

FROM DUST BOWL TO GREEN CIRCLES

A Case Study of Haskell County, Kansas



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FROM DUST BOWL TO GREEN CIRCLES: A CASE STUDY OF HASKELL COUNTY, KANSAS¹

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ABSTRACT

Social, economic, cultural, environmental, and other forces of change constantly are reshaping our communities, or more precisely, communal relations. An issue of particular concern is the changing significance of locality to the structure of communal relations. Specifically, is the relevance of locality to individuals' social interactions changing within our modern society? This empirical investigation examined changes in locality-relevant functions in a rural community: Haskell County, Kansas. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, case studies of six rural communities were conducted by the USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The communities were chosen to represent a continuum from high community stability to great instability. Sublette, Kansas, locked in the throes of the "dust bowl," was viewed as the least stable of the sites. Earl Bell's (1942) study of Sublette reported on the social and economic situation of Haskell County, and he confirmed and explained the great instability found in this community. Utilizing Bell's (1942) work as a benchmark, Mays (1968) revisited Haskell County a quarter of a century later. He described a community that recently had achieved relative stability. Among the changes that had occurred since 1940 were: replacement of the wheat monoculture with crop diversity because of irrigation and government programs, replacement of the "gambling mentality" of farmers with a business/economic rationality, an increase in class stratification, and men being more active than women in formal leadership roles. Like the previous studies, our study utilized three basic techniques: secondary data analysis, case-study field research, and survey research. The results showed that some trends noted in 1965 had continued, but many changes had occurred. The county has maintained many of its "traditional" community characteristics. Family continued to be the primary social unit, and the school continued to be the dominant social institution. Churches had become more visible and active in community affairs. Women were once again active in leadership roles. Differences between Sublette and Satanta had become more pronounced. Satanta's economy was based on energy resources, and the community showed more cultural diversity, yet had a higher degree of social interaction. Many residents of the county had negative attitudes toward federal and state government programs. The results also showed that water is the defining resource of Haskell County. From the settlement of the county in the late 1880s through the time of Bell's visit in 1940, the "capricious" rainfall in the region had created a history of economic and social instability. By 1965, technological changes had unlocked the vast resources of the region, in particular, the groundwater in the Ogallala Aquifer. Irrigation was the foundation of economic and social stability. In 1993, the aquifer clearly was declining and changing agricultural practices. This decline will continue to be the fundamental challenge facing Haskell County. It has caused some residents to speculate that development of the community has reached its peak. Other residents recall the accomplishments of past generations, i.e., the rise from the desperate conditions of the "dust bowl" and the Great Depression. Drawing upon this heritage, many Haskell County residents have a guarded confidence that the community can, and will, meet the challenges that lie before it. Given the increasing use of center-pivot irrigation systems to conserve water, their future may involve "green circles."

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Haskell County has been studied several times over the last 50 years. In the previous studies, the researchers noted the friendly and open nature of the local people. This study found that those conditions had not diminished. The people of Haskell County graciously welcomed us into their community. Their acceptance and assistance were critical factors in the success of the project. The authors are very grateful to every Haskell County resident who became involved with the study. However, special thanks go to Mrs. Ed Hall and the Haskell County Historical Society, as well as to Mr. Keith Waugh and Mr. Roy Pywell.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Community, both theoretically and empirically, is an important area of interest among sociologists, particularly rural sociologists. Although a universally accepted definition of community has eluded sociologists through the years, most would agree that community needs to be conceptualized as a dynamic social phenomenon. Social, economic, cultural, environmental, and other forces of change are constantly reshaping our communities, or more precisely, communal relations (Weber 1946; Mingione 1991). Perhaps beginning with the writings of Ferdinand Tonnies (1957 [1887]), sociologists have sought theoretical, methodological, and empirical means to identify the elements of change and determine their effects upon the structure of communal relations. An issue of particular concern for rural sociologists is the changing significance of locality to the structure of communal relations. Specifically, is the relevance of locality to individuals' social interactions changing within our modern society?

This empirical investigation examined changes in locality-relevant functions in a rural community: Haskell County, Kansas. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, six case studies of rural communities were conducted by the USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics (Taylor et al. 1940). According to Taylor (1942), the six communities for this rural study project (El Cerrito, New Mexico; Sublette, Kansas; Irwin, Iowa; The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; Landaff, New Hampshire; and Harmony,

Georgia) were not selected for geographical representativeness (Figure 1), but rather to represent a continuum from high community stability to great instability. Sublette, which was locked in the throes of the "dust bowl", was viewed as the least stable of the sites.

Earl Bell's (1942) study of Sublette, Kansas, reported on the social and economic situation of Haskell County. Based on his historical review and the conditions he found there, Bell confirmed and explained the great instability in this community. He further noted the impact that long-term instability had on the nature of community in Haskell County.

Utilizing Bell's (1942) work as a benchmark, Mays (1968) revisited Haskell County a quarter of a century later. His findings described a considerably different community than that reported in the earlier study. In contrast to the instability witnessed by Bell in 1940, Mays in 1965 found a community that recently had achieved relative stability. Mays described how this recent stability was changing the structure of communal relations in Haskell County.

The changes experienced by Haskell County and the wealth of information available from the previous community case studies offered a unique opportunity for an analysis of the social and economic changes in a rural community. A third visit to Haskell County, approximately 50 years after the first study and 25 years after the second study, would allow the development of a set of longitudinal data that might unlock some of the mysteries of community change.

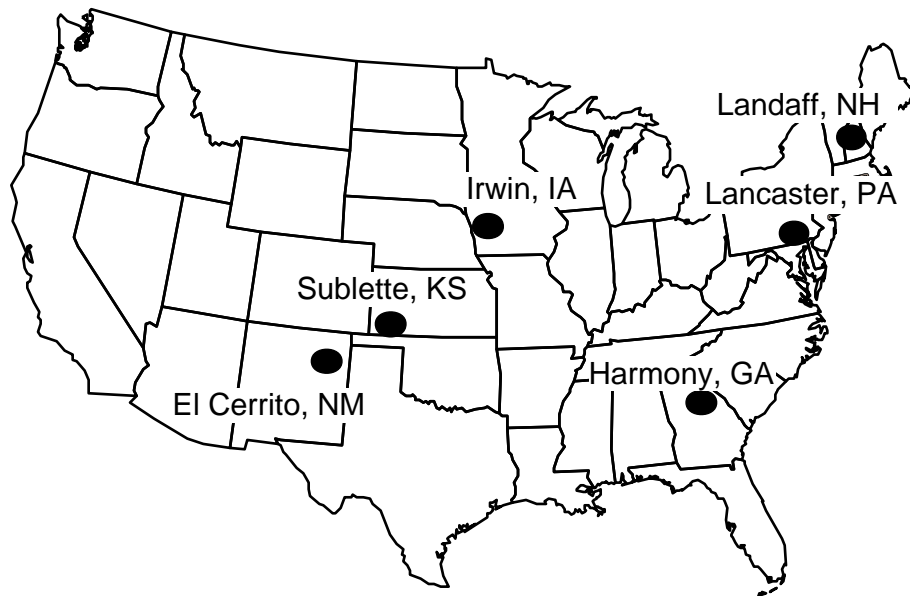


Figure 1. Locations of communities studied during the 1940s Rural Life Study Series, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

PROCEDURES

Given the longitudinal nature of this study, many of the research techniques were selected to be comparable with those used previously. As in the previous studies, three basic techniques were utilized, i.e., secondary data analysis, case-study field research, and survey research. These three techniques included five major analysis procedures: (1) an in-depth review of the two previous community studies of Haskell County (Bell 1942; Mays 1968); (2) a secondary analysis of demographic, weather, and farm statistics; (3) a content analysis of the local newspaper; (4) a self-administered mail survey of all households in Haskell County; and (5) participant observation and semistructured intensive interviews of persons knowledgeable of the Haskell County community.

Review of Previous Studies

For the third study within this longitudinal series, the first step in the analysis process was to review carefully the previous two studies (Bell 1942; Mays 1968). The purpose of this review was to isolate key sociocultural conditions for examination and to identify the processes of change that had occurred in Haskell County over this 50-year period. The results of this analysis set the stage for our study.

Secondary Data Analysis

The evaluation of demographic and weather data was a key component of the restudy of Haskell County. Population statistics, agricultural data, and weather records were important elements of the previous studies. Demographic data also can be used to document important social changes. For the purposes of comparison, data were analyzed for the United States, Kansas, and the 105 counties in Kansas. Data were obtained from three primary sources: the Census of Population, the Census of Agriculture, and the Kansas State Weather Data Library. The study of population utilized the decennial Census of Population to evaluate changes in the economic and social structures of Haskell County compared to the nation, state, and other Kansas counties. Employment and income were the primary variables for the analysis of economic changes. Changes in household and family structures and in the age composition of the population were used to specify social changes. Agricultural statistics were based primarily upon data from the Census of Agriculture. Key statistics included: land utilization patterns, i.e., irrigation; gross farm sales; the changing number and size of farms; expenditure patterns, i.e., energy and hired labor; and the occurrence of off-farm employment for farm operators. Meteorological information from the Weather Data Library was used to evaluate climatological changes in the 50 years since the first study of Haskell County. The primary focus was to evaluate the extent to which weather conditions have had a direct impact upon agricultural production. This analysis updated the weather data used in the 1940 study (Bell 1942) to see if any

changes had occurred in the weather pattern of Haskell County that could help explain changes in community stability.

Content Analysis of Newspaper

The primary purpose of the content analysis of the Haskell County newspaper for the years when community studies were conducted (1940, 1965, and 1993) was to evaluate quantitatively the presence of extracommunity, regional, and local community activities. Extracommunity elements are activities of national and state programs and associations, both governmental and private. Regional elements are activities that encompass multiple counties in the southwest region of Kansas. Local community activities are instances of group interaction relevant to communal relations.

Beyond evaluating the level of extracommunity linkages, a qualitative goal of this analysis was to determine the character of these relationships. The content of each article was studied to determine if it reflected either a positive or negative local attitude regarding extracommunity linkages. Another goal of the content analysis was to investigate the nature of local community activity by evaluating the roles of key social institutions and organizations within the community. A final aspect of this analysis looked at the occurrence and character of local conflict. The analysis of conflict can reveal important insights about the dynamic nature of communal relationships in a particular setting.

The official Haskell County newspapers for the years 1940, 1965, and 1993 were analyzed. In 1940, the county had two weekly newspapers, the Sublette Monitor and the Satanta Chief. The Sublette Monitor was the official newspaper of Haskell County and the city of Sublette. The newspaper, a member of Kansas Press Association, was published every Thursday by Rolland and Dee Jacquart. The Satanta Chief also was published by members of the same family, Henry J. and Ann Jacquart. The Chief was the official newspaper of the city of Satanta. It also was published every Thursday. A comparison of these two newspapers showed that their contents were very similar. Therefore, only the official county newspaper, the Monitor, was analyzed in this study. On January 1, 1957 the Sublette Monitor and the Satanta Chief were consolidated into the Haskell County Monitor-Chief. In 1965, the Haskell County Monitor-Chief was the official newspaper of Haskell County and the cities of Sublette and Satanta. The newspaper, a member of the Kansas Press Association, was published every Thursday by Rolland and Dee Jacquart. Beatrice Jacquart was the Satanta representative on the newspaper staff. In 1993, the Haskell County Monitor-Chief was still the official newspaper of Haskell County and the cities of Sublette and Satanta. However, it now was owned by Karen L. Brady, who owns a series of local newspapers in Oklahoma and Kansas, and was published on Wednesday instead of Thursday.

After an initial review of the newspapers, the first page was selected for analysis. This decision was made because of the significance given to articles appearing on the front page and as a means of making the analysis feasible regarding the volume of material to analyze. Beginning with the first issue of each year, every other newspaper was evaluated. The total number of articles was noted, and articles relating to extracommunity, regional, and local community activities were identified. Articles coded as extracommunity had to relate to a national or state activity that had local relevance. Items coded as regional activity concerned elements with local relevance that involved multiple counties in the southwest region of Kansas. Articles on local community activity were those that conveyed group interaction relevant to the local setting. In addition, the remaining issues of the newspapers were reviewed for important items relevant to these topics. Any items found were noted as "extra" cases in the content analysis, and although they were not considered in the numeric evaluations, they did contribute to an understanding of the activities involved and the tone of the articles. In addition to the review of the front page, letters to the editor in 1993 also were evaluated. Such letters often indicate issues of conflict within a community and can help further the understanding of the local social setting.

Considerable changes in the format of the newspaper occurred across the span of 53 years. In 1940, the front page rarely had photographs and contained an average of 14 articles. Most of the articles were short and generally were news stories of the local area and the southwest region of Kansas. In 1965, pictures occupied the greatest portion of the front page, averaging four large photographs per page. These pictures were of local events and local citizens, and some were accompanied by extended descriptive text. Typically, the front page contained only four articles plus leads to guide readers to stories within the paper. The use of such leads seemed to signify importance or anticipated interest in the stories. Given the important role of the photographs and leads, we decided to consider them as articles in the coding scheme. For example, if a picture was of a local association function, it was considered to be a local community activity article. On the other hand, if the picture was of a local person, but did not convey any group interaction, it was not considered to be a local community activity article. In 1993, the composition of the front page seemed to be a blend of the 1940 and 1965 styles. Local pictures were still used, but they did not occupy as large a portion of the front page as they had in 1965. More articles were included in 1993, an average of seven to eight, and the use of leads was no longer an important feature.

Community Survey

A self-administered survey instrument was disseminated by mail to all Haskell County households. The survey instrument was developed by the Technical Committee of the Rural Life Restudy Project, which coordinated the re-

study of all six communities that were studied in the original Rural Life Study Series some 50 years ago. The survey instrument built on the works of Goudy (1977, 1983, 1990); Stinner et al. (1990); and other rural sociologists. Major focuses of the survey were the concepts of community attachment and participation. The survey also collected information that had direct bearing on several locality-relevant community functions, i.e., socialization, social participation, social control, and mutual support (Warren 1978).

A critical aspect in the implementation of the self-administered survey was the attempt to generate public interest in the survey and in the larger study. Prior to beginning on-site intensive interviews, news releases about the study were provided to local and regional newspapers. In these news releases, the various components of the study, including the self-administered survey, were discussed. During the intensive interviews, which occurred throughout 1993, interviewers noted the intention to conduct a mail survey of all households to the informants being interviewed. Suggestions about how to conduct the survey in order to maximize participation were solicited.

In January of 1994, the research team made a presentation at the annual meeting of the Haskell County Historical Society. This presentation reviewed the previous studies of Haskell County (Bell 1942 and Mays 1968) and concluded with a discussion about the planned mail survey of the community. The research team shared a draft of the survey with the Haskell County Historical Society Board for its review and comments. The Historical Society agreed to sponsor the survey and provided the research team with the latest mailing lists available for Satanta, Sublette, and rural residents of Haskell County. When the mailing lists were compiled into a countywide list, it contained 1477 addresses.

From February through April of 1994, a written, self-administered, household survey was conducted in Haskell County. Through the process of mailings and telephone contacts, we determined that the 1477 addresses on the original mailing list contained 249 addresses of people who had moved or who had a Haskell County address but who did not really live there. Twenty-eight of the addresses were for people who were deceased, and 75 households had duplicate addresses. The final survey mailing list thus contained 1125 households. The 1990 Census counted 1382 households in Haskell County. We estimated, therefore, that the survey did not reach about 20 percent of the households. Because the mailing lists used for households in Haskell County were compiled in 1990 for Satanta, 1991 for Sublette, and 1993 for rural Haskell County residents, a high proportion of the 20 percent of households missed probably involved people who had recently moved into the county.

Out of the pool of 1125 households contacted, 488 responded. This represents a 43.4 percent response rate. From these 488 initial responses, 465 were acceptable for

analysis. Respondents who identified Satanta as their community accounted for 131 of the valid responses (28.2 percent). Respondents who identified Sublette as their community accounted for 152 of the valid responses (32.7 percent). Ninety-four of the valid responses identified Haskell County as their community (20.2 percent). The remaining 88 responses either identified a rural portion of Haskell County as their community, provided a description of their community rather than locating it geographically, or identified Copeland as their community. The responses to the survey were analyzed in four different ways, i.e., the entire set of responses and each of the three separate communities (Satanta, Sublette, and Haskell County). The Haskell County group in this report is made up of those respondents who identified Haskell County as their community. Satanta respondents had the highest response rate, 45.5 percent. The response rate of Sublette and the rural respondents was nearly the same, 41.5 and 40.3 percent, respectively. (Note: a detailed report of this survey is available in the archives of the Rural Restudy Project, NE-173.)

Participant Observation and Semistructured Interviews

Case-study field research was utilized to obtain a “thick description” (Geertz 1973; Denzin 1989) of local sociocultural conditions and the ways that local residents respond to them. Information was obtained primarily from semistructured interviews with local residents knowledgeable of the Haskell County community. Interviewees were asked about patterns of community change and the effects of various local and extralocal policies on contemporary community conditions. The use of a semistructured format for the interviews was designed to generate an open exchange that was guided by the broad areas of investigative interest but could flow according to the life experiences of the interviewee. Lofland and Lofland (1984:12) described a semistructured interview as,

“ . . . a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. . . [T]he intensive interview seeks to discover the informant’s experience of a particular topic or situation.”

The semistructured interviews were guided by three overall points of interest, i.e., the interviewee’s: (1) observation of important past social changes, (2) view of the community’s current social situation, and (3) expectations about the community’s future.

The interviewees were primarily residents of Haskell County, including both current and previous residents. Also included were non-Haskell County residents who had contact, typically through their employment, with the community. Identification of individuals to be interviewed followed a “snowball” method of sampling (Denzin 1989). This method basically develops its sample through the information gained from the interviews themselves. The critical

step in this method is the initial entry into the community. For this study, two paths of entry were developed. The first was initiated through contact with Haskell County residents who held key public positions. The second path was based upon the investigators’ contact with persons in the southwest region of Kansas who had both knowledge of, and rapport with, key people in Haskell County. At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewee was asked to identify additional persons who could give the investigators an insight into the social setting of Haskell County. Most people who were interviewed not only provided suggestions about others to interview but also were willing to allow the investigators to use their names as references when contacting the people they had suggested. With this level of support, very few people who were contacted declined to participate. Interestingly, the two paths of entry quickly merged, as the lists of persons who were recommended to us became remarkably similar. The intensive interview analysis was concluded when most of the additional persons suggested for interviews had already been contacted.

Interviewees also suggested other sources of information, i.e., published reports. Reports cited during the course of the intensive interviews and that were obtained and utilized in this study included: the Haskell County Economic Development Strategic Plan (Haskell County Economic Development Inc. 1993), the Haskell County Public Opinion Survey (Docking Institute of Public Policy 1992) conducted during their strategic planning process, the School Consolidation Study (Stewart 1993), and the Ogallala Task Force Report (Kansas State Board of Agriculture 1993).

Analysis of the Data

The use of a combination of research techniques, in addition to fitting the basic approach of the previous studies, provided the current study with several sets of data about the Haskell County community. According to Denzin (1989:25), “[N]o single method will ever permit an investigator to develop causal propositions free of rival interpretations. . . . Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed.” In this analysis, the data gathered from each of the multiple research techniques were combined to identify the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and other forces of change that have affected the Haskell County, Kansas, community over the half-century since it was first studied.

HASKELL COUNTY IN 1940

Bell's (1942) visit to Haskell County occurred in 1940; he lived in the community for 4 months and returned there several times to make additional observations (Taylor 1942). His field work combined secondary data analysis, case-study field research, and survey research. An important historical document that was available to Bell and may have played a significant role in the selection of Haskell County for study was Edwards' (1939) analysis of the influence of drought and depression upon Haskell County in 1938.

