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What is This?

Asian Fatherhood

Wei-Jun Jean Yeung[1]

Profound demographic and socioeconomic transformations in Asia in the second half of the 20th century have significantly affected Asian families (Quah, 2009). Despite significant variation across Asian countries in the nature and intensity of these changes, major trends can be identified to include an increase of nuclear families, a decline in fertility and mortality rates, delayed marriages (Jones, 2007), a rise in female education and labor force participation (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004), increased internal and international migration, and globalization (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010; World Bank, 2001, 2010). Apart from the scope of changes, the speed at which these changes have occurred has shaken up many old systems and ideologies. As described by Kyung-Sup (2010), compressed modernity occurs

> in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system. (p. 1)

These structural changes, accompanied by adaptations in normative ideologies across countries, have reshaped intergenerational relations and gender roles in varying manners in Asia.

Of all aspects of Asia's family transition, the extent to which men's family roles have changed has received little attention to date. As the labor market attachment among women with young children strengthens, gender

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ideologies become more egalitarian, and globalization forces unfold, there is a heightened expectation of "new fathers" who would provide more physical and emotional care to children in addition to financial resources and moral teachings as in many European and North American countries. Studies in Western societies have demonstrated that father's involvement, both in absolute and relative terms, has increased despite a considerably lower level of physical involvement by fathers in child rearing activities than mothers (Pleck, 1997; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). A burgeoned body of literature documents the positive associations between fathers' involvement and children's well-being (e.g., Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, & Carrano, 2006; Lamb, 2010), marital relationship, and father's own development (Eggebeen, Dew, & Knoester, 2010). Little systematic work has been conducted on fatherhood in Asia (see a review by Shwalb, Nakazawa, Yamamoto, & Hyun, 2010).

The seminal work on family change by William J. Goode (1963) predicts that with the spread of industrialization there will be a convergence between Western and developing countries to conjugal family form in which marriage bonds rather than bonds of lineage would become more prevalent and that marriages based on a companionate relationship will become the norm in the world. Much of this general trend has indeed occurred in varying degree in many Asian societies. However, diverse cultures, socioeconomic and political structures, and policies and programs across Asian countries have also shaped family values and behaviors in ways that are distinct from what we see in the West today, including how men view fatherhood and how fathers relate to their children and spouses.

There are rich and diverse religious and cultural traditions in Asia such as Confucian, Hindu, and Islamic teachings that retain powerful influence on Asian family lives. One of the consequences is that family remains a central socioeconomic unit in the society. Although family size has generally declined, a much higher proportion of the population still coresides with their extended families than in Western countries (Toki, Iwai, Yi, & Xie, 2011; Yap, 2007). Trends in the West known as the "second demographic transition" are generally not prevalent (yet) in Asia. Fewer Asian couples live together outside marriage, and childbearing outside of wedlock is extremely rare. Divorce rates, though rising, remain very low by Western standards. Another consequence of the strong hold of these traditions is that patriarchy remains a dominant family ideology in many Asian societies despite an impressive increase in Asian women's education and labor force participation. Another unique trend in Asia is that, as rapid urbanization and globalization unfold in the last few decades, a large number of men (and women) in

countries such as the Philippines, China, and Sri Lanka leave their families for a long stretch of time to work in other regions or countries, leaving their children with only one parent or other relatives (Hugo & Ukwatta, 2010; Parrenas, 2005). This trend has profound impact on families in both the sending and receiving communities. In Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, the drastic decline of marriage and the "ultra-low" fertility rates have altered gender dynamics and expectations of men's roles in the society. Other trends such as an increase in interracial or transnational marriages and the wide range of population and work–family policies across Asian countries (Jones, 2011; Mason, 2001; McDonald, 2008) will most likely have varied impact on Asian men's family roles. For example, the one-child policy in China may have exerted a very different impact on father's relationship with their children from the more recent pro-natal policies in Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore. These differences suggest that findings in Western societies about fathers may not be directly transferable to Asia.

