

SYMPAB - (16313) - THE REPRODUCTION OF THE FIELD GEOLOGIST IDENTITY

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Short Abstract

The disciplinary identity of geology is historically linked to the exploration of Earth through expeditions and fieldwork. The creation of knowledge in geology has traditionally been based on observations and inferences conducted in the field. The geological identity has thus been strongly linked to being an explorer and returning from the field with new insights. Today, fieldwork still plays a major role in geology education as one of the important arenas where students are introduced to the established practice of what it means to conduct research in geology. A critical reading of educational research on geological fieldwork and how it is valued shows that it is influenced by a dominant discourse of fieldwork having an inherently positive effect on student learning and identity work. In this way, fieldwork is given an implicit value and status, which is not contested and therefore reproduces normative positive discourses about fieldwork. By combining insights from ethnographic studies of a group of students in their first year and in their third year of a Bachelor's programme in geology this paper shows how these notions of fieldwork are present in the students negotiations of belonging and identity. In the exploration of fieldwork practices, this paper aims to unfold how the idea about the scientific discipline and the conduction of fieldwork set the scene for students' understanding of the discipline and of how they can belong. The paper presents research on geological identities and provides examples of how educational fieldwork practices convey rather narrow ideas about how to be and become a geologist. This is particularly troublesome in the light of equal participation and inclusiveness.