CHAPTER 5

Knowledge Democracy and Action Research: Pathways for the Twenty-First Century

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In December 1987, Paulo Freire and Myles Horton met at Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee for a week of dialogue (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990). Both men had been familiar with each other's work for more than 20 years, and their paths had crossed on a few occasions at conferences and gatherings. However, they had not had an opportunity for an extended in-person dialogue until the Highlander event. The dialogue was centered on the relationship of education and social change. During the dialogue, Paulo stated:

> respecting the knowledge of the people for me is a political attitude consistent with the political choice of the educator if he or she thinks about a different kind of society. In other words, I cannot fight for a freer society if at the same time I don't respect the knowledge of the people. (As cited in Bell et al., 1990, p. 101)

This chapter examines knowledge democracy, a concept rooted in the relations between knowing the world, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, and taking action in the world (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). It is fundamentally concerned with how action researchers engage with the knowledge of the people and the impact of this engagement on action researchers and participants in action research.

We examine issues faced by action researchers working within the context of democratizing knowledge. Not all action research supports democratized

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knowledge and not all advocates of knowledge democracy are comfortable with the stances and practices of all action researchers (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009). This chapter takes up the challenge of considering these issues in relation to the broad themes of the *Handbook*, that is, the implications of globalized action research; the place of networks in knowledge construction and dissemination; and the impact of critical intellectual, moral, historical, and sociopolitical issues on the practice of action research. For brevity, we use the term "action research" to represent various kinds of action research such as participatory action research (PAR), cooperative inquiry, collaborative action research, participatory inquiry, and so on, unless distinctions need to be made.

5.1 Vantage Points for a View of Knowledge Democracy

We have delineated four vantage points for this chapter to brief the origin of knowledge democracy, the progress toward knowledge democracy, and current and future prognosis and recommendations. They are (a) knowledge monopoly in the field: on the origins of participatory research; (b) knowledge monopoly in the fortress: globalization and the scientific worldview; (c) action research and alternative globalization: the practice of knowledge democracy; and (d) convergences in knowledge democracy: reflections on a battlefield in the global North.

5.1.1 Knowledge Monopoly in the Field: On the Origins of Participatory Research

The first vantage point is the situation confronted by those drawn to PAR in the mid- to late 1960s. This was a time of uprising, exhilaration, and hope for a better world, and there was a sense that "something useful was bound to come of so many uprisings" (Berman, 1996, p. 14).

The knowledge monopoly that created the need for the countervailing perspective represented by PAR was rooted in a revolutionary time some 500 years before the uprisings described by Berman. The Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to the birth of the "modern world system, a capitalist world economy" (Wallerstein, 1998, p. 45). Among many noteworthy developments, this system also sponsored the colonization of the global South by the global North. This colonization reflected an epistemic divide (Santos, 2014), which Santos characterizes as Northern hemispheric epistemology threatening to extinguish ways of knowing found in the global South. He refers to this as "epistemicide," and its destructive power serves as the backdrop of the emergence of PAR.

Fals Borda deeply understood this phenomenon (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). He asserted that PAR in Latin America and other parts of the global South offered a way to correct the "unequal relations of knowledge" through "stimulating popular knowledges" (p. 31). Whether coming from South America (Fals Borda, 1979), Africa (Hall, 1992; Swantz, 1996), or India (Tandon, 1982), the calls for breaking the knowledge monopoly were strongly

connected with recognition of the value of participatory forms of action research in the global South.

Among PAR pioneers, knowledge democracy was an effort to break the hold of "intellectual colonialism" (Fals Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003, p. 35) rooted in the monopolizing effects of the dominant research paradigm of positivism (Tandon, 1982). According to Hall (1992), mobilizing disenfranchised and oppressed peoples required demystifying the social science approach to knowledge production: "We have created an illusion and we have come to believe in it—namely, that only those with sophisticated techniques can create knowledge" (p. 25). Similarly, Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) described support for "knowledge existing as local or indigenous science and wisdom to be advanced by the people's self-inquiry" (p. 31) as a basis for achieving equality and democracy.

Most Western-educated PAR pioneers realized that the theories and methods they learned during their formal university educations did not fit the situations they found themselves in as socially conscious individuals. Fals Borda (1979), a sociologist educated at the University of Florida, concluded that the categories utilized within the sociological paradigms imported from the global North were "inapplicable to the existing reality … and too specialized to be of use in attempting to understand the totality of the phenomena confronted daily" (p. 35). Swantz (1996), after many years living and working in Africa, found her European university experience troubling and "felt it was cultural arrogance for anyone to study the people of another culture as a kind of specimen without ever asking them what they themselves wanted to find out" (p. 124).

