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A Contemporary Youth Story in Indonesia



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Indonesia
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A book, which is written by Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan is described about young generations including teenage life in the era 2000. In the world of youth studies at the global level, Lyn Parker and Nilan try to analyze the hot issues about Indonesian youth's life of Indonesian youth and how western theories are able to overcome the phenomena that are currently happening in Indonesian youth at that time. The main idea in this book is to show the phenomenon in Indonesia that places in Indonesia especially Indonesian youth as the actor. In this book, Parker and Nilan, are able to explain quite clearly and tell about how youth are in their stages of personal development from condition of dependency within their families, and from formal institutions, school to work and thereby independence and citizenship rights and responsibilities which are the manifestation of youth transition. At the same time, in this

writing youth as a separate category is also seen an unintended outcome of urbanization and industrialization, great capitalism and modernity.

The attenuation of childhood, as can be seen above all by mass education in the era of nineteenth century, meant that there was a gap between childhood and adulthood. Parker and Nilan also show how the characteristics of youth are different in each country. The term of "youth culture" was coined by Parsons who said, "In the American youth culture and its adult romanticization are much stronger emphasis has been placed on the cross-sex relationship". He felt that American youth culture was irresponsible, one of its dominant notes is "having a good time" in relation to which there is a particularly strong emphasis supposing western theorizing about youth on social activities with the opposite sex". As explained by Nilan, we must be wary of transposing western theorizing about youth onto non-western

cultural contexts (Nilan, 2011). However, the phenomenon as said by Parson, also happen in Indonesia. On the other hand, they discuss various issues about youth that become the center of attention by teenagers nowadays.

A big scheme that unites the logic and arguments in this book is about the context of social changes and contemporary era affecting quite rapidly and massively. The author of this book also discusses various types of the effect of social changes for youth both in transition context and the culture itself. One of the writers offers his perspective in every condition that is suitable for Indonesian youth nowadays. This book begins to introduce Indonesian youth, discusses about youth culture and also how young people actualize themselves as the existence in their circle.

In all parts, this book consists of eight chapters. Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan join together to complete and strengthen the arguments and the data in each chapter. This book is interesting to read, because Pam Nilan and Lyn Parker try to show many things including daily activities of young people from any places or regions/cities in Indonesia. The authors also write about Indonesian history and how the history itself affects how Indonesian youth behave. Not only writing about Indonesian history affects youth's behavior but they also show the introduction and the conclusion that contain the future agenda in youth studies. The conclusion shows us that there optimism and anxiety as the evidence among educated young people. In this case, hope and dreams will be owned by youth when they are highly religious and technologically sophisticated. Youth create natural boundary of friendship until they are in their adult phase.

In chapter 1, Parker and Nilan talked about the analysis of youth perception from teenager to adulthood, government and community discourse and also how conservative cultural collision meets pop culture, which is being enjoyed by young people. A lot of youth do observation and adaptation in their daily lives so that they can follow norms, values and customs that are accepted by society. This book also explains that youth in Indonesia want to look more popular and religious, modern and another good point is they also follow moral value from society. During the twentieth century, youth is the main actor to lead any protest towards social and political transformation in Indonesia. This time youth is seen as the main actor in society because they can be pioneering not only in global level and young consumer culture in Indonesia but also Islamic revival. As can be seen by Parker and Nilan, they say that the attitude towards fashion, music, transformation and life ambition are shaped by the massive expansion in the middle class consumers as a result from sustained economic growth in Indonesia. To engage in a competitive labor market, Indonesians youth spend increasingly long period in education. Youth do more things compared to their parents today. However, the hypothesis shows that they might be confused by different forces brought to bear on them, for example the apparently conflicting crosscurrent of global pop culture massages and the massages of Islam known as *Dakwah* in Indonesian Language. Older generations might see youth as being vulnerable. Youth want to be known as confident and optimistic people in the face of hard reality, such as the tight graduate labor market or even homelessness (Soluang, 2002). In contrast, what is currently happening to youth's life, makes older generations anxious. Youth in Minangkabau, Solo and Jakarta become the research object for this book and it is

also showed that religion cannot be separated from people's life especially youth because every stage of self-development should be passed through the teaching of religiosity.

In chapter 2, Vickers in his thoughts shows that Indonesia have various complicated stories because Indonesia is known as a big country with its heterogeneity that does not have its own narration. The technological device ensures "meditation" from "sense of culture" for all youth in their free time of entertainment, interactive games, clothing and sports. However, by sophistication and modernity the way youth communicate these days is not the weirdest thing at all or something new that happens in their surrounding but the most important is "service" that gives interpersonal relation, interest and concern (Geser, 2007). This chapter also describes about the history of how youth in the past struggled to achieve freedom from colonial attack and how they educated themselves through formal education during Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. A lot of social movements happened to Indonesia at that time before nineteenth century, such as Jong Java, Sarekat Islam, Budi Utomo Gerwani (Indonesian Women Movements). In the colonial era youth still faced hard time to improve their education because they were restricted at that time.

