

*The Chain is No Stronger than the Weakest Link:
Trends in Rural Iowa*

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Social and economic changes are never neutral in their impact. These changes produce gains for some and losses for others.

Rural Culture



Agriculture



Changes in Rural Communities



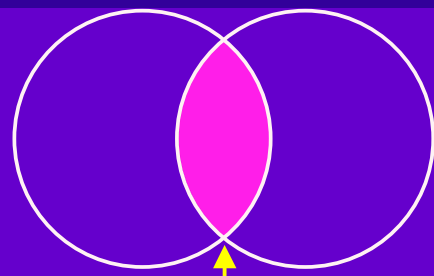
- Population mix
- Industrial base
- Occupational shifts
- Lifestyle choices
- Linkage to urban places

Changes in Production Agriculture

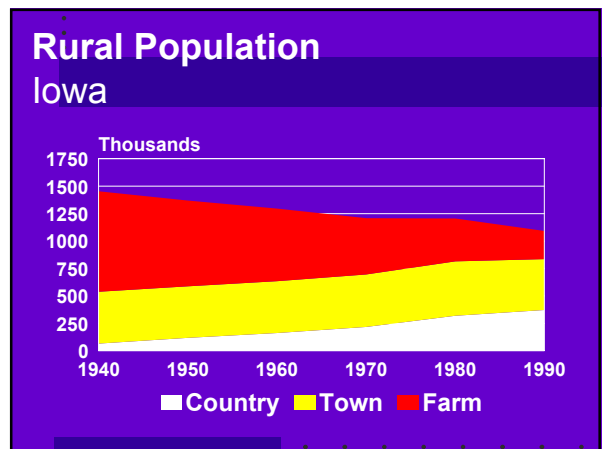
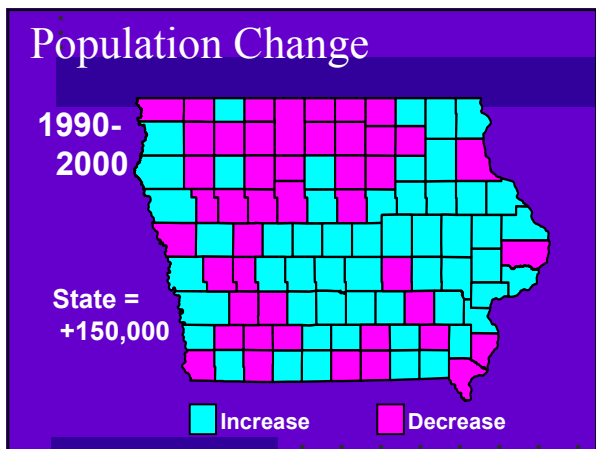
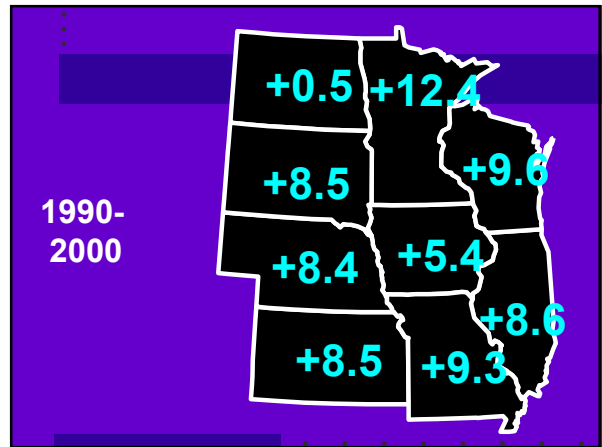
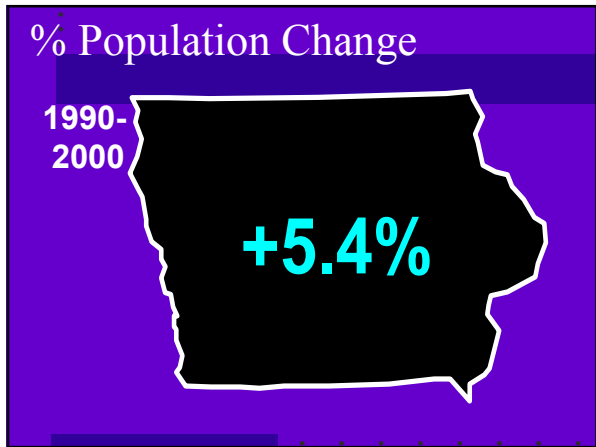
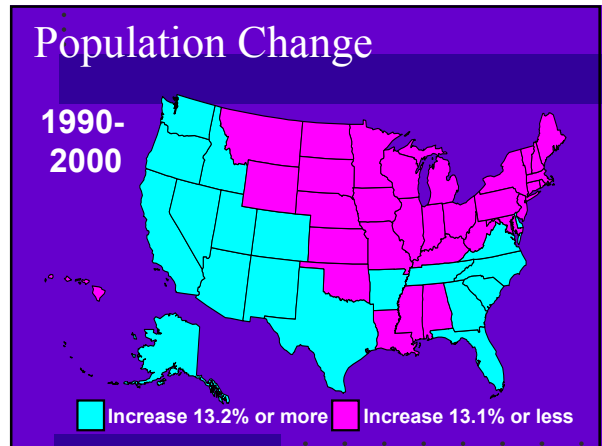
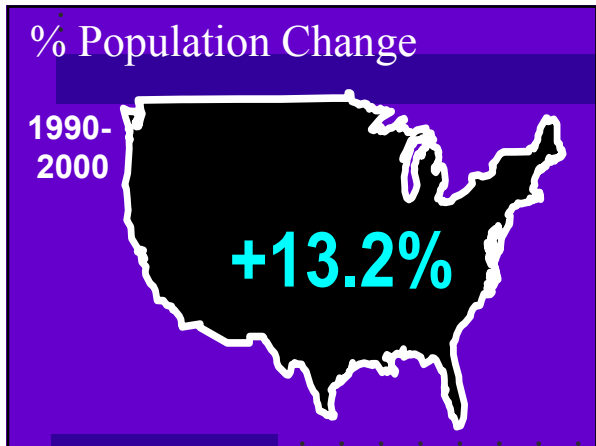
- Decline in farm numbers
- Increased farm size
- Vertical integration
- Value added processing
- Dual agriculture



