

Lingering Discourses: Jean Jacque Rousseau's 18th-Century Images of Mothers, Fathers, and Children

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Using a critical discourse approach (Fairclough, 2003; Foucault, 1972; Luke, 1997, 2002; Rabinow, 1984; van Dijk, 1993; van Leeuwen, 2008) this paper examines the text and embedded meaning conveyed in Jean Jacque Rousseau's novella *Émile*. This treatise written in the 18th century includes Rousseau's conceptualization of best practices and a set of educational guidelines detailing habits to avoid and the necessary combination of "natural" and "progressive" approaches recommended to raise children as moral citizens. In our analysis we discuss the ways Rousseau uses binary descriptions of girls-boys, mothers-fathers, and learners-tutors separately and in opposition. We go on to situate his novella as an early example of expert advice on parenting, where Rousseau positions himself as an educational expert by simultaneously defining the maternal role in early education and the role of education in society. We contend that Rousseau's works are founded on particular beliefs about the source of knowledge and construction of meaning that continues to constrain the formation of authentic partnerships among and between parents and early childhood educators. We argue that this discourse—and, importantly, the values, beliefs, and attitudes it conveys—lingers in Canadian early childhood

education learning communities and that the vestiges of these early ideas truncate and unnaturally shape our ideas of parenting, teaching, and learning by socially positioning families and teachers in ways that make it difficult to engage in co-construction of curriculum. We suggest that by better understanding and deconstructing this discourse we can move our thinking forward and authentically engage in co-inquiry.

The September 2011 "Ready, Set, School!" issue of *Parents* magazine featured articles such as "Smart Learning Advice for Every Age", and "Turn Your Kid's 'I Don't Wanna!' into a 'Yes!'" Throughout the magazine, the clothing advertisements are almost indistinguishable from the photographs that accompany the articles. Images are created of perfect, neatly dressed children with smiling, open, inquisitive faces. The children hold chalk, books, or stylish backpacks; all are smartly dressed and "ready" for school. The photographic style is reminiscent of Anne Geddes postcard images where angelic infants are posed amid artificial backgrounds. The flawless staging makes the child model almost indistinct from the background and the props she or he holds. This technique creates an objectified "child as doll" image of innocent perfection. Consistent with the magazine advertising, the articles suggest

ways the child can be prepared emotionally and intellectually for school. Advice is infused throughout the publication, specifically targeting middle- and upper-class families, including tips to combat bullying and ways to gain an advantage in learning. This portrayal seems like a marketing dream come true, where the archetype of the perfect child—unruffled, ready for learning, and well adjusted—can be created if parents follow the fashion and educational advice provided by experts and fortify children with the look, knowledge, ego strength, and skills to succeed.

In this article we explore the roots of these and other images of children and families by investigating Jean Jacques Rousseau's 1762 educational treatise *Émile*, in part contrasting his advice for *Émile* with his descriptions of Sophie (Book V of the novella). Our discussion focuses on the images Rousseau created, the binaries he presents in the novella, and the link he makes between child development theory and education, including the contradictory construction of a natural yet engineered education.

Background

Michael Foucault recognized the formative power of systematic or recurrent statements or themes in language and literature as "discourse." When a discourse appears regularly and persistently, Foucault

