Chapter 12
Teachers and Power in Student Voice: 'Finger on the Pulse, not Children Under the Thumb'

Emily Nelson

Abstract Theorising power is a key aspect of theorising student voice. However, with teachers increasingly committing to enact radical collegiality with their students, power theorising is needed that accounts for what student voice requires of teachers, and how teachers act powerfully to position students with substantive influence in pedagogical decisions. Drawing from one empirical study, this chapter demonstrates how three teachers partnered with their students to share pedagogical decision-making in their classes and engage with their students as agents of their professional learning around good teaching. Findings suggest three imperatives drove teacher action: (1) constructing new identities in interaction with students that accorded students status and influence; (2) expanding and opening up the pedagogical decision-making agenda to students; and (3) appropriating current educational discourses to their student voice goals. These imperatives represent also teachers deploying power productively to enact partnerships with students. Within an education system largely designed to preserve status quo arrangements of power, theorising power productively is vital to take account of the complexity of power relations involved when teachers commit to radical collegiality with their students in classrooms.

1 Student Voice and Power

Student voice refers to activity that involves students and their perspectives in educational debate, design and decision-making. In practice, student voice occurs through a diverse range of activities: consultation by adults to amplify the 'missing' voice of students on schooling (Beattie 2012); participation initiatives to include students actively in improvement projects relevant to their experiences of learning

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and school; and more recently, partnership orientations that engage students as leaders and decision-makers with teachers (Healey et al. 2014). These orientations differ in the degree to which they enable substantive student influence. As Lundy (2007) argued, the depth in the student voice concept is easily diminished. She contends that student voice work, as a participation right for students (United Nations 1989) and not a privilege bestowed by adults (Lundy 2007), must: value students' unique perspectives; provide students support to form their views; provide space and audience for the expression of these perspectives; and lead to substantive student influence in determining actions that result from their participation.

All student voice activity is saturated with power. Thomson (2011) argues:

> 'Voice' is inherently concerned with questions of power and knowledge, with how decisions are made, who is included and excluded and who is advantaged and disadvantaged as a result (p. 21).

Different orientations to student voice configure power relations in particular ways. Consultation creates opportunities for students to share their views, a vital starting point, but does not necessarily shift their status beyond that of informant. Participation initiatives actively involve students with each other and alongside educators on issues and challenges related to schooling but, lasting shifts in influence are not necessarily implied. Partnership orientations, on the other hand, challenge educators to engage in ongoing influential decision-making relationships with students (Toshalis and Nakkula 2012). However, even within partnerships, the agendas on which students are invited to collaborate with teachers are often constrained by adults, with substantive student involvement in decisions around pedagogy within the classroom a rarity (Lundy and Cook-Sather 2016; Thomson 2012). I am interested in how students can act as radical 'agents of adult professional learning' (Fielding 2008, p. 9) as teachers of young adolescent students. I am also interested in how teachers and students can work together to co-design classroom pedagogy as governance partners (Nelson 2014; Thomson and Gunter 2007), that is, making pedagogical decisions for the good of the whole class. The classroom focus links to Robinson's (2014) contention that student voice should 'pervade life inside as well as outside the classroom' (p. 19) and involve re-conceptualising student and teacher roles. The research I report on in this chapter takes up these challenged partnership orientations to student voice.

Teachers play an important role in enacting student voice in classrooms, especially in enacting student voice as student/teacher partnership. Such work positions teachers and students in a mutually constitutive relationship with any changes in status for students producing implications and changes for teachers also. Lundy and Cook-Sather (2016) argue that 'one of the most influential relationships that children have is the one with their teachers' (p. 265) and even though this relationship is characterised by adult power and authority, this should not be exercised 'in a way that undermines a person's right to be treated with dignity and equality' (p. 265). Positioning students as pedagogical partners will necessarily involve teachers and involve the development of a radical collegiality (Fielding 2001) promoting more democratic engagement between students and teachers. As Fielding (2001) argues,

excluding consideration of teachers and their voice in student voice work 'is a serious mistake … The latter is a necessary condition of the former: staff are unlikely to support developments that encourage positive ideals for students which thereby expose the poverty of their own participatory arrangements' (p. 106). In this chapter, I take up this challenge, drawing on one empirical study to examine what student voice required of teachers and how power dynamics played out in the process of enacting student/teacher pedagogical partnerships in practice.

