On June 28, 1840 in the Thuringian town of Bad Blankenburg, Friedrich Fröbel, pioneering pedagogue, social reformer, and political radical, founded the first kindergarten. The kindergarten was imagined as a “garden of children” from which would sprout a “new spring of humanity.” Articulating a liberal and national vision of education shaped by an anti-authoritarian dissenting Christianity, Fröbel hoped that the kindergarten would become a model institution for the growth of a new German community. In turn, activists across political and religious camps utilized the kindergarten as a space for furthering social and cultural reform.

This paper examines the kindergartens established in the city of Hamburg between 1849 and 1851 as a case study to examine how the early children’s education institution came to be seen as a revolutionary space that served as a model for activists who argued for emancipation and social reform. The kindergartens were opened predominantly by female activists who invoked an ideal of a new philanthropic womanhood that transcended confessional differences in order to advance social and cultural reform. Hamburg, in particular, provides us with an exemplary view of the movement. By the late 1840s and early 1850s, the city had become a center of both the kindergarten movement and revolutionary activity for religious, political, and social reformers. This was a period dominated by the demand for social and cultural change and the development of new associations throughout the city. Between the unrest Hamburg saw in 1830, the Great Fire of 1842, and the revolutions of 1848-51, activists re-imagined ideas of belonging, class relations, and gender roles. Set against the backdrop of a need for political reform, the kindergarten came to serve as a model for a new future in the city, the state, and Germany as a whole.

I. The Kindergarten as a Platform for Revolutionary Ideas
The Bad Blankenburg kindergarten was founded on the anniversary of the invention of the Gutenberg Press on June 28, 1840. It was conceived
as a school for young children between the ages of three and seven. The kindergarten emphasized nature and free play as vital elements in early child development. Its founding was shrouded in the language of progress and change, as the pamphlet published on the occasion demonstrates: “this year we appropriately recognized Gutenberg Day as the day on which humanity celebrates its new birth.”

Fröbel’s kindergarten was based on a revolutionary pedagogy. Fröbel emphasized the ways in which activities such as playing with toys and being outdoors enhanced children’s awareness of their environment while at the same time developing their understanding of themselves as independent beings. A child’s Bewusstsein (awareness and consciousness) is explored throughout Fröbel’s writings as a sphere that undergoes constant development and activity. Rather than limit a child’s propensity to explore his or her outer surroundings and environment, he sought to embrace this propensity as part of a larger teaching method. Fröbel believed that children maintained a special relationship to nature that should be shaped rather than broken, for “[i]n the child’s activities lies its pursuit of self-awareness. Unconscious awareness, a sense of being.”

Liberal newspapers promoted the kindergarten as a special institution dedicated to the future. Throughout the German-speaking lands, articles celebrated the kindergarten as the dawn of a new era in German history and as a memorial to Gutenberg that would lead the way to a new Germany.

The kindergarten soon garnered support from pedagogues of diverse backgrounds, who promoted the institution as the only one of its kind that focused on the development of children’s physical and mental capacities rather than on merely supervising and disciplining them. Three pedagogues demonstrate this clearly in their writings. During the general meeting of the first Bürgerkindergarten in Hamburg the director of the Hamburg Realschule, Alexander Detmar, described the differences he saw between existing institutions dedicated to early child care such as the Warteschule (day care), and the kindergarten.

As Detmar stated, “in the first few years the whole development of the physical and mental capacities of children must begin to develop. Other institutions are inefficient in achieving this goal.” The “most important difference which can be made between the Warteschule and the kindergarten,” he noted is “that the kindergartens seek the physical and mental development of children.”

The idea of the kindergarten as a space for mental and physical development of young children was also echoed by the Hamburg
pedagogue Wichard Lange. He observed that the bourgeois educational methods employed in Germany at the time found their extremes in Jesuit and Pietistic education. The “former sought the destruction of the individual through religious piety,” Lange noted, “while the latter wanted to turn humanity into a machine.”\(^9\) As one of the members of the Hamburg Association of Schools and a co-organizer of the petition to improve the circumstances for Hamburg teachers submitted to the senate in 1848, Lange was also vital in the move to improve education in Hamburg generally.\(^10\)

