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Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America

Patrick J. Carr, Maria J. Kefalas

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In 2001, with funding from the MacArthur Foundation, sociologists Patrick J. Carr and Maria J. Kefalas moved to Iowa to understand the rural brain drain and the exodus of young people from America's countryside. They met and followed working-class "stayers"; ambitious and college-bound "achievers"; "seekers," who head off to war to see what the world beyond offers; and "returners," who eventually circle back to their hometowns. What surprised them most was that adults in the community were playing a pivotal part in the town's decline by pushing the best and brightest young people to leave.

In a timely, new afterword, Carr and Kefalas address the question "so what can be done to save our communities?" They profile the efforts of dedicated community leaders actively resisting the hollowing out of Middle America. These individuals have creatively engaged small town youth—stayers and returners, seekers and achievers—and have implemented a variety of programs to combat the rural brain drain. These stories of civic engagement will certainly inspire and encourage readers struggling to defend their communities.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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