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AGEING AND GENDER PREFERENCES IN RURAL INDONESIA

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Over the last two decades, gender has moved steadily up the agenda of interdisciplinary population studies, beginning with a number of early programmatic statements (Mason 1993; Greenhalgh 1994; Obermeyer 1995), and continuing via substantial collections (e.g. Bledsoe, Lerner and Guyer 2000) and in-depth studies (Basu 1992; Bledsoe 2002; Johnson-Hanks 2006). The increasing focus among demographers over the same period on consequences of demographic transition has made the conjunction of two themes — ageing and gender — inescapable. Demographic data at the national level readily show potentially significant economic and social differentials between men and women, and these data have been used to make a general case for important gender disadvantages in later life, particularly for women. The impact of disadvantages, by implication, accumulates across the life course. Thus, in Indonesia, women's disadvantage is found in variables like the years of education they receive, their income stream, whether they participate equally in formal sector employment, enjoy equity in marriage choices, and have equal access to pensions (Malhotra

1991; Rudkin 1993; Adioetomo and Eggleston 1998; Kevane and Levine 2003; Samosir, Tuhiman and Asmanedi 2004). The accumulative effects of these differences, however, are less clear. Women participate extensively in intergenerational transfers, leading some commentators to conclude that gender differences in support provision for older people are “practically non-existent” (Frankenberg and Kuhn 2004, p. 27). General patterns of economic and social change in which elders receive support from both sons and daughters, and which often give particular emphasis to daughters’ roles in providing personal care, continue to follow tradition. In other words, most elders appear to find that both daughters and sons deliver — even though some gendered aspects of the life course, and elders’ expectations about gendered kinds of support, remain unequal.

Generalized statements of gender disadvantage or advantage, no matter how systematic the survey data on which they rely, can only take us part of the way to understanding whether and how gender differences actually impact on later life. A critical review of the literature by Knodel and Ofstedal (2003), in underscoring this point, has done the field three important favours. First, the authors emphasize that attention to context is a necessary and unavoidable component of social and demographic explanation. We cannot simply assume that aggregate differentials apply uniformly in the diverse settings and circumstances in which people live. Second, and more particularly, they highlight the capacity of socio-economic differences to condition and override the importance of gender. For example, disadvantages that individual women or men face may be attributed less to gender *per se* than to the impact of poverty and social hierarchy on whether family networks function successfully as redistributive mechanisms. In consequence, aggregate gender disadvantages in education or access to healthcare may not impact significantly on older women if family networks consistently enable them to gain access to modern sector services. Third, Knodel and Ofstedal (2003) argue convincingly that until contextual and structural factors are taken into account, an emphasis on the disadvantage to one or another gender is premature. Exploration of patterns of female and male disadvantage provides a more balanced approach.

Two assumptions underlying their critique deserve note. One is that they take the existence of major cultural and economic differences as a given, and expect there to be much variation — undoubtedly within, as well as between, societies — in patterns of gender disadvantage and advantage. At least, the potential importance of such differences needs to

be checked empirically before general patterns of gendered disadvantage are asserted. Second, study of variation requires methodologies that examine underlying processes, and thereby inform and complement survey data. While surveys tell us about aggregate statuses and outcomes, they do not actually observe the family and community mechanisms that give gender and other differentials their meaning and impact.

This chapter draws on the longitudinal ethnographic and demographic field study of three communities representing major Indonesian ethnicities (Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau), located in three of the five provinces that, since 1990, have reported more than 7 per cent of the population over the age of 60. Comparative ethnographic study supported by panel surveys enables us to establish contexts and variations in family and community support for older people, and the advantages and disadvantages that may accrue in consequence to older men and women. Similar patterns of socio-economic stratification exist in the three communities, which have an important bearing on elderly well-being, notably by influencing the supply of children, family network size and structure, and intergenerational exchanges. Following a brief introduction, in which the communities and research methodology are described, the chapter notes two contrasting preference structures that differentiate gender in the communities. Gender has a marked structural significance in matrilineal societies, like the Minangkabau, that is not manifest for the Javanese and Sundanese. Case studies then illustrate some aspects of these structures. The chapter concludes with a brief look to the future, by considering the expectations of current working age generations about their own later lives, and the limitations of relying exclusively on aggregate data to assess their likely policy needs.

AGEING IN INDONESIA

Beginning in April 1999, a joint Indonesian and British research team has studied the populations of three communities: Kidul in East Java, Citengah in West Java, and Koto Kayo in West Sumatra.¹ The family systems in the two communities on Java are characterized by nuclear/bilateral patterns, while the Minangkabau population of Koto Kayo is matrilineal. The proportions of adult children reported in 2000 as no longer resident in the community (46, 45 and 75 per cent, respectively) give some idea of the active engagement of family networks in regional, national and international economies (Kreager 2006). Since most migrants are of younger ages, the level of migration tends to increase the proportion

of the population age 60 and above: 11, 10 and 18 per cent of the respective communities are over the age of 60, noticeably higher than the 7 per cent normal in their respective provinces (Ananta, Anwar and Suzeti 1997). Each community is characterized by a mixed family economy, drawing on income from migrants, employment in local government, and services and small-scale manufacturing, while also retaining the traditional economic base in agriculture and local markets. All communities are predominantly Muslim. Languages spoken in the home are respectively Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau, with most speakers competent in the national language, Bahasa Indonesia. Interviews were conducted in more than one language in each site.

