

in Korea. At the early stage of the economic crisis, a number of corporations had to go bankrupt. This directly resulted in the sudden disappearance of a number of “permanent” jobs for workers. Youths who finished their schooling tried to enter the labor market but found that there were few jobs available to them. All these resulted in soaring unemployment rate for all age groups. To cope with the crisis, Korean government initiated to reconstruct the labor market not only to increase jobs sharable by many unemployed but also to induce foreign investment. As for the government, the only way to accomplish both goals seems to adopt the principle of “new liberalism.” The core principle of the reconstruction of the labor market in accordance with the spirit of “new liberalism” was “flexibility.” According to this principle, workers should be possible to be laid off whenever necessary. Rather than regular full-time workers, part-time or temporary workers have been preferred in various work places by owners.

This effort to reconstruct the labor market might succeed in creating a number of new jobs available at the societal level. Also, the highly soared unemployment rate gradually declined. This might be the positive result of the reconstruction of the labor market. But the barrier to the entrance into the labor market for younger people is still so high that they always have to undergo a kind of “war” to find a job in the labor market. On the other hand, the condition of labor or job status has become deteriorated and unstable. The concept of lifetime job has suddenly gone away in Korea since the economic crisis. The spread of part-time or temporary jobs made it impossible for people to settle down at a work place. The fear of unexpected layoff made people adopt a new way of life different from that before the economic crisis. Loyalty to the work place or commitment to their task has been weakened remarkably.

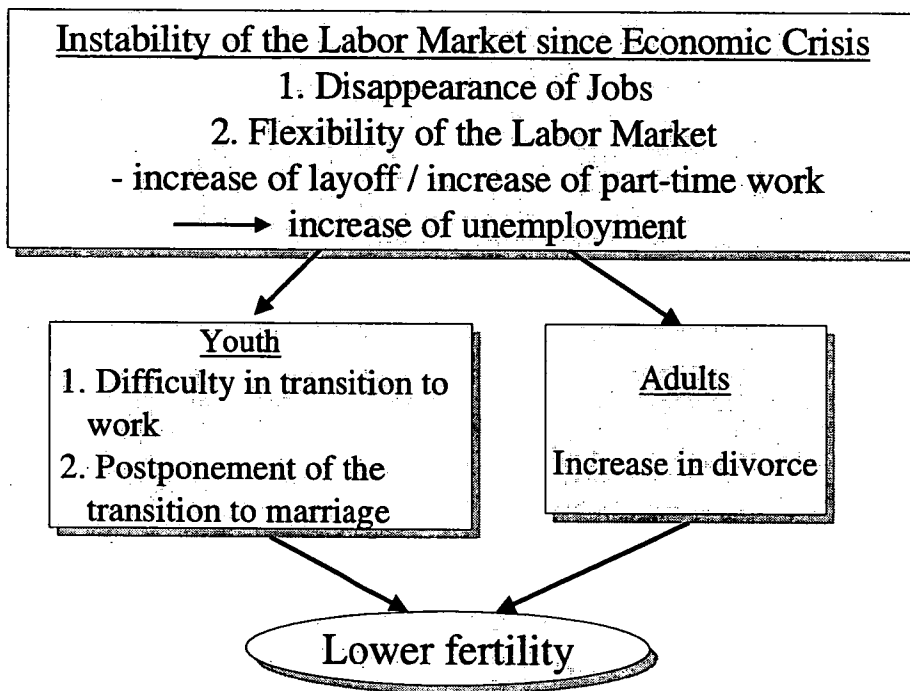
Who has been the most victim of the changing labor market since the economic crisis? It is usually youths. Under the economic hardship, most work places want workers with various experiences who need not additional training or reeducation. On the contrary, youths who are just out of school are likely to have no career or prior work experience. They usually need training or reeducation for new work places. It may take months or a year to train new comers. It is natural in the age of economic hardship that owners of corporations avoid recruiting inexperienced youths to save time and financial resources. This automatically results in higher unemployment rate for youths with insufficient experiences who have to make a transition from school to work, marriage and childbearing.

Layoff affects greatly adults' life, too. Once they are laid off, it is so difficult for them to make a reentry into work in a formal sector in Korea. The most frequent type of the transition to reentry into work is the entry into self-run small business with unpaid family labor. Because of the lack of experience in that kind of work for them, and of fierce competition in the fields, however, self-run small business is highly likely to fail. This inevitably worsens economic difficulty for them, which is likely to make their marital life end in divorce. Soaring rate of divorce since the economic crisis is sure to reflect this situation in Korea.

My model is based on the above discussions. In this model, I assume the changing labor market as the most significant factor in explaining rapid decline of fertility. This affects the life of both youths and adults. As for youths, they are likely to face the difficulty in the transition from school to work. Less jobs at the societal level sometimes make it impossible for youths to transit to work after schooling. Although they succeed in making a transition to work, the job is likely to be part-time or

temporary. Korean male with a part-time or temporary job, who still assumes the role of breadwinner, inevitably hesitates to make a transition to marriage. High cost of housing also aggravates the possibility of the transition to marriage for single males who are usually in charge of arranging a house before marriage in Korea.