It is the aim of this special issue to advance our understanding and stimulate future research on whether and how Asian men's fathering behavior and ideology have changed, how they differ from those in Western societies, and what consequences such changes have brought on the well-being of their children. To be sure, it will be erroneous to treat Asian families as a homogeneous unit given the diversities noted above. The idea of this Asian fatherhood issue originates from the first international conference on Asian fatherhood that I organized in Singapore from June 17 to 18, 2010, titled "Fatherhood in 21st Century Asia: Research, Interventions, and Policies." The conference was sponsored jointly by the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Singapore Dads for Life (an initiative of the National Family Council), and the Singapore Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. The one-and-half day event brought together approximately 180 academics, policymakers, and practitioners from government and community agencies to gain a better view of Asian fathers' diverse roles and challenges and to raise awareness about positive father involvement. The conference featured an opening speech by Dr. Maliki Osman, Singapore Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of National Development, a keynote speech by Professor William Marsiglio of the University of Florida, and five panel discussions—Father Involvement in Changing Asia; Fathering Across Diversity; Father–Child Relationship and Fathering Styles; Fatherhood Ideology, Aspirations, and Motivations; and Fatherhood in the Context of Migration. Presenters shared findings from studies about fathers in nine Asian regions in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, India, China, Vietnam,

Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The articles use a wide range of research strategies including both qualitative and quantitative methods. On the second day of the conference, a half day workshop to brainstorm about programs to encourage positive fathering behavior was also held. A summary of the research presented at the conference can be found in a report on the program website (Yeung, 2010).

The papers presented at the Singapore conference provided a valuable glimpse of contemporary Asian fathers' involvement in their children's lives and how they perceive their roles, representing men of diverse cultural background and socioeconomic statuses. They underscore some unique Asian contexts that are crucial in understanding fathering behavior and ideologies in Asia today. At the same time, they also reveal that fatherhood research in Asia is still at a formative stage. Studies are often based on small selective samples, cross-sectional data, and are often limited in examining only paternal involvement, in particular, direct engagement of fathers in two-parent families with their children. Some of the literature on Asia fatherhood is in languages that are not accessible to the international community. To fill the gap in literature on Asian fathers, this special issue includes four papers presented at the Singapore conference and two solicited after the conference. The six articles featured here examine fathers in contemporary India, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, and the Philippines. Each article gives a careful description of the unique historical, cultural, and socioeconomic background that shape fathering behavior in a particular country. Authors use both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine father involvement with children of different ages. Despite limitations in each article, this body of research represents an effort to showcase family changes and dynamics in Asia on an international stage. Taken together, they contribute to the emerging international comparative literature on fatherhood (Doucet, Edwards, & Furstenberg, 2009; Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, in press).

Indian Fathers

The first article, by Sriram and Sandhu, provides a rich description of well-educated middle-class Indian fathers' involvement with their children, their motivations, and feelings for getting involved based on focus group discussions, survey data, and in-depth interviews with fathers themselves. The study took place in the city of Baroda in western India where education and economic opportunities for both men and women have improved substantially in a globalized economy. As nuclear family becomes a dominant family structure in this area, parents have limited time and support from their

extended family members. The authors show how these structural changes intersect with traditional Hindu parenting ethos to shape the behaviors of these middle-class Indian fathers. Hindu culture expects a father "to perform his *Swadharma* (right course of action in life) for the family's welfare, and to fulfill the important roles of provider, guide, mentor, and nurturer and pass on *sanskar*." Sriram and Sandhu describe *Sanskar* as "the most unique aspect of Hindu culture," which refers to the

> purification and refinement of inner consciousness, acquired through childhood experiences when children imbibe conduct and values that become part of the subconscious; this develops in a person the ability to discriminate right from wrong, makes him more dynamic, valuable and responsible toward self and society.

