Child marriage as a choice: rethinking agency in international human rights

Horii, H.

5 Child marriage as a 'solution' for modern youth in Bali

The previous chapter demonstrated how pre-marital sexual intercourse could be risky for boys: They can be sent to jail since judges are concerned about girls' now-tainted reputations. This is the judicial argument for resolving conflicts between families based on the official moral discourse. However, such discourse can differ from young people's moral perspectives. This chapter turns to young people's experiences and views on sex and marriage. It examines the socio-cultural conditions whereby young people in Bali are marrying today. Swasti's story indicates some of the underlying factors for so-called 'child marriage' in present-day Bali.

5.1 Prologue

Swasti, aged 29, lives in a rural village in Bali and runs her own beauty salon. She proudly showed me some photos of Balinese style weddings she had arranged for her customers. She seemed reluctant to talk to us when her daughter was present, so we arranged to conduct our interview when she was alone. She was afraid that her 13-year-old daughter might "*do the same (takut dia ikut)*" (i.e., "*marrying young (kawin muda)*") if she hears the story of her mother's teenage marriage. Swasti does not want her daughter to marry young since she wants her to continue her education.

Swasti became pregnant when she was 15 years old and had a customary (*adat*) marriage before giving birth at the age of 16. She had then been courting (*pacaran*) her boyfriend for over a year, who was six years older than her. When her boyfriend asked to have sex as *"proof of love"*, she agreed, although she admitted she was scared. She found out that she was pregnant when she was three months along. *"Maybe I was too free at that time (Mungkin terlalu bebas saat itu)"*, she said. Her parents were busy working away from home, so she was free ("*makanya bebas*"). She repeated the word '*bebas*'.

When she told her boyfriend that she was pregnant, he first denied that it was his child and refused to marry her. After a week, he eventually agreed to get married since he was *"ashamed" (malu)* because their relationship was known in their small village. The news about her pregnancy upset her parents. Her mother told her to have an abortion, as they were still too young. She wanted her to continue studying, and that was not possible while pregnant. However, Swasti decided not to have an abortion because she was *"scared"*.

Although she does not regret having a child, she regrets marrying her husband. *"If I could go back to the time when I became pregnant, I would choose to be a single mother."* However, at that time, it was not an option. People in the village did not accept single mothers. If she gave birth without getting married, her and her family would have been ostracized from the local community (*banjar*).[1]

5.2 Introduction

5.2.1 The danger of the 'rights discourse'

Swasti's story is one case of a so-called 'child marriage'. International development organizations tend to frame child marriage as a human rights violation and an obstacle to global development, perpetuating poverty, inequality, and insecurity (Girls Not Brides n.d.b). These organizations seem to be oblivious to the diversity of child marriage practices (Horii and Grijns 2019).

This generalizing definition of child marriage risks encouraging a "rights discourse" (Grugel 2013: 20), which focuses on individuals who have been deprived of their "rights". Grugel argues that the rights discourse risks detracting attention from underlying structures that shape inequalities and their reproduction (Ibid). I have argued that aiming to 'end child marriage' altogether is not an effective approach (Horii 2018; see also Chapter 3), because of the diverse types of and motivations for child marriage (Horii and Grijns, 2019; see also Chapter 3). Boyden et al. (2012: 520) also pointed out the risk of the abolitionist approach, which could neglect the most critical social and economic problems. What then are the motivating factors for child marriage to which we need to redirect our attention? I rely on empirical data to answer this question, demonstrating real-life cases of child marriage in Bali.

5.2.2 Conceptual framework

To analyse the structural reasons why children are marrying, I use the concept of modernity. On the one hand, modernity's ideals are the basis of the current international advocacy to end (all) child marriage (i.e., marriage below the age of 18), as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Human rights advocates consider child marriage as a problem, a 'harmful traditional practice', and tend to view those who practice it as 'traditional', i.e., insufficiently modern. In this chapter, I challenge this viewpoint by discussing data that shows that these young people use under-age marriage to navigate the modern world in which they live.

1 Interview, July 2017.

As a concept, modernity requires careful distinction. Modernity in Bali has been discussed extensively. Vicker's (1996) presentation of modernity as a continuous condition in Bali and his use of plural "modernities" show the varied meanings of the word. Modernity created "tradition" as a by-product, sometimes as institutions and attitudes which were left behind by those who were engaged in "progress", and sometimes as collective values that were perceived as "lost" (Schulte Nordholt 2000: 102). In the Indonesian context, 'modernity' and 'globalization' are often used in popular discourse to denounce any foreign influences. Words such as *'terbuka'* (open) and '*bebas'* (free) are both often used to describe young people's lives in Bali. When they are used in association with the perceived image of a Western liberal lifestyle, primarily liberal sexual morality (in their words, *"promiscuity"*[2]*),* they carry a negative connotation. Swasti said, *"I was too free"* in a regretful tone, referring to her pre-marital sexual intercourse, a moral transgression.

