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PROVOKING CRITICAL AWARENESS AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY THROUGH “TRANSFORMATIVE STORYTELLING”

Abstract

Theories that inform pedagogical practices have positioned young children as innocent, pre-political and egocentric. This paper draws from an action research study that investigates the impact of “transformative storytelling”, where stories purposefully crafted to counter metanarratives, revealed the impact of human greed with one class of children aged five to six years of age. Derrida’s notion of “cinders” provided a concept for investigating the traces or imprints the language of story left behind, amidst the children’s comments and actions, enabling the possibilities of the history of these “cinders” (that is what informed these comments and actions) to be noticed. Readings of some of the children’s responses suggest that children aged five and six years can engage in political discourse through the provocation of “transformative storytelling”, and that their engagement demonstrated the consideration of others through critical awareness and intersubjectivity. These early readings raise questions regarding curriculum content and pedagogical practices in early years education and the validity of ongoing educational goals that incorporate critical awareness and intersubjectivity to equip students with communitarian strategies to counter the individualistic outlook of neoliberalist societies.

Introduction

Within neoliberalism, there is a globalised practice of viewing nature as commodity providing benefit to the individual (McAfee, 1999). This focus on the individual feeds greed, as evident in the prolific consumerist messages we receive everyday. This paper investigates one Prep class of children aged five and six years experiences of storytelling, that purposefully offered counter narratives to the metanarratives of neoliberalism. In the west, hegemonic ideologies view children as innocent, pampered, irrational and pre-political (Stasiulis, 2002). Piaget’s (1932) research that defined young children as egocentric, has contributed to developmentally appropriate practice, which has been viewed as ‘the regime of truth’ in early childhood education (MacNaughton, 2005). Such readings of children, limit the types of learning opportunities made available to young children. This paper describes accounts of children aged five to six years competently rationalising political discourses from an intersubjective position rather than the typically assumed egocentric position.

The discussion in this paper draws from preliminary readings of a doctoral study that searched for the “cinders” (Derrida, 1991) or lasting impressions that “transformative storytelling” provoked with one class of children aged five to six years. It acknowledged what remained after the language of the live storytelling had passed. The study involved myself as storyteller/researcher facilitating weekly “transformative storytelling” workshops with children aged five and six years across two school terms. The children’s responses were interpreted from a subjective position, employing Derrida’s notion of “cinders”. Critical discussion occurred amongst all participants (children, teacher, teacher aide and myself – storyteller/researcher) throughout the

duration of the study, providing a range of subjective readings of the children’s experiences of “transformative storytelling”. This paper discusses early readings of the data that noted suggestions of children’s critical awareness and intersubjectivity.

To begin with this paper will describe and discuss the terms “transformative storytelling”, critical awareness and intersubjectivity, as informed by literature on storytelling, transformative education and arts education. Then, the theoretical influences and methodological framework of the study explain the study’s contextual position. Readings of the data are then discussed, with regard to critical awareness and intersubjectivity. The paper concludes with a discussion of this paper’s contributions to educational research, with suggestions for further inquiries.

Transformative storytelling

Within this study, the practice of employing storytelling as the platform for transformative education is referred to as “transformative storytelling”; with storytelling being purposefully crafted to transform the audience’s awareness of unjust practices and incite collective responsibility. Transformative education is a frequently used term for educational practices that address social justice issues. Greene (1995) refers to transformative education as teaching for the sake of arousing vivid, reflective experiential responses that inspire students to come together to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. Paulo Freire (1974) called this process ‘conscientization’ (*conscientização*), the development of the awakening of critical awareness. Storytelling was selected as the platform for transformative education for its capacity to arouse and awaken the hearts and minds of by engaging with an audience as a supportive community (Bruner, 1986; Zipes, 1995).

A well told story actively invites listeners to enter the world of the story, identify with the characters and accompany them on the journey of experience, then emerge with new insight and understandings. It is from this position that Jaffe (2000) argues that “storytelling...can serve as an important medium for effective communication of curriculum content, with long-lasting repercussions for children as learners and participants in a complex and demanding world” (p. 175). This is not a new argument in education, for Egan (1986) has previously advocated strongly for the place of storytelling in education recommending that teachers approach a unit of learning as a story to be told. He built his argument on the notion that virtually every culture has used stories to make sense of experience. From this position he argued further that carefully crafted stories can enable children to acquire higher levels of meaning of abstract concepts like death, love, honour and courage. Jaffe also acknowledges the capacity of storytelling to provide a deeply interpersonal and communal context for personal voices to be spoken and heard. By dealing with emotions, stories do not pretend to be objective in their evocative descriptions of the irrational nature of human behaviour.

