VALUE OF CHILDREN: EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON FERTILITY BEHAVIOR AND CHILD-REARING PRACTICES IN GHANA

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Why do people have children, or what values do they assign to having children and how does the value assigned to children reflect in the ways they are socialized? These are the two main questions this paper discusses from a theoretical point of view and as basis for generating hypotheses to be tested out within the Ghanaian cultural setting. The paper draws upon ideas emerging from an ongoing research project - Value of children (VOC) - which was initiated about 30 years ago in nine countries and is currently being replicated in some nine different countries. Of concern in the VOC-project is that African countries were neither included in the original studies, nor in the on-going replication studies. This is not to suggest that the issues addressed by the VOC-studies are of no relevance to Africa. On the contrary, problems of rapid population increase growth / in the presence of stagnant economies plus the burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Sahara Africa make Africa an ideal site to undertake such a study. The primary aim of this paper is therefore to raise some of the concerns about the implications of the VOC-study findings for Africa and in particular for Ghana, and perhaps more importantly to initiate a similar study in Ghana. To elucidate the relevance of VOC for Ghana, the paper examines some of the changes globalization has bought in Ghana and links these to fertility behavior and child-rearing practices.

Values of Children

The question: why do people choose to have children assumes that child bearing is a behavior in which a couple or an individual makes active decision about, and initiate. Indeed several studies on fertility suggest that fertility behavior is based on individual decision (Kagiteibasi, 1982a; Trommsdorff, Zheng & Tardiff, in press). The general assumption is that this decision is also influenced by socio-economic and political conditions. Consequently it is often assumed that high fertility is related to the economic value of children. Specifically, the assumption is that when children are important for the economic productivity of the household, and their economic utility is high, the number of children born should be higher than when children's economic utility is low (Nauck & Kohlmann, 1999). assumption however, fails to explain certain demographic realities such as why children are born under circumstances of low economic utility (e.g., in high-income families). assumption also fails to account for why children are born when having children might imply high economic costs (e.g., bringing up children may be expensive, by way of having to invest time and money to raise them). Furthermore, the economic utility approach does not explain why the birth rate is high in many countries even though these children could not significantly contribute to a low family income because of unemployment. Such questions require a sociopsychological perspective, and it is against this background that the original VOC was initiated.

In addition to studying the impact of socio-economic factors on fertility, the VOC-project asked questions about psychological conditions for fertility (Hoffman & Hoffman, 1973; Kagitcibasi, 1982a, 1982b) and parenting (Hoffman, 1987). The project took into account socio-economic, cultural and psychological aspects of fertility in nine countries, including extensive surveys among 20,000 people, mostly women in the USA, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Turkey. The main goal was to test expected relationships between socio-economic factors, the value of children, and fertility.

"Value of children" was conceptualized as a psychological construct referring to the expected benefits of having children as compared to the expected costs and disadvantages. The specific values of children (voc) were understood as reflecting parents' motivation to bear and rear children, and this motivation included personal goals and parents' own socialization experiences.

While economic/utility value of children (e-voc) was the main expected value for having children, two other value types, psychological (p-voc) and social (s-voc) were also identified. Psychological values referred to the happiness, joy, and companionship or to the discomfort and stress which parents expect to experience with having a child. Social values referred to the expected social advantages or disadvantages of having children (e.g., social approval and social status when a married couple has a child; continuation of the family line as in the case of having a son as in patrilineal societies). Although s-voc may be seen as an instrumental value type, it is different from the economic/utilitarian value of child. The e-voc referred to the expected material benefits and costs of children when they are young and when they become adults (e.g., economic support given by parents to their young children and given by older children to their elderly parents). Social-voc on the other hand are more related to beliefs about the ideal family, marriage, or the role of women. Social-voc is cultural in orientation and may be more relevant in certain cultures than others. Depending on general cultural values, this social value may again have different implications. Having a child may fulfill the need to improve the marriage or family life or, in certain societies, in order to be accepted as a man or woman.