Many scholars and activists in the Northern hemisphere saw parallels between what critics such as Fals Borda (1979) and Tandon (1982) were describing in the global South and their own struggles for social justice. Gaventa (1991) outlined three strategies for North American PAR: (1) the reappropriation of knowledge; (2) developing the people's knowledge; and (3) popular participation in the social production of knowledge (p. 122). He discussed these strategies in the context of grassroots groups gaining control over "knowledge and skills normally considered to be the monopoly of the experts" (p. 124). The similarity between "Third World" and "First World" participatory research initiatives was rooted in the recognition that groups in both worlds shared "characteristics of domination by the knowledge system" (Gaventa, p. 122).

Fals Borda addressed the importance of these South–North "convergences" (1991, p. 158) in PAR in his writing up until the time of his death in 2008. In the first *Handbook of Action Research*, Fals Borda (2006) discussed 1970 as a crucial year in which alternative institutions and research approaches grounded in "research and action focused on local and regional problems involving emancipatory educational, cultural and political processes" (pp. 27–28) sprang up independently in various parts of the world, yet shared essential commonalities. Even with convergences between South and North, Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) held strongly to the view that Northern intellectuals were not giving "due recognition" (p. 161) to the leadership of Third World PAR philosophy and techniques in remaking science and knowledge (p. 161). Nevertheless, the

open door for convergence was clearly marked. That is, the task of creating new knowledge, of pushing back against knowledge monopoly, was directly connected to people's struggles for justice, peace, and progress, no matter whether one was located in the North, South, East, or West.

Smith (2012) equated breaking the knowledge monopoly with a process of "decolonizing methodologies" (p. 1). With a specific focus on the experience of indigenous peoples, she identified the word "research" as "probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1). Here, we encounter disgust with the patronizing views of colonialism in any form and the remaking of indigenous peoples into "objects" of study by "experts" from the developed world. The social science view in which only the "scientists" could make sense of the world had created a need for approaches that would decolonize the act of understanding indigenous peoples and free up the creative capacities of indigenous people to seek solutions to their problems.

As Fanon (1963) discussed the psychology of colonization, the role of colonizing knowledge is to confirm to the colonized that the given order of things is as it should be. The psychological trick is to convince the oppressed that radical change should not be supported because it is "not needed," with things being just fine as they are. Here again, the notion of knowledge democracy has the potential to disrupt this status quo and open prospects not only for seeing the world differently but for taking action individually and collectively to align new ways of seeing with new ways of being in the world.

Today, the issue of knowledge monopoly looks somewhat different than it did during the earlier decolonization. First of all, a more democratized perspective on knowledge has gained greater exposure through scholarly journals, books, and the Internet, as well as through popular struggles for social justice and against racism, poverty, sexism, and other injustices. The knowledge monopoly of Western epistemology gave birth to a quest for recognition of diverse forms of knowledge and for the creation of practices to work with these knowledges in service of creating a more socially just world. In the process of confronting the knowledge monopoly, the available tools of social science were found to be inadequate. The resulting situation is that although the social sciences remain a "large-scale enterprise" (Tandon, 1982, p. 79), it is not an enterprise that finds it possible to operate with impunity in the world today.

5.1.2 Knowledge Monopoly in the Fortress: Globalization, Universities, and the Scientific Worldview

Our second vantage point brings into view the interplay among knowledge production, universities, and globalization, as well as the position of action research within this interplay. We use an example of a major initiative in support of the democratization of knowledge as the backdrop to our considerations. The multi-year international research project conducted by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos and his colleagues condemns the injus-

tice associated with epistemicide and makes the case for the "emancipatory recognition of both cultural differences and the epistemological diversity of the world" (Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007, p. *ix*). Santos challenges the hegemonic position of neoliberal globalization and supports an alternative globalization comprising "local/global linkages, networks, and alliances" (pp. *vii–viii*), rallying people to social justice and social emancipation.

In Santos' view, the "monoculture of scientific knowledge" (Santos et al., 2007, p. *xx*) plays a key role in neoliberal globalization's suppression of social emancipation in the global South. Here, Santos is updating the very scenario confronted 50 years ago by those initiating PAR. Philosophical debates associated with knowledge, its production, and its uses go back much farther than the current concern with globalization. At its core, the term "knowledge democracy" reflects a struggle over the "politics of knowledge" (Kincheloe, 2009, p. 108) that has been a part of the fabric of human civilization since the beginning. In this context, our focus is on knowledge democracy built on the "epistemological diversity" of the world as a fundamental source of ideas, practices, and values for furthering global social emancipation.

As the primary fortress of the monoculture of scientific knowledge (Santos et al., 2007), universities play a particularly troubling role in the scenario we are considering. In our view, the capacity of action researchers to critically examine our positionality (e.g., Shepperd, 2002) within the dominant globalization agenda is a crucial issue in assessing the potential of action research to contribute to knowledge democracy and alternative globalization. For most of those involved with action research, the home base of their work is the very fortress from which the oppression they struggle against has been rationalized.

