

Understanding parenting from interdisciplinary perspectives

This guest lecture series explores the conceptualisation and practice of parenting from interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g., sociological, psychological). Bringing together a team of international scholars, the guest lectures aim to support students to:

- Explore different theoretical concepts in understanding parenting;
- Critically reflect on how different theoretical perspectives underpin different practices of parenting;
- (Re)consider parenting practices in its socio-cultural and political contexts.

The guest lectures will take place online via Teams.

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Meeting ID: 313 351 557 180 0

Passcode: BS3PZ7Jf

Programme schedule:

Date	Time (China)	Time (UK)	Lecture	Guest lecturers
07/11/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Introduction: understanding parenting from interdisciplinary perspectives	Dr Yuwei Xu, University of Nottingham, UK
14/11/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Parenting in Focus: Intersections of Gender, Work, Health, and Disability	Dr Laetitia Coles, University of Queensland, Australia
21/11/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Towards Caring Fathers: The Role of Young Fathers' Mothers in Enabling Alternative Masculinities in South Africa	Dr Francesca Salvi, University of Nottingham, UK
28/11/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Mothers and their educational support in the UK primary school context	Dr Rachel Lehner-Mear, University of Nottingham, UK
05/12/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Psychological Perspectives on Parenting: Theories, Research, and Implications for Contemporary Societies	Dr Jie Gao, University College London, UK
12/12/2025	16-18 pm	8-10 am	Changing ideas and experiences of fatherhood	Professor Martin Robb, Open University, UK

Descriptions:

07/11/2025 Introduction: understanding parenting from interdisciplinary perspectives

This lecture starts by encouraging students to reflect on their understanding of parenting, and the theoretical perspectives that underpin those understandings. In so doing, the lecture raises awareness among students about the importance of theories in master-level educational and psychological research. The lecture further promotes students to discuss how different theories of parenting link

with different practices in various cultural contexts. This lecture supports students to be ready for critical discussions of parenting theories and practices in the coming weeks, from interdisciplinary perspectives.

14/11/2025 Parenting in Focus: Intersections of Gender, Work, Health, and Disability

This lecture examines how parenting is shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional worlds in which it takes place. Moving beyond individualised or psychological models, it approaches parenting as a relational practice that reflects and reproduces wider systems of gender, work, health, and policy.

Drawing on Laetitia Coles' research on fathers, work, and care, the lecture introduces the concept of the caregiver breadwinner to explore how men negotiate long working hours while remaining emotionally engaged parents. It then extends to her research on sleep as a hidden form of care labour, revealing how gendered norms determine who gets rest, recognition, and support. The lecture also highlights the experiences of parents raising children with disability, showing how families navigate fragmented service systems and advocate for inclusion.

Through participatory and creative methodologies including arts-based and poetic approaches, Coles and her collaborators communicate the emotional and embodied dimensions of care, challenging the boundaries between research, storytelling, and social change.

Ultimately, the lecture reframes parenting as a collective and ethical concern rather than a private responsibility. It calls for inclusive policies, workplaces, and professional practices that enable all families to care well and invites students to consider how theory, context, and lived experience intertwine to shape parenting across societies.

21/11/2025 Towards Caring Fathers: The Role of Young Fathers' Mothers in Enabling Alternative Masculinities in South Africa

Teenage pregnancies are on the rise in South Africa, yet public and policy conversations continue to centre young mothers while rendering young fathers largely invisible. When young fathers are acknowledged, it is often through a moralising lens that constructs them as irresponsible, absent, or disinterested - narratives that shape the design of programmes and policies which assume, rather than question, their absence.

This lecture challenges such assumptions by asking: Who are these young fathers, and what do they need to embrace a more caring, connected form of fatherhood? Drawing on research into the intergenerational dynamics of care, it explores the pivotal role of young fathers' mothers in enabling alternative masculinities that disrupt dominant notions of fatherhood. In doing so, it invites policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to rethink how support systems can foster a culture of nurturing and relational fatherhood among young men in South Africa.

28/11/2025 Mothers and their educational support in the UK primary school context

In this lecture, I will discuss a recent project focused on mothering and mothers' educational support. I will first outline the UK's neoliberal educational context in which parents are routinely responsabilised for their children's educational outcomes and expected to 'participate' in teacher-directed educational activities at home. Having introduced key concepts used in this research, I will introduce the project, participants and data collected, and share some of the key findings. Attendees will gain an understanding of how mothers' expected role in their children's education is both morally underpinned and entwined with their existing mother-child relationship. The lecture will highlight mothers' agency and (dis)empowerment in education practices and raise questions about the notion of partnership between parents and schools.

