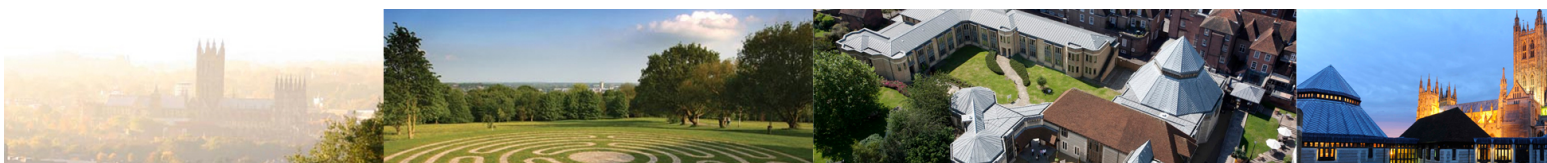


# Keynote Abstracts

**Parenting and Personhood:  
Cross-cultural perspectives on expertise,  
family life and risk management**

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016**  
**University of Kent**  
**and**  
**Canterbury Cathedral Lodge**



## Parenting and Personhood

### Family-life, expertise, and risk management

Professor Frank Furedi

Parenting practices are mediated through prevailing ideas of personhood. Such ideas inform how adult society perceives children. The growing tendency to presume that children are defined by their vulnerability has led to the promotion of initiatives that are designed to cultivate resilience, grit and character. The implications of society's unprecedented sensitivity to the 'vulnerable child' raise important questions about agency and the ideal of autonomy. This lecture will put the case for the humanising of personhood.

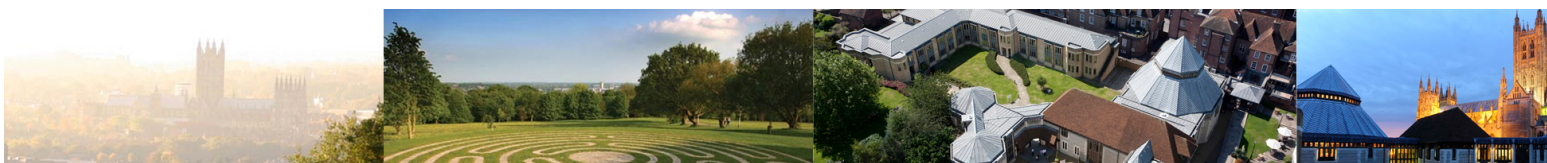
**Frank Furedi** is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent. His research is oriented towards the study of the workings of precautionary culture and risk aversion in Western societies. At present he is engaged with issues located at the border between historical and cultural sociology. After completing a study of the sociological history of authority he is now looking at the relationship between the contestation of cultural authority and literacy.

## Parenting and Difference in Cross-Cultural Perspective

### Parental determinism and risk-consciousness in Scandinavia and (South) East Asia

Dr Dil Bach

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Denmark and Singapore, this presentation demonstrates how a shared perception of an ever more competitive global future has resulted in apparently reverse educational reforms and changes in parenting norms. While politicians in Denmark prepare for the future by looking eastward and inculcating parents with academic ambitions, reform makers in Singapore try to make the country *future ready* by urging parents to stop worrying excessively about academics and instead identify more with a Western inspired psychological model for more relaxed parenting. However, a psychological model of good parenthood that has hitherto been dominant in Denmark has not meant completely relaxed parenting. Rather than competing academically, Danish parents compete on social engagement and on their children's social and creative competences. Danish parents also worry about what kind of childhood they offer their children and fear that too little, too much or simply improper parental contact will put their children's wholesome development at risk. In conclusion, this presentation stresses, that neither in Denmark, nor in Singapore, do the new parenting ideals replace the old ones. A kind of multiple risk-consciousness seems to characterize parenting in the two contexts. In Singapore as well as in Denmark, parents – especially mothers - are increasingly held responsible for both their children's wholesome development as well as their academic success. Some parents manage to live with these multiple demands in a meaningful way while others experience them as contradictory or even mutually exclusive and feel blamed as bad parents no matter what they do.



## Parenting and Difference: Motherhood and everyday geopolitics

Professor Ann Phoenix

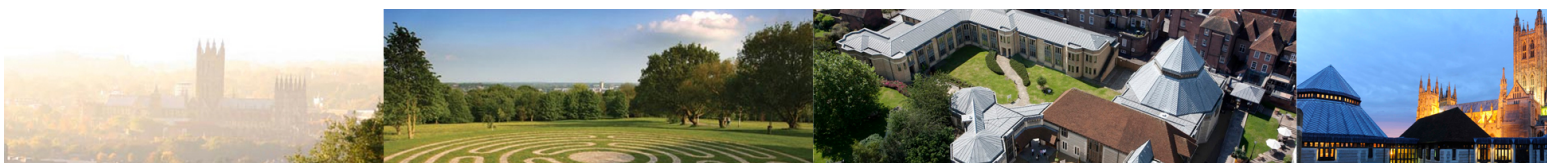
As parenting becomes ever more professionalised, so parents in the global north are increasingly expected to devote time to thinking about parenting, children's development and future outcomes. This is so much the case that parenthood is frequently constructed in totalising ways, as if 'good parents' should take responsibility for children's economic, educational and emotional wellbeing and wellbecoming. Such constructions often treat parenthood as if there is a single standard to which parents should conform, ignoring the ways in which ideas about parenting are constantly changing and intersectional differences between parents. In doing so, they render many forms of parenting invisible and obscure gendered differences.

