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# KANSAS THROUGH THE EYES OF KANSANS

## PREFERENCES FOR COMMONLY VIEWED LANDSCAPES

ROXANE FRIDIRICI AND STEPHEN E. WHITE

Kansas does not spring to most minds as possessing unique or picturesque landscapes. A study by the Ozark Regional Commission to help promote tourism in Kansas found that the state is generally perceived to be devoid of scenery and things to do.<sup>1</sup> Drab was a word used by several respondents. Some held outright negative images of Kansas; others had no image at all and no desire to visit the state.

Kansas inspires in outsiders a certain amount of respect for its mercurial weather, bumper grain harvests, and natural gas and oil deposits, but it has no spectacular mountains with accompanying ski resorts, no ocean beaches, no quaint eighteenth-century villages, no booming industrial belt. Even the town that carries the name of the state, Kansas

City, is for the most part an appendage of Kansas City, Missouri.

Kansans sometimes seem almost apologetic about their state's dull "image," or lack of scenic vistas. To compensate, there has been a recent attempt to capitalize on the commonly held association of Kansas with the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*. The attempt goes so far as to rename a highway "The Yellow Brick Road" and a town "The Emerald City." The current slogan from the State Department of Economic Development, "Kansas—Land of Ahs," springs from the same inspiration.

In reality, the landscapes of Kansas are very subtle. To the eye accustomed to identifying beauty as forests, oceans, or mountains, the vastness and the sweep of Kansas landscapes can seem empty, and the linear patterns boring. Yet, according to C. Rubenstein, Kansans are among those Americans who experience the greatest psychological well-being.<sup>2</sup> They experience less stress, a greater sense of personal competence, and are more satisfied with their communities, homes, and neighborhoods than citizens in many other parts of the country. If geography can create a sense of security and contentment, then Kansans must not feel deprived by their environ-

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ment. The focus of this paper is on the aesthetic preferences that Kansans have for some of the more common landscapes in their state. We will assess the elements in favored landscapes and examine the variability of tastes for persons of both sexes and all ages who are familiar with different areas of the state.

Landscapes are integral to geographic study.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, those landscapes with which we are most familiar have not usually fit geographers' notions of landscapes that need study or special consideration. Yet as a commodity and a resource, common landscapes have the greatest impact on most people's daily lives.

The term *landscape* has been used by painters, geographers, planners, architects, humanists, and earth scientists, and is, inevitably, ambiguous. Including both built and natural elements, a landscape is a mingling of the "physical and cultural features which any glance around us displays."<sup>4</sup> It comprises the visible aspects of the shape of the terrain, the relative variation of individual components of weather, light, and seasonal change, and the presence or absence of people, animals, and cultural artifacts. P. F. Lewis notes that the culture of an area is reflected in its landscape, and that almost all of the items of the landscape reflect that culture.<sup>5</sup> Although the most ordinary landscapes are perhaps the hardest to interpret, they are very important to developing an understanding of an area.

Groups of people may voice similar opinions about some object or some portion of the countryside, but each individual has brought to bear upon the landscape not only his or her physical senses but also a whole range of past experiences, cultural biases, knowledge gained from books and school, values, beliefs, and viewpoints from some stage of professional or personal development. Organized research into landscape preference and perception is still very young. No real body of theory has been developed, and the main findings by scholars cannot be generalized to fit every case.

## MEASURING LANDSCAPE PREFERENCES

This study uses a projective technique to measure landscape preference. In an attempt more carefully to examine subjective responses to phenomena, geographers began in the early 1960s to adapt psychological techniques, among them projective techniques.<sup>6</sup> Projective methods vary in format, but on the whole they are designed to provide freer, less inhibited responses that include both conscious and unconscious attitudes of respondents and a minimum of investigator bias.

