Behind the Scenes of Early Marriage in Perigi - East Lombok  
West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia  
The Young Women’s Story

Thesis submitted for Masters Degree

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SUMMARY

Throughout the world, marriage is a moment of celebration and is often seen as a symbol of the transition to adulthood. In most cases, girls are married without giving their own consent or are too young to make such a decision. Early marriage can have an adverse physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional effect on both girls and boys. They can face the risk of discontinuing their education, and in most cases for girls, early marriages are rapidly followed by pregnancy and delivery. The number of adolescent girls who fall pregnant within marriage is larger than the number of girls who become pregnant while single.

Early marriage occurs in all provinces in Indonesia even though the median age of marriage has increased. However, available information does not provide a complete picture of why early marriages still occur in Indonesian, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara. The context that influences early marriage is rarely studied and those that are the central in the process, the young women themselves, are not represented.

The purpose of this study is to explore how women who marry at an early age perceive their marriage and the effect of their marriage to their well-being. This thesis is a reflection of a six-week fieldwork experience, from May until the end of June 2002, in Perigi, a village in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. As an anthropological study, this study is descriptive and uses qualitative research methodology. It focuses on the emic perspective of the young women who married young. Multiple semi-structured interviews with six informants were conducted and completed with observation.

The thesis consists of seven chapters. In this first chapter, I presented an overview of the literature related to the early marriage and discussed the importance of the study in the problem statement. The second chapter will address the research objectives, the research questions and the methodology. The overview of the village, where I conducted the fieldwork, the people of the village and the informants can be gleaned in chapter three. In the following three chapters, I will discuss the findings and link them to other researches, commencing from the perception of early marriage in chapter four, the decision-making process in chapter five and the consequences of the marriage in chapter six. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations which will be of relevance to all parties.
who are concerned about and dealing with early marriage issues: decision-makers in
government institutions, public health program managers, NGOs, or individual
researchers.

There are different perceptions about the concept of ‘early’ marriage in the Perigi society.
In contrast to the trend of using the minimum age to define early marriage, age is not very
important as an indicator for the marriage ability of a girl in Perigi. The local perceptions
combine physical and social maturity to assess whether a girl is ready to marry or not.

For the young women, the decision to marry is a complicated process and cannot be
isolated from the wider social and cultural context under which the women live. The
informants’ decision to marry was made as a response to a situation over which they had
little control, based on their own calculation of advantages and disadvantages they would
receive from the marriage. Two major factors that influenced their decision to marry were
economic hardship and gendered expectations and practices. The informants realised their
limited life choices and understood marriage as the only choice in their future life that they
could make to gain access to economic security and social respectability. It can be seen as
a strategy to negotiate their positions and roles in their communities, to protect their
reputations as good women, and to avoid the social risk associated with a damaged
reputation.

Marriage for the young women could mean happiness or suffering, or both. They talked
about economic and social security as the positive aspects of their marriage. Their
perception of the negative impacts of their marriage was dominated by concern for social
issues rather than health issues.

Through marriage, a young woman assumed new roles as a wife, a daughter-in-law, and or
a mother. It required an abrupt shift of female roles: from a teenager to a woman. For the
informants, it meant less freedom and more responsibility. There are social and cultural
obligations imposed by this new role. To be culturally and socially accepted in society, it
was easier and more convenient for the young women to adjust themselves to their
obligation as married women. However, they revealed that they needed time to do it and
needed assistance from an experienced adult.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to UNICEF (2001), early marriage can have adverse physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional effects on both girls and boys. They can face the risk of discontinuing their education, and in most cases for girls, early marriages are rapidly followed by pregnancy and delivery. In addition, UNICEF (2001) pointed out that pregnancies and resultant childbearing of young girls are generally seen as health care ‘problems.’ Furthermore, ‘teenage pregnancy’ is typically understood as pregnancy outside marriage. In fact, the number of adolescent girls who fall pregnant within marriage is larger than the number of girls who become pregnant while single. Early marriage, particularly the detriments it poses to the girl’s health, social, educational and economic life, have received a great deal of attention in Indonesia.

The former Indonesian Minister for the Role of Women, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, said that girls from West Nusa Tenggara, a province in the eastern part of Indonesia, get married at an early age (Kompas 8 January 2001). Quoting a report from the Indonesian National Family Planning Coordinating Board (NFPCB), the Minister indicated that the median age of marriage for girls has for a long time stayed at the age of 16. This suggested that in Indonesia, particularly the West Nusa Tenggara province, marriage for teenage girls is still highly prevalent.

Thus, this thesis looks at early marriage in Perigi, a village (desa) in Lombok, one of two islands in the West Nusa Tenggara province, where the number of early marriages is high. As an Anthropological study, it focuses on the description of the meaning of early marriage from the first-hand source: young women who marry early. The study then tries to broaden the understanding of issues related to early marriage from the medical and legal perspectives to include a more localized and culturally informed view of meanings and practices concerning early marriage.

Throughout the world, marriage is a moment of celebration and is often seen as a symbol of the transition to adulthood. Many girls and boys enter a marital union by the age of 18. Fifty percent of the girls in several developing countries marry at an early age (Singh & Samara 1996:155). Some girls in countries like Bangladesh and Nigeria even marry before the age of 15.
In most cases, these girls are married without giving their own consent or are too young to make such a decision. In other situations, they are compelled to do so due to personal circumstances.

Based on official data, early marriage occurs in all provinces in Indonesia even though the median age of marriage has increased. Ten percent of once-married women (aged 25-34) were married before they turned 16 years old (GOI & UNICEF 2000). The figures vary in each region, and women in rural areas are more likely to get married at a young age than those in urban areas. In 1998, the age at first marriage in rural areas was about 19 while in urban areas it was 23 (CBS, NFPCB, MOH & MI 1998). Yet, for West Nusa Tenggara, the Indonesian Demographic Health Survey (IDHS) revealed a figure different from that of the former minister. This survey reported that in 1997, the median age of first marriage in this province was below 19 years (ibid: 118). According to the 2000 National Socio-Economic Survey, almost forty percent of women who had ever been married did so before reaching the age of 19 (BPS 2000).

In spite of that, the exact number of early marriages in Indonesia is certainly higher than those revealed by official records. Many marriages are unofficial and unregistered. A factor contributing to the inaccuracy of records is the fact that couples, who are younger than the accepted legal age, often register themselves, or are registered by someone else, as being older than they actually are in order to make their marriage official.

From a public health perspective, early marriage is a problem especially for girls. It brings more negative consequences than positive ones because of its contribution to early pregnancy and child bearing. In Indonesia, the onset of sexual relations and child bearing is strongly related to the age at first marriage (UNICEF 2001). Especially in rural areas, sexual activity and births are supposed to occur only within a marriage. When people marry, they are expected to have a child as soon as possible. Studies in Indonesia and Nepal found that child bearing in both countries starts within two years of marriage (Choe et al. 2001). Teenage pregnancy is thus

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1 Indonesia has had a Marriage Law to regulate marriages since 1974. It requires that a marriage be performed in a religious ceremony and then be registered. The majority of marriages in Indonesia are conducted according to Islamic law by the Kantor Umsan Agama (KUA or The Office of Religious Affairs), which then issues a Marriage Book as evidence of the marriage. An official Muslim marriage requires the presence of a Perjodina, an official from the KUA who will declare the marriage official, and two witnesses. The Islamic marriage has to be registered at the Marriage Registrar Office of the KUA. Non-Islamic marriages (Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, etc) have to be registered at the Kantor Catatan Sipil (Civil Marriage Registrar's Office) of the Office of Internal Affairs.
related more to the effects of early sexual activity, pregnancy, and child bearing experienced by married ‘girls’ than by single girls.

Many medical anthropologists have criticized the medical perspective that uses health as a universal model of explanation. Yet, it increasingly influences the lives of women, including in the case of early marriage. The medical perspective defines health mainly in physiological terms. Kleinman and colleagues (Helman 2000:80) argue that this perspective “assumes that biological concerns are more basic, ‘real’, clinically significant, and interesting than psychological and socio-cultural issues.” Thus, numerical ranges are increasingly used as indicators of health. Health or normality is defined in relation to certain physical and biochemical parameters and for each measurement there is a numerical range—the ‘normal value’—within which the individual is considered ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ (ibid).

Furthermore, the medical understanding of what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ in relation to early marriage and pregnancy is defined according to age ranges—the minimum age that is considered as a universal ‘value’ of potentially ‘risky’ age for girls to enter a marriage, and by extension to fall pregnant and have a child. Medically speaking, women under the age of 18 face an increased health risk when they fall pregnant. Similarly, pregnancy and childbearing for women over the age of 35 is also more risky. The possible negative health outcomes for their babies also increase compared to babies of women belonging in the ages of 18-35. The ‘normal’ age for marriage (and thus for bearing a child) lies somewhere between the ages of 18-35. The medical perspective on ‘early’ marriage is thus rather connected to notions of anticipated physiological ‘risk’ related to childbearing for a young woman. It can be criticized for ignoring the meanings that women give to their lives (Helman 2000:119).

The staunch opposition of legal advocates to early marriage, meanwhile, establishes the necessity to understand the legal notion of adulthood (see Chapter 4). They argue that marriage should not happen when the girl is still under the age of 18.

Based on all these different perspectives, as well as on the views of girls who get married early, I will describe and discuss early marriage based on a six-week fieldwork, from May 2002 until the end of June 2002, in Perigi. As an Anthropological study, its point of view emanates from an understanding of the emic perspective of the young women who get married at an early age. I will look at three main themes: first, the concept of early marriage among these young women;
second, the perceived decision making process of the marriage; and finally, the effect of the marriage on the young women's well-being.

Women's Emic Perspective and Early Marriage: Problem Statement

Cultural and religious values strongly influence people's life in Indonesia. Similarly, the way people think about sexual activity before or outside marriage is also influenced by how it is culturally viewed, as in the case of Muslim societies. It might nevertheless be different in each ethnic group. Despite the fact that some studies indicate the growing trend of engagement in premarital sexual activity among adolescents in some big cities, sex in the context of Indonesian society, especially in rural areas, usually starts within a marriage.

Even so, the efforts made by policy makers in most of the developing countries, including Indonesia, to solve the 'problem' of early marriage are designed specifically with health and fertility concerns in mind. Most efforts rely on the information about the negative health consequences of early marriage as a means to educate the girls to make a 'better' decision regarding early marriage. The broader life consequences of early marriage have been neglected, both as a research and as a policy subject. In fact, the issue of early marriage is quite complicated. Mensch, Bruce, and Greene (1998:2) argue that the social and economic disadvantages experienced by girls are the most important issues contributing to early marriage and childbearing. In the context where female adolescents have little control over their lives, an effort to increase awareness of the negative impact of early marriage is inadequate. We need more than a health and fertility perspective to fully understand the issue.

Unfortunately, available information does not provide a complete picture of why early marriages still occur in Indonesia, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara. Most studies on early marriage in Indonesia use a quantitative approach and are done from an ethnic perspective, where early marriage is, again, presented as a problem to be solved (Choe, Thapa & Achmad 2001, Savittidina 1997). The context that influences early marriage is rarely studied.

What is also lacking are the girls' voices. Kitzinger (as cited in Phoenix 1991:28) argues that social scientists in many cases do not delve into the 'folk knowledge' or 'lay understanding' of the people who are involved in this issue. As a result, those who are central in the process, the young married women themselves are not represented. As early marriage can be unwanted or
wanted (voluntarily) by the couple, so can the effect of the marriage be negative or positive. The girls might have different views concerning the effect of early marriage on their well-being, than the public health perspective. However, studies that explore the experiences related to early marriages are limited. The question on whether it is wanted or not, especially in Indonesia and particularly Lombok, is seldom asked.

In contrast to quantitative studies, qualitative studies try to answer the question ‘why’ so as to understand the meanings of people’s ideas and practices (Hardon et al. 2001:3). The ethnographic approach used in anthropological studies involves studying a small-scale population to understand how they view a particular issue and how they manage it. Because people’s ideas and practices can only be understood within their specific context, an anthropological study that focuses on the meanings, ideas, and experiences related to early marriage from the perspective of the young women, and on their particular cultural context, can provide valuable information and deepen understanding of the way they make sense of their married lives.

These perspectives should be the starting point of the public health program. As Hardon et al. (2001) have argued, policy makers and public health program managers often do not take into account the people’s own ideas and thus there is a lack of sensitivity to the context of the issues they are trying to handle. As a member of a society, what a woman believes or does, cannot be independent of a wider context such as cultural, socio-economic, and political influences. As the ones who experience the marriage, it is important to understand the women’s point of view on the early marriage and to grasp the underlying context that perpetuates early marriage before implementing a program on behalf of these women. Only then can one create a public health intervention program aimed at decreasing the possible harmful impacts of early marriage. It would be difficult to design a successful and cost effective behavioural change program without a proper understanding of young women’s own perceptions regarding their marriage.

Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this study is to gain insights on how women, who marry at an early age, perceive their marriage and the effects of their marriage on their well-being.
The research objective generates the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of women with regard to an ideal age for a woman to get married?
- How do young women who got married at an early age perceive the early marriage decision-making process?
- How did the early marriage change their role as a woman?
- How do young women perceive the effect of early marriage on their well-being?

Literature Review

**The Effects of Early Marriage**

*Physical Effects*

The relationship between early childbearing and the increase in the risk of maternal morbidity and mortality are well documented. Studies have found that pregnancy and childbirth among teenagers under the age of 19 increases the risk of maternal morbidity and mortality two to four times compared to the risk of pregnancy and childbirth among women over the age of 20 (Network Spring 1997: 9, Outlook Dec.1998: 2). UNICEF also noted that pregnancy and delivery at a young age increased the risk of premature labour, complications during delivery, low birth-weight, and infant mortality (GOI & UNICEF 2000, UNICEF 2001). Thus, pregnancies that occur ‘too early’, that is, when a woman’s body is not fully developed, are a major risk for the survival and future health of both mother and child.

Moreover, pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for 15-19 year-old girls (married and unmarried) worldwide. Mothers in this age group face a 20 to 200 percent greater chance of dying during pregnancy than women aged 20 to 24. Those under the age of 15 are five times as likely to die in their twenties (UNICEF 2001, Network 1997, Outlook 1998). Further, for every woman who dies during childbirth, 30 women suffer injuries, infection and disabilities, which are usually left untreated; some of which are lifelong and will result to infertility (UNICEF 2001).
A woman whose pelvis and birth canal are not fully developed often endures a very long labour. It is possible that the baby's skull can damage the birth canal, causing damage to the walls of the vagina and allowing uncontrollable leakage from the bladder to the vagina, a condition known as Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF). WHO estimated that there are two million women living with VVF (UNICEF 2001: 12) and that 50,000-100,000 new cases occur every year, many of which are untreated.

In addition, a woman with excessive vaginal fluids is perceived as unclean and serves as a basis for divorce (UNICEF 2001). Some studies reported that men express their dislike of vaginal fluids (Ray 1996 as cited in PATH 2002). They would prefer a vagina to be dry, perceiving it to be cleaner and healthier. Wives express the need to please their husbands with dry sex so as to keep their husbands from leaving them and/or to minimize their number of girlfriends (PATH 2002). Thus, the relationship between a wet vagina and uncleanness is widely accepted among Indonesian women. In fact, many use traditional herbs or medicine to ensure that their vaginas are always dry and tight.2

Violence and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Early marriage is often resulted to violence and abandonment. In 1997, a study among women in Calcutta found that half of the informants married at or below the age of 15 and thus were highly vulnerable to sexual violence in their marriage. When these young wives informed their husbands of their unwillingness to tolerate sexual violence within their marriage, 80 per cent of them reported that their husbands ignored their protest and the violence thus continued (UNICEF 2001). Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from Egypt revealed that 29% of married adolescents were beaten by their husbands (or husband and others) and of these 41% were beaten during pregnancy. Moreover, a study in Jordan in 2000 found that 26% of reported cases of domestic violence were committed against wives under 18 years old (ibid).

Teenage girls are also more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, than older women. This is because power relations between young women and older men put them in an even more difficult position to negotiate for safer sex (UNICEF 2001: 10).

2 Two studies conducted in Jakarta and Bali show that sex workers frequently use 'Tongkat Madura (Madura Stick)' or 'Tongkat Putih (White Stick)'; a stick made from wood and herbs, to dry and tighten their vagina. However, some of them revealed that it makes their vaginas so dry and tight that it is wounded by sexual intercourse (Hull 2000, Sadli et al. 1994, Soebahar and Usman 1999).
Gender Roles and Education

Hinshelwood (2001) cited that a woman's status and entitlements in a society are often determined by her role in her family as a daughter, a wife and/or a mother. Also, the implications of early marriage comprise the change of the social roles of a woman at a young age. These changes include intangible factors such as loss of mobility, her confinement to the home and household roles.

When girls get married, they will normally cease going to school. Even though it is possible for young women in Indonesia to gain tertiary education after marriage, there are restrictions on married females attending academic institutions at lower levels (Savitridina 1997). Thus, while theoretically married women can complete their schooling, in practice this is seldom allowed. Schools tend to prohibit married students at Junior and Senior High School level. If a student gets married, she often has to leave school. Then, they have to move to another one or just stop schooling. Most of the time, the latter is the only choice.

Divorce

Although the relationship between early marriage and divorce has not been proven yet, some studies suggest that early marriage increases the likelihood of divorce and separation (UNICEF 2001, Singh & Wulf 1981 in Singh and Samara 1996, Jones 1994). It was shown that girls in Java who marry early, are three times more likely to be divorced than those who marry at a later age (Jones 1994). The younger the girl, the more likely she is to be dependent on her husband. Thus, the inequality between the husband and the young wife is a double power inequality, based not only on gender but also on age difference (UNICEF 2001).

In general, the divorce rate in Indonesia has gradually declined. According to Jones (1994), this has been explained by the rise in the age of marriage and greater freedom in the choice of a marriage partner. In the case of West Nusa Tenggara, however, the divorce rate has always been the highest among provinces in Indonesia (BPS 2000).
The Causes and the Context of Early Marriage

Poverty

There are many factors contributing to early marriage worldwide (Choe, Thapa & Achmad 2001, Hinshelwood 2001, IPPF 2001, UNICEF 2001, Savitridina 1997, Singh & Samara 1996, Dagne 1994). One key factor is poverty. A young girl can be regarded as an economic burden, because in most cases she does not work and is uneducated. Parents may be forced to marry off their daughter in the hope of reducing the number of people in the family who are dependent on the family's limited resources (IPPF 2001). The marriage of the daughter – many times to a much older man – can be regarded as a strategy for economic survival for both the family and the girl (UNICEF 2001).

