



TOWARD A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FOR RURAL SCHOOLS: AN ECOLOGICAL VIEW OF RURAL STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

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RURAL STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

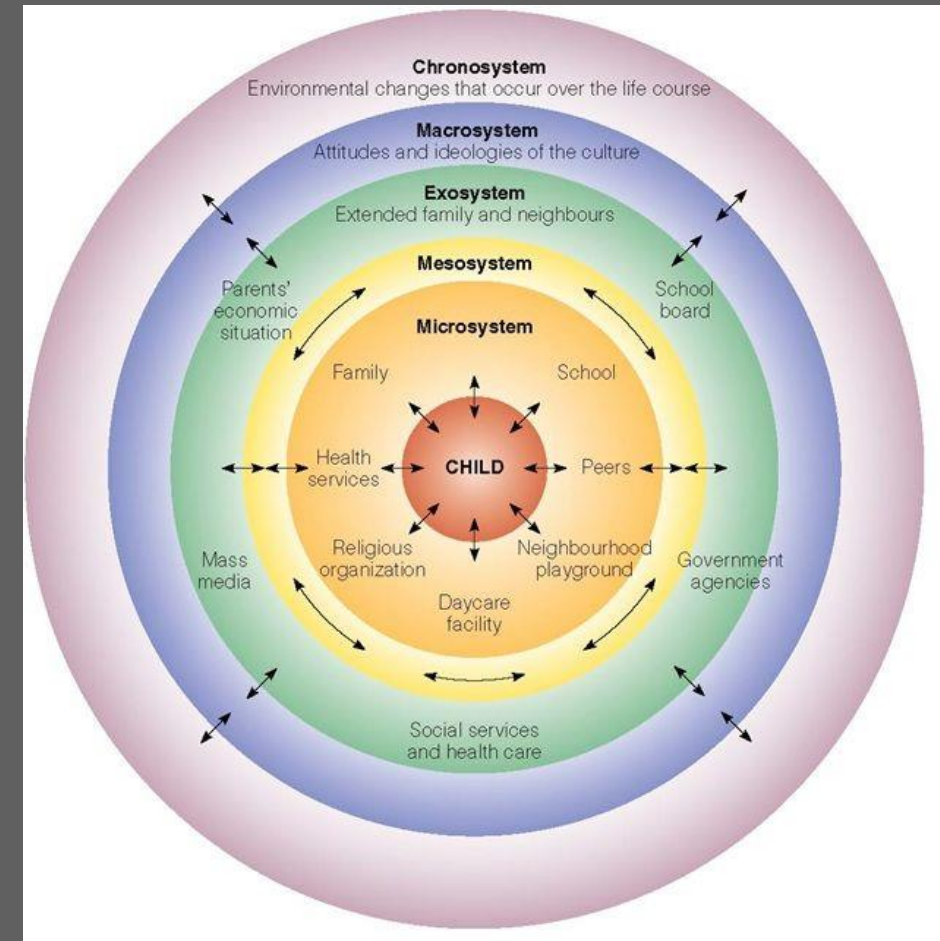
- Youths' aspirations signal a set of realistic plans as well as a desired future
- Aspirations are never individualistic; they are always influenced by social and structural forces
- Aspirations can impact students' engagement in school, overall academic performance, and – more distally - their developmental trajectories over a lifetime

RURAL STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

- Various factors are seen as influencing rural youths' aspirations
 - often treated in isolation
- Families, Schools, Communities and Beyond
 - Parents' educational background predicts children's attainment levels
 - Discussions about college can motivate students to pursue postsecondary education
 - Schools and "rural brain drain"
 - Sense of community attachment can influence students' decision-making
 - Deficit views towards those who stay in communities

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Bronfenbrenner's (2009) theory of ecological development posits a nested set of systems which impact individual and group outcomes.
- Individuals are influenced within their most immediate, local contexts and distal elements such as state and federal policy and the wider cultural and economic milieu
- An ecological framework can elucidate the various, interacting factors which influence the construction of rural youths' aspirations.



