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Editors

The Politicization of Parenthood

Shifting Private and Public Responsibilities in Education and Child Rearing

Springer

The Politicization of Parenthood

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Introduction

Sabine Andresen and Martina Richter

Parenthood has become a focus of political attention throughout our modern welfare-state societies. As economic resources become more limited, attention is shifting toward how families may contribute to the development of society as a whole and the duties they have to fulfill when rearing their children. Frequently, particular doubt is cast upon the parental competencies of families of low socioeconomic status, with the greatest concern addressing the behavior of single parent mothers or unemployed fathers. However, policymakers and the media always focus on individual behavior, thereby masking the social and, above all, the economic framing conditions of parental failure and lack of well-being.

Nonetheless, the situation of families and the well-being of children and adolescents also depend decisively on how the educational and social institutions respond to inequalities and whether they are capable of improving the life situation of those who are less privileged. Hence, what is decisive is the relation between public and familial responsibility for well-being along with the socially determined fit between both family lifestyles and child-rearing styles and institutional expectations. This brings us to the topics addressed in the present book "*The Politicization of Parenthood: Shifting Private and Public Responsibilities in Education and Child Rearing*."

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The book brings together contributions from different countries and different disciplines. It is based on an international conference held at Bielefeld University on "Mapping Families: Practices and Concepts of Children, Parents, and Professionals in All-Day Schools." This conference was financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, not only because the introduction of all-day schools in Germany has transformed the relation between families and a nationally reorganized education system, but also because policymakers are also interested in international comparisons—particularly since PISA.

The editors of this book have carried out their own comprehensive qualitative empirical study on families as actors in Germany's all-day schools. Their findings point to several central problems in the processes this involves. One particular question guided the project: How do different concepts and fields of responsibility contribute to a rearrangement and reassessment of families?

After 15-year-olds in Germany had performed so poorly in the PISA comparisons, German policymakers turned away from the traditional morning-only organization of schooling and started promoting an all-day school system with a federal program known as the *Initiative Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung* [Future initiative for education and care]. This is pursuing two political goals, although providing no guarantees for their successful implementation:

1. Easing the work–life balance, that is, allowing women to take up employment.
2. Creating equal opportunities for children from families with a low socioeconomic status and poor qualifications. This group contains many families with a migration background.

Because Germany's federal system requires each single federal state to decide on the content, structure, and curriculum of its own all-day school model with the national government having no say in this, the school landscape now shows a great variety of structures 10 years after the initiation of the program. Nonetheless, two features are almost universal:

– In almost every state, parents (and children) can choose to use an all-day provision at their child's school or to keep their child at home in the afternoon. In other words, all-day schooling is voluntary. This leads to a separation between obligatory morning lessons for all children and extracurricular education and care provisions in the afternoon, thus making a regular all-day school impossible.
– There is little coordination between the professional groups involved—teachers, childcare workers, social workers, and volunteers. In Germany, teachers belong to the education system, whereas childcare workers and social workers belong to the social welfare system. Both systems follow their own principles, and this impedes any collaboration in organizing this type of school in a way that grants recognition to all groups involved. The outcome for parents is that they cannot be sure about who is responsible for what.

With respect to the German case, we have two leading questions: How is this organized in other countries? How is the relation between voluntary offers and obligatory institutional settings?

One central determinant of the relation between the family and educational institutions, as between the family and the labor market, is gender relations and the accompanying gender-specific divisions of labor and responsibility. This is also one of the topics in the latest book by the French philosopher Elisabeth Badinter, *Le Conflit, la femme et la mère* [Conflict: The Woman and the Mother] (2010). It has triggered a major controversy in Germany, just like her earlier work *L'Amour en plus* [Mother Love: Myth and Reality] (1980). In *Le Conflit*, Badinter makes us more aware of the moral dictate of the image of the perfect mother. She analyzes how the "naturalistic offensive" in recent years has once again contributed to placing endless demands on mothers and, to remain in Badinter's framework, to subordinating the needs of the woman to those of the mother. We can see a mélange of attachment theory, new ecology, or old natural law and conservative feminism, strengthened by the economic crisis that particularly throws poorly qualified women out of the labor market—all joining together to promote the picture of the self-sacrificing mother.