In agrarian communities, the family is the unit of economic production and the only source of wealth, social status and security for its members (UNICEF 2001). According to the division of labour in the family, a son runs the household and maintains the status of the family. Daughters are responsible for the housework. With this kind of gender division of labour, people consider education not necessary for girls. With a limited income, a family usually prefers to spend the money on the boy's education.

In Indonesia, this is often the case. The economic crisis in 1997 contributed to an increase in the number of families marrying off their daughters (GOI & UNICEF 2000). Due to economic difficulties, many girls had to drop out of school to work or to get married. However, getting a job is difficult for a girl with little or no education. As a result, many girls have very little choice: having only the alternatives of marriage or working as a sex worker.

Despite the fact that within two decades Indonesia has successfully attained higher education levels (GOI & UNICEF 2000), serious problems remain such as access to good quality education, the variation between regions and between rural and urban areas. There is also a difference between male and female achievements. When the economic crisis hit Indonesia in 1997, primary and secondary school enrolment have decreased. A survey conducted in 100 villages in Indonesia indicates that among adolescents, the decrease in enrolment among girls was twice as high as that among boys (ibid). Furthermore, 1.6 million children aged 13 to 15 years old are out of school, with differences in region and gender. The chance of children in a poor family continuing their schooling to junior high school is 14% higher for boys than for
girls. West Nusa Tenggara is one of the five provinces with the largest number of early school dropouts (ibid:120). It is likely that girls marry not long after starting school or drop out of school for reasons mentioned above.

In traditional societies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride’s family may receive cattle as the bride price for their daughter (UNICEF 2001). In other places, the bride price can be in a different form, such as capital or other goods or both. The arrangement is between the groom, or his family, and the father of the bride who decides the amount of the bride price the groom, or his family, has to provide. In general, the amount is based on the ‘value’ of the daughter and her potential financial value to her husband’s family (IPPF 2001). The daughter becomes a commodity that is valued on the basis of her father’s investment in her education and the family’s social status.

Family Network

As previously cited, marriage in Indonesia is not only an arrangement between two people, but between two families. In many cases, the decision to marry is not an individual choice as the whole family is involved in the arrangement of the marriage. The family’s influence is even greater in the case of an early marriage. Parents and other family members, such as grandparents, are usually the ones who make the decisions about when and whom a girl should marry. However, throughout the decades, the family’s influence has been decreasing except in the villages.

As the family continues to be regarded as the basic social and economic unit, marriage cannot be divorced from the standpoint of family values, societal traditions, and social expectations of a marriage. For example, in a peasant family, relatives are the main source of help and support especially in times of difficulty, disaster, or crises. For this reason, a large social network is needed to enhance the family’s status (Dagne 1994:36). Through a marriage, a social and economical tie with another family is established. A family with a ‘good’ reputation and a ‘good’ social network is regarded as a ‘valuable’ family. Other families would like to be part of a ‘valuable’ family and use marriage as a means to enter the social network. Since marriage is seen as a means of unifying two families, many families marry their sons or daughters as soon as

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3 The other provinces are: East Timor (at that time East Timor was still Indonesian region), East Nusa Tenggara, West Kalimantan, and Irian Jaya.
possible in order to secure their relationships with other 'valuable' families. In general, the main
criteria for a desirable marriage partner, aside from social status, socio-economic background
and ethnicity, is the existing friendships between families while the beauty and the youth of the
girl are added assets.

Within the extended family system, Indonesians highly value the importance of family. People
assess a person based on his/her family. In Javanese families there are three criteria for accepting
someone as a daughter- or son-in-law: bihiit, boket, and bebiet. First, she or he has to be from a
'good' parentage or lineage (bihiit). The family has to be a respectable one and without any
unpleasant history or stigma attached to it. Secondly, she or he also has to be from a family with
a sound economic status (boket). Last, she or he has to have a good social status and superior
personal qualities, intellectually and psychologically (bebet).

In Muslim society, honour is a basic social principle. A family's reputation and status in the
community is highly important (More 1988:106). The majority of people from Lombok are
Muslim. Thus, family reputation is the most important criterion for selecting marital spouses in
Lombok society, as in Java.

Protection from Premarital Sex

Religious and cultural beliefs in Indonesia emphasize that marrying a girl at a young age is a way
to protect her from the temptation and the perils of premarital sex during puberty. This is also a
common phenomenon in Africa, South and Southeast Asia. There is a perceived need to ensure
and protect the daughter's virginity as an important pre-condition for a first marriage. Parents
worry that a daughter who marries late will lose her virginity before marriage and thus will bring
shame to the family and lessens the chance of getting a good husband. Therefore, families
prefer to marry off their daughters as soon as possible to be on the safe side (UNICEF 2001,
the major reason for early marriage in a town in East Java, Indonesia, was the need to protect
the girls from temptation and from bringing shame on the family. A similar pattern can be
gleaned from Zuidberg's findings in Serpong, West Java (ibid).
Old maid Stigma

There is also social pressure to marry daughters early to prevent the girls from the stigma of becoming an ‘old maid’ (Dagne 1994:36). If a girl is not expected to get married at a certain age, she and her family becomes the object of gossip. In Indonesia, people make joke on girls who are not married at a certain age thus referring them as *pemuaian tua* or ‘old maids’ (Jones 1994:116). This term stigmatizes the girls as ‘leftovers’ or ‘unwanted’ for marriage. However, the ideal age of marrying differs from one region to another in Indonesia.

In her 1972 study in Yogyakarta, Central Java, Valerie Hull asked both married and unmarried women about their ideal age for getting married. The unmarried women tended to mention a higher age (19-20 was the most ideal for them), but 35% of those asked could not answer the question. For those who could not, they opined that they had never thought about it and that they were not accustomed to verbalize any feelings that they might have about this issue (Jones 1994:89). On hindsight, it would be very interesting to probe into the girls’ uneasiness to verbalize their feelings. Jones, unfortunately, did not give any detailed information on this issue. As an Indonesian, I believe that the prevailing belief that good girls are silent and passive plays a role. This belief is common among many ethnic groups in Indonesia, including Javanese.

Love

Early marriage can also occur when the girl and the boy are deeply in love. In this case, young couples mostly decide on their free will to get married. They generally choose their partners based on personal qualities such as physical attraction and a good mix of complex feelings, which Nanda and Warms (1998) call ‘romantic love’. However, following the values in Indonesian society, which views sexual relationship before and outside marriage as a sinful act and thus being labelled as a taboo, a ‘romantic love relationship’ is not always a definite precursor for sexual relations between couples.

The number of couples in Indonesia, especially in urban areas, whose marriage is based on their own choice, has been increasing during the past decades (Hull 1994 in Muhidin 2002:33). Hull suggests that “changes in the institution of marriage from traditional practices (where parents are involved) to more modern forms (couples finding and courting their partner of choice) contribute to the raising of the age at marriage”.

**Premarital Pregnancy**

In Indonesia, pregnancy is supposed to occur only within a marriage. Yet, several studies show that unmarried adolescents increasingly have sex before marriage (Conrad 2000, LDFEUI & NFPCB 1999, Utomo et al. 1998). Unfortunately, the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy has never been systematically recorded by the Indonesian Ministry of Health (MOH). The Indonesian Behavioural Surveillance Surveys (BSS) in 1996 revealed that many of the male students in some big cities who were sexually active reported that their first sexual experience took place before they were 15 years old (Utomo et al. 1998). Unfortunately, young Indonesian people receive hardly any formal or informal sex education. Furthermore, family planning services in Indonesia are only accessible to married couples. From a public health perspective, the occurrence of teenage pregnancies is influenced by these factors.

Moreover, when an unmarried woman gets pregnant, her family would ask the couple to get married to protect the family from disgrace. Because abortion is illegal in Indonesia, except in cases when the mother’s life is at risk, this option is not very popular.

**Theoretical Approach**

This study aims to describe the broad picture of early marriage from the young women’s perspective. It means studying the enic perspective, that is, trying to understand the way in which young women, who marry at an early age, make sense of their married lives and how they perceive the economic, social, and cultural influences on the decision-making process of their marriage. As Hardon et al. (2001:4) pointed out, “The Anthropologists’ emphasis on understanding and studying culture in context usually implies trying to discover how people view their own situation and how they solve their problems”.

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4 Indonesian Behavioural Surveillance Surveys (BSS) were done in 1996, 1997, and 1998 in Jakarta, Surabaya (East Java), and Manado (North Sulawesi).

5 The 1997 Indonesian Demographic Health Survey (IDHS) shows that the percentage of women who have their first child before the age of 20 has declined over the years even though 10% of women aged 15-19 have already had their first child (GOI & UNICEF 2000:33).

6 Based on the Indonesian Health Law No. 23 1992, abortion is illegal in Indonesia, except for medical reasons to save the mother’s life. Yet, many studies estimate the wide practice of abortion throughout Indonesia, with the total estimation ranging from 750 thousand to 1 million numbers annually, contributing for 25 to 30 per cent of maternal deaths (GOI & UNICEF 2000, UNFPA 2000). In the case of abortion among adolescents, girls tend to attempt self-abortion by drinking *jamiu peluntur*, special herbs believed to be able to abort the foetus. If this does not work, she will seek help from a *dukun*, a special traditional healer, nurse or other paramedic (Hidayana 1997). Another study among 44 pregnant women aged 15 - 24 in Yogyakarta in 1996 found that 88% of those women had tried to conduct self-abortion, mostly with traditional methods such as *jamiu*, eating unripe pineapple, or going to a massage *dukun* (Khidirjah, Muридjana and Wijayanto 1996:43-45).
I use a feminist anthropology perspective as the essential theoretical approach. This perspective, according to Moore (1988), sees gender relations as central to the analysis in anthropology and in other social sciences. Feminist anthropology does not take ‘women’ as its subject, but gender relations. Thus, Stockard (2002:9) pointed that marriage is “a critical moment when social inequalities –between husband and wife, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or men and women in general– are visible and reproduce.” Gender analysis is accordingly essential in understanding the young women’s perspective on early marriage.

Initially, early feminist anthropologists assumed that women’s subordination is universal. They used opposing dichotomies, which divide society into two opposed spheres, as their main argumentation. Ortner (1974 as cited in Moore 1988) suggested that women are symbolically associated with nature while men are associated with culture. Since culture attempts to control and transcend nature, culture is therefore superior to nature; and ultimately, women are subordinate to men. In the same vein, Rosaldo uses a public/domestic (private) dichotomy. In this view, society is divided into a less prestigious domestic sphere, which is inhabited by women, and a more prestigious public one, dominated by men (Nanda & Warms 1998:211).

However, many contemporary scholars of feminist anthropology disagree with these assumptions. One criticism comes from Ernestine Friedl (Nanda & Warms 1998). She argues that although male dominance is very widespread, it is mostly about economic issues –to the issue of who has more advantage in the exchange of goods and services. Furthermore, she questions the universality of male superiority by adding that women in other cultural settings might not be without power. Another criticism also comes from Lamphere (as cited in Boschma & Franks 2001) by arguing that the dichotomies-based models are based on Western categories and therefore are not applicable to cross-cultural studies and analysis.

Contemporary feminist anthropologists, in general, have shown that gender is an important analytical concept and that the definition of gender changes historically and cross-culturally (McGee & Warms 2000). While sex is a biological difference between male and female, gender refers to both maleness and femaleness as being culturally and socially constructed. By saying culturally constructed, it means emphasizing the different ways cultures think about, distinguish, and symbolize gender (Nanda & Warms 1998). According to Moore (1988:15-16) “the value of analysing ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as symbolic categories or constructs lies in the identification of the expectations and values which individual cultures associate with being male or female.” She
furthermore argues that such analysis will provide information on the ideal behaviour of men and women in their expected social roles, which can be compared with the actual behaviour and responsibilities of the two sexes.

Devor (1989:49) defines femininity and masculinity as social definitions used to identify a person by gender. Masculine characteristics are signifiers for males and are described by dominance and aggression. Feminine ones are signifiers for femaleness and are associated with passivity and submission. Society thus expects, demands, rewards, tolerates, or punishes its members for conformity to, or digression from, social norms attached to each gender.

Children are then socialized or enculturated with their culture’s social definitions of gender. They learn what values, norms and behaviours are appropriate for each gender. However, even though enculturation, the process of learning to become a member of one’s culture, is an important process in childhood, it also continues throughout life (Nanda & Warms 1998). Marriage is a passage to adulthood. Children become men and women whose behaviour, expectations, and experiences are influenced by the culture in which they grow up. At this point, they learn what is necessary for these new roles.

Marriage can be used as indicators of women’s status (Moore 1988:106). For the reason that it is related to a woman’s ability to choose when she marries, to whom she marries, and how many times she marries, as well as for its correlation with a woman’s rights concerning access to education, economic autonomy through work, and participation in her society. As the member of a society, young women grow up learning the ‘right’ and ‘natural’ way to think and do – that is what the people in their social circle think and do. How they perceive early marriage parallels with norms and values on gender relations and roles in their society, as well as gender-based ideal behaviour and responsibilities as expected by their society. The feminist anthropological perspective is thus a critical theoretical approach to fulfil the objective of this study.

The Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters. In this first chapter, I presented an overview of the literature related to the early marriage and discussed the importance of the study in the problem statement. The second chapter will address the research objectives, the research questions and the methodology. The overview of the village, where I conducted the fieldwork, the people of
the village and the informants can be gleaned in chapter three. In the following three chapters, I will discuss the findings and link them to other researches, commencing from the perception of early marriage in chapter four, the decision-making process in chapter five and the consequences of the marriage in chapter six. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations which will be of relevance to all parties who are concerned about and dealing with early marriage issues: decision-makers in government institutions, public health program managers, NGOs, or individual researchers.
CHAPTER II
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Type and Design

This study is descriptive, emphasizing the emic point of view of young women who marry at a young age. Their perspectives on early marriage, the decision making process and the effects of their marriage on their physical, economic, and social well-being will be described.

Study Site, Population, and Sampling

Getting Started

The fieldwork was carried out in a small village in East Lombok, the West Nusa Tenggara province. Initially, I planned to conduct my study in my father’s home village near Mataram, the capital city of the West Nusa Tenggara province. While this might have been the most convenient way to carry out my fieldwork, I was also aware of the possibility of bias. For example, my relationship with some of my relatives in the village might influence the willingness of young women to participate in the study. Some of my relatives would be obliged or forced to participate. In addition, being a relative might also influence the stories they would tell me and how open they are about their lives thus loosing my research objectivity. As a back-up plan, I also contacted a friend, who works at a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Mataram, to inquire about another village as a possible study site.

As soon as I arrived in Lombok, I contacted some of my relatives in my father’s village and my friend in Mataram. I found out that my father’s village was no longer a village but has been developed as an urban area. Based on this information, I decided not to conduct my fieldwork in my father’s home village. The given duration for the fieldwork was actually six weeks but was cut short due to my return to Amsterdam in order for me to participate in a summer course.
I decided to choose the contacts of my friend in Mataram. She arranged a visit to 15 villages in East Lombok where her NGO conducted a survey on marriage and divorce in 1999 and a program related to early marriage and divorce. In every village I visited, I was introduced to some young people who were involved in the survey and played the role as contact persons in the villages. I explained to these young people that I would like to conduct a study on early marriage and informed them of the possibility of their village being chosen as the study site. All of them showed interest and willingness to assist me in my research. During the fieldwork, they became my valuable partners. Not only did they assist me in gaining access to key people in the villages, such as the heads of the villages and sub-villages, but also they were a source of information on early marriage and gave unsolicited practical suggestions for my fieldwork, including how to behave appropriately as a woman.

I decided to conduct my research in Perigi, a village located in the foothills of Mount Rinjani, the highest mountain in the West Nusa Tenggara province. The village consists of seven Desa (sub-villages) with several hundred to a couple of thousand residents. I will present more details on the West Nusa Tenggara province, particularly the island of Lombok and the village of Perigi, in chapter three.

Before officially starting the fieldwork, I had to go to the sub-district office to get permits from the government authorities. There is a bureaucratic process a researcher has to follow, from the central level in the capital city down to village level. Due to my short period of fieldwork, my contact person in the village proposed two alternatives. The first was to follow the ‘normal procedure’ that, according to the staff in the sub-district office (kecamatan), can be shortened by going directly to the district (kabupaten) office in East Lombok. The second alternative is to ignore bureaucratic procedures, an approach which would be much faster and more convenient. To avoid any possible problems in the future, especially administrative problems with the authorities, I decided to go through the ‘normal’ bureaucratic procedure. Unfortunately, it was not as simple as I thought it would be. I spent more than a week going through the procedures from district level offices to the village level office. However, in the following days, I benefited a

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1 After the survey, YKSSSI (Yayasan Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera), the NGO, in collaboration with PLAN East Lombok, established ‘Kelompok Pemantau Masalah Kawin Cerai’, a group which consisted of people concerned about the issue of early marriage and divorce in Lombok, particularly in East Lombok. The members are young people from 15 villages in Kecamatan (sub-district) Sakra, Prigabaya and Suele, in East Lombok. These members were served as the contact persons for this study.

2 At the central level, the procedure begins with the application for a research permit from LIPI (Indonesian Institute of Science) in Jakarta. The letter from LIPI has to be authorized by Dirjen Sospol (Directorate General of Social and Political Affairs). After approval by the central level bureaucracy, one has to proceed through the lower levels: provincial, district (kabupaten), sub district (kecamatan), and finally the village level.
lot from having gone through that procedure. Being equipped with a letter from the district offices, the village gatekeepers, both formal and informal leaders, were very cooperative.

**Rapport Building**

The first thing I did when I finally settled down in the village was to build rapport with the people, especially with the young women. As suggested by my contacts, I travelled to all seven dusun to introduce my study and myself to its leaders. I also talked to a number of formal and informal leaders of the village. They also served as key informants concerning the socio-economic and cultural aspects of early marriage. In general, they were very open and helpful, even though a few were reluctant or too busy to meet me and converse with me.

A conventional technique used by most researchers to build rapport with the target group is to become involved in the people's routine daily activities. The more the researcher is involved in their lives, the more familiar the people become with the researcher (Budiwanti 2000:17). Following that technique, my rapport with the young women was also built by joining in special events, such as preparations for weddings and wedding ceremonies, where I could have a chance to meet and talk with them. Another method was to establish a short talk and have informal conversations with them whenever I had the chance. I did not find any major problem in establishing rapport with them since most of them were very curious about me and willing to have chitchats with me. I found out that locations near a river or a mosque where people take a bath were the main places where I could meet and have conversations with many village women of all age levels.

**The Informants**

I used the snowball technique to select the informants. This meant that I identified some individuals who were relevant to the study and then asked them to refer me to other individuals. Since I realized that Perigi consisted of seven dusun, I tried to select informants from each dusun. However, I did not achieve this goal. One informant from Dusun Aik Betak refused to continue the interviews. In addition to that, time constraints prevented me from finding an informant from Dusun Limbungan.

