

Bridging Philosophical Practice: A Theoretical Framework for Integrating Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) and Philosophy for Children (P4C)

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Abstract: This paper presents a theoretical enabler for a new, interdisciplinary approach designed to improve children's emotional well-being by integrating Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) and Philosophy for Children (P4C). This article addresses a gap in the literature by outlining an intervention example for children aged 10-15 which aims to respond to the increasing global concerns about youth mental health. This approach relies on the synergistic blend of P4C's collaborative "Community of Inquiry" with LBT's structured, virtue-oriented process for identifying and challenging irrational beliefs (Cardinal Fallacies). The theoretical model highlights that the P4C environment creates a safe and developmentally appropriate space for children to engage in LBT's cognitive restructuring. In addition, LBT provides a practical, well-being focused direction to the philosophical dialogue. This article serves as a foundational blueprint, presenting a methodology to inform the development of future empirical studies which target to evaluate the long-term impact of this integrated approach on emotional well-being.

Key-words: logic-based therapy; philosophy for children; well-being; cardinal fallacies; community of inquiry; cognitive restructuring;

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Introduction

Child and adolescent mental health challenges are rising globally, thus effective and accessible interventions are critically needed (WHO, 2024). One in seven children and adolescents aged 10 to 19 struggle with mental health conditions and services are often inaccessible. For the presented target group, stress was observed to be driven by a range of factors as: exposure to adversity, peer conformity, identity exploration and the gap between lived realities and aspirations (WHO, 2024).

Educating children in philosophical thinking, especially during early adolescence, equips children with a set of tools that can be used for making sound judgments, thus fostering emotional well-being. A key challenge in our research is the lack of a clear, unique definition of it (e.g., Duncan & Chase-Lansdale, 2001; Pople & Mainstone-Cotton, 2014). Thus for the purpose of this paper, aligned with the goals of LBT, "emotional well-being" is defined as an active process involving a step-by-step method to lessen the emotional pain we cause ourselves by challenging unhelpful thoughts. The process of challenging is paired with the cultivation of moral virtues like courage, authenticity and self-respect. The desired outcome is an improved ability to face challenges with clearer thinking and calmness, targeting as a final state a greater sense of inner peace (Cohen, 2004, 2016). This perspective is rooted in Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, or a flourishing life, which is built through consistent effort and habit, as highlighted in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cohen, 2004, 2016).

We posit that early intervention can prevent the development of emotional difficulties and promote lifelong well-being. This research champions an upstream, preventative strategy by exploring the synergistic potential of LBT and P4C for the age group of 10 to 15 years old. The current interest was born from a concern for children's well-being and the observation that a blend of LBT and P4C could cultivate healthy emotional and cognitive habits. As a parent and educator, I have witnessed the diverse challenges children face in school, at home and in social contexts. These issues often require reflective thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and dialogue, which are core components of a blended philosophical approach.

The Theoretical Intersection of LBT and P4C: Links and Potential Synergies. P4C's Foundational Alignment with LBT

The Philosophy for Children (P4C) method was developed by Matthew Lipman (1988) in response to pedagogical concerns about maximizing children's critical thinking for a robust democratic society. Lipman addressed this through the "Community of Inquiry" method, where a facilitator guides a group through the collaborative exploration of problematic issues, encouraging participants to support their claims with reasoned arguments (Lipman et al., 1980). This process cultivates critical thinking and an ability to analyze underlying assumptions. Over time, the consistent internalization of this dialogic process leads to the internalization of dialogue itself (Morehouse, 1993; Cam, 1995; Lipman et al., 1980). Active listening and openness to challenging deeply held beliefs are key pillars of this approach (Burbules & Rice, 1991). Philosophy is valuable precisely because it helps us to remodel our ingrained thought patterns. In the words of Peter Abbs (1994), it helps "to catch and destroy the vermin of received opinions" (p. 19). Essentially, it involves an "unlearning" process, driven by the desire to clarify one's own understanding of reality. Abbs (1994) argues that this is particularly evident in Socratic teaching, which he describes as an "onslaught on those internalized opinions, internalized ideologies, internalized half-truths, around which the human ego, and all the defensive emotions of the ego, has crystallized" (p. 19).

