Resilience of West Sumatran Women: Historical, Cultural and Social Impacts

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Abstract

In 1965-66, the Indonesian government attempted to eradicate the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) following a coup attempt that led to the establishment of the New Order government under President Soeharto\(^1\). These anti-Communist activities included detainment, arrest, and murder of PKI members as well as members of various organisations associated with the PKI. This study focused on the experiences of 8 women in the province of West Sumattra who were affected by the events of this period. Using a narrative ethnography approach, the study elicits their understanding of their own experience which serves as the basis for an analysis of the strategies and choices they made in adjusting and developing resilience over the 50 years since the events of interest. Its findings suggest that the women studied were able to develop considerable resilience by withdrawing from the public environment and using the strengths of their traditional Minangkabau culture. This culture, which is matrilineal and unique in Indonesia, provides a place for women, as the main family decision-makers and gives them a right to use family assets that cannot be denied. In addition, the women were able to use their religious faith as a support to resilience and to participate in the kinds of economic opportunities that the traditional system provided. The study makes an important contribution to the understanding of resilience in a non-western society and

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\(^1\) Throughout this study, the name of Indonesia’s second president is spelled Soeharto. However, the spelling Suharto is commonly seen in the literature. This reflects a change in spelling that accompanied standardisation of the national language in 1972. However, because the president signed his own name using old spelling, it is used here.
also presents new insights into the impacts of the events of 1965-66 on one part of the Indonesian community. Its approach that combines narrative ethnography, the study of resilience, and historical study can serve as a model for future work that seeks to understand historical events from a new perspective.
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. Background
The study of the 1965-66 anti-Communist activity in Indonesia is important for history. Not only did these events allow the Indonesian military to form the New Order government of President Soeharto but they also represent a period of Indonesian history associated with murders, apprehension on the part of the public, the stigmatisation of certain women for being immoral, and torture of members and sympathisers of the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI) throughout Indonesia (Wieringa, 1999). Further, the New Order isolated survivors politically, economically, and socially. It has been suggested that the government carried out continuous surveillance of all those suspected as association with the Communist party until the regime collapsed in 1998 (Cribb, 2002).

Over the past fifty years, the individuals who experienced these events have had to overcome their effects and go on with their lives. Within this time, some of them have adapted to societal conditions and have integrated into the rest of the community. In some cases, their children and grandchildren have obtained university degrees and entered the world of work, although many have experienced discrimination in trying to achieve their educational and career aspirations. To understand how these individuals have adapted, it is important to examine social and environmental factors that may have played a significant role in building their individual capacity for accommodation. This
type of accommodation is often referred to as resilience, which has been shown to be strongly influenced by social and environmental factors (Ungar, 2008).

1.2. Research Problem
This study investigates the social and environmental factors of the West Sumatran community that have allowed women affected by the 1965-66 anti-Communist activities to return to normal function. The subjects of this study are women who experienced abuse and isolation by the government and also faced circumstances that were unique to their gender. These women belong to the Minangkabau ethnic group, a matrilineal culture whose members are Muslim and originate in the Indonesian province of West Sumatra. The social and environmental factors that derive from this specific context and cultural milieu are the focus of this study.

1.3. Aims and Significance
This study investigates resilience strategies of women affected by the 1965-66 anti-Communist activities in the Indonesian province of West Sumatra and analyses the social and environmental factors that have contributed to their ability to overcome the impact of the events they experienced as well as the longer-term impacts of the events of this historical period. The study further elucidates the specific strategies they used to return to a normal life and shows the ways these strategies evolved in the context of their unique social and cultural factors and community structure.

Research on resilience has been carried out for several decades. Most researchers who study this phenomenon have considered contemporary western settings. These studies describe the influence of western social factors...
in building resilience in communities where they are found but rarely consider communities outside the western world. Little work has been done in Muslim communities in Asia and, as a result, we know much less about the nature of resilience in these parts of the world. This study will fill a gap in our understanding of resilience in non-Western contexts, especially with respect to the resilience of Muslim women in communities where traditional cultural practices remain strong.

1.4. Justification, Research Questions and Limitations
The issue of resilience in non-western societies is relevant to a range of socio-political activities of western governments and aid providers in the context of disaster relief and social programs. However, western paradigms of resilience are of limited use in approaching affected communities in other parts of the world because they rely on cultural and social assumptions that may not exist in the society of interest. A better understanding of the reactions and strategies used by individuals affected by negative events in non-western countries will allow inter-governmental and private sector initiatives to support those affected and encourage recovery that is more effective in meeting the needs of their target populations. This study contributes to this understanding and provides insight into the kinds of contextual factors that build resilience in such populations. This understanding, in turn, can be used to develop more effective programs that better meet the needs and expectations of those they are designed to support. The use of a historical event as a starting point allows for the development of resilience to be contextualised and also for the boundaries of individual experience to be identified. This approach may serve as a model for future work in communities where little is as yet known about the formation and nature of resilience.
This study has five research questions:

1. What is the nature of resilience among women affected by the 1965-66 anti-Communist activities in West Sumatra?
2. What factors contribute to resilience in this group?
3. What are the bases for resilience in this community?
4. How did women develop survival strategies and move on with their lives during the New Order period?
5. How do these women see their place in history almost 50 years after the events of 1965-1966?

This research has a number of limitations. It is based on a small number of female participants in West Sumatra, who have experiences of both violence and resilience. All of the participants are Minangkabau and Muslim. For this reason, the results of this study may not apply to male members of this society who experienced the same events. Further, while its findings represent widely applicable insights into populations in Indonesia and other parts of Asia with a similar cultural base, the specific contextual factors that contribute to resilience in this community may not be identical to those present elsewhere.

1.5 Translation
The interviews that form the basis for discussion in this thesis were conducted in the Indonesian and Minang languages, as preferred by the women who took part in the study. These are the usual languages of communication in West Sumatra, and the author is fluent in both. In addition, two of the author’s
supervisors are also fluent in these languages and were able to assist in analysis of the interview material.

Where excerpts from these interviews are presented in this thesis, they were translated by the author. All translations were checked by the author’s supervisors and are presented in colloquial English that conveys the meaning and intent of the speakers.

1.6 Summary
This chapter provides the background for the study and outlines its aims, significance and justification. The research questions for the study are presented along with the limitations of the research and a note on translation.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This review discusses literature on resilience and has four parts. The first part examines the concept of resilience and a number of ideas that have influenced the development of the concept in question. It commences with a discussion about the nature of resilience then describes developments in our understanding of this attribute in individuals dealing with a variety of challenges in their lives. This discussion focuses on the relationship between the social structures of society and individual agency. The second section of this review focuses on the relationship between religion and resilience and discusses impacts of religious belief and associated attributes on the formation of resilience in individuals. The third section concerns the relationship between culture and resilience and discusses the ways in which the unique aspects of a person’s culture might influence his or her resilience. The last section relates to historical trauma and focuses on how events in a person’s past have the potential to influence his or her experience in later life and even into subsequent generations.

2.1. Resilience

The term resilience refers to an individual’s ability to bounce back and return to a path of normal development following an adverse event. Resilience constitutes a positive individual reaction toward various problems or issues, which may encourage the maintenance of psychological health despite potential impacts of isolation and other destructive events, violence, or life-threatening situations (Masten and Gewirtz, 2006). Resilience is not an innate strength automatically possessed by individuals. Instead, it is a dynamic
process, which relies strongly on actions taken by individuals in times of stress or duress.

Hollister-Wagner et al. (2001) suggest that resilience is a process which requires that the affected individual take action to control his or her reaction. They do not see it as an inherent ability or characteristic. This view allows for analysis of why a person might succeed or fail in confronting a range of difficult situations in his or her life but does not address what motivates a person to undergo a dynamic process of this kind. It has been noted that process by which resilience is built is parallel to the appearance of negative change in some individuals (Supkoff et al., 2013). Whether any one individual becomes more resilient or experiences a detrimental impact from adverse experience has been described as a pathways framework by Sroufe (1997). This framework depicts resilience as an outcome of development over time; as the result of multiple routes leading to a similar outcome; as producing variant outcomes under different circumstances; as allowing for change at many points; and as being constrained by earlier adaptation. This model is capable of explaining why individuals whose experience was similar may exhibit differing levels of resilience as well as the converse situation where individuals with very different life experiences may emerge as equally resilient.

In considering the nature of resilience, the ability to recover from and adapt to adverse circumstances can be seen as an attempt by the individual to sustain normal patterns of development over his or her life course (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 1996). What constitutes ‘normal’ for the person in question has a cultural component which will be discussed further below, but, in all cases, certain personal attributes or aspects of personality are significant. Wagnild
describes resilience as having five contributing characteristics, namely perseverance, equanimity, meaningfulness, self-resilience, and existential aloneness that any given individual may demonstrate to a greater or lesser degree. Perseverance refers to an individual’s capacity to carry on living despite recurring failure, rejection, refusal, and hard times. These situations, he suggests, do not have to be obstacles for a person in trying to overcome them and return to a normal life. Equanimity is a person’s ability to absorb positive things from his or her life experiences. This characteristic allows a person to laugh at him or herself or at his or her experiences and not to dwell on self-pity. The third characteristic is meaningfulness, which allows the individual feel a sense of purpose to achieve, which may continuously motivate the setting of goals. The next characteristic of resilience is self-reliance. A person having this attribute is able to rely on personal strength and capability, which includes using earlier successes to guide future endeavors. Finally, existential aloneness refers to the idea that each person is an individual who has to experience certain things alone, although there are other experiences that can be shared with others. The author suggests that this last characteristic may bring personal freedom as well as the recognition that a person is unique.

Sroufe (1997), Masten and Gewirtz (2006), Hollister-Wanger et al. (2001), and Wagnild (2009) all suggest that resilience is a kind of reaction that heavily depends on the capability of individuals to learn from a variety of previous life experiences. They believe that resilience is a response, which strongly relies on the capability of individuals to benefit from the learning that they experienced in various aspects of their lives. Yet, there remains a question as to why some individuals seem to be able to do this more readily and seem to be able to use
their experiences in ways that allow them to deal more effectively with adverse or negative events.

Chalfant-Lemery (2010) suggests that individual capability to make use of experience and build resilience relates closely to genetic factors, which can be thought of as a form of natural resilience intended to protect the individual from detrimental impacts. In addition, this genetic heritage may permit individuals to investigate the world empirically, based on their experiences. Differences in genetic heritage may contribute to the resilience of different individuals and potentially may have implications at the level of the group or community.

Feder et al. (2009) discuss the genetic basis of resilience as well. They note that most people are resilient, and it is a minority of individuals who suffer long-term negative psychological effects from acute and chronic stress. Their discussion is based on a growing body of research that shows there are environmental, genetic, and epigenetic factors that affect the development of resilience and indicates that there are neural pathways that are impacted by a combination of these factors to enable a person to react with resilience. These changes in the brain, they find, are closely associated with the individual’s reaction to stress and suggest that it may be possible to understand more about resilience through the study of neurobiological factors that can be measured experimentally.

Charney (2004) studies the neurobiological basis of resilience that is felt to be mediated by a number of neurotransmitters in the brain. He proposes a model in which resilience is seen as a result of neural processes that relate to reward,
fear and survival instincts, and social behaviour. Charney finds that certain attributes associated with these neural processes are significant in the formation of resilience and include optimism, learned helpfulness, altruism, and teamwork, among others. He suggests that an understanding of the neurobiological aspects of resilience could be effective in dealing with the effects of stress and stress-related conditions.

If resilience does have a genetic basis, then it follows that each individual possesses a unique capacity for resilience. The implication of this situation would be that each person has a predetermined ability to adapt such that some individuals may simply be less equipped to cope with and recover from adverse experiences. In the context of the pathways model described by Sroufe (1997), the role of a person’s genetic endowment might be to provide the push towards one pathway or another or towards positive versus negative change.

While some authors do suggest that genetic endowment is the most significant determinant of resilience (see, for example, Charney, 2004; Feder et al., 2009), others believe that factors outside the individual also contribute to this characteristic and can be significant in individual reaction. Several authors have discussed a behavioural aspect of resilience. This understanding of resilience is closely associated with personality, which has been described as the aspect of individual identity that links mental and physiological systems (Mayer and Faber, 2010).

The view that personality has a major impact on resilience suggests that every individual has the capacity for resilience and should be able to develop his or her personal capabilities in ways that will support greater resilience in the
future. However, it has also been suggested that strength of personality may not be enough to allow individuals to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity (Mayer and Faber, 2010). Personality typically emerges in childhood, which has been the focus of most of the study of resilience. The components of childhood personality have been seen as promoters of resilience in adulthood or acting as moderators (Shiner and Masten, 2012). In this understanding, a promotive factor, such as being good natured, may serve as an asset for the development of resilience. A moderating factor may lessen risk to the individual when present in a person who has experienced adverse circumstances. The five personality traits most closely associated with resilience across age groups are extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Caspi and Shiner, 2006). However, in adults especially, personal intelligence may also be required.

Personal intelligence is the individual capacity to control emotion, motivate oneself, self-conceptualise, dream, imagine, and internalise experiences of oneself as well as others (Mayer and Faber, 2010). Personal intelligence has been seen as one factor that allows successful generation of positive output. One way of understanding personal intelligence is as a combination of interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence (Kincheleo, 2004). Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to identify with others and intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to be self-reflective and form an accurate view of oneself (Cary 2004). By realizing their own abilities and the potentials of the environment, individuals are better able to learn and recognise patterns that allow them to build resilience from the learning process they undergo. Personal intelligence will help the individual understand the context of an issue or
problem. This understanding, in turn, will enable the resolution of the problem they face.

From the concepts that Chalfant-Lemery (2010), Mayer and Faber (2010), Kincheleo (2004), and Cary (2004) discuss, it appears that there are three aspects of the individual that contribute to resilience. They are genetic factors, personality, and personal intelligence. Individual actions or experiences probably cannot change genetic factors, however personality and personal intelligence do have the potential to develop and adapt as the result of challenges the individual faces. Genetic factors, then, may support the formation of natural resilience, while personality can shape individual adaptive processes in response to problems. Individuals can draw on personal intelligence to construct greater resilience, which might be likely to generate positive outcomes in the future. This suggests that individuals have the capacity to alter the patterns of resilience that they may naturally manifest. Once individuals have reached this understanding, they can start to seek solutions to their problems.

This conceptualisation of resilience takes into account the social environment in which adversity occurs. It also allows for the possibility that cultural factors may influence the way people try to comprehend adversities and form the basis for personal understanding of problems that may affect individual resilience. It also suggests there is potential for individuals to learn various survival techniques deriving from the foundation provided by their ability to recognise, observe, and decide on the kind of attitude to adopt over the course of their adaptation efforts.
Psychoanalysts view individual ability to learn various survival techniques as part of the conception of human development. Erikson (1980), discussing the concept of epigenesis, states that individual awareness to act on the problems he or she encounters is a result of an individual dialectic with the self as the consequence of interaction between the individual and the social environment which is influenced by the person’s cultural background and past experiences (Smith-Osborne, 2008). Erikson’s conception holds that this dialectic process is able to deliver accurate information for the individual to act on for the sake of his or her future survival. Erikson’s model describes a pathway to analyse the resilience of individuals who experienced traumatic incidents in the past (Erikson 1980).

Specifically, Erikson (1980) viewed his epigenesist theory as an explanatory mechanism for the development of personality where each stage or developmental period builds on previous ones, with age-appropriate abilities and capacities appearing gradually over time. Eventually, the adult personality will be complete. Erikson saw this as occurring within an interactional and adaptive framework that allows for interaction with the surrounding social environment and also with the culture, society and historical contexts. Responsiveness on the part of the individual but also from the society and culture in which he or she lives is also needed for optimal development. Erikson’s life span approach is closely related to resilience theory which, as discussed above, describes risk and protective factors which have been shown to vary depending on the life stage, the type of adverse situation, and the nature of resilience reaction that is being studied (Ungar, 2004; Smith-Osborne, 2008). It has also been shown that what operates as a risk factor in one context may be protective in another (Supkoff et al., 2013).
Other models, however, center on the influence of cultural factors and the social environment in the shaping of resilience. Where Erikson sees resilience as a dialectic process, Ungar (2010) views resilience as a process of navigation and negotiation. Ungar suggests that the interaction between individuals and their social environment forms the navigation and negotiation process, which is influenced by the cultural background of the individuals involved. Navigation is an individual ability that functions as the primary basis for directing the person in ways to gain various types of resources in the social, cultural, or physical environment as a way of sustaining his or her well-being (Ungar, 2010).

The social environment, which might include government or religious institutions, families, and communities, plays an important role in providing resources that individuals need. Provision of these resources helps individuals in dealing with a variety of problems. The ability to navigate, along with the capacity for individual or collective negotiation, carried out in the context of culture, will result in physical resources and psychological strategies that are crucial for the endurance and health of the individual (Ungar, 2010).

Ungar (2010) points out that navigation and negotiation are the outcomes of interaction, but he does not explain the shape or pattern of interaction which produces navigation and negotiation and eventually generates individual resilience. One way of understanding the nature of resilience-related interactions is through the relationship of structure and agency originally developed by Giddens. Giddens (1984) views the interactions between individuals and their social environment as described in his theory of structuration, which is based on a relationship between structure and agency that is characterised by mutual influence (duality). According to Giddens (1984),
structure is a set of rules and resources available within institutions and embodied in a system that functions as the medium for social practices. These rules and resources are always produced and reproduced by agents (human beings) in the form of interrelationships, which generate social practices within the limitations of time and space. Agency is the event of an action taken by individuals (agents) within structural frames (social institutions). Gidden does not regard structure and agency as a dichotomy such as in the view of structuralism. Instead, he sees structure as representing a duality, where it operates as both medium and outcome. Within individuals, Giddens suggests that structure exists as memory traces that direct their actions but also externally as the result of the actions of human agents in the past. Human beings, as agents, are contained by societal structure but also create it. Structuralism has tended to view the creation of social systems as mechanical and holds that human activities must be seen as being part of a larger system that is discernable through social interactions (Blackburn, 2008)

Giddens’ structuration theory places individuals at the center of the structure-agency relationship but does not extend to the factors that might encourage individuals to act in any given setting. Bandura (2006) discusses this issue as part of his cognitive self-regulation concept. Bandura suggests that humans possess personal ability to create their own future through their self-capacity in organizing, regulating, and reflecting on a wide range of alternatives, which eventually generate positive actions (Bandura, 2006). Bandura emphasises that human beings have the capacity for intentionality, forethought, and self-reactiveness, which together build cognitive capability that enables them to reflect on the self, thoughts, and actions as the agents in structure-agency relationship. In other words, human beings have the ability to train and control
their-self functions toward events that take place in their social environments. Bandura calls this ability self-efficacy, which is shaped by the experience of control over something in the past (mattering experiences), the ability to emulate social behaviour (social modelling), social direction (social persuasion), and the physical and mental condition of the individual (Bandura, 2001).

Bandura’s social cognitive theory is based on the reciprocal nature of personal, environmental and behavioural factors; the relationships of learning and motivation; and the sources of behaviour change (Bandura, 2001). This model was expanded by Bronfenbrenner (1977) who viewed the lifelong development of individual adaptation as an ecological systems model. More recently, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) describe this process as a bio-ecological paradigm that holds that human development occurs through a series of reciprocal interactions that are increasingly complex over time and takes place within a concentric set of systems beginning from the micro level (immediate setting where the individual is located) and expanding outward through meso-systems (interaction between two or more micro-settings where all contain the individual) and exo-systems (interaction between two or more systems where only one contains the individual) to the macro system (cultural and socioeconomic environments) and finally the chrono-system (change over the life course). The work of both Bandura (2001, 2006) and Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1994) is relevant in understanding resilience because they help explain what might contribute to a resilient personality. In particular, Bandura’s concept of reciprocal action and social cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory relate directly to the ways in which people learn and might make positive adaptations as a result of their life experiences. Both Bandura and Bronfenbrenner stress the importance of time in allowing for
positive adaptation. This represents a parallel with the life-course approach to understanding resilience. This approach holds that the starting point of experience is not in controlling the past; rather it lies in life history of personal experience and individual personality. Both play a role in interpreting the social environment based on a historical framework, which serves as the basis for individual adaptation with the environment.

Life course analysis does not only position individuals as being capable of shaping the relationship between structure and agency but also applies to the social environment (Hitlin and Edler, 2006). The life course approach focuses on agency within structured pathways, which Hitlin and Edler (2006) see as encompassing the work of Bandura but extending to include both self-efficacy and optimism. They see optimism as a personal attribute that serves to increase the individual’s sense of agency. In addition to personal attributes that an individual might possess as a result of genetic factors, personality and personal learning, resilience may depend on the accumulation of different types of human capital that derive from the interactions of the person with his or her environment at a number of levels. This is the point at which study of resilience in the individual intersects with broader models of the function of society. As discussed above, models of resilience generally take into account the setting or context in which individual adaptation takes place and, as a result, it is necessary to consider the ways in which these environments might contribute to the formation of different kinds of capital that people can draw on in developing resilience.

Poortinga (2012) highlights the relationship between individuals and their social environments in their efforts to build resilience. The connection between
these two elements is influenced by the presence of human capital, social capital, natural capital, and economic capital, all of which provide the bases for the formation of strong bonds between individuals and social communities (Poortinga, 2012). Poortinga makes clear that human capital is individual ability, which relates to skills and level of education. Both of these aspects determine how individuals establish relationships with their communities. Individuals who possess skills and higher levels of education are considered to be more capable of adapting and socializing with others (Miller, 2006) whereas other elements, such as social capital, natural capital, and economic capital serve more to ensure individuals can establish social networks, access the environment, facilities, and income (Poortinga, 2012). All of these elements interact and complement each other in the formation of individuals’ level of resilience.

Poortinga (2012) views human capital, social capital, natural capital, and economic capital as social resources, which function as the base for individuals in establishing relationships with structural institutions. Each individual is part of a community that has its own structures regulating the relationships of community members. These relationships or social bonds form the ties between the social structures of society and individuals (Fanany and Fanany, 2012). Fanany and Fanany (2013) describe societal structures as consisting of all institutions that operate in the cultural, political, and economic areas. These institutions regulate the actions of individuals in their interactions with other individuals, their community as an entity, or other communities. These ties may be legally or morally binding and apply to all individuals. This contrasts with agency, which enables individuals to choose and act according to their own experiences and considerations (Fanany and Fanany, 2012). As discussed by
authors like Bandura (2001, 2006) and Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), this emphasises that the individual is central in making decisions when interacting with the community. The personal and other capital discussed by Poortinga (2012) and Hitlin and Edler (2007) provide the resources required for these decisions and may also constrain possible decisions if they are not available. This means that the structural environment serves as a framework, which contains material, knowledge and moral dimensions with the capacity to influence individual attitudes and viewpoints in coping with various challenges in life. Individuals, for their part, use their agency within the framework offered by societal structures in the context of the capital they possess.

The literature discussed above suggests that resilience does not only relate to individuals’ abilities or relationships with the social environment but is part of a learning process, based on relationships within the patterns of structure and agency that exist in social environments. In this context, previous experiences and the cultural background of the individuals may play an influential role. This can supply a framework to analyse resilience which might be applicable to a wide range of situations and contexts. Among the factors that define the social context are religion and culture which vary greatly and occur in numerous combinations around the world. According to Alarcon (2010), culture is defined as a set of behavioural patterns, lifestyles, purposes, and values, shared and utilised by a group of human beings in the form of collective knowledge, customs, mores, convictions or beliefs, traditions, language, religion, social relations, and principles of ethics. All of these elements may serve as catalysts for the individual in adapting to nature and the social environment. Religion is a specific manifestation of human behaviours that share certain characteristics with culture and that has been found to play an important role in resilience.
A number of researchers have shown that religion is a major element of human experience with the capacity to direct the behaviour of individuals, groups, and societies but that differs conceptually from culture. Where culture tends to concern values, religion is more concerned with human life as a search for meaning. It is both a response to the environment of human beings and also an exploration of its frontiers (Pohlong, 2004). Both cultural and religious thinking offer concepts that help human beings survive and adapt through different means. The dimensions of the values of these two domains are discussed below in the sections on religious and cultural resilience.

2.2. Religion and Resilience
The concept of religion is a belief in spiritual things. It exists as a way to explain events in nature that are beyond the power of human beings to control (Nelson, 2009). It can be seen as a system of beliefs, values, symbols and rituals, and religious organisations and institutions that play an active role in shaping individual behaviour and personality, as well as regulating individual relationships with God and the social environment. This explanation carries certain values, which Pargament (1997) calls substantive and functional values. Substantive value refers to sacred or holy things within the dimensions of belief, practices, and feelings in relation to God. By contrast, functional values make reference to the acts that give purpose to life, whereas belief, practices, symbols, and experiences describe individual existence and struggle. Based on these substantive and functional values, Pargament sees religion as a process in the effort to search for the meaning of life connected to sacred or holy matters (Pargament, 1997). Pargament concludes that religion possesses constructive dimensions, which actively serve to help individuals overcome the
problems of life. Pargament and Cumming (2010) further describe religiousness as a constructive dimension for individual personality development that is tied to greater self-efficacy and active problem solving approaches.