A contact in Perigi referred me to people in the seven sub-villages (dusun) in Perigi. They, in turn, later introduced me to potential informants from every dusun. However, as they were also
involved in a campaign related to early marriage-divorce issues in Perigi, I was aware of a possible sample selection bias. As in other villages in Indonesia, people in Perigi, or at least those who live in the same dusun, know each other. This also applied in the case of my contact persons. The villagers and the informants know them as people who are against early marriage. Thus, I was concerned that they might choose informants who shared their convictions concerning early marriage. To limit this possibility, I asked my contact persons to be open to everyone.

Girls in Perigi generally marry before they turn 18. I decided to have one group of informants who were young women, below the age of 25, who married before they reached the age of 18. The informants were chosen based on their willingness to participate. Within several days of living in the village, talking with the villagers and observing their daily life, I realised that most of them did not know the year they were born and thus were unsure of their age. Thus, I inserted certain questions in the interview to estimate the age of the illegible informants.

**Data Collection**

The study used the following data collection techniques:

**In-depth Interviews**

I used multiple semi-structured in-depth interviews. With this technique, I hoped I would encourage the informants to explore their lives. My aim in the first interview was to build up a relationship of trust, with general questions about the informant's personal life, education, and marriage. I would then aim to gain more information about their lives and perspectives by conducting another interview to follow up issues raised in the first interview. The informants were invited to tell their story the way they wanted to.

To get the approximate age of the informants, I included questions about the year and the age of the informants when they started elementary school. Even though not all participants remembered their age when they started school, most did remember the year in which they entered elementary school. With an assumption that children in Indonesia generally start elementary school at the age of six, I estimated the informants' age.

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3 See annex 2 for more detailed questions in the interviews
I conducted multiple interviews with seven young women aged approximately 12 to 19. Each of them was interviewed one to four times, depending on the availability of the informant and the degree of the informant's openness. Some informants were quite open, which meant fewer interviews were needed. Others were very shy and had difficulties in understanding and answering my questions, and thus needed more and longer interviews. In total, 18 interviews were completed, each interview taking between 1 to 1.5 hours.

Half of the informants could speak Bahasa (the Indonesian official language) fluently. I used an interpreter to assist me during the interviews with the informants who spoke only the local language, Sasak, or who chose to use Sasak in the interviews. Some of the desa contact persons became my interpreters and even hosted some interviews.

The locations of the interviews were always discussed and decided according to the convenience of the informants. All of them wanted to be interviewed at home. However, sometimes the interviews were conducted outside their house, the most-preferred location being the benangq.4

One informant refused to have her second interview. During the first interview, she could hardly answer the questions and her mother answered most of the time. In the second interview, the mother explained that her daughter refused to have another interview. She told me that her daughter could not understand my questions and why I asked such embarrassing questions. Unfortunately, I had to exclude this interviewee from further analysis, as I wanted firsthand information. The information the mother gave, however, was intriguing and it resembled the stories of the other informants. Therefore, I used the information to help me interpret the other interviews.

Sometimes the mothers of the informants were around during the interview. Most of the time, I could hear the mother's answer leading the informant's answer, especially when the informant was very shy or unable to speak Bahasa. When that happened, I would ask my contact person to arrange a different place for the next interview. I would also ask her to assist me in talking to both persons, the mother and the informant, in a different place and at a different time, after obtaining prior consent from the daughter. Some of the mothers of my informants, fortunately, turned out to be valuable key informants. They enriched me with a broader knowledge and insight into the decision-making process leading to their daughter's marriage.

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4 A benangq is a roofed small building without walls, but with a floor raised off the ground. It is like a hut, which forms part of a house compound. Usually it is located in front of the house and used as the most comfortable place to meet and talk.
I recorded all my interviews with a tape recorder. Even though none of the informants refused the use of the tape recorder, it created another unanticipated problem. Rumours went around that I was a journalist who was writing an article on early marriage and divorce issues. Consequently, two informants refused to have their second interview. I was able to regain these informants' trust though, by re-explaining the purpose of my study and my intentions to them, their partners, and other members of their family.

**Observation**

In order to have a better opportunity to observe the villagers' daily life, I stayed in the village during the fieldwork. With this technique, I received a lot of additional information, apart from what I had gained from the in-depth interviews with the informants. I was able to gain information concerning the dynamics of the hierarchical relationships between men and women, between older people and younger people and also about expected codes of behaviour for married and unmarried women.

There was no electricity in the village. The villagers gathered and discussed many things in the evening. Almost every night I joined them, trying to listen to and understand their conversations. They showed their willingness by letting me listen to their conversations and their eagerness to talk in Bahasa helped me to understand and follow their conversations. Yet, sometimes they switched to the Sasak language when they discussed a sensitive topic. Once I asked an informant's father about an issue he had talked about with an old man one night. He just smiled and told me that it would be better for me not to be involved.

Living in the village was also an advantage as it gave me the opportunity to observe women's interaction with their families, with female and male friends, and with other community members. This gave me a wider insight into women's position in the village. However, as Perigi is a big village with seven desa, spread across a mountainous area and separated from each other, I was not able to observe all the desa, which according to some people are culturally different from one another. For example, there is a difference in the dress code for women in Limbungan and in Aik Betak. To minimize this disadvantage, I spent one night or more at the other desa.

In addition, I attended two wedding ceremonies and other occasions, such as Maulid Nabi (an occasion in Muslim society to celebrate the Prophet's birthday), and Sunatan (the ceremony for
boys' circumcision). I was lucky because the fieldwork was conducted during the dry season when most of these ceremonies are held. By taking part in these occasions, I could explore the dynamics of hierarchical relationships between the community members, and learn about the rituals, the symbols and the meanings behind the rituals. As mentioned previously, these occasions were also a good chance for me to build and maintain rapport with the people. Still, there were more special occasions than I was able to attend.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

I planned to organise two FGDs with young women who had married below the age of 18. The first FGD would be with young newly-weds and the second FGD would be with informants aged 25-30 years old, who had been married for more than five years. Each FGD would consist of six to eight participants. However, during the fieldwork, no FGD was successfully established, mostly due to shortage of time.

Yet, an unplanned FGD occurred among formal and informal leaders of the village. It was unplanned because the discussion was arranged in the early stages of my fieldwork to introduce the study and myself to the village gatekeepers. However, it turned out to be a discussion on the early marriage issue, complete with a question and answer session where I was allowed to ask them questions. Unfortunately, since I was not prepared I could not take maximum advantage of the opportunity to get as much information as I would normally hope to get from an FGD.

Data Processing and Analysis

All the interviewed recordings were fully transcribed, even though I could not transcribe them immediately after the interview was done. Firstly, due to the absence of electricity in the village I could not use my computer. Secondly, as I mentioned before, evenings were used for observation purposes. As an alternative, I wrote the transcriptions by hand when I had time. To avoid forgetting important information or details, I wrote and re-checked my field notes and wrote a diary usually before I went to bed or in the early morning of the following day. The data, mainly from the interviews and observations, were categorized and analysed according to the research themes: the reason, the process, and the impact of the marriage.
Limitation and Ethical Considerations

Perhaps the main limitation of the study is the number of informants such as I interviewed women who had married young. As a result, a general conclusion is difficult to be drawn. Nevertheless, as it is a preliminary descriptive and qualitative study, it is sufficient for this type of study.

Because the study is related to a sensitive topic, I had to approach the informants and their families to gain rapport and their trust prior to the interview. The research purpose was explained and prior consent was obtained from the informants before the interview took place. I tried to maintain privacy, anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. In practice however, this was not possible for a variety of reasons. First, as an outsider, I attracted people's attention and curiosity. Wherever I went, there were always people who would join me and curiously wanted to know what I was doing. Second, even though the interviews were done inside a house or a room, it was impossible to keep the conversations unheard from others, who were outside the house or in another room, due to the condition and structure of the house. Third, even if I would have been able to avoid these two problems, the informants themselves talked to others and informed other informants or their relatives about the interviews. Many times, I was surprised when one informant mentioned something related to an interview with another informant. For most of them, sharing with other informants or their female friends or relatives what they had discussed with me was enjoyable. According to them, they had never discussed such topics before. I was also aware of the possibility that the answer given by the informants could have been pre-discussed among them or with their relatives.

As I was doing research in my own country, specifically with people from the same ethnic group as my father, I was what is classified as a 'native anthropologist'. As Nanda and Warms mention, native anthropologists are those studying their own societies (1998:28). On one hand, this status gave me some advantages, especially during the first stage of my fieldwork, in getting access to the people. On the other hand, my link to this ethnic group did have some disadvantages and sometimes created dilemmas. Knowing that I am half Sasak, people expected me to some extent to have the abilities a Sasaknese should have. Language is the main example. On many occasions, people would have a strange look on their faces when I told them that I did not speak the language. Some of them expressed their criticism. To a certain extent, inability to
speak the local language caused problems for me, usually with important people in the village who would look down upon me because of this.

However, being looked down upon and being unable to speak the language did offer advantages as well. It was easier for me to build relationships with the women in the village, letting them know that I am not as ‘perfect’ as they might have thought. Language then became my opportunity to demonstrate my eagerness to learn from them.

Time constraints also imposed a limitation. There were some issues or events, which I could not follow up because of this constraint. I was also not able to follow up the stories of my informants. However, my biggest regret was that my relationship with some people in the village, especially the women, and with my informants had to end just at the time when I felt that they had started to accept me.

Some of the people misunderstood the reason for my presence in the village and felt that I would be able to provide solutions to their problems. For example, because of economic hardship, some women asked me for a job and said that they were willing to follow me wherever I would go, either to Jakarta or to Amsterdam. Some men did the same. Faced by this situation, there was nothing I could do but telling them the truth that I would not be able to solve all their problems. My explanation was not only a disappointment for them but also for myself.

Conclusions

This study is descriptive, and uses qualitative research methodology. To emphasise the emic point of view of the young women who married early, multiple semi-structured interviews were conducted and completed with observation. Six informants participated in the study. Almost six weeks period of fieldwork was carried out in Perigi, a village in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara.

Time limitation, social and cultural realities of the people, the environmental and demographical conditions of the village, or other constraints in the fieldwork, required me to be flexible in doing the fieldwork and applying the methodology I planned to use in the research proposal. At the end, I had to make adjustment and changes in the methodology I used in this study, such as the data collection method.
I am aware that I am my own 'research tool'. This means that I had to be sensitive to possible biases that might occur during the data collection and analysis of this study. As a woman with a cultural, educational and social background that differed from that of the informants, I already had perceptions and ideas of early marriage, which probably differed from those of my informants. For example, with my public health background, I see early marriage as a problem: it negatively affects young women’s health and therefore women should marry at an older age. However, being aware of my own bias, I realise that the young women might not share my ideas. This study meant a self-reflection confronting my own ideas and values with the realities of the people and especially the young women who live in the village.

\[5\] In 1997, I got a bachelor degree in Public Health from the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. Since then, I worked in the area of Reproductive Health and Women's Health until 2001.
This study was conducted in a village called Perigi, located on Lombok, an island in the province of West Nusa Tenggara. In order to provide background information on the field site and its people, I will begin by describing the geography and general power structures of Lombok. This information is necessary to help set the context in which the informants of this study live in. Furthermore, in the last part of this chapter, I will provide background information on the young women who are the informants of this study.

The Area and the People of Lombok

West Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Barat or NTB) is a hilly and mountainous province in the eastern part of Indonesia. It consists of two main islands, Lombok and Sumbawa, and hundreds of smaller islands. In total, it covers an area over of 20,177 square kilometres, divided into six regional districts (kecamatan), three being in Lombok and the rest in Sumbawa.
Based on the 2000 census, the population of West Nusa Tenggara was estimated at 3.8 million people with the density of 189 people per square km (Muhidin 2002:15-17). However, it is not equally distributed among the six regions. More than 70% of the people in West Nusa Tenggara live in Lombok (Budiwanti 2000:6). Although the majority of the people are Muslim, other minority groups include Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, and Protestants.

The three regions in Lombok are referred to as West Lombok, Central Lombok, and East Lombok. Mataram is the capital of the province of West Nusa Tenggara and is located in West Lombok. The head of the district is called bupati. Each district is administratively divided into sub-districts or kecamatan and headed by a camat. Under the sub-district, each village (desa) is led by a kecab or kepala desa. Desa are then divided into dusun or sub-villages, and their leaders are called kliwon dusun or in some places, like in Perigi, are called kepala dusun (kadus). The smallest hierarchy unit is desan or hamlet.\(^1\)

The majorities of the people of Lombok live in villages and are rice farmers. The population mainly consists of people from the Sasak ethnic group and a smaller number of other ethnic groups, such as the Balinese, Javanese, Bugis, Chinese, etc. The Sasak is a patrilineal and

\(^1\) For the diagram of the provincial government hierarchy, look at annex one.
patrilocal community (Grace 1996: p.147). In daily conversation, people in Lombok speak the Sasak language.

Area of Perigi

The village Perigi lies at the foothills of Mount Rinjani, the highest mountain in Lombok, in the kabupaten of East Lombok. East Lombok has a much drier climate, smaller population and fewer facilities than the west of the island. Perigi lies 76 KM east of Mataram. To reach the village, it takes more than two hours to travel from Mataram to Labuhan Lombok by car. The closest city from Perigi is Pringgebaya. There is only one narrow main road that passes through this village. Furthermore, ojek, or motorbike taxis, are the only available public transportation to and from the village.

Perigi has an area of 6280 ha, most of which are parched areas. It is divided into seven dusun (sub villages): Bukit Durian, Karang Asem, Limbungan, Blumbang, Aik Betak, Gunung Rawi, and Lekong Pulut. Two dusun (Bukit Durian and Karang Asem) are close to each other and form the centre of the village. This is where almost all of the village's important facilities such as the school, village office, and primary health centre (puskesmas) are located. The dusun are scattered over the foothills of Mount Rinjani. The farthest dusun from the village centre are Limbungan and Lekong Pulut.

Compared to other villages under the same kecamatan, or neighbourhood villages under different kecamatan, Perigi is less developed, mostly due to its geographical location and transportation constraints. Only two dusun have electricity: Bukit Durian and Karang Asem. It is difficult to travel from one dusun to another. Some dusun are isolated and hard to reach by transportation. It took me from morning until evening to reach each dusun. Even though Dusun Blumbang is not as far as Limbungan or Lekong Pulut, it has the worst transportation facilities. As a result, it is the most difficult dusun to reach from the village centre. It becomes particularly isolated when it rains, because the road is too slippery and dangerous to travel on by motorbike.

Houses in Perigi are built close to each other. Most of them have bamboo-made walls and are tin shaded. There are also some buildings made from cement or from cement and wood or

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2 Within Sasak language, there are five dialects: Kuto-kute (North Sasak), Ngeto-ngete (Northeast Sasak), Meno-mene (Central Sasak), Ngeno-ngene (Central East Sasak, Central West Sasak), and Mrika-mriku (Central South Sasak). (Source: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Indonesia+%28Nusa+Tenggara%29, cited on September 10, 2002)
bamboo. The later is more common in Bukit Durian and Karang Asem, indicating their wealthier economy compare to the other desun.

At every desun, a pond is usually located beside a mosque or musjid (small mosque) where men and women of all ages take their baths in separate locations. It is also a source for drinking water. The water comes from the spring, which is far away on the top of the mountain. Water has always been a problem for Perigi people. Many times in the dry season, the spring dries up. Consequently, people must use the water wisely and sparingly. People from Gunung Rawi suffer most from dry seasons because they are forced to walk barefoot along the foothills to the nearest desun or to another village in search for clean water.

The People of Perigi

According to the 2002 village population report, Perigi, with a population of 8,105 in a total of 2,437 households, is the largest village within kecamatan (sub-district) Sule, in kabupaten East Lombok. Within its desun, Blumbang is the most populated area (see table 1).

Table 1. The Population of Perigi in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dusun (Sub-village)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bukit Durian</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>1,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karang Asem</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>1,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbungan</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>1,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blumbang</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>1,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alk Betak</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunung Rawi</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>1,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lekong Pulut</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,894</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,211</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,105</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to other villages, most of the people in Perigi work in the agricultural sector as small landholders, sharecroppers and/or wage labourers. The rest of the village population consists of a few traders, civil servants, soldiers, retirees, midwives, etc. However, in general agricultural work is still their main source of income. Many households, however, are landless or do not have enough land to provide for their basic needs. Most women do not work in the fields and are housewives taking care of the domestic chores. Wages are low and employment
opportunities outside the agricultural sector are very limited, so some men go to other Indonesian islands or to Malaysia to find employment.

Working as an ojek (motorbike taxi) driver is preferred by young men in the village. They use their own motorbike or someone else's. For these young men, being an ojek driver is more profitable than any other kind of work. Besides, it is less strenuous and sometimes provides them with social advantages. One middle aged woman once told me that ojek drivers are seen as desirable men by young women. According to her, these girls are unreasonable because they only value the motorbike, which in their eyes is a symbol of the man's masculinity. The real attitude and behaviour of the man is not a consideration.

There are three kinds of leadership in the village. Firstly, there are formal village government leaders, who are responsible for the administrative and governmental matters. The second group consists of religious leaders (kiai or tuangon), who are associated with the village mosques and may manage the local religious office and act as Islamic teachers. Finally, there are traditional leaders (pemangku adat), who are responsible for the traditional rituals and ceremonies in the village.

As indicated by some literature, Islam in Lombok is divided into two different beliefs: Waktu Lima and Waktu Td (see Bartholomew 2001, Budiwanti 2000, Cederroth 1981). Waktu Lima follows the orthodox Islam. Waktu Td is a mix of Islam, Hinduism, and animism; thus claiming that they still follow the traditional way of life or adat. Bartholomew, Budiwanti, and Cederroth also document the recent struggles between the two beliefs (ibid).

Almost everyone in Perlgi is Muslim and follows either Waktu Lima or Waktu Td. The influence of Waktu Td is found among the more traditional and isolated desan like Limbungan and Lekong Pulut. The influence of Waktu Lima is found among the people in the rest five desan—those that are more developed, have more people from outside of the village (migrants), and are located closer to the centre of the village. The formal government leader and the religious leaders follow Waktu Lima while pemangku adat or traditional leaders support Waktu Td. This is probably because, as Hunter (1996) indicated, the Indonesian government recognizes Waktu Lima rather than Waktu Td.
Education

The literacy rate in Perigi is very low. Based on the 2002 village population report, the majority of the people (58%) lack formal education and have never attended any school. Among the small number of people who had ever attended school, most did not study beyond elementary level.

There is no high school in Perigi. There are only three elementary schools, a religious one in Karang Asem, Blumbang, and Lekong Pulut, and a "tsanawiyah" or Islamic junior high school in Bukit Durian. Girls and boys who want to continue to high school have to go to Pringgabaya, the nearest city by using an ojek. Some of them prefer to rent a room and stay there during the school days and return to the village on weekends. However, both are expensive options for the majority of the people in Perigi because of the cost involved in the transportation and accommodation. The same holds true for those who wish to continue their education at the academy or university.