The differentiation between these three types of voc proved useful in testing the theoretically expected relation between context and fertility. For instance, in less developed or in rural areas as compared to more developed or urban areas, parents reported more e-voc. The p-voc was negatively related, and the e-voc was positively related with fertility in the Turkish samples (Kagitcibasi, 1982a, 1982b). It was also found that parenting was more rule-oriented and authoritarian, and fertility was higher in less developed, rural as compared to urban areas (Kagitcibasi, 1982a, 1982b; Hoffman, 1987, 1988).

The original VOC study demonstrated among other things that so-called "value of children" is an important psychological variable for explaining different fertility rates in different countries; and that different individual goals may be associated with different fertility rates, depending on the economic context. An issue accruing from the original VOC studies which also cried for immediate attention and answer is the implication of these values for the child born to the family. That is, what have voc got to do with the child itself, and its life afterwards? In other words there was the need to go beyond fertility behavior and consider how specific voc may affect socialization practices in different cultures, how these values are transmitted from parents to children, and how these affect mothers' and children's quality of life. For instance, bearing many children because of economic reason may have its toll on the mother's health, lower the mother's care-giving ability, and subsequently the health of the child. Bearing a child is only the beginning of a life-long complex process of parent-child interactions (e.g., parenting and the quality of the parent-child relationship), and the resultant quality of life and health of both the parents and children concerned. How are the original values of parents with respect to voc transmitted from one generation to the next, and what are the outcomes of the parent-child interactions? These questions arising from the initial VOC-studies form the bases of the on-going replication studies. A modified theoretical framework for the on-going study is shown in Figure 1. However, rather than discussing the framework, the next section focuses on how "values of children" may be reflected in child rearing practices.

Value of Children and Child-Rearing Practices: A Theoretical Perspective

The notion of "developmental niche" (Super & Harkness, 1997) may be a useful starting point to understand how parents' vocs may impact on their children. Values of children may

be viewed as a "developmental niche" and as a mediating variable linking on the one hand, economic status and socio-cultural values, and on the other hand parental behavior (Trommsdorff, 1999). Cultural values affect values of children and parental belief system such as parents' value orientation and expectations with respect to their children. In other words, it is the immediate social environment such as parental values and behaviors that mediate the economic conditions and cultural values and affect child development. The proximal context in which children are born and in which children grow up (including siblings, other family members and peers) can be specified with respect to the underlying values of children of primary caregivers. Parents' vocs of children can be seen as developmental contexts that are part of the socio-economic, macro-structure, the meso-structure of socialization institutions, and the micro-structure of the parent-child relations. Values of children may be part of the "caretaker psychology" described in the developmental niche model, and should be seen as a mediating variable linking macro-, meso-, and micro-level of the society and constitutes the "developmental niche" for the individual development.

To illustrate this point, Trommsdorff (1999) uses traditional agrarian societies as an example. In these societies, Trommsdorff points out, children are supposed to fulfil economic support of the family and social responsibilities for the family members. Young children are expected to engage in household chores such as cleaning and earing for younger siblings. These children are expected soon after puberty, to have children of their own and to support their older parents (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Reciprocity of support characterizes the family relations between the generations and across the life span. Related activities of children and parents are learned as part of developmental tasks. These normative reciprocal activities are embedded in stable family systems which is differentiated according to ascribed roles for the different ages and gender. Values of children in these societies are based on economic and social needs. These values serve to stabilize the economic and social systems and foster continuity of the family in the specific society. Nevertheless, values alone could not serve these functions unless they are transmitted in respective child-rearing practices and rules for behavior. In these societies, children are socialized to adopt the norms and expectations of the family, to fulfill prescribed social roles and to conform to cultural values. To achieve this, authoritarian parenting and child rearing practices geared towards obedience and interdependence are the preferred modes of socialization (Kagitcibasi, 1996).