Figure 4 A New Model for Recent Fertility Change in Korean Society



As for Korean females, they have become independent economically with increasing educational attainment and by participation in the labor market. Their attitude towards marriage and family is also undergoing a huge change. Most Korean females do not like to be lifetime single, but also do not like to hurry into marriage even when they pass so-called “appropriate age at marriage.” Social norm on age at marriage has greatly weakened nowadays in Korean society. More significant in relation to the

declining marriage for Korean females is that the number of “marriageable” male has become less and less since the economic crisis. Although younger females want to get married, they are difficult to find “marriageable” males who are at least comparable with them or in better conditions. So Korean females also have difficulty in the transition to work, marriage and childbearing as males do.

As for divorce, I will not repeat my discussion because I already mentioned above. It is noteworthy that divorce should be considered in future research on fertility decline in Korea although the impact is rather small.

5. Analysis

At this moment, it is not easy to prove my hypothesis emphasizing the impact of the changing labor market on fertility decline since the economic crisis in Korea. Above all, I need data that shows the trends of the transition to work, marriage and childbearing at the individual level. But there is no such data available at this moment. I rather like to prove my hypothesis using some aggregate data although my discussion is limited. The following Table 5 shows the trends of age at marriage in Korea for both males and females. Mean age at marriage for both males and females has been increasing as if there is no limit. Most Korean demographers predicted in the 1980s that age at marriage would not increase so much because they thought it would already reach the ceiling of age at marriage. But their predictions have been proved wrong. For ten years in the 1980s, mean age at marriage increased for both males and females by 1.4 and 1.6 years, respectively. Age at marriage never stopped growing in the 1990s, either. What is interesting is that the increase of age at marriage in the 1990s was accelerated in the latter half of the 1990s. In particular, it is tremendous since the economic crisis. Age at

marriage in 2002 is at a record high, 29.8 for males and 27.0 for females.¹ But it is more probable that this record high age at marriage will be renewed with much higher age at marriage in 2003 and afterwards unless the economic situation affecting the transition to marriage for males and females changes positively. This rapidly increasing age at marriage since the economic crisis is an evidence to support my hypothesis.

Table 5 Singulate Mean Age at Marriage in Korea, 1981-2002

Year	Male	Female	Difference
1981	26.4	23.2	3.2
1985	27.0	24.1	2.9
1990	27.8	24.8	3.0
1991	28.0	24.9	3.1
1992	28.1	25.0	3.1
1993	28.1	25.1	3.0
1994	28.3	25.2	3.1
1995	28.4	25.4	3.0
1996	28.4	25.5	2.9
1997	28.6	25.7	2.9
1998	28.9	26.1	2.8
1999	29.1	26.3	2.8
2000	29.3	26.5	2.8
2001	29.6	26.8	2.8
2002	29.8	27.0	2.8

Source: KNSO(2001:20, Table III-10); KNSO(2003).

The increasing age at marriage reflects the growing proportion of single for both males and females. Following Tables 6 and 7 show respectively how proportion of single has been changing for both males and females in Korea.

¹ Japan is no exception to this. See Retherford et al. (2001).

Table 6 Proportion of Single for Male by Age in Korea, 1970-2000

Age	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
15-19	99.7	99.7	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.8	99.7
20-24	92.6	92.9	93.1	94.4	96.4	96.3	97.5
25-29	43.4	47.0	45.2	50.7	57.3	64.4	71.0
30-34	6.4	7.0	7.3	9.4	13.9	19.5	28.1
35-39	1.2	1.4	1.7	2.7	3.8	6.6	10.6
40-44	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.5	2.7	4.9
45-49	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.3	2.4

Source: KNSO, 1960-2000.

Table 7 Proportion of Single for Female by Age in Korea, 1970-2000

Age	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
15-19	97.1	97.4	98.2	99.1	99.5	99.2	99.3
20-24	57.2	62.5	66.1	72.1	80.5	83.3	89.1
25-29	9.7	11.8	14.1	18.4	22.1	29.6	40.1
30-34	1.4	2.1	2.7	4.2	5.3	6.7	10.7
35-39	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.6	2.4	3.3	4.3
40-44	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.9	2.6
45-49	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.0	1.7

Source: KNSO, 1960-2000.

It is clear that proportion of single for both males and females has increased greatly during the fertility transition until the late 1990s. But we must note that proportion of single in thirties for males and in twenties and early thirties for females began to increase tremendously between 1995 and 2000. For example, the proportion of single for females aged 25-29 was 29.6 in 1995. However, it jumped up to 40.1 for the same age group in 2000. For males, the proportion of single aged 30-34 was 19.5 in 1995, but increased to 28.1 in 2000.

