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## Place Based Education as a Tool for Rural Career Development

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## Place Based Education as a Tool for Rural Career Development

### Abstract

Rural career development is rarely studied despite a large portion of American students attending school in a rural area. Rural career development is affected by factors such as student attachment to place, access to professional role models, local economic development, school funding, and geographic proximity to professional industries and higher education. A Critical Pedagogy of Place (Gruenewald, 2003) empowers students to critical explore the spacial and social constructs of their local area. Given that school counselors are in a unique position as career development and social justice advocates, this article explores the use of a Critical Pedagogy of Place as an approach to rural career development.

### Keywords

rural, career development, school counseling, advocacy

Career development is an ongoing process including views of self, the world, and ability, impacted by life events and experiences (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Magnuson & Starr, 2000; Super, 1990). Studies indicate that early life context and experiences have a significant impact upon children's career self-concept and aspirations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001) while career development interventions influence children's conceptualizations of the world of work (Beale, 2003; Beale & Williams, 2000). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has set standards and guidelines focusing on developing, enacting, and measuring comprehensive K-12 career development programs (ASCA, 2016). Workforce and college readiness demands have made K-12 career education a priority at the governmental level, spurring a push from state governments to include comprehensive college and career planning in elementary, middle, and high school curriculums (Boyd, 2017).

There is little research investigating the career and educational development of rural students, despite the fact nearly one third of American children attend school in rural areas (Ali & Saunders, 2009). Despite the fact rural students have standardized academic achievement test scores on par with or superior to students from other geographic locations, rural residents have significantly lower levels of educational and career achievement, including college attendance and completion rates (Byun, Irvin & Meece, 2015; Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014; Koricich, Chen, & Hughes, 2018). Approximately 50% of rural residents have attended some form of postsecondary training versus 62% of urban residents (Farrigan, 2019). Only 21% of rural individuals ages 25-35 achieved a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 34% of people from nonrural backgrounds (Provasnik et al., 2007) and even when rural individuals complete college degrees, their earnings are significantly lower than their non-rural counterparts (Farrigan, 2019).

A large percentage of rural communities are not located near institutions of higher education, limiting student exposure as well as increasing the logistic and financial challenges of attending college (Grimes, Arrastia-Chisholm, & Bright, 2019; Schafft, 2016). Lack of exposure to career options results in children never considering potential paths (Blackhurst et al., 2003) and role models are shown to positively impact the career aspirations and belief of children (Gibson, 2005; Lent, 2013; Super, 1990). Rural communities often lack employment opportunities for those with college degrees, limiting student awareness of professional job opportunities while also representing college as a vehicle destined to take a student away from their home community (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Corbett, 2007, 2010; Schafft, 2016).

Public education emphasizes teaching to educational standards and job fields are not present in or are directly irrelevant to rural community life (Corbett, 2007, 2010; Petrin, Schafft, & Meece, 2014; Schafft, 2016). Economic globalization has continually removed jobs from rural spaces (Biddle & Azano, 2016). Statewide curriculums are normed in urban and suburban spaces, resulting in educational practices lacking relevance to the economic needs and reality of rural spaces (Corbett, 2007, 2010; Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). This promotes a deficits-based perspective where rural schools and communities are viewed as the source of their own problems with educational and cultural assimilation towards the norms of other spaces championed as the solution (Petrin et al., 2014; Woodrum, 2004). This culminates the rural brain drain, where the most academically capable students are encouraged to pursue opportunities outside of their home community, leaving areas without human capital and infrastructure (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Petrin et al., 2014). Taken together, it is clear that these standard educational and career development practices may not be the most beneficial for rural schools, students, and communities.

Effective school counseling requires an understanding of the unique sociocultural dynamics and challenges faced by a counselor's school and student population (Grimes, Haskins, & Paisley, 2013; Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2015). Advocacy in school counseling revolves around "reducing the effects of oppression on students and improving equity and access to educational services" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p.18). School counselors are positioned both to address the career development, personal-social, and academic needs of students with a systemic perspective benefiting school and community (Grimes et al., 2013; Dahir & Stone, 2009).

Given the role alignment of school counselors with the career development needs of rural students, this article explores the use of a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003) as a career development approach with rural elementary students. Research and practice implications are presented, conceptualized under Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise.

