



Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care after the Second World War (Gender and American Culture)

Emilie Stoltzfus

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During World War II, American women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, and many of them relied on federally funded child care programs. At the end of the war, working mothers vigorously protested the termination of child care subsidies. In *Citizen, Mother, Worker*, Emilie Stoltzfus traces grassroots activism and national and local policy debates concerning public funding of children's day care in the two decades after the end of World War II.

Using events in Cleveland, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and the state of California, Stoltzfus identifies a prevailing belief among postwar policymakers that women could best serve the nation as homemakers. Although federal funding was briefly extended after the end of the war, grassroots campaigns for subsidized day care in Cleveland and Washington met with only limited success. In California, however, mothers asserted their importance to the state's economy as "productive citizens" and won a permanent, state-funded child care program. In addition, by the 1960s, federal child care funding gained new life as an alternative to cash aid for poor single mothers.

These debates about the public's stake in what many viewed as a private matter help illuminate America's changing social, political, and fiscal priorities, as well as the meaning of female citizenship in the postwar period.

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