05/12/2025 **Psychological Perspectives on Parenting: Theories, Research, and Implications for Contemporary Societies**

This lecture examines key psychological perspectives that have shaped our understanding of parenting. We will explore foundational theories, including psychoanalytic, behaviourist, cognitive, and attachment-based approaches, and consider how these psychological theories explain parental roles, child–parent relationships, and developmental outcomes from different perspectives. Drawing on classic and contemporary psychological studies, we will analyse how psychology research findings inform parenting practices and policies in today’s rapidly changing social and cultural contexts. Students will be encouraged to critically reflect on how psychological insights intersect with broader societal factors such as technology, gender roles, and cultural diversity in shaping modern parenting.

12/12/2025 **Changing ideas and experiences of fatherhood**

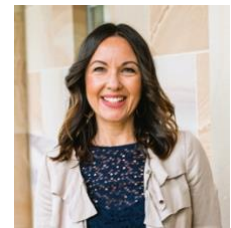
This lecture will draw on Professor Robb’s extensive research with fathers in the United Kingdom over two decades, exploring the ways in which men’s experience of being a father has changed, and how changing societal ideas and expectations have informed those changes. Topics covered will include the ways in which childhood influences shape men’s capacity to care, the question of whether men’s care is distinctive or different from women’s care, and the perspectives of men who have experienced to the loss of a child, and what those experiences reveal about the importance of fatherhood to men.

Speakers’ bios:

Dr Yuwei Xu is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at the University of Nottingham, UK. His research interests include gender and men’s participation in early childhood education, child agency, 0-3 curriculum, child-centred pedagogy, parenting and family relationships, play-based pedagogy, and teacher professional development. Yuwei is co-editor-in-chief for *British Educational Research Journal*, *Children & Society*, and *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*. He is also a council member for the British Educational Research Association, and an executive committee member for Gender and Education Association and The Education and Development Forum (UKFIET).



Dr Laetitia Coles is a sociologist and Research Fellow at The University of Queensland, working across the Child Health Research Centre and the Queensland Brain Institute. Her research examines how families, educators, and health professionals navigate systems of care, with a focus on gender, work, and disability inclusion. She leads and collaborates on projects exploring caregiving, sleep and wellbeing, and participatory approaches with families of children with disability. Partnering with government, early childhood, and health sectors, her work aims to reshape policy and practice to enable all families, and those who support them, to thrive.



Dr Francesca Salvi is an interdisciplinary social scientist specializing in gender studies, climate change education and environmental sociology, with a focus on non-WEIRD contexts. Her work centres on amplifying children’s voices in spaces where they are often excluded, from policy to pedagogy. In Mozambique and South Africa, she has shown how global narratives on teenage pregnancy can hinder young people’s educational and career opportunities. Her current projects in Mozambique and Indonesia pioneer co-created approaches to Climate Change and Sustainability Education with children and educators.



Dr Rachel Lehner-Mear is a former primary school teacher and further education lecturer, with 12 years' experience working with families and schools in the area of parent engagement. She has a PhD in Education, recently completed a prestigious Economic and Social Research Council fellowship exploring mothers' educational support, and is the author of *Primary Homework, Mothering and Maternal Agency*. Rachel's research focuses on parenting and parent engagement, the home-school relationship, and school practices which invoke family labour and participation. Within this, she is particularly interested in how family educational experiences are shaped by gender, class and ethnicity. Using theories of parenting, mothering, emotion and relationality, Rachel explores experiences, identities, embodiments and interactions in early childhood education, primary school and family contexts.



Dr Jie Gao is Associate Professor at IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. She obtained her PhD in Psychology and Education from Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge in 2016. Her research centres on parenting, children's agency, wellbeing, play, and preschool-to-primary school transition through an interdisciplinary perspective, particularly using participatory and multimodal research methods. Jie is on the editorial board of *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* and *Childhood & Society*. She has extensive teaching experience in universities both in the UK and China, as well as supporting the continuous professional development (CPD) of early childhood education teachers in cross-cultural contexts.



Professor Martin Robb is Professor of Care Ethics and Culture at The Open University in the United Kingdom, where he leads the Masters programme in Childhood and Youth Studies, and where his research has focused mainly on men's practices and experiences of care. He is the author of *Men and the Care of Children: Images, Ideas and Identities* (2020) and co-editor of *Men and Loss: New Perspectives on Bereavement, Grief and Masculinity* (2025). He is co-editor of the journal '*Children & Society*', and the host of the 'Careful Thinking' podcast, in which he explores ideas about care in conversation with writers, researchers and practitioners at the cutting edge of current thinking about care.

