FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABILITY: POWER, REALITY[1] AND DRAGONS

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Abstract

With the goal of better understanding how Engaged Philosophical Inquiry (EPI), can be used with young children (aged 4) on topics related to the environment and sustainability the following paper presents findings from a year long pilot project and a follow up study taking place within a childcare center and its surrounding forest environment. Using ethnographic research methods, we gathered, transcribed and analyzed digital video, photographic and audio recordings of our activities in answer to the question: How can Engaged Philosophical Inquiry be used with four-year-olds as a way to inquire about our environment and the concept of sustainability? This research was approached in partnership with the children using a model of democratic community building and a holistic pedagogy that yielded findings related to: 1) democratic community building processes; 2) the use of context to focus our discussions; 3) optimal group membership and group size; and 4) turn taking and the role of the moderator including effective framing of purpose, questioning, clarification and reiteration of the children's ideas. We conclude that children at this age are able to engage in philosophical discussion with the assistance of a skilled moderator and opportunities to engage experientially in activities related to the discussion thread.

Key words: Engaged Philosophical Inquiry; sustainability; democratic community

Fundamentos da democracia e sustentabilidade: poder, realidade e dragões

Com o objetivo de compreender melhor como a Pesquisa Filosófica Engajada pode ser utilizada com crianças pequenas (4 anos) em assuntos relacionados ao meio ambiente florestal local, o presente estudo apresenta algumas descobertas de um projeto piloto de um ano e um estudo posterior acontecido num abrigo para crianças e numa floresta do entorno. Utilizando métodos de pesquisa etnográfica, consideramos, transcrevemos e analisamos vídeos digitais, registros fotográficos e áudio das atividades em resposta à pregunta: praticada com crianças de quatro anos como pode a pesquisa filosófica engajada ser usada

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[1] Note that we have changed this title from "Power, Magic and Dragons" to "Power, Reality and Dragons" This was done to better represent the children's discussions and intentions. The use of the term 'Power', is also based on the children's interests in wild and powerful animals and dragons and in part on an early EPI session, when we allowed the children to make turn taking decisions. The power role-reversal from adult to child seemed to evoke a sort of nervous riotous laughter and silliness as children took turns preventing others from speaking at times for up to 90 seconds.

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como forma de investigar acerca do meio ambiente e do conceito de sustentabilidade? Esta pesquisa foi realizada em colaboração com crianças usando um modelo construído de comunidade democrática e uma pedagogia holística que permitiu achados relativos à: 1) processos de construção de uma comunidade democrática; 2) o uso do contexto para focar nossas discussões; 3) otimizar a pertença e o tamanho de um grupo; 4) pedir a palavra e o papel do moderador, incluindo contextualizar o propósito, questionar, clarificar e reiterar as ideias das crianças. Concluímos que crianças dessa idade são capazes de comprometer-se numa discussão filosófica com a ajuda de um moderador hábil e de oportunidades de comprometer-se experiencialmente em atividades relacionadas ao fluir da discussão.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa Filosófica Engajada; sustentabilidade; comunidade democrática

Fundamentos de la Democracia y la Sustentabilidad: poder, realidad y dragones

Resumen
Con el objetivo de entender mejor cómo la Investigación Filosófica Comprometida puede ser usada con niños pequeños (4 años) sobre temas relacionados con el medio ambiente y la sustentabilidad este trabajo presenta algunos hallazgos de un proyecto piloto de un año y un estudio sucesivo que tuvo lugar en un abrigo de niñas y niños y en una selva del entorno. Usando métodos de investigación etnográfica, consideramos, transcribimos y analizamos videos digitales, registros fotográficos y audio de las actividades en respuesta a la pregunta: ¿Cómo puede la Investigación Filosófica Comprometida ser practicada con niñas y niños de cuatro años como forma de investigar acerca del medio ambiente y del concepto de sustentabilidad? Esta investigación fue realizada en colaboración con niñas y niños usando un modelo construido de comunidad democrática y una pedagogía holística que permitió hallazgos relativos a: 1) procesos de construcción de una comunidad democrática; 2) el uso del contexto para focalizar nuestras discusiones; 3) la pertenencia y el tamaño de un grupo; 4) el pedir turnos y el papel del moderador, incluyendo contextualizar el propósito, cuestionar, clarificar y reiterar las ideas de niñas y niños. Concluimos que niñas y niños de esta edad son capaces de comprometerse en una discusión filosófica con la ayuda de un moderador hábil y de oportunidades de comprometerse experiencialmente en actividades relacionadas al fluir de la discusión.

