CHAPTER 3

THE CHANGING FACES OF RURAL AMERICA[1]

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THE STORY WE WANT TO TELL

Rural Americans can still be Norwegian bachelor farmers. They can also be Hmong seamstresses, Latino businessmen, Pakistani landlords, and Filipino computer programmers. The Norwegians, meanwhile, are buying radicchio at the co-operated by newly retired women lawyers or organic basil grown by hobby farmers living on 20-acre ranchettes. Nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) places in the 21st century are very different than they were just 30 years ago. Rural populations have also changed as a significant number of retirees have moved into nonmetro places, while increasing tourism has helped to shift the nature of rural livelihoods. Simultaneously, as young people leave high schools in some rural areas to move to cities, schools and businesses are closing due to a lack of students and customers. In other places, rural schools and hospitals now must provide bilingual teachers and nurses to educate and care for new immigrants' children. As a result, nonmetro people are now older, more likely to be female, and more ethnically diverse than in the recent past.

Why did rural populations transform so dramatically in the latter part of the 20th century? Partly these changes had been coming for more than 30 years. As the economy shifted from resource extraction and manufacturing to services, and as family farms were replaced by corporate farms, the types of employment that could be found in nonmetro places was transformed. The need for low wage labor on corporate farms and in processing plants greatly augmented already existing streams of immigrant labor. At the other end of the spectrum, these technological developments, in association with rising personal affluence, also allowed people with higher incomes to move to rural places for non-economic reasons. For example, an IBM employee could have her phone ring in Atlanta; her secretary could answer the phone in Boston; and transfer the call to her actual location in Logan, Utah. Finally, while the total U.S. population was aging because of declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy, the overall age of people in nonmetro places increased even more rapidly than in metropolitan (metro) areas

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due to the long-established tendency of young adults to leave rural areas after high school graduation and the newer phenomenon of retirement migration.

This chapter examines changes in age, gender, and race/ethnic composition and discusses implications of these changes for personal and community well being. The chapter is organized in three distinct, integrated sections. We first examine trends in aging, which affect housing, work, Social Security, care-giving (for both young and old) and community services, and which have important implications for individual well-being among rural residents. Fluctuations in age composition are tied to changes in relative numbers of males and females, and thus the next section focuses on how age and gender interact to alter characteristics of rural labor markets as well as family and household structure. Third, we consider how the rapidly transforming ethnic and racial makeup of rural places affects, and is affected by, both age and gender. These three variables—age, sex, and race/ethnicity—are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to discuss developments in one without discussing changes in the others. Many of these dynamic processes occur in urban places as well, but they have distinctive causes and consequences in rural America.

HOW THE AGE STRUCTURE OF RURAL PLACES IS CHANGING AND WHY IT MATTERS

Fertility, mortality and immigration determine the age structure of a country's population, and these variables along with internal migration affect the age composition of different geographic areas within that country (e.g., rural versus urban). In the past, fertility exerted a stronger influence on a population's age composition than mortality or migration, but over time declining mortality rates concentrated in the older ages have played an increasingly important role in changing the age structure of the U.S. population (Siegel, 1993).

Fertility rates began a sharp decline in both rural and urban areas after 1960 following the post-World War II baby boom, which peaked at 3.58 children per woman. Currently the rate hovers around the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. In recent years, fertility has declined even more rapidly in rural than in urban areas (see Chapter 2). In 1940 the child to woman ratio for women 20–44 years old was 44 percent higher in nonmetro than metro areas. In 1980 it was 18 percent higher and by 2000 metro and nonmetro child to woman ratios had equalized (data not shown).

Concurrent with declines in fertility, life expectancy in the 20th century alone increased from just 47 years in 1900 to over 75 years in 2000. Crude death rates are somewhat higher in nonmetro than metro areas, but the median age is also higher and consequently the literature is inconsistent on whether there is a difference in mortality after adjusting for age composition (McLaughlin et al., 2001; Morton, 2004). The important point is that metro and nonmetro areas have been on largely parallel paths relative to declining fertility and increasing longevity,

and these trends have fueled the rapid aging of the population. Recent waves of immigrants, especially Hispanic and Southeast Asian immigrants, have been a countervailing force. Immigrants are younger and have higher fertility than other nonmetro or metro residents. Immigration is primarily focused on metro areas, but nonmetro areas have also become the destinations of a substantial number of immigrants in recent years. Accordingly, immigration increases the share of the total population in younger age groups and thus over time may diminish the proportion but not the number of the population that is elderly. The result is that the rapidity of aging in nonmetro areas is historically unprecedented in the United States. This phenomenon is examined by comparing the age structures of metro and nonmetro areas in 1990 and 2000 and then by examining long-term trends in median age. Finally, aging is considered by region.

The population pyramids in Figure 3.1 illustrate the aging of the metro and nonmetro populations (using the 1993 metro definition) during the last decade. As the median age on each pyramid shows, both sectors have become older, but the aging of the nonmetro population (from 33.8 to 37.0) was more dramatic than that of the metro population (from 32.6 to 34.9). In 1990, nonmetro areas still had a slightly greater percent of their population between 5 and 19 than their metro counterparts. However, even then, nonmetro areas had proportionately fewer children less than five years of age. While the baby boom affects both metro and nonmetro areas, it is more exaggerated in metro areas, with nonmetro areas having a notably smaller proportion of adults between the ages of 25 and 44.[2] On the other hand, nonmetro areas had a higher proportion of older adults starting in the 55–59 age group.

This pattern repeats in 2000, but with two important shifts. First, by 2000 there were proportionately fewer children in the 0–4 and 5–9 age groups in nonmetro areas, and the proportion of 10–14-year-olds was about the same for both metro and nonmetro areas. Second, nonmetro areas had a greater proportion of older adults starting with the 50–55-year-old age group.

Figure 3.2 examines median age from a longer-term perspective by two types of geographic areas—metro/nonmetro and urban/rural (in each case the area definitions are those that were current at the time of the census.)[3] Between 1920 and 1940, the rural population was on average five years younger than the urban population, although both were increasing in age. After 1950, the age gap between rural and urban areas began to narrow. In 1980, for the first time in the 20th century, the median age of the rural population was older than that of the urban population. This was also true comparing nonmetro to metro areas.