Power itself is a contested notion (Robinson and Taylor 2013). In the student voice field, an assumption of power as repressive has underpinned scholarship (Taylor and Robinson 2009). From a repressive view, power functions in a 'power over' relationship to maintain the dominance of some social actors over others through 'coercion, domination, manipulation, authority and persuasion' (Taylor and Robinson 2009, p. 166). Power is viewed as finite, a resource that some have more of than others and 'presumes a world of subjects (teachers) and objects (students) arranged in a hierarchical relation in which only the former have power' (Taylor and Robinson 2009, p. 165). Student voice becomes a project to emancipate students from hierarchical and unequal relations through teachers relinquishing power and balancing unequal relations (Mitra 2008). However, this view assumes that power is only repressive, that teachers are interested mostly in maintaining their status quo dominance, and that power relations can be escaped. A repressive view of power is increasingly challenged as insufficient to explain the nuanced and complex effects of power (Bahou 2011; Bragg 2007), especially within the dynamics involved in teacher/student partnership relationships. As Lundy and Cook-Sather (2016) argue, 'aligning the rights of teachers and children can be in the interests of both, and that children's rights are not a zero-sum game in which teachers inevitably lose out' (p. 272). Lukes (2005) contends that even within power over approaches, 'power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity' (p. 109). However, even when power is conceptualised as operating beyond a zero-sum framework (Lundy and Cook-Sather 2016) in student voice, it continues to be largely conceptualised as domination (see for example Robinson and Taylor 2013) (for exceptions see Bahou 2011 and Mayes 2018).

2 Power as Productive: What are the Possibilities?

Increasingly, focus is applied in student voice to what different views of power can 'do'. Mayes et al. (2017) contend that any theory of power should be interrogated for 'what it makes visible and what it masks, what particular ways of thinking about power help us to describe and explain, and what exceeds or escapes from these theories' (para 1).

A repressive view of power draws attention to problematic issues of domination but masks the ways in which power creates material effects, some of these positive. The problem this poses student voice is that if power is only viewed as repressive,

then teachers' participation in student voice can only be read through this lens and a repressive view does not explain generatively what teachers are doing when they participate in student voice to build partnerships with students. Opening up to positive aspects of power, I argue, is especially important in student voice initiatives when increasingly, teachers participate in student voice, not to minimise students' influence but to expand it.

Foucault (1977) offers a way forward beyond the repressive binary, arguing power is productive in its effects:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality (p. 194).

If substantial student influence is the aspiration, power can be deployed to produce this reality. Foucault also emphasises how power circulates relationally, diffuse and dispersed without individual author (Gaventa 2003), 'ubiquitous, and appear[ing] in every moment of social relations' (p. 1). From a productive view of power, power relations are inescapable. Relations of domination are still possible effects of power and some relations are perpetually asymmetric (Foucault 1988). However, Foucault argued that even within perpetual asymmetries, 'margins of liberty' or the power to act differently in your own or others' interests, do exist. Power shifts to a project to minimise domination (Foucault 1988) towards producing desired social outcomes.

A final aspect of power relevant to this chapter is that power circulates through discourses. Discourses constitute 'ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities or kinds of people' (Gee 2012, p. 3). Discourses both shape social actors' identities and are shaped by them. Student voice is enacted within social contexts already populated with discourses, saturated with power that influence the 'kinds of people' students and teachers can be. Perhaps the most important challenge of student voice is to push back on discourses that position teachers as more able to identify students' 'best interests', and through this resistance, expand the possibilities for student influence in framing their own interests.

Foucault describes how discourses produce subjects in particular ways. In this research, the term 'identity' is used in preference to 'subject' taking up Burr's (2003) contention that the interaction between subject positions and discourses is 'the process by which our identities are produced' (Burr 2003, p. 110). The term positioning is also utilised to look at how 'people are subject to discourse and how this subjectivity is negotiated in interpersonal life' (Burr 2003, p. 116). In this negotiation, identities are either accepted, countered or resisted in interaction with others.

A productive view of power in student voice opens up possibilities for analysing how teachers deploy their positional authority, albeit asymmetrical, to enact decision-making partnerships with students. A productive view requires us to consider a multiplicity of possible relations, how power operates in visible, hidden and discursive ways (Lukes 2005) and acknowledging the nested nature of teachers'

work within broader educational and political systems that constrain their autonomy (Taylor and Robinson 2009). For instance, Bourke and Loveridge (2016) identify how teachers pay attention to student voice that relates to their curriculum imperative and Rudduck (2007) contends that teachers, as key gatekeepers of change, take account of student perspectives they perceive as general rather than personal, and feasible to action. As orientations to student voice shift towards partnership, a concomitant focus on teachers and the potential they bring to the challenge of enacting student voice is needed, whilst acknowledging also that for teachers, student voice work represents a significant, and at times risky, professional aspiration.