In line with these assumptions, empirical findings indicate that in traditional societies, social and economic values of children are preferred, as these foster tradition and continuity. This is not to suggest that low economic development is necessarily related to social and economic values of children, or vice versa. Even though our theoretical position is that values of children affect socialization and these values are transmitted from one generation to the next, it is unclear whether, for instance, conformity oriented parental discipline alone can ensure the economic survival of the family when emotional ties in parent-child relations are excluded. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) and Maccoby (1992), have pointed out that the emotional quality of the parent-child relation and acceptance of parental authority is a necessary prerequisite for successful socialization of values and the stability of intergenerational values. It could be argued that in modern industrialized societies, where more emotional/psychological and less economic values of children prevail, a possible consequence is lack of conformity demand and low values of reciprocity. This situation may manifest itself in decrease in the importance of intergenerational obligations of the family.

Studies by Trommsdorff (1995) and Kornadt and Trommsdorff (1990; 1997) suggest that these assumptions about economic level of development and emotional quality of parent-child relations may not be enough to account for all of the observed socialization outcomes. Indeed, the cultural transmission model of Berry and Cavalli-Sforza (1986), point to other important agents that impact on the children. And from the developmental nich model, prevailing "customs" of the society such as interdependence and their historically rooted

meaning together with the "social and physical settings" are equally important for the values of socialization and the child's development.

The Ghanaian Context: Globalization, Modernization and the People

Globalization as a concept has been defined variously depending on the theoretical perspective taken. In this present analysis the concept is defined as the process by which cultures influence one another and become more alike through trade, immigration, and the exchange of information and ideas (Arnett 2001). From the perspective of this paper, the interest is on how western industrialized countries in the form of modernization and urbanization are influencing Ghana culturally, socially, economically, and politically, and how these in turn affect fertility behavior and child rearing practices.

As a republic, Ghana is a little over four decades old. However, anecdotal evidences link some ethnic groups of present day Ghana such as the Akans, the Voltaic people and Manprusi, Dagomba and Gonia tribes of Northern Ghana to the great medieval empire of Ghana around the 7th century. This empire was located about 800 kilometers north of the present location. The medieval empire had trade links with Arabs and Europeans across the Sahara. Prior to 1957, present-day Ghana, then called Gold Coast, also had trade links with European traders who first arrived in 1471. Thus both the country and its people have a long history of globalization. However, it is the events of the last 500 years that seem to have impacted greatly on present day Ghana. These events include the colonization by the British in the early 19th century and development of infrastructure for trading, transportation, education and health facilities. The period prior to independence and the first few years after was characterized by rapid urbanization of many areas and economic growth. The country inherited GBP 200 million from the British following independence, but this money was used up in less than 10 years. Since then the country has experienced economic decline and this has been the one major cause of the changes in civilian and military governments in rapid succession. Recent years have also seen high cost of living and high unemployment rates in the country as part of economic re-structuring concomitant with Western style globalization. Several free incentives Ghanaians previously enjoyed (e.g., free education from primary to the University level) during the period after independence is now something of the past. Contacts with Western culture, which are pronounced in the urban areas, have created opportunities for achieved status mobility and patterns of Western lifestyle behavior. Nevertheless, most Ghanaians still remain attached to their traditional cultural roots (Kuaba & Chachah, 1999). Role definitions based on ascription and other traditional prerogatives have not been entirely obliterated, even though they are changing, and the rate of change seem to follow the degree of globalization.

Assimeng (1981) referred to by Kuado & Chachah, (1999) has described Ghanaians as conforming and blatant eschewing of individual speculations; unquestioning acquiescence; lack of self-reliance owing to the pervading influence of extended family system; fetish worship of authority and charismatic leaders; and hatred of arguments. These characterizations of Ghanaians, and in particular those pertaining to conformity, the influence of external family system, have several implications for the values assigned to children and possibly the way they are socialized.

In addition to the extended family system, Ghanaian ethnic groups are divided into clans and of which individuals are members (Sarpong, 1974). Individual members of a family may belong to different clans (i.e., either the mother's clan or the father's or both depending on lineage). Members of the same clan are held to be relatives and bound by a common tic. Embodied in this tie is the belief that members of the same clan descended from one ancestor and are linked spiritually. Clan members are also bound by certain obligations towards one another. As part of the descent from one ancestor, is the belief in fetishism and spirits, a belief that ensures conformity and strong adherence to obligations within the family and within the

clan. However, belief in the clan system appears to be weakening as part of the country's westernization.