To begin with, a brief overview of findings from the research project *Ageing in Indonesia* will help to define the contexts in which gender differences matter. A key starting point is the contrast between the matrilineal extended family system of the Minangkabau, and the nuclear family systems, backed up by bilateral kindreds, characteristic of the two Javanese sites. These contrasting kin and family logics entail: (1) strikingly different norms defining intergenerational support; and (2) a categorical emphasis on the position of daughters in the matrilineal system that has no equivalent in the less formal, preferential attitudes of the Javanese populations to gender. We will discuss the Javanese sites first, before turning to the Minangkabau population in West Sumatra.²

Strata, Networks and Gender in Javanese Communities

In the two Javanese sites, family norms may be characterized as a balance entailing generational independence in a context of mutual support in which elders commonly take the major role (Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2008). On the one hand, couples in later life prefer to live on their own, with at least one adult child living nearby, and with regular and if possible frequent contacts with other children living away from the village. This pattern is substantially realized, as on average family networks experience numbers of younger generation members who are “lost to the system” — that is, out of contact, and not contributing materially to family networks — at levels of one child or less (Kreager 2006, p. 41). On the other hand, where coresidence with children is found, it often reflects either economic vulnerability or lack of independence in the young adult generation (and hence continuing dependence on elderly parents), or the fact that the youngest child has yet not left home. Dependence of the younger adult generation on the old is often consequent on their divorce

or lack of employment; further dependence takes the form of a “skipped generation” household in which elders are raising and covering costs of grandchildren that their own children have left with them while working away from the community (Schröder-Butterfill 2004*a*). Coresidence, in short, provides no reliable indicator of elderly dependence, and may well indicate the opposite.

Values of independence favoured by the Javanese have a double character, manifest in many aspects of daily life. On the positive side, older people wish to remain active in family and social life, and generally succeed in doing so. Gainfully employed throughout most of their later lives, and sometimes with the help of small pensions, they remain net contributors to the economy, even when families no longer strictly require them to do so. The continuing employment of elders reflects the dependence of their identity and reputation on continuing participation in intergenerational exchanges. For example, analysis of the 2000 household survey in the East Javanese site showed that, for family networks including older members, two-fifths of all families engaged in balanced exchanges between generations — “balanced” here denoting not a strictly equal monetary value of goods and services, but reciprocity. In the 2005 survey, this proportion had increased to nearly one-half (Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2008). Of course, as elders’ physical disabilities increase, their material contribution normally lessens, but even small contributions are recognized as maintaining status. Part-time agricultural labour or factory work, and assistance in children’s households, enable elders to participate as expected in family and community rituals. Even if the income gained or saved is small, it remains important in matters of personal and collective esteem. The “exchanges” in question may, to take a common example, enable elders to give out of their own pockets, and as a matter of course, sweets and small favours to grandchildren.

On the negative side, elderly vulnerability emerges where elders’ declining material contribution to families coincides with overall family poverty, manifest in limited network size and useful connections, and scarce assets in land or other material resources. Households in lower socio-economic strata show the greatest strain.³ A quarter of elderly people are net receivers of support from children, some 80 per cent of whom belong to poorer strata: support, usually confined to food and/or companionship, does not provide an adequate safety net, for example in the event of a health crisis. Even in families not facing poverty, elders’ sheer physical frailty (particularly incontinence and an inability to carry out basic activities of daily living (ADL)) involves inevitable loss of

reputation. The inability to contribute in any way to family or wider exchanges equates to loss of social status, especially where dependence is on charity coming from without the family.⁴ The potential downside of normative values of independence and balance of generations here becomes plain: unlike joint family systems (prevalent in much of mainland Asia), or stem family systems (as in Thailand), family networks do not explicitly and normatively designate a particular child as responsible for eldercare late in life or for other circumstances of their vulnerability. In Javanese communities, ties between elders and particular children or grandchildren are preferential: they evolve in the context of personal relationships over the life course and, thus, are vulnerable to the usual ups and downs experienced by members of different generations.

The preferential character of Javanese elderly support patterns may give a strategic significance to gender, especially to the role of spouses and daughters, but not in a sense that overrides the more fundamental role of family networks and of normative values of reciprocity governing them. This situation is most evident in the case of adoption: childless elders in better-off strata are much more likely to be able to find nieces or other female kin to adopt, explicitly with the intention of their providing personal care and companionship in later life (Schröder-Butterfill 2004*b*). Clearly, in a family system that emphasizes generational independence, the role of spouses — male or female — is the usual first port of call for assistance for livelihood or personal care. Given the predominance of women among the elderly, men are, as in most societies, on average more likely to have a spouse on whom to rely. Serious male vulnerability nonetheless arises from inadequate networks — especially where there is a lack of female support in the network — as will be demonstrated in the case studies below.