This narrowing of the metro/nonmetro age gap between 1950 and 1980 was due to several factors. Rural fertility declined more rapidly and more closely approximated that of urban women (Fuguitt et al., 1989). This was also a time of heavy out-migration of rural youth to urban areas. Note that the median age declined in both urban and metro areas between 1960 and 1970 but not in rural or nonmetro areas as baby-boom youths began to graduate from rural/nonmet high schools and move to urban/metro areas.

Figure 3.1. Age Distribution of the Metro and Nonmetro Population by 5-year Age Groups: 1990 and 2000

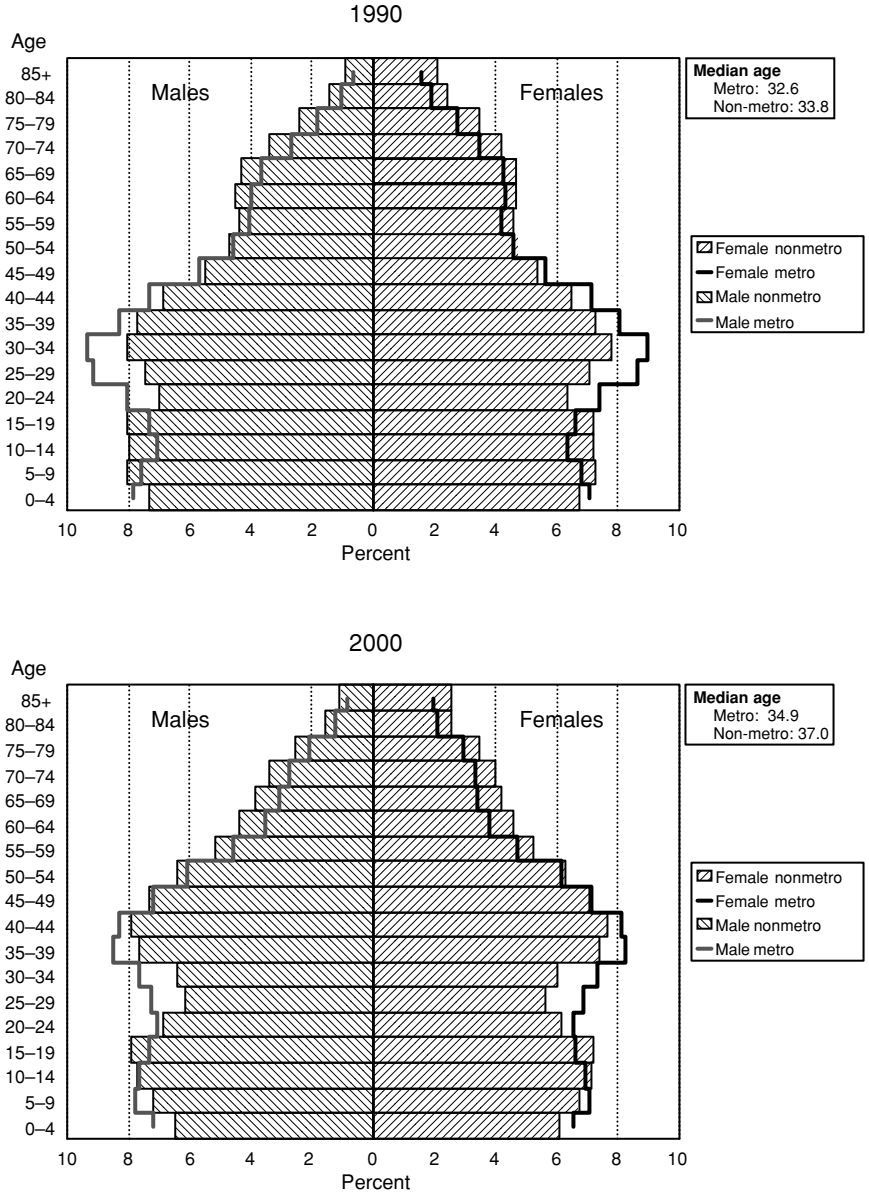
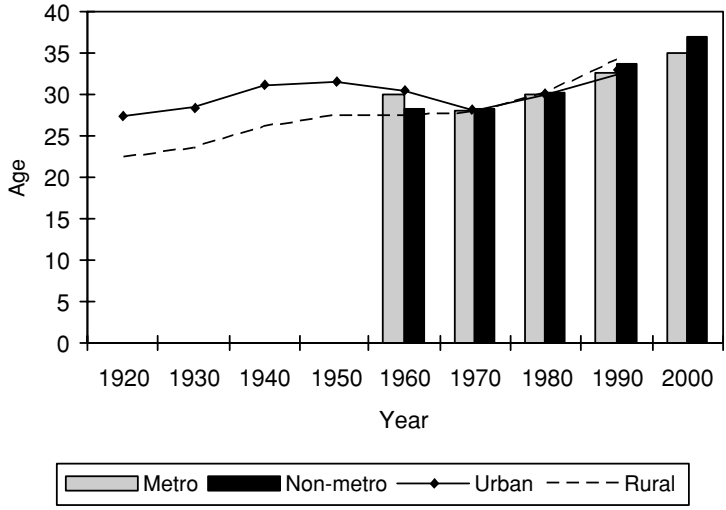


Figure 3.2. Median Age 1920 and 2000



Despite the much-heralded "rural turnaround" of the 1970s, which saw the rural population increase at a faster rate than the urban population for the first time in decades, nonmetro areas continued to lose young adults—and their childbearing capacity—at the same time that they gained older adults. During the 1970's turnaround, net migration to nonmetro areas became positive after decades of net out-migration. Examining migration rates by age for the four years between 1975–76 and 1992–93, Fulton and colleagues (1997) found that 18–24-year-olds had net out-migration rates from nonmetro areas in every period, while persons 60 and over had net in-migration rates for every period. Nonmetro areas were not only losing young adults and their childbearing capacity but were gaining older adults throughout this period of renewed overall growth.