A number of studies on resilience reinforce the significance of the constructive dimensions of religion in forming individual resilience. Kendler et al. (2003) suggest that religiousness has seven dimensions that play an important role in promoting resilience. The first dimension is general religiosity, which reflects an individual’s attention to and involvement with spiritually related things and their active connection with God in daily life. The second dimension is social religiosity that teaches individuals how to establish and maintain relationships with other individuals, especially between similar religious groups, and with members of their own community. Involvement of God is the third dimension. This dimension concerns belief in and conviction about the active involvement of God in the affairs of human beings. The fourth dimension is forgiveness. Forgiveness illustrates a sense of concern for others, love and affection, and forgiving. God as Judge is the fifth dimension that has God possessing decisive power over humans’ fate. In other words, God is the divine power that determines human destiny. The sixth and seventh dimensions are acceptance [without vengeance] and thankfulness. Acceptance reflects a non-vengeful attitude, while thankfulness involves a feeling of gratitude. These seven dimensions, including their related religious institutions and organisations, complement one another in the formation of resilience.

Prior to this, Fetzer et al. (2003) analyzed the influence of religiousness using 12 dimensions that promote the formation of resilience. The members of Fetzer’s research team analysed these twelve dimensions separately. The first
dimension is daily spiritual experience, which was studied by Underwood. Underwood (2003) explains that daily spiritual experience is a dimension of religiousness that describes individuals’ perceptions in their interaction or involvement with things of a transcendent nature on a day to day basis. The second dimension is meaning, which relates to the questions of how meaning is constructed and to what extent an individual takes his or her religion to be life’s purpose (Pargament, 2003b). Idler (2003a) discusses value as the third dimension of religiosity that relates to the extent to which an individual’s behaviour reflects a normative expression of his or her faith or religion as the ultimate value. The next dimension is belief. Belief relates to the meaning of suffering and death that are in some way central to all religions and offer individual cognitive resources beyond the relatively simple or naive expectation of positive outcome (Idler, 2003c). The fifth dimension is forgiveness that Idler (2003d) divides into five domains, namely confession, feeling forgiven by God, feeling forgiven by others, forgiving others, and forgiving oneself. The sixth dimension is private religious practice. This dimension explains how religious practices can increase an individual’s religiosity (Levin, 2003). The seventh dimension is religious/spiritual coping. This dimension relates to the ability of religious practices to enhance individual coping, of which there are three styles: deferring, collaborative, and self-directing. According to Pargament (2003a), in the deferring style of religious coping, control is sought from God, and the individual places the responsibility for coping in God. In the collaborative style of coping, control is shared with God. The individual and God are jointly responsible for coping. The self-directing style of coping has control resting with the individual who takes responsibility for coping by him or herself (Pargament, 2003b). The eighth dimension is religious support. This dimension relates to relationships between individuals and members of a religious community that
may help increase the coping ability of individuals (Krause, 2003). The ninth dimension is spiritual history. This relates to life’s journey and suggests that the spiritual experiences of an individual have religious value that will improve the individual’s resilience (George, 2003). The tenth dimension is commitment. According to William (2003), commitment relates to how far a person is willing to devote time, energy or strength, and wealth to religious services or practices. The last two dimensions are organisational religiousness and religious preference. Both of these concepts explain the extent to which an individual is involved with religious institutions (Idler, 2003b) and how an individual can be certain of their preferred religion (Ellison, 2003).

The religiosity dimensions that Kedler et al. (2003) and Fetzer (2003) discuss provide alternatives in analysing the role of religion in the formation of individual resilience, which may reveal how an individual communicates pain, causes of problems, and future actions and alternatives to address problems and return to normal life. Interactions between the individual and the environment that have a religious basis may have a significant relationship with increased social support (Wagnild, 2009). This type of interaction may ameliorate the isolation of individuals from their social environment and serve as an effective means to overcome life’s pressures and allow the person involved to seek help from others. The involvement of individuals in religious activities may be beneficial for handling stress that is outside the personal control of the respective individual (Shaw et al. 2005).

As a whole, the concepts discussed above relating to the dimensions of religiosity suggest that religion can play an active role in shaping individual resilience. Pargament and Cumming (2010) state that religion allows people to
see meaning in their experiences and also seems to protect from negative psychological impacts that can result from adverse events. A similar conclusion has been drawn by a number of other researchers as well. Pargament and Cumming also note that people who are religious can often gain greater support from others and from their own beliefs which can help create greater resilience by acting as a resource in times of adversity.

In summary, religious resilience is the ability of the values contained in a religion, and including the interactions between religious institutions or groups and individuals, to enhance individuals’ resilience in dealing with the problems that life presents. For this reason, religion can be a powerful force in resilience among people who are facing the most traumatic experiences in life (Pargament and Cumming, 2010).

Considering religious feeling in the context of the work of Bandura (2001, 2006), Bronfenbrenner (1977), and Hitlin and Edler (2006), it is possible to see how the dimensions of religion might contribute to self-efficacy, optimism and other attitudes that could foster resilience. Further, research suggests that religion is an important aspect of the personal capital described by Poortinga (2012) that can support individual adaptation over the life course. In this, it is important to note that there are two aspects of religion that must be considered. The first is the internal dimension that relates to a person’s perceptions, views, beliefs, and values, as discussed by Kendler et al. (2003), Fetzler et al. (2003) and many others as noted above. This aspect of religion is the one that serves to support the growth of resilience. However, religion has a second aspect that is structural and relates to the societal institutions that support its expression. This is the seventh dimension of religion identified by Kendler et al. (2003). Religion, then,
can be seen as a source of personal capital for adapting to adverse events and developing resilience but also as an aspect of the structural environment within which individual decision-making takes place and which, in some cases, might act as a constraint in this process. This is an example of the complex relationships that contribute to resilience that are contained in Sroufe’s (1997) model and that emphasizes the importance of considering resilience from the point of view of the structural environment as well as in the context of personal agency.

2.3. Resilience and Culture

The literature contains many definitions of culture. The earliest ones, such as Kroeber (1949), Parsons and Shils (1951), and Herskovits (1966), focus on shared values and customs that could be identified as being associated with a certain ethnic or language group and represent a learned body of knowledge. Several later authors defined culture in terms of shared values. Geertz (1973) falls into this category and has been very influential in anthropological and other approaches to culture.

Geertz (1973) describes culture as a complex social institution that carries a set of rules containing knowledge collectively owned by a group and that is present in unique form in every human society. Culture constitutes a system of ideas which is made up of meanings and symbols that function is to regulate individual behaviour. He describes this system of ideas as being transmitted historically and serving as a source of information for individuals in interpreting experiences and guiding them to act. He notes that there are a number of elements within the system of ideas, which include knowledge, norms, language, and social institutions. Language is the means of communication to
transmit meaning and symbols that facilitate understanding. In this model, institutions are the medium that bind a group into one cohesive unit that functions based on values and rules generated from societal knowledge and interpretation of the environment. In other words, according to Geertz (1973), culture is a product of a community’s dialectic toward its environment that is utilised to regulate patterns of interaction between individuals and communities. Culture, then, can be seen as an outcome or a result of a process shaped or formed by experiences, which creates attitudes and behaviour that unify a community group and influence the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.

It is worth noting that the concept of culture remains difficult to define, especially in the context of cross-cultural psychology, the area that encompasses phenomena like resilience. Jahoda (2012) reviews a number of current definitions of culture used by researchers in this field and notes that some of them are incompatible and incomplete. His conclusion is that it is difficult to achieve consensus on exactly how this term should be defined. However, he suggests that the term ‘culture’ can be used without a fixed definition and remains a useful construct for studies such as this one.

Regardless of the specific definition of culture used, it has been observed that people from different backgrounds react to adverse events in different ways. However, it has also been noted that the literature on resilience has largely used a western paradigm and definitions of normal functioning and has often overlooked cultural factors that determine how specific cultural patterns affect behaviour (Ungar, 2004, 2005; Boyden and Mann, 2005). As discussed above, most researchers believe that resilience is built in childhood and continues to
develop throughout the life course. Increasingly, the role of the early social and cultural environment is seen as fundamental to the development of resilience (Luthar et al. 2000; Luthar, 2003). Secombe (2002) stresses that the role of individual determinants (genetics, personality) in resilience cannot fully explain observed reactions and suggests that social factors and societal structures are as significant. Gilligan (2001) has a similar view.

While noting that it is necessary to consider the specific context of any group or individual within the framework of their own culture, Ungar (2012) finds that there are universal indicators of resilience as well as culture-specific ones that can be seen around the world. He describes four principles in developing a contextually-relevant understanding of resilience that derived from a large, 14 site international study of resilience. These principles are: resilience in young people has universal and also culturally and contextually-specific elements; these elements vary in importance in contributing to resilience depending on the culture and context; the elements of experience that contribute to resilience are related to each other in patterns that reflect the culture and context; and the tensions that occur between individuals and their culture tend to be resolved in ways that reflect very specific cultural and contextual factors. The significance of culture specific approaches to the study of resilience is also noted by Arrington and Wilson (2000) and McGoldrick (2003).

The impact of culture in the formation of resilience has been discussed by a number of authors. Becker and Newsom (2005), for example, note that an understanding of the culture of African Americans can support better management of chronic diseases in this population and facilitate greater resilience. Cultural factors have also been identified as significant in individual
resilience among Canadian indigenous people in the context of drug use (Curie et al. 2013). Grandbois and Sanders (2012) describe the cultural philosophy of indigenous American communities that has contributed to individual resilience in addressing negative impacts of past trauma and stigma experienced in the modern context. These studies suggest that cultural factors are significant in building resilience and also give an indication of the specificity of individual response based on cultural background.

Nonetheless, Ungar (2005) finds that there has been insufficient study of the nature of resilience in what he calls ‘non-western majority world cultures,’ by which he means large populations with shared culture who originate outside the North American/European regions. Indonesia is one such population where the nature of resilience has not been fully studied. Ungar (2005) further finds that study of the culturally determined aspects of resilience in non-western contexts might challenge generally accepted ideas about resilience pathways and normative behaviour. This study will help fill this gap by elucidating some of the cultural factors that contribute to resilience in one community in Indonesia that has not been previously studied in this context.

2.4. Historical Trauma
The study of historical trauma is fairly new and dates from the end of the 1960s. The experiences of groups of people from various parts of the world have been studied with the aim of understanding the medium and long-term impacts of negative events on individuals and communities (Elhers, et al. 2013). Originally, historical trauma was conceptualised in clinical terms as an aspect of mental health within the psychiatric/ psychological context. Denham (2008) notes that, for over 25 years, the concept of trauma has been constructed as a
diagnostic category which concentrates on the medical analysis of internal reactions, often overlooking various factors outside the individual. A number of social researchers, however, have suggested that the concept of trauma is not a strictly clinical phenomenon, rather it is more of a result of certain experiences and represents the psychological remainder or proof of these occurrences (Fassin and Rechtman, 2009). Such negative experiences constitute a kind of emotional injury, comparable to physical injury sustained as a result of an accident (Denham, 2008). Historical trauma, in contrast to other types of severe negative experience, affects groups and is a collective or shared experience deriving from an occurrence that affected the whole group (Crawford, 2013; Gone, 2013).

Historical trauma emerged as a concept that allowed for the analysis of the experience of holocaust survivors (Kellerman, 2001) but has since been applied to a number of groups in various parts of the world. In situations of historical trauma, affected individuals may experience a cumulative emotional burden that continues after the event has passed. In other words, a negative event may become part of an individual’s life following the initial experience of trauma (Mohatt et al. 2014). Trauma has the potential to affect not only the individuals involved but also others in their immediate environment. Trans-generational, multi-generational, inter-generational, and cross generational impacts have all been described (Bar-On et al. 1998; Kellermann, 2001). This may mean that cumulative emotional and psychological impact is handed down to the next generations, who did not experience the traumatic events directly, as the former generation did, or that the experience of a younger generation can affect their elders as well as the generation that follows. Historical trauma always involves a group experience, however, and extends across multiple
generations. Current members of the affected group may perceive an experience of trauma, even though they were not themselves present at the event that triggered the reaction (Mohatt et al. 2014). One of the key issues in understanding historical trauma is the role of the original negative event in creating a narrative that influences the identity of individuals in the present. This narrative resulting from trauma has been seen as having two aspects or levels. The first of these is the internal narrative that a person uses to connect his or her current condition with the events of the past. The second is a constructed representation that serves as the memory of the event (Young, 1995, 2004). The aspect of memory as constructed is significant as it has been shown that current constructions of trauma are not always the same as those constructed by earlier generations (Young, 1995), so it is important to consider this aspect in analysing historical trauma in any given social context.

Historical trauma can provide a framework within which members of an affected group understand their present day experiences. Crawford (2013) described a number of functions historical events can have that include as a representation contained in stories; as a socially validated aspect of history; and as an internal source of logic that supplies the cause and effect relationship between past and present experiences. This understanding stresses the fact that the perceptions of members of the group involved are significant in defining and understanding the nature of historical events and that, in effect, the history of group is made by the ways in which its seminal experiences are recalled.

Historical trauma can be seen in public narrative (the way in which the event of interest is presented in public discourse) and personal narratives (the way
individual people understand the experience). While personal narratives are unique to the individuals involved, public narratives are part of public discourse (Ganz, 2011); reflect an intersubjective interpretation (O’Donnell and Tharp, 2012); and are shared by specific groups or communities (Rappaport, 2000). The personal narratives of individuals are formed within the framework provided by the public narrative of the event in question. This framework derives from the ways in which the culture in which the event occurred depicts adversity and the expected response to it (Pals and McAdams, 2004). This cultural specificity is important in interpreting historical trauma because the understanding of one culture may not reflect the understanding of another in relation to the same event.

There is a connection between historical trauma and resilience where narratives of past trauma can serve as a source of resilience by establishing the nature of group experience as well as the group’s response to it. In this way, the individuals involved may use the group’s narrative to understand their own subsequent experiences and as a lens through which to view their lives (Neimeyer and Stewart, 1996). In other words, over time, the experience of trauma becomes integrated into individual psychology (Denham, 2008). The narratives of a group about its past traumatising experience can also serve as a powerful marker of identity and belonging which itself can contribute to individual resilience (Wexler et al. 2009). These personal narratives that may signal group membership exist alongside, or in contrast to, any public narrative of the same event. The public narrative may contribute to group resilience by allowing for the development of solidarity among group members and facilitating a network that is accepting of individual reactions (Denham, 2008; Wexler et al. 2009; Crawford, 2013). A model of the relationship between
public narrative, personal narrative, and the health of affected individuals and communities, which includes resilience, was developed by Mohatt et al. (2014) which takes into account the impact of public narrative at the larger level on personal narratives and ultimately on health and resilience. This model accounts for the problems of what the authors call ‘public reminders’ of the event which may act to keep the traumatic experience in the present experience of those involved. The problem of dominant forces in a society (government, cultural elites, politicians, etc.) may also direct the nature of public narrative in a way that results in constant reminders to individuals of their personal experience (Rappaport, 2000; Sims, 2008).

To date, the literature on historical trauma has addressed a range of events, including the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish survivors as well as in Jewish communities that were not directly affected (Hogman, 1998; Bar-On, 1998; Stein, 2009); the experience of Native American populations (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998; Gone, 2013); the experience of Indigenous Australians (Kennedy, 2001; O’Loughlin 2009); and those affected by political violence in Cambodia (Beacher, 2009; Field et al., 2013). The present study, which involves women affected by the anti-Communist actions in Indonesia in 1965-66, will add to this literature and encompasses aspects of both public and private narrative of this historical period and the possibility of resulting historical trauma for those involved. Both public and personal narratives are important in understanding the experiences of these women and the ways in which their experiences have affected them in the decades following the trigger events. While the aim of this study is to understand the nature of resilience among this group of individuals and resilience is closely associated with the way they understand their own experience, the public narrative of period is important in
Indonesia and is considered a significant period in its history. At the time, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was accused by the national military of attempting to stage a coup. With this as justification, people believed to be members of the party or associated with it in some way across Indonesia were killed or imprisoned, and a campaign of anti-Communist propaganda and blacklisting was begun (Cribb, 2002). There are indications that many of those targeted during this period were not, in fact, involved but were caught up in the efforts to eradicate any traces of communism. Those involved, as well as their families and others associated with them, were often labelled enemies of the state (Robinson, 1995; Cribb, 2002). The impact on individuals at the community level was significant in many locations, including West Sumatra, and the incident remains an aspect of Indonesian history that has contributed to current political understandings. References to it appear from time to time in modern discussion as well as in literature and other types of expression.

2.5 Summary
This chapter reviews selected literature related to four major topics. They are: resilience, religion and resilience, resilience and culture, and historical trauma. This literature provided the foundation for this study, which is intended to contribute to and expand our understanding of the formation of resilience in a non-western contexts deriving specifically from a triggering historical event known to have had an adverse impact on those who experienced it.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter describes the way this study was carried out. It is divided into a number of subsections. The first addresses the study design. The second describes the way data was collected. This subsection discusses the type of data used and the methods of collection. The third subsection concerns data analysis. Methods of analysing the data are described here. The fourth section addresses issues of validity and reliability that relate to this study. The fifth subsection concerns translation issues, while the sixth section relates to ethics associated with the conduct of this research.

3.1. Study Design
This study concerns the reactions of a group of women in West Sumatra, Indonesia, who experienced the anti-Communist actions of the Indonesian government in 1965-66. Its aim is to understand the ways in which they adapted following the traumatic events of this period and to elucidate the factors that contributed to their development of resilience. It also investigated the nature of personal and public narratives of the event as a means of understanding the way in which historical trauma may have affected this group and the ways in which these individuals see themselves and their families some five decades following the initial traumatic period. The study uses a life course approach and focuses on the specific social and cultural factors that have shaped the reactions and resulting resilience of this group.

In analysing the resilience of the participants, this study uses the pathways model developed by Sroufe (1997). Sroufe (1997) formulated a developmental
model of resilience that was intended to serve as a contrast with the medical models that have been widely used to study this phenomenon. Medical models tend to view any observed reaction to negative effects as a discrete event or episode that is separate from the experiencer’s life before and after the event. In models of this kind, a person’s reaction to any type of trauma is seen to come from the event itself, without consideration of his or her life experiences and context. Sroufe’s model views the individual and his or her social and cultural context as inseparable and suggests that negative reactions that a person might experience as a result of some event or trauma are part of a developmental continuum. In this understanding, the appearance of some kind of reaction (behaviour) is seen as being related to the event that triggered it but also to a range of other events and circumstances of the person’s life (see also Cicchetti and Tucker, 1994; Rutter, 2008). Sroufe explains this as behaviour arising from an interaction of the individual’s inherent attributes (genes), his or her environment and context, and his or her history of adaptation (resilience in the past (Sroufe and Egeland, 1991; Sroufe, 1997).

Sroufe (1997) called his model of resilience a ‘pathways framework’ (p 253). It was developed largely to explain various kinds of emotional disorders in children but has been widely used in the study of resilience in other age groups (see, for example Ungar, 2010; Masten and Tellegen, 2012; Taylor and Conger, 2014). For this study, Sroufe’s pathways framework is especially appropriate because it allows for a network of effects to be identified and positioned according to their influence on resilience. It also allows for differences in the reactions of different people to be conceptualised in terms of their similar and differential features.
Sroufe (1997) depicts the pathways framework as a tree where the trunk represents a point of interest where a behaviour or reaction can be observed. The tree’s root structure represents the various influences that affected the individual before this point in time. They may be difficult to ascertain at the time of observation. Progress up the trunk to the top of the tree represents positive adaptation or resilience and return to normal function. The side branches represent different points at which less beneficial adaptation can occur. Each branching is a separate pathway, some of which will end at the top of the tree with resilience. Others may lead off to the sides, ending in less beneficial adaptation. This negative adaptation, Sroufe points out, may lead to disorder in the form of psychological disorder.

The implications of Sroufe’s (1997) pathways framework are as follows. First, significant deviations in the nature of a person’s adaptation may result in disorder over time. Disorder then is a result of repeated failures to adapt. In this model, developmental issues a person may experience are viewed as risk factors, not defects in themselves. Second, different pathways may lead to similar outcomes. This suggests that different influences and different actions may be appropriate for different individuals based on their specific situation or social and cultural context. Third, the same pathway may lead to different outcomes in different people. Again, this may occur as a result of the individual circumstances of different people and they ways in which their personality leads them to react. Fourth, the model suggests that change can occur at any point along the pathway. That is, even an individual who has experienced a negative event leading to a maladaptive reaction may return to a more beneficial developmental path, and it is not appropriate to say that an individual has a particular condition or is in a particular state as if that were a
permanent situation. And fifth, change towards positive adaptation (resilience) is constrained by past experience. Specifically, the longer a person has been on a maladaptive pathway, the more difficult it may be to develop resilience and return to more beneficial development. Sroufe notes that this framework has limitations but is useful for identifying the complex network of influences that give rise to resilience. It also allows for the process of adaptation to be seen from an optimistic viewpoint, rather than in terms of disorder or defect.

This study considers the pathways by which a group of women who experienced political violence some 50 years ago responded to their experience and eventually developed a level of resilience that allowed them to exist successfully in the same communities where their traumatic experiences occurred. Each of these women has a unique lived experience that converged at the time the events of interest occurred. Their adaptations and experiences following that time represent a number of different pathways that have resulted in varying levels of resilience and adaptation. Because of the historical perspective of the current study, it is possible to elucidate these pathways and understand the contextual as well as individual factors that facilitated change. The women of interest here have developed resilience, and it is the aim of this research to show how this result came about in each of the individuals involved.

3.2. Data Collection
The data for this study was collected through a process of interviews based on the methodology of narrative ethnography. Narration is a process of interaction that derives from navigation and negotiation by individuals in and with their social-cultural environment. It has been shown to be an important component of the development of resilience (Cortazzi 2001, Ungar 2008). Narrative
ethnography, which gives study participants an opportunity to explain their own experiences and understanding of their life, allows the researcher to understand the varied meanings of events as experienced by individuals within their own context and framed by the structures of their environment (Gubrium and Holstein 2008). The meaning of context in this study is the social and cultural setting that serves as the background for the formation of resilience, within the context of Minangkabau society in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Ungar (2008) notes that the context, or domain, has four separate but interacting aspects: cultural, community, relationship, and the individual. Each domain has a number of significant elements that are specific to the social and cultural environment of the group of interest.

Narrative relates to the ways people view their own lives and experiences, and narrative analysis has been used in many fields to investigate different phenomena. In particular, narrative analysis has been used to investigate the ‘relational self’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008: 243), which can be seen as the position of the individual in the context of daily life, his or her social interactions, and the way in which they have affected the way the person sees him or herself. Narratives, in this context, provide insight into the social realities of the people involved (Plummer, 2001). Lieblich et al. (1998) describe several uses of narrative research. One of these is exploratory and applies to this study. Lieblich et al. suggest that narrative analysis can be used when little is known about a situation of interest, and the narratives of those involved can be used to understand their experience. From this, it may be possible to identify variables that can be used in subsequent research or elucidate themes that will allow the experience of the group to be characterised. Lieblich et al. also discuss various methods for analysis of data obtained in the form of narratives. In this
study, the part-content approach they recommend is used. This approach involves studying sections of the narrative to identify sets of words and categories as well the relationships the individual identifies as important. This approach is also discussed by Riessman (1993) among others.

The context in which narrative ethnography takes place also varies, depending on the nature of the study of the people involved. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) note that the setting is important because narratives alone do not provide much insight into the social context they relate to. While their internal structure is important and informative, Gubrium and Holstein stress the need to understand people’s stories in what they refer to as their ‘narrative environment’ (p 252). The narrative environment for this study is the Indonesian province of West Sumatra, and more specifically the towns and villages where the participants currently reside.

The data collected as part of this study consists of primary data obtained from in-depth narrative interviews with women who have personal experience of the anti-Communist actions of 1965-66 in West Sumatra. Individuals were identified using a snowball technique. This method allowed additional respondents to be identified using the network of one or two individuals to contact additional respondents who fit the selection criteria (Patton, 2002). There are community organisations in West Sumatra that work with the population of interest that were used as a starting point to reach a potential group of respondents who are associated with these groups. Once individuals expressed interest in taking part in this study, they were asked to invite others with similar experiences to participate. Personal contacts are very important in Indonesia, and it is not unusual to use friends and acquaintances as a means of
introduction to individuals or groups of interest. This occurs in all social contexts and is viewed as an appropriate way of meeting people.

Eight participants were sought for this study. This number allowed for in-depth study of their experiences and permitted the development of a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to resilience in this society based on one specific trigger event, namely the events of 1965-66. This study focused only on the experience of women, although men were also involved in the events of interest. As the author is a woman, the use of female participants fits with the social norms of West Sumatra and was intended to put them at ease. Because social interactions in this community are somewhat segregated and there are issues that each gender is unlikely to discuss with members of the other, it is often beneficial for a researcher be of the same gender as the individuals he or she wishes to interview.