Another Hamburg pedagogue, Heinrich Hoffmann, was crucial in promoting the kindergarten as a new ideal of education. Hoffmann emphasized the importance of this institution as a way of furthering the progress of society, beginning with children. Reporting from a meeting of pedagogues held in Bad Liebenstein from September 27-29, 1851, Hoffmann observed that “in Hamburg, Fröbel’s cause took the most root.”\(^11\) By September 1851, six kindergartens were open with as many as 87 children enrolled in one kindergarten alone.\(^12\)

The kindergarten’s radical pedagogy provided a platform to enact new ideals of community-building and citizens’ rights and to re-imagine relationships within the family and state during the revolutionary period of the 1840s. While the above-mentioned pedagogues highlighted the importance of the kindergarten in preparing children for the Volksschule (public elementary school) and raising a better-educated citizenry, other activists emphasized the ways in which it could contribute to raising citizens of the new society and state they envisioned.

Kindergarten activists across German-speaking Europe (predominantly in the Protestant north and middle Germany) advocated for kindergarten education as a path to a better understanding of human rights and emancipation. In this context educational reform was also seen as a form of citizenship and state reform. In her 1848 publication \textit{Für deutsche Frauen} Thekla von Gumpert, a children’s book author and adherent of Fröbelian ideas, declared that education and the kindergarten were vital in the process of promoting human rights, “our whole new world epoch has recognized the realization of the idea of universal reason and human rights for our whole national being, the indefeasible right of national and civil life, the Volksrecht against Fürstenrecht, the right of religion and freedom of consciousness, the

\(^9\) Volksblatt für das Herzogthum Meiningen: Saturday, 10 March 1849 No. 20. DIPF/BBF/Archiv Nachlass Fröbel 176.


\(^11\) DIPF/BBF/Archiv Nachlass Fröbel 146-148, Zeitschrift für Friedrich Fröbels Bestrebungen, 10.

\(^12\) Ibid. “In Hamburg, Fröbel’s cause took the most root. It was in spring 1848 when the first kindergar- ten was opened by Doris Lützens and Allwina Middendorff, now tied with [Wichard] Lange. Initially it began with eight chil- dren. In 1849-49 Mr. Beit opened a private kindergar- ten. Jewish and Christian women had created the purest association in the name of love. Thus came into existence the Frauen- verein. Friedrich Fröbel and his kindergartens were to have first priority: In the summer of 1848 the third institution [kindergar- ten] under me [Hoffmann] was established. In winter 1849/50, when Friedrich Fröbel was in Hamburg, the first Bürgerkindergarten was opened with 70 lower- class children enrolled. The second Bürgerkindergarten now has 87 children en- rolled ... Another instituti- on, the Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht led by Miss Krüger.” [Author’s translation].
freedom of the press etc.”

Hamburg pedagogue and politician Anton Rée, one of the main advocates of Jewish emancipation in Germany, also viewed educational reform as a path to human emancipation. Not only Jews, who were barred from basic social and political rights, but also the lower classes, would be freed from prejudice and social ills through a new conception of education beginning with children. Such views were also echoed in Fröbel’s newspapers and weeklies that openly discussed ideas such as freedom, democracy, emancipation, and the need for a form of education that would promote progress and humanity.

Wilhelm Middendorff, one of Fröbel’s closest associates, was vital in promoting the view of the kindergarten as a new educational and social space in the new Germany. In 1848 he wrote a pamphlet addressed to the Frankfurt Parliament highlighting the need to legislate and protect the kindergarten as a state-sponsored institution. In his view the kindergarten unified Germany’s diverse population, “noble and low, Jews and Christians, Protestant and Catholics, blessed side by side, free from prejudice, united for the children.” Families and communities would be strengthened by the institution of the kindergarten, as children learned from each other and from their teachers at this young age. Education thus provided a platform to think about the building of a new future for the new state. Middendorff wrote: “We look for a new future … we would like to invoke the unification of life, the unity of the fatherland. Where is the magic wand? … It is education, it is the fact that we strengthen the feeling of accord in the budding hearts of our people.” The kindergarten was thus identified as a space that accommodated diversity among German citizens across class and confessional lines.

Debates on education and new rights for the citizens of a new state were common between 1848 and the early 1850s. The developments within the kindergarten movement mirrored debates in the Frankfurt parliament. The constitution proposed by the parliament sought to legally define the citizen without any distinctions related to religion or class. As article II section 137 states: “There is no distinction of class before the law. The nobility as a class has been abolished.” Religious freedom was codified in article V of the constitution. The new form of education embodied by the kindergarten reflected these new political rights.