Although out-migration of rural youth to urban areas has been the pattern for over 100 years, this pattern became more important at the end of the 20th century (especially when coupled with the in-migration of older adults). This is because differences in rural and urban fertility narrowed throughout the 20th century and became negligible by 2000. In the past, higher rural birth rates helped offset the out-migration of rural youth. In the 21st century, migration will be the primary determinant of differential growth between rural and urban areas. Thus the continued out-migration of rural youth is likely to contribute to differentially higher aging in nonmetropolitan areas. These long-term historical trends were behind the jump in median age in nonmetro areas between 1990 and 2000.

The rapid aging of the population is a major trend affecting all areas of the United States, but, as noted above, the nonmetro population is aging more rapidly

than the metro population. In 2000, 14.6 percent of the nonmetro population was age 65 or older compared to only 11.8 percent of the metro population. Moreover, trends affecting the age distributions of the metro and nonmetro populations vary by region of the country. For decades, the Great Plains and parts of the Midwest have experienced heavy out-migration of young people of childbearing age, which had a strong negative effect on fertility. It is now common for nonmetro counties in those regions to have natural decrease—an excess of deaths over births (McGranahan & Beale, 2002)—and they have the highest concentrations of older people of any nonmetro region of the United States (Glasgow, 1998). Nonmetro retirement migration has been channeled primarily to the South and West. Sunbelt migration has been a widespread phenomenon affecting all age groups, however, so that the South (except for Florida) and the West have not become disproportionately old. In the first quarter of the 21st century, both rural and urban areas will be affected by the aging of baby boomers because the leading edge of the baby boom will reach retirement age by 2010. Baby boomer aging will necessitate significant increases in health care, but it is more difficult and expensive to provide health services in rural than urban areas (Glasgow et al., 2004; Krout, 1998). Migration and/or a continuation of long-established residence patterns will determine the extent to which the aging of the baby boom generation affects different regions and metro versus nonmetro areas of the country.

An examination of the proportions of the population in different age groups by metro and nonmetro residence across the four broad census regions (Northeast, Midwest, South and West) shows roughly comparable proportional shares in each age group (data not shown). This suggests that variations in age composition by metro/nonmetro status are a subregional rather than a regional phenomenon. In other words, while rural areas in the Midwest as a whole may not be older than their counterparts in other regions, Plains counties with persisting dependence on agriculture are much older than the regional average. Moreover, percent change in the population by age group and residence shows regional variations between 1990 and 2000. To gain a better perspective on how rural population age composition is changing, we examine the differences and implications of those changes.

First, it is worth noting that, regardless of region, metro/nonmetro differences in population change by age group between 1990 and 2000 were substantial (Table 3.1). In all regions among all age groups, metro population gains were greater or declines were smaller than was the case for nonmetro areas. Nonmetro areas showed declines in the proportionate size of the less than 20 years of age population everywhere except in the West, whereas metro areas in all regions of the country gained younger persons. Nonmetro declines in this age segment will contribute to the further aging of the rural population. The 35–54 age group, comprised of baby boomers, had the largest increase in size of any age group, regardless of region or residence, yet in all regions metro areas showed larger population gains among baby boomers than did nonmetro areas. This suggests that the aging of the

Table 3.1. Percent Change in Metro/Nonmetro Population by Age and Region: 1990–2000

	United States	Northeast		Midwest		South		West	
Age Group	Total	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro
Under 20	12.8	10.8	−13.3	10.9	− 5.1	23.9	−5.3	24.3	2.9
20–34	−5.4	−13.7	−29.1	−7.1	−16.8	3.9	−11.8	1.5	−8.2
35–54	31.9	26.0	11.3	30.7	19.4	43.9	17.1	38.5	26.4
55–64	14.8	3.9	−1.6	9.8	2.6	28.1	6.5	27.0	18.5
65–74	1.6	−5.5	−13.4	−0.4	−8.8	13.9	−6.4	8.9	−1.8
75 and older	26.4	23.9	5.5	26.9	6.2	39.9	6.7	42.3	23.0

baby boom will affect metro areas more than nonmetro areas, unless baby boomers migrate to rural areas in large numbers upon their retirement. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in the 65–74 age category shrank in size in all nonmetro regions and did so as well in metro areas of the Northeast and Midwest but not the South and West. The Depression-era birth cohorts entered this age group during the previous decade, which accounts for the drop off in growth of the 65–74 years population. The 75 and older segment showed large gains in population size, however, providing further indication of the rapid aging of the population. For that age group, proportional gains were considerably larger in metro than nonmetro areas, which over time would tend to equalize metro and nonmetro concentrations of older people.

Regional differences are apparent in that, between 1990 and 2000, the South and West continued to have higher population growth than the Northeast and Midwest (Table 3.1). This comparison pertained more to metro than nonmetro areas. Among nonmetro areas, the West had higher growth or smaller declines at each age group than did the other three regions. Overall, the South and West are more likely to experience the pluses and minuses of population growth than the Northeast and Midwest. Parts of the Northeast and Midwest are more likely to face issues related to population decline.

The currently middle-aged baby boomers will turn age 65 and older between 2010 and 2030. During that period, the number of older persons is projected to increase from 39 to 65 million, with the older population expected to comprise 20 percent or more of the national total population by 2030 (Siegel, 1993). After 2030, the older population will slowly decline as a proportion of the total, and the U.S. population is expected to reach zero population growth.

Baby boomers are approaching old age, and a large increase in the number of older people in the population between 2010 and 2030 is projected. This change will have implications for the types of housing, health care and transportation services that communities need to provide. Older people occupy smaller housing units than do younger families, and at some point in older people's lives they may need housing combined with personal and health care services (such as that provided in assisted living, continuing care retirement communities and nursing homes). Unfortunately, rural areas often do not have the capacity to meet increased demands for these types of services (Brown & Glasgow, 1991; Krout, 1998).

