Practitioner Research as "Praxidents" Waiting to Happen

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Practitioner research, as Ravitch (2014) writes in the previous issue of *Perspectives on Urban Education*, holds the unique possibility of "generating local, practice-based knowledge that is deeply contextualized and meaningfully embedded in a specific milieu" while spurring a "counter-hegemonic way of thinking about and approaching theory-research-practice-policy connections and integrations" and "push[ing] against traditional expert-learner dichotomies" (p. 5). My academic-self strongly aligns with these values and approaches.

My teacher-self often felt worlds away from this.

Ravitch's piece has motivated me to write about this gap that I feel in relation to the field of practitioner inquiry, and to explore my own reflections on my practice as a form of practitioner research. Within one week of entering graduate school in September 2013, I was already sufficiently missing my full-time high school teaching position to want to reflect on the work that my students and I had done together over my three years of teaching. I decided to reflect on a junior- and senior-level Urban Education course I taught at University City High School in Philadelphia. One of my mentors eventually persuaded me that this inquiry was a perfect fit for the Ethnography in Education Conference. As I had designed our high school course to be very much a collaboration between teachers, students, and Penn undergraduates—all of us equally knowledgeable about schools and society—I excitedly submitted a proposal in

which some of my former students would join as co-investigators. But as I prepared for the presentation, I felt a profound tug of doubt: I was doing this practitioner research piece *as if I was still a high school teacher*, even though I was now a doctoral student; I felt inadequate for not having mastered (or even having intentionally tried!) the methods of practitioner research before undertaking this practitioner research project for an international practitioner research conference. This dissonance between my current academic-self and former teacher-self was unnerving and plagued me throughout the project. It represents, for me, the gap between what Ravitch refers to as "the transformative power of taking an inquiry stance on practice," and the feeling that it is still worlds away for practitioners.

My teaching-self didn't feel I had the language or stature, let alone the time or effort, to be connected to capital-R Research. This, despite the fact that I considered myself to be an intellectual and a serious teacher. In my teacher education program, I had studied the work of Dewey, Freire, and Cochran-Smith and Lytle, felt their consonance with my emerging values, and recognized that their ideas were informing my teaching values. But as a teacher, rather than describe that I was engaged in problem-based learning, or problem-posing education, or taking an inquiry stance, I would likely say instead that I held strong values about my teaching, embedded in my day-to-day and moment-to-moment actions. These values-in-action included the importance of listening and understanding my students and their

lived experiences, creatively developing lessons that were rigorous rather than rote, striving to improve and learn from my (many) mistakes, and trying to do right in an inequitable society.

Looking back as a newly erstwhile teacher, rather than say that I was engaged in practitioner research, I would say that my desire to reflect on my practice came from wanting to remember and re-explore it, to understand it anew and with more depth. No longer a teacher and instead a doctoral student, I now realize that my values (and values-in-action) match the spirit of taking an inquiry stance (Cochran & Lytle, 2009), and that my more systematic investigation of my teaching represents practitioner research. But as Fecho (2003) writes of his own experiences,

> In my own experience I never considered the academic journals as an outlet for my writing when I was teaching high school because I never felt I could invest the time needed to meet the criteria for acceptance…. I don't think practicing teachers who care about teaching in K-12 classrooms as well as conducting research with the intent to publish should have to decide, in large ways, between the two (p. 290-291).

The gap between these core-yet-unsurfaced values and the academic discourse and context of practitioner research is a gap that must be bridged.

Whereas Fecho captures the way this dissonance plays out in the publication of teacher research, I want to start at the beginning of that process. So many aspects of teachers' work are naturally connected to the work of taking an inquiry stance, and easily invite further and more intentional investigation. This paper is a self-reflective effort to explore that dissonance through the exploration of my teacher-self and the "praxidents" that occurred along the way. I am hoping the portmanteau praxident (that is, praxis plus accident) might become teacher shorthand to capture the accidental intersections between teacher values, actions, and reflections, and the academic discourse that happen to overlap with them. For example, my high school teacher-self has a strong sense of my educational values, enacted and reflected on through practice; in teaching Urban Education, they *praxidentally* paralleled theoretical underpinnings of Deweyan problem-based learning, Freirian critical co-investigation, and Cochran-Smith/Lytle-ian inquiry as stance. My teacher-self felt distant from this discourse, believing that reflections on my values-in-action certainly didn't count as formal knowledge. I strongly believe that uncovering the way teachers' work praxidentally connects to the academic discourse is important for teachers to know that there is nothing "extra" or "inaccessible" about practitioner research, just something further and deeper. It seems that engendering comfort and confidence for teachers to go further and deeper is central to the success of a movement so grounded in the knowledge and experience of practitioners.