The preferred residential pattern, in which some children are “near” while others reside “away” at ever-greater distances, provides a second and potentially crucial back-up for widows, widowers, the unmarried, and frail elderly couples. Intimate personal care is provided normally by daughters or daughters-in-law, and elders in almost all cases will express a preference for having a daughter living near to them (Schröder-Butterfill and Fithry 2014). The advantage of the “some near/some away” residential pattern is that in most cases, a number of members of a family network can be found to provide meals, companionship, or personal care — but arrangements are often mutable, depending on who is available.⁵ A kind of division of family labour enables children and sometimes other kin to share support responsibilities — some providing food or companionship because they

are at hand to do so, others making less continuous contributions during visits or emergencies (such as contributing to hospital costs) (Schröder-Butterfill 2005). The reality, nonetheless, is that levels of migration and alienation within the family network make primary or exclusive reliance on daughters impossible for many people, some or all of the time. Norms of generational independence and reciprocity imply that the needs and demands of both younger and older generations must be balanced, if possible. In practice, elders have no special priority.

Strata, Networks and Gender: Minangkabau

Minangkabau society has developed a sophisticated migration-based economy for more than a century, making it an integral part of the wider Southeast Asian economy. Koto Kayo, as is typical of traditional Minangkabau communities, has a local economic base in agriculture, with almost 90 per cent of households drawing part of their subsistence from rice and other locally grown foodstuffs, while many also engage in cultivation of crops like coffee and cinnamon for the market (Indrizal 2004). Most of the village's wealth, however, is the product of labour migration (*rantau*) associated particularly with trade in cloth and clothing across the Indonesian archipelago. Upwards of two-thirds of young adults are away from Koto Kayo at a given point in time (Kreager 2006). *Rantau* is at once a commercial strategy for generating wealth for oneself, one's lineage, and the community. It is also a crucial *rite de passage*. Young men who do not establish themselves successfully on *rantau* cannot attain full respect and position in the community. With time, flows of migrants from the community have established lineage networks and resident communities in major cities like Jakarta and Bandung, and this facilitates the entry of new migrants into successful trade and other employment. It has also enabled women to participate in *rantau* activities, not only as property owners and wives, but as major traders in their own right. Networks are the basis of major flows of remittances, supporting annual or more frequent visits to the home community and support for local community projects. Active networks in this way reinforce or improve family status, as well as building and sustaining ties through local Islamic and political associations. The Minangkabau became "transmigrants" — that is, a people with a permanent material and cultural basis in more than one place in the Indonesian archipelago.

This close identification of individual, family, and community identity with success on *rantau* results in a very different normative

structure of intergenerational relations than observed in the Javanese communities. Key evidence of a family network's success and solidarity is elderly parents' ability to rely on a combination of remittances and local practical support, rather than having to continue to work. Quite unlike rural Java, dependence in later life is a source of satisfaction and respect. Where Javanese elders emphasize their own continuing contributions (even where they are also receiving material support from children), Minangkabau elders emphasize contributions of the younger generation, even where local agricultural income means they can survive comfortably on their own. Both as an ideal and in practice, the emphasis on support from children is strong. For two-thirds of elders, net intergenerational exchanges flow predominantly upwards from the younger generation (including, as appropriate in a matrilineal society, support from nephews and nieces). The second round of the household survey, following up the situation of the oldest old, showed that this pattern intensifies to almost nine-tenths of elders over age 70 (Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2008).

As in the Javanese sites, the strategic importance of gender is conditioned by relative socio-economic status and the size and constituency of networks. Gender, however, plays a much more profound role within these constraints, as would be expected in a matrilineal society. The 4.8 million Minangkabau in Indonesia form the world's second largest matrilineal population, and the organization of descent and inheritance follows prescriptive rules in which rights and property pass from mothers to daughters, and women take major roles in the management of family affairs in conjunction with their brothers. Men thus look to their sisters' children as heirs, although they are also likely to have strong (if less formalized) ties to their own children. Normative preference is for the senior female to live in the matriline's ancestral home (*rumah gadang*), with the daughter who will succeed her. The husband of the senior female, and the daughter's husband, live as "honoured guests" in the *rumah gadang*; their major family and material interests are in the property and *rumah gadang* of their sisters, and this gives them an inevitably ambivalent status in relation to their wives' matriline — especially as the senior female's brother takes the major formal and practical role in decision-making. The prescriptive nature of matrilineal descent is perhaps most evident in the emphasis on links between mothers and daughters: a matriline without daughters faces no future, and kinship here is referred to as "lost" (*keluarga punah*). Sons cannot inherit and pass on property and, indeed, a matriline without daughters is considered childless no

matter how many sons — and successful ones — it may have (Indrizal 2004).⁶ Childlessness affects 7 per cent of older people, but a further 17 per cent lack surviving female offspring (Indrizal, Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2009).

The prescriptive character of matrilineal descent carries a number of structural entailments that can make gender differences problematic, both for men and women. One is a kind of *de facto* childlessness, a situation in which, for example, all daughters decide to remain permanently away from the *rumah gadang*, preferring their lives on *rantau*. Although distant family members may be found to maintain ancestral properties, the lack of a daughter resident in the *rumah gadang* is a disgrace. A second liability is the structural vulnerability of older men without wives, whether on account of divorce, the wife's death, or non-marriage.