Presently, nonmetro areas are relatively more aged than metro areas, but, should trends of the previous decade continue into the 21st century, concentrations of older people in metro versus nonmetro areas may even out. Services for older people are relatively more difficult to provide in nonmetro than metro areas due to distance, sparse settlement patterns and lower capacity among rural governments to provide services (Krout, 1998). Moreover, in those rural areas characterized by chronic out migration of younger people, elderly parents are less likely to live in near proximity to their adult children than are metro older parents (Glasgow, 2000). Not only are formal services less available in rural areas, informal services

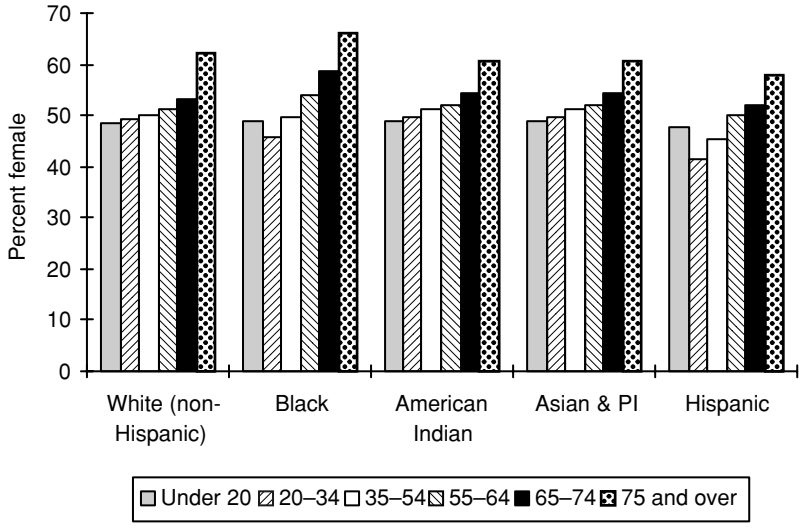
provided by adult children and others in the informal network are also limited. Policies pertaining to the aging of baby boomers should pay particular attention to how formal services can bolster and support informal services.

HOW AGE RELATES TO GENDER

Age affects the gender makeup of rural places, which, in turn, affects family and household structure. First, since it is women who bear children, the presence of women of childbearing age in a population is associated with larger numbers of children. The fewer the women of childbearing age, the less likely there will be large numbers of children, and the population age structure will be older. As with the age structure of the population, gender affects the types of services required in nonmetro places, such as the need for obstetricians and childcare in populations with large proportions of younger women. In addition, most occupations are dominated by either males or by females. As a result, gender also affects the likelihood of employment. Men are less often employed in service occupations, so that the increase in service employment in rural places tends to favor women.

Second, as shown in Figure 3.3, regardless of race or ethnic background, the percentage female increases with age. Hence the proportion female in nonmetro places is highest in the oldest age groups. Simply put, women live longer than men even though more boys are born than girls. That is, if one thinks of the proportion

Figure 3.3. Nonmetro Percent Female by Race/Ethnicity and Age



of males and females as a ratio, at birth there are about 105 male babies born for every 100 female babies. Over the life course, however, males are more likely to die at younger ages from accidents and certain illnesses, slowly eroding their numerical advantage. At age 35 there are equal numbers of males and females, and by age 65, there are only 70 males for every 100 females.

Historically, more urbanized places have had more women, while rural areas have had more men. This differential was in part due to higher birth rates in rural places, themselves a result of younger age structures. Moreover, rural places were frontier areas that attracted more male than female in-migrants and harbored employment opportunities like mining or forestry that were open primarily to men, not women. As family sizes declined, the age structure of rural places became increasingly older and the gender structure of rural places changed, although not as dramatically as age and race/ethnic structure changed (Fuguitt et al., 1989). The traditional pattern of youth leaving rural places for education and jobs in more urban settings persisted, ensuring that nonmetropolitan places grew older and became increasingly female.

This close relationship between aging and gender composition explains why the decline of the young adult population (20–34 years of age) in nonmetro counties in all four regions from 1990 to 2000 resulted also in changes in the proportion of men compared to women. The population pyramids in Figure 3.1 show that the percentage of the nonmetro population that is female and over age 34 increased while the percentage female in younger age groups did not.

Why does gender composition matter? Rural labor markets are and have long been more sex-selective of males than females. Rural economies were historically defined by male-oriented employment, whether in mining, fishing or other extractive industries. In the 1960s and ‘70s, however, the economic restructuring of rural places drew more women into the rural labor force, albeit into the lowest paying jobs (Fuguitt et al., 1989). An increasingly service-oriented economy means that rural employment tends to be more open to women now than in the past. However, rural female workers generally have less education and fewer work skills than do their urban counterparts, which tends to segregate them into low wage jobs. In addition, the greater gender segregation of rural labor markets further reduces the returns to education or employment training among women in rural than urban places (Bokemeier & Tickamyer, 1985; Gorham, 1992; McLaughlin & Perman, 1991; Lichter & McLaughlin, 1995; Sachs, 1996; Wells, 2002).

The gender make-up of nonmetro and rural places affects and is affected by family and household structure. In 1990, 70 percent of the older population lived alone or with a spouse, whereas, in 1850, 70 percent of elderly people resided with their adult children (Ruggles & Brower, 2003). Given increasing life expectancies and the greater predominance of women at older ages, nonmetro older females are at risk of becoming socially isolated. Hence, service providers and businesses in rural areas will have a growing role in supporting the needs of the greater presence of older rural women.

WHERE RACE AND ETHNICITY COME INTO PLAY

Racial and ethnic change in rural America has complicated the gender and age differentials described above. While rural America has always been racially and ethnically diverse, the racial and ethnic character of rural areas has evolved and changed since the settling of the first colonies. Historically, Native Americans were forcefully pushed further and further west onto reservations. African-origin slaves were brought to all of the original colonies, but for centuries they formed the backbone of the rural work force in the South's plantation economy. Spanish-speakers were absorbed when the United States wrested control of Florida from Spain and part or all of what would become the states of Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado from Mexico. Immigrants from China and the Philippines, a territory of the United States from 1898 to 1946, helped build the railroads of the West while Japanese immigrants established farms in many rural areas of the West. Western and Eastern European immigrants homesteaded in areas of the Midwest and West.