Why do age at marriage and proportion of single increase so much in recent years? Can we regard these as proving my hypothesis that the transition to marriage has been retarded or delayed because of the economic hardship? Then, we need to prove that

economic situation for youths has been aggravated in recent years. The following Tables 8 and 9 show the trends of unemployment rate for both males and females, respectively.

Table 8 Unemployment Rate for Male by Age, 1995-2001

Age	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
15-19	9.1	8.9	11.6	25.3	22.5	14.5	14.7
20-24	7.7	8.2	8.9	19.6	13.6	12.4	11.5
25-29	3.7	4.2	4.9	11.1	10.5	6.9	7.1
30-34	1.7	1.8	2.3	6.3	6.2	4.3	3.6
35-39	1.7	1.4	1.8	6.1	5.2	3.5	3.3
40-44	1.4	1.4	1.7	6.1	5.6	3.4	3.3
45-49	1.3	1.3	1.5	6.5	6.0	4.2	3.2
50-54	1.2	1.4	1.6	6.9	6.4	3.4	3.3

Table 9 Unemployment Rate for Female by Age, 1995-2001

Age	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
15-19	7.5	6.6	8.7	17.5	17.0	12.7	12.4
20-24	4.9	4.4	6.2	11.9	10.7	7.6	7.4
25-29	1.9	2.0	2.8	6.5	5.3	3.8	3.9
30-34	0.8	0.9	1.6	5.0	4.7	2.7	2.4
35-39	0.8	0.8	1.6	4.7	4.4	2.5	2.2
40-44	0.7	0.8	1.7	4.7	4.6	2.9	2.4
45-49	0.5	0.5	1.0	3.8	3.6	2.2	1.8
50-54	0.3	0.5	0.9	3.8	3.2	1.9	2.1

As anybody can expect, the unemployment rate soared between 1997 and 1998 because of the impact of the economic crisis that began in 1997. The unemployment rate more than doubled for all age groups regardless of sex between 1997 and 1998. Although unemployment rate has been decreasing after 1997, it is still high.

Because of the custom of age discrimination in employment, those who once lose the opportunity to be employed right after schooling are very hard to find a job in a formal

sector next time. In fact, there are a number of youths who are not employed right after schooling, and consequently face the barrier of age discrimination in entering the labor market afterwards in Korean society. A significant part of those who fail to enter the labor market right after schooling are likely to give up employment. These youths who do not seek employment any more are usually omitted in calculating unemployment rate by the government. This inevitably leads to underestimate of unemployment rate in Korea. Considering this custom in calculating employment, we can assume easily that the real unemployment rate for youths after the economic crisis has been higher than that calculated by the government.

The trends of high unemployment rate for youths since the economic crisis indicate that Korean youths have had difficulty in the transition from school to work. Although some younger people succeed in the transition to work, their jobs are likely to be part-time or temporary because the proportion of part-time and temporary jobs has surpassed that of regular full-time jobs in the labor market since 1999. All these conditions are sure to make Korean youths delay the transition to marriage.

6. Conclusion

Korean society has experienced a lowering fertility even after she completed fertility transition in the 1980s. Total fertility rate in 2001 was 1.3. It is expected that TFR would be lowered below 1.3 afterwards. Nobody knows how low the fertility will decrease in Korea in the future.

Demographers and social scientists have explained the mechanism of lowering fertility in Korea as well as in other Asian societies by the “traditional” way in terms of educational attainment of women, women’s participation in the labor market, changing

family values, for example. I do not deny that the “traditional” way of explanation has been significant in understanding long-term fertility transition from high to low fertility in Korea. However, this “traditional” model is not sufficient to understand the recently sharp decline of fertility in Korea. Neither is it in other Asian societies.

We must note that recent low fertility is to some extents attributed to the “tempo” effects as Bongaarts, Kohler and other demographers already indicted mainly in the context of developed countries (Bongaarts, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Bongaarts and Feeney, 1999; Kohler and Philpov, 2001; Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2002). Tempo changes usually mean that timing of childbearing has been delayed in recent years. First of all, age at marriage began to increase sharply. In addition, first birth interval has increased for recent marriage cohorts in Korea (Eun, 2001). These changes in timing of childbearing directly affect the “period” fertility, which results in lowering fertility in Korea.

As long as the currently lower fertility is mainly due to changing tempo of childbearing, we need to concentrate on factors that cause changes in age at marriage and timing of childbirth. In this research, I assume that the increasing age at marriage is caused by the difficulty in the transition to marriage followed by the difficulty in the transition to work by both young males and females, not by changing family values or by increasing participation in the labor market by women. The difficulty in the transition to work and marriage comes from an enormous transformation in the labor market that began after the economic crisis. As the labor market becomes flexible, part-time and temporary jobs surpasses regular full-time jobs nowadays. Layoff is possible whenever necessary by owners. The number of jobs becomes less and less, on the one hand, because of the worsening economic situation and, on the other hand, due to the

developing information technology. All these conditions have made it difficult for youths to make a transition to work first, and then to marriage and childbearing.