Can we agree with this diagnosis? Whatever the case, the continuous expansion of all-day schools in Germany, for example, just like the gradual growth in the number of crèche places, is helping women with toddlers and elementary school children to be not just mothers but to pursue other careers as well. However, a key question in any cultural analysis is: What are the real decision-making and action options that result from this? How far are the individual mothers and fathers—and also children—able to make their own choices for their own good reasons?

Examining families always means examining them in their national contexts; their framing conditions in terms of social, familial, and labor market policy; and the freedoms granted to individual family members. This is a field for international and interdisciplinary research. If we want to map families, their internal dynamics, and their external networks in, for example, the childcare and education system or the nursing care system, in the neighborhood and community, on the labor market, or in the system of political parties and associations, we have to analyze the perspectives of the actors, their concepts and practices, their aspirations, but also their feelings of guilt. Badinter's reconstruction shows us clearly how we possess at least formally granted freedoms, but that family life is a negotiation process that has to consider competing interests and seek ways of maintaining some kind of balance. Whose interests carry more weight and have more chances of being asserted, and when and why this is the case depend strongly on the dominant relation between the genders, and this is always constrained by social conditions. However, both the generational balance of power between children and adults as well as the power divide between families and educational institutions play a major role in this. Gender, social origins, and power are accordingly coordinates of an international cartography of families. This casts light on those interfaces that are particularly relevant for children as they grow up: interfaces between families and institutions, between ideas on "good childcare" and "good child raising" among adult actors, but also interfaces between families and public institutions and decisive market interests. Both the market and politics focus particularly strongly on families, and it is not chance alone that makes them the topic of so many modernization-oriented and critical narratives of cultural decline.

One helpful perspective on this topic is to conceptualize the interaction between familial and school perspectives in terms of cultural fit (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1973). Initially introduced in the 1970s to analyze education and equal opportunity, this concept has recently regained popularity in both German-language and international discourses (Betz 2008; Büchner and Brake 2006; Ecarius and Wahl 2009; Helsper and Hummrich 2008; Jünger 2008; Lareau 2003; Vincent and Ball 2006). It provides an analytical access to the adaptability and connectivity of family and school as locations of education that is simultaneously sensitive to inequality issues.

Proceeding from the concept of cultural fit, family theory could focus on the question of family images and concepts of responsibility. Recent studies have indicated that despite the transformation processes in society, the traditional nuclear family continues to exert a powerful influence. This orientation toward the traditional, intact two-generation family with its complementary, gender-typical division of labor can be interpreted as a hegemonic family model that is still retained today (Churchill 2011, p. 53). Empirical studies reveal that paternal identities remain strongly tied to the status of the primary breadwinner, and the image of the full-time, stay-at-home mother remains "a normative reference point" for good motherhood in several European countries, North America, and Australia. However, mothers and fathers are urged not only to fulfill their traditional responsibilities but also to match the "universal adult worker, nurturing mother, and involved father" ideals (Churchill 2011, p. 53; see also Daly 2004; Maher and Saugeres 2007).

For families, sticking to this male breadwinner/female carer family model (Daly and Rake 2003, p. 139) and its attendant social norms and expectations—particularly regarding the division of labor between the genders—creates paradoxes in everyday life and family management, because it broadly contradicts contemporary family realities.

At this point, it is necessary to ask whether such a hegemonic family model continues to be so effective within the context of educational or social reforms such as the all-day school reform process, or whether change is making it necessary to assume a juxtaposition of diverging and competing family models. Initially, it could be assumed that the ideas and images of "family" not only in the families themselves, but also and particularly among professionals, will no longer follow the traditional pattern. However, our findings from the German project deliver indications to the contrary: It seems as if the hegemonic family model and the accompanying normative expectations regarding relations between the genders do not just continue to be effective in the families, but that it is particularly the professionals who retain the model of the traditional family. This is indicated by the finding that the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the reasons why a family decides to take advantage of the all-day provision is a decisive issue for professionals. They frequently continue to assume that, ideally, children are best looked after at home in the afternoons, and that afternoon schooling is neither necessary nor meaningful for a properly functioning family that is able to look after its children itself. The all-day school, in contrast, is considered to be particularly suitable for children who require supervision and help with their homework in the afternoon and would otherwise be left to fend for themselves alone in the family home.

