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A PROFILE OF KOREAN RURAL VILLAGES, FARMERS AND THEIR CHANGING QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract

This report is based on a USAID-sponsored survey to collect data regarding social characteristics of Korean rural village and its changing aspect. First, in this paper the writer provides a profile of Korean rural villages. This is followed by a description of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Korean farmers. Finally, the writer presents his assessment of farmers' life quality and its changing aspect based on social-psychological and subjective indicators.

During the period of May 6–15, 1980, the writer carried out a social survey funded by USAID to evaluate, from a sociological perspective, the effects of AID's 66 small and medium scale water projects in rural Korea. Out of 66 project areas, 16 were chosen as sample sites for the survey. These sample sites included 90 villages, from which 464 respondents were randomly selected for our interviews. The present report is based on the data collected in this survey. In this report the writer provides a profile of rural people and changing living conditions in villages.

I. Characteristics of Korean Rural Villages

Korea is divided into two "special" cities and nine provinces which are the largest administrative units. The nine provinces (*Do*) include 33 cities and 138 counties or rural districts (called *Gun*). Each of these counties consists of a county seat (*Eup*) and averages 10 subcounties (*Myon*), each with an administrative office. Within each of these subeounties (*Myon*) there are on average about 27 villages (*Ri* or *Dong*). The village is the smallest administrative unit in rural Korea, which is either a single natural habitat (community) or comprises a number of neighborhoods, depending on settlement patterns. There are about 36,405 villages in the nine provinces of Korea. Our survey covers 90 villages from six provinces.

In 1975 there was an average of 74 households and 389 persons per

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village in Korea. The number of households on average in our survey area is somewhat larger than the national average: 91 households and 468 persons in our sample villages in 1975. In 1980, however, the average number of households in our sampling area was only 84 households with 433 persons.[1] Thus, our sampling villages lost about 7 households (7.8 percent) or 35 persons (about 7 percent) on average during the period from 1975 to 1980 (see Table 1).

Data in Table 1 also present characteristics of household composition by size of owned land in our sampling areas in comparison to the characteristics of rural Korea in general. Similar to the national figure for all rural areas, the largest portion of our sample households owned land in the size range from 0.5 *ha* to 1.0 *ha* in both 1975 and 1980.

Korea's average cultivated area per farm household was 0.87 hectares at the end of 1961. At the beginning of the 1960s the government began actively enforcing policy measures to expand cultivated land. In 1962. the Reclamation Promotion Law was enacted, and reclamation work by farmers was highly encouraged with the aid of government loans and subsidies. Stimulated by these measures, reclamation work boomed as efforts were made to reclaim mountain slopes and seashores as arable land. As a result, the cultivated area increased by 189,000 hectares, from 2,049,000 hectares in 1961 to 2,222,000 hectares in 1978. With the increase in farmland and the decrease of actual farm households, the average area per farm household rose from 0.87 hectares in 1961 to 0.99 hectares in 1976.

TABLE 1 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION IN SAMPLING AREAS IN COMPARISON TO ALL RURAL AREAS, 1975 AND 1980

	Total Sample Areas, 1975	All Rural Areas, 1975*	Total Sample Areas, 1980	All Rural Areas, 1979*
Number of Farm Households	73		68	
Under 0.5 ha	30 %	30 %	26 %	30 %
0.5 ~ 1.0 ha	38	36	36	37
1.0 ~ 2.0 ha	25	27	27	27
2.0 ~ 3.0 ha	7	5	10	5
3.0 ha and over	1	2	2	2
Number of Non-Farm Households	18		16	
Number of Total Households	91		84	
Average Population per Village	468		433	
Average Number of Family Members	5.1	5.6	5.3	5.4

Source: MAF, *Report on the Results of Farm Household Economy Survey,* 1976 and 1980.

[1] It should be noted, however, that a great deal of variation exists among the villages. The smallest village in our sample had only 116 households and the largest one had 310 households in 1980.

The increase of per farm household acreage is noticeable particularly in the areas of the water project which seem to have brought out land during the past five years.

Data in Table 2 provide us with other characteristics of the people and villages as a whole. Korea is geographically characterized by abundant hills and mountains, which occupy nearly 70 percent of its territory. Among the 90 villages we visited and surveyed, less than one-fourth of them (24.4%) were located in plain areas, the rest being located in hilly or mountaineous areas.

Traditionally, Korean rural society, like that of many other Asian countries, has been family or clan-oriented, stagnant, feudalistic, and isolated. Even though rural isolation has been reduced greatly by the recent expansion of modern transportation and mass media, a large protion of rural people still live in large families, and have strong identification with relatives and clan. In rural Korea relatives mean much more than they do in many other countries. The Korean kinship concept is not limited to immediate relatives but extends to all people of the same clan, that is, to those with the same family name, tracing their ancesters to the same family name and the same family seat. Their given names are so divised as to indicate their relative position in the family tree.