3 Teachers and Students Collaborate as Pedagogical Partners

This section reports on research between three teachers and their students in one Decile 8 intermediate school. The research school promoted student voice as part of its philosophy for educating young adolescent students (aged 10–14). The project utilised a collaborative action research framework (Collins 2004) to bring teachers and students together to design and enact pedagogy in their classrooms that aligned with the students' perceptions of good teaching. Collaborative action research enabled students and teachers to collaborate towards desired social change (McTaggart 1994), in this case positioning students as pedagogical partners with their teachers. Participatory methods, coupled with reflective opportunities, enabled teachers to participate as learners (Borko 2004) and students to participate as agents of teachers' professional learning (Fielding 2008).

Full ethics approval was gained from the author's institution for the study, and permission was granted by the Board of Trustees for interested teachers and students to participate. The research design was presented to teachers at a staff meeting, and they were invited to indicate their interest to participate via email. Three teachers of years 7 and 8 (ages 11–13) composite classes agreed to participate. The teacher in Class A had been involved in student voice research previously, the teacher in Class B was interested in enacting student-led learning and the teacher in Class C identified student voice as a current professional ideal that she wanted to learn to enact. All were experienced teachers, having taught for between six and 15 years each, and all worked together within the same teaching syndicate. The three teachers chose the names of their first pets as pseudonyms and are referred to in this chapter as: Chicken (Class A), Betty (Class B) and Lincoln (Class C).

The central question guiding the research was: How might teachers utilise their students' perceptions of good teaching to co-construct responsive and reciprocal pedagogy with them in their classrooms? This question was explored iteratively across three terms of the school year through three Cycles of Action: (1) establishing starting points; (2) exploring wider perspectives; and (3) taking action.

Findings from each cycle informed the next. Each cycle comprised a mix of research and pedagogical intervention. The teachers met with me in individual planning and reflection sessions (seven in total) across the three cycles of action and together in five collaborative action research sessions at the beginning and end of each cycle. These sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Students participated in slightly different ways. The majority of students in the three classes (approximately 90 students) participated in the study primarily as part of their classroom programme. They were made aware that their teachers were participating in a research project that would involve them also as pedagogical partners. Consent was gained from students (and their parents) to participate in the research on this basis, or to opt out. The 2–3 students in each class who chose to opt out did not have any of their contributions to class action research sessions included as data.

A student research group (SRG) of 12 members, four from each class, was established to act as an advisory group to the participating teachers and myself throughout the research. The opportunity to join the SRG was offered to all students through a presentation about the role of the group and the activities that participating would involve across the school year. Despite informal indications of high student interest, low initial sign-up numbers through lunchtime introductory sessions necessitated a change in recruitment strategy. Each of the three teachers approached 4–6 students who had informally expressed interest. This approach was more successful. Twelve students consented (with parental approval) to participate. The SRG comprised four male and eight female students, a mix of five year 7 and seven year 8 students, two of whom identified as Māori and 11 who identified as New Zealand European (one student identified as both Māori and New Zealand European).

Each SRG member selected their own pseudonym for the project (Nespor 2000); these are used in this chapter. This process generated much creative expression, with names invented or borrowed from popular culture. Only one student pseudonym 'Barak Obama' was changed through negotiation on the basis this might cause confusion in any US-based publications. The student adopted 'Captain Underpants' instead.

In Action Cycle One, the SRG completed a photograph assignment. Photo elicitation (Capello 2005) is particularly suited as a participatory method with young people. It reverses adult researcher/student power relations by shifting the locus of control in data generation and data analysis to participants [although this remains problematic in practice at times, with students tending to defer to adult researchers (Rose 2016)]. Each SRG member used a disposable camera to take a series of photographs over a week that represented their perceptions of good teaching. Student-led photograph elicitation interviews (Capello 2005) followed, enabling the students to assign meaning to these images as the first analysis (Collier 2001). The participating teachers analysed the 12 elicitation interview transcripts generated utilising a constant comparative approach (Silverman 2005) during a collaborative workshop. This process generated an emergent framework of students' perceptions of good teaching.