There are four stories here: the values and vision of the high school Urban Education course; its evolution through planning, instruction, and reflection; my practitioner inquiry, which explored these at the Ethnography Forum; and my current reflection on that process. I tell these stories moving forward chronologically, as they occurred to my teacher-self. (I make this choice knowing that my academic-self would likely represent the conceptual framework for this paper as a nested one.) Each story involves a gap between my teacher-self

and practitioner research self and an exploration of the "praxident" at hand. Each is animated by my values, and includes examples of my values-in-action. In being put into action, and then reflecting on the outcomes, these stories are examples of "praxis," action and reflection on that action. And thus, each story also involves a praxident, an overlap with academic discourse in some fashion that my teacher-self did not see, and that my academic-self needed my teacher-self to see if I was to journey further into the field of practitioner research.

I have chosen to use four fragments of practice—a journal diagram, a dry erase board brainstorming event, an email to a mentor, and notes to myself before a presentation—as jumping off points for exploring each of these four praxidents, similar to the way that Harste and Velazquez (1998) describe the value of journals as an "audit trail" for documenting practitioners' learnings. I believe using these fragments of reflection in my practice shows that my values-in-action are part of the smallest, most everyday moments, and simultaneously serve as jumping off points to the discourse and structures of practitioner inquiry.

Urban Education Course Vision and Planning: A Deweyan Praxident
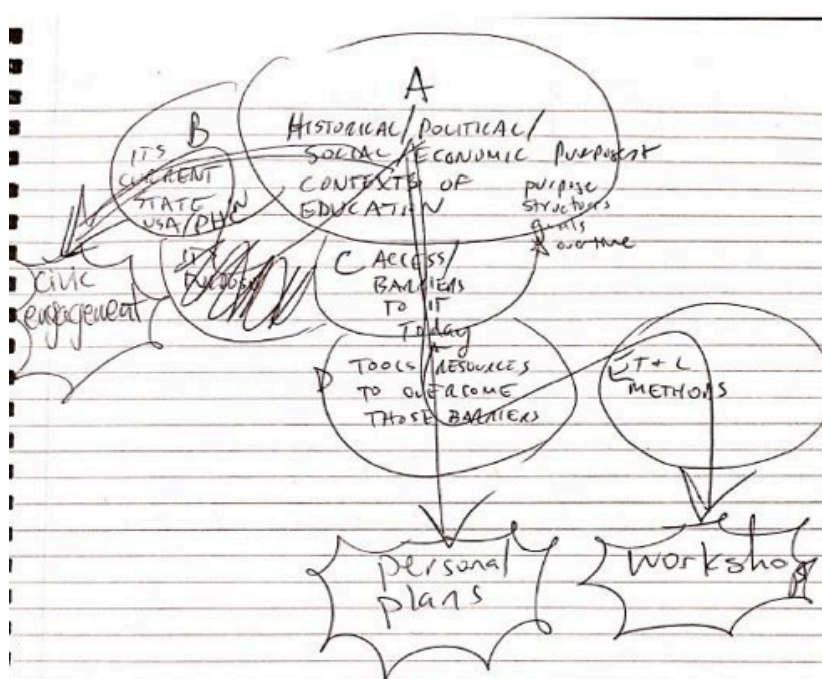
Figure 1. Journal Entry, June 21, 2012

This image comes from my teacher journal on June 21, 2012, the summer before I would teach the Urban Education elective. This diagram is the third iteration of my brainstorming of what a high school course on urban education with urban students should do. I realized that I wanted to create a space where exploration issues of school and society were central concerns of the course. By adding content conversations about the state of public education today (specifically as it affected students in Philadelphia), I imagined the course having a civic engagement component that would position students as doers as well as knowers. By discussing issues related to access and barriers to education and the tools and resources available for overcoming those barriers, I hoped that students would be able to develop personal plans over time, ultimately charting their futures in college and/or careers and identifying in advance the resources they would need to succeed. Lastly, I hoped that they would also learn about methods and practices of teaching and learning, partly in order to be able to name the processes they observed happening to them in their daily lives, but also as methods useful for developing workshops to share information about barriers, access, and resources with others. I envisioned my Urban Education course sustaining and furthering these explorations throughout the school year.

As I look back on this journal entry, I can unearth the values that I felt at that moment: that allowing students to be the explorers of educational issues was important; that these experiences should help students further their own hopes and ambitions; that the experiences should also equip students to share what they have learned to improve others' opportunities; and finally, that this would facilitate students engaging issues of education in their own worlds, from own their perspectives. I didn't do any research how to do this. Instead, I relied on my experiences at our school, my knowledge and relationships with my students, and values of student self-growth, increasing student access, and the importance of civic engagement.   know first-hand that many teachers share these values, and that there is nothing too uncommon about them.

