

Chapter 2

Feminism and the Development of Early Childhood Education in Australia

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Abstract Feminism has multiple definitions and even more manifestations, but many women working in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century for the development of early childhood education in Australia were undeniably feminists, part of what has been called the “first wave of feminism” (Krolokke and Sorenson 2006). This chapter looks at the views and activities of some of these women who were prominent in the establishment of kindergartens in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Whilst active in the women’s suffrage movements, they also advocated innovative views of education which were only just being explored in Britain and the USA. Examining their views on education give an insight into the kind of feminism they represented. Debates on women’s suffrage were relatively straightforward and indeed women’s suffrage was established remarkably early in Australia. Debates in the field of early childhood at the time, though cutting edge in terms of educational theory, were more complex in practice. The debates were often about philosophies of education, control of educational institutions, and the necessity or otherwise for training early childhood teachers and the kind of character appropriate to such teachers. One writer has argued that these debates “exemplified the issues that fractured the field of early childhood education for most of the twentieth century” (Whitehead 2010, p. 87). The fractures manifest themselves in the “second wave of feminism” in the 1970s where childcare provision was a major concern. Bitter disputes on the value of childcare between different sections of the early childhood field meant that during this second wave of feminism there was no strong united voice for feminism from the early childhood field.

Keywords Feminisms • Australian history early childhood • Progressive education • Maternalism and early childhood • Splits in early childhood feminist views

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to look at a few of the key persons who played roles in establishing institutions for the care and education of young children, in Australia particularly in New South Wales (NSW), South Australia and Victoria in the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries, exploring the kinds of feminism espoused by these figures and connecting decisions made during that period to later expressions of feminism in the early childhood movement. It has been noted before (Brennan 1998, p. 14) that several important figures in the kindergarten movement were also significant in campaigns for women's suffrage. It is the contention of this chapter that this was no accidental connection and that further exploration of the political philosophies and philosophies of education influencing the early kindergarten movement in the Australian colonies throws light on the kinds of feminism embraced by these key players.

The term 'feminism' has multiple definitions and even more manifestations. hooks (2000) adopted the following definition: "Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. 1). But the quest for simplicity failed, first because the meaning of sexism is itself problematic and second because hooks was using this definition partly as a way of bringing men who were opposed to sexism into the fold of feminism, a move that not all agreed with. In the late nineteenth century the understanding of feminism may seem less complex. The term gained currency, according to Haslanger et al. (2012), as part of the struggle for women's suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two of the colonies of Australia gained suffrage very early, South Australia in 1894 and West Australia in 1899. The Australian Federal Constitution 1902 gave, to our shame, all non-indigenous Australian women (Wilson and McKeown 2003) the vote.¹ One prominent Australian feminist, Goldstein (1910), writing just a few years later, gave an explanation of this relatively rapid success in achieving women's suffrage in Australia. Goldstein (1910) explained that there were numerous and diverse groups fighting for reforms, such as temperance societies, societies for the protection of children, groups wanting to change the age of consent, others wanting to change divorce laws and to give women equal custody of children and equal pay for equal work. Goldstein (1910) pointed out that it was only by persuading these diverse groups to put women's suffrage on the top of the list that these other objectives had any hope of being achieved. She cites a member of parliament who "said frankly, 'I would sooner speak to five men with votes than to five hundred women without them.' [After achieving suffrage] five women are as important as five men" (Goldstein 1910, p. 10). Education, particularly education of

¹The history of Australian indigenous women suffrage is complex. The Australian constitution of 1902 gave the vote to all women who already had the vote in their state. This included only indigenous women in South Australia and Western Australia. It was not until the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act of 1983 that indigenous people in Australia were formally recognized for voting purposes on the same bases as non-indigenous (Norberry and Williams 2002).

the very young and education for women were significant inclusions on these lists for reform.

One woman actively fighting for reform on several fronts was Maybanke Selfe-Wolstenholme-Anderson. Deserted by her first husband in 1884 and left with three sons to support, she set up a very successful school. By 1891 she was vice-president of the *Women's Suffrage League of New South Wales*, and in 1895 assisted in setting up the first free kindergarten in Woolloomooloo in NSW. She worked with the *Kindergarten Union of New South Wales*, and was secretary of the *Playgrounds Association of NSW*. She worked for the reform of the divorce laws and benefitted from these reforms when she was able to divorce the husband who had deserted her and marry Francis Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University. Anderson is a useful source since her voluminous writings, published first under the name Wolstenholme, the name of her first husband and later the name Anderson, cover the period from the 1880s to 1920s. The topics range over working women, vaccinations, the eight hour day, sex education, teacher training, women beggars, midwife training, free love and of course many aspects of both women's suffrage and of kindergartens. She saw no tensions between these many concerns. Rather they were all part of an integrated view of a progressive society, a society in which women played a powerful role.