The reformist pedagogical approach of Fröbel’s kindergarten made it attractive for social reformers yet suspicious to the state. While...
each state regulated education in specific ways, all forms of education of young children were still the prerogative of the Church (and supervised by state authorities). Teachers were supervised and trained by church officials to ensure that children would receive religious instruction and be disciplined according to strict rules of conduct.

The quality of schooling, the quality of living for the teachers, and the overbearing dominance of the Church (both Catholic and Protestant) in educational matters had radicalized teachers, leading to the development of teachers’ associations across Germany. These associations often supported the revolutionary educational views promoted by the radical student movements that had been banned following the Restoration after 1815. To state authorities and pedagogues, the kindergarten belonged within this tradition of radical reform.

By the 1840s the conflict between teachers and government and religious authorities had deepened. To police officials, the kindergarten was a haven for revolutionary pedagogues and activists who utilized the space to construct a new democratic and free Germany that sought to go beyond religious authority and class based society. Berlin police officials traded letters with Hamburg criminal police officials that documented the movement of the kindergarten teacher and activist Theodor Hielscher. According to the Prussian police, Hielscher used the kindergarten to spread his democratic views to children.

The man was not to be trusted and was an active supporter of fighting on the barricades. Ludwig Storch, kindergarten teacher, activist, and writer, was also forced to close down his kindergarten when it was declared illegal in Nordhausen, Thuringia on July 8, 1851. Another letter from Dresden written on July 14, 1851 argued the ways the kindergarten was used as a school for socialism, democracy, and atheism. Taken together, this demonstrated a concentrated attempt by Berlin Police Chief von Hinkeldey to clamp down on revolutionary activity coming from what he called a socialist and atheistic “nursery of destruction.” On August 7, 1851 Prussian Kultusminister von Raumer issued a decree banning the kindergarten.

21 Ibid.
24 Die Repressionen des preußischen Staates ab 1824 gegenüber Friedrich Fröbel. Schreiben des Berliner Polizeipräsidenten von Hinkeldey vom 15. September 1851, ed. Wolfgang Meretz (Berlin, 1990), s.1.1
II. The Role of Women in the Kindergarten Movement

Since the pedagogues of the kindergarten movement believed that maternal instincts and motherly love were vital to the care and education of children, women were required for this educational space to function. As a pedagogical method, the kindergarten sought to return to “natural” ideals of learning through institutionalizing the relationship between women and children.

Women and their supposed natural attributes were given high priority in this method. In stressing the importance of nature, kindergarten activists sought to emphasize the ways the family home was replicated in the kindergarten rather than destroyed or subverted. This is particularly the case with the pedagogical ideal of motherhood that was vital to kindergarten pedagogy. As early as May 1840, Friedrich Fröbel appealed to German women to participate in the *Pflege-, Spiel- und Beschäftigungsanstalt für Kleinkinder* (to be renamed the kindergarten following the opening ceremony) in various newspapers across Germany. His plan for the realization of the kindergarten defined the role of women within this new institution: “for God has placed the physical as well as the spiritual continuation of the human race through childhood and emotions into the heart of women.”

Women’s nature was regarded as a vital element in this social reformist project centered on children. Fröbel emphasized that women’s role needed to be reconsidered and once again associated primarily with child rearing: “child care must therefore once again be entirely turned towards women’s life; women’s life and child care must be reunited, feminine minds and sensible child-rearing must become a reality again.”

Evidently this appeal to women was based on a preconceived notion of the role of femininity in the social and cultural development of children. The program for the Bad Blankenburg kindergarten stated, “it is only by mediating between the external female occupations, the social duties, and the demands of childhood that the original unity of female and motherly life with childhood can be regained.” Such a fusion of different social roles of motherhood would produce a new type of woman to specifically care for small children in a professional capacity, as Fröbel continued: “Kinderwärterinnen, Kindermädchen, Kinderführerinnen and Erzieherinnen ... who mediate between the demands of the mothers’ heart, their desire and care, and the needs of the child.”

This would benefit not only mothers but also the child: “for the children then are, reach, and give what the mother herself cannot be, reach, and give to them, try as she might.”

