

**‘PILLARS OF THE FAMILY’ –  
SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE  
ELDERLY IN INDONESIA**

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## **Abstract**

Most research on family support networks in developing countries has focused on support provided by children to their elderly parents. Central to such research are assumptions that elderly people require support as a matter of course, and that children are available, able and willing to provide assistance. Qualitative and quantitative field research in rural Java shows these assumptions to be erroneous. Many elderly are without children, and where children exist they are often unreliable. Moreover, far from needing support, the majority of elderly people remain economically active and materially independent.

This paper examines the role of elderly Indonesians in providing material and practical support to their families. Far from merely assisting with childcare and domestic tasks, the elderly are often the central pillars of multi-generational families. Where pension incomes exist, these may serve to secure the livelihoods of whole family networks. The accumulated wealth of elderly parents is important in launching their children into economic independence and in underwriting their social and economic risks. Parental generosity does not necessarily elicit commensurate reciprocal support when it is needed. This leaves many old people vulnerable and points to important policy implications for elderly welfare and security in rural Indonesia.

## **Introduction**

Most research on ageing in developing countries has focused on support provided by adult children to elderly parents. Underlying this approach is the mute assumption that elderly people are on the whole in need of support. Population ageing is therefore seen as a challenge, if not outright problem, to families and societies. This is reflected, for example, in the use of dependency ratios as a measure of 'elderly burden' on the productive population (Anwar 1997); or in the anxious monitoring of elderly living arrangements and family sizes as indicators of their growing imperilment due to declining availability of support (for example, Knodel and Chayovan 1997, Hermalin, Ofstedal, *et al.* 1995, Chen and Jones 1989, Martin 1989). The received wisdom that elderly people are dependent is a legacy of a large body of demographic literature on intergenerational wealth flows (e.g. Clay and Vander Haar 1993, Caldwell 1976) and the importance of children for old-age security (see Nugent 1985 for a review).

More recently, leading demographers of ageing in Asia have started to voice doubts about some of the dominant assumptions and approaches in the field. For example, it has been noted that living arrangements are inadequate indicators of welfare or support for the elderly, and that it is necessary to investigate actual exchanges within and beyond households in order to assess intergenerational flows of support (see Kreager 2001, Hermalin 2000, Knodel and Saengtienchai 1999, Natividad and Cruz 1997). In addition, there has been a growing appreciation of the role of elderly people as *providers* of support in their families and communities (for example, Hermalin, Roan, *et al.* 1998, Andrews and Hennink 1992).

The aim of this paper is to add to the growing empirical body of research on the contributions elderly people in less developed countries make to their families by addressing the following questions: Are elderly people dependent? What kinds of support do they give? What is the extent of support provided relative to support received? The paper has two parts. First the question of elderly dependence is dealt with, and an estimate of dependence versus having dependants arrived at. Then three scenarios in which elderly people provide far-reaching support to younger generations are examined. Elderly people in rural Java often maintain full parenting responsibilities for young children and grandchildren; they take on the role of main

breadwinner in multigenerational families after children have grown up; and they provide crucial practical and financial support for younger family members in times of crisis.

### **Research location and methodology**

Indonesia provides a good case for a study of the role of elderly people in family support systems. On the one hand, the population is ageing rapidly, and there are few formal provisions for the elderly in terms of financial support, health care or institutional care (Hugo 2000, Asher 1998, Ananta, Anwar, *et al.* 1997). This implies a strong role for families in old-age support provision. On the other hand, many family systems in Indonesia are not traditionally extended, but nuclear family types with bilateral kinship reckoning (Niehof 1995, Geertz 1961). Migration and divorce are common (Tirtosudarmo and Meyer 1993, Jones 1994, Hetler 1990). As a result, the elderly are not automatically part of multigenerational households. Nor do families generally operate as larger economic units of production from which the elderly can benefit after ‘retirement’ (Wolf 1992, Jay 1969). In addition, the recent economic crisis in Indonesia has put severe strains on labour markets and household economies. Many migrants have lost their jobs in the urban economy and returned to the villages, where the rural labour market—already under strain before the crisis—has been unable to absorb them. As a result, many young people see themselves forced to depend on their families (Breman and Wiradi 2002, Breman 2001, Hill 1999).

Research for this paper was part of a comparative project on ageing in Indonesia (1998-2001), based in three rural communities in East Java, West Java and West Sumatra (Schröder-Butterfill 2002, Kreager 2001). The findings presented here are based on data from East Java where the author conducted fieldwork of 12 months duration in 1999-2000. The community, given the pseudonym Kidul, reflects a wider Indonesian context in which members of family networks are involved in both modern and traditional, formal and informal economic sectors. Due to Kidul’s proximity to urban centres the village economy is highly diversified. Agriculture is no longer the dominant source of activity. Trade, factory and construction work, transport, and civil service play similarly important roles. Approximately ten percent

of the population are aged sixty and over, slightly more than the national average of eight percent.

Field research combined ethnographic and quantitative methods. Semi-structured interviews with 206 elderly people, and in-depth interviews with 90 elderly people and their family members were conducted. These generated life histories and information about potential and actual support networks. In order to differentiate these networks between economic and social strata, a survey of the village as a whole, addressed to household economy and support exchanges (N=106 households), was undertaken at the end of the fieldwork period (for details see Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2003, Schröder-Butterfill 2002). The rationale for relying heavily on ethnographic data was to arrive at locally-generated models of relevant social units, practices and relationships, rather than drawing on exogenous theories like modernisation or bargaining (cf. Bledsoe and Hill 1998, Fricke 1997, Kreager 1986).

### **Are elderly people dependent?**

The question of elderly people's dependence on their families can be approached from a number of angles. Most obviously, elderly people's need for material or practical support has to be investigated rather than assumed. If most elderly people work and are in good health, dependency is likely to be low. In addition, actual availability of family members to provide support is a key precondition that cannot be taken for granted. Finally, it may be illuminating to investigate social norms surrounding intergenerational and familial relations to gauge the extent to which elderly parents *expect* to rely on families for support.

#### *Elderly people's need for support*

Rather than presuming that all elderly people are dependent, we examined people's likely need for support in old age directly. Not surprisingly, considerable heterogeneity in terms of physical, material and social capabilities among the elderly population was uncovered. The demand for physical assistance only arises if an elderly person is ill, frail or handicapped. Even then the support need not come from a younger generation family member. For elderly men in particular, spouses are often the most important source of care: as many as 88 percent of elderly men are married, compared with only 24 percent among elderly women. Data on health status are

summarised in Table 1. They are based on questions about current health problems and impairments, and on observations.

Table 1: Health status of the elderly in Kidul by age group.

