

On June 27th, social scientists and lawyers from different countries met in York (UK) at an international conference on "Gender and Social Changes in Developing Regions: Managing Obligations to Children in Separated Families". The conference was organized by Dr. Christine Skinner, Reader in Social Policy at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York. This is the third conference in the international series funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC Award ES/L000792/1) titled *Child Maintenance: International Perspectives & Policy Challenges* (<http://www.york.ac.uk/spsw/research/child-maintenance-esrc-seminars/>)

The discussions in the morning focused on the social and cultural developments of Confucianism in the modern Asian society in China and South Korea. It was found that the traditional division of roles (obligations of women towards their families and in-laws / patriarchy) is abandoned more and more; this change already began with the communist era and the "one child policy" in China a long time ago. Further, it was noted that the divorce rate as well as the number of children born out of wedlock and single parents is increasing. The question as to how these changes affect the relationships between family members (especially father / daughter relationships in Shanghai) as well as to how the state (especially in South Korea) has responded to this development in the field of social support was then examined. Currently, a considerable discrepancy can be observed between the major economic growth and the comparatively low amount that the state invests in the support of families (e.g., less than 5% of the budget in South Korea). Further intervention of the state is therefore increasingly necessary and also possible. As a problem-solving approach, the possibility of introducing cash benefits such as social assistance (which partially already exists at very low levels) or improving care options for young children were mentioned. However, it is also necessary to support older people, as this support can no longer be easily provided within the traditional family.

In the afternoon, two social science studies on child support policy implementation in Colombia and Peru were presented. It was found that, given the increasing number of separated families, more and more children depend on the payment of child support. However, child support is often not claimed because creditors are not sufficiently informed. In Peru, for example, the language barrier between the indigenous people and the Spanish-speaking society still plays a role. In Colombia, the Colombian Institute for Child Welfare (Instituto de Bienestar de Familia Colombiano) endeavors to support families seeking advice. At present, however, families are hesitant to make use of the consulting services. If a child support order is established, the possibilities of enforcement are very limited, which is why both countries are currently trying to promote the amicable settlement of maintenance disputes.

In conclusion, it was determined that a contradictory development is apparent. On the one hand, greater equality between the sexes is sought. Thus, women are increasingly taking on traditional male roles and expect men to be more involved in family responsibilities. On the other hand, the father is required to pay alimony/ child support and thus restricted to his traditional role as breadwinner if the parents separate. An equilibrium between these two tendencies is yet to be found.