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**Is there a right to research? If so, what is it?**

Formal academic institutions have controlled the definition of research, and have thus inadvertently decided who does and does not have access to the process and results of theoretical inquiry. Individuals with access to expensive, elitist training in research design and methods are the people who produce knowledge about the world. This knowledge is then validated and spread by others within the same elite community through peer-reviewed publications and teaching, but also outside academia through the mainstream media, government, and other civic forums that accept or follow what the research establishment has to say. In this way, the production of scholarly research reflects certain inequalities in society. Those with more education, more financial resources, and greater political clout are accorded the right to explain why and how the world functions the way it does. These explanations may be biased or even incorrect because they do not take account of other important viewpoints.

The university should not own or dictate who has a right to participate in and consume scholarly research. Making sense of the world should not be confined to only those inside academic and related institutions. This is especially true with regard to research concerning marginalized populations and social justice issues. The reasons for this are threefold. First, bringing knowledge generated through the lived experience of these populations or on-the-ground practitioners who navigate social justice issues can help to advance social inquiry in ways that scholars cannot match. Second, data collection and interpretation through the eyes of those living the actual situations being studied could well have greater validity. Third, by expanding the right to research and to generate new theories, beyond those traditionally trained as scholars, we can expand the engaged citizenry in our society. Helping people become more self-conscious of the situations they are in, and enhancing their ability to share the knowledge they have can inspire them to take (corrective) action.