## **Literature Review**

### **Circumscription and Compromise**

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise conceptualizes individuals based upon how they come to process and deal with the variety of career choices social influences provide them (Gottfredson, 2005). The theory sits upon the tenet that individuals in their early developmental stages know little to nothing regarding vocations, what it takes to attain them, who these jobs are for, and their role regarding this process (Gottfredson, 2005). Gottfredson contends that awareness of social processes delineate for children what careers are appropriate and attainable, often regarding which jobs are perceived appropriate based upon gender lines and which jobs hold the most prestige and desirability (Gottfredson, 2005). Children are also influenced by common stereotypes about workers and aspire to professions aligned with what they perceive appropriate for their social class, with higher social class children envisioning themselves

in better paying professional roles (Gottfredson, 2005). This is the process of Circumscription and Compromise by which the choices students consider and perceive as attainable are valuable are contained by the social reality and societal expectations in which they operate (Gottfredson, 2005).

Children progress through four developmental stages in in the Circumscription and Compromise process (Gottfredson, 2005). Cognitive growth allows for an understanding the reality of occupations. Self-Creation puts the self into perspective as it relates to potential occupations. Circumscription reduces what choices a child will consider based upon their identity. Compromise is the process by which children consider external barriers to career choice, such as societal gender expectations, income, and prestige, allowing children to divide occupations into acceptable and unacceptable options (Gottfredson, 2005). These processes funnel children's aspirations based upon a view of self which has been socially derived and influenced, highlighting early developmental experiences as major predictors of career path and trajectory (Gottfredson, 2005).

Gottfredson's theory has been studied regarding children's perceived ability, socioeconomic status, and gender expectations. Cochran, Wang, Stevenson, Johnson, and Crews (2011) found that socioeconomic background significantly influenced adolescent career aspiration and that students of high socioeconomic backgrounds did not eliminate prestigious career options even if they were beyond perceived academic ability. This was not the case for low socioeconomic background students, who aspired to less prestigious careers and eliminated career options based on perceived ability. Leung (1993) found that Asian students were more likely to take a job against normed gender roles than a job with lower prestige, a finding contrary to studies in other populations. Within elementary populations, Auger and Wahl (2005) found that by the fifth grade, students has increased the limits of viable career options based on gender roles and social value.

These social and cultural factors may be prevalent in rural communities, which find themselves geographically isolated from other segments of society and facing several challenges to career exploration, growth, and development.

### **Barriers to Rural Student Career Development**

Many rural communities are not in close proximity to institutions of higher education, reducing student exposure to the culture and workings of higher education as well as increasing the logistical and financial challenges associated with a college education (Grimes et al., 2019; Schafft, 2016). Rural students have an affinity for family and their home community, leading to the belief that living in close proximity to home is important to their lives (Hektner, 1995; Petrin et al, 2014). One study found that rural students with a positive perception of their home community were more likely to limit their educational and career aspirations to stay closer to home and that students from more remote communities were significantly less likely to consider career fields requiring education beyond a bachelor's degree (Meece, et al., 2013). The authors hypothesized that rural students limited their educational and career options due to less exposure to degree requiring careers and a perception that these jobs were less relevant to their home community spaces (Meece et al., 2013).

The lack of exposure to entire career sectors may circumscribe rural students' knowledge, beliefs, and expectations of what is attainable in their futures. In order to pursue academic pursuits and professional careers, rural students must significantly further from their home communities than nonrural students, providing them with additional hurdles in their journey and less access to support from home (Hektner, 1995; Meece et al., 2013; Petrin, et al., 2014). For those rural students who are actually able to attend and complete college, the dearth of professional career options in

rural communities may limit their ability to return home graduation and live where they would like to (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Corbett, 2007; 2010; Petrin et al., 2014).

This puts rural communities in a difficult position where losses of youth with high levels of human capital leaves rural communities at a deficit of educated and skilled people for local economic development (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Petrin et al, 2014, Schafft, 2016). Thus, while the goals of state and federal policies promoting academics and career development are to provide students opportunities, these measures have a negative impact upon rural students and communities looking to positively invest into their hometowns (Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016).