Ann Sharp and Matthew Lipman (1978) argue that introducing philosophy to children in schools is justified because, unlike other subjects, philosophical ideas uniquely aid children in discovering personal meaning. They highlight that children possess an "impressive capacity for wonder" and philosophy can harness this curiosity to constructively explore the fundamental enigmas of existence that children might otherwise only assume (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 8). They assert that explanations of the physical world alone are insufficient; children require a meaningful context that addresses their profound and persistent "Why?" questions. This deep need to grasp the meaning of the world is why, in their view, "the child cannot make do with less than philosophy" (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 8). Beyond discussing abstract philosophical concepts, children are often drawn to philosophy by their innate need to understand their own deep

questions. Thus, whether through concept analysis or seeking answers to philosophical problems, philosophy significantly enhances the meaningfulness of education for children. Sharp and Lipman (1978) emphasize that it can help "to provide what all students need: their own sense of the importance of learning" (p. 9), a considerable benefit. Evaluating ethical inquiries with children, Clyde Evans (1978) points out that even in everyday, practical issues, children are naturally driven to consider the underlying philosophical concepts, recognizing the philosophical dimension inherent in even the most practical problems (p. 172). In parallel, Logic-Based Therapy, founded by Elliot Cohen (2016), is a practical form of philosophical counseling that helps individuals identify and challenge the irrational premises (*Cardinal Fallacies*) underlying their emotional distress. LBT offers a structured, virtue-oriented framework to replace self-defeating beliefs with more rational ones. LBT doesn't necessarily seek to offer universally accepted or unquestionable premises (Fraser 2005; Georgakakis 2021) as their fallibility is considered a natural part of human cognition. A suitable goal for LBT, therefore, is to propose reasoning that aligns with the beliefs of the individuals, their preferences, and worldview, and effectively helps them address their emotional and practical problems (Fraser 2005; Georgakakis 2021). While effective in therapeutic settings, LBT is less explored in a group educational format for children. The integration of LBT and P4C relies on a philosophical anthropology that affirms a child's capacity for moral reasoning (Matthews, 1994). Viewing children as moral agents in development means interventions like LBT-P4C are not premature, but developmentally aligned with their evolving identity.

Both methodologies share a foundational alignment, particularly in their emphasis on value clarification and practical decision-making (Gardner, 1998). P4C, through philosophical inquiry, directly engages with "questions of value," mirroring LBT's focus on identifying and cultivating values. LBT provides a structured way to analyze the reasoning process, while P4C fosters "moral practice" by contemplating the consequences of actions, thereby bridging values to behavior. Looking at the philosophical inquiry, it often addresses questions of value, allowing participants to discuss, without bias, the challenges, outcomes, advantages and logic behind different value systems in various situations. Through this process, Philosophy for Children (P4C) helps participants develop a comprehensive

understanding of their desired personal qualities and their world view. Given that these discussions function as a form of "moral practice"—where young people contemplate the repercussions of choosing from a range of alternative actions—P4C also aims to ensure these values ultimately shape their actual behavior (Gardner, 1998).

Gardner's (1998) study highlights a strong alignment between P4C and the core processes of Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), particularly in their shared emphasis on value and belief clarification and the application of these in practical decision-making. The connection can be articulated through several key areas:

- *Values and Belief Examination:* P4C, through philosophical inquiry, directly engages with "questions of value," mirroring LBT's focus on identifying and examining the values that influence an individual's beliefs, thoughts and actions. LBT systematically explores fallacies in thinking, which are often triggered by specific beliefs.
- *Structured Reasoning Analysis:* P4C promotes an attentive examination of the challenges, outcomes, advantages and logic behind different value systems. LBT mirrors this process by its structured approach to understanding the complexities and potential conflicts which lie in personal values and the reasoning process.
- *Bridging Values to Action:* P4C fosters "moral practice" by contemplating the consequences of choosing from a range of alternative actions, directly linking value exploration to decision-making and behavior. LBT seeks to align an individual's future actions with identified guiding virtues.

Beyond these direct links, sustained participation in a Community of Inquiry exposes participants to diverse viewpoints, allowing them to see others' perspectives as essential pieces in understanding complex situations. Given the dynamics of the Community of Inquiry, consistent participation is predicted to enhance participants' capacity and disposition to consider a broader range of viewpoints when addressing issues, both immediately within the inquiry and by fostering a habit of self-reflection which can be later applied. While acquiring the ability to consider multiple perspectives in complex situations is valuable, perspective-taking alone doesn't ensure the development of an action plan. An individual might identify various viewpoints without fairly incorporating them into their

decision- making or behavior. This connects directly to Step 6 of the LBT framework, which emphasizes integrating examined values into a coherent action plan. LBT's Step 6 moves beyond simply acknowledging different viewpoints to focus on how those viewpoints are actually used to inform and shape behavior.

Empirical Foundations: P4C Outcomes Supporting LBT-Relevant Skills

To assess the impact of P4C within a Community of Inquiry, it is essential to evaluate qualitative shifts in children's reasoning styles alongside their enhanced perspective-taking abilities (Gardner, 1998).

