

UCLA

InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies

Title

Formation of Professional Identity at the New Silver Street Kindergarten, 1883

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/59d4g4t6>

Journal

InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 2(2)

ISSN

1548-3320

Author

Adams, Kathleen

Publication Date

2006-06-14

DOI

10.5070/D422000576

Peer reviewed

When the kindergarten movement of the 19th century expanded across the educational landscape of the United States, women led the way – strong, capable, middle class women who created a new kind of school for young children and a new professional identity for themselves as “kindergartners,” or “child gardeners.” How did these women create a female professional identity for themselves within a society that expected them to marry, keep house and raise children within the private sphere of home and family? While the women who led the kindergarten movement received training to teach young children, little in their training or backgrounds prepared them to assume a public, professional identity within a cultural discourse of public and private spheres that were sharply delineated by gender. For example, Susan Blow, who worked with W. T. Harris to establish kindergartens in St. Louis, had to overcome the strong opposition of her socially prominent father to any public role for his daughter (Shapiro, 1983). Alice Putnam, who organized the kindergarten movement in Chicago, was already a wife and mother when she trained as a kindergartner (Beatty, 1995). Kate Douglas Wiggin, who opened the first free kindergarten west of the Rocky Mountains, trained as a kindergartner when the death of her stepfather left the family without resources. Prior to that tragic event, Wiggin never considered the possibility of a professional life, describing herself as “wholly untrained and... unbusinesslike” (Wiggin, 1923, p. 81). Nevertheless all these women, and many more, created a professional identity as kindergartners: They incorporated schools, established training classes, raised funds, and educated “other people’s children” (Wiggin, 1892, p. 221).

In this paper I utilize discourse analysis embedded within a historical context, to examine the formation of professional identity within the kindergarten discourse community, a group of people united by their participation in the kindergarten movement. The members of this discourse community were largely white, female, and middle class. In any era, gender and class strongly influence the formation of professional and personal identity. The 19th century kindergartners, however, functioned within a pervasive cultural or dominant discourse that idealized middle class women as wives and mothers rather than as competent professional women through a cultural paradigm known as the “separate spheres.” Within this cultural paradigm, the bourgeois world was divided into private and public spheres. The private, domestic sphere encompassed the home and family and constituted the arena in which middle class women enacted the roles of wife and mother. The public sphere encompassed the field of public action in which middle class men participated in commerce and politics. The cultural expectations embodied in the separate spheres paradigm shaped the kindergartners’ formulation of professional identity and therefore

shaped, and continues to shape, the professional identities of early childhood educators.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how kindergartners used their linguistic resources to create a professional identity that simultaneously exploited and expanded cultural notions of appropriate roles for middle class women. This analysis is presented in the form of a case study of the New Silver Street Kindergarten Society (NSSKS) of San Francisco. Through discourse analysis I demonstrate how the New Silver Street kindergartners, led by sisters Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Smith, created a professional identity for themselves as socially and professionally competent members of a kindergarten discourse community that included members and subscribers of the NSSKS, kindergartners practicing or trained at the Silver Street Kindergarten, and kindergarten supporters from the business community, the press, and other kindergarten societies. As I argue below, the New Silver Street kindergartners negotiated a space for their professional identity that was between spheres: incorporating aspects of the private, domestic sphere to which their gender assigned them and by adapting particular aspects of the public sphere that were necessary in order to facilitate their professional goals. The text I analyze, *Superintendent's Report of the Work of the New Silver St. Kindergarten Society Since January 1st, 1882, and A History of the Free Kindergarten Movement*, is the first document to be issued by the New Silver Street Kindergarten Society. With this document, primarily authored by Wiggin and Smith, the kindergartners introduce their professional identity to the discourse community. This document provides a rich source of data illustrating how these particular kindergartners formulated their professional identity. It also enumerates the strategies utilized by the New Silver Street kindergartners which were especially influential since the New Silver Street Kindergarten Society was one of the first kindergarten societies to be founded outside the German-English academies of Milwaukee (Vandewalker, 1908, p. 56). Therefore the New Silver Street kindergartners provided a model of professional identity for kindergartners employed by the 400 kindergarten societies founded across the nation by 1897 (Vandewalker, 1908).

Historical Context

Because the kindergartners' profession developed during the second half of the 19th century, the New Silver Street kindergartners, along with others, developed a professional identity shaped by this specific historical context. Some of the major factors influencing identity formation for 19th century women, such as those involved in the NSSK movement, included the much discussed "separate spheres" (Cott, 1977; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985; Ryan, 1990), the rise of a

specialized labor force (Cott, 1977; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985), and the professionalization and feminization of school teaching (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Each of these major factors left an imprint upon the professional identity of kindergartners.

The kindergartners created a female professional identity within a dominant discourse of separate spheres based on rigid gender roles. Rotundo (1993) writes, “The dominant belief structure presented the sexes in sharply polarized terms: women were pious, pure, submissive, domestic; men were active, independent, rational, dominant” (p. 145). Rotundo calls this polarization of gender roles a “moral geography” (p. 23), but it resulted in a physical geography as well. Men enacted their roles within the public sphere of competitive business and politics, a sphere characterized as exploitative, individualistic, and even treacherous (Cott, 1977). Women enacted their roles within the private sphere of the home, a sphere characterized as a moral haven from the public and commercial world. Within the privacy of the home, the primary responsibility of a woman was to create an island of order, serenity, and moral rectitude for her husband and children (Cott, 1977). Although the dominant discourse seemed to celebrate the values of the private sphere while condemning those of the public sphere, Cott (1977) points out, “The canon of domesticity did not directly challenge the modern organization of work and pursuit of wealth” (p. 69). Instead it served to justify a socio-economic system which legally excluded married women, whose property and earnings belonged to their husbands (Cott, 1977, p. 70) and reified only one acceptable identity for middle class women, that of wife and mother.