Literary and general linguists (Vandergrift, 1980; Raines & Isbell, 1994) affirm that stories are understood at more than one level, offering diversity amongst interpretations. Each person can experience the same story differently. A story will trigger different personal connections, different messages and different levels of meaning for each

person. In the same way a story shared with a child recurrently over time will have an evolving sense of meaning as the child’s knowledge and understanding of the world develops. Young children in particular, Saxby (1992) acknowledges, possess a disposition to explain and explore both their inner and outer worlds through story. This disposition supports the use of storytelling to provoke awakening of diverse positions (or critical awareness) with young children.

Critical Awareness and Intersubjectivity

Critical awareness provides a broader more comprehensive view of the world, understanding the cause and effects of issues. This awareness can then inform actions; inciting actions that consider others, shifting away from the neoliberalist focus on the individual as entrepreneur. Critical awareness or *conscientização*, Freire (1974) argued can only occur in “active dialogical educational programs concerned with social and political responsibility and [that are] prepared to avoid the danger of massification” (p. 19). This “massification” that Freire refers to occurs when people remain susceptible to the magical, mythical, illogical, and irrational practices of power. The stories in this study were purposefully crafted to reveal post-modern concerns, such as environmental degradation, child labour and dislocation countering such “massification”. For example, if we read the current environmental crisis as urgent, then the facilitation of transformative educational programs that actively provoke critical awareness of the irrational practices of neoliberalism, could offer a way to actively counter blind acceptance or complacency (what Freire refers to as the domestication of the masses).

The crafting of stories that counter “massification” or dominant ideologies or “metanarratives”, is referred to as counter narratives by Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren and Peters (1996) and draws largely from Lyotard’s (1984) recognition of the need to challenge the “metanarratives” of modernity. Lyotard argues that capitalism is one of the names of modernity and that the “problem of legitimation of knowledge and education is inseparable from an analysis of capitalism” (Giroux, et.al, 1996, p.10). Capitalism has penetrated most all human practices, with most everything being commodified, and requiring the endless pursuit of the optimization of the cost/benefit ratio (Lyotard, 1993). Through this criterion it legitimizes what is declared as official knowledge (“metanarratives”), in that the knowledge will enable greater outputs. Feyerabend (1988) further supports this notion of countering “metanarratives” by arguing that the “... the semblance of absolute truth, is nothing but the result of an absolute conformism” and that any method that encourages uniformity is “a method of deception” (p. 45). Once again we are warned of the dangers of “massification”. He continues with: “Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a humanitarian outlook” (p.46). Counternarratives provide alternative and diverse positions, thus contributing to ‘a humanitarian outlook’ and critical awareness.

This study employed counternarration at two levels. Firstly, the hegemonic ideology of young children as irrational and pre-political was countered, by actively engaging with the children as capable of critiquing and rationalising political discourse. Secondly, the “metanarratives” of modernity were countered through stories that revealed the devastating impact of the widespread greed of capitalism. The stories were

purposefully selected and crafted to alert the children to unacceptable practices of power, through a counter or alternative position. Dominant race ideologies and myths have been challenged through this practice of ‘counter stories’ by critical race theorists and researchers (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001, 2002; Parker, Deyhle, Villeneas & Nebeker, 1998), provoking critical awareness of the complexities of race issues. ‘Counter stories’ create a transformative education platform, that is, “what it takes for individuals and social groups to believe that they have any responsibility whatsoever to care, have an investment in, or even address the often unjust consequences of class, race, gender oppression and related material relations of domination” (Giroux, 2003 p. 56).

