

parents have an obligation to promote their children's best interest, and develop skills and competencies. It's not sufficient to prevent harm, but it's also expected that parents give their children a good childhood.

In contrast is the rationale and genealogy of policies and practices that perceive children as individuals here and now, as something different from, but equally valuable, as adults. These policies are concerned with the quality of children's childhood, stating as Finland and Norway do, that it's a social justice issue to make sure children are treated with respect and are given a loving upbringing. These states promote a happy and caring childhood, securing children the same rights granted others, aiming to give children in the child welfare system the same opportunities as other children in society.

Children are seen not so much as future workers, but as current citizens. This perspective reflects the fact that all of the countries studied in this book, except the United States, have ratified the UN Convention of Children's Rights (CRC) of 1989, which on a formal level implies that children have social, political, and legal rights. Since the mid-1990s, a number of countries have made particular efforts to secure national legislation that is in accordance with the CRC, as in Netherlands in 2001 and in Norway in 2003. Belgium considers all legislation in accordance with the CRC, and the Supreme Court in Canada made it illegal to use physical discipline on children (spanking laws) due to the CRC. Such efforts make sure children's rights are not merely varnish, but have real impact on how decisions are made in courts and in front-line child protection agencies.

The strong standing of children's rights is particularly evident in the right to participate, understood as children's active input and involvement in decisions that concern their lives. All of the countries in this book have legislation that gives children opportunities to participate and for their voices to be heard in matters concerning them. For example, in Norway, the views and opinions of children aged 7 years and older are taken into account, as are those of all children in England who are capable of expressing their opinions. Interestingly, even though the United States has not ratified the CRC, children's right to participate has a strong standing in the child welfare system. Children have a right to their own lawyer to make sure their voices are heard. In addition, several arrangements have developed (e.g., guardian ad litem, next friend) to make sure the child's best interests are taken into consideration (cf. Peters, 2007). Child participation is a matter that has gained increased attention in research and is becoming an important aspect in child welfare work. This implies that decision-makers shall both hear children and "weigh" their views according to age and maturity, and hence that formal rights are intended to have an impact on practice. From our point of view, this is a strong indicator that more states are treating children as individuals with opinions about their own life, and not only as a part of a family. Although children are seen as important in their own right and clearly having an existence independent of the family, the reasons and rationale for perceiving them as future workers or as current citizens are

different and have different implications for policy and practice. In particular, these perspectives influence how much priority and influence is seriously allotted to the views of children.

The child-focused orientation puts children's rights above parents rights, and emphasizes parents obligations as caregivers. The child welfare system provides services to promote children's needs and well-being, but in return demands change and results on behalf of the child. In Table 12.2, we outline the dimensions of the child-focused orientation together with those of the family service and child protection orientations.

We are not suggesting that these dimensions form discrete models, hence our preference for the idea of "orientations." The orientations can be seen to range along a continuum from a more laissez-faire neo-liberal approach that emphasizes the watchdog functions of government to the more social democratic approach that advances policies associated with defamilialization. However, although some countries might emphasize one of the orientations more than another in their approaches to child maltreatment, all of the countries contain

Table 12.2: Role of the State Vis-à-Vis Child and Family in Orientations to Child Maltreatment: Child Focus, Family Service, and Child Protection

	Child Focus	Family Service	Child Protection
Driver for intervention	The individual child's needs in a present and future perspective; society's need for healthy and contributory citizens	The family unit needs assistance	Parents being neglectful and abusive toward children (maltreatment)
Role of the state	Paternalistic/defamilialization—state assumes parent role; but seeks to refamilialize child by foster home/kinship care/adoption	Parental support; the state seeks to strengthen family relations	Sanctioning; the state functions as "watchdog" to ensure child's safety
Problem frame	Child's development and unequal outcomes for children	Social/psychological (system, poverty, racism, etc.)	Individual/moralistic
Mode of intervention	Early intervention and regulatory/need assessment	Therapeutic/needs assessment	Legalistic/investigative
Aim of intervention	Promote well-being via social investment and/or equal opportunity	Prevention/social bonding	Protection/harm reduction
State-parent relationship	Substitutive/partnership	Partnership	Adversarial
Balance of rights	Children's rights/parents' responsibility	Parents' rights to family life mediated by professional social workers	Children's/parents' rights enforced through legal means