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27 Ibid.
28 Entwurf eines Planes zur Be- gründung und Ausführung eines Kinder-Gartens, einer Allgemeinen Anstalt zur Ver- breitung allseitiger Beach- tung des Lebens der Kinder, besonders durch Pflege ihres Thätigkeitstriebes DIPF/BBF/Archiv: Nachlass Fröbel, 8.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Male activists primarily supported this new role for women in the kindergarten. One such activist stated: “only mothers, and women overall, can educate children at this young stage ... [their] nature and their maternal instinct provide significant work that is sufficient for the object of education.” Women between the ages of 16 and 24 were to undergo formal theoretical and practical training as kindergarten teachers. “Every young girl after completing her training in the kindergarten would therefore be prepared as a mother for womanly professions such as early child care.” Fröbel and other kindergarten activists promoted a new ideal of the female teacher as an individual who was vital in the mental, emotional, and physical development of young children outside the home.

Yet women were not only important as kindergarten teachers, but also as advocates and founders of kindergartens. In Hamburg, a number of women’s organizations were instrumental in this process. The Hamburg chapter of the Frauenverein zur Unterstützung der Deutschkatholiken (Women’s Association for the Support of the Deutschkatholiken) represented an interreligious partnership that opened kindergartens to realize their goal of religious freedom and the pursuit of what they called “humane goals.” The Frauenverein zur Unterstützung der Armenpflege (Women’s Association for Poor Relief) saw the kindergarten as an institution of charity and social reform. Meanwhile the Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht, an innovative and ambitious women’s higher educational institution, established its kindergarten not only as a charitable institution, but also as an educational facility where its students could practice the profession they were training for.


32 Ibid.

33 Ann Taylor Allen explores the ways the kindergarten and the importance of motherhood provided a space to articulate a new ideal of female activism in Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914 (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991). Allen also provides a transatlantic comparison of the kindergarten in her work, The Transatlantic Kindergarten (Oxford, 2017).

34 The Deutschkatholiken were a sect of dissenting Christianity founded by Johannes Ronge in Breslau in December 1844. The movement sought to fight what it saw as irrational superstition within the Catholic Church. This criticism later grew against the power of the Protestant Church. Historians have highlighted the importance of this association in carving out a space for women’s participation in revolutionary politics: Sylvia Paletschek, Frauen und Dissens: Frauen im Deutschkatholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden 1841-1852 (Göttingen, 1990).

35 Staatsarchiv Hamburg Wüstenfeld 622-1/113 Nr.4. Frauenverein zur Unterstützung der Deutschkatholiken, seit 1853 Frauenverein zur Förderung freier Christlicher Gemeinden und Humaner Zwecke (1847-1855).

36 The Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht was a school training young women to become kindergarten teachers founded by Karl Fröbel and conceived for female students aged 15-25.
Founded by Fröbel’s nephew Karl Fröbel, the school was open to women who “renounced the pleasures of sociability” and worked for “an eternal ideal of humanity.” Women between the age of 15 and 25 were encouraged to enroll and take courses in history, pedagogy, mathematics, and languages. The school aimed to ensure the cultivation of women’s particular nature and their philosophical education through a combination of “human education” and “feminine education.” In his pamphlet describing the school, Karl Fröbel compared the education of men and women thus: “The highest goal of men’s education,” he stated, was “the representation of spiritual unity in the multiplicity of life, domination of the mind over nature, the spiritualization of the physical.” Women’s education by comparison was “inversely the embodiment of the spiritual.” For this reason, women had a vital role to play in constructing a new society, he argued: “The ultimate goal of female education lies in the unification of social life, in the family, the community, and in the larger societies.” The new education of women, Fröbel claimed, would lead to a new society:

This can only be done by women: they bind men’s minds, always striving upwards towards the general, to the details of life. Women must be made part of our highest philosophical convictions, our most universal and grand purposes. They must think and feel about religious views, from God, providence, fate to immortality, the ultimate purpose of the individual as well as that of the human race as we men do. Then, and only then, do we approach the goal where truth, love and justice rule among human beings.

Karl Froebel’s ideal of women’s education therefore went beyond class and religious differences. According to Fröbel, women possessed specifically feminine qualities that could be employed to spread justice and progress. The Deutscher Frauenverein (German Women’s Association) in Hamburg mobilized this idealized womanhood that cut across class and confessional lines by promoting an interreligious “spiritual sisterhood.” As articulated by two major Hamburg kindergarten activists, Johanna Goldschmidt and Emilie Wüstenfeld, such a sisterhood involved an association of women coming together across confessional divides to heal social fragmentation and lead society to a better future. Pedagogue Heinrich Hoffmann observed that “Jewish and Christian women had created the
purest association in the name of love. Thus came into existence the Frauenverein,” which was vital in promoting the first kindergartens in the city.43