What role was kindergarten to play in this ideal society? In an interesting study of the diffusion of the Froebelian kindergarten through many cultures and geographical settings Wollons (2000) asserts: "Whether as a part of large compulsory schools systems or as small private enterprises, the kindergarten is a politicized institution, directly linked to the goals of the state in the formation of national identity, citizenship, and moral values" (p. 2). Other writers make similar points (e.g., Boreham 1996). Certainly much of the discourse about kindergartens and the fact that kindergartens in Sydney and Melbourne were so often set up in areas which would serve the poor and neglected child, would seem to support the thesis that the function of kindergartens was to train the lower classes to be subservient workers. Add to this the fact that many of the most active and effective workers for kindergartens had power through their social connections, Anderson through her university connections, others, for example Mrs Alfred Deakin, wife of the first Prime Minister of Australia and first president of the *Kindergarten Union* in Melbourne, through government and society connections. The activities of the kindergarten movement could easily be construed as control exercised by the socially powerful over the poor, as philanthropy with strong class control.

A study of Maybanke Anderson's writing, however, throws into doubt this view that the purposes of early kindergarten advocates were mainly philanthropic. She explains, the "policy which made philanthropy go hand in hand with education has been justified from the beginning. A cry for reform in education would have been at that time unheeded, but it was comparatively easy to arouse interest in the conditions of neglected children, and the imminent dangers of larrikinism" (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 214). In other words, education was their main interest but to obtain the necessary funds to establish kindergartens, they used the threat to social order posed by undisciplined "larrikins" as part of their propaganda. And to use the word

“education” could lead to an underestimation of the kind of education they were referring to. While Maybanke Anderson did talk about production of citizens, these were not to be citizens who were unquestioningly compliant with the state. One education commissioner recently returned from a tour of Europe and America was enthusiastic about kindergartens explaining that “Kindergarten will introduce a new spirit... It encourages a child to think for itself. ...If as primary school teachers say, pupils from a Kindergarten are for a time hard to manage, it is true also that they afterwards become the most tractable, because their mind culture has made them able to see the need for discipline” (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 222).² Some critics at the time were in fact concerned that children were being educated “above their station” and argued that education “unfits people to become servants” (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 214). The purposes and possibly the effects of this kindergarten approach was to produce active citizens, not subservient workers, though indeed Maybanke Anderson also wanted to recognize that work was honourable.

To gain a better understanding of the nature of the education being promoted by those like Maybanke Anderson, it is necessary to look further at both the social context and theoretical influences of the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century all the Australian colonies passed Acts to establish compulsory education, to provide a predominantly secular curriculum and to withdraw public money from denominational schools (Campbell 2014). A variety of educational theories, most originating from parts of Europe, were being explored and interpreted. Preeminent among these as far as kindergarten was concerned were the theories of Friedrich Froebel, whose influence spread, as described by Wollons (2000), not just in Christian English-speaking countries, but to Muslim Turkey, Buddhist China, Buddhist/Shinto Japan and also to Russia and Vietnam (p. 6). Of course there were multiple interpretations of his theories, including interpretations of his “gifts”—a cube, a sphere and a cylinder—and the “occupations”—paper cutting, modelling with clay and drawing—the latter sometimes being thought to help with hand/eye coordination and therefore as good preparation for manual workers. This was very far from Froebel’s understanding of both a cognitive and a spiritual significance in these objects and activities.

Other parts of Froebel’s theories are also open to interpretation, controversy and disagreement—his emphasis on learning by doing, the important role he sees for mothers, and his insistence that kindergarten teachers needed quite extensive training. The two latter aspects are particularly important in considering the kind of feminism expressed by the early kindergartners in NSW, South Australia and Victoria.

²There is an interesting echo of this in the later period of feminism where primary school teachers complained that child care graduates were hard to manage (see Seyfort 2007).