contends that it asserts truth and constitutes knowledge that becomes a powerful agent in the creation of social and psychological identities and the formation of social, economic, and political position (Foucault, 1972; Rabinow, 1984). Simply put, these discursive messages become our realities, even if (or especially if) our energies are placed opposing and contesting them. The dominance of these rhetorical positions oblige us to take them up in some way. For example, in early childhood education, the discourse of school readiness has persisted from year to year over the last quarter century and has essentially inculcated our school culture by defining the purpose and meaning of preschool and school and the subsequent roles that families and early childhood educators play in the process of educating children. Typically in late August and early September at the start of the new school year, the media is rife with “back to school” messages in advertising and literature (newspapers, magazines, blogs). Rhetoric contends that some children aged 4 or 5 years may not be “ready for school” and are not prepared socially, emotionally, and intellectually for the formal educational experiences they are about to embark upon. Parents, teachers, and “educational experts” are featured in this discourse as producers and consumers of a dialogue about “preschool skills,” “school readiness,” “red shirting,” “the basics,” “best practice,” “standards,” “Canada’s global position in education,” “literacy and numeracy rates” and so on. Often embedded in this discourse is a competitive assumption that sees education as a way to advantage the child, family, community, or country. Raising these questions raises doubts: Is my child ready for kindergarten? Should my 4 year old enter school in September when his birthday isn’t until December? What preschool skills should be taught? How can I advantage my child or pupil in school so that she can succeed? These are powerful questions that shape the conceptual images and ways we think about children and their “needs” and simultaneously shape how we see ourselves as mothers, fathers, and educators. When these messages are presented year after year they give

families, educators, and, indirectly, children the message that school can be a scary and competitive place where some children may find themselves ill prepared and behind, even unsuccessful. Ironically, this message can become self-fulfilling as parents try to gain a competitive edge and teachers try to prepare children for the years to come. Less obvious are the secondary messages, or, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, the “conceptual metaphors” that are created discursively. In early learning, even innocent-sounding words such as *preschool* and *school readiness* metaphorically suggest that early life experiences are merely a staging ground for formal education and that the role of families and early learning specialists is to make the child “ready” for the more important experiences yet to come. When we take up this discourse uncritically, we are conceptually agreeing with the values, beliefs, and assumptions these assertions are premised on. Dangerously, in this context we have lost other ways of viewing learning and other ways of seeing children’s capabilities. Our concern is no longer with who the child is at present and what he or she is capable of; our concern becomes preparation and protection, as the child is judged against the expectations of tomorrow. In this view, today’s child is in need of emotional and intellectual fortification and inoculation if she or he is to succeed in the future.

“Like all of Rousseau’s political commentaries, in its day Émile represented radical thought and a progressive set of ideals that threatened both the state and the church.”

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis has been described by Luke (2002) as a “repertoire of political, epistemic stances: principled reading positions and practices for the critical analysis of the place and force of language, discourse, text, and image in

changing contemporary social, economic, and cultural conditions” (p. 97). According to Fairclough (2003), the process of critical discourse analysis simultaneously attends to the order of the discourse and the ways in which the language is socially structured. This analysis draws attention to the genre of the text and the styles the author uses. By viewing the discursive processes as social events, we are able to position the author and readers relationally to uncover assumptions, values, practices, and beliefs. This process involves, according to Luke (2002), a conscious switching back and forth in the analysis between the normative reading of texts and the normative reading of the social world. In this paper, we take up this approach by attending not only to the words conveyed in Rousseau’s text *Émile*, but to the images and deeper conceptual meanings created throughout the text. We do this to better understand and to critically evaluate the relational and pedagogical implications of Rousseau’s advice to mothers and educators and to better understand how this discourse continues to preoccupy our educational dialogue.

Historical Context

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1712. Rousseau’s mother died in childbirth, leaving him in the somewhat indifferent care of his watchmaker father, who, as a single parent without his wife’s higher social status and endowment, found himself financially restricted and socially marginalized. Rousseau Sr. taught Jean Jacques to read and modestly attended to his education until the boy was 10, at which time he fled Geneva to avoid the law. Jean Jacques was left in the care of his uncle, who paid for his formal education until he was 13 and then sent him to apprentice with an engraver. His apprenticeship was unhappy, and within two years Jean Jacques ran away to the outskirts of the city and eventually to France, where he entered into a series of employment and educational pursuits, including studies of music, religion, and sciences. In 1749 Rousseau’s life course profoundly changed when he entered and won a contest in Dijon, France, for the best

essay written on the topic “Has the Progress of the Arts and Sciences Contributed More to the Corruption or Purification of Morals?” Rousseau argued that civilization had essentially created evil among men. He proposed that, despite advances in the arts and sciences, humankind was no further ahead. Rousseau’s critique was timely, given its presentation in an era marked by inequalities of power and privilege and shifts from local feudal systems to political nationalism. This was also an era when fragmentation in the Christian church was compounded with the rise of humanism and empirical science. Fernand Braudel (1982) describes France during this era as a country filled with conquests and clashing civilizations. Power was localized among a small number of privileged persons in a hierarchy where “everything invariably falls into the lap of this tiny group: power, wealth, a large share of surplus production” (p. 466).