While the prescriptive character of female descent gives rise to critical constraints in some matrilineal families, the situation is clearly easier in the majority of households where the continuity of the matriline is not endangered. A senior female without daughters may have a sister with daughters, one of whom is prepared (and will reap considerable advantages) by assuming the mantle of senior female on the death of her aunt. Most daughters (who are not in line to become senior female) and sons are less constrained by the matrilineal rule; their residence in households near the *rumah gadang* or being permanently away on *rantau* is less of an issue, assuming (as is the commonly observed norm) that their remittances, visits, and continuing support towards the family and community keeps them within the family orbit.⁷ The pattern of “some children near/ some away”, which we noted in the case of Javanese communities, also characterizes support patterns in Koto Kayo. Here, although daughters are fundamental to matrilineal ideology and practice, daily support for older people comes normally from *both* sons and daughters, varying according to their capacities and their point in *rantau* development and, in this respect, intergenerational exchanges resemble the preferential pattern observed in the Javanese communities.

DISCUSSION

The observation, cited earlier, by Frankenberg and Kuhn (2004, p. 27), that in Indonesia gender differences in support provision for older people are “practically non-existent”, was based on national-level surveys. We are now in a position to interpret this assertion more carefully. On the one hand, it may be taken as broadly true, as both daughters and sons are actively

engaged in support of their elders. While elders commonly express a desire for their daughters' support, particularly in personal matters, their preference is no less to have a number of children of both sexes actively engaged.⁸ Support is part of a long term and diverse body of exchanges that take place across the life course. The family networks that characterize inter-generational support appear to function in a way that permits flexibility — they include both sons and daughters as well as continuing elderly support of younger generations, and allow for changes in support roles according to the possibilities and needs of both generations (and, also, of grandchildren). The preference among elders for daughters' involvement, in short, is not pursued single-mindedly, or without due allowance for the preferences of the daughters themselves — which inevitably embrace more than issues of support for ageing parents.

On the other hand — and as Frankenberg and Kuhn (2004) are no doubt well aware — to say that gendered patterns of support effectively do not exist is a radical simplification of a complex set of realities. The fact and value of a daughter's involvement and care is a general sociological phenomenon in thousands of Indonesian communities, such as those described in this chapter. This is true whether expressed as a preference or, as in the matrilineal case, a prescription that stipulates that the very continuity and reputation of a family absolutely require a daughter to take the primary role at the centre of the matriline. What is at issue in all of these cases is not only the importance of gender as encompassing a set of values in Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau cultures, but the inevitable heterogeneity of practice in these communities, which means that gender preferences are realized (or not) in different ways among several values, and are subject to varying constraints. Not everyone manages to have the children they prefer actually care for them in old age, or do so all of the time. Alternative arrangements are inevitably necessary. The presence of these alternatives, and the fact that many, or even most, elders may have to make do with them, does not lessen the importance of the gendered values in question. Norms are only achieved some of the time, and this may enhance their value, rather than lessen it.

As we have noted, actual flows of intergenerational support, whether from sons or daughters, are mediated by socio-economic status and network behaviour. Members of current elder generations who belong to better-off strata and more successful networks are, particularly in Java, both more likely to have surviving children and to be better able to adopt young people successfully to look after them.⁹ In contrast, one of the several consequences of the prescriptive character of matrilineal

succession in the Minangkabau case is that a lack of daughters cannot be alleviated by economic or social success. The following brief case studies are intended to illustrate how family systems in these cultures cope — with varying success — when they run up against constraints on the availability of support, particularly where that support involves a normative gender preference. We will consider, in turn: (1) coping with childlessness and *de facto* childlessness; and (2) male vulnerability in the absence of a spouse and/or children.

Vulnerability in Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau societies does not necessarily arise from a lack of children, or of daughters or sons. Adoption (often of siblings' children) and remarriage provide alternative routes to children in the Javanese communities. In the logic of the matrilineal system, a sister's children are equivalent to a woman's own children, as they belong to the same matriline, can inherit ancestral property, and are able to perpetuate both line and property. Indeed, no distinction is made in kin terms between a woman's own children and the children of her sister, both being referred to simply as *anak* (child). Children will refer to their matrilineal aunts as *mandeh ketek* ("small mother", if the aunt is junior to the mother) or *mandeh gadang* ("big mother", if the aunt is senior). A woman without children can thus take a positive and respected place in the family as classificatory mother of her sister's children, and it is to these children that she will look for assistance should she need it (van Reenen 1996).

Problems arise, as noted earlier, either where there are no daughters prepared to return permanently from *rantau* and assume matrilineal responsibilities in the *rumah gadang*, or where sisters also lack children. In the former, children's regular remittances and return visits to the village ensure adequate levels of material support for most elders. However, the psychological insecurity arising from an absence of children locally, and the threat of an empty *rumah gadang*, cannot be underestimated. This is particularly felt by elderly women whose daughters are all away, since they look to one of these daughters to take over the management and continuity of ancestral property. The case of Asnima exemplifies the paradox of, on the one hand, having many and successful children, while on the other, feeling lonely, vulnerable and "childless" because none are locally available. Asnima, age seventy-five, is the youngest of eight siblings and the only sister. She descends from a line of clan headmen (*penghulu datuk*), now including one of her sons. She has seven sons and two daughters. All are married and living in migration sites. Both daughters married non-Minangkabau. The oldest has a successful permanent