MAJOR FORCES THAT SHAPED THE COMMUNITY

Bell (1942:72) claimed that, because of the great similarity throughout the entire county, the most appropriate unit for his community study was Haskell County (although he retained "Sublette" as the title for his report). In his review of historical records, he documented the instability of the community. His observations of current conditions confirmed that the elements of instability were still present in the community. He felt that four key factors had shaped the community of Haskell County: (1) environment; (2) federal government programs; (3) development (i.e., mechanization, commercialization, and monoculturalization) of agriculture; and (4) human psychology.

Environment

Bell (1942) noted that the single factor most responsible for Haskell County's instability was the "capricious" forces of nature.

"The topography is ideal for farming, the soil is rich and deep, and the frost-free period is sufficiently long for most crops. These are all elements for successful farming save one—rain. The eccentric rainfall is most responsible for the instability of the county. If the precipitation were consistently scanty, adjustments would have been made and the county would have continued the grazing economy. If it were consistently plentiful, the county could rival the world's richest tract of agricultural land." (Bell 1942:15)

Edwards (1939:27) also made this point in his earlier study. "The crop and weather records of Haskell County reveal that deficient rainfall has caused a complete or partial failure of the crop for at least 24 out of 53 years . . ." Bell (1942) pointed out that the dramatic swings in precipitation were significant factors limiting stable population development. Edwards (1939:97) stated,

"In Haskell County the type of farming, the size of population and the whole set-up of community organization have tended toward what could be supported under the most favorable conditions . . . In spite of the fact that droughts have been characteristic features of the climate, they have not been anticipated or

planned for by the residents of the county who were eager to conclude, after a few good years, that droughts were a thing of the past."

Haskell County was organized in 1887, and its population had varied according to rainfall (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942). Adequate precipitation between 1887 and 1892 spurred settlement, and the amount of the prairie broken out for crop production increased by 400 percent (Bell 1942). During the county's first drought, 1893-97, nearly half the settlers left. As the rain returned in 1897, so did the stream of immigrants, "the landless seeking land in the tradition of their fathers and grandfathers—seeking a place to make a home; and speculators seeking land to make money" (Bell 1942:3).

Although the swings between net in-migration or net out-migration for Haskell County had been extreme, they did not fully illustrate the nature of changes that have occurred in the community. People arrived even during droughts, and people left even during good farming conditions. "Even during the lush years from 1920 to 1925 and 1925 to 1930, more than a fourth of the farm operators left the county—more than the number who left during the bad years from 1930 to 1935." (Bell 1942:9)

Federal Government Programs

The federal government provided the initial stimulus for, and the settlement pattern of, Haskell County through its Homestead Act. Under this legislation, people could acquire a quarter-section of land (160 acres), providing residency and improvement qualifications were met. Although a farm of this size may have fit eastern climatic conditions, it was totally unsuited to the semiarid conditions of Haskell County. Drought and the lack of capital quickly vacated many of the homestead claims, and for those who remained, a "free range" environment returned in practice (Bell 1942:29). However, the quarter section ownership pattern became a fact affixed within the legal system.

The role of the federal government lessened during agriculture's boom in the 1920s. In Haskell County, wheat production and prices both soared. Production continued to be good in 1930, but the price of wheat had fallen. Many farmers held their wheat in storage, hoping for a return to higher prices. Although production was good again in 1931, prices remained down. Storage costs quickly equaled the value of the commodity. Then the rains stopped, and the drought began. Both Edwards (1939) and Bell (1942) noted that the drought in the 1930s was the most severe on record. Federal programs were called forth to help stabilize farm conditions. By 1939, approximately half of the total agricultural income of the county came from government payments (Bell 1942). As government payments became linked to conservation farming methods, the Haskell County

farmers, extremely independent prior to 1931, were left to “farming the A.A.A. [Agricultural Adjustment Administration]” (Bell 1942:107).

Beyond the drought, Haskell County, like the rest of the country, was in the midst of the Great Depression during the 1930s. Of the government programs designed to assist the country through this period, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) and the National Youth Administration (N.Y.A.) were two key programs utilized within Haskell County. The W.P.A. provided not only work and pay to families needing help, it also became the vehicle for most community improvements during this period. Over time, many people in the community began to abdicate the responsibility of the community’s care to the W.P.A. program (Bell 1942).

By 1940, the role of government programs in Haskell County seemed to have come full circle. Initially, government programs, by stimulating settlement on environmentally unrealistically sized farms, helped fuel the cycles of growth and decline (Edwards 1939 and Bell 1942). Then during the Great Depression and the “dust bowl,” government programs reduced instability and helped people remain in Haskell County.

“Federal subsidies have directly or indirectly comprised a major source [sic] of cash income for nearly all families in the county since 1933 and have been chiefly responsible for the fact that most of the residents have been able to remain there without suffering greatly from lack of food and clothing.” (Edwards 1939:7)

Edwards further noted that people also tended to stay during the Great Depression because of the limited economic opportunities elsewhere.

Development of Agriculture

Haskell County’s economy was dependent upon agriculture. “Haskell County is primarily agricultural, having no important industries except those dependent more or less directly on farming” (Edwards 1939:6). “Agriculture dominates their existence and influences their attitudes in much the way that mining does a village in which the whole population derives its living from the mine” (Bell 1942:55). However, Edwards (1939) noted that natural gas and possibly oil were resources that might have development potential in Haskell County. “The first gas well was drilled in 1931, but none of its production has ever been sold.” (Edwards 1939:54) The first connection of a gas well to a pipe line occurred in 1937. Edwards also pointed out that some Haskell residents did find employment in a carbon black plant located in Grant County.

The early settlers broke out the native prairie and planted wheat. Adequate moisture and the adoption of a new wheat variety enhanced production. Additional land was placed in wheat production. With the exodus of many

settlers during the droughts of 1893-97 and 1904-07, agricultural production gravitated towards activities better suited to the arid climate. For a time, sorghum and cattle seemed likely to replace wheat as the primary agricultural products. Edwards (1939) and Bell (1942) both identified several key technological and economic changes that were instrumental in the return to wheat production. The railroad arrived in 1912, providing better access to markets. Tractors replaced horses and provided the necessary power to more easily break out the sod. Then wheat prices soared during World War I, and the acres planted to wheat began to increase. In 1919, the combination of adequate moisture, a good wheat crop, and high prices set the stage for the renewed push to a wheat monoculture in Haskell County. The introduction of the combine in the early 1920s completed the process of mechanization (Bell 1942). Conditions, i.e., moisture and wheat prices, remained favorable during the 1920s. Wealth and attitudes soared. Progress and prosperity seemed only to await further development of the land into wheat production.

Agricultural diversity and the production of subsistence goods were lost in the rush to produce wheat for the cash market (Edwards 1939 and Bell 1942). By 1931, “King Wheat” accounted for 94 percent of the planted acres in the county (Bell 1942:25). Haskell County’s commercialized agricultural monoculture revolved around mechanization and a “cash” economy. The frailty of this economy became painfully clear after the price of wheat fell in 1931 and the rains stopped in 1932 (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942).

“With mechanization and cash-crop farming, the emphasis shifted from self-sufficiency to commercialization. Farming as a mode of life was sacrificed in favor of what they considered a fuller life and one that could be bought. That mode of living was in full swing until the thirties when depression and drought destroyed the sole support of their way of life.” (Bell 1942:56)

Human Psychology

The wide variance between the years of bounty and the years of absolute crop failure had a strong psychological effect upon those living in Haskell County. As Bell (1942:2) noted, “next year” was the watchword of the Great Plains farmer during poor production periods.

“The Haskell County farmer has almost resigned himself and his success in raising a crop to fate or luck. . . . This attitude is reflected in their [sic] entire personality It has helped to develop the gambler’s psychology, so noticeable to outsiders. . . . They have an optimism which [sic] is nearly unbelievable.” (Bell 1942:42-43)

The attitude that success is a matter of being able to “hit it right” (Bell 1942:42) was an example of this gambling mentality. Bell suggested that such an attitude had inhibited the development of farming practices more suitable

to the environment. Edwards (1939) noted the common belief at the time that the climate of the area would improve with increased cultivation.

Haskell County farmers' optimism and embracing of commercialized agriculture carried with it an attitude regarding debt and spending that was uncommon among farmers in other regions.

"[T]he acceptance of large indebtedness is due to the high degree of commercialization. . . . Thrift, in the sense known in the old Middle West, is almost nonexistent. The people are free spenders when they have money, and interpret the necessities of life broadly at all times." (Bell 1942:60)

A final example of the unique attitude of the community regarding life in such an unstable environment was the level of outside land ownership and the apparent lack of a strong desire by local farm operators for land ownership. Both Edwards (1939) and Bell (1942) noted the significant level of outside ownership of farm land, i.e., persons living outside of Haskell County. Only 35.5 percent of the farm land in the county was owned by the man who farmed it, and 55 percent of the farm land in Haskell County was owned by persons outside the county (Bell 1942:30). Bell suggested that the burdens of interest and taxes during poor production periods made land ownership less desirable.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Class Stratification

Edwards (1939:12) noted that the population of Haskell County was comparatively homogeneous except for two settlements of Mennonites. Bell (1942) found that, other than the division between Mennonites and non-Mennonites, no significant division existed in the social structure of Haskell County. He identified seven key factors that he felt had limited the development of class differentiation:

". . . [1] the lack of sharply-defined occupational groups, [2] the similarity of working hours and time for recreational and cultural activities for all groups, [3] the dominance of agronomic-mindedness of all groups, [4] the lack of established tenure groups among farmers, [5] the high mobility of population throughout the country's history, [6] the small range in the distribution of wealth, and [7] the leveling effects of recent cataclysmic changes in economic patterns and the environment." (Bell 1942:98)

In other words, the community's economic dependence upon agriculture; the similarities of its occupations, i.e., nonfarm business owners who also farms (Edwards 1939); the population's shared residential location, i.e., the frequency of farm families living in town; and its history of high gross migration were key social-economic elements that had limited social stratification in Haskell County.

Spatial Patterns in Community

Community spatial patterns were affected greatly by the availability of automobile transportation.

"Now the conquest of space by automobiles has broken the chief bond that held the people together in communities, and this, together with economic conditions, has brought about a dispersal of the institutions. People are no longer oriented toward a specific center; the individual is now the center and looks about him in all directions. . . . It is clear that the community is weak and the individual's life is segmented, with each segment oriented in a different direction." (Bell 1942:68-9)

Dodge City to the northeast, Garden City to the north, and Liberal to the south pulled trade from Haskell County. Businesses in Sublette felt the effects of missing services, i.e., the lack of a movie theater and a physician, as people left the community to meet these needs.

"The local village store has now taken on the aspects of the urban neighborhood drug and grocery stores, which are used as a convenience [sic] We may, then, picture the individual farmer as having primary experience in an area of some 100 miles in diameter and within which he moves about freely. In this area are small and large zones of activity—villages, towns, and cities—each competing for his business and social activity." (Bell 1942:70)

Centers of Social Interaction

From his examination, Bell (1942) felt that only one example of an "integrated" community existed in Haskell County ("integrated" referred to the presence of social interactions centered upon common location). This community was located in the northeastern part of the county and centered around the Colusa school. During lulls in the agricultural cycle, monthly community meetings were held at the schoolhouse. The entire family participated in a variety of social, cultural, and educational activities. Colusa, one of the county's old towns, did not have a business center at the time of Bell's visit. The school building was the center of the community. Bell noted that the activities in the Colusa school, which shaped it as an integrated community, were planned and maintained by five families. "Recently when illness kept three of those families from taking part, the meetings were not held" (Bell 1942:71). The participants in the Colusa school meetings were the non-Mennonites in the region. In fact, Bell (1942:71) identified the arrival of a large Mennonite colony to the area as a significant element that stimulated the non-Mennonite population's own group consciousness.

Active participation in the Church of God at the old high school in the Prairie View area was the only other example of a group in Haskell County that displayed some characteristics of an integrated community. Bell (1942:71) indicated that, "The farm program provides an added unify-

ing element, for the Prairie View community is in a geographical environment which [sic] is rather different from the remainder of the county.”

The Haskell County “Community”

Even with the differences found in these two locations, “throughout the county there is an over-all [sic] similarity of responses to a wide variety of stimuli. This serves as a binder to hold the people together regardless of their social and economic differences” (Bell 1942:72). The foundation of this overall similarity was the community’s absolute economic dependence upon agriculture.

Patterns of Social Interaction

Mechanization of farm practices, with the ensuing transformation of wheat farming into an individualistic business, along with other modern social-economic changes, had fostered an overall decline in the informal neighborhood cooperation that had been prevalent during the pioneer settlement of the region. “Cooperation on a two-family basis has effectively replaced the whole-neighborhood cooperative pattern. . . . The urban pattern—including division of labor, specialization, and cash economy of the industrialized world—has been impressed upon the county.” (Bell 1942:74) The family farm had become more independent. Generally, the exchange of mutual support occurred along kinship lines.

The Family as a Social Unit

The pattern of the extended family taking the place of former patterns of neighborhood cooperation was an example of the importance of the family as the primary informal social unit in the county (Bell 1942). The home remained as an economic unit for both production and consumption. The bonds within the family, i.e., between husband and wife and between parents and children, were very strong. Divorces were rare. Children, particularly boys, contributed labor to the farm at a relatively early age.

The Role of Schools as Formal Institutions

The family as the dominant social unit and the family’s focus upon children were quite evident in the community’s support of its schools.

“The school is the dominant formal institution of Haskell County. It has the wholehearted support of all the people and is well supported both financially and morally. Besides its function of formal education, it has become the focal point for the informal training of the young for social life and for the recreation of the old. Its activities have largely replaced the churches.” (Bell 1942:81)

With the exception of the Mennonite community, practically all children of the county graduated from high school. Based upon Bell’s (1942) discussion of the structure and finance of schools, the local community appeared to maintain a great deal of control over the school systems. School ac-

tivities, such as football and basketball, were major community events. Bell concluded his discussion of the importance of schools and education to the community with an insightful observation about people’s attitude toward the function of education.

“Education is the modern force to which the people look for a solution of their problems. They say that any given problem—social, economic, or political—must be solved through education, although but little emphasis in the educational system of the county is placed on preparing the students to make a living. Neither of the high schools has a vocational agricultural course and the commercial courses are rudimentary This is in sharp contrast to the emphasis on social and recreational activities which [sic] have been developed so highly during the last 20 years.” (Bell 1942:86)

The Role of Churches as Formal Institutions

Although noting the difficulty of determining the relative institutional importance of the churches within the community, Bell (1942) did discuss the role religion played in the residents’ system of values and moral standards.

“The ethics of the conservative Christian churches are thoroughly ingrained in the culture of the community and form the backbone of the people’s system of values and moral standards. These standards have been exceptionally successful in withstanding the impact of urban ways.” (Bell 1942:89)

The difficult economic conditions had limited the residents’ ability to financially support the local churches, but people still considered the churches to be important institutions. The role of the churches was restricted primarily to religious matters, because social and recreational activities had been taken over by the schools. However, schools also had incorporated the values and taboos of the conservative churches.

Social Participation of Men and Women

Bell (1942) noted differences between men and women in their social participation in formal and informal associations, in their involvement in farm operations, and in the nature of their leadership roles. Females were more active than males in formal associations. Overall, women’s activities were formalized, and the social life of men was unorganized. The differences between the associations of men and women began at an early age. Girls were encouraged to participate in formal social organizations, whereas the emphasis for boys was upon practical income-earning skills, and their social activities were kept on an informal level (Bell 1942). Women were involved in both family and farm activities. Generally, the record keeping of the farm operation was maintained by the wife. Women were frequent and involved participants in farm organizational and educational meetings. In general, men preferred informal leadership roles. Among the 13 “natural” farm leaders that Bell

(1942:100) was able to identify, bluntness and resourcefulness were the most prevalent traits. Bell pointed out the incompatibility between the trait of bluntness and the tactfulness often required within public office. He felt that this might be an important reason why these informal leaders avoided formal offices. Women, on the other hand, were formally active in a wide array of organizations, were more publicly outspoken, and were more inclined to accept formal positions of leadership opportunities.

Farm operators, which were mostly men, did not even participate actively in farm organizations. Although Haskell County had two farm organizations, the Farmers' Union and the Farm Bureau, neither had extensive membership or participation. For example, the Farm Bureau, which was organized about 6 years prior to Bell's (1942) study and had a larger membership than the earlier established Farmers' Union, involved only about 18.8 percent of the farmer residents of the county. Bell speculated that this limited participation was a reaction against its program promoting agricultural diversification. "The membership of the Bureau is more concentrated in the northern part of the county among the diversified farmers. The strictly wheat farmers are not well represented, for the Extension program is built around and pushes diversified farming." (Bell 1942:90) Regardless of its small initial start, the organization of the Farm Bureau and the hiring of the County Agricultural Agent were key events in the community. "Since the County Agent is associated with the Farm Bureau which, in turn, is the agency through which the Extension Service of the Kansas State College contacts rural areas, this action was of considerable significance." (Edwards 1939:79)

The concept of cooperative grain elevators was the form of association best supported by Haskell County farmers. Bell (1942) noted that the support of such grain cooperatives was a mechanism that many farmers felt was necessary to deal with the large independent grain dealers. "Several persons have indicated that the cooperative elevators are a necessity [sic]; that except for them, the independent dealers would try to make too big a margin." (Bell 1942:92)

The Role of Government

The role and scope of government, both federal and local, underwent significant changes during the decade of the 1930s. Haskell County's long history of instability and the economic boom or bust environment prior to the 1930s, had been primarily dealt with locally (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942). However, Haskell County, like most other American communities, found that local resources and programs to provide aid to their citizens were insufficient given the severity of the Great Depression. "The functions of the county have altered and it has become, to a large extent, an instrument for the administration of State and National programs." (Edwards 1939:79)

Local citizens' attitudes toward the support programs of the federal government, although generally positive, often were based upon their knowledge of and relationship to those persons receiving aid (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942). A common negative evaluation of the W.P.A. program was that it undermined the local labor market by establishing wage and work hours that were at variance with the typical jobs offered by the local employers, i.e., farm labor. Also, as previously noted, Bell (1942) felt that another externality of the W.P.A. was the abdication of local responsibility for the care and improvement of the community.

The global wheat glut and the ensuing drop in prices, plus the drought of the 1930s, were additional economic burdens that had befallen Haskell County. The positive effect of farm programs on the stability of local farms was widely recognized and appreciated. However, most farm operators regretted what they perceived as a loss of independence when farm support became linked to the implementation of specific conservation practices (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942).

"Everyone seemed to be in favor of program payments; in fact, looked upon them as a legitimate right of the farmers. . . . When questioned about the soundness of such government assistance the retort that 'business has enjoyed a subsidy from the tariff' was almost always given." (Bell 1942:66)

Ironically, the linking of payment to acres in production actually was of less benefit to those farmers who previously had been practicing conservation measures, i.e., summer fallow (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942).