In order to create a professional identity within this rigid cultural milieu, it seems likely that the kindergartners looked to role models from other professions. The development of kindergartning as a profession occurred on a foundation of labor specialization built during the early 19th century (Cott, 1977). For example, formally trained, allopathic physicians formed professional associations that lobbied for legislation that would standardize medical training and licensure. The medical associations based their demands on claims of specialized knowledge (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985, p. 230). Therefore it was probably not a coincidence that the New Silver Street kindergartners, led by the step-daughters of a physician, would lay claim to a body of specialized knowledge that “certified” its members to practice their profession in the public sphere. The specialized knowledge possessed by the kindergartners was knowledge of a curriculum that was both sacred and technical. Frederick Froebel (1782-1852) of Germany, the father of the kindergarten, developed a curriculum and instructional materials for infant education that were subsequently brought to America by German immigrants (Shapiro, 1983). The Froebelian curriculum was sacred in the sense that it was the only curriculum accepted at the time as appropriate for early childhood

education. Winterer (1992) suggests that the success of the kindergarten movement, contrasted with the failure of the infant school movement, resided in its specialized curriculum. The Froebelian curriculum was also sacred because its function was “the forming of the mind” during a “precious formative period of life” (New Silver Street Kindergarten Society, 1884, pp. 42, 43). Therefore the curriculum was sacred in both its content and purpose. The curriculum was technical in the sense that it required training along with special tools and materials, the “gifts” and “occupations” developed by Froebel as instructional materials for the kindergarten (Beatty, 1995, pp. 43, 44).

In creating a professional identity, it also seems likely that the kindergartners looked to examples, both positive and negative, set by school teachers. Specifically the kindergartners appropriated rhetoric justifying the entrance of young women into the profession of teaching, while rejecting certain institutional characteristics of public schools that limited women’s access to power. Advocates of women as school teachers, such as Emma Willard, provided a justification for women entering the public sphere as educators by claiming that women were especially fitted to working with children and that teaching was preparation for motherhood (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, pp. 42, 43). Willard asserted that “nature” had “designed” women to be teachers of the young” (as cited in Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 42). Female school teachers, however, operated within an organizational structure that mirrored the patriarchal structure of the family: Men held the “ultimate authority” (Rotundo, 1993, p. 133). The kindergartners adopted the same line of reasoning but also created a new organizational structure that allowed them to be in charge. Allen (1988) notes, “The demand for [kindergarten] teacher training led to the creation of institutions administered, staffed, and attended by women which formed little enclaves of female control within an otherwise largely male-dominated educational establishment” (p. 30). Beatty (1995) extends this analysis by asserting that, within kindergarten organizations, “women had almost complete autonomy to create an alternative professional model, establish occupational norms and practices, and make internal policy decisions” (p. xii).

The kindergartners also rejected the institutionalized pressure of public school systems to limit women’s careers to the short period of time between the end of their education and marriage. Unlike public school teachers who were routinely dismissed from their positions when they married (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 88), kindergartners seemed to have the option of continuing or even starting their careers after marriage. Wiggin began her kindergarten career as a single woman but continued her work with the New Silver Street Kindergarten after her marriage (Wiggin, 1923). The records of the California Kindergarten Training School, associated with the New Silver Street Kindergarten, indicate that almost every training class from 1881 through 1897 included some women whose

names were preceded by the title “Mrs.” This evidence brings up an interesting question: How did the kindergartners create a professional identity that allowed them to move back and forth daily between the sanctuary of the home, where they assumed roles as “sheltered” women, and the “bank-note world” (Hale as cited in Cott, 1977, p. 68), where they assumed roles as professional women - regardless of marital status?

Scholars of the kindergarten movement have proposed a variety of answers to this question, analyzing how the kindergartners both utilized and countered the dominant discourse of separate spheres to justify their professional endeavors. Allen (1988) writes,

Like many female activists of the period, kindergarten founders challenged [cultural] definitions by urging women, not to forsake the private for the public sphere, but to transcend the dichotomy altogether by opening the private world to public concerns and the public world to the elevating influence of private virtues (p. 24).

Allen offers this as a broad explanation of how the kindergartners countered the dominant discourse and connects their work to the larger social reform movement of the era. Beatty (1995) focuses on individual kindergarten advocates who utilized the dominant discourse to avert criticism. She notes that Elizabeth Peabody equated kindergarten work with motherhood (p. 61), aligning herself with the advocates of school teaching and associating kindergartners with their culturally-assigned goal. Alice Putnam, on the other hand, justified the work of the kindergarten as an expansion of the private, domestic sphere in the service of social and moral reform (p. 84). As professional women, all kindergartners had to reconcile their professional identities with the domestic identities assigned to them by the dominant discourse. It seems likely that kindergartners, individually and in groups, used a variety of discourse strategies to justify their professional identities within their local discourse communities.

A Brief History of the New Silver Street Kindergarten

In order to contextualize the discourse analysis, a brief history of the New Silver Street Kindergarten (NSSK) is presented here. During the summer of 1878, Felix Adler, President of the Society for Ethical Culture and founder of the Adler Charity kindergarten in New York, visited San Francisco to deliver a lecture series. While in San Francisco, Adler inspired a group of “mostly German and Jewish ladies and gentlemen” (Wiggin, 1884) to organize the San Francisco Public Kindergarten Society (SFPKS) for the purpose of sponsoring a kindergarten in “the dismal locality known as Tar Flat” (Wiggin, 1884, p. 7). One

of the organizers, Emma Marwadel, a kindergarten trainer, recommended that the group hire her former student, Kate Douglas Smith (later Wiggin), to organize and teach the kindergarten class. On September 1, 1878, Smith, with the support of the SFPKS, opened the first free kindergarten west of the Rocky Mountains at 64 Silver Street.

Propelled by the energy and enthusiasm of Smith and the fundraising efforts of the SFPKS, the Silver Street Kindergarten (SSK) was a phenomenal success, described by Wiggin in her memoir *My Garden of Memory* (1923). After she won over the initially suspicious neighborhood parents, the kindergarten class filled and had a waiting list. The SSK was publicized by the San Francisco press, and as a result many visitors, sometimes as many as fifty or sixty per day, passed through the small kindergarten classroom. The kindergarten movement launched in San Francisco soon expanded to other organizations and neighborhoods across the state. To meet the increasing need for trained kindergartners, Smith opened her own on-site training school, the California Kindergarten Training School, in 1880. Her sister Nora A. Smith was one of three students in the first training class. When Smith married Samuel Wiggin in 1881, she continued to pursue the expanding work of the training school but turned the work with children over to Nora and Mrs. Arnold, another member of the first training class (NSSKS, 1884).