One example is evident in the current popularity of community-engaged research (McKenna & Main, 2013). There have been earnest efforts by university-based action researchers to engage communities in democratizing knowledge (e.g., Gutberlet, Oliveira Jayme, & Tremblay, Chap. 41, this volume; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Nelson & Moxham, Chap. 35, this volume). Too often, however, the community-engaged research perspective (Bourke, 2013; Gelmon, Jordan, & Seifer, 2013) also reflects an effort by universities and other formal institutions to "follow the money" in research funding (e.g., the US National Institutes of Health and Department of Health and Human Services). For example, community-engaged research gained considerable momentum in health-related fields with the 2006 decision of the US National Institutes of Health to place a new emphasis on translational research—research that focuses on the translation of scientific discoveries into practical applications that improve human health—in its funding decisions. With research funding at stake, many top universities in the USA rediscovered the community surrounding them and the importance of linking with it.

Yet, translation and empowerment are not at all the same thing and "going into the community" can be accomplished without learning a thing from the community or supporting the community in its long-range interests in

social emancipation. Many community-based or community-engaged research initiatives unwittingly continue to marginalize community participants, setting research agendas without making sufficient efforts to understand the local context and conducting research without adequate communications with community participants (Bourke, 2013; Jordan, 2009).

The two key components of knowledge democracy (Santos, 2007, 2014)—knowledge diversity and empowerment of the oppressed—operate in a kind of symbiotic relationship. As Rahman and Fals Borda (1991) discuss, people's knowledge should be respected in efforts to make a different kind of society where local knowledges are engaged in improving society through research and action. Where the knowledges of the oppressed are respected and engaged, empowerment becomes a natural extension of knowledge democracy. On the other hand, epistemicide destroys the social practices associated with diverse knowledges and disqualifies "the social agents that operate according to such knowledges" (Santos, 2014, p. 153). Without this kind of deeper engagement with epistemological issues, the same tendency found in earlier development projects threatens the democratic validity of community-engaged research, namely the tendency to view the locals as "a kind of problem that the experts [have] to solve" (Hall, 1982, p. 14).

This issue also illustrates the tendency of higher education to appropriate for itself all discursive space associated with knowledge and its production. Rather than opening space for critical reflection with communities, universities usurp terms originally put forward for emancipatory purposes, reshaping them to fit the epistemological contexts within which universities are operationally and ideologically comfortable. If an authentic collaborative relationship does not exist between the community and a university's community-engaged research team, the potential for knowledge democracy and for nurturing an action-orientation that challenges wider issues of social justice is muted.

Some supporters of community-engaged research attempt to walk a fine line between community-engaged research's potential to contribute to knowledge democracy and its vulnerability to cooptation (see, e.g., Hall, 2009). However, the tendency of "paradigm maintenance" (Wade, 1996, p. 31) lurks in the shadows of community-engaged research, just as it has in the World Bank's adoption of "alternative knowledges" as a way to show acceptance of epistemological pluralism (Enns, 2015). In the case of the World Bank, although respect for alternative knowledges became an official stance in the 1990s, intended to end the Bank's one-way prescriptive approach to development, this stance was not reflected in actual operational practices within World Bank departments. In examining this, Robert Wade, a former World Bank economist, introduced the construct of paradigm maintenance as "the mechanisms used to influence knowledge in favour of the dominant economic paradigm" (Enns, 2015, p. 64).

We see similar mechanisms at work in university involvement with forms of participatory research. That is, the approach to knowledge, whether in the community, in a partnering country, or in a campus laboratory, seems to be

shaped to conform to the dominant knowledge paradigm of the academy to maintain the monoculture of knowledge. For academicians, the rejoinder to this critique might be the simple folk dictum "don't bite the hand that feeds you." Universities are not looking to change the fundamental frames of reference they operate within, and this includes the dominance of an epistemic monoculture (e.g., Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Washburn, 2005).

However, criticisms from within abound (e.g., Daniels & Porfilio, 2013; Guinier, 2015; Schrecker, 2010) and perhaps in the long run the gravity of such criticisms will lead to the academy's reclaiming of its mission, devotion to the common good, and veering off from the adoption of "corporate practices" (Schrecker, 2010, p. 3) in service of the knowledge economy that is now the handmaiden of the corporate globalization model. Yet, for the foreseeable future, the pressures directed at higher education and its faculty in the context of globalization and the hype associated with the knowledge economy will continue. As Jacoby (1987) detailed more than 25 years ago, the academy will continue to be a place in which faculty withdraw into their specializations to protect themselves from public criticism and institutional rebuke. Universities will continue to be environments in which "younger intellectuals no longer need or want a larger public … colleagues [are] their audience; monographs and specialized journals their media" (p. 6); the same sentiment expressed more recently in a *New York Times* op-ed, "Professors, We Need You!" (Kristof, 2014).

Nevertheless, as long as the academy also provides space, however small, in which "academic freedom" includes being able to think critically, there continues to be room to work "outside the box" of the current system of higher education. There is room to test the intellectual and practical boundaries of theory and action and to challenge the hegemony of a monocultural view of scientific knowledge. It is still possible to make contributions to strengthening practices associated with issues of social justice.