The development of this idealized and spiritual image of womanhood covers various religious and secular traditions. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, advocates of Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, noted the need to better educate women. In his July 1806 article “Letters on Respectable Women of the Jewish Religion,” published in the reform-minded Jewish journal Sulamith, Gotthold Salomon encouraged Jewish women to continue their education for the sake of progress.44 As members of a matrilineal religion, Jewish women were vital in ensuring the continued existence of the faith. As mothers and sisters they were regarded as important members of the Jewish people who had to be educated about their duties and responsibilities for education. Salomon argued against past traditions of keeping women outside of the religious community, a subject vigorously debated in the Jewish Reform movement. Salomon criticized that women were stuck in a ceremonial past that was blind to “true religion.”45

The notion of “true religion” and the position of women were also highlighted in Christian dissenting circles. In 1849, the charismatic dissenting Christian leader of the Deutschkatholiken movement, Johannes Ronge, spoke about the symbol of Mary and womanhood in Christianity to criticize the statements of the Catholic Church on women’s political participation in the Catholic Christian world. The limits placed on women were limits placed on the nation and God, he maintained. As Ronge stated, it was “established against the aspirations of women and their right to self-determination and against their participation in the fulfillment of humane aspirations and of God’s new empire.”46

Hamburg kindergartens focused on the image of women as salvation for the community.47 Pedagogues and teachers joined with Christian dissenters and Jewish emancipation activists who further promoted this ideal. A letter Johanna Goldschmidt wrote to Friedrich Fröbel epitomizes the idealized notion of women’s mission for social and cultural change. Approaching him on behalf of the Hamburg German Women’s Movement in March 1849, she wrote that “a small group of local women have the strong desire to bring your system of revival of the spirit of children into full effect in Hamburg and we ask you for advice and support.”48

43 DIPF/BBF/Archiv Nachlass Fröbel 146-148, Zeitschrift für Friedrich Fröbels Bestrebungen, 10.
46 Johannes Ronge, Maria oder die Stellung der Frauen der alten und neuen Zeit (Hamburg, 1849). 5.
47 Salvation referred to the construction of the female kindergarten teacher as individuals who, if provided the right education and guidance, could help lead humanity to a better future.
With Fröbel’s support, this small group of women hoped to open a school to train women as kindergarten teachers, where they believed they could “achieve a higher goal when we ensure that young women learn children’s play in the Fröbelian spirit and with the Fröbelian heart.” Fröbel’s kindergarten, according to the Hamburg Women’s Association, was key in the construction of a new pluralistic society. As Goldschmidt stated, “We intend to promote the kindergarten as well as the knowledge of your system ... The Frauenverein will pursue this goal with Christian and Jewish women.”

The members of the Frauenverein viewed the kindergarten as a crucial platform to promote an ideal of womanhood that would work towards social harmony. Members understood their mission very much in gendered terms. A women’s association brought women together for social and cultural reform. Rather than bring women together as individuals, they understood their existence as women who had a social mission to fulfill due to their perceived natural gender differences. Unlike men’s associations that debated the freedom of the individual, women’s associations understood themselves as associations brought together under female direction in order to spread the concept of “love.” The historical definition of Verein referred to an association of free (usually male) citizens who came together due to shared interests. They became the places where sociologists theorized the development of free liberal civil societies and the functioning of democracy. Women’s associations, however, were rather more complex.

The early women’s associations of the nineteenth century were united by spiritual and religious ideals centered on femininity as a key force in history. The Frauenverein was supposed to fulfill a higher duty that would benefit mankind. This work brought together the private and public worlds of women, a concept that would be unthinkable in men’s associations, “such action in one’s own heart, in the family, in society, in the community, the people, the human race, in the life of the spirit and the mind in and of itself — that is what we need.” This was a gendered social mission that men did not have to fulfill.

Through ideals such as “motherly love” and other supposedly feminine qualities, women would better the human race. Fröbel emphasized this ideal clearly when he claimed that “only through Frauengemüth and children’s education can the unification of
mankind, the human race, the people, religious communities, and the family be saved.” The Frauenverein therefore fulfilled an important and “respectable purpose,” namely the “social convergence and unification of Jewish and Christian women in the interests of children at play, to deepen it, and it includes the cause of humanity.” This ideal of going beyond a confessional identity exemplifies the common theme of Seelenschwestern (spiritual sisterhood) found in the writings of activists during the 1840s in Hamburg. The notion of spiritual sisterhood developed from the discourses on the peculiar position of femininity found among religious and secular reformist literature.