On January 1, 1882, however, a split occurred between the Silver Street kindergartners, the organization's practitioners, and the SFPKS, which served as the organization's administrative branch. Wiggin (1884), as primary author of the first annual report of the New Silver Street Kindergarten Society (later known as the Silver Street Kindergarten Society), described the split in this way:

The Public Kindergarten Society having decided to remove its institution to the corner of Seventh and Market Streets, that region south of Mission and east of Fifth Streets, (the original neighborhood in which the first free Kindergarten in California was planted) was left destitute of this most beneficent educational charity. Believing that there was no locality in San Francisco so crowded with young children as this, we determined to continue the work, and with the small branch of the old Silver Street Kindergarten, taught by MRS. M. E. ARNOLD, as a nucleus, we began in January, 1882 to build up the new institution (pp. 9,10).

The 1882 report of the SFPKS describes the split in a different way:

The Public Kindergarten Society was established in this city, in July, 1878, by Prof. Felix Adler, of New York. The lively interest he created in the minds of some of our best known citizens, for this charitable work, resulted in the establishment of the first free Kindergarten on the coast, which opened September 1st of the same year, at 64 Silver street [sic]. For over three years the school was under the control of the officers of this Society, but in January of the

present year the responsibility was assumed by others, and a circular was addressed to members of the Society, stating that a new school, under its management, would be opened on Market and Seventh streets (p. 5).

A comparison of the two descriptions reveals contrasting views. Apparently there was no mutually agreed-upon explanation for the disparity in perspective over the cause of separation. Both organizations put forth explanations that served the identity-building processes of the individual organizations within their discourse community, a theme that will be explored further below.

Clearly this was a liminal moment (Laver, as cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999) in the history of both the SFPKS and the NSSKS. On the one hand, the SFPKS was able to retain its organizational structure and identity that had developed through three and a half years of operation. Thus the task for the SFPKS was to find a new site and new kindergartners to continue the enactment of a previously established organizational identity. On the other hand, the Silver Street kindergartners were practitioners faced with the challenge of creating a new organizational structure and identity. But unlike the SFPKS, they possessed the site of the first free kindergarten west of the Rocky Mountains, a landmark site, yet had to develop an organizational structure, the NSSKS, to support their work there. The Silver Street kindergartners thus faced the additional task of creating an identity for their new organization. Wiggin, Smith, and their associates utilized the first document to be issued by the NSSKS as an opportunity to introduce their new organization to the kindergarten discourse community and to establish their new professional identity. Written primarily by Wiggin and Smith, this document demonstrates the linguistic strategies utilized by the NSS kindergartners to create a professional identity for themselves and their institution. The document, representing the kindergartners' introduction of themselves as the NSSKS to the San Francisco kindergarten discourse community (i.e., the members and supporters of local kindergarten associations), exhibits the textual first impression that the women hoped to make for themselves as independent actors in the San Francisco kindergarten scene.

Analysis of this particular document is especially fruitful because Wiggin and Smith became very influential within the larger kindergarten movement. Vandewalker (1908), quoting the Report of the Commissioner of Education, reports,

No single individual has done more to spread kindergarten influence and to gain friends for the cause than [Kate Douglas Wiggin]. No kindergarten has enjoyed a wider celebrity and achieved greater success among the children and in their homes than the celebrated Silver Street Kindergarten, conducted by Mrs. Wiggin and her sister, Nora A. Smith (pp. 66, 67).

In many ways, Wiggin and Smith themselves became models of professional women for the next generation of kindergartners through their work at the California Kindergarten Training School (CKTS), which was part of the NSSKS, and through their extensive publications. Young women from throughout the United States and its territories, Canada, and Japan trained to be kindergartners at 64 Silver Street (CKTS, 1880-1897), temporarily becoming part of this professional community and developing a distinct, CKTS-influenced professional identity. Many more were influenced by the flow of tracts, articles and teaching manuals (e.g., *Practical Suggestions to California Kindergartners*, *Kindergarten Principles and Practice*) flowing outward from the NSSK, all building upon the foundation constructed by the original NSS kindergartners.

Data and Data Analysis

The data I will now analyze is drawn from the *Superintendent's Report of the Work of the New Silver St. Kindergarten Society Since January 1st, 1882, and a History of the Free Kindergarten Movement* (hereafter referred to as the *Superintendent's Report*). Major authorship of the document can be attributed to the superintendent Mrs. Kate Smith Wiggin, although the report includes sections specifically attributed to Wiggin's sister Nora A. Smith and various testimonials and letters contributed by interested others. Because the document contains a treasurer's report from September 30, 1883, and the next published superintendent's report addresses the year ending December 31, 1885, a probable publication date is late 1883. Through discourse analysis I show how this data samples provide evidence of how the kindergartners constructed a professional identity as socially and professionally competent members of the discourse community, within a space that drew together elements of both the public and private spheres. I draw examples from the documents that illustrate the authors' use of face work, enactment of lines, and changes in register to communicate the multiple aspects of professional identity for young women in the late 19th century.

Much of this analysis is based on Goffman's work done on the notions of face and lines. Goffman (1999) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p. 306) with the line being a pattern of verbal acts through which the actor expresses a view of the situation. For Goffman, discourse events are ritualistic in nature with the speakers/writers viewed as actors wearing different faces or masks. As an aspect of social interaction, face work is interactive and conducted within discourse communities, composed of members united by the focus of their discourse (e.g., a profession, a sport, a political party). Members of a discourse community create cohesion within the community by

mutually engaging in face work to maintain face for all members. Goffman (2001) writes, “He [the member of the discourse community] is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others ... because of emotional identification with the others and their feelings” (p. 308).