Looking back, Deweyan approaches to teaching and learning naturally overlapped and maybe even subconsciously informed my approach. But these concepts were just not the schema I used to conceptualize how to build the course. Disconnected from Deweyan discourse, I felt my brainstorming reflected approaches that best fit my students—not the academy. However, I would label it a "praxident" that this initial sketch (and its evolution over the summer) represented a Deweyan approach to teaching Urban Education in an urban high school. Did I value "learning from experience" and "expression and cultivation of individuality" (Dewey, 1938, p. 19)? I would argue so. Did I feel the importance of being "intelligently aware of the capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction" to be "develop[ed] into a plan and project" (Dewey, 1938, p. 71)? Yes. Did I seek to build off of "the range of existing experience" that students had in the school, with the "promise and potentiality of presenting new problems"

for students to actively engage (Dewey, 1938, p. 75)? Absolutely. These values emerged in the course of action—constructing the course—and reflection on how the course design matched my values. The alignment between the course vision and the Deweyan underpinnings was simply a praxident. It saw it as the right approach for the course; it never occurred to me it was an entry point into the discourse of the academy.

Urban Education Course Evolution: A Critical Pedagogy Praxident

The course, in practice, iterated significantly from this course vision. The first quarter offered some successful projects—one group of students presented their findings about the school's new block schedule directly to the staff, another created the draft of an article about declining school enrollment to a local periodical that was almost published—but I generally did not feel like enough groups reached their audience and had the impact they desired. Thus, in the second quarter, I seized on a meme I was starting to hear from some students—my classes aren't preparing me for my future—and constructed an ethnography assignment to explore it more deeply. Students interviewed someone in a potential future career of interest, observed two classrooms in our school, and evaluated whether the skills they were being taught would be useful in their future careers. While this responded to different students' talents, needs, and desires, I had the same challenge of finding an audience for their work to be useful.

As students changed at the semester mark, I rebooted to focus on a more narrative and autobiographical approach to investigating school and society rather than systematic and analytic approach. As my second semester

syllabus attested: "Because public education is for everyone in America, everyone has a story about school. And yet, experiences in schools are vastly different based on where you live and who you are. The goal of this semester of our course is to tell your story, your educational autobiography, to a wider audience." Students composed multimodal autobiographies (narratives, podcasts, videos) to capture their stories as we explored how broader social, political, and economic forces structured inequities in schools and society. The values that informed these changes—and my changing values over the course— are best represented by the evolution of the fourth and final project of the course.

The dry erase board (*Figure 2*) represents the work that I undertook, along with two graduate students and two Penn professors, to plan our final quarter project. We considered the pieces at play: students' educational autobiographies, noted above; the opportunity of an audience at a multi-school gala at the School District of Philadelphia; the School District's relatively recent three-to-two vote to close our school for good; students' inquiries about a particularly intriguing 1973 photograph of our building's cornerstone. The image of the dry erase board in Figure 2 surfaces the central themes (change, struggle/grit, identity) and goals (voice, legacy) to prepare options that students discussed for a final project. In the end, students elected to create a Digital Time Capsule website to capture the legacy of the school—taking 360° pictures of a majority of

the rooms in the school; digitizing as many of the school's yearbooks as we could get our hands on; searching for artifacts across the school; interviewing alumni and archiving historical documents about the school; capturing newspaper and video coverage of our fight to keep the school open; housing the multimodal educational autobiographies students had created. Simultaneously, we planned an event that would bring together current students and staff with alumni, former teachers, and community partners to
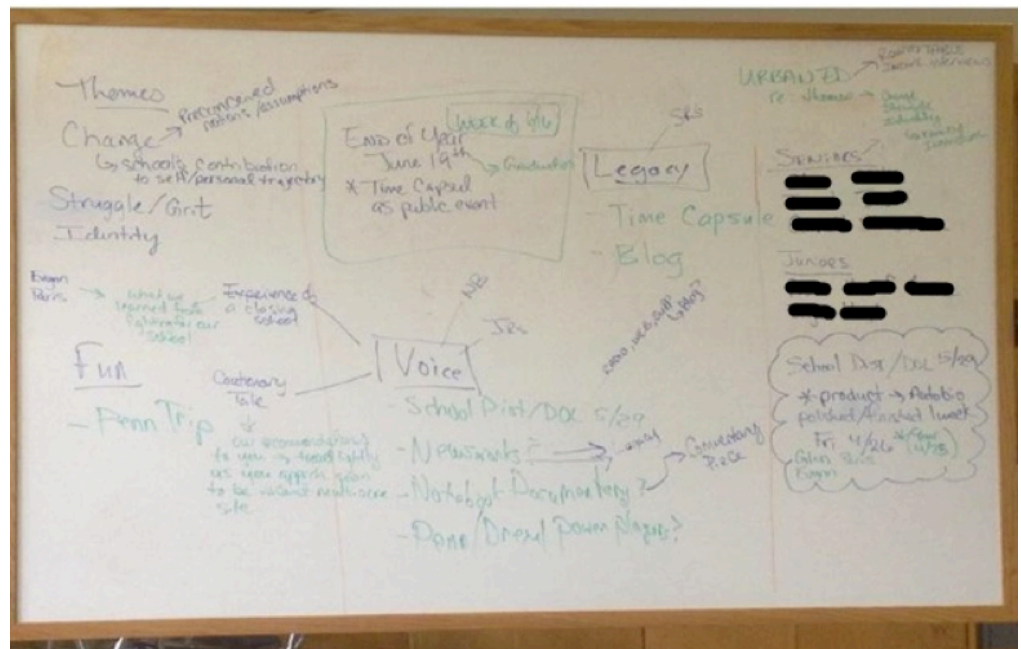

Figure 2. Dry Erase Board Brainstorming, April 18, 2013.

reveal the contents of the 1973 time capsule stored in our school's cornerstone.