For Hindu fathers, fulfilling fathering duties and performing good deeds (*karma*) can earn them merit and pave the way to salvation. In such contexts, the authors show that these well-educated Indian fathers are highly involved in providing moral guidance, correcting negative behavior, and monitoring children's habits. These Indian fathers see it as their main responsibility to make children successful by ensuring they have good grades, all-round development, and right human values (*sanskar*). Rich narratives of fathers' own voices are given about their motivations and how they pay attention to both academic and personal development in a wide range of ways such as by encouraging extracurricular activities, exposing children to literature, taking children to religious places and events. Data show that almost all fathers are involved in planning for children's future through choosing children's schools, saving for children's education, and even attempting to alter children's course of life by planning to immigrate to other countries.

Sriram and Sandhu note a positive correlation between fathers' and mothers' involvement; even though mothers continue to be more involved than fathers, involvement with children is a family matter that both father and mother participate in. The authors conclude that the childrearing ethos in India is becoming more child-centered. The concern to give children skills to survive a competitive global environment appears to be similar to the Western trend documented in the literature (e.g., Laureau, 2003). A parallel was also drawn between the Hindu view of fathering and the generative fathering framework in the West (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997) that views fathering as an ethical call with a desire to nurture the next generation, shaped by contextual factors. Hindu teachings align with roles of a father prescribed by culture as a provider, guide, mentor, protector, and teacher. Although

results of this small-scale study is limited in its ability to generalize, the rich narratives of fathers' own voices and analyses through triangulation of data shed light on important aspects of middle-class Indian fathers' motivations, participation, and feelings.

Shanghai Fathers

Xu and Yeung turn to examine the relationships between fathers and daughters in one of the most modern cities in China—Shanghai. As they note, for thousands of years, traditional Chinese family relationships have been governed by Confucian doctrines, which see father–son relationships as most central. In the past, fathers made little investment in daughters as they believe "a married daughter is like water spilt on the ground." Although an important role of a father in the Chinese culture is to teach children, as the saying goes, *zi bu jiao, fu zhi quo* (It is the father's fault if a child is not taught properly), the emphasis has been on educating sons. Confucian teachings in fact emphasize that a lack of talents is a virtue in women (*nu zi wu cai bian shi de*). A father's most important responsibility is to find a man who can provide a good livelihood for his daughter(s). The highest hope a father has for a daughter is for her to marry someone prominent so that she will bring pride and resources to the entire family. Emotionally, traditional Chinese fathers have the image of being distant, strict, and nonexpressive.

Against this historical backdrop, Xu and Yeung use data collected with multiple methods, from focus groups, in-depth interviews with both fathers and daughters, and survey conducted in 2008 and 2009 to see the extent to which father–daughter relationships have changed. They found today's Shanghai fathers highly involved in many different domains at behavioral, emotional, and cognitive levels. Both fathers and daughters value and enjoy emotional closeness to each other. Particularly unique is the very high aspirations these Shanghai fathers have for their daughters regardless of their own socioeconomic status. Many of those with relatively higher education coach their daughters to improve grades. Those who do not, help in many other ways, for example, by staying up late to accompany daughters to study or waiting outside whenever their daughters went for after-class tutorials.

Xu and Yeung argue that these fathering behaviors need to be understood in the historical contexts in China, as the country had moved from a feudal system to a communist society and subsequently transformed into a market economy in the last three decades. Since the 1950s, the Chinese communist government has reformed marriage and labor laws, resulting in more egalitarian parent–child and gender relationships. In the late 1970s, China started the

one-child policy and the economic reform. Rapid privatization and globalization, particularly since 2000, have greatly enhanced the value of human capital and increased competition in the society. Many parents put all their resources and hopes on their only child regardless of the child's gender to help them compete for their life chances.

> The lack of educational opportunity and material resources available to Shanghai fathers when they were young have motivated them to try their best to provide for their daughters. Cultivating the next generation largely means ensuring their academic success, and many fathers believe being a good provider is the most effective way to support their daughters and to express their love.

The analysis shows that Shanghai fathers' high value for their daughters' educational attainment is the key driver of their involvement level. The saying *wang nü cheng feng* (hope for daughter to become a phoenix) in contemporary China conveys parents' high expectations of their daughters' success based not on marrying a good husband but on the daughters' own academic achievement, in contrast with old practices.

This study underscores the importance of paying attention to macro socio-economic and historical contexts in addition to the psychological and micro-level factors that most existing fatherhood theories focus on.