Palabras Claves: Investigación Filosófica Comprometida, Sustentabilidad, Comunidad democrática

FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABILITY: POWER, REALITY AND DRAGONS

Introduction

In our EPI sessions, 'Power, reality and dragons' is a topic that was explored with the children over a 7-month period through weekly visits by Warren Bowen, our Philosopher in Residence. We identified this discussion thread and theme based on a careful review of recorded video and audio observations and transcripts of the children's play and EPI sessions. We also based our curricular decisions on the teachers' and facilitator's individual strengths and interests and the centre's curricular goals related to sustainability. This approach, sometimes referred to as a 'negotiated curriculum' (Fraser, 2011), provides scope for the delivery of material and activities related to the children's interests and engagement, but is not determined strictly by either the children or the adults. Rather, it is selected by the pedagogues from a larger curricular strand and then refined based on the pedagogue's strengths and dispositions and the children's continued interests, focus, passions and engagement. In this way we democratically considered the observable and/or stated goals, interests, perspectives and abilities of both the children and adults (Cam, 1998; 2000; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dewey, 1954). In our case these decisions were related to the goal identified by the teachers at the research centre who wished to provoke deeper discussion about the environment and issues related to sustainability and to allow the children to explore their interests and points of intellectual tension and fascination within this curricular area.

We noted that 'power, reality and dragons' was a topic that persisted with the children over time in the children's play and was seen as important to the children both in their discussions and other physical actions (i.e. play postures and physical intentions). We observed the children's curiosity and fascination with the power of dragons and large wild animals but also the intellectual tension the children were experiencing as they engaged in and transgressed metaphysical boundaries within these topics to gain deeper understandings of reality and imagination and to

interrogate living and non-living constructs. For example, children were able to discuss their conceptualizations of dragons based on popular television and movie characterization and also integrated themselves into the plots and action during play as they constructed the rules of engagement and negotiated their roles and relationships. Importantly, these activities and discussions provided an outlet for expressions of fear, understanding of dragons and wild animals, and entrapment. This created a forum to discuss reality and imagination. In these discussions, the children identified dragons as imaginary and intellectually separated them from so-called real animals, but then, as in the case of one child, contested the separation of real and imagined through the assertion that she was a dragon.

Pilot Activities

Our deliberate use of the forest as a curriculum context for EPI was chosen to complement and support our research centre's vision to develop children's understanding of environmental and social sustainability. Through EPI we saw the potential to deepen children's intellectual and wondrous inquiry into sustainability and engage in discussions related to the interface between the forest and themselves. We began with a series of pilot activities in the year prior to the present study. These were used to probe the children's engagement and to gauge our ability to facilitate the children's discussions related to the forest and sustainability. On our visits to the forest we asked the children questions such as: Is it possible to make the forest more beautiful? Are our paintings of the forest more beautiful than the forest? What are powerful things in the forest? Why are they powerful? Are some animals too powerful to befriend? Are we powerful, and how can we help the forest using our power?