5.1.3 Action Research and Alternative Globalization: The Practice of Knowledge Democracy

Action research, in our view, has the capacity to produce knowledge in partnership with the powerless in the interest of change. Action research can be a way to acknowledge, respect, and work in alliance with social practices grounded in alternative knowledges. What we see in the works of Fals Borda, Freire, Horton, Swantz, Gaventa, and many other pioneering action researchers were first steps toward knowledge democracy. The more grounded action research has been in working respectfully with diverse knowledges, the more it has "slipped the bonds" of epistemological privilege. In general, action research, PAR in particular from its beginnings, has struggled with issues of power and knowledge. According to Park (1993), PAR provides "space for the oppressed to use their intellectual power to be critical and innovative in order to fashion a world free of domination and exploitation" (p. 15).

The examination of knowledge interactions was a critical element in the Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo (2003) contribution to Volume 1, Number 1 of *Action Research*. Although they were aware of the technical superiority of the North regarding knowledge production and accumulation, they were certain that twenty-first century-knowledge production needed to be based on a more "horizontal and symmetric" (p. 36) process. Their "invitation" (p. 35) for a South–North convergence in the 2003 article was an extension of what they had experienced in their work in the field over the previous 30 years and had been the focus of the 1997 World Congress they had helped organize in Cartagena, Colombia.

We believe that new convergences, including advancing action research on a more visible global scale and an increased intentionality in applying action research to an alternative globalization initiative, should serve as a focal point for dialogue and action within the global action research community. Although some examination of the relationship between action research and globalization has taken place (e.g., Lykes & Mallona, 2009; Morell, 2009), much more is needed. In particular, the global action research community needs to get its bearings on how to contribute productively to alternative globalization. While a call for this project is beyond the scope of the present chapter, some preliminary steps can be identified. We address three points in the convergence of alternative globalization and action research.

Action research and epistemological diversity. A first step would be to strengthen practice in aligning action research with diverse epistemologies. Much of the action research produced to date has been based on "the methodological discourse of the social sciences" (Carr, 2006, p. 422). What might action research based on diverse epistemologies look like in practice and in forms of written dissemination? One clear example is the work of Fals Borda and his colleagues in Colombia (Rappaport, Chap. 9, this volume). Rapapport describes Fals Borda's integration of traditional data with "the work of the imagination" (p. 148). In his engagement with indigenous peoples, Fals Borda worked with stories, pictures, drawings, maps, and other items of interest out of the recognition that social justice could be served only in the context of a profound respect for the indigenous culture.

A second example is found in the work of Swantz (1996). Her "personal quest for living knowledge" (p. 120) did not just take her to another continent (from Europe to Africa) but led to transformation in her thinking about science, rationality, research, and development in the non-Western world. She concluded that participatory researchers should be assessed with the same criteria as a fellow human with "the same anticipation of honesty and transparency, the same scrutiny and self-critique of his or her motives and ways of acting and relating to other people, and the same weighing of the purpose of life" (p. 125). Another example comes from a talk given by Freire (1982) at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania in 1972. Freire addressed organizing a large-scale PAR project involving, potentially, thousands of people. Freire spoke of combining a commitment to social change with issues of epistemol-

ogy. As he explained, how the project would approach data collection and use would have to be grounded in how the Tanzanian people see the world. The method would incorporate the concrete reality of the people, which consists "not only of concrete facts and (physical) things, but also includes the ways in which the people involved with these facts perceive them" (p. 29).

What these examples tell us is that action research has much to learn from PAR regarding the particulars of working with diverse epistemologies. Perhaps one of the most relevant convergences for the first half of the twenty-first century would be a two-fold initiative in which (a) intellectual-activists from the global North enter into a period of extended listening to the voices of the global South and (b) non-Eurocentric PAR practitioners and action researchers lead dialogues with practitioners from the global North. Such an initiative might begin with a prompt for reflection. One of the most useful we have found is the question posed by Joe Kincheloe (2009): "Why would Western researchers know how to produce knowledge that would be useful to those whose history has been marked by Western colonial exploitation of their resources and/or labor?" (p. 119).

Engaging with intercultural translation. Santos (2014) sees intercultural translation as an alternative ground to the "nonrelationships" of Western modernity and non-Western cultures and the "destruction and assimilation" (p. 212) of epistemicide. To be clear, this is not linguistic translation, although linguistic translation and intercultural translation work in tandem. Intercultural translation recognizes "mutual intelligibility among culturally diverse social experiences of the world" (p. 217). Similarly to Pratt (1992), Santos sees "translational contact zones" (p. 218) as spaces within which "rival normative ideas, knowledges, power forms, symbolic universes, and agencies meet in usually unequal conditions and resist, reject, assimilate, imitate, translate, and subvert each other" (p. 218). An example is a research team's participation in Talking Circles in the Cree Nation as a part of their effort to gain access to study leadership practices with this indigenous group (Buchanan, Makokis, & Donmoyer, 2012). The Cree community required the team to participate in numerous Talking Circles prior to any decision being made on access for research purposes.