In undertaking these tasks, it seems that we sought to amplify students' voices, connect students' investigations of themselves and their worlds to a broader audience, capture their individual legacies and our school's legacy, and have the last word in a fight in which the powers-that-be seemed to be getting the last act. These manifested in values-in-action that reflected student expertise, collaborative decision-making,

and democratic participation. We—adults and students—engaged in roundtable discussions about school experiences in the context of city and societal inequities, nominated students to lead different aspects of the time capsule based on their interests and talents, and reached out to bridge school and community. The result was a digital time capsule website that students still regularly check, and the event opening the 1973 time capsule at the end of the school year event. These experiences stood out centrally in students' memories of the course. As one student reflected much later:

> To see these community people come together from the school that's talked so badly about, like we do have something to pride ourselves of, we're more than...a bad urban neighborhood, a neighborhood school…. [I]t was meaningful to me because it brought together the students, this newer generation of students and this older generation of students, so it was like we just seen, we brung [sic] history to life, we brought the past to the present, something that a lot of people can't do (G. Casey, personal communication, 2014).

Overall, I would say that the course praxidently evoked critical pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. The need to investigate school and society in preparing educational autobiographies represented problem posing, in which "the teacher presents material to students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own" (Freire, 2011, p. 81). Our collaborative roles around each others' learning experiences, to which I brought broader conceptions of the structural and
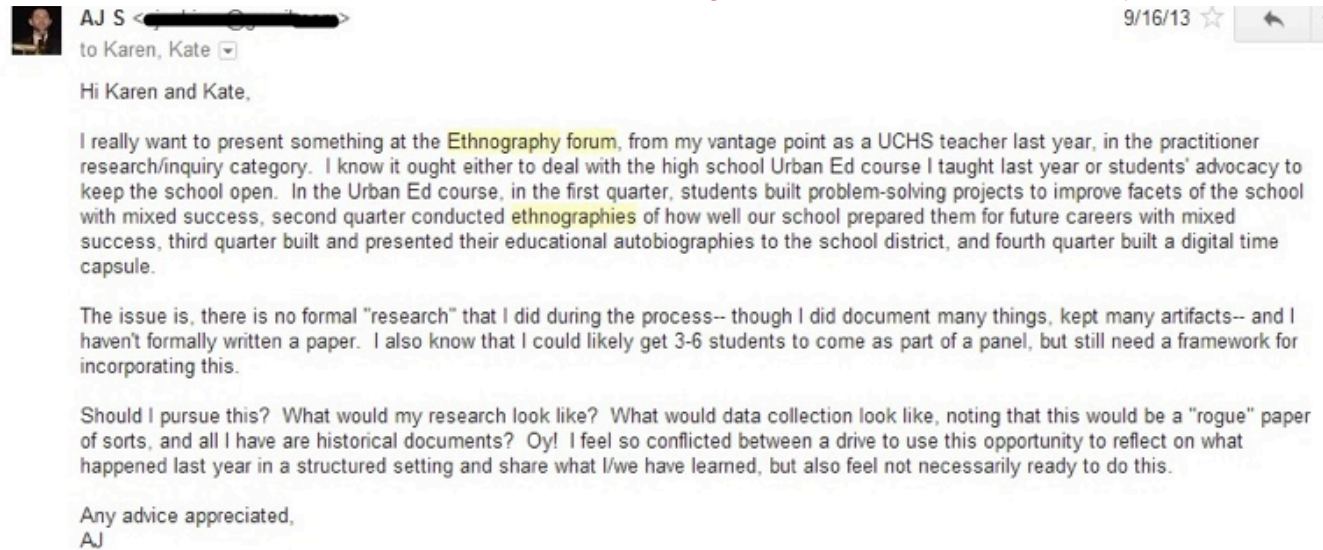
ideological forces which structure inequities and to which the students brought their lived experiences, illustrated critical co-investigation. This co-investigation also really required deeply listening to students to understand "how they make sense of schooling and their lived worlds" in order to do this (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 20). Doing this surfaced "generative themes" (Freire, 2011) of legacy and voice, which served as the touchstones for this project. I also hoped that their experiences involved both "preparation to confront the conditions of social and economic inequity" and "access to the academic literacies...that make college attendance a realistic option" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 7). The evolving Digital Time Capsule represented a type of praxis of its own, with all of us engaging in action and reflection in the context of our discussions of what would best capture UCHS's legacy and how our efforts were preserving that legacy. But again, these are incidental overlaps. As in the above section with the work of Dewey, I had read Freire before and noticed that many of my values matched his and were given words and names through reading about reading the word and the world. In the course of our classes, we "praxidentally" engaged in critical pedagogy.

