Fighting the Brain Drain

The rural "Brain Drain" is a phenomenon that was studied by Patrick Carr and Maria Kafalas in *Hollowing Out the Middle*. The "Brain Drain" is essentially the fact that many of the best and brightest in this area end up leaving for other areas. The authors argue this is the case because the way society shapes the idea of success. Society would lead one to believe that the most best thing you can do, to ensure you will be successful, is go to college and get a good job in a big city. This leads to further urbanization and the "Brain Drain" that exists in rural America. The authors also argue that the biggest transmitter of this idea of success is the education system. Carr and Kafalas give examples of how in the education system, even in rural America, the only students that are presented as successful are the ones that go on to go to college and get a job in a big city somewhere. This leads to most of the attention of teachers being focused on the students that are the high achievers and very little focus given to the students that will remain in the area.

Misdirection of attention by teachers is counter-productive to the success of small towns for a number of reasons. First, teachers are spending all of their time training people to leave, why would anyone want to stay? Second, if you do not develop the students that will likely not go to college and end up living and working in or around the community they are in how do you expect that community to evolve or even survive? The fact of the matter is a more holistic approach needs to be taken by the education system and the communities. One thing they could do would be to highlight the successes of the people who have stayed in the area and have been successful. Another thing that they should do is be to attract talent back to the communities.
rather than telling them success lies in a big city somewhere. If you bring the best and brightest back to your community your community will likely be better off. This process needs to be a joint effort by the teachers and the community. The teachers, the role I will be focusing on, need to more aware of who is getting their focus, reward more than just the students who are book smart, teachers need to find ways to highlight the talents of the individuals who will remain in the community and convey the message that success is achievable in more than just big cities.

*Expectations*

What I am looking for in this article is to find out what percentage of future teachers even realize what the "Brain Drain" is and what percentage of them realize the factors that an educator plays in this process. I expect most future teachers will understand what the "Brain Drain" is but maybe not so much the impacts that educators have on the phenomenon. Since most of the teacher candidates in the area are from the area I would hope they would know what the "Brain Drain" is and understand why it is happening. It might also be interesting to what percentage of professors and USD faculty understand what the Brain Drain is and what causes it. I would think the appreciation and understanding would be higher among professors in the Education Department than in most other departments on this topic simply because it is more immediately relevant to them, also I would guess many of them have read the *Hollowing Out the Middle.*

*Research Methods*

The only print source that I have referenced so far is *Hollowing out the Middle,* but I expect to find more sources that deal with the out migration of talented youth from the Midwest. Also I would like to conduct a survey in two parts as mentioned above. The first part of the survey would be of teacher candidates and the second part of the survey would look at faculty and their knowledge of the "Brain Drain." Also I would like to do some interviews. The Rural
Learning Center is a company based out of Howard, South Dakota, that focuses on the
development of rural communities and would be a great source for interviews.

Form and Technique

This article would suit local print publications such as *605 Magazine* or *South Dakota Magazine*. It might also be posted to a Web site for South Dakota teachers or a local newspaper. The essay would be an ethnographic approach to the problem and hopefully bring light to the issue amongst people who have the authority to influence it. The field research would be the substance of the article. The article would address the knowledge that exists in the communities as it exists now. The hope is that the article, about a topic that is already defined, would further the dispersal of the knowledge and evaluate the knowledge that is already out there. The interviews would hopefully discuss some solutions that people who are dealing with the issue right here in South Dakota are using to address the issue.

Questions

The main issue that I see arising with this article is participation in the surveys. People are busy, especially professors, and I am not sure that I would get a good return on surveys. Another concern would be with the interviews, I am not sure that I would be able to schedule an interview and complete it in the amount of time we are presented with. Also, conducting an interview is a concern. It is not something that I have done or feel that I would know how to do well.