Projective tests of landscape preference often use pictures in some form as surrogate images of the real landscape. Pictures can and do distort, edit, bind, and freeze the landscape, and may elicit response to a work of art rather than to the landscape. Landscapes portrayed by a photograph also involve only one sense, sight, which may limit the impact of a scene upon an individual. Nevertheless, the practical problem of transporting respondents to a variety of locales while maintaining a consistent landscape to view makes the use of photographs a necessary and adequate substitute. Research has shown that responses to slides tend to be consistent with responses to the same environment in the field.<sup>7</sup>

This research is based on two premises. The first is that "although a viewer's personal experience provides the context in which the information received from the landscape is processed, the characteristics of the landscape itself are the major determinants of the response."<sup>8</sup> That is, viewers will, for the most part, respond to the landscape they are shown, rather than to some internal construct or association of personal experience and beliefs, although these filters will affect the expression of the response. The second premise is that "the factors contributing to the aesthetic or emotional response to a landscape are capable of being identified."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, other research has shown that photos taken at one location but in different directions tend to receive similar ratings, supporting the proposi-

TABLE 1  
 DESCRIPTIONS, PREFERENCE SCORES, AND RANKINGS OF LANDSCAPES

Landscape Description		Preference Score	Preference Rank
A	Canyon in Gypsum Hills, southcentral Kansas	81.8	1
B	Stormy sky over the Flint Hills, road, cars, and house, Geary County	78.7	2
C	Stone wall and milo field, hills in the background, Wabaunsee County	74.4	3
D	Horses and cows grazing in pasture, Russell County	73.0	4
E	Post rock and field at sunset, Rush County	70.4	5
F	Upper-middle-class houses, yards, and trees, Johnson County	70.0	6
G	Bluffs and green vegetation around Lake McBride, Scott County	69.7	7
H	Hereford in green field, Wabaunsee County	67.7	8
I	City of Manhattan in early autumn from top of a high hill, Riley County	66.4	9
J	Sunbathers and swimmers at Tuttle Creek Reservoir, hills in background, trees in water, Riley County	66.3	10
K	Fields of ripe wheat with Kinsley and elevator in distance, Edwards County	66.2	11
L	Large Victorian houses on brick street, Atchison County	65.6	12
M	Loading chute, trees, sky, and fields, Morris County	65.4	13
N	Abandoned farmhouse, windmill, shed, and tree, Cloud County	64.7	14
O	Country crossroads with stop sign, Clay County	64.1	15
P	Farm gate and road through a pasture, Pawnee County	64.0	16
Q	Imposing limestone bank building, Ness County	62.3	17
R	River valley and railroad bridge over the Cimarron River, Seward County	58.4	18
S	Rural road and fields, Jeffrey Energy Center in distance, Jackson County	57.2	19
T	Old wooden army barracks at Fort Scott National Monument, Bourbon County	55.8	20
U	Centerpivot sprinkler preirrigating wheat at dusk, Gray County	54.4	21
V	Orchard on terraced hillside in early spring, silo in background, Cherokee County	52.8	22
W	Large new houses scattered over the countryside, Pottawatomie County	52.6	23
X	The Alma Hotel, old limestone building with iron grillwork and yellow awnings, Wabaunsee County	52.0	24
Y	Grain storage bins, legs and elevator, piles of milo, Marshall County	49.8	25
Z	Low-water road by lake, with chunks of ice in the water; car and figure in distance, Riley County	48.1	26
AA	Large Pillsbury elevators and storage bins, railroad tracks and cars, Atchison County	44.7	27
BB	Railroad crossing grade, old brick school, general store, and house in Volland, Wabaunsee County	44.4	28
CC	Pickup trucks and cars outside a bar with Coors beer sign, Stanton County	42.4	29
DD	Apartment complex, power pole, and blooming redbud tree, Riley County	41.2	30
EE	Mine spoils banks and reclaimed area, Crawford County	40.6	31
FF	Mine spoils bank with motorcycle tracks, water in gully below, Bourbon County	39.9	32
GG	Downtown Emporia, shops and line of cars	38.7	33
HH	Traffic on cloverleaf of I-35 and 75th Street, Johnson County	36.2	34
II	Traffic signs on busy commercial street during rush hour, Johnson County	27.3	35

tion that a single photograph can be used to represent a place.<sup>10</sup>

For this study, thirty-five slides of different Kansas landscapes were selected and shown to 115 Kansas State University students who were born in Kansas and who had lived most of their lives in the state. The slides were chosen to be representative of Kansas landscapes at different times of day and seasons of the year. Photographed in diverse locations, they showed the greatest variety of scenes allowed by the limited number of slides used. The number of slides was chosen with attention to completing the evaluation within a class period and to maintaining the respondents' attention while representing a variety of landscapes that occur within the state. Descriptions, preference scores, and preference rankings are provided in Table 1. Nine figures are offered to facilitate the discussion of the findings and to make the reader aware of the range of landscape types that were viewed by the respondents.