job in Jakarta. The other daughter, married to an Acehnese, recently moved to Padang, a good three hours away from Koto Kayo. For the time being, Asnima can look after the *rumah gadang* and family lands. She is financially secure, because her children regularly support her and she has income from the lineage rice fields. None of this, however, can reduce her fears about the future presence of her lineage in the village. Asnima often visits her children, but will not consider settling permanently with them. Living with a son is not, in any case, an option, since this violates Minangkabau norms and would reflect badly on her daughters. If she had her own way, Asnima would raise the only granddaughter she has via her daughters, because it will ultimately be that granddaughter's responsibility to continue the matriline. Asnima nowadays occupies the ancestral home on her own, although sometimes a young, unrelated woman keeps her company at night, helps her with cooking and takes care of her when she is ill.

Asnima's situation illustrates the contrary impacts of migration: on the one hand, *rantau* continues guaranteed support and social standing; on the other, these strengths co-exist with the genuine threat of the end of the matriline in the community. Thus far, most ancestral homes are occupied, although some, like Asnima's, are rather quiet. In less prosperous communities, many *rumah gadang* are abandoned or fall into disrepair. When frailty or ill health makes personal assistance necessary, women like Asnima face a choice between two courses of action, neither of which preserves self-esteem or public face: accepting help from a non-relative, or leaving the ancestral home to be with a daughter who has moved away.

A contrasting example, in which a woman with many children is left *de facto* childless, can be drawn from the narrative of Rumiati who hails from Citengah, the West Javanese research village. Rumiati is a widow in her late seventies with eight children. Of the eight, one died in infancy, and Rumiati also lost an adult daughter in childbirth, which left her a baby girl to raise. Despite working hard as an agricultural labourer, she needed to sell half of the small amount of land she possessed to assist several children on transmigration to Sumatra and Kalimantan. A further sale provided a "loan" (never repaid) to her granddaughter to help her start up a business as a trader. The granddaughter was also given the larger half of Rumiati's house after her marriage. None of the five children who left have ever returned or sent money, not even the daughter who left her first-born son in Rumiati's care. One daughter now lives nearby, but is poor and relies on sharecropping on the remainder of her mother's

land to survive. Rumiati's present income from agricultural labour has to support her and her coresident grandson, still at school.

The absence of local, supportive children in both Asnima's and Rumiati's cases are instances of migration gone wrong from the older generation's point of view. Neither, despite the undoubted assistance they provided their children, have any child at hand on whom they can rely near the end of their lives. Yet the two cases also highlight important differences between Minangkabau and Javanese communities. In Java, parents are expected to assist adult children to become independent, often to the limits of their ability, and to step in if necessary even after children have left home. This does not obligate children to provide reciprocal flows of support to elderly parents, as it does in Koto Kayo. In Koto Kayo, young grandchildren were never left with grandparents, whereas in Java, it is not unusual for grandparents to be left in charge of grandchildren when the middle generation migrates, without this eliciting regular or adequate remittances (Schröder-Butterfill 2004*b*). This latter responsibility, however, provides Rumiati with a small compensation not possible for Asnima: she retains the presence of the granddaughter whom she raised, and any (albeit modest) assistance she may need, whether in the form of cooked food or care in illness, is likely to come from her granddaughter. Despite Asnima's much greater material well-being, her ability to organize her later life in a way that carries out local norms (i.e. which successfully involves a daughter or granddaughter in her home) remains less than Rumiati's.

Turning now to examples of male vulnerability, the example of Jamain shows how Minangkabau elders whose lineage faces extinction, and who have failed to create adequate ties within the matrilineal system, experience severe insecurity and loss of status. They have no safety net of support late in life of the kind that Minangkabau lineages normally provide. Atypically for men from Koto Kayo, Jamain only briefly took part in labour migration and returned unsuccessful. His two marriages were childless, ending in divorce. The second earned him disapproval from fellow villagers for marrying a woman from outside the village. Jamain's older brother has four children, but in accordance with the structure of Minangkabau society, their first loyalties lie with their mother's matriline. It is to his sister and her offspring that a man normally turns for support. Unfortunately, the sister also remained childless, and recently died. Jamain now relies on a sympathetic neighbour and on less sympathetic fellow villagers, who unwillingly give him money when he

begs. Begging lowers Jamain's status and dignity, and deviates strongly from expected Minangkabau behaviour. The lack of daughters in his extended family network means that Jamain's matriline is doomed to extinction. Since his sister died, Jamain can at least live in his ancestral house and benefit from the production of family rice land. Eventually, the house with its land will fall to a distant, collateral line.

Given the logic of Minangkabau kinship organization, in which connections may be traced to increasingly distant but inclusive units of kin, relatives sharing responsibilities can normally be identified by going back several generations. In the eyes of other villagers, had Jamain conducted himself in a manner more in keeping with the ethos of the Minangkabau people, someone from such a collateral line might well have stepped in to help. Equally, money sent back to the village by successful migrants, distributed by the mosque, would have been more forthcoming.