Poverty prevents many children from attending school or continuing their schooling because there are only limited employment opportunities for junior or high school graduates in Perigi, families in Perigi give low priority to child education.

The Language

People in Perigi, including those that attended school and are able to speak Bahasa (the Indonesian language), generally prefer to speak the Sasak language. The ability to speak Bahasa is greatly associated with the period of school attendance because school is the place where students normally speak the language. Those who only attended elementary school for a few years generally cannot speak Bahasa very well although most of them understand the language. Moreover, those who never attended any school, mostly women and older people, only speak the Sasak language. There are different dialects between the dusun. Even though I could not differentiate between dialects, people sometimes told me how different people from the other dusun speak.
The Family

Ideally, a nuclear family in Lombok establishes its household near the father's house of the husband, constituting a localised extended household(s), known as *gahuk*. It is formed around men related through the patrilineal line, with women marrying in and out of the patriline (Grace 1996, Ecklund 1971). A marriage between first, second, and third cousins is preferred. Normally when the son marries, the family is required to provide *mas karim* (a bride price) to the bride or to her family. It is the responsibility of the man to fulfil this as a symbol of his commitment.

Most women move to their husbands' *gahuk* after getting married. The wife will return to her parent's house if she is a divorcee or widow. Due to marriages and divorces are oftentimes unregistered, people in Perigi view the act of returning the wife to her parent's house would indicate that she is a divorcee. When a woman's husband is away for a long period, she will also move to her parent's house. This happened to Yuni, one of the informants. Instead of living with her mother-in-law, she moved into her uncle's house when her husband went to Malaysia for work.

As a patriarchal society, men have a superior position within the nuclear family and the women are responsible for the internal operation of the household. The place of women is in the kitchen or other parts inside the house. A woman will therefore rarely be in charge of or take part in agricultural production. However, in the harvest season, both men and women carry out agricultural work. In this situation, the daughter is in control of the household chores while the mother works in the field. Even though the husband is mainly responsible for the family income, some of the wives, in addition to their household jobs, help their husband in the field. They may also sell the agricultural products in the market, but they will not do that without their husband's or the family's approval.

A Portrait of the Young Women

The age of the informants ranged from fifteen to nineteen years; one did not finish elementary school, two completed elementary school, one completed junior high school, and two others attended only the first year of high school. Most of them reported economic hardship as the

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It is possible for a man in Perigi to have more than one wife.
main reason for the cessation of their studies. Only one informant said that, based on her own decision, she dropped out from elementary school because she lost interest in studying and preferred to work as a Janger.4

Most of the informants married men much older. They were younger than seventeen years old when they were married and their husbands were actually in their 20s. Most of the men were divorced or still had another wife or wives when marrying the informants. In Perigi culture, men are allowed to have more than one wife.

The characteristics of the informants and their husbands are summarized in table 2 and table 3.

### Table 2. Characteristics of the Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Dusun</th>
<th>Last Education (*)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age when Married</th>
<th>Duration of Marriage</th>
<th>Marital Status (Now)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elli</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Karang Asem</td>
<td>SMA 1st grade</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hani</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Blumbang</td>
<td>SMP Complete</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3 mths</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Karang Asem</td>
<td>SMA 4th grade</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murri</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bukit Durian</td>
<td>SD Complete</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.5 yrs</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuni</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bukit Durian</td>
<td>SD Complete</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>15 (*)</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erna</td>
<td>15 (*)</td>
<td>Leokong Pulut</td>
<td>SD – 4th grade</td>
<td>Traditional Dancer</td>
<td>1st, 11 (*)</td>
<td>1st, 1 yr</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: (*) = Estimation because the informant was unsure

### Table 3. Characteristics of the Husbands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Informants</th>
<th>Husband’s age when marrying the informant</th>
<th>Husband’s status when marrying the informant</th>
<th>No. of Children with the informants</th>
<th>With another wife (s) or ex wife (s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elli</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hani</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>28 years (+)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murri</td>
<td>30 years (+)</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuni</td>
<td>27 years (+)</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erna</td>
<td>1st, 20 years (+)</td>
<td>1st, married</td>
<td>1 (died)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd, 30 years (+)</td>
<td>2nd, married (4 times)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Janger (also called Rangga) is a Sasak traditional dance performed by a young girl dancer, mostly in the open air and accompanied by traditional music called 'Gamelan'. I had a chance to look at Janger performances in Limbungan. There were three dancers. Each dancer would individually dance and sing using a fan. She then would invite a member of the audience, usually a male, to dance with her by touching him with her fan. The man then attempted to mirror the dance movements, and if possible, to make short and quick physical contact with the elusive Janger. During the dance, some men tried to seduce the Janger dancer. The audience would applaud these men's attempts. The more seductive a movement he would make, the more applause the audience would give. After the dancer finished performing, the man would give her some money as a tip. The amount of money depends on her beauty and how much the man is pleased during the dance.
Below are short descriptions of the informants. I use fictive names to protect their identity.

**Elli (18 years old, divorced, has one daughter)**

Elli got married when she was 16 years old. She said that she was one of the smartest students in her village since elementary school. She was among the few who were admitted by a public high school in Pringgabaya. In her first year of high school, she married a 30-year-old man, a divorcee with one child. She met him when she had just completed her junior high school studies. The man came to the house of Elli's aunt where she lived at the time. According to Elli, she was not interested in him but was reluctant not to accept his visit. However, because the man kept visiting her, she was afraid of her reputation being ruined and consequently, married the man. A year after the marriage, she gave birth to a girl. She knew while she was pregnant that her husband had an affair with his former wife. Nonetheless, she tried to be a good wife by not being too demanding, impatient, or protesting. The gossip about her husband's affair with his former wife went around the village. "Everyone knows about the story," she said. He finally divorced Elli and wanted to re-marry his ex-wife. Elli now lives at her mother's house in Karang Asem, owned by her mother and her stepfather. She also has a relationship with another man. According to her, her ex-husband wants to re-marry her but she has already refused his proposal.

**Heni (17 years old, married for 3 months, no children)**

Heni is a kindergarten teacher. Despite her desire to pursue higher education, she was unable to attend high school due to economic difficulties. Three months before this study was conducted, she married a 22-year-old man from Masbagik, a small town in East Lombok. According to Heni, her husband was the one who first saw her on the village street and started to visit her afterwards. She accused her husband of using 'love magic' because she has never come to understand why she married him. Two months after the marriage, Heni went back to her parents' house in Blumbang and refused to return to the house of her parents-in-law. She was still staying there when I interviewed her. She wanted to divorce her husband but he refused to

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5 Because of the tight competition, being accepted by a public high school in Indonesia is a privilege for a student. In general, a public high school has a better quality than a private one and thus is more desirable. Due to the government subsidies, it is also cheaper than private high school. As a result, students in general, especially from the middle class, compete to be accepted by the public school.

6 There are two kindergartens in the village founded by PLAN East Lombok, one in Bukit Durian and the other in Blumbang.
fulfil her request because in Perigi, it is not possible to get divorced without the husband’s approval. In this regard, she was very depressed and did not know what to do. Yet, she decided to live separately from her husband and not to return to the house of her parents-in-law.

**Ida (18 years old, married, has a son)**

Ida is the only daughter. She has stepsisters and stepbrothers but is not close to them. She married when she was 17 years old. Her husband is an *ojek* driver and that was how he first saw her when he drove a person to Ida’s *desa*, Karang Asem. Ida was still in her first year of high school when she decided to get married. Similar to Elli, Ida was a smart and very active student. She was also one of the three junior high school graduates who were accepted by the public high school in Prijagabaya. She wanted to continue her education up to the tertiary level. Unfortunately, her mother, who supported her financially and her dream to attain higher education, was diagnosed of having cancer. Ida could not ask her father’s financial support because he did not support her financially before and opposed her desire to attain higher education. She had to drop out of school and marry her boyfriend, who was 26 years old at that time. Her mother died soon after her marriage. Now Ida has a son and lives in Karang Asem with her husband.

**Mumi (19 years old, married, has a daughter)**

When she was 17 years old, Mumi married a 30 year-old man, a friend of one of her brothers. When he married Mumi, he was a divorcee with three children. Her parents, especially her mother, suggested that Mumi marry him. At first Mumi refused, but after some consideration she finally accepted the idea and married the man. Mumi went to an elementary school in Perigi but did not continue junior high school because of financial limitations. As a result, Mumi cannot speak Bahasa fluently, although she can adequately understand the language. She prefers to speak in the Sasak language. Now, she is still married to the same man and has a daughter. They live in a small house in Bukit Durian, next to her parents’ house. Mumi contributes to the family income by helping her husband in the field.

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7 I heard the same comment from some people in Perigi about relationships between stepbrothers or stepsisters. Because divorce and remarriage are very common in Perigi, the children do not live with one of the parents but with the grandparents. They do not live together with their stepbrother or stepsister from a different mother or a different father. As a result, the bond between them rarely exists.
Yuni (17 years old, married without any children)

Yuni lives at her uncle’s house in Bukit Durian. Like Mumi, Yuni only finished elementary school. She married when she was 15 years old, two years after completing elementary school. She married her own cousin, a 27-year-old man. They had been seeing each other for almost two years before he proposed marriage to her. A divorcee, her husband did not have any children from his previous marriage. Like most men in Perigi, her husband works in Malaysia. Yuni is also not fluent but can converse in Bahasa. She has no children yet. She has been living at her uncle’s house since her husband left the village for Malaysia. She does not have to work because her husband continually sends her money from Malaysia. Her uncle manages the money. In addition, Yuni helps her uncle and aunts by working in the field during harvest time.

Erna (15 years old, already married twice, now divorced without children)

Erna was the youngest informant. She cannot speak Bahasa but has a basic understanding of the language. She lives in Lekong Pulut with her mother. The latter had been married six times at the time of the interview. Erna has been a Janger since she was six years old. She was first married to a 20-year-old man when she was 11 years old. He was divorced at that time. Erna divorced her first husband a year after their marriage because he had been unfaithful to her. Within three months of her divorce, Erna married another man. He was 30 years old and she met while watching a VCD (Video CD) in her dusun. Erna had a baby boy but he survived only for a week. Before marrying Erna, her second husband had already been married four times. Erna’s second (and her husband’s fifth) marriage ended within two years. Her second husband physically abused her throughout their marriage. Currently, Erna still works as a Janger; performing traditional dances on special occasions, such as wedding receptions.

Conclusion

Perigi consists of seven dusun that are scattered over the foothills of Rinjani mountain, located in eastern part of Lombok, in the province of West Nusa Tenggara. As a result of its geographical location and transportation constraints, most of the areas are arid and relatively isolated. Compared to other villages, Perigi is less developed; there is no electricity in most of the dusun and there are problems with the water supply. It is nevertheless the most populated village within kecamatan Sucle.
Perigi people belong to the Sasak ethnic group. Almost everyone is Muslim and follows one of two different groupings: Waktu Lima, which follows orthodox Islam, and Waktu Tdu, a mix of Islam, Hinduism, and Animism. Waktu Lima is found among more developed dusun, which have more people from outside the village and are located close to the centre of the village. Waktu Tdu is found among the more traditional and isolated dusun. There are three kinds of leadership in the village: formal leaders, religious leaders (kiai or tuangitu), and traditional leaders (perangku adat). The formal government leader and the religious leaders follow Waktu Lima while the Perangku Adat support Waktu Tdu.

In general, agricultural work is the main source of income for the people. Employment opportunities outside this sector are limited. The majority of the people lack formal education and have never attended any school. Due to poverty and limited employment opportunities for junior or high school graduates, families in Perigi give low priority to education. Consequently, many people cannot speak Bahasa and only speak the local Sasak language.

Perigi has a patriarchal society. Men have a superior position and are responsible for the family's basic needs, while women are responsible for domestic issues. The extended family forms a gabuk, an extended household, which consists of nuclear family households that surround the house of the husband's father. A marriage between first, second, and third cousins is preferred.
CHAPTER IV

PERCEPTIONS OF MARITAL AGE: EARLY MARRIAGE?

It is not easy to define 'early' marriage as it varies across cultural settings. In one society, a particular age can be viewed as too young to marry, while in another, it can be perceived as too old to enter into marriage for the first time. For example, at the age of 18, a girl or a boy in a Western country, such as the Netherlands, is normally regarded as an adolescent and as too young to marry. In other regions, such as rural Indonesia, she or he may be considered as an adult and thus mature enough to enter a marriage. The situation is also affected by the fact that birth registration is not common in many countries. The exact age of young people who are getting married cannot be ascertained.

Early marriage is understood in different ways. While a minimum age for marriage may be useful as an indicator, different perspectives set different minimum ages. First, there is a minimum age from the perspective of public health and other advocates against early marriage. Second, there is also a legal minimum age, which in most countries is different from the public health perspective. Finally, people in local settings have different notions of minimum age and the ideal time for a girl to get married. They have their own reasons. In general, it relates to the way they look at the concept and the process of adulthood, which is derived from the meaning of maturity and gender roles.

This chapter is aimed to look at these differences: whether or not the people's perception of early marriage in the Perigi setting corresponds with those of the public health perspective and the legal notion of early marriage in Indonesia. While interviews with young married women are treated as the main data source, the information given by other village members or from the observation are also valuable. The chapter is divided into three sections with the first two illustrating the public health and legal perspectives and the perspective of the local people in Perigi regarding early marriage and timing of marriage.

\[\text{Based on the 2001 Council of Europe's Report on "Recent Demographic Developments in Europe", the mean age of first marriage for women in the Netherlands in 2000 was almost 28 (cited from www.coe.int)}\]
Early Marriage: Perspective of Public Health and Marriage Law in Indonesia

When defining 'early' marriage, public health and many advocates against early marriages refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was officially campaigned for adoption and ratification on 26 January 1990 by most countries of the world. Based on this convention, a child is defined as "all human beings under the age of 18, unless the relevant national laws recognize an earlier age of majority" (UNICEF 2002, Hinshelwood 2001, UNICEF 2001). From this perspective, therefore, early marriage is defined as any marriage that takes places when the girl or the boy is under the age of 18.

Most countries, including Indonesia, have a law that regulates the minimum age of marriage. Yet, even though Indonesia is among the countries that ratified the CRC, the legal definition of early marriage in Indonesia is different from that of the CRC. Article 7 of the Indonesian Marriage Law No. 1/1974, clearly specifies the legal minimum age at marriage as 16 years for females and 19 years for males. This means that families who marry off their daughters when they are still in high school falls under the ambit of legal age of 16. Article 6 makes it mandatory that any marriage should be mutually agreed upon by both partners. It further states that, "...for a person who is not yet 21 years old, there must be consent of the parents." According to Hanum (1997:3), this parental consent is often used as a justification or rationalization for the practice of marrying off daughters under 18 years of age.

Furthermore, the law is contradictory and can be interpreted in various ways. For example, the law states that everyone below the age of 18 who has never been married falls under the responsibility of his or her parents and is thus considered a child. It approaches marriage as a transition from childhood to adulthood because when a girl marries, she becomes an adult – even if she is only 16 years old. The same applies to a boy. When he marries, he is considered an adult in a legal sense. In a broader context, a married person of whatever age in Indonesia, and probably in every country, is considered legally and culturally to be no longer a child (GOI & UNICEF 2000). However, women might actually remain minors within the marriage. For example, they might legally be subservient to the decisions of their husbands, especially when there is a big age gap between them and their husbands.

Advocates against early marriage in Indonesia have been critical of the marriage law. First, because the legal minimum age for girls is lower than the international perspective of early
marriage. As a result, they call for changes in this law by increasing the minimum marital age for girls from 16 years to 18 years. Second, there is a different minimum age for marriage for boys and girls. Accordingly, while a higher minimum age for boys at first glance suggests a form of discrimination against men, this law is actually based on ideas of women's inferiority. It assumes that women need fewer years to prepare themselves for a marriage because their duties are confined to childbearing or domestic roles (IPPF & IWRAW nd.). Others argue that this standpoint takes for granted that women have a different rate of intellectual development than men or that their stage of physical and intellectual development at marriage is not essential (UNICEF 2001).

The locals’ viewpoint on the appropriate age for first marriage might differ from the Public Health perspective and the Indonesian Law's definition. In the next section, the perception of early marriage among young married woman and people of Perigi will be described. It will also discuss the differences in concept of early marriage between the local perspective and the Public Health and the Indonesian Law perspective.

**Perception of the Age for Getting Married in Perigi: Its Disparities with Public Health and Indonesian Marriage Law**

There were two kinds of perceptions among the informants to indicate the timing for a girl to enter a marriage. The people generally used age to indicate the timing for a girl to enter a marriage. Most of them described the ages of 20 to 25 as the ideal age range for a woman to get married. They used health and maturity as their indicators for determining these ages as the ideal ones. They also indicated that girls or boys who were still in school should not get married.

From their perspective however, the ideal age of marriage is not the same as the appropriate or the actual age of marriage. Despite her opinion that 25-year was an ideal age to marry, Mumi considered her age at marriage (17), as appropriate. She believed that she was not too young to start a married life because it was normal for a 17 year-old girl in Perigi to get married.

The better-educated people and the senior villagers who work for the government in Perigi also use the minimum age perspective as well and perceive early marriage as a problem in their village. According to them, girls who are younger than the minimum ages used in the public
health perspective and the Indonesian law, 18 years and 16 years respectively, are not old enough to get married.

However, the notion of a minimum age to define early marriage is not always used in Perigi to decide whether a girl is old enough to marry or not. One informant talked in terms of a girl’s ‘qualities’ (cooking and dancing) to decide whether she is ready for a marriage. According to her point of view, marrying at the age of 15 is appropriate as long as a girl is able to cook. Thus, she thought that she herself was married at an appropriate timing because she was already able to meet these two prerequisites. Older villagers and young people who have not had any formal education share the same opinion with this informant. For them, the notion of age is not so important but rather whether the girl is mature enough. They believe that there are factors that indicate a young woman’s preparedness for marriage, such as menstruation and her ability to cook. Instead of using age, they use these characteristics as indicators.

When a girl marries in Perigi, she will live with her husband’s family and live separately from her parents. She will assume a new role as an adult and thus has to be mature enough to take on this new role. Therefore, she has to be well prepared and capable to take care of her new family, which is being symbolized by her ability to cook. I encountered some people who said, “A woman is not yet a woman if she cannot cook”. The same way of thinking is applied when using menstruation as indication of marriage-preparedness for a girl. It means her physical capability of reproduction.

According to Ecklund (1977), marriage is concomitant to adulthood. Yet, adulthood itself is culturally and socially constructed. There are diverse perceptions about the notion of adulthood and its process from one culture to another. For example, adolescence in one culture might be acknowledged as a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. In other places, there might be no adolescent period: when adulthood starts, childhood ends.