The impact of the economic crisis is in fact wide in everyday life of ordinary people in Korea. Fertility is no exception to this. Nonetheless, the impact of the economic crisis on fertility decline has never been appropriately dealt with in prior demographic research on low fertility. The cause of currently lowering fertility in Korea is rooted in the difficulty in the transition to work, marriage and childbearing for both males and females, which is the direct result of the transformation of the labor market since the economic crisis. This is why I propose a new model for understanding recent fertility decline in Korea in this research.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Proportion of Female Married by Age, 1970-2000

Age	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
15-19	2.8	2.6	1.7	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.7
20-24	42.3	37.2	33.7	27.8	19.5	16.7	10.7
25-29	88.4	86.8	84.9	80.9	77.3	69.9	59.1
30-34	94.6	94.4	94.3	93.3	92.4	91.4	86.9
35-39	92.0	93.2	93.4	93.3	92.8	92.2	90.7
40-44	84.8	88.2	90.1	90.4	90.3	90.1	88.9
45-49	76.8	79.1	83.1	85.9	86.1	86.4	86.1

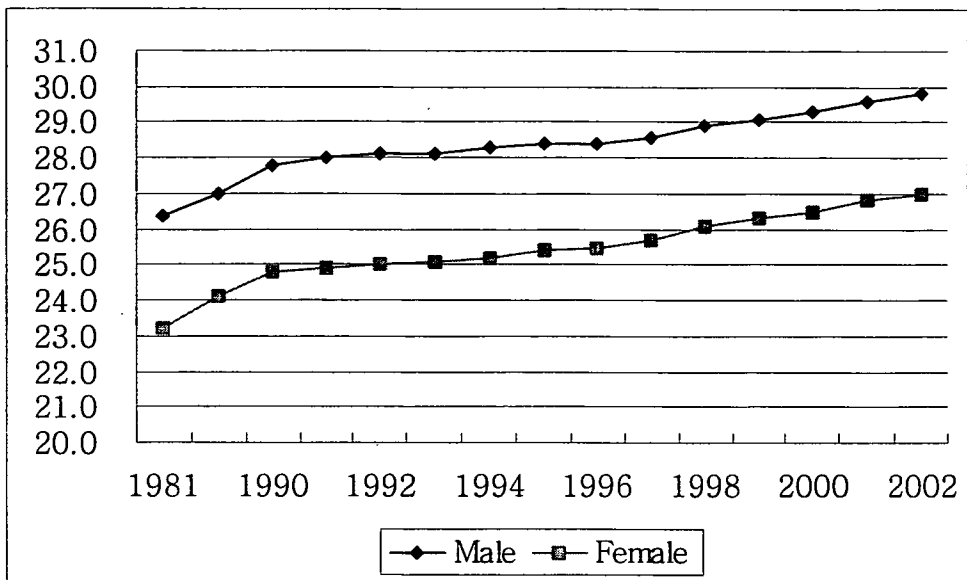
Appendix 2 Proportion of First Birth by Duration of Marriage in Korea, 1992-2001

Duration	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<2 Years	84.1	82.8	81.5	82.9	83.4	82.6	81.0	79.9	77.5	76.5
2-3	12.2	12.5	13.4	12.6	12.2	12.9	14.4	15.1	16.8	17.2
4-5	2.2	2.8	3.1	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.9	3.5	3.9
6-9	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.9
10+	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

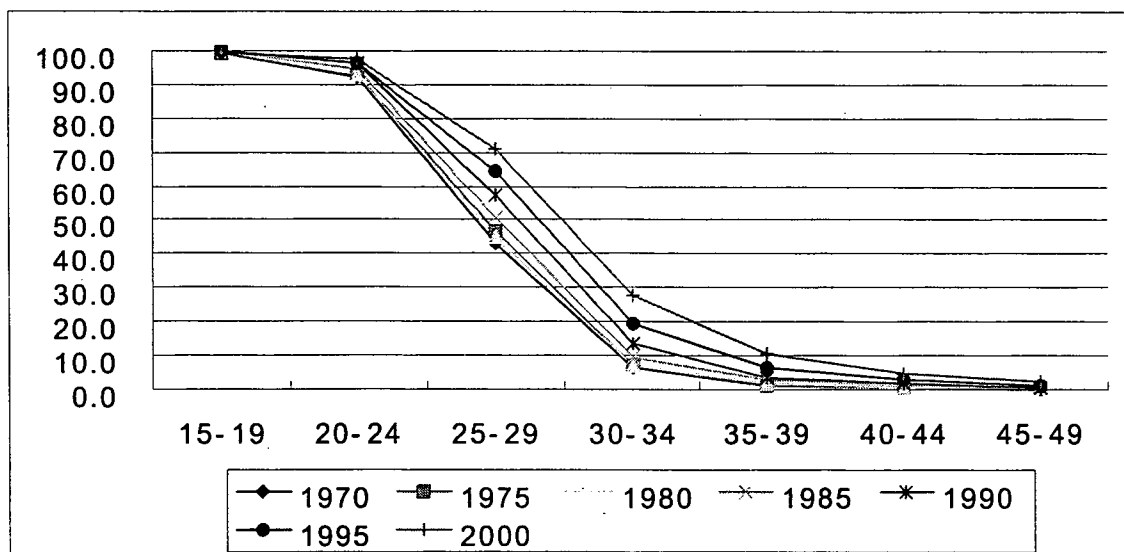
Appendix 3 Trends of Reasons of Divorce, 1992-2001