However, hegemonic family images do not prevent exclusions or shifts in the borders of areas of responsibility. Indeed, the opposite is the case. They generate controversies and a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for which tasks in which form. This issue of the distribution of tasks and areas of responsibility between the family and the institutions addresses the attributions and adoptions of responsibility by families, teachers, childcare workers, and politicians. The task dimensions of "care," "child-rearing," and "education" and the responsibilities for individual learning processes or homework (see Ecarius and Wahl 2009; Jünger 2008; Kolbe et al. 2009; Lareau 2003; Züchner 2009) are important aspects within the politicization of families (see also Ellingsaeter and Leira 2006). This makes it all the more important to reconstruct the different "senses of responsibility" in different societies (Vincent and Ball 2006).

The present book links up systematically to these issues and presents the current state of research and discussion on the basis of different national trends and international discussions. It is divided into three parts: The first addresses "Families and the Welfare State: The Understanding of Responsibility" and thereby a broader perspective on the politicization of the family and on societal and welfare-state concepts of responsibility. The second part of the book, "Child Rearing Between Family Care and Institutional Provisions," focuses on how the actors perceive the different ratios in the mixture of familial care and extrafamilial provisions. This does not just cast light on central categories of difference such as social class, gender, and migration background. It also reveals which different levels of action are relevant and which concepts are generated within the discourse on, for example, what constitutes a "good childhood." The third part, "Meeting Parents' and Children's Needs: Professionals in Schools," focuses particularly on the challenges of compulsory schooling and the time- and content-related integration of children into daily school life. These chapters address the fit between the school and the needs of both parents and children.

Part I, "Families and the Welfare State: The Understanding of Responsibility," contains seven chapters: In her chapter "Family Policy and the Politics of Parenting: From Function to Competence," Val Gillies (London) critically discusses the moral constructions of family and shows how the focus of policy has shifted in Great Britain. Poverty of parenting is being used increasingly to explain social problem states. As a result, not only policymakers but also the mass media allocate responsibility exclusively to the parents. Nadia Kutscher's (Cologne) chapter "Families, Professionals, and Responsibility" relates to this and reflects on the discursive practices and political strategies in response to the declining birthrates in many countries. Kutscher accordingly discusses responsibility in light of a diagnosis of "demographic panic."

Anne Lise Ellingsæter's (Oslo) chapter "Nordic Politicization of Parenthood: Unfolding Hybridization?" addresses the state's attempts to politicize the family. It presents a systematic study of the historical background and the effects of Scandinavian family policy designed to promote dual earner/dual carer family models. She concludes that the well-being and care of the youngest of children is currently a central "battlefield" in most European countries.

Brid Featherstone's (Milton Keynes) chapter "Can a Crisis Become an Opportunity? Gender and Care in Contemporary Ireland" takes up the challenge of analyzing the current crisis on the financial markets and the drastic consequences this is having for Ireland. She comes to a theoretically systematic conclusion on the need to reconsider an earlier feminist discourse, namely, that on the political ethic of care. In contrast, Kristen D. Nawrotzki's (Heidelberg/London) chapter on "Parent–School Relations in England and the USA: Partnership, Problematized" reveals interesting parallels, but also marked differences between England and the United States. She shows the way in which educational inequality has become a benchmark for national politics, and she critically discusses the demand for parental involvement—a demand on parents that is also addressed by Elke Wild and Sittipan Yotyodying in Part II and studied empirically by, among others, Michael Urban, Kapriel Meser, and Rolf Werning in Part III.

In his chapter "Family and Welfare State Change: Challenges for Education," Andreas Lange (Ravensburg-Weingarten) concentrates on the question how and why child-rearing has become a central issue for political actors in modern societies. He analyzes the tension arising between the assumption that child-rearing and education are central resources and a situation, particularly in Germany, in which the education system reveals major deficits in delivering these resources. Part I closes with the chapter from Nina Oelkers (Vechta) on "The Redistribution of Responsibility Between State and Parents: Family in the Context of Post-Welfare-State Transformation." She applies a welfare theory perspective on the attribution and addressing of responsibility that reveals the stress this triggers for families, thereby reconstructing the effect of calls for activation.