Biomedical and legal perspectives define childhood and child marriage through a number of indicators based on biological and statistical reasons. Studies have shown that there is a specific age range within which childbearing poses an increased risk – that is when the mother is too young or too old. Child bearing under the age of 18 is seen as potentially risky as is childbearing over the age of 35. Early marriage is categorized by using a fixed indicator, the minimum marital age – girls younger than 18 are too young, and thus marriage below the age of 18 is essentially a form of child marriage. Early marriage and by extension bearing children before the age of 18, is
seen as falling outside the 'normal' range for childbearing. Furthermore, it assumes that people within a particular age bracket stay in school. This age is an exit level for schooling and thus too young to marry. This is, nonetheless, different from perceptions and practices in many non-western societies.

People in Perigi have a different set of values on the issue of early marriage. Compared to the public health and legal notion of early marriage, they have their own ways of looking at the issue that are more flexible. In their eyes, the end of childhood, and thus immediately a start of adulthood, is attached to their perception of gender values and roles. For a girl, cooking ability and the onset of menstruation are used as symbols of her womanhood: the time when a girl becomes a mature woman and is thus capable of performing domestic roles and reproduction. Thus, she is ready for getting married, having sexual intercourse and being a mother of children—her role as a woman, wife and a mother. The 'readiness' for marriage in Perigi is measured by symbols that are seen as typical gender roles of women. Early marriage thus takes place when the bride-to-be is regarded as immature and not qualified, based on these qualifications.

The socialization of the public into the health and legal perspective concerning the minimum marital age is eminent in Perigi since 1999. Some of the girls, and other villagers, react positively to these perspectives by changing their perception on early marriage. Yet, while the young women to some extent adopt the health and legal perspectives, they adapt their perception to the realities in their day-to-day life at the same time. Even though most of them have a positive attitude towards the government and public health point of view, they do not see these as realistic. That is why they use three different age standards when referring to early marriage. The level of education also influences the level of adopting and understanding the public health perspective on early marriage. Those informants who have a relatively high education could elaborate on the reasons of why they perceived a certain age as the ideal marital age.

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2 In 1999, YKSSI and PLAN East Lombok ran a campaign program on early marriage and divorce in Perigi and 14 other villages in Kecamatan (Sub-district) Sakra, Pringgabaya, and Sule, in East Lombok. East Lombok is well known for its high numbers of early marriage. Most people in Perigi marry young. The main goal of this campaign was to educate people with the issue aim of reducing the number of early marriages and divorces in those villages. In order to create a sustainable outcome, YKSSI created a group called "Kelompok Pemerhati Masalah Kawin Cerai," with its members were mostly young people from 15 villages. It sought to address issues of early marriage and divorce in Lombok. Since then, YKSSI started their efforts to reduce the number of early marriage by promoting the negative consequences of early marriage, informing the people in Perigi of the public health perspective on early marriage, which uses 18 as the minimum marriageable age. Many young men and young women were trained as the volunteers by this NGO to conduct monthly discussions on early marriage in their villages. At the same time, the Indonesian government, through their officials, has also been promoting the similar campaign program against early marriage. In this case, the officials use the legal minimum age, which is 16 years old.
Conclusion

The young married women and the people of Perigi appear to have different perceptions of early marriage. In general, the perception of early marriage correlates with the perception of the concept and the process of adulthood. While the Public Health perspective and the Marriage Law use a Western notion of adulthood and thus use a fixed numerical symbol to define early marriage through a number of indicators based on biological and statistical reasons, people in Perigi have their own mindset. In their eyes, the end of childhood, and thus the starting point of adulthood, is related to gender values and roles. For a girl, cooking ability and the onset of menstruation are used as symbols of her womanhood: the time when a girl becomes a mature woman and is thus capable to perform domestic roles and reproduction. The 'readiness' for marriage in Perigi is measured by symbols that are seen as typical gender roles of women. Thus, 'early marriage' (for people in Perigi) takes place when the bride-to-be is regarded as immature and unable to meet the local standards.
CHAPTER V
MAKING THE DECISION PROCESS IN EARLY MARRIAGE

This chapter will discuss the decision-making processes regarding contracting a marriage. It is essential to present how the young women see these processes in order to have a better understanding of the social, economic, and cultural contexts that influence the marriage decision. Their view on their marriage, the first time they met their husbands and the courtship process, spousal selection, specific features of marriage in Perigi, and familial involvement in the marriage process will be discussed before presenting an overview of the women's reasons for marrying. The chapter concludes with a discussion of marriage decision-making processes in relation to wider social and cultural contexts, to create an understanding of why marriages are happening.

Economic imperatives and gender are the main issues in most of the young women's stories about the motive for contracting the marriage. Due to economic hardship, they have to stop their education and then get married. They also have to maintain their honour as ‘good’ girls so as to be a desirable marriage partner. The result is an ambivalent situation. While they have to keep their honour, they need to behave in the expected feminine way by being polite to the men who court them. These two factors put them under strong pressure to get married. The same issues also come out in their narration about spousal selection. The values of femininity and masculinity are the main concern. They mention that only a ‘good’ woman is eligible for marriage. The women interviewed speak about the way they measure their future husbands based on their economic ability and ability to take care of the family. There are three kinds of marriage arrangements in Perigi and according to the informants, *meurik*, which uses elopement in the process, is the main way for young people in Perigi to get married. In every kind of marriage, the family is involved in some way.
Informant's Views on their Marriage

The girls in general recalled that they had never thought of getting married soon. The main reasons for staying single were their desire to continue their education or their affection for their families.

"To tell you the truth, I did not have any intention [to marry]. My main reason to marry him was because of my mother's health condition" - Ida

"I still loved my mother. I still wanted to be with her, working together to earn money for the living, I wanted to be with my family. I never thought of dating or marrying before" - Murni

Four informants said that their marriages were contracted with their full consent. Two informants thought that they had nothing to do with the marriage decision-making process. Murni and Heni's marriages were arranged, though with different levels of familial involvement. In Murni's case, her mother played a key role throughout the marriage process: from matchmaking until the wedding. Murni initially refused but then decided to marry her future husband after all. In Heni's case, her parents took a small part in the arrangement process, although the marriage was not her choice. Like Murni, Heni was not involved in the marriage process. Yet, Murni said this lack of involvement was normal in Perigi.

"Well, I think I was not involved. When he [the husband] came here, to pick up my parents or their representative for the wedding, he did not ask for my permission first" - Heni

"I was not involved. I was only informed that I was going to be married on that day or that night. I just accepted it. I had been informed though, so I just went to the pengahulu [a person who has the authority to marry a couple based on Islam]. I could not say anything about when I wish to get married. What date I preferred. I could not say that. Well, that's how it works here, that's the custom. Even though we are going to be married next month we won't be involved in the discussion with the parents" - Murni

First Meeting and Courtship

When the young women talked about their first meeting with their husbands, they mostly used terminology indicating passivity, using the expression "tens dia lihat saya (then he saw me)." Erna met her first husband when she was dancing dangker at a wedding and met her second husband

1 The sentence in the mark '[...]' is the writer's explanation to give a clearer understanding of what the informants were trying to say.

2 The text is modified into a first person form based on the translation from the interpreter.
while watching a VCD (Video CD) movie at one of her neighbours’ house. Heni was introduced to her husband while watching VCDs as well. Ida encountered her husband for the first time on the street. Elli’s sister introduced her to her ex-husband at their aunt’s house. Murni’s husband was her brother’s friend from Sumatra, and was living at their house after returning from working in Malaysia. Yuni married her cousin.

Even though each of the informants had a different story to tell, watching VCD was a popular pastime in Perigi and the most common occasion where the informants met their husbands for the first time. Renting and watching VCDs had become more popular in Perigi and other villages in East Lombok because of the relatively cheap rental-prices. A family would rent a VCD and other people in the village would come to their house to watch. Watching VCD was thus a communal activity and an opportunity for young people to mingle and to meet members of the opposite sex.

Before getting married, five of the young women stated that their future husbands had courted them. Courtship in Perigi is called niJarr. In the case of two of the women, courtship occurred without their consent. Even though the men knew that the women refused their proposals, they kept coming to the young women’s houses. Murni, on the other hand, revealed her future husband never courted her. Even though she liked the man and they were living in the same house, she never spoke to him before the marriage. She said she was too shy to initiate conversations with him and she married him because of her mother’s initiative to propose that they get married.

**Spousal Selection**

**Selection of the Groom**

Despite their young age, the informants usually assessed their future husbands before deciding to marry them. Most valued the behaviour and attitude of the man. Others appraised the man’s economic independence or his ability to take care of her. Even Murni, whose marriage had been arranged, assessed the man before she said yes to her mother.

“I assessed him when we were still dating. I carefully examined his behaviour to find out whether he was good enough for me, based on my own standards. I didn’t accept other people’s opinions about him. I didn’t care what they thought. I thought he was a kind person, matching to what I expect from a man” - Ida
"Why did I want to marry him? I don't know, maybe because I wanted it. I only judged from his behaviour. I realised that he was actually a good person, not as bad as I had thought he was. Even though I had never dated him, at the time of the marriage I suddenly felt very happy. Why? I don't know" – Mumi

When assessing her future husband, Elli also asked some advice from some of the older people in the village whom she considered wiser than herself. Because of her young age, she regarded herself as not being able to think clearly. Although the man was divorced, the older people considered him as an appropriate choice for Elli because of his ability to take care of her.

"I asked some of the old people. They said that he was a good man and was willing to take care of me. He was also a respectable man and besides being the head of his neighbourhood, he is a teacher. Even though he was a divorcer, they said that he was a good choice for me. The most important thing was his willingness to take care of me. Maybe all of them suggested me to marry him. Well, not all but many of them. Even the educated ones suggested that I marry him. I didn't think clearly at that time" – Elli

Good Girl and Bad Girl, Marriageable and Unmarriageable One: Selection for a Bride

"You know, a woman has to be appraised before a man can ask for her hand in marriage” - Ida

Following her remarks about the importance for a man to appraise a girl before marrying her, Ida described several expectations men in Perigi have when they select their future brides. There were three important qualities for a girl to make an eligible bride. These were more valuable than beauty and they are as follows: femininity, passivity (not being too expressive), and modesty – indicated by wearing decent clothes (not wearing mini-skirts). According to Ida, a smart man appreciates these qualities in a girl and chooses a good girl who still pursues the culture and ways of life in Perigi.

"To tell you the truth, nowadays only a few women appreciate their femininity. Men realise this phenomena. My husband is an example. Why do you think he choose me? I'm not beautiful. Many girls are more beautiful than me, but it's my femininity that made him fall in love. Not being too expressive [not being too active]. I mean, for example, when there was a movie in this village, I would never go to watch it. There are, for example, I am sorry to say, girls who wear mini-skirts. I'm not like them but am a woman who still follows the culture and the ways of life in Perigi. For a male outsider, a woman's real attitude and behaviour may be unknown. For him, the most important thing is her beauty. However, a man who knows about these things would think better" - Ida

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3 There was no cinema in Perigi. The informant indicated to an occasion when a movie (usually a movie from India) was shown in an outdoor place or field. It was usually showed once or twice a month by cinema businessmen from small cities in East Lombok. Sometimes, it was held in a wedding party of a rich family in the village.
Eli said her ex-husband perceived her as a good girl and thus marriageable. Due to this quality and her ability to protect her reputation, he pursued her as a future wife.

"Before we married, he saw me as a good girl. Therefore, I showed him that I am a good girl, just like what he thought. Yes, according to him, I am a good person. He also said that I could protect my self [my reputation]. In short, he was convinced with me" - Elli

From Elli's point of view, people in Perigi underestimated women and viewed women's roles only in relation to the domestic domains of cooking, cleaning and sex.

"Women are less important here. Our role is only on the bed, kitchen and bathroom. 'That's all" - Elli

Elli felt that education was important for a woman and should not be underestimated. However, even a well-educated woman needs to behave properly and in accordance with people’s expectations.

"That's good [having an education], as long as she behaves properly. It [education] is fine with people. They won't underestimate you if you are educated" - Elli

People in Perigi make a distinction between a 'good' and a 'bad' girl, between a respectable and disreputable one, and between a marriageable and unmarried one. From Ida and Eli's perspectives, a girl's performance in the public sphere is important for her marriage prospects. Therefore, her attitude is highly valued and her clothing represents this as well as her behaviour and her social class.

Young women in Perigi are categorised by the clothing that they wear. In daily life, some people believe that good girls wear a t-shirt or blouse and a sarong that covers their body from their elbows to their legs, and does not show their knees and calves. When they go out of the village for any reason, they can wear a t-shirt or a long or short-sleeved top with a skirt that covers their knees, or they can also wear loose trousers. Girls who wear 'decent' and modest outfits, and who have good attitudes and behaviour, are viewed as the ones who will be ideal wives. They are also 'appropriate' if they are from the same social class as the man. Although not regarded as 'bad', a girl is also unmarriedable if she comes from a higher social status than the male or if she is an outsider.

'Bad' girls wear different outfits: a short skirt (rak miri) which shows their calves and knees, or tight trousers which show the shape of their legs, with a tight shirt which shows the shape of their body, or sleeveless t-shirts. They also choose to wear bright colours. These are the type of
girls to have fun with in a ‘one-night-stand’ midang or dating. An unserious midang in the Perigi context, which is not intended to woo a wife, is not carried out in the girl’s house where the parents can observe and control the process. Instead, the boy or man will usually ask the girl to go out to watch a movie or listen to Dangdut music somewhere. Even though it does not necessarily mean having sexual activities, people in Perigi view this kind of midang as disgracing for a girl. ’Bad’ girls are not the ideal girls to marry.

How are marriages in Perigi executed? This question is important to deal with before entering the issue of why early marriages are happening in this area. The next section will focus on the marriage arrangement in Perigi and how the family is involved in the process. Marriage arrangement in Perigi is not entirely the same as the Western notion of marriage. It is probably even different from marriage arrangement in other parts of Indonesia.

Types of Marriage

There are three ways of conducting a marriage in Perigi. The first is merarik (elopement). This is when a man takes a woman usually from her house and elopes with her to the house of one of his relatives. The second is dilamar, which is when a man asks a young woman’s parents to marry her. Thirdly is the kasin tangkap or ‘red-handed’ marriage, which is when a man and a woman are forced to get married by the people to save the woman’s reputation after accusations of improper behaviour and premarital sex or adultery. Three informants (Elli, Yuni, and Erna) married after eloping (merarik) and three others (Heni, Ida, and Murni) engaged with their parent’s approval (dilamar). None of the informants got married because of kasin tangkap, which rarely happens in Perigi.

Merarik (Elopement)

Merarik literally means a runaway marriage, elopement or kasin lari in Bahasa. It remains the most popular choice among young people in Perigi these days. Informants mentioned that compared to the other ways to be married, merarik was adat (custom or tradition) in their village and thus was more preferable.
In most cases of *menik* in Perigi, it happens spontaneously, without any prior arrangements, after a man proposes to a woman that they elope and she agrees to do so. Usually the man discusses his plans with his parents before asking the girl to elope, so that the family can prepare a place for the woman to hide. In general, elopement occurs late in the afternoon or in the evening. This is to prevent the danger of being discovered by the woman’s parents. The couple then goes to the house of one of the man’s relatives, usually one of his paternal uncles, so they can acknowledge that the elopement has taken place. Within three days after the couple has eloped, one of man’s relatives, usually the parents or the uncle, reports the elopement to the kepala desaun (kades), the head of the desaun where the woman live. The kades then informs the woman’s parents, providing them with a letter announcing the elopement (sejati setahar).

Yuni, Erna, and Elli got married after eloping by *menik*. They had wanted to marry their future husbands and chose *menik* because they were afraid that their parents would not allow them to do so.

"If we asked my parents, we were afraid that they wouldn’t allow us to marry because of my young age. Therefore, we chose *menik*. Also because he was quite old and had already been divorced. That’s why we decided to elope" - Yuni

According to Heni:

"I think in this village, there are couples who chose *menik*. Well, both methods are used. If the parents don’t agree, then *menik* will be used. If one of the parents agrees, then they will use dilarrj" - Heni

For Yuni, Erna, and Elli, *menik* was a scary process. They thought of not going through the elopement and wanted to return to their parents’ house. Erna said that even though she had agreed to *menik* and she felt happy when they departed from her house, she got scared when they arrived at the house of the man’s family. She was afraid of the consequences she would face. Yet, even though Elli wanted to return to her parent’s home, it was not possible. She explained:

"On the way to his family’s house, I wanted to run from him and return to my parent’s house. However, he said that I couldn’t do that because I had already done *menik*. That’s the truth; I wanted to run away but I was already at his family’s house. It was too late" - Elli

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4 For more details on *menik*, see Bennet (2002), Cederoth (1981), and Ecklund (1977)
The young women believed that once they started to elope they could not stop the process. Even though *memrik* does not mean that they are legally married, it indicates their consent for the marriage to go ahead. Thus, it was not possible to cancel it while in the process. They were also aware of the consequences. If the elopement did not result in an official marriage, it would damage their reputation and would bring shame on their family as well.

"There were some cases where women returned from the elopement. Then people said bad things about her, that even though she had done *memrik*, she had eloped, but she returned. They said that she must be a bad woman. They would think that when she was taken and started the *memrik*, maybe they [the man's family] realised that she was a bad girl. All of the bad things would be revealed. That's why probably they returned her to her parents' house. That's why it would be very embarrassing if I did that" - Elli

When the man and the young woman arrive at his family's place (usually his uncle), the woman hid there until the marriage happens. Since the family of the man provide a place for the woman to hide from her family, she is under their protection until the day of the marriage. Therefore, they must be willing to defend the woman they protect.

"Once the elopement occurs, the man's family would defend it very much. On the way, I actually wanted to return to my family but they didn't allow me to do so. They didn't let me. Well, of course it would be humiliating for them. It's ridiculous for a woman who has agreed to elope to withdraw. 'You are unethical!' he told me" - Elli

"Oh, I did not want to [interrupt the elopement] because I had already been given to his family. I was under their supervision. It was a strict one and I had a watchman. That's why I could not run away" - Erna

Once the woman's family finds out about the elopement, it is impossible for them to interrupt the elopement because it would only cause a lot of trouble between the two families. In many occasions, the notion of 'war' is used to describe when this trouble arose between two families.

**Dilamar (With Proposal)**

According to Heni, the number of marriages through *memrik* in the dusun Blumbang, where she lived, had increased. Contrarily, Ida and Murni thought that *dilamar* was more preferred. Ida consciously chose this type of marriage. For her it was the most preferable marriage option because her parents supported her marriage and she did not want to go through a long process to get married. She thought that *memrik* would take a longer time and thus she preferred *dilamar* as she thought it was more practical for her.

