Power-sharing in the Philosophy Classroom: Prospects and Pitfalls

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Abstract:

Many of our students learn to approach their college education as yet another system of external control that places authority and decision-making power in the hands of others. This attitude carries consequences for young people's growth as independent learners, critical thinkers, and participants in democratic community, which in turn has repercussions on personal, professional and political agency. One of the chief benefits to power-sharing in the philosophy classroom is that it disrupts students' sense of passive complicity in their own schooling. However, as I explore in this essay, there are many ways we can fail as instructors to create deeply engaging scenarios in our classrooms, not least in part because our methods and manner can unintentionally and subtly continue to encourage student passivity. Drawing on insights emerging from my own experience with classroom power-sharing, in this essay I will both examine the value of classroom power-sharing activities as well as offer ideas for implementing them responsively and effectively in a standard college setting, with particular emphasis on the philosophy classroom.

Keywords: philosophy | power-sharing | college pedagogy

Article:

Introduction

In *When Students Have Power*, Ira Schor diagnoses the average college student with "Siberian Syndrome," a condition which requires taking on "a dependent posture of negative resistance, a defensive position of 'getting by' in a non-negotiable setting."[1] Schor, following in the tradition of Freirean critical pedagogy, argues that such defensive and dependent attitudes bar students from accessing deep and transformative learning experiences and also encourages a citizenship that is alienated from and uncomfortable with democratic deliberative processes.[2] In a similar vein, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner ask us to

> examine the types of questions teachers ask in classrooms, and you will find that most of them are what might technically be called 'convergent questions,' but which might more simply be called 'Guess what I'm thinking' questions. . . . So, what students mostly do in class is guess what the teacher wants them to say.[3]

My aim in this essay is not to unpack the political angle of Siberian Syndrome, that is, to reveal what deleterious effects student complacency may have on the development of role-based civic virtues such as alert participation and fair-minded cooperation. Still, I take Schor's and Postman and Weingartner's critical comments to serve as a useful wake up call, alerting even mindful instructors to the possibility that we may be inadvertently reaffirming our students' expectations to be "hoop-jumpers" in our courses rather than adventuresome, inspired learners. It is with this wake-up call in mind that I will here consider varieties of classroom power-sharing activities alongside their valuable effects, moving on to a case of implementation from my own teaching practice and conveying in some detail its on-the-ground challenges and misfirings. I conclude the essay with some ideas for increasing the chance of practical successes with power-sharing in our classes.

Awakening Powers of Voice

Power-sharing practices can be understood to range from "mild" adjustments to "wild" interventions in course design. Examples of the former kind include, for instance, allowing students to choose their own final paper topics; designing assignments that ask students to speak in class on behalf of particular positions (as in staged debates); or incorporating self and peer performance reviews into grading considerations. "Wilder" interventions include things like co-authoring syllabi and assignment rubrics with students; designing activities which call on students to engage in largely improvisatory role-playing; and dialogically created grade contracts. The difference between the mild and the wild is, in my view, not merely a matter of degree. To be sure, both sorts of adjustments have the effect of decentering the classroom dynamic. An instructor who invites students to choose a course-related paper topic they feel personally interested in sends a clear message: the course is here to help you make sense of matters you care about, that you have wondered about, and that you, equipped with the tools you've learned here, can now analyze in a more serious and productive manner than before. The center of gravity moves from the instructor's interests alone to something more dialogical between instructor, course tools and content, and student. Similarly, a staged debate helps students feel their voices play a more significant role in the classroom. Being put on the spot in a debate performance also bonds the class closer as a community of learners, since there is an element of risk-taking that all must engage in at some point during the activity. Shared experiences in turn can lead to increased trust and respect for one another, and help students realize the immense learning resource they have in each other.