This study also made use of secondary data to establish the nature of historical events that took place in West Sumatra in 1965-66. An aspect of this study is to understand how the participants see themselves in relation to historical events and how their personal narratives compare to the public narratives of this time. Local and national newspapers provided some of this background. In addition, there are a number of books that describe the events of this period in the larger context of Indonesian history. This study made use of those that have been published by mainstream Indonesian publishers and reflect a scholarly interpretation of these events and also considered school history texts. The aim of this was to establish the nature of the public narrative about 1965-66, especially the aspects of this narrative that may be known to members of the public with no special interest or study of the period. Since the participants in
this study are members of a larger society with historically established social views about the period in question, it was important to understand the sources of information that people who were not directly involved in the events of interest may know.

3.3. Analysis of Data

This study uses two approaches for the analysis of data. The first is thematic analysis. The aim of this is to identify prominent or recurring ideas and elucidate the ways in which they are related and interconnected (Corbin and Anselm, 2008). A process of coding was used to identify themes of interest that are contained in the data. Key phrases and terms were selected as representative of concepts in the narratives collected (Charmaz, 2006). This information was compiled in a database so that the connections and relationships between elements could be seen and studied. Contextual and cultural information specific to the community of interest informed this classification of data.

The second form of analysis is semiotic. This approach analyses the meanings of signs (e.g. words, terms, expressions, etc.) in a given social context. Danesi and Perron (1999) describe the process of semiotic analysis as applied at a micro (word, sentence) and macro level. This study made use of both levels of analysis to investigate the underlying meaning contained in the language used by respondents in their narratives and, through this, to understand their experience at a deeper level.

Semiotic analysis, which dates from the work of the linguist Saussure and has been developed by researchers in many fields, is closely related to language and communication in the larger sense. In this study, an analysis of the nature
and content of communication is especially relevant because of the complex language situation in West Sumatra, and in Indonesia in general. The first language of people in West Sumatra is Minang, a language that is related to Malay but is viewed as having split from Proto-Malay at an early period. Minang is the language of daily interaction and the language people speak at home. However, public interaction in Indonesia, such as in schools, government, and the media, uses Indonesian, the national language of the country. Indonesian is a standardised form of Malay but is a separate language from Minang. Further, the public of West Sumatra is Muslim. Adherence to this religion is part of personal identity as a member of the Minangkabau ethnic group. The language of Islam is Arabic. While people in West Sumatra do not speak Arabic, they use it in religious contexts in certain formalised ways. Finally, English is the most widely used foreign language and is the major source of loan words and concepts in modern Indonesian. For this reason, the words and expressions used by respondents in this study may have specific social meanings that must be understood. Similarly, switching between languages, if it occurs, has social significance as well because certain topics are “properly” discussed in one language and others in another.

3.4. Validity and Reliability
Reliability is a concern in any type of social research and steps must be taken to ensure reliability throughout the research process (Kidder and Judd, 1986). A process for ensuring reliability should be part of research design and analysis of data. The aim is to produce research that is trustworthy, credible, and confirmable with highly dependable data (see, for example, Golafshani, 2003, and many others). In the context of narrative ethnography, it is important to recognise that people’s memories are highly individual and may not reflect a
complete or historically accurate understanding of what they experienced (Tullis-Owen et al. 2009). For this reason, it may be necessary to evaluate the plausibility of a respondent’s narrative. That is, the narrative must be compared with verifiable events to determine whether such an incident could have occurred and whether it could have been experienced by the person in question (Bochner, 2002). In this study, the use of secondary sources as described above was used to check this aspect of the data collected. In addition, respondent narratives were used to cross-check that the larger framework of contextual determinants as well as historical events are consistent across narratives.

To ensure the validity of the data collected in this study, the respondents’ narratives were recorded and transcribed immediately. This procedure allowed the information they contained to be documented and cross checked with notes taken by hand during the interview process (see Liamputtong, 2010). Validity was tested by asking the respondents to check the transcripts to ensure they accurately recorded their narrative. This also allowed the author to clarify any points that were not clear (see Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Information obtained from secondary sources was used to cross-check contextual information that that related to the background of the narratives obtained. This allowed the personal narratives of the respondents to be put in context and also for inconsistencies in the context to be resolved. In this way, it was possible to check that the interpretation of events used for analysis represented a general consensus in the community of interest (see LeCompte et al. 1993) and that they represented a valid reflection of how the participants felt and what they thought (see Krueger, 1988; Schensul and LeCompte, 2013).
Reflexivity is an important concern in this study. Reflexivity is associated with the position of the researcher in the context of study and his or her relationship to respondents. Reflexivity requires that the researcher develop a high level of self-awareness about the research process. In other words, the researcher must be aware of any biases or assumptions that he or she may have in relation to the topic of research and that may inadvertently affect the process of data collection and analysis (Begoray and Bannister, 2010). Reflexivity is required from the researcher to balance his or her position within the research context. In this study, the researcher was a woman and a member of the Minangkabau society of West Sumatra. While there were certain advantages associated with this, such as the ability to use the local language as well as Indonesian in conducting interviews and an insider’s understanding of social issues and norms, it also meant that the researcher had specific ideas about the culture and its values. For this reason, this study applied four principles intended to overcome any biases that might have resulted through a lack of reflexivity. They were theory construction, methodological disclosure, development of a narrative voice, and presentation of a polyphonic text (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). A theory about the experience of the participants in this study underlies the research questions. This theory comes from the literature reviewed. The methodology for this study was intended to operationalise as much of the process of research as possible. The researcher was required to use a process of continuous self-reflection throughout data collection and analysis. The presence of the researcher’s narrative voice may be discernable in the text but care was taken to clearly identify and separate data from analysis. Finally, participants were enabled to speak for themselves. A significant number of quotations from their interviews in their original language (Minang and
Indonesian) are presented. These are translated but also appear in their original form.

3.5. Translation
The interviews for this study were conducted in the language of choice of the participants. In many cases, this was Minang, the local language of West Sumatra, or Minang mixed with Indonesian. Secondary data used for this study was in Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia and the language of the media. For this reason, this study required translation of material to be presented as part of its findings. These translations were made by the author, but all translations were checked by Professor Ismet Fanany, the author’s principal supervisor, who is a native speaker of Minang and Indonesian.

3.6. Ethics
Ethics approval for this study was sought from the Deakin University Human Ethics Research Group and complied with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. This study was considered to present some risk because of the nature of the information sought from participants. The nature of the events of interest is such that many people in Indonesia today remain sensitive to association with the ideas of Communism, and this period of history was a traumatic period for many of those involved. However, these events are now five decades in the past, and the aim of this study is to study the resilience of those who experienced them. For this reason, this study was not viewed as contributing to psychological distress for the participants because it proposed to study the experiences of those involved from a positive perspective, rather than to investigate the traumatic events themselves or to promote an identity of victimhood.
3.7 Summary
This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. It contains sections that outline the study design, collection of data, analysis of data, validity and reliability concerns, and translation and ethics issues. The nature of Sroufe’s pathways model of resilience that is used as a framework in this study is discussed as is the process and function of narrative ethnography that provides the approach used to elicit the experiences of the study participants.
Chapter 4

Cultural and Historical Background

This chapter provides cultural and historical background that supports the narratives of the women who took part in this study. It contains sections relating to the geography of West Sumatra, the matrilineal social structure that is traditional in the community, and Indonesia in the 1960s. These sections outline the relevant social and cultural issues discussed by the study participants in relating their personal experiences of the 1965-66 period and the years that followed.

4.1 Geography of West Sumatra

The term Minangkabau is sometimes used as a geographical identifier to refer to the Indonesian province of West Sumatra, located on the central west coast of the island of Sumatra. However, the term Minangkabau more correctly refers to a cultural environment that is shaped by the traditions of the Minangkabau ethnic group that originates in the area that is now West Sumatra. The region was first delineated as an administrative area during the Dutch colonial period and was part of the province of Central Sumatra (Sumatera Tengah) immediately following Indonesia’s independence (see Mansoer, et al., 1970; Amran, 1981). At this time, the highland town of Bukittinggi was the capital of Sumatera Tengah. In modern West Sumatra, Bukittinggi is a major town, but the city of Padang is the provincial capital.

West Sumatra is occupied almost entirely by people of Minangkabau ethnic origin. They speak the Minangkabau language (also referred to as Minang),
which is linguistically related to Malay; are Muslim; and have a matrilineal social structure that is unique in Indonesia. As a result of this homogeneity, the Minangkabau language is in common use in daily life all over the province and is the first language of most of the population. The ability to use Indonesian is high, however, and the language is used in all official interaction (education, government, the media), as in the rest of Indonesia. The homogeneous population also means that certain aspects of Minangkabau culture are generally accepted and applied by most of the public. This includes the open practice of various kinds of religious behaviour as well as social behaviour that fits with the Minangkabau cultural outlook.

Geographically, the Minangkabau region is roughly the same as the modern province of West Sumatra and runs from Nagari Air Bangis in the southwest to Taratak (near Teluk Kuantan in the province of Riau) in the southeast. The southern border is in the Pesisir area (Navis, 1984). This corresponds to the area controlled by the Minangkabau kings in ancient times (Batuah, and Madjoindo, 1956; and Navis, 1984; Djamaris, 1991). The area borders the province of North Sumatra to the north and Bengkulu to the south. There are large populations of people of Minangkabau origin in the cities located in these nearby regions, especially in Pekanbaru, Riau; in Bengkulu; and in the province of Jambi located to the southeast.

The traditional Minangkabau world has two spatial divisions: the darek, which refers to the highland area in the center of West Sumatra; and the rantau, which includes the coastal part of the province. The darek is located in the Bukit Barisan mountains, around Mount Singgalang, Tandikek, Merapi, and Sago. This upland territory is divided into three luhak (districts), Luhak Tanah Data, Luhak
Agam, dan Luhak Limo Puluah Koto. The rantau includes Pasaman, Lubuk Sikaping, Rao, Solok Selayo, Muaro Paneh, Alahan Panjang, Muaro Labuah, Alam Surambi Sungai Pagu, Sawahlunto Sijunjung, the border of Riau and Jambi, Rokan, Siak, Tapung, Kampar, Kuantan/Indragiri, and Batang Hari (Madjoindo, 1956). These areas were settled by Minangkabau in ancient times and are now considered part of the Minangkabau world.

The physical environment of the Minangkabau world is tropical and is distinguished by rice fields, small villages, and jungle against a backdrop of high mountains. The fertility of the soil depends on the presence of volcanic activity, and access to agricultural land is the traditional source of wealth and livelihood. This environment provides context as well as the content for the culture’s worldview. This is discussed in detail by Fanany and Fanany (2003).

The Minangkabau world as described above is characterised by a social structure that is associated with the traditional culture of the Minangkabau ethnic group. This culture is distinct in Indonesia, and the associated social structure has a number of elements not found in other parts of the country. This is important in this study because of the relationship between traditional social structures and practices and the development of resilience in the women who took part in this research.

4.2 Matriliny
The Minangkabau people have a traditional social structure that is matrilineal. This is unique in Indonesia and is one of only a few such groups in the world (see De Jong, 2012). The most important aspect of this traditional culture in Minang society today is the nature of land ownership. Land and other forms of
wealth are owned in common by extended families that descend from a senior woman. All the women of the family have a right to use and benefit from these assets and cannot be denied this right. Family land cannot be sold by individuals but can be divided up for use by the women of the family by consensus of the group (see von Benda-Beckmann, 2013).

It is generally agreed in Minangkabau society that women are the heads of families and the main decision makers in relation to family issues. However, there are also leadership roles for men. One of the most important is as uncle to a man’s sister’s children. This maternal uncle, mamak in Minang, has a specific responsibility for the education and well-being of his nieces and nephews. Traditionally, this responsibility was greater even than that of a person’s father. This relationship is based on another basic principle of Minangkabau society where each person is considered a member of his or her mother’s family for life. This means that children are part of the same family as their mother and her brother (mamak), but not their own father.

Men will always be part of their mother’s family, even after marriage, and will have certain responsibilities toward their own sisters and female relatives, as mamak to their nieces and nephews, and in terms of their expected contribution to working on the family’s land. For this reason, Minangkabau men have traditionally had a more distant relationship with their wife’s family than with their own throughout their life. They do not have the same rights to their mother’s family property as women, however, and can only use family land with the agreement of their female relatives (see Biezeveld, 2002). In this study, women’s undeniable access to land and other assets was extremely important.
in contributing to resilience among the study participants; if the study had involved men, this might have been different.

Because each person in Minangkabau society is a member of his or her mother’s family, there is a recognized formal relationship with the family on one’s father’s side. These relatives are called bako in Minang, which distinguishes them from the closer family on one’s mother’s side. Traditionally, it was very important to maintain good relations with one’s bako, but these responsibilities were social and did not involve resources, as is the case with maternal relatives. In this study, some of the women were able to benefit from the assets of their bako. This, however, is unusual in Minangkabau and, as a result, was a remarkable occurrence.

In the past, when more people lived in the area where their ancestors came from and where their mother’s extended family had land, the social relations between the sides of the family were very important. This is less the case today because of the social change and alternatives to the traditional environment that are increasingly important to younger people (see Fanany and Fanany, 2017). However, at the time the women who took part in this study were young, the extended family structure and the traditional relationships between maternal and paternal relatives was much stronger. For this reason, these traditional social structures were extremely important in their resilience and in supplying the means for them to cope and adjust to the negative events they experienced.

At that time, as is still the case today, the traditional environment offered a parallel context that exists alongside the national environment. The traditional
environment is characterized by use of Minang and is structured by traditional culture and principles. The national environment uses Indonesian and is structured by the nature of the modern nation of Indonesia. While every person, to a greater or lesser extent, interacts in each of these domains, it is also possible to live almost exclusively in one or the other. In this study, the existence of a Minangkabau cultural environment was extremely important to the women involved. They discussed this in detail and described how they were able to take advantage of their rights as women in the traditional matrilineal society of Minangkabau.

4.3 Indonesia in the 1960s

Indonesia achieved independence from the Dutch in 1945. Its early years under President Soekarno were politically dynamic, with various parties and movements competing for public support. By the late 1950s, following several separatist conflicts, one of which involved West Sumatra, two important political forces emerged. One of these represented an Islamic view and was embodied in the Masyumi political party. The other was Communism, as espoused by the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). Each of these organisations had a women’s group that was intended to popularise their views. The Masyumi women’s organization, called Wanita Muslimat Masyumi, contrasted with the Communist women’s group, Gerwani. Several of the women in this study were associated with Gerwani which operated like any other social group and was not a political party in the modern understanding.

One of the aims of Wanita Muslimat Masyumi was to spread anti-Communist sentiment among women. Communism was often compared to religion at
meetings and events sponsored by the organisation. This created an opposition between Islam and Marxism. Historically, the PKI had been important in West Sumatra in the opposition to the Dutch, when it was seen as championing the view of the much of the public in the nationalist movement of the 1920s (Zed, 2004). By the end of the 1950s, however, the party was viewed as being opposed to religion, which was an important social force in West Sumatra, with the result that Communism became a negative influence in the community.

Following the rebellion against the central government that took place from 1958-1962, Gerwani, which had originally been less aggressive in recruitment and activities than Wanita Muslimat Masyumi, began to be more active. The organization began approaching women, especially in the Limo Puluhah Koto region, and urging them to join Gerwani. Many women, particularly those who had male relatives interested in Communism, changed affiliation and joined Gerwani or another group, Barisan Tani Indonesia (Ranks of the Indonesian Farmers). Because of the role the Islamic organisations had played in the rebellion, they were now much less able to interact politically, and many women who had taken part in political action under their auspices were recruited by Communist organisations (see Kahin, 1999). This highlights the fact that many people in West Sumatra, including women, were less interested in the specific political motivation or views of these organisations. Instead, they were more concerned about potential social change that might come about through their participation and often wished to take part in the social aspects of the group.

Amid increasing concern among prominent figures in the Minangkabau community about the growing popularity of Communism and official crack
downs on Communist-leaning newspapers, a counter force began to appear in West Sumatra that included the establishment of a pro-government newspaper in Padang that became a voice for the armed forces (Kahin, 2005). Finally, in late 1964, an order was given by the Regional Command of the military to arm members of the public in every district who would support the army against Communists. The aim was to head off any action by Communist forces that might threaten the government.

In September of 1965, a coup took place in Jakarta that appeared to involve a small number of military officers, who had formed an alternative organisation of armed forces members and kidnapped and assassinated six generals. The next day, several thousand soldiers occupied strategic areas of the capital and took control of the national radio broadcaster. The armed forces Strategic Reserve (KOSTRAD), commanded by Major General Soeharto who became Indonesia’s second president, took control of the situation. Sometime before this, the head of the PKI as well as the commander of the air force were said to have fled, suggesting that they had been involved in the coup attempt. By seven that morning, a radio announcement told the public that a sub-group of the army had taken control and had suppressed a coup attempt by a group of generals with the help of the CIA. President Soekarno was said to have been taken into protective custody in order to ensure his safety (Selected Documents Relating to the September 30 Movement and its Epilogue, 1966).

Soon after, the army began to describe the involvement of the PKI in the coup attempt. This view was promoted strongly by the new government of President Soeharto (the New Order) and was abbreviated as G30S/PKI, where G stood for gerakan, the Indonesian word for ‘movement’; 30 S referred to 30 September;
and PKI is the Indonesian acronym for the Indonesian Communist Party. A number of arrests and trials ensued. In West Sumatra, a short period of anti-Communist activity followed that resulted in the suspension of 115 teachers and dismissal of 34 others from their positions, while 448 more people were waiting for a decision from Education and Culture officials (Zed, et al., 1996). By November 1965, "cleansing" conducted by the army and the West Sumatra anti-Communist alliance began (Narny, 2008). Despite of the relatively small scale, some murders did occur (see Bahar, 1994; Narny, 2008). The arrest of PKI members and members of its organisations occurred throughout the area. Several of the women in this study were affected by these arrests.

Overall, the number of people killed in West Sumatra during these anti-Communist activities was small compared to what occurred in Java and Bali. Nonetheless, the apprehension felt by members of Communist organisations was significant (Bahar, 1994; Narny, 2008). This fear, coming soon after a period of political turmoil in the late 1950s, had a disproportionate impact on the public in West Sumatra that was wary of extreme views by this time. Having been involved in a recent rebellion against the central government, the fear of additional reprisal may have been higher than was warranted by what actually occurred. Additionally, social networks based on kinship and place of origin have always been strong in the region, and news spread rapidly, possibly becoming exaggerated or losing accuracy. Many extended families were anxious to protect their members, especially if someone in the family had been involved in the Communist Party. These elements of the situation emerged from the narratives provided by the women who took part in this study and should be understood as part of the context that led up to the period of stress which represents the beginning of the phase of their life that is of interest here.
4.4 Summary
This chapter provides the contextual background against which the narratives of the woman who took part in this study should be understood. The chapter’s subsections describe the geographical area that makes up the Minangkabau world, the nature of the matrilineal social structure, and the political events of the 1960s in Indonesia. These elements are referred to in the participants’ narratives or represent and implied background to which their stories refer.
Chapter 5
The Women and their Strategies

For more than 50 years, people in West Sumatra who were members of the PKI or related organisations, or who had relatives who were involved with the party, have had to live with the associations that emerged following the events of 1965-66 that targeted individuals thought to be Communists or have Communist leanings. This chapter describes the experiences of eight women from various parts of West Sumatra in adapting to the changing political and social context and outlines the strategies they employed to overcome the impacts of this period and reestablish themselves in the community. The stories presented here come from the women themselves. Excerpts of their interviews are presented in original form with translations to convey the tone and language they themselves use to talk about their experience.

5.1 Zainar

Zainar was born 79 years ago in Pucuang Anam, in the VII Koto Sub-District of the Padang Pariaman Regency. Her father was a coconut trader, and her mother was a housewife, who also worked land inherited from her clan. Zainar has two younger siblings, a sister and a brother.

Zainar wanted to become a teacher and attended teachers’ college (Sekolah Guru Bantu (SGB)) in Koto Mambang, Tandikek, Padang Pariman. However, she did not realise this goal because her maternal uncle, who has a traditional responsibility for his sisters’ children, wanted her to marry a man of his choice. Zainar agreed because she felt she could not go against her uncle’s wishes.
In 1953, Zainar married and eventually had two children, a daughter and then a son. Her husband was an active member of the PKI in Padang Pariaman. As the wife of a party member, Zainar took part in the activities of Gerwani, the women’s groups associated with the PKI, which was independent but affiliated with the Communist party. According to Zainar, Gerwani was fairly influential in Padang Pariaman. The organisation’s position on women’s initiatives and the rights of children and its stance against polygamy were attractive to many women in the community. Gerwani was also active in promoting literacy for women and establishing kindergartens. Zainar was involved in a kindergarten set up in her village.

In 1960, Zainar was appointed Head of the Gerwani branch in Padang Pariman, which reflected her role and participation in the activites of the organisation. In 1965, following the killing of the generals at Lubang Buaya in Jakarta, news reports placed responsibility for the incident on the PKI. Zainar recalls how this news, received over the radio, affected the leadership of the PKI in West Sumatra. They immediately instructed their members and others to leave the city and seek refuge in their village of origin or other areas where they felt safe. They also warned members that there might be a search for Communists and Communist sympathisers. In fact, the government did immediately call for members of the party and affiliated organisations to turn themselves in to the police. The authorities also began to arrest party members and supporters.

The rapidly changing situation caused great anxiety for Zainar and her family. Leaving their three year old daughter with Zainar’s mother, Zainar and her husband took their 16 moth old son and left Padang Pariaman. For the next two weeks, they stayed with friends and relatives in other locations but could not
stay long in any one place, as the authorities were conducting an intensive search for PKI members. Zainar explained in Minang:

“Mereka membawo bambu runcing dan berteriak-teriak. Babi, babi batino, itu keceknYo.”

[They were armed with sharpened bamboo spears and were yelling. ‘Pigs!’ ‘Female swine!’ That’s what they were saying.]

The situation forced Zainar, her husband, and a number of friends to hide in the jungle near Mount Tandikek in Pariaman. This was a boundary area between the regencies of Pariaman and Agam. Zainar’s family was very concerned about the baby and decided to come and get him. Her grandfather came to the jungle where Zainar and her husband were and took the child home. Zainar explained what she recalled of this event in Minang:


[At the time we went to the jungle, I was with Siti’s father [Siti is the respondent’s daughter]. My other child was only 16 months old when this happened so I took him with me. When we first went to the jungle, we came to a big hill. My grandfather came to meet us there. He took the baby home. The baby was still nursing. Siti was three and stayed with grandma, my grandmother. So, that was how the child
suffered. The baby became sick and could not be treated and died.]

Following this, Zainar and her husband continued through the jungle into the region of Agam. The weather was bad, and it was difficult to find food. Sometimes they ate whatever they could find; other times, they ran into people from their area who gave them food. Zainar explained:


[I once spent two days without food. I ate plant roots in the jungle. After that, we finally arrived in Agam. We met some people from our village, and they gave us something to eat. Do you know how we cooked the rice? We found some bamboo and put the rice into the segments. Then we sort of grilled the bamboo on a fire we made. We once went two days without food.]

In March 1966, the new government disbanded the PKI and began to hunt down members more intensively. Zainar, her husband, and their friends knew people were after them, even in the jungle. At the border between the region of Agam and Tandikek Village, Zainar and her husband fell into a gorge. Army personnel, whom Zainar knew were close to the PKI, saved her. However, they could not find her husband. Zainar recalled:

“Nan ayah siti ko ndak basuo lai. Lah mati disinan.”

[They couldn’t find Siti’s father [her husband]. Most probably, he died there.]
Tired of running, Zainar finally surrendered herself at the closest military post in Patamuan, Agam. This post was part of the chain of command of Unit 032 of the Bukit Barisan Military District Command (KODIM), whose headquarters was located in the town of Bukittingi. During her temporary detention, Zainar received proper treatment. However, because she was officially domiciled in Padang Pariaman, she was transferred to Unit 034, located in Pariaman. Zainar was then handed over to a local police station and was imprisoned in the Pariaman civilian penitentiary until 1977.

In the Pariaman penitentiary, Zainar was placed in a 6x6-prison-cell with 20 other women. Facilities in the penitentiary were poor. There were no mattresses or blankets to sleep on. Inmates had to rely on supplies brought by relatives. The food was particularly bad, often consisting of rice mixed with corn. In order to improve conditions, the women devised their own stove to cook on from tin cans they obtained from male inmates who were part of a work gang outside the prison. Visiting relatives brought them food that they cooked in this way.

Some of the women were beaten or raped by the guards. They were subject to taunts and insults during the interviews by police officers seeking information about the party and its members. Zainar chose to say as little as possible and simply answered, ‘I don’t know,’ to all the questions. While in prison, Zainar was permitted to see her daughter anytime she wanted, but Siti was not allowed to stay with her all the time. This was extremely trying for her, and the idea that she was not able to raise her daughter herself was a source of continual anxiety.
She also had to accept that her son had not lived long after their separation, despite being in the care of her family.