To become critically aware, infers a deeper awareness of another’s position. To consider others nurtures a communitarian approach, where the collective entity is the main focus rather than the capitalist focus on the individual entity. However, Papastephanou (2003) argues that if the communitarian worldview is adopted, serious difficulties can arise in justifying the subject’s potential for questioning its community. She proposes a pedagogical ideal of symmetrical reciprocity or intersubjectivity, where care is enhanced and equality and justice flourish, as both parties intend to understand each other and respect each other’s diverse qualities. The notion of symmetry is problematised by Benhabib (1986), who warns of the interpretation of symmetry that generalises ‘others’ with specific needs and abilities, in effect one model of symmetrical reciprocity that fits all. This is not what Papastephanou proposes, but rather a responsive and considerate interaction of individuals within a community. She claims that the educational impact of this is the construction of a subject who is less self-centred and more oriented towards bonds with others: “For, to encourage the connections between knowledge on the one hand and emancipation, justice and democracy and care on the other, one must first believe in their ontological possibility” (p. 405).

Intersubjectivity is also discussed in the arts by Sawyer (2003) in his discussion of collaborative creativity. He defines it as a process of coordination of individual contributions for a joint activity. Papastephanou’s (2003) discussion seems to focus more on the value of consciously building awareness of others, where as Sawyer focuses on the acts of intersubjectivity: two or more people collaborating together. This paper views intersubjectivity as a combination of both definitions, where there is a conscious effort to be aware of the others within collaborative processes.

The Research Design

The class for this study was purposefully selected, on the grounds that their teacher was interested and supportive of the project. No particular qualities were required of the group of children for this study, aside from being within the early years, as a somewhat original feature of the study was the intentional provision of transformative education to young children. Typically educational programs and syllabus documents investigate social justice issues such as child labour and dislocation with upper primary age or older children. For example in Queensland these issues are positioned in level four or above (targeted for children aged ten years and older) in the Studies of Society and the Environment Years 1-10 Syllabus document (The State of Queensland, Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2000).

The supportive teacher involved in this research taught a preparatory class (the first but non-compulsory year of schooling in Queensland) at a public school within a higher socio-economic area of Brisbane, Australia. Participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) provided the framework of reflective cycles and a commitment to collaboration for this investigation of social change as provoked through “transformative storytelling”. The design of the study involved the facilitation of three cycles of four to five weeks each, with two to three weeks between each cycle for deeper critical reflection. Each cycle consisted of one storytelling workshop (with follow-up interviews of participants) per week for four to five weeks. The storytelling workshops with the children were the focus of the study and consisted of the telling of a transformative story, a critical discussion of the story and extension experiences (opportunities for the children to respond to the story in diverse ways). The transformative stories shared each week were the interventions that provoked change. The dual roles of visiting storyteller and researcher cast me as an active participant in this action research project, encouraging children to think critically about social justice issues; and reflecting on the children’s reactions in collaboration with all participants through three cycles. This active participation enabled fulfilment of three key qualities of action research: responsiveness, flexibility and action (Dick, 2002). After listening to the children’s and teacher’s comments on each story, subsequent stories were crafted to respond to their main concerns.

The Stories

Ten stories in total were shared within the study. This paper focuses on data that responds to the stories from the first cycle. These four stories offered a range of positions on the relationship between humans and animals. The first story was the metaphoric Thai folktale “*The Freedom Bird*”. It was selected for its capacity to provoke numerous issues: freedom; tolerance; difference; persecution and survival. For each subsequent story I listened carefully to the children’s responses and crafted the next story to provide an alternative position to either the most frequently expressed concern from the previous story, or the response that had the strongest impact on me and/ or the teacher.

Concern and critique of the hunter’s cruel treatment of the freedom bird dominated the critical discussion after the story. To counter this understanding of hunting I then shared the Cherokee story *Awi Usdi*, which advocated the practice of hunting only when needed and for it to be conducted in a respectful manner, honouring the spirit of the animal. Following this story many of the children were still alarmed by the practice of hunting and wanted to actively campaign against it. When I searched for information on anti-poaching campaigns to address their interest, endangered animals of Africa and Asia were the focus of organized campaigns. Following Lyotard’s suggestion of countering “metanarratives” with small localised narratives, I sourced information on a critically endangered bird (the Coxen’s fig-parrot) within the school’s local region, South East Queensland. This then informed the third story, which revealed the impact of deforestation and urbanization on the Coxen’s fig-parrot population. The critical discussion following this story largely focused on how human practices such as deforestation have affected a species. To counter this, the fourth story I shared told of a young African man who had such an admiration for animals that he chose to live with

them and learn from them, providing another position amongst human-animal relationships. Across the four stories a range of positions were revealed and discussed: from disrespect and cruelty; to acknowledging the spirit of an animal; and from fulfilling human wants at the cost of animal populations; to seeking animal wisdom.