Immigration is often seen as targeting primarily urban areas, but this has never been completely true. In the latter part of the 20th century, both legal and illegal immigrants have migrated to or been recruited by industry to work throughout the rural United States. They have taken jobs as low wage laborers to tend and harvest crops and work in processing plants for fruits, vegetables, and in meat and poultry packing plants (Broadway, 1990; Griffith, 1990; Martin, 1984). In short, America's rural areas have never been racially and ethnically homogeneous, and many formerly homogeneous areas have been swept into the increasing diversity of the U.S. population.

These historical forces have been significantly modified by changes in U.S. immigration policy since the 1960s. These new laws have opened immigration to an increasingly diverse set of countries of origin and accelerated immigration to both urban and rural areas. In 1965, Congress passed a bill that replaced a national origins system favoring Western Europe with a system of family reunification without preference to particular countries or regions. In 1980, it eased restrictions on the admittance of refugees, many of whom were from Southeast Asia. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act legalized the status of 2.7 million unauthorized aliens, many from Latin America. The Special Agricultural Worker provision of the 1986 act made it easier for those who worked in agriculture, most of whom were in rural areas, to qualify for legal status. In contrast, between 1996 and 2002, the nation tried to tighten its borders, and several pieces of legislation were passed to try to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. (See Martin & Midgley, 2003 for a more complete discussion.)

Changing definitions of race and ethnicity across time complicate the comparability of data from census to census.[4] The major racial categories on the decennial census and those used in this chapter are: White; African American or Negro (referred to as Black in this chapter); American Indian or Alaska Native

(referred to as American Indian); and Asian and Pacific Islander. Prior to 2000, persons were allowed to check only one category on the race question, but in 2000 persons were allowed to check more than one. Thus data on race are not strictly comparable between the 1990 and 2000 censuses. Because Hispanic Origin (considered an ethnic identity) and race were separate questions in both 1990 and 2000, it is possible to select out persons of Hispanic Origin from their racial group.

The census data presented in Table 3.2 reflect the increased racial and ethnic diversity that occurred in just one decade, from 1990 to 2000. In all regions, the metro population was more diverse than the nonmetro population—a smaller percent of the population was non-Hispanic White. Throughout the United States, in all regions and in both metro and nonmetro areas, the non-Hispanic White population grew more slowly than all other racial/ethnic groups and consequently declined as a percent of the population.

With the 2000 Census, the Black population remained by far the largest minority in nonmetro America at over four and a half million. In the United States as a whole during the last decade, however, the Hispanic population became the largest minority. In nonmetro areas, the Hispanic origin population rapidly gained ground on the Black population, growing by over a million compared to less than half that for Blacks. Should this trend continue, Hispanics would be the largest nonmetro minority by 2010.

With its history of slavery and, more recently, return migration of Northern Blacks to both the metro and nonmetro South (Frey, 2001; Stack, 1996), over 90 percent of the nonmetro Black population lived in the South in 2000. Over 17 percent of the South's nonmetro population was Black, far higher than in any other region in the United States. The growth of the nonmetro Black population in the South also accounted for 77 percent of the growth of the nonmetro Black population overall.

The nonmetro American Indian population was about one-fifth the size of the nonmetro Black population in 2000, but it was more evenly distributed regionally. Given the history of the reservation system, it is not surprising that the largest number, 523,000, or about half of the nonmetro American Indian population, lived in the West, where they made up fewer than 6 percent of nonmetro residents. In the South, the American Indian population was numerically larger than in the Midwest, but in each region it made up 1.2 percent of the nonmetro population. Only small numbers of American Indians remain in the Northeast. However, in all nonmetro areas, the proportion of American Indians grew faster than the non-Hispanic White population. This was due to higher fertility, a younger age structure, and a growing tendency for American Indians to self-identify starting with the 1970 census (Eschbach et al., 1998).

The Asian and Pacific Islander population was the smallest nonmetro minority in 2000. Prior to WWI, representatives of this group were often driven out of rural areas, and large amounts of land were confiscated from rural Japanese Americans at the beginning of WWII. More recent arrivals have tended to settle in

*Table 3.2. Race/Ethnicity by Region: 1990–2000**

	United States		Northeast		South		Midwest		West	
	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro
Non-Hispanic White										
Population 1990 (thousands)	145,032	43,393	35,351	5,089	44,215	17,213	35,925	15,313	29,540	5,778
Population 2000 (thousands)	148,564	45,989	34,138	5,189	47,436	18,492	36,642	15,744	30,347	6,564
Percent 1990	73.3	85.3	77.6	96.6	70.1	77.0	82.2	95.8	64.9	79.2
Percent 2000	66.0	81.9	71.0	94.3	63.0	74.1	77.1	93.2	55.8	74.5
Percent change 1990–2000	2.4	6.0	−3.4	2.0	7.3	7.4	2.0	2.8	2.7	13.6
Black										
Population 1990 (thousands)	24,955	4,329	5,180	70	11,718	3,955	5,419	241	2,638	64
Population 2000 (thousands)	29,162	4,786	5,687	98	14,449	4,318	6,148	289	2,879	81
Percent 1990	12.6	8.5	11.4	1.3	18.6	17.7	12.4	1.5	5.8	0.9
Percent 2000	12.9	8.5	11.8	1.8	19.2	17.3	12.9	1.7	5.3	0.9
Percent change 1990–2000	16.9	10.5	9.8	40.8	23.3	9.2	13.5	19.8	9.1	27.3
American Indian										
Population 1990 (thousands)	962	904	90	18	297	268	169	166	406	453
Population 2000 (thousands)	1,028	1,041	93	20	335	302	167	195	433	523
Percent 1990	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.3	0.5	1.2	0.4	1.0	0.9	6.2
Percent 2000	0.5	1.9	0.2	0.4	0.4	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.8	5.9
Percent change 1990–2000	6.8	15.1	2.8	11.0	12.8	13.0	−1.5	17.9	6.7	15.6

(*cont.*)

Table 3.2. (*Continued*)