Developmental theories suggest that increased differentiation in perspective-taking can significantly alter how one reasons. Gardner (1998) conducted a two-year study in a private school that implemented P4C across its primary grades, aiming to measure the impact of long-term P4C participation on students' reasoning styles and moral development. Students in the 5th grade were assessed before P4C implementation (control group) and then again after one and two years of instruction. The study focused on qualitative changes in reasoning, including self-protective attitudes, social values (principled thought), tolerance of ambiguity, external orientation and self-esteem. Gardner's study made five specific predictions, with the following conclusions:

- *Decreased Self-Protective Attitudes:* Long-term P4C participation was associated with a reduction in self-protective attitudes like opportunistic thinking, fear of being caught or punished, the tendency to put the blame on others or external factors.
- *Increased Principled Thought (Social Values):* P4C appeared to cultivate thinking beyond self-interest, incorporating universal implications of ideas and action, though this particular effect typically required sustained engagement for over a year to fully manifest.
- *Increased Tolerance for Ambiguity:* P4C enhanced students' ability to handle ambiguous situations, information, or ideas that are unclear or vague, uncertain or undetermined, complex, contradictory and open-ended.

- *Decreased External Orientation:* P4C might reduce general external orientation, meaning that children will see themselves as more responsible for their action, decision and also of their consequences, they will have an increased awareness on the fact that their efforts, choices, actions can influence the outcomes, they could become more pro- active in solving issues and as a consequence they will manifest reduced blame externalization.

P4C was associated with increased self-esteem manifested as enhanced sense of personal worth, value, and confidence in one's own abilities and identity, with a direct observed impact in family dynamics and overall self-perception.

These qualitative improvements, in combination with the LBT framework, could offer a robust approach by which we can tackle a range of psychological and behavioral issues in children like: difficulty with peer relationships, anxiety, low self-confidence, mild depression, and rigidity in thinking, poor problem solving skills, a victim mentality... Each qualitative improvement can directly influence the results of an LBT step, thus leading to more effective interventions.

Detailed Synergistic Alignments: P4C Outcomes Facilitating LBT Steps

Let's delve into how these P4C outcomes align with and strengthen LBT's framework:

- *Decreased Self-Protective Attitudes:* This directly improves the results of Step 1 (Identify emotional reasoning) from the LBT framework. As children become more open and flexible in their thought processes, they can more easily examine the reasoning behind their feelings. The orientation towards less defensive and more open communication increases the value of the inquiry. When self-protective attitudes decrease, individuals can acknowledge mistakes without condemning themselves, aligning with the guiding virtue of self-respect associated with the fallacy of Self-Damnation. They're less likely to generalize from a single negative experience or flaw to their entire self-worth, this prevents them from "rating the whole according to the part" (the fallacy of composition). They will look at themselves from a more accepting

angle which permits them to zoom out to see themselves within a larger context, thus diminishing their need to explain or to defend themselves.

- *Decreased External Orientation (Conformity):* This supports children in overcoming the "Jumping on the Bandwagon" fallacy. This fallacy is defined as "blind, inauthentic conformity of belief and/or action largely deduced from the demand for approval of others" (Cohen, 2016, p. 84). Given the pervasive influence of social media on ideas and viewpoints, this is a particularly common fallacy and a decrease in external orientation directly counteracts this tendency.
- *Increased Principled Thought (Social Values):* This can be helpful in situations where children commit the "World Revolves Around Me" fallacy which occurs when somebody imposes what others must accept based on their own beliefs, values, desires or preferences. The belief that one is the center of the universe often manifests as ignorance for other people's needs, feelings or perspectives. Personal growth is negatively impacted as such beliefs make it difficult to connect with and learn from external viewpoints, thus remaining stuck in one's own world. Developing empathy is one solution to such faulty thinking. It implies giving up the self-defeating idea that only one's own values, interests, preferences, and beliefs carry import and validity" (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 88). As children get better at seeing things from other's perspective, their empathy becomes more broadly applicable. This important ability helps them choose a guiding virtue for themselves but also contributes to increasing the chances that their action plans will actually work out."
- *Increased Tolerance for Ambiguity:* This outcome from Gardner's study directly helps to balance the "Demanding Perfection" fallacy, which is among the most committed fallacies. According to Cohen et al. (2019), this fallacy involves individuals demanding that the world, things, others and themselves conform to an ideal or at least expected state at all times. This becomes a rigid demand that leads to extreme irritation and frustration when expectations aren't met. This is a fallacy because individuals who seek perfection fail to recognize the built-in imperfection of the universe and the

unrealistic, impractical nature of such a demand. To mitigate the frustration and anxiety associated with unmet demands for perfection, Cohen et al. (2019, p. 75) emphasize cultivating "metaphysical security." A metaphysically secure individual accepts human fallibility, both in themselves and others and in a similar manner of the world too. Someone who is comfortable with ambiguity is less likely to expect perfect behavior from themselves or others because they understand that mistakes are part of our world. Ambiguity often involves considering multiple possibilities, both positive and negative, thus an ideal outcome is not expected as a mandatory or solely possibility. This attitude allows individuals to see a range of realistic possibilities rather than feeling down or frustrated due to an unexpected outcome. A higher tolerance for ambiguity thus directly supports the core components of metaphysical security. It enables individuals to feel comfortable with imperfection, to maintain a balanced and realistic perspective on possibilities and feel secure even when faced with life's uncertain situations or outcomes.