Building on Goffman’s work, Brown and Levinson (1999, p. 322) describe face as something that must be constantly maintained through face work lest it be lost (i.e., “losing face”). In their work on the concept, Brown and Levinson categorize face as having both positive and negative expressions. Positive face is “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others”; whereas negative face is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (p. 322). Therefore discourse participants must simultaneously attend to a variety of interactive face work strategies to maintain and create face and support their positions within the discourse community. Laver’s work in this field has elaborated on the ritualistic nature of discourse events in ways that also enlighten this analysis. His work broadens the definition of ritual to include “a wide range of activities in which people engage during transitional or liminal moments in social time and space” and notes that all such rites of passage are marked by verbal rituals which support the actors in moving through the transition without losing face (as cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 292).

With these concepts in mind, the superintendent’s report can be read as a genre of ritualized communication within the kindergarten discourse community. More specifically, the annual report serves as ritualized communication from practicing kindergartners to the society supporting their work and the larger kindergarten discourse community. Those parts of the specific superintendent’s report analyzed here that conform to the genre may be recognized as ritualized communication in which the authors take shelter as they transition from their old role as subordinates in the hierarchy of the SFPKS to their new identities as creators of their own professional community. Because the report analyzed here was written during a liminal moment, those parts of it which do not conform to the ritualized communication genre, I argue, may be seen as reflective of the authors’ intention to create a new mask, persona, or identity that fits their new role within their new institution.

Finally, the notion of linguistic registers illuminates the transitional nature of this moment in the history of the NSSK as expressed in this document. Tannen and Wallat (1999) define register as reflecting “conventionalized lexical, syntactic and prosodic choices deemed appropriate for the setting and audience” (p. 352). Discourse participants, therefore, make linguistic choices that are context-specific to define the roles they are enacting within the discourse community. When applied to the document being analyzed here, we can see how the primary author utilizes a shift in registers to redefine her role within the San Francisco

kindergarten discourse community and to transition into the new professional identity formulated within the document.

Discussion

Although written language differs greatly from oral language, an overview of the *Superintendent's Report* suggests that it closely parallels an oral self-introduction typically made by new members of a discourse community. In this case the discourse community is a public one, composed of kindergarten supporters in and near San Francisco. The members of this discourse community constitute a public sphere of action wherein the Silver Street kindergartners enact the role of professional kindergartner as defined within this document. Moving from the general to the specific, the document begins by establishing connections and credentials, proceeds to clarify how the new organization will participate within the discourse community (i.e. the kind of player it will be), and finishes with a more specific description of the professional role they are establishing.

The Establishment of Social Competency through Face Work

Within the first sections of the *Superintendent's Report*, the authors muster their linguistic resources to demonstrate the social competency of their new professional persona represented by the NSSKS. Within the first few pages, the authors utilize a variety of face work strategies that set the scene for the lines they develop later in the document. The New Silver Street kindergartners use the well-established ritual of the annual report as a vehicle for going public with their new identity while employing face work strategies to create a place for their new role within the kindergarten discourse community.

The first three pages of the *Superintendent's Report* provide an interesting example of how the authors utilize both positive and negative face work to create authority and identity for themselves within the kindergarten discourse community of San Francisco. The first three pages are full-page advertisements and additional advertisements are printed after the body of the report. This is an important feature of the text because the inclusion of advertisements represents a departure from the typical format for the superintendent's report. This proves to be unique since an earlier report that Wiggin wrote for the SFPKS contains no advertisements, nor does the SFPKS report of 1881. Later reports of the NSSKS contain advertisements for publications by Wiggin and Smith, such as *The Story of Patsy* or *Kindergarten Chimes*, but no business advertisements. Therefore both the inclusion and placement of these advertisements should be regarded as strategic.

The advertisements, as a group, create positive face for the New Silver Street institution by indicating the support of the local business community for their goals. Two of the advertisements, placed at the beginning of the report, are for “George H. Fuller, Manufacturer of Kindergarten Furniture” (p. 2) and “A.L. Bancroft & Co., SOLE AGENTS FOR THE PACIFIC COAST FOR Milton Bradley & Co.’s Superior Line of KINDERGARTEN MATERIAL” [sic] (p. 4). These two advertisements represent the approbation of that part of the business community most closely associated with the kindergarten movement. At one level, the advertisements might be viewed as a fundraising tool by this new organization. And since the authors later report that they bought furniture and equipment for their new kindergarten “on credit” (p. 10), the reader might wonder whether the advertisements return the favor of extending them credit or constitute full or partial payment for the materials purchased. Neither of these considerations changes the fact that the advertisements (and the extension of credit) create positive face and send a message to the discourse community that these businessmen have faith in these kindergartners and support the NSSKS enterprise. This becomes especially important because, later in the document, the authors present the NSSKS as an enterprise that exists in the “bank-note” world but is not governed by “bank-note” rules.

The third advertisement (p. 3), sandwiched between the Fuller and Bancroft pages, is for the second edition of *The Story of Patsy*, a popular story written by Wiggin for the benefit of the SSK when it was part of the SFPKS organization. The placement of this advertisement draws attention to Wiggin’s dedication to the kindergarten cause and creates a connection to her previously established professional identity. The text of the advertisement refers to “Kate Douglas Smith (now Mrs. Kate Smith Wiggin), a lady well known in connection with Kindergarten work in this city” (p. 3). The entire advertisement, and especially the specific reference to Wiggin, creates negative face (i.e. the desire that their actions not be impeded by others) for the New Silver Street institution by reminding the discourse community of her status as the first kindergartner of the first free kindergarten west of the Rockies.

The strategic placement of these three advertisements mimics the face work accomplished in a typical introduction by calling attention to social connections and establishing credentials. In modern oral discourse, the introduction might sound like this: “Hello. My name is the New Silver Street Kindergarten. George Fuller and A.L. Bancroft can vouch for the financial soundness of my enterprise. I’ve been doing kindergarten work in San Francisco for several years under a different name.” The introduction places the kindergartners and their new institution within a meaningful frame of reference for other members of the discourse community.

Thus, in order to create an identity for themselves as cooperatively competent members of this discourse community, the Silver Street kindergartners must create and maintain face for other members of the community as well as for themselves. The section of the *Superintendent's Report* subtitled "A Brief Sketch of Kindergarten Work IN CALIFORNIA" [sic] (hereafter referred to as "A Brief Sketch"), which is attributed specifically to Wiggin, provides a demonstration of social competence through mutual face work.