Muslim Fathers in Malaysia

Juhari, Yaacob, and Abu Talib study Malay-Muslim fathers' involvement with their adolescent children in the state of Selangor. As in India and China, Malaysia has also experienced rapid socioeconomic changes in that almost half of Malaysian Muslim women are now in the labor force (46% of women aged 15-64 years as of 2011) and 59% of the working women were married. Family remains a strong socialization and economic unit in Malaysia, with marriage rate near universal, fertility rate higher than in many other Asian countries, and divorce rates very low. As the authors note, "Malay families have always been patriarchal."

Juhari et al. interpret Malay fathers' behavior in light of the values and customs that are embedded in the Islamic religion and Malay culture. For Muslims, who live by the Quran, procreation is one of the most important functions of family life. Parents are entrusted with care of their children and are held accountable for bringing up their children properly. Muslim fathers see financial provisioning, moral teaching, praying, reciting the Quran, and

fasting together with children as their religious duties that God entrusts to them to fulfill both worldly and after-life purposes. As such, Islamic teachings serve as a guide for fathering behavior, based on the mission of parents to guide the child to lead a good, god-fearing life. A major task and concern of these Muslim fathers is to equip a child with worldly and religious knowledge for the benefit of their children's future in this world and the life hereafter. This study again highlights the importance of culture in shaping paternal roles, as noted by Lamb (1987). Unfortunately, the study does not have direct measures of Malay cultural aspect or the "religious" aspect of fathering or a non-Muslim comparison group to permit a detailed examination of how they shape fatherhood ideology and behavior.

Based on quantitative analyses of survey data with Malay Muslim fathers conducted in 2007-2008, the authors find support for the importance of family contexts in shaping fathering behavior. Fathers who perceive high involvement of their own fathers and are more satisfied with their own fathers' involvement are more involved with their children, supporting the intergenerational role modeling concept. In general, younger fathers are found to be more involved with their children than their fathers were. Juhari et al. also find that men who are more satisfied with their marriages and those who are more educated are also more involved with their children. Data show that Muslim fathers are least involved in leisure, fun, play, and sharing activities with their children. A majority of these fathers desire to be more involved according to the teachings of Islam, particularly in religious teachings and matters related to children's academic success.

Vietnamese Fathers

Jayakody and Phuong focus on yet another rapidly developing country in Southeast Asia—Vietnam. One might expect that with globalization, mass media expansion, and policy initiatives designed to affect gender and intergenerational relationships, Western culture, including the notion of more involved fathering, would have strong influence on Vietnamese men.

The author argues, however, that Vietnam's strong Confucian heritage and its kinship structure may have limited the adoption of fathers as equal co-parents. As they describe, in early years of Vietnam's history, "Views of the father role have been dominated by Confucian ideology with patriarchal family structure as one of its clearest principles." These doctrines are as evidenced in the Le Code, which operated during the Le Dynasty from 1498

through 1788. The tradition of ancestor worship and continuity of family line through males result in a strong son preference in Vietnam. The father is the symbol of power in the family and is given the authoritarian and disciplinarian position. In the mid-20th century, Vietnam was split into two governments because of wars. During this war period, Vietnamese fathers were often absent from children's lives for extended periods of time. Northern Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, abandoned feudal vestiges, including Confucian principles, to promote gender equality by reforming marriage and labor laws, resulting in very high female labor force participation rates. In contrast, the southern government sought to reinforce Confucian principles and maintain gender and generational hierarchies. Since 1975, the country was reunited into a socialist Republic. In 1986, Vietnam introduced its renovation policy (*doi moi*) and started to transition to market economy and establish international relations. Women continued to have a strong presence in the labor market during this period.