Reason	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Conflict between Couple	86.2	84.8	83.1	83.0	83.2	82.3	80.7	80.2	74.5	74.0
Economic Reasons	1.9	2.4	2.8	2.9	3.5	4.3	6.6	7.0	10.7	11.6
Health Problem	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.7
Others	10.6	11.6	13.0	13.1	12.3	12.4	11.8	11.9	13.9	13.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

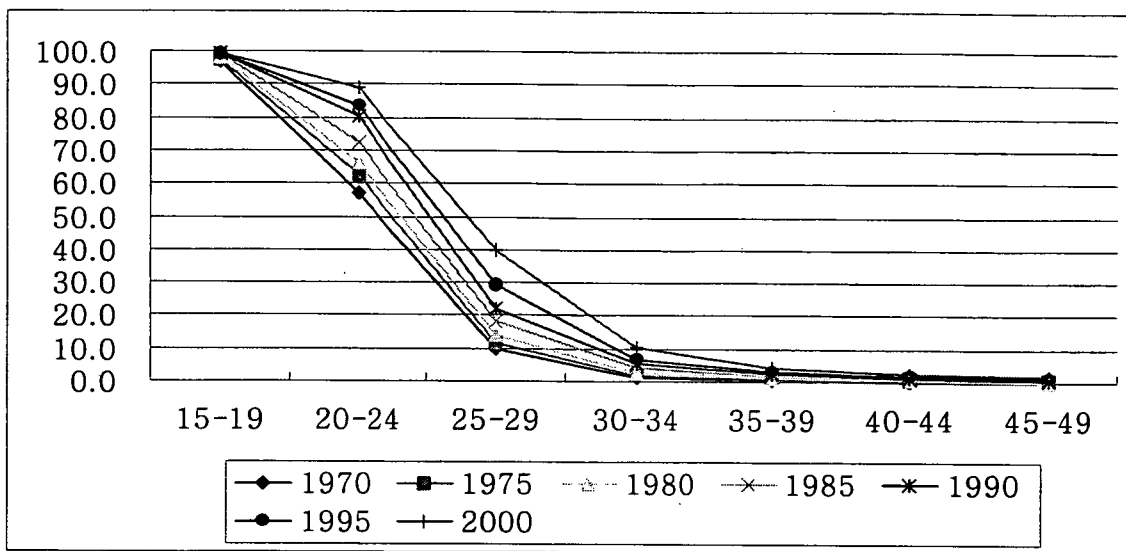
Appendix 4 Singulate Mean Age at Marriage, 1981-2002



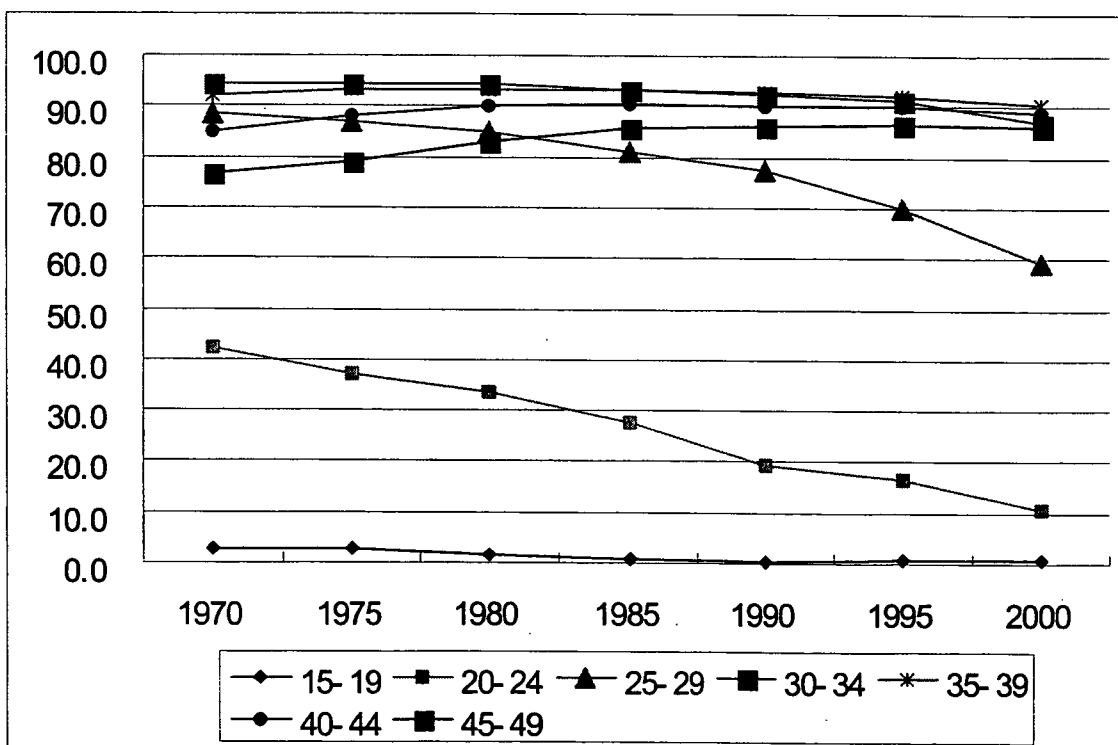
Appendix 5 Proportion of Single for Male by Age in Korea, 1970-2000