But the key difference between "wild" and "mild" power-sharing lies precisely in the idea of *risk*. Students risk more, and may as a result engage more authentically, when working with debates, inspired paper questions, and peer and self-performance reviews. But what does the instructor risk with these activities? These tasks are, in the end, still firmly under the instructor's control, both in design and execution. It is the instructor who sets the parameters for the pre-assigned in-class debate, the instructor who has final say whether a student's paper topic is

sufficiently course-relevant and has adequate promise for making use of course tools in a productive manner, and the instructor who reserves the right to take student self and peer reviews more or less fully into account in final grade considerations. What would it be like if an instructor *really* shared the reins with students, extending them *complete trust*, *utter transparency*, and *full co-executive powers*? These features underscore the central contrast between mild and wild power-sharing: while the former requires some unaccustomed risk-taking from the side of the student, the latter requires a great deal of risk-taking from the side of both student *and* teacher.

I would like now to situate these ideas within the richer context of actual experience, namely one of my own on-the-ground experiences with radical power-sharing. Many of us have seen in our own teaching practice how mild course design adjustments can help unsettle young people's default status as passive receivers or spectators and in their effect wake students up to exciting possibilities in regards to the meaning of their own education. We have felt that this effect is especially valuable for philosophy students, since taking responsibility for one's beliefs and for the justification of those beliefs remains a typical learning goal of our courses. Still, fewer of us have taken the leap to the wild side, to see just how far a power-sharing premise can be taken. My colleague Anthony Weston and I took the leap in the Fall 2013 semester when we co-designed and co-taught an upper level Philosophy of Education course that attempted in an overt way to continually place students in productively improvisatory role-playing and group deliberation–driven spaces, which we hoped they would increasingly welcome as live opportunities for co-constructing the course's unfolding events, trajectories and meanings. It is to this risked venture and our reflections upon it which I will now turn in some detail.

An Invitation to Join In

The course Anthony and I co-devised operated on a simple, but (we hoped) productive pedagogical twist. Students came to a typical class having read assigned materials that propounded a particular philosophy of education. They then experienced the affordances and limits of that pedagogical model as it was expressed in a 45-minute enactment of a related teaching style and learning method—in which everyone in the classroom became active, spontaneous role-players. After reading about the lecture as a style of teaching and learning, for example, Anthony, dressed up for the occasion and with speaker's podium and glass of water close at hand, treated us to a dense, quickly flowing lecture on the history of the philosophy of education, in this way exposing students to new course content, while also actively exhibiting the model of teaching and learning students had prepared to analyze that class period. Once students caught on to the enactment, some attempted to ask questions during the lecture, only to receive rushed replies from Anthony, who still had, as he explained a bit feverishly, "a lot of content to cover today!" After the enactment, there was time to discuss what we had learned from the occasion, in terms of the on-the-ground role-playing experience, higher up reflection on the model being expressed in the enactment, and the further level of processing new course vocabulary and concepts that Anthony had delivered to us via his lecture.

On another occasion early in the semester, I played the role of "drill sergeant," questioning students sharply and unforgivingly about a list of terms and definitions central to the philosophy of education we had required them to memorize, as we considered the "law school method" of

teaching and learning. A particularly interesting moment arose when one student decided she had had enough of the stress and unpredictably severe questioning, and blurted out as much; her eyes had venom in them as she looked at me, the relentless interrogator—and she noted afterwards how swept up in the experience she felt in that moment, despite knowing it was all an act. Our students for the most part hated this nerve-wracking, emotionally-taxing experience, but already they were learning to separate their experiences as players within the enactments from their thoughts about the model being expressed through the enactment. In other words, they were realizing the value both of engaging in practice and of practicing theoretical disengagement—and shifting between the two. This flexible, creative and indeed playful capacity to shift between practice and theory seemed to us to be a hallmark of productive philosophical training.[4]

Over the course of the semester, we enacted fourteen models of education by demonstrating their assumptions in actual pedagogical practices. Critical discussion followed every enactment and students were given time to write short reflections of their own, drawing on the assigned readings, the enactment they had just experienced, and the ensuing class discussion. As this was a Philosophy of Education course, the self-referentiality implicit to this structure seemed to us especially promising. The general arc of models we considered moved from what we called "traditionalisms" (teacher-centered models in which the drill and lecture enactments found their home), to progressive models inspired by Dewey, and finally—as we moved into the final third of the semester—to liberatory models inspired by Freire. Anthony and I designed this arc with a particular vision in mind: by the time we reached critical pedagogies, students would be ready to move from being largely unsuspecting participants in the enactments to being inspired co-organizers with us; indeed it was our intention that they co-organize and lead the seminar from a certain point on, equal to us in authority and investment.