Ethnography Forum Preparation: An Inquiry Stance Praxident

September 9, 2013 was the first day of the first school year ever in which University City High School was not open. As one of the 3,800 teachers laid off, I was now a full-time Ed.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania. As the email in *Figure 3* attests, within one week I was already suffering from the ivory tower version of cabin fever, constantly replaying the memories of teaching at UCHS and grasping for

ways to both hold on to them and make meaning of them. The importance of making sense of them through studying them became apparent to me, and the Ethnography in Education forum seemed to be the perfect doctoral student excuse to do it. (Notice the change in positionality.) The email in Figure 3, written to two close mentors I had been in regular contact with since my pre-service teaching, illustrates my interests and hesitations:

Figure 3. Email with mentors, September 16, 2013

What values emerged from sharing this story? Knowing that it "ought to" deal with the Urban Ed elective or school closings continues to recognize the value of student agency in my mind, particularly with the possibility of including my students on a panel as co-investigators of the course. The last sentence that reveals "a drive... to reflect on what happened last year in a structured setting and [to] share what I/we have learned" captures a sense that teaching Urban Education was something truly special, for both me and my students, and I wanted to unpack how it worked. Eventually, Kate would convince me to focus on three simple questions to further this exploration:

- As a practitioner in creating such a setting, what was the vision for the course?
- How did it develop and evolve, and what influenced those changes?
- What outcomes and experiences were most meaningful to its student participants?

I may have labeled my efforts as practitioner inquiry, but as this email also illustrates, I considered myself dissonant with methods and approaches of practitioner inquiry. Ravitch (2014, p. 5), in her piece, notes that practitioner research involves "systematic research procedures and practices that foster critical reflection and action in the context of professional practice." This email surfaces the many ways in which I felt unqualified and incapable of engaging in practitioner inquiry: that I had no "'formal' research," "needed a framework" for incorporating students as a panel, considered this effort a "'rogue' paper of sorts," and "[felt] not necessarily ready to do this." Never mind that adjusting my practice over the course of the semester in light of concerns about educational rigor and student voice represents an inquiry stance, "a worldview, a critical habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 120). That I saw presenting at the Ethnography Forum

as a "rogue" foray into the formal world of academia represents just how much the idea that investigating my practice with my students was only "praxidentally" practitioner inquiry.

Ethnography Forum Presentation: The Inquiry Community Praxident

Throughout January and February 2014, I struggled to prepare "Critical Co-investigation with the Ultimate Stakeholders: A Practitioner Inquiry into the Urban Education Elective at University City High School." I truly believe that our high school course was a co-investigation, with students and myself learning about school and society through our dialogic interaction with each other. (But, as noted above, I had only conceived of it as a "critical co-investigation" after coming to graduate school and re-reading Freire.) Leading up to the presentation, however, I realized that I was the practitioner doing the practitioner inquiry; I was the teacher doing teacher research. No matter how often I replayed moments in my head of my students telling me that every school should have an Urban Education elective, we weren't doing this presentation together in the conventional sense. I looked at dozens of pages of student work, classroom artifacts, and teacher journals (including the fragments in praxidents one and two), and interviewed a number of students to understand how the course evolved and how it was perceived by students. In a broad sense, I felt like I needed to do right by my students, but I didn't know how to navigate that without imposing on them. I felt ill prepared to present what was billed as a co-investigation at an academic conference that drew attendees from across the globe.