Rousseau’s essay on the corruption of civilization was later published as the “Discourse on Political Economy” in the 1755 *Encyclopédie*. It easily found its audience among an industrious, active working class who were critical of the idle, privileged higher echelon. Following his initial successes, Rousseau worked concurrently on *The New Héloïse*, *The Social Contract*, and *Émile* all published in 1762. As Ballinger (1965) aptly describes, in these books, Rousseau found his place as a social critic by articulating his often contradictory thoughts with a passionate rhetoric that fuelled many revolutionary ideas.

Rousseau’s *Émile*

Rousseau’s novella *Émile* is divided into five books: the first three dedicated to the child Émile, the fourth on the adolescent, and the fifth on Émile’s female counterpart, Sophie, as well as to Émile’s domestic and civic life. Rousseau’s early childhood experience of being raised and educated largely by his father and his uncle (Hillesheim, 2002), in addition to the social norms of the day favouring women caregivers, may have contributed

to his veneration of motherhood, including his construction of an image of the ideal mother whose sole purpose was to breast-feed, nurture, educate, and protect her young from the corrupt influences of society. In Rousseau’s early adulthood he also tutored two boys, an experience which, by his own admission, was a failure, but which undoubtedly shaped his thinking and the advice he later prescribed. In *Confessions*, Rousseau (2011b) provides readers with another interesting contrast: the fact that he abandoned his own five children to a foundling hospital, choosing not to raise them himself. As he explained, he abandoned his children for the sake of what he thought would be a proper upbringing and because he felt he would be an incapable father. As he described in *Confessions*, he found the practice [of delivering the children to the foundling hospital] to be “good, reasonable and lawful” (Book VIII, para. 21). Unlike Rousseau’s own children who were abandoned to the foundling hospital, the fictitious character Émile received doting maternal care and expert tutelage. In the novella, Émile was nursed by his biological/natural mother and taught in measured, prescribed, and “natural” ways by a tutor who was constantly available to him. Beginning with the assumption that children have “innate goodness,” Rousseau built his methods on the belief that parents and tutors should shield children from the potential harm of the corrupt society that surrounds them. The very idea that children are born innocent was so radical that it incensed both the Calvinist and Catholic communities who perceived humanity, including children, as innately evil, tempted by the devil, and awaiting salvation from God through the church. Like all of Rousseau’s political commentaries, in its day *Émile* represented radical thought and a progressive set of ideals that threatened both the state and the church.

Images

The notion that an image of children can be conceptually constructed and, importantly, can influence how we think about and teach children was introduced to us by

Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994). Malaguzzi (1994) believed that the image educators and parents hold of the child positions adults to behave in certain ways based on the assumptions and suggestions the image holds. For example, if we hold an image of children as capable and competent, we proceed as educators in a particular way that is qualitatively different than if we begin with a conceptual image of children as needy and wanting.

As do the magazine images described in the introduction, Rousseau aimed to provide advice for wealthy upper-class citizens. Throughout the novella, Rousseau built many images as he assumed the voice of expert, raising and immediately answering his own rhetorical questions. This discursive style exudes a force that leaves no space for the reader’s own ideas, values, and beliefs or the views of others, nor does it promote reflection and the ability to construct other ways of thinking about a given topic. Although Rousseau himself was very disciplined in his self-study and intellectual pursuits and he described the importance of his own reflective practices, the training style he adopted and recommended for the tutor was didactic, simultaneously treating the reader and the novella’s fictitious child Émile as intellectually passive and limited in their ability to summon independent thought and reflection. According to the novella, *Émile*, and by implication, all boys his age, need guidance and direction. In this belief, Rousseau was much influenced by his predecessor, John Locke (1632–1704), who believed that children were *tabula rasae* (Latin for “blank slates”) ready to be filled with information (Locke, 1989). In this view, children were thought to have no innate abilities to gather their own information or perceptions or direct their own learning.