We did not choose slides for their highly artistic or photogenic qualities. It could be argued that this practice may have adversely affected the preference ratings, but an especially photogenic scene or artistic composition or a slide showing some spectacular, fleeting event—a rainbow or a dramatic sunset—might have elicited responses to the slide as art work, or to a single outstanding feature, rather than to the landscape as a whole. Lenses or filters that might have altered the image of the landscape were also avoided.

The slides were randomly ordered. All respondents saw the complete set of slides twice. The first time they viewed the slides, they were asked to rate the desirability of the landscape of each slide along a 100 millimeter bar scale with a pencil stroke. The scale ranged from zero, which was "negative/dislike," to 100, "very desirable." Only the two extremes and a midpoint were indicated on the bar scale. Respondents were given about twenty seconds to view each landscape and record their degree of preference with the pencil stroke.

The same slides in the same order were shown to the group a second time. The respondents were given about forty-five seconds to write sentences, phrases, or words that indicated what they were responding to in rating the landscape, that is, what they felt about the scene. It was explained to them that they were not to critique the photographic composition or technique, and they did not have to rationalize why they felt a certain way. They were asked to be as spontaneous and complete as possible in their answers.

We performed four types of analyses on the landscape preferences. First, we assessed characteristics of desirable and undesirable landscapes. Second, we analyzed differences in preferences among socioeconomic groups. Third, we examined the subjective written responses to determine why different groups preferred different landscapes. Finally, we assessed the degree to which the written responses could be fit into classification schemes provided in the literature by D. W. Meining and B. R. Little.

#### FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH PREFERENCE SCORES

Preference scores for each landscape were computed by averaging the numerical responses provided on the 100 millimeter bar scales. Factors affecting preference were determined by a combination of the researcher's subjective visual understanding of the scene and an overview of the written responses. Factors associated with high preference scores are access to sky views, human impacts that appear to be in harmony with nature, and color contrast.

*Sky.* People with as broad a view of the sky as Kansans must be influenced by the appearance of it. Kansas has no mountains, and the hills are often low and flat-topped. Roads frequently run along the ridgeline so that the usual view of the landscape can contain nearly 180° of sky. Compared to many other states, Kansas has fewer areas where trees shut out

the sky. Towns are smaller and—except for Wichita, Kansas City, and Topeka—do not have urban canyons of multistoried buildings to crowd out the sky.

Because Kansas is in the center of an area of cyclonic weather systems, there are frequent and dramatic changes in weather conditions, cloud formations, and color. The sky becomes a giant backdrop for the landscape, and many otherwise bland scenes are transformed by their setting against a particular sky. The most striking example of this is Landscape B (fig. 1), the second most preferred landscape in the test collection. The storm clouds, white and puffy above, shading to purple gray below, angle rays of strong golden sunlight onto an otherwise very typical scene of the Flint Hills. In Landscape E (Fig. 2), ranked fifth, sky dominates. There is little to the scene other than green shortgrass pasture or winter wheat, a few tufts of bleached prairie grasses, a post rock, and a broad expanse of the subtle pastel shades of early sunset. Most of the preferred landscapes have a clear blue sky, or skies of the dark gunmetal color associated with summer storms. The importance of the sky element in listing preferences may also explain the frequency of terms such as *open* and *vast*, carrying

positive connotations, in the descriptions of the selections.

*Human impact in harmony with nature.* Nature contains plants, animals, earth, and water. Imposed upon these may be the artifacts of human occupation of the landscape such as houses, crops, automobiles, and roads. A field of corn cannot be considered completely natural, because it appears in the landscape in its present form only through human cultivation, but it is composed of natural objects.

The top-rated slides focused on landscapes in which natural objects predominated, and in which the impact of human activity appeared to be limited. Distant houses or people, a post rock of native limestone or a stone wall seem to be acceptable. But town views, evidence of degradation of the environment, industrialization, or scenes with little vegetation are not viewed favorably.