In chapter 3, Parker and Nilan explains about youth in the developing world, Solonese youth. Solonese youth does not necessarily have money. A great deal of their leisure time is to spent with friends at home and other social places. Brand name and tagline for phones, watches, handbags, shoes and sunglasses in the past were ubiquitous. In this case, brand and tagline attracted many young people in Solo. Because of that phenomenon, in this chapter, Parker and

Nilan offers their insight into the domain of youth in Solo, Central Java, as one of our two main field sites. The historical background and contemporary description offered from this chapter are to show how adolescents remain their time, place and context, even they keenly embracing certain aspects of global youth culture.

Parker and Nilan clearly describe how pop culture becomes youth's lifestyle in Solo, in every social class. Parker says that the atmosphere of contemporary youth in Solo is passionate and optimistic as they move through the micro-social world of this rapidly developing city. This constitution of partly independent social existence (social world) by youth beyond family is the basis of moral misunderstanding about possible immorality and delinquency of youth that will happen sooner or later. It can be seen there is a youth in Makassar (one of the cities in Indonesia) has been influenced by Korean music like Asian Super Band from South Korea named 2NE1. In contrast, as seen in Solo, Central Java, youth there evidently show that they can preserve their local culture even in deeper level.

In this chapter, it also shows how youth from Solo, who live out-of-town, try to keep and preserve their local culture. The tendency towards young people from Solo is to live out-of-town for their study or work (the cities where most of youth from Solo choose to live are Jakarta, Semarang, and Yogyakarta) and it becomes a phenomenon that is also followed by youth from other cities in Indonesia. As seen in Yogyakarta, youth there move quite rapidly. They use education as the main reason to achieve higher social and economic status. Another plus point found in Yogyakarta for youth who are from Solo is because of

the location. The location is not too far from Yogyakarta. Upward social mobility to the prosperous middle class is the most readily identifiable sentiment among working class and lower middle class Indonesian youth (Nilan, 2008). The survey shows that 3,565 Indonesian young people in secondary schools and universities at nine locations across the country found a “high and unanimous ranking of “good education” for the desirability of a “well-paid job and home ownership” (Nilan *et al*, 2011:714). Solo is an education hub of Central Java with numerous universities and many secondary schools. Social world of education is vitally important for Solonese youth.

In this book, there is a view of Geertz about status of aristocracy as seen in an old Surakarta Kingdom in Solo. What has been taught and influenced by Surakarta people in the past affected young generations today. They follow moral value and customs used by society in Surakarta. The status order for old Surakarta consisted first of the aristocracy – the *priyayi* (Geertz, 1960), then the tiny merchant class and the peasantry, who primarily lived outside the city walls. Particularly, rigid boundaries were maintained against the peasantry, and their movements were tightly constrained within the city. Until Dutch came, the Javanese aristocracy held hierarchical power over the peasantry in two ways: simple military terror and religious enthusiasm (Geertz, 1960:231). Islam was well established in Central Java by the time *Susuhunan* Pakubuwono II settled his court at Solo, and the king used religious authority to extend and strengthen his kingdom. In that sense, the development of Islam in Solo cannot be separated from the authority on the two royal courts.

Chapter 4 discusses about the moral world of Minangkabau. Parker and Nilan describe quite clearly how youth socialize and live in society. They conducted the research from those who live in West Sumatera, Sejuk City. Most of them are Muslim. This chapter also shows how Islam has influenced society and spread many norms and value in Minangkabau. The presence of turmoil or contradictions experienced by youth in social systems, history, and geographical conditions are also explained in real. They considered that in the Minangkabau region, women are very dominant in mobilizing social and economic systems in society. It has an impact on the flow of youth in free sex and promiscuity in inter-gender relations. Nilan explains how youth, especially young women who are getting interested in the opposite sex, internalize the Minangkabau community culture. Moreover women in Minangkabau have a very wide role in social system, politics, and culture. They explore moral misunderstanding as seen in young people and socialize extensively such a dominant disclosure in Indonesia at this present time. A complex moral judgment comprising propriety, modesty, mobility and above all, free sex.

Lost its way and in West Sumatera, the idea that Minangkabau has lost their preeminent position in the nation-state – is not such that youth are rebelling politically or opting out. For the most part they are not fired up about formal politics anymore. As Naafs notes, “young men and women in their late teens and twenties, find that their scopes for upward social mobility is quite limited” (2012:50). Religion can be one of the factors that controls how youth socialize. It is sometimes considered as taboo because it is much different compared to how old generations do. Chapter 4 discusses about the various activities of religious doctrine along with the

traditions of acculturation of religions and the value of eastern customs is important to their youth as a consideration in choosing what to behave that they can actualize. This phenomenon is generally found in several places in Indonesia.