The various women’s associations in Hamburg utilized the philanthropic emotional role of women portrayed within all these traditions for the sake of social betterment. The Hamburg German Women’s association in 1847 called for the cultivation of women as a form of social progress and freedom for all, “the general purpose of the women’s association is to develop the feminine sex for its higher destiny through humane education, and with free self-determination to promote the spiritual, as well as the secular, well-being of humanity.” The goal of religious and individual freedom held by the Women’s Association went well beyond the Christian faith.

III. Bridging Class Divides?

The kindergartens opened in Hamburg interpreted Fröbel’s pedagogical method and what that meant for social reform broadly. The families who sent their children to these institutions ranged from middle-class political moderates to radical activists. Each kindergarten’s approach to the state, women, and class differed while remaining true to Fröbel’s rhetoric and method. Three kindergartens exemplify this diversity: the Bürgerkindergarten, the kindergarten opened by the Frauenverein für Armenpflege, and the kindergarten of the Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht. A closer look at these institutions highlights the assumptions on class and gender that were vital within this reformist ideology and the conflicts that this would cause among activists.

The Bürgerkindergarten represented a more “middle-class” vision of the kindergarten movement. The first Bürgerkindergarten was opened in the winter of 1849 when Fröbel was visiting the city. Class was central to this type of kindergarten. While this institution aimed to attract children from all classes, it hoped specifically to attract middle- and lower-middle class children. As Hoffmann stated in his report on Hamburg kindergartens, 70 lower-class children were
enrolled at the time. In a letter to Johanna Goldschmidt, one of the founders of the Bürgerkindergarten, Fröbel stated, “a kindergarten for the poor middle-class craftsmen is almost as important during this time as caring for the poor.” The institution was therefore crucial in ensuring the continuation of middle-class values among those at risk of being relegated to the lower classes. Therefore the Bürgerkindergarten was not only a space to enact social reform, but its founders also sought to prevent social decline by strengthening middle-class identity.

This is evident in the announcement advertising the founding of the Bürgerkindergarten, which reads: “all those who know the Fröbelian kindergarten also know that it is mainly for middle-class needs.” The exact nature of such needs was elusive, however. One can assume that it points to the Bürgerkindergarten’s emphasis on family, community, and the development of the individual’s capacity to learn. Fröbel reiterated this ideal of middle-class identity within the kindergarten in his speech at the opening of the first Bürgerkindergarten on March 5, 1850. “The German Bürgertum, and above all, Hamburg’s citizens, have striven for the longest time to make this evolving idea visible!” It was the middle class, according to Fröbel, that was able to develop education as an emancipatory concept. He believed that “through education you can achieve human worth.” Class and ideals of liberal emancipation were therefore ingrained within the Bürgerkindergarten. However, this did not negate the reality that it was also a space of discipline and organization.

Children attending the Bürgerkindergarten were to be physically fit, and their parents had to pay a weekly tuition of three schillings. The founding statute of the Bürgerkindergarten stated that “children may not suffer from contagious rashes, epilepsy and physical disabilities, and must, during their attendance of the institution maintain the necessary cleanliness.”

The Bürgerkindergarten propagated childcare as a source for community-building and national regeneration that promoted individuality and implicitly criticized the traditional state and social structure. A Rudolstadt newspaper praised the fact that “in Hamburg, the founding of the Bürgerkindergarten was part of the public good,” an inseparable institution tied to the citizenry. The pedagogue Alexander Detmar further elaborated on the benefits of the Bürgerkindergarten for social change and freedom. “The clearer we men recognize the infirmities of our time and the freer we manifest in our occupations and struggles for
the welfare of the fatherland and the Vaterstadt [Hamburg], the more we must put our hearts into the idea of the kindergarten, the seed of a beautiful and free future.”63 Detmar explained that this was the battleground for a new future and for emancipation: “There is much talk about the emancipation of women today! Here is the place where a worthy emancipation can be found; here is the battlefield where they can achieve victory — a victory more glorious than all the deeds of men on bloody battlefields.”64 While the Bürgerkindergarten maintained a middle-class appearance, it nonetheless employed the rhetoric of emancipation and social reform through a new pedagogical approach that focused on women and children. Here the school benefitted the fatherland and the future of the nation. By September 1851, 87 children were enrolled in a second Bürgerkindergarten.65

The Frauenverein zur Armenpflege and the Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht provide us with two cases of kindergartens that worked within the more radical tradition of the movement. Both were understood as philanthropic institutions for the care of lower-class children who lacked proper education at home. Such a kindergarten was seen as a space to promote a new educational method as well as a seedbed for an egalitarian and free society. With these goals came a new ideal of womanhood. At the Hochschule, in particular, women were encouraged to practice a new profession based on “scientific” knowledge.