Part II "Child Rearing Between Family Care and Institutional Provisions" brings together six chapters starting with a chapter based on discourse theory from Tanja Betz (Frankfurt/Main) on "Early Childhood Education and Social Inequality: Parental Models of a 'Good' Childhood." She studies parents' concepts of childhood in the interplay between early childhood and social inequality. The author then reports findings from a large-scale research project on which ideas of a "good childhood" are frequently used to guide policy, and she analyzes the effects these have in terms of generating inequality. Colette McAuley (Dublin) also addresses issues in childhood studies, but her chapter "Child Well-Being in the UK: Children's Views of Families" studies the perspectives of the children themselves. This addresses a central actor perspective that is closely linked to the concept of subjective well-being. She shows the major relevance of what families contribute to the well-being of their children on different dimensions such as relationships, time use, health, or the satisfaction of material needs.

In their chapter "The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes," Carol Vincent, Nicola Rollock, Stephen Ball, and David Gillborn (all from London) report systematically on their research into family work with the educated child (making up the middle-class child). They show which child-rearing strategies are applied in Black middle-class families, how they are applied, and why. This perspective permits a differentiated analysis of the aforementioned cultural fit between families and institutions. The chapter from Jutta Ecarius (Cologne) on "Significance

of Family and School, Educational Standards, and Social Reproduction in Education" can be read as a continuation of this theme. She applies Bourdieu's habitus concept to study the dimensions of social reproduction, the patterns of family transmission in a private space of possibilities, and the reproduction strategies of the education system. She focuses on families as locations of child-rearing and education and examines the mismatch between family habitus and institutional expectations.

Elke Wild and Sittipan Yotyodying's (both from Bielefeld) chapter examines the returns to parental involvement. "Studying at Home: With Whom and in Which Way? Homework Practices and Conflicts in the Family" draws on empirical research to call for multidimensional conceptualizations of parent involvement. They use their study of homework practices in Germany to formulate five dimensions of the quality of school-based home instruction that include parental conceptions of responsibility and parental role conceptions.

Part II closes with Christine Hunner-Kreisel's (Bielefeld) chapter on "'Having to Keep Silent': A Capabilities Perspective on Growing Up and the 'Education Process' in a Migration Family." This chapter is based on the theoretical framework of the capability approach that has also been used to conceptualize well-being. The author applies it to the issue of how the migration context influences the shaping of child-rearing processes.

Part III "Meeting Parents' and Children's Needs: Professionals in Schools" addresses the overarching issue of well-being and the relation between families and schools from the perspective of the needs of the actors. It contains eight chapters and starts with Erin McNamara Horvat's (Philadelphia) "Pushing Parents Away: The Role of District Bureaucracy in an Urban School." This presents the findings of an ethnographic study and analyzes the difficulties this reveals for parents trying to cope with bureaucratic obstacles and procedures that lack transparency. She shows how neighborhood factors, school factors, and parents' motivations interact and undermine the parental school selection process. A further ethnographic study is that reported by Till-Sebastian Idel (Bremen), Kerstin Rabenstein (Göttingen), and Sabine Reh (Berlin) in their chapter on "Symbolic Constructions, Pedagogical Practices, and the Legitimation of All-Day Schooling from a Professional Perspective: Tendencies Towards Familialization in All-Day Schools." Proceeding from the historical context of the formation of the nuclear family and public education in Germany and a systems theory inquiry into the functionality of institutions, they present findings on the transformation of school practices, with a particular emphasis on how family practices are gaining entry into the school.

The next chapters focus decisively on the school reform process in Germany since PISA, although they also pose more far-reaching questions that can be applied for comparisons from an international perspective. Nicole Börner's (Dortmund) chapter "Parents' Perspectives on Services to Support Families in All-Day Schools" asks how the reforms in the services provided in the school context can support families. She bases her study on interviews with parents whose children attend voluntary all-day schools as well as parents whose children do not attend voluntary all-day schools.

