



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 22

Issue 1 March - Special Issue on Social Work
with Minority and Ethnic Groups

Article 21

March 1995

Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930.

Molly Ladd-Taylor.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

(1995) "*Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930.* Molly Ladd-Taylor.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol22/iss1/21>

This Book Note is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



discussion of the images of women in traditional. Christian theology, and den Uyl's analysis of Malinowski's explanation of the sexuality of Trobriand islanders make engaging reading.

Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890–1930*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994. \$39.95 hardcover.

A substantial body of scholarly research into the sociological, political and economic factors responsible for the development of 'welfare states' in the Western industrial countries has now been published. Many distinguished social scientists have contributed to this research, attributing the emergence of the welfare state to factors ranging from the 'logic of industrialization' to the conspiratorial motives of capitalists who seek to use social policies to subdue a potentially turbulent labor force. Despite its significance, this research has neglected gender. The fact that the welfare state was designed primarily for males in industrial wage-employment has only recently been emphasized, and it was with the publication of Theda Skocpol's book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Harvard University Press, 1992) that the role of women and women's organizations in promoting social policies has been given adequate attention.

Molly Ladd-Taylor's book makes an important contribution to the growing body of literature dealing with the role of women in the creation of the welfare state. Ladd-Taylor takes Skocpol's research further by analyzing in meticulous detail the many women's organizations that campaigned for the extension of public social services. Conventional explanations of the origins of the welfare state as a product of impersonal societal *forces* impinging on male dominated governments to facilitate the emergence of a variety of social programs, will have to be recast to incorporate the feminist explanation articulated in Ladd-Taylor's work. As Ladd-Taylor reveals, a variety of women's groups inspired by maternalist ideology made a crucial contribution to the development of social policy. Her book deserves to be widely read and widely cited in future theoretical work on the origins of the modern welfare state.