Tabula rasa

In keeping with Locke’s view, Rousseau saw Émile as an intellectual blank slate, a perspective that leads to a binary tension between the child as empty vessel in need of being filled and the opposite image of adults as experts who are able to fulfil this need. On the surface, this image of child

as tabula rasa may not appear so bad. In many ways it makes the teacher powerful and important, knowing that they might impart, fill, or scribe knowledge upon the child's mind, but when we examine this image critically, we also see that it is a dangerous image of a passive, disengaged student alongside an omnipotent teacher who doesn't provide the pedagogical space for children to construct their own understandings, draw their own conclusions, or make connections that might lead to deep, independent thinking and learning. By implication, the image of *Émile* as a passive learner is almost guaranteed by the strength and wisdom of the adults Rousseau contrasts him with. This conceptualization is taken farther in Rousseau's discussion of a so-called negative education from age 2 to age 12, when instruction is purposefully withheld from *Émile* so that he can develop his physical qualities and senses without the interference of intellectual or moral instruction. In this view, little room is left for other realities, such as a child's ability to generate her own early understandings or pursue her own questions. In this thesis there is no room for the social role of peers as co-constructors in a learning process, nor, importantly, for the role of extended family members and learning communities. No alternative moral, intellectual, or social possibilities, are presented.

Child as naïve and helpless

Closely following this image of *Émile* as a blank slate is a companion image of *Émile* as naïve and helpless without his mother or tutor. This image extends to mankind, who is in need of the salvation of education. Rousseau (1979) writes:

We are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally unprovided, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgement. Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education. (p. 38)

This image is simultaneously posed as a problem and embedded with a solution or advice. Although the message that education is a gift that can fulfil us is a

powerful and hopeful one, it also implies that education can somehow be separated from other holistic and embedded practices, such as nurturing children and engaging them relationally. By implication, as we strengthen the value and power of education, we start to conceptualize it as something beyond ourselves, that is, as something that can only be given to us formally by tutors or teachers. In this handing over of education, we lessen the active role and our ownership of learning through individual action, reflection, modelling, peer learning, or learning from our community. Early childhood educators, mothers, family members, and others recognize that young children are learning all the time, but what Rousseau asks us to see as education is something that can only be delivered by those charged with this task. This stance begs the question of the time and location of learning and the curriculum to be taught, as well as if, when, and why we should see education as formal and as separate from other learning experiences. This critique can also be extended to Rousseau's view of "negative education," where education is purposefully withheld from the child in a contrived fashion that is said to be natural.

Mother as tender and anxious

In *Émile*, mothers are portrayed as tender, anxious, and charged with a duty to care and protect their young. Rousseau (1979) wrote:

Tender, anxious mother, I appeal to you. You can remove this young tree from the highway and shield it from the crushing force of social conventions. Tend and water it ere it dies. One day its fruit will reward your care. From the outset raise a wall round your child's soul; another may sketch the plan, you alone should carry it into execution. Plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education. (p. 6)

This image of duty is embedded with the message that if the mother is successful in the care of her children she will be rewarded in her old age: "One day its fruit will reward your care." By implication, if the mother is unsuccessful, she is to blame.

In this scenario the stakes are high and the assumption is that she (or the tutor) is alone in this educational task. *Émile* has no siblings; no mention is made of extended family or community outside his immediate nuclear family and there is no sense of a communal responsibility for the care and education of young children. This stance follows from Rousseau's assumption that society's influence is corrupt and that the child should be protected and buffered from life outside the home. The danger to families and educators of adopting this position is that it devalues the role of the family and community in the child's educational experience, with the assumption that the influence of the family and community is antithetic or at best inconsequential to the child's "true education" delivered by the tutor. In this vignette, educating the child seems to imply protecting him from outside influences or forces, just as we see in the parenting magazine described in the introduction where parents are shown ways to protect their children from bullies. The notion that we can inoculate children from the harsh realities of the world has created a parenting and teaching style where very little intellectual, physical, or social risk is taken, with the result, we would argue, that very little life experience or intellectual growth can occur.