The lineage in Ghana (matritineal or patrilineal) determines which side of one's parent one can inherit from. Traditionally, the Akan tribe in Ghana is matrilineal, such that in the absence of a testament children inherit from the mother's side, and from one's uncles. This situation naturally impacts on the e-voc, where mother's "old age security" may be indirectly linked to their brothers through their male children.

Ghanaians, just like other Africans, have their core personality linked to their ancestors through the 'spiritual principle' (Sarpong, 1974; Sow, 1978). As such, children are seen as serving a spiritual function by way of strengthening the link between the living and the dead. Whereas pregnancy is seen as signifying divine blessing, the child is regarded as God's precious gift, "given" through the mediative approval of ancestral spirits (Nsamenang, 1992). Consequently, "fertility for the girl is crucial, (especially in matrilineal societies), as it ensures among other things that the society will not die out. "Barrenness then is the greatest calamity that can befall a Ghanaian woman" (Sarpong, 1974, p. 69). Sackey (1999) in a case study of the "Twelve Apostles Church" vividly describes the extent to which Ghanaian women will go to become pregnant. Against this background one would expect high s-voc in Ghana. The degree of s-voc however, will depend on the extent to which family member stands apart from the rest of the clan, and the level of Westernization.

As previously suggested, the economic situation in Ghana has been on decline. Thus based on VOC-study assumptions, e-voc should be the one form of value of child that prevails in Ghana. However, since globalization has resulted in different levels of socio-economic statuses in the country, a more nuance view of value of children in Ghana needs to be appreciated.

Globalization, Value of Children and Child-Rearing Practices

It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that traditionally, children are highly valued in Ghana, not only for their economic worth, but also for the social status accorded both men and women. However in the face of globalization and the westernization of several urban areas, what has become of these values and have psychological values of children become important for couples / parents? These answers cannot be adequately answered in this paper, but to allude to them. To this regard, I will draw upon a recent study by Agyei-Mensah (1997) on fertility behavior among 1200 Ghanaian women of three different age cohorts in three different settlements.

The three settlements in Agyei-Mensah's study were Accra, Cape Coast and Otnam. In Cape Coast and Accra more than one study site was used. In Accra, the sites were the Airport Residential area and James Town. And in Cape Coast, the sites were Ridge, Eyifoa and Idan. All the three settlements were originally fishing settlements but have undergone major changes as part of globalization. The residents of Ridge and Eyifoa in Cape Coast, and of Airport residential area in Accra could be said to belonging to high socio-economic status (SES). These residents lived in elite areas of urban metropolitan cities. The residents of the remaining study sites, Idan (in Cape Coast), James Town (in Accra) and Otuam generally belonged to a low SES, and lived in indigenous rural areas.

Using level of illiteracy as a proxy for degree of globalization, Table 1 shows that all three settlements, and for both genders, have witnessed an overall drop in illiteracy rate – from 85.2% in Otuam in 1960 to 18.7% in Accra in 1984. The drop can be seen in all three age cohorts. This drop is most prominent in Accra, and least in Otuam, forming a kind of globalization gradient. It is important to note that generally the illiteracy rate is lower for males than females.

Of the sample that was studied by Agyei-Mensah, while 89.3% and 78.3% of the 1970-79 birth cohort living at the Airport residential area and Ridge/Eyifoa respectively had Tertiary

level of education, none in Idan and Otuam, and 5.5% in James Town had such an education reflecting on the general socio-economic development of the various study sites.