The severity of local economic conditions even had affected the local political arena. Interest and participation in local politics had increased, largely because public offices offered a steady income that increased the economic stability of the family (Bell 1942). Although most local citizens were of one political party, the other party had a substantial share of county offices. The leaders of the two political parties were representatives of old families in the county, and three key families had a strong influence over local elections (Bell 1942). The county electorate did not appear to be a part of any outside political machine. "The general easy going philosophy of 'live and let live' permeates the political philosophy of the people." (Bell 1942:94)

CONCLUSIONS

Both Bell's (1942) and Edwards' (1939) assessments of the social and economic situation of Haskell County described a community that had experienced dramatic changes in its short history of settlement. Although the people of Haskell County clearly desired and had worked hard to develop a community similar to that from which they came, the dependence upon agriculture within the capricious climate of the Great Plains presented great challenges. The commercialization, mechanization, and specialization of agricultural production into a wheat monoculture, which generated great wealth and prosperity during the 1920s, left the region ill prepared to deal with the low wheat prices, drought, and economic depression of the 1930s.

In previous difficult economic times, which followed drought conditions, the local community provided support within the limitations of its resources. When these were exhausted, the population of the county dropped severely, as people migrated to locations with better economic opportunities. Largely because of the national magnitude of the economic depression, the federal government evolved into

an active partner in providing a combination of agricultural, community, and individual support. This support, when combined with the reality of limited economic opportunities elsewhere, helped lessen the out-migration of Haskell County's population.

Even though instability may have been the norm for Haskell County, this had not undermined the determination of its people to develop a strong community. During each economic "boom," in this cycle of "boom or bust," the people were quick to create community institutions and structures like those found in the places they left. Unfortunately, the resources to maintain these elements were exhausted rapidly during the "bust" of the next drought. Although outside governmental assistance had helped provide a degree of population stability, it had not relieved the local community of the challenge of supporting the institutions and structures developed during the prosperity of the 1920s. Cycles of economic "boom or bust," specialization and commercialization of agriculture, large levels of gross migration, and the evolution and growing dependency upon federal and state governmental programs were elements that had shaped the social structure of Haskell County.

HASKELL COUNTY IN 1965

In 1965, William Mays (1968) visited Haskell County to study the changes that had occurred over the 25 years since Bell's (1942) 1940 study. This "restudy" of Haskell County utilized a methodology similar to Bell's, i.e., secondary data analysis, case-study field research, and survey research. His examination found that significant changes had occurred in the four major forces that Bell had identified as shaping the Haskell County community.

MAJOR FORCES THAT SHAPED THE COMMUNITY

Environment

The single biggest change in Haskell County was the development of irrigated agricultural production. Changing technology (pump engineering), the availability of ground-water (Ogallala Aquifer) and cheap energy (natural gas), and the flat terrain of the area (permitting gravity flow application of the water) combined to accommodate rapid development of irrigated crop production. The number of irrigation wells had increased from two in 1939 to 263 in 1965, with some 204,000 acres being irrigated (Mays 1968). Although irrigation did not provide absolute control over the weather, it did provide the means by which the "capricious" forces of nature could be managed better. It acted as a "stabilizer of agriculture" (Mays 1968:19). The greater stability of agriculture also provided an environment conducive to greater economic and community stability.

Federal Government Programs

Although the economic recovery during and following World War II had largely eliminated many of the federal government's efforts related to the Great Depression, it still remained a dominant force in agricultural programs.

"It was apparent that much of the prodding in the direction of greater diversification had been supplied by the national government. Restrictions placed on wheat and milo acreage through various programs of the United States Department of Agriculture forced many farmers to make their own lands more productive." (Mays 1968:42)

Other than state legislation regarding schools, Mays' analysis implied that the roles of state and federal government programs had receded as the Haskell County community obtained greater economic stability.

Development of Agriculture

Although the development of irrigation and the influence of government programs had shattered the wheat monoculture in Haskell County, mechanization and commercialization of farm production continued to increase.

"Over the decades since 1940 the number of farms has slowly but steadily declined while the average size of farms has slowly but steadily increased. . . . Farming had become agribusiness, and business considerations were dominant throughout the thinking of the farming community. . . The average size farm of 1200 acres represented a considerable capital outlay, and rising operating costs were all but eliminating the marginal farmer in 1965." (Mays 1968:35-6)

Entry into farming largely had been eliminated by rising capital costs and the narrowing of the margin between costs and income. As an agribusiness, farming was no longer a seasonal venture. The magnitude of capital investment and the diversification of agricultural production with irrigation had made farming a year-round venture.

"Hand in hand with the year-round farm has appeared the year-round employee, who, in line with the technological advances in farming, has become a technical expert in matters related to the use and maintenance of farm equipment. . . freeing the businessman-farmer for the task of coordinating the varied aspects of this ever-enlarging enterprise." (Mays 1968:36-7)

In stark contrast to the lack of desire for land ownership in 1940 (Bell 1942), rising commercialization had fostered a competitive environment for available resources.

"[T]he desire for ownership was undeniably very strong no matter whom one questioned. . . . Land values have risen quite noticeably with the coming of irrigation. Apparently the desire for ownership has increased in direct proportion to the increased valuation and growing scarcity of available land." (Mays 1968:26-9)

Human Psychology

The gambling mentality associated with the "boom or bust" history of Haskell County had been replaced by an economic rationality. "[A]ll elements of the population appear to accept as their ideal-type the farmer-capitalist, or the agri-businessman, who has won out against great odds." (Mays 1968:112) Success, which in 1940 was felt to be a function of being able to "hit it right" (Bell 1942:42), in 1965 was a measure of the individual's effort. "[H]e [the Haskell County farm operator] believes that he has won through to his present day successes by virtue of his own efforts." (Mays 1968:112) The agricultural stability achieved by the development of irrigation and the ensuing emphasis on farming as a business had significantly shifted the community's value system. Business management skills replaced "luck" as the defining psychological feature of the community.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Class Stratification

Bell (1942) identified several factors that had limited the development of class differentiation in 1940. Mays (1968) evaluated the change in these factors and felt that although "class consciousness" may not have changed, a clear increase in social stratification had occurred.

"A greater range in wealth, less violent fluctuations, both economically and environmentally, an absence of wholesale migrations, and a trend in the direction of established tenure groups among the farmers, especially those at or near the top, may not spell class or class consciousness, but they do make for a greater tightening of the social structure and an awareness on the part of all concerned that they do not occupy the same level in that structure." (Mays 1968:115)

The top position in this social structure was held by the successful farmer-capitalist. "It is quite certain, however, that Haskell County does possess an upper-stratum of farm owners and operators, and that they set the pace for all other population elements." (Mays 1968:116)

Below this group was a broad middle group, composed of farm operators who rented a significant portion of the ground they farmed, shopkeepers, businessmen, county employees, teachers, and professional people (Mays 1968). Laborers and poorer families formed the lower portion of this social structure. Within this social stratification, Mays found definite evidence of a community power structure.

"[I]n the words of C. Wright Mills they constitute 'a power elite,' holding authority which [sic] they exercise in benevolent fashion on town councils, county boards, as well as church and school boards. The interlocking nature of the power so wielded is apparent to anyone who examines the listings of the personnel on various boards and committees, the same names appearing again and again." (Mays 1968:115)

Mays (1968) also noted that the middle group, particularly the businessmen of town, professionals and educational personnel, gas company employees, and store owners and employees, was very active in civic and cultural activities. According to Mays, although social stratification apparently had increased since 1940, it did not consciously affect day-to-day affairs of the community.

Spatial Patterns in Community

Economic stability also had fostered significant commercial development in both Sublette and Satanta.

"While the towns in Haskell County have experienced a period of steady growth since WWII, both commercially and population-wise, the recent history of Copeland has been the exact reverse, following, in the main, the national trend whereby many little

towns are disappearing. . . . When asked where people did their shopping the invariable reply would be, 'We look in the stores of Sublette first, and if they don't have what we want we go to Garden City, Liberal, or Dodge.'" (Mays 1968:59-60)

This commercial development clearly had enhanced the community's capture of local trade. The spatial patterns had become focused more inwardly. Two conditions triggered substantial commercial and industrial growth in the towns of Haskell County. These conditions were: (1) the increase in irrigation, which contributed to a broadening of agricultural support services, and (2) the development of oil and gas resources, which created opportunities in support services for those industries. The commercial and industrial growth in Sublette and Satanta followed different paths.

"While Sublette has been concerned with county government and affairs attendant upon the large-scale shift to irrigation, Satanta has concentrated on the coming of the oil and gas interests. If anything, the interests of the latter community are more diverse than those of the county-seat, and the shifting nature of industrial development and the resultant readjustments have left Satanta with a population of widely divergent interests, centering not only in agriculture, but in the varied concerns which [sic] have touched the area in the past fifteen to twenty-five years." (Mays 1968:61)

The development in Satanta provided it with a more heterogeneous population than any of the surrounding towns. According to Mays, the people of Satanta learned that the positive aspects of such diversity greatly exceeded the problems. Sublette's growth, on the other hand, had not altered its high degree of homogeneity. "[T]he city of Sublette, which had an equal chance to attract various elements into the town, prided itself on the homogeneity of its population composition." (Mays 1968:63)

Although much of area's growth and development were spurred by interests outside the county, their impact had not gone unnoticed by local leaders.

"For one thing, leaders point out that Haskell County in 1965 had a better balanced economy than when it was merely a one cash-crop county. . . having seen what the coming of outside interests could mean to a community's growth and development, leaders were no longer willing to allow their entry on the local scene to be fortuitous or happenstance. . . . Leaders and businessmen of the several towns are very much aware of the fact that the coming of industry to the area helped to save their towns from experiencing a slow death as trade and business centers." (Mays 1968:65-6)

We should note that the economic development of Haskell County's towns had not eliminated trade and association of their residents with the larger cities in the region.

“Increasingly, it appears that the towns and cities of the area were gaining a monopoly of social life and group activities. An important theatrical production appearing in Dodge City, or an orchestra coming to a near-by town will find at least half of the tickets sold being bought by those in rural areas.” (Mays 1968:110)

Centers of Social Interaction

In 1965, Mays (1968) found that social interaction in Haskell County was centered primarily around the towns of Satanta and Sublette.

“Today in Haskell County there is little social life outside the towns. Since WWII the social gatherings which [sic] used to take place in the Colusa schoolhouse in the northeast part of the County have disappeared. . . . Aside from the Mennonites, the Pleasant Prairie section was the only area outside the towns where any form of community activity could be seen in 1965.” (Mays 1968:110)

The Haskell County “Community”

The overall similarity throughout the county in 1940 seemed to have weakened, because economic development had shifted some of the emphasis.

“Farming was the economic mainstay of Haskell County in 1965 as it was in 1940. Two-thirds of the working force at the latter date were engaged in agriculture, although the percentage of those living on farms had dropped in the twenty-five year interval. The rural-farm population in 1940 was approximately 57.5 percent. In 1965 only 33.9 percent of the residents could be classified as rural-farm. . . . Many of the one-third of the working force engaged in non-agricultural pursuits had come to the region to service the expanding oil and gas industry in the western two-thirds of the County.” (Mays 1968:55)

The mix of economic development varied between Sublette and Satanta, and as previously mentioned, the population composition of the two towns differed considerably. Although the dominance of agriculture within the county’s economy continued to generate a great similarity throughout the county, the elements of difference appeared to have increased.

Patterns of Social Interaction

Family-based cooperation continued in 1965. “Few families visit with neighbors anymore. Visiting patterns were generally confined to family members, . . . Meeting friends and neighbors is largely confined to basketball games and other school events.” (Mays 1968:77)

The Family as a Social Unit

Although the family was still the primary informal social unit in 1965, conditions were changing. Mays (1968) felt that economic concerns and education were factors that superseded family matters. Farming as a business and the

trend for farm families to live in town had reduced the involvement of the family.

“In commercial farming regions where emphasis is upon production, and where the general farm has all but vanished, farming becomes more a business venture and less a way of life, the farmer’s life becoming increasingly segmentized and wholly dependent on the success or failure of the general economy.” (Mays 1968:70)

“It did not appear that the wives who were questioned knew as much about farming and farm problems generally as wives in similar circumstances a generation ago. Certainly the wives of town-dwelling farmers had lost contact with farm activities. . . . In a similar fashion, a farmer should tend to his business of fields and crops, but he should not burden those at home with problems and difficulties. Should the pattern of town-dwelling on the part of farmers, markedly on the increase in recent years, become even more prominent in the future, this dichotomy of home and work will become more pronounced in the rural setting.” (Mays 1968:75-6)

Although the family had continued as the “pre-eminent” group, rallying to support members in trouble and maintaining continuity between parental and new family units, Mays did find signs that “familistic characteristics” had lessened. “Familistic characteristics which [sic] had been much weakened over time were the complete integration of individual activities for the achievement of family objectives and the willingness to use family resources for the help of needy members.” (Mays 1968:85) Also, the shift in responsibility for the socialization of children, noted by Bell (1942) in 1940, continued in 1965.

“A continuing trend among Haskell County families is a willingness to turn over an ever increasing portion of the socialization of children and youth to agencies outside the home, and to regard this socialization of superior quality to that which young people formerly received.” (Mays 1968:85-6)

Mays also noted that family group activities seldom occurred and that families had increasingly been scattered to many parts of the country. Many families mentioned church as their only shared activity.

The Role of Schools as Formal Institutions

The school continued to be the dominant social institution in Haskell County in 1965 (Mays 1968). As in 1940, the school fulfilled multiple functions for the community. “Programs of the schools serve a dual function. They are the major media for the training of youth, as well as an exceedingly important social outlet for the parents and the entire community.” (Mays 1968:91)

“School and school activities, especially in the towns, played an ever-enlarging role in the socialization of the young. Since farming as a business stressing volume is far removed from farming as a way of life

stressing chores and duties for the young, the school, through extra-curricular activities, was filling the time of the young and giving them the training that farm duties used to provide. The rural family appeared just as willing as its urban counterparts to surrender the task of child training to the schools for nine months of the year, and even allowing the towns to assume greater responsibility for their care in the summer months through a broader recreational program. . . . With the schools providing the only social activities in the County on a community-wide basis through sports, plays, exhibits, and other events, all other meetings and gatherings are set in relation to school events. This was true in 1940 and in 1965." (Mays 1968:97)

In contrast to 1940, the increasing mechanization of agriculture was reflected in the school's curriculum, in which the shop class had been expanded into a 4-year program (Mays 1968).

Although local governance of schools remained in 1965, Mays (1968) did describe the emergence of state initiatives directed at school consolidation. The legislation provided the legal means for consolidation, but the decision to implement these procedures was left to each local community.

"However, the impetus for the closing of "the little red school-house" came largely from the people themselves as the advantages of the larger schools in the towns soon became apparent to all. Throughout the State of Kansas, consolidation and annexation were widely practiced. Many factors contributed to the desire for larger districts. Rural population decline, smaller tax resources, improved transportation facilities, better school facilities in towns and cities, and the development of mechanized farming were a few of the elements which [sic] spurred the consolidations of school." (Mays 1968:93)

However, Mays noted that the 1963 School District Unification Law and the issue of consolidation had fostered conflict between Sublette and Satanta.

The complexity of farming as an agribusiness was reflected clearly in the values held by the businessmen-farmer regarding a college education.

"Rational and experimental farmers with large acreage and heavy investment in machinery and equipment saw degree competition as a 'must' for anyone who would survive in agribusiness today. In their view of the situation, one needed to know all he [sic] could about scientific farming and sound business practices." (Mays 1968:96)

The Mennonite population of Haskell County, in contrast to the values of the non-Mennonite population and with increasing hesitancy among its own membership, continued to oppose education beyond the eighth grade.

The Role of Churches as Formal Institutions

Local churches were better supported financially in 1965, because they shared in the benefits of the economic recovery and stability (Mays 1968). As in 1940, the churches had not ventured much beyond the regular services of worship and could not be considered vehicles for community service. To most individuals in Haskell County, the church would still follow economic, educational, and family concerns. "Spiritual forces might reach men's hearts, but their minds could never let them forget the concerns of earthly affairs. However one might view it, men in Haskell County considered other things before they considered the church." (Mays 1968:106) Although a minority of the population actively participated in the churches, the impact of the churches was clear, because commitment to the community's ethical and moral standards remained high.

Social Participation of Men and Women

Mays (1968) discovered significant changes in the pattern of association in 1965 compared to 1940. Most notable was the increased involvement by men in formal leadership positions. "If anything, the men were more active than the women in positions of general responsibility in contrast to an earlier day when the reverse seemed to hold true" (Mays 1968:121). County leaders generally were drawn from the group of large-farm operators in the area. They exercised much of their leadership through the public offices they held. Men welcomed the opportunity to compete for such positions. Leadership positions in countywide organizations were dominated by this group.

Although accepting greater formal leadership responsibility, men still had not developed an elaborate system of formal clubs like the women had. In fact, male farm operators still did not participate actively in local farm organizations. "The only farm organizations at all active in the County were the Farm Bureau and the Grange, and of these only the women's organization of the Farm Bureau could be considered very active." (Mays 1968:109)

The Role of Government

Other than mentioning the continued involvement of federal government programs in farming as having largely shaped the county's agricultural diversity, Mays (1968) did not discuss federal institutions. His discussion about increased leadership and participation of males in positions of formal authority and the progressive nature of local welfare programs seems to imply greater local autonomy. Given that the role of the federal government in providing economic assistance had declined with the economic recovery following World War II and Haskell County's relative prosperity and stability, a higher level of local autonomy apparently existed in 1965 than in 1940. Even legislation by the state designed to facilitate school consolidation had left the decisions and implementation with the local school boards.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Although the majority of Mays' (1968) observations fit within the major areas discussed by Bell (1942), he developed a few additional key points that warrant discussion.

Residence of Farm Families

Bell's observations in 1940 determined a perceived difference among the relative statuses of farm operators based upon the location of their residence. "The farm-resident operators consider themselves the better farmers." (Bell 1942:35) Stability and the transformation of farming into agribusiness seemed to have affected attitudes by 1965.

"Town farmers regarded themselves, and were regarded by their peers, as successful land owners and operators, one symbol of their success being their city address. . . . Neither the so-called "suitcase farmer," who still maintained a hold in the County, nor the town farmer, who had increased in recent years, were considered "marginal men" by the community or in their own estimate. Place of address was a secondary consideration; whether a man was a businessman-farmer or a marginal one served to place him in the eyes of the community and in his own eyes." (Mays 1968:33-6)

Mays felt that this change in attitude helped to explain the pattern of farm operators and their families migrating to a town residence.

Groups of Farm Operators

Mays (1968) proposed that the farm operations in Haskell County could be divided into three distinct groups, i.e., traditionalists, experimentalists, and rationalists. This classification was based upon their willingness to adopt new technology and venture into diverse crop production. Numerically, the traditionalists constituted the largest group. They represented the group reluctant to develop irrigation practices. They continued to focus upon wheat production and considered irrigation just another innovation that would not stand the test of time. This group continued to have the "gambling mentality" found earlier by Bell (1942) and accepted the risk of crop failure during dry conditions. "[T]hey were willing to trust everything to that one good year in three, which the County had averaged since the earliest days of settlement until irrigation made its appearance." (Mays 1968:41)

The experimentalists constituted the smallest of the three groups. They channeled their risk into efforts to diversify the crops they produced. They had adopted irrigation methods, but they also were looking for new crops that would yield higher returns. This group actively worked

with public institutions in attempts to test potential crops that were now possible under irrigated production. These "men willingly cooperated with the county agent and the soil conservation experts in devoting part of their lands to the trying out of new crops" (Mays 1968:41).

The rationalists were the emerging businessmen farmers, i.e., farmers engaged in agribusiness. Like the experimentalists group, they had adopted irrigation technology, but they limited their production to proven crops.