"Yes, he proposed to me on that day. The following day, we got married. It didn't take a long time because my parents had already given their blessings for my marriage. Not like the others who preferred the *memrik*. From my point of view, *memrik* is quite a long process and thus
takes more time. With a proposal, my family and him directly discussed the wedding, the date, the cost, and in a short time, we were married." - Ida

**Familial Involvement**

In general, the young women had some autonomy to choose their spouses. However, for both *mawrik* or *dilamar* marriage, the family and especially the father, have to be involved.

In *mawrik*, the involvement of the family of a woman begins when the family receives the letter announcing the elopement (*sejati sddhar*). They have to decide on the amount of money they will ask from the groom’s family for the cost of eloping with their daughter. The women interviewed did not mention the amount of the money paid, but a senior villager said that it depends on the social class of the bride’s family; whether they are a rich family, from a noble family, and whether they like the groom or not. When the family receive the letter, they have to legalize the marriage within at least three days after the elopement. It brings shame to the family and for the girl if the elopement does not end up in marriage. As Elli mentioned:

“They could not do anything to stop us, because it had already occurred. That’s why they can only just accept it. Because once it occurs, it will bring shame to the family if they try to ask their daughter to return” - Elli

For *dilamar* marriages, the family’s involvement is greater than with *mawrik* marriages. The man comes to the girl’s parents to ask their permission to marry their daughter. If the parents agree to the marriage, the father decides on the amount of money the groom or his family has to pay for the bride price. Heni said it was important to involve the bride’s father in the marriage process, especially in the case of a first marriage. According to her, her husband and his family did not discuss the bride price with her father but they asked her. As a result, the amount of money they gave her for the bride price was too small. In general, it was supposed to be from 25,000 to 500,000 Rupiah, but they only gave her 10,000 Rupiah. Furthermore, asking the bride to decide on the amount for the bride price is humiliating for the family and the small amount of bride price make the humiliation worse.

“The [girl’s] father is the one who decides the amount of the bride price, that is the custom here. However, in my case, they asked me and I don’t know why. That’s why my family was so angry. For example, my brother was so angry that he wanted to throw the loudspeaker [on the wedding day] because they did not ask my father beforehand regarding the bride price. People consider that as arrogant because in the case that it’s the first marriage for the bride, the groom’s family has to ask the bride’s father first for the bride price, not ask the bride herself” - Heni

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6 This is equal to 3 to 61 Euro. When this study was conducted the rate for 1 Euro was Rp.8200
Despite the ideal of custom, the informants did not say much about their father's involvement in the marriage process, except in the case of Heni where the father's role in the marriage process was clearly described. In the other marriages, the mother was the one who was involved in the marriage. Ida, Yuni and Erna's mothers were involved because their mothers were divorced from their fathers. Elli's father died when she was in elementary school.

From the young women's stories, it seemed that their family had little involvement in their spousal selection. When their parents did not agree with their selection, they preferred to elope (mawrik) so they could still get married.

**Reasons for Marriage**

Every informant had her own way of perceiving how the decision was made for her to marry. There were notable differences in the reasons for marriage given by the informants. The young women in this study revealed that they had never intended to marry young. The fact that they eventually decided to get married indicated that something changed their minds or that they were in a position where there was no other choice than marriage.

**Economic Security**

The greatest motivation to marry before the age of 18 was economic survival. Due to economic hardship, all the informants were unable to continue their education to the level that they had expected or wanted to. It was only Erna who said that she was not interested in continuing her education and preferred to work as jagger, which she started since she was six years old. For the others, after dropping out from school, it was impossible to work to earn a living or to support their families. Most of them had to work in the fields. When they became concerned about the hardships they were facing, it was impossible for them to continue their studies. By marrying, the young women hoped to gain economic security from their husbands.

"I had to drop out of school, because we could not afford it. I didn't have any relatives so I decided to marry him, my husband" - Ida

"I thought that if my mother had to continue supporting me, she wouldn't have enough money to do so. This was my concern. My father had already passed away and then my mother remarried with a farmer. I thought, well, it's better to accept his proposal of marriage. I couldn't afford to continue my education anyway" - Elli
Responsibility as a Good Daughter

"My mother was alone because she was a widow. My father was a headmaster of an elementary school and then he died. What could she have from a pension? That was the only income she had. I felt sorry for her" - Elli

Elli mentioned that her reason for marrying was that she felt concerned about her mother's economic situation. According to her, her mother did not have enough income to support their family. As a good daughter, she did not want to be a burden for her mother and perceived marriage as solution.

As I mentioned in chapter three, there is a gender-division of labour in the household in Perigi. Women ideally are in charge of domestic work and the man is responsible for financially supporting the household. A daughter helps her mother with the household work, and can even take over this responsibility.

Elli and Ida did not have any support from their fathers. Their mothers were both responsible for the household and providing their needs. Ida's mother got sick when she was in high school. Aside from the money problems, as a good daughter, she felt that she had to take over her mother's role in the household. In the end, she dropped out of school. However, there was no financial support for the household or for the hospital bills. The man at that time was not yet her husband gave financial assistance to her and her mother. In the end, she decided to marry him.

"I was still in high school at that time. Suddenly my mother got critically ill. No one could help us cook, do the laundry, and other household work. Then my mother said to me: 'you'd better stop school because nobody can take care of all these things.' I didn't have any relatives so I decided to marry him, my husband. Yes, I had to make the decision. My mother actually wanted me to continue my education but because of her critical condition, she let me get married. My husband was the one who paid all the hospital bills when my mother was sick. Besides that, he also financially supported other things. My mother was hospitalised twice and both times my husband took care of the payments" - Ida

Arranged Marriage versus Marriage for Love

None of the informants felt any pressure from their family as to whom they should marry. Ida, Yuni, and Erna clearly stated that they married their loved ones. They perceived their love for their future spouses as one of the reason they wanted to get married.

"I wanted it. It was my choice" - Yuni

"They asked me to but I wanted it as well" - Mumi
Although Mumi’s parents initiated the idea of marriage and arranged the marriage for her, she finally agreed with her parents. She also wanted to marry her future husband. She had never spoken to or dated the man before their marriage. Yet, her parents’ suggestion made her think about her feelings towards the man and she then agreed to marry him.

“At first I did not like the idea. However, after my mother talked to me, I realised that I also had feelings for him and gave in to the idea. I finally agreed to marry him. Then I realised that he was actually a good person, not as bad as I had thought he was. Even though I had never dated him, I suddenly felt very happy at the wedding” - Mumi

**Fear of Damaged Reputation and Shame on the Family’s Honour**

Some informants were aware of their responsibility to keep a good reputation. It was as a reflection of their family’s honour, and was also in accordance with other people’s expectations of women.

“He [the ex-husband] said, ‘What you can do is very restricted.’ You know, this is a village. If we make a mistake, even only a small one, they would think that we have had premarital sex or a sin” - Elli

As a single woman, Elli realised that being accused of engaging in pre-marital sex was a risk if she acted in an unacceptable behaviour within the Perigi society. It would totally ruin her reputation and her family’s honour. For example, a girl in Perigi is not allowed to have a male visitor present at her house later than 9 pm. In relation to this norm, her parents warned her to be mindful of the family’s honour and to avoid gossip. If she had a man visiting her and people became aware of the situation, they would start gossiping. She would be accused of unacceptable behaviour and it would be suspected that she had lost her virginity and her sexual purity. Her reputation would be totally damaged. Only marriage can then save a young woman’s reputation and her family’s honour. This is what they call *keraii tengkap* or red-handed marriage.

According to Elli, being in that situation is a disgrace for a girl and her family, and she was aware of this risk.

“It is very bad [*keraii tengkap*]. That’s why I was afraid. It’s better to marry him than to have them ‘catch’ me [to marry]. Well, it’s very difficult as a woman. I told him that if he was really willing to be responsible for my life, in all aspects, and to take care of my life, then it’s OK. It’s better than being caught. He refused to go home when I asked him to, anyway. Therefore I married him” - Elli
Elli also complained about her difficult position as a woman in this village. When a man was attracted to her, he started to pursue her by visiting her at her house almost every evening. When it was almost 9 pm, she would try to ask him to leave but he always refused to do so. Being aware of the risk of a damaged reputation, Elli decided to rent a room near her school and stayed there. However, the man would still keep visiting her at her new place ignoring the prescribed visiting hours. Elli was ashamed as other students lived in the same house. She then decided to return to her parents’ house in Perigi. When the man kept on pursuing her, she realised that people might accuse her of engaging in premarital sex. On the other hand, as a woman, it is impolite to drive a man away from the house. Thus for her, marrying the man was the only solution. One other informant gave the same reason. For Elli, people’s notion about what a woman was like in Perigi, influenced her decision to elope.

“From what they had told me before, I imagined how difficult my life as a woman could be. I was convinced [by what they have told her] and was afraid [because of that]. As a result, I eloped [married] with him” - Elli

**Love Magic**

Like other ethnic groups in Indonesia, Sasak people in Perigi strongly believe in the existence of supernatural powers. In many cases, they related phenomena or situations with magical or supernatural happenings, especially when they seem unexplainable. Heni thought she was under the influence of *sanggar* or ‘love magic’ from a spell her husband had cast on her.

Heni first met her husband when he went to Heni’s parents house to watch a VCD her family had rented. She was still in Junior High school at that time. After that, he started visiting her at her house. Even though she did not have any romantic feelings for him, Heni did not mind accompanying him because she did not want people to accuse her of not being polite to him. However, her politeness was misinterpreted. The man thought that Heni had romantic feelings for him and he asked Heni to marry him. Even though Heni rejected his proposal, eventually she accepted it and married him.

What Heni still could not fully understand, was how and when she agreed to marry him. A few days after being married, Heni really regretted her marriage. The romantic feelings for her husband, which she strongly felt during the marriage process, and her happiness disappeared after three or four days. Her happiness with being married was only temporary. She asked herself the reason, but has never come to understand how she made that decision.
Some people in her desun suggested that there had been the involvement of senji in her marriage. Even though she was not sure, she thought that it was the only reasonable explanation for what had happened to her.

"People said that its because my marriage is not based on my own will. They call it Senji, a 'love magic' spell cast on a woman to make her fall in love with the man. They said that he [the husband] used 'love magic' on me" - Heni

Heni was not the only one who thought to have had a spell cast on her with senji. She mentioned that her sister, and some other women in her desun, had also had a similar experience. Usually, the man applies oil to any part of the body of the woman he wants to cast a spell on. Within three days and three nights after the oil application, the woman changes her mind towards the man and will do anything he asks her to do. If the man does not ask her to marry him, then the woman will ask him to marry her. Sometimes after being married for only several weeks, the woman is free from the spell and realises what has happened to her. After that, she will ask the husband for a divorce or run away with her previous lover.

Nevertheless, the people in Heni's desun tolerate the act of senji. They say that because the man is so much in love, it is reasonable for him to do it. Despite the fact that the woman is the victim of the act, according to Heni, when the woman asks her husband for a divorce, people blame the woman and the result is a bad name for her and her family.'

"In this desun, people will support the man who conducted that [love magic]. It only will bring a bad name to the reputation of the woman's family. I don't know why. Maybe because they think it is normal for a man to do that. Well, that is the reason. They said, its normal for him [to spell magic love] for being too much in love" - Heni

**The Perceived Marriage Decision-making Process**

Hull (1994) argues that the changes in the institution of marriage from traditional practices, where parents were involved, to more modern forms (couples finding and courting their partner of choice) have contributed to an increase in the marital age (in Muhidin 2002:33). Looking at the women's stories, this argument is not entirely valid when applied to early marriage in Perigi. Even though the informants generally perceived their marriages as their own decisions and believed that they chose their own spouses, it did not prevent them from marrying the first man who wooed them before they turned 18 years old. In her ethnography of a Sasak village, Grace (1996) also found that young Sasak women and men who live in rural areas usually marry the
first person they fall in love with (cited in Bennet 2002). Furthermore, one contact person
anecdotally mentioned that the age at the first marriage in Perigi has not changed significantly
over the years, but his statement cannot be supported by statistical data.

The analogy of a game can be used to describe the process of marriage in Perigi, with courtship
as the arena or the field of the game. Just like players in a sports game, women and men who
wish to be involved in the game, have to meet some requirements before entering the game.
They also have to play the game according to a set of rules. The community acts as the referee
who decides whether the players play the game in accordance to the rules or not. Any player
who engages in any forbidden act will have to deal with the consequences, such as being
excluded from the game or having to face certain punishments from the referee.

The Rules of the Game

In a broader context, the rules of the game are the social and cultural order with accepted norms
and values in the community. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the rules in the Perigi
context are constructed differently depending on the sex of the player. Like other Muslim
societies, a key value for the people in Perigi is nama baik (honour). All adults have the
responsibility to maintain their nama baik, as an individual, family or community member. In this
respect, the ideology of control is used to sustain one’s nama baik. However, the ideology of
control, the means that maintains nama baik, is different for men and women.

A man in Perigi is expected to be good mannered and mature. His honour depends on his
responsibility for his family and his ability to protect other family members: the women and
children. Tapper (1991:123) argues in her research about marriage among one ethnic group in
Afghanistan, that there is a greater range for men to define their interests as responsible and
honourable than there is for women to do so. A man’s honour relates to his activities in the
public domain. The people expect him to be actively involved in the community and to exert
control over other members of the society. Similarly, a man in Perigi is not measured by a moral
framework, which uses a dichotomy of good and bad, but mainly on his activity and capability to
control resources and other society members and for him to demonstrate his responsibility in
maintaining his or his family’s nama baik.

7 Bennett (2002) used the same analogy in her dissertation when discussing issues of courtship in Mataram, the provincial city
of West Nusa Tenggara.
A woman, on the other hand, is the symbol of the family’s honour, to be protected and controlled. Different from men, the control over women in Perigi lies within the framework of a relatively fixed moral framework that tends to use white and black dichotomies: ‘good’ woman versus ‘bad’ woman. As Jennaway (2002) argues, cultural notions of female ‘purity’ continue to be one of the most important mechanisms to control women’s behaviour. The girl’s reputation is seen as a symbol of her quality as a person and as representative of her family’s name-brick. A mechanism to control her behaviour is also set up to assure that she will behave appropriately according to local expectations. Tapper (1991:213) says that good and responsible women are those who passively accept their roles defined in terms of their dependence on men. Following this argument, the same values are found among people in Perigi: a masculine man is the one who actively controls and a feminine woman is passively controlled.

This passivity is reflected in the notion that ideal, good and feminine women in Perigi are those who are sopan (polite) and salehama (being simple and not too expressive), as a form of humble and modest behaviour. She is thought to conceal her affection. She has to behave well so that she is not regarded as gezi (flirtatious), and at the same time has to be carefully polite and hospitable to avoid being considered as rude. Expectations of modesty for a good woman are applied to the way she speaks, to her appearance, and to her behaviour in general that reflect her femininity. Thus, similar to what Bennett (2002) puts forth, “moderation and self-control are the core considerations in the definition of normative femininity.” In this passive ideology, female desire is a danger and passionless ness is the price women have to pay for their ‘admission to moral equality’ with man (Jennaway 2002:76). Modest clothes are a representation of appropriate salehama behaviour. Women’s attitudes are highly valued, and her outfits are indicative of her attitudes, behaviours and social class. As Manderson and Liamputtong (2002:9) argue, representations of the body suggest that these codes of appearance are mainly applied to females and more important for women than for men.

In Perigi, a good reputation is a crucial determinant of a girl’s future marriage. Her performance and attitude in the public sphere is crucial to maintain her reputation. Bennett (2002) states that, “A woman’s public behaviour is categorically more important in sustaining a good reputation.” For a woman to be eligible for a marriage in Perigi, she must behave as a good woman according to culturally accepted performances and behavioural norms. The loss of a woman’s reputation because of her loss of virginity highly damages her marriage prospects. Unacceptable
behaviour jeopardize a girl's marriage prospects, and places at risk the family and community's honour (Manderson & Liamputtong 2002:12).

The young women's stories reflect how deeply they internalize these principles. It has a tremendous influence on how they are thought of and how they think about themselves and other people. For them, their good reputation is the most crucial aspect and depends on public perceptions. They are aware of the impact for them and their family if they do not comply with these values and norms. Noteworthy is that the informants perceive themselves as the only actors who have the responsibility for maintaining their honour and therefore rely solely on themselves to maintain their reputations and their family's honour. This is in line with Bennett's statement that, "it is women themselves who pay the greatest role in protecting their reputations by conforming with, or performing, the multitude of social expectations that constitute reputable behaviour" (Bennett 2002:55). From the informants' perspectives, maintaining namu baik (honour) merely means keeping control over themselves as a woman. There is a noticeable lack of help from other family members for the young women in this regard. The father and the brother who are responsible to watch over and protect the young women, whether her attitude is appropriate or not, also stress that this burden belongs to her. Unacceptable behaviour not only jeopardizes a girl's marriage prospects, but also places her family and community's honour at risk (Manderson & Liamputtong 2002:12).

In Perigi, just as there is a perception of the ideal good woman; there is also a perception of the ideal good daughter. Bennett (2002) argues that the ideals of femininity comprise popular representations of single women as faithful, obedient and beloved daughters. A good daughter has to obey her parents and take care of them. When there is possible damage to her family's honour, she should feel obliged to try to protect this honour by being well behaved. The same principle applies when economic hardship strikes a family. Some of the young women feel obliged to sacrifice themselves to marriage to improve the economic well-being of their family. An insistence on personal ambitions, such as continuing an education, in this context is considered an irresponsible attitude for a daughter. Thus, marriage is seen as something that can release her parents from an economic burden.

**Midang: the Arena of the Game**

Goode (1970) states that mate selection process is similar to a bargaining process where each person brings different values into the process – love, physical attractiveness, ability to perform
tasks assigned within the society, and status or wealth (cited in Manderson and Lamputtong 2002:9). From the eyes of the young women, when a girl in Perigi starts puberty, she will immediately enter this bargaining process. Men will start to visit her and court her regardless of whether she wants to or not. The value she can offer as a desirable woman is her femininity.

According to Bennett (2002), courtship or midang happens for many reasons and has different meanings for women, but is mainly related to finding a marriage partner. LeMasters (1957) mentions that courtship is the process by which an individual moves from the single status of adolescence to the married status of adult. (Cited in Manderson & Lamputtong 2002:7). Thus, courtship has strong connotations with heterosexuality and marriage.

Bennett (2002) furthermore states that midang allows women considerable freedom to select between men, by using the strategy of “keep them guessing”. This is highly effective in encouraging the ongoing attention of a man, and eventually securing him in marriage. However, in the eyes of the young women, this kind of freedom cannot apply to them. While the majority of the women agreed on the purpose of midang as finding a spouse, others described their involvement as involuntarily. The meanings of midang for them are not only to find a marriage partner. In the context of Perigi, the informants construct the courtship by a distinction between a ‘serious’ midang, which is aimed at a marriage, and only with a good girl, and an ‘only for fun’ midang, is only with a bad girl.