Looking at the fertility rates in the three settlements, and within the 5 study sites, a fertility gradient can be observed. Figure 2 indicates that at all the five sites, there has been a drop in mean number of children born for all the three age cohorts. While the mean number of children born to the 1950 age cohort around the Airport was 3.16, this had fallen to almost zero (0.07) birth per woman for the 1970 age cohort. Although the fertility rate in Otuam is still high it follows a similar fertility decline gradient (from 7.71 in the 1950-59 birth cohort to 2.48 births per woman). The birth rates of the 1970-79 age cohort, were generally very low. In fact other than the women in Idan and Otuam, these women were on the average having less than a child. This is not to suggest that Ghanaian women have stopped having children. It is important to remember that at the time of data collection (i.e., 1994), the 1970-79 age cohort were just around 20 years of age. Meanwhile the mean at first birth ranges from 24.3 years at Airport to 15.6 years in Otuam.

Table 1: Illiteracy rate (in percentages) for three birth cohorts in the three settlements

**************************************	CAPE COAST		
**************************************	1960	1970	1984
Females	61.5	45.3	28.3
Males	35.6	23.1	12.9
Total	48.6	34.4	20.7
	ACCRA		
Females	60.6	41.9	24.9
Males	35.9	21.7	12.2
Total	47.3	31.6	18.7
	OTUAM		
Females	89.4	75.2	69.0
Males	81.7	55.2	55.0
Total	85.2	69.2	62.2

Source: Agyei-Mensah (1997

Figure 3 shows that the mean age of first-birth for the women have risen in all the study sites. Generally women living in the clite areas of Accra and Cape Coast on the average had their first child 2 to 5 years later (see Figure 3), and preferred two children less than their counterparts living in the more indigenous rural areas. Still on the issue of mean age of motherhood, young motherhood was particularly experienced in James Town, Idan and more substantially in Otuam. In all these areas, the mean age of first birth was less than 20. It is also important to add that out-patient clinic statistics from Accra, Cape Coast and Otuam indicate the high incidence of pregnancy related complications and gynaecological disorders in Accra, followed by Cape Coast than in Otuam. These problems were virtually non-existent in Otuam suggesting that the low birth rate in Accra, and more important in the clite areas may not be so much absence of birth, but failure to carry the baby to full term.

Another finding from Agyei-Mensah's study is the extent to which parents expected their children to support them in their old age vis-a-vis the parents taking care of themselves in

their old age, by way of personal social security. Figure 4 is an adapted figure from Agyei-Mensah's study. As can be seen in the figure, while the percentage of parents looking to their children for their "old age security" has generally fallen for the three age cohorts, it is still very high (close to 60% to over 80%) in James Town, Idan and Otuam. These are still lower than over 90% of parents who saw their children as their social security in the 1950 birth cohort. The drop in children in "old age security" seems to follow tan opposite pattern with respect to parents investing in their own future social security. Around Airport and Ridge/Eyifoa, investing in one's own social security is close to 100% in the 1970 age cohort. Generally the degree of investment in one's own future social security and looking up to children for future "security" seem to be closely related to the level of socio-economic development of the residential area.

The results from Agyei-Mensah (1997) study suggest that fertility rate among Ghanaian women measured by mean number of children, mean age of first child and preferred number of children follows a gradient, and that this (fertility) appears to be related to the level of socio-economic development of the residential area. From the results, it can also be alluded that the economic/utilitarian value of children also follows a similar fertility gradient. What is not clear from the study results is how a decline in e-voc affects socialization of children, and the role of psychological and social values of children. At this point, one can only speculate on the bases of available VOC findings, where we suggest that:

- psychological voc follows a similar fertility gradient among women in the 5 study sites; where p-voc will be more prominent in the elite areas of Acera and Cape Coast than e-voc;
- the same fertility gradient will be seen with respect to s-voc; where on the general
 value system in Ghana, s-voc with strong preference for a "son" will be more
 prominent in the rural indigenous areas;
- economic and social voc will be related to obedience, conformity and strict child rearing practices. On the other hand psychological voc will be related to autonomous and independent child rearing practices.

Bearing in mind the goal of the workshop where this paper forms part, the intention is to propose the initiation of a research program, and more specifically one in line with the VOC project, on the socialisation of children in present day Ghana. As part of this, are hypotheses to be tested out in a similar study site as Agyei-Mensah's. What has not been dealt within this paper is how the study should be carried.

