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Young Men and Peer Fighting in Solo, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article considers peer fighting between lower middle-class Javanese schoolboys with a view to describing the masculine habitus referenced in local collective violence. Acknowledging the long history of heroic warfare and factionalism in Java, the data points to the pleasurable sense of oneself as a kind of warrior fighting with a band of brothers. Four important points emerge about contemporary youthful masculinities here. First, peer fighting is a temporally bounded activity that ends with the school-to-work transition, thus bearing out Messerschmidt's argument. Second, alcohol plays an important role in amplifying peer conflicts and honor disputes. Third, getting a girlfriend demands the expression of a different kind of masculine habitus from that operationalized in peer fighting. Finally, Muslim school-boy youth squads (geng[s]) are intense formations for the construction of warrior masculinities, employing extensive imagery from the field of global Islamist struggle in battles with boys from secular and Christian schools.

[youth](#) [Indonesia](#) [peer fighting](#) [gendered habitus](#) [Muslim imagery](#)