In "A Brief Sketch," Wiggin might have chosen to build face for herself and the NSSKS by highlighting her own role in establishing the first free kindergarten west of the Rockies, thereby strengthening the face work accomplished by the advertisement for *The Story of Patsy*. Instead, she utilizes several strategies to build and maintain face for the San Francisco Public Kindergarten Society (SFPKS) and its constituency who were "mostly German and Jewish ladies and gentlemen, progressive in their ideas, energetic in their labors, and generous in their contributions" (p. 7). Wiggin attributes the founding of the California kindergarten movement to members of this society: Frau Bertha Semler who founded the first private kindergarten in California and Emma Marwadel who "opened a Kindergarten and Training School in Los Angeles" (p. 5). Moreover, in her narrative, Wiggin incorporates the names of the SFPKS members with flattering descriptions. To this end, she writes of Marwadel whose "whole life has been given up to disinterested work for education" (p. 6), of Prof. Adler who "is widely respected for his various philanthropies" (p. 6), and of the "enthusiasm" and "cordial aid" of the members of the SFPKS. Further, she describes the SFPKS as "reaching out its kindly hand toward the tiny youngsters residing in the dismal locality known as Tar Flat" and being "most wise and efficient in their labors" (p. 7). In addition, during this account, Wiggin minimizes her own role in the establishment of the first Silver Street Kindergarten and only devotes a single sentence of the entire text to her contribution. Finally, in closing this section, Wiggin lists the 19 free kindergartens in San Francisco, thereby implying that the growth of the San Francisco kindergarten movement was made possible by the foundational nature of the SFPKS's original work. As reflected in the differing descriptions of the split between the SFPKS and the NSSKS (above), these two members of the discourse community have an uncertain and ambiguous relationship. By using "A Brief Sketch" to engage in mutual face work, Wiggin achieves multiple goals: She serves notice that, despite the split, the NSSKS wants to maintain social cohesion within the kindergarten community, contributes to the identity of the NSSKS as a socially competent member of the discourse community, and maintains face for the SFPKS.

Although all discourse communities cultivate the qualities of cohesion and cooperation through mutual face work, those qualities exist along a continuum of practice. "The Brief Sketch" serves as an example of that side of the continuum

where cohesion and cooperation are most valued, especially when contrasted with the more aggressive style of face work exhibited in the report of the SFPKS, a more masculine and socially conservative organization in terms of leadership. This may be due in large part to the fact that the officers of the SFPKS included three men, who served as president, vice president and treasurer, and two women, who served as secretary and assistant treasurer. Further, the difference in organization and communication styles might be attributed to cultural differences between the largely German-American supporters of the SFPKS and the largely native-born supporters of the NSSKS. As noted above, the report of the SFPKS (1882) simply states that responsibility for the Silver Street kindergarten “was assumed by [unnamed] others” (p. 5). Subsequently the report states,

The Society feels that much is to be regretted from the fact that the charity Kindergartens of the city are not united in their work. Had the various subscriptions, donations or endowments, which have been called forth by this new beneficence, been directed to one large and well managed Society, there is little doubt but that our city would have had a widespread system of Free Kindergartens, of which its citizens might well feel proud. As it is, each school is managed by a different set of officers; the machinery is complicated, and consequently much more likely to waste the necessary power by a too extended diffusion, instead of a concentration of its strength (pp. 6, 7).

The history of the San Francisco kindergarten movement bears out that this aggressive style of face work was less successful within the largely female-oriented kindergarten discourse community. The NSSKS and the Golden Gate Kindergarten Society, organized by Sarah Cooper, were the most successful and longest lasting kindergarten organizations in San Francisco, operating beyond the turn of the century; whereas there is at present no evidence suggesting that the SFPKS lasted beyond the mid-1880s. I suggest that this may be a very concrete example of the “female” ethic of cooperation, or perhaps more accurately a “female” degree of cooperation, being used to define who does and does not belong to the kindergarten discourse community, specifically the Americanized kindergarten discourse community.

The kindergarten movement, having originated in Germany, naturally found its first American supporters in German-American communities. The first American kindergartens were conducted in German within German-American homes and academies. This is an important phase of the early kindergarten history because as scholars (Beatty, 2000; Shapiro, 1983) have noted, the kindergarten curriculum went through a process of Americanization before its popularization. For example, Beatty (2000) notes that the German curriculum was Americanized through changes initiated to address the needs of poor, urban children and through the incorporation of modern, scientific ideas of child development and

psychology (p. 47). Analysis of the discourse surrounding the NSSKS – SFPKS split and of the organizational structures suggests that Americanization of the kindergarten extended beyond curriculum modification and that additional characteristics of the Americanized kindergarten may have included the feminization of kindergarten discourse through increased use of mutual face work along with the feminization of the administrative structure of kindergarten.

Although it might be possible to read Wiggin's very specific description of the SFPKS as "German and Jewish" as a repudiation of those cultural identities, the evidence (as I know it) does not support that interpretation. Roland (1980) reports that the German immigrants of San Francisco were more successful than other European groups of the period. As an example, the German and Jewish supporters of the SFPKS were well-respected members of the San Francisco community, including a banker and a judge. In addition, Fraulein Elise Dittmer, a member of this ethnic community, remained with the NSSKS as the nursery kindergartner. Therefore it seems likely that, while cultural differences related to curriculum and gender roles may have contributed to the SFPKS-NSSKS split, cultural segregation was probably not the goal.

The Establishment of a Collective Professional Identity through Register-Shifting

After establishing themselves as socially competent members of the discourse community, the Silver Street kindergartners turned to developing the professional persona that they had begun to enact within the community. The remaining sections of *The Superintendent's Report* serve to develop a more detailed professional identity for the Silver Street kindergartners. The change in purpose is accompanied by a shift in register, most noticeably characterized by a change in pronoun usage. In the first two sections, Wiggin is clearly the author, and she refers to herself predominately as "I": "I am requested by the Directors ... to present the work of this special institution" and "I undertake this somewhat serious task" (p. 4). In the remaining sections, individual authorship is sometimes blurred, with one section directly attributed to Nora Smith and the inclusion of letters and testimonials written by a variety of supporters. This move is visible in the predominant pronoun changes from first person singular to first person plural: "We determined to continue the work" (p. 10), "We had not sufficient money to pay even the first month's rent" (p. 10), and "Our second class" (p. 11). This shift in pronouns represents a change in register from an individual voice to a collective voice, highlighting the authors' membership in a collective professional identity as Silver Street kindergartners.

