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MASTER THESIS

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN IN GHANA: PERSPECTIVES OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN KUMASI.

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE MASTER OF PHILOSPHY DEGREE IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES, NOSEB, NTNU.

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged, this research is my own work.

....

Kwabena Anane Kwarteng Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my lovely mother Madam Alice Gyimah and my entire family.

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My heartfelt gratitude goes to God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit for being the author and perfecter of my faith.

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ABSTRACT

International children's rights actors and activists view children and childhood as a special time set aside for school and play without due regard to the duties and responsibilities borne in society. In this way, children under 18 years are characterised by the ideal of the work-free childhood which is now infiltrating notions of proper childhood in many countries including Ghana. On the contrary, children in Ghana are valued for their socio-economic roles and duties that they undertake within the family. As a result, the study aimed at exploring views of children and adults on the duties and responsibilities of children in Ghana. It draws inspiration from the Social Studies of Children and Childhood which proposes children as social actors and active participants in their own lives and in the society. Therefore, this study positioned children as competent social actors and involved them as the principal research participants. As a qualitative study, data were collected using multiple participatory methods such as semi-participant observations, focus groups, story writings, and semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork was conducted in a Junior High school in Kumasi with six boys and six girls as young participants as well as six teachers in the same school. In addition, six parents were interviewed as part of the adult participants.

At the heart of the thesis is the gap between rights-based policy discourse that empower children as right-holders and the actual lived experiences of children where they are dutiful human beings. In Ghana, children fulfil multiple roles and duties that are shaped by age, gender, competence, and social maturity. Consequently, they grow up holding multi-faceted responsibilities which they execute within the family. They do not only carry out domestic activities such as cooking, washing utensils, cleaning and so on. But some children especially those from poor families contribute immensely to family income. Children's perspectives of responsibilities revealed that they appreciate and are appreciated by their families for fulfilling their childhood duties. The study also depicted that poverty coupled with unemployment made a lot of families vulnerable. Therefore, children are required to engage in economic activities to raise money for the survival of the family. Culturally, three values that sufficed from the research were respect, reciprocity and responsibility. These values underlie adult-child relationships and sense of responsibility in Ghana, and create interdependencies within the family. In this context, children do not see themselves as autonomous individuals but as part of the family. Lastly, the study showed that children are able to integrate the three activities in their childhood namely; work, play and school.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CEDC	Children in Especially Difficult Circumstance
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights &Administrative Justice
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development Policy
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGD	Focus-Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GES	Ghana Education Service
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOFEP	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MOWAC	Ministry for Women and Children Affairs
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
NFED	Non-Formal Education Division
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCHR	United Nation High Commission on Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAJU	Women And Juvenile Unit

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) 1948 is an international human rights instrument that is recognized widely by member states of the United Nations. In addition, many countries have also accepted other relevant human rights instruments including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966 and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and incorporated the human rights provisions in their Constitutions. One important human rights instrument specific for children is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). It incorporates the whole spectrum of children's rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural - and sets out the specific ways these rights should be ensured for children and young people. The impetus for establishing the UNCRC was derived from the primary assumption that "children constitute a social group with common interest and a universal set of entitlements". (White, 2002:726). Almost all member states of the United Nations (UN) have ratified the UNCRC except United States of America and Somalia. It has been the most successful of all UN treaties in light of the short process of ratification and the number of nations that have endorsed it (Rutkow & Lozman, 2006). This rapid ratification of the convention has given it enormous power of becoming a key mechanism for tackling issues pertaining to children's welfare internationally.

On February 5, 1990 Ghana ratified the UNCRC which sets out the rights of the child in a global context and integrated it into its domestic laws. As a member state, Ghana agreed to uphold the 54 Articles of the UNCRC, and to submit five yearly reports on children's rights in the country to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, the UNCRC has been criticized especially from the cultural relativist perspective (Snipstad et al., 2010). The argument is that the UNCRC was drafted by Western oriented groups who failed to recognize the socio-cultural and economic differences in the developing countries (Boyden, 1990). Therefore, it has been criticized as Eurocentric (Ansell, 2005). Also, there is high emphasis on children's autonomy in the Convention. Especially with the participation articles, the UNCRC empowers children to express their views freely and actions concerning

them must be in their best interest. This implies that children are being socialized into ideologies that place high value on individuality and freedom of self expression (Griesel et al., 2002). This is because from the modern West, the individual path is seen as the normal way to develop (Kagitcibasi, 1996) which is resulting in a tendency towards cultural imperialism.

Based on the culture from developed countries, children are supposed to have inalienable rights without any form of responsibilities. They are expected to go to school, play and have fun. Any childhood deprived of these conditions is not a proper childhood. For instance, Boyden & Gibbs (1997:22) argue that:

> For their own protection, nurture and enlightenment, children in Western societies are excluded from work and other such responsibilities and confined, largely, to the home and the school, where they experience a prolonged period of social maturity and dependence. These are the conditions and circumstances that are thought to best favour children's psycho-social well-being and development. Thus, children who do not enjoy such life conditions are believed to be at risk, their development and adaptation to society undermined.

The assertion above means that children are to enjoy life without any kind of responsibilities. Nevertheless, as advocated by James et al. (1998) it is imperative to study different childhoods in different context. For example, as a typical African nation characterized by culture, traditions, norms, reciprocity, solidarity, and interdependencies, children in Ghana are valued for their socio-economic roles in the family. This view has been recognized by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which is children's rights instrument specific to the African context. Article 31 of the ACRWC acknowledges the importance of children's responsibilities in society. It considered the obligations of children in tandem with their rights because it has essential propositions where children are placed within the context of their families and communities (Abebe, 2012). In this way:

> The article shifts attention away from the vocal, global and participating child (as articulated in the UNCRC) to the uniqueness of local, dutiful and cultural child that views its life as being closely tied together with the lives of families and communities (Abebe, 2012:18).

Premised on the above statement, it is important to note that culturally, Ghanaians are socialised as part of the family (both nuclear & extended) and they hold multi-faceted duties and responsibilities within it. Children like adults have specific roles that they play for the proper functioning of their families. Most of these roles are often gendered (Ansell, 2005). Within the family, generation, gender, age, birth order, social maturity and competence are very influential in the household division of labour (Punch, 2001). Twum-Danso (2009:427) argued that in Ghana:

> By bringing forth a child and taking care of him during his childhood a parent is issuing a contract, which he expects to be paid back once the child is in position to do this by fulfilling their expected responsibilities and behaving in an appropriate manner. A child who does that will have their rights fulfilled.

The argument signifies that Ghanaian children are expected to perform certain duties and responsibilities based on age, gender and maturity. This in effect is reciprocal to the love, support and resources offered by their parents or adults in their upbringing. In line with this argument, Abebe (2008) argues that there is a form of intergenerational social contract existing in interpersonal relationships among family members 'in Ghana'. This social contract can be conceptualised in two ways. Firstly, there is 'intra-household social contract' involving members of the immediate family for instance parents and siblings (Abebe, 2008:81). Several forms of this contract position one generation at the core of the flow of resources in any given period. Accordingly, these intra-household contracts explain the "centrality of children's work and their roles in family livelihoods, as well as the ways that parents invest resources to nurture children" (Abebe, 2008:81). Secondly, there is the 'inter-household social contract' that extends beyond the family unit to integrate the extended family. According to Kabeer (2000:463) cited in Abebe (2008:81) these contracts include "extra familiar obligations either as a way in which traditional societies are structured or in response to the 'fracturing' of the inter-household bargain of care and reciprocity". In other words, in Ghana the intra-household social contract explains the ways that children contribute to family livelihoods through their duties and responsibilities. And the inter-household social contract encompasses the role of the extended family in nurturing children and how children also give reciprocal care and support to members.

Following the argument above, traditionally, it is evident that children in Ghana are socialised to have roles in the family structure. This is because they are "valued for their socio-economic roles and grow up holding complex responsibilities and maintain reciprocal relationships within the family" (Abebe, 2012:2). Therefore, the study sought to research into the multi-faceted duties and responsibilities performed by Ghanaian children in order to enable the family to work efficiently and effectively.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2004:3):

> Childhood is the time for children to be in *school* and at *play*, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation. As such, childhood means much more than just the space between birth and the attainment of adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of a child's life, to the quality of those years.

This definition of childhood by UNICEF echoes with the notion of proper childhood in the western world. As asserted by Ennew & Milne (1989:8), "children in the west go to school rather than work, they are not expected to take on responsibilities; they have special activities called play and special things called toys to play with". This view tends to depict any other kind of contradictory childhood as 'lost', 'abnormal', or 'stolen' (Bourdillon, 2006:1202; Punch, 2003:277-278). It is based principally on the Western ideas of childhood where the world of children is completely different from the world of adults. Therefore, the place for children is limited to school, play and leisure without due regard to the duties and responsibilities borne in society. There is no doubt that school and play are fundamental in the nurturing and development of children, but this must be balanced with some duties. This is because in Ghana children are trained from an early age to perform certain roles in the family based on age, gender and maturity (Twum-Danso, 2009). As a result, their daily lives are intricately entwined with and inseparable from the family collective where they maintain reciprocal care and support with family members (Abebe, 2012).

The assertion that children should live free from any responsibilities has been escalated by the UNCRC. The convention does not only empower children with the right to protection, to freedom of expression and association, but also recognizes their capacity to act independently (Snipstad et al., 2010). On the other hand, the ACRWC which is the children's rights instrument specific to the African continent made reservations and incorporated the duties of children in the charter. Since it is based on African cultural values, drafters of the Children's Charter saw the importance of the responsibilities of children and included it as such. This is stipulated in Article 31 of the ACRWC which states:

> Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty;
>
> (a) To work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need;
>
> (b) To serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service;
>
> (c) To preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity (africa-union.org).

Unlike the UNCRC which empowers children to have individual autonomous lives, the ACRWC enjoins children to work collectively with family members, and also serve their community as well as the State. Owing to this, it is therefore problematic to only see children as right bearers without any form of responsibilities; and also make policies without taking into consideration the culture of particular society. Therefore, in line with the Sociology of Childhood, there is no universal childhood but diversities of childhoods in different cultures (James et al., 1998). Consequently, the international community must acknowledge that Ghanaian children are valued for both their domestic duties and/or economic roles in the family and society.

1.2 Aims of the research

This study aims to explore the duties and responsibilities of children in Ghana. It discusses how children work for the cohesion of both the nuclear and extended families by fulfilling complex responsibilities and roles. The objectives are outlined below:

- To explore children's views of their duties and responsibilities as well as rights in Ghana.
- To find out how children contribute to family livelihoods.
- The perspectives of parents and teachers about the duties of children in Ghana.
- To examine the gender dimensions of work among children.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to answer the aims of the research, the following questions will be addressed:

- What specific duties do children perform?
- Why is work important in the Ghanaian context?
- What are children's everyday life experiences of the duties they perform?
- How do children perceive their rights in Ghana?
- How is work distributed among children?
- What do adults say about the responsibilities of children?
- How do children combine work, play and school?

1.5 The Significance of the study

This research is underpinned by the Social Studies of Childhood which sees children as social actors and active participants in their lives (James et al. 1998). As active participants, children should be involved in the research process and given a direct voice. As suggested by Hardman (1973:87) children are to be "studied in their own right and not just as receptacles of adult teachings". Therefore, researchers must seek the voice of children themselves and not their parents especially when the research is about them. But in most research in Ghana, the perspectives of adults are sought and children are ignored even if the research is about

children. As a result, this research will contribute to the growing body of literature in Ghana that advocate for seeing children as units of research and incorporating their views in research.

International children's rights actors and activists employ 'rights-based approach' to children according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR, 2006) and national actors have to adapt in order to get sponsorship. Rights-based approach identifies rights-holders and their entitlements and strengthen their capacities to make their claim from duty-bearers (UNHCHR, 2006). For example the UNCRC has been adopted by children's rights actors and advocates empowering children as right-holders to make their claims as autonomous individuals. These policies which are based primarily on western ideologies do not consider the culture and economic differences in the developing countries (Boyden, 1990). Consequently, this research will contribute to the notion that socio-cultural values must be taken into account when policies are being enacted by international agencies. This is because every country has its specific traditions, norms, customs and values that make it unique. In addition it is worthy to note that children and childhood are socially constructed. That is why in the Ghanaian culture; children are appreciated for the duties they perform due to poverty, unemployment, death and so on. Therefore, this study will add to other existing works about the importance of children's work (duties and responsibilities) in the society (see Abebe, 2008; Punch, 2001).

In this thesis, I also address the importance of involving children as participants in research and listening to their views as underlined by my theoretical framework. Therefore, the Government of Ghana, media, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC) in Ghana, international and local NGOs advocating for the welfare of children will recognize this work as very useful. This is because it includes both the direct voices of children from their own perspective and adults as well.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter one looks at the introductory overview of the study. It presents a brief introduction about the research, statement of the problem, aims of the research, research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two appraises the concepts and theoretical perspectives underlying this research. Some of the concepts discussed were definition of child, conceptions about children and childhood. The theoretical perspectives presented in this chapter includes; Social Studies of Childhood and Children, children's rights discourse and interdependent rights. Following is a discussion on some key debates on children and work. The last part is a review of related studies on children's duties and responsibilities from Ghana and other developing countries.

Chapter Three is the Methodology section. It provides the methodology and methods used in the research. It begins with researching the perspectives of children which covered informed consent, sampling techniques and background characteristics of participants. This chapter also contains the methods of data collection and analysis as well the methodological and ethical dilemmas encountered during the research and how I addressed them.

Chapter Four describes the profile of the study area. Issues covered in this chapter includes: description of Ghana, demography, socio-economic characteristics, education, language and religion as well as issues relating to poverty. In addition, it also describes the background information about the study setting (Kumasi) and the specific fieldwork site, Ghanaian culture and policies on children in Ghana.

Data analysis and discussions are divided into chapters five and six.

The last part is chapter seven. It captures the summary of the research findings, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTS, THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RELATED STUDIES

This chapter discusses concepts and the theoretical perspectives underlying my research. It commences with the definition of a child, rights, as well as the conceptions about children and childhood. From the theoretical viewpoint, the research is underpinned by the Social Studies of Children and Childhood, discourses on children's rights, the UNCRC (1989), interdependent rights, key debates about children and work, and a review related studies.

2.1 Definition of a Child

The UN 1989 convention on the rights of the child, defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This definition has been widely accepted by many governments who have ratified the convention and incorporated it into their domestic laws. For instance, the 1992 constitution of Ghana also defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. Likewise, the Children's Act of Ghana (1998) which is a document against which parameters for child well-being is set and monitored in Ghana also defines a child in the same way. The 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACRWC) is not an exception regarding the definition of a child. This is ascribed in Article 2 of the Charter which states that "For the purposes of this Charter, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years". Since these human rights instruments are widely acceptable and applicable, in this thesis, I also define a child as any person below the age of 18 years.

2.2 Rights defined

The oxford dictionary defines *rights* as "someone having a moral or legal claim or entitlement" (Oxford Dictionary online). It implies that bearers of *rights* are seen as able to make claims with dignity and independence, unlike people with *needs* who must beg for charity (Ansell, 2005). Rights can also be defined as legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory. The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) makes it clear that human rights are the inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently

entitled to with dignity simply because that person is a human being. It also states that all human beings are born free and equal with dignity and rights. Therefore, human rights are universal (applicable everywhere) and egalitarian (the same for everyone). This follows directly that children's rights are thus seen as human rights of children which is children's entitlement and claims as being members of the society.

2.3 Conceptions about children and childhood

The concept of children and childhood are understood in very different ways in different societies in different historical times**.** In his influential book *Centuries of Childhood,* the French historian Philip Aries pioneered the idea that childhood is a social construction (Aries, 1962). Aries claimed that the view that childhood is a distinct human condition began to emerge after the Middle ages, around the fifteenth century. Perspectives about childhood as a special period in life gained ground during the seventeenth century, and culminated in what Aries saw as the "sentimentilization of childhood and the child-centred family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Montgomery, 2003:55). Relying mostly on an analysis of European art of the Middle ages, he claimed that children were treated as miniature adults and once their physical dependency of infancy were ended (around the age of seven); they were fully integrated into social and economic life. Therefore, childhood as a separate state from adulthood did not exist in medieval Europe and the people at the time had no conception of childhood. Aries has been criticised for basing his argument on paintings in middle ages because these paintings were mostly used for religious reasons. Also, by relying on paintings he ignored other sources of information and documentations about children.

Even though Aries has been criticised lengthily, his postulations shaped ideas about children and childhood that notions about childhood is not a universal construct but they change over time. For instance, two predominant yet contradictory images of children existed over the past four centuries (Jenks, 1996) as 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' views. The Dionysian view dominated in the West prior to the twentieth century. It perceived children born as 'little devils' according to the Catholic doctrine, original sin, and they need strict moral discipline (Jenks, 1996). On the other hand, the Apollonian view saw children as 'little angels', born innocent and untainted by the world. Therefore, children needed special care and protection, childhood was a time to play and not to work. These two images of childhood support the

argument that the ideas about childhood vary over time and conceptions about childhood are constructed in time and space.

In contrast to the global notion of childhood (Boyden & Ennew, 1997) which suggest that there is a natural and universal distinction between children and adults, and childhood is universal, this study is based on the idea that there are diversities of childhood. This is because, childhood is not a natural, universal category, and the difference between children and adults in a given society cannot be read off from physical difference. Even within societies such as Ghana, which comprises ten regions, in every region there are different tribes or ethnic groups that speak a particular language and have a unique culture. This means that experiences in childhood differs from culture to culture even within that same region. Children experiences in these tribes are relatively distinct from each other not to compare with their counterparts in the West. However, in spite of the fact that "childhood is not a natural physical category; there are biological and physiological facts that constrain and shape children's lives, particularly in early childhood" (Ansell, 2005:9). Diversities of childhood suggest that there is no universal *childhood* but variety of *childhoods*. This contradicts ideas of developmental psychology and socialisation theories that views children and childhood as universal. The Social Studies of Children and Childhood argues that there is no universal child but diversity of childhoods. The following section discusses perspectives connected to the Social Studies of Children and Childhood in relative length.

2.4 Social Studies of Children and Childhood

The Social Studies of Children and Childhood acknowledges children as active social agents worthy of study in their own right. This approach sees children as active determinants of their own lives. It seeks to give a voice to children and therefore as Hardman (1973:87) suggests, they must be "studied in their own right and not just as receptacles of adult teaching". The Social Studies of Children and Childhood as a paradigm that called for paying closer attention to children as social actors with diverse lives and experiences, gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s. It arose as a critique and as an alternative to what James & Prout (1997) calls the 'dominant framework'.

The dominant framework referred to developmental psychology and socialization theories developed by Piaget and Parsons respectively. These theories dominated the ideas about

children in the past and these influenced policies, ideas and notions about children worldwide in terms of caretaking, nursing, schooling and so on. A key concept in the dominant framework surrounding the study of children has been the concept of 'development' and the three dominating themes in relation to it are 'rationality', 'naturalness' and 'universality'. Children are seen as 'human becomings' and adults are seen as 'human beings' (Qvortrup, 1994). In order to develop, the child must go through four specific stages of cognitive development: the first stage is sensory motor (0-2 years), pre-operational stage (2-6 years), concrete operational stage (7-11years) and the most important stage is formal operational stage (12 years and above). This is a strict order according to Piaget. Talcott Parsons also asserted that socialisation was the only way through which a child can be transitioned from the state of human becoming into a human being. When a child is born he/she is unaware of the social conventions of the society that can make him/her a fully fledged human being. Therefore, socialisation provides the gateway for children.

In their prominent book, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood,* James & Prout (1997) sought to give an alternative way of positioning children as competent, complete human beings and not human becomings. They drew together what they called a new 'emergent paradigm' (James & Prout, 1997:8) which is a collection of commitments that contradicts one or other aspect of the dominant framework. This emergent paradigm gave birth to the Social Studies of Children and Childhood. It has six key features (James & Prout, 1990:8-9). These are outlined below: Childhood is understood as a social construction. That is it neither a natural or universal feature of human groups; Childhood is a variable of social analysis. It can never be entirely divorced from other social variables such as class, gender or ethnicity; Children's social relationships and culture are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspectives and concerns of adults; Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the society in which they live; Ethnography gives children a more direct voice; Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present.

According to Alanen (2001), these features can be divided into three branches namely: Deconstructive sociology of childhood, Sociologies of children and Structural sociology of childhood. *Deconstructive sociology of children* means that the notions of the child, children and childhood are all analysed in discursive formations through the ideas, images and

knowledge of children and childhood conveyed in the society. Children have been viewed as irrational, universal, incompetent, incomplete, immature and so on, therefore, the "task of sociologist is then to deconstruct such formations - cultural ideas, images, models and practices of children and childhood" (Alanen, 2001:12). In order words, there have been a construction in the past about children as irrational beings; sociologist now needs to deconstruct such ideas in order to reconstruct new ideas about children as been active participants in their own social lives and also in the lives of those around them.