Father as ambitious and harsh

In the 1979 Allan Bloom translation of *Émile*, fathers are not mentioned at all. This itself is an interesting comment on the translator's view of fathers' lack of importance in this era to the early education and nurturing of young children. However, in a later translation by Barbara Foxley (Rousseau, 2011a; 2011b), we find many references to fathers. For example, in one passage of Book I we read that fathers are filled with "ambition, avarice, tyranny" and that "the mistaken foresight of fathers, their neglect, their harshness, are a hundredfold more harmful to the child than the blind affection of the mother" (Rousseau, 2011a, Chapter 2, para. 1-3). Here we see the mother's "blind affection" celebrated when compared to the father's hard-edged tyrannical approach. In other passages in the same edition, many

references are made to the father's role in education and guidance of older children and youth, including his role in deciding what is right educationally and morally. Rousseau's descriptions seem to hand off the child from mother to father as the child makes developmental gains. This stance reflects the values and assumptions that mothers are less equipped to care for the intellectual and moral needs of their older children, and conversely, that fathers are ill prepared to engage relationally with the needs of infants and younger children. This perspective also creates a binary with no middle ground for situations where fathers may support mothers in their nurturing role or vice versa. Although we could argue that this binary is no longer as dominant, we still see a majority of mothers caring for infants and young children on a daily basis and a majority of women teachers in early childhood education. Additionally, no consideration is given to parents' individual strengths or to the temperament, gender, or other individual differences of the child. The descriptions easily become archetypes of mothers, fathers, children, and tutors, with no perceivable distinguishing qualities and no middle ground for different approaches that might best suit the fit between them. The danger of such archetypes is that we very quickly learn who we should be or what others should be through that archetypal image, and often we are restricted in our ability to learn who others truly are or who we might be outside this dominant image. The parents who drop their children off at school become archetypes of mothers or fathers, not Hemakshi or Andrew. The children we teach become boys and girls, not Christy, James, Carleen, or Hiêú. Can we ever really reach a point of co-inquiry and collaboration with archetypal images lingering? How can we truly get to know these children and families?

Tutor as selfless expert

This sets the stage for a theme taken up throughout *Émile* where Rousseau adopts the voice of "expert" through his creation of the archetypal tutor. In *Émile*, the tutor assumes responsibility for the provision of Émile's mental, moral, and physical

education and is seemingly omnipresent. This creates the image of education as an impossible-to-attain ideal for the nurse, mother, or tutor given the magnitude of the task. In Rousseau's (1979) words,

when education becomes an art, it is almost impossible for it to succeed, since the conjunction of elements necessary to its success is in no one's control. All that one can do by dint of care is to come more or less close to the goal, but to reach it requires luck. (p. 38).

In addition to describing education as an art that is impossible to master or succeed in, Rousseau extends the challenge and judgment by advising the reader that the role of mother, nurse, and tutor also requires rational analysis and monitoring. The educators are warned that they themselves must not contribute to a maladaptive education. To guard against doing so, the mother is expected to step outside her practice and evaluate the extent to which she is contributing to the child's condition. As Rousseau (1979) notes,

the lengthy tears of a child who is neither bound nor sick, who is allowed to want for nothing, are only tears of habit and obstinacy. They are the work not of nature but of the nurse who, not knowing how to endure the importunity, multiplies it without dreaming that in making the child keep quiet today one is encouraging him to cry more tomorrow. (p. 69).

This warning adds to the unattainable qualities the educator should possess. Not only must the mother, nurse, or tutor observe, evaluate, or diagnose the child's needs and react appropriately, she must also know how her reactions may contribute to the child's misbehaviour. In all of this, the educator has no identity of his or her own. In fact, throughout the treatise the mother, nurse, tutor, and father are all nameless. Only Émile has a name, needs, desires, and character. Put simply, this namelessness leaves the educator and family unnaturally devoid of feeling and form.

