

What's Ahead for Iowa Communities: The Need to Strengthen Social Capital

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Five Essential Forms of Capital

- Financial
- Physical
- Human
- Environmental
- Social

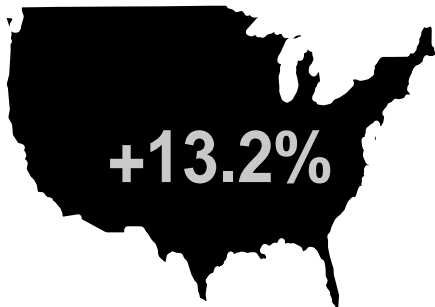
Social Capital

- Community involvement of people and organizations; participation in community events and projects; diversity of leaders; cooperation among organizations, etc
- “the glue that holds community together”
- “the social fabric that binds people to community”

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

% Population Change

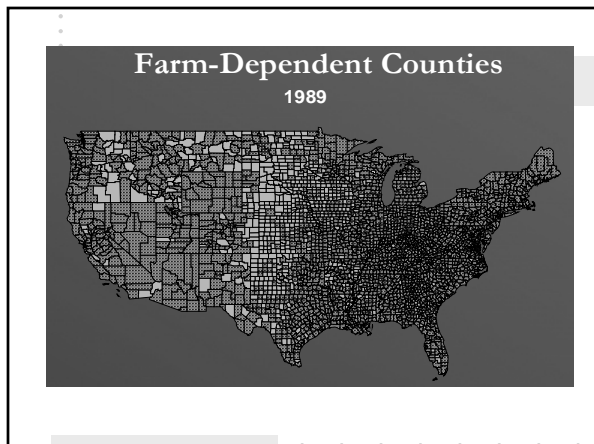
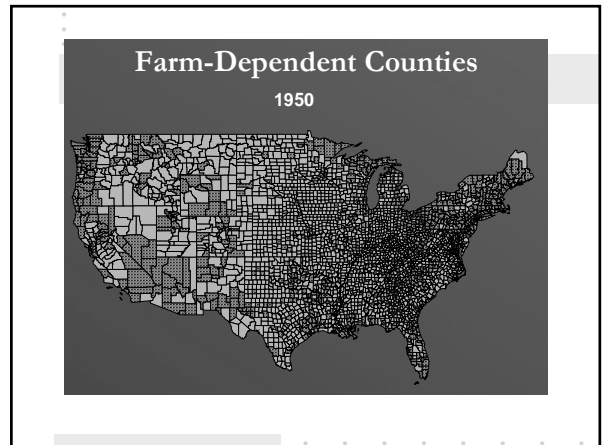
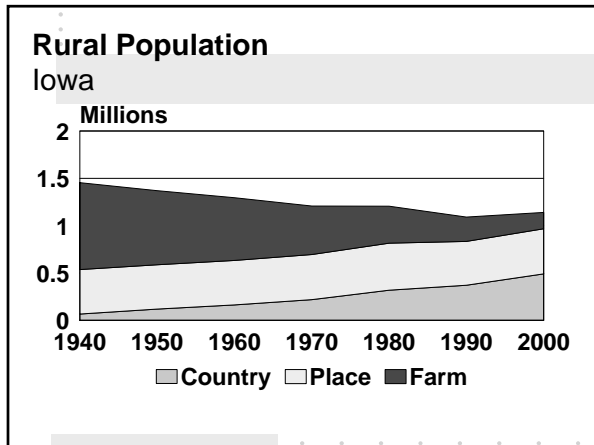
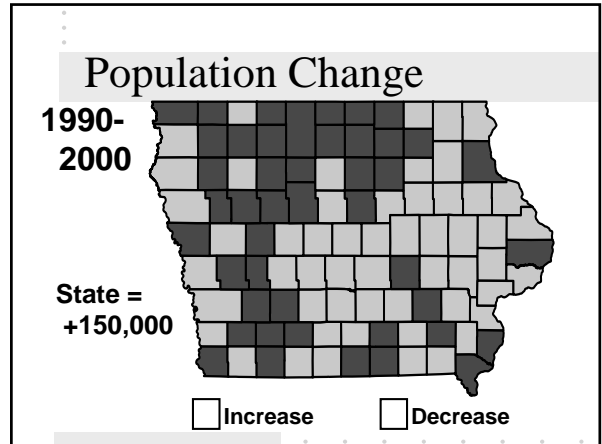
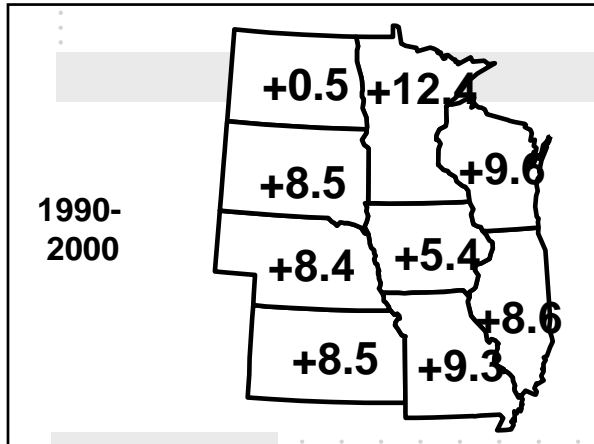
1990-
2000