So what happened in practice?

It was around Week Nine of fourteen of the semester that Anthony and I prepared the classroom for the radically decentering enactment. Before class, we moved all desks to the sides of the classroom and put twenty-two chairs in a circle. Once class time arrived, everyone seated themselves without any prompting from us. Then Anthony and I, each in our own words, simply invited students to become fully equal agents in creating and sustaining the course's aims, structures and wider possibilities of impact. Our message, however, was not "simply" received by the students. Unusually reticent and skeptical, our new co-instructors began to probe the nature and limits of our challenge to them—for indeed, students initially perceived our invitation to be a rather threatening challenge rather than an exciting opportunity. This gave us pause, but did not catch us entirely off guard. We reassured the students numerous times that we were absolutely committed to extending them the power of course direction, preparation and management from this point on in the semester.

Gradually, perhaps quite inevitably, students started talking about grades. Could they abolish them? Could they award themselves As? Could they delete all earlier grades and assignments from the record and design their own set of assignments on which to be assessed? Who should assess these? To keep matters fair (because all agreed that matters should remain fair, somehow), who should see that some collectively agreed upon standard of content mastery would be henceforth upheld? All of these questions and many more whirled around and around our shared

circle, and seemed to grind the course to a halt for two full weeks of meetings (with the semester clock ticking). During this time, online discussion board posting and private conversations amongst students outside of class took on an unfamiliar sense of urgency—though there remained quite a few in the class of twenty who participated less and seemed content to wait for the situation to resolve itself.

In the end, the community, that is, at least those participating in the discussions, decided that we continue with the models and reading plans that Anthony and I had initially envisioned ending the semester with, but that each student was to meet with us to design his or her own course grading contract. In what is surely a fascinating outcome, some students chose to stick with our original grading policies, while others chose to demonstrate their mastery of course aims and content by other means; one student requested an oral examination, another committed herself to a detailed journaling project, while yet another wrote a standard final paper outlining her emerging pedagogical commitments as a future teacher, and so on. Only one student decided he would not demonstrate his subject competency to us, the formal course instructors, in any form; still, he shared his list of course goals and commitments with us, and invited us to share our feedback regarding this list and his work in the course thus far.

Even with grade contracts designed largely by the students themselves, we ended with a fairly typical distribution of grades—some Cs, some Bs, some A-s, and some As (there was a slightly higher number of straight As than typical for our courses, but none who received As didn't obviously earn them). The reason for this fairly typical outcome, we believe in retrospect, is two-fold: first, some students' grade contracts openly stated that they were aiming for Bs, not As, in the course, and that they would put the effort in to earn that grade, but not more. Second, nearly all students, as a means to keep themselves accountable *to themselves*, placed a caveat into their contracts: should they fail to perform any of the tasks specified therein, grading authority would revert back to the nominal instructors, or would at least become a matter of negotiation between the three of us. This sense of accountability was probably encouraged by the fact that all grade contracts (by communal agreement) were posted one after the other in a shared Google Doc, for anyone in the class to read and comment on and refer back to.

