A Qualitative Life Course Study: Using technology to address the cultural and geographic isolation experienced by Appalachian youths

Peggy Henderson Murphy
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
United States
murphderson@gmail.com

Using a qualitative approach this study used Life Course Theory in order to identify the experiences that encouraged first generation college graduates from Appalachian to attend and persist to college graduation. One event identified was the use of online communication technologies. The participants in this study used technology to communicate and form relationships with people outside of their communities. Those relationships seem to have had an impact on how they viewed cultures that are different from their own and how they felt about moving away from home to attend college. The technology also gave then a way to stay connected to their friends and family which was very important to their success. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants and six family members from different areas of the Central Appalachian region.