"[T]hey will grow only those crops which [sic] have been proved to be commercially successful under conditions prevailing in the region. All operations of rationalists are geared to the market, and the efficiency of operation means much to these men." (Mays 1968:41)

Functionality of the Family Unit

For Mays (1968), the social phenomenon having the greatest impact upon the family unit in Haskell County was a rising individualism. Increasingly, the focus had shifted away from family solidarity and cooperation towards individual self-interest and well-being.

"The integration of individual activities for the achievement of family objectives is perhaps the most undermined of all familistic values in the area surveyed. The individualism associated with urban ways of life has entered, and self-interest and monetary considerations seem uppermost in the thinking of increasing members of the younger generation." (Mays 1968:83-4)

Position of the Elderly

Mays (1968) also placed significant emphasis upon the changing attitude of the Haskell County community towards the care of the elderly. The highest portion of local welfare cases in Haskell County was from the aged population. Increasingly, care for the elderly was being considered a public function rather than a family responsibility. This change in attitude was found among both the younger and older populations.

"In several cases where aid was being received when this survey was made, the families could have cared for the victims, but flatly refused to do so. The reason for the refusals was quite obvious, and revealed a change in attitude over the years. The families involved wanted the persons cared for out of public funds, feeling that since they had paid taxes for this purpose, they should be able to use the benefits so specified. The use of public funds, they reasoned, was a right, and as such, should be claimed. . . . [This] does reveal a change in family relationships and a move towards greater individualism on the part of the younger generation." (Mays 1968:125-6)

CONCLUSIONS

The economic and social instability of Haskell County, largely a function of the “capricious” forces of nature (Edwards 1939 and Bell 1942), had changed dramatically with the advent of irrigated agricultural production. Increased stability and growth in Haskell County allowed a greater degree of local autonomy to emerge. Federal and state programs designed to provide support through the Great Depression faded with the overall economic recovery during and following World War II. However, national policy and programs in agriculture, which grew significantly during the Great Depression and “dust bowl” era, continued to be important forces in local agricultural production.

Following the development of irrigation and the influence of government programs, diversification had supplanted the wheat monoculture in Haskell County. But the trends towards mechanization and commercialization continued to intensify agricultural production. Farming as a way of life, not a strong feature in Haskell County even in 1940 (Bell 1942), was being replaced by farming as an agribusiness.

Dramatically rising capital costs and year-round production activities were two key aspects that accompanied the development of irrigated farming. The “gambling mentality” of the Haskell County farmer noted by Bell (1942) had been replaced largely by the business/economic rationality of the successful agribusiness farmer.

Class stratification, although still not a feature of day-to-day life, had increased since 1940. The agricultural stability of irrigation permitted the development of a successful farmer-capitalist group. This group held the top position within the community’s social structure.

Although agriculture continued to dominate the county’s economy, commercial and industrial development had helped to provide some diversity to the county’s economy. In 1965, one-third of the employment in the county was outside the area of agriculture. Development of oil and gas resources and the additional support services required with irrigated agriculture had allowed the two towns in Haskell County, Satanta and Sublette, to buck the national trend of declining rural communities. Although people continued to travel to the regional trade centers for

some goods and services, the growth in commercial activity seemed to foster a positive attitude towards shopping locally. However, the larger communities continued to be sources of social activity and association.

Economic growth in Satanta and Sublette followed different paths. Development of Sublette, the county-seat town, was related to government and irrigation services. The concentration of development of energy resources in the western portion of the county provided the most significant growth for Satanta. The mix of economic activities in each town also affected the composition of the population. Satanta’s population was diversified, whereas Sublette’s population remained very homogeneous. Although agriculture continued to dominate the county’s economy, the overall similarity throughout the county (Bell 1942) seemed to be weakening.

For Mays (1968:69), the major elements of Haskell County, in rank-order of importance from greatest to least, were economic concerns, education, family matters, and spiritual values and goals. The family remained as the primary informal social unit, and the school continued to be the dominant formal social institution. However, rising individualism and changing attitudes about the care of the elderly had reshaped the family unit.

The school’s role in the socialization of youth and as the recreational and social outlet for the community was increasing. The churches had better economic support but continued to play a very traditional role in the community.

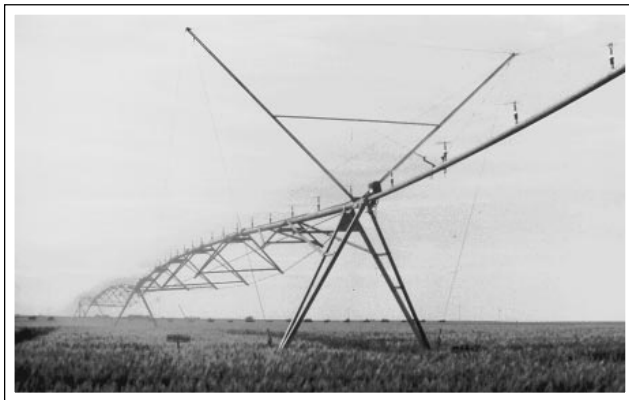
Another important aspect about social institutions and social interaction was the changing nature of community leadership. In contrast to 1940, when men avoided formal leadership positions and women actively sought such opportunities, men in 1965 were more active than women in formal leadership roles. The informal leadership by men in 1940 had been replaced by leadership through public office.

Between 1940 and 1965, Haskell County experienced a significant change in relative stability. Irrigation provided agricultural stability, which along with greater economic diversity, fostered economic stability. Economic stability, in turn, supported social and community stability. Although most of the key social elements identified in 1940 continued to be important in 1965, dramatic changes had occurred.

HASKELL COUNTY IN 1940



HASKELL COUNTY IN 1993



HASKELL COUNTY IN 1993-94

The semistructured interviews generated information that seemed to fit well within the structure of the previous studies. Therefore, we will use the points developed through the reviews of the previous studies as an outline for the analysis of the data gained through all five of our research methods. This assessment typically begins with information gained from the semistructured interviews and then draws upon supporting or conflicting views obtained through the other methodological approaches. For some of the conditions, the other research methods were the primary resources, and the interviews were evaluated for their supporting or conflicting view of the situation. In order to improve the flow of the discussion, a parenthetical format is used frequently to cite the methodological source of the information. In addition to the evaluation utilizing the structure of the previous studies, the section includes the information gained about the residents' views of their community's future.

MAJOR FORCES THAT SHAPED THE COMMUNITY

Environment

Rainfall in Haskell County continued to be "eccentric" in 1993 (Figure 2). Other weather data also appeared quite similar to those reported by Bell. The temperature, although perhaps slightly warmer, still exhibited extreme variability (Table 1). The growing season remained sufficiently long for most crop production (Table 2). The annual varia-

tion in rainfall remained broad, but the odds of adequate rainfall seemed to have improved (Table 3). However, the proportion of the rainfall that is effective for agricultural production has improved only slightly (Table 4). The "spotty areal distribution" (Bell 1942:19) of rainfall also has continued (Table 5). Although the forces of nature continued to be "capricious," the effects had been lessened by the development of irrigation. Mays noted that, although some irrigation began as early as 1940 in Haskell County, it took "a drought of considerable severity in the years 1952 to 1956 before farmers of the area became convinced that irrigation was worth the large initial cost in wells and farm equipment" (Mays 1968:18). Figure 3, which shows both the annual precipitation (1940 to 1993) and the number of acres of irrigation (1940 to 1992), confirms Mays' comment. In subsequent years, however, adoption of irrigation did not seem as strongly tied to rainfall.

The updating and reevaluation of the weather statistics utilized by Bell (1942) clearly indicated that the weather patterns of Haskell County have remained "capricious." However, examination of the weather information combined with farm statistics and demographic data confirmed Mays' (1968) conclusion that groundwater irrigation had helped to stabilize the "capricious" force of nature. Since 1965, irrigation has continued to be the catalyst of massive changes in the agricultural sector of the southwest region of Kansas. These changes had a tremendous impact upon the Haskell County community. The combination of the aquifer and the cheap source of energy (the natural gas reserve) to raise water to the surface fostered the development of

Table 1. Temperature data for Haskell County, KS: comparison of initial study (Bell 1942) and current study.

Variable	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Avg.	Years
Bell's Table 3: Station at Dodge City														
Mean	29.3	33.3	42.8	54.0	63.1	72.9	77.9	76.8	68.9	56.2	42.5	32.6	54.2	33
Mean Max.	41.2	45.8	56.2	67.1	75.2	85.0	90.2	89.2	81.6	69.3	55.8	44.4	66.7	56
Mean Min.	17.4	20.8	29.0	40.9	51.0	60.7	65.7	64.5	56.1	43.1	29.6	20.7	41.7	56
Highest	79	84	98	95	101	107	108	105	102	94	86	79	56	
Lowest	-20	-26	-10	13	19	36	46	43	30	10	-13	-15	56	
Current Study: Station at Sublette, 1947-92														
Mean	31.6	37.9	45.4	56.2	64.9	73.8	77.5	77.0	68.8	57.4	43.3	34.7	55.7	44
Mean Max.	45.7	52.8	60.7	71.7	79.2	88.4	91.9	91.3	83.6	73.2	57.8	48.4	70.4	44
Mean Min.	17.6	23.0	30.1	40.7	50.6	59.2	63.1	62.7	54.0	41.7	28.9	21.0	41.0	44
Highest	80	88	92	98	105	112	108	108	102	96	88	86	44	
Lowest	-24	-16	-11	13	24	39	49	46	25	16	-2	-14	44	
Difference: Current Study's Value Minus Previous Study's Value														
Mean	2.3	4.6	2.6	2.2	1.8	0.9	-0.4	0.2	-0.1	1.2	0.8	2.1		
Mean Max.	4.5	7.0	4.5	4.6	4.0	3.4	1.7	2.1	2.0	3.9	2.0	4.0		
Mean Min.	0.2	2.2	1.1	-0.2	-0.4	-1.5	-2.6	-1.8	-2.1	-1.4	-0.7	0.3		

Source of current study's data: Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

Table 2. Growing season data for Haskell County, KS: comparison of initial study (Bell 1942) and current study.

Category	Length or Date
Bell's Table 4:	
Average length of growing season	174 days*
Average date of last killing frost	April 16
Average date of first killing frost	October 24
Current Study: Sublette, 1947-92	
Average length of growing season	176 days
Average date of last killing frost	April 23
Average date of first killing frost	October 17

Source of current study's data: Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

*The dates and the length of growing season listed above do not match. The number of days between April 16 and October 24 is 190. However, the days and months may have been transposed, because the number of days between April 24 and October 16 does equal 174.

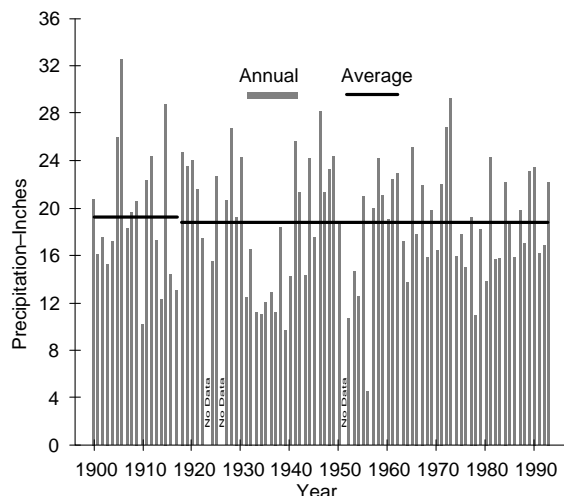


Figure 2. Annual and average precipitation in Haskell County area, 1900-93 (Dodge City, KS, 1900-17 and Sublette, KS, 1918-93) Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

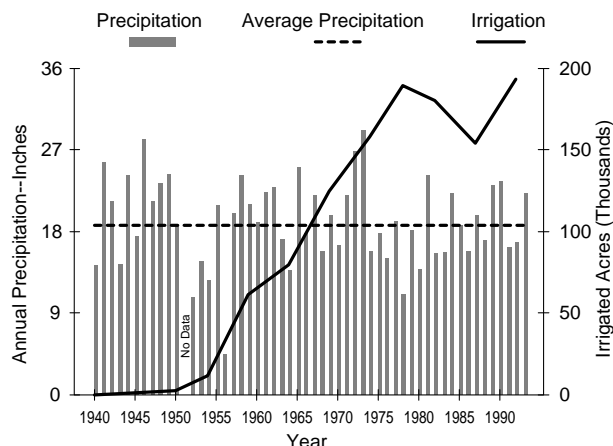


Figure 3. Annual precipitation in Sublette, KS, 1940-93 (Weather Data Library, KSU) compared with acres of irrigation in Haskell County, 1940-92 (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

Table 3. Chance of rainfall in Haskell County, KS: comparison of initial study (Bell 1942) and current study.

Amount of Rainfall (inches)	Number of Years	Percent of Years
Bell's Table 5: Sublette 1914-40.		
17 or less	11	41
16 or less	10	37
15 or less	9	33
14 or less	6	22
Above 17	14	52
18 or above	12	44
19 or above	11	41
20 or above	9	33
Current Study: Sublette 1941-92		
17 or less	17	33
16 or less	14	27
15 or less	8	15
14 or less	6	12
Above 17	35	67
18 or above	31	60
19 or above	27	52
20 or above	22	42

Source of current study's data: Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

Table 4. Effectiveness of rainfall in Haskell County, KS: comparison of initial study (Bell 1942) and current study.

Category	Inches	Percent of Average Annual Rainfall
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Bell's Table 6: Goodwell, OK during a 21-Year Period*.

Average annual rainfall	18.0	100.0
Light, ineffective showers	5.5	30.56
Effective rains	10.0	55.56
Excessive rains	2.5	13.89

Current Study: Sublette during a 33-Year Period (1961-93).**

Average annual rainfall	19.83	100.0
Light, ineffective showers	1.32	6.66
Effective rains	11.88	59.91
Excessive rains	6.62	33.38

Source of current study's data: Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

*Adapted from Finnell, H.H., "A Series of Radio Discussions," Amarillo, Texas, 1938, broadcast over Station KGNC.

**Ineffective rainfall—less than 0.10 inch, effective rainfall—equal to or greater than 0.10 and less than 1.0 inch, and excessive rainfall—equal to or greater than 1.0 inch.

irrigation, which, in turn, allowed for the development of feed grain production. Furthermore, the availability of feed drew cattle feedlots to the area. Last, but not least, the concentration of feedlots brought packing plants to the region. In the early 1980s, Iowa Beef Packers (IBP) opened the world's largest beef packing plant in Garden City. The packing plants in Finney, Ford, and Seward counties slaughter approximately 20,000 head of cattle each day. Haskell County is located centrally among these three communities. The development of feedlots and packing plants has had a dramatic effect upon the region's economy and population (secondary data analysis). In 1991, over 83 percent of Haskell County's gross farm sales came from the sale of livestock, mostly cattle (Figure 4).

In contrast to the trend of population decline in most agriculturally dependent counties outside of metropolitan areas in Kansas and the Great Plains region as a whole, Haskell County has grown in population in each of the five census periods since 1940 (Figure 5). Population instability had been replaced with a relative permanence, as the length of residency of Haskell County residents exceeded both national and state averages. However, increasing length of residency did not prohibit significant changes in the population from occurring. Ethnic diversity, i.e., persons of Hispanic origin, has increased dramatically in Haskell County over the last 20 years (Figure 6).

Haskell County's natural gas resources are in the Hugoton gas field, one of the largest known natural gas reserves in the world. The development of energy resources in Haskell County has been important for several reasons: (1) it provided economic growth in its own right (jobs, in-

come, and public revenue); (2) it fostered the development of irrigation; and (3) it has been a cause of emerging differences between Satanta and Sublette.

Although the development of the Hugoton gas field has been a boom to Haskell County's economy, it is important to realize that the field is controlled by large outside corporations and is affected by outside forces of change. Changing global markets; federal and state regulations; plus federal deregulation, automation, and other changes emanating from outside the county have had direct impacts upon the local economy. A consequence of those changes has been a recent decline in the local energy sector.

Although the development of the energy sector in Haskell County had helped to diversify the local economy, the dominance by the agricultural sector has continued. In 1990, the agricultural sector accounted for one-third of employment in the county. The percent employed in the agricultural industry in Haskell County is 10 times the level for the United States (Figure 7). Haskell County's employment growth outpaced that of the United States and Kansas between 1970 and 1980 (Figure 8). In figures 7 and 8, A.F.F is Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries; T.C.P. is Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities; and F.I.R.E. is Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate. From 1980 to 1990, the county's growth was less than that of the United States, but still greater than the Kansas average. Employment in the agricultural industry in Haskell County also increased in both of these time periods. The county's agricultural employment increases were greater than those for the United States and ran counter to the decline experienced overall in Kansas.

Table 5. Areal distribution of rainfall in Haskell County, KS: comparison of initial study (Bell 1942) and current study.

Year	Sublette	Dodge City	Garden City	Liberal	Range	Station with Most Rainfall
Bell's Table 7:						
1915	22.43	28.75			6.32	Dodge City
1919	23.60	13.70			9.90	Sublette
1920	23.97	22.97			1.00	Sublette
1921	21.56	17.51			4.05	Sublette
1925	22.62	26.21			3.59	Dodge City
1930	24.29	19.14			5.15	Sublette
1935	12.01	15.09			3.08	Dodge City
Current Study:						
1940	14.21	25.84	21.50	18.04	11.63	Dodge
1945	17.52	20.47	15.17	16.94	5.30	Dodge
1950	18.75	14.55	18.81	19.23	4.68	Liberal
1955	20.92	17.42	19.73	14.28	6.64	Sublette
1960	19.07	20.14	16.63	18.14	3.51	Dodge
1965	25.05	24.95	27.7	20.24	4.81	Sublette
1970	16.41	12.26	14.97	14.04	4.15	Sublette
1975	17.76	18.83	15.71	15.28	3.55	Dodge
1980	13.84	19.80	16.21	16.95	5.96	Dodge
1985	18.65	22.48	19.72	21.68	3.83	Dodge
1990	23.5	20.88	18.76	22.11	4.74	Sublette

Source of current study's data: Weather Data Library, Kansas State University.

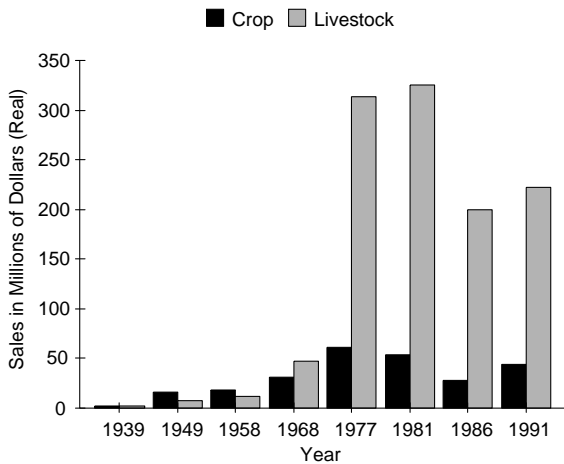


Figure 4. Crop and livestock sales in Haskell County, KS, 1939-91, in real dollars (1982-84 base period; U.S. Census of Agriculture).



Figure 5. Resident population of Haskell County, KS, 1890 to 1990 (Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1992-1993).

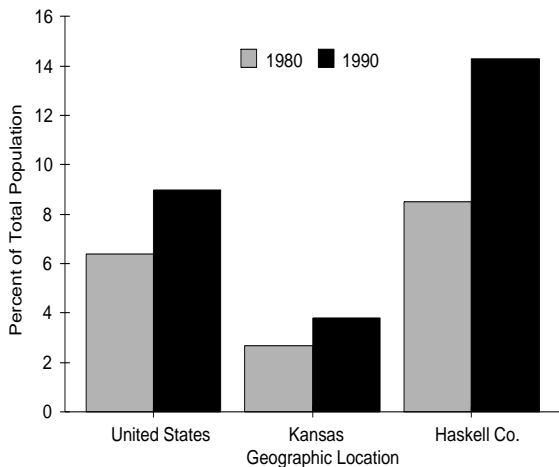


Figure 6. Resident population of persons of Hispanic origin, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County, 1980 and 1990 (U.S. Census of Population).