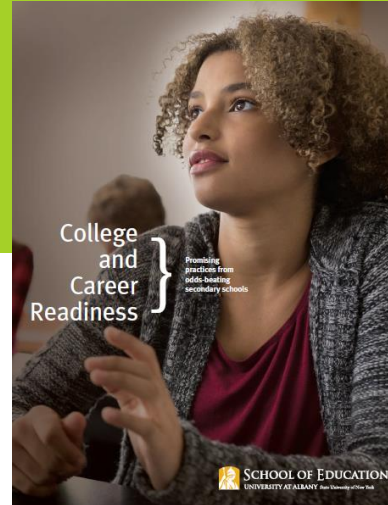
PHASE 1 STUDY

Selection Criteria:

- Regents Graduation Rates
- Advanced Regents Graduation Rates

Populations:

- African-American/Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- English language learners
- Economically disadvantaged



Phase 1 Findings:

I think that's another highlight of our teaching, that students are the biggest part of their learning, and they have ownership of that and they take pride in that and they enjoy it. As opposed to being taught to, they're more taught with and/or we're taught from them because that's another way to learn where they're at. . . . If you don't actually allow them to be the highlight, then you really are just doing what is in the book or doing a module or functioning.

—Crown Point superintendent



PHASE 2: STUDENT STUDY

Research Questions

- 1) How do rural youths' construct their aspirations for their future, and what factors influence these aspirations?
- 2) What value can an ecological view provide to those seeking to understand the construction of rural youths' aspirations?

• Data Sources

- ✓ Interviews: 11
- ✓ Focus Groups: 4
- ✓ Questionnaires: 11
- ✓ Student –crafted Artifacts: 41
- ✓ Documents: 6

• Participants: 11

- ✓ Juniors and Senior High School Students

SCHOOL CONTEXT

- Town of Crown Point
 - 2,000 inhabitants; located in NYS' "North Country" a few hours drive from cities of Plattsburgh and Albany
 - Established as logging town, later mining
 - Service work and small businesses replaced industry and agriculture over the course of the 20th century



SCHOOL CONTEXT

- **Crown Point Central School District**
 - PK-12 building in center of town; hub for community events
 - 75 students; 61% economically disadvantaged
 - Turnaround since 1990s when designated by NYS as a school “in need of improvement”
 - Crown Point’s graduation rate and performance on state assessments now exceeds schools with similar demographic profiles



