

Review of: "Encounters with Others: Student Growth through Fieldwork Studies in Rural Areas"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Overall review comments:

1. The paper is well-written and provides a comprehensive overview of the benefits of FWS in rural areas with declining populations. The use of interview data adds depth and personal touch to the analysis.
2. Some sections could benefit from further clarification and conciseness.
3. Consider adding a conclusion that summarizes the key findings and implications for future research.

Specific comments:

Introduction:

1. Consider elaborating more on the specific challenges faced by rural areas with declining populations in the context of Japan.
2. Briefly explain the concept of "fieldwork studies" (FWS) and its different types.

Theoretical Background:

1. Briefly mention the potential limitations of FWS, such as the issue of power dynamics between students and residents.
2. The section on "Rural Development and University in Japan" could be integrated into the previous section for better flow.
3. The section on the educational benefits of FWS could be strengthened by providing more specific examples of skills and knowledge gained by students through FWS.
4. Consider mentioning potential limitations or challenges of FWS.
 1. Provide more details about the interview process, such as the selection criteria for participants and the duration of interviews.

Rural Development and University in Japan:

1. The figures could be explained more explicitly in the text to enhance their impact.
2. Briefly discuss the reasons for the decline in population in rural Japan and the challenges it presents.

Counterpart Communities:

3. This section could be expanded to include more examples of specific FWS projects and collaborations between universities and rural communities.
4. Consider discussing the challenges and opportunities faced by both universities and communities in implementing FWS programs.

Methodology:**Specific revisions:**

1. Page 2: "However, not all regions have universities." This sentence could be rephrased to be more impactful, for example: "The lack of universities in many rural areas presents a significant challenge for fostering young talent and revitalizing these communities."
2. Page 3: Consider adding a brief explanation of the Kansai region and its demographics.
3. Page 4: The description of the interview participants could be expanded to include more details about their academic disciplines, motivations for participating in FWS, and career aspirations.
4. Page 5-6: The examples of FWS activities could be categorized or grouped based on themes to improve readability.
5. Page 7-8: Consider using subheadings to organize the discussion section by theme, such as "Impact on students' personal and professional development," "Impact on rural communities," and "Challenges and future directions."

Results:

1. The section on "Graduates" could be reorganized to improve clarity. Consider grouping similar themes together, such as graduates' current work, impact on rural communities, and personal values.
2. Some quotes are quite lengthy. Consider shortening them while preserving the key message.

Discussion:

1. The comparison with Rubinger's work on private schools in Japan is interesting but could be further developed. Explain how it relates to the current study's findings.
2. The final sentence is a bit abrupt. Consider expanding on the idea of "hometowns" and their significance in the context of FWS.

Additional suggestions:

1. Consider adding a figure or table to summarize the key findings of the study.
2. Consider adding a conclusion section to summarize the main findings and implications of the research.
3. Ensure proper citation of all sources throughout the paper.
4. Proofread the paper carefully for any typos or grammatical errors.