In Action Cycle Two each teacher shared the emergent framework from Action Cycle One with their class. This sharing generated further discussion and pedagogical intervention with a focus particular to each class. In Class A, the students designed a 'Utopia' home learning project to begin exploring more creative and integrated home learning (but still designed by the teacher). In Class B, the students and teacher designed 'successful learner' goal setting records to explore more relevant self-assessment and reflection practice. In Class C, the students produced 'Me as a Learner' visual maps to teach their teacher about themselves as learners. In this way, the broad findings from Action Cycle One were situated, and deepened in the specific contexts of the three classes. This meant that the perceptions of the 12 SRG students informed their teachers' learning about good teaching and acted as a starting point for broader student and teacher exploration of the topic.

Action Cycle Three culminated in ten-week class action research projects. The focus of each project emerged from the previous cycles of action. Class A decided to re-design the home learning programme because the existing school-wide approach did not suit the students' (or the teacher's) ideas of engaging home work. Class B decided to revitalise reflection practice, frustrated by the existing formal and individualised process for reflecting on learning. Class C enacted student-led learning through an inquiry into film-making. Project sessions were integrated into each class programme.

In Action Cycle Three, the teachers were asked to video record three snapshots of classroom practice across the project to illustrate: (1) desired student involvement; (2) teacher actions that opened up opportunities for student voice; and (3) opportunities missed. These snapshots were shared and reflected on collaboratively with the other participating teachers. In addition to the video snapshots, data comprised eight transcripts of teacher planning and reflective sessions (including transcripts of reflections on video snapshots), seven transcripts of class SRG focus group discussions (two for each class and one combined at the end of the ten weeks), student work samples and classroom documentation (class learning stories, charts and photographs) related to each project.

Findings in the projects focused on enacting the pedagogical partnerships iteratively, and on re-vitalising aspects of classroom practice mutually important to students and teachers. This situated knowledge was acted upon immediately in the form of next steps in each project. The explicit analysis of power dynamics was conducted retrospectively once the research had ended but was prompted by the reflections of both students and teachers. This process involved firstly, constructing a chronological account of each class action research project and secondly, overlaying this with a discourse analysis. Firstly, the data analysis focused on 'how did teachers take account of students' perceptions of good teaching and engagement to co-construct responsive pedagogy with them?' Key events of each project, and the activities within these (Gee and Green 1998), were identified and collated as a chronological case account.

Secondly, discourse analysis tools were applied to the video snapshot data and transcripts of reflective teacher sessions and SRG sessions to examine how power was deployed through discourse and practice. Foucault's techniques of power

(see Gore 2002) were applied to identify processes of norming, classifying and regulating conduct. Lukes' (2005) three dimensions of power, as visible contests, control of agendas and engendering consent to be governed through discourses were applied also. Additionally, a theoretically eclectic toolbox (Thornberg 2010) of discourse analysis constructs enabled further examination of the interplay between authoritative discourses (official messages most commonly controlled by teachers) and dialogic discourses (grassroots discourses that emerge from students) (Scott et al. 2006), and patterns of discursive interaction between students and teachers and how these shifted across each project (Brodie 2010). Insights from this analysis are presented in the next section.

4 Imperatives for Influential Pedagogical Partnerships

Three 'imperatives' drove teacher action when enacting the pedagogical decision-making partnerships with their students emerged during the classroom research projects:

1. Creating new identities to position students as partners;
2. Expanding the pedagogical decision-making agenda students could participate in; and
3. Appropriating current professional discourses to enact student voice aspirations.

These imperatives comprise key pedagogical interventions of each project and, taken together, represent how teachers deployed power productively to position their students as partners. In the next three sections, I introduce and illustrate each of these imperatives with data from the Action Cycle Three class projects.

4.1 Enacting Identities for Pedagogical Partnership

New student voice identities, related to each project focus, enabled teachers and students to work together as decision-making partners. New norms were established to normalise (Gore 2002) students and teachers working as partners together.

In Class A, designing and implementing a new home learning programme was proposed as a design challenge for the class. The students wanted to leap straight to solutions but Chicken insisted on a systematic and collaborative process that involved students as 'researchers':

> I was looking at my ladder of pupil participation and I was thinking that, the kids are definitely right up the ladder, they are 'pupils as researchers' 'cos I thought they were involved in the inquiry and they've got an active role in the decision making, they're not just in the inquiry, they're actually involved in the decision making.