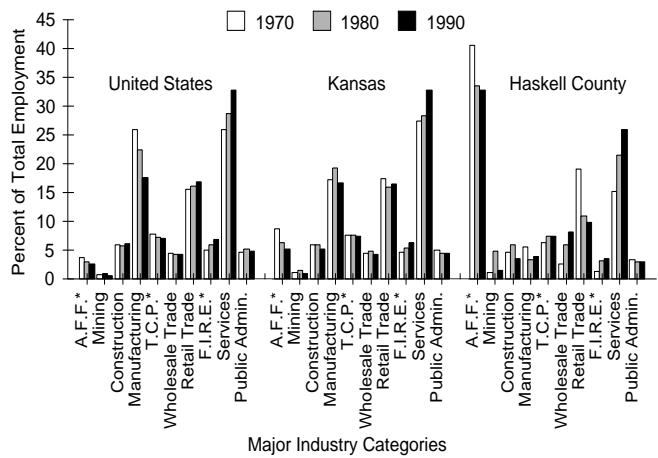


Figure 7. Employment by industry, 1970-90, major categories as a percent of total employment, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Population).

*See text for a description of this category.

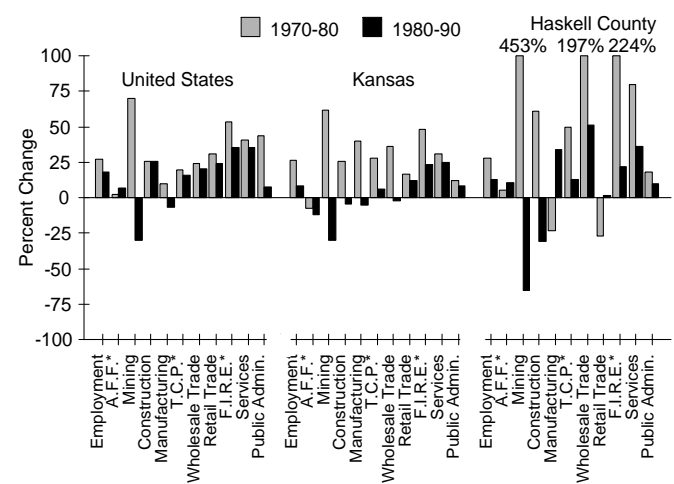


Figure 8. Employment by industry, 1970-90, percent change in major categories a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Population).

*See text for a description of this category.

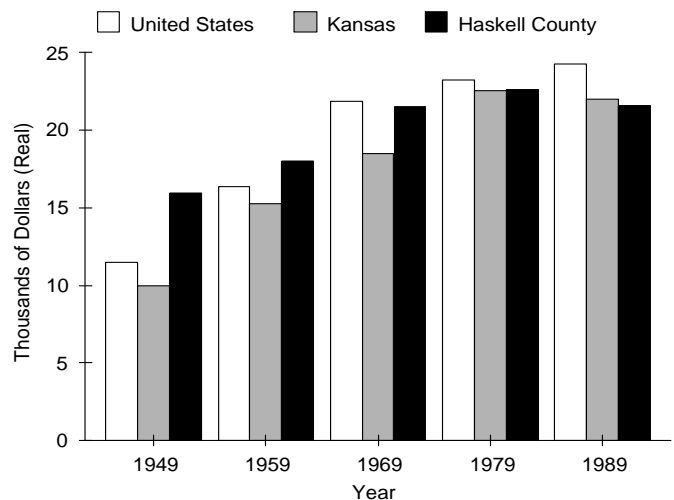


Figure 9. Median household income, 1949-89, in real dollars (1982-84 base period), a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census Bureau).

Haskell County's narrow economic base is reflected in its income levels. The county has experienced times of exceptionally high and low incomes. In 1949, Haskell County's median household and family incomes were extremely high. In 1969, 1979, and 1989, however, the county's median incomes dropped below the national averages (Figure 9). Annual per capita income figures clearly document the volatility of Haskell County's income. During the 24 years between 1969 and 1992, Haskell County recorded both the highest and lowest per capita incomes in Kansas. However, high per capita income occurred with much greater frequency. In 20 of the 24 years from 1969 to 1992, Haskell County's per capita income exceeded both the national and state averages (Figure 10).

From the mid-1950s until the early 1970s, irrigation in Haskell County followed a path of momentous growth. Haskell County became the most intensively irrigated county in Kansas (interviews; secondary data analysis). Irrigation has meant increased production (Figure 11) and greater stability. It also has meant a significant increase in the capital requirements and complexity of farming. The development of irrigated agriculture has generated significant structural changes in the farm sector (secondary data analysis). Compared to both the United States and Kansas, Haskell County has retained a higher proportion of its farms and experienced less growth in farm size over the last 50 years (Figures 12 and 13). Haskell County's farm production has diversified. Farming also has become much more intensive. Energy and hired labor costs have increased significantly and are considerably above the national and state averages (Figures 14 and 15). Off-farm employment by farm operators is much less in Haskell County than in both the United States and Kansas (Figure 16).

However, irrigation in Haskell County is changing. Since the mid-1970s, problems in irrigation have begun to emerge. The aquifer's water table is declining. In 1991 and 1992, Haskell County's water table decline was the most se-

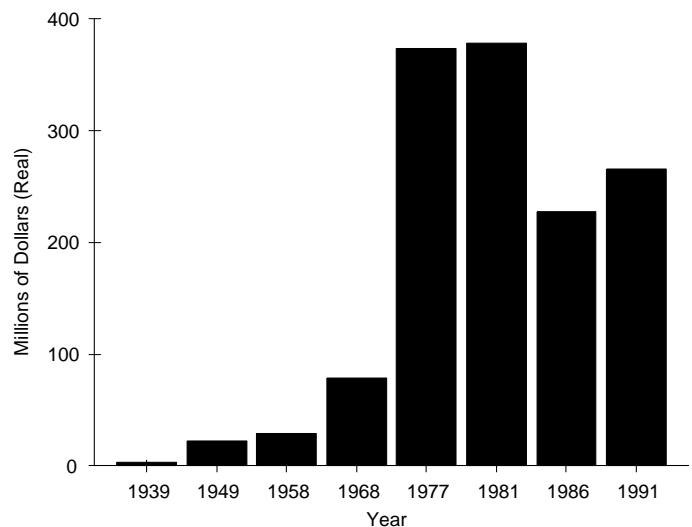


Figure 11. Gross farm sales in Haskell County, KS, 1939-91, in real dollars (1982-84 base period; U.S. Census of Agriculture).

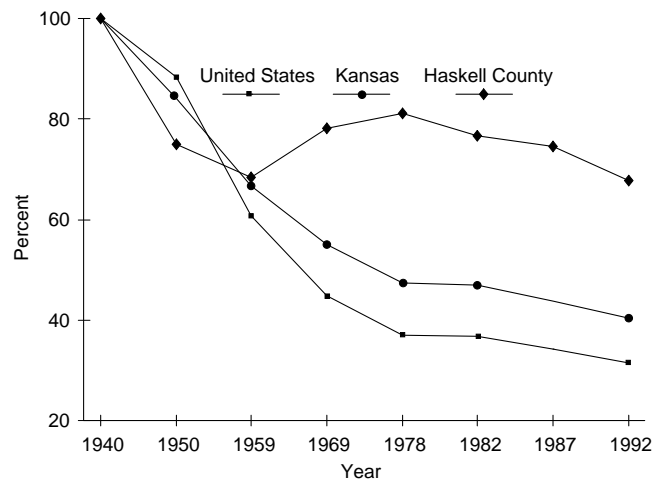


Figure 12. Number of farms, 1940-92, relative to the number reported in 1940, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

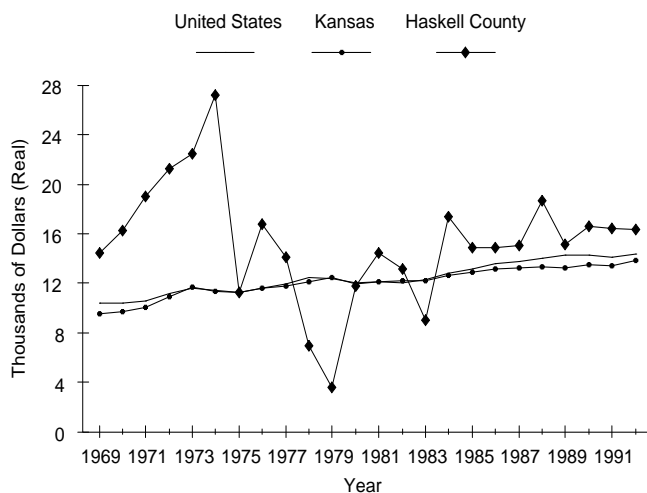


Figure 10. Per capita personal income, 1969-92, in real dollars (1982-84 base period), a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (REIS CD-Rom, Bureau of Economic Analysis).

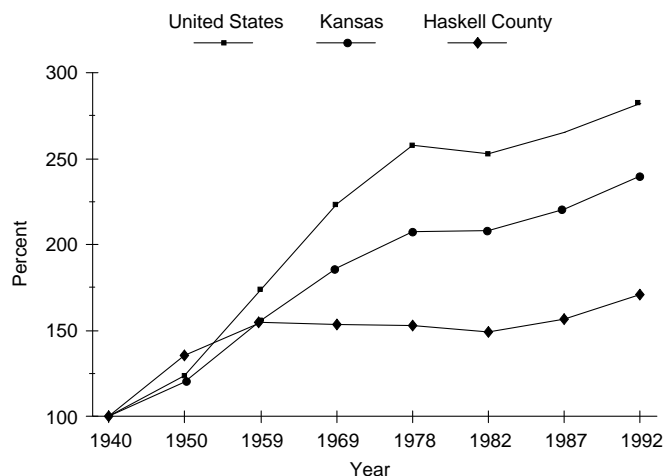


Figure 13. Size of average farm in acres, 1940-92, relative to the size reported in 1940, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

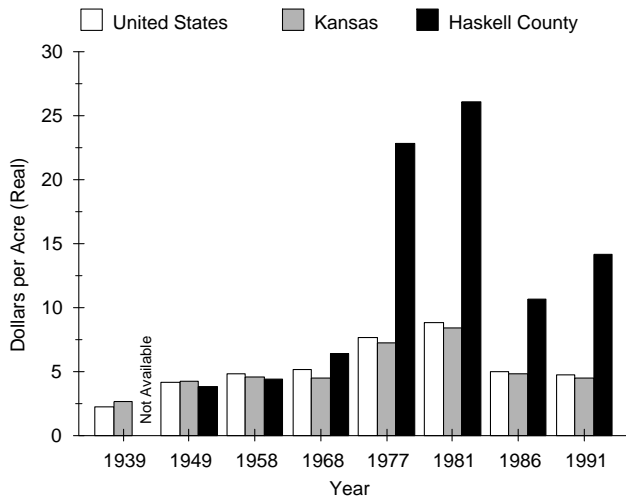


Figure 14. Farm energy expenditures per acre, 1939-91, in real dollars (1982-84 base period), a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

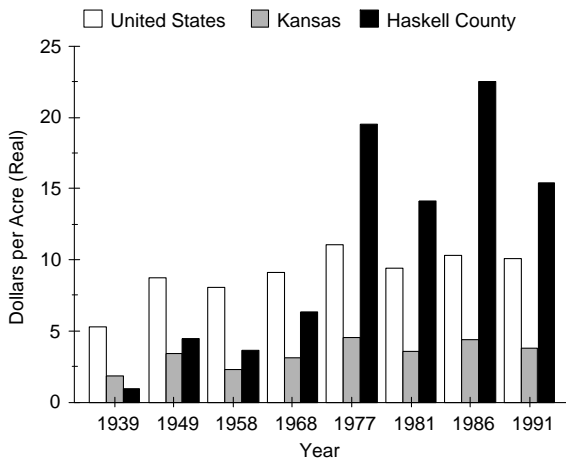


Figure 15. Farm hired labor expenditures per acre, 1939-91, in real dollars (1982-84 base period), a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

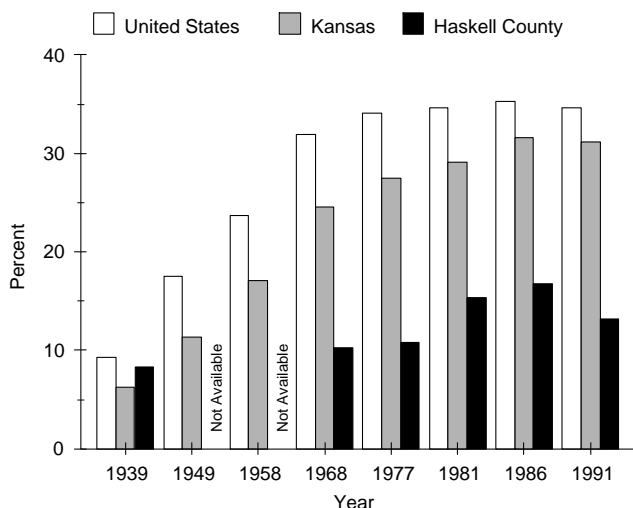


Figure 16. Farm operators working off-farm 200 or more days a year, 1939-91, as a percent of total farm operators, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

vere in the southwest region of Kansas (interviews; document analysis). Many of the early developed wells are reaching the limit of their expected useful life. Moreover, the cost and variability of natural gas have increased with deregulation. These factors together are beginning to challenge the feasibility of irrigation. Increasingly, new technology has been sought to address these changing conditions.

Another force of change affecting irrigation is the increased role of the state in water issues. The local Groundwater Management District, a quasipublic institution made up of water users, of which Haskell County is a part, has begun to implement a system to meter the use of water. Although most farm producers understand the fragile nature of the aquifer's water resource, and most support conservation and the wise use of water, many question the effectiveness of the metering system and regret the increased presence of the state. "The increased role of government [the state] in the conservation of water is not the answer—metering, most farmers are against it." (interviews)

Federal Government Programs

Based upon the information gained from the semistructured interviews, Haskell County residents in 1993 felt that outside governmental forces had reemerged and were again significant to their community. Many people in Haskell County, particularly those who lived through the "dust bowl" and Great Depression era, recalled the important role that federal government programs played in the history of their community. They acknowledged that the farm programs and other "New Deal" programs of the 1930s helped to provide stability to the community. However, attitudes about government involvement have changed dramatically. Some people noted the changing attitude of society in general. This attitude, they suggested, is based upon a contradiction between higher expectations about government support and the desire to preserve individual freedom. Others discussed the loss of rural political influence and the increasing urban bias of public policy. Comments from the semistructured interviews indicated that "[d]eclining political influence is frustrating farmers. Some older farmers disliked the ASCS—SCS [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service]. Younger farmers are becoming dependent, but often retain or reflect the older farmers' attitudes." "Schools have seen increasing federal and state involvement, [we could be moving toward] a state-national curriculum." "With government programs, the structure of local input continues to exist, but few areas are left for real local decision making." "Local [county] government's greatest change is the amount of red tape, bureaucracy."

Results of the community survey corroborated the concerns expressed in the semistructured interviews. In response to the questions about concerns for the future of the community, the two most frequently mentioned issues were taxation and the loss of local control to the state and federal governments. This sense of declining local control was felt most acutely regarding the state's role in education.

For the southwest region of Kansas, which includes Haskell County, the combination of complex social issues, court mandates, increasing regulations that carry no fiscal support, the relative decline of rural representation, abundant natural resources, and the relatively high degree of wealth have generated an atmosphere of suspicion toward the role or presence of federal and state governments. The need or desirability of many regulations is not at issue. Haskell County residents also desire safe water, a clean environment, sound financial institutions, and fair labor practices. However, they do regret the rigid application of regulations they view as developed to fit the needs and resources of urbanized areas. They also are painfully aware of the trend of diminishing federal assistance to implement these mandates.

The semistructured interviews and the results of the community survey revealed Haskell County residents' feelings that the outside government's presence is increasing and that more of the local resources are being drawn away from the community. Many perceived a division between eastern and western Kansas, a division drawn along rural and urban lines. Recent actions by some in the southwest region of Kansas to raise the issue of secession from the state are clear indications of the seriousness of these concerns.

However, not all state and federal programs were viewed negatively in Haskell County. Programs to provide support to the senior population and the poor and local economic development efforts generally were viewed positively. Interestingly, each of these programs reflects a transfer of resources into the local community.

The content analysis of the local newspaper, although supporting the relative decline in the presence of outside governmental units between 1940 and 1965, did not confirm the re-emergence of these activities in 1993. In 1940, as noted by Bell (1942), federal programs were dominant in the Haskell County community. Nearly half of the relevant articles (within the content analysis coding system) were about extracommunity activity. In 1965, most of these articles were about local community activity. Just as Mays (1965) had reported, economic stability had allowed the features of community to emerge in Haskell County. The dominance of local community activity continued in 1993. Beyond the fact that articles in this area still constituted the majority, a clear pattern of increased community development activity was discovered.

Although many explanations are possible for the discrepancy between the results of the semistructured interviews and the survey of Haskell County residents and the results of the content analysis of the local newspaper regarding the presence of outside government activity within the county, two explanations seem likely. One is that federal and state government activities have become so ingrained within American society that, although they have a significant impact upon the local community, they are no longer

considered "news." Another likely explanation is that the conflicts between the local community and the extragovernmental agencies (i.e., taxation and the control of the local schools) were of such critical importance to the community that they overshadowed the absolute decline in extracommunity versus local community activity. Still another possible factor is that the growth of regional newspapers has changed the scope of news coverage in the local newspaper since 1940. Many rural weekly newspapers have become increasingly focused upon local events, leaving most of the news coverage to their region's daily newspaper. In reality, the situation in Haskell County in 1993 is probably a combination of all of these factors.

Development of Agriculture

Massive capital investments, increased mechanization, a greater use of hired labor, changing technology (new crop hybrids and increased use of chemicals and fertilizer), deregulation of energy inputs, the rising importance of successful marketing strategies, and the increasing scope of government regulations all have dramatically changed the business of farming. Overall management skills have replaced production capabilities as the defining characteristics of successful farming. Successful managers are those who are able to deal with the rising complexity of farming. Such ability is regarded as "progressiveness" (interviews).

Although irrigated production has increased the intensity and complexity of farming in Haskell County, until recently it also has allowed the county to buck the national and state trends of declining farm numbers and increasing farm size (Figures 12 and 13). Largely because the labor requirements of flood irrigation place a significant barrier to increasing economies of scale, Haskell County experienced growth in farm numbers and a decline in average farm size during the height of irrigation development. However, the combination of emerging problems in irrigation and the national farm crisis of the mid-1980s eliminated the county's ability to buck the prevailing trends. Over the last 10-15 years, Haskell County also has experienced a drop in farm numbers and an increase in farm size. From 1987 to 1992, the rates of farm loss and increase in farm size in Haskell County exceeded both the national and Kansas averages (secondary data analysis).