Allen (1988) has suggested, "Kindergarten founders transcended conventional conceptions of public and private by creating institutions based on private values derived from ... the networks of female friendship to which women

of this era turned for support” (p. 30). The change from the “I” to “we” in this document supports that notion and suggests that, as part of their professional identity, the NSS kindergartners embraced a collective, cooperative identity rather than an individualistic, competitive identity. Confirmation of this idea exists later in the report when the authors refer to “Mrs. Cooper’s Kindergartens, her work being virtually one with ours” (p. 12). The NSS kindergartners could have viewed Mrs. Cooper’s Jackson Street Kindergarten Society (later known as the Golden Gate Kindergarten Society) as a competitor for donations and subscribers, but instead her work is described as part of the same collective whole which is also their work (and she was also their honored guest at the first annual dinner of the California Froebel Society). This shift in registers supports a collective, cooperative identity and also reinforces the high degree of mutual face work occurring simultaneously in the document.

The Establishment of Professional Competency through Line-Building

While the face work described above establishes the social competency of the NSSK and the register-shifting establishes a collective professional identity, the lines developed by the authors establish the professional competency necessary to participate in this discourse community. The professional persona is supported by three lines developed within the document. The first line emphasizes the female characteristics of their institution and defines it as a uniquely female enclave. In the construction of this line, the kindergartners appear to conform to societal norms for middle class women, anchoring their professional identity firmly in an extended domestic sphere. The second line builds their authority to act in the public sphere through claims of specialized knowledge, similar to other emerging professions (e.g., medicine) of the era. Finally, the third line combines elements of both public and private spheres, defining the NSSKS as a hybrid organization combining both commercial and domestic aspects. Together these lines illustrate how the kindergartners created a new professional identity by moving female ways of being into the public sphere and adapting certain characteristics commonly viewed as “masculine” during this period.

The female nature of the kindergarten profession is a repeated theme throughout the *Superintendent’s Report* but receives concentrated attention in the section titled “The Art and Mission of the Kindergartner.” In this section, attributed specifically to Wiggin, the author emphasizes the essentially maternal nature of the kindergartner as one of “God’s mothers” (p. 42). After asserting, “The woman’s hour has struck” (p. 41), Wiggin describes how the kindergartner supplements the efforts of “the weary mother [who] has an endless round of duties to perform, in which, too often, the child, with his hourly wants, his

intellectual hunger, and ceaseless questioning, is either censured ignorantly or impatiently brushed aside as troublesome” (p. 42). Even after asserting the necessity of professional training for kindergartners, Wiggin also writes that no amount of training can substitute for “maternal instinct” (p. 42). In developing this line, Wiggin anchors the profession in the traditions of family and domesticity, the province of women.

Unlike a traditional family, however, the NSSKS has no father figure, unless it is the father of the kindergarten, Froebel, who is conveniently unavailable to assert any personal authority. Instead, the kindergartners develop an identity for the NSSKS as a female enclave of authority and power, thereby extending the boundaries of the domestic sphere. One strategy used to establish the NSSKS as an enclave of female power was to emphasize that the continuation of their work was financially supported by a woman, Miss Harriet Crocker. The report tells the story of how Wiggin wrote a letter to Crocker, “the daughter of one of our wealthiest citizens. It was sent intentionally to the daughter, and coming straight from the wistful heart of one woman who saw the need, it chanced to fall into the heart of another who was willing to respond to that need” (p. 10). And although the entire Crocker family became supporters of the NSSK, the generous donation that enabled the kindergartners to reopen the Silver Street facility and support a class of 80 children was made in Miss Crocker’s name (p. 10). Additionally, Miss Crocker is listed as the president of the NSSKS that further signifies the outward emphasis of women’s roles in sustaining the early kindergarten movement (p. 57).

In direct contrast to the substantial section of text devoted to Miss Crocker’s role in the NSSKS, only one sentence is devoted to Adolph Sutro, the man who provided funding for a second class of children: “Our second class was started April 1st, 1882, through the generosity of Mr. Adolph Sutro, who gave us money for furniture and apparatus, with a liberal subscription which continued for nine months” (p. 11). In addition, Mr. Sutro did not participate in the governance of the NSSKS (p. 57). This differential treatment suggests that Miss Crocker as savior of the kindergarten, in response to a woman-to-woman request, better suits the identity-building purposes of the NSSKS as a female enclave of power. Although the NSS kindergartners undoubtedly valued Mr. Sutro’s substantial contribution, they chose to highlight Miss Crocker’s role in the NSSKS, while diminishing Mr. Sutro’s, to emphasize the female nature of the organization.

The bulk of the *Superintendent’s Report* is devoted to developing the line that, as trained kindergartners, the women of the NSSK have a body of specialized knowledge that allows them to participate and co-create this emerging public enterprise. The specialized knowledge claimed by the kindergartners includes knowledge of the Froebelian curriculum, viewed by the NSS

kindergartners as one with the sacred mission of the kindergarten. Wiggin introduces this line in the preface:

To those who are wrestling with the problems of our national system of education, we would say that the thoughtful men and women of our day see in the Kindergarten, when it is intelligently carried out *according to the principles of its discoverer* (emphasis added), the germ and foundation of that new and better education which shall prepare humanity for that new earth over which shall arch the new heaven (p. 4).