On the morning of the presentation I ad-libbed a way to navigate this tension that would value both collaboration and co-investigation: I would reframe our presentation as a conversation. I decided to make clear that this was a three-way conversation: I would share my inquiry with the audience, but also with my students, so they would see the workings and evolution behind the class; the students would share their experiences and perspectives with the audience and with me, to speak back to my perspectives; and the audience would not only listen or ask clarifying questions but would help make meaning of the course as a third party. I quickly slipped a new frame into the presentation making this relationship clear, and made some notes about the ways that I envisioned this collaboration occurring (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4. Notes on Ethnography forum slides, March 1, 2014
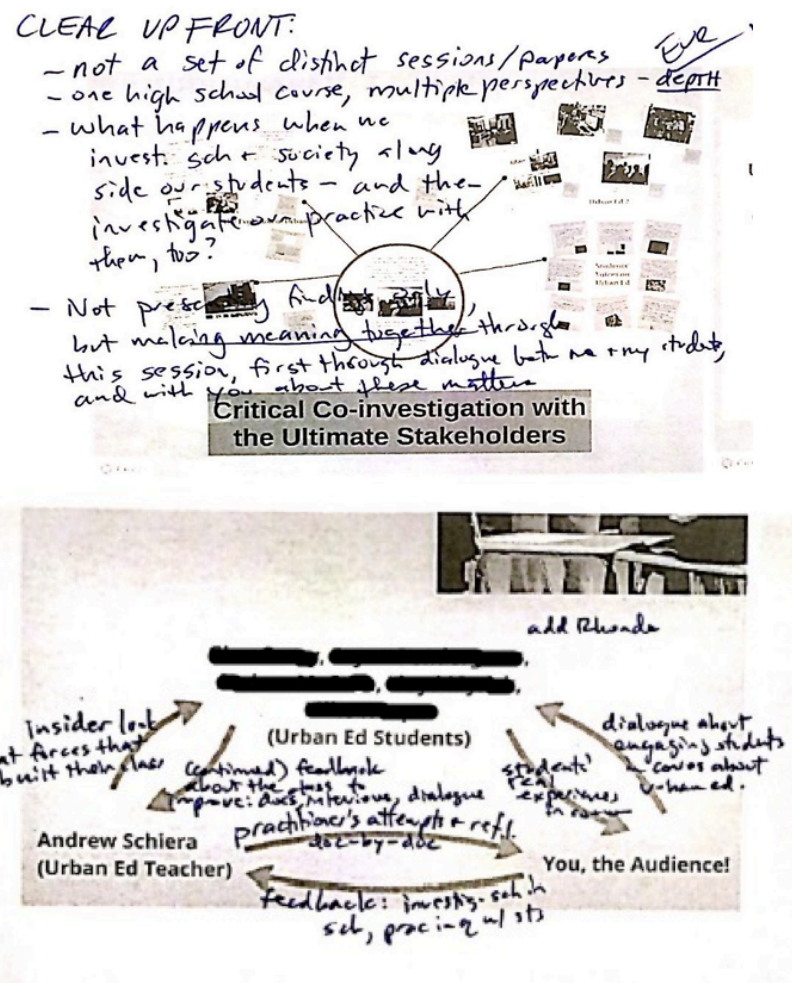
As I presented this to the audience at the start of the presentation, I felt like I was simultaneously providing a disclaimer— in case they were disappointed—and a statement of my values. It reveals that I valued authenticity in my interactions with students, and that although my students, members of the audience, and I myself were all differently positioned, we all had important things to say to each other—we could "make meaning together."

As the session went on, the sense of conversation and community deepened. Students hopped in to talk about their particular experiences at different junctures of the course. I talked honestly to students about the times when I thought I could have been more successful in structuring experiences for them and helping them find audiences for their work. Audience members asked candid questions about the course, and the impact of school closings on the students and the school. One audience member had taught at UCHS for over a decade before my arrival, and spoke to students about the strong academic tradition that they had come from. Afterwards, we had an extended conversation with the audience member from Sydney, Australia—it turned out her students were losing a space that allowed for student voice, and were feeling the same things our students were as the school closed—and our students recorded a short, spontaneous video to capture their resilience and send messages of hope 9,000+ miles away. As one student said: "To the kids in Australia, don't be afraid to express yourself…. And even though we didn't keep our school, we still kept our pride…. Don't bite your tongue, speak up."

From preparatory actions that reinforced how much the practitioner inquiry was a project unique to me, to my reflections illustrating a concern about the dissonance between a presentation billed as "co-investigation" that I was driving, to the values that our conversations be authentic, meaningful, and fair to the different positions we all held, this tri-directional approach to the conversation was an improvisation that illustrated my values-in-action. I would have never called it an intentional approach to building an inquiry community. Out of necessity for framing the discussion, we "praxidentally" created a space in which adults and students' discussions helped "to improve the cultures of practice, enhance students' learning and life chances, and ultimately to help bring about educational and social change" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 140).

Praxidents Waiting to Happen

How do we capitalize on the praxidents that so regularly surface in teachers' practice? How do we help teachers see that the intellectual work they do in their planning, the creative work they do in their instruction, the cognitive work they do in their reflection, and the social-emotional work they do in building relationships with their students are jumping off points that beg for investigation—and have a home in the academy?

I ask this question, and share my experiences presenting about Urban Education at the Ethnography Forum, in order to suggest that maybe the gap teachers often feel isn't quite as wide as it appears. I share the stories of my four praxidents to convey the fact that teachers' thoughts, values-in-action, and reflections often parallel conversations happening in the academy. The question is, how will teachers reach out to the academy— or how will the academy reach out to teachers? The connections are waiting to be made.