For rural students still interested in exploring careers and pursuing higher education, several other major barriers remain. Rural students are disproportionately from low income and first-generation backgrounds, increasing the logistical and financial barriers linked to higher education (Byun, Meece, Irvin, & Hutchins, 2012). Rural areas are adversely affected by persistent poverty (Murray & Schaefer, 2006). Since 1970, 95% of counties with continuous poverty rates of 20% or higher are rural (Murray & Schaefer, 2006). The USDA expresses that “persistent poverty tends to be a rural county phenomenon that is often tied to physical isolation, exploitation of resources, limited assets and economic opportunities, and an overall lack of human and social capital” (USDA, 2017 pg. 1).

Being raised in an impoverished environment increases the likelihood of an individual remaining in the same socioeconomic situation as an adult due to an increased likelihood of transition to multiple homes and schools, attendance at underfunded schools, limited parental access to resources, parental impairment due to the struggles of poverty, and less parental investment in education (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2009). Persistent poverty environments also increase the likelihood of children experience educational challenges, as well as physical and

psychological trauma (Wadsworth et. al, 2008). These situations present academic and career development barriers to rural students living in difficult situations unable to focus on career and self-efficacy development.

Large proportions of rural community members did not attend college, meaning rural students are often first generation college prospects (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). First generation low-income prospective college students have less knowledge of how college operates, how the application process works, and how to finance a college education (Castleman & Page, 2014). Students from first generation low socioeconomic backgrounds often have less direction and support from parents centering around career choice and illustrate lower academic and career self-efficacy (Matheny & McWhirter, 2013).

Rural communities also deal with geographic isolation. There are limited professional job opportunities available in rural communities, limiting their exposure to differing types of careers and role models (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Corbett, 2007, 2010; Petrin et al., 2014). While education attempts to provide students with the goal and means to attain whatever career they desire, the reality of relocation and career choice for students is more complex, with Corbett (2007) noting that equal choice in higher education assumes equal ability to relocate. Corbett highlighted that since rural students are likely struggle with leaving their community for economic, cultural, and logistical reasons, the reality of equal choice is a “cruel fiction” (Corbett, 2007, p. 30).

The impact of the rural context on career aspiration was explored in the work of Byun and colleagues (2015). Using a national longitudinal data base of 12,000 rural students, the researchers found that rural students faced statistically significant disparities regarding postsecondary attendance, including lower attendance at selective institutions and matriculation into graduate

programs. These discrepancies held as statistically significant even when comparing rural students from high SES backgrounds with nonrural students from high SES backgrounds.

Rural student career aspiration was studied by Ali and McWhirter (2006) who found that vocational and educational self-efficacy emerged as the strongest predictors of postsecondary pathways in rural Appalachian high school students, with low socioeconomic (SES) students perceiving barriers to educational achievement and therefore not considering higher education as a potential route. Ali and Saunders (2009) also found that self-efficacy and outcome beliefs were the most powerful predictors of post high school career paths in Appalachian students, noting that negative cultural stigmas associated with education may be influencing which paths rural students deem appropriate. The authors cited previous research (Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Wallace & Diekroger, 2000) which indicated that rural students internalize stereotypical media messages of themselves as backward country folk. Such harmful messages may circumscribe what types of education and careers rural students view as appropriate for themselves.

Ali and Menke (2014) found that perceived ability to overcome career barriers correlated with outcome expectation in rural students regardless of race and Shepard (2007) concluded that the rural community context influenced women's view of self in relation to career. These results indicate that hope may be related to rural career development concerning ability to overcome obstacles and outcome expectations. While these results indicate important influences on rural student career development, all studies done were on a secondary student populations.

### **A Critical Pedagogy of Place**

A critical pedagogy of place combines the spatial and ecological awareness of place-based education with the willingness to challenge social assumptions, norms, and practices of education and society as found within critical pedagogies (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-based education has

traditionally had an ecological lens, with an awareness of the value of place and conservation and has been studied as a potential solution for rural schools finding relevant ways to meet state academic standards (Gruenewald, 2003). Given the value of place to rural schools, communities, and individuals, place-based education aligns with relevant interests and needs. Gruenewald's critical pedagogy of place goes beyond this by emphasizing the social aspects of space; the inequalities, systemic expectations, and societal attitudes contributing to the social condition of spaces and communities. Gruenewald challenges all "educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations" (Gruenewald, 2003, pg. 1).