In "Parental Involvement in All-Day Special Schools for Learning Disabilities," Michael Urban (Biefefeld), Kapriel Meser (Biefefeld), and Rolf Werning (Hanover) survey the specific challenges facing special education and suggest that in many cases, professionals view the all-day school as providing a better family for the children (colonialization of the family lifeworld). Based on interviews with parents, they deliver highly informative analyses of how parents are addressed and how parental involvement is integrated into school activities and the self-image of professionals. Regina Soremski's (Gießen) chapter "Educational or Child-Rearing Partnerships: What Kind of Cooperation Is Needed at All-Day Secondary Schools?" also asks about parental involvement, but, in this case, in secondary schools, and she supplements this with an analysis of the newly forming concept of an education and child-rearing partnership. The question that emerges is whether and how such a partnership can be possible in light of the asymmetric balance of power between parents and the school.

Natalie Fischer and Felix Brümmer (both from Frankfurt/Main) adopt a completely new perspective in their chapter "School Attachment and Performance: The Impact of Participation in Extracurricular Activities at School" by asking how special provisions within the school impact on learning processes and outcomes. These provisions, which also contribute decisively to the quality of a school, are the options available for children and adolescents to participate in extracurricular activities. The authors emphasize that such activities can exert a positive influence on the school climate as well as on the students' attitude toward and commitment to the school.

Ivo Züchner (Frankfurt/Main) introduces his chapter "Daily School Time, Workforce Participation, and Family Life: Time Spent in School as a Condition of Family Life," with an idea from legal philosophy. This is because compulsory schooling and the children's right to receive education and training through the school place principal constraints on family and school life. He analyzes the relation between school time for children, working hours of women, and family life, thereby once again linking up with the idea of responsibilities in both labor market policy and welfare policy.

Part III ends with the chapter "Ideas of Family and Concepts of Responsibility at All-Day Schools" from Sabine Andresen (Frankfurt/Main), Lena Blomenkamp (Cologne), Nicole Koch (Duisburg-Essen), Martina Richter (Vechta), Anne-Dorothee Wolf (Bielefeld), and Kathrin Wrobel (Bielefeld) that reports on the research project "Familien als Akteure in der Ganztagsgrundschule" [Families as actors in the all-day elementary school]. Based on their empirical findings, the authors link up systematically with the question raised in this book on the shift in the understanding of responsibility on the side of the families and on the side of the professionals representing the educational institutions. This brings us back once again to the meaning of the images of a "good family" and a "good childhood" that were already reconstructed by Tanja Betz in Part II.

The context of shifting borders between the family and the welfare state and social and pedagogical institutions reveals major areas of tension that refer particularly to two aspects: the significance of the different parties' understanding of the family or ideas of family in their interactions, and the way they allocate tasks and

obligations to themselves and the others with the accompanying calls for the others to honor their responsibilities.

We hope that this collection of chapters will contribute to the discussion on the significance of families for the entire growing up process and the well-being of children and adolescents. We also wish to engage in a critical discourse on the way the welfare state applies attributions to certain families and family members that often function on the basis of guilt and shame, and we wish to redefine responsibility and open it up for discussion.

The end of this introduction is the place for us to express our gratitude to all our contributors and expressly thank Bettina Bundszus and Dr. Petra Gruner from the BMBF in Berlin for their support and their generous funding of the conference. We thank Asher Ben-Arieh for the opportunity to publish the book in the "Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research Series" and thereby locate it within the international context of research on well-being. We also thank the team at Springer for their support and their suggestions for the title of the book.

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Part I
Families and the Welfare State: The Understanding of Responsibility

Family Policy and the Politics of Parenting: From Function to Competence

Val Gillies

Recent years have seen governments prioritize family as a mechanism for tackling social ills. As a result, some of the most significant social changes of late have taken place within the arena of family policy, with huge consequences for families themselves. Governments have increasingly come to see families more in terms of their practices than structures and have targeted policy interventions accordingly. Reflecting an increasing professionalization of family relationships, emphasis has been placed on the need for all parents to have access to support, advice, and guidance. In this chapter, I discuss how dominant moral constructions of family have shifted away from concerns with function and structure to embrace a new policy-centred orthodoxy of "competence." I begin by outlining how in the UK, parenting was pushed to the centre stage of the social policy curriculum in line with a neoliberal emphasis on family, community, and personal responsibility (Gillies 2005, 2007). More specifically, the advent of the New Labour government in 1997 marked a distinct attempt to reposition family life as a public rather than a private concern.