Students working together as researchers, using *The Ladder of Pupil Participation* (Flutter and Rudduck 2004) as a heuristic, provided an identity through which students could participate as agentic, and influential decision-makers with each other and with their teacher.

In Class B, the teacher, engaged her students as 'co-triallers' to revitalise reflection on learning practice. Collectively the students enacted this identity by contributing possible strategies of reflection to trial as a starting point:

> Now we've brainstormed, we've done like a brainstorm of how we can reflect and we've picked the ones we're going to trial. And we had to do like starters like overall and how I thought about it or like did I enjoy it and some other stuff. (Sandy Dee)

Levels of student agency as co-trailers were high. The use of the collective 'we' in the quote above suggests collective student ownership of the reflection project. Together the teacher and students trialled four reflection strategies, applying each to learning within the curriculum. The class also reflected collectively and voted on the efficacy of each reflection strategy against criteria they negotiated with the teacher and with each other.

Finally, in Class C student-led learning was enacted through a movie-making inquiry. SRG member Captain Underpants described student-led learning as 'We kinda get to choose what we do in class without it getting chosen for us'.

The students chose to organise the curriculum in the ten weeks around an integrated theme. The teacher decided inquiry learning would form the pedagogical vehicle for this. The inquiry quickly morphed into the students making a horror movie. The students positioned themselves as 'movie-makers', drawing on norms of the film industry to negotiate the structure and roles they required:

> We voted as a class on the producers and then the producers chose the Director, which is me, and then at the moment we're like choosing all the other roles for people. (Captain Underpants)

Lincoln positioned himself as a consultant to the student-led movie studio. SRG descriptions indicate that participating as movie makers invoked a sense of real ownership and responsibility for the movie:

> It's quite a big responsibility, 'cos like when we've got our parts you've got to be always ready to do it (Hityu) … If the movie looks bad then it wouldn't be good to put out so it becomes a waste of two terms. (Captain Underpants)

Each identity developed for the student voice projects necessitated teachers working co-constructively with students. These identities also positioned teachers as learners and students as agents of teachers' learning:

> I became a learner. I became someone, I wasn't the person with all the answers. It was good because when I did pose questions they **did** have answers and they were able to justify what they thought … I enjoyed that. I enjoyed that and I just let go the reins. (Chicken)

This shift in student/teacher power relations was described by one SRG member as:

> Student voice. You actually get to do the same things the teacher does, but you also get to do a few things that you want to do as well. So it's like the teacher and you actually doing it together, you're having student voice and you're planning it. (Shortstuff)

Power was shared through these new identities and their attendant norms, and created new possibilities for student and teacher action. The new ways of working enabled teachers and students to be different kinds of people (Gee 2012) whilst maintaining more conventional teacher/student patterns of relating in other areas of the class programme.

4.2 Expanding the Decision-Making Agenda

The second imperative driving teacher action involved expanding the classroom decision-making agenda to include students in decisions teachers would usually make themselves in the 'best interests' of the class. This most explicitly involved the students defining the key constructs of each project.

In Class B, the students iteratively identified the criteria on which reflection strategies would be adopted as enjoyable, useful, time efficient, and later in the project, supportive of student/student collaboration.

> Some people were going to do these skits to reflect on [learning] but it was going to take too long, it was going to take a couple of days [Tim Bob Jim: to reflect on the skit] and you can't reflect on a skit. (Sandy Dee)

Betty described the dialogic emergence of these criteria from class discussions on another occasion:

> Stop motion [clay animation], it would have taken weeks to do, and so a kid was like, 'but like that would take us all term' and so we decided that [time effectiveness] would have to be one of the criteria. (Betty)

Along with students gaining licence to make decisions teachers would normally make themselves, the spaces for this licence to be enacted were often enacted through collective class discussion forums or pedagogical strategies that required students to talk together. The 'potential for student collaboration' criterion emerged in this way, when the students were encouraged through a think, pair, share (TPS) strategy to reflect on the value of discussing their self-assessment of their performance in their class speech. They worked in pairs with a continuum ranging from 'black terrible' to 'blue amazing' to rate their speech performance. The 'share' aspect of TPS enabled increased student talk in the whole class 'share' aspect of the discussion. This collective talk also made student thinking more available to the teacher, ensuring the take-up of students' grassroots discourse around the importance of collaborative reflection opportunities into the thinking of the teacher. One student reflected: 'if your class knows how you feel about yourself, when it comes

to judging yourself, they can like tell you'. The class then incorporated this student-preferred criterion to adapt all subsequent reflection strategies trialled.