While in prison, Zainar met a fellow inmate whom she felt had better prospects than herself. Also a political prisoner, he was serving as the driver for the prison commander. Zainar said:

“Ayah si hen ko, pandai bergaul jo urang KODIM tu, namuah jadi sopir KODIM e. Jadi sayanglah orang KODIM tu ka e. Dek sayang orang KODIM ko, diabonyolah jadi tahanan lua.”

Hen’s father [her husband] was very sociable with the military personnel. He was willing to be their driver, and the military personnel liked him. He was given the privilege of being ‘detained’ outside the prison.

The two married which enabled Zainar to leave the prison and live outside. Because of her husband’s connection to the military, they were allowed to live in a barracks that Zainar recalls had been built by the police to house the very large number of prisoners that exceeded the prison’s capacity. Despite this, they were still required to pay the warden for the privilege of living outside the prison. Zainar explained:

“Jadi tahanan luar tu mambayia tu pik, mambayia Rp 3.000, samo jo Rp 200.000 sahari. Jadi dek awak asa dapek tahanan luar.”

Outside prisoners had to pay 3000 rupiah a day, which is the same as 200,000 rupiah in today’s money. We managed it, just so we could live outside.
From this marriage, Zainar had two children. The first was born when she was still being detained outside the prison, while the second was born after Zainar was freed in 1977.

After being officially pardoned and released by the government in 1977, Zainar and her husband returned to Zainar’s village of Pucuang Anam. The family allowed her to live in her grandmother’s house. In addition, they gave Zainar and her husband some land to farm. Zainar and her husband became banana producers. Their aim was to send their children to school to give them a better future. Zainar explained:


[I put my children through school by farming on my own land. I was determined to educate them. I swore when I was in prison that I would plant bananas and cassava when I got out. I produced a lot of bananas, as many as 10 bunches a week. People in the village bought them. That’s how I supported the children. That’s how I put Siti through school. When she graduated from teacher training, she got a job right away. I also had rice fields, so I worked them as well.]

In this way, Zainar was able to put her daughter Siti (from her first marriage) through school and enable her to become a teacher. Siti’s employment at a public junior high school was noteworthy because of a Ministerial Instruction on the employment of former political prisoners and their families that came
out in 1981. This document, Instruksi Menteri No 31 tahun 1981, was intended to prevent people with what were considered inappropriate political views from obtaining government employment.

According to Zainar, it was possible for her daughter to obtain a teaching position through the assistance of a friend’s younger sibling who worked in the Office of the Governor of West Sumatra. Zainar said:

“There were all kinds of problems. My daughter was the child of a PKI member but . . . she managed to become a government employee. This was Siti, and it was a government job, but thank God, it has all been fine, even now. In 1983, she finished teachers’ college. The one who helped her was the younger sibling of a friend of mine. Siti said, once she graduated, they asked ‘Where do you want to teach, Ti?’ Siti said ‘Just assign me to my village.’ ‘Why do you want to teach there?’ they asked her. ‘There are so many problems.’ Siti said that didn’t matter. She wanted to set things right, maintain the family connection. In the end, no one cared, no one looked into her background. Praise God, she is now a school principal. She even has a Bachelor’s degree.”

Zainar and her husband continued producing bananas into the 1990s. At that time, with the rising cost of living and the need to pay for the education of her
two younger children, one of whom was studying at a college for the health professions and the other of whom was in high school, they opened a new business and set up a café at the bus terminal in Sicincin, a town in Padang Pariaman. About this, Zainar said:

“Manggaleh tu dek upik ndak, pagi jam 5 tu. Kato urang alun timbang tarimo rangik jo langau, awaklah kalua tu...[Laughs.]. Dek rami urang nan mambali.”

[We start selling at 5 in the morning. You call this leaving home ‘before the mosquitoes hand over their shift to the flies.’] [Laughs.] We have a lot of customers early in the morning.]

Zainar’s efforts to educate her children were successful. In addition to Siti, who is now a school principal, her son works for Padang Cement, a government-owned business located in Padang, the capital of West Sumatra. They were able to obtain government employment despite the administrative barriers in place against PKI members and relatives. Those barriers disappeared in 1998 (long after their initial employment) with the end of the New Order government of President Soeharto.

Zainar’s experiences changed her perception of political participation and she determined to concentrate on working and saving money for her children’s future. She explained;

“Kami ko maikuti e se nyo Pik, coblos Golkar keceknyo, kami coblos lo.”

[I decided to just do what the government told me to. If the government said, ‘Choose Golkar’, I chose Golkar.]
Golkar [Golongan Karya = Functional Group] was the political party of President Soeharto. Zainar was referring to the practice during the New Order period of encouraging the public to vote for Golkar in order to maintain political stability and the domination of the party. Today, despite the proliferation of political parties following the end of the New Order, Golkar remains a major party in the national and regional political arena.

Reflecting on the nature of the New Order government almost 20 years after its fall, Zainar has reached a new understanding of the period in question. She believes that then General, and later President, Soeharto was involved in the planning and implementation of the Lubang Buaya incident. She explained:


[Ahmad Yani\(^2\) was a hero. [Soeharto] killed him. If it hadn’t been for Ahmad Yani, West Sumatra would never have been free [from the control of rebellious Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia/PRRI]. He (Ahmad Yani) was friendly with PKI officials. Soeharto accused the PKI of the killing [Ahmad Yani]. How crazy was that? If someone was prominent, Soeharto took care of them. Those generals that died, he was the one who killed them.]

\(^2\) Ahmad Yani was the head of the Indonesian army in 1965. He was one of the generals killed in the coup attempt attributed to the PKI.
Despite her experiences, Zainar is convinced that the events of one’s life are part of their fate that is predestined by God and that they must live out as planned. These events are a test and must be accepted with resolve. Zainar explained:


[I feel very sad. I often cry at night. I frequently get up at midnight to perform the tahajud prayer. I pray that my children will succeed in their lives. That much is very clear. I pray that my children will be successful. Then, at 5 in the morning, I watch a TV program called “Siraman Kalbu” [Showering the Soul]. That program strengthens my faith and helps me accept what happened.]

Now that her second husband is dead, Zainar spends much of her time with her children and grandchildren. Some of them are studying at university, and others are still in school. She still lives in her grandmother’s house, which stands out from others in her village because of the repairs that have been done. Zainar explained:

“Anak-anak nio maniakan haji ibu, tapi ibu ndak nio doh, bilo katunggu, lamo dapek kursinyo, lah mati juo wak dulu. Ibuk katokan rumah selah baik i, tando wak ado di Minangko yo rumah ko nyo, pelok i rumah gadang ko, tu dipelok i nyo basama samo.”

[My children want to pay for me to go on the Haj pilgrimage (to Mecca), but I do not want to, because in order to get a place, you have to wait for a very long time. I’d probably die before we even got the chance. Instead, I asked my children
to renovate our house, to show that we are indeed Minangkabau people. ‘Please fix up the house of our clan,’ I said. And, sure enough, they did, with each of paying their share."

For Zainar, the house was a priority. Despite the problems she has experienced in relation to the national political context, her identity as a Minangkabau woman with a special responsibility to maintain and improve the property of her extended family is more important and more enduring. The matrilineal network and connections of the extended family that exist in the traditional environment of West Sumatra are separate from any political events and form the basis for her identity and that of her children and grandchildren.

5.2. Sofia
Sofia was born 76 years ago. Her father was the head of their clan and held the title Datuak Maka in Koto Laweh where they lived. Sofia’s father had an ancestor who had been appointed Tuanku Lareh by the Dutch. This position required that he keep order among the clans and extended families in the area. Sofia’s mother came from the same region as her father. She was a rice trader and came from an ordinary family.

When the PKI came into existence, Sofia’s father became the chair of the Agam District Branch of the party and served as an advisor to Regent of Batusangkar, a nearby town in another district. As a leader, he was knowledgable about Communist ideology, Minangkabau tradition, and Islam, and, according to Sofia, her father was also a source of information about community life, the application of traditional law, and Islamic teachings for many people in the community.
Sofia’s mother owned a rice shop located in the center of the Nagari Koto Baru market. She was active in the management of Gerwani, an women’s organization associated with the PKI. Generally, the wives of PKI members would join Gerwani as a matter of course. However, according to Sofia, her mother joined Gerwani because she supported the anti-polygamy views the organisation espoused.

Sofia, was the oldest of eight children and had five sisters and two brothers. She eventually married a man who was an activist from the Association of Indonesian Scholars (PSI), an organisation aligned with PKI. Sofia had been a university student in Padang but did not complete her degree because she married. While at the university, Sofia became an activist with the Center for the Indonesian University Student Movement (CGMI). This organisation also supported the PKI. She often took part in dance or drama performances staged by CGMI and once represented Indonesia as a member of a dance group that was sent to Moscow.

When the PKI and its associated organisations were disbanded at the end of 1965, Sofia’s father, mother, husband, and a younger brother were arrested and imprisoned in different locations. At this time, Sofia, who had infant twins, managed to leave Padang and return to Koto Laweh in Agam. One of her younger sisters, who was a university student at that time, married a member of the Military Police Corps (CPM) who was stationed in Padang, which allowed her to avoid the attention of the authorities. Sofia's other five sisters also returned to Koto Laweh.
Sofia lived in a house that belonged to her mother’s family with six of her siblings and her grandmother. In Koto Laweh, as former members of the PKI and related organisations, they were required to report to the police on a regular basis. After the first year, this requirement was reduced until it was finally removed in 1970.

Life in the village without her parents present was difficult for Sofia whose main concern was to feed herself and her siblings. Without older members of the family who would have played important roles in the extended family, Sofia had to take on some of their duties. In the first months in the village, she was forced to sell many of the families possessions to get by. Sofia explained in Minang:

“Bajua sapeda, bajua lamari, bajua pacah balah, bajua baju, kain.”

[I sold the bicycle, the wardrobe, the dishes, clothing, even sarongs.]

Sofia used the money to support her parents, who were in prison, and her younger siblings, as well as to pay for transportation to visit her relatives who were incarcerated in different locations. Sofia explained in Minang:

[You had to take food to people in prison. On different days, I would take food to my husband in Padang Panjang, my father in Batusangkar, and my mother in Bukittinggi. One time, I had no money to go see my mother. So I sold a piece of cloth I had [to wear wrapped around the waist like a skirt]. The man asked me what I needed the money for. I replied that I needed it to visit my mother in prison. My father, mother, husband, and younger brother were all in prison and I had to take them food.]

Once she had sold everything of value, Sofia had to find other ways to support the family. Like every other woman in Minangkabau, Sofia was entitled to a share of the property of her mother’s family. It was not much however. Her mother’s family owned some rice fields, but the revenue was insufficient to support the seven family members in the village and the four who were in prison.

Under these circumstances, the extended family of Sofia’s father, that was very well to do, allowed Sofia and her younger siblings to work some of their land. Sofia described this unusual situation in Minang:

“Dek ayah ibu dalam panjaro, disuruahnyo manggarap dek inyiak ketek ibu. Saketek, tantu ndak cukuik do.”

[With my parents in prison, my (paternal) grandparents let me work one of their rice fields. It was small and was not enough to feed all of us.]

To supplement their income, Sofia and her siblings began to work on other people’s land for wages. She continued:
“Bajamua padi urang dek urang sakatidiang, dek awak saliter. Adiak ibu nan laki-laki tu pulang sakolah langsung ka sawah, manyabik.”

[I would dry people’s rice in the sun. For every bushel they got, I got a liter. My younger brother would go right to the fields with a sickle when he got home from school].

After a year, Sofia’s mother was released, and several months after that her father died. Sofia learned of her father’s death directly from the CPM commander in Batusangkar when she went to visit him at the prison. Sofia recalled:


[‘Sofia, I am sending your father to the moon,’ said the commander, Major Suroso. I said, ‘That’s up to you. My father will die with his convictions intact.’ Other CPM personnel heard this and someone said, ‘You’re political, aren’t you?’ He yelled at me, and I was scared. But I kept quiet after that. Soon after that, my father was gone from the prison. Of course, I tried to find him and eventually learned that he had been killed. There were three of them from Batusangkar. First, they killed my father, then the second and third, one after another. If I recall correctly, my father was killed in 1966.]
At this point, Sofia and her mother had to take full responsibility for the family. Her mother resumed her rice business at her old location at the Nagari Koto Baru market. In the past, however, her mother had owned a shop. Now she sold rice outside, in front of the store she used to own. While she was in prison, someone had come and simply taken possession of her shop. Sofia said in Minang:

“Bara padiah no dek upik tu.”

[You can imagine how bitter this was.]

With their mother selling rice in the market, Sofia and her sisters did whatever they could to increase their income. Sofia tried to sell food, she recalled:


[I made whatever I could. I would make crackers or anything fried. Fried corn, spiced crackers, spiced peanuts. [Laugh.] I sold them to small shops. I also sold cookies to stores in Padang Panjang and Bukittinggi. I sold cakes to restaurants. That was my work. Back then, we didn’t have an oven. I used dried coconut husks (to make a fire) and an earthenware pot [tarenang]. You know what a tarenang is, don’t you? It’s an earthenware vessel. This was how I baked the cakes].

In order to help her mother and the other members of the family, Sofia also worked as a dancer at a nightclub in Padang.

[I had a friend who owned a nightclub in Padang, where they would have traditional dances every Saturday night. The name of the place was ‘Mayestik.’Before that, another friend wanted me to join a dance tour to Pekanbaru. That was when my luck began to change. I danced at the club once a week. I’d do the Umbrella Dance, the Plate Dance, and other Minang dances. They paid me once a week. Every Saturday, I’d go to Padang. On Saturdays, I’d be at this glittering place in Padang and on Sunday, I’d be working in the rice fields in my bare feet. [Laughs.] The contrast was extreme. No one in the village knew what I did in Padang every Saturday night. No one in Padang knew what I did from Sunday to Saturday. [Laughs.] The important thing was, we could live.]

Eventually, people in the village learned of her dancing and would talk about her. However, this was something her family could tolerate. She said:

“Sampai ibuk dikatokan hotes bagai. Nan penting dek ibuk bisa hiduk.”
[They said I must be a ‘hostess’ [prostitute]. But the important thing was that we could survive.]

Economic pressures and economic and political isolation during the New Order made it impossible for Sofia to continue her education. Sofia recalled her mother saying, “Kok ka kalian nio lanjuik sakaloh cari pitih sorong” [If you all want to continue your education, you pay for it yourself]. Sofia’s mother was certain that no amount education her children might have would overcome the problem of getting a job with the family’s background as long as the New Order government remained in power. Nonetheless, one of Sofia’s sisters did overcome the isolation of children of former political detainees implemented by the New Order. Sofia explained:

“Si Ta ko, untuk biaya sakolahnyo inyo cari surang jo mamburuh disawah tiok akhir pakan. Kami cuma manyadiokan samba jo bareh senyo dari rumah. Inyo lai lo pandai, banyak kawannya ndak minta tolong jo inyo, diajak baraja karumah, diagiahnyo makan. [Laughs.]”

[My sister, Ta, worked on people’s land every weekend to pay for school. We only had enough to feed ourselves. But she was a good student and had a lot of friends who helped her. They would invite her over to study and give her a meal. [Laughs.]]

This sister graduated from high school and got a job at Pertamina, the state-owned oil and gas company. Another of Sofia’s younger siblings earned a Bachelor’s degree.

In 1972, Sofia’s husband was released from prison but could do little to help support the family because of chronic illness. He died in 1975. Sofia then
married another man who had also been a political detainee. She felt this would be best because someone from a similar background would better understand her family’s situation. Some friends introduced her to a widower who had three children. They married in 1978. With her new husband, Sofia supported her family by working land lent to her by her father’s family.

This was a difficult situation because Sofia did not have a traditional right to use this land, and it might have been claimed by someone from the extended family that did have a right to it. For this reason, it was important to them to find another source of livelihood. Sofia explained:

“Kami batekat pik, untuk indak salamanyo jadi patani doh. Bialah makan jo lado, untuk bisa mangumpuan pitih untuak modal usaho.”

[We were determined that we were not going to be farmers forever. We didn’t mind eating rice with nothing but chili, as long as we could save money for our own business].

After about five years of farming, Sofia and her husband decided to quit. Her husband used the money they had saved to finance a rural transport business. According to Sofia, the decision to do business was based on the consideration that there were very few transport businesses that helped farmers get their produce to a number of markets around Nagari Koto Laweh or to Bukittinggi and Padang Panjang. At the same time, Sofia also began selling rice. She bought it from farmers and sold it in the rural markets in Nagari Koto Laweh.

Slowly, their economic status improved. One of Sofia’s children and one of the children of her husband’s former wife graduated from university. Sofia and her
husband built a house for themselves. It was located on land given to them by Sofia’s father family. Sofia explained how this occurred:


[The story was like this. My aunt (on her mother’s side) lived in the traditional house. [I said to my aunt (on my father’s side)]“Aunty, please give me a piece of land to build a house on.”“Yes, I will, but not now.”“If you give me the land someday in the future, I might not be able to use it because I will be old. I won’t be able to enjoy your gift. If you are really going to give it to me, give it to me now. If you give it to me now, I will be able to benefit and enjoy your gift.”“If that is what you want, alright, I’ll give it to you.” (I said,) “I only have one child, Aunty. Ten meters of land would be enough for me.”]

At present, Sofia, together with her children and grandchildren, live in the house they built on the land given to them by her father’s family. Sofia no longer works. She spends most of her time in community activities, such as reciting the Qur’an with other housewives in the village.

During the New Order, Sofia no longer was interested in political activities. She was busy with her business. In addition, she became one of the representatives of the neighborhood level women’s welfare group, Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK) originally founded as a joint ministry initiative in 1967. She was eventually recognized as one of the most successful representatives and was given an appreciation award by the Minister of Social Service.
Following the end of the New Order in 1989, Sofia became involved with the Research Foundation for Research on the Victims of 1965/1966 (Yayasan Penelitian Korban 1965/1966). She was one of the founders of the branch of this organisation in West Sumatra. Management conflicts occurred following the establishment of the foundation, which caused Sofia to resign.

5.3. Nurma
Nurma was the wife of a legislative assembly member from the Indonesian Communist Party. She is the eldest of four children and was raised in a traditional house owned by her father’s family in Koto Laweh, Agam. Nurma lived with her father’s sister who did not have children. According to her, her father’s extended family was unfortunate because none of her aunts on that side had daughters. Nurma was seen as the replacement heir for her father’s extended family.

Nurma was raised in an atmosphere of nationalism. Her uncle was prominent in the nationalist movement in the colonial era. His name was Ahmad Chatib, better known as Datuak Batuah. Datuak Batuah was a teacher, religious leader, and independence fighter for the Indonesian Republic. He had a Communist ideology and helped create a philosophy called Islam Kuminih [Islamic Communism] in the province. Using this ideology, he spread nationalism in West Sumatra as a way of rebelling against the Durch. As a consequence, he was arrested by the colonial government and exiled in Boven Digul.

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3 Boven Digul is a region in the southern part of Papua, located in the far eastern part of Indonesian. It was used by the Dutch as a place of exile for political prisoners in
During the colonial period, the house where Nurma lived was a gathering place for activists for Indonesian independence. Following the departure of the Dutch, the house became a centre for Communist activists under the protection of the PKI. Among the PKI figures who visited the house was Nurma’s future husband. He was a PKI member and won a seat in the National Legislative Assembly in Jakarta. When they were living in Jakarta, Nurma worked as a primary school teacher. They had four children, but one died in childhood.

Following the assassination of the generals at Lubang Buaya, the search for Communists was more rapid in Jakarta than in other places. Nurma and her husband had to act fast. Nurma’s husband disguised himself and went into hiding. Nurma and her children moved from one rented house to another in Jakarta. During this time, Nurma and her husband were in secret communication with each other through friends and relatives in Jakarta. Occasionally, Nurma’s husband visited the family and stayed for a while. This went on until 1970. In that year, one of her husband’s colleagues betrayed him to the police. Nurma’s husband was arrested and sent to Cipinang Penitentiary in Jakarta for some time. Later, he was transferred to Buru Island in Nusakambangan.

Nurma left her job as a teacher and began working in a grocery store located in the Tanah Abang Market. When her husband was arrested, Nurma was also interrogated. She was forced to confess that her husband took part in the assassination at Lubang Buaya on 1 October 1965 According to Nurma, she order to remove them as far as possible from the areas where they were seen as causing trouble.
insisted that she knew nothing about her husband’s activities and explained to the army that she was just an ordinary homemaker.

The interrogation lasted for several months. Nurma resumed her work in the market. A trader who was concerned about her situation helped her to finance a small business. Back in the village, Nurma’s family members figured out ways to help her as well. Every year, they sent her a share of the harvest that she was entitled to. This helped Nurma support her children and her husband in prison.

However, Nurma could not focus on her trading for long. Her youngest child was often sick and always needed her at home. Nurma closed her shop. She decided to take a sewing course and opened a new business at home. Nurma explained:

“I lived with my children. I tried to be a trader. I had stopped teaching and started small business. But it was very hard. Yanto (her youngest son) was always sick. He was in and out of the hospital. The business was interrupted. When he was better, I would sell things. Then he’d be in the hospital again. I sold groceries. I didn’t know what to do. Finally, I enrolled in a sewing course. I figured I could take in sewing
and still look after my children. If I continued to run the shop, I would be open for an hour or two and then have to go home because the child was sick. When he was a child, Yanto had epilepsy. Seeing someone having a seizure is frightening. So, I decided it would be better for me to learn how to sew. I could earn money from sewing.]

Once she had the skill and a large clientele Nurma opened a sewing course at her rented house in 1974. This earned her a good income. She explained:


[The income was good, and I could feed my children. I could afford to buy them clothes and give them pocket money. Before that, we sometimes had days with nothing to eat. Sometimes we only had soy sauce. We had to make the rice last for several days. It was just enough to get by. At times, we had only watercress with soy sauce. That was what it was like when my husband was not there.]

With the money she earned from her sewing, Nurma was also able to provide her husband with clothes and medicine while he was on Buru Island. Despite becoming financially stable, Nurma was worried about the psychological development of her children, who were bullied by other students at school. Nurma went on:

“Anak-anak saya itu sering diejek bahwa Bapak mereka adalah pembunuh para jendral.”
[My children were often mocked; [other children said] their father had killed the generals.]

At the suggestion of her friends, Nurma moved her children to a Catholic school run by the Santa Maria Foundation [Yayasan Santa Maria]. The tuition was high, but Nurma was allowed to pay reduced fees. Her children were treated better in this school than in the public school they attended before.

In 1978, Nurma received a letter from her mother’s relatives in Koto Laweh where the family came from. The letter said her mother was sick and asked her to come home. Together with her children, Nurma returned to the village. However, when she arrived, she learned that her mother was fine. The family members had made up the news as a way of getting her to come back. Her extended family did not want her life in Jakarta to be more difficult than it already was.

However, anti-Communist sentiment was deeply rooted in her village. Nurma explained:


[People in the village were surprised I came home. How could she come home? [they asked.] People were still turning in Communists. A few of my friends had dared to come there, others did not. But I had one friend, because of his social circle
and the fact that he was a man, who would sit in the coffee shop. He would find me (and tell me what people were saying). If I stayed in the village, they would turn me in. So I talked to my relatives; if I stayed there, I would be arrested. If I went back to Jakarta, they wouldn’t get me.]

After discussing the matter with her extended family, the family agreed that Nurma and the children should go back to Jakarta, but, within two years, they again told Nurma to return to the village. Her father’s family wanted her to live in the house where she grew up. Her aunt and uncle had now died, and the family wanted her to manage the house and land that had belonged to them. According to Nurma, none of her father’s family members lived in the village, and none of them had daughters who were entitled to use the land. Her mother’s side of the family also wanted Nurma to manage their property since all of her siblings had left the village and were living in other places. Nurma agreed and again moved back to Koto Laweh with her children.

When she arrived, Nurma felt that people in the village now accepted her presence. Some of them were still suspicious about her political leanings, especially the local administrators in the village and sub-district. Nurma explained what happened when she went to the sub-district office:

“’Gestapu datang.’ ‘Memang kenapa pak, kita dibilang gestapu?’ Awak ndak pernah dihukum dek urang. Wak ndak pernah ikut-ikutan!. Itu bapak. Kalau bapak kan dia saja yang ikut, bukan aku.”

[‘Gestapu’ is coming (they said). ‘Why did you call me that, Sir? Why did you call me Gestapu?’[I asked.] I had never been convicted. I never participated! It was my husband. My husband was the only one who did it. Not me.]
This attitude did not deter Nurma. She participated in community affairs through the women’s organisation and contributed to various activities. She continued to sew, make flower arrangements, and do the clothing and make-up for brides. Nurma frequently helped people dress their nieces and nephews who were getting married. Her ability to teach such skills to others in the village allowed them to win a number of local competitions. This encouraged people, including government officials, to accept Nurma within the community.