Jayakody and Phuong use retrospective data from the Vietnam Family Survey collected in 2003-2004 to assess changes over time in family attitudes and behavior for three birth cohorts, representing those who were at the family formation age during three distinct historical periods—the war, the reunification, and the renovation period. They found that despite years of communist doctrine, specific policies on gender equality, and increased globalization and media access, Vietnamese men's attitudes toward fathers' roles remain unchanged. Fathers' participation in daily child care tasks is very low, and there is also no clear evidence of an increase over time. Clear traditional gender lines remain, with women primarily responsible for housework and child care. The authors explain this lack of change in fathering roles in Vietnam with the traditional gender role ideology and the network of family relationships. As Vietnam continues to rely on an extended family system, other relatives, particularly grandmothers or older female siblings, are important sources of child care. Because of the availability of help from these female kin, many Vietnam fathers are free from child care responsibilities. This article illustrates how powerful social and cultural contexts can shape the conceptions of parenting. As in many other studies, Jayakody and Phuong also found Vietnamese father's education to be positively associated with their involvement level. They point out that given trends in increased education and migration (due to urbanization and globalization) that will make extended family less available for help, we are likely to see some changes in fathering role in Vietnam in the future.

Japanese Fathers

Ishii-Kuntz takes a rare look at factors that are related to a very important context other than family—the work place—for Japanese fathers. As the author notes, it is well documented that Japanese fathers spend substantially less time with children than mothers do. According to the 2006 Family Life Education International Survey, the gap between the father and the mother was largest in Japan compared with countries such as Korea, Thailand, the United States, France, and Sweden. It is also well known that Japanese work culture is characterized by long work hours and strong gender lines.

The author uses data collected from fathers with preschool age children in a web survey conducted in 2010. Based on quantitative analyses, Ishii-Kuntz finds that, controlling for family and individual factors, work-related factors are significantly related to fathers' involvement in child care, although the impact seems to differ by the size of the company for reasons that are not entirely clear in this study. Workplace accommodation of parental needs (such as whether child care leave, shortened work hours, and flextime systems are in effect and whether the fathers are entitled to them), and job autonomy of work hours and workloads are associated with a higher child care involvement for fathers in medium/small companies. In large companies, job stress reduces men's involvement. Among all work-related factors, work and commuting time pose greatest constraint on fathers' participation in care of their young children, suggesting that government efforts in creating father-friendly policies must seriously address the problem of Japanese men's long work hours and commuting time.

Despite the limitations of the data, this study underscores the significance of work environment to the fathering role. In addition to work-related factors, this study highlights that attitudinal dimensions such as fatherhood and gender role ideology are important elements to be considered. Better educated and younger fathers as well as those with an involved father have a higher involvement level in child care.

As Ishii-Kuntz argues convincingly, it is necessary for future studies to identify additional work-related factors such as work culture, work shifts of fathers and those of their spouses, and number of paid leave days. The analysis in this study also includes an important indicator that characterizes the extent of "gendered" work environment measured by men's perception of how often women in the company are unfairly treated in terms of career promotion and advancement and whether many women resign from the company because of childbirth. Although this measure is not found to be a statistically significant predictor, better ways to measure such gendered work

environment other than through men's perception are warranted to further investigate the impact of work culture.

Filipino Fathers

The final article in this special issue focuses on an increasingly important global trend that has affected a significant segment of the population but has received little attention in the fatherhood literature to date—that is, how increased international labor migration has affected fathering behavior and father–child relationship. Globalization has provided various economic opportunities for transnational migratory labor, and this has influenced the division of domestic labor and how families function as a unit with prolonged absence of fathers or mothers. A question often raised about these families is what makes a good father, as decisions to work abroad are often made to ensure economic prosperity of the family, and in many cases, for the education opportunities of the children. Harper and Martin discuss the impact of transnational migratory labor on parent–child relationships and on children's behavior in Filipino families.

The Philippines relies heavily on remittances from transnational migrants for the country's economic survival. The authors estimate that roughly 2 million individuals leave home to become Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) per year. The authors raise two research questions. First, "Do children of OFW families, compared with those of non-OFW families, encounter different issues of parent–child relationship and problematic outcomes?" Second, "What are the factors that may help buffer any negative effects of father absence?" Harper and Martin conducted an analysis based on survey data collected in 2007 from 116 OFW families and 99 non-OFW two-parent families of elementary school children.