Many Korean rural villages are still regarded as clan villages. Of course, this does not mean that many villages in rural Korea consist of

TABLE 2 VILLAGE CHARACTERISTICS, 1980

A. Topological Location		B. Agricultural Pattern		C. Paddy Land & Its Arrangement (per village)	Sample Areas		All Rural
Hilly Region	59%	Paddy Mode	50%	Total Size of of Paddy Land	66 ha	(100%)	
Semi-plain Region	17	Mixed Mode	42	Irrigated Area	48	(72)	(86)
Plain Region	24	Upland Mode	8	Consolidated Area	14	(22)	(24)
(N = 90)		(N = 90)		Leased Area	13	(19)	(17)

D. Consanguinity		E. Service of Village Ritual		F. Type of Election of Ri-chief	
Clan Village (Type I)	38%	Done	30%	Appointed by Officer	3%
Clan Village (Type II)	18	Not done	70%	Elected by Village Influencials	59
Non-Clan Village	44			Elected by Voting	38
(N = 88)		(N = 89)		(N = 89)	

G. Village Organizations		H. Educational Attainment of Adults		I. Newspaper Subscription	
Number of Organizations	8	College or Technical College	2	National	13 copies
Total Membership	276	High School	8	Local	8
Number of Key Staff	22	Middle School	16		

only those who are from the same family tree with the same given name. There is no pure clan village in contemporary rural areas. By a clan village we mean a village where a substantial number on kins (that is those with the same given name from the same family tree) live together. In our research a village is identified as a clan village if more than 30 percent of residents are kins (that is, from the same family seat with the same family name, Type I) or more than 30 percent of villages are composed of two kins (for example, 20% Kims and 15% Parks, Type II). According to Table 2, about 56 percent of our sample villages are clan villages (38% Type I and 18% Type II).

As in most of the other primitive and early agricultural societies, traditional Korean villagers believed that supernatural spirits resided in natural forces and in animate and inanimate objects surrounding them. Thus farmers wishing for a good harvest held village ceremonies which were intended to propriate the local gods of field and forest. As the data in Table 2 indicate, we found that each year a substantial number of rural village (about 31%) still held village rituals or ceremonies that were remains of primitive religious activities. The annual village rutual, which is regarded as the biggest holiday in rural Korea, is held on January 15 of each lunar calendar. We also found that even among villages that had abolished such a traditional religious ceremony, the village people usually got together on that day to discuss various important village-wide issues and problems. In most of the rural villages this is the day the village leaders such as village chiefs (*Ri*-chief) and *Saemaul* leaders are elected, for example.

The *Ri*-chief is usually elected informally. Data in Table 2 indicate that the majority of the village leaders are elected informally either by village influentials (59%) or directly by the villagers, voting (usually by hand raising). The village chiefs are usually paid a small salary from the government. In addition, a lesser countribution (usually with rice or other crops) is paid to the village leaders by the villagers themselves. This means the village leaders are not formal public officials, although they take orders from administrative organizations and deliver them to the villages. Village chiefs also perform the role of reflecting village people's opinions or requests to the government. Thus the village chiefs are important mediators of communication between the government and villagers. Furthermore, village chiefs take leading roles in most of the voluntary organizations in the village. Since the *Saemaul* movement was launched in the early 1970s, several community organizations have been created in most rural villages (see Table 2). Thus the village chiefs' roles have been expanded and their leadership has become more and more significant in most villages[2] We also found there is a small number of in-

[2] We asked our respondents who is the most influential person in their village. Seventy

fluential persons who participate in the discussion of important village issues and in problem-solving. These local influentials or rural "elites" are usually those with some wealth, education and good family background that has been recognized for a long time by the community. They are normally incumbents of various social positions such as the Ri-chief, *Saemaul* leaders, head of FLIA office, co-op administrators or other public officials. The number of these elites vary from village to village. But we can get some idea about the size of this elite group by looking at the number of adults who are regarded as more or less educated people. Figures in Table 2 show that in our sample villages, only ten persons have a high school diploma or post-high school education. Even if we include persons with middle school education (that is, 9 years formal education) in the educated elite group, the group still involves a minority of villagers.

A similar indication of the size of the village elite group may be seen in the number of households in the village who subscribe to national or local newspapers. Only 13 households (or 15%) get any kind of national newspaper and the majority of villagers are isolated from national matters —political, economic and otherwise. Lately, since television has become widely available to rural residents, they have some access to national news, although from only one television channel which is run by the government-owned television station.

Television watching, however, is one of the most important forms of recreation in rural Korea nowadays. This is understandable because there are few other modern recreational facilities such as theater, museums or music halls. Rural people used to get together in their neighbor's house and enjoy life through direct face-to-face conversations and interactions. Nowadays, instead of visiting neighbors, most of the villagers sit around their family television set for rest and recreation.