This is the kind of discourse about 'modernity' that is often used in contrast to 'tradition'. Distinguishing from modernity as a discourse, here I use modernity as a changing social condition, borrowing Giddens' idea that the modern world is where social life is "open" with multiple lifestyle choices (Giddens 1991: 6). Consider the educational opportunities that are increasingly available to young generations in Bali. *"Children are already open (terbuka). They want to continue with school, and they want to continue until university"*, a lawyer working for social programs told me.[3] The wide variety of life-choices now open to these individuals emancipates them but can also threaten traditional communities and creates a normative gap between generations. Parents and children today have different perspectives on the world, lifestyles, courtship, and marriage. The "relational self", which is shaped by ties to traditional kin and community (Merry 2009: 404), becomes conflicted with one's desire for the 'new world'.

In this chapter, I use two additional concepts that are relevant to changing social conditions ('modernity'). One is the idea of a reference network, which I use to unpack the 'openness' of modern society. The other is the idea of relational autonomy, which I use to explain the youth's decision-making process (see also Section 1.2.5). In the following sections, I will further discuss all three concepts, use them to interpret data, and explain how they are related and support this chapter's main argument.

2 Interview with a girl from a local community in Denpasar, August 2017.
3 Interview, June 2017, Denpasar.

5.2.3 Methods

This chapter's analysis builds on interviews and Focus Group Discussions I conducted during my fieldwork in 2017. To understand the link between child marriage and adolescents' sexuality in Bali, I interviewed legal practitioners, CSO staff members, government officials, health care personnel, and teachers. I also spoke with 20 adolescents about their practices and ideas of sexuality and marriage through either FGD or individual conversations. I selected two groups of Balinese Hindu adolescents whose class and lifestyles differed significantly.[4] I called one of the groups the 'Pasar Community', as most of them work in the *pasar* (traditional market) as carriers. They were all from a specific remote rural area in East Bali. They live with limited life resources (housing, food, educational and work opportunities), and most have never had any formal schooling experience. The second adolescents' group is called the 'Teruna Teruni Group'. This is one of the *adat* (customary) communities for youth '*teruna teruni*' in Denpasar. In this group, adolescents gather for community *adat* ceremonies or perform Balinese dancing for hamlet ceremonies. They are from upper-middle-class families, tend to be followers of Balinese customs, and are knowledgeable about local practices.

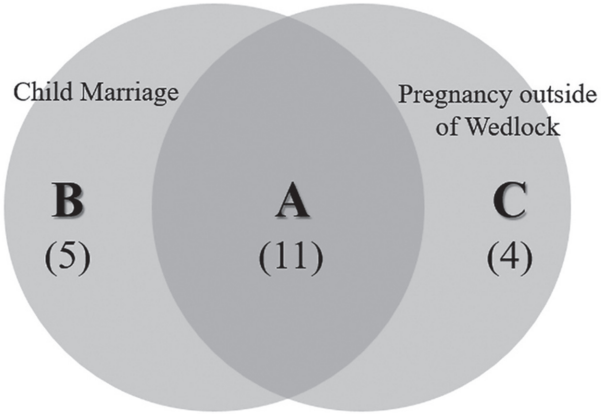

Figure 1: Case studies

4 While it is difficult to identify 'representative' groups of Balinese adolescents, I selected these two groups whose class and lifestyles differ significantly, in order to examine to what extent these variables influence their sexual norms and behaviours. As this section explains, Pasar Community is a very specific community, often isolated from the other communities in Bali. Therefore Teruna Teruni Group is perhaps more representative than Pasar Community, but not entirely, as these adolescents probably belong to Balinese families who value their participation in this youth group, while not all Balinese do.

I also refer to 20 child marriage cases. The 11 Type A cases first involved teenage pregnancy and then child marriage. The 5 Type B cases involved child marriage without pregnancy, while 4 Type C cases involved teenage pregnancy without marriage. I specifically use these cases to examine the causality between teenage pregnancy and child marriage and to illustrate how adolescents decide to marry in pluralized normative systems. To study these cases, I interviewed the young women and men involved, and their parents and family members. I interviewed most of these people in Denpasar, the capital city of Bali, though some of the informants were only working there and were originally from other areas of Bali.