Intercultural translation is similar in concept to Fals Borda's (1991) notion of convergences. Fals Borda's (2006) intention was to "discover a way to bring about a convergence between popular thought and academic science … [to] gain both a more complete and a more applicable knowledge—especially by and for the underprivileged classes which were in need of scientific support" (p. 29). We suggest using translational contact zones as a way to deepen convergences in action research. An example would be creating explicit space for translational contacts within action research conferences and gatherings. Here, attendees would experience more of the dizzying swirl and "reciprocal incompleteness" associated with "having one foot in one culture and the other in another" (Santos, 2014, p. 219). The intention of the time created for such

zones would be to explore the intersections of theory, practice, and values, and to build solidarity for epistemological diversity.

Unlearning and reinvention. What we have written to this point perhaps suggests a return to a thesis introduced by Carr (2006) who questioned "Why is it felt necessary to import the methodological discourse of the social sciences into debates about the nature and conduct of action research?" (p. 422). Drawing on Gadamer's (1980) rehabilitation of Aristotle's philosophy, Carr concludes that the pre-modern tradition of practical philosophy, in particular the adoption of *praxis*, offers a better ground on which to construct understanding of action research and helps fill an intellectual and practical void now shaped by "cultural tendencies that … undermine and degrade *praxis*" (p. 434). Might "unlearning" the current epistemic structure of action research be necessary? Such unlearning would involve taking up the question of what is "lost in translation" when projects involving indigenous knowledges in the global South are reported to the global North through the lens of "Eurocentric scientific paradigms" (Fals Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003, p. 32). An alternative globalization orientation within the global action research community would place struggle with intercultural translations and back-translations at the center of its work, as a part of a practice of cognitive justice.

All research involves questions, but in the context of knowledge democracy and alternative globalization the questions we ask take on a new meaning. In calling for respect for epistemological diversity and for turning away from Eurocentric epistemological domination, Santos (2014) has concluded that the entirety of Western political imagination is "haunted" (p. 24) by its inability to come up with good answers to the tough questions of our time. In this context, unlearning involves an encounter with indigenous knowledges that do not share the premise of "infinite growth and unstoppable development of productive forces" (Santos, p. 23). Such encounters open psychological space for reconsiderations and reinventions, and the global action research community should nurture and create such opportunities.

Summarizing these three elements, we believe that further embracing epistemological diversity, initiating intercultural translation experiences, and unlearning and reinvention are good places to start for enhancing knowledge democratization. Working on the epistemological interactions among action researchers, within and across the global South and North, and holding to praxis will not be easy work. We believe it is essential to remember that action researchers not only produce knowledge by providing research evidence within the context of their practices but also change the realities of their practice. That is, the purpose of action research has an intrinsic connection to generating change and improving society. We can proceed with some confidence based on this recognition. Yet, with the very epistemic structure of action research called into question, and for good reason, there is much room for humility and growth. It will require courage and a determination to pursue the tough questions of what kind of world we wish our children and grandchildren to inhabit.

5.1.4 Knowledge Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on a Battlefield in the Global North

What we have chosen to reflect on for the final vantage point is close to home to us as authors and as professionals. We have chosen to discuss knowledge production in education both because we are knowledge producers in this field and we want to address the workings of neoliberalism's vast globalization project within the education sector as a case of epistemicide within a social domain in the global North, particularly the USA. Here, the issue is not so much local knowledge rooted in culturally oriented epistemology and practice but local knowledge rooted in the practices of educators and "held" within them as unarticulated practice wisdom. In this case, the epistemicide is the systematic suppression of this knowledge by the denial of its validity in public discussion and debate of educational policy making at local, state, and national levels. This denial is carried out by the monolithic neoliberal education enterprise, where corporate business models have attempted to shape the academy and pre-K-12 education at all levels and all functional aspects (Donoghue, 2008; Giroux, 2014).

In keeping with the previous vantage points, we address the impact of knowledge monopoly, the obstacles and opportunities for intercultural translation, and emancipatory initiatives associated with the totality of educational research and the methods and means of producing this knowledge. In a 1998 document, the National Alliance of Business describes teachers as "knowledge suppliers" and schools as "the knowledge supply chain" (discussed in Emery & Ohanian, 2004, p. 15). This logic perfectly reflects the current state of American public education, in which, as Giroux (2013) expresses it, "neoliberalism's ideology of competition now dominates policies that define public spheres such as schools, allowing them to be stripped of a civic and democratic project and handed over to the logic of the market" (p. 11). Within this ideology, pedagogy is geared toward conformity, an unquestioning acceptance of authority, and the squeezing out of any thoughts concerning "education and a critical notion of citizenship" (Giroux, p. 118). In such an environment, teachers and the other educators working in schools, including principals, counselors, and librarians, are reduced to the role of "de-skilled technicians" (Giroux, p. 164), and it is no wonder that their morale has plummeted (Ravitch, 2013).