The impact of the television set on rural people's life has yet to be systematically studied in Korea. We suspect that it has both positive and negative socialimpacts. But it is not difficult to believe the impact of rapid industrialization and urbanization on rural people's life is substantial through the television set in rural Korea. The role of the mass media, of course, is more than to provide entertainment to rural people. The media accomplishes an important educational function, providing knowledge and information about agricultural improvements, health and family planning, housing and environmental improvement and incluca-tion of modernism-oriented attitudes.

Although mass media plays a major role in linking rural people to the national scene daily, the rural villages we surveyed were still more or less isolated physically from major socio-economic and cultural facilities. In order to identify the degree of physical isolation of our sample villages

five percent of them stated that the village chief is the most influential.

TABLE 3 INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY ISOLATION FROM MAJOR SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES, 1980

	Distance	Time
Primary School	3km	19min.
Drug Store	3	29
Bus Stop	4	25
Sub-county Office	4	29
Middle School	4	33
Post Office	4	34
Extention Service Station	4	35
Agricultural Cooperative	4	35
Market	5	35
High School	7	45
Paved Road	8	38
Hospital	8	40
Railroad Station	18	60
County Office	17	79

we asked the *Ri*-chiefs how far their village was from major social and economic facilities. Data in Table 3 present the average distance by kilometer and time taken to travel.

Finally, we wanted to find out the impact of the *Saemaul Undong* (New Community Movement) on the improvement of housing and other aspects of the physical environment in villages. Many writers have written about Korea's *Saemaul Undong* and its effects on rural communities (Brandt 1977; Kim and Kim 1977; Lee 1977; Kim 1979). While the authors do not completely agree with each other about the overall effect of the *Saemaul Undong* on rural villagers' life and their communities, they do agree that there has been a remarkable improvement in aspects of the physical environment such as housing, roads, drinking water facilities, public housing facilities for the villagers' gatherings, and sanitary conditions.

One of the basic features of the *Saemaul Undong,* which was launched in the early 1970s to improve the income of farmers and to uplift their quality of life, was that it strongly emphasized human development and training for community development work. Financial, administrative and technical support from the government has been used judiciously for this purpose. With such training in mind, the *Saemaul Undong* first emphasized those projects for improving farmers' immediate living environment, followed by projects to create economic and social infrastructure, and finally by projects to increase farmers' production and income. At the initial stage, the government gave incentives to farmers to improve their own living conditions by upgrading roofs, kitchens and toilet.

In the initial stage of the *Saemaul Undong* these projects were undertaken mainly by individual farmers themselves. Materials required were pro-

vided by the government, partly as grants and partly as loans, but the recipients had to carry out work in accordance with a set of standard designs. All they needed was motivation and a desire to help themselves. At this time, diligence, self-help and cooperative spirit were the philosophical and conceptual foundations of the *Saemaul Undong*.

As individual farmers achieved their initial goal of improving their own immediate environment and as their self-help sprit was inspired, the government encouraged villagers to take up projects which would both create infrastructure for increased agricultural, production and required cooperation of all the villagers. Examples of these community-wide projcets were the construction of small bridges the opening up farm roads for motor transport, the improvement of running-water facilities, the construction of small-scale irrigation facilities, village beautification, the construction of village meeting halls and the establishment of credit unions. In most cases the government provided a small share of the finance, necessary materials, and technical guidance.

The villages that completed major community infrastructure developments were next encouraged to take up income-generating projects such as group farming, common seed beds, greenhouse vegetable cultivation, livestock farming, forestation and referestation, *Saemaul Undong* factories and common market facilities. The government provided materials, grants and loans and people put up a share of the necessary funds, labor and cooperation. Because such income-generating activities require sophisticated managerial and technological skills as well as the community's full participation and cooperation, they were introduced after the village had passed the second stage involving projects intended to build sound infrastructure and to create a cooperative spirit. This step-by-step approach is considered one important factor contribution to the success of the *Saemaul Undong*.

In connection with the developmental stages of the *Saemaul Undong* movement, all Korean villages were classified in 1973 into three categories; 1) basic (underdeveloped) villages (18,415 or 53%); 2) self-reliant (developing) villages (13,943 or 40%); and independent (developed) villages (2,307 or 7%). During our survey period we asked the village chief to rate the village in terms of these three categories. Tho result of their rating is presented in Table 4 and more detailed data about the progress of the *Saemaul* projects are provided in Table 5.