5.3 Sexual morality for adolescents in today's Indonesia

5.3.1 Child marriage and sexual morality

From the 16 cases of child marriage that I studied during my fieldwork in Bali, at least 11 were caused directly by an unplanned teenage pregnancy, including Swasti's. Two of the other cases were caused by a fear of pregnancy, as this case illustrates:

> Krisna and Sri had been in a relationship for two years. They lived together in an apartment in Denpasar for three months when they decided to marry. Krisna was fifteen and Sri was seventeen when they married through the *adat* ceremony. Their cohabitation was unsettling to Sri's family, who worried she might become pregnant. To ensure that Krisna would be responsible for the consequences of a possible pregnancy, Sri's family insisted that they marry. Sri also said, *"My family wanted me to marry to avoid shame (malu) in the village as the neighbours and relatives already knew about our relationship"*. Krisna's father initially disagreed with the marriage, arguing that Krisna was still too young. However, Sri's family insisted.

A (fear of) pregnancy outside of marriage significantly motivates child marriages in both Bali and other areas of Indonesia, including West Java (see Chapter 3). The stigma of *zinah* is not limited to the girl involved, but extends to her family, especially her parents, who are considered to have failed in raising their daughter properly (Utomo and McDonald 2009). A 2015 study by Rumah Kita Bersama also showed that in 36 out of the 52 studied cases of child marriage, the marriage was motivated by a pregnancy (Marcoes and Putri 2016).

The link between child marriages and adolescent sexual behaviour becomes clearer when explained in the broader context of modernity. Factors such as increased educational opportunities and mobility and an expansion of choices and social networks for youngsters distinguish today's young generation from their elders' generation. In Indonesia, like many other countries of the Global South, the young generation today is better educated

than the previous generation (Naafs and White 2012: 10). They also have wider physical and digital mobility, and this extends to all social classes and genders (Ibid: 12). These expansions mean increasing freedoms in dating patterns. ECPAT International, a CSO network, released a report mentioning a growing number of children's "love marriages" as a result of increasing educational opportunity and mobility (Chaudhuri 2015).

Statistics show the recent marriage patterns of young people: The rise of female (mid- to late-) teenage marriage in urban areas. First, Jones's research analysed the difference in 2005 marriage patterns between a 20-24 and 50-54 year old female cohort (Jones and Gubhaju 2008). The younger cohort had almost half the number of teenage marriages, but more marriages in their late teenage years (i.e., 18 and 19) (Ibid). UNICEF Indonesia (2016) also finds that marriages increased among girls aged 16-17 between 2008 and 2012. Second, the 2013 National Household Survey shows a slight increase in child marriage rates in Indonesia between 2010 and 2012, associated with an increase in urban child marriage rates since 2008 (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) 2016). Between 2008 and 2012, the child marriage rate steadily decreased in rural areas (33.5% to 29.2%) while increasing in urban areas (18.8% to 19.0%) (Ibid). A comparison of 2008 and 2012 census data revealed child marriage rate increases in nine provinces, including DKi Jakarta (12.8% to 14.9%) and Bali (15.9% to 16.5%) (Ibid).

One of the possible explanations for the puzzling rise in urban female teenage marriages is the changing lifestyle and consequent anxiety about moral decay. A judge at the religious court in West Java stated, *"Child marriage is increasing because of globalization"*. Harding (2008) helps us to understand this remark: Indonesian youth now interact more with the outside world and 'Western' cultures, which are regarded as a threat to traditional Indonesian cultural and religious values. In relation to this, the social anxiety associated with adolescents' sexual behaviour pressures girls to marry early. Some data support the changes underlying the anxiety: Utomo (2001) demonstrated a recent rise in premarital sexual intercourse, particularly in large cities in Indonesia.

Human rights advocates demanding a rise in the legal marriageable age adds to the tension between the conservative and progressive groups. This tension is observed in the divided opinions about the proper marriageable age, expressed during the 2014 hearings at the Constitutional Court judicial review (see Chapter 3). Moderate Islam and non-Muslim experts supported the proposal due to the negative consequences of child marriage on girls. However, representatives from major Islamic organizations in Indonesia argued that maintaining the current marriageable age is a solution to prevent 'free sex', a word commonly used in Indonesia to criticize any sexual relationship outside of (and particularly before) marriage. According to Marcoes (2018), child marriage has become part of the political identity

of Islamic fundamentalists in Indonesia. This controversy around the issue indicates that, for conservative religious groups, early marriage is a way to control youth's sexual behaviour without directly engaging with the discussions on teenage sexuality and safe sex.