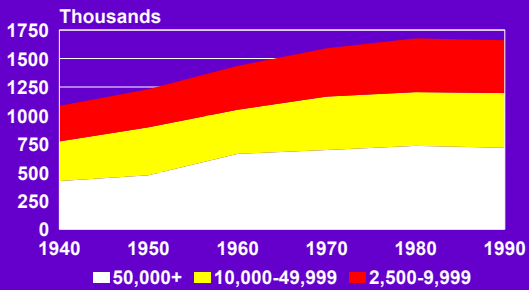
Rural Communities Production Agriculture



Rural Community/Production Agriculture Interface

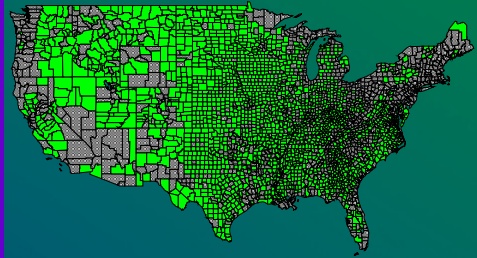


Urban Population Iowa



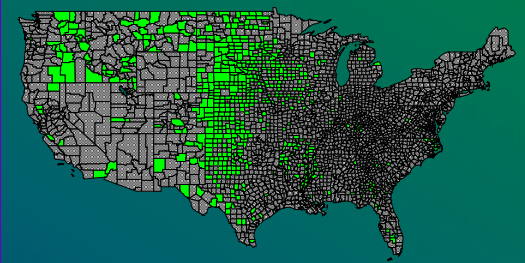
Farm-Dependent Counties

1950



Farm-Dependent Counties

1989



What is needed to grow Iowa?

IOWA: A PLACE TO GROW

Five essential forms of capital

- Financial Capital
- Physical
- Human
- Environmental
- Social

Social Capital

- Community involvement of people and organizations; participation in community events and projects; membership in local organizations; diversity of leaders; cooperation among organizations, etc

Emerging Traits and Characteristics

1. Turbulence

- Rapid changes--often these changes are viewed as losses.
- Social and economic change is never equal in its impact.
- Reactions to externally driven social changes → feelings of powerless, grief and anger.

2. Anxiety

- Fear of the future, because the past has produced so much change (losses)
- Are rural people more anxious?
 - Fear of additional losses
 - Fear of prosperity

3. Weaken social institutions

Social institutions bring people of dissimilar interests together (unlike special interest groups)

- Local government, schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.
- Importance of service clubs and local organizations.

4. Decline in civility

- Less tolerant
- Less respect
- Unyielding positions
- Divided communities

5. Widening gaps between groups or sectors

- Age, income, generational differences
- Race or ethnic background
- Regional differences
- Commodity interests
- Rural–urban
- Newcomers versus long–term residents

6. Consolidation of business enterprises

- Production
- Processing/Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Banking
- Retailing

7. Occupational changes

Moving from a nation of self-employed entrepreneurs, business persons to one of hired managers and employees

8. Callousness

- Indifference
- Erosion in community and trust
- Blaming the victim
- Orientation to individual rather than group or collective needs

Are these trends creating a
“distrustful culture”?

- Where people no longer trust each other
- Where extreme individualism is primary
- Where people no longer know each other
- Diminished respect, communication, and cooperation

Traits of a distrustful culture

- Legal representation
- Formalized contracts
- Fear of liability
- Less personal contact
- Formal communication
- Suspiciousness
- Negative attitudes

- Is it possible that we are creating a rural culture, where no one wants to live?
- Where there are limited opportunities?

Building Social Capital

- Communication
- Trust
- Cooperation



Importance of Service Clubs

- Strengthens social capital
- Networking
- Building sense of belonging
- Demonstrates civic duty and responsibility
- Bringing people of diverse backgrounds, interests and talents together--community building

Need to Restore the Practice of Neighboring

Neighbor as a verb
versus
Neighbor as a noun

THANK YOU