Federal farm programs remain important aspects of farming in Haskell County. Bell (1942) reported extensively about the role and importance of the newly developed farm programs, plus the attitudes of the community's farmers regarding them. In 1940, farmers expressed a reluctant acceptance of federal farm programs. They recognized their dependence upon the programs for survival, but regretted program requirements, which they felt diminished their independence. These same sentiments existed in 1993. Although local farm operators felt that "participation is a must," they also believed that "the programs have become a bureaucratic nightmare" (interviews). Government regulations have escalated, and each regulation adds to the

amount and complexity of paperwork farm operators must face. Farmers had a sense that many of these regulations were generated by special interest groups outside of farming. These regulations appear to farmers to be formulated in a vacuum, ignoring regional differences. Although frustrated by increasing regulations, some farm producers recognized that they need assistance in managing the increasing sophistication of new technology. They acknowledged that “regulations may be the best means to ensure safety and compliance” (interviews).

The increasing complexity of farming and the concomitant emphasis upon management represent dramatic changes in this occupation. Although the physical stress in farming has declined, the mental stress has increased. Air-conditioned tractor cabs and hydraulically powered equipment have reduced the physical stamina demanded for farming. The “sweat of the brow” is now more likely to occur as the farm operator slides behind his desk to tackle the paperwork. Farm program records, financial statements, marketing transactions, documentation of compliance with government regulations, and income tax documentation and preparation generate a great deal of paperwork and stress for the modern farmer. Given the amount of capital required in today’s farm operations and the recent changes in lending policies, financial management is both one of the most critical and most stressful aspects of farming.

Human Psychology

Progressiveness, or the ability to successfully manage the increasing complexity of farming, was seen as the most important ingredient for economic success in 1993. However, people’s attitudes were based on other psychological features as well. Increasing length of residency and the accumulation of wealth had fostered greater class stratification in Haskell County. The top social class contained successful (wealthy) farm families. They were born and raised in the county, and most can trace their ancestry back to the pioneers who settled the region. As might be expected, older individuals make up the majority of this group. The primary concern of this group is stability. Their attitude and actions were directed towards maintaining the community as it is, or was. Avoidance of change was the basic predisposition of this group. Because of the group’s status, it has been very effective in promoting this perspective as the dominant ideology in the community. Although economic rationality was still a key psychological feature of the community, economic and social stability had fostered other key attitudes that had become intertwined within the resident’s basic psychological composition in 1993. Thus, the human psychology of Haskell County residents had two contradictory features: progressiveness in farm businesses and maintenance of the community as it was.

With the decline in the energy sector in the early 1980s and the agricultural crisis of the mid-1980s, the no-growth ideology of the older and established leadership began to be questioned. A new group of leaders, largely com-

posed of professionals and managers, who were not life-long members of the community, emerged. In 1993, this emerging leadership group, coalescing around the issue of growth promotion, was attempting to legitimize its position within the psychology of the community. The actions by this group were met with resistance from the older, established leadership group, which sought to maintain the dominance of their no-growth ideology. The struggle between these groups had helped to create contradictory attitudes in the collective consciousness (human psychology) of the Haskell County community in 1993.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Class Stratification

During much of the period between 1965 and 1993, increased stability fostered wealth accumulation and increased tenure. With these changes came increased social stratification. The top position in the county’s social structure was still held by the successful farmer-capitalist. The broad middle group of the social structure continued to be composed of farm operators who rented a significant portion of the land that they farmed, shopkeepers, businessmen, county employees, teachers, and professional people. Laborers and poorer families still formed the lower portion of this social structure.

In 1965, Mays (1968) found definite evidence of a focus of community power. He also noted that the middle group was most active in civic and cultural activities, particularly the businessmen, professionals and educational personnel, and gas company employees. Although these two conditions continued to exist in 1993, the decline in relative economic stability had placed these two groups at odds over the issue of growth promotion and change, as discussed in the previous section.

Spatial Patterns in Community

By 1993, Haskell County had not experienced any significant diversification beyond that present in 1965. Agriculture and energy activities remained the community’s primary economic functions. The agricultural crisis of the mid-1980s and the drop in energy prices in the early 1980s had negative impacts on commercial activity in the county. Although the mix and level of goods and services available in the two towns experienced a decline similar to that in other regions with small populations, the overall commercial activity in the community was stronger than that in other agriculturally dependent counties. Most of people’s day-to-day needs could be satisfied locally. But the influence of mass merchandising also was present in Haskell County. The tendency for people to travel to regional trade centers had increased since 1965. These changes affected people’s attitudes about their community. “Empty businesses on main street convey to some people a sense of de-

cline. The community has become a Monday through Friday community.” (interviews)

Although Haskell County’s central location among the region’s three trade centers (Figure 17) may encourage residents to shop outside the county, this centrality also can offer local residents employment opportunities within reasonable commuting distances. Additionally, it allows the county to be considered as a viable living center for those who work in these larger communities but wish to escape their problems. It is not uncommon for people of southwest Kansas, including Haskell County residents, to travel 50 miles one way to work each day. However, the community’s limited availability of housing has lessened its development as a residential center. “[T]he availability of housing has limited the scope of this. Housing cost are pretty high and rentals are in short supply.” (interviews) Some people speculated that the limited supply of housing and the difficulty of developing new housing were mechanisms by which the “elites” (cf., Logan and Molotch 1987; Flora et al. 1992) controlled the type of development (change) that occurred in the community (interviews).

Centers of Social Interaction

In 1993, although the patterns of social interaction were changing, each of the two towns clearly continued to support communal relationships. The demographic analysis indicated that many of the social changes and current social characteristics of Haskell County apparently have had positive impacts upon the emergence of community. Population stability and the increasing length of residency should enhance individual attachment to community. Economic stability, less division of labor, and higher levels of self-employment should increase economic ties to the local community. Less variance in the distribution of income also may indicate greater homogeneity (Figure 18). A higher proportion of “traditional” family units, a phase in the life cycle with

higher need and opportunity for community involvement (Stinner et al. 1990), should foster communal interaction. Less female participation in the paid labor force may allow greater family discretionary time to participate in community activities (Christenson 1982).

The semistructured interviews showed that most people strongly preferred life in their community to other possibilities. Satanta and Sublette residents each described their community as “a good place to live” and “a caring community.” They indicated that living in a small community provides a sense of “closeness and strong mutual support.”

Looking at the overall response to the written survey confirms these comments. Community attachment was quite high; nearly 80 percent of the survey respondents felt very much at home in their community. Family, friends, and economic considerations were elements that helped to form this strong level of attachment. About two-thirds of the respondents were very interested in local community happenings, and nearly 90 percent of the respondents would be sorry if they had to leave their community. Familiarity and kinship networks were quite extensive. Over three-fourths of the respondents reported knowing one-half or more of the population. In fact, over 75 percent of the respondents indicated that half or more of their close personal friends lived in the community. Less than one-fourth of the people responding to the survey indicated that they had no relatives living in their community, whereas nearly 30 percent reported that half or more of their relatives lived in the community. Given this level of attachment, familiarity, and kinship, we can understand why community and organizational participation is so high. Over half of the respondents indicated that someone in their household had participated in a community improvement activity in the last year. Less than one-fourth of the respondents reported that they were not members of a community organization.

Southwest Kansas

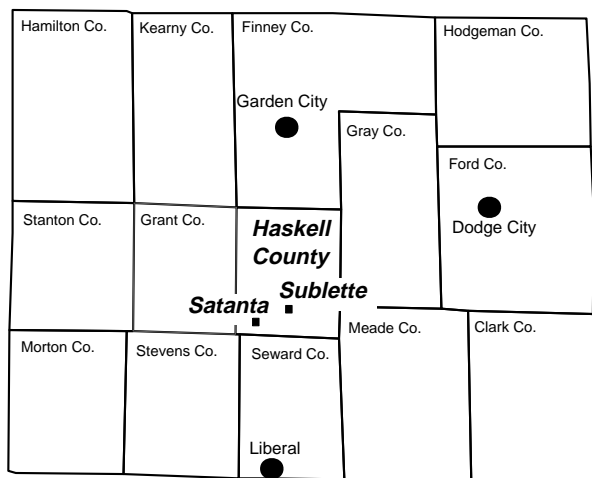


Figure 17. Haskell County’s central location within the regional growth centers of Southwest Kansas.

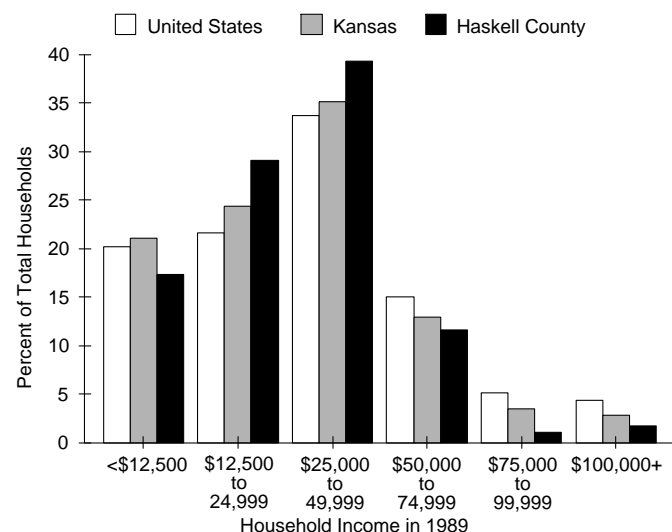


Figure 18. Distribution of 1989 household income, a comparison of the U.S., Kansas, and Haskell County (U.S. Census Bureau).

Most of the people who responded to the survey held membership in more than one organization, and nearly 60 percent of the respondents reported being somewhat to very active in local organizations. Satisfaction with a specified list of community opportunities and services showed that the respondents were most satisfied with the “opportunities to make friends” and the “opportunities for residents to participate in community affairs.” Over three-fourths of the respondents agreed that membership in local organizations was more rewarding than membership in large nationwide organizations. More than 50 percent also agreed that local happenings were more interesting than national and international events.

Generally speaking, the written survey respondents represented those with greater social and economic investments in their community. Long-term residency and higher socioeconomic status, conditions that are associated with a high degree of community attachment (Goudy 1990; Stinner 1990), were overrepresented in the survey response. Even though such respondents may overrepresent those with strong community attachment and participation, higher levels of familiarity and kinship, more organizational participation, and greater satisfaction with opportunities and services in the community, evidence of such attitudes across nearly one-half of the population does lend support to the existence of “traditional” community characteristics in Haskell County.

A comparison of the written survey results for the two towns within Haskell County, Satanta and Sublette, reveals two main points. First of all, the strong community characteristics of the overall survey were present in each of these locations. However, relatively speaking, Satanta displayed the highest level of “traditional” community characteristics. This difference also was noted in the semistructured interviews. An evaluation of the increasing differences between Satanta and Sublette is the topic of the next section.

The Haskell County “Community”

In the 1990s, the residents of Satanta, Sublette, and the area outside of the two towns still relied upon an agriculturally based economy. The dependence upon agriculture was documented clearly in the region’s employment statistics (secondary data analysis). However, noticeable differences between the three regions (Satanta, Sublette, and the rural residents) also existed. The characteristics of a more “traditional” social setting compared to national and state characteristics (i.e., longer residency, less division of labor, higher self-employment, a higher proportion of married couple families with children, less female participation in the paid work force, and a more youthful population) occurred most frequently in the noncity portion of the county. The residents of Satanta, on the other hand, displayed the greatest degree of variance from the county-level statistics. In contrast to the other regions within the county, Satanta’s population had been decreasing over the previous 20 years (Figure 19). Satanta also had the greatest degree of diversity in population ethnicity, length of residency, employment, income, family structure, labor force participation, and age composition. Sublette contained the highest level of homogeneity. Its population had the least ethnic diversity (Figure 20). Length of residency was longer in Sublette than in Satanta, but shorter than that in the noncity portion of the county (Figure 21). Agricultural employment directly accounted for one out of every five jobs in Sublette (Figure 22). Sublette had the highest and most concentrated income (Figure 23). Its family structure was closer to that found in Satanta, i.e., much less traditional than the noncity portion of the county. Sublette’s labor force participation was closest to national and state averages, and it also had the highest proportion of people in the primary workforce age-group.

Clear similarities and differences existed among the geographic areas within Haskell County. The similarities

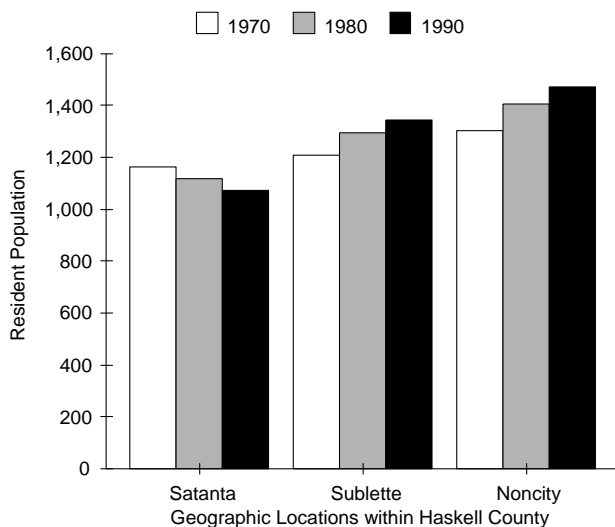


Figure 19. Resident population, 1970-90, a comparison of geographic locations in Haskell County, KS (U.S. Census Bureau).

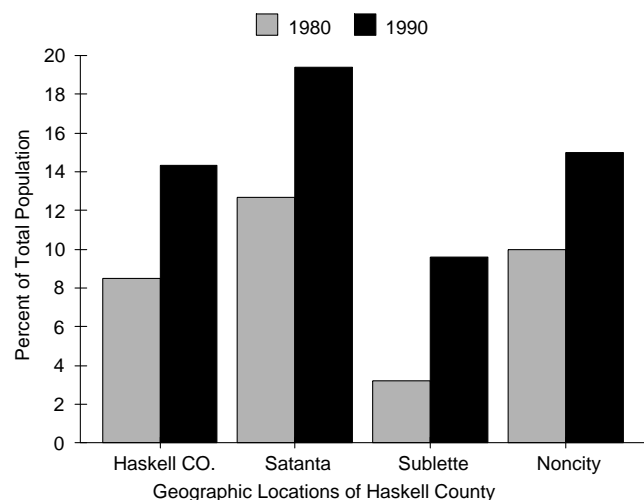


Figure 20. Ethnic diversity in 1980 and 1990, persons of Hispanic origin as a percent of the total resident population of locations within Haskell County, KS (U.S. Census Bureau).

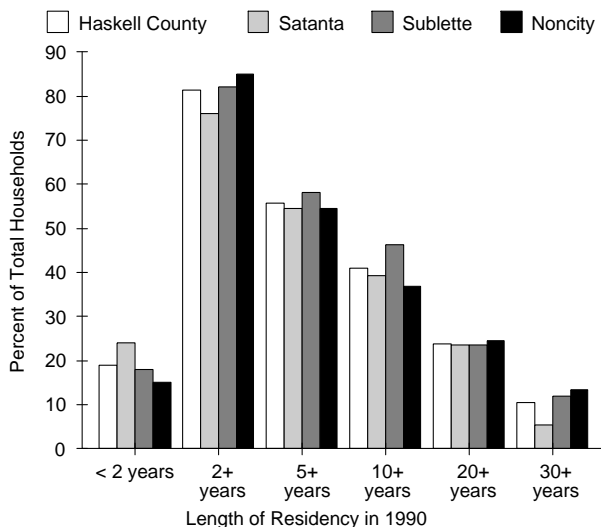


Figure 21. Length of residency as of 1990, a comparison of geographic locations in Haskell County, KS (U.S. Census Bureau).

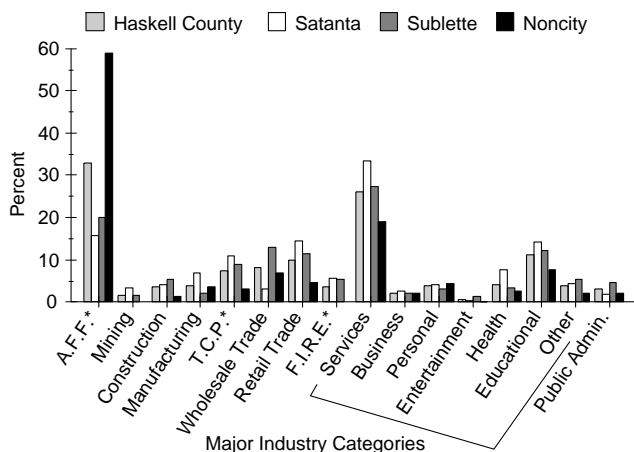


Figure 22. 1990 Employment by industry, showing major categories as percents of total employment, a comparison of geographic locations of Haskell County, KS (U.S. Census Bureau).

*See text for a description of this category.

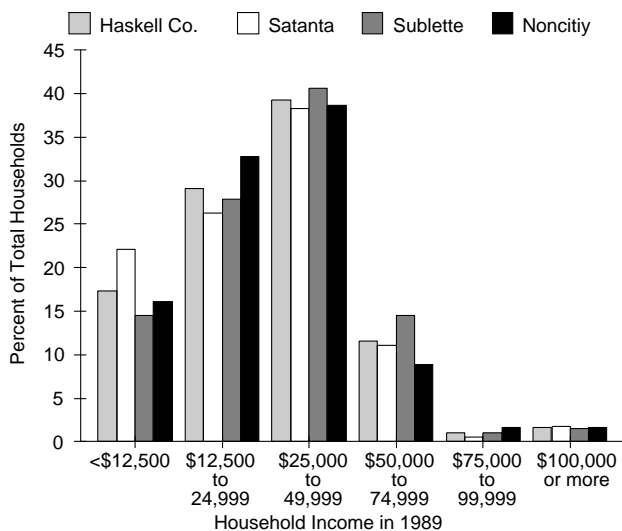


Figure 23. Distribution of 1989 household income, a comparison of geographic locations in Haskell County, KS (U.S. Census Bureau).

were based on their economic reliance on agriculture. Their differences reflected variation in the degree of this reliance. The presence of oil and gas resources in the western portion of the county has supported development of a more diversified economic and social setting in Satanta. However, each of the three areas (Satanta, Sublette, and the noncity portion of the county) exhibited many of the social characteristics identified at the county level that may have positive impacts on the emergence of community. The differences indicate a variance in the degree of intensity of these characteristics, rather than a clear distinction between a “traditional” or “modern” social setting. In addition, many noncity residents may identify with one of the two cities as their community, thereby increasing the “traditional” nature of each city.

Although Satanta and Sublette both exhibited strong community characteristics in 1993 and continued to share many similar characteristics, differences between the two had become even more pronounced than at the times of the previous studies. Perhaps the four most important differences between the two communities relate to their: (1) natural resource base, (2) cultural diversity, (3) degree of social stratification, and (4) communal relations.

The Natural Resource Base. Because of the location of energy resources in the western portion of the county, Satanta has a much stronger natural resource base than Sublette. This has allowed Satanta to limit the per capita costs of several key social institutions. Until the recent change in the state’s school finance laws, the Satanta school district could levy a low tax rate against its vastly larger assessed valuation and still generate a large budget for school operations. With these resources, the Satanta community has strongly supported its schools. The school district’s physical infrastructure is excellent, and its per-pupil operating budget was nearly 150 percent of that of the Sublette school district (Stewart 1993).

Satanta’s health care facilities also are subsidized by its natural resource base. Satanta’s hospital, clinic, and extended care unit clearly are recognized as community strengths. However, without the tax revenues generated by taxing the natural gas resources of the area, few of these services would be feasible to provide. Drawing upon its natural resources, Satanta has been able to maintain several key locality-relevant functions that many similarly sized, and even larger, rural communities have not. For example, Sublette, located only 8 miles east of Satanta, does not have the degree of wealth generated by the natural gas resources. Its assessed valuation for tax purposes is significantly less than Satanta’s (Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing’s Community Profile 1992). Although the residents of Sublette also support their schools, they have had increasing difficulty in generating the resources necessary to meet the needs of the school district. Sublette, which does not have a hospital, also has found providing for the health care needs of local residents to be extremely challenging.