5.3.2 An accepted taboo: sex before marriage in Bali

In Muslim-majority rural West Java, pre-marital sexual intercourse is a sin and taboo. By contrast, pre-marital sex is somewhat more socially accepted in Muslim-minority Bali, generally described as the 'permissiveness' of sexual behaviours among young people (Van Bemmelen 2006; Lewis and Lewis 2009). It is also not uncommon for a prospective gloom and his family to try to determine whether the prospective bride is "*berisi*" (fertile), because it is important that she can give birth to a son as the successor to the father's lineage (Van Bemmelen 2015). Singarimbun's research (1991) comparing adolescents' sexual behaviour in urban/rural Yogyakarta and urban/rural Bali concluded that Bali respondents had engaged in more sexual experiences than those in Yogyakarta. Utomo (1997) also found that adolescents who live in Muslim-minority provinces in Indonesia show more permissive attitudes concerning sexual relationships than those living elsewhere. Notably, the 'permissiveness' discussed in the 1990s and 2000s was referring to sexual *behaviour*, not sexual *norms*, although the two are interlinked.

The ambiguous relation between sexual norms and behaviour is demonstrated in Jennaway's (2002) ethnographic fieldwork in a rural village of North Bali in 1992. It showed general societal disapproval of young girls' promiscuity: when a girl lost her virginity without a guarantee of marriage, it implied 'moral laxity' (Ibid: 163). The girls involved in the study spoke of being torn between upholding norms of chastity and their romantic and sexual desires (Jennaway 2001: 93). Jennaway (2002: 144) also suggested the generalized image of love had a creeping influence, shared via mass media outlets such as village televisions. Bellow's study also documented anxieties among the Balinese about the influences of Western modes of dating and marriage for love, introduced through tourism, social interaction, television, or imported pornographic videos (Bellows 2003: 8, 16).

Today, when I asked adults in Bali across classes and from various positions, *"Is it okay to have sex before marriage?"* they avoided answering 'yes' or 'no'. Instead, they said, *"It's already common"*. This answer seemingly indicates that adults generally still consider pre-marital sexual intercourse as a taboo that is prohibited by their religious/customary norms. Therefore, they do not explicitly say 'Yes, pre-marital sex is okay', but acknowledge that it is happening. In the following paragraphs, I will demonstrate the normative gap regarding pre-marital sexual intercourse that exists between today's young people and the older generation.

In an interview with the head of PHDi (*Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia*)[5], he explained that the concept of *zinah* exists in Balinese *adat* as '*mitra ngalang*'. The idea prohibits sexual intercourse without an *adat* marriage.[6] The court decisions analysed in Section 4.2.4 regarding marriage dispensations show that pre-marital sexual intercourse is officially condemned. A marriage registrar at the Civil Marriage Registration Office (KCS) explained that young people's marriage is mostly due to "Marriage By Accident" (marriage because of pregnancy), stating: *"We always tell them that it is not correct. We tell them, if you want to have sex, please wait until marriage."*[7] This is the official discourse on pre-marital sexual intercourse.

According to Gajah Mada University researchers (Arida et al. 2005), *adat* leaders or old generations still maintain these official *adat* norms. However, adolescents' behaviour and their perspectives on pre-marital sexual intercourse differ from the old *adat* norms. In one of my FGDs, participants from both the Pasar Community and Teruna Teruni Group expressed their opinion about pre-marital sexual intercourse as being an "*aib*" (disgrace) and a "*dosa*" (sin). They said, *"it is salah (wrong) according to Hindu"*. However, a participant later told me individually, *"That's what our parents say. We are the generation of millennials, globalization and such. For us, it is ok to have sex (sex boleh aja). We know about those things."*[8] This shows the normative gap between parents and children. What this girl said around peers and in private also emphasizes the moral ambivalence that exists surrounding pre-marital sex.

5.3.3 Kehamilan Tak Diinginkan ('unwanted' pregnancy)

Kehamilan Tak Diinginkan ('unwanted' pregnancy), known as KTD, is often discussed as a problem in Bali. Since pre-marital sex is not permitted in principle, in-school sex education is very poor, and any communication about the topic is difficult. In most cases, teenagers acquire knowledge about contraception only through the Internet or social media (including pornographic videos), where the shared information is often incorrect. Many of the teenage informants told me their incorrect understandings about 'safe sex'. They sometimes do not know that sex can cause a pregnancy, and often believe that pregnancies do not happen if sexual intercourse occurs only once, or if they take a shower after intercourse. Teenagers often express their difficulties in purchasing contraception. They feel *'embarrassed' (malu)* buying condoms, although they are available in shops. The practice itself is

5 A major organization involved in rallying for the preservation of Hindu and *adat* customs.

6 Interview, June 2017, Denpasar.

7 Interview with a marriage registrar at the Denpasar Civil Marriage Registration Office, 20th March 2017.

8 Interview, August 2017.

not strictly stigmatized ('permissiveness'), and so teenagers engage in sexual relationships without the proper tools and knowledge. This explains the frequency of 'unwanted' teenage pregnancies.