Given the assault on education by the corporate elite leading the neoliberal enterprise, it is also no wonder that educators working in the trenches have been marginalized in the creation of knowledge about educational practice. In the struggle over whose knowledge counts, those who teach in the classrooms of pre-K-12 educational institutions have been pushed aside in favor of the views of corporate reformers and conservative think tanks (Ravitch, 2013). In our view, the clash between the current manifestation of hierarchical perspectives about knowledge construction in the form of the corporatization of education and the recognition of other kinds of knowledge generated through practice within schools and other public institutions is a battle for social justice and against the epistemic monoculture of the knowledge economy.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) spoke of a "knowledge strategy" for political organizing in poor and marginalized communities, and we suggest that a knowledge strategy for educational reform be developed in which knowledge democracy is promoted at all levels of educational policy formation, education assessment, and professional development for educators. We believe such a strategy can be built upon the knowledge produced through action research conducted in various locations within the pre-K-12 educational system, such as whole school-district initiatives (Caro-Bruce, Klehr, Zeichner, & Flessner, 2007), school-site action research experiments (Senese, Chap. 44, this volume), border pedagogy work (Barajas-Leyva & Rowell, Chap. 42, this volume), pre-service preparation of educators (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2013; Rowell, 2005, 2006), and the construction of in-service knowledge democracies of teacher action research (Pine, 2009; Shosh, Chap. 39, this volume).

We acknowledge that, at present, education is not an area in which any clearly visible form of systematic knowledge democracy is being practiced. Although many higher education institutions involved with teacher education have faculty who are actively involved with action research, in particular in preparing pre-service educators to use it, these involvements are rarely institutionalized with full support, usually are maintained through the interest of one or two faculty members, and can be swept away in an instant through the changing of an administrator, a sudden shift in interest by a faculty member, or the twists and turns of faculty politics.

Furthermore, in the education sector, the same issues of knowledge monopoly appear before us. The same top-down monoculture of scientific knowledge (Santos et al., 2007) looms over all efforts to produce knowledge in this field. The same tendency to view the "locals," in this case the teachers and students in schools, as "a kind of problem that the experts [have] to solve" (Hall, 1992, p. 14) is found. Yet, we have hope that things can change, and we have some thoughts about how that might occur. From this vantage point, and again returning to the importance of focusing our considerations on supporting knowledge democracy in relation to the practice of action research, we sort through distinctions between the current fetishistic promotion of evidence-based practice and what we introduce as practice-based research evidence (PBRE). Although some might see this as a small skirmish on a very large battlefield, we believe that this skirmish will help align forces needed in the larger battle.

PBRE and knowledge democracy. We think that developing PBRE in a partnership among practitioners in the field, the educational research as well as general social science research communities, and the public is a good way to build knowledge democracy in education. Encouraging practitioners to engage in collecting PBRE contributes to knowledge democracy as practitioners in schools independently or in collaboration with scholars in research institutions can produce evidence of what-works on specified problems of practice. We see PBRE as an important source for various deliberations regarding educational practice and policy making within institutional settings such as schools, com-

munities, and state education agencies. Such a shared mission is one way the research community can learn from the vast number of practitioners, many of whom exhibit practice wisdom developed across years, which can be shared among other practitioners and scholars in the field. While it has rarely been seen in the USA, there have been efforts to improve education based on non-hierarchical knowledge collaborations among local constituents in Sweden (Rönnerman & Salo, Chap. 28, this volume), although PBRE was not their focal point.

Although practitioners are in an outstanding position to create knowledge by producing PBRE, there are major obstacles that prevent non-academy practitioners from engaging in research within their practices (e.g., Pine, 2009). Even for those individuals who learned and conducted action research in their pre-service education, with many of them seeing the benefits of action research, conducting action research during in-service practice is something that requires a different kind of commitment and that has stacked against it an array of disincentives. In general, practitioner-led research, either by collaborating with someone inside or outside the practice or by themselves, has been rare. Over the past several years, we have informally interacted with many educators in the field in an effort to understand this phenomenon. Three themes have emerged from our observations and interactions that partly explain the lack of practitioner-research.

(a) Practitioner–scientist gap. The vast majority of pre-K-12 educators do not see themselves as researchers. Although perhaps interested in tackling what they see as problems in their practices and somewhat intrigued by the possibility of becoming authors and presenting their work to the larger public, becoming a practitioner-researcher and author is a new and somewhat frightening concept. Some teachers, however, are motivated by the possibility that the knowledge they produce could be useful and shared with other practitioners in the field. One practitioner shared with us that he does not like "teaching strategies and policies thrown at [him]" and saw action research as a way that his voice could be heard. Some have mentioned that they are sick of researchers who come to their workplaces telling them what to do in professional development, when they do not understand the particular situation of the workplace.