In Class C, the roles, focus and parameters of the movie were devised by the class and the student-led production team. As Lincoln noted:

> They are wanting to be here and involved in it, which is good, so they are all really owning it at the moment. (Lincoln)

Chicken reinforced this governance level of decision-making:

> It's more than creating activities … they're owning all the criteria, they've made it […] They decide[d] … 'cos it's through their feedback, well they've owned it, they owned everything from the ranking, the justifications to the rankings, to the whole [home learning] grid.

The SRG students enjoyed the influence this expanded decision-making realm opened up to them with one noting 'You get a say in what you're doing and it's cool'. (Shortstuff)

At times, expanding the decision-making agenda required teachers to hear uncomfortable truths (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015) communicated in student reflections on aspects of the project innovations. As Betty reflected:

> I don't know, when [feedback] is specifically about the teacher, then I start to feel under pressure. I know there is good stuff in there too, don't get me wrong but when it is black and white and in your face that this is what you don't do, you sit there thinking, 'well who else thinks that?' 'Are there thirty kids that think that about me?' Even though I have worked my butt off to do that, you know it is just a hard thing.

In contrast, the SRG students valued the opportunity to communicate feedback to their teachers. Honey Bunny summarised this: 'I liked it 'cos we got our say and the teacher listened to what we wanted'. This tension between student voice as generalised or personal feedback highlighted the ongoing vulnerability pedagogical partnerships produced at times for the teachers in relation to their own professional identities.

4.3 Appropriating Discourses for Student Voice Action

The third imperative driving teacher action involved appropriating existing educational discourses as familiar starting points for positioning students as decision-making partners. The three teachers appropriated discourses that promoted licence for this, such as: student-led learning promoted within inquiry learning, assessment for learning and enacting students as 'confident, connected actively involved, life-long learners' (Ministry of Education 2007, p. 7). For instance, in the Class A home learning project, defining home learning was linked to developing students' assessment capability (Ministry of Education n.d.). Students defined 'high quality work' and the criteria that would indicate success (see Fig. 1). They also

Fig. 1 Finalised home learning success criteria

Learning Intention

We are learning to…

- Design and implement our own home learning

Success Criteria

We'll know we are effective when our home learning reflects these points

- Structure-has a theme or focus
- Full of relevant facts/knowledge which is easy to understand
- Planning meets an individual or class need
- The work reflects the criteria set, relevant content and best work.
- The presentation has words which describe, has clear writing, layout including borders and meets the criteria set.

evaluated their proposed home learning programme plans against these agreed criteria.

This assessment for learning discourse assisted students and teachers to transform student voice aspirations into practice.

In the Class B reflection trial, SRG members explicitly linked the ownership potential advocated in student voice to inquiry learning. When asked about the opportunity to influence pedagogy that inquiry learning offered them, Timmy Star noted 'That's pretty much what inquiry is, we go and look for the information, not sit down and read a book.'

The inquiry framework facilitated student ownership and engagement similarly in Class C. Lincoln describes this effect:

> I came back into class and I found that they [Production Team] had done selection criteria for the students that were going to be acting out roles. And they even had little cards for the kids to fill out with information for their audition … I didn't tell them at all, they just decided that. That was quite good.

The inquiry also introduced students to ways of operating a film studio, which at least initially, supported the production team to lead the class, an opportunity welcomed by the students, 'it's cool, people your same age being in charge of you' (Lulabelle).

The influence of circulating accountability discourses meant that each of the three teachers reported locating their student voice projects in 'low-stakes' areas of the class programme: home learning, reflection on learning, and inquiry learning. The teachers noted that priority areas like literacy received the most external surveillance and offered the least scope for partnering with students:

> With literacy, there is a massive emphasis on it like staff-wide. And all these tests and we get all this stuff through at the end of the year and you see in black and white. You see where your kids have moved to, and not moved to, and for me, it is kind of scary. If I gave them too much leeway and then they didn't meet those test targets then your room looks bad. (Betty)

Restricting the participation agenda for students to low-stakes curriculum areas was perceived as not ideal but still valuable by teachers:

> I think it is good that we have the inquiry and the PE where we can branch out and have some of the co-construction. And the kids, I don't think they mind that they don't get as much say as long as they feel as a whole that they are getting a say. (Betty)

Interestingly, no SRG members commented on the projects' locations in these low-stakes areas. The focus of each project was in some way important to the students.