In Bali, it has been a popular discourse to blame *"modernization"* or *"globalization"* for teenage pregnancies, associated with the widespread use of mobile phones and pornographic content. A government official told me, *"Teenage pregnancy in Bali has been increasing because of technology that entered into Bali and pornography."*[9] A medical doctor said to me, *"The Internet makes children want to try or practice what they see on it, such as YouTube or social media."*[10] Others blame *"parents' lack of control over their children's behaviour"* for the increase in teenage pregnancy.[11] *"Normally, parents have to monitor children's behaviour, but nowadays, parents are too busy. They do not have a good relationship and communication with their child"*, said a judge.[12] In an interview, a CSO head expressed how globalization affects youngsters' ideas of sexuality: *"Because of the globalization, Balinese people 'maju' – became progressive. They became more 'bebas' – free, and they use gadgets (holding her smartphone)."*[13]

People blame the above factors for both teenage pregnancies and child marriage. *"Gadgets (mobile phone) are a cause of underage marriage. Both in urban and rural areas, most of the children use mobile phones from elementary school (SD). This makes it easier to interact with their boyfriend/girlfriend. Family cannot control the children."* These were the causes of child marriage according to a CSO's legal assistant.[14] Many other interviewees also identified mobile phones as a cause of child marriage, referring to the accessibility of videos that make children *"curious"*. In a CSO's workshop about reproductive health, when teachers were asked what causes unwanted pregnancies among teenagers, they named three factors: 1) technology and pornography, 2) non-educative media, and 3) broken homes and lack of parental control. For them, there is no distinction between the causes of child marriage and teenage pregnancy since 'safe sex' does not officially exist and pregnancy almost always leads to marriage.

National policies and regulations significantly explain why safe sex is not a common practice. First, contraceptive tools are only officially available to married people. BKKBN is in charge of distributing contraceptives. However, it distributes its supplies exclusively to married people. *Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia* (PKBI), a CSO for family planning in Indone-

9 Interview, April 2017.
10 Interview, April 2017.
11 Interview, April 2017. Interview, March 2017. Interview, June 2017.
12 Interview, June 2017.
13 Interview, May 2017.
14 Interview, June 2017.

sia, is slightly more liberal with its distribution of contraception and with abortion practices. Still, it must handle these sensitive issues very carefully. Second, according to Article 75 of Law No.36 of 2009, abortion is illegal except, e.g., when rape has occurred or where pregnancy could cause health problems to the mother or the baby. Even legal abortions that meet these conditions carry negative connotations, so PKBi call them "*medical abortions*" or "*menstrual regulations*".[15] The director said, "*We call this abortion a 'menstrual regulation' or to make menstruation flow. This term is chosen to make abortion not too vulgar because in the society the term 'abortion' has a very negative connotation*".[16] The general inaccessibility of abortions obviously affects the rate of teenage pregnancies. Young pregnant girls perceive they must choose between having the baby and protecting themselves from 'shame' by marrying young or having an illegal abortion.

PKBi has to refuse most teenage requests for abortions since they do not meet the conditions established in Article 75. The high refusal rate of PKBi is dangerous since young girls or women might then look elsewhere for an abortion. Unofficial forms of abortion are available, such as a medicine (*cytotec*) available at *jamu* (traditional medicine) sellers or private medical practitioners. According to the head of PKBI, many midwives and doctors practice abortion illegally.

In 4 out of 15 cases of extra-marital pregnancies I studied, the girls had an abortion or miscarriage. One of the informants told me that she intentionally had an abortion by taking medicine. For the rest, it remained unclear whether they intended to have an abortion. The informants told me that they had a 'miscarriage', but they did not prevent it and some even promoted it to occur. One kept working as a carrier, carrying heavy bags every day. Another kept eating young pineapples, a method the couple found when they searched online for 'how to have a miscarriage'. The other 11 cases of pregnancy led to marriage. When I asked the couples if they considered having an abortion, one of them told me that she and her boyfriend married because they had failed to have an abortion with the unofficial medicine. Many others replied that they did not consider this because they were *'ashamed' (malu)* or *'afraid' (takut) 'of the risks'* or *'of karma'*. These remarks show that abortion is not a safe or legal option for adolescents in Bali.

While dating and premarital sexual intercourse are somewhat accepted in Bali, strong stigmas and severe consequences are attached to birth outside of wedlock. Krisna discussed his school friends who married because of pregnancy and said, "*If you get pregnant, the only way is to get married (jalan*

15 Interview with staff at PKBI, May 2017, Denpasar.
16 Ibid.

satu-satu nya kawin)".[17] In the Balinese patrilineal kinship system, babies are supposed to belong to the father's lineage, and the only way to identify the father is through marriage, according to the Balinese *adat* system. When an unmarried woman gives birth, *adat* sanctions are imposed on the family involved, as Chapter 4 explained.