    Empowering practitioners as knowledge producers who feel comfortable generating and disseminating knowledge based on PBRE could be accompanied by opening up spaces for new forms of intercultural translation in which public school educators and university-based action researchers could meet to explore the politics of the practitioner–scientist gap, to build trust, and to explore possibilities for using teacher knowledge to improve education. Here again, practitioner suspicion and resistance regarding knowledge production is understandable given the current colonization of primary and secondary schools by the knowledge producers from the university (Kincheloe, 2009). Strong efforts would need to be

made to separate such an initiative from the "war against public school teachers" (Giroux, 2013, p. 160) in which the neoliberal agenda rides roughshod over respecting teachers for their contributions to the public good. As Giroux (2013) explains, "neoliberalism … is also a mode of pedagogy and a set of social arrangements that uses education to win consent, produce consumer-based notions of agency, … while simultaneously instrumentalizing all forms of knowledge" (p. 161). The promotion of practitioner/teacher research will need to be built from the ground up as a contribution to ending the bashing of public institutions, including schools, and restoring the teachers' role as "engaged citizens and public intellectuals" (p. 160). If careful attention is not given to this tension, teachers will most likely continue to see practitioner-research as another form of imposed pedagogical practice.

(b) Motivation. No extrinsic rewards exist in the current educational culture for practitioners who are willing to engage in research in their practice. Teachers, for example, are assessed and rewarded mostly by their students' test scores, not by efforts to improve their practice though classroom-based research to enhance student learning. Although teachers might have developed practice wisdom, say, in classroom management, there are, in most workplaces, no incentives to collect data and share what-works with colleagues and a wider audience. Further, there is no time available for the "extra" work of evidence gathering. We suggest that new forms of recognition be established by school districts and unions and awards be given for initiative and innovation by educators participating in various forms of action research.

(c) Research application process for practitioner-led research. Research Review Board and application processes constitute major hindrances to practitioner-research. When a principal we interviewed planned to conduct school-wide action research with teachers in her school, she found that her district had no research application for practitioner-research. The district only had forms for university researchers who wished to conduct research utilizing the districts' schools. District administrators were "baffled" by her request and the principal was left with no alternative other than putting her idea on hold. Modifying the procedure, she was told, would take many months. Another scenario involved two middle-school teachers who wanted to conduct research with their students. In this case, the district's Research Review Board directed them to obtain human-subject protection training, which was not readily available through their district, before they could apply to conduct action research. We suggest that alternatives to the current highly restrictive practices associated with research led by practitioners are available and that advocates for practitioner-research expand their advocacy to include addressing the current barriers.

Strategy for implementing PBRE. In our view, the focus of a knowledge democracy strategy in education should be three-fold. First, identifying key

participants for the development of local and regional strategy and convening planning meetings needs to take place. This element of the strategy should concentrate on establishing a strong partnership between educators, local communities, education unions, and, when possible, university schools of education. The use of "Futures Action Research" (Ramos, Chap. 48, this volume) may be a helpful part of this initial element. Second, an initiative to develop a democratized knowledgebase as an alternative to the vast array of top-down knowledge could be launched. Such an initiative might be approached through something like "network action research" (Foth, 2006, p. 205) in conjunction with web-based knowledge democracy resources (discussed below). Third, once established, the knowledgebase could be used systematically to challenge the dominance of the epistemic monoculture of education research, to launch egalitarian countermeasures to the corporate agenda for school reform, and to engage in productive intercultural translation work with educators, academicians, union leaders, policy makers, and the larger community. Knowledge democracy in this arena again would need to fit the dual challenge of respecting diverse knowledges and being at the service of emancipatory initiatives.

We see a number of considerations to be thought through by those potentially interested in the knowledge democracy strategic initiative we have suggested.

(a) Supporting practitioner-researchers producing knowledge by gathering PBRE. Clive Beck (Chap. 3, this volume) discusses the "informal action research" of everyday classroom inquiry, noting that such research is important for teacher morale and resilience. Beck indicates that informal action research is distinctive in that it is not usually made public, beyond informal conversations among teachers. Although teachers' informal conversations are quite beneficial as they allow them to learn from each other, we assert that when teachers collect evidence based on their practice, that evidence should be shared with a wider audience. We believe the action research community should actively explore ways to ally with practitioner-researchers and help them produce and disseminate knowledge associated with everyday classroom inquiry.

There are already Internet sites that provide space for practitioners to share their action research evidence, including a network for the living theory approach to research and life by Jack Whitehead (http://www.actionresearch.net/), Catherine Bruce's Internet space where mathematics teachers' action research digital papers are presented (http://www.tmerc.ca/digitalpapers/), a repository of pre-service teachers' action research studies facilitated by Joseph Shosh (http://home.moravian.edu/public/educ/eddept/mEd/thesis.htm), a website for pre-service school counselors' action research studies facilitated by Lonnie Rowell (http://www.schoolcounselor-advocate.com), and the Center for Collaborative Action Research by Margaret Riel, providing space for practitioner-researchers'

written reports (http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html) and an action research tutorial (http://ccar.wikispaces.com/AR+Tutorial).