Theodor Hielscher, a teacher who had actively participated in the revolution and now worked at a kindergarten opened by the Frauenverein zur Armenpflege, defined them as institutions that would remedy the inefficient welfare and assistance lower-class children received. Directing his criticism at the existing Armenschule (charity school) and the dominance of church officials in schooling, he wrote: “The schools for the poor are crowded ... Classes have at least 70 students, a number that pedagogues and doctors agree is too much. How should the 70 (some classes as much as 110) children be supervised? What air fills the room? What kind of care is given the individual child? What becomes of the teacher?”66

In comparison to the Armenschule, the kindergarten provided an alternative that would improve the education of poor children, because “children are separated into two classes led by women who have united in their call to help educate children.” According to Hielscher it could not be considered a real school, however, “not because these women have not demonstrated real self-sacrifice,”

64 Ibid, 152.
65 DIPF/BBF/Archiv Nachlass Fröbel 146-148, Zeitschrift für Friedrich Fröbels Bestrebungen, 10.
66 Staatsarchiv Hamburg Polizeibehörde-Kriminalwesen, 331-2 1851 Nr. 1367 Band 2. Nr, 12 A. 1851.
but because training and funding at these institutions fell short of what it needed to function properly.67 This however did not limit the teachers, but pushed them to make the institution open to the public and gain more support.68

To Hielscher, the kindergarten represented the benefits of moving away from confession-based education. “The institution is purely the work of charity, and so are the teachers, women from both confessions ... who successfully undertake this work not for the individual confession but for the general good. The children therefore come from both Jewish and Christian confessions.”69 He described how “the children of both confessions, without difference separating them, simply humans, are educated as images of God to bring this likeness in them to consciousness and so to give them an inner support.”70 Similarly to the Bürgerkindergarten, the class divide was ever-present. As charitable institutions, these kindergartens were expressions of philanthropic and educational action. Their founders hoped that bringing children into the kindergarten would allow them to move beyond their class identities and to create a new society where notions of class and religious divides would disappear.

The Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht and its associated kindergarten represented a radical extreme of 1848 that illustrated the ways in which the institution came to express new ways of imagining the nation and community. Opened in January 1850, the school was led by Karl Fröbel, while the kindergarten was headed by his wife, Johanna Fröbel and Amalie Krüger. Both Johanna Fröbel and Amalia Krüger had trained with Friedrich Fröbel. Together the women’s school and its kindergarten continued their call for a social revolution that specifically sought to educate women and children in an openly anti-patriarchal manner that would help stabilize a new state. Only through a new form of education, Karl Fröbel wrote, could the state, the family, and society change.71

The Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht exemplified the revolutionary potential of Fröbel’s pedagogy. The kindergarten connected to the school also attempted to go beyond class identity as it was open to all children. In Johanna Fröbel’s view, the biggest failure of the Bürgerkindergarten was that it was too expensive and therefore very exclusive: “The children of the less well-to-do should be accepted, but it was only open for the wealthy.”72 She also criticized that the training the kindergarten teachers received at the Bürgerkindergarten

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
72 Kindergarten und Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht in Hamburg. Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 662-1/113 Emi- lie Wüstenfeld, Nr. 5.
was merely superficial since it was limited to performing a duty rather than to fully developing an individual’s capabilities.73

The kindergarten of the women’s school represented a new way to think about society that abandoned the moderate terms used in the Bürgerkindergarten. As an institution, it educated women according to a scientific form of education and became a place of charity and spiritual uplift for the children. This idea also legitimated the kindergarten teacher as a career.