	60-69	70 +	Total
Good	66.3	48.5	57.6
Fair	26.9	37.4	32.0
Poor	6.7	14.1	10.3
Total (N)	104	99	203

*Source:* Field data 1999. 'Fair' comprises elderly who have health problems that do not significantly impede their independence or activities of daily living (e.g. long-term blindness, slight rheumatism, asthma). 'Poor' refers to elderly who are seriously affected in their ability to live independently (e.g. people who are bed- or wheelchair-bound).

More than half of all elderly are in good health; among those aged under 70 the figure is even two-thirds. Their abilities to carry out even difficult activities of daily living, like walking five kilometres, carrying a heavy load, or doing gardening, are unimpaired. One-third of elderly are in fair health. This means their daily routines are somewhat affected by ailments, but their independence not significantly circumscribed. For example, it includes people with diabetes, asthma or long-term blindness, where coping strategies have been developed. Only one in ten elderly can be classed as being in poor health and as such significantly impeded in their daily lives and ability to maintain functional independence. Four elderly in Kidul were bedridden, fourteen had medium to severe mobility impairments and three were blind. These figures compare well with other studies of elderly health in Indonesia that found comparatively low levels of poor health (Keasberry 2001, Rudkin 1994, Chen and Jones 1989).

The extent to which elderly people rely on their families economically depends on their work status or income. Table 2 summarises data on work for villagers in three broad age groups. As would be expected, there is a decline in the proportions engaged in paid work from almost three-quarters among those aged 20-59 years, to 57 percent in those aged 60-69, and a quarter in those aged 70 and over. For the elderly population as a whole, the proportion is 41 percent (*figure not shown*). However, if we include people who engage in occasional paid work or unpaid productive work (producing goods for own consumption), and those who have no

need to work because they have income from pensions or agricultural land, the proportion of elderly with independent means is much higher, namely 80 percent among 60-69 year-olds and over half among those aged 70 and over. Clearly, then, economic dependence is not the statistical norm among elderly people in rural East Java.

Table 2: Work status among adults in Kidul by age group.

	20-59	60-69	70+
Paid work	73.0	56.6	24.0
Occasional or unpaid productive work <sup>[a]</sup>	---	7.5	12.0
Not working, but income from land or pensions <sup>[b]</sup>	1.3	16.0	19.0
Unpaid domestic work <sup>[c]</sup>	18.0	9.4	18.0
Not working	6.5	5.7	6.0
Unable to work	1.3	4.7	21.0
Total (N)	233	106	100

*Sources:* Household Survey 2000 and field data 1999. [a] Refers to people who occasionally work or who grow produce for own consumption. [b] Some elderly in this category undertake paid or domestic work in addition. Similarly, a few people in paid work also receive a pension. [c] Refers to elderly women who have *major* housekeeping responsibilities, either keeping house for their families, or, if living alone, for themselves.

Elderly people who live with an adult child or grandchild are less likely to work than those living alone or with dependants only (see Table 3). Among the former group, 31 percent engage in paid work, compared with 50 percent among the latter. These differences are not enormous, and the pattern is certainly not indicative of a system where elderly parents automatically ‘retire’ on their children’s support if they can (for a similar result see Cameron and Cobb-Clark 2001). Moreover, once we take into account elderly people who have incomes from pensions, land or occasional work, the difference between the two groups diminishes. Then slightly fewer than three-quarters of elderly people who do *not* live with an adult descendant have some form of income, compared with 61 percent among those living with a grown-up descendant. This raises the important question of what these incomes are for: Why do elderly people living with an adult child or grandchild continue to work? How do they use their work or pension incomes? We shall return to this issue below when examining the contributions from elderly people.

Table 3: Work status of elderly by coresidence with an adult descendant.

	Not with adult descendant	With adult descendant
Paid work	49.5	30.9
Occasional or unpaid productive work	10.1	9.3
Not working, but income from land or pensions	14.7	20.6
Unpaid domestic work	12.8	14.4
Not working	2.8	9.3
Unable to work	10.1	15.5
Total	109	97

*Source:* Field data 1999. Notes as in Table 2. ‘Adult descendant’ is defined as aged 19 and over, or aged 25 and over if still in education. The vast majority of adult descendants are married, widowed or divorced.

#### *Availability of kin*

So far the physical and economic independence of most elderly people in rural Java has been established. What can be said about the availability of kin support, should it be needed? High aggregate levels of fertility in developing countries mean that an abundance of children is generally taken as given. Elderly parents are assumed to have not one, but several children to fall back on. Indeed, high fertility is sometimes seen as explicitly motivated by a concern for support in old age (Cain 1986, Datta and Nugent 1984, Nag, White, *et al.* 1980). However, simply assuming the presence of children is problematic for two reasons. One is that long-term trends of comparatively high fertility may hide temporary oscillations in reproductive rates, for example due to economic crises, epidemics and the like. The implication is that certain cohorts may face unfavourable parent-child ratios, even if the long-term picture is one of high fertility (Kreager and Schröder-Butterfill 2003). The second problem is that high aggregate fertility may hide considerable individual variation in reproductive outcomes (Knodel, Chayovan, *et al.* 1992). The proportion of elderly people who are childless is therefore an important indicator of the extent to which children can be depended on for old-age security. Local availability of children is also of relevance for assessing sources of regular, physical, and emotional support.



Table 4: Percentage of elderly people in Kidul by number of children surviving and children in the village.

No. of children	Children surviving	Children in the Village
0	25.6	34.0
1	15.3	23.2
2	10.3	25.1
3	10.8	9.4
4	9.9	3.9
5	11.3	2.5
6+	16.8	2.0
N	203	203

Source: Field data 1999.

Table 4 shows the availability of children to elderly people in Kidul. Levels of childlessness are remarkably high, with one quarter of elderly having no surviving child and 41 percent having no or only one child.<sup>1</sup> A third of elderly people have no child living locally, and more than half have at the most one child in the village. Of course, access to children may also be by marriage or adoption, which is common in Java; this reduces the level of *actually* childless elderly people to roughly 18 percent (n=32) (Schröder-Butterfill forthcoming). Nonetheless, it is easy to see that for demographic reasons alone not all elderly can be classified as dependent, or, at least, not dependent on offspring.

Childlessness and a traditional preference for nuclear family formation underlie the comparatively low rates of residential dependence of elderly people in Java (Koentjaraningrat 1985, Geertz 1961). This is reflected in Table 5, which shows living arrangements of elderly people in Kidul.

Table 5: Living arrangements of elderly people in Kidul by age and sex.

