

Written by Debbie Schwanke
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Dr. Patrick Carr will be the first speaker of the year hosted by the Dr. Max Pickerill Lecture Series at Colby Community College. There are two opportunities to hear Dr. Carr on Monday, April 4. He will speak at 11:15 a.m. in room #711 located in the Bedker Memorial Complex and at 7 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center located on the southeast corner of campus. There is no admission charge.

About Dr. Carr

Dr. Patrick Carr is Associate Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, and is an Associate Member of the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood. He earned his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1998, and his research interests include communities and crime, informal social control, youth violence, and transitions to adulthood.

Dr. Carr is the co-author of *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America*, and author of *Clean Streets: Controlling Crime, Maintaining Order and Building Community Activism*.

He is co-author of *Coming of Age in America*, a book based on a comparative in-depth study of young adults funded by the Network on Transitions to Adulthood.

He lectures internationally about rural development, community policing and crime control. His research has been featured on numerous media outlets including National Public Radio.

Hollowing Out the Middle--The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America

In 2001, with funding from the MacArthur Foundation, Carr and his co-author Maria Kefalas traveled to Iowa to understand the rural brain drain and the exodus of young people from America's countryside.

The sociologists moved to "Ellis," a small town of 2,000 in Iowa. Ellis is a pseudonym used to protect the community and its residents' privacy. Ellis is typical of many small towns struggling to survive, and Iowa is typical of many states in the Heartland that are aging rapidly. According to Carr, one reason is that many small towns simply aren't regenerating, but another is that its educated young people are leaving in droves.

In Ellis, Carr and Kefalas identified the working-class “stayers,” struggling in the region’s dying agro-industrial economy; the high-achieving and college-bound “achievers,” who often left for good; the “seekers” who head off to war to see what the world beyond offers; and the “returners,” who eventually circled back to their hometowns. According to the book, 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, and by under-investing in those who choose to stay, even though these young people are their best chance for a future.

The co-authors concluded that the emptying out of small towns is a national concern, but there are strategies for arresting the process and creating sustainable, thriving communities. They believe that “Hollowing Out the Middle” is a wake-up call because 60 million Americans still live in rural communities and small towns, and because our nation’s economic health and future is tied to the Heartland.

“The time we spent living in Iowa brought home to us the fragility of places that on the surface appear prosperous,” said Carr. “One patch of bad luck--a shuttered factory or the realization that there aren’t enough children to keep a local school open--can bring a community to its knees. We have seen firsthand the herculean efforts that some small towns make to survive and the ferocious love that inhabitants feel for their dot on the map.”

For more information about the lecture series contact Linda Davis-Stephens at (785) 460-5528.