Maternalism and the Early Childhood Movement in Late Nineteenth Century

To modern and postmodern feminists the linking of mother and child so closely may well raise alarm bells. One such feminist is Susan Moller Okin who argued in the 1980s that the kinds of injustices suffered by women were related to the division between the private world of the family and the public world of politics and work. Women's vulnerability, she argued, was related to the gendered operation of the family (Okin 1989). Her definition of gender is "the deeply entrenched institutionalization of sexual difference" (Okin 1989, p. 6). Women were socialized to be the persons primarily responsible for work in the home, but this work in the private sphere of the home, though essential to the economy, was not recognized and not valued in the public world. Okin (1989) argues for the "genderless family":

It is more just to women; it is more conducive to equal opportunity both for women and for children of both sexes; and it creates a more favourable environment for the rearing of citizens of a just society (p. 183).

In Okin's (1989) view differences between men and women had to be played down. Froebel however stressed, as did many nineteenth century philosophers, the difference of women. For Froebel maternal interactions were important for the well being of all children. His *Mother Play* was translated into many languages and certainly adopted by the early kindergartners in many countries, including the Australian colonies. In similar spirit, though without so much stress on mothers, Anderson (1902/2001c) published *Australian Songs for Australian Children*. Froebel appeals to "nature" to explain the close link of mother and baby, but when the children begin to utter words, "the education of man, at this stage is wholly committed to the mother, the father, the family to those to whom by nature, the child still forms an undivided whole" (Froebel 1916, p. 63). Here there is a supposed natural link with the father also. There is not here the sharp division between the mother as the affective carer to be contrasted with the father as the authoritative rational educator, a distinction found in some other nineteenth century theorists of education (Davis 2011).

But for all his emphasis on nature, Froebel argued that education for the new society was too important to be left to natural instincts and required extensive training (Allen 2000). He wanted his kindergartens to be a unifying factor in society by being available for all classes and rejected the "condescending philanthropic approach" (Allen 1986, p. 437) of the day care societies of his time which were directed at controlling the children of the poor. Froebel's aim was not to produce social or religious conformists but individuals who could think for themselves while recognizing how they could contribute to the wider society. Froebel was critical of solely home-based childrearing partly because it was so often given over to young nursemaids and partly because of its lack of social vision and narrow religious outlook (Allen 2000).

There is little in Maybanke Anderson's writings portraying a romantic naturalism about motherhood. True, in the journal *A Woman's Voice*, established by her in 1894, she speaks of kindergarten trained women as being "remarkably useful wives" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001a, p. 168), and later she does speak of "the training of the child" as the "natural work of women" (Anderson 1913/2001b, pp. 228–232). However as early as 1895 she was arguing "many married women, exhausted mentally, physically and morally, by the bearing of a large family, and details of home life, are unable to do their fair share of public and social work" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001c, p. 104) and was already proposing cooperative housing to free women from the isolation and burdens of a single household, the establishment of "one cooperative home, with a few families, a kindergarten nursery, and a kitchen managed to supply the needs of the whole establishment" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001c, p. 105). She seems to have been aware of and sympathetic to at least some aspects of the socialist theories of the nineteenth century.

The overwhelming concern of her writing is about the unfair differences between women and men, not so much their natural differences, but differences brought on by social circumstances. She knew from personal circumstances the difficulties of being in an unhappy marriage, and she took steps to change the situation for herself and other women through working for divorce reform. Again from personal circumstances she knew the difficulties of single mothers having to work to support children. She dealt with the challenge, this time by opening a school in her own house. But her concerns went beyond her own circumstances, covering sex education, equal pay, working conditions and job opportunities for women, prison reform, many aspects and stages of education, as well as of course women's suffrage. In each of these cases she was trying, sometimes successfully, to bring about a change to women's social condition. She was working to give them the powers and rights that men already held. She recognized that this would involve structural change. In an article entitled *Women and Capital* she proposed a women's cooperative to which "wage earning women" would contribute. She notes that the clothes-making industry had been in the hands of women, but had been taken over by the superior monetary power of men "The claim to equality will not tell while the commercial power is all in the hands of men" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001b, p. 170). There are echoes here of the Owenite feminists³ earlier in the nineteenth century, reference to which causes some uneasiness about referring to the suffragettes of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as the "first" wave of feminism.