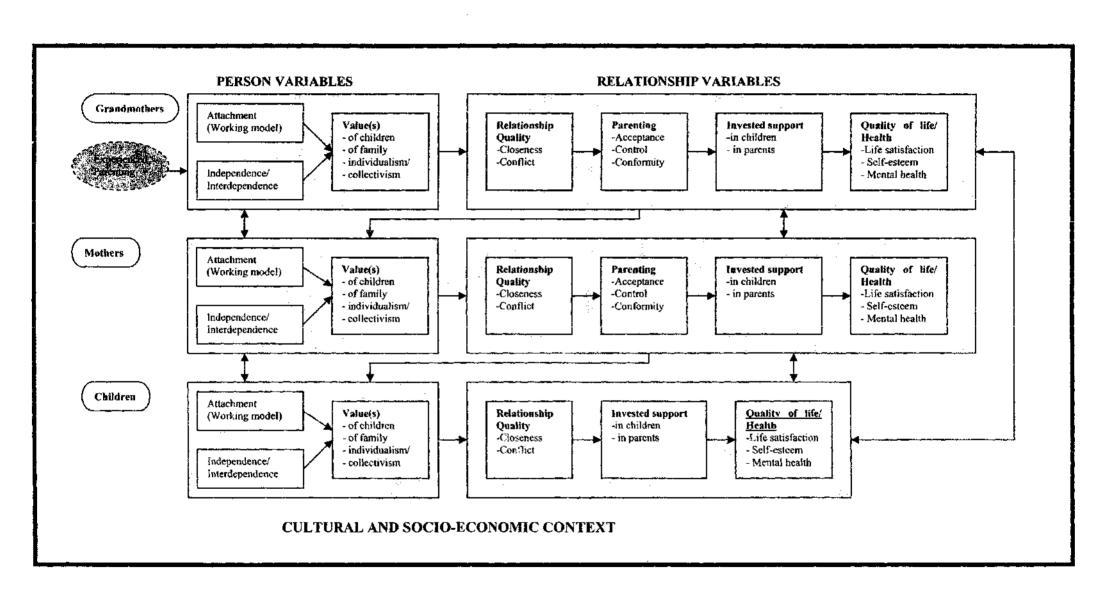


Figure 1. Value of Children, Intergenerational Relations and Quality of Life in Three Generations (Modified from Trommsdorff,