Assessing Success

Seen from a certain light, the result of our classroom power-sharing experiment was far from a failure. Students were suddenly in a position to draw authentically and productively on the philosophical assumptions underlying the various pedagogies they had explored earlier in the semester, and to apply them in making their cases for the re-design of their course experiences. Nonetheless, Anthony and I remained peculiarly disappointed with the result. Why had students been so obsessed with the grading question? We had envisioned their "liberation" as bringing an explosion of creativity and excitement to the *philosophical* questions on the table for the semester. Instead, our new co-instructors largely and quite uncritically accepted the plans we had devised for the course, shying away from fully taking the reins in terms of meeting preparation and planning, or for radically recasting the classroom power dynamics and even the classroom space to reflect a genuinely decentered learning experience. There are several possible reasons for this shying away; I will lay out several which I believe present common challenges for instructors working on classroom power-sharing.

It is first of all worth recognizing that the space created by power-sharing practices is not comfortable—and most students seek comfort, especially today as many colleges market their product as being conducive to comfort—a beautiful campus, a plethora of social activities outside of class time, enjoyable recreational, dining, living and entertainment facilities.[5] Stepping into the role of co-designer of the learning experiences in a course or an assignment requires not only figuring out what one needs to learn to be able to connect with self-identified learning goals, it also requires constant attunement to the needs of other members of the learning community. One must also recognize that group deliberations, while necessary for agreeing on learning structures, will also be slow-moving and messy; the class community must have faith that going to that trouble is worthwhile. Our students wrote of their feelings of discomfort and frustration in an anonymous retrospective Google Doc created as a space to reflect collectively (and vent):

> *Student 1:* Although beneficial for some I found this to be my least favorite enactment of all of the enactments we have done so far. . . . Prior to this enactment I was excited to come to class and participate but after this enactment I did not feel as motivated to come to class because I knew that once again I was going to sit there in frustration.
>
> *Student 2:* Key question: was our frustration around the progressive model worth it or not? The slowness around deciding grades and how we wanted that to work—it took forever, was slow, we sought consensus, but many checked out and felt like nothing was happening—I found it rewarding but it was also frustrating—maybe need a better balance? Is it good frustration?
>
> *Student 3:* The notion of process is coming through very strongly to me right now and I'm also realizing how rarely we've been given reigns in a class so it took us a while to get our bearings.

The literature on threshold concepts and transformative learning argues effectively that an uncomfortable but productive liminal space is required for high stakes, genuinely transformative learning.[6] As Glynis Cousin remarks, the liminal space of transformative learning is

> an unstable space in which the learner may oscillate between old and emergent understandings just as adolescents often move between adult-like and child-like responses to their transitional status. But once a learner enters this liminal space, she is engaged with the project of mastery unlike the learner who remains in a state of pre-liminality in which understandings are at best vague.[7]

Our students' reactions to the 'democratizing' enactment suggests that power-sharing can bring both the discomfort and the fertility of this transitional space to students' awareness in an acute manner, because it nudges them to actively test and explore the notion that worthwhile and lasting learning is inherently transactional and dialogical in nature.

A second possible reason to account for our students' responses concerns their habitually passive consumption of civic discourse. Practicing stakeholder decision-making is intimidating and, to

be fair, beyond any expertise which Anthony and I had helped our students develop—for example, we did not provide them with resources on democratic thinking and sociocratic processes, and we did not give them a chance to practice these skills prior to there being so much skin in the game. Our students reported honestly about the group's inexpert handling of class discussions in the anonymous Google Doc:

> *Student 4:* I know the point of this enactment was to give the students the power but I believe that there is a reason that our society gives teachers the power. Classes become very overwhelming and unorganized when twenty plus students have all the power instead of one or two professors who are knowledgeable about the topic we are learning.
>
> *Student 5:* It's worth emphasizing that this was a genuinely transformative model . . . whether we all were on board or not—which is funny considering the model is about democratizing the classroom.
>
> *Student 6:* [I had a] feeling of frustration where it seems like nothing gets done until, voila!, a decision is reached that people are happy with—it feels like empowerment, and the struggle is worth it

These student comments all focus on how frustrating power-sharing dialogue was, but the latter two reveal there was also some satisfaction quite unique to the experience.