Secondly, another branch under the social studies of childhood is the *Sociologies of children/ Actor-oriented child research*. This approach argues for studying children in their own right and from their own perspectives and for implementing this value in sociological work by taking children as units of research. This is what Hardman (1973) echoed as studying children in their own right and not just as a receptacle of adult teaching. Studies must focus directly on children and their life conditions, experiences, conditions, social relationships, activities as well as ideas (Alanen, 2001). In this research, children are seen as active social actors and participants in their own social livelihoods and also participants in the formation of their own childhood. The last branch worth mentioning is the *Structural sociology of childhood.* Under this approach, childhood is viewed as a social phenomenon- that is both structured and structuring (Qvortrup, 1994), which is "comparable and analogous to the proto-sociological class and notion of gender in the social sciences" (Alanen, 2001:13). The society is structured into categories in which childhood is part and there is a continuous interplay with class, gender and other social structures. As a structural form, due to its interaction or its interplay with other structures, childhood is influenced by the same social and societal forces that also affect adults. This implies that childhood in its structural form is dynamic or keeps changing; it is neither universal nor natural as postulated by developmental psychology by Piaget and socialisation by Parsons.

2.4.1 Significance of the social studies of childhood to this study

The social studies of children and childhood call for studying children in their own right and not just as receptacles of adult teachings. In Ghana, most research about children take into account the perspectives of adults without consulting children themselves. For that reason, this theory gave me the edge to research into the lives of children from their own perspectives. As a result, I used children as my principal participants. This theory also

acknowledges children as social actors and agents in their own lives and the lives of those around them. Accordingly, I recognised children as not being passive objects but active social agents who are capable of voicing out their views. Therefore, I conducted the research with them.

2.5 Children's rights

In order to have a comprehensive view of children's rights, I will present the historical perspectives of children's rights by taking inspiration from Alston et al. (2005). According to Alston et al. (2005) the international efforts to promote children's rights have gone through 5 different phases.

2.5.1 Phase I: 1901 - 1947

The first phase of the children's rights movement (1901-1947) had the concept of making the plight of children visible. The relative invisibility of children in the 19th century international agenda began to change dramatically in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Alston et al., 2005). This was fuelled by the heightened child labour saga, sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking and children orphaned by war. It led to the creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919 which focused directly on children and helped to develop the notion that, in the labour field, they possessed certain rights. In 1923, the founder of Save the Children Fund UK, Eglantyne Jebb drafted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and it was adopted by the then League of Nations on September 26, 1924. This five-point Declaration which subsequently became known as the Declaration of Geneva was a set of non-binding declaration to be used as guiding principles for the provision of care and protection of children by the members of the League of Nations.

2.5.2 Phase II: 1948 – 1977

The second Phase began with the creation of the United Nations in 1945. This phase was fundamentally a period that emphasised the consolidation and building of human rights regime as a whole and not forgetting children's rights. Both the 1948 and 1959 Declaration on the rights of the child highlighted provisions which relate to children in existing human right conventions (Te One, 2008). The UDHR mentions children in two places. Article 25.2

affirms that "motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection". The second is article 26.3 which states that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children". Children were therefore not seen in this phase as autonomous and independent but they were to be protected by caring adults. This was reaffirmed in the preamble of the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child which states that mankind owes to the child the best it has to give. Therefore, "the 1959 Declaration recognised childhood as a special period of life, and that children needs protection" (Te One, 2008:24). The Declaration was very significant because it introduced the term 'children's rights' (Alston et al., 2005:5).

2.5.3 Phase III: 1978 - 1989

The third phase in the historical perspective on children's rights saw the emergence of child's right movements. In the 1960s, the UN General Assembly approved a motion for 1979 to be the 'International Year of the Child'. At the 34th session of the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child in 1979, the Polish delegation brought a formal proposal that the United Nations should adopt a Convention on the rights of the child. This acted as an effective catalyst for a variety of actors to observe a rights-based approach to at least some aspects of the welfare and well-being of children (Alston et al., 2005). The third phase helped in bringing forth the present UNCRC which viewed children as independent agents with rights like adults. Civil rights movements and the growth of feminism enhanced in recognising the independent rights of children (Dunne, 2006; Mayall, 2003 in Te One, 2008:25). Child liberationist argued that children were autonomous beings and they have the same rights as adults (Archard, 1993). Therefore, children must act in their own interest and make their own choices. On the other hand, another movement was the protectionist that argued that children were vulnerable, incompetent and they were not matured enough to make their own choices. Their parents should act in their best interest and choose paternalistically for them otherwise they will make grievous mistakes (Archard, 1993).

2.5.4 Phase IV: 1989 - 2000

This phase saw the emergence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). The Convention is a legally binding agreement for member States and it

sets out the civil, political and economic rights of children. The UNCRC influenced a lot of policies about children. For instance international organisation like UNICEF took the convention to heart and began the unprecedented process of seeking to re-orient its priorities and its programming to reflect a CRC-based approach to its work (Alston et al., 2005). Other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) also began to incorporate the UNCRC in their policies and work with children. The UN High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR) authorized several child-specific special procedures (special rapporteurs) and for the first time, they put on its agenda a comprehensive item dealing with all aspects of children's rights (Alston et al., 2005).

One significant difference between the 1959 Declaration and the UNCRC was the principle of *best interest of the child*. The best interest principle was introduced in the UNCRC which asserts that in all actions concerning the child, the best interest of the child must be paramount. In this light, Freeman (1998) argues that there was a shift from protecting children to protecting the rights of children. The convention provided children with independent rights and empowered them in society as having rights like adults. According to Alston et al. (2005:7) the "close of the 20th century witnessed... a normative framework for children's rights which would have been unimaginable even a quarter of a century earlier".

2.5.5 Phase V: 2001 – present

The final phase cuts across the 21st century. Alston et al. (2005:7) argues that with the "new century, there began a phase of both consolidate and reaction, in relation to children's rights". In terms of consolidation, this was called for on the part of the major actors involved in the UNCRC process. This happened because, the relative ecstasy in the third phase began to wear off and governments, international agencies and NGOs started to realise the difficult task they have taken for themselves (Alston et al., 2005). Also, there were reactions by governments who have ratified the convention in that they came under huge pressure and financial constraints to protect and provide for children as enshrined in the convention. These difficulties have been largely attributed both rightly and wrongly to globalisation which gives no priority to children. As argued, "the dramatic increase in global economies does not necessarily ascribe to the same moral code that existed during the formulation of UNCRC (UNICEF, 2005 in Te One, 2008:29). A lot of things have changed since the inception of the

UNCRC. Another difficulty also involves accountability which is integral in the UNCRC philosophy (Alston et al., 2005).

2.6 UNCRC (1989)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is a legally binding international instrument which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. In recognition that children also have human rights, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the convention and opened it for signature on 20th November, 1989 which was 30 years after the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child. This was also 10 years after the Polish delegation submitted a formal proposal to the UN Commission on Human Rights for the adoption of a convention for children in 1979, the International Year of the Child (Fottrell, 2000). The convention came into force on 2nd September, 1990 and it defines a *child* as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless an earlier age of majority is recognized by a country's law (Article 1). According to UNICEF

> The Convention is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. These basic standards also called human rights—set minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be respected by governments. They are founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability and therefore apply to every human being everywhere (www.unicef.org).

National governments that ratify the convention are bound to it by international law because it is a legally binding agreement unlike the 1924 and 1959 Declarations which were nonbinding agreements. Compliance to the convention is monitored by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child which is composed of members from countries who have ratified the convention. By acceding to the convention, State parties have agreed to ensure and protect children's rights and hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community. In every five (5) years, state parties are obliged to submit a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the advancement in the implementation of the convention and the status of children's rights in the country.

The convention is made up of 54 articles. It has four core principles: *Non-discrimination* (Article 2); *Best interest of the child* (Article 3); *Right to life, survival and development* (Article 6); and *Respect for the views of the child* (Article 12). Two Optional Protocols were also adopted on 25th May, 2000. The first one restricts children's involvement in armed conflict and the second prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

2.7 The Three Ps

Another important concept relevant for this study is the 'Three Ps' (Wringe, 1995). The Three Ps is a categorisation of the UNCRC into the provision rights, protection rights and participation rights.

2.7.1 Provision Rights

Provision rights of the child have been articulated in many of the articles in the convention. Article 27 of the convention obligates state parties to "recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development". This entails that every child must have adequate standard of living for his survival and full development in the community. In line with this, Article 24 of the convention also resonates that governments must see to it that children enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and have access to facilities for the treatment of health and rehabilitation purposes. The state must ensure that children have good nutrition for their physical well being. It is the responsibility of the state to provide children with primary health care, combat malnutrition and diseases especially the six killer diseases in Africa. In addition, the UNCRC stipulates that a disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and aid the child's active involvement in the community (Article 23). Physically or mentally challenged children have a right to special care and education for their harmonious development. Under the provision rights, all children have the right to education (Article 28). One way to make this possible is by making primary education free for all and compulsory as well. Provision rights of children depend on others for its realisation. Article 18 of the convention gives power to parents as the primary care givers for the upbringing and development of the child. In accordance with this, state parties are obliged to provide adequate support and assistance to parents or legal guardians by providing appropriate facilities and basic amenities to rare children.

2.7.2 Protection Rights

Many international instruments on human rights such as the 1924 and 1959 Declarations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights have documented the protection rights of children. Children must be protected against all forms of discrimination in spite of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (Article 2). Children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) who are very vulnerable in society such as children involved in child labour, street children, children orphaned by AIDS, children living in institutions, refugee children (Ansell, 2005) and so on must be protected by the state to ensure their survival and development. Furthermore, the state shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and coercion of the child to engage in pornography (Article 34). Children must also be protected from economic exploitation and child trafficking.

2.7.3 Participation Rights

Participation rights of children are the most controversial rights among the Three Ps. This is because giving children the autonomy to make decisions is highly contested by adults. The UNCRC conceives of participation in two domains; "possibilities for children to engage with the world around them and opportunities to have a voice in formal decision making processes" (Stephens, 1994 in Ansell, 2005). Lansdown (2001b:2) asserts that the convention has introduced "a radical and profound challenge to traditional attitudes, which assume that children should be seen and not heard". Some articles worth mentioning from the convention about children participation rights are: Article 12 which empowers children to express their views in decision making; Article 13 gives them the right to freedom of expression; Article 14 gives the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The UNCRC as noted above states vigorously that governments, parents and institutions should give children the opportunity to express their views on decisions in the family, at school, society or nationally. The views of children must also be accorded due weight. But Article 12 of the convention has been widely criticised in that it states that the best interest of the child must be the primary consideration when making decisions about the child. This view in a way questions adults as well as the states authority and power when dealing with

children. It is also unclear what the best interests of children are? Nevertheless, it is of relevance to this study, even though age is reckoned to be a good indicator, children from the age of 12-14 are very capable of making decisions.

2.8 Individual rights or Interdependent rights

Western philosophical thinking of childhood and children views children as autonomous individuals with agency and independence. But viewing children as having individual rights confirms the translation of the UNCRC into development policies and practices that strengthen the "superiority of the childhood model as it evolved in the West and the need to impose this model on a global scale" (Nieuwenhuys, 1998:270 in Abebe, 2012:2). In addition, it also serves as a validation for the Western belief that it has the "right to reshape children in their own image and remake non-Western childhoods … in Western forms" (Mathews, 2003:4). As Abebe (2012) argues, in the global south the desire to sustain family solidarity, cohesion and interdependent lives often overshadows children's individual needs and interest. As part of a family, the individual rights of children are integrated into that of the larger family collective. This is an implication that children rights must be situated within a broader socio-cultural context rather implementing Western ideologies of children and childhood into non-Western context.

In a typical African setting characterized by culture, traditions, norms, customs, reciprocity, solidarity, and so on, it is very difficult to draw the boundary between children's individual rights and the collective rights such as that of the family and the society at large. The African charter considers the obligations of children in tandem with their rights because it has essential propositions whereby children are placed within the context of their families and communities as well as for exploring rights from the perspectives of duties and responsibilities (Abebe, 2012). As enshrined in Article 31 of the African Charter which acknowledges the importance of children's responsibilities, the

> Article shifts attention away from the vocal, global and participating child (as articulated in the UNCRC) to the uniqueness of local, dutiful and cultural child that views its life as being closely tied together with the lives of families and communities (Abebe, 2012:18).

The argument is that in the wider context of the African society, even though children have their individual rights, their rights are interdependent with those of the wider family network with whom they work in partnership and in which mutual and long-term livelihoods strategies are set (Abebe, 2012).

This is what has been termed as *Interdependent rights* Abebe (2012). Unlike the developed nations like Norway where the ideal notion of childhood is characterized by work-free philosophy, children with/without parents are cared for by the State; they are viewed as more independent in a way than their counterparts in developing nations. On the other hand, to muster resources needed for viable livelihoods children in the majority world depend critically on family collectives and social networks of support and not on the state. Punch (2002) argues that in spite of the fact that children in the Majority world tend to achieve relative independence earlier, family interdependence continues throughout their life course. In the global south, children are valued for their socio-economic roles and they grow up holding complex responsibilities and maintaining reciprocal relationships with the members of the family (Abebe, 2012). Since there is much cohesion and solidarity, children are neither independent citizens nor autonomous individuals with separate rights but interdependent beings with interdependent rights (Abebe, 2012) which are inseparable from the family collective. Interdependent livelihood strategy produces a favourable condition for children to apply various degrees of individual authority while concurrently negotiation the dynamics in which the collective interests of the family work (Abebe, 2012).

Therefore, it is very imperative that child-family relationships should be explained in terms of interdependencies which are negotiated and renegotiated over time and space, and it also need to be recognized in relation to the particular socio-cultural context (Punch, 2007). This means that the human rights of children should be situated within the "broader socio-cultural and polico-economic context of children's livelihood ….but include the interrelatedness of rights, duties and obligations vis-à-vis the family collective" (Abebe, 2012:3). This is not to say that children do not have individual rights but the argument is that in Ghana which is characterized by inter and intra-generational relationships, kinship bonds and family ties, the rights of children are interdependent with those of the wider family network where they interact and have their livelihoods.

This theory is very significant for my study because in Ghana children are born into families. As a result, they do not live independently; rather they live with other family members like parents and siblings. In addition, in the absence of parents, most children live with their grandparents, cousins and other members with whom they interact daily. The family unit can function effectively when every member plays their role efficiently. Parents and adults provide children with food, material needs and protection. Children in Ghana do not act passively by receiving help only, but they act as social actors and agents in the family by performing complex responsibilities. Such as running errands, cooking and caring for sick grandparents. This creates a sense of interdependencies within the family members. As such, individual rights that are advocated by the UNCRC and western ideologies are set aside and group rights are push forward for the cohesion of the family.

2.9 Key debates about children and work

Over the years, there have been debates about whether children ought to work or not. Drawing on Abebe & Bessell (2011), I present three competing perspectives about children and work: work-free childhood, socio-cultural context of work, and the political economy.

2.9.1 Work-free childhoods

Article 32 of the UNCRC designates State party to assure:

> The right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development (United Nations, 1989).

Arguments against children's work posits on the idea that work is hazardous to the physical, mental and social well-being of children. This approach sees children as weak and vulnerable; as a result, they must be separated from work. It has been argued that work can have bad effect on the future health of children as well as their development. Another strand of argument that forbids children from work relates to education. For instance, Article 28 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, to which Ghana is a signatory, establishes children's rights to education and enjoins the government to expand free and compulsory

education, especially at the primary level. This article signifies that children are supposed to go to school and must be excluded from the market forces of the adult world. Consequently, as argued by UNICEF (2004) childhood is a period reserved for schooling, leisure and play without any responsibilities.

Work is also seen as exploitative. Opposition to children's work contends that children are exploited from work. Since there are unequal power relations in the workplace, children are poorly paid. In addition, trade unions believe that children's involvement in paid labour adversely affects adult employment (Ansell, 2005). Therefore, children must be prohibited from work. But it is important to note that depriving children from work especially within the contours of the family will only aggravate poverty in the family and put children at risk.

2.9.2 Socio-cultural perspectives of work

Bourdillion (2006) and Nieuwenhuys (1994) argue that children's work needs to be understood in the light of diverse material and cultural conditions and seen as varying according to age, capability and gender of the children involved (cited in Abebe, 2008:12). This assertion conceives that any attempt to deprive children from earning income is seen as Eurocentric (Ansell, 2005). Because work forms an integral part of the everyday life of children for instance in Ghana and it is indispensable from the family livelihoods. Although this approach seeks to protect children from exploitation, it also sees childhood as continuous with the adult world whereby children move gradually into the adult world based on competence and opportunities (Bourdillon, 2006). In other words, work is seen as an initiation from childhood into adulthood just like in Ghana. This makes children adaptable and able to participate in the labour force more effectively in future.

Also, Ennew et al. (2005) argues in favour of the participation of children in either paid or unpaid work according to age, because poor children are often harmed rather than protected from work. In line with this argument Bass (2004) asserts that the benefits of children's work is spent on food and clothing: even though work is envisaged as an obstacle to education, some children work to earn money to pay school fees and uniforms (Ansell, 2005). Additionally, studies across cultures have documented that many children take pride in their contribution to family income, therefore they feel a sense of responsibility, self-respect, worth and self-reliance (Kabeer et al., 2003; Woodhead, 1998). This means that work must

not be seen only from the views of the West where children are alienated from work but from the cultural context where it is embedded and indispensable from society. Moreover, Nsamenang (2004) argues that children who are sent on errands and perform domestic duties demonstrate greater cognitive development than their non-working counterparts.

From the social and cultural point of view, work is valued as an arena which transmits skills and provides apprenticeship for children. In this way, children are socialised into adult roles. Working children may acquire some skills and lessons which may not be taught as part of the school curricula (Woodhead, 1998). Children can be empowered through work, enabling them to provide their own needs, or been able to negotiate their lives within the family. Therefore, in line with Abebe (2008) it is important to go beyond considering child labour as something one either support or not, and to aim at the different contexts in which it occur. Because children's work occur in varying historical time, society, period, as well as according to household, gender, age, class, seniority (Nieuwenhuys, 1998).

2.9.3 The political economy perspective

Recently, it has been argued that children's work must be grounded in specific ecological, economic and politico-historical context (Abebe & Bessell, 2011). The economic and political transformations affecting children's lives include: poverty, debt, corruption, war, geo-political conflicts, epidemics, unfair trade, structural adjustments programs (SAP), inappropriate policies and ineffective legislation (Bass, 2004 in Abebe, 2008:15). For example the macro-economic policy changes imposed by the IMF and World Bank forcing poor countries like Ghana to open up their economies in response to the 'Washington Consensus' had adverse impact on children lives.

The implementation of SAP had a direct repercussions and affected children to a high extent. These included cuts in public spending, removal of price controls and subsidies, particularly on food, privatisation of public enterprises which led to unemployment among public sector employees and wage constraint. The government of Ghana was forced to introduce SAP around the 1980s and it resulted in unpleasant conditions especially for children. Education and health delivery system was appalling due to the policies which also culminated in the 'cash and carry' system in Ghana. Primary school subsidies were reduced and unemployment

was high. This implies that work originally assigned to women were shared or shifted completely to children under women's supervision. Children had to earn income to survive.

2.9.4 Implications of these debates to my study

In Ghana, work is seen as a medium where children are socialised from childhood into adulthood. Children are trained to acquire valuable skills and vocation through work and an attempt to detach them from it is deemed Eurocentric. Therefore, the concept of work-free childhood is somewhat problematic in the Ghanaian context because children are valuable source of labour force for the family through paid and unpaid services.

Consequently, in this thesis, I argue that the lives of children in Ghana can best be understood in relation to the socio-cultural context as well as the political factors in which their lives unfold. In addition, since the perspectives of adults and that of children differ, I argue how children benefit from work, and how they perceive and understand the complex roles they fulfil within the family.

2.10 Review of Related Studies

This section reviews some literature in relation to the study. It is based on different research from Third World countries such as Ghana, Bolivia, India and Ethiopia. In Ghana, in exploring the dynamics of parent-child relationships, Twum-Danso (2009) focuses on the three Rs of intergenerational relationships – respect, reciprocity and responsibility. She argues that these concepts are central to parent-child/adult-child relations and it regulates everyday lives of people.

Respect

According to her, from an early age children in Ghana are socialised to respect, obey and take their advice. This cultural notion also receives support from the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). It stipulates that children must respect parents and adults. Therefore children are anticipated to be as described by Sarpong (1974:70) "ideally expected to be respectful, charming and smiling when in the company of adults, ready to go, without hesitation, on the errands of adults". This means that children must submit to parental

control and adult authority. However, those children who are disrespectful and disobedient may be seen as deviants in the society. They are envisaged as not well-mannered and not cultured. In this case, children who are seen as assertive and not submissive may be punished by parents or adults.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a central element of the socialisation process in Ghana. Twum-Danso (2009:427) asserts:

> By bringing forth a child and taking care of him during his childhood a parent is issuing a contract, which he expects to be paid back once the child is in position to do this by fulfilling their expected responsibilities and behaving in an appropriate manner. A child who does that will have their rights fulfilled.

This assertion is supported by Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuona-Hamond (1996: 15) who argue that in Ghana "a child is obliged to render services to a parent which obligation is then reciprocated by the parent by care and maintenance". It signifies that children grow up knowing that the care their parents give them is based on the belief of pay-off. The pay back starts at a very early age where the child is supposed to respect and obey his/her parents. In addition, the child is expected to submit to their authority and take their advice. They are also expected to perform certain duties and responsibilities in the family in order for it to function effectively. When children perform these duties their parents in return provide them with basic needs and protection. As a developing country which is characterised by poverty, children are also seen as a security in old age. This implies by that the investment of emotions, financial and material resources by parents or guardians are envisaged to be reciprocated. Simply, parents expect a pay back from children it when they are old.