Landscape F, showing upper-middle-class homes, is something of an anomaly. A suburban neighborhood can hardly be considered a natural environment. But the houses are all surrounded by large trees and rolling lawns, and there is no traffic, litter, or other objectionable features. Landscape I (fig. 3) is a view looking toward the town of Manhattan from a

FIG. 1. Landscape B:  
*Stormy sky over the Flint Hills, road, cars, and house, Geary County.*





FIG. 2. Landscape E:  
*Post rock and field at sunset, Rush County.*

high hill. Trees hide much of the detail, and only the nearest or tallest buildings rise out of the early autumn leaves. The river can be seen below. This is a very pleasant image of a city, with all the troubles and traffic hidden away below the leaves.

Harmony between humans and their cultural artifacts and the natural environment is

achieved in the photographs by distance or scale. A town at a distance, as in Landscape I, or automobiles, distant and dwarfed by the rest of the scene, as in Landscape B (fig. 1), are much less intrusive than they might otherwise be. Therefore, these landscapes were rated more highly.

Other preferred landscapes suggest a sense



FIG. 3. Landscape I:  
*City of Manhattan in early autumn from top of a high hill, Riley County.*

FIG. 4. Landscape D:  
*Horses and cows grazing in  
pasture, Russell County.*



of human cooperation with nature. The scenes shown in Landscapes C, D (fig. 4), E, H, and J (fig. 5) show well-tilled fields promising good harvests, animals grazing in green pastures, and people enjoying a summer's day by a lake. In each of these, the human activity seems to harmonize with the landscape. Indeed, human beings and their animals have become almost

natural, the horses and cattle taking the place of deer and antelope.

*Color.* Generally, the most preferred landscapes were ones in which the colors were vivid or in strong contrast. The scene having the highest preference score (A, fig. 6) is a good example—deep blue sky, emerald green vegeta-

FIG. 5. Landscape J:  
*Sunbathers and swimmers  
at Tuttle Creek Reservoir,  
hills in background, trees in  
water, Riley County.*





FIG. 6. Landscape A:  
*Canyon in the Gypsum  
Hills, southcentral Kansas.*

tion, and deep red soil. In the second most preferred landscape (B, fig. 1), the light and dark shading of the colors is very striking, dark storm clouds, puffy white at their tops, and the bronze and gold of vegetation. Landscape C, third in preference, is less striking, but the colors of a stone wall and milo fields are still bright and crisp. The exception to this preference to color in a desired landscape is Landscape F, which shows homes in suburban Johnson County. The sky is gray, the trees are leafless, and the colors dull. Some other factor must have caused this landscape to be rated as one of the most desirable. The houses are large, older homes in a middle- or upper-middle-class neighborhood. The lawns are large, with well-tended shrubs; the street is winding and tree-lined. The appeal of this landscape may be the lifestyle that is represented, an obtainable representation of the American Dream and an acceptable form of urban life.

#### FACTORS IN LOW PREFERENCE SCORES

Features found in the ten least desirable landscapes are less easy to identify. A combination of factors or vague associations, rather than definite elements, seems to be at work here.

*Strong human impact or lack of natural elements.* This factor is composed of different but related ideas, and the presence of either aspect in the landscape seems to be undesirable. Landscape AA shows a well-kept agricultural scene. The elevators and bins look tended, with no graffiti or trash. The sky overhead is blue; the bins are glinting silver in the sun. But there is no sign of any greenery or any natural object. Everything is asphalt, metal, and concrete.

The least desirable of all slides, thirty-fifth in the preference rating, was II, a rush-hour scene on Metcalf Avenue in Kansas City (fig. 7). Though the little sky visible was overcast, there were many bright colors from the cars, signs, and traffic signals. However, the overwhelming objects in the landscape are masses of cars, powerlines, and advertisements. There is no vegetation; in fact, humans or any other natural objects would seem out of place in this claustrophobia-inducing landscape. A landscape with many of the same elements, GG, is also among the ten least desirable landscapes. Here, the scene is more familiar—downtown Emporia with a line of cars—and the scale is much more human. There are shops and a sidewalk, a tree or two, and a blue sky overhead, but it was still not seen as being a desirable landscape.

FIG. 7. Landscape II:  
*Traffic signs on busy commercial street during rush hour, Johnson County.*



*Colorlessness.* Landscapes EE and FF (fig. 8) are examples. The predominant color in both of these is a muddy gray. Sky, earth, and vegetation are all shades of the same drab color. HH is less monochromatic, but the dull

sky, leafless trees, and the expanse of concrete highway make for very subdued colors. Even a pastoral scene such as the landscape shown in FF can be seen as undesirable if composed of dark shades and shadows.

