a way to avoid having to work or get married. Education becomes not only a domain that compensates for not being able to move to on, but is a domain where young people can use to justify being successful without being pressured to ‘move on’.

Yet, this study also finds that intragenerational relations have much more significance than as merely a resort from a ruptured experience of growing up. Emphasising the value of peer groups for the formation of a youth identity, this study also tries to add to the body of literature on social identity theory. As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, these theories have focused mainly on various social identities based on ethnicity, nationality, and race (Verkuyten and Lay, 1998; Reicher et al., 2006), while paying little attention to age or generation related social identity, with the exception of the work by Hockey and James (1993; 2003) and Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995). However, Hockey and James’ main focus is on adulthood and old age. This study looks into social identity in a similar manner to Widdicombe and Wooffitt, highlighting the relations between social identity and youth subculture. While Widdicombe and Wooffitt’s work remains heavily biased towards a view of youth culture as a way to resist adult culture, the findings of this study elaborate how being young is not always in contrast to growing up, or in resistance or opposition to adult culture. It confirms Blackman’s
notion of youth cultural practices as reflecting continuity to adult culture (Blackman, 2005) rather than opposition to it (Willis, 1977). This is especially seen in the activity of hanging out.

Hanging out in adult-made institutions and public spaces, such as schools, has been illustrated as part of youthful activity. This has also been extensively discussed by geographers, as young people claim space in otherwise adult-dominated places (see for instance, Robinson, 2009, Skelton et al., 1998, and Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). However, this study highlights another dimension to hanging out. First, while online social networks may have provided an alternative way of hanging out (Liu, 2009), the centrality of school settings, coffee shops and malls in hanging out explained in this study, is in line with other work on young people conducted in the Global South (Schielke, 2009; Jeffrey et al., 2008). Second, hanging out is also used to prepare for one’s future and facilitate the process of growing up. I would like to emphasise that hanging out, especially among those still in education, is not to compensate for being stuck and to overcome boredom, as elaborated in Schielke’s (2009) work. Instead, the findings of this study suggest that hanging out in public places is both a source of entertainment and a way young people build networks that are expected to smoothen future transitions. Third, there is a tendency for hanging out to be ethnically segregated. The significance of ‘bonding’ with peer networks and its use it as a ‘bridge’ to acquire social networks outside their own ethnic group, have also been noted in Reynolds (2007).

Another form of youth culture that young people believe facilitates growing up is involvement in romantic relationships, where young people learn about acts of ‘sacrifice’. This goes against the suggestion of some scholars such as Swidler (1980: 136), who view
sacrifice as a negative act, as it is assumed to jeopardise one’s well-being because it denies the opportunity to develop one’s individual needs. Whitton et al. (2002: 174) provide an explanation of this difference. They argue that in relationships guided by principles of interdependence, sacrificing (to a certain extent), supports the development of oneself rather than being detrimental to it. This is also in line with one of the early ideas in the lifespan perspective, which sees growing up as a process of moving from an egocentric self to a social one (Kaplan, 1988: 257).

The above discussion shows how I have positioned this study in relation to previous studies. Here, I offer some reflections on its theoretical implications which may be of use for further studies. First, by looking at growing up and being young together, we are able to see that peers are becoming more significant in young people’s lives in all life domains. Thus, there is a need to develop social identity theories that use an age or generational based framework, and to further explore theoretical connections between concepts such as social identity, youth culture, and youth transitions. Second, this study supports the argument that continuities also exist between adult culture and youth culture. By doing so, it supports a view that the significance of peers does not render the family unimportant. This is not unique to Pontianak, Indonesia, or countries of the Global South, but is also the case in Global North. Along the same lines as this study, which proposes young people move in and out of growing up and being young, Tanner’s (2006: 30-31) work in the US illustrates how young people move away from their family at certain times of their lives, and re-establish bonds with the family of origin when they are entering adulthood. The goal of achieving independence, Tanner emphasises, is only temporary. Building on
Tanner’s insightful work, more studies are needed on the dynamics and shifts between growing up and being young, and the ways in which interdependent relations (rather than relations of dependence or independence) are practiced, in different regions and social groups of Indonesia and other parts of our globalised world.