Responsibility

Twum-Danso (2009) argues that in Ghana every child has certain responsibilities to perform. These responsibilities are usually allocated according to gender, physical size, age, maturity, competence and so on. In Ghanaian society, from the early age of 5-6 years children are assigned some duties to perform. As they mature and grow older, their responsibilities

become complex and more difficult. The duties children perform are often base on gender. For instance girls assist their mothers in the kitchen and learn how to cook. Boys mostly run errands for their parents, other siblings and the extended family members. Other duties children do are contributing to the maintenance of the household by sweeping the compound and its interior, washing utensils, helping mother to cook and looking after younger siblings. Especially among the poor, children's participation goes beyond household duties as they partake in the main income-generating activities. Girls sometimes assist their mothers in trading or selling goods as part of their training. These unpaid domestic services performed by children as well as the income they contribute ensure that the family unit functions efficiently and effectively. These three concepts: respect, reciprocity and responsibility are very crucial in the Ghanaian society. Traditionally, they are seen as values that bind families and people together.

In another related studies, Punch (2001) writes about household division of labour in Bolivia. Drawing on her ethnographic studies from the rural community in Tarija, southern Bolivia, she shows how work is divided among family members. From her studies, allocation of household labour in rural Bolivia is worked out according to generation, age, gender, birth order and sibling composition. From an early age, children are given some domestic tasks to perform and these duties increases as they grow older. This depends on knowledge, maturity, physical capability and a sense of responsibility. From the age between 4-9 years, children's duties are not gender specific. They start by fetching water and running errands for their household. Some children wash dishes, peel potatoes and collect firewood. By the age of 10 children begin to perform more gender specific duties such as food preparation for girls and grazing livestock for instance the sheep, goats and pigs for boys.

In the same way in northern Tanzania, among the Pare people, girls of 12 and boys of 14 are seen as equal to adults. Therefore they are seen as having power and skill in most work and they are capable of looking after themselves and the family in the absence of parents (Hollos, 2002). Schildkrout (2002) also asserts that in northern Nigeria, Moslem women who practice Purdah depend on children in order to trade with customers and generate income. Women cook food and sell other products such as salt, sugar, fruit and kola nuts through children who carry them on trays from house to house and on the streets. This emphasises the importance of children's duties and responsibilities in contributing to their families. Furthermore, in India, as children grow older their duties become more gender specific. This is because

specific responsibilities within the family relates to particular positions. Sons act as care-givers to elderly people and brothers protect unmarried sisters. This "creates a sense of interdependence and a tendency to prioritise family interests over personal interest" (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002 cited in Ansell, 2005:71)

Similarly, drawing from his study of rural Ethiopia, Abebe (2012) supports the notion that children are interdependent human beings. He argues that children do not only depend on adults for basic needs and protection but they also give reciprocal care by holding complex responsibilities. According to him, gender, birth order, family composition and social maturity influences the ways in which work in allotted in the Gedeo households. Therefore, as interdependent beings, children's daily livelihoods are entwined with the family collective and wider social structures. As a result, children do not see themselves as independent individuals but they see themselves as part of the family.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods that were employed to conduct this research. It begins with researching the perspectives of children. This is followed by informed consent, sampling technique and the background characteristics of participants. Since it is a qualitative research, participatory methods such as observations and informal dialogues, story writing and list, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used. In addition, the chapter deals with my role as a researcher, accessibility& gatekeeping, and ethics. Lastly, the chapter discusses the transcription and analysis of data as well as some challenges faced by the researcher during the field work process. The research took place from June 15, 2011 to August 12, 2011.

3.1 Researching children's perspective

Research with children and young children is very important because children are widely regarded by researchers as active participants in the research process (Alderson, 2000; James & Prout, 1997). Children are now seen as active social actors and participants in their lives. This perspective has shifted in wake of the UN 1989 Convention that gave birth to the UNCRC (Corsaro, 1997). The Participation rights of the child outlined in Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC empowers young children and gives them the right to be informed, involved and consulted in all decisions affecting their lives. This has led to an increasing involvement of children as research participants (Nieuwenhuys, 2001) and a growing body of literature where the perspectives of children are sought from children themselves rather than from adults (Alderson, 2000; Boyden & Ennew, 1997).

Christensen and Prout (2002:480) outlined four ways that children and childhood have been identified in research - the child as an object, a subject, a social actor, and the child as an active participant or co-researcher. As an *object,* the child is viewed as objects who are researched *on* rather than as social actors in their own rights. In this approach, children are seen as dependent, incomplete and unable to speak for themselves. Therefore, they are protected by their caring adults who act as interpreters in the research on their behalf (ibid). In the second approach, Christensen and Prout (2002) argued that children are seen as *subjects* in research, but involving them in the research process is impeded by their perceived

immaturity and cognitive inability due to young age. Moreover, as *social actors*, children "act, take part in, change and become changed by the social and cultural world they live in" (Christensen and Prout, 2002:481). Lastly, another perspective of children which is highly advocated by many researchers although it has been criticised concerns children taking *active participatory role* in the research process (Clark, 2005). However, if the research is to be in the best interest of children, researchers must put into consideration crucial issues in the planning, carrying out and dissemination stages of the research.

Taking a cue from above, I positioned my theoretical knowledge in line with the fact that children are active social participants in the formation of their own social lives (James et al., 1998). Being inspired by this philosophy, I saw the need to do the research *with* children as active participants rather than researching *on* them as objects where "the child is portrayed, like the laboratory rat, as being at the mercy of external stimuli" (James & Prout, 1997:13). But in doing research with children, there are power imbalances between the researcher and children because of the generational gap. Therefore, in order to address the unequal power relations between the children and myself, multiple participatory methods such as story writings, listings, focus-groups and participant observations were used.

3.2 Field work process

3.2.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is one of the key issues in the research process. It is very important for the researcher to give all relevant information about the research to the participants for the purpose of their consent to be part of the project. It ensures that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research so that they can decide in a conscious and deliberate way whether they want to participate or not (Ennew et al., 2009). Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) further argues that informed consent means informing participants that their participation in the research is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study at any time. In simple terms, informed consent entails outlining: the primary aim of the research, possible risks and benefits of the project, anonymity and respect for privacy, how confidentiality will be protected, the role of the research participants, voluntary participation and how participants can withdraw from the project at any time.

In this research which involved children, teachers and parents as participants, seeking consent from teachers and parents is a tradition which must be followed. But obtaining consent from one of the most vulnerable groups in Ghana (that is children) is another issue altogether. As argued by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) with school children, the question comes up about where to obtain consent from, whether from the teachers, parents, school board or from the children themselves. But, I realised that it is not only sufficient to ask for consent from the school authorities or teachers but to ask the school children themselves. I saw this as a mechanism to earn the children's trust and respect. Therefore, I sought consent from the children themselves.

Informed consent can either be written or oral (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). *Written consent* means that a person receives a written document that describes the research process, aims and important information that the participant needs to know as well as the possible risks of participating in the research. On the other hand, *Oral consent* means that a person receives all of the information needed for consent verbally and then verbally consents to participate. Both the adult and young participants gave verbal/oral consent to take part in the research. Because they did not see the need to engage in contractual agreement especially in the Ghanaian context where there is scepticism about signing agreements.

3.2.2 Sampling technique

Purposive sampling method was used to select participants for the research. In this method, the researcher vigorously selects the most productive sample size for the research (Patton, 1990). Also, by snow-ball technique (Babbie, 2005), I was able to recruit the parents for the research. It involved utilizing well informed people to identify participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation. This technique was important for the study because it enabled me to select key participants to discuss critical issues on the research. One disadvantage with this technique was that it was difficult controlling the possible selection of individuals with similar socio-demographic characteristics. However, efforts were made to rectify this problem. I made sure I had participants from diverse background.

3.3 Background characteristics of participants

As people's perspectives in the society are influenced by social variables such as age, gender, occupation, socio-economic status as well as socio-cultural traditions and values, I intend presenting the background characteristics of my participants.

3.3.1 Age and gender of young participants

In this research, twelve children (six boys and six girls) were sampled as participants from the ages of 12 to 14 years.

3.3.2 Family profiles of children

Other important characteristics of my participants worth presenting are their family structures, birth compositions, parents' occupations and their socio-economic status, level of education and so on. In the Ghanaian society, children are highly valued and they are viewed as a blessing in marriage. Most of my participants had large family sizes ranging from 5 to 9 members. The parents of my participants engaged in various occupations such as technicians, some are also engaged in their private work but most of the mothers of my participants were petty traders in the Kumasi Central Market. The parents' levels of education were Junior/Senior secondary school and Vocational training school for most of the mothers, while most of the fathers of the selected children attended technical school and teacher training colleges.

3.3.3 Adult participants

I selected six parents and six teachers as my adult participants. The parents that I interviewed were within the age group of thirty-five to fifty years. Most of them had large families ranging from 6-10 members. One of the male participants was a painter by profession and the other was a carpenter while the females included a baker and a petty trader. I interviewed a couple - the woman was a house wife and the man was a business man. I had focus-group discussion with six teachers. This was made up of three female and three male teachers.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The research is a qualitative study and therefore embraced the application of multiple participatory methods such as observations/informal dialogues, field notes, story writings and listings, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. In addition, other secondary sources of data were also employed. Participatory methods appear "emancipatory and democratic, respecting children's agency as individuals in their own right" (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008:499). Also, Boyden & Ennew (1997:157) asserted that "using three or more methods facilitates triangulation or cross-checking information on the same issue or topic obtained through different methods, perhaps from different sources".

3.4.1 Observations/Informal dialogues

Observation is the basis of all good research (Ennew et al., 2009). It may be structured or unstructured and very vital for understanding the context of data. Observations are essential in recording people, surroundings, sounds and speech, events, overheard comments, noises, smells behaviour and body language (Ennew et al, 2009). This is because it allows the researcher to study people in their natural setting without their behaviour being influenced by the presence of the researcher. First and foremost, before I could use any other method to get information for my research, I observed the children in the school I chose. After I sought permission from the school authorities to conduct my research, I used semi-participant observation method to observe the daily activities of the students, play time, lunch time, classes, extra-curricular activities and so on. In order to build close relationship, the first week in the school was used to identify research participants which were very difficult due to the limited time frame for the research.

Initially, building good rapport with the children was a challenge, so during their morning and afternoon recesses, I usually hung out with them in order to earn their trust, confidence and build friendship. Therefore, I always joined the queue to buy rice or 'waakye' for lunch. I sat at the same table and ate with these children at the same time. In addition, playing football with them gave me the opportunity to engage in informal dialogues with the children. These informal dialogues enabled me to push forward some of the topics I wanted to research and to identify some of my research participants. Through observation, I took a critical look at the physical environment of the school, its location and the unique setting. Most importantly, I

observed the day to day interactions between the students and their peers and between teachers and the students. This critical observation was extended to school authorities and the students as well as other non-teaching staffs in the school. Essential to me was how the school children negotiate their rights with their peers and their superiors in the school.

I made use of semi-participant observations coupled with informal dialogues with participants in their own natural settings which enabled me to engage them on their own terms, in their groups, in their words, with their time-frames (Nairn & Smith, 2003). This helped me to earn the trust and confidence of my participants. Aside the observations I did in the school, another place I observed was their houses. Routinely, I visited parents who had the desire to participate in the research. Sometimes when I am passing by compound houses, I observed how parents lived together with their children. I took into account the various roles members perform for the effective functioning of the family. Most of these observations took place around 5pm when most of the children and parents are back from school and work respectively. I saw the children involving in a wide range of household chores, running errands and others playing football in front of their houses or on the streets. Especially on weekends, I observed children cleaning their houses. These responsibilities performed by children were confirmed by participants through other methods such as story writings, list makings and individual interviews.

3.4.2 Field notes

Field notes were a major part of my field work as far as data gathering for the thesis was concerned. The field notes helped me to describe the settings, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who took part in the activities and their roles in the activities. Field notes again assisted me to describe the meaning of what was observed from the perspective of the participants, record exact quotes or close approximations of comments that relate directly to the observed activity. Prior to my research, I read three ways of organizing field notes which is observational, methodological and theoretical notes (Richardson, 2005 in Abebe, 2008:59). According to Richardson (2005), the first category is *observational notes*. These are the notes I took during my observations especially in the school where my informants were, the play ground, football field and the home. Based on my experience and observations on the field, I documented precisely and accurately the important issues relevant to the research which was distinguished from the other categories. I tried as much as possible

to present the actions, behaviours, attitudes, mood, perceptions and body language of the people I observed. Another important category is the *methodological notes*. This was the aspect I wrote about how to organize my field work. I took into consideration the methods of data collection, reflecting upon getting consent from participants, how many people either male or female to be interviewed, the location for doing individual interview, when and where to observe and do focus group discussions. Another important issue was the challenges I encountered and how to deal with them. Lastly, a different feature of my field work adapted from Richardson (2005) was the *theoretical notes*. It cannot be denied that every researcher goes to the field with some pre-conceptions or theories about the phenomena s/he is researching on. The theoretical notes refer to the prior knowledge, assumptions and critiques about what we already know. Therefore, I recorded how my field work had changed a lot of perceptions I earlier on held and assumptions about my participants and the research as a whole.

3.4.3 Story writings and List making

Another important qualitative method that I employed in this study was 'story writing'. It enabled me to have an idea about the lived experiences of children because the stories they told me through their creative writing served as a yardstick or starting point for the interviews and focus-group discussions. I gave participants the opportunity to choose from a wide range of topics in order to express their thoughts, feelings, opinions and experiences in writing. Some of the themes were; *my childhood experiences*, *duties and responsibilities at home* and so on. This method enabled me to generate valuable data which reflected the views of participants because writing essays is part of the school curriculum. Other children also made lists about their duties at home. The method could also be likened to home work, as I gave the topics to the children and they presented them to me in their own convenient time. Writing essays and making lists to me was very appropriate in the Ghanaian context in that it is less confrontational and a more confidential method.

3.4.4 Focus-group Discussions (FGD)

Focus-group discussion is an official, facilitated discussion on a specific topic (Ennew et al., 2009). It helps to encourage a variety of viewpoints from different angles. This method is very beneficial for my research since it involves more than a single participant. Most

importantly, I chose this method because it served as an effective means of accessing the subjective experience of children, giving them the opportunity to be valued as experts while working collaboratively with their peers and facilitators to develop and articulate their thoughts (Gibbs, 1997). I organised three different sections of focus groups, two of which involved children and the other with teachers in the same school.

An advantage of using focus groups is that children find it less intimidating as compared to interviews where interaction is one-to-one basis as most children are comfortable in the company of peers. The method is useful in empowering them to participate in the research. Another advantage is that since it involves a lot of children with a facilitator, it reduces power imbalances.

Most of the discussions took place under tree, a popular playground of the students in the school. The principal aim of the focus groups with children was to find out their duties and responsibilities at home and school, their experiences of work and how they perceive themselves in society and gender dimensions of their work. Nevertheless, one disadvantage of focus groups is that it may reflect the ideas of dominant participants. In order to minimise this in my research, I offered participants equal opportunity to talk by taking turns.

The focus-group discussion with teachers comprised of three male and three females. It was conducted in the staff common room. The focal point of discussion centred on the perspectives of teachers about the role of children in the Ghanaian society.

3.4.5 Semi-structured interviews

This has been defined by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009:3) as the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena". To give more insights about how interviews produce knowledge, I adapted Danish Psychologist Rubin drawing which can be seen alternatively as two faces or as a vase, but not as both at the same time. Focusing on the two faces, you see them as the interviewers and interviewees, and conceive of the interview as a communication between two persons. Alternatively, if you focus on the vase between the two faces, you see it as containing the knowledge constructed *inter* the *views* of the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Below is the drawing by Danish Psychologist Rubin.

Figure 1. Research interview seen as Inter – Views

Using the other methods such as observations or informal dialogues, story writings and focus-groups served as grounds breaking for me to know the world of my participants before the individual interviews. Since the question of power always arises in researching with children (Fraser et al., 2010), it was very important for me to balance the power relations between my informants and myself. Preceding my field work, I prepared interview guide with mostly open-ended questions which reflected the main themes for my research questions. The first theme I sought to explore was children's views about their rights and responsibilities in the school, home and community. Under this theme, I asked young participants to talk from their own experiences about how they understand their responsibilities in Ghana. An interesting part of the interview was whether they have responsibilities at home/school or not. Most of the children especially those from the middle-income status attested to this fact.

In addition to interviews with children, the themes in my research questions also covered the perspectives of parents about children's duties and responsibilities. The principal aim for interviewing the parents was to seek their views on how duties are apportioned in the family, for instance based on gender, age or maturity.

3.4.6 Secondary sources of data

Secondary data were collected from the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana and UNICEF (Ghana office). I also went to public libraries and university libraries to get data from published and unpublished literatures, journals, books and articles. Other important documents that enhanced my research were the UNCRC, ACRWC, The Children's Act of Ghana (1998), the Constitution of Ghana (1992) and other internet sources.

3.4.7 Choice of language

As a multi-ethnic society which is made up of different tribes, cultures and traditions, Ghana is a multi-lingual country. Kumasi, where the research took place is a cosmopolitan society where people from all parts of the country are found. Apart from *English* the official language which is spoken and written language, the most widely spoken language in this area is *Twi.* Twi is the language of the Ashanti tribe. Fortunately, most people speak Twi and this was a landmark for my research because I am a native of Kumasi. In the school, English was the medium of instruction. However, in order to get so many participants I gave the students the option to choose either to be interviewed in English or Twi. Initially, some of the students did not want to participate because, they claimed their friends laughed at them when they speak English because they were not fluent in speaking the language. I encouraged them to do their best and ignore their friends. Focus-group discussion with the teachers was done successfully in the English language. But all of the interviews with parents were conducted in Twi in order to make them feel comfortable and ensure a successful conversation.

3.5 Researcher's role

In qualitative research, one of the most complicated aspects is the role of the researcher. Some scholars have argued that in this type of research, researchers are interpreters, a role described as complex and difficult (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Unlike in quantitative research where researchers give out questionnaires to their participants (McCracken, 1988) qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. It requires researchers to have direct contact with their participants and methods such as participant observations, ethnographic studies or participatory methods are used in the quest for obtaining relevant information. Therefore, the role of researchers is very important as argued by Kvale & Brinkman (2009:74).

> The role of the researcher as a person is critical to the quality of the scientific knowledge and the soundness of ethical decisions in qualitative enquiries.

During the fieldwork, I assumed different types of roles when and where the need arose. It was difficult from the start because obviously, I am an adult and in a typical Ghanaian school, children do not mingle with adults. Most of them construed me to be a teacher. I remember

some of the children asked me during break time when I was buying food at the same food joint where the students buy food: *Are you not a teacher?* They asked as they expressed their astonishment for seeing me in the queue buying my own food. This was because under normal circumstances, a teacher will never have done that. In order to address the power relations between the students and myself, efforts were made to break all barriers. For instance, I ate in the school canteen where children were and interacted with them to gain their trust and confidence before the research started. I assumed a *least adult role* (Mandall, 1991) where I did not see myself as a child but an adult who was interested in the affairs of children. In this light, I took the role as a non-authoritarian figure unlike a teacher in order to reduce the power imbalances. This aided in building good rapport between me (the researcher) and participants (the children).

In the Ghanaian context, respect for the elderly is highly valued. Therefore, people especially elderly people are always called by their titles. In the communities, males are referred as *bra* for a young man or youth in Twi and *sister* for a female. So for instance, in order to show respect to someone who is an older, you may call him *bra* Jerry for a male or may be *sister* Juliana for female. Likewise in the school, as a sign of courtesy, students use the title 'Mr' for male teachers and 'Madam' for female teachers. When I arrived in the school, the students started calling me Mr. Anane but I felt very uncomfortable with it because I did not want to be associated as a teacher. After the first two days in the school, I coined the name *Misty* as my nick-name in the school. The students really liked the nick-name because it was neither a title nor a real name. This helped to reduce the power differences between me and my participants.

In order to ameliorate the possibility of researcher's effects as noted above, multiple methods for generating data were necessary. These methods allowed for a range of possible interpretations of the experiences observed; methods such as field notes, combined with other participatory methods such as story writing/lists, interviews and focus groups were very useful. Having informal dialogues with participants during free times and fun activities helped in building good rapport. The students liked speaking to me because unlike their teachers whom they had to speak to strictly in English language. I used to speak what we call in Ghana *Broken English* (Pidgin) with them. In this way, they saw me more as a companion than an adult or researcher.

Having assumed different roles, it was no surprise that participants opened up, confided in me and were willing to take part in the research. Before I left the field, some of the students asked me, *Misty, when are you coming back again?* This bond of friendship with my participants was very imperative and I was able to achieve this because I came down to their level and also showed keen interest in their needs and welfare in the school.