Related to this point is the role played by the so-called "cascade effect" in defining and constraining the potential of a democratic learning community. The effect, essentially a failure of group deliberation, occurs when group members take the first few initial judgments heard to be adequate representations of all group members' views; many group members as a result never disclose what they know or what they prefer.[8] Some of our students draw attention to this effect in the Google Doc:

> *Student 7:* At the end of the contract development I was surprised to learn how many students found little wrong with the initial syllabus and had ethical issues with the policy of universal A's. Yet so few of these students spoke out! Though initially intended to be open, I believe that our conversations became limited to those who did find flaws in the syllabus and did not leave room for those who did successfully learn through the previously designed framework. It almost felt that we created a culture of rebellion in which it would be unacceptable to admit to the productivity of the current structure of learning.
>
> *Student 8:* Although I had many ideas I felt like only a handful of people were talking and similar conversations happened over and over again.

Based on these student reflections and my own observations, it seems that cascading occurred in our 'democratizing' enactment and that it was a problem that the effect went unthematized. As a result, it substantially affected our students' (and our own) sense of authorized participation in the discussion. This lesson is of course useful to bear in mind in and beyond the classroom, too, for all conversations that aim to support equal footing between stakeholders.

Finally, it is evident to me that, despite our best intentions, we instructors did not make a fully compelling case for our students to take seriously the availability of a radically liberatory experience. There are at least two issues here. One is that some of our students simply weren't interested in accepting our invitation, for the reason that some (perhaps many) students today simply do not experience an inconsistency in being passive consumers of education and being free and self-determining agents.[9] They are surrounded by a consumerist culture that lures them to believe that one becomes who one is not via the significance of one's exerted creative and moral energies, but via the products, celebrities and memes one stands by, identifies with, and re-posts.

The second issue I see behind our not making a fully compelling invitation to our students has less to do with the students' preconceptions and more to do with ours: our overt messages of power-sharing and invitation did not completely do away with our implicit autocratic wishes for the students' activity—and our students' picked up on these subtle pressures. In other words, embracing the challenge we proposed to them required that students stop seeking the Right Answer from us, i.e. the thing we wanted them to parrot back to us; yet paradoxically, by taking up our decentering challenge they *would* be following what we wanted from them. I believe some of our students were quite convinced to the end that we instructors were setting them up for something, a Big Reveal, and that we were just being particularly obscure about what we were setting them up for. This was, in the end, just another play-enactment for some of them, another time to skip down a path paved and maintained by us, the "real" instructors—as one student put it in a telling moment of honesty.

The two issues just thematized are certainly provocative for thinking about the use of power-sharing practices, because they suggest the fundamental struggles always at work therein: despite our best intentions we can fumble at inviting democratizing scenarios into our classrooms, sometimes because our students just aren't interested and it may not be possible to get them interested within the mere confines of one semester-long college course, and sometimes because we instructors can think we are inviting and nourishing power-sharing when in fact we are not really doing so, or not doing so genuinely enough, or just confusing and frustrating students without making the benefits of the experience transparent. One of our students put this latter point quite perfectly in our anonymous shared Google Doc:

> *Student 6:* Why were you [instructors] so surprised about how long it took for us talk about the remaking of the class? In this enactment we saw that with greater freedom the conversation flows to where people want it to. The act of being surprised denotes a sense of having an idea of where the conversation should go and possibly even then still maintaining control of the classroom i.e. hidden curriculum. I don't know. . . . I think people were just going with the flow in the conversation and taking time to process.

It is of course particularly satisfying to us that one of our students calls us out in this manner, as it nicely shows that the student had so deeply learned the key course notion that "no pedagogy is philosophy free" that he or she was able to apply it to *us*, the very instructors of the course where the student had first been introduced to the concept! To my mind, the most valuable conclusions that can be drawn from the experience as a whole are that we instructors fall back on "old ways"

when caught off guard, when we ourselves are momentarily uncomfortable with residing fully in the highly risky liminal space of communally-crafted exchange and inquiry. But we can also build too much control right into the very experiences we invite our students to co-create with us.