Bennett (2002) also mentions that courtship involves many degrees of formality and rules, which are essential to protect female virginity, family honour, and to avoid undesirable marriages. In the eyes of the informant, courtship is a dilemmatic process. I suggest that courtship process in Perigi is influenced by notions of the passive female and active male, and perceive female desire as dangerous. As Jennaway (2002:83) has argued, female chastity – or the denial of women’s desire – is an important element of courtship. The imbalance of power between the passive woman and the active man puts men in almost complete control over the process and the results of the courtship. When a man is attracted to a girl or a woman, he will be able to actively insist on his desire to marry that girl, even when she is not interested in him, or the parents do not agree with their relationship. While young women have to carefully negotiate their passive position and desires in order to keep their good reputation, men in Perigi do not have to be concerned about theirs.
Despite strict public supervision of the female's public performance and behaviour, the informants described how some men took advantage of the situation by trespassing on the rules of courtship in Perigi. Some women indicated their helplessness when the man kept visiting them, even though they refused to be visited or had already asked him to leave their houses before a certain acceptable time during courtship. Women were conscious of the potential damage to their reputations and to the honour of their families. However, they were expected to be polite and hospitable, and not be rude, in order to keep their marriageable status. These ambivalent demands put many women in Perigi in difficult situations, especially the young ones. Due to their youth, the young women were not sufficiently experienced to have developed strategies to deal with this situation, and to negotiate their positions. It appears that for some men, a courtship is a powerful means to 'secure' their 'ownership' of the girl they want to marry.

Age differences between the young women and their husband, which often are big, placed these women in an inferior position. It was even harder for them to negotiate their anxiety about the possibility of having a damaged reputation because of the men's behaviour towards them. As in many other places in Indonesia, women are not in a position to make suggestions to an older person, especially to a man, about what he can do and what he cannot do.

This gendered imbalance of power is also apparent in the case of love magic or sejigger. In this respect, the man who conducts sejigger is someone who actively exercises his desire over a passive woman. Thus, his actions are perceived as 'normal' by the people in Perigi, and do not necessarily mean that the man is violating the norms. On the contrary, it symbolizes masculinity. The women on the other hand, must passively accept the circumstances. The effort to protest or resist their 'normative' passive position, like in the case of Heni, is a resistance against the norms and is perceived as unfeminine. Consequently, it is negatively stigmatizing and can possibly ruin her reputation as a good woman.

Marriage for Love versus Arranged Married: The Family's Involvement

According to Goode (1954, cited in Fox 1975:181), where extended family is the norm, love is seen as a threat, and thus has to be controlled because a love bond can loosen the individual's commitment to the family, by replacing it with a commitment to a spouse. Furthermore, because the mate selection is significant to the entire extended family, a marriage decision should not be left to the children themselves. In this regard, we would expect to find love matches to be problematic and arranged marriages as the socially approved method of mate selection (ibid).
Yet, the women's stories are not entirely in line with this argument. Even though the Perigi society has an extended family system, the young women mentioned that at a certain level, they had their autonomy in deciding about the marriage and selecting their future husband, even though this was not a totally autonomous decision. They perceived their spouse as their own choice based on their romantic feelings towards him.

The informants did not find that their love-based spousal selection and their family's interests to be in contradiction. In Murni's case, she needed her family as the mediator between herself and the man, both to make her realise her desires towards him and to 'open the gate' of communication for the couple. The way informants assessed their future husbands in general was in line with how an extended family would assess the future husband as a family member, such as the man's ability to protect the girl, including the family. As a good daughter, girls selected their spouses not just for their own sake but also for their family's sake.

In a patriarchal society, the father is the head and is responsible for the well-being of the family members, especially the women. Bride price is a symbol of the exchange system in a marriage between two families and thus has to be discussed between the heads of the families. When this notion is transgressed, it is a provocative act against the family's honour. Just like in Heni's case when bride price was paid without prior discussions with her father.

However, the idealized father's involvement in the women's marriages in reality did not happen among the majority of the informants. The mothers were the ones who were involved. This was perhaps related to the lack of their father's involvement in their lives more generally. Parental divorce was one reason mentioned by the women for their father's absence in their lives. As Perigi is one of the places in East Lombok with a high rate of divorce, the lack of a father's involvement in one's life was common.

There are layers of control over a woman in Perigi to assure that her attitude and behaviour will be in accordance with the local expectations. On the other hand, the same powerful control mechanism apparently does not exist for the male. A man will not have a severely damaged reputation if he does not execute his male roles. As a result, many women in Perigi in reality have to 'take over' the male roles: as the financial provider for the family, as the protector of their daughter's and the family's honour, and also arranging her daughter's marriage. However, at the same time, she still has to behave as a passive woman.
The women’s autonomy to a certain degree is seen in spousal selection during *merik*. When parents do not agree with a marriage, then *merik*, eloping with the girl, is taken for granted. In the informants’ eyes, *merik* can be used to practice their right to be married and to choose their own spouse. According to Bennett (2002: 48), “the act of *merik* itself does not constitute a socially, religiously or legally recognised marriage, and may or may not result in such union. For individuals, *merik* functions as a statement of intent or desire to marry, and is therefore a practice situated at the boundaries of premarital relationships.” In this case, it is very difficult for the women’s family to interrupt *merik* because of the potential for stigma to be attached to the women and their family if this occurs.

**Conclusions**

Each informant had her own reasons for marrying early. However, they generally described five main reasons: economic security, responsibility as good daughter, arranged marriage, fear of damaged reputation, and ‘love magic’. Many indications from their stories pointed to two major factors which led to the marriage: economic hardship and gender issues, which at the end put them in a position with lack of choices and control over their lives.

The informants realised their limited life choices. Poverty and the female gender values and norms in Perigi made them economically, socially and psychologically dependent on men. The lack of material security and other socially respectable alternatives to marriage for women in Perigi means a lack of real choice. Marriage was understood by the young women as the only choice in their life that they could exercise. The women valued marriage as guarantor, even though briefly, of economic security and social respectability.

The assumption among public health program managers, decision maker, and advocates who are against early marriage is that information and formal education will give women more choices and thus empower them to control their lives. The girls in general agreed about the importance of education as empowering and giving them more choices. In fact, their desire to continue their education made them prefer not to marry early. Yet, at the same time, they indicated that knowledge and formal education were not enough; it could not give them authority to control and decide for themselves. From their perspectives, the woman’s decision to marry can be seen as a strategy to negotiate a position and role in the community, to protect her reputation as a good woman, and to avoid the social risk associated with a damaged
reputation. Here we can see the power of social control of women in Perigi in relation to marriage decisions.

The results of this study demonstrate that the decision-making process does not merely rest on a simple, single reason. It is a complicated process, which cannot be isolated from the wider social and cultural context in which women live. The gender norms and values and other complex factors such as economic issues, exert influence in the decision-making process of the marriage. The young women's decision to marry may not be the expression of an active desire but a response to a situation over which they have little control. The decision to get married is made based on their own calculation of gains and losses they will receive from the marriage.
Despite the commonly held public health notion that early marriage contributes to health problems for young women, the young women in this study experienced some positive aspects to early marriage. Thus, this chapter will present and discuss the young women’s perception of the impact of their marriage to include both positive and negative consequences. It will also describe and discuss the way the informants see their new role in society after marriage.

Overall, the economic concerns dominated the girls’ stories. One informant said that her marriage did not have a single positive consequence at all. The others listed some positive impacts such as:

- The marriage brought happiness to their lives;
- Through marriage she could basically survive because there was someone who would take good care of her and depended on;
- Through marriage there was someone who could provide for herself and her parents so that she would not have to work in the field; and
- Through marriage, she felt happy and relieved because she would have ‘legitimate’ sex with her husband.

The Perceived Negative Impacts

*Freedom and Responsibility*

In general, informants mentioned that compared to their lives as single adolescents, their marriages entailed more responsibility. Less freedom was the major change they experienced.
They said that having less freedom and being more responsible changed their way of thinking. In the end, marriage made them more mature.

"Before I got married I could go anywhere I wanted. Now, I'm not as free as I was before. That's why I told my friends not to get married too soon. ‘It is not as good as we thought it would be. We won't be as free as we were before,’ I said to my friends. When we are married we cannot go anywhere without our husband's permission, not even to a friend's house. That's why, from my point of view, I was happier before I got married" - Heni

"Well, it's responsibility. When we were still single, we didn't have any responsibilities. Now that we are married, we have children and a husband who are our responsibilities. We have the responsibility to dedicate ourselves to them in every aspect. When we were still single, we did not have any other responsibilities, only to our parents. We only had to respect our parents. However, when we have a husband and children, we have other responsibilities. When we want to do something, we also have to consider them. Well, it changes the way we think, it makes us more mature" - Elli

Ida added that the household jobs were burdensome and decreased her freedom.

"Before the marriage, I did not have to think hard. I took everything easily and I was so relaxed. All I needed to do at that time were going to the school and studying. My mother did not push me to do the household works because I was still a student. After getting married, then we know what it is like to be a housewife: the household work. Especially me, because I don't have someone to help me. My life after getting married is very hard for me. It's not like when we were still single, when we can just relax" - Ida

Divorce

Almost all of the informants were concerned about the possibility of being divorced. Some of them, such as Elli and Yuni, expressed their worries about their future before they got married. The others preferred to be circumspect but were nevertheless concerned about the impending marriage.

"I told him about that [her worry to be a divorcee]. ‘I don't want to marry [marry by elopement], I said. I don't want to get married. Don't you know that I'm afraid of becoming a divorcee?’ I said. It's true, I was afraid of becoming a divorcee. I thought I could do the maron and build my own family. Even though I marry at this young age, I was sure I would be able to do it, to manage my household" - Elli

"I said to him [the husband], ‘I won't marry you if you are the kind of man who easily gets married and divorced’" - Yuni

This anxiety was expected as the number of divorces and re-marriages in Perigi was very high. For Mumi and Elli, the fear of a divorce was related to the number of their friends who were divorced and the struggles they would face after the divorce, such as stigma attached to a divorcee in Perigi.
Watching my friends who were divorced and re-married many times scared me. I was thinking of what kind of life it could be after we are being divorced by our husbands. Well, if you are divorced you have to go back to your parents” - Mumi

“In my eyes, being a divorcee or a widow was like being in a middle of a street which has valleys on both sides and a tiger on the front. That was my fear of becoming a widow. It seemed as though a widow has no freedom. That’s my fear. Because people here think that as a widow, there must be something wrong with me. Just like that Nuraini [the first wife of Elli’s ex-husband], she is too wild. They think that it must be very easy to ask me to go out and that it must be very easy to flatter me” - Elli

However, their faith in their husbands was stronger than their concerns about divorce. They believed in their husbands and thus they hoped that they would not have to go through the experience of divorce.

“I am indeed afraid about that [divorce]. Is it possible that I will have to experience it? I think he won’t do that [divorce], because he knows me and I know him, too” - Mumi

According to Ida, a divorce usually happens when the husband has another woman.

“There are different causes. The main cause is because the husband has another woman. It will bring the couple in arguments and finally a divorce. That’s what always happens here” - Ida

According to a contact in Lekong Pulut, it is very common and easy for women in Perigi to be divorced. The husbands can divorce their wives without following court procedures; he simply verbally divorces his wife by literally saying that he divorces her. This form of verbal divorce is against the law, yet it happens a lot and is largely condoned by the community.

“That’s the custom here. It’s rare to find registered marriages. That’s why if the couple wants to get divorced, the woman does not get anything. They don’t go to the court to get a divorce, nor to the kades. Only when they get married [go to kades and the court] but when they are going to divorce, they just go to the parent [of the woman]. The man would say [to his parents-in-law]: ‘please accept your daughter back, we have just divorced.’ That’s the custom.” - contact person in Lekong Pulut

According to this contact person, adat or the custom of verbal divorce in Perigi was responsible for the high numbers of divorce in Perigi. Another contributing factor was that marriages in

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1 Based on the 1974 Marriage Law, divorce in Indonesia has to be carried out only before a Court of Law, after it has attempted to reconcile the couple. A husband who has married under the Islamic law may submit a letter to notify the religious court of his intention to divorce and giving his reasons. If his reasons accord with any of the six accepted reasons as mentioned in the Marriage Law and the court determines that reconciliation is not possible, the court will grant a session to witness the divorce. The grounds for a divorce include: adultery, any condition that is difficult to cure such as alcoholism or addictions to narcotics, abandonment for two years without any reason, abuse which is endangering life, etc. For the custody, the Marriage Law mentions that the father has the responsibility to financially support the children, unless he is unable to do so, in which case the Court may ask the mother to share the expenses (source: http://www.law.emory.edu/IRL/legal/indonesia.htm). In the reality, such as in Perigi, however, father’s financial support for the children is rarely implemented.
Perigi are generally not registered. The simple way of getting divorced might account for the high number of early marriages in Perigi, according to the contact person.

Others explained that young couples are more likely to get divorced. According to them, a very young couple has not established a complete degree of emotional maturity. An argument can easily lead this young couple to a divorce, usually in the verbal form. Even if they would soon regret what they had said or done, they would be too proud to admit their mistake. After the couple gets divorced, they would often marry again because the divorce took place without any clear and deep consideration. The number of re-marriages in Perigi is thus also high.

A divorce in Perigi can only be initiated by the husband. As illustrated by Heni’s story, a wife can ask the husband to divorce her but in the end, it depends on him. If he refuses to do so, there is nothing she can do. Yet, the adat states that in the case of domestic violence, a wife may initiate a divorce. However, it requires a prior agreement between the wife’s family and the husband when the first beating happens. As this agreement must state that a divorce will be enacted if the violence happens again, it means that the divorce initiated by the wife can only happen when the husband beats the wife a second time.

Furthermore, as a divorcée and especially being the one who initiates the divorce, a woman would be stigmatized by the people in her village. Heni said that she had never been in love with her husband, which was the reason for asking him for a divorce. Even though her husband refused to fulfil her request, she still insisted on it. She had to suffer.

"People in this village say that they think it’s because he hasn’t paid the bride price that I have to suffer like this. That’s how the people think about this problem. Actually, that’s not true. Even though he built a house in front of me, I wouldn’t accept it. I don’t want it, I told them. The main reason is that I don’t love him anymore, I said. I told everybody that I had never loved him. After that, his family here started to have a bad impression of me. If we met, they would ignore me, pretending that they had never knew me at all. There are also people who are nice only in front of me. On my back, they say bad things about me. They pretend to be nice to me. They are actually looking for information from me, the negative one. When they get it, they will spread the gossip about me" – Heni

Elli and Erna had already been divorced when the interviews were conducted. In both cases, the reason for their divorces was their husband’s affair with another woman. Domestic violence contributed to Erna’s divorce from her second husband. However, all divorces were initiated by the husband and were executed verbally, followed by the act of returning the informants to their parents’ house. In this regard, the informants viewed themselves as victims, as Elli used a proverb to describe her feeling of being used by the man: ‘Habis manis sepah dibuang’ or literally
translated ‘After the sweetness, the remains are thrown away’. In this context, this proverb indicates that the man had used the informant’s youth, physically (read: sexually) and emotionally, when they were married and then disposed of her when he found a new one.²

With the experience of being cheated by their former husbands, Elli and Ema said that they would not want to re-marry soon. Despite the attached stigma, they preferred to enjoy their lives as divorced women. In their eyes, after the divorce, they had more freedom and the most important thing for them was that nobody would hurt their feelings anymore.

“I am more happy now. I was trapped and I could not do anything before [while still in the marriage]. Well, it was because I was hurt and now nobody can hurt me. It’s better for me now. However, I don’t want to be like this for the whole of my life. I want someone to take care of me, so I won’t cause any problem for my parents anymore. Well, I don’t know yet, but I know for sure that I am better now than before. I was so skinny because I was stressed. I looked like a living dead body. I was so pale because I didn’t have enough sleep. I also had a baby. Now, I am not like that anymore. Maybe it is also because my daughter is big enough now” - Elli

In Heni’s case, despite the consequences she had to face, divorce was still better for her than being married to a man she did not love.

“Well, maybe my condition will be better than now if I divorce” – Heni

It made sense for her because she also described how stressed she was, living separately from her husband, whom she did not love, but was not divorced from either. On one hand, she felt that everybody pushed her to reconcile with him. On the other hand, she hated the man and was afraid to meet him, due to the ‘love magic’ he used upon her. She explained the impact her ‘forced’ marriage had on her mental state.

“My mental state is not like it used to be. Sometimes, when I was alone, I would laugh alone. I don’t know why, I was just laughing when I was alone. Then some people said [to the parents or the family]: ‘What has happened to her? Why don’t you cure her, try to find sawar [help from a traditional healer to cure the ‘magic love’] to calm her down? Otherwise, she would be crazy.’ I don’t know why, my mind is empty. That is the negative impact on me” - Heni

**Education**

Another issue raised by the informants was the impact of marriage on their pursuit of higher education. Three informants mentioned that marriage terminated a woman’s opportunity to continue her education. They believed that a young woman who marries at high school age

² This proverb can also be understood as an act where someone becomes nice to someone else only when he/she wants something from the person.
(between 16 and 18 years old) or younger, will not be able to manage her time between her family and school. The schools also prevent married students from continuing their education by applying a fine system for students who are getting married. They knew that once marriage happened, their schooling would be stopped.

"It is not possible for us to continue attending school when we are married. It's a different position. I mean it is impossible for us to continue attending school if we already have a family. The main problem is in the time management. It's more feasible [to get married while studying] for a university student because they are more independent, more mature in their way of thinking. Well, they are capable of managing their households. Not like us, who are still in high school, still childish and considered adolescents" - Ida

Social life

In general, the informants did not experience any changes in their social relationships with other people. Yet, there were certain behavioural changes that followed when they got married, such as the way they dressed and behaved in public.

"She [a married woman] should be well behaved. I mean her clothes. She has to be modest. She has to act in motherly way" - Ida

Aside from her marriage restricted her freedom, Heni described how her marriage affected her relationship with her friends. After getting married, she could not mingle with her friends as freely as before. Her eldest brother insisted on her being accompanied by one of her brothers when she wanted to go somewhere, especially in the evening, including to her friend's house. He also put pressure on her not to have any contact with her ex-boyfriend. As a result, many of Heni's friends were afraid that her eldest brother might accuse them of helping her to meet her ex-boyfriend. She missed the time with her friends and her school days.

"When I am alone, I only think about the moment when I was at my friend's house, then I imagine how nice it would be if I would still be at school." - Heni

Other informants also mentioned being less free to socialize with their friends. However, the majority of their friends were also already married, and thus the difference was not strongly felt.
Marriage and the Women's Well-being: Who are They Now - Young Women or Married Women?