3.6 Accessibility and Gatekeepers

Accessibility and gatekeeping is one of the most integral part of the research process. Getting access to conduct a research in a particular setting is not easy especially when researching with children. In Ghana, a high percentage of research conducted in the country always seek the views of adults neglecting the views of children who have been branded immature, incompetent and unable to voice out their views. Therefore people are very sceptical when a researcher wants to seek the perspectives of children and not that of adults. This makes the accessibility extremely difficult because the children are protected by so many gatekeepers. According to Kawulich (2011:58) gatekeeping means "the process by which investigators gain access to the research setting under study and to the participants in that setting". To explain the role of gatekeepers in knowledge production, Hamersley & Atkinson (2007:50) state that:

> Knowing who has the power to open up or block off access, or who consider themselves and are considered by others to have authority to grant or refuse access is, of course, an important aspect of the sociological knowledge about the setting.

The process of gaining entry involves developing relationships in the study setting to facilitate data collection (Schensul et al. 1999). Therefore, the first step I took when I got to the field was getting to know the authorities of the school without whom I could not enter the school. This relationship building process as argued by Kawulich (2011) entails becoming familiar with the setting, acting appropriately in culturally acceptable ways and building good rapport with key participants. Therefore, I observed, learned and became familiar with the practices, norms and curriculum in the school in order to fit properly.
In the same approach, Mason (2004:45,46) asserts that:

> The nature of children and young persons' lives in families, schools, day care and institutions means that they are rarely entirely free to decide for themselves whether or not to participate in research. They are surrounded by adults who act as gatekeepers, controlling researchers' access and children's and young persons' opportunity to express their views.

Following the argument above, Mason has emphasized that children are protected by adults who act as their gatekeepers. Before any researcher can undertake a research with children, be it in the school, home or in an institution, permission must be sought from these adults. Prior to my research, I made contacts with two schools in the Kumasi area as potential places where I could do my field work. Fortunately, I had a positive respond from one of the schools. Initially, I had contacted the Headmaster who assured me of his support. When I got to the school, I was introduced to the Assistant Headmaster who also took me to the Staff common room and had me introduced to other staff members. However, the next hurdle was the approval of the Proprietor of the school and the Parent's Teachers Association (PTA) for their consent. There was a break through, fortunately, when I was introduced at a PTA meeting where the Headmaster introduced me to the parents as a researcher and will engage some of the children in a research which the parent readily agreed. This depicted a *hierarchy of gatekeepers* (Hood et al., 1996:120) that runs from the organizational level of teachers, parents and finally to the child.

Even though, I was giving permission, researching with children was a very dicey issue for most of the adults. A teacher told me, *these children will waste your time, why don't you interview us and go*. During the initial stages of the research, I was kept under supervision as annotated by Hamersley & Atkinson (2007:51) gatekeepers may attempt to "exercise some degree of surveillance and control, either by blocking off certain lines of inquiry, or by shepherding the fieldworker in one direction or another".

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are very important when doing research with children. Ethical research aims to protect the rights of children and young people involved in the research. It also re-assures parents and advocates of children's welfare and safety that research conducted with children is designed in their best interests (Ennew et al. 2009). Another reason is to guarantee good

quality research; to promote professionalism and validity of research. Ennew et al. (2009) denote that ethical principles in research with children comprise; not harming the children either emotionally, physically or mentally, protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation, agreeing on interventions, not putting children at risk, not exploiting adult power, confidentiality, privacy and informed consent.

3.7.1 Ensure Confidentiality & Anonymity

Confidentiality in research simply means that the data identifying the participants should not be disclosed (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This implies that if a study will publish information about participants which will be easily recognizable by the general public, participants should agree before such information is published. Confidentiality is very crucial and a sensitive issue when it comes to research with children. Since my participants confided in me, it was important for me not to betray their trust but to keep their data confidential. I guaranteed them that issues arising from the research will be kept confidential without any third party knowing. One challenge was with the Headmaster of the school and the Proprietor wanted to find the responses of the students. I overcame this challenge by involving them in informal dialogues emphasizing the fact the research was purely for academic purpose.

The chief means researchers use in protecting research participants from the accidental breaking of confidentiality is the process of anonymisation. Anonymisation of data is a traditional option used for removing identifying information or disguising real names. In order not to break the confidentiality of my respondents, I did not record their names during interviews. I also told them not to write their names on the stories and lists they made for me. Instead, they provided their age, sex and grade in the school. This gave them the assurance that I was honest and I was not going to break my promise of confidentiality. According to Coad & Evans (2008) efforts must be made to anonymize tape interviews and transcripts before they are analyzed and that data collected from the research must be recorded and kept according to appropriate ethical guidelines. Following this assertion, all the interviews conducted were kept appropriately. As indicated earlier, I did not use pseudo-names, therefore in the data analysis the ages and gender of participants were used in the interpretation.

3.7.2 Respect Privacy

As enshrined in the UNCRC which is the legally binding agreement that promotes the rights and welfare of young people under the age of eighteen (18), children have the right to privacy. Article 16.1 states that:

> No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her *privacy*, family, or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

Researchers embarking on research with children cannot overlook this critical ethical issue of privacy. Once informed consent has been obtained, the next line of action was the negotiation of privacy for the children involved in the research (Alderson, 1995). As a researcher, one of my principal aims was to follow the moral ethical codes governing research with children. But I must acknowledge that it was sometimes difficult to ensure participants privacy because I conducted most of the individual interviews under a tree in the school. This was a place where most students also played during their break times. Sometimes some of the students just came to interrupt the interviews. Privacy was another crucial matter especially with the girls in that I wanted to conduct the interviews at a place where it was visible. When conducting interviews with the girls, I always had one of the female teachers to sit a few metres away from us. This method was adopted to dispel the perception that I was exploiting the students.

Respecting the privacy of adult participant was also important to me. With painstaking efforts, I ensured that their privacy was not compromised. As Nilsen & Rogers (2005) points out, there are difficulties in conducting private interviews in the family home, where space is at a premium and other household members may be tempted to eavesdrop. It was a little difficult trying to find some space to do individual interviews with the parents at home; there were so many interruptions especially from their children. Sometimes, the interview had to come to a halt for about ten minutes before we could continue. Lastly, before I left the field, I asked permission from participants to use their pictures in my research.

3.7.3 Addressing Power differences

One of the most critical issues when it comes to researching children's perspectives is the question of power. Power or *dunamis* as in Greek is the ability or authority to do something. This implies that in any kind of interactions between people the person with the highest authority wields the power. Unfortunately, traditionally, young people and children has been defined as incompetent, incomplete, immature and their perspectives are not valued (Lee, 2001). Children's age has been used as a measure of their incompleteness and immaturity. In line with this, Lee (2001:9) argued that this "process of measurement underlies, and acts as justification for, many distributions of power and authority in society along the lines of age and maturity" (Lee, 2001:9). Therefore adulthood with its connotation of stability, competence, completeness and maturity wield most of the power in the society. But it is an undeniable fact that children are experts in their own world (Clark, 2005) and in research with children they should be approached as social actors and participants in their social world, and also as participants in the formation of their own childhood (Alanen, 2001). This implies that it is important that in doing research with children power imbalances between the researcher and the participant are negotiated.

O'Kane (2000) asserts that the first step in overcoming power differential is openly acknowledging that it exists in order to help to promote equal relations between researchers and participants. As I indicated earlier, age is the main subject when it comes to unequal power relations in research with children even though disparities in power may also arise from differences in gender, race, ethnicity, education, wealth, class and caste. In negotiating unequal power relations, Corsaro (1996) reported that it is not necessary to act like a child by taking children's perspectives. Instead he advocated acting as an *atypical* adult- an adult who pretends to be little and puts children in charge. He stressed that it was not being just an atypical adult but also an *incompetent* adult who the children see as such (Corsaro, 2005:52).

I assumed the *least adult role* (Mandall, 1991) in order to minimize the power differences between me and my participants. Again as stated earlier, in order to balance the power difference and build good rapport with the students, I asked them to call me misty which was neither a title nor a real name. The students called me Misty throughout the field work process. Eventually, the Headmaster and teachers in the school also became attracted to the name and they all called me by my nick name. This was really a landmark in addressing the

power inequality. Another fundamental issue I took in consideration when I was doing the research was respecting the children. In the Ghanaian context although children respect adults, I saw that *true* respect is earned. So in order to earn that *true* respect from the children, I must respect their views, ideas, nature and circumstances first. During lunch times, I bought the same food the students bought and sat at the same table, and ate with them under a tree on the school compound. After school, I took the same *trotro* or bus with the students to the house. This enabled me to gain their trust.

In addition, as a fun of football which is the biggest sport in Ghana, I played football with the children during free times. Especially on Fridays which were designated for fun games, I took my shoes and jersey to the school to play with them. Assuming these different roles helped in the negotiation of unequal power relations between me and the children. I recalled on one occasion, we were playing penalties and I kicked the ball over the goal post, the students started laughing. One of them came and said, *Misty, I will show you how to score a penalty*. He took the ball and scored. This demonstrates our relationship and the *role reversal* (Clark, 2005) between participants and me. For instance, on the football field, I became the student and the children taught me how to score a penalty.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argues that reliability relates to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings. It is often treated in comparative to whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers. This is important in order to ascertain if the research participant will change their answers during an interview or if they will give different answers to other researchers about the same issue. In other words, reliability could also be defined as the measure of how stable, dependable, trustworthy, and consistent a test is in measuring the same object each time (Worthen et al., 1993). In order to get reliable data different participatory methods including observations, informal dialogues, story writing and lists were employed in addition to semi-structured interviews. It must be well noted that although:

> Increasing the reliability of the interview findings is desirable in order to counteract haphazard subjectivity, a strong emphasis on reliability may counteract creative innovations and variability (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009:245).

Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. That is validity pertains to the degree that a method examines what it is intended to measure, to the extent to which our observations indeed reflect the phenomena or variables of interest to us. Validity was very important in my research because it ascertains truthfulness that is whether the research measures what it purports to measure (Mehrens & Lehman, 1987). It is not only a matter of conceptualization and of the methods used; the personality of the researcher (Salner, 1989), including his or her moral integrity and practical knowledge are critical for evaluating the quality of the knowledge produced (cited in Kvale & Brinkman, 2009:248). As pointed out by Creswell (2003) validity measures if the findings are accurate from the view of the researcher, the participants, or the readers of the account. This is why I also used several methods to enhance the validation of my research findings.

Therefore, it can be inferred that reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the actual measuring instrument or procedure and validity is concerned with the study's success at measuring what the researchers set out to measure.

3.9 Transcription and Data Analysis

To transcribe means to transform, to change from one form to another. Transcriptions are translations from oral language to a written language (Kvale & brinkman, 2009). Transcription that encompasses translation from one language to another presents an especially complex and challenging situation. This problem occured when I was transcribing the interviews especially those with the parents since most of them were conducted in the local language - *Twi*. The first step for transcribing an interview is that it must be recorded and secondly, the recorded conversation must be audible to the one transcribing (ibid). Due to this view, I recorded all the individual interviews I conducted with the Children as well as the interviews with the parents and focus group discussion with the teachers. I used an audio recorder and ensured that there was no background noise even though sometimes it was inevitable. In the transcription process, I was overwhelmed by the amount of data I have gathered within the short research period. I adapted (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2001) iterative process of reading, thinking and writing, and re-reading, re-thinking, and re-writing in order to form some concrete themes for my research work. This process helped in the reduction of

the "initial mountain of data to an ordered set of themes" (Fuller & Petch, 1995:85). This categorisation of data into themes was very instrumental in the data analysis process.

Analysis of data and interpretation was an on-going process throughout the study. During the semi-participant observations coupled with informal dialogues, I wrote down valuable notes. With the help of my field diary, I documented how children interacted with their peers, teachers other adults. As noted by Kjørholt et al. (2005) "observation and participation in children's life....is a valuable tool to get deeper insight into the unspoken words". Therefore, I recorded the day-to-day activities and actions of children in the school which cannot be obtained through interviews. The stories and lists were somewhat analysed in the field. During individual interviews, I gave children the opportunity to explain in details the stories and lists they made. In this way, I was able to get a full understanding of what they wrote and this helped me to categorise them under specific themes. Using multiple methods enabled me to authenticate the views of participants. For instance, the advantage of this was that I was able to validate the stories about children's duties and responsibilities with my own observations.

3.10 Field work challenges

It is an undeniable fact that researchers face challenges and some limitations in their research enquiries. Especially when researching with children there are so many stumbling blocks as a result of the sensitivity of the study or the participants. The challenges I faced in my research comprised; getting access from gatekeepers, power relations and so on. Getting access to the school where I conducted my study was my first challenge. After I had communicated with the headmaster of the school outlining my research aims, duration and purpose of the study, I had to wait for some days before I could get consent from the school authorities as well as the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) in the school. I finally obtained consent after showing them my introductory letter from the Norwegian centre for Child Research (NOSEB) which authenticated my identity as a student.

Secondly, another obstacle I had to combat on the field was the power imbalances between the research participants and me. Initially, the students perceived me as a teacher, so their relationship with me was very formal. In cultures like Ghana where children are viewed as subordinates, adult-child relationships are characterised by unequal distribution of power. I

was able to overcome this problem by adopting different roles as a researcher. Mandall's (1991) concept of *least adult role* was very influential in my field work. Taking inspiration from that concept, I was able to reduce if not solve the unequal power relations between my participants and me. By using different techniques such as dressing the same way as the students during football games, speaking 'Pidgin English' with them and sharing jokes with them. Another concept of *role reversal* by Clark (2005) whereby participants took active part in the research process by taking up leading roles was also helpful in dealing with this problem. In this way, participants were offered the opportunity to take active part in the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

This chapter provides an overview of Ghana and the study area. It gives a brief description of the country, demography, socio-economic characteristics, education, language and religion, as well as poverty. In addition, it describes the Kumasi area, the field work site, Ghanaian culture and policies on children in Ghana.

4.1 Brief description of Ghana

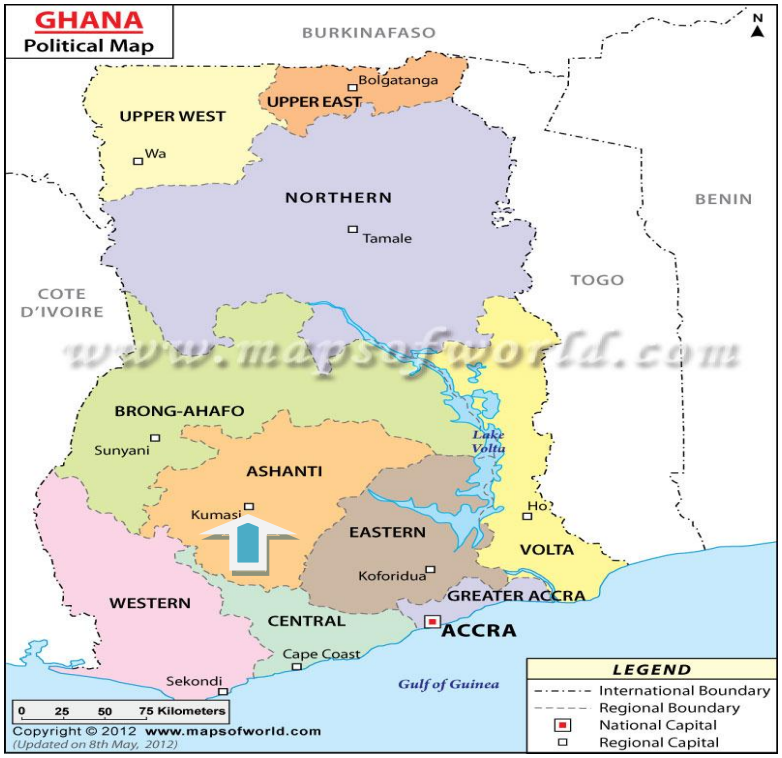
Ghana is located in West Africa. It is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. The total land area is 238,533 sq km. Ghana lies between latitudes 4° and 12°N, and longitudes 4°W and 2°E. The Prime Meridian passes through the country, specifically through the industrial city of Tema. The climate is tropical; warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast; hot and humid in southwest; hot and dry in north. The word *Ghana* means "Warrior King" and is derived from the ancient Ghana Empire. It was formally called the Gold Coast and achieved independence from Great Britain in 1957 becoming the First sub-Saharan African colonial nation to do so. The name Ghana was chosen for the new nation to reflect the ancient Empire of Ghana. Ghana is a member of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union. Being a member of the African Union and United Nations, Ghana has ratified the ACRWC and the UNCRC.

4.2 Demography

Ghana's total population is estimated to be about 24,965,820 people. The number of females is approximately 12,264,380 and that of males is 12,701,440 (Human Development Index, 2011). In 2010, the population (thousands) of children under 18 years was 10,977 and population (thousand) of children under 5 was 3,533 (State of the world's children, 2012). Ghana is dominated by a large youth population from 15 to about 64 years. The age structure in Ghana is: 0-14 years: 36.5%; 15-64 years: 60%; 65 years and over: 3.6%. The population growth rate is estimated about 1.78% with a birth rate of 26.99 births/1,000 population and death rate of about 8.57 deaths/1,000 population. Greater percentage of the population is concentrated in the southern part of the country. The urban population occupies about 52.2%.

Ghana has 10 Administrative regions and it is sub-divided into 170 districts. It is home to different ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are the Akan (which includes the Fante, Akyem, Ashanti, Kwahu, Akuapem, Nzema, Bono, Akwamu, Ahanta and others) 45.3%, Mole-Dagbon 15.2%, Ewe 11.7%, Ga–Dangme (comprising the Ga, Adangbe, Ada, Krobo and others) 7.3%, Guan 4%, Gurma 3.6%, Gurunsi 2.6%, Mande-Busanga 1%, other tribes (Hausa, Zabarema, Fulani and Others) 1.4%, other (among them whites of mostly Scottish descent and English descent) 7.8%. The capital of Ghana is the Greater Accra region (Accra) with a population of 4,358,263 and Ashanti region (Kumasi) has about 4,839,100 people. Eastern region (Koforidua) 2,297,565; Western region (Takoradi) 2,558,113; Central region (Cape coast) 1,864,104; Volta region (Ho) 1,878,316; Brong Ahafo region (Sunyani) 2,257,304; Upper East (Bolgatanga) 1,001,926; Northern region (Tamale) 2,259,671 and the smallest region is the Upper West (Wa) with a population of about 637,157 (Source: GSS, 2010).

Figure 2: Map of Ghana showing the study area (Arrow)



Source: www.mapsofworld.com

4.3 Language and religion

English is the country's official language and predominates in government and business affairs. It is also the standard language used for educational instruction. Nine languages have the status of government-sponsored languages and are taught in Ghanaian schools: These comprises Akan, specifically Ashanti Twi, Fanti, Akuapem Twi, Akyem, Kwahu, Ahanta, Nzema; Dagaare/Wale, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja and Kasem. Hausa is the lingua franca among Ghana's Muslims even though it is not an official language.

Ghana's population also comprise of different religions due to freedom of religion and association. Christian religion is the largest and predominates in southern areas and parts of the northern regions. It has about Christian 68.8% of the population. Muslims account for about 15.9%. In many parts of the country, there is still the practice of traditional African religions and these are sometimes intermixed with Christianity or Islam. Traditional African beliefs and other smaller religions are about 8.5% of the country's population.

4.4 Socio-economic characteristics

Ghana has graduated from being a country of lower income status to a lower middle-income status, with a per capita income of US$1,318 as of 2010. The economy is largely open market oriented, with three main sectors: agriculture, industry and services. Though the agricultural sector has been the mainstay of the Ghanaian economy, in recent years it is losing its significance to the services sector. The economy is managed by two independent institutions. These are the Bank of Ghana, mandated by law to achieve price stability through the use of various monetary policy tools, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP) responsible for the fiscal (revenue and expenditure) activities of the country.

About 30% of Ghana's population are living on less than $1.25 per day in addition of 46% living on less than $2 per day, and a rate of 25% youth unemployment. Known for its gold in colonial times, Ghana remains one of the world's top gold producers. Other exports such as cocoa, crude oil, natural gas, timber, electricity, diamond, bauxite and manganese are major sources of foreign exchange even though Ghana continues to experience electricity and gas shortages. Oil production at Ghana's offshore Jubilee field began in mid-December, 2010, and is expected to boost economic growth.

Ghana's labour force totals 11.5 million people. The economy relies heavily on agriculture which accounts for 37.3% of GDP and provides employment for 56% of the work force, mainly small landholders. Industrial workers are around 15% and services are 29%. Unemployment rate in 2005 was estimated around 12.9% and population below poverty line was 28.5% in 2007. Ghana's Human Development Indicator is 0.541, which gives the country a rank of 135 out of 187 countries with comparable data (Human Development Index, 2011). In July 2007, the Bank of Ghana embarked on a currency re-denomination exercise, from the Cedi (₵) to the new currency, the Ghana Cedi (GH₵). The transfer rate is 1 Ghana Cedi for every 10,000 Cedis. The Bank of Ghana employed aggressive media campaigns to educate the public about the re-denomination. The new Ghana Cedi is relatively stable and in 2009 generally exchanged at a rate of US$1 = GH₵1.

Ghana signed a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact in 2006, which aimed to assist in transforming Ghana's agricultural sector. Ghana opted for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) program in 2002.The HIPC Initiative also relieved the economy of some of its financial burdens, aiding in the financing higher expenditure on poverty related projects. The country is also benefiting from the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative that took effect in 2006. In 2009 Ghana signed a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to improve macroeconomic stability, private sector competitiveness, human resource development, and good governance and civic responsibility.