In addition to the educational discourses teachers appropriated to enact their pedagogical partnerships with students into practice, they also appropriated a student voice discourse around power sharing as zero-sum at times. They described 'handing over' or 'stepping back' to promote student-led learning. Lincoln characterised his identity as 'consultant' in the movie project in this way:

> That is when I step back. At the moment I am just working as a facilitator. So there are students who are above me in class and they get to make the final decisions.

Betty linked stepping back as a response to the capability of her students to work independently of her:

> These guys can be let go to do a lot more and you can step back and watch from a little bit back. (Betty)

Chicken linked promoting student voice as 'letting go', linking this explicitly with power:

> Teachers letting go – what is it? I just thought of this the other night "finger on the pulse but not children under the thumb" […] And for some it's really difficult because it's about the power – they want to know exactly what's going on and sometimes kids go off on tangents and you have to let them.

This perspective is suggestive of a productive view of power, with power circulating as a pulse rather than as repression, associated with students being 'under the thumb' of teachers.

Reflecting at the end of the project, Chicken highlighted the importance of pedagogical scaffolds and a gradual release of responsibility to students:

> And it's not going to happen overnight, like I knew getting into it I thought, just little steps each time because it's not the sort of thing you can go "hey guys, so you tell me you didn't like the home learning, let's change it", there had to be a process you had to go through.

This perspective indicates that for teachers to support students as partners require more active engagement with them to build their decision-making capacity, especially within a governance realm associated conventionally with teachers.

5 Student Ambivalence to Being Involved in Classroom Decision-Making

Student voice partnerships that pervade the classroom (Robinson 2014), whilst engaging students in new partnership roles with each other and with their teachers, also disrupt conditions of schooling that work well for some students (Cremin et al. 2011). In this research, SRG students reported ambivalence around partnering with teachers in practice even when they had espoused a desire for more influence in pedagogical decision-making earlier in the project. Drawing on Hyde's (1992) typology of categories that typify students' responses to being involved in curriculum negotiation (Thankful and amazed, Suspicious but open, Contempt and Dismay) the students discussed the tensions inherent for them in partnering with their teachers.

Those students who identified with being 'thankful and amazed' reflected that being encouraged to make pedagogical decisions indicated the teachers' respect for their decision-making capability:

> I'm thankful and amazed because our teacher obviously respects us enough to make our own decisions and trust us, what we can do. (Captain Underpants)

Opportunities to make learning choices deepened students' engagement: 'well it's kind of better learning what you want to learn because you're more engaged and you get to learn more' (Asheley Green). One student linked decision-making with getting a job in the future: 'that's what's going to help us learn, in the future, when we want to get jobs'. (Lulabelle)

For others, partnering with teachers generated suspicion combined with openness to the possibilities the change this new positioning might generate:

> Usually like the teachers say 'oh we'll do this' and it sounds really fun and we're like 'okay'. Then, they never get round to it or they forget about it or they just don't do it. (Hityu)

Participating in pedagogical decision-making with teachers also brought students into a pedagogical decision-making relationship with each other which was not always welcomed. As Tim Bob Jim contended: 'sometimes they just say stupid stuff which isn't helpful'.

Although open to increased influence in the classroom, students discussed the importance of teachers setting the learning direction. One student contended that if

the teacher did not set the learning direction, the students would not know what to do, arguing '[they're] a teacher not a sit-around-and-watch-us-er' (Flippinschnip). This student-generated identity for teachers was reinforced by Honey Bunny who argued:

> They're the teachers … because they went to university and got their degree so they are teachers, that's their job, they come here to teach us and we come here to learn … we shouldn't be the ones that say what we should do all the time.

The SRG students promoted balance between teacher direction and student autonomy as a feature of good teaching and ideal student/teacher positioning:

> Sometimes I like to have like the teacher telling us what to do and sometimes I like to do my own thing, but I wouldn't like to have it all the teacher telling us what to do, and I wouldn't like to have it all like we want to do. (Bubbles)

6 Accounting Productively for Teachers and Power in Student Voice

Teachers created pedagogical partnerships with students by deploying their positional authority productively to create identities that normalised students as pedagogical decision-makers. The identities, in turn, generated local student voice discourses for each project. Foucault (1980) refers to power as local solutions to local challenges. In this research, the class projects were focused on re-vitalising one aspect of pedagogy of mutual concern to students and teachers. In this respect, the identities created local discourses of student voice, with their attendant norms and practices, that could be taken up in the class action research project sessions to enact students' preferences of good teaching in partnership.