FIG. 8. Landscape FF:  
*Mine spoil bank with motorcycle track, water in gully below, Bourbon County.*



Once again the effect of color on the rating of a landscape was important, and the color varied with the time of day and change of season.

*Undesirable associations.* This category is meant to include landscapes that for some reason other than their physical appearance (or in addition to their appearance) have a connotation of undesirability. Examples could be the urban street scenes or spoils banks, but each of those also had other factors contributing to a negative rating: drab colors, lack of natural elements, or adverse human impact.

Landscape BB (fig. 9), however, has an intensely blue sky and bright sunlight. Although the shrubs and trees are not well-tended, they are not objectionable. The old red brick school, white house and general store, and the gray of the gravel on the railroad crossing grade provide pleasant color contrasts. There is not the impression that the buildings are deserted or dangerous in the sense of an urban ghetto. Yet this landscape was rated poorly. Some respondents saw it as representing the “wrong side of the tracks,” as

a place where people were too poor or too discouraged to maintain and improve their surroundings. Others saw it as a place without civic pride. Kansas is dotted with similar remnants of towns that have already, or seem destined to, become ghost towns. Kansans may be embarrassed by what this scene represents.

In contrast, Landscape DD shows a relatively new apartment building. Strong late afternoon sunlight illuminates the building, a power pole, and a blossoming redbud tree. This landscape was rated thirtieth among the slides. The college students involved in the study may have lived in various small apartment buildings, and been all too familiar with their shortcomings. These shortcomings were perhaps projected upon the image they held of this landscape.

The low rating of Landscape Z is more difficult to explain. The scene shows a low-water road running by the side of a lake, water lapping at the berm of the road. The sky and the water are deep blue, and the bare tree branches and clumps of ice clinging to stalks of grass reveal it is winter. The undesirable rating



FIG. 9. Landscape BB:  
Railroad crossing grade, old  
brick school, general store,  
and house in Volland,  
Wabaunsee County.

may have been due to the car and road intruding into an otherwise natural scene. Or perhaps the scene conveyed the strong winds and icy temperatures of the winter day. Or perhaps the ice was mistaken for litter thrown into the water.

Landscape CC shows pickup trucks and cars lined up outside a smalltown bar with a Coors beer sign over the door. The landscape received a low preference rating; many people saw it as a bad neighborhood, or a sleazy place to go drinking. They preferred not to associate with the "rednecks" they were sure were inside. For some, however, this image conjured up a very familiar and homey atmosphere that they felt comfortable with and enjoyed. They had had good times in some small bar very like this, and that positive experience altered their perception of this landscape's desirability.

#### PREFERENCE DIFFERENCES AMONG RESPONDENT GROUPS

The respondents were cross-classified within six different characteristics to include age, sex, size of hometown, location within Kansas, metropolitan experience, and familiarity with Kansas. A t-test was performed to compare the difference in preference means for each landscape between various respondent groups. The most surprising finding was the degree to which there was agreement among different groups of respondents about landscape preferences. For example, only two of the thirty-five landscapes received significantly different preference scores between men and women. The degree to which respondents felt they were familiar with Kansas also had little to do with landscape preference. Likewise, landscape preferences did not vary significantly between persons from eastern Kansas and western Kansas, contrary to popular supposition.

In only two preference comparisons did different groups of respondents have significantly different landscape preferences for at least eight of the thirty-five slides. Those who grew up on farms differed with those who lived in cities larger than 45,000 on thirteen land-

scapes, while those in the metropolitan area of the state disagreed with respondents in the eastern quadrant of Kansas on eight landscapes.

A subjective assessment of preferences suggests the following reasons for the differences. Those from farms are less recreationally inclined than the urban group. They enjoy openness and space more and are critical of industry or other forms of urbanization encroaching upon them. In addition, they are more sympathetic toward landscapes showing agricultural activities. The urban group is less interested in agriculture, and less informed about it. They often find farm landscapes boring. They are more likely to mention the recreational activities possible in a natural landscape. The urban respondents are intrigued by the idea of a small town, but less impressed by the reality.