	Men 60-69	Men 70+	Women 60-69	Women 70+	All
Living alone	5.3	0	5.9	21.9	9.7
Husband and wife only	15.8	22.2	10.3	4.7	11.7
With young descendant	39.4	19.4	23.5	4.7	19.9
- <i>Child</i>	36.8	8.3	8.8	0	11.2
- <i>Grandchild (skipped)</i>	2.6	11.1	14.7	4.7	8.7
With adult descendant	31.6	52.7	53.0	57.8	50.5
- <i>Child</i>	26.3	44.4	51.5	48.4	44.7
- <i>Grandchild (skipped)</i>	5.3	8.3	1.5	9.4	5.8
Other arrangements	7.9	5.6	7.4	10.9	8.3
Total (N)	38	36	68	64	206

*Source:* Field data 1999. *Notes:* ‘Young descendant’ is defined as a child or grandchild under the age of 19, or under the age of 25 if still in education. The vast majority of ‘adult descendants’ are married, widowed or divorced. In skipped generation households the middle generation is missing.

One in ten elderly live on their own. For elderly women the proportion increases steeply with age (22 percent among women aged seventy and over), for men there is a decline to zero in the older age group. A further 12 percent live just with a spouse, and eight percent with relatives or non-relatives other than children or grandchildren. In other words, almost one in three elderly people are not living with a child or grandchild. Of course material independence or lack of contact with children cannot be deduced from this, but nor can the supposition of elderly dependence easily be maintained. Moreover, Table 5 reveals that almost thirty percent of elderly who *do* reside with a descendant live with a young child or grandchild (for a definition of ‘young’, see Table 5). This leaves only one in two elderly living with an adult descendant. A lot of research on ageing in Asia takes coresidence with an adult child to be indicative of upward flows of intergenerational support (e.g. Keasberry 2001, Cameron 2000, Ofstedal, Knodel, *et al.* 1999, Hashimoto 1991, Knodel and Debavalya 1997). The extent to which this assumption is warranted for rural East Java will be investigated in the remainder of this paper.

### *Norms of intergenerational relations*

One of the most commonly traded stereotypes about intergenerational relations in Asia is that children feel duty-bound to provide old-age support to their parents. Parents give children the ‘*gift of life*,’ nurture and raise them, and launch them into adulthood (Chye 2000, Caffrey 1992, Lopez 1991). Children are then expected to provide care for their elderly parents “as a means of repaying the tremendous debts ... owed for producing and caring for them in infancy and childhood” (Lamb 2000: 46). Rural areas of Asia are seen as

characterised by the absence of alternative systems of old-age support, by well-developed social norms underpinning family-based support systems, and by the dominance of the family among institutions and the ability of families to inculcate altruism and to enforce social norms (Bhaumik and Nugent 2000: 256).

Assumptions of strong filial obligations in Indonesia are echoed in this statement:

The Indonesian social norm prescribes that children respect their elders. Children who ignore and who do not care for their parents are subject to social sanctions. ... The norm which demands children to respect their parents remains in effect and is adhered to by the Indonesian people. ... Children in many communities are happy and proud to be able to care for their parents ... (and) often compete for the opportunity to care for their parents (Wirakartakusumah 1999: 17).

The reverse of children’s reciprocal obligation is seen in elderly parents’ right to ‘retire’ on familial support. This is often portrayed as the natural progression of life-cycle interdependencies (Harper 1992: 170). Younger generations take over household headship and responsibility for the family enterprise, and elders reap the rewards for their earlier efforts.

The interpretation of such normative statements for understanding intergenerational relations is problematic. Sociologists and anthropologists have long observed that actual practice cannot be inferred from norms (see Lockwood 1995, Holy and Stuchlik 1983, Bourdieu 1977). People may use norms to project a particular representation or justify a course of action without the norms being *reasons* for actions. In Kidul, for example, village officials claimed that no elderly person lived alone; in reality, one in ten did. Beneath the official discourse we can find a wide range of preferences and motivations entertained by actors in the practical management of their lives. In East Java, at least, this includes a pervasive ethos of

independence (*mandiri*), a fear of being a burden (*beban*), and reluctance or even shame (*sungkan*) at becoming dependent on younger generation family members (also Vatuk 1990, Rudkin 1994). Thus, in addition to observations of functional, economic and residential independence we find evidence at the normative level that dependence in old age is not 'the norm'. Quite the contrary: as we shall see, strong normative pressure is exerted on parents to support their children to the limits of their capacity.

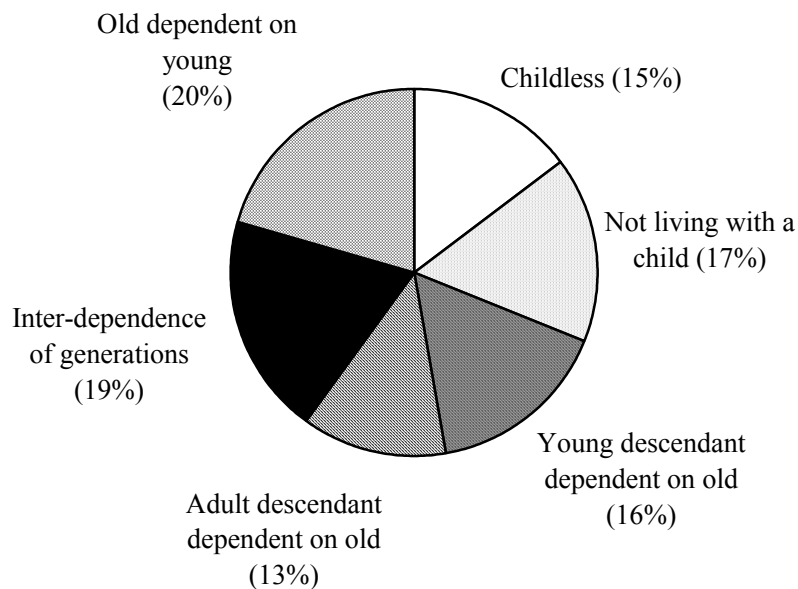
### *Conclusions about elderly people's dependence*

This first part of the paper started by asking whether elderly people in East Java are dependent on their families? Evidence of elderly people's health and income status, availability of children and living arrangements allows us to reject the notion of general or even widespread dependence. Only half of all elderly live with a mature descendant, a mere 10 percent are physically in need of care, and the majority, even among those aged 70 and over, have some source of income.