How much has this *Saemaul* movement and its associated projects changed the rural people's mental outlook? In a way, *Saemaul* Undong is a social movement toward modernization of the rural villages and people. Obviously, environmental and small structural change would not bring about a quick change in people's attitudes or behavior. Thus, we asked our rural respondents who was the final decision-maker in their

TABLE 4 VILLAGELEADERS RATING OF THEIR VILLAGES IN TERMS OF THE DEGREE OF SAEMAUL PROJECT PROGRESS, 1980

Underdeveloped Village (Backward Village)	6%
Developing Village (Self-Help Village)	32
Developed Village (Self-Reliant Village)	62
	(N = 90)

TABLE 5 VILLAGE CHIEFS' RATING OF THE STATUS OF VARIOUS SAEMAUL PROJECTS IN THEIR VILLAGE, 1980

Roof Improvement	86 %
Village Hall	83
Village Warehouse	63
Sanitary Water Supply	44
Communal Retail Store	40
Sewage Improvement	40
House Improvement	21
Village Resettlement	11
Village Working Site	9
Communal Stall	6
Communal Laundry Yard	4
Public Bath House	4

daily family affairs. We found that it is still the husband who makes decisions to a large extend (62%). Only 16 percent of the respondents said both husband and wife discuss and make joint decisions about daily affairs.

When we asked more specifically who made the final decision regarding their property management, 66 percent responded that their husbands make the decision. Eight percent said that parents are the most important decision-makers and 16 percent claimed that both husband and wife jointly make the final decision. Even in the matter of children's education, 56 percent of the respondents believe that husbands are the ones who make the final decision. In this case, however, about 25 percent of the respondents said that husband and wife make a joint decision about their children's education.

Thus, one can notice that, if women's participation in the daily decision-making process of their family is an important element of modernization, it has yet to occur in rural Korea. In fact, women's participation in many of the village matter decision-making, is minimal in rural areas. In most cases, women's participation in any voluntary association is not allowed or encouraged except in *Saemaul* women's club activities. For example, they are qualified to become members of the agricultural coop-

erative which is supposed to be an organization for the inhancement of farmers' welfare. In other words, rural communities still maintain a strongly male-centered partiriarchal social system. In a later section we present more detailed data about the mental outlook of rural people.

While many rural villages seem to maintain more or less traditional social structures with some degree of physical isolation, rural resident's interactions with the outside world seem to be frequent. For example, 39 percent of our respondents said they visit cities occasionally or often. However, the most frequent interaction with outsiders occurs between them and public officials who visit the respondent's village. When they were asked how often public officials visit their community. the majority of them (69%) mentioned that the officials visit them occasionally or often. We also asked whether the villagers often visit public administrative offices (such as county or sub-county offices). Forty-three percent of them said they seldom visit it and the remainder said they would visit such offices occasionally or often. However, a larger proportion of females said they seldom visit the administrative offices. The interaction between the villagers and urban people or public officials could be another source of stimulation that could bring about change in rural Korea.

II. Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Korean Farmers

We have just described the overall characteristics of rural villages and some social aspects of villagers' life. We will describe here additional demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the individual, and related social conditions.

Data in Table 6 present information about demographic characteristics of the respondents. According to these data, the majority of our re-

TABLE 6 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESIDENTS, 1980

Age		Education		Occupation	
20–24	1 %	No Education	23 %	Farmer	97 %
25–29	1	Scodang	3	Officer	1
30–34	7	Primary School	46	Agricultural Laborer	1
35–39	10	Middle School	18	Unemployed	1
40–44	21	High School	9	Others	1
45–49	20	Technical College	—		(N = 464)
50–54	17	College	1		
55–59	10		(N = 464)		
60–64	8				
65+	6				
	(N = 464)				

spondent's ages are between 35 and 54 (68%), males (63%) and married (95%). Most of them are farmers (97%). Also, the majority had at least elementary education, and those who had not received any formal education were about 23 percent of the total respondents. When we looked at the respondents' level of education by sex, females' level of education was much lower than that of males. About 33 percent of the female respondents said they did not have any formal education while only 17 percent of the males reported that no formal education was received.

We also found that the average number in the family is between 6 and 7 persons (6.7 on average).[3] Thus, one can tell that family size in rural villages is rather large despite the widely known success of family planning and birth control in rural Korea in recent years. However, the effect of successful family planning in rural Korea is seen in the fact that the average number of family members who are younger than 14 years old is about 2, and 31 percent of the surveyed households had more than 2 children under 14 years old.

While the widely-accepted family planning and birth control in rural Korea has caused a decrease in the number of children in rural Korea in recent years, the number of older persons of age 65 and over has been steadly increased lately. Although this is a nationwide trend, the proportion of older persons in rural Korea, in particular, has been growing faster than that in urban areas, mainly due to the loss of younger people in rural parts through their migration to city areas.

To what degree do young people move out of their home in the rural areas? Our data showed that about 24 percent of the rural families have at least one child who is away from his or her rural home for schooling in urban areas. Also about 51 percent of the households had at least one family member who had left home. This suggests that a substantial number of young people are away from their rural families for education of employment in urban areas.