The authors invoke two main theories to explain these potential relationships. The first is the family stress theory. Stress occurs when there is boundary and role ambiguity. When fathers are away for a prolonged period of time, such ambiguity is experienced by the parents who are left at home, the parents serving abroad, as well as by children. The second theory is the attachment theory, which contends that children who develop a secure basis of attachment with their caregiver feel free to explore and develop a healthy sense of autonomy while still maintaining a close connection to the family. When a parent is responsive, warm, and nurturing, children are likely to have fewer behavior problems and exhibit more prosocial behavior.

Harper and Martin find that mothers of OFW families demonstrate a lower level of warmth when compared with mothers from two-parent homes and

that children from OFW families have more internalizing and externalizing problems. However, father's remittances and frequent contact are positively related to mother's warmth. Increased paternal warmth during visits predicts higher quality marital and father–child relationships, and the authors speculate that such paternal warmth affects children's behaviors indirectly through the quality of mother–child relationship. Mother's negativity to father's contact is found to be associated with a decline in marital quality and father–child relationship. Harper and Martin argue that this negativity in turn affects mother–child relationship quality and child's behavior. A high-quality mother–child relationship is found to be associated with fewer child behavior problems. Increased mother warmth when fathers are abroad contributes to an increase in relationship quality between the child and father. The analysis also shows that the effect of fathers working abroad is pronounced for son but not for daughters, possibly suggesting the importance of having a male role model around for sons.

The authors explore how men father across borders. Absent fathers can play a meaningful role in the developmental outcomes of children by supporting mother financially and emotionally. The mother is a key player in mediating the father–child relationship. As Harper and Martin note, since transnational migration for work in the Philippines will continue in the foreseeable future, it is important to further investigate potential ways in which some of the negative effects of having an absent father on children may be mitigated in families that live apart for work.

Discussion

Fathers in these six articles represent men of diverse cultural background and socioeconomic statuses though are by no means comprehensive in representing all groups in Asia. In addition to highlighting the powerful influence of culture, these articles clearly illuminate the limitations in extant fatherhood literature in its overwhelming focus on individual and family contexts in conceptualizing and theorizing fathering behavior and ideologies. Trajectories of socioeconomic development and different policies in a society powerfully shape men's family ideologies and behavior. In addition, as a result of globalization, a nation-bound framework is no longer sufficient. It is necessary to go beyond considering fatherhood issues only within a nation's boundary, as illustrated by the article on migrant fathers in the Philippines and to a lesser extent articles on Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese fathers as the globalization process advances.

Although existing data do not allow us to compare fathers' involvement with children across these countries or with fathers in Western societies, all

but the study on Vietnam provide some evidence that younger men are more involved in a wide range of activities than their own fathers were. That said, all articles also show that Asian fathers' level of involvement remains considerably lower than that of mothers especially in caregiving activities and emotional support. The breadwinner role remains central in Asian men's identities. Their long work hours keep many from spending more time with their children. These articles along with a paucity of time use research suggests that Asian fathers' involvement level is likely to be lower than men in Western societies despite Asian women's equally high participation in the labor market. Eun (2011) shows that, from 1999 to 2009, the average time Korean men and women spent on unpaid work changed from 36.8 to 41.4 hours per week for men and from 273.2 to 250.5 hours per week for women. In Japan, between 2001 and 2006, the average time Japanese men and women spent on unpaid care and housework increased for men, from 0.17 to 0.23 23 hours per day, while for women it remained the same at 2.32 hours per day (Japan Statistical Bureau, 2011). Some unique Asian contexts that are crucial in shaping Asian fatherhood are highlighted in this body of work.