4.5 Education

Ghana has a good education system coordinated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) which has policy, planning and monitoring responsibility. The mission statement of the ministry is to provide relevant education to all Ghanaians at all levels to enable them to acquire skills that will assist them to develop their potential, to be productive, to facilitate poverty reduction and to promote socio-economic growth and national development.

The educational system is made up of basic education, senior high and technical and vocational education, and tertiary education in addition to non-formal education. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is the agency that implements the Basic and Senior High School education programme, including Technical and Vocational institutes. Tertiary and non-formal educations are managed by the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the

Non-Formal Education Division (NFED) respectively. At the basic level, there is free education after the launch of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in September 1995 with the goal of improving access to quality basic education. Article 38 of the Constitution requires government to provide access to FCUBE and, depending on resource availability, to Senior Secondary, Technical and Tertiary education and life-long learning. Educational reforms have been carried out under various successive governments, since independence, to make it more relevant to national needs. Educational reforms were carried out in the years; 1961, 1967 and 1987 with reviews of the education system in the years 1966, 1974, 1993, 2002 and 2007 (Tonah, 2009).

However, Ghana's tertiary education sector is growing rapidly. There are six national public universities in Ghana, the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education. The University for Development Studies, and University of Mines and Technology add up to the tally. Currently there are over twenty private universities in the country. According to the HDI (2011), the adult literacy rate of people above 15 years who can read and write has increased from 57.9% in 2000 to 66.6% in 2009. The literacy rate among males stands at 66.4% and females at 49.8%. More males are in schools than females due to the traditional notion that the place for women are in the kitchen accounting for high illiteracy rate in females.

4.6 Poverty

As a developing country, the poverty prevalence rate in Ghana is high. In the Ghana Living Standard Survey 4 , the Ghana Statistical Service set the lower poverty line at 700,000 Cedis (GHC 70) and upper line at 900,000 (GHC 90) per adult per year. Those who fall below the lower line are categorised as *extremely poor* and those who fall between the two lines are termed as *poor* (Ashiabi, 2000). Accordingly, UNICEF (2009) reports that one quarter Ghana's population live below the poverty line with 18.5% living in extreme poverty. Ghana is among the low income countries in Africa with a GDP per capita of about $400 yearly. The Human Development Index (HDI, 2011) indicates that the population living below $1.25 PPP per day (%) is 30. Some of the causes of poverty may be attributed to the fact that: 1) About 56% of the population are engaged in agriculture on small-scale and subsistence farming. This creates a very low income due to lack of money to buy quality seeds for

sowing, lack of access to credit to buy fertilizer, and pesticides. 2) Lack of employment due to low educational levels, lack of jobs, corruption, and so on.

4.7 The Study Area: Kumasi

Kumasi was chosen for this study because a lot of research in Ghana is conducted in the capital city Accra at the expense of other cities. Most of them do not take into consideration the voice of children even if the research is about them. This study will contribute to the existing research with children that have been conducted in Kumasi. Moreover, Kumasi presents some unique characteristics that are relevant for this study which is discussed below.

This section presents the description of the study area. It exposes the reader to the general characteristics of the area. Themes include the location and description of Kumasi, history, demography & language, economy and the specific field work site.

4.7.1 Location and description

Kumasi is a city in southern central Ghana's Ashanti region. It is located near Lake Bosomtwe, in the Rain Forest Region about 250 kilometres (160 mi) by road northwest of Accra. Kumasi is approximately 300 miles (480 km) north of the Equator and 100 miles (160 km) north of the Gulf of Guinea. There are two main seasons; wet season and the dry season/harmattan. The city has two different rainy seasons, a longer rainy season from March through July and a shorter rainy season from September to November. Kumasi experiences the harmattan during the low sun months. Lasting from December to February, the harmattan is the primary source of the city's dry season. It is popularly known as *The Garden City* of Ghana because of its many beautiful species of flowers and plants.

4.7.2 History

The city rose to prominence in 1695 when it became capital of the Ashanti Confederacy due to the activities of its ruler Osei Tutu. The ruler of Kumasi, known as the Asantehene, also served as ruler of the Confederacy. With their 1701 victory over Denkyira the Asante confederacy became the primary state among the Twi speaking Akan peoples. Parts of the city, including the Royal Palace, were destroyed by British troops in the Third Anglo-Ashanti

War of 1874. The city holds an important place in the history of the Ashanti people, as legend claims that it was here Okomfo Anokye received the Golden stool, an embodiment of the soul of the Asanti nation.

4.7.3 Demography and Language

Kumasi is the second-largest city in the country. It has a population of about 1,989,062. The total surface area is 254 km^2 (98 sq mi). The largest ethnic group is the Ashanti, but other ethnic groups are growing in size. *Asante Twi* is the most common language spoken since most people are Ashantis. However, English is the official language which is used in school. As a multi-ethnic society, other languages spoken are Fante, Akyem, Ewe and Hausa by the Muslims. Approximately 80% of the population is Christian and 5% Muslim, with a smaller number of adherents to traditional beliefs.

4.7.4 Economy, Education and Health

There are large gold deposits in Kumasi which makes it one of the wealthier cities in Ghana. The city's major exports are hardwood and cocoa. Kumasi has 50% of the timber industry in Ghana, with more than 4,000 employed in the business. The Kaasai Industrial Area plays an important role in industry in the area. Most people in Kumasi especially women are petty traders who engage in trading activities around Kejetia Market and Adum. They sell farm produce like tomatoes, cassava, yam, garden eggs, pepper, onion and so on. Likewise, most of the men also engage predominantly in buying and selling of goods. Unemployment rate is high since there are few jobs. Rural-urban migration is also very high in this area because there are a lot of people who migrate from the Northern region to Kumasi. There are frequent power cuts and gas shortages.

The Kumasi Metropolis has four tertiary institutions: Two public universities (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University College of Education-Kumasi), one private university (Christian Service university College) and one public polytechnic (Kumasi polytechnic). It also has over 83 Second Cycle institutions and 1674 Basic School. Health delivery system is appalling due to lack of quality hospitals and qualified health personnel. Nevertheless, the metropolis has 1 teaching Hospital (Komfo-Anokye teaching hospital) which serves as the Regional Hospital, 2 quasi-government

Hospitals (one for the University and the other for the military) 5 Polyclinics, over 200 Private Clinics, 13 industrial Clinics, 9 Maternal Health Posts and 119 Outreach Centres.

4.7.5 Field work site

The field work took place in a school in Kumasi which consisted of the Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary, Junior High School and a senior High School. The institution was established in 1976. In the year 2002, the Senior High School was also established. The school is located at Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana near Tafo. It has a serene atmosphere and environment friendly for teaching and learning. It has a computer lab, science lab, playing field, and an auditorium. The school has boarding facilities for students outside of Kumasi.

Located in the heart of the city, the school can boast of over nine-hundred students and about one hundred teaching and non-teaching staffs. However, due to the age limit of the research, this study took place at the Junior High School (JHS) where I recruited students aged from 12 to 14 years. There are about 300 students in the Junior High School which is sub-divided into three. That is JHS1, JHS2 and JHS 3. The study took place only in JHS1 and 2. The subjects offered by the school are: Religious and Moral Education, Pre-Technical Skills, English, Social studies, Integrated Science, Pre-Vocational Skills, Mathematics and Ghanaian Language. The school was chosen for the research because it is situated in Kumasi and it is among the best schools in Ghana. In addition, among three other selected schools. It proved to be the best choice for my project work since I had permission from teachers, parents as well as students alike to do the research there. Furthermore, it proved to be the best in terms of proximity and accessibility. It was quiet easy for me to visit the school every day to undertake the study because of its location. Transportation fares to and from the research site was reasonably cheaper. Moreover, as a native of Kumasi, I was familiar with the school because I grew up in the same vicinity it is located. Lastly, an advantage for me for choosing this place was that I can speak both English language and local dialect which is Twi. This made communication and interaction between me and the participants very easy.

4.8 Ghanaian Culture

This part provides a precise overview of the culture in Ghana with special emphasis on the *Asantes* who are located in Kumasi (study area). Ghanaians have a rich culture that is embedded in their traditions, customs, norms and belief system. As designated earlier, it is made up of different ethnic groups which are also sub-divided into tribes such as Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, Guan, Gurma and the Akans which is the largest and comprises the *Asantes*. In the traditional society, every tribe has its own chief. Chiefs are very important because they are seen as repository of wisdom and knowledge. The name of the chief among the Asante people is Asantehene who is formally called Nana Osei Tutu II. His palace is located at Manhyia in Kumasi where he sits with his sub-chief to discuss the progress of the kingdom and settle disputes among people. The role of the Queen mothers in the society is very fundamental. Just as the chiefs, they act as mentors to young girls and mediators in times of conflicts. Every ethnic group in Ghana has its own unique festival, dance, dressing, language and so on. Among the *Asantes,* 'adowa' is the most popular dance and 'akwasidae' is the largest festival where they celebrate, drink and make merry.

In the local community, each clan has a clans head called 'abusuapanin'. Usually, the eldest surviving male in each clan assumes this position. He directs the affairs and oversees the progress of the clan. Culturally, in the domestic unit, the head of the nuclear family is the man. Therefore, men wield considerable socio-economic and political power than women. Women are responsibility for the proper functioning of the house, child bearing and rearing. Children occupy the bottom position in the society. Even though, procreation is primarily the task of parents, child rearing is the responsibility of all the extended family members. Among the Matrilineal system of inheritance exist among the Asante people. This implies that children do not inherit property from their fathers but from their maternal uncles. On the other hand, almost all the other ethnic groups are patrilineal. However, the enactment of the Intestate Succession Law – PNDC Law 111 (1985) has changed inheritance practice in Ghana. When a man dies intestate (without a Will), household property goes to the wife and children in order to avoid maltreatment from the deceased family.

In the Ghanaian society, there is cohesion and solidarity among the people. High value is placed on togetherness rather than individualism. People are bonded by respect, reciprocity and a sense of responsibility. They importance of the generational order in the society is

never underestimated. Elderly people are highly respected and they occupy the top position in the family. The principle of give and take is also essential when interacting with other people. For instance, among the *Asantes*, when an extended family member dies, the whole clan mourns and help in the funeral activities. This sense of togetherness binds people together.

4.9 Policies for children in Ghana

Ghana was ratified the UNCRC on 5th February 1990 after it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. After ratification, since governments are expected to submit periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ghana has submitted three reports. The first report was in 1992, second report in 1995 and also in 2005. Similarly, the government also ratified the ACRWC on 10th June 2005. The 1992 constitution was a landmark in recognising the rights of children in Ghana after the country returned to democracy. Like the UNCRC and ACRWC, Article 28 of the constitution of Ghana made provision for the rights and freedoms of children and laws were to be enacted by parliament for the protection, survival and development of children. This process led to the passage of the 1998 Children's Act (Act 560) which is a comprehensive law incorporating the civil, political, economic and social policies for children. According to Twum-Danso (2009:417) the Children's Act "brought together all laws relating to children into a single child-focused legislation that at the same time, domesticated the Convention into the national laws of the country". In addition, other legislation and policies that were enacted are: the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653), the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694), the Gender and Children's Policy (2002).

Two key institutions have been established by the government for the welfare of children. First was the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) which is now called the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service. Its aim is to protect women and children who are victims of violence and assaults. This unit is now in all the ten regions in the country. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs was also established in 2001 specifically for the coordinating, monitoring and reviewing the formulation of gender and child responsive policies and their implementation within sectors (UNCRC Ghana report, 2005). The Juvenile Justice Act was set up for the protection of the rights of Juveniles and young offenders, in accordance with the UNCRC and UN Standard Minimum Rules for the

Administration of Juvenile Justice. Other institutions are the Ghana National commission on Children which is a non-governmental body and the Department of Social Welfare.

Also, the Government of Ghana believes that proper upbringing of children must begin from early childhood. Since the government considers early childhood care and development as top priority, a lot of attention has been given this area. Therefore it has introduced the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (ECCD). Since its inception, awareness creation on ECCD has increased enormously in both the electric and print media, capacities of stakeholders, community members, children, parents and traditional authorities. These have been built at both the national and the district levels. For the proper functioning of the policy, a National Coordinating Committee was set up to play advisory and coordinating roles for the implementation of the ECCD Policy. The essence is to create awareness on the need to mainstream the development of the child from its early years of life. This is aimed at promoting the integration of ECCD related issues into the plans of the national and district sector towards the sustainable growth of the Ghanaian child in the society (Source: UNCRC, Ghana report 2005).

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) had a particular department dealing with child rights but the department. Unfortunately, this department no longer exists on its own. Its activities are integrated in the various functions of the institution. CHRAJ receives individual complaints on child-related matters from people. Complaints filed with CHRAJ are categorized into administrative justice, family related issues and general basic human rights. Most often it comprises: child/spousal maintenance, paternity and socio-economic rights mostly health and educational rights. However, data is not properly gathered since there is no separate department or desk that handles these complaints. Such information is only collated when the Commission undertakes specialized case-related research about child abuse. The Commission is also under resourced in terms of funding (Source: UNCRC, Ghana's Report 2005).

Furthermore, programmes aimed at promoting the welfare of children especially in schools are for example the Education Capitation Grant and The School Feeding programme. The Education capitation grant was introduced in 2005 in some selected schools covered tuition fees for children and other levies for poor children. The School feeding programme was set up 2004 to give free food to school children in government schools. These two programmes

were aimed at increasing enrolment rate in schools. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was also established by the government to ease health care delivery system. This scheme was to replace the *cash and carry* system where a patient had to pay cash at the hospital before he/she can see the doctor. Children under 18 years were exempted from paying the premium for the scheme. It has helped reduced infant mortality and promoted good health especially among poor. Notwithstanding the success of the Education capitation grant, School feeding programme and NHIS, the change in government from the New Patriotic Party to the National Democratic Party in the 2008 national elections has led to the demise of these policies. Since each government has its own priorities, these policies are no longer functioning creating poor standard of living especially for young people in the country.

Although, it could be predicted that the passage of the Children's Act could have been a turning point for children lives, but there are cases of physical, sexual and verbal abuse. There is high infant mortality rate that is about (per 1,000 live births) is 50 and under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) stands at 69. The life expectancy at birth is 64.2 years (HDI, 2011). According to the State of the world's children (2012) report, literacy rate for male children from 2005 - 2010 is 81% and 79% for girls. The net enrolment ratio for boys is 76% and 77% for girls within that same period. Fortunately, the government and all stakeholders are doing their best to promote quality standard of living for children in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I present the findings and discuss the themes obtained from the data collected. It is done in relation to the research objectives and theories used in the study.

The chapter begins with two stories written by a female and male participant respectively during the field work, before other themes are discussed. These stories encompass most of the themes in the research. It highlights some of the views of research participants in relation to their duties and responsibilities from their lived experiences. In addition, it depicts how children understand the responsibilities they hold and how they define it. These stories are important because it gives a general overview of role of children within Ghanaian societies, and provides a concise view of how children construct their own childhood. Also, some statements from the stories are used in this chapter.

Table 1: Story by a 14 year old girl

I am a girl of 14 years of age and I live at Krofrom in Kumasi. I am an Ashanti by birth which is one of the ethnic groups in Ghana and I come from Mampong in the Ashanti region. In my family, we are nine (9) in number. This includes my parents, four brothers and three sisters. I am the sixth born in the family and the youngest female. My father is a technician by profession and he does his own private work. My mother is a petty trader who sells clothing in the Kumasi central market. I am in currently in Junior High School (JHS 2). Children are supposed to eat good food, play with friends, go to school and have fun. In spite of these, I believe we (children) also have some responsibilities especially at home and school. For instance, at home I am responsible for sweeping the house, scrubbing the bathroom, helping my mum to cook food and washing cooking utensils. After school, I bring my youngest brother back home and give him some food since my mother come back from the market late. I also run errands for my parents. On weekend, I go with my mum to the market to sell foodstuffs. I enjoy my responsibilities because I think it will help me when I grow up and when I obey my parents they will pay my school fees and buy gifts for me.

Source: Story writing (July 2011)

Table 2: Story by a 12 year old boy

I am twelve (12) years old and I am in JHS 1. My family is made up of my parents, three brothers including me and my younger sister, and also my grandmother and cousins. My dad is a carpenter and my mum is a hair-dresser. Since my parents have minor jobs, they have very little income to support the whole family. Because of this my eldest brother dropped out of school very early and he is an apprentice in a fitting shop at magazine, a place where they repair cars in Kumasi. It is my right to have cloths, food to eat, play and also go to school. In addition, in the school I have to get qualified teachers to teach me and enjoy the benefits that a student should get. In the house, I help my mum to clean the compound and fetch water. I run errands for my parents and siblings; I help my dad in his carpentry shop when I am free by buying glue and nails for him to work. At school, it is also my responsibility to respect my teachers, clean the classroom and behave well.

Source: Story writing (July 2011)

These were stories from two participants highlighting most of the themes in this research. The following themes present the main findings of the research.

5.1 Children's knowledge and awareness of rights

In order to research about the perspectives of children and adults about rights of children in the Ghanaian context, first of all, I asked my young participants whether they knew what children's rights was in a focus-group discussion:

> **Misty Jerry (Researcher):** You are welcome to this focus group discussion
> **Participants** (students): Thank you
> **Misty Jerry**: We are going to discuss about children's rights but first what is a right?
> **Boy**: Like if you do something good or correct
> **Girl**: Emm.. When you are right with something

Initially, participants did not understand the question and they were confused with what I was talking about because they defined *rights* in terms of what is 'good' or 'bad'. After sometime, a 14 year old boy JHS 2 boy said, *a right is a privilege to have something under the constitution of a country*. It was evident that children's rights are not talked about or

recognised widely in Ghana. However, after the definition by the 14 year old boy, most of the children understood rights as something you get as being part of the family, school or society. Defining rights as a 'privilege' means that it is reserved for those who wield power and wealth in the society. In other words, only those who have the power can enjoy these rights in the society that are mostly adults or children of wealthier families. Upon further discussion, it came to light that the children had less knowledge about rights that are specific to them like the UNCRC. This is because children's rights especially the right to expression (Article 12, UNCRC) is not a topic that is talked about in the local Ghanaian context.

5.2 Awareness of the UNCRC and ACRWC

The UNCRC as an internationally recognised legally binding agreement that sets out the social, legal and economic rights of children is a very important document when talking about children's rights. Likewise, the ACRWC is no exception. The ACRWC also spells out children's rights that are specific to the African continent. Since these two documents are major sources of information for rights and welfare of the child, I asked both my young participants and adult participants about their awareness of these documents. None of the students have heard of the UNCRC or the ACRWC before. It was not also surprising that all the parents I interviewed did not know anything about the UNCRC because most of them dropped out of school early. But on one occasion, during an informal conversation with one participant (male teacher), when I mentioned the word *UN*, he said *Oh, then it has to be something linked to the United Nations*.

5.3 Views of children on rights

The main objective for this project work was to find out the perspectives of children in Ghana about their rights and duties. Through participatory methods such as focus groups, story writings, listings, and semi-participant observations and interviews, I gave my participants aged from 12-14 years the opportunity to articulate their thoughts on this subject. In order to have a clearer view of this, I have discussed the views of these children under the provision, protection and participation rights (Wringe, 1995:19) of the UNCRC.

Views of children about the provision and protection rights were easily identifiable as opposed to the right to participation. Under the provision rights, the children indicated the

importance to have access to food, clothing, and shelter and to live in a loving family environment. A 14 year old boy said *I want to grow up in a family where there is unity, love and happiness*. From his perspective, provisional needs and material things are very important for development of the child. Also, growing up in a conducive environment and family which is made up of parents, siblings and grandparents is desirable. This is because children depend on adults for support and protection. The right to quality education was identified by all participants as a priority in school because that will help children to become *big men and women* in society. As stated by a 12 year old boy:

> My desire is to go to school, get a good job, so that I can have a good status in society and also help my family in future (Interview July, 2011).

In the same way, a 13 year old girl also stated:

> Education is important because here in Ghana, people say the girl's place is in the kitchen, but my aim is to go to school to be a lawyer and help others (Interview, July 2011).

The above quotations indicate that children's views of rights relate to the possibilities they get to improve their life through education and employment. Children see education as an important tool that can help them obtain a good job in future. In this way they can achieve a good status in society and be in the position to help their family. Therefore, it can be inferred that the focus of children is on the future rather than their current situation. They set their aspirations and expectations towards the future because it is there that they can have certain entitlements fulfilled.

Protection rights were also deemed highly valuable by the children. The participants identified the responsibility of parents and government to protect them from abuse, harm and diseases. As illustrated by a 13 year old boy:

> I am an asthmatic patient, therefore my parents take me to the hospital often for check up, and they buy medicines often for me. To ensure that I take my medicines as prescribed, my father came here (my school) to talk to my class teacher to keep an eye on me (Interview, July 2011).

Likewise, in story writing a 13 year old girl wrote:

> When I was young, I used to fight with boys a lot. One day, I picked up a fight and the boy followed me to my house. Fortunately, my dad was around and he stopped him (Interview, July 2011).

These two examples show the vital role of parents in protecting their children. It depicts that they have the primary responsibility to protect children from harm. Additionally, as stipulated in article 18 of the UNCRC, it enjoins governments to render appropriate assistance to parents in caring for children by providing appropriate facilities and services for the care of children. This comes in the form of building hospitals, importing medicines and immunizing infants and so on as a way of protecting children. At school and in the community, most of the children mentioned the right not to be discriminated and bullied by other people as very significant. A 12 year old boy from JHS 1 said, *sometimes the JHS 2 and 3 boys bully us too much*. Bullying in Ghanaian schools even though it is illegal is practised by some students and this is a matter of concern. Therefore most students saw the need to be protected by teachers and school authorities from bullying as important.