Data in Table 7 present the level of education ond occupation of the respondent's eldest son. According to Table 12, more than a half of the eldest sons have at least a high school diploma, which indicates a remarkable progress in younger people's education in rural Korea. As pointed out earlier, the remarkable increase in the level of the oldest sons' education is the major source of upward social mobility for the farmers. It might be added that this intergenerational mobility is an important factor causing social change in rural Korea.

Perhaps a better and more direct indicator of social mobility is seen in the types of occupations taken by the respondents' eldest sons. According to Table 7, only 28 percent of the total eldest sons are farmers and the rest

[3] Family members who are temperarily away from their home are included in this figure.

TABLE 7 EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION OF THE ELDEST SON, 1980

Education		Occupation	
No Education	1 %	Farmer	28 %
Seodang	2	Officer	7
Primary School	19	Teacher	2
Middle School	24	Clerical	19
High School	40	Skilled Industrial Laborer	11
Technical College	5	Unskilled Factory Worker	18
College	10	Sales	7
		Others	3
		Unemployed	6
	(N = 260)		(N = 217)

are either factory workers, white-collar workers or others. Twenty eight percent of them are white-collar workers (public officials, teachers, and other clerical workers) and 9 percent are in sales business or others. Skilled and unskilled factory workers account for about 29 percent of these people, which indicates the significant impact of urbanization and industrialization on rural families in Korea.

However, children's education and occupational mobility is achieved in many cases at the sacrifice of their parents. We asked if our respondents had to sell any piece of their land for any reason in the past few years. Date in Table 8 present responses from those who sold their land for some reason. The largest portion (33%) of these farmers said that children's education was the reason for selling their land. We have already pointed out the major source of social upward mobility for farmers is their children's education.

Other important reasons for selling land are labor shortage (12%), medical expenses (9%), living expenses (8%) and expenses for family rituals such as weddings and funerals (7%). The labor shortage in rural areas was mentioned by many of our respondents. This problem is a direct of urbanization and industrialization which causes a large portion of rural young people to move to urban areas. Medical expenses have also been a heavy burden to the rural people who are excluded from any benefit

TABLE 8 REASONS FOR THE DECREASE OF LAND HOLDINGS

Low Profitablity	4 %
Labor Shortage	12
Living Expenses	8
Educational Expenses for Children	33
Medical Expenses	9
Family Ritual Expenses	7
Establishment of Stem Family	3
Others	26
	100
	(N = 77)

from the modern medical insurance. As we will see later again, the majority of our respondents pointed out that medical facilities are poor, or rather non-existent in their villages at the present time.

Another important reason farmers sell their property is to secure expenses for their family rituals. Traditionally, rural Koreans (and urban people, too) used to spend a substantial amount of money on their family rituals, mainly because it was a symbol of family status. In the early period of the last decade, however, the government passed a new law restricting the family's spending on rituals such as weddings funerals, ancestoral worship, ceremeonies for the 60th birthday of the elderly, and so on. This new law, in conjunction with an extensive social campaign to simplify traditional rituals and to reduce financial waste, was largely successful. As a result, nowaday's family rituals are much simpler and more frugal. Despite this national trend, however, our data indicate that some rural families still reduce their land just for their traditional rituals and ceremonies.

Next, what is the status of the family income among the rural residents and their overall material living standard? Data in Table 9 and 10 provide us with information regarding farmers' income status and their material living standard in terms of the possession of modern household items. According to these data, the farmer's annual family income is about 1.9 million won (or a little over $3,000 in US currency). The most popular household item among farmers is the television set. This item is owned by 87 percent of all respondents.

The improvement in tho living standard of rural poople, in terms of their possession of household items, has occurred rapidly in recent years. In fact, the majority of rural people did not own television sets or other electric household items in 1975. As data in Table 16 indicate, only about 16 percent of Korean rural residents owned television sets in 1975, although about 82 percent of the rural communities had electricity by that year (see Table 10).

Data in Table 11 exhibit a different picture of the economic conditions of the respondents. About 74 percent of our rural respondents have some degree of debt and the majority (59%) of them said farming expenses were the major cause of their debt. The next important reason given was

TABLE 9 FAMILY ANNUAL INCOME, 1980

(unit: 1,000 won)

Under 50 thousand won	7 %	250 — 300	5 %
50 — 100	19	300 — 350	8
100 — 150	23	350 — 400	2
150 — 200	14	400 thousand won and over	5
200 — 250	17		

(N = 435)

TABLE 10 HOUSEHOLD ITEMS IN RURAL AREAS

	1970[a]	1975[b]	1976[c]	1977[d]	1978[e]	1979[d]	1980[e]
TV Set	1 %	16 %	30 %	44 %	63 %	64 %	87 %
Electric Iron	—	—	—	—	—	50	59
Electric Fan	—	18	18	24	36	48	58
Rice Cooker	—	—	—	—	—	47	63
Tape Recorder	—	—	3	44	11	13	22
Phonograph	4	7	12	14	17	12	15
Refrigerator		1	1	2	4	6	14

Source: [a] National Bureau of Statistics, EPB, *Population and Housing Census Report*, 1970.
[b] ————, *Population and Housing Census Report*, 1975 (5% Sample Survey).
[c] Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1979.
[d] Whang, In-Joung, *The Integrated Rural Development in Korea*, Korea Rural Economics Institute, 1979.
[e] Surveyed Sample (N = 464).