Data Sources

At each of the storytelling workshops and follow-up visits, data was collected from a variety of sources to provide diverse positions creating a dialectic, which is considered necessary for the trustworthiness of action research (Dick, 1993). The data sources included: video and audio recordings of the storytelling workshops; audio recordings of the follow-up interviews with the teacher and focus group of children; artefacts of children’s creative works, such as drawings; and researcher’s field notes. The storytelling workshops were both video and audio recorded to provide data assurance in case either of the technological devices malfunctioned, but also for the purpose of providing multiple perspectives. Goldman-Segall (1998) refers to this as configurational validity, where multiple positions are presented, in the pursuit of meaning making.

A few days after each storytelling workshop, I returned to the study site to conduct a debriefing interview with the teacher and a focus-group interview with a four to six children. The children voluntarily elected to participate in the focus group interviews, which Scott (2000) declares improves the quality of data, in addition to honouring children’s rights. The children were interviewed as a group, for this social experience worked to stimulate discussion and aid recall (Fontana and Frey, 2003; Scott, 2000). Each of these interviews was audio recorded, and usually began with inquiring as to what were their strongest memories or concerns with regard to the week’s story. From this point of discussion the interviews with both the teacher and the children flowed organically, being responsive to the interests and concerns of the interviewees. Rich detailed data was sought, as opposed to precise data that aligned with predetermined codes, which structured interviews elicit (Fontana and Frey, 2003). Researcher’s field notes, a recommended action research source of data (Stringer, 1999), were recorded throughout the research project, to capture reflections on the research process, and significant comments or expressions shared by the children.

Theory

This action research project was conceptualised within critical theory and poststructuralist paradigms. Critical theory’s advocacy for social change with just outcomes formed a symbiotic relationship with participatory action research methodology, in that both worked to promote positive social change within one class community. Marcuse’s (1964, 1968, 1978; Kellner, 2001) work, in particular, was drawn upon to advocate for “the union of theory and practice to make critical theory an instrument of social change” (Kellner, 2001, p. 24). In addition, Marcuse’s philosophical writings on valuing aesthetic components within social action inspired and framed my utilisation of the arts to engage in social justice discourse with young children. This study endorsed Marcuse’s (1978) belief that the voices of the oppressed and the possibilities of human freedom can be communicated symbolically, metaphorically and

sensuously through the arts with poise, power and conviction. Aesthetic experiences enable pluralism, diversity, tolerance, human dignity and equal respect to be valued by inviting multiple, fragmented and diverse positions on social justice issues.

Poststructuralism enabled readings of the influence of subjectivity on the diverse meanings and impressions that were left with the participating children of this “transformative storytelling” project. Derrida’s (1991) work “*Cinders*” provided a concept for identifying lasting impressions. The influence of individual experience bore weight on meaning and interpretations, providing insight to the diverse subjective positions expressed by the participating children and adults of the study. These subjective positions were identified by noticing which images and meanings from the stories *smouldered* for different children and how these images and meanings changed and shifted and reappeared through comments, questions, actions, and symbolic expression in the arts.

The search for ‘cinders’ was not an endeavour to name truth, nor its impossibility, instead it allowed space for interpreting what came before the “cinder”, a pondering of the possibilities of what formed it. It created openings for interpretations that were literal and metaphoric without being reducible to either. Derrida ponders whether something remains within “cinders” that “primes the dialectical process and opens history” (p.44). Reading “cinders” is an interpretation of history, for “cinders” are what remains of what came before. The poststructuralist conceptualization of multiple realities enabled diverse realities to be explored through story and welcomed diversity in the children’s responses (from child to child, but also with each child) to the transformative stories.

Readings Of The Data: Smouldering “Cinders” of Critical Awareness and Intersubjectivity

The “cinders” discussed in this paper are the lasting impressions, the thoughts that stayed with the children and that these thoughts transformed into behaviours, attitudes and dispositions. The following discussion raises comments and actions that were notable to the teacher, teacher aide and myself: notable in that they were a recurring pattern during the study, or notable in that they presented a paradox. One of the intentions of this “transformative storytelling” project was to provoke critical awareness, following the goals of transformative education and critical pedagogy. The facilitation of a critical discussion with the whole class after each story provided space for dialectical critique of the children’s points of view with regard to issues raised in the story.