We were careful to ask these questions only after the children explored an activity designed to provide a contextual and experiential foundation related to the question. Many of these questions were spontaneously derived from comments the

children made or observable actions noted during activities. This practice was based on our understanding that young children are better able to engage conversationally when the focus of their attention is already on a meaningful object or subject (Tomasello, 2003), and when the adults are readily supporting conversational turns by focusing the child's attention, usually on something concrete. For example, our question about whether or not the children's paintings of the forest were more beautiful than the forest itself was posed once the children had completed a painting activity not only of the forest but of the forest while standing in the forest! This provided the children a ready comparison based on what they had experienced first hand. To do this, the teachers brought easels, paper and premixed green paint to the forest so the children could engage in representational paintings. Taking time to allow the children to experience and create a representational painting before posing a question about representations of the forest yielded a much stronger and more meaningful response than if we had sat inside the building to think about the forest and/or gazed at a picture of the forest in abstract in order to generate the discussion.

Another learning experience we explored with the children on our visits to the forest was a game called "scavenger hunt". The hunt was conducted by our "Philosopher in Residence", Warren Bowen. In this game, children and their adult leaders were given baskets and asked to find items in the forest that are: happy, sad, beautiful, ugly, alive, dead, etc. The important part of this activity was not simply to find the item but to achieve consensus among members of each team through discussion. As a group, each team member was required to determine what is "happy" in the forest, "sad", "beautiful", etc. These discussions are interesting as children use their powers of reason and logic to structure arguments for and against each item. For example in a recent "hunt" when asked what is happy in the forest, one child answered "Trees! Trees are happy!" While another child disagreed, saying "No, [they aren't happy] because they don't have a face". In this case the child's sense of happiness was qualified by having powers of expression: understanding trees as

happy was impossible based on facial expression. When the same group of children decided that *they* were happy in the forest (and had faces) the same child considered the rules of the scavenger hunt and also disagreed with this statement by saying, "No, we don't fit in the basket". Needless to say, this group didn't get far down our scavenger hunt list, but were able to engage in some encouraging discussions.

Present Study

Following nearly a year of pilot activities, in October 2014 we embarked on the present Engaged Philosophical Inquiry using ethnographic techniques (Charmaz, 2008) to systematically analyze the weekly sessions. This included gathering digital video, photographs, and audio recordings. These digital traces were collected, transcribed and analyzed to better understand the patterns and responses related to questions posed during the EPI sessions and to focus our debrief and planning sessions. Using these methods, we set out to answer the question: How can Engaged Philosophical Inquiry be used with four-year-olds as a way to inquire about our environment and the concept of sustainability?

We recognized at the outset from our experience with young children the previous school year that these discussions would not look or sound similar to the type of EPI one might have with older children, and that our EPI sessions needed to be carefully integrated with experiences and driven by observation and documentation to inform them. In this way, we viewed our weekly EPI sessions as culminating activities that followed careful experiential skill building and our own inquiry. We also saw the sessions themselves as skill building in dialogical turn-taking, self-expression, and perspective-taking knowing that children of this age were just beginning to articulate and investigate their emerging understandings of reality and only beginning to be aware that taking turns during speech is punctuated by listening rather than speaking in parallel; a practice which is typical at this age.

Democratic Community Building

In his discussion of philosophical inquiry, Matthew Lipman (2003) notes two key differences when comparing conversational turns to dialogue. In addition to being personal, Lipman points out that conversations tend to be stable exchanges over time. In contrast, the focus of the dialogue in a community of inquiry focuses on developing a logic that when taken up by the group transcends the personal and tends to be unstable and dynamic in order disrupt and compel forward momentum. To meet such criteria it was necessary to reinforce a sense in the children that they are part of a group investigation or collective exploration and wonder. To do this we found it necessary to move the discussion away from personal to a group ethos by supporting their connections to each other and linking this back to their previous experiences. With four-year-olds this process didn't always go smoothly. There were times when parallel speech and the children's need to emphatically express their singular point of view eclipsed their ability to pursue and maintain the question raised and the focus of the collective inquiry. This meant a significant amount of work was needed, at the outset to help the children think about themselves as a community of inquiry. As illustrated by the example below, at times the sessions seemed to go in a different direction than intended or became unruly and ill defined. These became opportunities to reinforce the importance of hearing everyone's contribution and weave the conversational thread into dialogue related to the inquiry. Many times it was essential for Warren to re-frame the isolated statements and connect them back to shared experiences from the previous week or other aspects of the inquiry, as shown here:

