

Research Note / Note de recherche

Analogy, Self-Identity, and Family Identity: Research in Progress

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Previous work by the authors (Jardine & Morgan, forthcoming; Jardine & Morgan, n.d.) involved the exploration of the nature of analogical thinking in young children, and its roots in the iconic, concrete activity of the subject. In this work, we relied heavily on C. S. Peirce's (1895/1960) concept of the *icon* in his discussion of signs, Sebeok's (1978) critique, and Gallagher's discussion of analogy and correspondence in Piagetian theory (1977). We have used the notion of analogy to critique the developmental theory of Jean Piaget with its reliance on a strict notion of logical identity as central to rational discourse in general. Analogy provides an alternative model of how our understanding of the world operates, and it therefore provides an alternate developmental paradigm to Piaget's paradigm of logico-mathematical knowledge. As such, it provides an alternative paradigm for expressing the child's conception of the world and its development.

The present study, currently in progress at the Faculty of Education, University of Calgary, the University of Guelph, and Brown University, provides both an extension and a complement to this work. The central objective of our work is to examine the applicability of notions of analogy and analogical thinking, previously applied to the problem of understanding the *world*, to the notion of *self-understanding*. How can analogical thinking (and the notions of *resemblance*, *correspondence*, and *parallels* that it

implies) be fruitfully applied to traditional notions of self-identity and family identity?

The critical core of our work comes from an examination of Piaget's theory of self-understanding (Jardine, forthcoming) in which the subject is construed as an "epistemic subject, the condition and instrument of objectivity" (Piaget, 1971, p. 338). We are proposing that, once the notion of self-understanding is taken out from under the paradigm of logico-mathematical knowledge, a sense of self-identity emerges which operates by means of uncovering correspondences, similarities, and parallels in one's life history, a process we call *self-analogizing*. Using the work of Kelly (1955) and his concept of *personal constructs*, which are developed through a process of finding analogies or similarities between oneself and significant persons in one's environment, we develop the notion of *self-analogy* as an alternative to notions of *self-identity* which have recourse to a strict concept of logical identity. Using the work of Peirce (1895/1960) and William James (1890/1950), we see a pragmatic or practically oriented notion of knowledge emerge and demonstrate the analogical and iconic character of understanding in general and self-understanding in particular. We will also examine Wittgenstein's (1968) concept of *family resemblance* insofar as it provides a reformulation of the nature of analogical language and a critique of logical identity. From this, early childhood education (ECE) programs (e.g., Weikhart, Rogers, Adcock, & McClelland, 1971) which are based on Piagetian theory will be reviewed to assess the extent to which the paradigm of logico-mathematical knowledge affects the conception of self-identity and its achievement in such programs.

Also following Kelly (1955), we consider the suggestion that one's family provides the core of significant others in relation to which self-analogy is developed and sustained. We explore the possibility that, because family identity is constituted by the perceptions of the members of a family, and because such perceptions operate analogically, families themselves can be understood as *analogical entities*. We examine critically what Wolin and Bennett (1984) call a "family's underlying, shared identity" (p. 401) in relation to a more flexible and fluid notion of *family resemblance* or, so to speak, *family analogy*, where what is shared is not some identical feature common to all members but an analogical "network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing" (Wittgenstein, 1968, para. 66). Wolin and Bennett's work on family rituals will be developed into an exploration of the nature and functioning of *family stories*. Our thesis is that family stories are not simply factual recountings of events in a family's history but analogies for family structure. Their purpose is to sustain and display family resemblance.

We anticipate that our research will be theoretically and practically important to ECE since it will involve both a critical examination of one of the central underpinnings of ECE (the work of Piaget) and an examination of the place of analogy and identity in ECE curriculum texts. The same can be said for our explorations of the notions of family identity and family analogy. The production of rituals and stories has become a technique in a therapeutic approach to families, and we believe that examining analogy and analogical thinking in this regard will be important to such approaches.

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