	United States		Northeast		South		Midwest		West	
	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro	Metro	Nonmetro
Asian and PI										
Population 1990 (thousands)	6,607	388	1,260	30	997	74	673	69	3,677	215
Population 2000 (thousands)	10,005	472	2,076	40	1,822	120	1,113	93	4,994	219
Percent 1990	3.3	0.8	2.8	0.6	1.6	0.3	1.5	0.4	8.1	2.9
Percent 2000	4.4	0.8	4.3	0.7	2.4	0.5	2.3	0.5	9.2	2.5
Percent change 1990–2000	51.4	21.7	64.8	35.1	82.8	61.8	65.5	33.9	35.8	2.0
Hispanic Origin										
Population 1990 (thousands)	20,036	1,864	3,581	58	5,824	838	1,475	185	9,156	784
Population 2000 (thousands)	32,130	3,176	5,154	100	10,115	1,472	2,715	409	14,146	1,194
Percent 1990	10.1	3.7	7.9	1.1	9.2	3.7	3.4	1.2	20.1	10.7
Percent 2000	14.3	5.7	10.7	1.8	13.4	5.9	5.7	2.4	26.0	13.6
Percent change 1990–2000	60.4	70.4	43.9	73.8	73.7	75.7	84.0	121.8	54.5	52.3

* Percents do not sum to 100 because the "some other race" and "two or more races" categories have been omitted. In 2000 only a small number of people were in these categories. However, it will be very important to follow trends in the "two or more races" category (an option available for the first time on the 2000 Census).

metro areas, primarily on the west coast. In 2000, the largest number of nonmetro Asian and Pacific Islanders was located in the West (2.5 percent of the nonmetro population), but their numbers grew slowly during the last decade, resulting in a percentage decline from 55 percent of all nonmetro Asians and Pacific Islanders in 1990, to just 46 percent by 2000. The nonmetro South experienced the greatest numeric increase in Asian and Pacific Islanders during the last decade, followed by the Midwest and the Northeast. This reflects the trend of Southeast Asian refugees to settle in selected nonmetro counties to work in poultry processing and meat packing plants and other low wage industries.

The Hispanic population was by far the most rapidly growing minority in the United States during the last decade. Their growth was so rapid that, by 2000, they outnumbered Blacks in metro areas. They are quite likely to outnumber Blacks in nonmetro areas by the end of this decade as well. The South experienced the largest increase in the number of nonmetro Hispanics and had the largest number in 2000, 1.4 million or 5.9 percent of its nonmetro population. The number of Hispanics in the West was only slightly smaller than in the South but represented 13.6 percent of this region's nonmetro population. In addition, both the Northeast and the Midwest witnessed substantial increases in the number of Hispanics.

HOW RACE AND ETHNICITY INTERSECT WITH GENDER AND AGE

Gender

As noted earlier, the number of males exceeds females at birth, but these numbers are essentially equal in the young adult years, with the preponderance of females increasing at older ages. Imbalances from this expected pattern should be examined to determine why they have occurred and the policy implications for areas where they occur. In 2000, the pattern described above characterized the non-Hispanic White, American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander and two or more races populations for both metro and nonmetro areas and for all regions (data not shown). By contrast, the nonmetro Black population in the Northeast, Midwest and West varied markedly from this pattern and from the metro population, as did the Hispanic population in all regions. Figure 3.4 shows that, with the exception of the South, the relative lack of Black females in nonmetro areas for 20–54 year olds is striking. In the Northeast and West, only about a quarter of 20–54-year-old Blacks were female. As Figure 3.4 shows, this pattern is also apparent, although not as markedly, for the Hispanic population in all regions. In each region the percent female in nonmetro areas is below the percent female in metro areas.

To understand these gender imbalances, we examine, in Figure 3.5, the percent of male Black and Hispanic 18–64-year-olds (more detailed age groups were not available) living in correctional facilities in 2000 by metro and nonmetro areas, one possible reason for the deficit of young females shown in Figure 3.4. In 2000, in all regions of the United States, including the South, nonmetro Blacks

Figure 3.4. Percent Female by Race/Ethnicity, Ages 20–54

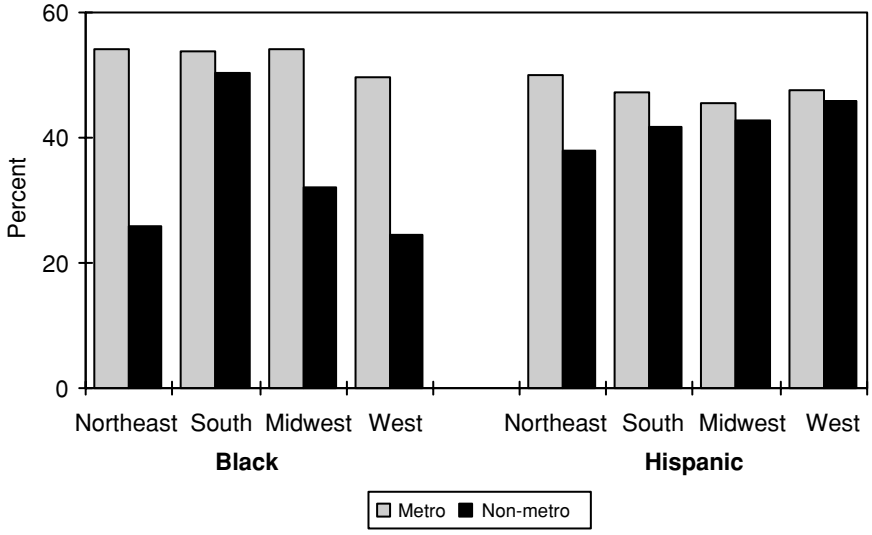
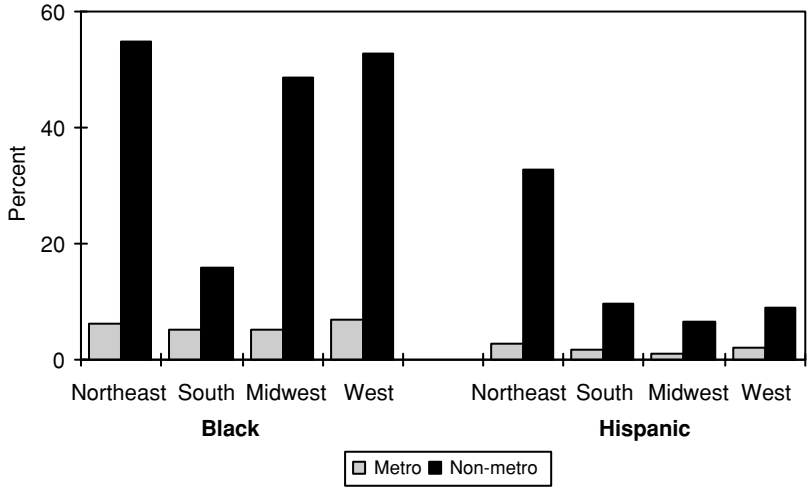