> G: [Not agreeing on the building site for a dragon den] No! Dragons already have their thing over there. [Pointing to a bird nest build by people]

> Warren: Oh, okay interesting. Well, we can talk about that a little bit, too, because last week, so last week we were talking about building another nest because ours was destroyed, but there were some different ideas that people had…

In this example Warren acknowledges that G's point is interesting but also reinforces the thread of the discussion from the previous week and the collective inquiry. In this particular session after several attempts to get the children to attend to each other the discussion still became disjointed. From this and other experiences, we realized that Lipman's notion of stability is mediated also by the strength of the inquiry thread. If too many unrelated new ideas are introduced we found there was no forward momentum; rather, there were only statements of personal experience or interest. In contrast, when the discussion was working effectively, the strength of the inquiry or joint focus of attention held the attention of the children and logic prevailed. As Lipman (2009) suggests, "in a community of inquiry students learn to build on each other's ideas". In our case, given young children's tendency towards parallel speech and personal narratives it was essential to stop and re-frame the conversation many times by connecting ideas to the prior speaker and/or to the previous idea. It was difficult, even then to moderate and re-calibrate the discussion:

> Margaret: I'm having trouble hearing Warren, everyone.
> Warren: So, J, I'm talking right now.
> A: Can I just say something?

To overcome the tendency toward singularity and speaking rather than listening, we drew on Dewey's (1954) notion of democratic community building. It seemed the fundamental task was to encourage the children to recognize themselves as a group. As Dewey states, "discovering the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests. This discovery is necessarily precedent to any fundamental change in machinery" (p.146). In our EPI sessions, we capitalized therefore on moments when the children did

recognize themselves as part of a group. Some children were further along in their ability to see themselves in relation to the group. In the case of one boy this was expressed in the form of a concern about being heard and allowing others to have turns at speech. He was fascinated by the talking stick used in a previous session and began distributing "talking sticks" to his friends so that they could take turns. As noted below in the transcripts, he also recalled our rule about signalling an intention to say something by putting your finger in the middle of the circle and was keen to reinforce this strategy to create order in the discussion. The exchange went as follows:

> Warren: So before we begin talking about what we want to build next, A has something really important he wanted to say about sharing our ideas. So what were you saying to me A?
> A: If you put your finger in the middle, whoever's talking, gets to talk. But the other person don't get to interrupt. Okay?
> Warren: That's a really good idea, A. We have a rule with our talking circle: if you want to say something, you put your finger in the middle otherwise I hear too many voices at once and people get interrupted and they get upset, and nobody gets their idea understood. Does everybody understand why we do that?

Here Warren extends A's statement to also make the point that talking during our sessions is done to communicate ideas that have to be understood in order to be effective, and not as an end in itself. Again this helps to define the group inquiry over the individual personal conversational turn at speech and place a stronger emphasis on group rather than personal expression. Moreover, A's comments helped to identify shared issues and concerns that could then be formed into group governance and rules. This meta-discussion within the group about group process became a launching pad for a deeper shared group ethos and identity.

Context

Given the importance of building a democratic community and creating a relevant shared experience we found it useful to contextualize our philosophical exploration within the natural environment of a second growth forest located close to the childcare centre. We also used objects and activities that were relevant to the discussion topics and reinforced these through related and relevant lines of questioning. We found it useful to follow a similar sequence of events each time we met beginning with preparation for the outdoors (very weather dependent): gathering on the log outside the centre; a walk to the forest followed by a game, challenge, or shared task; and finally the EPI session. Routinizing the events in this way helped the children understand what was ahead and allowed for active engagement within the forest environment prior to the discussion.