Traditional place-based pedagogy revolves around using local geographic space as a learning tool. This includes career development interventions such as rural elementary students traveling to local towns to explore career opportunities and visit businesses. This also includes biology lessons examining the animals and ecosystem of local places, linking these things to work in the world beyond. A critical pedagogy of place goes the next step in examining the social frameworks encapsulating local spaces and empowers students to consider these meanings. A critical pedagogy of place would not only emphasize the science in the previously mentioned biology lesson, but challenge students to analyze the processes, businesses, and organizations impacting the local ecology, why these processes are occurring, and to utilize their education to impact these processes. The place-based lesson is no longer simply about geographic space but rather the social construction of and interaction with local places, empowering students to see their home community as part of a larger system. The academic standards required in science education are therefore taught in conjunction with providing students a deeper understanding of how local norms and realities are impacted by larger forces, such as those of the State and Federal

Governments. From a career education perspective, such lessons could be tailored to encourage students to find solutions for local biological challenges (pollution, loss of habitat) through conservation and advocacy efforts exposing students to the concept of work within the scientific and governmental realms respectively.

A critical pedagogy of place is used to challenge the assumptions of the dominate culture which pushes its values (through education) that individualistic, capitalistic competition within a global economy, in which there are winners and losers, is in the best interests of individuals, communities, and society (Gruenewald, 2003). Rural areas have been adversely impacted by economic globalization, including the closing down of local factories and the reduction of entire industries once linked to small town prosperity (Biddle & Azano, 2016). Rather than have rural students think of their local spaces as without careers, destined to a fate of decay, a Critical Pedagogy of Place empowers students to reimagine their home area as part of a larger system that they can influence.

This approach can be adapted to encourage students to think critically about the needs of their home area and what businesses and professions are needed to respond to these needs. Such a placed-based career development approach could empower students with high academic skills to invest into their home areas and solve local problems instead of concluding that the only opportunity for career success lies in other places.

### **The School Counselor in Career Development**

The ASCA National Model established three major pillars of foci for school counselors addressing student needs: academic, personal-social, and career (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009). These foci unified a focus for elementary, middle, and high school counselors, putting each domain as a major emphasis of their work with students, regardless of age group (Dahir, et al., 2009). The

ASCA has explicit guidelines for school counselors regarding their role in career development, indicating that efforts regarding exploration, understanding the world of work, and integration of career into curriculum should begin the PK-3 years (ASCA, 2017). However, despite these professional guidelines and emphasis, elementary counselors spend significantly less time, or even none at all, focusing on career development (Dahir et al., 2009).

Career development is a lifelong endeavor entailing exploration of self and the world (Super, 1990). In line with the ASCA's 2016 National Model, several states have developed career development standards at the K-12 level, with schools required to provide evidence of individual exploration and progress at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 (Boyd, 2017). School counselors, with their role emphasis on career development and the presence of these state demands, have taken on major roles within elementary career development.

School counselors address elementary career development through the use of individual service, small groups, classroom guidance lessons, and school wide curriculum and programmatic coordination (ASCA, 2017). The Missouri Department of Education (MDE) has entire school counseling curriculums available online to assist in elementary career development, with many of the classroom lessons focused exploring likes, skills, interests, perceived abilities, and the world of work through career clusters (MDE, 2018). Elementary lessons often emphasize these principles, utilizing structured lessons, games, activities, and child-centered career exploration to encourage career development (Knight, 2015). Elementary career lessons can be cross-beneficial, encouraging a strengths-based view of individual talents and preferences, allowing children to explore who they are and why along with how, in the long run, these aspirations can tie into their career path (Knight, 2015). In addition to career development curriculum spanning the elementary years, events such as career days, where local workers and graduates of the school visit to present

about their profession, can inspire students to consider possibilities, break stereotypes, and see what types of jobs are available in their community and beyond (Beale & Williams, 2000). School counselor organized field trips, such as to local businesses or the hospital, can open students to the myriad of professions available in local spaces as well as the diversity of skill sets required for a workplace to function (Beale, 2003). Partnerships with universities can expose elementary children to the world of higher education while also strengthening the school with resources, such as career development or mental health professionals (Knight, 2015).