A comparable case of male vulnerability in the absence of a spouse and/or children comes from Kidul in East Java. Lubis has no children of his own, but gained four stepchildren by two marriages, including two daughters. He also helped to raise two boys belonging to a neighbour. None of his stepchildren continue to live locally. Lubis' family was very poor, often without regular work, but small sums of money from one of the 'raised' boys, and occasional gifts from his stepchildren, have helped him to get by. In 2002, Lubis's second wife left him to live with one of her daughters, leaving him to rely chiefly on a neighbour and a nephew (the son of his first wife's sister) for his meals. The situation quickly deteriorated when Lubis fell and became bedridden. For a short time, one stepdaughter visited and sent money, but day-to-day care was available only from the neighbour and the nephew. Neither was prepared to continue providing intensive support for long, especially as Lubis's condition worsened. Against his will, he was taken to the home of a distant relative in a neighbouring city who, although possessing nominal rights to inherit Lubis's house, had not been in contact for many years. Lubis died shortly thereafter, and his wish to be returned to Kidul for burial was ignored.

Both Lubis and Jamain are examples of older men who reach the end of their lives with all but non-existent support networks. Poverty, unsuccessful marriages, and childlessness combine powerfully to limit their options, even in Lubis's case in which there were numerous stepchildren, and of both sexes. In both cases, none of the alternatives to having children (such as having more distant kin, neighbours, or stepchildren)

proved comparable to care by one's own child or spouse, and the quality of care and the extent to which care could be sustained were likewise lessened. Those who took responsibility for looking after Lubis, if only for a time, were the people who happened to be nearby and to have a modest tie of some kind to him. From the outside, the attitude of Lubis's stepchildren, or Jamain's brother's children, may seem uncaring — but it is a reminder that support is a relationship built up over time via networks; values like gendered care, or sustained care, are secondary to the structure of ties a life course does, or does not, create. To the extent that men are less likely to build enduring networks in Indonesian communities, their vulnerability tends to be greater.

CONCLUSIONS

The subject of gender, as it emerged in late twentieth-century social demography, has commonly been approached as a potential marker of disadvantage, particularly as experienced by women. In the Indonesian case, at least, we have seen that, even where gender differences serve as powerful mechanisms of individual and group identity, intergenerational relationships and flows of support are guided by flexible network arrangements that in most cases secure support of both sons and daughters. There are, moreover, major differences in the way Indonesian cultures configure gender, which we have summarized and contrasted very briefly as *preferential* (for support from daughters, in the Javanese and Sundanese communities) and *prescriptive* (the Minangkabau maintain a powerful gender ideology emphasizing female lines of descent, inheritance, and family arrangement in which preferences regarding ongoing material support nonetheless rely on both sexes). In sum, gendered support, while important to older people's perception of their situation, and often in the patterns of assistance they actually receive, is not determinant of levels of support or of the diverse network arrangements by which family and community networks respond to elderly needs.

Gender undoubtedly poses a dilemma for demography, and for ageing research more generally. While important, gender differences, as they influence intergenerational relations and patterns of support, commonly resist reduction to the value of a variable. As Knodel and Chayovan show in this volume, similarities in the situation of older men and women on many dimensions are often more dominant than clear contrasts. Variables often tend to point in conflicting directions. Economic variables like the distribution of household income may show little difference

between genders (see Chapter 2, this volume), while other and closely related ones, like labour force participation (see Chapters 10 and 11, this volume), do show such differences. The influence of regional and ethnic variations is likely to complicate interpreting national level patterns in such variables; national survey data often appear, at best, to be a kind of composite of several regional, ethnic, and other patterns of behaviour, and are therefore unlikely to describe any one of them adequately. And relative economic situations, as they pertain to elderly well-being, will need to be interpreted in light of evidence that older women are more adept networkers than men.

The difficulty, of course, enters long before modelling techniques are applied, in the customary simplifications employed in collecting and compiling data, and in the way classes of data are then taken as proxies for difficult-to-get-at multi-dimensional phenomena, like gender. By way of conclusion, it may therefore be interesting to look at some survey data on the three communities described in this chapter, to see what happens when description and analysis attempt to shortcut the heterogeneity of gender support patterns. We shall take current and projected living arrangements as a case in point, since demography and ageing research have long emphasized their significance.

It could be argued, for example, that residential arrangements, to the extent that they indicate older people's desires and access to support, may provide a relatively simple and efficient measure of disadvantage. Thus, if residence is an accurate proxy for the extent to which older people are successful in realizing preferences for assistance from a child of one gender, then we can use measures of residence patterns as indicators of gender-related advantage or disadvantage. Does such an approach stand up to scrutiny?

Table 6.1 gives percentages of elders' living arrangements, in three groups: *independent* (including those living alone, with spouse, or with dependent unmarried or young descendants); *with an adult female descendant* (a married daughter, an adult non-married daughter, or a married granddaughter); or *with an adult male descendant* (a married son, adult non-married son, or married grandson). The pattern in the table of gender-specific coresidence with children or grandchildren reflects in a general way the contrasting status of daughter preference across the three communities. A closer look at the table, however, drawing on the evidence presented above, shows that the relative advantage or disadvantage of elders, and whether support really depends on gender differences, are not tied consistently to residence.