One piece of the puzzle seems to be personal, to the extent that teachers see their teacher-selves and academic-selves as separate. This has societal causes: we live in a society that deskills and de-professionalizes teachers, reinforcing portrayals of teachers as anything but intellectuals (Kincheloe, 2008). Further, some have noted the ways that teachers and researchers find themselves in "two very different institutional contexts… [and] frequently carry with them sharply contrasting worldviews that arise from the distinctive problems of practice they encounter in their perspective roles" (Labaree, 2003, p. 16). Some might argue that the more that teachers see their teacher-selves and academic-selves merged, the more they will see their praxidents as practitioner research waiting to happen. Seeing "a theory of action grounded in the dialectic of knowing and acting" positioned as valuable knowledge for both practice and the academy, can bridge this divide (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 122). But in a chicken-and-egg way, teachers may not feel able to merge these identities without some evidence that the overlap is already there. It also leaves unanswered the question of who must make the first move: the teacher or the academy.

I close, therefore, by re-posing the question: What will it take to disrupt many teachers' senses that their work is disconnected from research? I know this not a new question, and yet it persists, in my narrative as well as innumerous others. Unless we find the ways to make these connections, teachers' practice will be littered with praxidents waiting to happen.

A Response to AJ Schiera's "Practitioner Research as Praxidents Waiting to Happen"
Sharon Ravitch, University of Pennsylvania

It is my honor to have been asked to respond to AJ Schiera's (2014) article "Practitioner Research as Praxidents Waiting to Happen," and even more so that my last article for the Journal spurred him to write this one. There are many aspects of Schiera's piece that I want to engage with, but I will limit this response to a few themes that his article brought to the fore, which include: research dissonance as artifact; (re)envisioning what constitutes data and research; and "teachers as transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988). I hope that my comments, brief and therefore oversimplified as they are, will contribute to an emerging dialogue on these issues in the Journal.

Research dissonance as artifact
Schiera begins his article by talking about feeling a sense of dissonance, as a teacher, from "capital-R research." He shares that in some ways practitioner research has felt far away, rarified, and even inaccessible to him as a teacher. From almost two decades of working with practitioners (including but not limited to teachers) in the realm of practitioner research, I would say that this is a commonly held perception: that research requires highly specialized skills that are not available to or achievable by practitioners and, even further, that there is a hierarchy of formal knowledge and therefore that teacher knowledge is less valuable. As Schiera writes:

> My teacher-self felt distant from this discourse, believing that reflections on my values-in-action certainly didn't count as formal knowledge. I

strongly believe that [it] is important for teachers to know that there is nothing "extra" or "inaccessible" about practitioner research, just something further and deeper. It seems that engendering comfort and confidence for teachers to go further and deeper is central to the success of a movement so grounded in the knowledge and experience of practitioners.

Schiera underscores how "formal research" has become, or perhaps always was, framed in ways shaped primarily by/within the Academy and highlights the resultant dissonance that this can engender for some individual teachers and practitioner communities. I believe strongly that this sense of dissonance does not lie within teachers, but rather, within a system which confers dominance on certain forms of knowledge, expertise and types of research over others. In this sense, the dissonance that Schiera writes about can be viewed as an artifact of a broken and inequitable system of education – one that along with other hegemonic acts, dismisses teacher knowledge – rather than as something that resides within individual teachers. This seems an important distinction given that words like "dissonance" and "resistance" serve to re-inscribe deficit orientations towards teachers and obfuscate how systemic these issues really are. As I see it, within what Schiera writes is a conundrum, an opening, and a complex question: how to make the conceptualization and processes of research accessible and therefore more often used as a form of professional engagement and development while ensuring that practitioner research studies are rigorous enough so that whatever actions or policies might be built upon its findings can ensure a fidelity to the realities of the context, phenomena, and people in focus? And yet another layer of the question/conundrum is the question,

"Who gets to decide what rigor means?" Clearly, in an historical and normative sense, the Academy and those with power within the realm of educational policy have set the bar on research rigor (and even on what constitutes research) and yet, in the realm of practitioner research, where data are a part of and stem from "naturally occurring practice" these lines are blurred in ways that I believe, when critically considered in communities of practice that include academics and practitioners (and those who are both), create incredible possibility for everyone to re-conceptualize what constitutes data, rigor, and research itself. And to think about some critical rearrangements in and across these milieux.

(Re)envisioning what constitutes data and research

The four stories that Schiera shares in his piece help us understand possibilities in practitioner research as well as to begin to enlarge and complicate our sense of what constitutes data and research rigor. When Schiera quotes my article, in which I state that practitioner research involves "systematic research procedures and practices that foster critical reflection and action in the context of professional practice," sharing that this framing of research served in part to reinforce that this kind of "systematic research" was beyond what he felt capable of (which is a great reminder to me to continually reflect upon my own language choices and the biases they reflect); it helps push into these tensions with regards to research, inquiry, and the politics around what constitutes data. By sharing his own inquiry process and some of his data (which he referred to as "fragments of practice") and reflections across these four contexts, Schiera helps us to see how data are emergent and generative in a never-ending cycle of teacher reflection, inquiry, and action. Schiera's conceptualization of "Praxidents," is

provocative, I think. He states:

> I am hoping the portmanteau praxident (that is, praxis plus accident) might become teacher shorthand to capture the accidental intersections between teacher values, actions, and reflections, and the academic discourse that happen to overlap with them.