The review of letters to the editor, in the content analysis of the local newspaper, confirmed that health care was a significant issue in the Sublette community. In particular, taxes to support local health care services were causing conflict in 1993.

Cultural Diversity. Satanta and Sublette exhibited considerable differences regarding cultural diversity, and these differences had a direct impact upon the nature of social interaction found in each community. Satanta's level of ethnic diversity was significantly higher than that present in Sublette (secondary data analysis). However, Sublette's ethnic diversity has grown substantially over the last decade. But perhaps the more important aspect of difference between the two communities was their reaction to diversity. Although the Satanta community has a history of embracing diversity, Sublette, on the other hand, has a history of promoting homogeneity (cf., Mays 1968). In 1993, Satanta continued to present a positive atmosphere for cultural diversity, an atmosphere that appeared to support cross-cultural social interaction. In Sublette, the presence of diversity and examples of cross-cultural social interaction proved difficult to discern. Although Sublette residents were aware of the presence of increasing diversity, these differences were largely ignored. "Sublette works to maintain a homogeneous population. Sublette is changing—but most of their Mexican population lives out on the farms. Satanta has cultural diversity—Mexicans live in town." (interviews) Sublette's attitudes and actions appeared to be attempts to maintain its homogeneity, in principle, if not reality.

Degree of Social Stratification. Although both Satanta and Sublette had populations that could be seg-

mented according to relative wealth, the degree of social stratification in the two communities was different. Although social stratification was not a dominant element in either community, class differences were clearly more evident in Sublette than in Satanta. Participant observation and the semistructured interviews indicated that social organizations in Sublette were much more conscious of the relative composition of their membership. Social status, especially economic success and a person's heritage and tenure within the community, seemed to influence a person's entrance into the community and his/her opportunities for social participation. Perhaps the social interaction across culturally diverse groups in Satanta also helped to limit potential barriers based upon class differences.

Communal Relations. Social interaction in Satanta seems to have produced an environment that supports communal relationships. Many of the Sublette residents interviewed perceived that social interaction and communal relationships were stronger in Satanta. "The sense of community is missing in Sublette. Satanta does have a sense of community. The hospital in Satanta is an example of the community's support." "Satanta appears to be a closer community. They [sic] have more interaction. The chamber and businesses interact with senior citizens. They [sic] have a hospital and a good arts council."

Responses to the written survey were consistent with the opinions expressed in the interviews. Satanta survey respondents ranked their community highest for characteristics of community attachment, familiarity, and community/organizational participation (Table 6). Sublette, on the other hand, generally received the lowest score for these

Table 6. Rankings of community attachment, familiarity/kinship, community/organizational participation, and attitudes toward some community matters, 1994 household survey, Haskell County, KS.

Concept	Highest Ranking			Lowest Ranking		
	Satanta	Sublette	Hask. Co.	Satanta	Sublette	Hask. Co.
Community Attachment:						
feeling at home			✓		✓	
interest in community	✓					✓
sorrow if leaving			✓		✓	
interaction with others in community	✓					✓
Familiarity and Kinship:						
close friends living in the community	✓				✓	
relatives living in the community			✓		✓	
Community/Organizational Participation:						
community improvement activity	✓					✓
membership locally	✓				✓	
level of involvement	✓				✓	
Attitudes toward Some Community Matters:						
local participation is more rewarding	✓					✓
local news is more interesting		✓				✓
prefer well-established persons as leaders			✓		✓	

characteristics. Satanta residents also shopped locally for a greater number of the goods and services (Table 7). In particular, Satanta residents obtained medical care locally, whereas Sublette respondents left their community to obtain this service. Satanta respondents also expressed satisfaction with the greatest number of selected opportunities and services (Figure 24). Not surprisingly, Satanta respondents' satisfaction with "health care" stands in stark contrast to that of Sublette residents. Moreover, Satanta respondents, in contrast to the Sublette and rural respondents, did not express a dissatisfaction with "shopping facilities for daily needs." The evaluation of selected community characteristics between the respondent's assessment of "their" community and their view of the "ideal" community confirms the relative strength of the Satanta community. Satanta respondents indicated a greater similarity with the "ideal" community characteristics than either the Sublette or rural respondents (Figure 25).

During the semistructured interviews of residents of both Satanta and Sublette, one event was cited repeatedly as a venue that fostered communal relationships in Satanta. That event was Satanta Days, which has been held annually for nearly 80 years and is a celebration of the Satanta community. The event draws a considerable crowd to the community, many of whom are former residents returning to their "home." Local residents of all types participate in this event. Thus, it provides a means of social participation and social interaction and helps residents identify with their community. Sublette does not have a similar event.

Patterns of Social Interaction

Although the family continued to dominate the pattern of social interaction in 1993, the typical activities of the family had changed. In the responses to the written survey question, "How does your family spend its leisure hours?", television and reading topped the list of leisure time activities reported. Watching or participating in sporting events

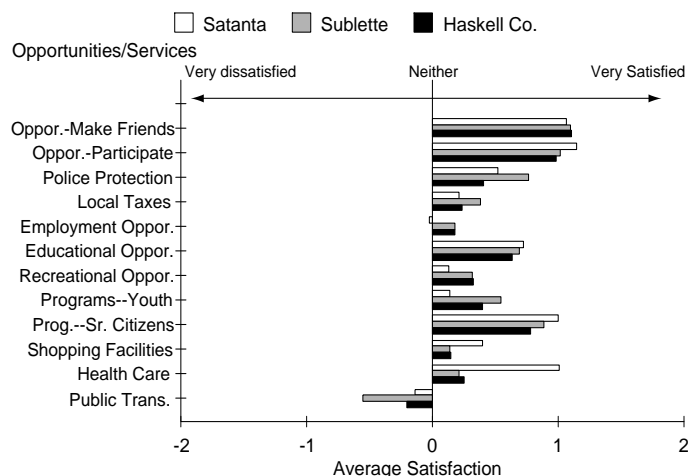


Figure 24. Responses to question 19, "Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following opportunities and services in your community," household survey, Haskell County, KS, 1994.

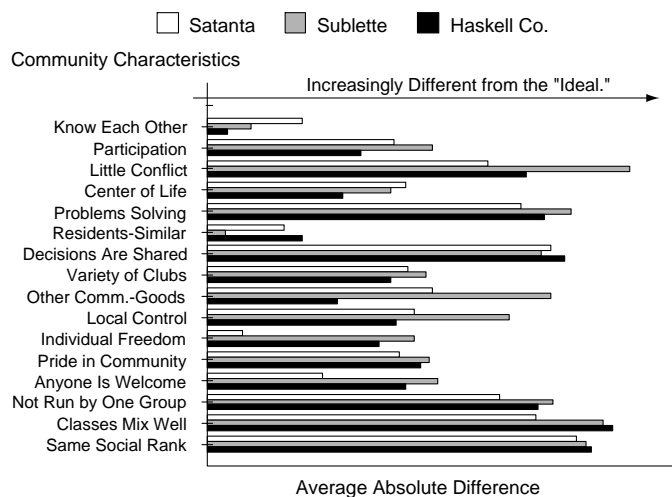


Figure 25. Responses to questions 20 and 21, comparing average absolute difference between the respondents' assessment of "their" community versus their "ideal" community, household survey, Haskell County, KS, 1994.

Table 7. Acquisition of goods and services, 1994 household survey, Haskell County, KS.

Item	Purchased Locally (Most Frequent Response)			Location of Acquisition Haskell County Respondents (Most Frequent Response)	
	Satanta Respondents	Sublette Respondents	Hask. Co. Respondents	Satanta	Sublette
Groceries	✓	✓			
Medical care	✓		✓	✓	
Dental care					
Hardware supplies	✓	✓	✓		✓
Banking services	✓	✓	✓		✓
Major appliances and home furnishings					
Auto repair services	✓	✓	✓		✓
Attending religious services	✓	✓	✓		✓
Recreation and entertainment	✓	✓			
Farm or other business inputs	✓	✓	✓		✓

was the third most frequently mentioned item. Extra-curricular school activities were important sources of leisure activities among survey respondents. Travel, visiting others, and church activities also were frequently mentioned family activities. Although most of these activities also were reported as being family group activities, clearly the top two (watching television and reading) involved little family interaction. The third highest item, extra-curricular school activities, represented social interaction beyond the scope of just the extended family. Two activities clearly brought the family together more than others: church and school.

In 1993, several changes were affecting the pattern of social interaction within Haskell County. Most significant among these were: (1) changing agricultural practices, (2) technological change and the emergence of “mass society,” (3) higher levels of ethnic diversity, and (4) the increasing length of residency of the population.

Changing Agricultural Practices. In 1993, irrigation was predominant in agricultural production in Haskell County. Irrigated production had altered the life style of farm operators and their families. “When I first arrived farmers worked extremely hard for 5-7 months [dryland wheat production]; they had more time for social interaction. Now farming [irrigated production] is a twelve month job.” (survey and interviews)

Technological Change. Technological changes and the increasing presence of “mass society” (Vidich and Bensman 1958), particularly in the area of communications, were elements that appeared to have modified the social interaction of Haskell County residents. “Cable TV, satellite dishes, and instant communications link individuals to the events/activities of the broader society.” “The new forms of entertainment available for people, TV, video movies, etc., generate less need or desire for social activities.” (interviews) From the content analysis of the local paper, we determined that, in 1940, each town in the county (Satanta and Sublette) had a locally owned newspaper. In 1965, there was only one local newspaper, but it was still owned and operated locally. In 1993, the single local newspaper continued to exist, but it was no longer owned locally. This change in ownership of the local newspaper was considered to be further evidence of the emergence of the “mass society” within the local community.

Ethnic Diversity. Increasing ethnic diversity, specifically, the increase in persons of Hispanic origin, also has contributed to changes in social interaction. However, these changes differed substantially between Satanta and Sublette. Cross-cultural interaction was much more readily apparent in Satanta, which had the highest proportion of persons of Hispanic origin. On the surface at least, Sublette continued to display a high degree of homogeneity. For example, although Hispanic-oriented businesses could be found on the main street of Satanta, no similar type of businesses could be found on Sublette’s main street.

Length of Residency. Haskell County’s increased population stability over the last 50 years also has generated some changes in the pattern of social interaction. Gaining entry into the Haskell County community, similar to other rural communities, was also a function of a person’s length of residency. “In order to be an ‘insider’ in the community, you have to have been born and raised here. . . . I feel that people like myself [new residents of the community] are considered ‘outsiders’.” (interviews) Clearly, the patterns of social interaction were shaped by a person’s heritage and tenure within the community.

The Family as a Social Unit

In 1993, the family continued to be the primary informal social unit in Haskell County. The demographic analysis showed that Haskell County’s household and family structure was much more “traditional” than those of both the United States and Kansas. In 1990, 72 percent of the households in Haskell County were married couples. Forty-two percent of the households were married couples with children. Both of these rates were higher than the rate for the United States and ranked as the highest levels in Kansas. In Haskell County, women made up a smaller proportion of the paid labor force, and the value ranked below the national and state averages. Less than half of the women with young children (less than 6 years old) were in the paid labor force, a value that was also below the national average and ranked as the lowest in the state of Kansas. However, as children grew up, the participation rate of Haskell County women increased dramatically. In 1990, 87 percent of the women with children 6 to 17 years of age were in the work force. Dual-income families also varied according to the age of the children. Less than half of the children under the age of 6 in Haskell County were from households in which both parents present were in the labor force, a value that ranked as the third lowest in the state. Nearly 80 percent of the county’s children aged 6–17 were from such family units. These figures suggest that the county’s economic strength and stability may offer families flexibility in balancing family and economic needs.

The written survey showed that kinship networks were quite extensive in Haskell County. Over three-fourths of the people responding to the survey indicated that they had relatives living in their community, and nearly 30 percent reported that half or more of their relatives lived in the community. Families get together frequently, an average of 17 times a year. These gatherings brought the extended family together; typically, three generations were in attendance. In addition to gatherings for special family events, church and school activities brought the family together.

The results of the semistructured interviews indicated that family support is critical to intergenerational transfer of the family farm, because the massive capital requirements of farming act as a barrier to young people trying to get into farming. Without family assistance, entering farming is

nearly impossible. "It's been 15 to 17 years since the last independent start up of a farming operation occurred."

The shift in the responsibility for the socialization of children from the family to the school, noted in the earlier studies, continued in 1993. However, the families (i.e., the parents and grandparents) of the community were not passive observers of this process of socialization, because they generally were involved intimately with the local schools. The school, as will be discussed in the next section, is a very important social organization to the family and the community.

The Role of Schools as Formal Institutions

In 1993, the school continued to be the dominant social institution in Haskell County. Similar to the earlier time periods, the school continued to fulfill multiple functions for the community. The school provided for the education and socialization of the community's youth. The school districts were the largest employers in the county. Extracurricular school activities provided the largest proportion of local recreation/entertainment (surveys). Local social interaction through school activities dominated the community. As in 1940 and 1965, local support for the two school districts in the county appeared to be strong. Although in the earlier time periods, a great deal of control over the schools appeared to be local, in 1993, residents were concerned that recent changes in state laws were transferring more control to the state (interviews).

The county had two school districts, one based in each town. The resource bases of the two districts were vastly different, however. Natural resources, and thus the assessed valuation of property available for taxation, were much greater in the Satanta school district than in the Sublette district. Recent changes in the state's school finance laws had a dramatic impact on the Satanta school district. This law set a base tax rate and per-pupil spending rate for all school districts. School districts such as Satanta, which have a high assessed valuation, send the amount raised beyond the per-pupil spending limit back to the state. The state redistributes these dollars to school districts with low assessed valuation. In 1993, the Satanta school district sent \$1.25 million back to the state. As would be expected, this legislative change, which was mandated by the courts, has been very unpopular with Satanta residents. The Satanta school district joined several other districts in filing a lawsuit on this matter. The dissatisfaction with the state's new school finance legislation within the Satanta community was confirmed across three of the research methods, i.e., the content analysis of the local newspaper, the semistructured interviews, and the written survey.

The Sublette school district, which does not have the high assessed valuation of property found in Satanta, experienced little change to its budget under the new school finance law. However, both Satanta and Sublette residents were concerned about losing control over their educational

programs. The state's recent effort proposing to improve the quality of education, the Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) program, has been met with resistance in both school districts (Reid 1995). In the last few years, "home schooling" has increased somewhat, primarily for religious reasons. Comments gathered during semistructured interviews indicated that some people felt that the state, through its role in determining school curriculum, has moved into issues of personal "values." "The issue of QPA is dividing the community. The start of a private church-related school is part of the local reaction to QPA teaching values. People don't like being told what to do." "There has been some 'ultra-right' group reaction. Some people see QPA as developing a 'state' curriculum." The seriousness of local concerns also was reflected in the content analysis of the local newspaper. The letters to the editor showed that the school board elections became forums for local residents to voice their concerns about these issues.

Although both school districts face issues regarding the state's role in education, Sublette also has been dealing with internal matters. Two recent school bond issues were defeated in Sublette. Explanations of this vote offered in the semistructured interviews were quite varied, but generally reflected "public uncertainty of where money is going and [a reaction to] the recent changes to school finance by the state." "Recent defeat of a school bond issue, defeated by a 2-to-1 margin, was largely because of the unsettling environment created by the state; specifically, property taxes and school finance." Clearly, recent state actions had created a less than favorable environment for such issues. However, the debate may have had another, more pervasive, dimension. The newly emerging leadership group included the strongest and most vocal supporters of the bond issue. The most notable opposition to the bond issue came from the older leadership group. Therefore, the vote on the school bond issue may have represented an opportunity for the older leadership group to reaffirm its power. "Community leadership is in transition; some friction exists. The defeat of the [Sublette's] school bond issue is an example of the division between new and old leadership in the community." (interviews) Those interviewed from Sublette were asked, Does the defeat of the school bond issue mean that the community is losing its high level of support for its schools? Most people did not sense that school support had diminished, but several others answered, "perhaps."

As noted by Mays (1968), the idea of consolidating the Satanta and Sublette school districts was raised in the 1950s by the local school boards. Although the school boards at the time were in favor of the concept of consolidating into one school district, most residents of both towns opposed the idea. Given the disparity between the assessed valuation of the two districts, the issue of consolidation re-emerges from time to time. Although many people interviewed discussed the possible benefits, few felt that consolidation would occur based upon local actions. Some people did speculate that, as the state's role in school fi-

nance continued to grow, the initiative for consolidation would come from the state. In 1993, the three school districts of Moscow, Satanta, and Sublette hired a consultant to evaluate each school and assess the rationale for consolidation. The consultant reported on the status of each school and concurred that consolidation was not warranted (Stewart 1993). This action may have been a “preemptive strike” directed towards any future discussion by the state regarding consolidation. The report also noted the need for the bond issue recently defeated in Sublette.

The Role of Churches as Formal Institutions

In 1993, the churches followed the family and the schools as the third most important element of communal relations (survey). Although most people interviewed felt that “the churches provide a vehicle for assimilation into the community,” others felt that “the several different religious groups in the community tend to split the community.” However, most residents interviewed considered the churches and church activities as strengths of their community. The role of the church in maintaining social values remained very strong, “The community is very church oriented. It voted down the three vices in the mid-1980s [liquor by the drink, the lottery, and parimutuel betting].”

Content analysis of the local newspaper and participant observation indicated that the churches had become much more visible and active in community affairs. The advent of “home schooling” and private, church-related schools, in reaction to state changes in school curriculum, is a clear example of the increased role of the churches within the community.

Social Participation of Men and Women

Women in the United States, Kansas, and Haskell County increasingly were entering the paid workforce (secondary data analysis). Likewise, the proportion of families with both adults working outside the home also was increasing. These changes can affect the family’s level of discretionary time. “Life today, even for those in a small town, is faster paced. There are more two-working-adult families. This affects social activities, such as church volunteerism.” (interviews)

Although the roles of women were changing, they nonetheless continued to play a critical role in the local community. Most farms were dependent upon the wife as an unpaid employee. “The wife provides the equivalent of \$20-25,000 worth of hired help directly to the farm activities—the replacement cost of hired hand, wage and benefits.” (interviews) Women were working in a variety of jobs, everything from keeping the books on the farm, to driving trucks at the feedlot, to operating businesses on main street. Information gained from the semistructured interviews indicated that “[m]ost of the main street businesses in Satanta are run by women.” “Community service, the Chamber, and church organizations are kept going by the activity of women.”

Although the presence and participation of women was clearly evident, some people did suggest that inconsistency existed between the role/activity of women and the status of women. Although women apparently had considerable opportunities in the community, most of the top employment positions were held by men. “Male dominance does exist in the county. Men feel that women should not have top positions in the community—they should be homemakers. Employment opportunities are limited for women, other than minimum wage secretarial and service jobs.” (interviews)

Employment by women, whether it be unpaid work on the farm or off-farm work in the businesses of the community, was a critical element for many families’ survival. Although the top employment positions and formal positions of leadership may have been male dominated, the social fabric of the community was maintained by the actions of women. Through these contributions, women have maintained their positions in the community. Their leadership role may be less formal (visible) than in 1940, but it has not diminished in importance. This importance was confirmed clearly in the results of the written survey, because many of the community leaders identified were women. One of the interviewees summed up the situation very well, “Women in Haskell County today are like [those in] the 1940 study; possibly this is related to the environment; it takes two people to exist.”