Rousseau's Views on Education

Education as behavioural problem solving

Several of Rousseau's examples liken early childhood education to behavioural problem solving. In one example, the educator rationally "teaches" Émile not to be afraid of masks. In his description, Rousseau (1979) writes,

All children are afraid of masks. I begin by showing Émile a mask with a pleasant face, then some one puts this mask before his face; I begin to laugh, they all laugh too, and the child with them. By degrees I accustom him to less pleasing masks, and at last hideous ones. If I have arranged my stages skilfully, far from being afraid of the last mask, he will laugh at it as he did at the first. After that I am not afraid of people frightening him with masks. (p. 30)

In this example, the reader is presented with a rational behavioural approach to solving the "problem" of childhood fears associated with masks. To counter this deficit, we are presented with a lesson in desensitization where the tutor is advised to model the pairing of the mask with laughter so that Émile associates the dreaded object with a pleasant response and eventually fortifies himself against the fears and anxiety he associates with it. Moreover, this strategy is intended to protect Émile and assure the tutor or parent that others won't be able to take advantage of a weakness that is common in children. This theme of bolstering the individual innocent, naïve young student against a corrupt and evil society is repeated continually, with the assumptions that the role of educator and education in general is to protect the child from the evils of the world. Initially the mother or nurse is charged with this task and later the tutor takes on this role. This approach is also reminiscent of the advice given to parents about how to "convince your kid to let you do even the things they hate" (Points, 2011, p. 46) by combining the dreaded task with affection.

Education as women's work and a woman's social security

Prior to the institutionalization of social security in Canada and Europe, it was common for one's family to act as social security for members who had fallen on bad times or were in need (Guest, 1985). In *Émile*, Rousseau (1979) paints a true picture of society in that era as he writes:

The earliest education is most important and it undoubtedly is woman's work. If the author of nature had meant to assign it to men he would have given them milk to nurse the child. Always speak, then, preferably to women in your treatises on education; for, beyond the fact that they are in the position to watch over it more closely than are men and always have greater influence on it, they also have much more interest in its success, since most widows find themselves almost at the mercy of their children; then their children make mothers keenly aware, for good or ill, of the effect of the way they raised their children. (p. 37).

This viewpoint extends the idea of family as social security to a notion that family might become social security in a time of need *if* the mother invests properly in her offspring and has been successful in educating her young. Conceptually this seems to imply that care for our mothers in their old age is contingent on how we feel we were educated by them in our early childhood and youth and perhaps how we were treated. This creates an image of a vulnerable mother whose fate is precarious and power limited. This description also continues to associate the duties of care and education with the individual nuclear family in isolation from the larger community. In this way, correctly nurturing and educating her children not only becomes part of the mother's role, but it also becomes a high stakes proposition. Done correctly, it could lead to being cared for in one's old age; done improperly, one risks being sent to the poorhouse!

Society as corrupt

Rousseau saw society as a corrupting

influence, even going so far as to denounce the role of books as unnatural and miseducative. He felt that man was born free but soon degenerated in the hands of others. A consistent theme throughout *Émile* was that he found fault in the educational practices of the day including rote memorization and separation of learning from the student's own direct experience. The 1st half of the book discusses *Émile*'s "natural" development apart from other children and away from the imitation of adult social duties and etiquette (a common practice among the elite). Instead, because he believed that young children were predisposed to being good, it was more important to allow their predispositions to emerge and find their natural expression. This could only happen, according to Rousseau, away from the corruption of parlour life and other social influences that misshape children.

Contradictions found in Rousseau's notion of a natural yet engineered education

Rousseau's treatise calling for a natural education describes an approach to learning that is individually tailored for *Émile* according to each stage of his development. Rousseau also acknowledged childhood as a separate and unique phase in life which should be cherished and appreciated. This perspective has contributed to our understanding of childhood as unique and valuable in and of itself rather than as a holding place prior to adulthood. Importantly, this view has also led to the establishment of children's rights and a disruption of the common view that children are lesser beings.