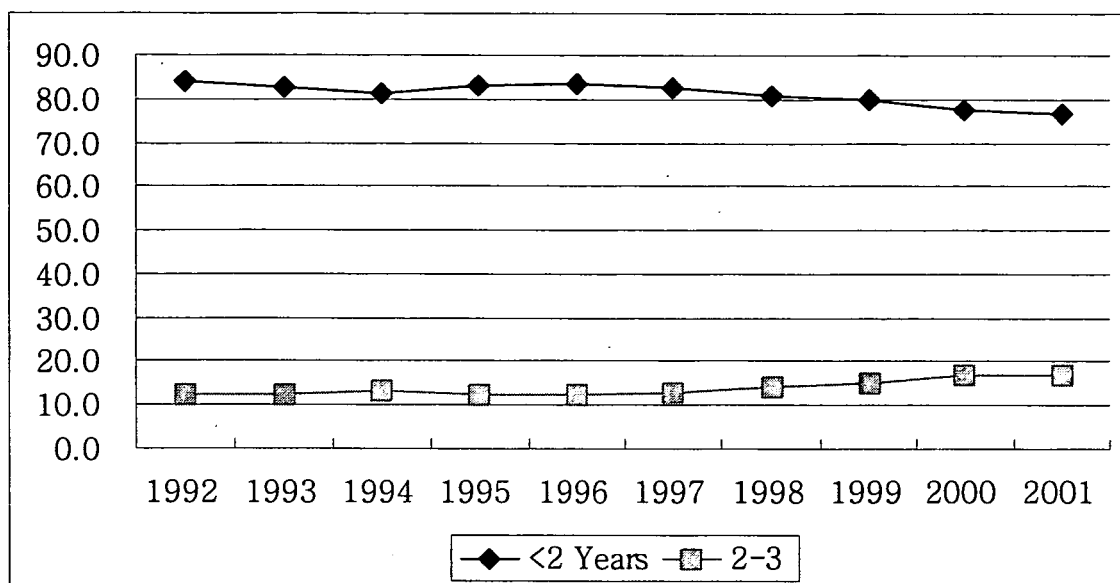
Appendix 6 Proportion of Single for Female by Age in Korea, 1970-2000