Under the participation rights, children talked about their right to play with friends and have fun in the society. Some also mentioned the rights to be heard in decisions. However, they did not see the right to express their views and make those views count as very significant as compared to the provision and protection rights. According to them as part of the family, decisions made by their parents surpasses their personal views. This is because, if they insist on their opinions, it will make them more vulnerable. A 12 year old girl shed her thoughts:

> Having good food, clothes and shelter is more important, I don't care if my parents listen to me, after all I will still get my needs (FGD, July 2011).

This understanding of rights relates to the 'living' aspects of rights (Nieuwenhuys & Hanson, 2012) that need to be attended to in the here-and-now rather than the 'voicing' dimensions where ideas are to be heard to. On the contrary, a 13 year old girl contended, *I wish my parents respect my opinions in the house, they always choose for me* (FGD, July 2011). This ensued into a debate amongst the students. Even though other children contested, at the end

of the discussion, they acknowledge getting access to their basic needs as a priority than been heard. This would be discussed further in the next sub-topic.

Participants viewed their rights as part of the family collective (see Abebe, 2012). They acknowledged the family as the arena where they can exercise their rights, and also get their rights fulfilled. They saw their rights as been part and parcel of the group rights. Seeing their rights as separate from the family puts them at risk and actually makes them susceptible. It is in the family that they interact, share ideas and receive support from parents, siblings and other kinsmen. This implies that empowering Ghanaian children as right-holders having autonomy could actually put them as risk. That means the idea of having separate rights has an untended effect of alienating them from their families and social networks (Abebe, 2012). Instead, children in Ghana must be empowered to implement their rights within the family collective, and as being interdependent with others. This is because the dutiful, respectful and obedient child who sees his/her rights embedded within the family (Abebe, 2012) is a kind of child which both Ghanaian children and parents considered a 'good child'.

5.3.1 Which right is a priority (provision, protection or participation rights?)

From the perspectives of children, the research findings illustrated that the provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and protection from harm was seen as a priority. Children identified the provision and protection rights as their main concern in the FGDs and interviews I conducted. As illustrated by a 12 year old girl**:** *without food, clothes and a place to sleep, life will be very difficult* (FGD, July 2011). Having access to quality health care was also seen as very essential. A 14 year old boy said *good medical care and medicines is important for me to be healthy* (FGD, July 2011). Closely following provision of basic needs is education. Children like adults identified education as a key right of children. This underscores the centrality of education to people's lives. This is because it is seen as an avenue to make children's live worthwhile and have a better future. It acts as a catalyst for people to secure jobs, contribute to family income and look after one's parent in old age. A 13 year old boy emphasised: *I want to go to school to become a big man in future and help my parents* (FGD, July 2011). Another important provision from parents is love and protection from abuse. The basic provisions are seen as a responsibility of parents as primary caregivers and children cannot access these resources if they are outside the family collective.

This underlines the importance of children to be part of the family where they rely on other members for their livelihood rather than living individual autonomous rights.

On the other hand, even though the participation rights of children has been highly escalated into the global arena since the coming of the UNCRC about two decade ago, children in Ghana do not see it as a priority. Especially in Article 12 of the Convention where children are empowered to express their views and opinion freely, Ghanaian children do not see the need to claim separate rights. As argued by White (2007) in Abebe (2012:17) "the 'universal rights of the child' do not transfer directly into the everyday contexts of children and their families" in Ghana. This means that most of the policies proposed by the international children's rights instruments exist at the political level, they do not permeate into the local context like the family and community in which children actually live. For instance, as stated by a 12 year old girl said: *having good food, clothes and shelter is more important, I don't care if my parents listen to me, after all I will still get my needs* (FGD, July 2011). This example depicts that children in Ghana place high value on their provision rights in the family than their voices to be heard. Like adults, they see the desire to maintain family solidarity and respect the decisions of their parents as important. In this way, they will not be vulnerable because children who do not obey their parents are seen as disrespectful and are punished. Making one's own decision as an independent child cuts him/her away from the family where they collaborate with other members for the fulfilment of their rights. In conclusion, participants (children) believed that the provision and protection rights were most important and they ranked them as their highest priority.

5.4 Do adults and children have equal rights?

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) specifies that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". This assertion from the UDHR declares that in terms of human rights, all human beings are equal. It implies that both adults and children must enjoy equal rights, a claim made by the child liberationist (see Archard, 1993). I will present the views of participants to find out whether children and adults have the same rights.

5.4.1 Views of children on equal or unequal rights

The young participants recognised that since adults wield more power and authority in the society, it was obvious that adults and children possess unequal rights. For instance, a 13 year old girl commented that *there is no way I can have equal rights with my mother because she is simply my mother* (Interview, July 2011). A 12 year old boy added that *how can I have the same rights with my teachers when they teach and instruct me what to do and what not to do?* (Interview, July 2011). They argued that there are asymmetrical power relations existing between adult-child relationships in the society. Therefore, adults are superiors because they occupy the top position in the structure of society and children are subordinates. Therefore, as subordinates children receive instructions and command from adults. On the contrary, some participants were of the view that children must have equal rights as adults because we (both adults and children) are all human beings. A 14 year old boy said *I contribute to the family income therefore I must have equal rights at home* (Interview, July 2011). In his case, he contended that since he works to add to the family economy he must also enjoy equal rights as his parents. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that it is impossible to claim this right since his work is for the development of the family. In addition, those children who said they should have same rights as adults were confused about the right to vote. Even though some participants identified certain types of rights, at the end of the FGD they were supportive of the argument that they (children) should not have equal rights as adults.

5.5.2 Views of adults on equal or unequal rights

It was apparent that all the adult participants had taken the protectionist view that children are property of their parental owners and therefore, adults should paternalistically choose for children in their best interest (see Archard, 1993). Both parents and teachers declared that children's rights are not the same as adult's rights. Their argument was basically centred on two main things. First, they emphasised that children are immature and they are the property of parents. One parent (businessman) argued that *if we (both adults and children) have equal rights, then there will be chaos in the house, who will make decisions?* (Informal conversation, July 2011). Some of the teachers also mentioned that under the constitution of Ghana, persons from 18 years and above can vote, which means that children do not have the right to vote. Another interesting topic during the FGD with the teachers was about the right to have *sex*. A male teacher illustrated, *Think of it, if children have the right to sex then there*

will be so many pregnant girls on the streets (FGD, July 2011). Some parents like the protectionists believe that it is very dangerous to allow children to have autonomous rights or else they will make grievous and irremediable mistakes. For instance a man commented that *children should not have equal rights as adults because I won't allow my daughter to go to disco at night, what about if she becomes pregnant* (Interview with a carpenter, July 2011).

In conclusion, I separated the discussion into views of children and that of adults as a generational split in structuring my data and not as a split of views of my participants. This is because it can be inferred from above that both children and adult participants do not support the idea that children should have same rights as adults. Therefore, the argument remains the same that in Ghana children – like – adults think that separate rights for children is not something they see as special. As a result they do not support children to have equal rights as adults.

5.5 Individual rights or Interdependent rights of children

In most Western cultures, children are socialised as autonomous, independent, and self-determining agents. The global notion of childhood (Boyden & Ennew, 1997) which is characterised by the concept of work-free childhood, play and school without any kind of responsibilities are deemed highly desirable in the Global North. Here, children are seen to have *individual* autonomous rights independent from that of adults. According to Nieuwenhuys & Hanson (2012) UNCRC ethics view children as individuals endowed with inalienable rights bearing no relation to their social roles. Therefore, the duty of parents towards children is geared to enabling them to become free and autonomous individuals (Nieuwenhuys & Hanson 2012). On the contrary, children in Ghana are socialised to be part of a family and not as individuals. As members of the family, they are "valued for their socio-economic roles and they grow up holding complex responsibilities and maintaining reciprocal relationships within their family" (Abebe, 2012:2). As Abebe (2012:2) argues these children are seen as "neither independent citizens nor autonomous individuals with separate rights but interdependent beings whose livelihood ... are inseparable from that of the family collective".

In Ghana, just like in Ethiopia, the desire to sustain family solidarity and interdependent lives most often overshadows children's individual needs and interest (Abebe, 2008). This was also evident during my field work in Ghana. All my research participants asserted that

children's rights are intertwined and interconnected to that of the family. This is because Ghanaian children rely on their families for food, shelter, clothing, schooling, health care, love and mutual support. Without these essential needs it will be impossible for children to develop and survive. This was pointed out clearly by a 14 year old boy: *I depend on my family for food, money to go to school, etc.. without them I cannot survive* (FGD with children, July 2011).

Adult participants also revealed that the rights of children are linked to their families. They emphasised that in Ghana, children are not free to decide for themselves. For instance, in light of heightened poverty, the need of the child is pushed aside and that of the family becomes the highest priority. A petty trader shed her view about this issue:

> ...this is a poor house so with the small money I have; I prioritise the family needs first which include every child. When there are surpluses then I buy something for the individual child (Interview, July 2011).

Another woman (house wife) also added:

> My eldest son has dropped out of school to engage in economic activities in order to support the family and help his younger siblings to go to school. He sells slippers in the market (Interview, July 2011)

She explained that as an unemployed woman, there is not enough money to send all her children to school. Even though her husband is a business man, his work does not fetch much money. Therefore, in order to survive, her eldest son about 15 years old sell slippers in the market to support family income. According to her, she believes adults and children depend on each other to survive because, if her son claims his rights as an individual, all of them will suffer. This example supports the interdependencies that exist among family members in Ghana. Reciprocity was mentioned as a factor that contributes to interdependencies. The concept of reciprocity as argued by one teacher is based on the principle that children are dutiful to their parents or adults and in return they are rewarded with food, clothes, shelter, schooling, protection and so on. This is like 'a give and take affair'. Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuona-Hamond (1996: 15) support this claim that in Ghana, "a child is obliged to render services to a parent which obligation is then reciprocated by the parent by care and

maintenance". The interconnection between children and their family throw more light on the fact that the rights of children in Ghana are inseparable from the family collective (Abebe, 2012). There is a broader discussion on reciprocity in this chapter.

Traditionally, Ghanaians pay great homage to their culture and views it as indispensable from the society. As portrayed by a carpenter:

> Our culture here is such that there is a strong bond between children and their families; therefore, we do things the family way and not individual way.

This assertion means that Ghanaians frown on individualistic way of life. They are supportive of working together as a group for the well-being of the family. There is mechanical solidarity among children, nuclear family, extended family and sometimes the society at large especially in the rural areas. This is depicted through the 'inter and intra-household social contracts' that exist in Ghanaian societies (Abebe, 2008:81). *We live our lives together, because we depend on each other for support, love and encouragement* declared by a petty trader (Interview, July 2011). As part of the culture, generational interdependence is also a central organising principle of family life in Ghana (see Abebe, 2012). As revealed by a 13 year old girl in story writing, *after my mother died, I have been staying with my grandparents for about 5 years now* (Interview, July 2011). As shown above, extended family members also play a part in the nurturing and development of children. Interactions between children and other family members are therefore very important. This is because it denotes that children do not see themselves as autonomous who have separate rights but as part of a collective. It is worthy of note that children having interdependent rights do not make them passive objects. This is because it enables them to exercise agency within the family by fulfilling complex roles such as cleaning, running errands, sweeping, cooking and so on. As agents, they are dutiful to their parents and in return they are rewarded with material and non-material needs for the development. In this way, children are assured of their daily needs, shelter and protection.

In conclusion, Ghanaians do not condone individualism because they see it as a Western ideology. They believe working together as a collective is pleasant. A male teacher quoted a popular adage *praye woho yi, woyi baako a ebu, wokabomu a emmu* which is simply translated as *united we stand, divided we fall* to symbolise the sense of unity in the Ghanaian

family and society. Hence, views from participants revealed how people (including children) see themselves as co-dependent human beings rather than individuals.

5.6 Children within families

Under this theme, I took a critical look at participants' perspectives on the construction of childhood(s) in Ghana. It is worth noting that there is not a single childhood existing in Ghana but a variety of childhoods. Although, there are differences in childhoods across cultures, there are certain commonalities that cut across cultures in Ghana. And these commonalities are what this sub-theme aims to achieve from the views of research participants. Perspectives of people were basically embedded in the traditions, socialisation and culture as well as what is expected of children within the family and society. Through interviews and focus-group discussions, it came to light that an idea of good childhood in Ghana relates to children found within the home, family setting, and or social networks. In an illustration, a 14 year old girl described an ideal child *as a young person who lives with parents and they provide your basic needs* (Interview, July 2011). This implies that the locus of childhood is found within the contours of the family. Family does not only refer to the nuclear family but the extended family as well. *I live with my grandparents because my parents are divorced and they give me food and money for school*, declared by a 13 year old boy (Interview, July 2011). In the absence of parents, children are taken care of by their maternal or paternal grandparents, uncles, cousins or extend family members. This depicts the importance of inter-households social contracts that exist within Ghanaian societies.

There is an indication that the child must develop within a social nest bonded by love and familial relationship with other members. As a result, each member in the family performs certain roles and these roles are very important. A baker shared her views: *I cook, bathe and take the children to school* (Interview, July 2011). This suggests that parents and guardians are responsible for the nutritional, health and educational needs of children. However, within the family, children are not only at the receiving end, they also play specific duties and responsibilities. A 14 year old girl illustrated, *I sweep the compound and cook in the absence of my mother* (FGD, July 2011). Another 12 year old boy also said *my duty is to wash my father car every morning before school* (FGD, July 2011). Since parents provide children with their needs and children are also dutiful to them, it makes them inter-reliant.

Moreover, childhood(s) in Ghana is characterised by submission and adhering to authority or adult supervision. This is to ensure that children are socialised to follow the norms and traditions. In this way they are taught how to talk in public, behave, dress, act and interact with other people. As stated by a 14 year old boy, *my father makes sure I come home early every day (*FGD, July 2011). In the same FGD another 14 year old girl said, *my mother checks my dressing before I go out so that I do not wear mini-skirt*. This implies that children found within the family are governed by rules and regulations. In an interview with a carpenter, he emphasized that he does not allow his daughter to stay out late and visit the disco. This is because the daughter can get pregnant and give birth to a bastard which will create more problems for the family (Field notes, July 2011). It proposes that children are supposed to be taking care by parents or guardians and instructed on the proper way of conduct.

Likewise in the school, children must abide by the rules and regulations. *A good student is one who follows teacher's instructions and does all assignments* as said by a female teacher (FGD, July 2011). The ideal Ghanaian child behaves appropriately, is submissive to teachers, respectful and obedient. For instance, a 12 year old wrote:

> I go to Sunday school. At the church, they taught us that drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes is not good. But my father sends me often to buy them for him. As an obedient child I run as fast as I can to purchase them (Story writing, July 2011)

The example above denotes that even though it is against the will of this boy to buy alcohol and cigarette for his father he still does it in obedience. Firstly, he knows it is a sin and secondly it is bad for the health of his father. *I sleep around 9:30pm everyday because that is the rule in my house* declared a 13 year old girl (Interview, July 2011). Another 12 year old boy added, *whenever I see an elderly person in the bus, I offer my seat and stand*. It is important to note that children respect and obey adults because they are aware of the generational order in society and they do not want to destruct it.

Lastly, another important feature of childhood in Ghana is that children are valued for their economic contributions to the family. Most children from poor homes engage in economic activities to supplement the family income. For example, *after school and on weekends, I go to sell handkerchiefs and candies at the market to get some money,* as mentioned by a 14 year

old boy (Interview, July 2011). From observations, I witnessed a lot of children selling pure water, doughnuts, popcorn in the streets after school and on weekends. Children are also valued for their domestic work and duties. A 14 year old girl illustrated this point; *I scrub the bathroom, sweep the compound, change my brother's diapers and cook for the family* (story writing, July 2011). Some children run errands for both their parents and siblings.

Premised on the above discourses, it can be stated that adults and children perceive that Ghanaian children should be located within family setting under the supervision of adults and under parental control. It means the child is bounded by rules and regulation. Such a child engages in non-economic and/or economic activities for the proper functioning of the family and lives as part of the group and not as an individual human being.

5.7 The structure of Ghanaian families

This theme focuses on the structure and the roles of members in families in Ghana. As pointed out by the story by a 14 year old girl in table 1: *In my family, we are nine (9) in number. This includes my parents, four brothers and three sisters* (Story writing, July 2011). This is an indication that the family is the basic social environment where children are nurtured, cared and loved. In the preamble of the UNCRC it reads;

> Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (Preamble of UNCRC)

The primary responsibility of parents is nurturing and upbringing of children (Article 18 of CRC). This was confirmed by a baker who shared her views, *I cook, bathe and take the children to school* (Interview, July 2011). Basically, women are in charge of taking care of children because they interact with them on daily basis. *My mum is the homemaker; she does everything in the house and takes care of the kids* as exemplified by 13 year old girl (Interview, July 2011). The common responsibility of Ghanaian mothers is raising children because from infancy they breast feed and take care of their health needs. Children are more attached to their mothers than fathers in the family because they are seen as disciplinarians.

In the Ghanaian family structure, fathers are heads of the family unit. They provide the members with basic needs. It is obvious that:

> My father is the head of the family. He is bread winner and provides money for food, clothing and other essential things. He is also responsible for disciplining children in the house (Interview with a 14 year old girl)

This entails that in terms of roles, male adults are in charge of disciplining children (Nukunya, 2003). In confirmation, a 13 year old boy stated, *my father punishes me when I do the wrong thing, so occasionally when he gives me work, I am afraid to do it (Interview, July 2011).* Therefore, as heads of the family, more power is vested in the hands of fathers than other members in the structure of the family. But women also wield power than children. As noted by a petty trader (woman), *I have distributed the domestic work among my children based on gender* (Interview, July 2011). Therefore, the argument follows directly that in terms of hierarchy in the family, children are at the base. As such, they receive instructions from parents and adults.

The Ghanaian family is not only made up of the nuclear (parents and children) only, but sometimes extended family members as well. In table 2 (story written by a 12 year old boy), he stated; *my family is made up of my parents, three brothers including me and my younger sister, and also my grandmother and two cousins* (story writing, July 2011). Further enquiry revealed that he stays in the same compound with his maternal grandmother and two cousins in addition to the nuclear family. Most children in Ghana live with their maternal or paternal grandmothers who take care of them in the absence of parents. ..*Since my parents died, I have been staying with my grandparents who provide me food, clothes and money* declared a 12 year old boy (Interview, July 2011). The role of grandparents and other members of the extended family in the upbringing and development of children cannot be underestimated. For instance 13 year old girl disclosed, *My uncle sometimes pays my school fees because my mother is a single parent* (Interview, July 2011). This means that extended family members are significant in the socialisation of children. This is because in Ghana, child care is a collective social enterprise in which both parents and other kin are active participants (Twum-Danso, 2009). As unveiled by a baker: *In Ghana, extended family members are important, we help each other in terms of finances, food and support* (Interview, July 2011). This implies that they provide financial, material and non-material (emotional) support for

people. This view from participants confirms the importance of 'inter-household social contracts' in Ghana (Abebe, 2008:81).

Lastly, within Ghanaian families, children have roles to play. They do not only receive care from family members but they also give reciprocal care and support to people. Children contribute to the effective functioning of the family by doing domestic chores, sweeping the house and so on. Most work is gender specific for instance girls are noted for cooking and boys mostly run errands for parents. Children are carers of the sick and their siblings. A 12 year old girl stated *I administer medicine to my grandmother who stays with us* (Interview, July 2011). Some children also contribute significant amount to the daily income of the family through their labour. *After school and on weekends, I go to sell handkerchiefs and candies at the market to get some money* as mentioned by a 14 year old boy (Interview, July 2011).

Therefore, it is evident that the lives of people in Ghanaian families are interconnected and intertwined. They live together and interact daily to ensure their survival and development creating interdependences. The relationship between the Ghanaian child and the family is very imperative. The examples above demonstrate the "inseparability of the livelihoods of children from the livelihoods of the family in which they form active part" (Abebe, 2008:81). Children cannot be detached from it, because the family is the social nest where development takes place. The father is the head of the family and the mother is in charge of nurturing children. The other extended family members compliment the socialisation of children. Children are also dutiful to the family which follows that members depend on each other in order to survive.

5.8 Decision making in the family

The unequal power relations that exist between adult-child relationships connote that adults mostly make decisions in the family or society. Traditionally, adults in Ghana are seen as the ultimate decision makers because of the notion of children as dependence, immature and incomplete. Due to this, adults choose paternalistically on behalf of children in their best interest, a view by the caretaker thesis (Archard, 1993). For instance: *Here in Ghana, parents make decisions and children obey them and that is final. We do not work with childish ideas* (Interview with a business man, July 2011). Children's power is therefore constrained by the

generational power of adults. This entails that in order to assert their power since there are unequal adult-child power relations; children have to engage in negotiations more than adults (Punch, 2007).

