

Interpretations of Research Identity and Social Justice following PURPOSE Fellowship Involvement

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Introduction

Abstract

The present study is a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with the 1st cohort of PURPOSE Fellowship scholars in 2018. Following the completion of their 12-month fellowship, semi-structured interviews were conducted with scholars to gauge their overall experience. Analysis revealed that the first cohort of PURPOSE fellow 's researcher identity was closely related to their personal identities. Additionally, their experiences with Freedom Schools and their own research affected fellows' views of social justice as well as their developing researcher identity. The two became aligned with uplifting minority populations.

Aims of the Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the development of fellows' researcher identity in relation to their personal intersectional identities as well as how their personal identity related to their views of social justice.

Research Questions

1. How did the first cohort of PURPOSE fellows describe ways that their intersectional identities were related to forming their research/scholar identity ?
2. How did the self-defined identities of the first cohort of PURPOSE fellows relate to their views of social justice?

Method

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants and answers were then recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were cleaned and uploaded into Dedoose for annotation. A team of researchers annotated interviews following a codebook. For the purposes of this study, only codes on social justice and identity were examined to find common themes in fellows' responses.

Participants

Participants included the 1st cohort of PURPOSE Fellows in 2018, who completed interviews. The cohort was comprised of 12 fellows, and 11 fellows completed the interview at the end of the year (92%).

Cohort Demographics:

Gender	Race	Classification
Women - 7	African/Black - 8	Undergraduate - 4
Men - 4	White - 2	Graduate - 7
	Prefer not to say - 1	

Data Collection and Analysis

- Following the 12-month fellowship, an exit survey was conducted with fellows to evaluate their time in the program.
- Fellows were questioned regarding their perceptions regarding social justice, intersectional identity, networking/mentorship, service learning, and professional/educational preparation.
- For analysis, a codebook was created to find key themes in fellows' responses. Of these themed responses, I analyzed codes for identity and social justice to answer the two research questions of this study.

IDENTITY	SOCIAL JUSTICE
Future Possible Self	Changes in Diveristy & Inclusion Understandings
Intersectional Identity	Changes in Social Justice Understandings
Personal/Social Identity	Definitions/Descriptions of Social Justice
Researcher/Scholar Identity	Diversity & Inclusion
Support for Personal/Social identity	Reasons for Change
Shared Identity	
Notable Quotes - Identity	

Results

Conclusion

After qualitative analysis, I found that the first cohort of PURPOSE fellows described their researcher identity as being very closely related to their personal identities. As much of the cohort was of minority descent, members found themselves wanting to research and help minority populations. Many of the fellows conducted service learning and research within Freedom Schools – comprised primarily of minority students from lower socioeconomic stautus. This experience, along with their own research had a profound effect on fellows' definitions and views of social justice as well as their developing researcher identity. The two identities became aligned with uplifting minority populations who had little access to resources.

Code	Quote
Changes in Social Justice	"[PURPOSE] refined my skills on how I looked at social justice and identity with that lens of education."
Researcher/Scholar Identity	"Black boys need more advocates, they need more people to care enough to research them. I guess, for me, that really impacted the way I wanted to do research in the future and the fact that I wanted to continue doing that kind of research"

Discussion

This study identified experiences of fellows who are early in their researcher career. It is evidenced that being part of PURPOSE, a fellowship geared toward social justice in education and research, has helped university students find their voice in the scholarly world. Being able to be part of social justice research has more finely defined their views of social justice, provided information regarding what is needed from researchers to support social justice, and strengthened fellows' research identities. This work contributes to other fellowships and programs geared toward helping minority populations, and also increases research conducted with underrepresented populations.

Key References



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