Some of the differences between metropolitan Kansans and eastern Kansans in non-metro areas include discrepant ideas of relative size; what is a small town to the metro respondents may be a town that is unpleasantly large for the eastern respondents. Openness versus crowdedness is also relative. The eastern response group is more likely to comment on the productivity of the land; the metro group on the industrialization of the landscape. However, landscape preferences among Kansans having different socioeconomic characteristics conformed to a degree that we did not expect.

#### CATEGORIZING LANDSCAPE EVALUATION CRITERIA

Can the criteria that Kansans use to determine their landscape preferences be identified and classified? The final segment of this research compares the written subjective responses of Kansans to Kansas landscapes with two categorization schemes that researchers have suggested to generalize the criteria that people might use to describe a landscape. We have examined the adequacy of these classification techniques for Kansans.

The first of these approaches is one developed by D. W. Meinig, who lists ten different ways a group of people might view a landscape: Nature, Habitat, Artifact, System, Problem, Wealth, Ideology, History, Place and Aesthetic (Table 2).<sup>11</sup> The second system of categories was developed by B. R. Little: Personalistic, Physicalistic, Global-aesthetic, Functionalistic, and Egocentric (Table 3).<sup>12</sup> Both are more theoretically based than research oriented, though Little's work did derive from responses of subjects to various landscapes.

The question here is whether Kansans' responses reflect these categories, and whether there are problems using such categories to clarify their responses. Each category suggested by Meinig and Little will have examples of responses to Kansas landscape that fit the criteria of the category.

Many responses fall into several categories and it was often difficult to know which was the most influential in determining the preference expressed for the landscape. To which of Meinig's landscape factors does one assign responses such as "hunting season" or "Stop? for what??" People who indicate unfamiliarity with a landscape or who have expressed an opinion resulting from a misinterpretation of the scene also cause difficulties, as do people who state they don't have a response, or whose attitude is that they are indifferent to the landscape. If a landscape has inspired total indifference or boredom, does this landscape represent Meinig's category of Problem, of Ideology, or neither? Still other responses would be very difficult to place. "Harvest design"—does that response refer to the aesthetic quality of the scene, or to the landscape as a system? "Dad works at a Co-op"—is that a landscape viewed as Place or as System, or neither? What is the correct category for a response such as "I love it" with no explanation of why? Kansans frequently respond in a positive way to a landscape they describe as "open" or "vast." Does this quality reflect Ideology, seeking a tangible expression of ideas or philosophy, or does it reflect an aesthetic view of the landscape in which wide reaches of

the land and sky are pleasing to Kansans' eyes?

Once again, the landscape categories can be filled by responses to Kansas landscapes. But as with the Meinig categories, some responses fit uneasily into Little's scheme. Neither Little's nor Meinig's categories allow for positive and negative views of the environment. If a landscape is viewed as History, the people seeing the landscape may feel a great sense of protectiveness about their heritage, or they may feel history is irrelevant to today's concerns, and this landscape should make way for new things.

Geographers and other people who work with landscape evaluations or perception do not habitually go out to classify every landscape as falling into Meinig's, or Little's, or another scholar's categories. But such schemes do tend to lurk in our consciousness because they are usually simple, clear, and self-explanatory. By thinking of landscape preference and landscape perception in terms of these prefabricated categories, it becomes very easy to overlook the subtler traits of either a particular landscape or populations, and perhaps ignore or lose some of the characteristics that are most influential and important.

To evaluate the landscape of an area, it is necessary to start with those landscapes, discover the preferences and the perceptions of the people who interact with them, and then develop the categories that occur naturally and that fit the unique qualities of those landscapes. Previous works in the subject area are very useful. Works such as Meinig's and Little's give an excellent overview and summary of major classifications.

The mistake that can be made is to attempt to force the results of an evaluation into the fixed categories of previous work that has been done. As noted above, the field of perception is relatively new, and bodies of theories and methodologies are still being developed. Likewise, categorical frameworks for defining the evaluation criteria that people use in actually assessing the desirability of landscapes will prove quite elusive.