TABLE 11 REASONS FOR DEBT

Living Expenses	9 %
Farming Cost	59
Educational Expenses for Children	11
Medical Expenses	
Purchase of Agricultural Machinery	5
Purchase of Farmland	3
Family Ritual Expenses	3
Land Consolidation	1
Others	8
	100
	(N = 344)

to meet educational expenses for their children (11%). We pointed out earlier that some farmers had to sell their land to send their children to school.

Next we asked to whom they owe their debt. The majority (75%) said their loan came from their local agricultural cooperative office. However, about 65 percent of respondents said that the major sources of smaller loans are their neighbors. In cases where farmers use private credition, they have to pay a much higher interest rate than if they use agricultural cooperatives or other banks.

In rural Korea, however, there is a long and persistent tradition of cooperative efforts in the socio-economic sphere. For example, among the villagers, several types of voluntarily formed multi-aid cooperatives exist for social and economic reasons. These are called *Kye*. We found that only 26 percent of respondents did not belong to any type of *Kye* and majority had membership in at least one *Kye* in their village. That is, a little less than 40 percept of the respondents belong to two or more *Kye* indicanting that the *Kye* is still the most popular informal organiza-

tion through which rural people save money or help each other.

Thus far we have presented data showing some socioeconomic characteristics of individuals and their life conditions. Socio-economic status (SES), however, is a relative social position that indicates where an ipdividual or his/her family members are located in the dystem of social structure. Thus, we may assess one's SES in terms of his/her income, education or occupation, or an index combining these factors in relation to other members of the community. However, we run into a problem when we want to assess one's SES in terms of such objective indicators. It is difficult to find a cutting point to determine who belongs to the upper status group and who belongs to the middle or lower class.

A solution to this problem may be to take a subjective assessment of the respondents' regard of their own SES in the community. For example, when we ask respondents what stratum they think they belong to, they might give us a subjective assessment of their relative ranking in terms of their level of income, education, occupation or other subjective critieria in comparison to other people of their community or society in general.

Figures in Table 12 provide us with data regarding the respondents subjective evaluation of their social stauts. When we asked the respondents what their own socio-economic status was, 25% of the respondents regarded themselves as having lower status, 15% believed they belonged to the group of higher status and the rest of them (60%) said they were middle class people in their villages. Thus, the majority of rural residents feel they are somewhere in the middle of the social stratum system, suggesting that rural Korea has achieved a more or less stable social structure in recent years. This is an encouraging social trend in rural Korea. Many scholars have pointed out that an absence of a stable and significant middle class could bring about polarization of the people into two conflicting groups, that is, the haves and the have-nots in a society that maintains a capitalistic economic system (Marx 1973).

Many factors may be responsible for the emergence of such a stable social structure in rural Korea. The early 1950s' Land Reform Act, in turning most of the Korea's cultivated land over to the family actually cultivating it and reducing the number of tenants or landless farmers to

TABLE 12 SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN THE COMMUNITY, PRESENT AND 5-6 YEARS AGO

	Present	5-6 Years Ago
Upper SES	15 %	16 %
Middle SES	60	53
Lower SES	25	31
	100	100
	(N = 463)	(N = 463)

a miniscule 5 to 7 percent of the total farmers, may be partly responsible for this. Also, according to the law, no farm family can own paddy land bigger than 3 ha.

Another factor responsible for the achievement of some degree of economic equity may be the governmental price policy for agricultural products, particularly for rice and barley. The government implemented a two-price policy to guarantee a stable income for farmers. But it has been asserted that this policy was implemented to protect urban consumers rather than rural farmers.

Still another factor may be the *Saemaul* movement. As was mentioned previously, the government was to a large extent successful in mobilizing unused rural labor for the improvement of the rural environment and to increase farm production. Whatever may have caused the aforementioned stable social stratification system, data in Table 12 indicate that the gap between the rich and the poor has been reduced and the proportion of middle class farmers has increased in recent years. Of course, this does not mean that the discrepancy between urban dwellers and rural residents has been reduced in terms of income of other socio-economic conditions. What our data suggest is that the larger propotion of rural farmers now identify themselves as people of the middle SES group within their rural communties.