Thus, when teenagers become pregnant, their options are limited. They can have a legal abortion if they fulfil the requirements or attempt an illegal abortion. They can give birth without marrying and face the consequences, or marry young. It is understandable why many choose to marry, considering the difficulties associated with having an abortion or giving birth outside of marriage. When I discussed these options at the workshop I organized with LBH Apik Bali (a legal aid association), all of the participants agreed that the best possible reaction to a teenage pregnancy was marriage. A participant from Wanita Hindu Dharma Indonesia (WHDI, the female division of PHDI) also suggested making divorces easier for women under Balinese *adat* law (see Section 4.4). This would add another dimension to the options available to pregnant teenagers, an option to end a marriage if it does not work out. However, in Bali, divorce is extremely difficult and has been disadvantageous for women (Jennaway 2002: 87-88). Swasti, having divorced her husband, legally does not have custody over her children or the right to their shared property (e.g., their house). Additionally, divorce carries such a negative stigma that Swasti still wears a ring on her finger to pretend that she is married. *"I just bought it myself. (Pause) Well … if I wear this, people think I am married."*[18]

5.4 Current pluralized normative systems for adolescents

5.4.1 Opportunities and restrictions in modern social conditions

Modernity in Bali affects adolescents' lives in various ways. Both boys and girls are now seeking higher educational opportunities and engage in career planning. These adolescents find it increasingly difficult to spend time and money participating in communal village rituals. They are being pulled between traditional temporality and the tempo of modern life (Ramstedt 2014: 74). Adolescents also have more mobility, with both girls and boys having more opportunities and locations to meet and mingle with the opposite gender. An increased prevalence of mobile-phone usage gives youngsters access to people outside of their communities and provides chances to text their love interests. As Naafs and White (2012: 16) highlighted, young people who have access to cell phones and the internet can connect themselves to a wider world. Since this new lifestyle is often incomprehensible to

17 Interview, May 2017.
18 Interview, July 2017.

parents, it regularly becomes subject to moral panic and is criticized by the older generation for embodying excessive materialism, individualism, and a loss of important cultural and religious values (Ibid: 13-14).

Such emancipation and increasing individual autonomy are at modernity's core, which implies individual detachment from the traditional identity, which is externally shaped by custom, religion, and family. Giddens (1991: 6) describes this as the "openness" of social life in modernity, which consequently forces individuals to navigate a diversity of options and contexts of actions. Interestingly, such changes are also dangerous, in that feelings associated with sexual and marital life become more mobile, unsettled, and open (Ibid: 13). In a modernizing world where the power of the traditional structures is arguably undermined, individuals have to guide themselves across fragile ground.

To unpack this phenomenon, I use the socio-psychological concept of 'reference network'. A reference network is defined as a set of individuals whose actions and opinions we care about when we make our choices (Bicchieri 2016: xiii). We constantly observe what others do, and from these observations, we get clues about appropriate behaviour, other's preferences, beliefs, and so forth. Accordingly, individuals prefer to conform to the socials norms of their reference network. They prefer this on the condition that (1) they believe that most people in their reference network conform to it (empirical expectation) or (2) that most people in their reference network believe they ought to conform to it (normative expectation) (Bicchieri 2016: 41-51). What Giddens (1991: 6) calls the "diversity of authorities" can be explained as the multiplication of an individual's reference networks.

Utomo and McDonald (2009) have described the conflicting moral values among young Indonesians. Liberal values are promoted through Westernized education, media marketing propaganda, and peer pressure. Meanwhile, traditional Indonesian Islamic teachings are promoted through religious schools and groups, families, and the state. Although Bali has a majority Hindu population, they also have a similar structure of conflicting values. Novi, a girl from the Pasar Community, said at the FGD that *"I have three boyfriends!"* but when we asked about what she does with her boyfriends, she said, *"it's private, it's not your business!"* She stated that *"sex before marriage is sin"*, but was eager to know the functions of condoms when we explained them to her while remarking, *"but we are ashamed to buy condoms, they are only for adults."* These conflicting remarks and behaviours reflect the different reference networks with which she lived. Novi wanted to look 'cool' in front of her peers. However, she also disliked appearing immoral or promiscuous in front of older people, such as those interviewing her. In other words, these young people have several reference networks, which sometimes have conflicting social norms.