In the past, intimate family relationships have tended to be viewed and represented as personal and outside the remit of state intervention. This boundary has now been challenged in an explicit and determined effort to mould and regulate individual subjectivity and citizenship at the level of the family. Parenting is no longer accepted by the British state to be a relational bond characterized by love and care. Instead, it has been reframed as a job requiring particular skills and expertise that should be taught by formally qualified professionals. A consequence of this reframing of family life is a new evaluative focus on family practices articulated

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through a discourse of proficiency or "competence." By way of evidencing this claim, I shall briefly explore some key, interrelated ways in which public understandings and expectations of family and child rearing have meaningfully shifted in a relatively short time span. The changes I discuss here relate specifically to a UK context, but similar trends can be identified in other EU nations as well as in the USA and Australia. I shall also seek to illustrate the gender- and class-specific implications of such changes to show how they work in particular to problematize and regulate mothering practices in poor households.

The Politics of Parenting

Whereas families have long been a source of concern for politicians, in the UK, the last 15 years or so have seen an explicit focus on parenting as a designated area of policy intervention (Gillies 2007). On winning electoral success in 1997, the New Labour government pledged to put parenting practice at the heart of the policy agenda in line with stated commitments to "support families" and tackle "social exclusion." Changes in contemporary family relationships and a decline in traditional values of duty and responsibility were posed as making good parenting increasingly more difficult:

> Parenting is probably the most important task any of us will undertake, yet it comes with no instructions or training. As more is known about children's needs, so parents' aspirations and uncertainties grow about how to care for and educate their children. At the same time, changing patterns of work and the breakdown of networks of family and friends, increased divorce and re-partnering rates, all combine to add to the complexities and pressures of parenting and family life. (UK government funded telephone helpline *Parentline Plus*, cited in Edwards and Gillies 2004, p. 629)

This perspective highlights increases in cohabitation, divorce and separation, lone parenting, and people living alone as evidence that isolation and individual self-interest have intensified at the expense of principles of responsibility and obligation. The values and identities associated with family life are regarded as having been undermined, thereby weakening social ties and damaging societal cohesion more generally.

While ostensibly distancing themselves from punitive family policies associated with previous Conservative governments, New Labour developed a social democratic critique of individualism, borrowing from the work of communitarian philosophers such as John Macmurray (1995) and Amitai Etzioni (1994). According to this doctrine, social cohesion is a key component of economic and personal wellbeing. However, a prevailing "me-first" mentality is undermining the cooperation and reciprocity necessary to sustain strong families and communities. In order to address this perceived threat, this "third way" philosophy aimed to balance individual rights with social responsibility through a contingent emphasis on both liberty and personal obligation. In pursuing this apparently contradictory aim, moralistic ideals of obligation, duty, and family values are stressed alongside principles

associated with Anthony Giddens' (1998) and Ulrick Beck's (1997) claims about the inevitability of change and the democratization of personal relationships. This translates into a seemingly paradoxical desire to reinforce the traditional family while simultaneously encouraging negotiation and choice (Deacon and Mann 1997). However, as close analysis of New Labour family policy shows, these opposing principles formed the basis for a new kind of interventionism characterized by explicit and implicit attempts to control and regulate the conduct of families.

Over their 15-year rule, a whole panoply of interventions were implemented by New Labour with the intention of advising and guiding parents. The result was a major expansion of state-sponsored and third-sector initiatives directly targeting families under the rubric of "parenting support." In the wake of the global financial crisis and a subsequent change of government in 2010, significant cuts were made to the public funding of such services, but the principle of family intervention as a core policy tool has remained strong, characterized by cross-party political consensus. In the context of the serious financial challenges facing the British economy, there is general agreement that in order to tackle social problems, the state must take greater responsibility for fostering and enforcing the practice of good parenting. This broad policy framework has led to some remarkable and rapid changes in the ways family is now represented, understood, and lived.

