PART 3

Friendship, Growing Up, and Peer Surveillance
Introduction to Part 3

School experience is not only about building for successful future through becoming employable: school is also a particular kind of social world, different from home, where friendship and lifestyle are immediate daily concerns. Friendship plays a critical role in assisting young people in their transition to adulthood, and this is a key focus of the chapters in this section (papers by Parker and Semedi), and it emerges as significant in many other chapters. Parker emphasizes that friendships fill an important gap at a time of rapid change when young people experience aspects of transitions to adulthood that are unfamiliar to their parents.

Parker identifies friendship as a lacunae in anthropological studies of young people in non-Western societies, despite recent academic interest in intimacy. Against the backdrop of an examination of the scholarly interrogation of friendship, she presents a subtle and poignant account of the friendships of young women in a small town in West Sumatra. She points to the significant role of these peer relationships in facilitating the transition to adulthood, as peers support each other with knowledge and in seeking new experiences.

The crucial importance of these intimate relationships (expressed through the idiom of *curhat* [to share intimacies]) for these young women, living away from their families, emerges in Parker's conversations with them. While in many parts of Indonesia there is a long tradition of young people leaving home for education (as discussed in the previous section), the current scale of this movement seems unprecedented, following the expansion in school participation and de-agrarianization (White and Margiayatin this volume).

Semedi investigates The Scouts (Pramuka) organization as a pleasurable site of peer relationships. Branded as a corporatist organization of the New Order, it might seem to be somewhat out of date; it is regarded as “uncool” by many young people who choose to join new and flourishing independent environmental groups, for example. But Semedi’s ethnographic study shows the Scouts as a “morally righteous” organization (approved of by parents) that provides a venue where enthusiastic young people enjoy peer companionship while learning some of the skills they will need in their transition to adulthood. For instance, he describes some quite complex activities where adults are largely absent and young people have fun while also learning skills such as organization, management, leadership, playing roles, taking charge, teamwork, and problem solving. It is also a space of gender equality where girls and boys can both take leadership positions.