III. Social-psychological and Subjoctive Indicators of Farmers' Life Quality and Its Change

Subjective indicators in this study refer to the respondent's evaluation of his or her own life and surroundings. Various social psychological states of individuals that are related to their evaluation of the quality of life and environment are also included here. Operationalizations and measurements of subjective indicators, however, are not easy tasks. Even though we have witnessed remarkable progress in the techniques of measuring psychological attitudes in the past few decades, there is no consensus on what and how we should measure quality of life or well-being of people. This problem stems from the difficulty in both conceptualization and technique of measurement.

For our purpose in this study we selected 16 items or areas of "social concerns" that would reflect the respondents evaluation of the quality of their life and surroundings. We asked them to rate the present state of each of these items and the degree of change in each item that occurred during the period of the past 5–6 years.

The sixteen items of quality of life are as follows:

1. Transportation conditions in the community;
2. Market facilities;

3. Educational facilities and conditions;
4. Medical service and facilities;
5. The respondent's own housing conditions;
6. The respondent's satisfaction with family income;
7. The feeling of reward from farming (work satisfaction);
8. Hardness of farm work (farm laboring conditions);
9. The respondent's satisfaction with his or her present life in general;
10. Closeness among the village people;
11. Social treatment and conditions for the aged;
12. Public safety and order (incidents of crime and other moral problems);
13. The respondent's satisfaction with the community;
14. The respondent's frequency of contact (interaction) with relatives;
15. The respondent's participation in community activities; and
16. Leisure and recreational activities.[4]

Some of these items seem to indicate the respondent's perceived environmental conditions related to his or her well-being in the local area (e.g., transportation, markets, educational and medical facilities). Some others (e.g., closeness among the villagers, public safety and order, recreational activities or community participation) seem to measure the respondent's social surroundings. Still others seem to indicate the respondent's own personal life quality (e.g., satisfaction with housing, income, farming and his or her present life in general).

Table 13 contains residents' responses to the question of what the present state of their quality of life is and what changes have occurred in their quality of life in terms of 16 items during the past 5–6 years. The quality of life indicator mentioned most as satisfying was the degree of closeness or extension of friendly help among the villagers at persent. Next most salisfying were public safety, community participation, interaction with relatives. life conditions for the elderly, educational facilities, transportation and market facilities. Thus, on the whole, 72 percent of the respondents expressed satisfaction with their community.

The respondents said that they were least satisfied with their present family income. Only 17 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with their present income status. However, almost a half of them (49%)

[4] Of course, we know that these 16 items are not exhaustive. There are many other items available that are used in other researchers' survey. However, we decided to limit life quality items to this number mainly for an efficiency reason (time and money problems) and partly by our haste which caused us to skip important items. For example, we realized later that it was a mistake to exclude an item measuring nutrition as an aspect of quality of life.

TABLE 13 SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF QUALITY OF LIFE AND ITS CHANGE

	Positive Evaluation of the Present Status	Positive Evaluation of Change
1. Closeness among Villages	95 %	38 %
2. Public Safety and Order	90	33
3. Community Participation	81	49
4. Contact with Relatives	76	43
5. The Conditions of the Aged	73	59
6. Overall Community Satisfaction	72	90
7. Educational Facilities	59	65
8. Transportation Conditions	54	70
9. Market Facilities	52	58
10. Work Satisfaction	51	33
11. Housing Conditions	48	54
12. Overall Life Satisfaction	37	67
13. Leisure and Recreation	33	27
14. Hardness of Farmwork	21	52
15. Medical Services and Facilities	17	36
16. Income	17	49

believed that their income status has improved in recent years. Housing conditions were still regarded as inadequate by many farmers despite the *Saemaul* movement helping farmers to upgrade the quality of their housing. In fact, 54 percent of the respodents believed that their housing in 1980 was more convenient than 5 to 6 years ago.

The modern concepts of leisure and recreation are alien to many rural farmers. Although they enjoy participating in traditional games and other forms of recrealion during nationwide holidays such as *Choosuhk* (a Korean version of thanksgiving day celebrated on August 15 in the lunar calendar) and the New Year Holiday, they have not benefitted from modern recreational facilities that are enjoyed by most urban dwellers. While this trend is common among farmers in many other countries, Korean farmers do not seem to be satisficed with the leisure and recreational aspects of their life. Only 27 percent of farmers believed that the recreational aspect of their life had improved in the past few years.

Still a large number of farmers (79%) complained that they suffer hardship in their farm work, although more than a half (52%) of the respondents felt that their farm work was becoming easier. Like income, medical facilities and services are regarded as poor by farmers even though some of them, (36%) believed that there services have improved recently.