These facts do not in themselves allow conclusions about the positive benefits elderly people may be providing to their families. In order to investigate the extent and kinds of contributions elderly people make, intergenerational flows of support within and beyond the household need examining. Figure 1 anticipates the quantitative importance of various wealth-flow types in East Java, some of which will be investigated in more detail below (see also Schröder-Butterfill 2002). The classification was developed on the basis of fieldwork data, that is, qualitative interview material on family exchanges, and quantitative survey data on work, household headship, ownership of assets, and household activities. We distinguish six broad types of intergenerational wealth flows, two of which set aside the elderly without children and those who do not live with children. The nature and extent of their support networks is investigated elsewhere (see Schröder-Butterfill 2002, forthcoming). Among the elderly who live with a child or grandchild, four categories are distinguished: elderly with young dependants, elderly with adult dependants, arrangements where the generations are interdependent, and elderly who depend on their coresident descendant (see also Beard and Kunharibowo 2001). A number of provisos are noted. Firstly, the data refer to support arrangements at a certain point in time, thus the picture is unrealistically static. Old age is full of transitions, with elderly becoming ill or losing a spouse, or children moving out or in. Thus both the needs for, and the ability to provide, support may change over time. Secondly, the

typology suggests a neatness that is in fact lacking. Elderly people may be providing for dependent offspring but receiving infrequent support in return, or anticipating the delegation of responsibility in the near future. The complexity of providing support to one family member but receiving it from another is also set aside here. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the typology is exogenous in the sense that villagers themselves do not think in terms of these classifications. This is not surprising given that people are part of long-term, open-ended exchange relationships with family members, where goods and services exchanged are largely considered incommensurate and disparities tolerated. In short, villagers engage in generalised, rather than restricted systems of exchange where social aspects are emphasised over material ones (Lévi-Strauss 1969, Sahlins 1965: 147). The utility of nonetheless creating a typology lies in the fact that it provides a rough summary measure with which to counter common assumptions of elderly dependence, to illustrate some of the variety underlying coresidential arrangements, and to sketch the importance of support provided by the elderly.

Figure 1: Elderly people in Kidul by intergenerational wealth flow types.



Source: Field data 1999.

As the diagram shows, one in three elderly people are not involved at all in coresidential exchange relations with children or grandchildren, either because they have no children, or because they do not live with them. As many as 29 percent are net providers of intergenerational support, of which almost half (44 percent) involve adult, as opposed to young, dependants. Roughly one in five elderly find themselves in arrangements of mutual benefit to the generations. These take a variety of forms, for example, an exchange of practical for material support, or pooled contributions by members of both adult generations to the household economy. Only 20 percent of elderly people can be classified as largely or entirely dependent on their families. This figure is broadly comparable with survey findings for Central Java in the late 1980s where only 11 percent of elderly men and 27 percent of elderly women indicated children as their main source of income; the figures for Sri Lanka and Thailand from the same survey are much higher, 35 and 52 percent, and 25 and 45 percent, respectively (Andrews and Hennink 1992).

### **Family support provided by the elderly**

Elderly people in rural developing societies may assist their families in a variety of ways. Research into the role of the elderly in Asia has tended to focus on their indirect contributions, that is, assistance with childcare or housework which enables the younger generations to devote themselves to other productive or reproductive tasks (e.g. Hermalin, Roan, *et al.* 1998, Chan 1997, Andrews and Hennink 1992). In rural Java, elderly parents' and grandparents' contributions are more far-reaching: they maintain full parenting responsibilities well into old age; they represent the economic backbone of multi-generational families; they step in during crises in the younger generation, and supplement meagre household incomes by continuing to work. The different kinds of elderly assistance will be examined in turn.

#### *Parenting in Old Age*

As seen in Table 5, above, one in ten elderly people live with children who are not yet married. Most of these children are in their late teens or even early twenties. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they may be making contributions to the households they live in, rather than requiring support from their parents. Certainly, earlier authors on Java have noted important economic contributions made by

children. For example, in their study of Java in the early 1970s, Nag et al. (1980) found 12 to 14 year-old boys to be contributing 4.7 and girls 7.3 hours of work to their households, which represented 42 and 59 percent, respectively, of average adults' input (see also Hart 1980, Geertz 1961). In Kidul, at the end of the 1990s, the reality is different. Education levels among young people are high. According to our household survey, 61 percent of 15-19 year-olds are still in education. Beyond primary school, parents have to pay fees for their children, and in secondary school these are often considerable.<sup>ii</sup> Only nine percent of 15-19 year-olds are in paid work. Except in very poor households, it is not expected that unmarried working children contribute their income to the household budget. Instead, it is deemed normal that youngsters spend their money on clothes, entertainment or consumer durables, or that they should save up for when they marry. All of the 15-19 year-olds surveyed who are working keep their income to themselves, and among 20-24 year-olds (of whom 48 percent work) 83 percent do. (This is not to say that such children do not occasionally buy generous gifts for their parents or siblings, or contribute money in a crisis (cf. Koning 1997, Wolf 1992).) We also found no evidence that teenage children are expected to make significant contributions in practical ways to the running of the household. All in all, in the vast majority of households where elderly parents live with young or single children the dominant flows of intergenerational support and wealth are downward, from parents to children (see also Knodel, Chayovan, *et al.* 1995: 442). Far from being a source of support, unmarried children generally represent a net economic drain on elderly parents' resources.<sup>iii</sup>

Elderly people not only support their own unmarried children, but also assume parenting responsibilities for grandchildren. In East Java coresidence with a young grandchild whose parents are absent is almost as common as coresidence with a dependent child (see Table 5). Nine percent of elderly people in Kidul find themselves in such a skipped generation household.<sup>iv</sup> Two kinds of arrangements may be distinguished. In the first, the elderly generation has permanently taken on the parental role, either because the grandchild's parents have died, or have relinquished parental responsibilities for other reasons, like divorce and remarriage. In the second, grandparents are caring for grandchildren temporarily to allow the middle generation to participate in labour migration. Roughly a third of all skipped generation arrangements involving young grandchildren are of the former kind. The following is an example that unfolded during the fieldwork period.

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### Case Study 1: Pak Abdul and Bu Rohana<sup>v</sup>

Pak Abdul is a comfortably-off village official and farmer in his sixties. His wife, Rohana, makes and sells cakes. When they were first interviewed, they were living with an unmarried son and a married daughter and son-in-law with a nine year-old son, Alfi. A week later, the daughter tragically died in an accident, thrusting her parents into a period of despair. This had been their only daughter, and they had hoped she would be close-by as they grew older. What eventually drew the grieving parents to take charge of their lives again was their new-found responsibility for their grandson. Rohana took on her daughter's mothering role and Abdul started paying for his grandson's school fees, pocket money and other needs. Over a period of months, the son-in-law, who still lived with them, became increasingly detached, often spending the night in Malang where he worked. His contributions to the upkeep of his son became irregular. When Rohana was tentatively asked what would happen should he remarry, the response was unequivocal: "He may do as he pleases, stay or leave, but under no circumstances may he take Alfi with him! Alfi will now remain with us and will inherit his dead mother's share".

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Most grandparents gladly assume the role of surrogate parent in the event of a family crisis; indeed, having a grandchild to look after was often seen as compensation for another loss. In such examples it is common for grandparents to come to refer to their grandchild as *anak angkat* (adopted child), who will later inherit. Of course, unlike dependent children who grow up by the time parents reach their seventies, grandchildren may continue to depend on economic and practical support from elderly grandparents well into old age. Pak Abdul, for example, will be in his seventies by the time Alfi reaches secondary education and may then have to sell agricultural land to cover the costs of his grandson's education.