In addition, Nurma managed the property on both her mother’s and her father’s side of the family. She explained:


[This was where we agreed, all of us siblings. It should have been the four of us. The rice fields should have been divided into four. If not that, we should have taken turns. This one one year, this one one year, so that everyone would get a turn every four years. But because my sisters understood about us, who my husband was, they never asked for their share. We had an agreement with our parents, whoever was at home or in the village would mind the house and work the fields. So they didn’t worry about it. I used the land as best I could. Except if they were in need, then I had to help them of course.]
Soon after returning to the village, Nurma received a letter from her husband telling her he had been released from prison and wondering whether he should return to the village or stay in Jakarta. Nurma told him to come home and live with her and the children. He did so, but it was difficult to earn a living from farming the family’s land. So Nurma and her husband decided to move to Padang, the provincial capital, and open a grocery store in Air Tawar, a part of the city that is densely populated. There are two universities in the area, and a large number of students live there.

Nurma operated this business for about 10 years. Two of her children obtained university degrees. One did not complete his studies because of conflict with his supervisor that made it difficult for him to finish his thesis. He decided to move to Australia and settled there. Her other two children have jobs and families of their own.

In 1991, Nurma and her husband again returned to the village to live on her family’s land in the house where she grew up. One of her children is married and lives with Nurma with his own family. In 2011, Nurma’s husband died, and she continued to live with her son and his family in the village.

Nurma does not regret any of the things she did or that have happened to her. She sees them as the risks associated with living. She said:

“Seorang pejuang harus bisa menahan resiko, apapun yang terjadi. Seorang pejuang, tokoh politik, organisasi dia harus
bisa menerima apa yang terjadi pada dirinya. Seorang pejuang harus bisa melaluiya.”

[A fighter has to be able to take risks, no matter what happens. A fighter, a political figure, has to accept whatever happens to them. A fighter must be able to get through it all.]

When she encounters difficulty, Nurma relies on prayer and the knowledge that whatever happens has been determined by God and is her lot. This view has allowed her to cope and adapt to the situation around her.

After the disbandment of the PKI, Nurma took no interest in politics. She did whatever was expected of citizens during the New Order period and accepted that it would be best to show her support for the government as people with questionable political histories were supposed to.

When the New Order collapsed in 1998, Nurma was not interested in becoming part of an NGO like the Foundation for Research on the Victims of 1965/1966 (YPKP). This was different from her husband. Nurma’s husband was one of the founders of YPKP in West Sumatra. Disagreements among the management caused him to resign from the organisation, and go ‘underground’ with several of his supporters. Nurma was worried about her husband’s activities but she could do nothing about them. She recalled:

[He never told me anything. I once asked him, ‘What is this all about?’ You don’t need to know, he said. How could I not need to know? I was taking the risk. When he went to prison, I took care of the children. I made sure they were fed. I worked (to support them).]

Nurma never learned what her husband’s ‘underground’ activities consisted of. Politics no longer hold any interest for her. She remains more concerned about the future of her children and grandchildren.

5.4 Lis
Lis, the only girl among three siblings, was born 73 years ago. Her mother worked as a rice trader, while her father was a farmer. Lis and her parents lived with the extended family of her mother in Padang Sibusuk in the Sijunjung District of West Sumatra. Although the family was large, Lis was the only daughter. She completed primary school in Padang Sibusuk and then, in 1954, attended junior high school in Yogyakarta, Central Java, where she lived with her mother’s older brother who was married to a woman from there. When she completed high school, Lis continued her studies at a training school for kindergarten teachers in Jakarta. In 1958 she returned to Padang Sibusuk to live.

In 1962, Lis married and moved to the Sawahlunto District. Her husband was active in the PKI and held an important position in the party. Lis herself participated in the women’s organisation, Gerwani, that was associated with the Communist Party. According to Lis, Gerwani’s views on women’s rights and children’s issues, as well as its rejection of polygamy, were what she supported. In association with Gerwani, Lis set up a kindergarten called Melati in Sawahlunto. She focused on building the children’s character through dancing,
singing, and play. Lis enrolled her students in competitions where they performed what they had learned. However, when the six generals were assassinated at Lubang Buaya, members of the PKI and Gerwani started to be pursued by the public and the military.

In the third year of Lis’ marriage, the political situation changed rapidly. Members of the PKI and its associated organisations were being sought for their political activities. While Lis was in a hospital of Sawahlunto after having a baby, her husband fled, and their house was looted. Lis could not do anything and was terrified about what might occur next. She felt her life was meaningless, and right and wrong were no longer social norms to be observed when taking action. Some of her friends ran away and even lived in caves to hide. Some others were shot, and their bodies were dragged away with ropes.

When she felt she was strong enough, Lis reported to the police and, for the first time, was imprisoned in Muaro Kalaban, 5 kilometres from Sawahlunto. Lis, together with her baby, was placed with other prisoners in a building that used to be a fabric warehouse. Every night, the police interrogated them. According to Lis, during the interrogations, the police did as they pleased. Younger, female prisoners were abused. Some of them were raped and even killed.

Lis did not escape the interrogations. When she was called, Lis would carry her baby in her arms and would not be separated. She said:

“Kalau ibu kan punya bayi. Kalau ibu diperiksa polisi, ibu bawa bayi tu setiap ibu berangkat, walaupun anak sedang tidur, atau sedang apa, ibu angkat anak ibu, ndak ibu pisah.”
[I had a baby (at the time). When I was questioned by the police, I took the baby with me. Whenever I was summoned, even if the baby was asleep or whatever, I took the baby; I never left him.]

Lis explained what she had said to the police officer questioning her:

“Kalau bapak ingin bunuh, bunuh saja. Kalau saya mati, anak saya mati, kan tidak ada beban sama bapak. Lebih baik keduanya dibunuh. Silakan pak, kalau dibunuh, saya sudah pasrah kok, ndak banyak anu lagi . . .”

[If you want to kill me, go ahead. If I die, this child will die, too, and won’t be a burden to you. It would be best to kill both of us. Go ahead, if you want to kill me, I accept it; I won’t make any more problems . . .]

Once a week, the prisoners were permitted to go home. Lis took the opportunity to return to Padang Sibusuk. To get there, she had to walk 10 kilometres, and she did so carrying her child in her arms. This was a chance for her to get food and clothing. She had to leave early in the morning in order to be back at the prison by six in the afternoon. If she arrived late, she would be fined and would have to pay either an amount of money or goods to a prison guard.

Lis spent several months in Muaro Kalaban Penitentiary and was then transferred to another jail located in Guguak Sarai, Solok. Here, Lis learned that her husband was imprisoned in the same town, at Simpang Rumbio, which was not far from where she was being held. Guguak Sarai Penitentiary was better than the one in Muaro Kalaban. Female prisoners were grouped in barns. During the daytime, they were allowed to leave the prison but they had to
return by six in the afternoon. Most of the prisoners did whatever work they could get during the day in order to make a living.

Lis used the time to help her husband at Simpang Rumbio Prison. Her husband operated a tailoring business inside the prison and was used by outside clients. Some of them were officials of the Ombilin Coal Mine in Sawahlunto. One of them suggested to the prison warden that Lis’ husband be permitted to work outside the prison. He felt that Lis and her husband could produce uniforms for the mining personnel. He asked the police to allow Lis and her husband to move their tailoring business to Sawahlunto, and the request was granted. Lis and her husband were permitted to run their business in town, but they still had to return to the penitentiary at night.

During her imprisonment, Lis had two more children. They lived with her in Guguak Sarai Prison. When he was eight years old, her eldest son was ‘adopted’ by the commander of the military police and went to live with his family. Lis explained why the police commander adopted her son:


[Dedi was adopted by Officer Tukul of the Sawahlunto military police. Initially, Officer Handoyo wanted to take him because Dedi was smart. Everybody loved him. The Commander wanted to take him as well. “Let me send him to school,” he said. At first, my son refused. But, this was the commander of
the military police. This meant we had to accept it. All of his children were dumb. Sugeng was the dumbest. He failed everything on his report card. The only thing he passed was art or something.]

Lis’ eldest son lived with the commander of the military police until 1978. At that time, she and her husband were officially released from prison.

Lis and her husband settled in Sawahlunto. They had two more children and lived in a hut with an earth floor and no electricity. They continued the tailoring business and rented a small shop in the centre of town. Generally, their clients were still the officials from the Ombilin Coal Mine. Lis and her husband did their best to maintain goodwill with their clientele by producing quality work. Because of this good relationship, they were often helped by their clients. As Lis recalled, one of their clients bought them a sewing machine when their only sewing machine broke.

Life went on, but the children were growing up, and they needed more money. Lis taught her children to be thrifty. The children even helped them make a living. She explained:

pik a...setelah dapat uang mau lebaran, kan 25 hari dia kerja adiknya dibeliin baju, terus dapat uang lagi, mau sekolah. Di SMA itu baru. Begitu benar kami hematnya pik, ngga ada cerita manja. Yang mau dimanjain apa, nggak punya. Yang punya tulang 8 karek ini saja.”

[Ilok (respondent’s daughter) never had pocket money. Her friends bought her snacks. If I asked her about it, she said that her friends were generous to her. The one who attended the technical high school, Ulik (respondent’s son), we only gave him Rp. 100. Yet, he never bought anything. He saved it all. Someone was building a new house, so Idet (respondent’s son) went to try to get a job there. It didn’t matter how much the contractor paid him. It happened I knew the contractor, so I asked him, “Could you hire my son so he can continue his school after Lebaran4?” “Where is he? Tell him to get to work immediately.” That was it... He carried bricks, pushed a wheelbarrow. That’s what my son did, ah... After 25 days of working, he was paid. It was almost Lebaran, so he bought clothes for his younger siblings. He had some money and wanted to stay in school. That is how we saved money. There was no such thing as ‘spoiled.’ We did not have anything to spoil our children with. All we had was our own strength.]

Lis also taught her children to be strong and patient and not to be ashamed of their financial hardships. She explained:


4 The holiday at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.
[I said,] ‘You are all grown-ups, aren’t you? You’re not ashamed of what you are now, are you?’ ‘What should we be ashamed of, Mother? This is how we are,’ my children replied. This is just an example of what things were like. It was important not to feel inferior. ‘We have arms, we have legs. What is there to feel inferior about?’ “All the wealth belongs to God, Mother. We can make it if we try.” My children have strong characters. ‘If I am the child of a political detainee and someone doesn’t want to associate with me, I don’t care,’ [they said.]

In 1989, two of Lis’ children were studying at university. Lis needed money to pay their expenses. Her husband’s health was declining. He was becoming frail, so Lis decided to start selling rice and poultry feed to support the household and finance the children’s education. Lis described this as follows:


[My eldest son was at the Bandung Institute of Technology. He finished the third year and had a bachelor’s degree. Then, Ilok (respondent’s daughter) went into the Technical Academy of the Ministry of Public Works in Bandung. So we had to carry two loads. However, Idet was getting some money from his job as a lecturer. If there were opportunities to make more money, I took them. I pursued it. Ilok still needed financial help. This is what I did to support my family. I borrowed 1000 liters of rice from my uncle to start a business. Within a month, I managed to return what I had borrowed. I had to be tireless.]
Many of Lis’ customers were her former kindergarten students. They still remembered her. Lis described the reaction of these former students when they saw her at her shop in the market where she sold rice:

“Eeee ibu aku..., Ibu aku.... saya silahkan beli, nolong ibu.”

[‘Ooooh, it’s teacher. Teacher, it’s me.’ I would say: ‘Please buy, help your teacher.’]

Lis succeeded in financing her children’s education. They graduated and secured jobs. Her eldest son has an important position in a well-known private company in Jakarta. Another is a teacher and entrepreneur. The children regularly give Lis and her husband money and built a house for her. In 2008, they paid for Lis to make the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The house and being able to use the religious title ‘Hajjah’ have made Lis a respected individual in the community, where at one time she and her family were ignored because of their Communist past. However, these views gradually diminished as she began to possess the wealth, position, title, and family that determine social status in the community.

While the New Order Regime was in power, Lis was not attracted to politics. The dissolution of the PKI put an end to her political aspirations, and Lis has concentrated on making a living. Mostly she wanted her children to complete their education. When the New Order collapsed in 1998, Lis became involved in a movement to restore the reputation and human rights of the victims of violence. Lis joined the Foundation for Research on the Victims of 1965/1966. She hoped the foundation would be able to assist victims in dealing with trauma resulting from the violence they experienced in the past and help restore their
position in the view of the public and government. To her, the end of the New order has allowed people to think differently about the events of 1965-66. No one is interested in the old propaganda, and she believes people are starting to recognise the level of violence people experienced at the time.

Being a political detainee for years made Lis believe that whatever happens is her destiny. God regulates everything, she believes, and she has to accept her life. Lis recalled advice given to her by one of the public prosecutors:


[He said] ‘Actually, I feel sorry for you. You just cannot go on like this.... Don’t be sad.’ The prosecutor said to me privately, “If the water is cloudy, let it be. Let the rubbish drift away. Let it all pass. Eventually, the water will be clear. You have to be patient.’

Lis remembered this and has always tried to overcome any obstacle she faced. She believes that God will always provide for those who work hard, and the rewards will make up for the pain and suffering she experienced.

Lis’ husband died in 1998, and she now lives with her children and grandchildren. Because she still sells rice, she has the chance to meet and talk to people and opportunities to socialise within the community.
5.5. Martiyas

Martiyas, now 70, is the eldest daughter of seven siblings. Her mother was originally from Pitalah, a village in the Batusangkar District of West Sumatra and was a housewife. Her father was an army officer stationed in Padang. Martiyas was born and raised in Padang.

Martiyas had finished high school and was a student at Andalas University when PKI members began to be pursued in Padang. At the university, she was actively involved in CGMI [Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia = Indonesian Student Movement Concentration], a student organisation associated with the Communist Party. She took part in almost every activity run by CGMI, which included dancing and singing. Right before the search for members of the PKI and associated organisations began, Martiyas and several of her classmates were preparing for a performance.

The hunt for PKI members forced Martiyas to save herself by hiding in the jungle so as not to be captured by the public. She was rescued by an army officer, whom she later married. He was part of the Banteng Raider Unit and came from Java.

Martiyas and her husband married in 1966, but the marriage only protected her for several months. The police did arrest her, but before she could be incarcerated, her husband sent her to his parents in Klaten (Java). At that time, Martiyas was pregnant and would have the baby soon. She escaped, but her husband was imprisoned on the charge of conspiring with the PKI, as was her father. Martiyas’ mother and her five younger siblings were placed under house-arrest. All of them lived with their mother in their home in Padang.
Martiyas gave birth to a son at the home of her parents-in-law. In 1967, when the infant was about nine months old, the military came to arrest her and sent her to a penitentiary in Padang. Martiyas could not escape and had to leave her infant son with his grandmother.

For Martiyas, the trip to Padang was not easy. It took a month, and she had to make a few stops by before arriving at the Padang Penitentiary. Among these stops was the Bukit Duri Penitentiary, a women’s prison, located in Kampung Malayu, Jakarta. She was placed in a cell with some other women.

During her ten days of imprisonment in Bukit Duri, Martiyas’ health began to decline. She was weak and mentally unstable. She constantly thought about her son. The other prisoners tried to console her but to no avail. Martiyas recalled what happened:


[When I first got to Bukit Duri, I would rattle the iron bars on the door. They took away my sarong because they thought I might try to kill myself. The other women tried to console me. ‘If you’re lucky, you won’t be here long,’ (they said).]

After a month, Martiyas arrived in Padang and was placed in in prison in Penjara Muaro. She underwent a number of interrogations but was getting thinner and seemed more fragile at each interrogation. Compared to the rest of the prisoners, Martiyas was lucky because she was never abused physically.
Martiyas explained that she responded to every question addressed to her in the most polite way possible:


[When you responded to questions politely, in a soft tone, there was no reason for them to hurt you. Sometimes, he [the warden] would walk me around the office. ‘Come with me,’ he would say].

Martiyas was placed in a cell with several other female political detainees. There, she met some of her former colleagues from CGMI. During her first three years of imprisonment, Martiyas could not get over what had happened to her. She kept thinking about her son in Klaten. However, she was able to see her husband. Martiyas’ husband, despite his status as a political detainee, was made a driver for the military police command. In this position, he was allowed to see his wife for a short time each day.

During this time, Martiyas’ mother had to support Martiyas, her husband, and her father, all of whom were in prison. Her mother took in sewing to enable her to send food to the family in prison and also provide for Martiyas’ siblings who lived with her in Padang. According to Martiyas, her mother mortgaged their family land in Pitalah to keep them all going.

After the first three years of imprisonment, Martiyas began to get used to life as a political detainee. During her time in prison, she started to work as a seamstress with the other inmates. The items they made were sold outside the prison by the wardens. In this way, Martiyas was able to support herself.
Martiyas was released in December of 1977. She, her husband, and her father went to her mother’s home. To support the family, Martiyas’ father opened a small food stall at their house. Her mother continued to take in sewing as she had done since Martiyas’ father was detained. Martiyas’ husband was entrusted by the head of the Military Police to work in a vehicle repair shop located in Padang. That job did not last long, and the commander moved Martiyas’ husband to a job at The Commodore cigarette factory. Martiyas’ husband continued to work at the factory until it went bankrupt. At that time, the same police commander helped him obtain work as a driver for the Indofood company.

In time, Martias became the treasurer of a local arisan group. An arisan is a kind of group saving mechanism where members contribute a set amount of money according to a schedule that has been established by consensus of the members. Periodically, the proceeds are awarded to each member in turn, such that each person has the expectation of a windfall when it is their turn to receive the pot. For Martias, however, being in charge of the funds allowed her to use them before they had to be paid out to the designated member as capital for various activities intended to support her family.

With this money, in addition to her husband’s income, Martiyas was able to support her children who were born in 1978, 1981, and 1986 as well as her oldest son who was living in Klaten with his grandparents. All six of her younger siblings graduated from universities, and one was a public prosecutor before his death.
Throughout this period, Martiyas remained in contact with her eldest son in Klaten, who understood the situation and his parents’ status. He eventually returned to West Sumatra to live with the rest of the family and completed high school in Padang. He eventually entered the Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung), one of Indonesia’s most prestigious universities. Martiyas discussed how she felt when she learned her son had been admitted:


[At that time, it was funny, Upik [interviewer]. He told me, ‘I got in to ITB, Ma!’ Then, I began to cry. How could we pay the the tuition? ‘Most people would be happy if their child got in to ITB but you’re crying!’ ‘Yanto, you’ve been with me for the three years of your high school. Now, how am I going to pay for your education?’ ‘Don’t worry about it, Ma,’ he said. ‘We’ll figure it out. The important thing is, I got in.’]

Martiyas went on to describe how she finally met her son's needs:

“Tuhan tu yo ndak sio-sio do Pik, ibu manang undian kupon di bungkuih Indomie, jo pitih itu Yanto berankek ke Bandung.”

[Belief in God is never in vain. I won a contest where there was an entry form in a package of instant Indomie noodles. That was the money Yanto used to get to Bandung.]

Yanto did whatever he could to earn extra money and was eventually hired as a teaching assistant. He graduated in 1993 and became an associate lecturer. After a year, he was given permanent status as a government employee.
Martiyas’ other children obtained university degrees as well. One of them is a lecturer at a private university in Padang, and another works for one of the major banks in Padang.

Martiyas noted that people in the village were open to the family when they were released from prison. She said:

“Tetangga tu prihatin, sebab sabalumnyo tu awak elok senyo.”

[The neighbours were very concerned for us because they knew we were good people.]

The neighborhood head was unhappy with the presence of Martiyas and her family in the area though. Martiyas felt he was two-faced; he was nice to her but lied about the family to the local military personnel, suggesting that the family was a risk to national security because of their Communist leanings. Martiyas elaborated on this:


[There was one time we know about specifically. Once, in the middle of the night, my family and I were summoned by the military commander. He said someone had brought something to his attention. It was clear what kind of game he (the village head) was playing.]

Martiyas and her family did not pay much attention to things like this. Her main concern was her children’s education and future careers. She encouraged them not to talk about what had happened, but they had strong feelings on the
subject and, as they obtained professional status, began to talk about what had happened to their parents. Martiyas explained:


[When they were little, people said things about us. (My children said:) ’We didn’t do anything. You didn’t do anything either. You aren’t a bad person. There isn’t anything, is there?’ ’No, there isn’t,’ I said.].

Martiyas believes, and taught her children, that nothing can happen unless God wants it to. People should remind themselves they have to be humble. This will allow them to find happiness. People can suffer from their ambitions so it is better to look down than look up.

In 1985, Martiyas was invited to take part in the Posyandu program at the village level. Posyandu, an acronym for *pos pelayanan terpadu* [integrated services post), offer grassroots health monitoring and surveillance at the village level in conjunction with a public health centre. They rely on the work of local volunteers. Because of her education, Martiyas was seen as a good choice to participate.

While Martiyas was eager to contribute to the community, she felt it was important to make her background known to the recruitment officer. She wanted to make sure her past experiences would not resurface and affect her participation in the Posyandu. However, when she raised this, the recruiter said
none of that mattered; what was important was that the community trusted her. Martiyas added:

“Sajak ikut tu, urang lai agak mancaliak ka awak kini lai.”

[Since then, people have looked up to me.]

After her release from prison, Martiyas took no interest in politics. She and her husband focused only on their children’s education. She advised the children to stay away from politics and not to become involved in any organisation. She feared her experiences might affect their future and wanted to avoid that if possible. Once the New Order ended, however, Martiyas began to follow political developments again. She began to talk about her experiences and became involved in the Foundation for Research on the Victims of 1965/1966 (Yayasan Penelitian Korban 1965/1966). In this environment, she has been able to talk to others whose experience was similar and share her story with other political detainees.

Through all of her experiences, Martiyas has maintained her religious faith. She is convinced in the power of prayer and believes that God sees the truth. That is why He allowed her children to succeed in their education and careers.

Martiyas prays five times a day and also performs an additional, early morning prayer that is optional. She accepts that God’s plans for people are more important than their ambitions. She chooses to remember that there are many people who are less fortunate than she is and is able to feel gratitude for what she has. She regularly participates in religious activities at the mosque and prayer house, such as group recitation of the Quran. She was even asked to run
a Quranic recitation at a nearby mosque. While she knows that many people in
Indonesia believe that Communists do not believe in God, Martiyas sees
religion and politics as two totally separate things.

5.6 Yulinar
Yulinar was born and raised in Batu Balang, Payakumbuh. Her father came from
this village and was known as a generous trader and a pious man, with deep
religious knowledge. He took part in a rebellion against the Dutch colonial
government in 1926, in which Communist party members were involved.
Yulinar’s mother was from Matur in the Agam District.

Yulinar was the youngest of three children and had one sister and one brother.
Her older sister was a teacher and a member of the Indonesian Teachers
Association [Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia (PGRI)], which was seen to be
affiliated with the PKI. Yulinar worked at the hospital in Payakumbuh and was
a member of the Satu Nusa Dance Club. Together with dancers from other
clubs, Yulinar performed at various events and competitions, including singing
at the local and national levels. She also took part in activities of the Lekra
[Lembaga Kebudajaan Rakjat (People’s Cultural Organization)], a literary and
social group associated with the Communist Party.

Less than two months before the assassination of six generals in Lubang Buaya,
on 1 October 1945, Yulinar was in Jakarta with the members of her dance club.
They were taking part in a national arts competition. Their presence in Jakarta
made the group the target of government officials, who accused them of
somehow being involved in the generals’ assassination. The house of Yulinar’s
parents was searched at the end of October 1965. Her older brother and sister were arrested, but Yulinar escaped because she was not at home at the time.

The arrest of her siblings forced Yulinar to seek a safe refuge. She decided to hide at a traditional Islamic boarding school (pesantren), owned by her father’s family, that was located in the same town. Yulinar believed that she would be safe from pursuit if she stayed in the pesantren. While her father’s family did not approve of their involvement with the Communist Party, they had no choice but to help them. Yulinar’s father’s family members were known to be extremely dedicated supporters of Asosiasi Tarbiyah Islamiyah [Perti], an Islamic political party whose orientation was the opposite of the PKI.

Nonetheless, when she attempted to return to her house, Yulinar was arrested. She was taken to the police station at Labuah Silang, Payakumbuh, together with several other female prisoners. Her two siblings were also imprisoned at that location. Following several months of detainment, Yulinar and both her siblings were released with the condition that they report to the police once a week.

A short time later, Yulinar was arrested again. Another prisoner told the authorities that Yulinar had met with President Soekarno a short time before the assassination of the generals at Lubang Buaya and must have been planning the killing. Yulinar explained what happened:

[That night, we had come back from the prayerhouse, when they came to get me. My parents were in tears that their daughter was being taken away in the middle of the night. I spent that night in a small shop near the police station. I lay down on a table in the shop. I didn’t sleep all night. I was afraid they would rape me, that was the one thing I feared. In the morning, they interrogated me at their office. They thought I had been at that meeting. ‘I didn’t have any meetings. There were no meetings at any time,’ I said. The police said: ‘Your friend said you did.’ ‘Let me talk to he,’ [I said,] ‘I never attended any meetings.’]