Culturally, children are socialised to respect, obey and submit to adult authority. However, it is not all the time that children yield to the power of adults, sometimes it has to be negotiated. To buttress this point, I take an extract from my field notes to illustrate how negotiations occur in parent-child relationship. It happened in a petty trader's (participant) house with her three sons and one daughter:

> 'Guys, go and buy charcoal for me to cook'. Since, I had visited her, she attended to me. After a while, when we were done, she was surprised to see that the money she gave to the boys to buy the charcoal was still on the table. Then she found them playing football at the back of the house with friends.
>
> 'Lazy boys, you are not going to eat today. Come here right now. Two of you go and buy the charcoal and one of you should wash the plates or else there will be food for you'. All of them offered to go and buy the charcoal. Even though the boys were reluctant to go, they saw the need to go in order for the family to survive. The girl went into the kitchen with her mother to start preparing the food.

The extract shows that children do not always obey their parents since they have their own agenda. The boys contended that their mother did not mention a specific person to go and buy the charcoal, so they were confused who to go. But eventually they performed the duties assigned to them. This supports the idea that generational power relations within households are interdependent and negotiable (Punch, 2007). This is because without the help of the children it will be difficult for parents to manage the family. For instance, while the children were going to buy the charcoal, the mother goes to the kitchen and prepares the foodstuffs for cooking.

As indicated earlier, it is not always the case that adults are the final decision makers in society, sometimes parents authority are fractured creating lapses for negotiations. For instance working children are able to negotiate and make decisions with their parents. A 14 year old boy noted: *I work after school to get some income. Every period my mother and I*

decide which product will bring more income. According to him, in light of poverty in the family, it is important for him to work to contribute to the maintenance of the family. Since he goes to the market, he is able to negotiate with his mother what product to sell at a given period of time. For instance whether to sell umbrella during rainy season or to sell handkerchiefs in the dry season when people sweat a lot. He also stated that although his other siblings are required to be at home around 7 pm, he is able to stay out late because of his role in the family.

In story writing, a 13 year old girl wrote: *my parents are illiterates therefore I make decisions about which school to attend, now I have decided the senior high school I will go*. The illiteracy rate in Ghana especially among the poor is very high. About 43% of adults are illiterates. Most parents are school drop outs or they stop schooling after Junior high school due to poverty. Because of this, they are not able to decide for their children which school to attend. This creates a platform for negotiations between parents and children. Schooling in Ghana is very important therefore in order to make a good choice of school; most illiterate parents rely on their children to make the decisions for themselves. And this happens to be the case of this girl who had to decide for herself.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that it is not all the time that there is tension and negotiation within the family. Decisions made by adults are mostly accepted and complied with in a co-operative manner with no attempts to compromise or negotiate (Punch, 2007). The desire to sustain family cohesion and a sense of responsibility towards their family makes children balance their needs and desires with that of the family. In this way, even though sometimes children negotiate with parents, they do not regard themselves as autonomous but as part of the group in which they derive their livelihood.

5.9 Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility

Culturally, three important values which form the bases of adult-child relationships in Ghana are: *respect, reciprocity and responsibility* (see Twum-Danso, 2009). From my research findings, it came to bare that these values are essential components in the daily interactions among Ghanaians. They contribute to the reasons why children in Ghana do not perceive themselves as individual human beings claiming separate rights but rather mutually dependent beings.

5.9.1 Respect

One fundamental principle in Ghana is *respect*. From an early age, Ghanaian children are socialised to respect adults, submit to their authority and take their advice (Twum-Danso, 2009). Accordingly, Gyekye (1996:85) argues that Ghanaian parents "want their children to develop good character traits, to grow and become worthy, respectful and respectable adults and responsible citizens". This argument was supported during fieldwork by a carpenter who said, *in this house, children are trained to be humble, respectful and obedient so that they will put on good behaviours when they go out* (Interview, July 2011). Among the Akans, one of the major ethnic groups in Kumasi where the study took place, parents teach children from the age of five how to speak to elders so that they do not use bad language and expressions. They use the word *mepawokyew* simply translated *please* in all communication with older people. Therefore, before a child talks to an adult, s/he begins by saying *mepawokyew* as a sign of respect and good manners.

Another important value with respect is the use of *titles*. Children are trained to address adults with titles. They do not have to call adults without using their title as a sign of respect. This accounts partly as a reason why the majority of children participating in the study for my research addressed me by a title Mr. Jerry. As stated earlier, in order to reduce power relations, I coined the nickname *Misty* because children are familiar with nicknames. Adults are respected for many reasons. They are seen as repository of knowledge and wisdom. In an interview, a boy stated: *my grandfather gives my siblings and I good advice anytime he comes home*. This view was further explained by a businessman who said: *in the olden days, we gathered around fire and my grandparents gave us advice, shared proverbs and wise sayings*. There is a common proverb that says: *He who listens to an elder is like one who consults an oracle*. It is believed that oracles give infallible truths, thus in comparison elders are also believed to say the truth and their instructions when heeded to, promote good behaviour among the young. Respect for old-age is very important in Ghana. From my own experience, there is a bus in Ghana called 'Kuffour bus' (like the busses in Norway). When the seats are full, children offer their seats to old people as a sign of respect. In the same way, a 14 year old boy also commented: *I was sitting in front of my house when and I saw a neighbour carrying loads, I run to her and offered to carry them home*.

On the other hand, children who do not listen to adult's advice and talk back to adults are branded as social deviants. This view is articulated by Twum-Danso (2009: 384):

> As a result of the centrality of respect and obedience to the socialisation process, those children who ... show signs of assertiveness are seen as social deviants, disrespectful and are thus punished or insulted – as witches or devils.

In order to avoid punishment and insults, children play their cards well when interacting with adults. A boy shared his ordeal when he disobeyed his mother: *I was playing football with friends when my mother sent me to buy charcoal to cook and I refused. I didn't get any food that evening* (Interview, July 2011). This means that there are bad consequences for children who disrespect adults. At the fieldwork site, a 12 year old boy described how he was punished by his teacher to scrub the students toilet when he did not do his assignments (field notes, July 2011).

In the focus-group discussion with children, I asked them about the importance of respect and why it is highly valued in Ghanaian society. And these were some response from participants:

> If you don't respect your parents, they will kick you out of the house or school said by a (13 year old girl).
> Since I am obedient at home, I always get money for school (12 year old boy).
> My father buys me new shoes often because I take his advice (14 year old girl).

These examples depict that by showing respect, children do not live as autonomous individuals rather they live together with adults whom they respect and obey. It also confirms that obeying the instructions of adults enables them to obtain their livelihood such as education, financial and material needs from them.

In the Ghanaian context, children show respect to adults not only as a cultural value but also as way to get their needs. This is because adults reciprocate it by rewarding them with food, shelter, clothing, money and protection. This ensures the continuity of interpersonal relationships between adults and children which inform their interdependencies. All the children that participated in the research for this study placed high value on respect as very

principal in Ghana. A 14 year old girl summarised everything: *children are supposed to respect and obey adults so that they can get their needs* (Interview, July 2011).

5.9.2 Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity is a principle that is embedded in the Ghanaian culture and it is very is fundamental in intergenerational relationships. It regulates parents-child or adult-child relationships in society and it contribute to the generational interdependence among family members. Reciprocity is *a give and take affair* as defined by a businessman (Interview, July 2011). Another participant (carpenter) explains it as, *you do what I want then I also reward you with your needs* (Interview, July 2011). This means that reciprocity in adult-child relationships is about pay-offs and negotiations. In an interview, a baker stated how she expects her children to perform house chores because she feeds, clothe and give them money for school. She also explained that *in our culture nothing is for free* (Interview, July 2011). The argument follows that both parents and children expect a reward for the services they render to each other. This view is made clearer by Pellow (1977:42) who asserts that in terms of reciprocity "If one party gives or does something to (for) another, there is an 'equivalent' return to be made... One does not receive something for nothing".

Reciprocity can be seen in different ways. From the perspectives of adult participants, supporting children is an investment which serves as a security in old age. A woman (petty trader) clarified this point when she quoted a common Ghanaian adage: *merehwe wo ama wose afifi, na wonso ahwe me ama mese atutu* (in Ghanaian language). It means that I (parent) will take care of you (child) to develop teeth or grow then you also take care of me in my old age. According to her, even though she is poor, she does her best in order to provide for the needs of the children. This is because she sees her children as investment and old age security. She explained further, *I want them to go to school so that they can get jobs and take care of me when I am old*. This response implies that reciprocity is envisaged like an 'insurance policy in which earlier transfers to the child are recovered by the parent under conditions of need' (Silverstein et al., 2002). A 13 year old boy also shared the same view:

> Since my father died, my mother has been working hard to provide the needs of the family, I want to learn hard, get a job and take good care of her in future (Interview, July 2011).

These examples emphasise the importance of reciprocity in adult-child relationships. Therefore, it can be argued that reciprocity accounts virtually as one of the reasons why parents and adults make investment of sentiments, devotion of time, protection, and provision of financial resources for children (Silverstein et al., 2002).

It is worthy of note that children do not depend on their parents alone for their livelihoods. They also depend on other members such as siblings and extended family for care and support. Traditionally, in a typical Ghanaian family, grandparents and the nuclear family lived together in the same compound. For instance it is common that grandparents take care of their grandchildren in the absence of parents such as death. *Since my parents died, I have been staying with my grandparents who provide me food, clothes and money* as mentioned by a 12 year old boy (Interview, July 2011). This means that children who see themselves as autonomous cannot receive any help from other family members if their parents are not around. Children also maintain reciprocal relationships with family members. A 12 year old girl stated *I administer medicine to my grandmother who stays with us* (Interview, July 2011). These reciprocal relationships bind Ghanaian families together promoting generational interdependence. In this way, children's autonomous rights are put aside and collective rights are pushed forward.

Focus-group discussions and interviews with young participants revealed that maintaining reciprocal relationships with other members were a catalyst to have their protection and provisional needs realized. As argued my Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuona-Hamond (1996:15) that in Ghana, "a child is obliged to render services to a parent which obligation is then reciprocated by the parent by care and maintenance". This view follows the notion of *give and take* and *pay-offs*. That is, you work for me then I also pay you back. This accounts for the reason why participants (children) saw respect, obedience and performing duties and responsibilities as very vital. This is because it enables them to receive care and provision of their needs. As emphasised by a 13 year old girl, *if you don't respect your parents, they will kick you out of the house or school. Since I am obedient at home, I always get money for school* also stated by a 12 year old boy. From these two examples, one thing is common, that is *school*. It implies that school is very important in the Ghanaian society, so children show respect in order to have education among other needs fulfilled.

Therefore, the crucial role that reciprocity plays in Ghana sustains the intergenerational relationships between adults and children. Children obey adults and submit to their authority in order to have their needs met. By submitting to the authority of adults, it does not mean that children in Ghana are weak or incompetent. But as stipulated by the Social Studies of Childhood, children act as active social participants and agents in the world around them and that of others (James et al., 1998). Twum-Danso (2009:428) argues that children are "agents making active decisions because they are aware of the benefits that come with playing the subordinate role expected of them in society". This view is supported by a 14 year old girl who stated that: *my father buys me new shoes often because I take his advice* (FGD, July 2011). It points out that as active agents; children accept their position as subordinates in society to ensure the provision of needs and protection from caring adults. To buttress this point, in an interview with a 13 year old girl I asked her:

> **Misty Jerry**: Why do you respect and obey your parents?
> **Participant**: You see.. my father is very strict and a disciplinarian. It is difficult to get money from him. But you know girls have many needs. So I have a strategy.
> **Misty Jerry**: Wow!! A strategy!! I exclaimed. Tell me about it.
> **Participant**: Ok. When he comes back from work I meet him to collect his bag, make the table and fetch water for him to bathe. I do my house cores thoroughly and run all errands. Surprisingly, it works like magic. I am able to get some money from him.

The example above illustrates how this 13 year old girl acts as active agent and exercise agency within the family. She accepts her position as subordinate and performs her duties diligently as a child to facilitate the provision of needs such as money. To conclude, this discussion has shown how reciprocity is seen as a crucial component in the socialisation process in Ghana. It adds to the argument that Ghanaian children do not live individual lives claiming inalienable rights as suggested in the CRC. Instead, as argued by Abebe (2012:15) "they set their achievements and life experiences against the backdrop of their relationships: siblings, parents...extended family members etc". In this way, children "perceive their rights as interdependent with those of their relations rather than as standing apart or taking priority over them" (Abebe, 2012:15). This is because they maintain reciprocal relationships with parents, siblings and extended family members. The following chapter explores the duties and responsibilities performed by children in Ghana.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS - PART II

This chapter is a continuation of the preceding chapter and it discusses the multi-faceted roles and responsibilities that children undertake within the family. In addition, it demonstrates how children are able to combine work, play and school.

6.1 Responsibility

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) states that:

> Every child shall have *responsibilities* towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the *duty to work* for the cohesion of the family, to *respect* his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need (Article 31)

Unlike the UNCRC, the African Charter which is a comprehensive charter specific for African children recognizes children's duties towards their family, state and other institutions. A responsibility is simply something everyone is expected to do, for themselves, for other people or for the community we live in. This implies that as members of the family both children and adults are expected to perform certain duties in the house. A business man I interviewed during the field work shared his views:

> In Ghana, as part of our culture, there is no right without a role to play. You have the right to have food and duty to clean. Every child has some duties at home. Girls for instance cook and boys run errands (Interview, July 2011).

In my quest to know from my participants about their views concerning children's responsibilities, most people mentioned *respect* and *obedience* as the first responsibilities of children**.** As a component of the socialisation process and culture, children are taught from an early age these two key values. This view was in congruence with Twum-Danso (2009) doctoral thesis in Ghana who asserted that respect and obedience are two fundamental responsibilities of children. During my field work, a 12 year old boy pointed out:

> Since I was about 6 years old, my mum and dad have been teaching me how to show respect and talk to elders. They bought a book for me called 'courtesy for boys and girls'. It illustrates how children are supposed to behave, show good manners and how to be a responsible child (Story writing, July 2011).

As stated earlier, Article 31 of the Children's charter states that children must respect their parents, superiors and all elders in the society. For that reason, it is not surprising that this is highly cherished in Ghana. Twum-Danso (2009:388) argues that:

> By bringing forth a child and taking care of him or her, during his or her childhood a parent is issuing a contract, which one expects to be paid back once the child is in position to do this by fulfilling one's expected responsibilities and behaving in an appropriate manner. A child who does that will have his or her rights fulfilled.

Alluding to the importance of maintaining order and respect in the family, a petty trader explained:

> I have four children, three boys and one girl. I carried each one of them in my womb for nine months. Therefore, I expect that they treat me with total respect, be submissive and obey me when I talk because I provide their needs with my meagre wages. In the house, I teach the girl how to cook and the boys sweep and wash clothes as well. If your children do not respect you, it is very painful because I know some friends who have these problems (Interview, July 2011).

Through story writings, making lists, interviews and FGDs, children provided information on their responsibilities. Most of these consisted of domestic chores, running errands, caring for young siblings, washing and others (see also Meyir, 2010). A 14 year old girl threw more light on her duties at home:

> When I wake up early in the morning before I go to school, I sweep our compound and duster the living room. After school, I go to buy charcoal for my mum to cook food for supper. After dinner, I wash all the cooking utensils because my other siblings are young so I do most of the things in the house (Story writing, July 2011).

Similarly, a 14 year old boy had the following to say:

> As for me I have many duties in the house, being a boy I run errands for my dad, wash clothes, feed the chicken and clean the compound. My father is a taxi driver so I wash his car every morning before I go to school. Yes, I remember one thing, I also pound fufu (local Ghanaian staple food) (Story writing, July 2011).

The above quotations from participants during field work indicate the responsibilities of children within their families. Children are also dutiful to their other siblings depending on age and maturity. Most children run errands for their older siblings such as buying bread, sugar or newspapers for them. Others are also required to take care of their younger siblings especially after school. From the story writing by a female participant presented in Table 1, a 14 year old girl wrote:

> After school, I am responsible for bringing my youngest brother back home and giving him some food since my mother come back from the market late (Story writing, July 2011).

In order to have a comprehensive view of the duties and responsibilities of children in Ghana, I have grouped the views of my participants under 'personal responsibility', 'social rules of conduct' and 'collective responsibility' (Taylor & Smith, 2009). Personal responsibility refers to the task children perform for themselves for their own well-being such as good grooming, bathing, washing their own clothes, eating for healthy living and being responsible children. Social rules of conduct refer to how the society expects children to behave. For instance: showing respect, being obedient, good manners and so on. Lastly, collective responsibility refers to the duties children are expected to do and/or for other people such as parents, siblings, extended family, school and society at large. As discussed below, most of these responsibilities are however gendered.

Table 3: Children's responsibilities at home

Personal responsibility	Social rules of conduct	Collective responsibility
• To bath • Do homework • Clean your clothes • Protect your property • To make right choices	• Respect and obey parents • Help parents	• Run errands • Clean the house • Wash utensils • Cook • Baby sitting

Table 4: Children's responsibilities at school

Personal responsibility	Social rules of conduct	Collective responsibility
• To go to school on time • Clean your desk • Take care of your books • Do assignments	• Respect and obey teachers • Abide by rules and regulations • Not to disturb others	• Keep school tidy • Clean desk • Help Clean classroom

Table 5: Children's responsibilities in the community

Personal responsibility	Social rules of conduct	Collective responsibility
• Take care of yourself • Responsible for your things	• Respect and obey adults • Do good things • Behave appropriately	• Do not destroy community property • Take care of nature • Not to litter around. • Help older people

Views of children about their duties and responsibilities at home, school and community (Source: story writings, lists making, interviews and focus groups).

Based on the field work, the information from participants concerning their responsibilities revealed three main themes: responsibilities for themselves; how they are to behave and duties for other people. Therefore, these three categorisations were made in order to organise the huge amount of data from the study. In addition, it was a good way in structuring the data which made the analysis easier and clearer. The next theme discusses the gender dimensions of work in Ghana.

6.2 Gendered responsibilities

Ansell (2005:70) points out that "children's roles are often gendered". Generation, gender, age, birth order composition and social maturity are factors that influence the ways in which responsibilities are allocated especially within the family (Punch, 2001). According to Robson (2003) gender is seen as a social construct which assign roles to males and females. Nukunya (2003:96) states that "in as much as in Ghana, doing/taking part is a form of learning". This means that a child performing responsibilities in the Ghanaian society is customarily seen as a form of training.

Twum-Danso (2009) argue that in Ghana, responsibilities begin early within the household and by the age of 5 or 6, children have tasks that are set aside for them to do on a daily basis according to their gender, size and competencies. This was also confirmed in my research by all the participants. Domestic chores such as washing utensils and cooking are most often reserved for girls in the family due to the traditional notion that the girls place is in the kitchen. Nevertheless, from my observations, in families where there were no girls, boys often take up the duty of doing domestic chores. In an interview with a petty trader (woman) she illustrated how work is apportioned to her children based on gender:

> I have four children, three boys and one girl. As usual, the father is the breadwinner of the house and I take care of the daily activities like cooking and caring for the children. As custom demands, the girl is always with me in the kitchen and she cooks in my absence which also serves as a security for her when she marries. The boys run errands such as going to buy charcoal for me to prepare food and so on. They are also responsible for sweeping the room and pounding fufu (Interview, July 2011)

It is worth noting that responsibilities in terms of gender create interdependencies among members of the family. For instance, from the example above, the petty trader illustrated that the husband provides money for the family and her daughter cooks for the family in her absence. Likewise, the boys are responsible for buying charcoal to enable the girl to cook. Therefore, without the girl there will no food in the house and likewise, without the boys there will be no charcoal to cook. It implies that each member depends on the other to have their rights to fulfilled, and the work of boys and girls, as well as men and women reflect what Abebe (2012) calls 'gender complimentarity'. The household division of labour in Kumasi also reflects roles of boys and girls that are complimentary. According to participants, other specific duties performed by girls are cleaning, washing of clothes and dishes, bathing and dressing younger siblings. Boys normally run errands for their parents and other members. A 13 year old boy in a FGD said: *I have a younger brother about 2 years old, so my mother sends me all the time to buy cerelac and pampers for him*. Other responsibilities for boys were pounding fufu, washing cars, polishing shoes and so on.

However, gendered responsibilities can also be vague. For example, the duties of boys and girls in the school are not clear-cut in terms of gender. This is because in school boys and

girls are instructed about the same duties and expectations. In a FGD some participants shared their views:

> Children are expected to sweep the classroom.
> It is a child's responsibility to come to school on time.
> Students are obliged to obey the rules and regulations in the school.
> Both boys and girls are supposed to respect teachers and the authorities.

Therefore, the examples above show that it is difficult to determine the precise responsibilities of boys and that of girls in a school setting. For instance it is the duty of both boys and girls to keep the school compound clean. However, it must be emphasised that in the school as well, children and teachers are mutually dependent on each other for their livelihood. Children sweep the classroom and duster the blackboard for teachers to teach. In addition, children are expected to run errands for their teachers such as buying food, newspapers and medicines. *In my class, I am the prefect, I go to buy food for my teacher every day. And also see to it that the classroom is tidy,* revealed by a 14 year old boy. This creates interconnections between teachers and children at school since teachers teach children and students in return reciprocate it by rendering services to them.