This is a really provocative and powerful concept and one that is central to (though different from) the notion of taking an inquiry stance on practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009); it raises many questions and exposes layers of assumption about where teacher research resides. As Schiera writes:

> How do we capitalize on the praxidents that so regularly surface in teachers' practice? How do we help teachers see that the intellectual work they do in their planning, the creative work they do in their instruction, the cognitive work they do in their reflection, and the social-emotional work they do in building relationships with their students are jumping off points that beg for investigation—and have a home in the academy?

The layers of this are profound and we – and by we I mean teachers, academics, students, educational leaders – need to further inquire into the spaces in which practitioners and academics come together (and perhaps spaces where they do not) as well as the contexts that shape these relationships (or lack thereof). Central to this are issues of power, legitimacy, voice, and audience and specifically, how different voices and the epistemologies that underlie them can be devalued and marginalized, sometimes even with the best of intentions. Part of the question Schiera poses, I think, is about the existing and possible roles of practitioners in the realm of academic research (and vice versa) and how to re-envision who gets to decide what constitutes rigorous research, what constitutes data, and even what it means to be a reflective practitioner, teacher researcher, scholar-practitioner and the like. So much of the current discourse in education serves to, whether consciously or unconsciously, re-inscribe binaries between practitioners and scholars and to perpetuate academic hierarchies that serve to legitimate intellectual hegemony and marginalize teacher wisdom and expertise. And yet, there also already exist vibrant spaces of connection and exchange that perhaps could be made more visible and accessible to teachers and academics so they can serve as symbolic Norths to which we can look for inspiration and ideas.

"Teachers as transformative intellectuals"

As Schiera argues, we live in a society that de-professionalizes teachers in myriad ways. In Giroux's (1988) chapter "Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals," he argues that it is vital to push against hegemonic structural issues that devalue and de-professionalize teachers' perspectives and expertise. He states:

> …I want to argue that one way to rethink and restructure the nature of teacher work is to view teachers as transformative intellectuals…First, [the category of intellectual] provides a theoretical basis for examining teacher work as a form of intellectual labor, as opposed to defining it in purely instrumental or technical terms. Second, it clarifies the kinds of ideological and practical conditions necessary for teachers to function as intellectuals. Third, it helps to make clear the role teachers play in producing and legitimating various

political, economic, and social interests through the pedagogies they endorse and utilize (p. 125).

Giroux's stance has deeply influenced my understanding of the larger systemic issues that shape teachers, teaching, and teacher research and the dominant narratives and policies that often prevent teachers from viewing themselves or being viewed by others as "reflective scholars and practitioners." Giroux has offered decades of critique of the top-down system that undermines teacher wisdom and dislocates teachers away from experiencing themselves as, and being viewed as, intellectuals and knowledge generators. Speaking into this tension and history, as a former teacher (which Schiera refers to as his "teacher-self") and a student in a graduate school of education (which he refers to as his "academic-self") who is mentoring teachers and engaging in practitioner research, Schiera writes: "The question is, how will teachers reach out to the academy—or how will the academy reach out to teachers? The connections are waiting to be made." Some have already made these connections (local examples include the Philadelphia Writing Project http://www.gse.upenn.edu/philwp and PennGSE's Urban Ethnography Forum's Practitioner Inquiry Day http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cue/forum/prday), while others have not. Even within some existing connections there exist problematic dynamics and issues that need to be worked out around questions of hierarchy and all that it brings to conversations within and about practice-based research. Schiera's article brings to the fore that a hybrid language and conceptualization for people's "teacher and academic selves" might flourish in critically co-constructed spaces that seek to not only resist, but to push into these constraining forces.

In my original Journal article I wrote:

The promise of practitioner-driven research is that the learning emerges from local, situated inquiry, the kind of inquiry that leads practitioners to engage in evidence-based practice—in a reinvigorated sense of that term, meaning that it is grounded in our own contexts, practices, and settings. And, from my experience, that is where the hope is: in the stories, in the data, and in the evidence that emerges from a more relational, contextualized, collaborative and practice-centered kind of research – not the top-down kind of research that is being forced upon many of us – but, rather, the kind that emerges from knowing and caring about people in a setting, the kind that emerges when practitioners take seriously the responsibility to collaborate with, care for, support, and empower ourselves, our colleagues, and our constituencies.

Reading Schiera's article, my sense of hope and my sense of urgency to address these issues has been reignited; my sense of the power of contextualized stories and site-based pedagogical reflection, inquiry, and questioning renewed; and my excitement about the future of education and the promise of teacher research and a more hybrid set of conceptualizations and practices of practitioner research intensified. Schiera has helped me to think more deeply and critically about the differences and overlaps between reflection and inquiry, between inquiry and research, and between intentionality in and the emergent quality of research in/on practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). There are many questions, tensions and insights that shape and emerge from Schiera's article that deserve further engagement. May the dialogue continue!

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