The centre's curriculum foundation document (MacDonald, 2015) is predicated on an inquiry approach and engagement with the environment. As previously discussed, we were careful to advantage the children as much as possible by connecting the EPI questions and activities together and where possible to the immediate environment we were in. While this particular forest was well used by children from the neighbouring school and even other children at the childcare, there were also many natural aspects that created opportunities for discussion related to the plant and animal world (other-than-human domains). As a facilitator of EPI, Warren was able to draw inspiration, examples, and assistance from the scenes we were surrounded by in a way that he could not when inside a building. For example, during one EPI session in December, A wanted to ask the group why Christmas comes. When the conversation was well underway, Warren then asked, "You get lots of gifts at Christmas time. Do you think that we could give a Christmas gift to the forest?" The topics of giving to nonhumans, nonhuman gratitude, nonhuman celebration, and nonhuman desire are all rich philosophical lines of inquiry. The children were taken by this question, though, perhaps ironically, the draw of playing in the rain and mud after already 15 minutes of talking prevented us from deeper

exploration. On another occasion, while discussing animal trapping using photographs of animals in cages, a cat walked past our group. The immediacy of the cat catalyzed the conversation in a way that still photographs, could not. As the example below illustrates, this culminated in the insight that sometimes the reason we trap animals is for our own, whimsical access.

> I: He can go in the cage and we can pet him whenever we want.
> A: Yeah!
> A: Yeah, and I'm thinking we could do it for real.

Later in that same session the forest also provided another unexpected contextual provocation. A mosquito landed on A and he caught it at the same time we were inquiring about the acceptability of trapping a lion with a cub using small animal figurines as props. The exchange demonstrated a fear that other beings want to or are able to harm us, and therefore ought to be trapped.

> Warren: So I want you to look at what A has. A has trapped a mosquito. The mosquito can't escape right now. Do you think the mosquito feels sad like you feel sad when you're trapped?
> A: Yeah.
> Warren: Why do you think yeah?
> A: Because he wants to go back and suck people's blood.
> I: He might suck your blood, though.
> A: We have to trap him so he won't suck our blood.

In these examples, the context of the forest allowed us to discuss other-than-human domains in a rich and tangible way with ready examples that could be spontaneously incorporated into the EPI sessions with a small amount of improvisation. This was inspirational and engaging for not only the children but the facilitator and teachers as well.

Group Membership and Group Size

As part of our community building process we began with the assumption that we could best enter into dialogue by keeping membership in the group consistent across time while limiting the overall number of children in each session. The rationale for consistent membership rested on the premise that participation over time with the same children was essential to community building and shared experience. To this end we selected children who regularly attended on the day of the EPI sessions and kept our day and time consistent across the school year. For children to get to know each other in the EPI context we also felt it was necessary to limit the overall number of children. In our case, our typical adult to child ratio during the EPI sessions remained around 1:3 with three adults and only eight or nine children at each session. This ratio worked well organizationally on our short walks to the forest and for supervision during the play sessions. During the EPI themselves, however, both Krista (the lead teacher on the project) and myself acknowledged that it made the most sense to only have one moderator so that the children could get used to one leadership and style, and naturally this role went to our Philosopher in Residence. During our pre- and post-meeting discussions, however, we tried to incorporate the perspectives and ideas of all the adults involved. In this way we were able to take into account the children's actions and words from a number of different perspectives to gain deeper insight. Krista's input at this time was invaluable as she had a deep understanding of the children's day-to-day experiences and backgrounds.