TABLE 6.1
Living Arrangements of Older People in 2005 (by Per Cent)

	Kidul	Citengah	Koto Kayo
Independent	37.7	61.6	47
Adult female descendant	26.5	23	53
Adult male descendant	35.8	15.4	0
Total	100	100	100
No. of elders	53.0	52.0	49

Source: Ageing in Indonesia Household Survey (2005) (authors' data).

Beginning with Koto Kayo, where we would expect the strongest evidence of daughter preference, we see that living with a son or grandson never occurs, while the prescriptive importance of living with a coresident daughter holds good in over half of households. The evidence clearly supports the norm in which one daughter should remain in the ancestral property of her matriline. The situation of the nearly one-half of elders who do not coreside with their daughters, however, is more difficult to interpret. As the case studies given above indicate, “independent” encompasses several sub-groups. The 47 per cent not currently co-residing with daughters are not a uniform block of people, identifiable as not conforming to residential norms. Their current residence arrangements reflect the developmental character of kin networks, and the many different needs and opportunities networks address. Once we take into account network patterns between households, then “independent” and “coresident” cease to be discrete categories.

One sub-group within the “independent” category is composed of elders with all children away on *rantau* who have, or believe they have, the firm commitment of a daughter who will return to the *rumah gadang*. There is, however, another sub-group, to which Asnima (see case study above) belongs, that does not have any such commitment. Upward support flows from sons and daughters, however, are ample for both of these sub-groups, so that neither is subject to economic disadvantage — quite the contrary. Economic advantage is thus not tied to key gender differences for either sub-group — even though the implication for households whose daughters refuse to return from *rantau* is extinction. There are still further sub-groups, moreover, including elders like Jamain (again, see case study above), who are demographically disadvantaged because they do not have children and are economically disadvantaged

because they lack *rantau* support; yet, as noted in Jamain's case, his demographic disadvantage need not have left him so economically weak if he had participated in normative exchanges during his lifetime. There exists, in short, yet another sub-group of elders without children who are nonetheless economically well-off, on account of matrilineal patterns of exchange.

For Koto Kayo, then, Table 6.1 provides at best a very crude picture of gender preferences and possible related disadvantage, even though there is a strong pattern of coresidence with daughters for half of the population. Coresidence is but one phase of network patterns, and one that occurs for some elders, but not others; half of the community is currently not in coresidence, but this is a diverse set of sub-groups not consistently related to economic or demographic disadvantage. Data on actual networks and on how and why they change over time is thus crucial to interpreting residential arrangements, and testing whether residence is an adequate proxy for gender disadvantage.

The need for contextual evidence on network behaviour as well as conventional survey measures to establish whether there is a clear link between disadvantage and gender is even more pronounced for the two communities on Java. From Table 6.1 we can see that Citengah is much more successful (61.6 per cent) in observing the preference for elders living independently than is Kidul (37.7 per cent). Living with a son, however, describes between one-sixth and one-third of households in the two communities, and predominates over coresidence with daughters in Kidul. Once again, however, knowledge of how networks give rise to sub-groups within these categories fundamentally changes our understanding of what they mean. Two points stand out. One is that calling an elderly person or couple "independent" just because they live alone often disguises major network support, for example, from a son or daughter resident elsewhere in the community (perhaps merely next door). Likewise, instances in which elders continue to give support to adult children not living with them go unrecognized. The other, in Kidul, is that coresidence with a son or daughter frequently describes a household strongly dependent on its elderly members, not one in which elders are net recipients of assistance. Within the coresident categories in Kidul, the percentage of households in which elders live with a married son or married daughter is the same (20.8 per cent), and these are sub-groups in which there is much more likely to be a balanced flow of support between generations. The remaining sub-groups within these categories

TABLE 6.2
Who Do You Hope to Live With in Old Age?

	Kidul	Koto Kayo	Citengah
Alone/with spouse	16.2	0.0	9.5
Any child/all children/only has one child	22.1	0.0	34.9
Specific child: daughter	25.0	64.5	54.0
Specific child: son	10.3	0.0	1.6
Other relatives (nephew, niece, grandchild)	2.9	4.8	0.0
Don't know	23.5	30.7	0.0
No. of respondents	68.0	62.0	63.0
Youngest child	19.1	3.2	15.9

Source: Ageing in Indonesia Household Survey (2005) (authors' data).

(living with an adult non-married child, or married grandchild) are likely to be households in which elders provide most of the material support; they are, in fact, more like “independent” households that continue to have unmarried younger descendants.¹⁰ Not only is there no reliable link here between residence, gender, and disadvantage, it is clear that static residence data, whether at a given point or points in time (the exercise can also be carried out for the 2000 round of the household survey), cannot on their own be relied upon without more fundamental evidence of network processes.