Meeting Challenges

A skeptic of classroom power-sharing might take this last remark as a cue to raise the following related concerns: First, don't power-sharing processes undermine established norms of expertise and mastery, which are professionally and socially useful? Don't they impede an instructor's valuable role in mentoring students? And second, even if power-sharing is desirable, is it even possible to democratize the classroom, as long as the instructor maintains absolute grading authority? In other words, what good is power-sharing as a lesson if we instructors retain final authority and veto power?

I would make the following points in response to these concerns. First, regardless of the degree to which students become involved in actively deciding course events and assignment design, general standards of competency in the subject matter and methods of the discipline remain fully applicable, as do communal and institutional concerns with fairness. Inviting students to shape the content and direction of class meetings through their active questioning, rather than the instructor's or the textbook's, does not seem to me to be in strong tension with there being an objective expertise worth developing, or even with the idea that the instructor's habits of mind and methods will prove worthwhile for students to emulate. The participatory approach merely re-orients points of puzzlement and of progress so that students are more authentic stakeholders in the effort to master content and methods. If at the end of the semester a student cannot sustain an engaged and conceptually nuanced conversation about the course subject matter and its central questions, drawing on vocabulary, frameworks, and examples featured in the preceding months' class work, then he or she can be objectively assessed as not having developed expertise in the subject matter, perhaps not even competency.

What of the veto power over grading and course decision-making which instructors will typically retain, even in quite radical experiments with classroom decentering? Does this veto power not send the message to students that any classroom power-sharing is not to be taken all *that* seriously, but instead as a kind of exercise or experiment run at the pleasure of the instructor? I think this concern gives too little credit to students qua stakeholders in their education. While these questions merit longer treatment than I can give them at present, I would here urge that we review the significant distinction between *having authority* and *being an authority*. We typically think of authority within the political sphere (who has the power to speak for whom?) and within domains of theoretical and practical expertise (who has the best educated judgment to make that call?), yet the etymology of the term reveals yet another meaning. The Latin root of authority is *auctorem*, which signifies "one who causes to increase"; it is the agent noun derived from *auctus*, past participle of *augere* "to increase" or "to promote."[10] There is at least some chance that students involved in a course which carefully employs decentering practices will walk away as greater authorities on what their own education involves, having been placed in positions where it is to some extent and for some amount of time *up to them* to organize course materials and aims. In wilder power-sharing contexts, they will gain exposure to democratic deliberative process and what it takes to co-own and co-sustain a community of concerned inquiring minds.

Ideally, having participated in a course that features power-sharing elements, a student will become a *self-authorizing* learner, that is, someone who has identified his or her inner capacity and motivation to grow—intellectually, creatively, interpersonally— without the constant overt prompting of an external authority figure. Perhaps this self-authorizing even captures the moment of coming to maturity, of entrance into the adult world, as the sine qua non of *self-authoring*, that is, the process of creative self-determination and values-discovery.

Here we return to the question of instructional authority. It is difficult to determine in an a priori fashion when the teacher ought reveal his or her status as subject authority in the context of classroom power-sharing practices and when he or she ought to accept students as co-experts in the subject learning process. Still, perhaps we can produce guidelines to bear in mind and put into play as we design decentering into our classes. I would like to contribute to this effort in the closing paragraphs of this essay. In particular, I propose the following three principles for implementing power-sharing practices responsibly and effectively:

> (1) TRANSPARENCY
> We ought to give transparent access to our pedagogical aims and justification of those aims when introducing a decentering practice into the classroom. Such a practice does not guarantee that students will dedicate more energy to the power-sharing exercise, but it will help mitigate their suspicions of a "hidden curriculum" at work therein. This is surely a key gateway requirement for productive collaborative and transformative learning.
>
> (2) META-NARRATION
> We ought draw overt attention to moments of frustration and triumph while the class community struggles in the liminal spaces of decentered learning. To think that power-sharing can occur without emotional upheaval is naïve, and as experienced deliberators and self-authorizing learners, we instructors have a special responsibility to also highlight the emotional and intellectual rewards that can and do come from patient deliberative work, as frustrating as it can sometimes be.[11]
>
> (3) GROWTH THROUGH RISK
> We ought to recognize that decentering is as much about our own growth as our students' growth—in decentered pedagogy, we are all learners! Creating an alternative classroom power dynamic takes time, care and a great sensitivity to our preconceptions and expectations about learning, as well as attentiveness to the changing effects that our words, plans, physical positioning and body language have on students' sense of class community and their own status as self-authorizing learners.