Figure 3.5. Percent of Males in Correctional Institutions by Race/Ethnicity, Ages 18–64



were more likely to live in prisons than metro Blacks, but this difference was extreme in the Northeast, Midwest and West. In those regions, around half of nonmetro Black males 18–64 years of age lived in correctional institutions.[5] Many nonmetro areas have pursued a policy of recruiting correctional facilities to offset job losses in resource-based industries. These data probably reflect such policies. However, these high figures must be understood in the context of low overall Black population living outside the nonmetro South.

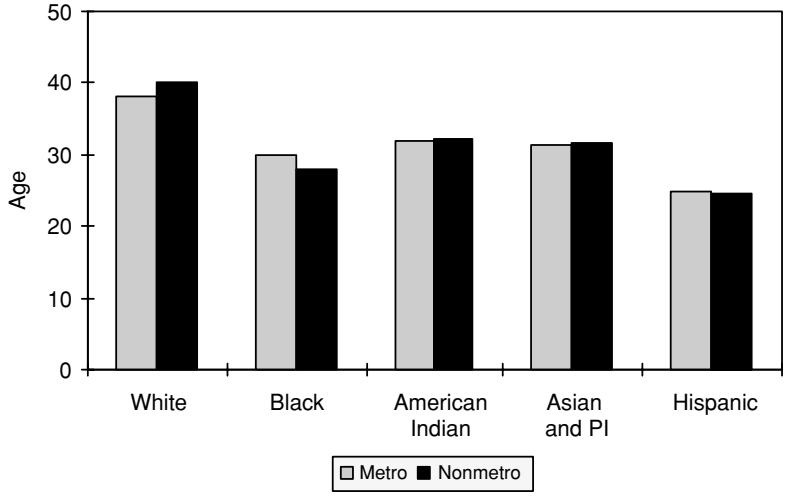
Nonmetro Hispanic males 18–64 were also more likely to live in prisons than metro Hispanics. The most extreme case was in the Northeast, where one-third of nonmetro Hispanic males lived in such institutions. The rates of incarceration were higher for nonmetro than metro Hispanics in other regions as well, but probably not enough to account for the preponderance of young males in the general population. Immigration and labor trends probably account for that preponderance. A culture of Mexican migration to the United States, especially among young males (Kandel & Massey, 2002), would lead to a greater preponderance of Hispanic males. In addition, in 2000 Hispanic males far outnumbered females in two of the most important rural industries, agriculture (5:1) and food processing (2:1) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Age Composition

Changes in the age composition of metro and nonmetro areas overall were described earlier. It is also important to consider whether there are differences in age by race/ethnicity, which could lead to inter-ethnic tensions over the distribution of needed services. As Figure 3.6 shows, the median age of the non-Hispanic White population in nonmetro areas was around 40 years. The median age of nonmetro minorities was younger, generally substantially younger. On average, American Indian and Asian and Pacific Islander populations were around nine years younger. But the nonmetro Black population was more than 12 years younger than non-Hispanic Whites, and the Hispanic population was fully 15.6 years younger. Similar differences exist in metro areas as well, but they are more muted mainly because the metro, non-Hispanic White population is somewhat younger. Historical factors already described, including the decline of fertility overall, equalization of metro-nonmetro fertility rates, and out-migration of rural youth, primarily affected the non-Hispanic White population. In addition, international migrants are concentrated in the young-adult, childbearing years (McFalls, 2003).

Are these trends in diversity important to rural America? In an article titled "The Diversity Myth," Frey contends that immigrants tend to concentrate in a few areas, and that "multiethnic counties are few and far between" (Frey, 1998; p. 39). It is true that many rural areas are not racially and ethnically diverse, and they are likely to remain primarily non-Hispanic White, especially those in the Midwest experiencing population loss. But to talk of diversity only in terms of current immigration trends ignores the nation's history. The nonmetro South has

Figure 3.6. Median Age for White (non-Hispanic) and Minority Populations: 2000



always been racially diverse, and most of the nation's American Indian reservations are located west of the Mississippi River. Descendants and cousins of the diverse Asian and Pacific Islanders who helped build the intercontinental railroad and farm California's Central Valley are also concentrated in the West. Moreover, with the absorption of Mexican territory in the 19th century, western and southwestern counties have historically had Spanish-speaking populations. These populations grew more rapidly in nonmetro areas than the non-Hispanic White population during the 1990s and will probably continue to do so in the coming decade. Policies that ignore the growing importance of racial and ethnic diversity in the rural population are increasingly likely to be inappropriate.

THE DENOUEMENT TO THE AGE, SEX, RACE/ETHNICITY STORY

This chapter has examined three important aspects of nonmetro population composition: age, gender and race/ethnicity. Major changes in all three of these characteristics have important policy implications. Nonmetro America is aging more rapidly than metropolitan America. Because of the out-migration of rural youth throughout the 20th century, the impact of the baby boom has been more limited in nonmetro areas. Moreover, birth rates, rather than exceeding those in metro America, as was the case for much of the 20th century, are now at parity. This is coupled with the attractiveness of many nonmetro areas for retirement living since the 1970s. Although these trends will be exacerbated or muted in specific counties depending on their history, natural amenities, economic base and

proximity to metro areas, the analysis here shows that nonmetro areas in all regions of the United States experienced a continued loss of young adults, which contributed to a rapid aging of the nonmetro population.