A different logic underlies the second kind of skipped generation arrangement. Here grandparents are temporarily, though often indefinitely, responsible for the upbringing of a grandchild, and thereby enable the middle generation to pursue work elsewhere (see Spaan 1999 for a discussion of labour migration in East Java). Some authors have cast such arrangements as examples of family strategies or 'corporate



group models' of the family, where family members cooperate in order to maximise economic or other opportunities (see Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe 1989, Peterson 1993, Richter 1996, Lee 2000). The middle generation improves incomes and living standards, and the older generation benefits from companionship and remittances. However, in the Javanese context, talk of a family strategy is problematic as elderly parents do not perceive themselves as having the option to refuse, nor do they usually benefit from the arrangement. Indeed, it is wholly inappropriate to model Javanese multigenerational families as 'firms' pursuing a common economic enterprise, as perhaps is true of the Chinese *chia* or the Japanese *ie* family. Javanese villagers are economically individualistic: property is owned individually, family members rarely cooperate economically, even spouses will often not pool their incomes (Geertz 1961, Koning 1997).<sup>vi</sup> We found little evidence that skipped generation households stimulate remittances from absent parents (contrast Rudkin 1998). Fewer than two-thirds of elderly household heads with coresident dependent grandchildren reported receiving *any* form of financial support. In all but two cases the sums remitted were insufficient to cover the child's expenditures and had to be supplemented, if not entirely paid for, by the grandparents. Insofar as fostering by grandparents represents a strategy, it is strategic from the point of view of the middle generation who benefit from free childcare and greater mobility. The elderly grandparents may in fact be significantly worse off as a result of the service they provide.

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#### Case Study 2: Mbah Juminah

Mbah Juminah is a widow in her seventies. From an upper class Central Javanese family, she was married to a member of the Indonesian army. Since her husband's death Juminah receives a modest pension (Rp.356,000 [£28] per month). A few years ago she tried unsuccessfully to set up a business and was left with debts, forcing her to sell her nice house. Juminah now lives in a run-down rented house which she shares with her divorced son and three grandchildren between the ages of four and seventeen. One granddaughter is the daughter of the coresident son whose wife left him soon after the birth of their child. The younger two are the children of another son who works and lives in the nearby district capital. His wife works in Malaysia. Mbah Juminah not only cares

for her three grandchildren, she is also largely financially responsible for them. Her coresident son does not contribute his income and leaves it to his mother to pay for his daughter's food and school fees. He merely provides pocket and transport money. Similarly, the non-resident son, who visits his mother and children once a week, contributes a sum which does not even cover one daughter's schooling. Not surprisingly, life is hard for Juminah. To generate a little extra income she is trying to grow mushrooms in the kitchen of her already crowded and damp house. Help from other family members is not forthcoming. Indeed, she awaits the repayment of a large loan she made to another of her children several years ago. Without her dependants, Juminah would be comfortably-off. As it is, she is struggling to make ends meet.

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In an arrangement like Juminah's, the lack of balance in family members' exchanges causes feelings of exploitation and resentment (see also Case Study 4, below). Not only does Juminah have to make material sacrifices now, but she does so with little guarantee that her grandchildren will later feel loyalty towards her once their mother has returned from Malaysia. It is not a long-term arrangement as in Pak Abdul's case.

To summarise the evidence so far, we find that one in five people aged 60 and over in Kidul live with a dependent descendant for whom they have primary responsibility. In the vast majority of cases, this responsibility extends not just to practical care, but also economic support. Whilst the dependency burden from unmarried children decreases with parental age, surrogate parenthood of grandchildren shows no appreciable decline with age. Parenting thus represents an important type of support provided by the elderly of all ages in rural Java.

#### *Pensions and land: the elderly as economic backbone*

What is the role of elderly parents once their children are fully adult? As will be shown, elderly parents often continue providing materially for their offspring, rather than their contributions being confined to assistance with practical tasks like childcare or housework. The focus here will be on support to *coresident* adult children or grandchildren. As Table 5, above, showed, half of all elderly in Kidul live with an adult child or grandchild; of these arrangements 57 percent involve a currently married child (*figure not shown*).

Support from elderly people to adult family members has been largely neglected in ageing research on Asia. In particular, few studies examine support flows within the household (exceptions include Chan 1996, Hermalin, Roan, *et al.* 1998). A reason for this oversight can arguably be found in the predominance of survey methodologies. Most surveys continue to treat households as the relevant basic unit of analysis in developing countries (see Andrews 1992 for an overview, and Knodel and Saengtienchai 1999 for a critique). Information on actual exchange dynamics within the ‘black box’ that is the household tends to be lacking as it is sensitive and difficult to collect (Natividad and Cruz 1997: 29). Moreover, a long tradition of treating families as guided by an altruistic head who is motivated to maximise collective welfare has disposed researchers to presume income pooling and equitable access to resources in households (e.g. Becker 1981).<sup>vii</sup> In ageing research this assumption, combined with dominant notions of elderly dependence and decrepitude, has meant that most researchers adopt the shorthand of equating coresidence with support *for* the elderly. In other words, the usual assumption is that coresidence implies net upward flows of intergenerational wealth, although smaller downward flows are sometimes acknowledged.

In reality, mere coresidence tells us little about actual flows of support within a household. As Hermalin has observed:

No formal definition of living arrangements can be informative about the content of ... relationships. Older parents living with married children may be recipients of considerable financial and emotional support, or they may be mainly aiding their children and grandchildren in the form of child care, shopping, and meal preparation (2000: 11).

In order to understand the meanings of living arrangements for elderly people’s situation, questions like, ‘Who are the main and secondary sources of economic support? To what extent are goods shared? What entitlements do various family members have to material and practical resources? How are responsibilities for housekeeping tasks distributed?’ need to be posed. On the basis of combined ethnographic and survey evidence we found that many elderly people in rural Java provide crucial material support to their coresident adult descendants. In terms of the wealth flow typology in Figure 1, net flows of intergenerational support are downward in one quarter of households where elderly coreside with an adult child or grandchild. In a further 37 percent of such households elderly people are making

significant material or practical contributions in return for support received. In other words, despite the fact that the presence of adult children or grandchildren may lead us to assume that coresidence is sought for the benefit of the elderly household member, in one in four households the senior generation actually represents the economic backbone of the family. The following provides an example.

