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Community Perspectives: Editor's Note

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Editor's Note

What would it look like if community-based participatory research were the norm, not the exception, in graduate education? Keisha Ivey and her fellow authors of this featured Community Perspectives submission demonstrate how bringing diverse individuals together to collaborate, identify needs within communities, and then tailor research design and implementation strategies best to address those needs is a valuable training tool for the next generation of scholars.

The authors identify language, trust, and access not only as essential principles of their project implementation, but of their collective project learning, one involving faculty, students, and community. In order to successfully interface with lay communities, Ivey and her colleagues remind us, there needs to be a shared language—one free of jargon. Shared languages facilitate trust. Trust is critical, as Ivey and her team point out, to gaining access to typically hard-to-reach community members and research participants.

The benefit to the project team afforded by a community-based participatory approach is thus the privilege of actually effectively reaching those the work intends to effect. This benefit is catalytic; it produces, Ivey and her colleagues note, more meaningful understanding of community needs and assists in tailoring more culturally appropriate research endeavors.

Moreover, it is also generative. It broadens the learning horizons to include varied and creative ways of formulating research questions. What more important goal could we set for graduate education than that of learning to unlearn what we think and know? What more important skills could our graduates acquire than those involving negotiations of language, trust, and access? As Ivey's team makes clear, these skills are what allow us to learn from an education confined not to instruction in the classroom, but informed by experiences lived beyond our ivory towers.



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