Fig 2: Mean number of children ever born by area and birth cohort

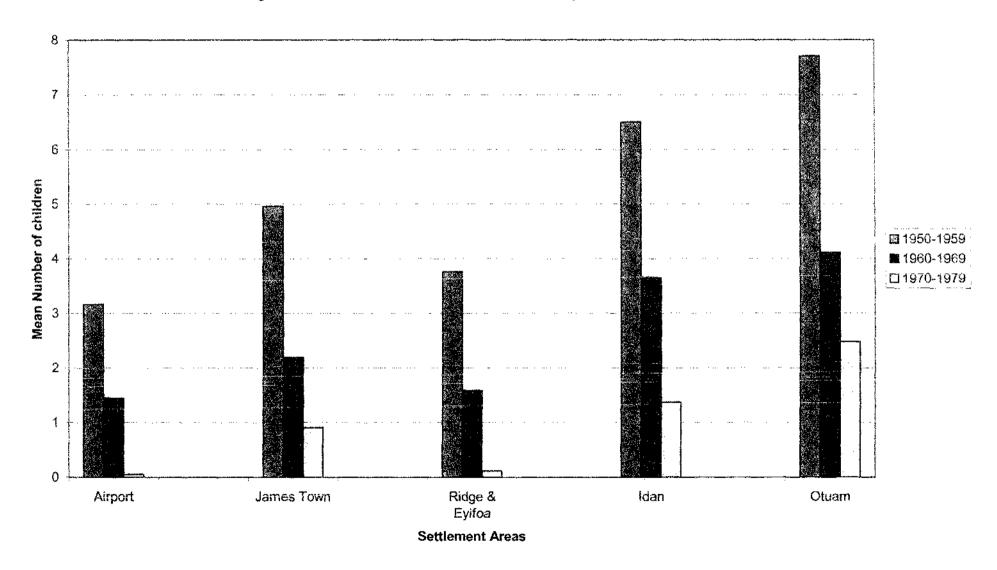


Fig. 3: Mean age at first birth by area and birth order

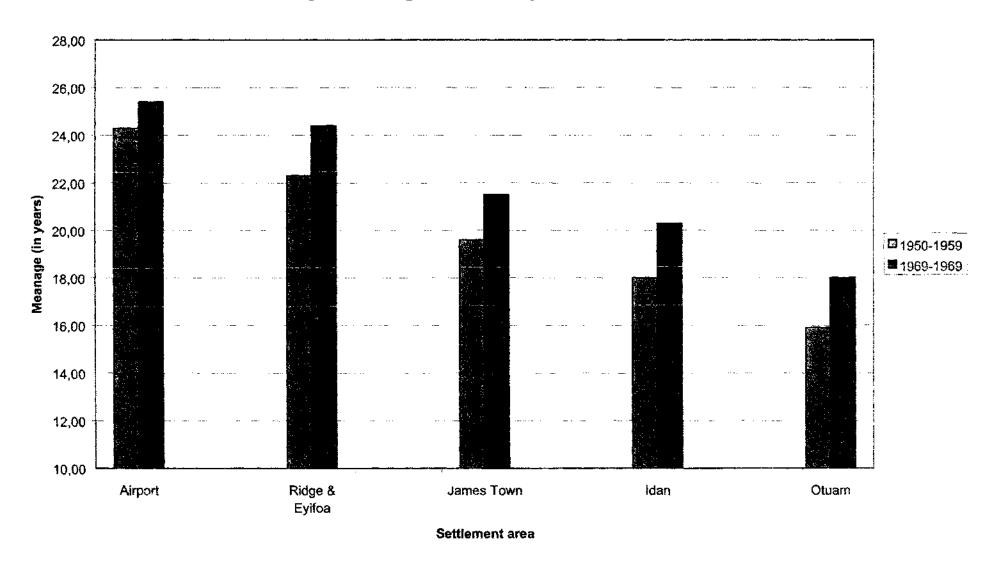
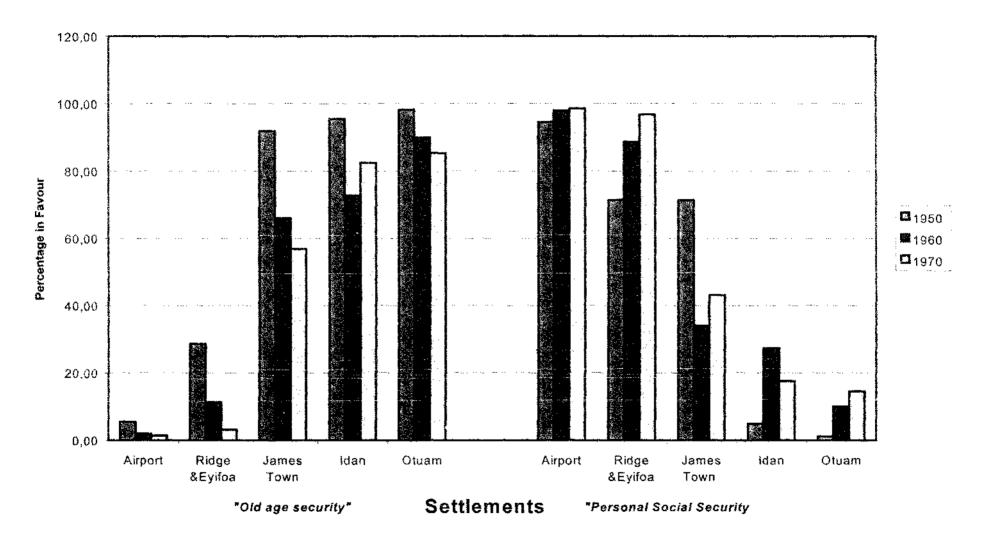


Fig 4:: Children as "Old age security" vs Personal social security



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