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### Case Study 3: Mbah Winar and Mbah Jin

Mbah Winar and Mbah Jin are an elderly couple in their 70s. As a former member of the Indonesian army, Winar receives a regular monthly pension (Rp.470,000 [£38]). The couple do not have any children together, but Jin has a daughter from a previous marriage whom Mbah Winar considers his own. One of the daughter's children, Tommy, was raised and educated by his grandparents. Some years ago the elderly couple decided to move to Kidul, leaving behind their daughter with whom relations were not particularly warm. Their decision depended on Tommy's willingness to move with them, and the house the elderly couple built in Kidul was put into the grandson's name. When Tommy married, his wife joined the household and they now have a toddler. Tommy's wife does most of the housework, and is expected to care for the elderly couple should they fall ill. Economic responsibility rests with the elderly couple. All the money for daily shopping, utilities, and treats for the great-grandchild comes from Winar's pension. Tommy only irregularly has work. When he does, he contributes a little money to the shopping, but most of his income is spent on modern consumer goods

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In this example the elderly couple represents the main source of income in a family of five. The arrangement is long-term. Despite the economic imbalance, the situation is considered harmonious as the elderly benefit from companionship and practical support. (For this reason the example falls under the wealth flow type 'interdependence of generations'.) Indeed, the arrangement was contrived by Mbah Winar and his wife in response to their perceived vulnerability in relying only on an uncooperative daughter in their old age. Financial security was not at issue thanks to

their large pension, but availability of reliable support, should they one day need it, was.

Analysis of elderly people like Mbah Winar, who are net providers of material support to their adult children or grandchildren, reveals that—with some exceptions—they belong to the wealthier strata in the village. Elderly in receipt of a monthly pension or regular income from agricultural land are over-represented: 30 percent of elderly households in which the dominant flow of material support is down the generations include a pensioner, and 57 percent a pensioner or landowner. In households where elderly parents are dependent on the young, the proportions are three and five percent, respectively. The overall proportion of elderly households in receipt of a pension in Kidul is 20 percent, whereas some 15 percent own rice-land (*sawah*).<sup>viii</sup>

Research in other developing countries has begun to investigate the role of pension incomes in wider family networks. Francie Lund (2002), for example, has found that pensions to poor elderly in South Africa raise the standard of living and provide security for entire households (see also Case and Deaton 1998). The reliability of pensions means that the income can be used strategically and allows households to obtain credit that they would otherwise not be eligible for. Rather than pensions ‘crowding out’ familial support, as Cox and Jimenez (1990) and Treas and Logue (1986:657) have it, Lund finds a whole range of wider positive knock-on effects:

Some worry about the potential of this public spending [i.e. pensions] to ‘crowd out’ individual savings, and to reduce transfers between generations. A growing body of research shows, on the contrary, that it ‘crowds in’ care, the status of the elderly, the health status of children, the creation of local markets, and micro-enterprise formation (2002 682).

Our data from rural Java also suggest that pension incomes represent important vehicles for economic redistribution in family networks. Among elderly in receipt of a pension, only thirty percent use their pensions predominantly for their own needs. In all other cases larger family units are being shored up. This is reflected in relative household sizes: whereas the average household with an elderly person has 3.75 members, households with an elderly pensioner have 4.4 members; pensioner households where pensions are shared even have 4.8 members. Of course, there are positive and negative aspects to this wider distribution of pension incomes.

The effect on younger generation members is an improvement in living standards and financial security over what would otherwise be enjoyed. For the elderly, receipt of a pension increases the likelihood of living with any child or grandchild (84 percent versus 72 percent), which points to greater companionship and potential support when needed. In the case of Mbah Winar, at least, the arrangement arrived at is seen as mutually beneficial. However, the dilution of pension incomes due to large numbers of dependants may in fact leave the elderly with little or no advantage over their non-pensioner peers. To use a crude approximation, average monthly pensions in Kidul are Rp.380,000 [£30], which translates into abundant daily incomes of Rp.12,700 [£1.02] for sole beneficiaries. Once divided by average household sizes of 4.4 or 4.8, we obtain per head daily sums of Rp.2,600-2,900 [£0.21-0.23]. Compared with average daily per head expenditure figures of Rp.2,350 [£0.19], this leaves little room for manoeuvre.<sup>ix</sup> Moreover, it is not *always* the case that elderly people who are net providers of support are wealthy. Roughly one-third are merely ‘ticking-over’ or even poor. Nor does elderly people’s far-reaching economic support for their offspring necessarily reflect a positive choice on their part. Some parents see themselves forced to continue providing indefinitely for handicapped or simply incompetent offspring; others may have to step in periodically to provide assistance in a crisis. It is to such support that we shall now turn.

#### *Crisis support by elderly parents*

Thus far the focus has been on the role of elderly people in providing long-term day-to-day economic support for their children and grandchildren, be it for unmarried descendants or for adult offspring who remain in the household and continue to rely on the older generation for routine support. However, the ideal pattern of family formation in Java is for children to set up independent households soon after marriage. The generations are then mutually independent and exchanges limited to visits, gifts and mutual help during ceremonies. Unless, of course, a crisis occurs.

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#### Case Study 4: Mbah Hari

Mbah Hari is an elderly man in his seventies. He used to work as a minor clerk in a school and now receives a modest government pension (Rp.350,000 [£28] per month).

The couple have no productive assets and their house is modestly furnished. Hari and his wife have seven surviving children. One never-married son in his forties and a married daughter with three small children were living with Mbah Hari when the elderly man was first interviewed. Lany, the daughter, had first moved out upon getting married, but then returned when her first marriage failed. With her second husband she moved to Jakarta where the husband worked in a hotel. Seeing living costs spiral in the capital, the young family moved back to East Java in 1998. Due to the bad economic climate following the collapse of the New Order regime and the ousting of President Suharto (May 1998) they didn't find work, and thus moved in with Lany's parents. Consequently, Mbah Hari's pension, which would have comfortably covered the elderly couple's needs and afforded some security in the case of illness, had to stretch to cover a family of eight. As the elderly man put it, his pension was the pillar (*tumpuan*) of the family. Mbah Hari's wife, in her late 60s, took on occasional work as a domestic help for neighbours. As she explained, "When the grandchildren ask for treats or need medicine, how can I disappoint them?" By the time of my second field visit, Lany had left for Malaysia in the hope of finding work. The son-in-law had returned to his village. The three small grandchildren were being looked after fully by Mbah Hari and his wife. The strains of this responsibility were etched on their faces. This, they complained, was not how they had imagined 'retirement'!

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The example of Mbah Hari illustrates the key role elderly may play in underwriting the risks young families face in an uncertain economy. Life course transitions are not necessarily linear and irreversible, and parent-child livelihoods may remain critically interdependent even after children marry and first leave home. Thus, although Lany gained residential and economic independence twice, she saw herself forced to return to her parents' home during crises. In Java, where divorce and adult mortality are traditionally high, temporary and permanent crisis reincorporation into parental households has long been a feature of intergenerational support systems. One in ten elderly people in Kidul, for example, live with a divorced or widowed child. In times of economic crisis and heightened volatility in the labour market, as experienced in

Indonesia from 1997 to the present, crisis support takes on an added importance. We encountered examples of elderly people returning to work to help pay off debts in the younger generation; of family homes being sold by elderly parents to pay for hospitalisation; and of grandchildren being incorporated into grandparental households to reduce the burden on parents who had lost jobs. In smaller ways, elderly parents' non-essential incomes in households where adult children are economically active often serve as a financial cushion that may be drawn on at crucial times, for example to cover for health care or expensive life-cycle rituals (*slametan*).