1. The deep-seated traditional gender norms and values remain strong, prevalent in moral teachings in some countries and in religious decrees in others. Confucian teachings on patriarchy and intergenerational hierarchies in family structure have been among the clearest principles of social organization in societies such as Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, China, and Singapore for generations. The traditional gender norms such as "strict father, kind mother," "son preference," and highly gendered domestic division of labor still exert discernible influence on men's perceptions of their family roles and women's attitudes about how men should behave. Religious decrees that have been in existence for thousands of years in Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity also permeate every aspect of daily living in shaping fatherhood ideology and behavior. All these traditions, combined with the strong familialistic male breadwinner welfare regimes in many Asian countries, make family units under legal bound a much stronger socioeconomic unit than in the West and the traditional gender divide more resistant to change. At the same time, the problems associated with absent fathers due to divorce or out of wedlock childbearing is unlikely to be as severe as those in Western societies at least in the near future.

2. Extended families and domestic helpers play greater roles in childcare in Asian families and they can have varying effects on

father–mother and father–child relationships for families of differ-
ent socioeconomic and cultural background. The role of extended
families is noted in the Vietnamese study. How the increasingly
important role of domestic helpers in family care in places like
Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore affects fathering ideology and
behavior in both the receiving and sending communities has not
received as much systematic attention in the literature. More work
is needed to gain better understanding about these dynamics.

3. Migration is, and will, remain a fact of life for countless Asian
fathers and their families. Asian families are much more likely than
those in Western societies to be divided due to increased migra-
tion as a result of globalization and urbanization. These experiences
present unique sociopsychological and structural challenges for
Asian men and their families that warrant further investigation.

4. Asian families generally place high value on education. As global-
ization forces enhance the value of human capital, Asian fathers
may play a greater role in children's education in contrast to the
generally low involvement of Western fathers in achievement-
related matters (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001).

5. Asian men lack role model for the "new father" role that is increas-
ingly expected of them, partly due to the compressed modernity
phenomenon in Asia (Kyung-Sup, 2010). Several papers presented
at the Singapore conference show that many Asian fathers often
feel ambivalent about their identities and unprepared and feel
inadequate for their roles. Asian men's own fathers' involvement
appears to have a significant influence on their own involvement
with their children as several articles in this issue and those pre-
sented at the Singapore conference show.

Clearly, significant variation exists among fathers of different social
classes and ethnicity. A near universal pattern is that the better educated
fathers are more involved with children. Education is the main driver that
will lead to more convergence in fathering behavior worldwide in the future.
It is clear that contemporary Asian fathers are negotiating, challenging, and
creating meanings of fatherhood. The "new fathers" we see in the 21st cen-
tury Asia will likely to be different from those in America or Europe given
the unique contexts noted above. It is my hope that this special issue will
stimulate further thinking and work on Asian fatherhood.

The list of research agenda is long. Beyond direct involvement, more
work is needed to understand factors that influence Asian men's construction

of, and initiation into, fatherhood. One of the threats to the sustainability of the family system in some of the Asian countries today is that a large proportion of men remain single and ultimately childless (Jones, 2011). More work is needed to understand what affects Asian men's trajectory of fatherhood and how fathers' attitude and identities change as they move through different fathering stages. Attention is needed for special groups such as low-income fathers; other father figures such as grandfathers, stepfathers, or uncles (social fathers); and absent fathers resulting either from migration or family breakups. Work on the impact of fathering behaviors on children's lives and fathers' own well-being is limited to date. Analysis on a broader network of relationships that may affect Asian fatherhood, such as relationship with mothers, other men, and the community, will lead to a more complete picture. Of course, longitudinal frameworks and data that allow researchers to examine the trajectories of fathering and the determinants and consequences of fathering behavior and ideologies will generate important breakthroughs in this field.

More consideration should also be given to policies and programs that influence fathers. Several papers at the 2010 Singapore conference illustrate that policies in many Asian countries are often gender-biased and far from taking family–work balance issues seriously. There is diverse and uneven development of policies and programs related to fathering in Asian countries. Taiwan's relatively new initiative of parent education centers and the 2-year parental leave policy, Singapore's Dads-for-Life movement, and programs in India and Malaysia are good examples of efforts that aim to encourage and help fathers nurture psychosocial bonds with their children. A better understanding of the efficacy of these policies and programs in different countries is needed to enhance men's effective parenting and positive family relationships. Finally, increased international collaboration will undoubtedly facilitate more productive comparative literature to advance understanding on fathers worldwide.

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