On the whole, medical facilities apart, the majority of the respondents seem satisfied with the environmental and communal aspects of their life, but are less happy with the personal aspect of their life such as housing, leisure and recreation, farm work and income. However, the majority

of the respondents (67%) said their overall living conditions had improved and thus now they were more satisfied with their life than before. These opinions about their personal and community situation, however, fail to indicate important attitudes of these rural people concerning the nature of man's condition in society. Thus, we asked the respondents and their village chiefs to react to the following six statements, to find out their attitudes toward society in general.

1. Success in business and politics cannot easily be achieved without taking advantage of gullible people;
2. It is hard to figure out who can really be trust these days;
3. Public officials doesn't really care what people like me think;
4. Things are changing so fast these days that one doesn't know what to expect from day to day;
5. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better; and
6. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.

Responses to these questions are presented in Table 14. The data suggest that, in matters involving relationships with other people including governmental officials or the possibilities of future improvement, there appears to be widespread uncertainty, despair and hopelessness among rural villagers. These feelings of distrust, uncertainty, despair and hopelessness seem to be somewhat inconsistent with the respondents' overall evaluation about their community situation. However, this seemingly inconsistent response may rather indicate that the evaluation of their specific community is one thing and their feeling about society or the world in general is another thing.

On the other hand, the respondents' attitude toward society in general seems to be related to their specific individual life conditions. We found

TABLE 14 ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIETY

	Residents	Ri-chief
1. Success in business and politics cannot be easily achieved without taking advantage of guilible people.	80 %	61 %
2. It is hard to figure out who can really trust these days	78	70
3. Public officials doesn't really care about what people like me think.	72	62
4. Things are changing so fast these days that one doesn't know what to expect from day to day.	67	46
5. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse,	43	42
6. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	39	29
	(N = 464)	(N = 76)

farmers to be not very satisfied with their personal life situations such as income status, housing conditions, and rest and recreation in their daily life. Thus, it seems to be that those who suffer poor personal living conditions may be more pessimistic and have more negative attitudes toward society than those who enjoy more affluent living conditions. Thus, village chiefs, who are better educated and more affluent, seem to be less pessimistic about their society than ordinary villagers.

On the whole, however, the data in Table 14 suggest that, regardless of class difference, rural residents seem to suffer pessimism or *anomie*, to use a sociologist's term (Durkheim 1964). When Durkheim coined the concept of anomie, which include normlessness, uncertainty, despair, hopelessness in man's condition in society, he was concerned about something more than economic factors. His concern was with rapid social change, which he believed to be responsible for the strain or malintegration of the social system. Durkheim lived in an historical period when the West experienced sudden and rapid social change, owing to the transition from a traditional social system to a modern industrial society. This sudden change was, to a large extend, the consequence of two great revolutions, the democratic and industrial revolutions. These revolutions began to reorder social roles, status, and cultural norms, and to change traditional systems of authority and community. As many scholars pointed out, in this transitory period anomie has been a common experience in the West.

An age of profound social change is now also upon Korea. During the 1970's many low-income rural areas were exposed to an accelerating process of modernization through the government's intervention in various community development programs. This government effort to modernize rural areas, along with the overall spill-over effect of industrialization and urbanization, has been the most significant impetus causing rural change in Korea. Rapid social change caused by such external forces as bureaucratization, industrialization and urbanization might have destroyed some of the traditional values and norms, with no new value system being established to suit the newly industrializing society. When people are caught up in the transition from a traditional social system to a modern society. they often experience a sense of confusion, uncertainty, powerlessness and normlessness. Also, many researchers have stated this is particulary true among women. In fact, our data show that this is the case in rural Korea.

In conclusion, rural Korea is changing and so are rural people. Farmers have seen an improvement in their quality of life and social environment, partly due to the community's developmental *Saemaul* projects, and partly due to the spill-over effect of national growth. Nevertheless, they seem somewhat confused and dissatisfied with their life. This disen-

chantment with life may be caused by many factors. We pointed out that rapid social change along with bureaucratization, industrialization and urbanization could be one of those causal factor. Another factor may be rapidly rising expectations. That is, with the completion of many community development projects or on-going developmental programs, farmers' hopes rise more rapidly than the possibilities for fulfilling them. Thus, rapidly rising expectations may have caused farmers to feel less improvement of their living standard than has actually taken place. The rising expectations can be seen in that over 70 percent of rural residents would like to send their children to college. We found that when farmers get extra income from farming, they first spend it on their children's education.

Alternatively farmer's may feel dissatisfied with their overall living conditions and, in particular, with governmental agricultural policy (77% of our respondents manifested dissatisfaction with the government's agricultural policy) mainly because now they regard urban people as their reference group. Thus, when they compare their lot with that of urban people, they feel deprived. In fact, our data indicate that only a few farmers (about 4% of our respondents) would like to see their children become farmers. This is why they desire to send their children to college if they can. However, the finding that farmers suffer dissatisfaction, powerlessness and confusion to some degree should not conceal the fact that their material living conditions have improved during the past few years.