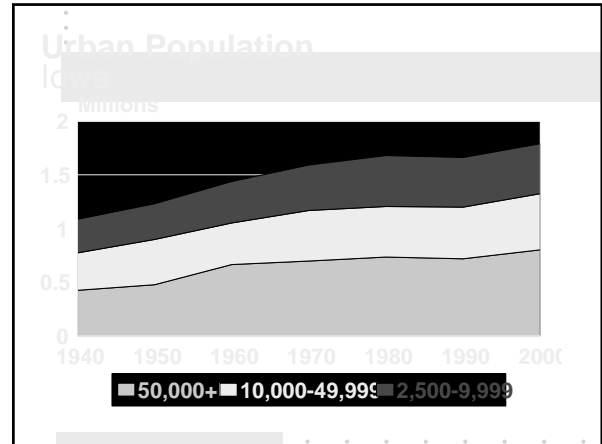
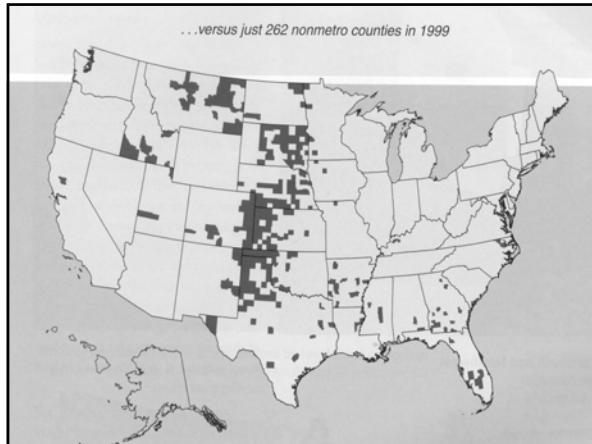


% Population Change

1990-
2000







Emerging Traits and Characteristics

- ### 1. Turbulence
- Rapid changes--often these changes are viewed as losses.
 - Reactions to externally driven social changes → feelings of powerless, grief and anger.
 - Observation—similarity between rural and urban poor—Loss of pride
 - Because social and economic changes are never equal in their impact, it is often used to define oneself as a victim and justifying unethical behavior.

- ### 2. Anxiety
- In the post Sept 11, 01 attack the level of anxiety, fear and vulnerability has increased. Diminished deferred gratification---need to do it now since the future is so uncertain
 - 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, churches, schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.
 - Importance of local community organizations. Sense of place

4. Declines in civility

- Less tolerant
- Less respect
- Unyielding positions
- Divided communities
- When there is no code of civility or ethics there is a crumbling of social ties and community spirit.

5. Widening gaps between groups

- 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 agriculture
- Processing/Manufacturing
- Marketing, Banking, Retailing
- What are the social and economic impacts?
- Corporate responsibility, no longer responsive to local community, so where is accountability lodged? In the board room? (Should we be surprised at Enron, Tyco, etc?)

7. Occupational changes

- Moving from a nation of self–employed entrepreneur and business persons to one of hired managers and employees.
- Jobs are more than source of income, they provide sense of identity, social contacts, define status and sense of purpose and hope for self improvement.
- Do the jobs being created in the service economy provide adequate opportunities for self-improvement and growth, or are they permanent, low income, dirty and dangerous work with few rewards?

8. Callousness

- Indifference to the plight of others
- Erosion in community and trust
- Blaming the victim
- Orientation to individual rather than group or collective needs contributes to indifference to the less fortunate.

Are these trends creating a “*distrustful culture*”?

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

Traits of a distrustful culture

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

What factors have contributed to the drift towards distrustfulness?

- Population change
- Changing role of women, the historic carriers of civic spirit
- Multiple job holding
- Hectic Lifestyles
- Aging population
- The hassles of public leadership

Building Social Capital

- Communication
- Trust
- Cooperation



The Role of Community Groups, Service Clubs, and Churches

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

What can be done to offset the decline in social capital?

- Start with where local people are at
 - Do they define the lack of neighboring, sense of community attachment, integration and participation as a problem?
- Bring people together around natural areas of interest
 - Hobbies, interests, common concerns

Why don't people get involved in community building activities?

- Time
- Too many existing obligations
- Free rider effect—let someone else do it
- There are risks of being involved
- Few benefits to me personally
- No one will care

What can be done?

- Building a sense of community
 - Key ingredients
 - Sense of belonging
 - Sharing
 - Inclusiveness
 - Genuineness
 - Inviting

Need to restore the art of neighboring

Neighbor as a verb
versus
Neighbor as a noun

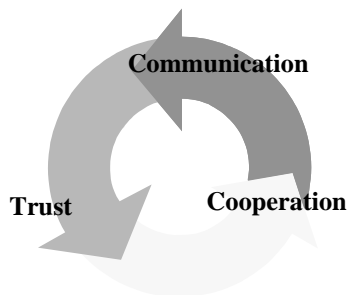
Some Basic Principles

- Start where people are at—hobbies, interests, common lifestyles, goals, age, etc
- People will allocate time to the things they enjoy and will avoid things they don't enjoy
- Need to reduce costs of participation
- Increase the sense of rewards and benefits

In the past community development was about building things..roads, schools, churches, industrial parks, etc..

Now it appears the future of community development is about building or strengthening social capital

Towards Building Social Capital



THANK YOU

Four Questions for you to consider

- What three things do you like about _____?
- What two or three things would increase the appeal of the community?
- What steps are necessary to move forward?
- What can or will you do to help?

What prevents us from reaching out to others?

- Fear
- Awkwardness
- Lack of trust
- Time
- Lack of common interests
- Perceived social distance

What do we mean by neighboring?

- What actions define neighboring?
- What attitudes reflect neighboring?