Anderson could be described as maternalist in that she saw women contributing something special and different to the education of children, a difference partly imaged in the mother's first interactions with the child. But she was not the kind of maternalist who would restrict women's place essentially to the home, though she

³Feminist socialist who were followers of Robert Owen (see Taylor 1991).

was realistic in believing that many, perhaps most, women would marry and many middle class women would leave the workforce because of this. In her eyes, women played a public role even while raising children both because they were educating the future citizens, and importantly by exercising their vote. However, she proposed extensive reforms going beyond even suffrage which would enable women to lead a more public life.

Training of Preschool Teachers

As noted above, Froebel believed kindergarten teachers should receive extensive training. The fact that there has been from the late nineteenth century in Australia an emphasis on preschool teachers being trained has been noted by commentators (Clyde 2000). Harrison (1985) records that the Sydney Kindergarten Training College had a three-year training program for kindergarten teachers from 1898, whereas, it was not until 1976 that a three-year program was required for elementary school teachers (p. 6). Maybanke Anderson argued in 1885 that “there should be systematic teaching of theory, as well as thorough supervision of practice, strict examinations at stated periods, and formal bestowal of certificates” (Wolstenholme 1895/2001d, p. 211). In her 1911 account of the development of the kindergarten union in New South Wales she describes the early development of a training board, lectures and examinations. Examinations and certificates were important both as guarantees of standards and as indicators of the complexity of the work. They also had the effect of providing public recognition of kindergarten teaching as a profession, thus increasing women’s opportunities for professional work. A similar situation had occurred in Germany; Allen (2000), referring to the German situation, states, “The kindergarten was by no means the first early childhood institution to employ women teachers... but it was the first to link early childhood education explicitly to doctrines of female emancipation and professionalism” (p. 20). For women this was an important step forward.

A New Education?

Froebel proposed a system complete with a philosophy of education covering the entire period of schooling, a method, a particular concept of childhood and a plan for social reform. This whole package was of interest to the feminist educators of the late nineteenth century. The *Kindergarten Union* deliberately sought out international influences to establish Froebelianism in NSW. Margaret Windeyer, secretary to *National Council of Women in Australia* visited America in 1895 and provided her friend Maybanke Anderson with the Annual Report of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association of San Francisco. Another German influence on the

Sydney education scene was Miniuska Scheer from Hamburg who ran a kindergarten in the Wesleyan Ladies College and was later influential in the setting up of the *Kindergarten Union*. Scheer had trained in Hamburg and according to Harrison (1985), “it was said she had been a pupil of Froebel in the last classes he conducted” (p. 10). The search for the first principal of the training college involved “long and tedious” (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 216) correspondence with both England and America, finally settling on Ridie Lee Buckey who had graduated from the Chicago Normal School in 1895 (Prochner 2009, p. 201), where there was a group of very influential Froebelians. It was also a time when John Dewey, at the University of Chicago, was “intensely interested” (Shapiro 1983, p. 155) in the kindergarten movement, and a time when Cook County Normal School was a “Mecca of Progressive Education” (Knoll 2015, p. 208). The first words of Dewey’s Pedagogic Creed were “I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth” (Dewey 1897, n.p.). Dewey recognized the importance of Froebel, acknowledging him as the first to see the child’s mind as “an instrument of knowing” (cited in Shapiro 1983, p. 156). He also admired his linking of learning with doing. Dewey was not uncritical of Froebel’s views and finally came to reject the kind of Idealist philosophy associated with Froebel. But both Froebel and Dewey recognized the social nature and purposes of education.

Links between NSW Kindergarten union and Chicago continued for some years, and several more principals and teachers, familiar with the productive ferment of discussion in Chicago around education were persuaded to come to Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College. Further correspondence with Chicago brought Frances Newton, a graduate from the Normal School of Chicago, who became the second Principal of the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College. More evidence of the spread of Froebelianism was when Newton in 1905 travelled to South Australia at the invitation of a group of philanthropists and academics, to give kindergarten demonstration classes with a pupil from Sydney, Lillian de Lissa. De Lissa, Sydney born but a devout Froebelian, in 1906 became director of the first free kindergarten in South Australia. The first person to pay dues to the Kindergarten Union which had set up this kindergarten in Adelaide was Catherine Helen Spence, notable writer and feminist. Spence’s credentials as a feminist were impeccable. She was vice-president of the *Women’s Suffrage League* in 1896 and in 1897 ran for the Federal Convention thus becoming Australia’s first female political candidate.