As in cases where elderly people provide long-term economic support, crisis assistance may put pressure on the elderly generation. In Mbah Hari's case, the elderly couple are economically and physically significantly worse off as a result of their daughter and son-in-law's failure to successfully maintain independence. Far from deriving satisfaction from playing an important role in their grandchildren's lives, they feel over-burdened by the financial and practical responsibilities they have. In addition, they bear the stigma of being pitied (*kasihan*) by their neighbours for their daughter's misfortune and the resultant effects on their own welfare.

The final case study provides a particularly tragic example of an elderly widow's economic and social decline as a result of her cumulative efforts, over a couple of decades, to bail out family members in crisis.

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#### Case Study 5: Mbah Sum

Mbah Sum is a widow in her 80s. When we first met her, she was living in a nice brick-built house with her widowed daughter (also elderly), her married granddaughter Diana, whom she had helped raise and considered as a daughter, a great-granddaughter and two small great-great-grandchildren. Three surviving younger sisters lived close-by. Mbah Sum no longer worked but helped with housework and childcare. Yet by the time we left some 10 months later Sum was living just with her daughter in a tiny windowless bamboo shack. What had caused this dramatic decline in fortunes?

Mbah Sum comes from a respectable village founding family and made three good marriages. She has only the one surviving daughter. With her third husband, a village official, Mbah Sum acquired considerable wealth in the form of land. However,



after his death in the late 1970s Mbah Sum came under constant pressure to hand over wealth to the younger generations. Bit by bit she sold land to cover family needs: a great-grandchild was hospitalised, costly circumcision and wedding ceremonies needed paying for, and capital was required to enable the granddaughter to leave for Saudi Arabia and to shore up the daughter's trading venture. Most unfortunately, she agreed to sell her house cheaply to her granddaughter Diana when she returned a rich woman from working in Saudi Arabia. Diana improved the house and lived in it with her mother, grandmother and daughter. She also invested in various business schemes none of which proved viable. By the time Mbah Sum was first interviewed, Diana was in debt and saw herself forced to sell the house in which her elderly mother and grandmother were still living. With the money left over from the sale she departed on labour migration once again. Mbah Sum now spends her dying days in poverty. She relies on a combination of charity, help from relatives (mainly her grandson and elderly sisters), and what little her daughter can make from selling second hand clothes. None of these sources is sufficient for health care.

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As this case study shows, the lines between crisis and long-term support may become blurred, as a series of crisis interventions for different family members add up to sustained pressure on the parent or grandparent in question. As is often the case, Mbah Sum's life-time accumulated wealth is dissipated through the family network, both as 'seed capital' and 'insurance policy'. As a result, Mbah Sum ends up destitute, her favourable material position at the outset of old age notwithstanding. It may be tempting to regard cases like that of Mbah Sum, Mbah Hari or Mbah Juminah as exceptional—instances of older people who are too generous for their own good. However, we found the view to be pervasive among villagers of all ages that parents' responsibility to children is paramount and indefinite. It is captured in the saying that parents will never be heartless (*nggak tega*) towards their children. Parents who cease to bail out adult children in need are harshly criticised.

Given the social expectations that parents support their descendants in need, and the wealth of evidence that such support is widespread, it seems natural to assume reciprocal upward flows of support to be common and expected. This reasoning is at

the heart of conventional models of reciprocity and exchange theories (e.g. Sahlins 1965, Dowd 1975, Caffrey 1992) and bargaining theories (e.g. Pezzin and Schone 1997, Lillard and Willis 1997, Bernheim, Shleifer, *et al.* 1985). In reality, however, we found little evidence of a reciprocal link between support provided and support received.

One reason for the lack of reciprocity may be located in the manner of wealth distribution in rural Java, which militates against its strategic use to secure old-age support. Inheritance is usually passed on during parents' life-times in order to avoid conflicts among heirs (see Geertz 1961: 51ff.). Only spouses and children normally stand to inherit, and it is considered ideal to give each child an equal share of the estate. (In some families and areas of Java the Islamic rule of befitting sons over daughters are invoked.) The system thus differs fundamentally from a stem-family system where one child receives the bulk of the inheritance in exchange for becoming the designated carer for elderly parents (e.g. Caffrey 1992). The equal division of property, especially land, results in what are often small, unprofitable shares that are then quickly sold, leaving little lasting benefit. In practice wealth is frequently distributed in a piece-meal fashion in response to family needs, making it inappropriate to attach any conditions to its receipt. Thus, although Mbah Sum has been extremely generous to a wide network of relatives over a long period of time, none of her beneficiaries feel particularly obliged or able to care for her when she becomes dependent.

A second, more fundamental reason for the lack of significant reciprocal flows of support up the generations must be sought in the logic of parent-child relations in Java. We found widespread agreement that the issues of giving support to children and receiving support in old age are—and should be—separate. Even parents who had shown tremendous generosity towards their children did not draw on notions of reciprocity to legitimise claims on their support: they too talked of their reluctance (*sungkan*) to receive support and their fear of being a burden (*beban*). At best, they *hoped*—rather than expected—that children would step in should the need arise. Children who were providing assistance to their parents also did not refer to gifts and support previously received as explanations for the help they were now giving. To use the language of exchange, it seems to be considered inappropriate to treat parental support as 'values' entering into exchange and creating debts to be repaid. Instead parents' love (*sayang*) is unconditional (see also Finch and Mason 1993). Explicit

expectations may only legitimately be attached to elderly people's generosity towards relatives other than children, like grandchildren, nephews and nieces. The difference is due to the fact that these relatives do not normally stand to inherit: if valuable gifts take place, they are voluntary and thus may legitimately have obligations attached to them. Hence Mbah Winar above was able to voice the expectation that, in return for house and financial support, his grandson and granddaughter-in-law would care for him and his wife should they need care. Similarly, Mbah Sum had been promised care by her granddaughter Diana in exchange for the discount sale of her house. Unfortunately, Diana renegeed on that promise.

### **Summary and Implications**

This paper has assessed the dependency status of elderly people in rural East Java and examined the role the elderly play in their families. Contrary to common stereotypes, the elderly are not dependent on others as a rule. Only one in ten elderly people in the study community are in poor health, and the majority continue to work or have income from pensions or land. This is true also of elderly people who live with an adult child and who are over 70 years old. In addition to the need for support being low, not all elderly have descendants they can depend on should they wish to. Childlessness and population mobility are high; as a result, more than a quarter of elderly people do not live with a child and only one in two live with a mature child or grandchild. All in all, it is a minority (20 percent) of elderly people who are actually dependent on descendants for material or physical assistance.