Public–Private Boundaries

A particularly notable yet underdiscussed change in the meanings attached to family relates to the ways in which the UK governments have successfully redrawn cultural conceptualizations of family boundaries. During the last 15 years, the state has presided over a remarkably aggressive attempt to reposition family life as a public rather than a private concern. Prior to the first New Labour government in 1997, legislation and sensibilities positioned everyday personal and family life as largely outside the remit of state intervention. This view is now consistently and explicitly challenged through a moral focus on children as the most important constituents of family life. In policy literature and public debates, the minutiae of everyday family and parenting practices are now systematically linked to "outcomes" for the child using psychologically informed cause and effect models. The focus is resolutely directed towards the significance of home and family life in determining future success, and away from structural and economic factors. It is widely claimed that to address inequality and its negative social consequences, child rearing must be repositioned as a public rather than a private concern, and that the state must take responsibility for fostering and enforcing the practice of good parenting. For example, the Conservative-led coalition government came to power in 2010 and soon after commissioned a review into child poverty that concluded:

> We have found overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those

crucial years that together matter more to children than money in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life. The things that matter most are a healthy pregnancy; good maternal mental health; secure bonding with the child; love and responsiveness of parents along with clear boundaries, as well as opportunities for a child's cognitive, language and social and emotional development. (Field 2010, p. 5)

Recommendations from the report included more intensive intervention from pregnancy and through the early years of a child's life, focusing on the poorest families in particular. In a simultaneous review into the early intervention as a policy approach, it was asserted that:

Early Intervention is an approach which offers our country a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long-term savings in public spending. It covers a range of tried and tested policies for the first three years of children's lives to give them the essential social and emotional security they need for the rest of their lives. It also includes a range of well-established policies for when they are older which leave children ready to face the challenges of each stage of childhood and of passage into adulthood—especially the challenge of becoming good parents to their own children. (Allen 2011, p. vii)

The extent to which public policy has been consistently pursuing a highly interventionist agenda in relation to family and parenting has been well documented (Furedi 2008; Lind and Keating 2008). Notably, this challenge to public–private divisions encompasses organizations and institutions as well as families. For example, legislation championing "family-friendly" policies in the workplace has been introduced forcing employers to facilitate caring responsibilities through provision of flexible working and unpaid leave, while institutions and services are routinely encouraged to consider the needs of families. To some extent, this has built on and extended long-standing maternity and paternity rights enshrined in law.

A clearer and more striking example of this transformation in the construction of state/family relations concerns the semipermeable boundaries that are now expected to be maintained between family homes and schools. Whereas education was once viewed very separately from family care, the domains of the teacher and parent have become far less distinct in recent years. Parental involvement in a child's education is now presented as an essential practice, alongside an expectation that opportunities for educational development in the home will consistently be provided. As Maryellen Schaub (2010) notes of the US context, parents have became increasingly involved in activities designed to aid their children's cognitive development, to the extent that it has now become a normative practice. In the UK, this relatively new parental duty has been explicitly set out in government policy documents. Schools have been encouraged to draw up contractual style "Home School Agreements" that both parents and teachers are expected to sign. These documents can specify the exact nature of the educational input that is required from home, detailing, for example, the number of hours parents are expected to read to children and the written feedback that must be passed back to the teacher. Home School Agreements were originally introduced by a New Labour government, and proposals were drawn up with a view to making them legally enforceable before the change of office in 2010. They remain common practice in British schools.

Whereas parents have additional pedagogic responsibilities, UK schools have been charged with a range of duties more traditionally associated with family practices. These changes were enacted through several legislative and policy developments, most notably the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) framework, introduced through the Children Act 2004. This legislation expanded the remit of schools beyond that of educating to encompass child and family welfare imposed through a legal duty to recognize and safeguard vulnerable children on their register. Teachers are now expected to work with a range of professionals to monitor children's development and intervene where necessary. Yet, as many commentators have pointed out, the focus of this concern does not extend to addressing the pervasive and engrained structural inequality driving outcomes for children (Hoyle 2008; Simon and Ward 2010). Whereas social and economic disadvantage is articulated in terms of risk, ECM focuses instead on "protective" interpersonal factors such as strong parent–child relations, parental involvement with education, availability of appropriate role models, and self-esteem.