Froebel’s philosophy was clearly attractive to these women who were working for a reformed, more equal society. In its view of childhood it was revolutionary. As de Lissa said: “Such have been our false standards of virtue in the past, that the child who has passively obeyed, we have held up as the good child, while he who valiantly fought for his own right, for obedience to an inward demand, has been considered the naughty child” (de Lissa 1914, pp. 14–15). The intentions of these Froebelians were not to “civilise” in the sense of control, but to give children what they needed to develop into active citizens.

A New Education for All Citizens?

Froebel's belief was that his philosophy of education was applicable to more than the kindergarten stage of education; it was applicable to all stages of education and to all socio-economic groups. He believed the kindergarten would be a unifying factor in Germany both in terms of religion and class, on Allen's (1982) account deliberately using the term "Kindergarten" to avoid the term "Bewahranstalt", or child care centre because of the latter's working class and custodial overtones. In NSW Maybanke Anderson also believed in the unifying effect of the kindergarten: "Rich mother and poor mother, employer's wife and factory hand, meet on the common ground of motherhood, all alike interested in the child and home" (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 232). If the Froebelian kindergarten was intended for all children it can be fairly asked, and indeed was asked (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 231) why they were not set up in state-run education departments. The answer to this is complex and disputed.

In Sydney, William Wilkins had attempted to setup a kindergarten along Froebelian lines in the Fort St Model School in 1850s but it was not well accepted. In the private schools Froebel's ideas were more readily received. Maybanke Anderson had established a Froebelian kindergarten in her own school. Scheer, with her German-based Froebelian influence, ran a kindergarten in the Wesleyan Ladies College. The *Kindergarten Union* had provided training in Froebelian methods to the Department infant teachers (Anderson 1913/2001b) but the classes soon stopped apparently due to clashing timetables. Maybanke Anderson's own answer in 1913 to the question, "Why not leave the business entirely to the Department?" was that, while she could admire "excellent kindergartens in many schools", those who criticize the Kindergarten Union for their separate operation "do so in ignorance of the conditions" in the Department, which had "an inspection always demanding progress in actual knowledge, and teachers anxious for promotion" (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 231). The term "actual knowledge" is interesting and she presumably intends it to apply to facts learnt by memory, in the words of Professor Anderson (1903), to a system which had the effect of forcing "the memory of the child to do the work of all the other mental powers" (p. 8).

A much more fiery debate on the same issues of separation of kindergarten teacher training from other teacher training occurred in South Australia. In 1910 the executive of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia (KUSA) which was dominated by prominent academics and business men proposed that kindergarten teachers should be trained at the University Teachers College (the UTC) which trained students for department of education schools. Lillian de Lissa's reply to the proposition was published in full by the daily press, and included the much discussed sentence, "It would be a decided disadvantage for kindergarten students to mix with the State teachers" (cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). She claimed that the first duty of kindergarten teachers was "not to obey like dumb-driven cattle, but to think out problems for themselves" (de Lissa, cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). The Director of Education countered that she had unfairly criticized the state teachers.

To which her reply was “I did not deprecate your teachers but your system” (de Lissa, cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). As with Francis Anderson in Sydney, what de Lissa held against the state-run training was that they were “merely places of instruction” (cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93).