As a systems-focused professional, a school counselor's work should not be limited to students. Parent workshops regarding career development are effective ways to invite parents into the school to be part of their child's journey. Such events could also assist in developing career development task forces, in which parents coordinate field trips, shadowing opportunities, and speaker visits to connect students to their local workforce and job possibilities (Knight, 2015). A career development curriculum should be intentional, progressing through each year, and relevant to the student's school and community context (Knight, 2015). A school based in an agricultural community may already have exposure to agriculture as a career field, but may benefit from the exploration of how other career fields are related to and impact the local business of agriculture. Further exploration could include how agriculture exists in the greater economic constellation of the country, what jobs are related in this constellation, and what how education could empower students to make direct differences in the local agricultural economy.

School counselors have a responsibility to meet unique needs of and advocate for their student population (Grimes et al., 2013). This entails a familiarity with the community and an appreciation for its needs. Breen and Drew (2012) recommend integration with rural communities through attending local events as a way for school counselors to understand and connect with rural

communities and earn their trust. It is a school counselor's responsibility to direct their interventions towards relevance for their students and communities (Breen & Drew, 2012). This makes the school counselor an ideal professional to address the unique career development needs of rural schools.

## **Implications**

### **Practical Implications**

A critical pedagogy of place empowers students to appreciate the value of space as well as the social constraints impacting their education (Gruenewald, 2003). Due to their systemic training, school counselors are in a unique position to integrate these practices to benefit rural students and communities. Rural communities, whose needs are overlooked and are often looked at with a deficits-based perspective, could benefit from strengths-based career development interventions valuing their local spaces and practices relevant to their local economy. State career standards, such as those in Pennsylvania, are already requiring schools to expose students to job opportunities available in the local community, directly aligning school counselors with this task (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018).

Schafft (2010) raises an excellent example of these type of career development practices in action. In 2008, Saint Mary's Area Middle School of rural Pennsylvania won the Building Community award given by The Pennsylvania State University. Saint Mary's has coordinated environmental and educational initiatives in line with conservation related to local forests and wildlife, all drawn from local context (Schafft, 2010). Saint Mary's has gone as far to develop an Environmental Learning Center through partnerships with local and state organizations such as the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

(Schafft, 2010). Saint Mary's has utilized this center to provide unique science education, aligning scientific issues and methods with occurrences and needs in the local environment (Schafft, 2010). From microbiology lessons in a local stream to the development of an aquaculture facility on campus, students eventually were able to create and manage a trout nursery fed by hydroponics which raises and releases trout into local streams (Schafft, 2010). As Schafft puts it, "Integrated into the local curriculum (as well as responsive to state academic standards), students are completely responsible for managing water quality, feeding, stocking, controlling for disease, and monitoring the production of effluent. Students record data on trout health, feeding habits, stress levels, and appearance, and they assist in maintaining tanks and fish raceways" (Schafft, 2010, pg. 282). This allows Saint Mary's to meet academic and career standards while building students skills they can utilize in careers local or otherwise, all while investing into the local community and making education relevant.

Rural elementary school counselors can use similar practices. Infusing career lessons into place-based learning can encourage students to engage with their local communities. This includes collaborating with teachers in the building to develop comprehensive integrated lessons. For example, biology lessons and projects conducted on school grounds with the teacher can be supplemented by exploration lessons with the school counselor where students are encouraged to imagine how they could further use these knowledge and experiences in careers, whether in the local community or within the world. The experiential learning would allow for relevance of what is being learned while the career exploration lessons would encourage introspection and application of these lessons in a personalized way. In this manner, individualized student career portfolios, an increasing demand from state legislatures, would be streamlined and integrated rather than being a disjointed piece of a student's education. The school counselor can further

cement more partnerships in the community, including experiential lessons at local businesses and organizations, allowing students to utilize academics in a local space to convey meaning and relevance. Such partnerships can establish ongoing academic curriculums or monthly service trips/experiential lessons within the local community.

Within the scope of Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, it is likely that rural students will limit their career choice and aspirations based upon issues such as social class and available opportunities. With a high prevalence of poverty, low SES rural students may not perceive certain careers as attainable. Further, a lack of visibility of career fields may inhibit students from envisioning themselves within entire segments of career fields. Rural students are not likely to visualize career opportunities as possible in their area without direct examples, limiting what they aspire to if they want to live locally.