Yulinar never learned who had said this about her and was taken to the Muaro Padang Penitentiary without a trial. She was placed in a cell with other female political prisoners.

The food in prison was sub-standard, so Yulinar asked her parents to bring her what they could. They did so when they were able, as it was a five-hour trip from Payakumbuh to Padang. When her parents did come to visit, they had to talk from a distance with Yulinar behind bars in a cell.

To help pass the time in prison, Yulinar and the other inmates made up songs and sometimes sang until late at night. This helped them express their sadness. She explained:

[When we felt sad, we would stay up late at night. We would sometimes sing loudly to drown out what we were feeling.]

To earn some money while in prison, Yulinar sewed clothes and other household items and also crocheted. One of the wardens, who sympathised with the lot of the prisoners, provided her with material. Yulinar explained further:

“Ado pegawai panjaro tu nan padusi nan lai sayang jo ibu, dibialiannya kain, dibialiannya banang-banang, tu manjaik karajo ibu disitu. Hasil jahitannya dijual keluar penjara oleh sipir penjara tersebut. Itulah biaya tambahan (pendapatan) ibu dalam tahanan tu.”

[There was a female warden. She liked me and bought me fabric and thread. So sewing became my work there. She sold the products that I made outside the prison. That was how I got extra income in prison.]

Yulinar could not hope for much assistance from her parents, who had been devasted by the disbandment of the PKI. Her older siblings lost their jobs and had to report weekly to the police. Her parents’ business failed as well. Yulinar said:

“Salamo di Padang, mungkin sakali satahun dicaliak dek urang gaek. Atau 2x setahun paliang tinggi. ...., biaya payah, ekonomi payah, sadoalah harato alah tajua. Ka managakkan rumah ibu di Matua lah cukuik sadonyo, bajua sadonyo baliak tu.”

[When I was in Padang, my parents might come to see me once a year, or twice a year at most . . . there was no money, life was hard, everything we had had been sold. We were
During this period, Yulinar recalls that her mother never demanded her share of the family assets in Matur. They had little contact with her mother’s family, who, according to Yulinar, was afraid of the impact of being associated with the family, especially since Yulinar was in prison. It was also impossible to ask for help from her father’s family. Yulinar feels they did not like her, attested to by the fact that no one told her about her father’s death which occurred when she was in prison. She recalled:


[They really hate me. When my father died, no one sent word to the prison to tell me. I was still in prison at the time, the prison here in Padang. No one told me at all.]

Yulinar was in the Muaro Padang Penitentiary for about four and a half years. Eventually, she had to appear in court on the charge of being involved in the coup that was instigated by the PKI. This occurred in Payakumbuh, and Yulinar was sentenced to eight and half years in prison, less time served. Following the trial, she was transferred to the Batang Agam Prison in Payakumbuh.

Life in prison in Payakumbuh was similar to life in prison in Padang, but the facilities were minimal. All the prisoners were allowed to work outside the prison during the day but had to return to their cells in the evening. Yulinar sewed and crocheted during the day as she had been doing to make money from before.
In 1976, Yulinar married another political prisoner at the Batang Agam Penitentiary. She originally felt pity for her husband who was frequently beaten in prison. Eventually, however, the Military Police Commander hired him as a tutor for his son, who at that time was in senior high school.

After their marriage, Yulinar and her husband were permitted to live outside the prison complex, so they rented a house next to the institution. To make a living, Yulinar’s husband collected sand from the Batang Agam River. This work was arranged by the Military Police Commander who had rescued him from the beatings. The Commander gave Yulinar’s husband a small boat to facilitate this work. Yulinar continued to work at home taking in sewing. Every morning, they would go to the prison to sign a roster showing they had taken part in the flag raising ceremony with the other prisoners.

A year before her official release in 1977, Yulinar had a son at the Ibnu Sina Hospital in Bukittinggi, near her mother’s village. She had to stay in the hospital for a few days and told the doctor about her experiences as a political prisoner. The doctor sympathised with what she had experienced, and she did not have to pay for her hospital stay. Yulinar said:


[(The Ibnu Sina doctors and nurses) were so full of compassion.’You don’t have to pay for your treatment. Use the money to buy milk for the baby,’ the doctor said.]
After their release from prison, Yulinar and her husband lived with Yulinar’s mother and sister in Batu Balang, Payakumbuh. Her husband continued to work collecting sand from the river. His business expanded rapidly and was able to obtain additional capital from the Department of Public Works in Payakumbuh. Yulinar recalled:

“Uda ko ditunjuakan dek urang PU, untuak bangunan, untuak jalan, kareke, kasiak tu awak nan manjamin tu. Jadi lumayan pulo lah penghasilan waktu itu. Diagiahnyo modal dek urang PU, awak manyadiokan bahannyo sajo.”

[My husband was chosen by the Department of Public Works to provide material for buildings, roads, gravel, sand. We provided all that. So our income was quite high at the time. The Public Works people provided the capital; we just had to get the material.]

At this time as well, Yulinar began selling bakwan, a type of fried snack food, from their home. The house was located opposite a primary school, and many of the students and teachers became long term customers. She also became active in the community women’s organisation sponsored by the New Order government. The program focused on activities to support community welfare at the grassroots level. She was a member of the management group of the prayerhouse near her home and took part in competitions between villages. Yulinar said:


[In Batu Balang, Pik [the interviewer], I don’t think anyone hated me. Thank God, no one hated me. I was a member of the community. I didn’t hurt anyone and tried to help. When they put on a show, I would sing. That was what I did. If people were going to the prayerhouse, I would go to the prayerhouse, too. What was there for them to hate? I never whined or was conceited or anything like that. So no one there hated me. Now, I can choose what I do. I’ve been the prayerhouse treasurer for years now. There’s never been any trouble. They can see where all the money goes. In fact, I just became the treasurer of a prayerhouse near here.]

Yulinar had several children, but she and her husband never told them much about their experiences in prison. They hoped the children would be successful in their education and careers. Nonetheless, during this period, the government version of events surrounding the assassination of the generals and the role of the PKI was contained in school textbooks, so their children were exposed to this information in this way.

Yulinar’s children worried that they would not be able to get jobs because of the isolation experienced by some former PKI members and their offspring. Yulinar explained:

They (the children) asked me about it. They said, even if they became engineers, they would never have any rank. They would not be able to move up. Their teachers had said, no matter how good they were, they would never become government employees. (I said:) ‘The main thing is, you study hard. You do that not to become a government employee. You do it to fill your brain. You just study now, whether you become a government employee or not is a problem for the future.’

Yulinar feels she was successful in bringing up her children with this approach. She said:


[Thank God, they were always top students. Especially Ririk, the youngest. He is really bright, the head of his class. The teachers all liked him. They all supported him.]

Yuslinar’s oldest son holds a Bachelor’s degree. Her second son studied in Japan and completed his undergraduate degree there. One of them now works for Padang Cement, a government owned company located in Padang.

Over the years, Yulinar has tried to repair the relationship with her mother’s family in Matur and hopes to be able to get her share of the family assets. At present, her husband has retired from the sand business, and they have now opened a mini-market near their home. This provides a good income that has
allowed them to buy rice fields and also to make the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, which they will do in 2018.

Yulinar and her husband are no longer interested in political issues. They have tried to err on the side of safety, especially during the New Order period, because they knew they were still under scrutiny by the authorities. Yulinar explained what happened during one of the elections that took place at this time:


[The police summoned us. They gathered us all together and told us we were to choose Number 2 [the ballot identification for the ruling Golkar political party]. If we didn’t, they would not be held responsible for our safety. So we had to vote and had to choose Golkar. As long as we voted, God knows what’s in our soul. He tested us for all those years. If we don’t stay with Him, we have no future.]

Golkar, an acronym for Golongan Karya [Functional Group], was the political party of former President Soeharto who led the New Order government for more than 30 years. Elections were problematic during this period in Indonesia’s history, and the way in which the vote was manipulated to ensure the president stayed in office has been widely discussed in the historical literature. Pressure for government employees and members of other groups to vote for Golkar was experienced by many Indonesians who were instructed to do so by work supervisors, the management of organisations, community
leaders, and so forth. This was seen as a means of maintaining stability by the
government and for remaining in political favor by organisations and other
groups.

Throughout her life, Yulinar maintained her religious faith which she sees as a
source of resilience. She believes that God will always provide a means to solve
problems, and Islam is the true faith. She explained:

“Ka Tuhan ibu ndak berang do. Bahkan tambah yakin ibu ka
Tuhan. Urang nan di alam bebas tahanan, sampai kini
ekonominyo morat-marit. Ibu kakak baradiak tatahan,
ekonomi ibu lumayan. Lumayan pik, mancukupilah. Bisa
kuliah anak ibu baduo, kok rumah ibu lai ado tampek tingga.
Kok sawah, ibu bisa. Jadi di Batu Balang tu sawah mambali,
kok tanah mambali indak dapek warisan gai do.”

[I have never been angry at God. In fact, I have become more
certain of His existence. There are people who were never in
prison who live in poverty. All of us were detained, but we are
quite well off now. We’re well off, we have more than
enough. My two sons could go to college. I have a house. I’ve
been able to buy rice fields. Here in Batu Balang, I bought rice
fields. We bought this land; it’s not inherited.]

Nonetheless, some of the local religious leaders have reacted negatively to the
family over the years, referring to Yulinar and her relatives as kafirun
(disbelievers). Many Indonesians, including those who are more religious,
associate Communism with atheism, which they view as the most grievous sin.

Yulinar explained:

“Alim ulama ko ibu sayangkan, pai ka panjaro menghina
Ndak wajib disumbayangkan, urang kapia. ” sagalo macam.
Ibu raso PKI labiah-labiah di sumbar ko ha, ndak ado nan kapia

[I feel bad that the attitude of the religious leaders was to come to prison and mock us. ‘You’re disbelievers. When you die, no one will have to pray for you. You won’t need to be prayed for, you disbeliever.’ All kinds of things they said. I don’t believe there were any disbelievers in the PKI here in West Sumatra. But that was how they mocked us. It hurt our feelings. They came to the prison to teach us but just ended up hurting us. They didn’t help at all. If we had been against God, for instance, they should have embraced us, tried to make us understand. People can repent. This is what made me angry.]

Yulinar learned about religion as a child and has relied on this foundation of knowledge throughout her life. She said:


[I was taught to be religious from a young age. That is why I could never change. I just tried to (understand) myself. When I was in prison, my faith became stronger. At home, I would sometimes not do the night prayers. But in prison, I often did these (optional) prayers. It was a chance for us to practice our religion. There were no interruptions.]
In her old age, Yulinar is thankful to God for what He has given her and believes her faith has allowed her to overcome the hardship she experienced. She believes that the path indicated by religion is in accord with God’s will and is grateful she has been able to follow it.

5.7 Nuraya
Nuraya, 85 years old, comes from Batusangakar in the Tanah Datar region. Her father was a tobacco cutter and her mother was a housewife. She attended school in the town of Payakumbuh and graduated from the Islamic College there. In school, she was a strong student with unusual speaking ability.

Nuraya was married three times and had six children. Her first husband, whom she married in 1948, was a soldier. He was listed as missing in action during the second Dutch Aggression in 1948. According to Nuraya, the colonial government killed her husband, but it was not clear where they buried him. Nuraya was pregnant at the time.

In 1953, she married again. This marriage produced three children but ended in divorce like her third marriage. Nuraya believes her divorces were due to political differences with her husbands that related to the 1957-58 conflict with the central government when the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) was active in West Sumatra. In 1963, Nuraya’s uncle forced her to marry again. Her new husband was already married, and she became his second wife.

Nuraya was actively involved in political movements since the Dutch period. She supported nationalist forces in the fight for Indonesia’s independence and
then the national government during the PRRI period. Her role was to persuade women to encourage their male relatives to support the legitimate national government. Her husband at the time supported the PRRI which led to their separation.

In addition, Nuraya was a member of Gerwani, the women’s organisation associated with the PKI. She became head of the organisation’s Payakumbuh branch and was given a chance to enrol at the PKI school at the provincial level and later at the organisation’s national training center. Nuraya left the organisation after marrying for the third time. In fact, she was removed from her position because her willingness to marry a man who already had a wife was seen an inappropriate by the organisation’s chairman as the group’s position was anti-polygamy.

A month after the assassination of the generals at Lubang Buaya on 1 October 1965, when Nuraya was pregnant with her third husband’s child, the public began looking for Communists. Nuraya explained what happened:

“Disiko lah paneh. Nenek sedang hamil waktu itu menyelamatkan bayi nenek.”

[Here (in Taram) things were heating up. I was pregnant and I had to save the baby.]

One of her husband’s friends suggested that he take his wife and find a safer place for her to stay. Nuraya decided to move to Pekanbaru where her maternal uncle lived. Her husband was to remain in Payakumbuh with the other children and monitor the political situation.
Nuraya and her uncle traveled by land to Pekanbaru using public transport and walking part of the way. On the road, they passed a number of police stations. They were questioned about where they were going at each post. In order to be allowed to pass, Nuraya’s uncle told her to let down her hair and laugh and talk to herself so the police would think she was mentally ill. This would provide a reason for their travel to Pekanbaru, where they were supposedly going so she could receive treatment.

In Pekanbaru, Nuraya was left by her uncle with another of her uncles who was a mechanic. This was a difficult situation because they were all concerned that anyone who sheltered a PKI member would be targeted by the authorities. In Minangkabau culture, however, maternal uncles have a traditionally set responsibility for their nieces and nephews, so they could not refuse to help her. Nuraya explained this very simply:

“Kama kadiilakan, [nyo] kamanakan awak.”

[How cold they not? I was their niece.]

Nuraya gave birth to her child in Pekanbaru and stayed there for a number of months. In March 1966, Nuraya and her uncle decided to return to Payakumbuh. They had heard that the PKI had been disbanded and the search for Communists had greatly abated. Nuraya was also worried about her children and could not stop thinking about whether they were all right.

In Payakumbuh, Nuraya went to the police station to report. This had been required when she was a member of Gerwani and, even though she had been
ejected from the organisation, she believed this was the right thing to do. However, she was arrested and sent to a detention facility in Tanjung Pati.

Nuraya was not abused in prison but her economic status declined. Before this, she had been comfortable and had been able to buy a rice field. When she was imprisoned, she was forced to sell this in order to support her children. Nuraya’s parents and husband had to provide her with food and bring it to the prison where she was being held along with her baby. Nuraya explained:

“Makan cuma keluarga dari rumah maantaan ka situ, ka tahanan. Urang tu ndak pernah diagiah makan do.”

[I only had what they brought me to eat from home. They never gave us anything in the prison.]

Nuraya and the other inmates made a request to the Sector Commander to be allowed to work outside the prison during the day. Nuraya was the prisoners’ representative in dealing with the work permits. According to Nuraya, she was chosen because she would be seen as a sympathetic figure and she had a strong ability to negotiate. The inmates were permitted to work outside the prison but were required to pay a part of their earnings to the guards. Nuraya and the others accepted these terms. She said:

“Nenek pandai ka sawah, pandai batanam, pandai basiang.”

[I knew how to work in the rice fields, how to plant and how to weed.]

After her release in 1977, Nuraya returned to her parents’ house in Nagari Taram where she lived with her husband and children. Nuraya continued to
work as a field laborer, while her husband became a trader. She had to let some of her children go to an orphanage in Padang, hoping they would receive a better education than she could provide. Another child was taken in by her husband’s relatives. Nuraya’s mother’s family also helped them as much as they could.

The children who went to the orphanage and to live with their father’s family graduated from high school, but the children who remained at home did not. Nuraya feels this was because of their economic status but also because of discrimination the children faced because of her background. Her children were bullied by their classmates, and the teachers, who knew the family’s history, saw them as traitors to the nation.

At some point, Nuraya’s husband decided to go to Singapore to try to make a better living. However, she heard he had been arrested as an illegal immigrant there and had been returned to the Indonesian island of Batam, located very close to Singapore. He ended up remaining in Batam and did not return to live with Nuraya. Her children are now adults. One worked for Bank Nasional in Padang before the bank was liquidated. Other are laborers and one is a bus driver.

Nuraya herself is well known in her own community as a speaker and leader. She participates in the events of the extended family, especially weddings, and has been able to matchmake for some of her younger relations.

After her detainment, Nuraya was no longer active in any political group. She has maintained the view that it was best for political detainees and their
families to support Golkar because of its power and the military support the party enjoyed. Other than the political issues, she recognizes that Golkar did good things for the nation. Nuraya explained:


[If it is husbands, wives, everyone, younger and older siblings, everyone should support Golkar. Why do I say this? Golkar has done the most for the country. If there had been no Golkar, everything would be gone. Everyone would be killing each other. That’s why we all supported Golkar. If we didn’t, we’d all have been dead, killed off.]

When the New Order fell, Nuraya began to support the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) [Unity Development Party], that she believes has the best approach to governance according to Islamic principles. She said:


[These PPP people understand us. They understand how we live. They’ve helped us. They gave us a two burner stove, a dozen plates, a dozen glasses; we could start selling lontong [rice cakes eaten with a kind of stew]. The second thing is, the
organisation has Islam as a base, right? They have always helped by children. I have never been isolated (by them).]

Nuraya is no longer interested in ideology. Her basis for supporting a political party is the practical ability of the group to create a stable economy, security, and prosperity. However, she does not regret the past and believes that regret is pointless. As a Muslim, Nuraya believes in God and accepts that everyone’s destiny is in His hands. She explained:


[A good or bad fate comes from God. We can’t do anything about it. If our fate is bad? We accept that bad fate. If it’s good, Thank God for it. The main thing is, we have to strive.]

Now, Nuraya spends her time with her daughter and grandchildren. They run a coffee shop in front of their house in the village. This supports their needs and allows her granddaughter to attend school.

5.8 Mani
Mani was born and raised in Padang Pariaman. Her father worked on the Indonesian Railway System [PIKA], while her mother was a homemaker. Mani was the sixth child of eight. She had one older sister and six brothers. One of her older brothers was deaf. Mani’s childhood was not unusual. She went to school in her village and recited the Quran at the local prayer house.

Prior to the disbandment of the PKI and associated organisations, Mani’s family was quite well off. Her father was a manager at PIKA. They owned a house, land,
and rice fields in Padang Pariaman, which her father had bought from his income. In addition, they owned thirteen cows in Batusangkar that were taken care by a local farmer for pay. However, once the anti-Communist activities began in 1965-66, everything changed.

Mani’s father, mother, and an older brother were accused of being members of PKI affiliated organisations. Her father and brothers were pursued by local people and were captured in the jungle in December 1965. When this took place, Mani was only 16 years old. She recalled what she heard at the time:


[They tortured my father as they felt like. Say it [God’s name], said my third brother. The people said, ‘What do you know about God?’ ‘You’re anti-God,’ they said. So they hit him with rocks, stuck him with bamboo spears, with knives. There were people doing construction on the road. One of them picked up a stone and threw it at my father’s head. They threw my father into the river from above, all the way down to the bottom.]

Mani’s father and older brother were killed as a result of the torture. Following this episode, her mother and another older brother were arrested and detained in the Batusangkar Penitentiary. Both were imprisoned for about eight years. Mani and her older sister, however, were required to do the laundry for families of the officers at the military headquarters. Every morning, Mani took the dirty
laundry to the river bank to wash. She was not paid for this work, which she did for four years. Mani said:

“Manyasah kain KORAMIL, jaankan ka diagiah pithi, aie satitik se ndak diagiahnyo. Tiok pagi ka bakureh, sasah baju e dulu. Taruih takah itu tiok hari, salamo ampek tahun. Masai bana pik, ndak bagarah-garah do.”

[For the laundry, they didn’t even give us water, much less money. Every morning, I’d work hard to wash their clothes before anything else. It was like that every day for four years. I really suffered because of that nonsense.]

Neither her mother’s nor her father’s extended family seemed to care about Mani’s situation. She was entitled to a share of her maternal family’s assets, but this was in the control of her mother’s younger sister who did not include her. Mani explained:


[We were controlled by the ones who had power. I couldn’t do anything. I was too young. How was I going to take charge? If we were going to eat, to drink, anything, to have clothes to wear, it had to be through our own efforts.]

Mani’s mamak, her mother’s older brother, was unable to help her. She said:

“Mamak tentara, laki-laki surang. Tapi inyo nan mangamankan dirinyo surang. Salamaikkan jo lah kecek.”

[My uncle was a soldier, the only son in the family. But he had to save himself.]

Mani explained that her uncle and his younger sister were afraid to be seen
aiding Mani for fear they, too, would be accused of Communist leanings. They were only half-siblings of Mani’s mother and had a different father. Mani feels this was why they did not feel a greater responsibility to her at this time.

While Mani’s mother and older siblings were in prison, she and her older sister decided to sell the belongings they had to support themselves and their younger brothers who were also at home. Mani began to sell food to passengers on the inter-city buses that used the provincial roads. She carried her wares in a plastic basin on her head and approached passengers when the buses stopped. She described this as follows:

“Manggaleh manggih mudo, tu usaho dulu, manggih mudo, cubadak, pisang. Dibali pisang urang tu di parak, tu diparam. Diabuih, tu dijujuang bantuak tu. Manggih, pisang, cubadak, dijujuang, dibao kian ka mari, di bao ka padang panjang, pokoknyo dibao di nan rami.”

[I sold young mangosteens, that was what I used to do. Young mangosteens, jackfruit, bananas. I would buy bananas from people who grew them, then I would let them ripen. I’d boil them and take them around on my head like that. The mangosteens, bananas, jackfruit, I’d carry it on my head all over the place, to Padang Panjang even, to any place where there were a lot of people.]

In addition to this, Mani worked on other people’s land for pay. This allowed her to feed her younger siblings and pay their school tuition. She was not willing to pay for her brothers to study at the university level because she felt that they would be disadvantaged by the family’s past and excluded from jobs. This would have been financially impossible anyway. In the end, two of her brothers graduated from high school, while the others only finished primary school.
Mani explained:


[What money did I have? If they all were to go to school, who would pay for it? If there was no work in the rice fields, I would sell things. If there was nothing to sell, I would work in the rice fields. That was enough to send the two of them to school. One graduated from the technical high school; the other graduated from the religious high school. They went to school, but the diploma was useless. We had been involved [in Communist activities]. What was the point? So, we didn’t get much education as children of people involved [in Communism]. It wasn’t allowed. We weren’t allowed to study. That was how it was under Soeharto. What could we do?]

Due to their comparatively low levels of education, Mani’s brothers also work in the informal sector, doing unskilled labour and selling things; one is a bus driver.

Mani was very happy when the New Order ended. She says she would have liked to revenge her father’s death if it had been possible. She feels her life has been very difficult and has included having to bear the insults of people in the community. She said:

“Anak PKI... Bunuah anak PKI.”
At the time, Mani was too young to fight back and felt that there was nothing she could have done to stop this. She is still angry, however, even though she knows the people involved are now old and weak. She sometimes even pities them. She explained:


[Revenge is all that’s left. But there aren’t many of the people who tortured my father left. Not one of them died well. Not one. None of them had a good death.]

Mani often meets with members of the Foundation for Research on the Victims of 1965/1966 (Yayasan Penelitian Korban 1965/1966). They talk about their experiences and support each other emotionally. Mani has made a decision to submit to God’s will. She believes that everything that happened to her was determined by God and she must try to accept it. She said:


[What else can I do? People say, it is your destiny. If you feel like swearing, who will you do it at? If you feel like cursing, or regretting, who will you do it at? If you get really mad, who will you take it out on? There’s nothing to regret about. What
would you regret about? That’s just the way it was. It was fate. I have nothing to regret, but what should I do next?]

Mani now lives with her younger brothers. She has no children despite being married three times. All three of her marriages ended in divorce.

5.9 Summary
This chapter contains the narratives of the eight women who took part in this study. Quotations from their interviews are provided, along with translations into English, to give an indication of how they discussed their experiences and the way in which they chose to present themselves and their past.
Chapter 6

Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of the experiences of the women who took part in this study in the context of resilience and the strategies they used to cope with the aftermath of the anti-Communist activities of the 1960’s. It uses the pathways approach described by Sroufe and others and also considers the women’s understanding of their own experience against the broader background of Indonesian history. The chapter contains four sections on the matrilineal social context, resilience through the life course, the role of religion, and historical perception.

6.1 The Matrilineal Social Context

The matrilineal social structure of traditional Minangkabau society is unique in Indonesia and guarantees a place for every person within their mother’s extended family. The position of women, however, is much more secure than that of men, and they are the ones who have primary access to the family’s assets. Women, especially older women, make up the leadership of the family, although there are roles for men in this, and exert the most control of a family’s real property that may include productive fields, other land, the family home, and so forth. The right to use such property, referred to as harta pusaka tinggi, is allocated to the women of the family according to need and based on discussion within the larger group of extended relatives.