A recent website whose mission is to help practitioner-researchers initiate action research in various fields has been launched by the Social Publishers Foundation (https://socialpublishersfoundation.org/). This site provides practitioners with opportunities for small grants and for crowdfunding for research and product development, and for publishing their practitioner-research. The published research process and findings will be displayed in various fields and subfields including Child and Youth Services, Community-based Participatory Initiatives, Education, and Healthcare. The Foundation utilizes social media to help disseminate the published materials, thus the site name, "Social Publishers" Foundation. Mentoring services are provided currently through the application review process for research funding and publication on the website; mentoring during practitioner-research is being conceptualized.

Practitioner-as-researcher is not a new concept (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986), and Feldman (Chap. 8, this volume) traces efforts in educational action research as far back as 1948. However, given the current climate of education, motivating practitioners to engage in action research, and sharing their approaches and findings requires renewed determination and innovation by local practitioners and action researchers with the support of the global action research community.

(b) Challenging the reign of evidence-based practice. In a very informative article, *Why "What Works" won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research,* Biesta (2007) concludes that evidence-based practice restricts "the scope of decision making to questions about effectivity effectiveness" as well as "the opportunities for participation in educational decision making" (p. 1). He points out various mistaken ideas about evidence-based practice in education, including what experimental research (randomized-controlled experimental research) can offer in determining what-works. What-works in "hard" natural science may not work as well in the "soft" social sciences, where the former involves the application of a straightforward method that assures a solution while the latter allows some rule of thumb or heuristic that narrows down possible solutions but without assurance of a solution (Simonton, 2004, 2014). Biesta stresses that educational practice requires educational and practical judgments about particular situations, not what has worked in a particular experimental condition. Although the latter can inform educational practice, it cannot replace professional judgment.

This trend in both the UK and USA has led some advocates of evidence-based practice as well as followers (some blindly) to assert that "any practice not based upon scientific knowledge is inferior and should ultimately be banned" (Biesta, 2007, p. 3). In the current "reign of error" (Ravitch, 2013, p. 1) in education, such an insult to the intellectual capabilities of teachers

goes almost unnoticed. One wonders who decides which evidence is scientific when there are a plethora of published works with questionable quality and relevance, especially when the research context cannot be matched with a practice context. Recent funding decisions in the USA, requiring the positivist randomized research design in applications for funding, seem to be not only top-down but flawed in generating what-works in education for a multitude of different classrooms and school contexts that require professional judgments by the educational practitioners. Research utilizing large-scale databases and meta-analysis incurs similar problems. It is not that randomized, large database, or meta-analytic research is not useful, but when such research is tied to requirements in policy making and funding, it violates the democratization of knowledge and marginalizes the professional judgment of teachers.

In summary, the difficulties we have discussed in the current research culture are symptoms of disrespect for the non-dominant knowledge production reflected in PBRE and practice wisdom. Not utilizing practitioners who "live" in the workplace and have vast contextual and practice-based knowledge regarding what-works and what-does-not-work is offensive to knowledge democratization and perpetuates a kind of colonization of knowledge about education. We agree with Kincheloe (2009) that a "transformative politics of knowledge" (p. 119) is essential to the overall process of decolonization, and we have attempted to show how elements of such a politics might be put into play in decolonizing the education system from the current dominance of a monocultural epistemology of knowledge production and dissemination. The task of educational action researchers is to help mobilize in the face of "neoliberalism's war against teachers" (Giroux, 2013, p. 159). As we have discussed, this can be accomplished in part by bringing together the emerging democratically produced knowledges from the trenches of practice in public educational systems and drawing on this cocreated knowledgebase to reassert the "role teachers play in preparing learners to be active and critical citizens" (Giroux, p. 165).

5.2 Some Concluding Thoughts

The work of aligning the global action research and PAR community with an alternative globalization project is a tall order. It ranges from taking up important considerations of philosophy and epistemology, to practical programs of intercultural translation, to the forging of new alliances in support of knowledge democracy, and other issues in between. Today, the neoliberal globalization project presses hard against the intention of action research to respect epistemological diversity and exerts its pernicious influence on all knowledge produced and used in the large institutional infrastructures of modernity. In this situation, action research faces severe challenges associated with its role in knowledge production and its potential to contribute to knowledge democracy. In our view, the global action research community is well positioned to contribute to the development of an alternative globalization. Grounded in the

links between thought and action, research and practice, and social injustice and the struggle against it, the action research community has a natural affinity for knowledge democracy and can contribute substantially to the development of this dimension of democracy.

Although we have appealed for knowledge democracy in this chapter, we expect that the battle over the monopolization of knowledge production will intensify in the decades to come. We hope that more university-affiliated action researchers working in solidarity will engage with practitioners in examining questions of practice and disseminating their work. Through the use of technology for knowledge democracy, the effort to democratize knowledge and to respect diverse knowledge ecologies can be made more visible. Finally, perhaps, action researchers and others can gather to again examine the convergences between the global South and North and to map out the road to be walked toward a more just and sustainable future.

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