Through *Émile*, Rousseau contributed the idea of the developmental stages of infancy, childhood (boyhood), preadolescence, adolescence, and young manhood, implying that a natural education would attend to these stages. His theory suggests that one cannot force knowledge, but that we must allow children to naturally develop and enjoy the early years of their life before they are ready to be formally educated. Since Rousseau's time, this stage approach has been furthered by evolutionary psychologists and developmental theorists

like James Mark Baldwin, Jean Piaget, and Arnold Gesell in their theories of genetics, maturation, and the mental growth of children. These theories have also been used to support the idea of developmentally appropriate learning where formal instruction and activities should be introduced at a timely point in maturation so that we avoid "hot housing" children and treating them as miniature adults. In Rousseau's treatise he illustrates this idea by suggesting that reading instruction should not to be attempted until after the age of 12. Children younger than 12 need to exercise their primary senses and directly experience the world around them. Such basic sensory experience will become the foundation of later abstract thought. In this way, Rousseau viewed experience as prerequisite to reason and abstract thinking, which he believed would come later. He viewed the child's development before age 12 as best suited for an "education of the senses" that required a "negative education" given his assumption that the child's verbal and reasoning powers remain latent for the first twelve years of life and shouldn't be corrupted by moral or intellectual instruction.

"Uncovering the roots of these images of teacher as expert, learner as passive, and mother as vulnerable, tender, and anxious, and critically evaluating the way we have distanced children and families and separated them from "educational experts" may help us to contest the value and currency of our positions so that they may be collectively reimagined."

Although there is good reason to see childhood as a qualitatively separate phase in life, Rousseau's stage theory can be problematic and is not necessarily "natural." Seeing obvious flaws in past assumptions like those generated by Rousseau, theorists such as Margaret Donaldson (1978) have since successfully argued that young

children are in fact capable of abstract thought and reasoning well before age 12, and that when children are evaluated on their ability to think abstractly, it is often a test of language comprehension that takes place. In *Children's Minds* (1978), she also argues against the traditional linking of egocentric behaviour to young thinking, pointing out that egocentric behaviour is often demonstrated throughout adulthood (we would add particularly in Western cultures).

From age 12 until 15 *Émile* is considered to have developed physically into a tough, resourceful, self-reliant individual whose powers of reasoning emerge and develop quickly. This image of the ideal independent, self-reliant thinker (latent or otherwise) is not a value shared by all cultures, and it also poses a problem if we adopt it unquestioningly. In many collective cultures and/or cultures that acknowledge the necessity and value of interdependence, this separation of the individual from the group is thought of as unnatural. Part of the appeal of seeing the individual educated outside the group, from Rousseau's point of view, was that it could offset the social and vicarious learning that would take place and, importantly, the corrupting influences of society. Rousseau says nothing in the novella about the value of the extended family, clan, or community. As part of Rousseau's celebration of individual rights, he saw the individual as having the right not to be used as a means toward an end (i.e., the global citizen). The pupil is regarded in this way as an end in him or herself and not part of a national economic or political plan. Again, this value has been highly prized in North America, but it is important to note that it comes with a set of assumptions and beliefs about where the learner is situated within the collective. Perhaps more importantly, it should be noted that these values are not universally shared.