In the Minangkabau system, the ownership of family property is communal, and no real property may be sold by a member of the family without consensus
of everyone who has a right to use it. Assets that are earned by individuals, however, remain their own property and may be disposed of without the consent of the rest of the family. This property, called harta pusaka rendah, typically comes from individual earnings and may be transmitted to children of either sex or other heirs as the owner wishes. The extended family has no claim on this type of wealth, which has become more important in recent decades as more people in West Sumatra have moved into the formal workforce.

For the women who took part in this study, an important source of resilience came from these two types of asset. When anti-Communist activity began in 1965-66, several of them lost their job, while others were detained or imprisoned. Having lost access to wages they or their husband derived from the public domain, they turned to the traditional environment for a means of support. Unlike formal employment, which was subject to changing governmental policy and political views, access to family wealth in the traditional context cannot be denied to women who are entitled to it under the adat (traditional law and custom) of the community.

Most of the respondents sold personal possessions to support themselves, especially in the early period following the events of 1965-66. This did not present a problem because they were entitled to do this without the consent of the extended family. It was not possible for them as individuals to sell or dispose of family assets that required consensus. However, in some cases, they were able to access a greater share of family wealth for their use because of recognition within the extended family that they were in need. This reflects an adaptation of the traditional system that allocates the use of land and other property based on consensus. The situations that might support a greater share
for one woman in the traditional context might extend to the need to pay for children’s education, care for a sick family member, or pay for a daughter’s wedding. However, some of the respondents in this study were able to access greater resources because of their family’s recognition and agreement that their need was extreme and the situation was out of the ordinary. Most of the women were able to claim their rightful portion of family wealth that would have been available to them under normal circumstances. In this, those who came from wealthier families had an advantage, as access to real property is the traditional source of income and security in Minang society.

It is important to note that Minangkabau women have an automatic right to a share of the family wealth, even when they do not live in the family home or even the family’s village. This right cannot be disputed; only the amount and nature of the share is subject to deliberation within the family. For this reason, most of the women in this study were able to use the wealth of their family, however much or little this was, in their time of greatest need. By contrast, men do not have this right, even though they are, in theory, permitted to return to their mother’s home. They would need the consent of their female family members to do this, however, and this consent is not guaranteed. For this reason, the experience of Minangkabau men in times of duress would be quite different from that of the women in this study.

For most of the women in this study, regardless of the family’s views on their political activities, it was possible to return to the extended family when it became impossible or dangerous for them continue their previous lifestyle. This reflects the very clear domains in Indonesian society, where political activities, formal employment, formal education, and the institutions of the modern
nation contrast with the institutions of traditional culture, *adat*, and the extended family context. The women in this study withdrew from the public, national context to return to the traditional context following the events of 1965-66. In addition to the resources of their individual extended families, there are traditional occupations open to women in this context. These include doing agricultural work on one’s own land or for pay for other people, selling things in an informal manner in markets or by peddling, doing handicrafts and sewing, and other similar ventures. These could be done without the need for any type of official permit or license and was generally seen as appropriate and beneficial by the extended family. For this reason, the women in this study turned to this informal type of employment, even when they possessed a formal education that would allow them to work in a professional job in the formal sector. Their withdrawal from the formal sector can be seen as an important life course adaptation that allowed them to overcome the negative events they experienced.

This also shows the way in which the matrilineal social structure makes provisions for women in times of need. This is an aspect of culture often cited by Minangkabau people as one of the strongest elements of their traditions. The way in which family assets are divided for use and also the relative freedom of women to make a living in various ways with the support of the extended family are seen as protecting the most vulnerable members of society by ensuring that women, along with their minor children, have reasonable means of support. The way in which these traditional practices operate is visible in the experiences of the women who took part in this study and demonstrate the protective aspects of the culture. As noted above, men do not enjoy comparable protections. Work is, of course, the main means they have to
support themselves, but they are not entitled to the support of family in this. Women, on the other hand, have an absolute right to demand support and assistance from their mother’s family.

In addition to providing access to resources, the extended family also has a traditional responsibility to care for children if their mother is unable to. This was observed in the case of Zainar and several others, whose family took responsibility for their children during the time when the women were unable to care for them. This responsibility to children in the maternal line was manifested toward the women themselves, as in the case of Nuraya, who was able to rely on the protection of her maternal uncles. These responsibilities are very strong in Minangkabau families as they derive from *adat*, which is seen as permanent and enduring. The problems of the modern context, such as the political involvement these women had with the Communist Party, is seen as transient and unimportant in comparison to the requirements of traditional society and the family. The women in this study recognised this and instinctively returned to their family context in their time of greatest stress. This reflects a consistent resilience strategy in Minangkabau culture.

An interesting phenomenon that was observed in this study was that, in some cases, such as that of Sofia, the families of the women’s fathers were also willing to help. This is neither required nor expected in Minangkabau culture. The relationship between people and their bako (family on the father’s side) is supposed to be polite but does not have the structured patterns of support that characterise relationships on the mother’s side. Nonetheless, a person’s bako may choose to provide support, as occurred for several women in this study. This may have been triggered by the seriousness of the situation in 1965-66,
which was perceived as an emergency by many people in West Sumatra. There can be no doubt that the willingness of their father’s relatives to provide support greatly facilitated the resilience of some of the women in this study, especially when their paternal relatives were better off than their mother’s side of the family. Nonetheless, support from the father’s side of the family is not expected in Minangkabau society and is not counted upon, the way support from the mother’s family can be. Nonetheless, it is generally considered desirable for people to be on good terms with their *bako* and to protect and develop the relationship as an aspect of familial courtesy. For some of the women in this study, their relationship with their father’s side of the family was sufficiently strong that support was offered to them outside the structures of *adat*.

6.2 Resilience through the Life Course

The women in this study were interviewed 50 years after the events of 1965-66 when all of them had moved past their traumatic past and reestablished themselves in the community. They demonstrated considerable resilience, whether or not they had attained financial success, and had apparently been able to transmit this resilience to their children, most of whom were established in jobs and careers. These women recognised several different sources of resilience that included their social network of friends and colleagues, their matrilineal family and the structures of the traditional community, and their religious faith. Each of these played a role in determining the strategies they used to cope and took on different importance at different times.
For most of the women, immediately following the actions against Communists in 1965-66, their first strategy was to escape the authorities. In this, their social networks were most important, and many turned to friends and acquaintances for short-term help. An example of this was Zainar, who moved from the home of one friend to another to avoid pursuit from people who were looking for Communists and Communist sympathisers. This allowed her to reach the property of her extended family, where she could seek refuge.

Having a network of friend and acquaintances to rely on was not only helpful in escaping pursuit but was also used by some of the women to make a living. At a time, when formal employment was closed to them, the women in this study had to turn to the kinds of occupations available in the informal sector. In the traditional context, selling goods depends on the seller good relationships with members of the community. Many of the women, such as Nurma and Yulinar, were able to use their network of acquaintances to support a small business of this kind when they were first getting started and had not yet developed a client base. In many cases, the land available for the women to use was very limited and did not produce enough to support their family. This resource was limited because of the communal ownership of assets by the extended matrilineal family in the traditional Minangkabau social structure. For this reason, even if they had preferred to, it was not possible for a number of the women in this study to rely completely on family assets. This made these networks of friends and acquaintances even more important, especially since they generally did not have business experience prior to the period immediately following 1965-66.

As is common in Indonesia in general, several of the women were also able to use their networks to help their children obtain employment and opportunities
that they believed would be unavailable due to their Communist background. In some cases, it was possible for the women to get help from friends in decision-making positions or who had standing in the community to support their children’s applications for jobs. Zainar, for example, was able to help her daughter obtain a teaching job in this way. It should be noted, however, that this strategy is very widespread in Indonesia today and has likely always been a feature of the employment context. Unemployment is chronically high, and people routinely use connections to get an edge in the competition for jobs. This is one advantage to having a large network of acquaintances, which can be seen as a resilience strategy that applied to the population in general, not just to the women in this study.

For women who were not living in their own village or in West Sumatra, networks of this kind were especially important when faced with the prospect of supporting a family without their husband’s contribution. In the case of Nurma, for example, living in Jakarta during the events of 1965-66, she was able to raise the capital to start a small business when her husband was imprisoned by going to people she knew in the local community. This allowed her to restructure her life in a way that, in some part, made up for the loss of income and helped her adapt to the situation following the immediate trauma of the anti-Communist activities.

Those women who were imprisoned during the immediate period of anti-Communist activities were also able to develop networks that facilitated their continued economic development. Because it was frequently permitted for inmates to work outside the prison during the day, a number of them were able to interact with people in the context of this work who would become a
valuable network in the future when the situation changed. Lis and her husband, for example, were able to make use of a social network they developed while in prison to support a tailoring business that they later were able to expand to supply a major coal mining company. This stresses a very important aspect of the anti-Communist activities of the 1960s -- this was largely a political issue that did not affect community perceptions of specific individuals, even if they were implicated by the authorities. In other words, many individuals who were identified by the government as Communists or Communist sympathisers were known in the community where they already had networks and social position, and their identification as Communists did not affect existing perceptions to a great extent. While the anti-Communist activities affected some of the public by creating a dislike of Communists in general, this feeling often did not extend to people they knew personally. This fact was mentioned explicitly by several of the women in this study.

Another interesting aspect of the use of social relationships as a survival strategy was the establishment of relationships between the study participants and military officers, which often gave them more access to resources. In some cases, these relationships preceded the anti-Communist activities. Tiyas, for example, was married to a man who worked for the military before the events in question. Even after being arrested, he was able to obtain work through connections to military officers who had been his superiors or colleagues. In the case of Yulinar, her husband became a tutor for the son of a military officer. She and her family were able to benefit from this relationship which gave them access to additional resources. The officer helped them to obtain permission to start a sand business that they continued when released from imprisonment. Thanks in part to this connection, the business expanded and ultimately had
government clients. Relationships between the women and military personnel also helped their children. Lis, for instance, entrusted her son to a military officer as a companion for the officer’s own son. This allowed her son to finish elementary school during her imprisonment.

The concept of in-group versus out-group is very strong in the West Sumatran community and is referred to in Minang as *awak samo awak* (‘we stick together’). The term *awak* means ‘us’ and can apply to social groupings based on matrilineal descent, clan affiliation, origin in the same village, and so forth and can serve as a very strong link that individuals can draw upon to seek help and support from others with whom they have this relationship. This is particularly important for people who are living away from their village and family land and is a very longstanding strategy used by Minangkabau in other parts of Indonesia. In the case of Nurma, for example, people within this type of social network were willing to act as go-betweens for her and her husband during a period of time when he was in hiding from the authorities. This network also helped him to elude pursuit. Again, this type of connection is a general resilience strategy among Minangkabau historically and up to the present time. In many cases, individuals use relationships based on common origin to get established in a new city or to get work with the assistance of people who are already there. In practice, it is very difficult to deny assistance to a person who is part of this type of network because of the traditional bonds of reciprocity that govern in-group social relationships. For the women in this study, these networks were a source of support in a period of extreme need but operate in less serious circumstances as well.
While detained, the women in this study tended to form new networks among the other prisoners and make strategic alliances that facilitated their adaptation. This was perhaps an underlying reason for the marriages some of the women made with other prisoners. They recognised that these relationships might be significant in managing the situation they found themselves in, specifically that it might be easier to make a living as part of a family unit than as an individual. In addition, as all the participants in this study were women, the presence of a husband might have offered some protection from the authorities. This was certainly the situation for those women who married soldiers or prison officials who were officially against them. Many of the women had experienced considerable loss. However, the comparatively loose conditions of detainment meant that it was possible even for those who had been arrested to work in the community and recreate a social network that would be adaptive in the future. Those women who were not detained generally chose to withdraw from the formal context and their prior employment. This also meant they had to redevelop networks that would allow them to make a living in the future. Among those who had been arrested, the people they met in the context of detainment were often the first members of these new networks because of their shared lot and the high likelihood that these individuals would accept them and recognise the value of mutual cooperation.

At the same time, in the period immediately following the crack down on Communist activities, the women in this study turned to their matrilineal family, and most returned to their village of origin to live among their mother’s family. As a strategy, this allowed them to take advantage of the strengths of the traditional system but also to normalise their position in a context in which
they could not be refused or denied a social role. While some of them did experience negative reactions from those around them, their position in their communities of origin could not be denied. Some of the women expressed this directly, and all were able to take advantage of the fact that people knew them, knew their family, and were aware of and willing to acknowledge their place in the community. This was extremely important in supporting their resilience. Even though several of them had lost jobs and positions in the modern context, they were able to replace them with a kind of status in the traditional context. For many of the women, their new status was not comparable to what they had to give up, but it did allow them to survive and reestablish a social network which is vital in Minangkabau society. As a communal community, it is extremely difficult emotionally for people to be isolated without the usual interactions at the personal, as well as the wider, level. What this meant was that the anti-Communist activities triggered a change in status, but not a total loss of status, for these women and, as such, the situation was more manageable in the context of their traditional culture and its structures.

Within a comparatively short time, the women in this study were able to reestablish themselves in their community. This included those who were imprisoned, as they were generally allowed to work, either inside or out of the jail which allowed them to develop a new means of making a living and also to build social networks. For those living in the village, their existing status as a member of an established family and the fact that people already knew allowed them to integrate into the village context in ways that corresponded to traditional patterns. The nature of the extended family in the Minangkabau community is such that women can always demand a share of its resources; even if they are not able to obtain this kind of support, it is not possible to lost
the association with an extended that is part of a given location which means social bonds remain meaningful, even if financial resources are lacking. This system is much older than the modern Indonesian nation and is separate from political considerations or national structures. The issue of Communism and government action is completely outside the traditional social environment and is not a consideration that could be used to exclude women from their own maternal families. Even if they disagreed with the women’s political views or their past behaviour, their extended families operated according to traditional principles that were not affected by events from outside in the political context. This allowed the women to make use of family assets, both economic as well as social, to reestablish themselves in the village.

While this was a difficult trade off for some of the women who were well-educated and had professional jobs, it was nonetheless possible to make a living in the village, and many types of work were available to them that allowed them to support their families. This shows the extent to which the modern political context in Indonesia parallels an older traditional context that operates in a different way and is quite separate. In West Sumatra specifically, the traditional context places women as the heads of families and the main decision-makers in the extended family who have the greatest access to family resources. This helped the women in this study and gave them choices that would not have been available to men in the same community or perhaps to women in another part of Indonesia.

Despite their personal experiences, the women in this study understood the parallel domains of interaction in Indonesian society and apparently retained a belief that formal education, an important aspect of the modern context, was
extremely important for their children. For this reason, all of them went to great lengths to ensure that their children could go to school and participate in the modern context in this way. This was an important resilience strategy, both for themselves as well as for the children, as it gave them something to focus their efforts on and also ensured a better future for their offspring. In fact, many of the children of the women in this study have experienced educational and career success and are fully integrated into the wider Indonesian community, despite the Communist activities of their parents.

The fact that, over time, the participants’ children could reintegrate into the community, despite official marginalisation of former Communist party members and supporters, is an indication of the success of the strategies used by their mothers to reestablish themselves in the community. It is also perhaps a reflection of the fact that the wider community was aware that membership in the Communist party did not necessarily mean that the individuals involved held views that were incompatible with the values of the community. By withdrawing from the national context as a strategy to overcome political pressure, the women in the study recognised that they might have to give up their opportunities in the formal context but that their children might be able to achieve these things. In Indonesia, formal education provides the transition from the traditional context to the modern one and allows children to develop an identity as an Indonesian in addition to their identity as a member of an ethnic groups (see Fanany and Effendi, 1999, for a detailed discussion of this). Despite teasing and bullying some of the women’s children experienced, they were generally able to take part in education with the expected results, despite their parents’ past. This can also be viewed as the outcome of their mothers’ successful strategy to recover from the events they experienced.
6.3 Resilience Strategies in the Context of Sroufe’s Model

The inherent concept of identity attached to every individual in Indonesian society was crucial in the formation of resilience for the women who participated in this study. As discussed above, Indonesians generally have a dual identity, as a member of the national culture and as a member of their ethnic group. While national identity tends to have certain common elements for everyone living in Indonesia, ethnic identity is specific to the cultural background of the person involved and may be very diverse, depending on where they come from, their level of integration into their community of heritage, their individual experiences, and also their attitudes, feelings, and perceptions. The anti-Communist activities the women experienced acted as precipitating events that required a change of direction in their subsequent life. However, these events were closely associated with the national political context and were not relevant in the context of their ethnic identity.

The framework proposed by Sroufe (1997) depicts resilience as an outcome of development over time. This view suggests that resilience will be the result of multiple routes leading to a similar outcome but where variant outcomes may occur under different circumstances. Change can occur at many points and can be constrained by earlier adaptation. This model explains why people who experienced similar events may have different levels of resilience as well as why individuals with very different life experiences may become equally resilient. In other words, this perspective indicates that resilience develops over time as the result of accumulating decisions that may be more or less adaptive to the person involved, in terms of allowing them to return to normal function and recover from a traumatic experience.
For the women in this study, the first decision made by all of them, based on their assessment of the situation, was to withdraw from the formal (Indonesian) context. Because of the parallel domains of national and ethnic culture and identity, as well as Indonesia’s large and dynamic informal economic sector that exists alongside the formal employment/occupational context, this was possible for all of them. Several of the women who took part in this study were well educated for the time but chose to give up the positions that level of formal education made possible. This was an important turning point for those involved. Most Indonesians feel that the formal context of employment, that uses the Indonesian language and is based on formal qualifications, has the most promise in terms of income potential and future prospects. However, participation in this type of employment requires immersion in the national context. For example, a large majority of professional occupations, such as teachers, are government employees. People who hold these jobs cannot choose not to participate in national institutions if they wish to remain employed. For this reason, leaving such a job and entering the informal sector means giving up the benefits of formal education, which are social as well as economic. It is often difficult even today for many Indonesians to leave the public sector for private sector employment (which is still in the formal context) because of perceptions about job security and benefits. Leaving the formal sector entirely is very unusual and would only be considered in very serious circumstances, such as those perceived by the women in this study. Once they made the decision to withdraw from the national context, the women had a number of alternatives available to them.

In the traditional Minangkabau context, there are many occupations that can traditionally be engaged in by women. Most of these do not require any specific
skill, but they are socially acceptable and are considered appropriate for women in the context of the family and larger society. These include making food and selling it door to door or at markets, doing agricultural work for wages, sewing and other handicrafts, and so forth. Many of the women in this study were able to turn to occupations of this kind. Even for those who had been arrested, there were opportunities to interact within the community and engage in this kind of work. For these women, the existence of these types of occupation, especially because they were both customary and socially appropriate, allowed them to make the decision to do such jobs. This is not to suggest that it was easy for them to make this choice, do the work involved, and recreate social networks that would facilitate their activities, but the choice was highly adaptive for the women involved and did allow them to demonstrate personal agency and take control of their situation.

In this, all of the women in this study benefitted from the traditional structure of Minangkabau society that places women as decision-makers and the heads of families. On the one hand, this allowed them to access assets belonging to their matrilineal, extended family which often served as the capital for their new endeavours. It was not possible for their extended families to deny them reasonable use of land for farming, for example, or access to their mother’s possessions (for use or sale), and the women did take advantage of such resources as were available to them. On the other hand, as the head of their family, it was expected by other family members, as well as members of their communities, that these women would engage in some kind of work and take full responsibility for their family’s welfare, especially if their husband was in jail or had been killed. This is an important aspect of Minangkabau culture; most Minang feel that the main strength of matrilineal social system is that it
protects women and children from poverty because of the way in which land and other assets are managed. There is some truth in this view, especially in the historical context. However, another aspect of this is that women generally are prepared to support themselves and their children through their own efforts and through use of their own property without the contribution of a husband. Traditionally, men have always had a major responsibility to their own mother and female relatives, even after marriage, while women tend to rely more on their brothers, maternal uncles (*mamak*), and extended family. For this reason, it was emotionally easier for the women to take over the role of provider for their family.

This is not to say that it is not important for women in Minangkabau society to have a husband. In fact, being married often strengthens a woman’s position in the extended family, and she is entitled to support that her husband can provide. For this reason, some of the women in this study chose to remarry after their husbands died. In some cases, this marriage was to another person in a similar situation to themselves. This provided a kind of companionship it may have been difficult to get from people who had not experienced the anti-Communist activities and no doubt contributed to the emotional resilience of the women involved. Having a partner who shared their background provided social support and an understanding environment that supported enhanced resilience. For other women, however, their marriage was to a member of the police or military who was officially charged with controlling people with Communist leanings. This can be seen as a choice that may have supported increased resilience as well because of the social protection a marriage of this kind could provide in a environment where sensitivity to Communist leanings was high. Regardless of who the women married, the presence of a husband
did have certain economic benefits as well as social ones that were important to these women in reestablishing their lives.

As time passed, the social and political situation in Indonesia changed. While there remained an official stance against Communism and community disapproval of the ideology was high, the women in this study were able to increasing integrate into the traditional context of their own villages where most had returned. The choice to return to the location of their family’s ancestral land was also strategic and allowed them to take maximum advantage of their family’s assets. The tendency of people from this cultural background to turn inward to the family in this way has been noted elsewhere (see Fanany and Fanany, 2013). Interestingly, some of the women were assisted by their bakó (their father’s family). This is not required in Minangkabau culture and is not part of the traditional functioning of the matrilineal system. However, it does show the importance to Minangkabau of maintaining good relationships with one’s bakó and the nature of reciprocal social networks at the village level. For the women who were able to access additional resources from their bakó, this provided an important source of extra income and support to resilience.

Several of the women in this study were formally educated and had jobs in the formal context, and they, as well as some of the others who were not as well educated, had to give up employment that is normally considered desirable in Indonesia. Once they reestablished themselves in the informal context and began to engage in more traditional occupations, they found they had to make decisions about their children. All of them women, despite their own experiences, recognised the best possibility for their children was to attend as much school as possible with the hope that they would be able to reenter
mainstream society at some future time. Overwhelmingly, this did turn out to be the case, and, as noted, the children of many of the women in this study completed their education and were able to get good jobs in both public and private workplaces. Participation in formal education, which is how people in Indonesia master the formal variety of the national language required for employment and also learn the nature of the formal context, is a strategy used by all Indonesians to improve the economic standing of each subsequent generation. The fact that the women in this study encouraged their children to attend school and university in some cases is an indication that they recognised the value of this economically as well as in terms of supporting family resilience. Some the women did report that their children were bullied because of their parents’ Communist background, but overwhelmingly, they and their children were able to overcome this, either through personal capacity (ignoring the situation) or through positive action (moving the children to different schools).

By the time these women were interviewed for this study, the events of 1965-66 were 50 years in the past and had faded in terms of their traumatic impact. All of the participants had moved past the negative effects they experienced and had rebuilt their lives in ways that were satisfactory and acceptable to them, but importantly, were also socially acceptable to members of their community. Over time, this had allowed them to regain the social position they had lost as a result of their association with Communism in the 1960s and, as noted above, had overcome the stigma associated with the first decades following these events. In terms of the development of their resilience, the most notable aspect of the experience of the women who took part in this study was that they were able to benefit greatly from the traditional culture of which they were a part. Because this culture offered alternatives to the public context
that were meaningful in terms of making a living, recovering from the negative events they experienced, and offering them a place in the community, it greatly improved their ability to adapt and develop resilience. While this has been noted in the literature (see Fanany and Fanany, 2013, for example), it is the case that these traditional strategies seem to be effective in building resilience in numerous contexts and as a response to different kinds of trauma. This stresses the importance of traditional culture in Indonesia and also shows its value in addressing issues outside its customary domain.

In this, the model developed by Sroufe (1997) fits the experiences recounted the women who took part in this study which can be seen as a series of decisions aimed first at survival, then economic improvement, followed by restoration of social status and the future wellbeing of the family as a unit. While it is likely that these women were not consciously aware that the decisions they made at any given would have long term implications for the future, they did consciously weigh the alternatives available to them in light of their inherent understanding of both Indonesian mainstream society and the traditional context. As members of the society, they were able to choose from among the available alternatives the ones that would best support their goals, which they tended to see in terms of economic improvement. Economic capital is an important resource for resilience (see Poortinga, 2012, for example) and is also concrete. However, there can be no doubt that being able to support their families was an important aspect of the development of emotional resilience among these women as well. Their growing emotional resilience, in turn, allowed them to overcome the personal trauma they experienced as well as to cope with isolation and stigmatisation that some of them encountered. While some of them had set backs at various times, the women in this study all
followed a path of increasing resilience that grew over time as the triggering events of 1965-66 receded into the past. An important component of this was the emotional resources that allowed them to cope with the situation and make positive decisions that encouraged greater personal agency and the ability to reestablish their lives.