Appendix 7 Proportion of Female Married by Age, 1970-2000



Appendix 8 Proportion of First Birth by Duration of Marriage in Korea, 1992-2001



Local Population Program in South Korea: A Preliminary Status Report

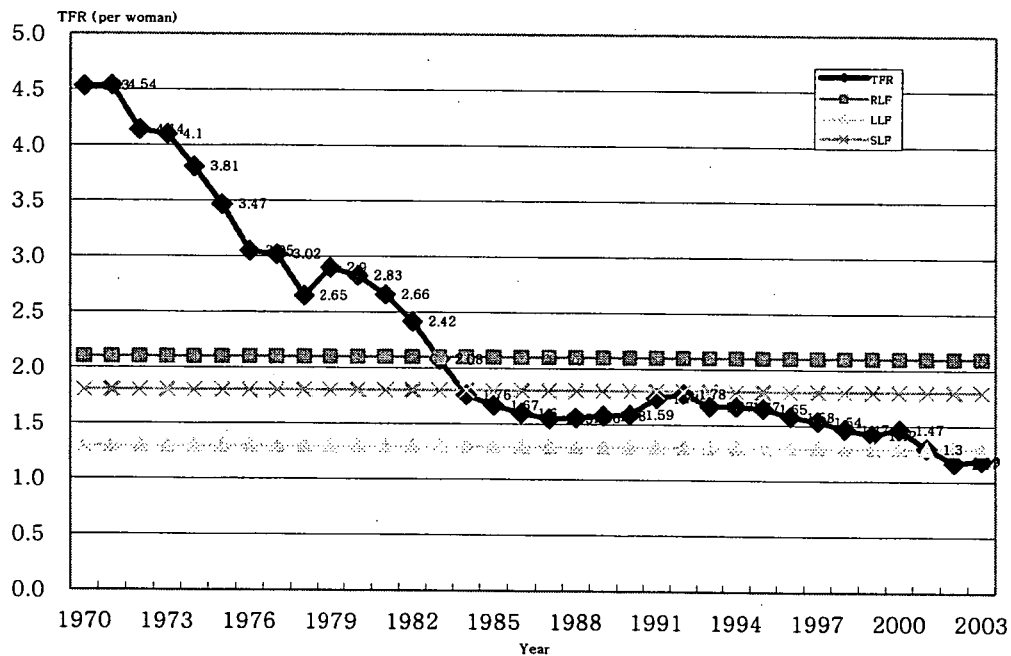
Introduction

1. In recent years, South Korea has experienced swift transformation in the size and structure of the population as a result of low fertility and rapid aging. In accordance with this change, there has also been ever increasing demand for the formulation of population policies that can deal most effectively with the undesirable consequence of the fertility far below a replacement. Many scholars, mass media, and government leaders currently believe that the fertility-boosting population policies, which are beneficial for the maintenance of “optimal” population and the improvement of population “quality,” must be pushed onward more vigorously by the maximum governmental efforts because they have direct bearings on sustainable economic growth and national development in the long run.
2. The national fertility-boosting population policies include not only those which try to identify the causes of low fertility and keep fertility at a stable rate, but a whole set of social policies which are used to change marriage and family values, increase the compatibility between work and children, and improve women’s reproductive health environment. In regard to these policies, the maximum governmental efforts mean that the local governments must also contribute their own lion’s shares to the initiatives of the national government. In this report, I would like to identify the current status of local fertility-enhancing population programs and policies and use them as basic data for developing new population policies in South Korea. I also believe that this report can be effectively used for a comparative purpose in East Asian countries with low fertility far below replacement, such as Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong.
3. The report distinguishes four major policy areas: (1) birth bonus programs; (2) childcare support program; (3) prenatal and postnatal maternal health care program; and (4) infant health care and others. In this report, I include population policy and programs from the responses the ward/city/county administrators gave me in the mailed questionnaires that were sent between February 14 and March 1, 2005. Before the beginning of this administrators’ survey, the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare asked 15 cities and provinces and their ward/city/county administrators to help me collect the basic information on local population policies as well as the level of fertility and depopulation. The start-up information the province-level administrators have provided me with was used effectively in order to gain a broad picture of what the ward/city/county governments under each of their jurisdictions achieve to cope with the issue of low fertility and the likelihood of depopulation in the near future.

The Korean Transition: An Overview

1. As we can read from Figure 1, Korea had completed her first, or classical fertility transition in the mid-1980s. The TFR was nearly 6.0 in the first-half of the 1960s, when the Korean government began to launch a state-sponsored family planning program together with a strong drive toward export-led capitalist development. In 1976, when the government shifted its momentum toward a heavy-industrial and chemical drive, TFR dropped to 3.05, namely the halving of the 1960 level. The fertility was plummeted to 2.65 in 1978, the “white horse” year of Chinese zodiac. The first transition ended with a TFR of 2.08 in 1983 although population experts had worried that strong gender preferences might delay the rapid transition to a near-RLF pattern.

Figure 1. Total Fertility Rate in South Korea: 1970-2003



2. After the completion of the first transition in 1983, TFR has never reached a SLF of 1.8 to 1.9 births, even for a while, until recently. Fertility hit the bottom in 1987, when it reached a TFR of 1.55, but began to surge up moderately to a TFR of 1.78 in 1992, a near-SLF pattern. However, it once more turned downward since its peak in 1992 and the tempo of fertility decline began to gain another positive momentum after 1995: The TFR of 1.65 in 1995 turned into 1.58 in 1996, 1.54 in 1997, 1.47 in 1998, 1.42 in 1999, and 1.47 in 2000. Finally, fertility once again plummeted to the never-to-return rock bottom: a TFR of 1.30 in 2001, a TFR of 1.17 in 2002, and a TFR of 1.19 in 2003.
3. The emergence of a LLF pattern in the latest three consecutive years is currently leading population

experts to worry about the stark reality about a LLF pattern and the aftereffects on the labor force growth and rapid aging of population in the first half of the twentieth century. Korea had to spend nearly two decades in undergoing the decline of fertility from a near-RLF pattern in 1983 to a LLF one in the latest consecutive three years. On the other hand, some European countries, particularly Eastern European countries, and small republics in the former USSR had waited for less than a decade in undergoing such a second transition. For example, Russia had reached a near-RLF pattern in 1990, but in six years moved abruptly to a LLF one. In addition to the small-child norms and attitude having prevailed in Russia, politico-economic catastrophes after the dismantling of the former USSR had most likely had severe impact on the reproductive behavior of Russian women in their prime childbearing ages. The current restructuring of fertility patterns in the former USSR must reflect the harsh aspect of everyday life and other aftereffects of various radical reforms blowing out in the transition to free market economy.