Disabling Divisions

The words of de Lissa at this time are a key in understanding the separation of kindergarten both from state systems of education and from childcare in most of Australia. But de Lissa’s words have been open to an array of interpretations. It could be speculated that this and similar moves in other states were attempts by women to maintain control of a domain, which had been developed and promoted largely by women, rather than be absorbed into the domain of state education where males held the power. Or it could be argued that the Australian states were not yet ready for progressive education. This latter was probably true of Wilkins’ attempts to introduce Froebelianism in NSW in 1850s, but by 1910 South Australia had a director who was knowledgeable of and enthusiastic about progressive education. Similarly in Victoria, Dr John Smyth, Principal of what was to become the Melbourne Teachers College and an extremely devoted Froebelian, wanted closer ties with the Kindergarten Union (Edgar 1967, p. 283). Again it was resisted by the *Kindergarten Union*. He gave a similar account to that of Anderson in Sydney: “Our large classes, the demands of the inspectors, and the ruling aims of our system, are all to blame here” (Victorian Education Gazette 1904, p. 84, cited in Edgar 1967, p. 78). Like de Lissa somewhat later, it was the “system” which made it difficult to bring Froebelianism to state education. Having a director or a principal with progressive ideas was no guarantee of achieving the massive changes in outlook and vision required. The *Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria* in 1914 defined the kindergarten as “neither a nursery school, a playground, nor a school but a combination of the three for it aims at the all-round development of the child through educative play” (cited in Gardiner 1982, p. 26). There seems justifiable reason to believe that this complex idea would not have survived the state education systems of the time.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the extent to which the Froebelians’ belief that they were the custodians of a new, even revolutionary, view of education, of society and of the individual’s place in it, played a central role in their resistance to having kindergarten absorbed into state education. For de Lissa, part of that new view involved encouraging individuals to think for themselves and to resist mere conformity. She thought of this as applying to both adults and children, to the teachers and the students. De Lissa’s words have been described as “elitist” (Jones 1975, p. 141). This word can be ambiguous between “best” or “exclusive” In de Lissa’s eyes kindergarten was not exclusive but unifying. Her intentions were not elitist, but her resistance to amalgamation with state-run departments in the end had elitist effects. The break between state education departments and kindergarten

training institutions meant that these kindergarten training institutions had to be fee-paying and were therefore, in spite of provisions of some scholarships, largely the province of the middle and upper socio-economic classes (Brennan 1998, p. 30).

Second Wave Feminism in Australia

It is common to mark the different waves of feminism by reference to publication of a particular book. In the US it was Betty Friedan's *A Feminine Mystique* (1963) which heralded the rise of second wave feminism. In Australia Germaine Greer described her book, *The Female Eunuch*, as "part of the second feminist wave" (Greer 1970, p. 11). What can be said of the second wave was that it was given strong impetus by the existence of a reforming government, even though that government had no child care policy when it came to power (Brennan 1998, p. 77). Feminists gained hope that their programs would succeed. Many of their hopes, such as equal pay for Commonwealth public servants, abolition of sales tax on contraceptives and the beginning of moves towards maternity leave, were achieved. But the education and care of young children proved more complex. In Brennan's (1998) words, "of great significance to the development of child care policies under the Whitlam government was the fact that there was no *single* feminist group putting forward a coherent and widely agreed upon position and no *single* feminist vision of what a commonwealth child care policy might look like" (p. 79). Preschools served better off families; it was unsuitable because of its short hours for families where both parents were in the workplace. It is doubtful whether many of the members of the Kindergarten Unions in the 1970s would have regarded themselves as feminists, and the *Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria* reports in 1974 with obvious hostility to "feminism", that "suddenly during this last year or so the preschool movement as it is accepted in our community and as we know through kindergartens and kindred groups, became attractive first to the Education Department, then to the Social Planners, to political extremists and feminist movements" (cited in Brennan 1998, p. 94). Bitter divisions grew up, both in the general population and among those who claimed some expertise in the matter (Seyfort 2007) between those who believed women should remain in the home for the sake of their children and those who held that women had an equal right to work outside the home. Such emotionally charged divisions were inimical to fruitful solutions. The happy coincidence of vision between feminism and progressive educational ideas which characterized the first wave of feminism had broken down.

Conclusion

The Froebelian women described in this chapter are middle-class and had social capital which enabled them to travel and have access to important theoretical movements in Europe, Britain and the USA. They certainly expressed concern for working class women, particularly on issues of pay, but just how many working class women were actually part of the movement is hard to calculate. As Marik (2011) has argued with regard to Owenite feminists, the views and activities of working class women are less likely to have been preserved. In her influential *The Female Eunuch* Greer (2007) has sneeringly and unfairly referred to the first wave of feminists as genteel middle class ladies only too happy to return to their corsets and middle class way of life after achieving suffrage. In contrast, according to Greer, in 1970 “ungenteel middle-class women are calling for revolution” (p. 11). The present chapter has not been concerned with assessment of the second wave of feminism. It has concentrated on the remarkable women who established kindergartens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has argued that it is a gross underestimation to describe them as just philanthropists or simply concerned for the suffrage. Inspired by both liberal and feminist socialist theories, they were working for a dramatic change in social outlook and practice based on a complex utopian vision central to which was an educational theory and view of childhood which, while they had antecedents, were certainly revolutionary.

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