In the early 1850s, as the political crackdown on revolutionary groups in German-speaking Europe intensified after the failed revolution, the differences between the various kinds of kindergartens became more marked. This was mainly a result of Friedrich Fröbel’s desire to maintain the original goals of the kindergarten in the face of his nephew’s and other activists’ increasing politicization of the institution. In letters to moderates within the kindergarten movement, Fröbel harshly criticized the radical reformers at the women’s school. In a letter to the Berlin activist Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülow, Fröbel was eager to distance himself from the more radical educators: “how can they call me a socialist? I do not understand. I barely handled a few philistines in Hamburg ... I haven’t entered the Hochschule. Not even with those ladies that brought it into being.”74 Fröbel emphasized that he refused to have any contact with “philistines” in Breslau, the center of the Deutschkatholiken movement. In this disavowal of radical reform, Fröbel sought to distance himself from his nephew, Karl Fröbel, and the women of the Hochschule. Due to political pressure and lack of economic support following the conservative reaction of the early 1850s, the women’s school had to close in January 1852.

Conclusion
The kindergartens’ reformist ideology was strongly shaped by assumptions based on class and gender. Although women were to lead a new society, they had to conform to certain ideals of womanliness. How much a woman could be educated and what this education meant was controversial. Activists such as Johanna and Karl Fröbel believed in a scientific universal philosophical education that could lead to women’s entrance into university while other activists disagreed and emphasized that women’s first duty was to run the household and raise their children. The Bürgerkindergarten reflected a middle-class ideal of citizenship and belonging. Meanwhile lower-class children were still the objects of paternalistic charity motivated

73 Ibid.

74 F. an Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülow in Berlin v. 16.5.1850 (Marienhall) (SBB, jetzt UB Kraków, Varnhagen-Sammlung, 62, Brieforiginal 1 B 8° 2 S. + Adr.) (https://bbf.dipf.de/de/recherchieren-finden/online-editionen)
by hopes of spreading liberal middle-class values. Eventually the division among these gender and class assumptions led to rifts within the movement.

As an educational project, the kindergarten in Hamburg became a crucial avenue for social and cultural reform during the revolutionary 1840s. Pedagogues and social reformers across political, class, and confessional lines were quick to note the anti-authoritarian ideals within the method, not least its revolutionary potential, openly promoted by Friedrich Fröbel. As an associate pedagogue of Fröbel’s earlier school in Keilhau (opened 1816) noted, “the spirit of 1815 was incarnate within it.” This spirit of revolutionary thought that developed during the Napoleonic wars encouraged teachers and pedagogues to see their roles as building a new future and nation. Teachers noted the importance of better training, better working conditions, and more independence from religious authorities. Teachers saw the kindergarten as a vital place for rethinking the role of education in ensuring the founding of the new state and the rights of citizens. Activists across Germany employed the rhetoric of the kindergarten to argue for a democratic and free Germany.

In Hamburg this was particularly evident. Several of the city’s women’s associations successfully promoted the kindergarten in partnership with Friedrich Fröbel and his kindergarten teachers. The pedagogues and activists in the city’s kindergartens emphasized that the institution was good for the development of children as well as for the building of a new nation. Designed to reach beyond the divides of religion, class, and gender, the kindergarten was supposed to lay the groundwork for “real emancipation” of the city’s citizens.

At the same time, Hamburg’s kindergartens reflected the ways in which the pedagogical and social reformist model was malleable and open to different interpretations. Assumptions based on class and gender eventually divided radical and moderate activists. While the moderate middle-class Bürgerkindergarten exemplified a middle-class association of citizens who united together to promote an educational model that would propagate liberal virtues, the more inclusive kindergarten of the Frauenverein zur Armenpflege exemplified a socialist ideal of the kindergartens that hoped to move beyond the confines of class and create a new society where Jews and Christians would work together to save children. The Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht represented the most radical application of Fröbelian pedagogy. It saw the kindergarten as a space to realize a professional

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and scientific ideal of femininity for the sake of social reform. These differences demonstrated the divisions within the movement that only became stronger during the years of the conservative reaction in the 1850s when Friedrich Fröbel’s institution was defined as a socialist and atheist institution tied to revolutionary upheaval.

Despite these divisions, the kindergarten movement reminds us of the importance of early childhood education for social and cultural reform. An analysis of the rhetoric used during the founding of these schools reveals a discourse of rights and emancipation based on the hope of educating a new generation of citizens. To pedagogues and activists, women and their relationship to children were key to ensuring that the ideas of the revolution lived on despite its failure. The history of the kindergarten movement during the revolutionary 1840s therefore reminds us to take seriously the history of education and teaching in Germany as an area where teachers and students were (and continue to be) key actors in constructing and shaping the nation, the state, and bonds of belonging.

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