Bulletin board hanging in
Crown Point hallway

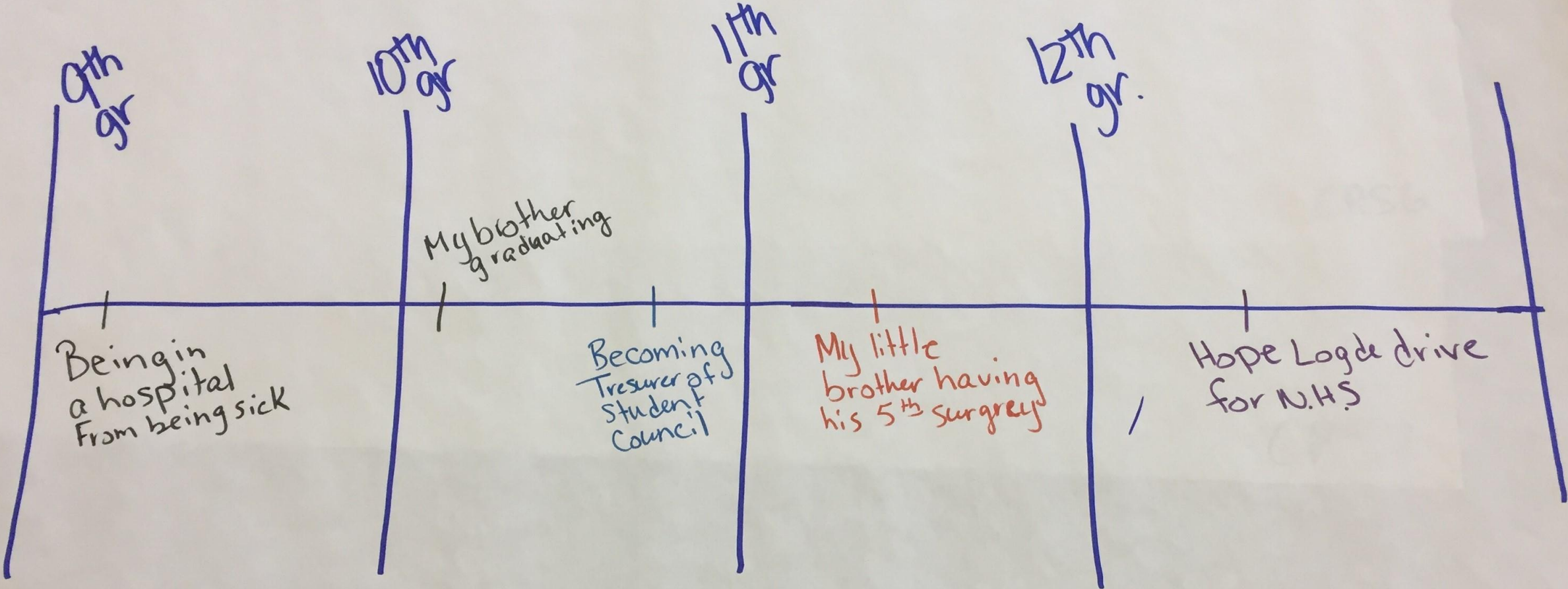
CRISTY

- Motivated to become nurse after hospitalization; mother's career and brother's post-graduation struggles both important influences
- Guidance counselor suggested Cristy shadow her mother; enrolled in Vocational-Technical program
- Plans to attend nearby Community College for Nursing Degree to stay close to family
- Community service activities and volunteer work

I have a group of [kindergarteners] that I bring out of the room and we work on letter identification, letter sounds, and I've done that since I've been in high school. I love going down there.

When we think of a nurse, we think of someone who's just helping them .. But being the nurse is just as important as all the rest of them.

CRISTY'S TIMELINE



ELLIOT

- Sought to enter workforce directly out of HS
- Wanted to pursue blue-collar career like family members (logging)
- Honed hands-on skills and confidence in abilities from Technology teacher
- Took part in community-based projects
- Considering job with National Grid after learning electrical engineering in school

“He just lets me take control and do certain projects how I want to do them, just so I can learn how to do it ... he takes my thoughts and lets me run with it”



Crown Point Technology room

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Interaction between family and school factors in shaping student aspirations
- Little evidence of antagonisms and attachment to community was fostered by school
- Extended family and siblings – not just parents – played large role
- Students' aspirations went beyond narrow emphasis on status attainment
- Findings illustrate the utility of an ecological framework for understanding rural youths' aspirations

Thank you!

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The screenshot shows the NYKids website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the University at Albany logo and menu items: HOME, RESEARCH RESULTS, RESOURCES, PERFORMANCE TRACKER, NEWS, ABOUT US, and CONTACT US. Below the navigation bar is a purple header with the text "Inform, Inspire, & Improve". The main content area features a large image of a family (a man, a woman, and a young girl) sitting at a table with a laptop, looking at the screen. To the right of this image is a featured article titled "Civility and Civic Engagement: Reflecting and Connecting edTrends' Nov. 4 Panel Discussion and Research from Odds-beating Schools", dated November 6, 2020. Below the article are several small thumbnail images and a social media share button for NYKids. At the bottom of the page, there are three purple buttons with icons and text: "ODDS - BEATING RESEARCH" (with a graduation cap icon), "IMPROVEMENT RESOURCES" (with an open book icon), and "PERFORMANCE TRACKER" (with a star icon). Each button includes a brief description and a "VIEW MORE" link.