Turn Taking and the Role of the Moderator

We found the role of the moderator to be the most essential element to successful work in EPI with this age group. Our Philosopher in Residence was able to shepherd the conversation and work toward discussion by using one of four main strategies: 1) articulation of shared goals and a community of inquiry, 2) effective questioning methods, 3) clarification and re-iteration of ideas, 4) providing an opening to set the stage for the discussions and summary of points at the end of the

conversation. In our project we found that it was essential that the moderator was able to build the group ethos by articulating any shared goals that the group had. As discussed earlier this helped maintain the necessary tension in the discussion and helped to ensure that the discussion thread remained strong enough to withstand or limit too many individual comments from diluting the EPI to the point of randomness. It was essential, therefore, to remind the group of their purpose and to help them see themselves as having a shared focus and common issues. In the example below, Warren does this in the form of a question to try and get the group to attend to an activity.

> Warren: So, dragons! I've noticed some things. In a dragon circle! Boys and girls, I'm actually really confused right now because sometimes when we play dragons it seems like we're always chasing each other, like dragons are really scary. But now you're telling me you want to build a nest and house for them, but I don't understand why you want to build a nest or a house for something that's scary. I mean, last week when we were talking about building something, A even suggested building a tower to trap them, I know J thought that, too. So what are we doing with the dragons? Are we trying to bring them to the forest? Are we trying to trap them? Are they too dangerous? What's happening? Yeah, A?

In this example, Warren is able to reinforce the group identity by pointing out a contradiction and tension between the children's suggested activities when he states, 'but I don't understand why you want to build a nest or a house for something that's scary'…and later 'So what are we doing with the dragons? Are we trying to bring them to the forest? Are we trying to trap them?' In this example the moderator is able to provide an overview of the actions and statements in way that points out the inherent tensions in the group discussion and demonstrates that contradictions and faulty logic exist. Once this is posed as a question it acts as a provocation to the children who are then able to consider themselves and their personal opinions vis-a-vis the group inquiry and the prevailing logic of the statements.

As pointed out by Gardner (2009) questioning during EPI is one of the fundamental roles of the moderator and is essential to the success of each session. When working with young children, we found that questions had to sometimes be extracted from the statements and comments of the children and could act as ways to re-orient the children again from individual personal narratives to collaborative discussion. In the example below S makes a statement that seems isolated during that week's session and Warren is able to re-link it to a previous statement made two weeks prior and ask a question to re-focus S's main point. In this case he also has to try and hold off other new ideas from surfacing while the children consider S's point. This then leads to a deeper discussion than would have occurred without the strength of the moderator's guidance.

> S: Yeah, and I want to pretend that it can be for us since dragons are not real. Dragons are actually not real. They're not in the world. So we could pretend that we are dragons and we could be trapped in and we could be a family and be [inaudible] and be boyfriends.
> Warren: Ok, so I remember a couple of weeks ago that A told everybody that dragons are only pretend. That they don't exist. You said that, right A?
> A: Can I tell you something?
> Warren: Hold on, just wait one second, okay? So, S, you're agreeing with what A said a few weeks ago that dragons don't exist? That they're only pretend?
> S: Yeah.
> W: But you're saying that *we* could pretend to be dragons.
> S: Yeah.

In addition to showing how essential questioning can be used for maintaining and identifying the children's main ideas or points in the discussion, the above example also serves to identify another role of the moderator, that of clarifying and reiterating the children's ideas. This is particularly true with young children when the germ of an idea is apparent perhaps to the adult, but is often disguised with other incidental comments that might also be of importance to the children at the time but can create confusion, such as 'So we could pretend that we are dragons and we could

be trapped in and we could be a family and be [inaudible] and be boyfriends'. This additional information detracts from S's main point and could have easily derailed the conversation. Warren at this point was successful in channelling the attention of the children back to goal and logical discussion thread.

The moderator's questions can also serve to consolidate the children's perspective by probing their stance or opinion on an issue. In the examples below, Warren is able to deepen the children's thinking and expression in relation to other children and other environmental and contextual experiences.

Warren: So, Aa, you disagree with A and A and G? Because they think maybe we can build a nest or a tower for the dragon, but you think it's too dangerous?

