

Discussion:

Snopowski & Sear: Is the Helping Behavior of Grandparents Predicted by Need? Evidence from Indonesia

This interesting paper focuses on intergenerational support from grandparents down the generations rather than the more frequent research which looks at support to the older population.

Using the Indonesian Family Life survey they want to see whether helpful grandparents have similar characteristics to those in (the much more studied) high income contexts and secondly if grandparental help is predicted by need of adult children and grandchildren. It seems that data on help were only collected for non-resident grandparents which I find makes interpreting the findings somewhat difficult; it would have been helpful to have some basic information on the scale of grandparental relationships this excluded and whether they were more likely to be paternal or maternal (I found the statement about the impact of co-resident grandparents at the top of Page 6 rather confusingly contradictory)

In general it seems that grandparents do provide more help when it seems likely that parents need the help: however this conclusion is only based on the characteristics of the parents and their children and whether one would then assume they might need more help (grandchild under 5, single, poorer parents, mother out at work) rather than any expression of need .

My main question revolves around how they have been able (if at all) to incorporate heterogeneity into the models and the interpretation. Indonesia is a vast and very heterogeneous population and other, more anthropological work on intergenerational relations has demonstrated that at a micro level ethnicity, filiation, residential organisation and cultural values have a major impact on the flow of help between generations (Kreager and Schroder Butterfill 2008). These authors would probably agree with the findings of this paper for the Java population but not for their other study group.

A further issue that intrigues me is how migration has been dealt with both in the data collection and the analysis: again from Kreager and Shroder-Butterfill there is very considerable young adult migration in Indonesia (which I imagine is also regionally varied. Is grandparental support of migration captured in this data set (presumably not since these cases would largely be co-residential) ? That is a situation where there is definite 'need' by the younger adult generation but also substantial potential benefits through remittances

A future direction could try and integrate both help from older to younger and younger to older: the question then being whether those grandparents who are not providing help are receiving help and whether the patterns of exchange are similar: do those who give more help (married grandparents and lone grandmothers) receive more or less support from the younger generations.

Kreager P & Schröder-Butterfill, E (2008) Indonesia against the trend? Ageing and inter-generational wealth flows in two Indonesian communities **Demographic Research** 19(52) 1781-1810