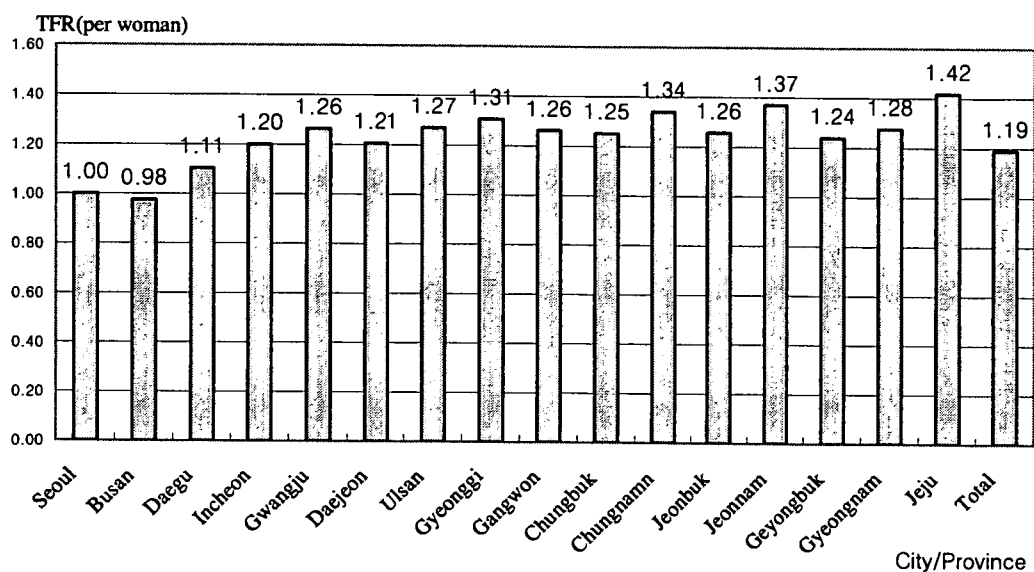
4. Population experts interpret the emergence of a LLF pattern in Korea as part of disruption or “uprooting” resulting from the aftermaths of East Asian financial crisis in 1997. In Korea, one of the most fundamental macro-structural changes was the restructuring of labor market, which was guided by neo-liberal bailout ideology popular with the then-IMF staffs and U.S.-Treasury government officials. At the early stage of the financial crisis, a number of large corporations and medium-sized enterprises went bankrupt, resulting in the sudden disappearance of well-paid, permanent jobs for Korean middle-class workers. Young women and men who just completed their college education attempted to enter the paid labor market but were extremely frustrated to watch that they were just on a long waiting list for a few jobs available to them. Apparently, the modest recuperation of fertility to a near-SLF pattern in the earlier 1990s has been suffocated because of the rate of unemployment and underemployment soaring up for all age groups in the aftermaths of the East Asian financial crisis of 1997.

Characteristics of Local Fertility in South Korea

1. According to the Korea National Statistical Office (2004), there are substantial variations in fertility by the metropolitan/provincial governments. In Figure 2, the national TFR was 1.19 births per woman in 2003, which was a little higher than 1.17 births in 2002. Three large metropolitan governments had a TFR lower than the national average: 1.10 births per woman in Seoul, 0.98 births per woman in Busan, and 1.11 births per woman in Daegu. The four other metropolitan governments, such as Incheon, Gwangju, Daejeon, and Ulsan had a little higher TFR than the national average: 1.20 births per woman in Incheon, 1.26 births per woman in Gwangju, 1.21 births per woman in Daejeon, and 1.27 births per woman in Ulsan. Of the nine provincial governments, four were 0.10 births higher than the national

average: 1.31 births per woman in Gyeonggi, 1.34 births per woman in Chungnam, 1.37 births per woman in Jeonnam, and 1.42 births per woman in Jeju, the remotest island province.

Figure 2. Total Fertility Rate by City/Province Government: 2003



1.1. The number of births is heavily concentrated in the capital region, such as Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon (100.0 thousand births in Seoul, 26.6 thousand births in Incheon, and 119.4 thousand births in Gyeonggi). The concentration of births in the capital region is not greatly different from the concentration of population in the national capital. The concentration of births is also conspicuous in Busan and its surrounding regions, Ulsan and Gyeongnam (29.9 thousand births in Busan, 11.7 thousand births in Ulsan, and 31.9 thousand births in Gyeongnam).

Figure 3. Number of Births by City/Province Government: 2003