Expanding the decision-making realm that students could participate in involved creating new spaces in the class programme for the projects and involved students in governance-level decisions. Expanding the agenda also involved the teachers making themselves subject to the views of students in the decision-making process. This was not an abdication of their responsibility as educators, but a commitment to a robust dialogic process where teachers engaged discursively to understand students' thinking, deepen students' understanding of their own thinking, and at times, acquiesce to student viewpoints.

To co-construct responsive pedagogy with students as partners, the teachers also appropriated educational discourses that circulate in the contemporary realm of education, putting these to work to position students with substantive pedagogical influence. The discourses of assessment for learning, inquiry learning and 21st century learning provided familiar starting points for action in the three projects and offered practical ways to shift power relations.

New positioning as decision-making partners changed the conversation and questions teachers and students considered together (Yonezawa and Jones 2009)

and how they related over an extended timeframe. However, these new 'radical roles' (Fielding and Moss 2011) and students' ambivalent responses to them 'are evidence of the multiplicity of reactions that are possible in these situations and the complexity of identity work in student voice' (Mayes and Groundwater-Smith 2013, p. 8). This ambivalence perhaps is to be expected in a student voice project embedded within an educational and societal context where neo-liberal discourses are entrenched. I interpret students' ambivalence as an indication that partnering with teachers also involves students partnering with each other, due to the collective and collaborative activity that is invoked. Student perspectives around this co-constructive relationship with peers need further investigation. At times, their perspectives suggest this opportunity to know and be known by peers is valued by students, and at other times, collaboration is identified as disruptive to ways of working that students prefer. As well, the student reflections indicate the need for an overall configuration of power in student voice that continues to value the professional expertise teachers bring to pedagogy, supported by an increased focus on teachers supporting student capacity building (Nelson 2017) and characterised by 'finger on the pulse' engagement rather than 'students under the thumb'.

In this study, analysis of power relations indicated that rather than act to minimise students' influence in order to maintain their status quo dominance, as might be expected from a repressive view of power, the teachers used their resources (identity, agendas, strategies and discourses) to enact real influence for/with their students. Partnering with students at times was not easy and involved teachers engaging with uncomfortable truths and negotiating ongoing accountability expectations that made them vulnerable. Within a broader system, designed increasingly for teachers to enact performative accountability, students participating with teachers as pedagogical partners remain simultaneously transformational and problematic (Quinn and Owen 2016). Robinson (2016) raises 'cautionary concerns' that must be addressed around power in student voice including 'school practices unwittingly reinforcing the school's prevailing cultural norms' (p. 87) and 'topics central to school policy and organisation not being open to negotiation' (p. 88). These concerns were relevant in this study where the interventions of each class aimed at better reflecting students' preferences of good teaching and challenged totalising school expectations of conformity. The students in Class A were not free to dispense with home learning, the students in Class B were not free to dispense with reflecting on learning, and the students in Class C had to engage in a class inquiry. The teachers were not free to dispense with these aspects either. These pedagogical foci were important to the philosophy and pedagogical approach of the school, and linked to circulating accountability discourses. However, the interaction between these circulating discourses and the pedagogy negotiated at a local level by participating teachers and their students rendered these negotiated interventions risky for teachers.

As Mayes et al. (2017) note, 'any attempt to unwind conventional power hierarchies is always already inflected with power relations that dynamically shift and change' (para 6). Attending to the multiplicity of power relations involves recognising what student voice requires of teachers, as well as the productive role they

can play in the entangled activity of student voice in practice. This is especially important where student voice pervades classrooms and pedagogy and is enacted over extended timeframes.

Teachers in this research committed to work with students as decision-making partners, a challenge identified as new for all of them. Their attention to identity and positioning, expanding the decision-making agenda and appropriating discourses carve out opportunities for other educators to attend to when planning for radical student/teacher partnerships and reflexively interrogating their current practice. Their example demonstrates what can be achieved by putting unequal and persistently asymmetrical teacher/student power relations to work to enhance student status and influence, whilst acknowledging also the structural responsibility placed on teachers for student learning in schools.

This chapter has focused on power in student voice, but from the teachers' perspective. This may appear counter-intuitive and one-sided in a field where the inclusion of students in making decisions in their own educational interests is at issue. However, if teachers are vital to the success of student voice in classrooms, then we need to engage with, and honour how teachers deploy power productively to foster student/teacher pedagogical partnerships, enacting these with students into radical reality.

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