If we ask adults who are not yet elderly what living arrangements they would prefer in old age (see Table 6.2), their responses likewise return us to the current state of play in family networks, since preferences expressed for residence with or near a child of a given gender depend on actual and potential network relationships. Daughter preference is, once again, strongest for Koto Kayo: the nearly one-third in the community who responded “don't know” live predominantly in households in which there is not yet a daughter. The percentages preferring coresidence with a daughter in Kidul (25 per cent) and Citengah (54 per cent) are the highest in these communities, but co-exist with substantial sub-groups in which living in other arrangements is preferable. Clearly, where childbearing is unfinished, and where the future material success, location of residence, and marriage patterns of children are unknown, answering this question becomes very hypothetical.¹¹ Once again, in communities in which inter-generational exchanges between households, continuing involvement of elders in the family economy, and the involvement of several children

in support flows over time, are all normative, respondents answering this survey question are, in effect, being asked to make a complex set of assumptions about how their family networks will play out over time. As we have seen, in the contemporary situation in the three communities, preference for daughters as a social fact coexists with other components of family networks and changing constraints on them. Gendered support is not a variable that can be isolated as a determinant of behaviour (unless the whole complex of factors could somehow be identified in a way that enabled their interaction with gender to be controlled). Attempts by means of proxies to define the importance of gender as a key variable in support patterns are, therefore, likely to understate its role in many, if not most, older people's lives.

Notes

1. Village data presented in this chapter were collected in the research project, *Ageing in Indonesia, 1999–2007*, with the generous support of the Wellcome Trust and the British Academy. We are grateful to Edi Indrizal and Tengku Syawila Fithry, our colleagues at Andalas University, Padang, who conducted the field research at the West Sumatran field site, and to our colleagues Vita Priantina Dewi and Haryono, at the Center for Health Research, University of Indonesia, Depok, who conducted the field research in West Java. Extended fieldwork of up to a year's duration, together with return visits, enabled development of comparable quantitative and qualitative databases. Semi-structured interviewing achieved substantial coverage of the elderly, between 80 and 97 per cent in the communities; repeated in-depth interviews were conducted with between 20 and 60 elderly in each site, complemented by in-depth interviews with one or more other adult family members in most cases. Collection of life histories enabled mapping of kin networks, checked by observation of exchanges over time. Fieldwork also made possible observation of local events, and enabled familiarity with problems and adjustments to changing circumstances that make up much of people's daily lives. Randomized surveys of household economy and inter-household exchanges with 50 "young" households and 50 "elderly" households in each of the three communities then served two important functions: they substantiated differences in social and economic status within and between networks which shape family and community responses to older people's needs; and they enabled quantitative analysis of the role of support from absent network members. Two survey rounds, in 2000 and 2005, were accompanied by in-depth follow-up interviews. Randomized health surveys were also carried out in both rounds. This combined qualitative and

quantitative methodology means that data were collected from many elderly respondents in several forms (observation, surveys, semi-structured and in-depth interviews), enabling quality checks on data and the identification and exploration of differing interviewees' interpretations of events and relations.

2. In view of the similarity of Javanese and Sundanese family patterns, and for ease of reference, both communities will here be referred to simply as Javanese.
3. Socio-economic strata in the three sites were defined by aligning economic differences revealed in the surveys with local terms of reference that people used in the course of in-depth interviews to describe their own and others' relative social position. No explicit scheme of social classification is normative in the communities, but four distinctions recur in everyday speech: (1) wealthy; (2) comfortable; (3) getting by; and (4) dependent on charity. A more detailed account of the strata is given in Kreager (2006, pp. 8–9).
4. Sophisticated community institutions in many cases exist to provide food and monetary support to the very poor (Schröder-Butterfill 2006; Kreager 2009). This aspect of support is not differentiated in terms of gender, and thus falls outside the current topic.
5. Employing non-family members to provide care for elderly parents is considered shameful, although bringing in poorer, more distant kin to provide services (and quietly providing the material incentives to do so) is an option available for some better-off families.
6. The contrast to patrilineal family systems lacking heirs underscores the prescriptive nature of matrilineal descent. Men without sons in a patrilineage may take further wives, either by divorcing the current wife or (where permitted) via polygyny, in order to obtain male offspring. A woman who may be fertile, but is unable to bear daughters, generally has no parallel option of obtaining daughters via remarriage. In contrast to Java, adoption is also not considered an acceptable solution (cf. Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2007).
7. Between 66 and 93 per cent of Minangkabau migrants contribute remittances or other support to their elders, depending on strata; the lower figure, which refers to the wealthiest strata, reflects the fact that at any one point in time only some children may be contributing; percentages for the other three strata are at least 87.5 per cent (Kreager 2006).
8. However, it should be noted that older Minangkabau men without wives, where they have reached physical disability that restricts carrying out basic life tasks, will express a preference for male personal care (Schröder-Butterfill and Fithry 2012).
9. On historical demographic factors that influence the shortage of children in current older cohorts, see Schröder-Butterfill and Kreager (2005); on the generality of this pattern outside Indonesia, see Kreager (2004); a good review of demographic patterns of childlessness affecting these cohorts at the provincial level is given by Hull and Tukiran (1976).

10. If we adjust the percentages in Kidul to reflect this (for example, by transferring all households characterized by dependent adult non-married children and married grandchildren to the “independent” elder categories), then the percentage of “independent” in Kidul rises much closer (57.7 per cent) to that of Citengah.
11. A sizeable minority expressed preferences that blur preference for residence with or near a daughter with residence with or near the youngest child (19 per cent in Kidul, 16 per cent in Citengah) (see Table 6.2); a further ambiguity is that stated preferences for living with a daughter may for some respondents not reflect a preference for daughters, but a preference for living with a particular child who happens to be a daughter.

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