The Role of Government

As previously discussed in this section, Haskell County residents in 1993 sensed that outside governmental activity had reemerged, and the tone of people’s attitude about this renewed activity was generally negative (interviews and survey). Haskell County residents appeared to be reacting to the rigid application of regulations that they viewed as developed to fit the needs and resources of urbanized areas, coupled with the trend of diminishing federal assistance to implement these mandates. They perceived a growing division between eastern and western Kansas, a division drawn along rural and urban lines. They also felt that they were losing local control of key community functions, with the most critical example of this being their schools.

The content analysis of the local newspaper found that the nature of extracommunity involvement in the local community had experienced significant change over this 53-year period. In 1940, these programs were identified clearly as providing essential economic and public infrastructure support for the community. In 1965, the support appeared to supplement the economic activity of the community. For example, agricultural programs, although noted, were not discussed as providing essential economic assistance. Support also was provided for infrastructure programs connecting the local community with other communities, i.e., highway construction. In 1993, agricultural programs were no longer reported prominently. Many of the reports about agricultural programs were directed at compli-

ance issues. The largest number of clearly positive reports about extracommunity activities were about cultural programs designed to broaden local residents' life experiences. Interestingly, the majority of articles that described negative or conflictive situations between extracommunity and the local community were divisions between local and state interests. The issue of conflict typically involved the most significant formal social institution in the community, the school.

Generally speaking, the attitude about extragovernmental actions within the community followed the path in which resources were flowing. In 1940, outside governmental action pumped resources into the community, and the local residents' attitude was positive. The general flow of dollars between the local community and extracommunity agencies in 1965 continued to be an net inflow to the county, and again the local attitude was positive. In 1993, the flow of dollars appeared, to local residents at least, to be away from the community. Examples of this flow of resources included diverting local resources to comply with federal and state mandates, the severance tax on energy resources, and the redistribution of school funding. With this perception of a net outflow of resources, residents' negative attitudes about outside governmental activities are quite understandable.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Residence of Farm Families

Mays (1968) identified a pattern of farm operators and their families migrating to a town residence. In 1993, no clear indication existed that a farm operator's geographic location was given any special consideration. The demographic analysis showed that over a third of Haskell County's population resided outside of the towns, and that the noncity portion of the population had grown over the previous 20 years. Participant observation and the semistructured interviews revealed that the typical migration between countryside and town was largely a function of age. As one generation retired from farming, it often moved to town, making room for the next generation to take over the farming operation. The demographic analysis confirmed that the noncity residents were younger and had a higher composition of "traditional" family units, i.e., married couples with children.

Groups of Farm Operators

Mays (1968) determined that the farm operations in Haskell County could be divided into three distinct groups, i.e., traditionalists, experimentalists, and rationalists. This classification was based upon the operator's willingness to adopt new technology and venture into diverse crop production. By 1993, these distinctions were not clearly evident. Crop production in Haskell County, like most other

regions of the United States, had become dependent upon the federal farm program. Compliance with these programs eliminated most experimentation with new crops. However, the other aspect of Mays' categorical scheme, the willingness to adopt new technology, did still offer some degree of differentiation among farm operators. The most striking example of the adoption of new technology related to the movement from flood irrigation systems to center-pivot systems.

Functionality of the Family Unit

The tension between individualism and family, noted by Mays in 1965, was still present in Haskell County in 1993. The community survey found that the most common leisure-time activities of family members were watching television and reading, actions that do not enhance family interaction. Changes in communications technology and the emergence of "mass society," as identified through the semistructured interviews, were given credit for limiting social interaction. However, the significant limit on functionality of the family unit by rising individualism suggested by Mays (1968) had not materialized in Haskell County. The family remained the focus of both individuals and the community overall (survey and interviews).

Position of the Elderly

The demographic analysis clearly showed that the senior citizens of Haskell County, similar to the nation overall, were much more financially secure in 1993 than in 1965. They were socially and politically active and had the second highest level of federal and state support in Haskell County after that given to agriculture. Considering these changes and the level of kinship networks present in Haskell County (survey), the elderly occupied a much more secure position in the community in 1993 than in 1965.

RESIDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THEIR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

The information gained through the semistructured interview process in 1993 showed that residents held a variety of opinions about their community's future. Speculation about changes in the Haskell County social setting covered the full spectrum, ranging from those who believed that little change would occur to those who felt that the changes would be extremely dramatic. One interviewee, who held that the changes would be relatively minor commented, "twenty years from now, overall community attitudes will be about the same. The economic base will still be agriculture, but there will be a decline in irrigation." "The shift to pivot irrigation will continue. But, over the next 20 years there will be little change in the overall agricultural structure, including the feedlots." At the other extreme were the interviewees who speculated that the community would experience significant change, "Thirty years from now, the region will return to dryland farming as the water will have run out. Oil and gas will also be gone." "Dryland produc-

tion will increase, and farms will continue to get larger. Haskell County's population will decline." "Without technological changes or specialty crops, the future will be big equipment and big farms." "Large agricultural production will increase, resulting in fewer and larger farms. [There will be] more efficient use of water. In the long term, irrigation will be phased out, and the county will return to dryland wheat production." Note that these comments about possible changes all hinge around the availability of water, i.e., depletion of the groundwater. As the single most critical resource to the community's future, water also was mentioned in the response to the written survey question regarding the opportunities or challenges for the future of the community.

In their discussion about the community's future, participants in the semistructured interview process raised the following key points: (1) the declining water table is changing agricultural practices, (2) development of the community may have reached its peak, (3) the community needs economic development and diversification, and (4) outside governmental forces have continued impact upon the community.

Effects of Water Availability on Agriculture

The forces of change affecting Haskell County's future are basically the same elements noted by Edwards (1939) and Bell (1942). "The county's dominant issues have been and will continue to be water and agriculture." (interviews) However, the issue of water has changed from inconsistent rainfall to the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer and the rising cost of irrigation. Comments from the semistructured interviews indicated that "[p]eople are well aware that the county is basically mining its resources. Increasing energy costs and a declining water table are requiring people to think about the future." However, some people noted that "irrigation did not develop overnight, and it won't disappear overnight." The challenge facing the county, as well as the entire aquifer region, is clear. Water conservation must supplant the drive for increased development and the focus upon production maximization within the region's agricultural complex (Kansas State Board of Agriculture's Ogallala Task Force Report 1993).

In Haskell County, technological changes that enhance water use efficiency were being implemented rapidly. The semistructured interviews revealed that, "The increased water efficiency of sprinkler systems versus the existing flood irrigation is beginning to make its way into the county." "Production techniques have changed greatly, and this will continue in the future. The focus is upon conserving moisture." Some people speculated that water conservation will go beyond volunteer actions. "The future use of water has been and will be increasingly affected by state legislation and mandates."

Beyond the changes in irrigation technology and irrigated farming practices, the proportion of dryland farming probably also will grow. Given the complexity of issues sur-

rounding irrigation, some producers were opting to return to dryland production, "Dryland is at a premium today for renting." (interviews) Overall, rising complexity and less stability in agriculture have contributed to a shift in attitudes regarding land ownership. Under these conditions, an increasing number of farm operators preferred to acquire land by renting rather than purchasing and increasing their debt load and risk exposure.

Community Progress

From the depths of the Great Depression and "dust bowl" conditions, Haskell County has undergone remarkable growth and development. The community has prospered by utilizing technological advancements to draw upon its natural resource base. However, several people interviewed questioned whether the community may have reached its peak. "It's hard to see the community progressing much higher than it is currently. It could very well be expected to trend lower."

Economic Development and Diversification

Recognizing the possibility that the community may have reached its peak, a group of emerging leaders pointed to the need for economic development. The following comments were gathered through the semistructured interviews: "We must work to keep the businesses we have as well as continue to work at marketing the community to attract new businesses. It's easy to get to the top; it's hard to stay there." "We need to diversify the local economy. Look at what has happened to the Texas Panhandle as a glimpse of Haskell County's future."

The drive for economic development may very well hinge upon the ability of the two towns in the county to work together, "Sublette and Satanta must work together in order to achieve meaningful economic development." How the communities deal with the current issue of health care may provide an indication of whether meaningful cooperation is likely. "People of this community value 'independence.' While this has been strength for the historic survival of the community, such an attitude may weaken the ability of the two communities in working together to meet future needs. This could threaten their survival. The history of the two towns regarding health care is an example of this."

Although the economic challenges facing Haskell County are significant, the community is not without opportunities. Further development of the Hugoton gas field is possible. In addition, Haskell County's central location among the region's three major population centers also offers development potential. However, possibly the most critical factor for the county's economic development is the emergence of new leadership. A transition from the old leadership, which has remained focused upon agriculture and has taken a no-growth or maintenance position, to the emerging leadership, with its eye towards diversification and growth, is taking place currently. Friction during this

transition could impede the community's efforts to address the challenges it faces.

Impact of Outside Governmental Forces

Some interviewees felt that outside governmental forces would continue to have strong impacts upon their community. These comments dealt mainly with the declining voice of rural areas in public policy formation. "So much of the future hinges upon the decisions of others, the urban population in eastern Kansas. The problem is that they don't have a clue about what is going on out here." Several people interviewed speculated that the state's theme in the future will be consolidation. School districts, and even entire counties, may be consolidated. Although respondents recognized that consolidation in some regions may make economic sense, they felt that consolidation would conflict with the emotional needs of the residents. Population decline and technological changes might make the physical characteristics of local school districts and counties obsolete, but people still retained emotional ties and identification with these local systems.

Challenges for the Future

Comments about the challenges and opportunities for the future of a community, in answer to a question on the survey instrument, focused attention on the youth. The primary issues centered around providing the youth with the education and skills they need, maintaining a "safe" family environment, and providing a positive economic environment so that employment is available locally. As one respondent wrote, the goal should be "to grow enough to survive, yet stay small enough to maintain a small town atmosphere."

However, underlying these concerns and challenges for the future was a recognition, by several respondents, of the accomplishments of previous generations and an awareness of the advantages of the region. A guarded confidence existed that the community (Haskell County) can, and will, meet the challenges that lie before it.

CONCLUSIONS

Between 1940 and 1965, the economic and social instability of Haskell County, largely a function of the “capricious” forces of nature (Edwards 1939; Bell 1942), changed dramatically with the advent of irrigated agricultural production (Mays 1968). Since 1965, the linkage between the environment and the community’s economic and social setting has remained very strong. Irrigation has continued to be the catalyst of major changes in the agricultural sector of the southwest region of Kansas. These changes have had tremendous impacts upon the Haskell County community. The combination of the aquifer and natural gas reserves fostered irrigation, which, in turn, allowed for the development of feed grain production. Furthermore, the availability of feed drew cattle feedlots to the area. Last, but not least, the concentration of feedlots brought packing plants to the region. The development of these feedlots and packing plants has had dramatic effects upon the region’s economy and population. In contrast to the trend of population decline in most rural, agriculturally dependent counties outside of metropolitan areas in Kansas and the Great Plains region of the United States, Haskell County has grown in population in each of the five census periods since 1940. Population instability has been replaced with permanence; the length of residency of Haskell County residents exceeds both national and state averages. However, stable growth and the increasing length of residency did not prevent significant changes in the population from occurring. The influx of persons of Hispanic origin has dramatically increased ethnic diversity in Haskell County over the last 20 years.

From 1940 to 1965, the increased stability of its institutions and the steady economic growth in Haskell County allowed a greater degree of local autonomy to emerge. Federal and state programs designed to provide support through the Great Depression faded with the overall economic recovery during and following World War II. However, the role of national policy and programs in agriculture, which grew significantly during the Great Depression and “dust bowl” era, continued to be an important force in local agricultural production. In 1993, the attitudes of Haskell County residents toward outside governmental actions had changed dramatically. For the southwest region of Kansas, including Haskell County, the combination of complex social issues, court mandates, increasing regulations that carry no fiscal support, the relative decline of rural representation, abundant natural resources, and the relatively high degree of wealth have generated an atmosphere of suspicion toward the role/presence of federal and state governments. Haskell County residents resented the rigid application of regulations they viewed as developed to fit the needs and resources of urbanized areas and the trend of diminishing federal assistance to implement these mandates. They sensed that local resources were being drawn away from the community, and they perceived a division between east-

ern and western Kansas, a division drawn along rural and urban lines.

By 1965, the wheat monoculture in Haskell County that Bell (1942) and Edwards (1939) described had been replaced with crop diversity, following the development of irrigation and the influence of government programs (May 1968). But the trend towards mechanization and commercialization continued to intensify agricultural production. Farming as a way of life, not a strong feature in Haskell County even in 1940 (Bell 1942), had been replaced by farming as an agribusiness (Mays 1968). These trends have continued since 1965. Massive capital investments, increased mechanization, a greater use of hired labor, changing technology (new crop hybrids and the increased use of chemicals and fertilizer), deregulation of energy inputs, the rising importance of successful marketing strategies, and the increasing scope of government regulations all have dramatically changed the business of farming. Overall management skills have replaced production capabilities as the defining characteristics of successful farming. Successful managers are those who are able to deal effectively with the rising complexity of farming.

Dramatically rising capital costs and year-round production activities were two key aspects that accompanied the development of irrigated farming. By 1965, the “gambling mentality” of the Haskell County farmer that Bell (1942) noted in 1940 had been replaced largely by the business/economic rationality of the successful agribusiness farmer (Mays 1968). An economic rationality was still a key psychological feature of the community in 1993. The ability to manage the increasing complexity in farming has been called “progressiveness” by local residents. However, economic and social stability had fostered an interest in maintaining the community as it was, which, when combined with the value placed on progressiveness in business, suggests a contradictory consciousness. Moreover, a new group of leaders, largely composed of managers and professionals who were not life-long members of the community, has emerged. These leaders coalesced around the issue of growth promotion and attempts to legitimize their position within the community. The conflict between this group and the older, established group’s attempt to maintain the dominance of their no-growth ideology also had generated contradictions in the human psychology of Haskell County.

Between 1940 to 1965, class stratification, although still not a feature of day-to-day life, had increased. The agricultural stability of irrigation permitted the development of a successful farmer-capitalist group. This group held the top position within the community’s social structure. Social stratification has intensified since 1965, but Mays’ (1968) class stratification system remained relevant in 1993. The successful farmer-capitalist still held the top position in the

county's social structure in 1993. The broad middle group of the social structure continued to be composed of farm operators who rented a significant portion of the land they farmed, shopkeepers, businessmen, county employees, teachers, and professional people. And laborers and poorer families still formed the lower portion of this social structure. However, in contrast to the harmony of 1965, the decline in Haskell County's relative economic stability had placed the top and middle groups at odds over the issue of growth promotion and change.

Although agriculture continued to dominate the county's economy in 1965, commercial and industrial development had helped to provide some diversity to the county's economy. In 1965, one-third of the employment in the county was outside the area of agriculture. Development of oil and gas resources and the additional support services required for irrigation had allowed the two towns in Haskell County, Satanta and Sublette, to buck the national trend of declining rural communities. Although people continued to travel to the regional trade centers for some goods and services, the growth in commercial activity seemed to foster a positive attitude towards shopping locally. By 1993, Haskell County had not experienced any significant diversification beyond that present in 1965. Agriculture and energy activities remained the community's primary economic functions. The agricultural crisis of the mid-1980s and the drop in energy prices in the early 1980s had negative impacts upon the commercial activity in the county. Although the mix and level of goods and services available in the two towns experienced a decline similar to that of other sparsely populated regions, the overall commercial activity in 1993 was stronger in this community than in other agriculturally dependent counties. Most of people's day-to-day needs could be satisfied locally. But the influence of mass merchandising was present in Haskell County, and the tendency for people to travel to regional trade centers had increased since 1965.

Economic growth in Satanta and Sublette followed different paths from 1940 to 1965. Sublette, the county-seat town, had development related to government and irrigation services. The concentration of development of energy resources in the western portion of the county provided the most significant growth for Satanta. The mix of economic activities in each town also affected the composition of their populations. Whereas the population of Satanta diversified, Sublette's population remained very homogeneous. In 1993, although agriculture continued to dominate the county's economy, the overall similarity that Bell (1942) noted throughout the county seemed to be weakening.

Although the social environment had changed between 1965 and 1993, Haskell County retained many of its "traditional" community characteristics. Community attachment was quite high. Family, friends, and economic considerations were elements that helped to form this strong level of attachment. Most Haskell County residents were very interested in local community happenings and would be sorry if

they had to leave their community. Familiarity and kinship networks were quite extensive. Community and organizational participation was high; most of the residents were members of a community organization.

Although Satanta and Sublette both exhibited strong community characteristics and both continued to share many similar characteristics, differences between the two had become even more pronounced by 1993. The four most important differences between the two communities related to their: (1) natural resource base, (2) cultural diversity, (3) degree of social stratification, and (4) communal relations. These differences affected the pattern of social interaction present in each community. In comparison to Sublette, the Satanta community displayed a higher level of "traditional" community characteristics.

Mays (1968:69) found that the family was the primary informal social unit, and the school was the dominant social institution. However, rising individualism and changing attitudes about the care of the elderly were reshaping the family unit. In 1993, the family continued to be the primary informal social unit in Haskell County, and the tension between individualism and family was still present. However, the significant limit on functionality of the family unit by rising individualism suggested by Mays (1968) had not materialized in Haskell County. The family remained the focus of both individuals and the community overall. The school also continued to be the dominant social institution in Haskell County in 1993. Similar to the earlier time periods, the school fulfilled multiple functions for the community. The school provided for the education and socialization of the community's youth. The school districts also were the largest employers in the county. Finally, extracurricular school activities provided the largest proportion of local recreation/entertainment. Thus, school activities remained the predominant sites of local social interaction in Haskell County.

From 1940 to 1965, the churches had better economic support, but they continued to play a very traditional role in the community. In 1993, the churches followed the family and the schools as the third most important element of communal relations. However, in contrast the findings in 1940 and 1965, the churches had become much more visible and active in community affairs.

Another important aspect about social institutions and social interaction was the changing nature of community leadership. In contrast to 1940, when men avoided formal leadership positions and women actively sought such opportunities, in 1965, men were more active than women in formal leadership roles (Mays 1968). The informal leadership by men in 1940 had been replaced by leadership through public office. In 1993, the role of women in Haskell County was found to be closer to Bell's (1942) description.

Water is the defining resource of Haskell County. From the settlement of the county in the late 1880s through the

time of Bell's (1942) visit in 1940, the "capricious" rainfall in the region had created a history of economic and social instability. By 1965, technological changes had unlocked the vast resources of the region, in particular, the groundwater in the Ogallala Aquifer. Irrigation was the foundation of economic and social stability. In 1993, the aquifer clearly was declining and changing agricultural practices. This decline will continue to be the fundamental challenge facing Haskell County. It has caused some residents to speculate that development of the community has reached its peak. Although some residents forecasted the community's decline, others pointed to the need for economic development and diversification.

In looking at the challenges before them, many residents recalled the accomplishments of past generations, i.e., the rise from the desperate conditions of the "dust bowl" and the Great Depression. Drawing upon this heritage, many Haskell County residents had a guarded confidence that the community can, and will, meet the challenges that lie before it. Although the "capricious" force of nature may be reemerging in its significance to the lives of Haskell County residents, they may face it with the tenacious resolve and pioneer spirit of the people who settled the community in the beginning. The "dust bowl" is their heritage. Given the increasing use of center-pivot irrigation systems to conserve water, their future may involve "green circles."

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