Geographers have examined the landscape

TABLE 2  
RESPONSES CORRESPONDING TO MEINIG'S CRITERIA

Nature: "no obstacles, just land"	Habitat: "place I would like to live—away from town"
"I like Kansas the way nature leaves it"	"neat place to live if it was rebuilt"
"natural, no signs of civilization"	"nice residential area"
"nature's power and beauty"	"want to live here in 20 years"
"landform, erosion, natural beauty"	System: "new technology helps yields"
Artifact: "someone has misused the pretty landscape with motorcycles"	"developing area shows what development is accomplishing"
"new houses improve the landscape"	"industry, advancement, technology"
"stone fencepost, standing forever"	Wealth: "development of industry—putting to use worthless land"
Problem: "someone left the gate open and all the cows got out"	"industry, fruits of labor, bumper crop, happy"
"will lead to pollution"	"money, food"
"someone shot holes in the stop sign. I hate guns"	History: "representative of the pioneers in Kansas, dryness of Kansas"
Ideology: "the hill is a conquest to be met"	"old and wise look"
"Main Street, U.S.A."	"the old homestead, where life began"
"shows what Kansas is all about"	"historical, would like to meet original owners"
"men who made it in the world, won the battles"	
Place: "Good ol' Kansas"	Aesthetic: "pretty—stone fence and color combinations"
"good times and sun at Tuttle"	"rich deep colors of red and green, untouched"
"Topeka is ugly"	
"looks like my house in my hometown"	"sky and clouds contrasting with the land"
"the road to Lake Kanopolis"	"artistic-looking, like a painting"

as a key to understanding the spatial variation in culture, the geographical past, and the end product of human interaction with the natural environment. Meinig tells us, "Environment sustains us as a creature; landscapes display us as a culture."<sup>13</sup> "All human landscape has cultural meaning," concurs Little. "There are no secrets in the landscape. All of our cultural warts and blemishes are there and our glory too. . . ."<sup>14</sup>

In this study we have examined the reactions of Kansans to particular Kansas landscapes. What they prefer, and what they

dislike, about the visual, cultural, and physical manifestations of their home environment has allowed us to begin to characterize how people in general respond to the landscapes with which they are most familiar.

#### NOTES

1. Welling, Monton & Vanderslice, Inc., "Technical Assistance for the State of Kansas in Reaching Its Optimum Potential in Tourism" (Tulsa: Ozarks Regional Commission, 1977).

2. C. Rubenstein, "Regional States of Mind," *Psychology Today* 16 (1982): 26.

TABLE 3

#### RESPONSES CORRESPONDING TO LITTLE'S CRITERIA

Personalistic (personalities in the landscape):	Physicalistic (physical character and limitations of the landscape):
"Kansas towns seem to breed a lot of narrow-minded people."	"rolling hills and meadows"
"probably good people"	"wheatfield with an elevator in the background"
"ignorant, loud, stupid, rednecks"	"nice houses, vegetation looks dead"
Global-aesthetic (higher order, qualitative):	Functionalistic (the use or function of a place; the behavior which would take place there):
"makes me want to run down to the riverbank"	"good hunting country"
"life! green newness of the land"	"grain being stored during harvest"
"road to the sky—feels comfortable"	"great place to party"
Egocentric (the effect of place on self or on the role played in that location):	
"I like going to the lake—good times"	
"reminds me of back home"	
"nice, I can relate to it"	
"going to work when I'd rather sleep"	

3. Some works of particular interest to geographers include D. W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); D. Lowenthal and M. J. Bowden, eds., *Geographies of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

4. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, p. 3.

5. P. F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, pp. 11-32.

6. T. F. Saarinen, "The Use of Projective Techniques in Geographic Research," *Environment and Cognition*, ed. W. H. Ittelson (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 29-52.

7. R. E. Coughlin and K. A. Goldstein, "The Extent of Agreement among Observers on Environmental Attractiveness," *RSRI Discussion Paper Series*;

No. 37, (Philadelphia: Regional Science Research Institute, 1970), p. 12.

8. C. Wilson-Hodges, "The Measurement of Landscape Aesthetics," *Environmental Perception Research Working Paper No. 2*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Institute for Environmental Studies, 1978), p. 3.

9. *Ibid*, p. 13.

10. Coughlin and Goldstein, "The Extent of Agreement among Observers on Environmental Attractiveness."

11. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye," pp. 33-48.

12. B. R. Little, "Specialization and the Variety of Environmental Experience," *Experiencing the Environment*, eds. S. Wapner, S. B. Cohen, and B. Kaplan (New York: Plenum Press, 1975).

13. Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, p. 3.

14. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," p. 12.