Changes to school curriculums have also underlined the new responsibilities accorded to teachers in securing the appropriate development of their pupils.

A nationwide schools initiative, termed *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL), is currently operating at primary and secondary levels in British schools, with the aim of providing "a whole-curriculum framework and resource for teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills to all pupils" (Department for Education and Skills 2005, p. 12). As a result, teachers are now expected to address personal and relational aspects of pupils' lives without recourse to parents. Activities aimed at developing "emotional literacy" are built into the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. Pupils are also taught how to negotiate and manage social relationships with peers, family members, and other adults.

The Rise of "Parenting"

This legislative and cultural blurring of the boundary between public and private reflects a fundamental change in the meaning and significance that has subsequently become attached to the term "parent." Drawing on a historical analysis comparing archived interviews from British community studies conducted in the 1960s with contemporary accounts of family reveals some dramatic differences in the understandings of child rearing over this time period (see Gillies and Edwards 2011). In the 1960s, "parenting" was not a commonly used term. Instead, "parents" described themselves as mothers or fathers and viewed this in terms of an ascribed relationship or identity. In contemporary times, the word parent has taken on a whole new significance as a verb. Mothers and fathers now "parent" children, and this task is loaded with moral and practical consequences. Current perspectives tightly tie the well-being of society (and that of individual children) to family practices and the particular parenting techniques pursued. A crucial feature of this change is a reframing of child rearing as a job requiring particular know-how and aptitude.

Policymakers have sought to establish parenting as a complex skill that must be learnt. "Knowledge" about child rearing is now portrayed as a necessary resource that parents need to access in order to fulfil their moral duty as good parents.

Christina Hardyment (2007) has documented the long history of child-rearing advice and manuals and shown how they have reflected often widely diverging philosophies. However, recent times have seen the emergence of a whole new industry and matching workforce with the aim of promoting "good parenting." The notion that there could and should be consensus over what counts as good parenting is regularly justified through reference to scientific evidence. For example, longitudinal surveys following large numbers of children across time, such as the Millennium Cohort Study,[1] are often cited as evidence that middle-class values and practices correlate with positive outcomes and life chances. In 2007, the publicly funded National Academy for Parenting Practitioners was set up in the UK with a remit to provide "evidence-based" training for parenting professionals. The major focus of the Academy was on the delivery of parenting classes that detail, amongst other things, how to play with children, praise them appropriately, handle misbehaviour, and develop their educational potential. Whereas the NAPP eventually became a casualty of public sector cuts, its legacy was a general acceptance amongst policymakers and practitioners that parenting can and should be taught as a technical expertise.

Working-class parents in particular have felt the sharp end of this policy preoccupation with parenting. For those identified as the "deeply excluded" in the UK, parenting intervention is not optional. Policy documents state that these parents should be offered support but note it is also incumbent on them to take this support. Those who fail to accept such interventions are viewed as morally compromised and warranting of ever greater use of compulsion such as fines and imprisonment. In the UK, interventions designed to force certain parents to attend classes and adhere to particular rules have been developed and expanded through a range of legislative acts. Much of the impetus behind this approach derives from an explicit linking of "antisocial behaviour" and public disorder to parenting deficits. Without help, poor parents are seen as destined to transmit their cultural deficits, thereby sustaining crime and disadvantage through an intergenerational "cycle of deprivation" (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004). In pursuing this reasoning, parenting interventions are targeted towards the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society in order to "save" the next generation.

This approach was pioneered by past New Labour governments but has been embraced enthusiastically by an incoming Conservative-led coalition government in 2010. In a speech on social mobility, the UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has explicitly claimed that "parenting not poverty shapes a child's destiny," declaring "we must not remain silent on what is an enormously important issue. Parents hold the fortunes of the children they bring into this world in their hands. All parents

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[1]See www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/text.asp?section=000100020001 for details.