Gender

When comparing Rousseau's careful articulation of the education of *Émile* to his discussions of *Sophie* (in Book V of *Émile*), we see another contrast in

educational values, in this case values related to gender. According to Jane Martin (1985), the majority of interpretations of Rousseau's educational theory have been taken from Books I to IV in which he discussed education solely for boys through his fictitious character *Émile*. *Sophie* is introduced in Book V essentially to complete or complement *Émile*'s life, given that in Rousseau's (2011a) words "it is not good that man should be alone" (Book V, para. 2). In Rousseau's blunt descriptions of the essential social and moral virtues that women should possess, he states:

The children's health depends in the first place on the mother's, and the early education of man is also in a woman's hands; his morals, his passions, his tastes, his pleasures, his happiness itself, depend on her. A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend to him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young. The further we depart from this principle, the further we shall be from our goal, and all our precepts will fail to secure her happiness or our own. (*Sophie* or *Woman*, para. 32)

The subordinate positioning of women described in this passage is only one of many examples throughout Rousseau's writing that illustrate a common view held in that culture and era: that men had proprietary rights to women and children. As explained by Martin (1985), while "insisting that she is by nature subordinate to *Émile*'s authority Rousseau makes it both necessary for her to remain in the traditional female role and impossible for her to be a citizen of the ideal state" (p. 46). With this view of women and children as property, we can reason that the education of girls and young women in Rousseau's day could never be as freely determined as that of the education of boys and young men. Conceptually, Rousseau also asserts

that any education that women receive is done for the betterment of her offspring, taking us full circle to an image of women as being charged with the selfless education of their young children.

Overall Rousseau's novella provides a blueprint for "natural" and "progressive" approaches to successfully raise boys as moral beings and buffer them from the early influences of a corrupt society. In our analysis, we see many strong images created by Rousseau that continue to linger as discourses in our current educational habits and practices. We also suggest that many of Rousseau's so-called natural approaches are contradictory and deeply embedded with a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs that define education and those who should be educated in a particular way, consistent with the culture and beliefs of Rousseau's era. The images, however, of teacher as expert, learner as passive, and mother as vulnerable, tender, and anxious all seem to linger in our current discourses and truncate our thinking in particular ways. Moreover, each of these images brings with it a number of conceptual metaphors that lock us into ways of thinking about children, pedagogues, and maternal roles that should be questioned and examined critically as they relate to our current world views and aspirations.

Conclusions

Uncovering the roots of these images of teacher as expert, learner as passive, and mother as vulnerable, tender, and anxious, and critically evaluating the way we have distanced children and families and separated them from "educational experts" may help us to contest the value and currency of our positions so that they may be collectively reimagined. Using a critical discourse approach, we can see the archetypal images presented in the photographs and articles in parenting magazines like the one described in the introduction as a measure of the way we have distanced parents and early childhood educators in Canada and the way we are inclined to view children. What might happen if we were to view

children's competencies as a starting point for instructional practices before other negative images? To see young learners as capable in their engagement with learning rather than perpetually in need or wanting? From this new beginning it may be possible to reimagine what is meant by *curriculum* and *education*. In the face of the many contradictions that have been historically created and that tend to linger or replicate themselves in our 21st-century discourse, we might simply begin with Malaguzzi's powerful suggestion that our image of children is where our teaching begins. If we can critically analyze the archetypes that have become our 21st-century discourse, we may be in a better position to forge new relationships with children and families in our learning communities.

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Life Long Achievement of Excellence

Submitted by Lynda Phillips

It is with the greatest of pleasure that we announce that Susan Fraser has been given an award for Life Long Achievement of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Public Service to the Province of British Columbia. Sue is the first recipient of this award. She has been chosen because of her lifelong commitment to young children and their families, not only in British Columbia but also in many other parts of Canada and the world. Many Canadian Children readers will know Sue and understand that she is seen not only as a guide and mentor, but that she is someone who has been instrumental in changing teaching practices in early childhood education throughout Canada. Sue has been an early childhood educator, a college and university professor, and a staunch advocate for children. She also served for a number of years as the editor of Canadian Children. Understanding that change occurs within a context, Sue has quietly and steadfastly worked to transform how early childhood education students are educated for practice; she has been instrumental in helping early childhood educators shift their understanding of how young children learn, and she has taken every opportunity to share all she has learned with governments, professors, teachers, parents and caregivers. Sue sees herself as a collaborator but we see her as a catalyst for change and a leader. Like all good leaders, she is loved and respected dearly.



Susan Fraser receives Lifetime Achievement Award.

Congratulations Sue!