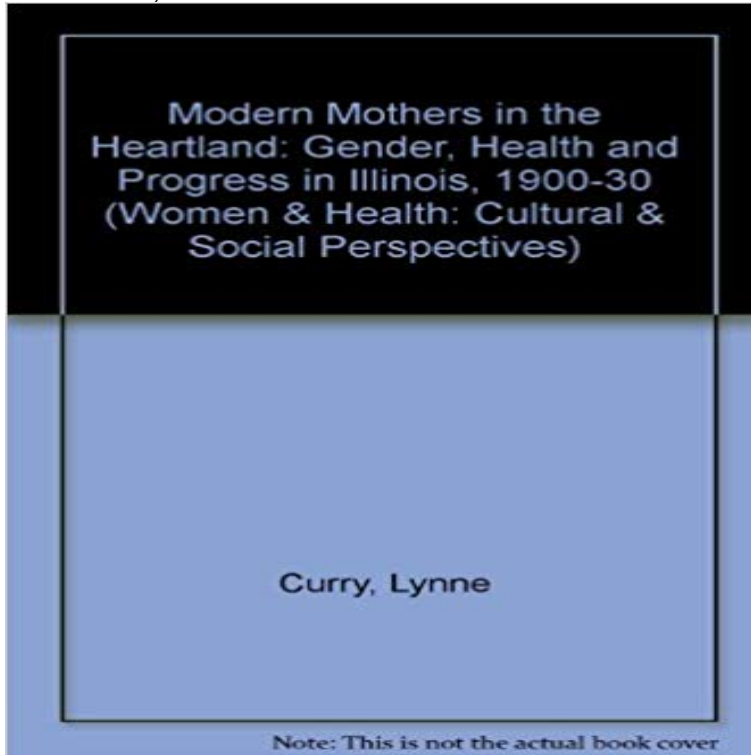


Modern Mothers in the Heartland: Gender, Health, and Progress in Illinois, 1900-1930



In the early twentieth century, ambitious social welfare campaigns linked the improvement of health to the broader aim of modernizing American life. Lowered mortality rates, especially among infants and young children, became for reformers a barometer by which to measure society's overall progress. To date, most analyses of Progressive Era child welfare movements have concentrated on urban areas in the Northeast and the national leadership role played by the Children's Bureau. *Modern Mothers in the Heartland*, in contrast, shifts the focus to the Midwest. Illinois provides an interesting case study because its rates of infant and maternal mortality tended to be higher than those of other midwestern states, and Chicago's rates were consistently higher than those of other major industrial centers. Drawing on local and state sources to reconstruct the nature of maternal and child health work, Lynne Curry highlights the interactive character of health reform: policy makers, clients of community health services, practitioners, and the volunteers who worked with them negotiated the final outcomes of the campaigns stated aims. Situating maternal and child health reform in its historical and regional context, this study uses information about Illinois's distinctive social, economic, and political history -- even its geography -- to enhance the analytical picture.

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