In this millennialist statement, Wiggin weaves together the sacrosanct nature of both the Froebelian curriculum and the mission of the kindergarten in a way that implies that the mission cannot be accomplished without the curriculum. Wiggin reinforces this theme in the section of the document titled “The Art and Mission of the Kindergartner.” Again tying together the sacred curriculum and the sacred mission, she writes, “You may think now, having never studied Froebel, that we Kindergartners speak in too serious a tone of what seems to be child’s play; but remember that ‘methods may make a skillful teacher; but only his aims can make him a blessing or a curse’” (pp. 46, 47). In the same section, Wiggin associates Froebel with Christ: “His life and teachings are enough of themselves to inspire one; and why? Because he walked in the steps and by the side of the Great Teacher who made no blunders in educating the human race” (p. 47). Although the NSS kindergartners would later advocate a less rigid implementation of Froebel’s curriculum, at this point in their careers, when they are establishing an identity as competent professional women, elevation of the Froebelian curriculum serves to legitimate their own professional knowledge.

The specialized body of knowledge claimed by the NSS kindergartners also includes mastery of the technical aspects of the Froebelian curriculum through intensive training. The kindergartners provide a lengthy description of the kindergarten curriculum, using many technical terms such as “gifts” and “occupations,” that convey little meaning to the uninitiated but demonstrate competence to the kindergarten discourse community. The authors note, “These Silver Street Kindergartens have opportunities for showing the Froebel method with considerable success” (p. 14). An example of which, the “Daily Programme,” (pp. 17, 18) describes the school from the first assembling of students in the yard through structured games and lessons. The authors expend great care to explain to the reader how kindergarten games are different from children’s regular games, although they value both types of play as learning experiences. For instance, they explicate the value of modeling, drawing, paperfolding, and weaving for young children. Finally, a weekly “programme” helps further distinguish between modes of play: “Prepared by Mrs. Wiggin and followed by the Free Kindergartens in California... offers a suggestion as to the

classification of our different plays, exercises and occupations” (p. 20). In presenting this array of specialized knowledge, the kindergartners demonstrate their qualifications for participating in this discourse community and their qualifications for operating in the public sphere.

In the sections “Practical Advice,” “California Kindergarten Training School” and “The Art and Mission of the Kindergartners,” the authors emphasize that only trained kindergartners, such as themselves, have access to the specialized knowledge necessary to fulfill the mission of the kindergarten. They warn the reader:

It is impossible for any one to gain, from “guide books” alone, the necessary instruction and inspiration sufficient for thorough, intelligent Kindergarten work. It is not a matter of opinion; no one with the slightest knowledge of the subject can answer differently. A personal training, with daily practice in a good Kindergarten, is indispensable (p. 37).

The authors go on further to enumerate the facets of kindergarten training:

In the first place, she must learn the “technique” of the method, the proper sequence of gifts and occupations and their uses, perfect familiarity with object lessons and stories, the reason and place of practical labor and organized play in the Kindergarten, together with a thousand and one small matters which unite in making the skeleton of the method (p. 43).

This intensive training is necessary for kindergartning because it combines “a scientifically learned and practiced profession” with “the best and highest instincts of women” (p. 41). By claiming the specialized knowledge resulting from kindergarten training and the ability to share this knowledge with others through the association training school, the NSS kindergartners assert their right to participate in the discourse community and operate in the public sphere as competent professional women.

The kindergartners may have also used their claims of specialized knowledge to elevate their profession and therefore raise the status of the entire discourse community. Clifford (1989) suggests that secondary teachers have traditionally been accorded more respect than elementary teachers because they have more sacred texts and sacred rules to teach (pp. 55, 56). It seems likely that the kindergartners displayed their specialized knowledge of a sacred curriculum to further separate themselves from and position themselves above primary teachers. This line is supported by Wiggin’s statement in “The Art and Mission of the Kindergartner”:

... unless a kindergartner is more thoughtful and better skilled than the average primary teacher, it is not only evident that the system of Froebel cannot affect any great reform, but that she cannot safely be trusted with that most difficult of all tasks, the forming of the mind. That of the succeeding teachers – the *informing* of the already partially formed mind – is a much simpler process (p. 46).

The kindergartners used the difficulty and importance of their task as further justification for extending and moving beyond cultural expectations for other women.

Having anchored one line of their professional identity in the private sphere and another in the public sphere, the kindergartners turn to a third line that weaves together elements of the public and private spheres, highlighting their occupation of a space that exists between the two spheres. Although the NSSKS was primarily a philanthropic enterprise, it was definitely a part of the “bank-note” world: It required money to operate and it was where women earned their livings. The NSSKS, furthermore, was a commercial enterprise, and therefore, within the dominant discourse of the era, a part of the public, masculine sphere. As previously noted, the kindergartners seemed to acknowledge operating in the commercial sphere by placing business advertisements at the beginning of the *Superintendent’s Report*. Subsequent sections of the text, however, suggest that the kindergartners were developing a feminized adaptation of the traditionally masculine commercial identity.

The *Superintendent’s Report* presents the kindergartners as relying, not on market principles, but on faith to ensure the financial soundness of the NSSKS. In the following passage, they specifically contrast their feminine, faith-based business principles with masculine, market-based business principles. Regarding their decision to keep the Silver Street facility open, the kindergartners comment,

We had not sufficient money to pay even the first month’s rent, but with that sublime indifference to finances which men call ‘lack of foresight,’ and which we call ‘faith,’ we ordered the partition wall taken down between the two largest rooms of the building, bought furniture and supplies (on credit), and made preparations for opening the class with that serenity which is born of a belief that truth will prevail ... (p. 10).

In selecting this line, the kindergartners chose not to create a professional identity that challenged masculine supremacy within the “bank-note” world but instead created a space between spheres wherein they could operate a business using feminine, faith-based principles. Therefore the NSSKS operated in the “bank-note” world without being of the “bank-note” world. This idea is confirmed by the kindergartners’ assertion, “We have no intention of ‘selling’ the products of

these embryo artists and artisans, as an economical visitor suggested the other day” (p. 21). The kindergartners will not consider exploiting the children to support the kindergarten; instead they believe that “truth will prevail... over masculine pocket-books” (p. 10). In this context, the support of George H. Fuller and A. L. Bancroft was even more important because it signals the approval of “real” businessmen for this commercial enterprise even though it is conducted by women in a space between spheres.