According to Heni, she liked her life better before her marriage because at that time she had more freedom and her responsibility was only to her parents. By being married, her life was controlled by her husband, not by her parents. She did not love her husband and thought that he used 'love magic' on her. It was difficult for her to be dependent on him for everything, and at the same time be responsible for his well-being. However, despite her preference for her teenage life, she thought that she had to make efforts to take the role as a wife seriously.

"There are times when I try to behave appropriately. I try to control my attitude and be a little bit more mature. Even though it's not perfect, I try to behave like a wife should behave" - Heni

All informants preferred the role as wife, mother, and even divorcee rather than as adolescent or single young woman. By doing this, it was easier for them to present themselves as 'good' women. Although they liked being single more, in the end they were satisfied with their new roles as a wife, as a mother, or as a divorcee.

By getting married and having a son, Ida was not a teenager or non-adult anymore, but a woman. As a good woman, she had to be 'better' than before and she ceased to behave like a teenager, who spent her time playing around. Having a son was a part of that change and the child needed her attention. The notion of positive change was also mentioned by some other informants.

"I've changed a lot. My husband guides me to be a better person. Therefore, I should not behave like a teenager because I already have a son. My husband always reminds me to take good care of our son: his health and his food. Those are what I have always paid attention to. I'm not like a teenager who can play around. It would be better if I pay my attention to my son's health, his food, and his hygiene. I am not a teenager anymore" - Ida

Despite their youthfulness, the informants were aware of peoples' expectations regarding their attitudes and behaviour as married women. They thought that a good wife should behave in certain ways, for instance: she has to dress more conservatively and modestly than a single woman. This is the case in relation to both colour and style. She has to be accompanied by a female friend or her relative when she goes out, especially in the evenings. She has to be patient and obedient to her husband. She must not demonstrate her passion too much, especially in public. She has to be more mature; and she has to make her husband happy. These informants
mentioned that after getting married, they changed themselves in accordance with these expectations. One informant described a woman’s role in the Perigi society in the following way:

“They said that a woman only has a gentle heart, which is not suitable for working [outside the house to earn money]. It’s enough for her to just manage their home” - Elli

Among the young women, there are diverse perceptions about the impact of marriage on their life. Overall, three informants said that their marriage did not change their life in general while three others said that it changed them very much. Because marriage at the age of 15 or before was common in their village, they saw early marriage as something normal and thus they had never discussed marriage with their parents or friends nor had they thought about it before they were asked to, or before they decided to get married. As a result, when they planned to, or asked to be married, they did not consider the consequences of their marriage on their well-being, despite their awareness that at that time they were somewhat young to marry. Marriage had both negative and positive results. They especially talked about marriage as providing economic and social security.

I would suggest that the social and cultural construction of the ideal female gender role in Perigi shapes the informants’ perceptions on this issue. They seem to have internalized the notion of the passive female and active male in Perigi, with its gender roles and expectations. According to such view, the male is the breadwinner of the family and the wife manages the household. Such socially and culturally constructed ideals perceive women as unsuitable to work and earn money independently. Consequently, it makes women in Perigi economically dependent on their husbands. That is why almost all of the informants talked of how marriage provided protection for them. In his research in the timing of marriage in Java, Malhotra found the same notion of “the ideological and economic expectations of husbands and wives, especially in terms of a provider role for the man and a dependent, domestic role for the woman” (Malhotra 1997:448).

The participants’ perception of the negative impacts of early marriage was dominated by social rather than health concerns. Divorce was the main concern. The women mainly focused on the high number of divorces and re-marriages in Perigi, as well as the negative consequences of being a divorced woman in Perigi. Divorce was, and still is, a real concern.
Yet, the views on divorced women in Perigi were ambiguous. The notion of the passive female played a role on how the informants themselves perceived divorce. The ideology of female’s sexual ‘purity’ made that a divorced woman or a widow was viewed upon as someone who had lost her purity; someone who had been ‘used’. On one hand, the informants saw it as a position that carried some stigma. On the other hand, they mentioned that a widow or a divorcee was a high demand in the marriage market because of their ‘experience in sexual activity’. The informants stressed the imbalance of power between husbands and wives when only the man can initiate divorce. For them, a divorced life somehow was unimaginable and unbearable. Firstly, a divorced woman had to independently provide financial support for herself and her children. Secondly, she had to bear the social stigma of being a divorcee. In the end, remarriage was seen a means to restore social respectability and economic security.

Most of the informants also brought up the impact of marriage on education. Once a marriage happened, their schooling was sacrificed. The young women saw marriage as an important experiential stage in a woman’s life cycle. After teenage, they would eventually enter marriage and life as an adult woman even if they might remain a legal minor to their husband. There was no other life option. In their eyes, these two stages, being a teenager and subsequently being married, were different stages and thus could not be experienced at the same time. In this regard, the informants perceived being in school as similar to being a teenager. It was not compatible with an adult and married life. As argued by Malhotra (1997:438), being in school is seen in most societies as preparatory, a life course stage that precludes social adulthood and responsibility, thus directly conflicting with marriage.

In general, the informants also pointed to a lack of freedom and increased responsibilities as the changes they felt greatly after getting married. In their eyes, being married required a shift of roles: from a teenager to a woman, a wife who is mature and responsible for her husband and children. To become a woman meant to be a mother, to bear the responsibility of caring for the family and the children, of not playing around like a teenager. Being or feeling young and immature did not match with the marriage life.

Through marriage, young women acquired new roles as wives and daughters-in-law. Different things were expected from these roles. Consequently, they shifted their role from young single women to different ones: wives and mothers as well. This was why, according to the informants, their feeling of freedom and responsibility totally changed. For the informants,
shifting role from a single woman to a married one would mean less freedom and more responsibility.

Most of the young women felt that they were obliged to perform household tasks and take care of other family members. There were some cultural obligations imposed on a woman. When married, she had to adjust herself to this new role. This role was remarkably internalized by the informants, despite their youth, even though a few of them admitted that they preferred their role as an adolescent. However, they needed time to adjust to their new role. Thus, the presence of an experienced adult to assist the new adult women was important. In this sense, the mother and or the husband played an important role in assisting the young women.

From their stories, the way the informants perceived whether their marriages resulted in positive or negative consequences in their lives depended on the result of the marriage: whether the husband treated them well or not, or whether the marriage ended in divorce or not. After having unhappy marriages, some informants regretted their decision to marry. Others, because they were happily married, had a positive perception of their decision to do so.

Conclusions

For the girls, marriage could mean happiness, suffering, or both. It could have negative as well as positive results. Some of them thought that marriage did not change their life in general, while some others said that it changed their life very much. Overall, the way they perceived their marriages, whether it resulted in positive or negative consequences in their lives, depend on the result of the marriage itself; whether the husband treated them well or not, or whether the marriage ended in divorce or not. Even so, because they saw early marriage as normal, they had never discussed marriage with someone else nor had they thought about it before their marriage. They did not consider the consequences of their marriage on their well-being beforehand, even though they were aware at that time that they were somewhat young to marry.

The young women were aware that early marriage would economically and socially influence their present and future life. They especially talked about marriage as providing economic and social security. While the public health program manager, policy makers, and advocates against early marriage are more concerned about the impact of early marriage on health aspects, the young women’s perception of the negative impacts of early marriage was dominated by social
concerns, (such as: less freedom and more responsibility, divorce, and education discontinuity) rather than health concerns.

Through marriage, young women acquired new roles. They shifted their role from young single women to being wives, daughters-in laws and mothers. Different things were expected from those assumed roles, but for the informant those roles meant less freedom and more responsibility. There were some cultural obligations imposed on this new role and they had to make the necessary adjustments. Most of them felt that they were obliged to perform household tasks and to take care of other family members. However, they needed time to adjust themselves to their new role and needed assistance from an experienced adult.
Conclusions

There are different perceptions about the concept of ‘early’ marriage in the Perigi society. Some use age as an indicator, including legal minimum age, ideal age, and actual age. The minimum legal age comes from government legislation and the ideal age reflects the public health perspective, and the actual youthful age of marriage is related to local circumstances, gender expectations, financial needs and such. The local perceptions combine physical and social maturity to assess whether a girl is ready to marry or not. In contrast to the trend of using the minimum age to define early marriage, age is not very important as an indicator for the marriage ability of a girl in Perigi.

For the young women, the decision to marry is complex. It is a complicated process and cannot be isolated from the wider social and cultural context under which the women live. Most of the women interviewed never intended to marry early. The fact that they did marry young was influenced by various issues. Two major factors that influenced their decision to marry were economic hardship and gendered expectations and practices. In the end, they did not have much choices or control. Poverty and gender values and norms related to women’s roles in Perigi put them economically, socially and psychologically in a dependent position in relation to men. The informants realised their limited life choices. They understood marriage as the only choice in their future life that they could make to gain access to economic security and social respectability.

The informants’ decision to marry might not be the expression of an active desire, but a response to a situation over which they had little control. Yet, it was made based on their own calculation of advantages and disadvantages they would receive from the marriage. The decisions to marry made by the women can be seen as a strategy to negotiate their positions and roles in their communities, to protect their reputations as good women, and to avoid the
social risk associated with a damaged reputation. Here we can see the power of social control of women in Perigi in relation to marriage decisions.

The young women had their own way to perceive the effects of early marriage on their well-being—different from the public health perspective. While public health program managers, policy makers, and other advocates against early marriage are more concerned with the negative impact of early marriage on health aspects, marriage for the young women could mean happiness or suffering, or both. From experience, the young women were aware that early marriage had economic and social dimensions that would influence their present and future life. In general, they talked about economic and social security as the positive aspects they gained from their marriage. Meanwhile, their perception of the negative impacts of their marriage was dominated by concern for social issues such as less freedom and more responsibility, divorce, and education discontinuity, rather than health issues. Moreover, the way they perceived their marriage depended on the outcome of the marriage itself; whether the husband treated them well or not, or whether the marriage ended in divorce or not.

Most of the young women considered themselves as very young when they got married. Even so, because they viewed early marriage as normal, they never discussed marriage with someone else nor had they thought about it before their marriage. Consequently, they did not beforehand consider the negative consequences of their marriage on their well-being.

In the eyes of the young women, through marriage, a young woman assumed new roles as a wife, a daughter-in-law, and or a mother. It required an abrupt shift of female roles: from a teenager to a woman. For them, to become a woman meant to be a mother, a responsibility to take care of the family and the children, not playing around like a teenager. It meant less freedom and more responsibility. Being or feeling young and immature could not be combined with this new role because it would give them difficulties to perform their new role.

There are social and cultural obligations imposed by this new role. Most of them believed that besides the obligation to take care of the household and take care of other family members, as a good wife and/or a good mother, they are expected to behave in certain ways. Her attitude and behaviour had to be executed in acceptable manners. To be culturally and socially accepted in society, it was easier and more convenient for them to adjust themselves to their obligation as married women. However, they revealed that they needed time to do it and assistance from an experienced adult.
Recommendations

These recommendations are aimed to all parties that are concerned about and dealing with issues of early marriage to include policy makers in government institutions, public health program managers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and researchers who are interested in the issues of early marriage and adolescent.

First of all, it has always been cited that the main goal of any early marriage program is to help the young women and therefore there is a need to listen to their voice and to understand their point of view. Any program on early marriage must be built on this understanding. By doing so, we can develop more effective programs, which are more understandable and acceptable to those who experience early marriage. For example, program managers and implementers should recognize that, as this study indicates, the young women have different perceptions when looking at the concept of early marriage. At this juncture, there is a need to deconstruct our definition in order to be more culturally conscious by taking into account the specific concept of early marriage.

The government and NGOs mainly emphasize early marriage as a problem and put an effort in preventing girls from marrying early. The young women, on the other hand, see their marriage in a more neutral way as something that will not only give them negative outcomes but also positive ones. With my public health background, I am still convinced that early marriage has many negative effects on young women's health and other aspects. However, I am also proposing that program planners, both from the government and NGOs, should be more aware of this opposite way of thinking. These girls have their own reasons for thinking and acting that way. Awareness in this case is not only needed for the girls but also for the policy makers and the NGOs. It does not necessarily suggest that we have to sacrifice the main objective to decrease the number of early marriages but as program managers and implementers, we have to be conscious not to assume that everybody has the same perception and opinion as ours. If we start a program based on concepts that are different from the perceptions of our target-group, I believe that it will not be accepted and will therefore be ineffective.

1 Besides being an anthropologist, I also have a public health background. Thus, I prefer to use ‘we’ and ‘our’ instead of ‘they’ and ‘their’ when referring to public health advocates to refer myself as well.
Furthermore, early marriage prevention programs in general concentrate on the issues of health and fertility. Since this study also suggests that the girls' concerns are dominated by social issues, early marriage prevention programs should equally emphasize social consequences that are more real and familiar to the young women. By doing this, the goal in delaying marriage for a girl may be achieved more effectively.

This study shows that early marriage is surrounded by complicated phenomenon. It is mostly related to economic hardship and gender issues. The assumption among public health program managers, policy makers, and other advocates against early marriage is that information and formal education will give women more choices besides marriage, and thus empower them to make informed decisions. The girls in general agree about the importance of education as empowering and giving them more choices. They also believe the value of education in increasing women's status and preventing early marriage. These young women have positive attitudes towards education and that should be encouraged and promoted. Yet, at the same time, knowledge and formal education are not enough; it cannot give them authority to control their lives and decide for themselves. As a result, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, they marry early. Thus, I would recommend that while promoting education for girls should be encouraged, this approach must also be supported by other approaches. It is also important for the policy makers and NGOs to help to remove the many layers of control over the girls and make an effort in dealing with gender issues. For example, we have to deconstruct the beliefs on masculinity and femininity that contribute to the number of early marriages in Perigi, or deconstruct the concept of gender roles in Perigi that sees marriage as the only choice for a girl in her life.

This study demonstrates that the marriage decision-making process cannot be attributed to a single actor. However, this study also revealed that the man is the one who has great influence in the process, greater than the girls and her parents. The program on early marriage therefore must not be aimed only at increasing awareness among the girls or the parents but will also have to confront the male attitudes and behaviours that are damaging to these girls. Such programs can and certainly will strengthen girls as individuals and the same time can be used to change the male's attitudes and behaviour in relation to early marriage.

In line with this issue, I would recommend research that focuses on the males' emic perspectives of early marriage. At the end, both perspectives, female and male, will offer very important
insight and information to find the solution to the issue and will thus help to create an effective and efficient program on early marriage.

Last, but not least, this study points out that the young women need support and assistance during their transitional period of their early-married life. Recognizing the large numbers of female adolescents that are wives and mother, the need for support is at the offing. Besides health support, they also need social support and assistances. Programs that take their perceptions into account and combine both knowledge and skills they need for their marriage, would give them significant advantages. We can make such program available as a preparation program before the marriage or as a supporting program after the marriage.
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Annex 1
The Provincial Government Hierarchy

Propinsi (Province)

- Kabupaten (District)
  - Kecamatan (Sub District)
    - Desa (Village)
    - Dusun (Sub Village)
      - Desan (Hamlet)

- Kabupaten (District)
  - Kecamatan (Sub District)
    - Desa (Village)
    - Dusun (Sub Village)
      - Desan (Hamlet)

- Kabupaten (District)
  - Kecamatan (Sub District)
    - Desa (Village)
    - Dusun (Sub Village)
      - Desan (Hamlet)
Annex 2

In-depth Interview Guide

I will conduct an in-depth interview several times using informal conversation. Since it is a life history interview, I will not use a list of questions. I will let the participant tell her story the way she wants to. In each topic, I will use questions such as "Tell me about ..." or "could you tell me about..." For the interview guide, I will use points for information that will be gathered in the in-depth interviews.

1) Introduction
   a) Self introduction
   b) Objective of the study
   c) Use of the information
   d) Interview duration: 1 – 1.5 hour
   e) Recording: OK or not?
   f) Guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality
   g) Questions before beginning

2) Personal information
   a) Age, education, occupation

3) About the marriage in general: beginning with "Could you tell me about your marriage, how was it?"
   a) Age of the Informant when she married
   b) The husband’s age
   c) Place of marriage
   d) How she met her husband
   e) How the marriage decided (then probe to whether she wanted it or not)

4) If the informant wanted the marriage: begin with "Can you tell me why you wanted to marry?"
   a) Why she wanted to marry (the reason)
   b) Whose idea: the husband or her idea
   c) How she felt
   d) How her parent’s reacted
   e) How she thought her parents felt at that time
   f) The decision making process at that time

5) If the informants did not want the marriage:
   a) Why she did not want to marry
   b) Who asked her to marry and why
   c) How she felt
   d) How she reacted
   e) How was the decision making process at that time

6) About early marriage
   a) Does the informant think that she was too young when she got married
b) Why

c) The ideal age for married according to the informant

7) About school
a) Was she currently at school
b) Did the school know that she was married
c) Did she tell the school
d) Why
e) Did she have any problem with the school after getting married
f) Why
g) Whether the school allowed their students to get married

8) About health
a) Does she have children
b) How many
c) When did she first have a baby, whether it was just after she got married
d) Did she have any problem during her first pregnancy
e) Did she have any problem when she gave birth
f) What did she think about her age to have a baby
g) Why

9) About the well being: how she feels about her life now
a) What is the positive (or what does she like)
b) What is the negative (or what does she dislike)
c) What she thinks about herself as a wife and her role as a wife
d) Where she lived after the marriage
e) What she thinks about her husband
f) Does she think that he is a good husband
g) What she thinks about her in laws
h) How did they earn money
i) Did she work after getting married and why
j) Is it OK with her husband if she works
k) How about parents in law, do they agree
l) What does she think about her marriage
m) What is the best and the worse thing of her marriage

10) Closing
a) Summary
b) Check whether the summary is correct
c) Ask for another interview and the time
d) Thank the informants
Annex 3. Problem Analysis of Early Marriage

Economic, Social and Cultural factors:
- Education
- Poverty → strategy for economic survival
- Enlarge the family social network
- Religious reason
- Perception that marriage protects young girls from premarital sex and pregnancy
- Fear of stigma of becoming old maid
- Fertility reason

Possible positive consequences:
- Better social status
- Economic status improvement
- Happiness

Possible Negative Consequences:
- Teenage pregnancy
- Teenage childbearing
- Health consequences for the young mother: Maternal death and morbidity
- Health consequences for the baby: low birth weight and death
- Violence
- STIs / HIV/AIDS
- Abandonment and divorce
- Psychosocial disadvantage
- Discontinuation of education

Biological Factor:
First menstruation

Inadequate/no sex education

No/poor access to family planning services / methods

Personal choice

Teenage pregnancy

Family pressure

Wanted Early Marriage

Unwanted Early Marriage