



Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930 (Women in American History)

Molly Ladd-Taylor

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Early in the twentieth century, maternal and child welfare evolved from a private family responsibility into a matter of national policy. Women played the central role in this development. In *Mother-Work*, Molly Ladd-Taylor explores both the private and public aspects of childrearing, using the direct relationship between them to shed new light on the histories of motherhood, the welfare state, and women's activism in the United States. Mother-work, defined as women's unpaid work of reproduction and caregiving, was the motivation behind women's public activism and maternalist ideology. Ladd-Taylor emphasizes the connection between mother-work and social welfare politics by showing that their mothering experiences led women to become active in the development of public health, education, and welfare services. In turn, the advent of these services altered mothering experiences in a number of ways, including by reducing the infant mortality rate. By examining women's activism in organizations including the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations, the U.S. Children's Bureau, and the National Woman's Party, Ladd-Taylor dispels the notion of mother-work as a contradictory term and clarifies women's role in the development of the American economic system.

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