6.4 Religion
Throughout the years since the anti-Communist activities of 1965-66, the women in this study have shown considerable religious faith that became more important as they aged. Religion has been found to provide a source of resilience in many different communities and seems to play this role in Minangkabau society as well. Participation in religious activities, such as communal prayers at the mosque and Quranic recitation in the community, is an important marker of social integration. Since all Minangkabau are nominally Muslim, this is a major element of appropriate social conduct that marks group membership and agreement with social norms. For the women in this study, religion provided the means for the development of resilience and also served a vehicle for integration into the community.

The Minangkabau people are Muslim, and this religion is considered to be part of cultural identity. Like some other Indonesian ethnic groups, identification as a Muslim is a required aspect of Minangkabau identity and is also a cultural element that signals group membership. In this, they are part of a cultural continuum that includes the wider Malay community and several other groups in Sumatra (Sakai, 2009). The requirements of the religion are easily observed throughout the community, where every neighbourhood has a mosque or prayer house, calls to the five daily prayers are audible everywhere, dress and
social conventions adhere to the local customs of Islam, and language conventions reflect certain Arabic usages. Traditional law and culture (adat) that governs traditional society and shapes the matrilineal social structures described above is seen to be based on religion. A saying, ‘Adat is based on (religious) law, (religious) law is based on the Holy Book’ (Adaik basandi sarak, sarak basandi Kitabullah), is viewed as a founding principle of modern Minangkabau society and shows the contrast between adat, which is flexible, and religious law which is not. This is discussed extensively in Fanany and Fanany (2003).

The extent to which Minangkabau society really reflects religious values is debatable, but it is the case that the vast majority of Minangkabau are exposed to the religion and its practice from birth and also participate in religious study throughout childhood and youth. The nature of Islam means that formal study is required to participate fully in the religious practices of the community, which involve ritual but also require some ability to read the Quran in Arabic and recite its verses. It is important to note, however, that Arabic is not used in the community for communication, and Minangkabau generally do not speak the language. Many of them can read Arabic text and recite it, so religious books generally contain translations into , and the meaning of texts is learned in this way in the form of whole passages. Nonetheless, Islam is seen as providing guidelines for appropriate individual conduct, as well as social behaviour. These are learned largely from interaction in the community but are reinforced by the interpretations of religious texts viewed as relevant to a given situation or that are seen as promoting some behaviour or attribute.
Among the most important of these at the individual level is the idea that a person must accept guidance from God and use his or her senses to understand how such guidance is to be applied. This requires faith (iman), which reflects an unwavering trust in God as well as an acceptance that whatever occurs is His will for reasons that are unclear to human beings. This interpretation allows Indonesian Muslims, including the Minangkabau, to show enormous resilience in the face of negative events. This has been demonstrated in research relating to the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh (see Fanany and Fanany, 2013) as well as in Padang itself following the 2009 earthquake that destroyed much of the downtown area of Padang and killed more than 1000 people (see Lies et al. 2014).

Islam is viewed by members of the Minangkabau ethnic group as providing the means to cope with negative events and suggests that they have to be accepted as a part of life that God has determined for the individual. Because nothing can be done about this, such events have to be approached calmly and without bitterness because they represent a challenge from God Himself and may also trigger an intensification of a person’s personal religious behaviour. In this way, religious beliefs offer a means of coping with negative events but also suggest a model of behaviour that is socially acceptable and desirable in the community that conforms to customary practices. Equally important, the communal or societal aspect of Islamic practice supports social cohesion and helps create a sense of community following an adverse occurrence. It has been suggested that a traditional response to misfortune in the Malay world is to turn inward to one’s group (Fanany and Fanany, 2013). Religion is one of the identifying features of the group and also suggests appropriate behaviour and attitudes.
This way in which Islam is understood in the Minangkabau community and its function for individuals has two important aspects that are significant in understanding the reactions of the women in this study. The first relates to the way in which Communism is understood in West Sumatra in relation to religion. Overwhelmingly, people in the Minangkabau community have a very simplistic view of the nature of Communism which they associate with atheism. While Communism is usually seen as an economic and political philosophy in the west, these aspects of what it espouses are not well understood by Minangkabau or Indonesians in general. Instead, Communism is strongly associated with the belief that there is no God, which explains why the community so strongly disapproves of Communism as an idea. It is seen to contradict one of the most important aspects of Minangkabau cultural identity, namely adherence to Islam.

At the same time, for the women in this study at least, the organisations associated with the PKI provided an important social outlet. None of them had very clear political aspirations or an in-depth understanding of Communism as a philosophy. Several were drawn into the political environment by family members (who also likely had a comparatively unsophisticated understanding of the nature of Communism), while others took part in organisations and activities as a means of socialising and because that was what others were doing. This type of group mentality is extremely strong and widespread in Indonesia, and members of the Minangkabau community are socialised from childhood to view it as better to be a part of a group than to do things by themselves. The result is that being part of an organisation or group and doing things with other members is very attractive. The nature of the group and its activities is often secondary. This accounts for the statements of several of the
participants in this study that their participation in Communist organisations was only social or came about because of a husband or other family member and did not reflect some conscious political belief. Others were interested in some of the positions of Communist organisations on issues that affected them (such as the status of women) but not in any larger political aspects of the movement.

Following the anti-Communist activities of 1965-66, it was this generally held view that Communists do not believe in God that caused difficulty for a number of participants when they returned to the village. In addition to concern that they were considered criminals or undesirables by the authorities, many people in the community were uncertain about the beliefs of some of the women and their families in regard to religion which was an important cultural and social force in the community. Nonetheless, this was not always the case. For some of the women, the fact that their family was known in the village and other people had a long history of interacting with them and their relatives meant that they were reasonably well accepted when they returned to this environment. Nonetheless, many of the women did make an effort to participate in the public manifestations of religious practice in the village as a way of demonstrating that they remained part of the community and held the same beliefs as their neighbours. The public demonstration of religious belief (praying at the mosque, fasting during the fasting month, and so on) was a way of denying the association with Communism and showing that they did, in fact, fit into the local community in every way.

The second aspect of religion that was significant in the ability of the women who took part in this study to cope with the events they experienced is the
personal strength they were able to find in their beliefs. Many of the women felt that they became more religious as time went on and were able to gain personal satisfaction from praying and learning more about religion. In this way, their religion provided a personal coping strategy that supported the development of resilience that allowed them to adapt to the aftermath of the negative events they experienced. The value of religion in this has been documented in the literature (see, for example, Pargamen, 1997; Underwood, 2003; Levin, 2003). For Islam in particular, the ability to support personal resilience and provide comfort in the eyes of its adherents has been discussed as well (see, for example, Koenig et al., 2012).

The role of religion in suggesting a way to cope with adversity is part of Minangkabau culture and provides a model for thinking about adversity that many people in the community find helpful in accepting negative events. For example, Islam, as it is understood in the Malay world including in the Minangkabau community, encourages people to think about the things they experience as fate (takdir) that could not not happen (see Fanany and Fanany, 2013). If events could not be avoided, then logic suggests they must be accepted. At the same time, people are certain that God would not subject them to more than they could tolerate. This view encourages them to see any type of adversity as manageable, whether community-wide, such as in the case of the tsunami and earthquake mentioned above, or individual, as in the case of the women in this study.

This is not to suggest that the events the women who took part in this study experienced were not significant to them or did not affect them deeply. However, their religion suggested a way to accept what occurred, and this
allowed them to start over and restructure their lives. It also provided and important means of participating in the life of the community and associating themselves with the dominant social force. At the same time, open religious behaviour was a way of denying association with Communism, as it was understood in the community, and showing that the accusations and punishment they experienced was unwarranted.

The connection between religious belief and resilience is well documented in the literature (see Kedler et al. 2003; Fetzer, 2003; Pargament and Cumming, 2010). In the case of the women in this study, their Islamic beliefs provided the means for the development of resilience both immediately following the events of 1965-66 and later in life. At the time of their interviews for this study, the women were all over 60 and had moved well past the traumatic events they experienced. Many had done well, had adult children who were working and established in their own families, and had more time to devote to religious activities and increasing their understanding of their faith. This is the usual pattern in the Minangkabau community where religious participation and study is seen as a valuable activity for older people, and the elderly are expected to take part in religious activity in the later stages of life (Fanany and Fanany, 2017). This suggests that religious faith continues to serve as an important source of resilience for people in the community and, as demonstrated by the women in this study, retains its value as a means for coping and adaptation throughout the life course.

6.5 Historical Perspective
The coup that took place in Indonesia in September of 1965 and was followed by the anti-Communist activities of the central government that were
experienced by the women who took part in this study are the subject of a public narrative that is contained in Indonesian history textbooks and official records of this period. Certain aspects of this period are undisputed. For example, it is clear that a small number of military officers, who had set themselves up as an alternative organisation of armed forces members, kidnapped and assassinated six generals in a coup attempt. In the early morning of 1 October 1965, several thousand soldiers occupied Lapangan Merdeka, a square in Central Jakarta where the headquarters of the Indonesian national radio broadcaster was located along with a number of other institutions. The east side of the square, the location of the armed forces strategic reserve (KOSTRAD), was not occupied. KOSTRAD was at this time commanded by Major General Soeharto, who became Indonesia’s second president. Sometime before this, the head of the PKI as well as the commander of the air force were known to have fled to Jakarta’s airport, suggesting to many that they had been involved in the coup attempt. By seven that morning, a radio announcement was made telling the public that a sub-group of the army had taken control of the situation and had foiled a coup by a group of generals with the help of the CIA. President Soekarno was said to have been taken into the protection of this group in order to ensure his safety (Selected Documents Relating to the September 30 Movement and its Epilogue, 1966).

Following this, the army began to discuss the involvement of the PKI in the coup attempt. This view was promoted strongly by the government of President Soeharto (the New Order), and the abbreviation G30S/PKI began to appear in school textbooks and other print sources. G stands for gerakan, the Indonesian word for ‘movement’; 30 S refers to 30 September; and PKI is the Indonesian acronym for the Indonesian Communist Party. Various individuals were tried,
and a number of pieces of evidence were made public, but many people, including western scholars, were doubtful that this version of events was correct. In order to promote this official narrative of the period, the New Order government financed a film entitled *Pengkhiantan G30S/PKI* [The Treachery of the G30S/PKI] that was shown on television as well as in schools and other institutions (Film Indonesia, 2010). As early as 1971, western observers had published alternative theories about what had happened. One of these articles, termed the Cornell Paper, that was written by Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey (1971), suggested that the coup attempt was staged by low-ranking army officers who were dissatisfied with the corruption in the military that they saw as impeding their careers and was completely an internal movement within the army. Those involved, it was suggested, had deliberately tried to implicate the PKI by bringing its leader to the airport, for example. Later works suggested that the whole incident had been designed to allow then Major General Soeharto to play a major role and move into a position that would allow him to take over control of the government (see, for example, Scott, 1985, who also suggests CIA involvement in events). Various other versions of this period have emerged more recently, including a theory that British intelligence was also involved (see Lashmar and Oliver, 1998).

The emphasis of the public narrative on the role of the PKI in the coup attempt and eventual end of the Soekarno government contributed to the longstanding suspicions about people suspected of being Communists or associated with Communist organisations. The violence against Communists and their relatives that was experienced by the women who took part in this study occurred when the PKI was banned by Soeharto, and the authorities, aided in some parts of the country by members of the public, embarked on a purge of those involved.
Estimates of deaths during this period range from 78,000 to one million (Sundhaussen, 1982). In recent years, a number of western scholars have become interested in the specific experiences of violence in various parts of Indonesia and have tried to focus attention on victims of this historical period (see, for example, Mortimer, 2006; Kammen and MacGregor, 2012). While this view has influenced a number of Indonesian NGOs and led to the formation of several community organisations such as YPKP 65, the group some of the women in this study belonged to, it has not been influential in changing the official version of events. Nonetheless, there has been some recent interest in this period among Indonesian scholars as the current political environment allows for more critical discussion of events than was possible in the past.

Despite and awareness of this public narrative, the women who took part in this study did not see themselves as having participated in an important period in Indonesia’s history. Instead, they viewed their experiences from a personal viewpoint that tended to place their experiences as simply part of their life, as one section of their life course. While they experienced trauma and were, in many cases, forced to change their way of life as well as their goals and aspirations, they viewed this as an individual experience, or one relevant to a group of others whose lot was similar to their own, rather than to events occurring on a national scale. For some of them, the existence of a group of other people whose experiences were similar has been important in the development of their resilience and the ability to move past the impediments they faced. In this, their personal narratives confirm group membership and are separate from the public narrative. As discussed by Denham (2008), Wexler et al. (2009) and Crawford (2013), among others, this type of shared narrative among people whose experiences were similar serves to validate their
perceptions and creates a network where their reactions and views are accepted. The organisation in West Sumatra that some of the women belong to is a formalisation of this. It should be noted, however, that YPKP 65 is a national interest group that takes an approach promoted by some western scholars interested in this period in Indonesian history (see Detak, 2016). It is not a reaction to their experiences created and supported by the West Sumatran community itself or by the women who took part in this study.

The women in this study have remained mostly uninterested in politics following the events of 1965-66. This was particularly the case during the New Order period which ended in 1998. While none of them was herself involved in politics at the time of the coup attempt, all the women recognised that the events they experienced were closely associated with the interests of that government and were aware of the public narrative of the period. They did not connect these things directly with themselves, however, and tended to view their experience as coming about because of their personal bad luck. As noted above, their religious views and the assets to which they were entitled as Minangkabau women allowed them to overcome the adversity they experienced and to respond with considerable resilience. For this reason, despite feelings of sadness, resentment and bitterness when asked to discuss their experiences, the events of 1965-66 had little relevance to the women at the time they were interviewed for this study. Overwhelmingly, they no longer felt themselves to be victims of history, although they believe that they were at the time of occurrence. This attests to their resilience and ability to make use of the physical and psychological assets available to them that is demonstrated by the choices they made and the nature of their life course in the 50 years since the anti-Communist activities of 1965-66.
6.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings from this study in terms of the aspects of experience that contributed to the development of resilience in the women who took part in this study. These included the matrilineal social system of the Minangkabau ethnic group and the religious views of the women that were also characteristic of their ethnic background. In addition, the development of resilience over their life course was considered as were the resilience strategies the participants used. Finally, a consideration of the historical perspective of the women was presented that shows how they view their experiences in the larger context of Indonesian history.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

This chapter concludes this study. It summarises the way in which the research was carried out as well as its findings. In addition, it answers the research questions that formed the basis of the research and suggests possible directions for future study.

7.1 Summary

This study concerns the development of resilience in a number of Minangkabau women who experienced the anti-Communist events of 1965-66. This period in Indonesian history was the catalyst for the transition from the administration of the nation’s first president, Soekarno, to that of its second president, Soeharto. The nature of the events of this time are not fully agreed upon by scholars, and the official version of history as espoused by the Indonesian government of the time does not fit fully with some of the historical research, especially that conducted outside of Indonesia. Because of the suggested involvement of the Soeharto government (referred to as the New Order), it was not possible to investigate these events as rigorously as possible during the years it was in power (1965-1998). Following the president’s resignation in 1998 after the Asian Financial crisis, however, Indonesia entered a period of greatly increased openness and transparency that extended to historical issues as well as cultural and political ones. As a result, it is now possible to investigate the events of 1965-66 in ways that were not possible in the past. This study contributes to this and provides new information about the experience of the people who were directly involved.
The aim of this study was to understand the nature of resilience and historical perspective of eight women from West Sumatra who were directly affected by the anti-Communist activities. Their stories were elicited through a process of narrative ethnography and are presented in Chapter 5. All of the women were members of the Minangkabau ethnic group that makes up almost all of the population of the Indonesian province of West Sumatra.

As members of the matrilineal Minangkabau culture, the women had traditional resources they could use to support the formation of resilience. This included the possibility of deciding to return to the village where their families originally came from. This was an important asset in the development of resilience because, as women, they had an irrevocable claim to use family property and could not be denied the right to live in the ancestral home. While many of the women had formal education in the modern context, they generally had to leave the positions that education made possible and change to a more customary occupation in the traditional context. The availability and socially acceptable nature of work of this kind for women allowed them to support their families and also to reestablish themselves in the community they came from.

In addition, the women’s religious beliefs, which were similar to those of people in the Minangkabau community in general, provided an additional resource for resilience. While Communism is associated with atheism in Indonesia, in fact, all of the women in this study felt they were religious and practiced their religion (Islam) in the ways that were usual in the community. It was evident in this that their involvement in Communism did not extend to a deep understanding or acceptance of all its principles. At the time of interview, none
of the women had strong feelings about their past political involvement, except to say that they had become wary of any political activity because of the unexpected negative experiences of the past.

The women in this study were able to make use of the dual nature of identity in Indonesia. All Indonesians have an identity as a member of an ethnic group that is generally associated with a local language and a specific traditional culture that structured people’s lives since the distant past. However, they also have an identity as a citizen of the modern nation of Indonesia that is associated with the public environment and the use of the Indonesian language. Politics and political issues are located in the public, national domain, as was the government-sponsored anti-Communist activities of 1965-66. In order to escape these activities, the women in this study were able to withdraw into the traditional environment of their native culture. This turned out to have very significant benefits for their resilience because they were able to take advantage of the matrilineal social structure which gave them meaningful economic assets as well as a social position in the family and community. This served as a replacement for the status they had in the public context before the anti-Communist activities and allowed them to rebuild their lives and develop resilience.

Over time, it was possible for the women to overcome the negative events they experienced and to encourage their children to reintegrate into the public context through formal education and employment. They were largely successful in this. Thinking about their past, the women did not have much feeling that they had been part of a major series of events in Indonesian history. Instead, they tended to look at their experiences as personal without much
sense of having been part of history. Nonetheless, the support of other people
who had had similar experiences was important to the women and helped
them adjust to the situation they found themselves in. This relates to the idea
of a shared lot that has been shown to be important in the narratives associated
with this period in Indonesia.

At the time of this writing, almost 20 years have passed since the end of the
New Order government. The stigma associated with Communism has mostly
disappeared, and there is new interest in studying the events of the New Order
period. The people who were directly involved in the anti-Communist activities
of the 1960s, including the women who took part in this study, are elderly.
Many have died. For this reason, it is important that personal narratives like the
ones presented in this study be available in order to better understand
Indonesian history. In addition, this kind of research shows how traditional
culture interacts with the public context in Indonesia and provides new insight
into the way in which Indonesian society works. This will allow for greater
understanding of culture, perception, and identity as well as resilience in the
context of historical events.

7.2 Research Questions

This study was structured by a number of research questions. The answers to
them are as follows. The first research question related to the nature of
resilience among women affected by the 1965-66 anti-Communist activities in
Indonesia. The findings of this study indicate that resilience was high among
the women involved at the time of interview. This resilience developed over a
period of years following the negative events that they experienced. All of the
women were able to take advantage of opportunities available to them and make choices that they believed would be the most beneficial at the time. Overall, these choices were advantageous and allowed the women and their families to reestablish themselves and find ways to make a living and restructure their lives. Economic assets were very important in this, and the women did have a number of choices that supported them in making a living. Emotionally, the women benefitted from their Islamic faith which, as it is understood in the Minangkabau community, provides additional resources for resilience that focus on faith, acceptance, and forebearance.

The second research question concerned the specific factors that contributed to resilience for these women. The study showed that there were several factors that were directly related to resilience among the women in this study. The first of these was the fact that Indonesian society consists of two separate domains, the public, Indonesian context (which encompasses political events) and the traditional, local language context (that relates to traditional community life). Because the anti-Communist activities were seen by the community, including the women themselves, as part of the Indonesian context, they had little impact on traditional social structures and perceptions. Within the traditional domain, the women benefitted greatly from the Minangkabau social structure which is matrilineal. Because women are the heads of families and cannot be denied a place in the ancestral home or access to the assets of the extended family, the women in this study were able to use family and other property to support themselves, including as capital for small business. In this context, some of the women remarried following the death of their husband. Despite being matrilineal, the presence of husband provides additional social status for women and also another person who can work. In
the Minangkabau community, it is usual and socially acceptable for women to do various kinds of work, such as making and selling different kinds of goods, working on other people land for wages, and engaging in traditional professions (sewing, embroidery, etc). Even the women who were jailed, had some opportunity to engage in these occupations. As a result, they were able to develop new sources of income that greatly supported their resilience. As noted above, their religious beliefs also contributed to their resilience and provided important emotional resources to make use of other opportunities available to them.

The third research question related to the bases for resilience in the Minangkabau community. The results of this study showed very clearly that the traditional matrilineal social structures and religious practices are very beneficial for members of the public. This is important in that the Minangkabau are one of some 300 ethnic groups in Indonesia, each with their own culture and social structures. The findings suggest that traditional cultural precepts may have value for Indonesians in general in terms of resilience, which has also been identified in a small amount of literature on the topic. For the women in this study specifically, there can be no doubt that the main sources of resilience lay in their ancestral culture and religion, not in the the structures or practices of the public, Indonesian domain.

The fourth research question related to the ways the women developed survival strategies and moved on with their lives during the remainder of the New Order period. All of the women in this study realized that they would have to withdraw from the public, Indonesian environment because this was the context for the anti-Communist feeling during the course of the New Order government. For many of them, this meant giving up their prior achievements
in the public context, such as professional jobs that required formal education. Despite having considerable achievement in these domains, the women chose to return to their regions of origin and re-establish themselves within the traditional context. This environment was outside the contexts that were controlled by the authorities and that operate based on traditional social rules. In this way, they were able to create a new life that did not depend on the structures of the modern nation where anti-Communist sentiment existed. While people in their communities were often wary of people associated with the Communist party, traditional social bonds and knowledge of the women’s families were more important than their prior political connections.

The final research question for this study related to how the women saw their place in history 50 years after the anti-Communist activities of 1965-66. Overwhelmingly, the women had little sense of being part of one of the most tumultuous and dynamic periods in modern Indonesian history. They tended to view their experiences as personal and were not very aware of the nationwide scale of events. Most of them had little actual feeling about Communism and had been involved in Communist organizations because of family connections or simply as a form of socializing. As a result, they tend to see themselves as having been caught up in events in ways that they did not anticipate. Nonetheless, several of them have recently become involved in groups of similar people who experienced the events of 1965-66 personally, although these organizations have not been fully satisfactory to the women involved. They have little sense of historical trauma such as has been identified in other parts of the world in response to similar events and tend to perceive their experiences as relevant to themselves and a small number of friends,
acquaintances and family members, with little concept of having played a part in the broader history of the nation.

In summary, the women who took part in this research now view their experiences as part of the political context that existed at the time. They also explained that people they knew in West Sumatra did not really see them as having the negative characteristics the government was telling the public that Communists had. While they were isolated from some community activities and were thought of as Communists by some of their neighbors, they were able to participate in the informal economy. Their position as women in the context of their extended families and villages was more deeply embedded than the status conferred by the authorities which came from political affiliation that was completely separate from the traditional context. Although their experiences were traumatic, the women who took part in this study, like many other people who were also involved in the events of 1965-66, were able to overcome the impacts of these events and become a part of their traditional community. Over time, they reentered the formal structures of Indonesia on more or less the same basis as other people. The New Order government fell in 1998, and the stigma associated with Communism been almost totally eliminated, and it is now possible to discuss and understand the impacts of historical events on people who experienced them.

7.3 Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that the use of Western paradigms in understanding resilience in non-Western communities may not be fully inapplicable since they were largely developed for western societies based on the traditions, perceptions, and social environment that dominate in those locations. This study also suggests that non-western communities, as
represented by the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, may have unique social structures and traditions that support resilience in their members. In this way, its findings contribute to filling a gap in our understanding on resilience of non-Western contexts, and specifically in relation to Muslim women in communities where traditional cultural and religious practices are strong. It is likely that its findings have relevance for other parts of Indonesia and the Malay world and also more broadly to communities around the world that share some of the characteristics of West Sumatra.

The results of this study suggest that there is value in continuing research into the nature and development of resilience in other parts of the non-western world in communities with a variety of traditional practices and social structures. This study may serve as model for how this can be done. In addition, the methods used in this study provide a way to gain new insight into historical events that offers insight into the experience of those with firsthand experience, in contrast to the official narrative or historical records of the events in question. Again, this will likely have relevance for other parts of Indonesia and the Malay world but also elsewhere where historical events in the comparatively recent past may be able to be elucidated by understanding the personal experiences of people involved.

Finally, this research suggests that it may be beneficial to move away from viewing specific groups, like the Minangkabau women who experienced the anti-Communist events of 1965-66 who took part in this study, merely as victims of historical events outside their control. Instead, the study of the experiences of such groups may lead to the development of new ways of
presenting and studying recent historical as well as the psychology of the people involved that can lead to new interdisciplinary methods and insights.

7.4. Summary
This chapter provided a summary of the thesis and outlined some of its most important findings. It also answered the specific research questions that shaped this study and offered suggestions for further study that may contribute to our understanding of resilience, especially in non-western societies, as well as offer new insights into the study of recent history in communities in Indonesia and elsewhere.
APPENDIX

Publications Resulting from this Study


REFERENCES


*Indonesia* (Cornell Modern Indonesia Project) 1: 131-205.