A Blended P4C-LBT Approach: Adaptation and Application for Children

The LBT framework, with its emphasis on reasoning and virtue, holds significant promise for adaptation to younger age groups. The blend of LBT with P4C leverages the strengths of each methodology to create a comprehensive intervention. Aaditya Jadhav (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 115) notes that while childhood stories and picture books instill values, they often don't explicitly showcase the characters' thought processes. This insight is key for the LBT-P4C blended approach, which uses narrative stimuli to introduce philosophical concepts and reasoning analysis to children. The general flow of the proposed blended intervention is structured as follows:

1. *Setting the Stage (P4C Focus)*: At the beginning of the session we establish a safe and inclusive environment which is characteristic for the P4C Community of Inquiry. Participants will be seated in a circle and the ground rules for respectful communication are agreed upon with the aim to ensure a space for open dialogue.

2. *Presenting the Narrative and Initial Exploration (P4C & LBT Step 1)*: A curated story or narrative stimulus, such as a video, is introduced. The chosen stimulus features characters facing emotional or behavioral challenges linked to faulty reasoning. The facilitator then leads a P4C-style discussion with open-ended questions to encourage children to identify characters' feelings and the thoughts or actions triggering those emotions. This phase directly supports LBT Step 1 by encouraging children to identify instances of emotional reasoning.
3. *Inquiry into Underlying Beliefs and Challenging Fallacies (P4C & LBT Steps 2 & 3)*: The facilitator guides the children to explore the beliefs which drive the emotions by phrasing them as statements and exposing them for critical analysis. Children are encouraged to challenge the validity of these beliefs through questions like, "Is this belief always true?" The Community of Inquiry provides a collaborative setting for critical analysis where children support or refute identified beliefs.
4. *Identifying Guiding Virtues (P4C & LBT Steps 4 & 5)*: The focus shifts toward identifying more helpful alternatives. The facilitator encourages children to consider what positive traits or ways of thinking (guiding virtues like courage or authenticity) might have helped the character in the situation. This phase aligns with LBT Steps 4 and 5, framed within a P4C discussion on character traits and their practical application.
5. *Reflection and Action Planning (P4C & LBT Step 6)*: At the end of the session, children summarize what they have learned and consider how they might apply these insights to their own lives. LBT Step 6 is being integrated by encouraging the development of a concrete action plan by having the facilitator invite students to reflect on small steps they could take to enact the guiding virtues they have identified.

This structured approach ensures that the process of LBT's reasoning correction is integrated within the collaborative, inquiry-based framework of P4C. The narrative provides a stimulating entry point for children, while the Community of Inquiry fosters the critical thinking skills needed for engaging with LBT's philosophical principles. Thus they together promote enhanced emotional well-being and reasoned decision-making.

Conclusion

This article provides a theoretical framework for integrating Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) and Philosophy for Children (P4C) to create a novel interdisciplinary approach which aims to improve children's emotional well-being. By addressing a gap in the literature, this work posits that LBT's structured, virtue-oriented process for challenging irrational beliefs can be synergistically blended with P4C's collaborative "Community of Inquiry" method. The theoretical framework suggests that the P4C environment creates a safe space for philosophical dialogue that provides an appropriate setting for children to engage in LBT's cognitive restructuring steps.

The analysis demonstrates the specific, synergistic alignments between the two methodologies. It argues that P4C outcomes, based on existing empirical foundations, directly facilitate the core steps of LBT. For instance, P4C's cultivation of a higher *tolerance for ambiguity* can directly aid children in overcoming the "*Demanding Perfection*" fallacy, promoting a more metaphysically secure and realistic perspective on an imperfect world. The practical application of this theoretical model is illustrated through a detailed five-step framework which outlines a structured flow starting with the narrative exploration and ending with the reflective action planning.

In a global context of rising youth mental health challenges, this paper's key contribution is the theoretical groundwork it lays for future empirical research. It serves as a foundational blueprint to inform the design of a comprehensive curriculum and to guide the methodology of future studies. The next critical steps involve the development and testing of this model through a robust methodology which would enable the measurement of its long-term impact on specific metrics of well-being, emotional literacy and self-esteem. Refining facilitator training programs is also essential to ensure this integrated approach can be effectively implemented by counsellors. This presented model of blended approach offers a practical way for young people to build *resilience* and enhance their *emotional well-being*.

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