The aging of the nonmetro population comes in spite of the fact that growth of the 65–74-year-old age group slowed during the 1990s in nonmetropolitan areas because these were the small cohorts born during the Great Depression. As their children, the baby boomers, age into the retirement years beginning in 2008, nonmetro areas will likely see rapid growth in this age group through both aging in place and continued retirement migration. During the 1990s, the 75 and over population increased in all regions of the United States. This increase was generally slower in nonmetro than metro areas, but service provision for the oldest adults in nonmetro areas often lags behind that in more urban areas.

In addition, as populations age, they become more female. The non-Hispanic White population makes up the largest number of nonmetro older adults 75 and over and is approximately 63 percent female, except in the West (58 percent). Rather than live with adult children as they did a century ago, older adults are now more likely to live alone. Many women over age 75 who were living alone in 2000 may be doing so for the first time in their lives. These women were born in 1925 or earlier, when it was customary for young women to live at home or with relatives until they were married. The small size of informal social supports in many rural communities challenges their capacity to supply essential services (Glasgow, 2000). Both the public and private sector are needed to provide substitute services for older people that would typically be provided by kin and friendship networks were these structures stronger.

Finally, nonmetro racial/ethnic diversity is increasing through immigration and through the large share of immigrants who are of childbearing age. The influx adds to a historically diverse mix of Blacks, primarily in the South; American Indians, often connected with reservations, primarily in the South and West; an increasing Asian and Pacific Islander population, particularly in the South but also in the Midwest and Northeast; and a Spanish-speaking culture in the South and West that was absorbed when the United States conquered parts of Mexico in the 19th century and has been augmented by immigration since the end of the Bracero Program. This growing diversity complicates the picture of nonmetropolitan areas. Some counties will remain primarily White, but others already have notable non-White minorities that have lived there for generations. Still others are experiencing the rapid growth of Hispanics or South East Asians as industries seek low wage labor and as individuals and families seek to improve their standard of living.

The young Black and Hispanic populations are more heavily male in several regions of the country. Many nonmetro areas actively sought the building of prisons to replace job losses in other sectors, and a large percent of the nonmetro Black population in all regions but the South was incarcerated in 2000. This attempt by rural areas to make up for job losses suffered by more traditional industries needs further examination, among other reasons to determine if persons incarcerated where it may be difficult for families to visit have higher or lower rates of recidivism.

Immigration streams that draw more heavily on males have increased the proportions of young Hispanic males in nonmetro areas. If past demographic trends persist, wives and children will join many of these men and/or they will marry and have children. Hispanics are already the youngest segment of the nonmetro population and these trends will ensure that this situation continues in the coming decades.

All of the changes related to the composition of the population raise challenges and opportunities that rural areas will face in the decades to come. For example, older adults are wealthier, more active, and healthier than in the past. When they are in-migrants, they bring incomes earned outside the area. Jobs that are related to this retirement population should do well in the future. Such jobs may range from low-wage jobs such as housecleaning and yard work to much better-paying employment in specialty health, medical, dental and vision services.

But it is up to individual communities to make sure that the types of services as well as the goods that this population would like to purchase are available in the area. A healthier population of older adults means that this population is more likely to travel to metro areas if the goods they need are not available in rural areas. And, as an increasing number of computer-literate older adults retire in rural areas, they can easily make purchases on-line. Given that the older population is more heavily female than other age groups, it is important to make sure that older women feel they have service providers and businesses that they see as safe and reliable.

An important question that will confront aging individuals as well as the nonmetro communities in which they live is the extent to which those communities can provide the specialty medical and housing needs of the oldest old. Will the very elderly find it more convenient to leave rural communities for urban ones to have access to these services? And to what extent do or can communities provide services for this population?[6]

All of this is complicated by changes in race/ethnicity and gender. Nonmetro areas have witnessed the pervasive out-migration of high school graduates for many decades. While birth rates have fallen for all racial and ethnic groups, the non-Hispanic White population has the lowest birth rate. Birthrates for minority groups are somewhat higher, and they have a higher proportion of young adults in the childbearing years. Many rural areas have an older non-Hispanic White female population and a younger minority population with a higher proportion of younger males.

This relatively young minority population has service needs as well. Most importantly, pregnant and nursing mothers need routine pre- and postnatal care if they and their children are to be healthy. Young children need routine vaccinations as well as doctor visits to avoid serious and costly health emergencies, and these children need good schooling to move into jobs with benefits and above-poverty-level pay scales. Older adults, the population most likely to vote, however, are sometimes hesitant to support tax increases, especially for property taxes. Many local services, such as schools, rely heavily on local taxes.

Many rural communities will be facing issues related to this bifurcation of the population—an older non-Hispanic White population with a greater proportion

of females, and a younger minority, often proportionately more male population with a rapidly growing number of young children—a generation gap reinforced by a culture gap. The ongoing viability of rural communities has always depended on how well residents work together. Thus, it is important for rural places to make sure that the Latino businessmen, Hmong seamstresses, Filipino computer programmers, Norwegian farmers, retired female attorneys and organic hobby farmers are all included in community decisions and all benefit from community services. Cooperation and understanding between an older White population, and a younger minority population will enhance the viability of rural areas. Without this, many rural areas could see increasing rates of rural minority poverty, failing education systems and increasing tensions that will be detrimental to all segments of the population.

ENDNOTES

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2. The baby boom took place between approximately 1945 and 1965. The youngest of the baby boomers would have been 25 and the oldest 45 years of age in 1990.
3. The metro/nonmetro time series begins in 1960 because this category was established after the 1950 census. Using an urban/rural definition (urban places are those with populations greater than 2,500) produces a longer time series.
4. A question on race has been on the census since 1790. While the wording of this evolved over time, important changes have occurred since 1970. In that year, a question on Hispanic Origin (considered an ethnic identity) was added because a rapidly growing number of persons from Spanish speaking countries did not identify with any one racial group and checked the "other" category under race.
5. It should be remembered that the Black population is small in these regions Beale (1996).
6. Glasgow (1998) found that migration of older-old people from nonmetro-to-metro areas was equal to their rate of migration from metro-to-nonmetro areas.

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