In chapter 5: “The Meaning of Education for Young People”. It explains about the influence and advantage of education for young generations. According to Parker and Nilan, they give some explanation of how education gives big impact on young generation development. It cannot be separated from the transition of youth from school age to working age, which in the contemporary world today is very difficult to be released from women level of education. One of the examples of comments from interview comes from West Sumatera with some additional data obtained in Bali. The author, Lyn Parker, focused particularly on schools and education system. We use some selected survey data especially questions for respondents. This generation is the most highly educated generation of Indonesia and youth today are more concerned with education like quality of education that they will receive; they are preoccupied with their own academic performance as individuals; they sometimes are worried about getting into the appropriate training program or university; and they also worried about getting job that will make them passionate to work and independent. For the most part, they are engaged with education process, in an active of education system. These activities illustrate many various patterns of transitional forms of youth and customary education culture revealed and should be obeyed to young people in accordance with their respective local culture.

Now it has been clear how education contributes a lot to the particular qualities that characterize young generations (teenagers) nowadays in Indonesia. To build themselves and their self-image, they use norms and values that is already taught in schools. At the same time, they prove a commonality of values and aspirations that show level of education system, the depth and homogeneity of the ideology of education and its effect in creating modern Indonesian subject citizens.

In chapter 6, it discusses more about free sex, moral panic and the construction of moral itself. The authors of the book talk about youth, who are compelled by driving for self-improvement, yet remain for fewer individuals than western counterparts. People who live in developing countries are less individual than those who live in developed countries. Otherwise, they show us quite significantly face of contemporary, dynamic, democratic in Indonesia. This chapter begins with a brief look at survey that reflects moral panic in Indonesia faced by young generations. After discussing phenomenon of moral panic, we analyze the discourse of “the authorities” with respect to free sex with some attentions to media coverage, government response and teachers’ discourse. We look back to youth and show their opinions and also behavior to argue that many young people share the discourse of moral panic.

In chapter 7, youth nowadays tend to spend their time in entertainment places like nightclubs. In Minangkabau, youth like to do lots of activities (positive or even negative). Leisure time is sometimes being spent for socializing with people in the same age. Mixed-sex teen socializing is a source of pervasive moral panic in Muslim-majority Indonesia (Parker 2009; Smith-Hefner 2009). From 1,788 respondents, they say that they are finally aware of bad impact

that they did from the way they socialized. Besides that, other activities that youth do are to go to an Internet café, watching television and a film in their home. It is common to find a number of young people do chatting in front of television.

In chapter 8, it discusses about how young generations has a big dream to achieve for the future. Parker explains that in his book there are three areas in particular: education, work, and marriage but begin with a short survey of the literature on “transitions” in youth sociology in Indonesia. We then provide some survey data that show youth’s ideas about what constitute “good life” and their ideal life for the future. They sum up the chapters with stories of the two young women, Nora from West Sumatera and Astrini from Solo. Although their biographies should not be seen as typical or representative, they capture many of themes and issues that encountered in the accounts of youth as they talked about their hopes and dreams. Overall, we can report that youth are optimistic about the future; this positive orientation has been found by other sources too (e.g. Guharoy 2010).

In the last chapter, Parker draws a conclusion that there are some important points from the chapters of his book like social networking. Social networking is the connection to create a participation in society. In the context of youth studies in Indonesia, theoretical framework is about social changes. Overall, this book discusses about how social networking can be a tool for creating participation and role for young generation in society. In dealing with the demographic bonus agenda, youth have enormous social capital alongside a better-established capacity of human resources. A very strong social class is present in every circle of youth's play but cannot show the actual social class.

The weakness of this book is that this book is still the dominant about reality that occurs among the youth. In fact, from the experience of young people that is reflected in the book, Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan explains how the comparison of habits of youth in Indonesia with other countries. A very strong social class is present in every circle of youth's play but cannot show the actual social class. Youth culture does not always represent social class (Bennet, 1999). This book has not been discussed about old generation perspectives nowadays and how they see youth phenomena that happen today. On the other side, this book should also be appreciated. Parker and Nilan successfully discuss and explain many things about youth life in this book. They are able to compare very well how youth in eastern countries (Indonesia) and how youth in western countries. By using appropriate analytical tools and being responsive towards cultural and social context in Indonesia, they gained a comprehensive study and practically they are able to compare very well how youth in eastern countries (Indonesia) and how youth in western countries. By using appropriate analytical tools and being responsive towards cultural and social context in Indonesia, they gained a comprehensive study and practically they are able to come up with innovative solutions that are expected to solve youth problems in Indonesia. They have explained comprehensively from the history of Indonesian social movements provoked by the youth to how the youth spent their time for entertainment. What Parker and Nilan has explained through chapters in this book is supported by various sources of secondary literature so it has strengthen the lifting argument of youth phenomenon in contemporary Indonesia.

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