This talk will draw on findings from a range of studies to foreground differences between parents in a range of countries. It will focus on a study of the ways in which parents from different socioeconomic groupings in India and the UK negotiate everyday environmental issues. It will also, however, consider parenting in families that differ from those currently constructed as ideal in the global north such as those who migrate, leaving their children behind, those who need their children to interpret and translate for them. Taking a broad perspective across a range of studies, and focusing particularly on motherhood, helps to illuminate the ways in which parenting is relational in gendered, temporal and generationally ways.

The paper suggests that recognition that a consideration of parenting and difference highlights ways in which geopolitics, emotional geographies and the everyday are inextricably linked (Dittmer and Gray, 2010) and the global and local are both part of the everyday relations and practices of parenting and 'childing' (Alanen, 2003) that constitutes families and identities (Morgan, 2011).

**Dil Bach** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Anthropology, Aarhus University, Denmark and is affiliated with The Danish Centre for Research in Early Childhood Education and Care, Roskilde University. For more than a decade, Bach has worked on parenting and the relation between parents and (pre)schools in Denmark and recently also in Singapore. Bach has published several articles on the topic and recently (2015) came out with a book on parenting, identity and class in Denmark. Bach has also contributed to *Children of the welfare state: Civilizing Practices in Schools, Childcare and Families* (2016, in press) and *Doing Good Parenthood* (2016, in press).

**Ann Phoenix** is Professor of Psychosocial Studies at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Department of Social Sciences, UCL Institute of Education, University of London and a Fellow of the British Academy. She co-directed the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre funded by the Department for Education and was the Principal Investigator on NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches), an ESRC National Centre for Research Methods node. Her research is mainly about social identities and the ways in which psychological experiences and social processes are linked. It includes work on racialised and gendered identities and experiences; mixed-parentage, masculinities, consumption, young people and their parents and the transition to motherhood. Much of her research draws on mixed methods and includes narrative approaches.



## Other people's children: Parenting in plural Norway

**Professor Hilde Danielsen and Dr. Synnøve Bendixsen**

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a socially mixed borough of Bergen, we will explore the making of parenting cultures in plural Norway. Migration and increased class differences bring along differentiations in access to resources and highlight the co-existence of different ideas of parenting in the same neighborhoods. What kind of persons or citizens do parents seek their children to be and become? How do they practice parenting in order to develop certain skills or traits in their children?

Cultural understandings of personhood have consequences for parents' expectations of their children, now and in the future. Investigating various conceptions of personhood among parents provides a gaze into discourses of societal challenges, and in particular current ideas of risk. We found that fostering resilient children is an ideal through which parents seek to facilitate social mobility, sustain their social class position, or counteracting the fear of failing. Furthermore, in our fieldwork we have noticed how parents pursue activities and change on behalf of not only their own children, but also the children in the neighborhood. Why and how do some parents become engaged in what we call other people's children? This engagement becomes part of creating a good neighborhood and society in which children can grow up. We suggest that the concern with other people's children becomes part of risk management, and a way of handling diversity.

**Hilde Danielsen** is a research professor with a PhD in Cultural Studies working on both historically and contemporary issues. Her research interests are intimate relationships, parenthood, reproduction and sexuality, place, identity and urban living, gender issues, equality politics, social movements and cultural perspectives on health and welfare. She is currently leading the research-project *Parenting Cultures and Risk management in Plural Norway* on how parenting cultures are formed by ethnicity, class and gender in one borough in Bergen. She was editor in chief of the *Journal for Gender Studies in Norway* 2009-2015 and was the project leader and one of three authors of the *History of Equality in Norway 1814 – 2013*. She was the editor of the book *When personal became political* (2013). Danielsen was the project leader of *Couple Courses as Public Intimacies*, where she studied ideals and practises regarding Norwegian couple sexuality, norms of equality and communication among couples and the policy concerning couple courses. Danielsen published a book on housewives in Norway in the 1950s (2002) and her PhD was a study of place making and families with children living in urban environments (2006).

**Synnøve Bendixsen** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, with a PhD from EHESS and Humboldt University. Her research interests include migration, personhood, Islam and Muslims in Europe, religiosity and urban anthropology. She has written a number of articles and book chapters, and one monograph: *The Religious Identity of Young Muslim Women in Berlin* (Brill 2013). Since 2013 she is co-editor of the *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*.