Conclusion

As women, the kindergartners were a “muted group” (Delamont & Duffin, 1978, p. 11) in comparison to the dominant group which was composed of men who controlled the dominant discourse of the late 19th century. Delamont and Duffin (1978) suggest that “women used the dominant ideas to obtain their own ends” and “had to articulate them in a form which was acceptable to men” (p. 12). This analysis provides one example of how women exploited the dominant ideas to create new identities and roles for themselves. Rather than directly assaulting the values of the dominant discourse, the kindergartners deftly wove together threads embedded in the dominant discourse – motherhood, femininity, faith, specialized knowledge – in a unique and emancipatory way. I suggest that their reweaving was intended to be acceptable not just to men but to everyone caught in the web of the dominant discourse. In creating a new role that was culturally acceptable for middle class women, including married women, the kindergartners seemed to take a step, perhaps just a small step, toward demolishing the paradigm of separate spheres. As Sarah Cooper (1883) explained, “That is *no* sphere. It is not even a hemisphere. It is a cranny, a corner of an angle” (p. 17). In developing one of the first professional communities established by middle class women, the kindergartners created a model of professionalism that led to subsequent career opportunities for middle class women in settlement houses and social work (Vandewalker, 1908) and eventually to expanded career opportunities outside the new “cranny” of the helping professions.

Although the identity work of the early kindergartners helped to open a pathway for women to work outside the home, it also contributed to the formulation of foundational ideas about early childhood education and early childhood educators that persist to the present day. For example, although kindergartens serving five-year-old children have largely been incorporated into public schools, the kindergarten is still regarded as a special and protected area of the school, often with a separate playground and different schedule denoting its separation from the main school. The three- and four-year old children who would have attended kindergarten during the 19th century now attend preschools that

often operate as physically and financially separate entities from K-12 schools. The professional identities of the teachers who serve these children are still bound up in cultural assumptions about women and children, gender and class. Do these cultural assumptions differ from those of the 19th century?

Karin Klein (2005), an editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, provides a partial answer to this question in her editorial, "Scary Preschool Utopia." In opposing a proposed legislative initiative that would provide free voluntary preschools for all California children, Klein complains, "It [the initiative] would insist on bachelor's degrees and credentials for teachers – and require, insanely, that they be paid on par with high school science and math teachers" (p. M1). Although the gendered assumptions embedded in Klein's statement are not as obvious as the separate spheres of 19th century discourse, they may be more powerful because they are unstated. Most preschool teachers are female. Klein devalues their work in comparison with high school teachers of science and math, two subject areas still strongly associated with male practitioners. In addition, issues of class shape Klein's opinion that relatively under-educated early childhood educators should remain an uneducated underclass. Klein neglects to explain that, as long as early childhood educators remain under-educated, they will also be under-paid, serving society for minimal recompense as a "muted group." While gender and class expectations play a more subtle role in this discourse, they still serve as powerful shapers of professional identity for early childhood educators and continue to echo the Victorian-era discourse of a separate sphere with linked and inferior subject positions for women and children.

References

- Beatty, B. (1995). *Preschool education in America: The culture of young children from colonial era to the present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Beatty, B. (2000). "The letter killeth": Americanization and multicultural education in kindergartens in the United States, 1856-1920. In R. Wollons (Ed.), *Kindergartens and cultures: The global diffusion of an idea* (pp. 42-58). New Haven, CT, & London: Yale University Press.
- Clifford, G. (1989). A Sisyphean task: Historical perspectives on writing and reading instruction. In A. Dyson (Ed.), *Collaboration through reading and writing: Exploring possibilities* (pp. 25-83). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Cooper, S. (1883). Woman's work. In N. Smith & L. Reinstein (Eds.), *A history of our beginnings* (pp. 16 -18). San Francisco, CA: California Froebel Society.

- Cott, N. (1997). *The bonds of womanhood: "Woman's sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven, CT, & London: Yale University Press.
- Delamont, S. & Duffin, L. (1978). *The nineteenth century woman: Her cultural and physical world*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books.
- Gee, J. (2001). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction and what is literacy? In E. Cushman, E. Kintgen, B. Kroll, & M. Rose (Eds.), *Literacy: A critical sourcebook* (pp. 525 -544). Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Goffman, E. (1999). On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland.(Eds.), *The discourse reader* (pp. 306-320). New York: Routledge.
- Jaworski, A. & Coupland, N. (Eds.) (1999). *The discourse reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Klein, K. (2005, June 5). Scary preschool Utopia. *Los Angeles Times*, pp. M1, M3.
- New Silver Street Kindergarten Society (1884). *Superintendent's report of the work of the New Silver Street Kindergarten Society since January 1st, 1882, and a history of the free kindergarten movement*. San Francisco, CA: Author.
- Public Kindergarten Society of San Francisco (1882). *Report of the Public Kindergarten Society of San Francisco for the Year Ending September 1, 1882*. San Francisco, CA: Author.
- Roland, C. (1980). *The California kindergarten movement: A study in class and social feminism*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Riverside.
- Rotundo, E. (1993). *American manhood: Transformations in masculinity from the revolution to the modern era*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ryan, M. (1990). *Women in public: Between banners and ballots, 1825-1880*. Baltimore: MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shapiro, M. S. (1983). *Child's garden: The kindergarten movement from Froebel to Dewey*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Smith-Rosenberg, C. (1985). *Disorderly conduct: Visions of gender in Victorian America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Tannen, D. & Wallat, C. (1999). Interactive frames and knowledge schemas in interactions. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader* (pp. 346-366). New York: Routledge.
- Tyack, D. & Hansot, E. (1992). *Learning together: A history of coeducation in American public schools*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Vandewalker, N. (1908). *The kindergarten in American education*. New York: The Macmillan Co.

- Wiggin, K. (1892). *Children's rights: A book of nursery logic*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Wiggin, K. (1923). *My garden of memory*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press.
- Wiggin, K. & Smith, N. (1892). *Practical suggestions to California kindergartners*. San Francisco: California Kindergarten Training School, California Froebel Society.
- Wiggin, K. & Smith, N. (1896). *Kindergarten principles and practice*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Author

Kathleen Adams is a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Education of the University of California, Riverside, and a practicing educator in the field of early childhood education. Her current research interests include the kindergarten movement, classroom discourse communities, and identity-formation.