It is paramount that elementary school counselors expose rural students to career opportunities in the local community as well as encourage an exploration of what local needs could be met by students if they sought further education and training. This is accomplished through career exploration lessons informing students of possibilities, field trips to local places of work and business, field trips to institutions of higher education, and through the use of career fairs and speakers. Speakers and presenters should be individuals from the local community who students may not readily be exposed to, allowing them to visualize options they previously did not think possible. For example, in rural areas there may not be a high concentration of people or places, so students may not be exposed to certain needs-based professions such as mental health counselor unless they or their family has directly needed that service. Being intentional in selecting participants from a wide range of backgrounds, both professionally and culturally, can open students' eyes to what they view as appropriate and possible for themselves. Local graduates who

have gone on to utilize their education and training in unique ways can provide role models and break down barriers for students at an early age. Further, emphasizing transferrable skills, entrepreneurship, and developing school to community improvement initiatives can allow students to see how they can use their education to directly serve the needs of their community in the present and future.

Considering a critical pedagogy of place, it is important for students to have conversations about what jobs are not available in the community and why. Understanding the social and economic processes framing the reality of their community will empower students to think globally about their career development and consider if they could bring a particular expertise to their home area. For example, the profession of a lawyer may not be highly visible in a sparsely populated rural community. Examining why (low population base/lower average salary in rural spaces) will empower students to further think about if they would like to change that. Students considering law may not be aware of the many types of legal needs which exist, and how if a lawyer specialized in several domains in an area without many lawyers, they could be successful while also finding meaningful work advocating for those who may not have access to other quality legal services. This further opens the door to legal advocacy and governmental positions in the local area. By using local dynamics as a case study, school counselors can inspire students to critically interact with the social processes impacting their conception of self within career development.

### **Counselor Education Implications**

Rural people and their unique needs do not receive sufficient attention in counselor preparation (Bright; 2018; Breen & Drew, 2012; Grimes et al., 2013). Counselor educators should expose students to rural individuals as a unique sociocultural population (Grimes et al., 2013). Rurality is often misunderstood, thought of as anything which is not urban and in broad

stereotypes, limiting true understanding of what occurs in these communities (Bright, 2018; Grimes et al., 2013; Breen & Drew, 2012). Lessons exploring the needs and mindset of rural people would assist counselors in developing the competencies needed to advocate for this population. Exposure to counselors in rural settings as part of classroom assignments would empower students to more deeply understand the challenges of the rural context.

Education regarding rural school counseling should emphasize the role of the school counselor in the community (Breen & Drew, 2012; Grimes et al., 2013). Participation in community events and summits may increase the community's level of trust in the school counselor while reducing the stigma of them as an outsider (Grimes et al., 2013). Rural areas are often looked at through a deficits-based perspective (Schafft 2016), therefore a validation and appreciation of the strengths of rural communities may also assist student and family buy-in and assure the appropriate approach for interventions (Grimes et al., 2013).

Rural schools are more likely than any other setting to have never had a school counselor (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016), therefore school counseling students should be taught the importance of role acclimation and community integration in rural settings. Rural school counselors must be prepared to explain and advocate for their roles, with students, community, and even within the school district.

### **Research Implications**

Future research can look into impact of critical placed based education on elementary student career awareness and aspirations. Limited research exists regarding place-based education and its outcomes regarding career exploration. Similarly, research centered on the career development needs of rural students is concentrated at the high school level. Research into these interventions at the rural elementary level could provide school counselors and educators useful

insights into the lifelong career development journey of rural students and what methods best encourage personal and community success.

### **Conclusion**

Rural career development interventions should honor place and encourage students to think critically about the nature of their education and how it can best serve the interests of themselves and their community. Rural students should not be pipelined based upon state initiatives, but rather met with the holistic school counseling perspective which values their individual needs and processes. This entails exposing them to a multitude of possibilities through experiences and placed-based initiatives followed by processing of wants, values, skills, and personal goals. The school counselor, as a social justice advocate and community systems strategist, is empowered to integrate career development curriculum into practical, beneficial practice in the community, using contacts and programming to benefit the student and community as a whole. Rural areas, which are often at social, economic, career, and educational disadvantage, require the elementary school counselor to be forward thinking and innovative when implementing comprehensive career development interventions for students.

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