

## Data and Methods

We use population data on race and ethnicity and geographic characteristics from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 decennial Censuses to examine socioeconomic characteristics, population dispersion, and settlement patterns among U.S. Hispanics and non-Hispanics, and their effects on residential separation within rural communities. Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites are distinguished on the basis of self-identifying race and Hispanic ethnicity questions on Census questionnaires. All people classifying themselves as Hispanic were considered Hispanic for this analysis, regardless of race.

Race and ethnicity questions are part of the 100-percent “short form” sample of the decennial Census and are available at the full range of Census geography down to the block level. We also use data on migration and socioeconomic characteristics derived from sample data provided by the 1990 and 2000 “long-form” questionnaires.<sup>4</sup> We examine four geographic levels of data: regions, counties, incorporated and Census-defined places, and Census tracts. We alter the four standard Census regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) by identifying for separate analysis a five-State Southwest region that includes Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas.

We use nonmetro counties to approximate “rural and small-town America,” and include among them all counties that fall outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) as defined in 1993, based on the 1990 Census.<sup>5</sup> MSAs, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget, include either “core” counties containing a city of 50,000 or more, or an urbanized area of 50,000 or more with a total population of at least 100,000 in the MSA. Additional contiguous counties are included in the MSA if they are economically integrated with the core county or counties, as determined by population and commuting data. We use the terms “rural” and “nonmetro” interchangeably to refer to people living outside of MSAs.

The introduction of multiple race categories in the 2000 Census complicates our comparison of racial and ethnic groups since 1990. Roughly 6.7 million people self-identified with 2 or more race groups in 2000. Rather than omit these cases from our residential separation analysis, we assigned them to one race following methodologies used by other researchers facing the same predicament (Allen and Turner, 2001). Accordingly, non-Hispanic Whites in 2000 include those that also checked American Indian or Other, while non-Hispanic Blacks include those that also indicated White, American Indian, Asian, or Other. We believe this approach does not significantly compromise our results because multi-race individuals make up less than 2.5 percent of both the nonmetro and total U.S. populations.

Finally, we emphasize that the term “Hispanic” in this report (and in general) refers to an extremely diverse population that possesses roots throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe, encompasses many socioeconomic strata, includes recent migrants and citizens of pre-Anglo settlement, and resides in geographically disperse urban and rural areas throughout all 50 of the United States. This report includes information on

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<sup>4</sup> The “long form” Census questionnaire is administered to an average of one in six households and includes more detailed questions than the “short form” questionnaire that is administered to all other U.S. households.

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<sup>5</sup> We use the metro-nonmetro classification as defined at the beginning of the 1990-2000 analysis period because some of the rapid growth we describe occurred in counties that subsequently became metro, and thus would have been missed using the later definition. The new set of metro and nonmetro counties—based on the 2000 Census and released in June 2003—uses different criteria and contains 253 fewer nonmetro counties than in 1990 (Cromartie, 2003).

all U.S. Hispanics, but focuses specifically on Hispanics in rapidly growing nonmetro counties who constitute a population we expect foreshadows demographic trends in rural America for the foreseeable future. To provide a context for understanding Hispanic conditions and characteristics, we frequently compare Hispanics with non-Hispanic Whites, who account for over 85 percent of all nonmetropolitan residents.