The multiplication of an individual's reference networks is consistent with Gidden's theory of modernity. However, this also shows that there is a certain illusion in the modern idea of freedom and openness. Children or adolescents specifically are not as 'free' and 'open' as they might think because they are always constrained by different normative frameworks. A remark by one of the girls from Teruna Teruni Community clearly illustrates what it is like to live in this gap: *"This friend of mine who got pregnant used to go home early morning, drunk, and in open clothes. Even more open than people in the West. […] In the West they can be open about relationships between boys and girls, but here rumour can spread and taint a good name of the family"*.[19] Bellow (2003: 8-9, 442) has also pointed out the continuous implication for Balinese cosmologies in sexual norms (i.e., sex is intended for procreation rather than pleasure), albeit on the surface, sexual practices appear to have gone "global".

5.4.2 The exercise of agency in pluralized normative system

How then do adolescents make choices in co-existing and often conflicting reference networks? Gidden's notion of agency considers persons as reflexive beings and agency as a capacity to observe one's experience and give reasons for one's actions (Tucker 1999: 80). Individuals can then both resist 'structures' (i.e., rules and patterns of social relationships) and consciously follow the rules of different reference networks. This is consistent with Mahmood's (2004: 15) concept of "agentival capacity" that is entailed not only in acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways one inhabits norms. Some adolescents are in between modern and customary ideas of sexual morality and marriage. Such adolescents' marital decisions should be considered in light of "relational autonomy" and how much their autonomy is limited by corrosive disadvantage (e.g., social, political, economic, and educational) or coercive, abusive, or violent social relationships (Mackenzie 2013: 43).

In the pluralized normative system in which modern youth in Bali live, their decision to marry is not only about their autonomy, choice, and bodily integrity, but also about a sense of community, religious faith, and family. Swasti's case is one of the many cases I studied that demonstrates the customary and communitarian normative system that affects autonomous decisions. Particularly in rural areas where the community is so central and strict in their rule enforcement, pregnant teenagers are left with no choice but to marry (at least from Swasti's perspective). In Evi's case, when she became pregnant at the age of 17, her mother expressed her concern:

19 Interview, August 2017.

I am afraid if we don't accept the apology and marriage proposal from the family of the boy (Evi's boyfriend), Evi's baby will have problems in the future. As an adult he must have his ancestral temple and at any kinds of life events (e.g., when he wants to marry) he must ask permission from his father's family. And the baby cannot enter our family's temple according to religion and adat.

The examples of Evi and Swasti indicate the significance of the 'relational self'. Belonging to their community is crucial for them. Within this framework of their life, marriage was the only 'solution' to the more urgent problem of an extra-marital pregnancy.

Despite the fear and social pressure, Krisna and Sri's case also illustrates the exercise of relational autonomy. Although it was Sri's parents who initiated and insisted on the marriage plan, Krisna said that they were '*very keen to get married*' as they did not want to be separated. The thin line between their motivations (to marry) and the underlying social factors (e.g., customary rules, shame, peer norms, and parental pressure) accurately shows the conflicting normative systems that adolescents deal with when making both daily and momentous decisions.

Wikan (1990: xvii, 137, 139) suggests a seemingly peculiar aspect of Balinese decision-making: From a Balinese point of view, there is no difference between feeling and thought, and "*keneh*" ("feeling-thoughts") is the person's choice and responsibility. Therefore, "*Ngabe keneh*" ("bringing the feeling-thought") and "managing the hearts" is at the root of a Balinese design for living (Ibid: xvii, 95). Today in Bali, adolescents manage 'their heart' (the feeling-thoughts in their romantic and sexual relationship) by balancing the demands of the modern era within the customary and communitarian normative system.

Swasti wants her daughter to marry after 20: '*She should finish school and work first*'. When I asked her if she had spoken with her daughter about how to prevent unwanted pregnancies, she said, '*I talk about sex and such a little bit, but not much, because I do not want to confuse her. It's hard to communicate about it*'. While Swasti's parents forbid her from dating a boy and engaging in sexual activity before marriage, she allows her daughter to have *pacaran*, but *'with limits' ('dengan batas')*. Swasti herself 'managed her heart' by secretly dating a man with whom she was in love. She agreed to have sexual intercourse with him before marriage and married him when she became pregnant. So how will her daughter manage her heart 'with limits' when she is in love?

5.4.3 Paradox of modernity

I now have elaborated on the three concepts that are central to this chapter's arguments. So how do these three concepts (modernity, reference networks, and relational autonomy) relate to one another, and what do they

tell us about the socio-cultural conditions in which Balinese adolescents marry? The framework of reference networks illuminates the multiple normative frameworks and social connections in which Balinese youth live. In the modern social conditions with increased mobility and education, individual choices have diversified and expanded, and so norms have pluralized. Krisna and Sri, for instance, moved to the city from North Bali. Their marriage was a compromise between their living situation and the rural village's customary rules and sentiments. Consequently, modern Balinese youth's reference networks are rather fragile and erodible since their generation is in an ambiguous relationship with their elders' generation. Navigating their modern world thus means trying to make the best of their lives within their context of family and community relations. This process of decision-making in multiplied normative frameworks is the essence of relational autonomy, the way such autonomy can be maximized.