In the first cycle, the third story that I shared was the *Lonely Coxen’s fig-parrot*, a “localised narrative” I created to convey how this local bird became critically endangered. The most significant contributing factor to its reduced population has been the deforestation of its habitat through the colonisation and settlement of South East Queensland (Environmental Protection Agency, 2001). The story told of people moving to this area from all over the world, each family needing a house, so over time more and more forests were cleared, reducing the bird’s habitat to fragmented patches of forest. Juliet, one of the six year olds in the study sample, was a frequent and articulate contributor to the critical discussions that followed each story, and the children’s focus-group interviews. Below is an excerpt of Juliet’s questioning during the critical discussion after this story.

- Juliet: I was thinking why did they want to take the forest away, ‘cos that means they are taking things away - they were killing the animals. Why would they want to do that?
- Louise: So Juliet was asking why they were knocking down the forest. (*Juliet nods her head*) Does anyone else want to answer why do you think they were knocking down the forest?
- Juliet: I know because they wanted houses but why did they want to come there and just build their houses there, why couldn’t they build their houses in their own other countries? (Lines 155–163 W3 30/07/2007)

Here Juliet expresses her understanding of the direct causal link (forest removed to build houses), then questions the issue beyond the content of the story. She raises the question as to why people chose to emigrate to South East Queensland. This conveys her capacity to think beyond the story and question rather than simply accept that thousands and thousands of people would leave their country to emigrate to South East Queensland. Juliet herself may be searching for ‘cinders’, by identifying traces of further stories lurking beneath this story. She engaged in active dialogue on the issue, persisting with her questions and actively rejecting “massification”, to build critical awareness of the complexities of the contributing factors to the endangerment of species.

There is passionate energy in the tone of her questioning as to why a species and forests in her local area have been affected. It seems that she has emotionally connected with the plight of bird. This emotional connection can be read into her response to a question I asked in the closing discussion:

- Louise: Juliet what concerned you?
- Juliet: When the people were chopping down the trees I felt like the parrot was dying. (Lines 913-915 W3 30/07/2007)

These words evoked powerful emotive imagery that I noted her comment immediately after in my field notes (FN 30/07/2007). Then at the start of focus group interview the following day she expressed the same sentiment.

- Juliet: Every time the tree got chopped down I felt like a bird was dying (Lines 1-2 W3 CI 31/07/2007)

Having stated this twice across two different days, suggests that the story left a lasting impression (a “cinder”) with Juliet: the critical awareness of the impact of deforestation on the Coxen’s fig-parrot population.

The combination of the transformative stories and the facilitation of each story’s subsequent critical discussion worked well to jointly provoke critical awareness within this class of children. Paul (1992) recommends critical inquiries as a core teaching strategy for critical thinking and that students learn best when there is extended exchange of point of view or frames of reference. These critical discussions gave these children experience in “being able to participate in a pluralist society in a critically aware manner” (ten Dam & Volman, 2004), where they took turns listening to each other’s points of view. The teacher aide noted this capacity in the children when I interviewed her at the end of the project “they seem to be much more aware - not only of the things that you have been telling them but things on television” (W13 TAI 27/11/2007).

Further to this, the interpersonal and communal context of storytelling created through the sharing of personal voices in a respectful and caring manner, enabled the children to connect with characters, their dilemmas, their hopes and their achievements. This then flowed through into their interactions with each other.

Teacher Aide: Yes even more aware of their peers. I mean that comes and goes but when they are doing something wrong you know to each other. They stop to discuss it with them. Why? They seem to be able to draw more on the experiences of these stories about having respect and valuing people.” (Lines 44-47 27/11/2007)

This practice of responsive and considerate interactions that Paspastephanou (2003) referred as intersubjectivity was also noted in the way children responded and built up on each other’s ideas in the critical discussions and extension experiences in the storytelling workshops.

In the final week the children were invited to tell a story to me. Some chose to tell as a pair or threesome. The children received no explicit scaffolding from either their class teacher or myself, on crafting a story. The only instruction on storytelling was what they would have observed in my storytelling throughout the project. The children were asked to select from a range of open ended materials, such as stones, sticks, pieces of materials and Guatemalan worry dolls, select a space and then use the materials to create the scene for their story. Some children had more time than others to play with their story as they waited for their turn to have their story videoed. Many of the stories they told included the characters (e.g., see below the Coxen’s fig-parrot and Freedom bird appear at the end of Carl and Charlie’s story) and issues of the stories that I shared: presenting noticeable “cinders” and indications what left lasting impressions or critical awareness with the children.

