

**ERNAPE Plenary Presentation:**

**MINDING THE GAPS BETWEEN FAMILY, HOME AND SCHOOL: Pushy or Pressurised Mummies?**

**By**

**Professor Miriam E. David,  
Director, Graduate School of Social Sciences  
& Professor of Policy Studies in Education,  
Keele University, Keele, ST5 5BG, UK**

**ABSTRACT:**

‘Minding the gaps’ is about how families - parents and children but especially mothers - cope with education markets in schools and higher education. Changes have taken place through neo-liberal regimes, including New Labour in Britain in public policies and practices in education. In this paper I am interested in exploring the ways in which these neo-liberal regimes and wider social and economic changes have affected family strategies in and about education. The paper is based upon several research projects that I have conducted with various colleagues about different aspects of choice and involvement in education. The five projects on which this paper is based explored variously parental choice of school, both primary and secondary schools in London, children and young people’s views of parental involvement in their education, young people’s perspectives on the choice processes of higher education and young people’s views about sex and relationship education in the context of early parenthood. Policy shifts have led to the public ‘gaze’ on these personal and intimate family matters.

In the paper I want to tease out especially mothers’ strategies in terms of their personal investments of time and energy, what have been variously referred to as forms of economic, emotional and social capital, as ways of coping with the new forms of risk and uncertainty. I also want to consider how these affect new generations of young women coping with their emergent lives, personal, professional and subjective identities in these neo-liberal regimes. I will conclude by considering how shifts and changes have led to more complex forms of educational and social inequalities despite the expansion and extension of educational opportunities, social and familial transformations and the creation of new learning communities.