By this logic, what international institutions call 'child marriage' is a way that teenagers can manage their romantic and sexual relationships within the pluralized normative framework. It is a way to fill the normative gap between generations. International actors advocate eliminating child marriage, aiming to achieve modernity's ideals of emancipation and self-determination. However, child marriage is actually a response or solution to modern social conditions. This paradox of modernity and child marriage can be explained in two ways. First, child marriage is a way for youngsters to manage their romantic relationships within the modern structure. Second, child marriage becomes a 'problem' through the demands of modern times.[20] Let me emphasize this point by quoting a local activist:

> *You know, I was thinking about the early marriage problem. I said earlier that you need to be 30 to be ready to marry. But actually, if girls get menstruation at age 12 or 13, it means the God created us to be reproductively ready at that age. There is nothing wrong with having a child or marrying at that age. People used to marry immediately after starting menstruation. When I said people should be 30 to marry, it is because of the modern system. In the modern system, before 30 women have lots of learning opportunities. So, it is because of the changing world*.[21]

So, in a sense, child marriage is simultaneously a problem *created* by modernity and a *solution* to modernity's problems in a "changing world".

20 Chapter 2 has extensively discussed this process of child marriage becoming a problem in the course of modernization.

21 Interview, June 2017.

5.5 Conclusion

Love or romance is a notion that has been developed throughout history and "it is an ethnocentric error to expect Balinese ideals of love and sexuality to conform with Western constructions of romantic love" (Jennaway 2002: 143). The cases I presented in this chapter have shown that for modern youth in Bali, 'child marriage' is a way to manage their romantic and sexual relationships within the customary normative system. In the modern era, increased educational opportunities provide them with more possibilities and spaces to mingle with the other gender. Mobile phones give them access to people outside their community and provide chances to communicate with their love interests via text. Such emancipation is at modernity's core, resulting in an individual's detachment from traditional identity, which is shaped by custom, religion, and family. Individuals' normative systems become pluralized, and feelings associated with romantic life become more open and unsettled.

For adolescents who are in between different ideas of sexuality and marriage, the decision to marry should be understood in light of relational autonomy. International advocacy surrounding child marriage is based on modernity's ideals of libertarian agency and the normative principle that we all (especially women) should be able to decide how to live our lives instead of submitting to the traditional order. Relational autonomy suggests that such a conceptualization of agency is an illusion, as our 'selves' are all embedded in social interactions and relationships.

This understanding of autonomy or agency is useful towards overcoming the well-known challenge of development: Not to dismiss the agency of women in the Third World (Mohanty 1984). Alongside respecting non-western women's agency, there is also an increasing need to respect children's agency (Bourdillon 2004). The common protectionist approach of 'saving' children is increasingly considered unproductive, as it deprives those under 18 of agency and choice (Grugel 2013: 23; Hart 2006). In this sense, the agency of girls in the Third World is the most precarious in international development discourse. Recognizing the relational aspects of agency is a way to 'open up space for the agency of non-western peoples' in development discourse (McEwan 2001: 95) and to challenge the paternalistic notions of development that rely on 'assumptions of superiority, linear progress and Western women's freedom' (MacDonald 2016: 6).

In the case of child marriage, by acknowledging that some children can exercise their agency to marry, the hidden core problem comes to the surface. Although the frequency of KTD ('unwanted' pregnancies) is a problem in Bali, the problem is not sexual relationships before marriage itself. In a society where teenage pre-marital sexual activity is allowed and accepted, they can safely participate in these activities by being well informed about

sex and contraception, resulting in lower rates of unwanted pregnancies. However, this is not the case in Bali, and in Indonesia more broadly. Teenage pregnancy is caused by a gap between reality and morality. Child marriage is not per se a problem. On the contrary, it is the present solution to a core developmental problem: Lack of access to reproductive health tools.

In fact, in Indonesia, it currently seems that early marriage is a way to control youth sexual behaviour without directly discussing it and safe sex. Thus, policies and programs for reducing child marriage will be more effective if they address this core problem directly. Swasti wants to prevent her 13-year-old daughter from following the same path as her but feels it is too early to teach her about pregnancy. The head of PKBi stated: *"Parents become anxious when children want to go out and do their own stuff. It is like children riding motorbikes. It is parents who are afraid, not the children themselves. Children are 'setengat sadar', not completely aware of their behaviour."* If a child wants to ride a motorbike, one can teach them how to ride it safely instead of forbidding it out of fear of injuries. If it is 'too early' to teach them, when will the time come?