The responsive and considerate interaction between pair tellers was noticeable, given they had received no adult support in the construction of the story. In the excerpt below from David and Tony’s (both five years of age) story, David has two birds nibbling on a block vying for space, and Tony responds by bringing more blocks.

David: (*birds nibbling on block*) And then they fought over the spot then they made it fall over so then they could both sit on it

Tony: (*brings more blocks to scene*) Then there was a lot more chairs to sit on

David: Then they all got one each (Lines 32-35 W13 02/11/07)

Here teller responds to teller following a mutual understanding to create a coherent story. Tony has recognised David’s struggle for seating his two birds, so he sources more props and offers them as seating within the story scene. Intersubjectivity is negotiated whilst maintaining the language of story, for were they not totally absorbed in their telling Tony might have interrupted with “here are some more chairs you can use”, instead he maintained the use of past tense to convey that it happened in the story.

Another way to view intersubjectivity is to notice the creativity emerging from interactions between individuals of the group (Sawyer, 2003). This is noticeable in the following excerpt from Carl and Charlie’s (also both five years of age) story:

Carl: And the Freedom bird and the Coxen’s fig parrot

Charlie: they flew

Carl: over the town

Charlie: yeah and they lived on the hill

Carl: and then everyone lived happily ever after (Lines 68-72 W13
02/11/07)

Carl and Charlie seem synchronised in their interaction, by taking turns phrase by phrase to construct the concluding sentence. Collectively, they conclude the story with a lasting impression; combining two characters (the Freedom bird and the Coxen’s fig-parrot) they had engaged with through the storytelling workshops. Working together they created a story enriched by their dual responsive and interactive contributions. This transcript excerpt could be read as intersubjectivity at play, where there is intention to understand each other and respect each other’s diverse contributions. Historically, many researchers (e.g., Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Wright & Jarvis, 1968; Klucksberg, Kraus & Higgins, 1975; Paiget, 1926 cited by Menig-Petersen, 1975) have found young children to be particularly inept at modifying their communication to respond to the needs of the listener. In this case, Carl and Charlie self-initiated telling a story together, where they consciously listened to each other and responded following the thread of the story.

Conclusion

This paper shared how “transformative storytelling” (the art of sharing counter stories to metanarratives) and critical discussion could provoke critical awareness and intersubjectivity with one class of children aged five to six years. Even though only a few examples of children’s responses to “transformative storytelling” from this study were discussed in this paper, they suggest that young children can express critical awareness and intersubjectivity by being responsive and considerate individuals interacting respectfully within a community. As noted earlier hegemonic ideologies and ‘regimes of truth’ do not position young children as capable of critical awareness or intersubjectivity. This study created space where young children could engage in critical awareness, and notice their practice of intersubjectivity. All the child participants entered the study with a wealth of prior experiences with their family, school and before school settings, so it is unrealistic to claim the “transformative storytelling” project as the sole contributing factor. From my subjective position, as the creator and facilitator of the project I can clearly see these “cinders” or traces, in meanings conveyed and practices role-modelled. These are my early readings of noticeable “cinders”, yet they warrant consideration for further investigation to inform decision-making regarding curriculum content and pedagogical practices.

Key theorists (Freire, 1974; Greene, 1995; Giroux, 1996, 2003) of transformative education suggest that these practices counter the individualistic metanarrative of contemporary society, and foster a community of care and respect where the needs of others are considered. These capacities possess educational validity if we are to consider education for a sustainable future. Freire, Greene, Giroux and Papastephanou (2003) claim that such practices equip people to consider others in their interactions in society. By nurturing an intersubjective communitarian approach, where symmetrical reciprocity is welcomed, there is potential to reduce harmful actions upon others. Positioned within a poststructuralist paradigm, this research can not claim conclusive findings, but rather raises further questions about how the provocation of critical awareness and intersubjectivity through “transformative storytelling” may inform young children’s engagement with the world now and in the future. The research

sample here was only one class across two school terms, a larger study would offer the opportunity to investigate whether children apply these capacities in a range of relevant contexts, supporting their thoughtful and active engagement in their community and broader society.

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