Not only are the elderly not a 'burden', but they are often vital to the survival and welfare of their families. It is conventionally assumed that coresidence with a child is indicative of net flows of support up the generations, from young to old. However, closer examination of elderly people living with a descendant reveals that in almost half of all cases the elderly generation represents the economic backbone of the household: wealth flows in these arrangements are unequivocally downward. In a further quarter of households the old are making significant practical or material contributions to family welfare. The importance of elderly people is felt in a range of situations, be it in caring for young or as yet unmarried children, taking on parenting responsibilities for grandchildren or shoring up adult offspring who have failed to make or maintain the transition to successful independence. Elderly people with

regular sources of income like pensions are particularly prone to having dependants, whilst elderly of all economic strata are liable to having to step in to protect family members in crisis. In Java, unlike in many other parts of Southeast Asia, a preference for residence in extended families is lacking; where coresidence occurs it is more commonly in response to vulnerability in the younger, rather than older, generation.

What are the implications of these findings for elderly Javanese people, for ageing research, and for policy?

The expectation that elderly parents are ‘never heartless’ towards their children, combined with economic conditions that make it difficult for young villagers to establish themselves, mean that elderly people continue to provide intergenerational support even at advanced ages. Elderly people’s own material welfare and security can be circumscribed as a result, either because incomes are shared among many or because key assets are sold or passed on, undermining the elderly person’s ability to maintain independence. Moreover, parents’ generosity is not tied to claims to, or even expectations of, reciprocal support by children. As a result, they may find themselves in a double bind: having provided support to their limits, elderly people may become dependent on descendants who are incompetent or negligent.

A number of implications for ageing research in developing countries may be summarised. Firstly, the findings add to the growing body of evidence that elderly people cannot be treated as a homogenous group, much less as a population that is dependent as a matter of course. Analysis and interpretation needs to take better account of subgroups within the elderly population on the basis of characteristics like health, economic status and kin availability. Further research is needed to investigate the contributions made by active elderly in a variety of settings and situations. Second, it is once again clear that the flows of intergenerational support cannot be inferred from coresidence. More attention has to be paid to actual exchanges and practices. For example, in order better to understand intergenerational flows of support in households, data are needed on household headship and ownership, all sources of income and their relative importance, the extent to which resources are shared, the identity of members with financial or practical responsibility for various tasks or outlays, non-working members’ entitlements to household wealth, and so on. If, in addition, we wish to understand the ways in which support arrangements unfold over the course of family biographies, retrospective and longitudinal data are

necessary. These kinds of information are not readily disclosed by respondents in a single survey interview, making it necessary to establish familiarity through repeated visits. Third, ethnographic research clearly has a role to play in uncovering the *logic* of familial and intergenerational relations. This will serve to adjust some of the assumptions regarding units, exchanges and identities on which survey methodologies are based. In Kidul, for example, it seems unlikely that notions of bargaining and exchange are motivating parental generosity.

Policy suggestions arising from this paper are at best tentative. The finding that elderly people are far from universally dependent, indeed are oftentimes the source of support for dependants, should reassure policy makers and encourage the development of targeted approaches. Rural elderly people do not as a rule expect to retire at sixty. Providing employment opportunities or micro credit to allow the elderly to continue to work, especially in the traditional sectors increasingly eschewed by the young, may represent an efficient way of ensuring independence in old age. Moreover, the evidence on the use of pension incomes demonstrates clearly that pensions serve dual functions of protecting the elderly and shoring up wider family networks. Giving regular, reliable income into the hands of elderly people may be considered part of a wider strategy for social security and socio-economic development. On the other hand, the fact that family support for the elderly cannot be taken for granted should guard against complacency: children are neither necessarily available to provide support, nor does the rhetoric of filial obligation and reciprocity have much valence on the ground. Even in rural Southeast Asia, it would seem, there is a role for market and state in the provision of old-age security.

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<sup>i</sup> These findings of high levels of childlessness are part of a wider historical pattern of sub-optimal fertility in Indonesia. On the basis of the 1971 census, Hull and Tukiran (1976) identify East Java as an area particularly affected by childlessness, with 17-23 percent of women aged thirty and over childless; levels in Indonesia generally are also high (14-16 percent). More recently, Vaessen (1984) found Indonesia ranking fifth in levels of infecundity and childlessness among 28 developing countries. Indonesian Family Life Survey data from 1993 confirm Hull and Tukiran's observations of above average childlessness in East Java. For a discussion of likely causes of this lack of children, see Schröder-Butterfill and Kreager (2003).

<sup>ii</sup> One family for which detailed figures are available was spending Rp. 575,000 [£46] per year on their 16 year-old daughter's senior high school education; this includes fees, books and uniform, but

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not transport costs. This sum represents roughly 67 days' wages for an agricultural labourer, food seller or factory worker.

iii Entry into the labour market, especially in formal or semi-formal sectors (e.g. the police, factory work), often requires a hefty 'recruitment fee' which parents feel obliged to try and raise. One elderly man was contemplating selling his agricultural land to raise the Rp.15 million [c.£1,200] necessary for his son to join the police.

iv Skipped generation households with immature grandchildren are more common in East Java than in Taiwan (two percent), the Philippines (six percent) and Thailand (six percent) (Hermalin, Roan, *et al.* 1998).

v All personal names in case studies are pseudonyms.

vi One day early on during fieldwork, I gave the old man in my house Rp.20,000, saying it was for him and his wife. Later he asked me, perplexed, whether this was for him or for his wife. I repeated, "For both of you, to share." As the elderly couple lived and ate together, I naturally assumed that they operated a common budget. The next day he proudly announced that he had indeed "shared" the money with his wife: he had given her all of Rp.5,000!

vii For criticisms of familial altruism and the assumption of resource pooling see Folbre (1997), Pezzin and Schone (1997), Sen (1989), or Parsons (1984).

viii To date, only a minority of elderly people in Indonesia receive a pension, as entitlement is largely confined to former civil servants and members of the army. In the last 20 years, formal sector employees have started joining voluntary pension schemes: in 1996, membership comprised about 12 percent of the formal sector labour force, but only 3.5 percent of the overall labour force (Asher 1998). Exact figures for government pensions were not to be found, but Asher estimates that 1.5 million Indonesians aged 55 and over receive a civil service pension and 0.5 million an army or police pension; this implies an overall proportion of about 10 percent. The fact that coverage in Kidul is higher (20 percent) is due to the village's proximity to Malang, renowned as a university city and an old army stronghold.

ix The expenditure estimate is based on household survey data and takes an average for households with an elderly member belonging to the middle two economic strata (referred to as 'comfortably-off' and 'ticking-over') in the village.

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