

Enter search terms:



[Advanced Search](#)
[Notify me via email or RSS](#)
**CONTRIBUTE**
[Why Contribute to Scholarly Commons?](#)
[Instructions for Submitting](#)
[Create Researcher Profile](#)
[Author Help](#)
**BROWSE**
[Collections](#)
[Subjects](#)
[Authors](#)
[Dissertations](#)
**GENERAL INFORMATION**
[About](#)
[FAQ](#)
**LINKS**
[Population Studies Center Website](#)
[About](#)
[Related Links](#)
[Home](#) > [PSC](#) > [PSC\\_WORKING\\_PAPERS](#) > [38](#)
[< Previous](#)
[Next >](#)
**PSC WORKING PAPER SERIES**

## Education Fever and the East Asian Fertility Puzzle: A Case Study of Low Fertility in South Korea

[Thomas M. Anderson, University of Pennsylvania](#)
[Hans-Peter Kohler, University of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Soc](#)



Included in  
[Demography, Population,  
 and Ecology Commons](#)

**Document Type**

Working Paper

**Date of this Version**

10-1-2012

**Comments**

Anderson, Thomas M. and Hans-Peter Kohler. 2012. "Education Fever and the East Asian Fertility Puzzle: A Case Study of Low Fertility in South Korea." PSC Working Paper Series, PSC 12-07.

**Abstract**

Fertility throughout East Asia has fallen rapidly over the last five decades and is now below the replacement rate of 2.1 in every country in the region. While similar but less extreme declines occurred throughout Europe during this same period, the declines to lowest-low fertility during the 1990s have been reversed in the last ten years as the pace of tempo changes (i.e., the postponement of childbearing) has slowed. Recent literature has shown that many European countries have in fact also experienced increases in cohort fertility. No such widespread fertility reversals has occurred in East Asia, where family size (i.e., cohort fertility) continues to decline. In this paper we seek to explain the precipitous (and in some cases, continual) fertility declines in East Asia. Using South Korea as a case study, we argue that East Asia's ultra-low fertility rates can be partially explained by the steadfast parental drive to have competitive and successful children. Parents throughout the region invest high amounts of time and money to ensure their children are able to enter prestigious universities and obtain top jobs. Accordingly, children have become so expensive that the average couple cannot afford to have more than just one or two. We argue that the trend of high parental investment in child education, also known as "education fever", exemplifies the notion of "quality over quantity" and is an important contributing factor to understanding low-fertility in East Asia.

**Keywords**

Education, Korea, Low fertility, Quality-quantity trade-off, South-east Asia

**Date Posted:** 01 October 2012