In this example, Warren provides a summative statement to reinforce everyone's position on the topic but is careful not to be persuasive in his own opinion about the reality of dragons. This helps continue the group's inquiry and moves the children forward in their thinking and next statements. Later more clarification and positioning of ideas is necessary as shown below:

Warren: We can put it in different places? Are you agreeing with G's idea, then, that we should have a separate place for the dragons and a separate place for us, or do you think that the dragons and humans can live together?

In this last example, the final question also extends the thinking further by proposing a thought challenge: do you think that the dragons and humans can live together? Here Warren takes the children's ideas and proposes a possible scenario that could be provocative if the children still believe that dragons are real (and thus dangerous) or dragons are imaginary (and thus harmless).

The moderator's role in summarizing the main points was also essential at the end of the conversation to provide the children with a perspective on what was discussed and to reinforce the discussion thread. In this final example—taken from an

EPI into whether Warren, as the moderator, should have special talking rules—Warren summarizes each child's contribution to the discussion and gives the group an overview of what was said and a look ahead to what might be expected at the next session:

> Warren: I think that you did a great job saying your ideas. We had different ideas: S said that she was worried that if I interrupted people, then other people might start interrupting others. But A said if I interrupt people it wouldn't be fair because other people would have to follow a different rule. But G said maybe it's okay if I interrupt people because I'm trying to help everybody understand. I'm not interrupting so that I can say anything I want to, I interrupt so that I can help you guys understand. So maybe what we can do is next conversation we can try to see what it looks like if I don't interrupt and see if it works. Because I don't know if it will. But we can try it, and we can see.

This strategy helped the children recall and consolidate what was said and recognize who made the point(s), and what those points were in relation to other ideas. It also helps the children know they were heard and understood by Warren.

Conclusions

From our experiences in our pilot year, it was apparent to us that children at this age were able to engage philosophically with one another with the assistance of a moderator, but that ongoing dialogue across sessions was difficult to sustain. This meant that topics from one session to another were not clearly united, if at all. Our approach to this was to have the moderator sustain the inquiry by reviewing and reiterating arguments from previous sessions, even when weeks or in some cases months had gone by. This was essential to the success of both the community building process and to the generation of coherent and consistent arguments across time. The foundation document used at this centre (MacDonald, 2015), focused explicitly on sustainability in the context of childcare, and was, from a P4C practitioner's perspective, invaluable by helping to focus the discussion and

encourage specific ideas and values to be explored. It provided a vital balance of guidance and freedom, functioning much in the same way Lipman's children's books, such as Pixie (1981).

As stated by Lipman (2003), unlike adults, for children philosophical inquiry like this doesn't require "providing a new answer to an old question, but transforming all the questions" (p.87). We found this to be particularly true in this project when working with four-year-olds. At this age, children are just beginning to work with questions and thinking in a group. This required skilful questioning, goal setting, opening and summation and clarification and reiteration of ideas. The moderator worked continuously at reinforcing the group ethos and community of inquiry by identifying the discussion thread and limiting when necessary the number of personal narratives and/or random tangential comments. This latter task Warren approached skilfully given that there were many times when what appeared to be unrelated comments were brought up at random moments. These incidental comments often had aspects of logic related to the discussion but had to be re-framed for the children. Although sometimes buried or camouflaged, these comments were typically necessary contributions that kept the discussion active and the child engaged. In addition, to create a strong community of inquiry in this project it was necessary that the children self-identified as a community of inquiry. To do this, we found that the context provided for the discussion was key for children at this age, as was the need to provide children with related activities that could help to mediate the EPI and support the children's understandings. In our case, with the foci of the EPI on sustainability and the natural environment, by taking the opportunity to conduct the discussion in a nearby second growth forest area we were able to make strong connections between the activities and the EPI discussion, providing inspiration for both the children and the adults alike in the environment as we worked together to explore young child's ideas regarding magic, power, and dragons.

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