These three points of reference complement other valuable practice-oriented suggestions already extant in the power-sharing pedagogical literature, in particular literature that focuses on making headway with student-centered deliberative process and with recognizing and dealing with well-hidden autocratic "hidden curricula."[12] The above three suggestions highlight the important metacognitive considerations that ought to be involved in instructor-introduced classroom power-sharing practices. It could well be that everything we instructors do in our courses in the planning, execution and assessment phases serves either to reinforce or to destabilize

traditionally assumed classroom power structures. We must be all the more sensitive to this possibility when attempting to implement decentering processes.

In closing, the introduction of power-sharing practices into a classroom will undoubtedly be rocky, even at the best of times; most college students will not only be confused when prompted to become self-authorizing, deliberative and collaborative learners, they will be actively resistant and even angry. Thankfully, power-sharing need not be seen as an all or nothing classroom scenario; to share power is a privilege and a challenge which it may make sense to only work into later stages of a course. One might also start mildly and modestly with scaffolded decentering processes— perhaps beginning by incorporating student reading questions into a Socratic-style lecture at the start of the semester, and gradually orienting class meetings toward open-ended group discussions that are self-moderated and in which the instructor is simply another co-discussant and co-facilitator.

There is no question that attempts to decenter the classroom will bring to light students' and instructors' controversial and deep-seated habits and assumptions concerning teaching and learning, authority and community, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation—and indeed, the very nature and purpose of schooling itself. Nevertheless, as I have attempted to show here, power-sharing is an adventuresome pedagogical tool that has great promise for awakening student voice and fostering deep learning. To achieve progress in working through these assumptions together will require constant vigilance and diligence on the part of the entire class community, lest anyone be at risk of falling back into an autocratic model with its implicit constraints on lasting growth.

Notes

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1. Schor, *When Students Have Power*, 149.

2. In his ground-breaking work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968; first translated into English in 1970), Brazilian educator and philosopher Paolo Freire identifies and attacks the "banking model" of education, wherein students are viewed as empty accounts to be filled with information the teacher provides. Freire argues that such a view supports and encourages anti-democratic political structures.

3. Postman and Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, 19.

4. This idea is further unpacked and explored in Anthony Weston's "From Guide on the Side to Impresario with a Scenario."

5. For further remarks on this rising trend, see Hoover, "The Comfortable Kid," http://chronicle.com/article/The-Comfortable-Kid/147915/.

6. Compare Perkins, "Constructivism and Troublesome Knowledge"; and *Threshold Concepts and Transformational Learning*.

7. Cousin, "Threshold Concepts," 139.

8. Sunstein and Hastie, "Four Failures of Deliberating Groups." http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1121400

9. I thank Charles Wright for bringing this observation to my attention and noting how it bears on the present inquiry.

10. *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1st ed., s.v. "author."

11. In addition, our meta-narration can itself be thematized in a transparent way for students. We can take time to show the facilitating value of paying attention to the flow and halting points of a conversation both as a group and as individual stakeholders. Students can be invited to develop this facilitation skill and employ it as another means of navigating multi-voiced discussions.

12. See, for example, Beaudoin, *Elevating Student Voice*; Hesse, "Teachers as Students"; Lake, "Community Building in the Classroom"; Simon, "Empowerment as a Pedagogy of Possibility"; Singham, "Death to the Syllabus"; Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*; and Woodbridge, "The Centrifugal Classroom."

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