Fatherhood – Organizational Change and Gender Equity

C. Philip Hwang
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Research seminar on the role of fathers for children’s socio-emotional development

University of Copenhagen, Denmark, August 26, 2016

philip hwang@psy.gu.se
Parents and Children (1945)

When a child is born, there are a thousand opportunities these days, when there is a shortage of housekeepers, for an enterprising father to show his interest and love for the baby...

If the father is normally equipped for practical work he should without difficulties be able to change the babies cloth...
Infant – mother/father attachment

• Avoidant (A) M=22%; F=25%
• Secure (B1 – B4) M=74%; F=71%
• Resistant (C) M=4%; M=4%

Conclusion (I)

• Minor differences between infant-mother and infant – father attachment
• Infant – mother attachment seems not to be the prototype for other attachment relationships
• No differences in infant – father attachment between “traditional fathers” and “non-traditional fathers”.

philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
Mothers focused on:

- Being a good, strong and competent mother
- Being vulnerable, possible problems with breastfeeding
- Having time for herself and her partner.

Fathers focused on:

• Work related issues
• Not getting enough sleep
• Partner too tired to have sex
• Not being able to take parental leave

Conclusion (II)

• Father involvement is multidimensional
• The stability of individual dimensions vary over time
• Some dimensions were stable over the first couple of years, but not over a longer time period

1. Are Swedish companies & unions becoming more responsive to fathers?

2. What types of companies are more responsive to fathers?

philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
Gender perspective

**Not:** Why do individual men choose to participate so little?

**Instead:** What assumptions and norms in the gendered institutions of family and work discourage men as a group from sharing equitably?

philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
Driving forces behind policy

Helping to establish a firm economic foundation for families

Women’s economic independence

Better relations between fathers and children.
Parental leave and child care policies in Sweden

- Maximum period of leave is 480 days per child
- Each parent has 90 nontransferable days + parents have 300 days to share
- 77.6% of salary (for 390 days), with a maximum of SEK 333,750 (€ 35,611).
- Temporary parental leave (care for sick children) = 120 days per child per year for children under 12 years.

philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
Impact of parental leave for fathers

• In 2015 90% of all fathers took parental leave but only 25% of the total number of days.

• The father’s quota in 1995 (one month) and its extension in 2002 (to two months) both led to more fathers taking more leave.
Company surveys

Mail surveys of personnel officers in largest (most profitable) private companies in Sweden:

1993
200 companies
80% response rate

2006
244 companies
71% response rate

philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
# Father Friendly Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Support</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Support</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Opposition</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of companies are more responsive to fathers?

_Significantly related (declining order of importance):_
Companies’ adoption of caring values
Women’s share of management positions
Being in the service sector
Women’s share of the workforce
Companies’ concerns about negative economic consequences of being responsive

_Not related:_
Company size, concerns about productivity

Evidence of “win-win” scenario?

- 77% reported: It makes good business sense to help employees manage work and family responsibilities.
- 18% reported: Taking parental leave contributes positively to men’s work qualifications.
- 4% reported: More fathers taking leave likely to have positive economic consequences for the company.
Conclusion – The bad news (III)

- Less than half of companies have formal policies and programs.
- Less than half report support from supervisors and co-workers.
- Few have someone in charge or procedures to train and encourage supervisors.
- Majority do not agree with ideal of shared parenting.
- Few see taking parental leave as positive.
Conclusion – The good news (III)

- Our results suggest that social policies can move corporations toward a more family-supportive and gender equitable workplace culture.
- Companies are more responsive to fathers now than in 1993 and 2006, including more formal policies and programs and more support from supervisors and co-workers.
- Fathers in private companies appear more likely to take parental leave now than in 1993 and 2006.

Study participants in 5 companies

56 informants ("chain")

Two top managers

White-collar middle manager

Focus group
3-5 white-collar fathers in work group

Blue-collar middle manager

Focus group
3-5 blue-collar fathers in work group
Conclusion (IV)

• Companies' approach to fathers who want to combine work and family is reminiscent of how families reason about equality: In principle they are for it, but there are many ifs and buts ....

• Companies rarely actively oppose men who want to combine work and family, but few companies encourage it.


philip.hwang@psy.gu.se
Conclusion (IV)

- Are the companies' approaches an obstacle for men who want to combine work and family? The answer depends on which company you work in, but perhaps most importantly who you are in the company.
Unions

- Largest unions in 200 companies (survey twice with five year interval)
- Interviews with the chairman of 64 unions (Central Organizations)

Unions more active when:

- The chairperson of the union is a women
- The company is more involved in equality issues
- The union and the company seem to pull in the same direction.
Conclusion (V)

- The link between work and family should have a more prominent place on the unions agenda.
- The unions need to become better at communicating to members where they stand when it comes to the link between work and family.

Future outlook

• “Implementation gap” will persevere – More fathers want to take leave entitlement but companies are not enthusiastic about this.

• Companies will slowly become more responsive to fathers because of the growing service sector.

• Increased equal employment opportunity for women could enhance companies’ responsiveness to fathers; women’s power is increasing but women’s participation in the private sector is not.

• Resistance to active fatherhood is rooted in the gendered substructure of workplaces.
“Hoa-Hoa” Dahlgren, Peter Svenonius and daughter Engla
Mark Twain:

When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learnt in seven years.