According to Nsamenang (2004:111) children's responsibilities are "indigenous instrument used to integrate children into the social fabric and economic life with little deliberate effort". Following this assertion, observations carried out during the field work depicted children engaging in economic activities especially after school and on weekends. Boys liked to engage in trading early than girls since most girls are confined to the kitchen. In line with the socio-cultural perspective of children's work, in families where there is poverty, boys engage in monetary activities at a very young age. But this does not mean that girls do not work. This is a common phenomenon on the streets of big cities like Accra and Kumasi to see boys and girls selling. A woman described the situation in her house:

> My eldest son about 14 years old is out of school because I do not have enough money to take all my children to school. He sells bread and sometimes sachets of water in the Kumasi market to help the family. Sometimes his younger sister also helps him to sell (Interview, July 2011).

The next sub-topic assesses the vital contribution that children provide for their family which makes them mutually dependent human beings rather than self-sufficient beings.

6.3 Contribution of children to family livelihoods

From the socio-cultural context of work which is one of the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research, children's work is an integral part of the everyday life and is indispensable to family livelihoods (Abebe & Bessell, 2011). According to Bourdillon (2001) we must understand children's work in the light of different material, socio-cultural conditions and context. For instance, in the Majority world like Ghana, children begin to contribute to household tasks as soon as they are capable and from an early age (Gill, 1987). Adult participants in this research also revealed that work is a pre-requisite for children in order to usher them into adulthood. Therefore, work is vital for the sustenance and survival of the family and an attempt to prevent children from working is Eurocentric.

In Ghana, the role of children in contributing to the family economy is very crucial. Many children are involved in non-economic activities and others are also engaged in income-generating ventures to help their families. Hollos (2002) argues that in many societies work is seen not as an adult domain where children might help, but the role of every member is important for the household. For example, as documented by Punch (2001) in rural Bolivia, children have responsibilities such as food preparation, childcare, feeding and grazing livestock, weeding and planting crops and so on. Similarly, in Ghana children contribute to the family by running errands for their parents such as going to the market to buy foodstuffs, charcoal and so on. As mentioned earlier, girls are often seen in the kitchen with their mothers cooking. Another critical contribution that most of the young participants mentioned was caring for their young siblings. A 13 year old girl clarified this point*: I have a 2 year old brother, so I give him food and change his diapers when my mother is busy or cooking. Sometimes I bathe him and put him to sleep* (Interview July, 2011).

It is worth noting that these unpaid services rendered by children ensure that the domestic unit functions effectively and efficiently relieving parents to do more highly skilled activities. Children especially those from the poor homes engage in income generating activities very early. As a developing country, most families live in poverty therefore it becomes difficult for parents to cater for all their needs. UNICEF (2009) reported that one quarter Ghana's

population live below the poverty line with 18.5% living in extreme poverty. Owing to this, some children go on the streets to sell in order to get money to pay for their basic needs. This view was explained by a 14 year old boy whose father is deceased. In order for him to survive, he sells handkerchief and candies after school to get money to pay his school fees (Field notes, July 2011). Similarly, in story writing, a 13 year old boy stated:

> I am from a poor home and life is very hard. Sometimes I do not eat before I come to school because there is not enough food. I sell polythene bags on the streets especially on weekends to raise money to support my parents to provide food for the family (Story writing July, 2011).

Correspondingly, a petty trader praised her daughter for the role she plays to supplement the family economy. She revealed that:

> My daughter is 16 years and she is the mother of the house now. She cooks for the family as I work late in the night. On weekends she carries some tomatoes, pepper and garden eggs to sell and sometimes she makes more money than me (Interview, July 2011).

These examples above make it evident that children's contribution to household economy is crucial for the growth and management of the families in Ghana. The responses from participants under this theme add to the argument that children do not live in isolation claiming separate rights. Instead they live as part of the family and contribute enormously through both financial and non-financial means to help sustain the household. This is because they do not only depend on family members for their livelihood but they are also carers of the sick and perform domestic and household chores.

6.4 Benefits children derive from performing responsibilities

The ACRWC reiterates the provisions of the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights that all individuals (including children) have responsibilities toward their family, society and the State. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to find out the views of participants about the benefits children derive from doing responsibilities. First of all, as indicated earlier, two primary responsibilities of children were to respect and obey adults which are also stated

in the African charter. In a FGD some children shed more light on the reasons why they respect adults: *When I obey my parents, I do not get into trouble* (13 year old boy). Likewise, another 13 year old boy mentioned that:

> Any time I obey my parents and do exactly what they tell me to do, my mother gives me good portion of food and my father sometimes take me to the stadium to watch football (FGD with students, July 2011).

Therefore, it can be inferred from the above examples that respect and obedience are ways that children can use to exercise their agency. As agents in their own social world (James et al., 1998) children assume the subordinate role in society as a way to have their needs met by their parents. Children are expected to obey, while they are also rewarded with food, clothing, schooling and other basic needs. For instance, a 12 year old girl revealed that *Christmas is the best time to show off your shoes and clothes; therefore I am extra careful to obey my parents so that they will buy me good stuff* (Interview, July 2011). This reveals some of the competencies in children and how they use it to get their needs.

Children's participation in work goes beyond household duties as they also participate in income generating activities especially on the streets. Children who engage in economic activities contribute immensely to the progress and growth of their family. Most children in Ghana make extra income to supplement their family's revenue. In this way, they do not wallow in abject poverty but they are able to make ends meet. Through their contribution to the family, a lot of Ghanaian children are able to continue schooling, make extra money for themselves, pay their own school fees, purchase books and school uniforms. A 14 year old boy confirmed it in an interview:

> My father died when I was young and my mum is a shop-keeper. So immediately after school, I go to the market to sell handkerchief and candies. I do this in order to continue schooling (Interview, July 2011).

Children who engage in trading are able to pay their school fees and have some money for their upkeep. Girls in particular assist their mothers in trading or selling goods in the market as part of their training. It is believed that trading develops interpersonal, numeric and money management skills, which are required for managing a household (see Twum-Danso, 2009).

Through observations, I saw that some children were also in charge of taking care of the shops of their parents after school or on weekends. It is the duty of most children in Ghana to keep the shop while their parents attend to other duties. These services provided by children are essential for ensuring that the domestic unit functions effectively. Children's participation in the labour force is also a part of a system of reciprocal exchanges where children are expected to help their parents and work for them (Abebe, 2007). While in return they also expect provision of food, schooling and protection. This means that when children perform their duties in the house, their parents reward their services by providing them with their needs. The reciprocal exchanges make parents and children interdependent human beings.

The parents I interviewed during the field work emphasized that duties serve as a form of training for children. A woman (home maker) exclaimed; *Eii.. my daughter is a very good cook now and I am very proud of her. At first she was not so good but through training it is better now* (Interview, July 2011). Some of the adult participants were of the view that children who have responsibilities are fast learners. *When children have specific responsibilities in the house, they become more responsible and learn very fast* (Interview with a business man). This was also reiterated by another woman who said: *girls who take care of their younger siblings in an early age serves as a platform for them to take care of their own babies in future* (Interview, July 2011).

Children who work with their fathers also acquire a trade or profession as a security for their future. In an interview with a painter (mentioned earlier), he made an illustration that he does not have enough money to send his son to school. Therefore, his son goes with him to his worksite as a learning process and acquiring a vocation. The statement indicates that children who help their parents as an apprentice do obtain a vocation. This was confirmed by a baker who also revealed that *her mother was a baker who baked bread and pastries in the house. As a young girl she used to help her. That is why she is also a baker now* (Field notes, July 2011).

Lastly, many children take pride in their contribution to the welfare of the family. Knowing that their earnings are spent of food, rent etc. gives them a sense of responsibility and self respect. It is crucial to acknowledge that Ghanaian children would not be able to enjoy these benefits if they see themselves as independent individuals with separate rights. Therefore, empowering children as right bearers possessing inalienable rights makes them vulnerable

and susceptible in the Ghanaian society. As suggested by a businessman: *In Ghana we do things the family way not the individual way*. This connotes that individuals outside the family circles do not receive much care and support as compared to those within it.

6.5 Is work a violation of children's rights?

In an interview with a painter, I asked him if he thinks work violates the rights of children in Ghana. And this was his response:

> What are you talking about, if I ask my son to join me in workplace, am I violating his rights? No! Because, school is expensive, therefore in order not to waste his time, as a painter, my son works with me so that he can have a profession when he grows up. Do you understand? (Interview with a painter, July 2011).

The issue about children's rights and work is very dicey. Society and culture in Ghana place high value on children who fulfil their duties at home. It is important to classify work in two ways that is *child work* and *child labour*. The activities illustrated by participants during the field work can be described as acceptable forms of work. Because 'child labour' according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are work that deprive children of their childhoods. On the contrary, the forms of work people described in this research were mainly seen as a form of training, socialisation process and apprenticeship.

One adult participant (a painter), shared his sentiments on how he could not get access to formal education, so he wanted his son to go to school and become a prominent person in society. But there is no money to send him to school. Therefore he works with him. He also explained that working with son was the best option and in his best interest. This is because without a vocation the child might engage in social vices like arm robbery or 419 (a dubious means of making money by cheating other people) (Field notes, July 2011).

Following this argument, a petty trader (woman) also had this to say:

> I am a single mother with five children. I sell cassava and plantain at the market. The children go to a Government school nearby and when they close from school, the four older children sell pure water so that we can get extra some money for other needs.

> They like doing it and they are not complaining so I do not think I am doing something against their will. Without their help, the whole family will suffer (Interview, July 2011).

It is worth noting that, among the less privilege people in Ghana, a child selling *pure water* (sachet of water) on the streets is a normal phenomenon. From my observation, around 4pm when schools are closed, a lot of children from the ages of 9-17 years come to the streets to engage in different kinds of economic activities. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear from participants that children sell pure water for the subsistence of the family.

> Today, I saw children selling pure water, doughnuts, popcorn, ice-cream etc. at the traffic light at Krofrom in Kumasi. Both boys and girls of school going age were selling on the streets. Especially when the traffic light was red, they go round and trade with people in the taxis, trotro and private cars. This was around 5pm when I was going home (Field notes, July 2011).

Many school going children said it was their duty to work for their parents and also in school. In a FGD, a boy said: *I am the boy in the house, and it will be very unethical for me to sleep and allow my father to wash his car. Everybody will think I am a disrespectful and disobedient child* (14 year old boy). In the same way, another student added*: I think it is my duty as a student to sweep the classroom and school compound because teachers are supposed to teach* (13 year old girl).

All the adult participants who took part in the study were convinced that work does not violate the rights of children. It is only in extreme cases like what the ILO calls hazardous work in the mining and fishing sector and or the worst forms of child labour such as prostitution, exploitation, pornography and forcing children in armed conflict. But according to them, works such as domestic chores, apprenticeship, running errands and cleaning the school compound are not violation of the rights of children. Rather, it serves as a foundation for a better future for children for instance in apprenticeship. To sum up, I take a quote from a male teacher who explains as follows:

> In Ghana, sometimes we copy blindly from the developed world which has its own culture; it is like putting square pegs in round holes. There is nothing wrong with child work (FGD with teachers July, 2011).

This teacher argued that work is good for children because it is a socialisation process that usher them into the adult world. In addition, he emphasized that Europeans have their own culture where children are allowed to go to school and play without due regard to responsibilities. But this is not our culture here in Ghana. Because of poverty and unemployment, children are important source of labour in the house and they engage in trading activities to help sustain the family. Therefore, it underlines the argument that the socio-cultural and political conditions of children's work must be contextualised according to time and geography.

6.7 Integrating Work, Play and School

A popular definition of childhood by UNICEF (2004) states that:

> Childhood is the time for children to be in school and at play, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation.

This definition by UNICEF depicts that children are suppose to be in school and play without due regard to any form of responsibilities. This is because they envisage work as a domain for adults, and children must be protected from abuse and exploitation. It is an undeniable fact that some children are exploited through work especially in the economic arena. But the argument is that the research findings indicated that children in Ghana are able to integrate work, play and school. Data collected from research participants revealed how children are able to combine their duties with having fun and learning. Ghanaian children carry out many unpaid work for their family from an early age as well as going to school for approximately five years of primary school and three years of Junior high school. Although, their domestic tasks increase in quantity and complexity as they grow older, they combine their responsibilities with both play and school, by negotiating their own time and space to unite these diverse activities (Punch, 2001).

In Ghanaian societies, the nature of children's work can be closely associated to play. When given tasks, children compete with siblings or friends to know who would finish first. From my own observations, I witnessed a lot of girls washing utensils in the evenings especially in the compound houses (a building with several rooms occupied by different tenants and sharing common kitchen and bathrooms). After each family has finished cooking, most girls in these compound houses bring their utensils in front of their houses and compete among themselves. I witnessed four particular girls for about three different times. Also, when sent on errands boys normally compete with friends to know who can run faster. In this way, they run as fast as possible to avoid the possibility of being defeated. Therefore what could have been seen as a difficult task becomes a necessity for play.

The data from the study signified that children frequently played while they were working or on the way to and from their tasks. As indicated by a 14 year old boy:

> I wash my father's car. Therefore, I am able to save some to water to play with friends with my water gun (Interview, July 2011).

According to this boy, there is no pipe-borne water in his vicinity. As a result it is difficult to get water to play. But when he washes his father's car, he is able to get some water to play with. In addition, since there are frequent water shortages in Kumasi, a lot of children have to go to fetch water from wells or people who sell water in tanks. This brings up opportunistic moments for children to play. A 13 year old boy shared his experience as follows:

> After school, I walk about 20 minutes to Buokrom to fetch water with friends. On the way, we shoot birds with stones from a slung of catapults. We do this everyday.

This example also show that the necessities of work teach children a useful skill which they use as play. The use of catapult meant that work itself was fun and so overlapped with play. Therefore, children do not see work as a burden. At the same time, the long queue at the place of collecting water gives children another opportunity to play. Girls for instance play *ampe* which is a popular game exclusive for them. Boys also play marbles with friends.

As well as integrating play with work, Ghanaian children also play before, during and after school. School children in the Junior High School spend about 8 hours of their time daily in school except weekends. Due to this, it provides the opportunity for students to meet friends and play. In the school I conducted the research, 7:30am until 8 am each morning was assigned for clean-up exercise. Therefore, children use this period as a time of socialisation and play with their friends. In an informal conversation with a 12 year old girl, she indicated that: *I like this time because I can talk to my friends and we can have some fun before classes begin* (Informal conversation, July 2011). Therefore, even though it is a rule established by school authorities for children to work during that time, school children see it as occasion to make acquaintance. At school, boys were seen playing football on the field during break times or on Friday afternoons which was assigned for physical activities and sports. Occasionally, I also joined the children to play football on the school field and also as a means of reducing power imbalances.

This coincides with Katz's research in rural Sudan which depicted that children in developing world are able to combine work and play (Katz, 1986). Likewise, Punch's research in rural Bolivia also revealed that children are able to carry out task and at the same time play and learn (Punch, 2003). Katz argued that "when play and work is separated, play becomes trivialised as 'childish' activity in the eyes of adults" (Katz, 1991:509 cited in Punch 2003:289). Instead, by combining both they have a mutually enhancing socialisation and educational value. In sum, the research findings showed that children in Ghana are competent to integrate the three main activities of their childhoods: work, play and school. This is because children played before, during and or after school and work. Consequently, this makes the definitions of childhoods as the time for children to be only in school and at play controversial.

From the foregoing arguments, I have demonstrated that children in Ghana are important source of labour for the family and they perform various duties and responsibilities. They do not see themselves as autonomous individuals but their lives are intertwined with the family where they obtain their livelihoods. Therefore, I argue that in order to understand children lives and work, the socio-cultural, economic and political factors that are strongly interconnected must be examined in a particular context. For example, placing children's livelihoods in local, regional and global economic contexts reveals how work is constructed different according to geographical locations (Abebe, 2008).

CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a summary of the major findings of the research. It summarises how the findings of the research relate to the research objectives, research questions, and also include some concluding remarks. Additionally, the chapter presents some recommendations for policy makers and future research areas in relation to the duties, responsibilities and rights of children in Ghana.

7.1 Summary of objectives, theoretical perspective and methodology

The research was aimed at exploring the perspectives of children and adults on the duties and responsibilities of children in Kumasi, Ghana. Specifically, it examined:

- Children's views of their duties and responsibilities as well as rights in Ghana.
- Gender dimensions of work among children.
- The contributions of children to family livelihoods.
- Perspectives of parents and teachers on the duties of children in Ghana.
- The extent to which culture influences adult-child relationships in Ghana.

From the theoretical viewpoint, this study was underpinned by the Social Studies of Children and Childhood or the Sociology of Childhood. The Sociology of Childhood recognizes children as active participants in their own social world. It calls for identifying children as active agents in society rather than passive objects. It argues for the value of studying children in their own right and from their own perspectives (James et al., 1998). By so doing, children are to be studied as 'unit of research' independent from adults (Alanen, 2001). Therefore, studies must focus directly on children and their life conditions, activities, knowledge, relationships with peers and adults as well as their own experiences (Alanen, 2001). Consequently, irrespective of the fact that children in Ghana are seen as subordinates occupying the lowest rank in the structure of society this study considered children as active participants. Although most research in Ghana mostly seek the perspectives of adults only ignoring that of children, this research took a different approach. Based on the Sociology of Childhood, I saw children as the principal subjects that can give credible data of their

experiences concerning the research. Rather than soliciting for information *on* children from adults, I did the research *with* children as participants.

From the rights discourses, I discussed that international children's rights actors use the 'rights-based approach' which indentifies right-holders and their entitlements and duty-bearers and their obligations (UNHCHR, 2006). Therefore, rights-bearers are strengthened to make their claims. Like the UNCRC, children are empowered as holders of rights to make their individual claims. This notion was mainly based on the ideas from the West since the drafters of the Convention were from individualistic Western societies. But I argued that based on intra and inter-households social contract, cultural values, and poverty, children in Ghana see their rights in tandem to the rights of the family collective (Abebe, 2012). Because in the Ghanaian society, rights are not automatic; rather rights are earned through fulfilling certain duties and obligations. This means that there are no rights without a role to play and duties to fulfil. Therefore, children see themselves as interdependent human beings.

In addition, in studying children's lives and work, the social, cultural, economic and political conditions and contexts under their lives unfold must be taken into consideration. In this way work will be seen as either rewarding or exploitative.

As a qualitative research, multiple participatory research methods were employed to collect data from both young and adult participants. Semi-participants observations were used to observe children in their natural setting. In this way, I saw their roles, interpersonal relationships and how they interacted with people every day. Focus-groups were also used in this research. In a group involving five children and me as a moderator, children were able to articulate their thoughts about their duties in the home, school and community. Additionally, as part of the research, children wrote stories and made lists about their experiences and livelihoods in the Ghanaian society. The 'listing' method provided precise data on the responsibilities of children and this was also very successful because it was less confrontational unlike other methods. Semi-structured interviews gave participants the chance to talk about their roles in the family from their own experiences. Even though power imbalances emanated between me and the participants especially during face-to-face interviews, my role as a non-authoritarian adult enabled me to overcome this problem. Overall, the multiple methods helped me to counterbalance the weakness of one method.

7.2 Children's knowledge and awareness of rights, UNCRC and ACRWC

One objective of this research was to find out children's knowledge and awareness of their rights. The data analysis revealed that children had less knowledge about their rights. This was because rights are not something that is usually talked about in the Ghanaian setting. In a FGD with young participants, most of them defined 'rights' in terms of something that is 'good' or 'bad'. Upon further discussions it was defined as a 'privilege' for young people. In this way, they understood it and gave information through other methods such as story writings, lists making and interviews. Data collected from participants were grouped under the *Three Ps* (Wringe, 1995:19) of the UNCRC. Under provision rights, children stated the right to have access to food, shelter, clothing and education. Protection rights included; protection from abuse, harm, having access to medical care and so on. It was not surprising that the children did not talk much about their right to express their views freely. Even though children acknowledge their participation rights, they did not see it as a priority. Instead, they saw the need to have access to food, shelter, protection and education as their biggest priority. As one participant emphasized, having good food, clothes and shelter is more important, I do not care if my parents listen to me or not, after all I get what I need.

This view was shared by almost all the young participants. Especially among the lower and middle classes in Ghana, poverty coupled with unemployment makes children very vulnerable. For instance, UNICEF (2000) argues that children are often the hardest hit by poverty and in turn exposes them to defenceless deprivation that renders them more vulnerable. Therefore, children did not see themselves as autonomous individuals bearing separate rights as postulated by the UNCRC which empowers children to self-determination. Instead Ghanaian children saw their rights embedded within the family where they interact with other members for their livelihoods. They perform complex duties as part of the family to make it function effectively. This depicted that in the family context, school and communities in Ghana, children do not pay particular attention to their own rights but they saw themselves as part of groups.

As an international human rights instrument empowering children as right-bearers, I sought the views of children about their knowledge of the UNCRC. Nevertheless, none of them had heard anything about the children's convention. Although the Republic of Ghana was the first to ratify the convention in Africa about two decades ago, its contents exist only at the

political and policy levels. Likewise, children had no knowledge of the ACRWC which is the document that is specific to the African continent. Although, it is the only document that incorporated the duties and responsibilities of children in Africa (Article 31 of ACRWC). Surprisingly, African states were slower to sign the ACRWC than the UNCRC. As de Waal (2002) argues, this may suggest their motives for signing the UNCRC related more to achieving international acknowledgment than a true commitment to children's rights. As a result, this may account as part of the reasons why the Government of Ghana has not integrated any human rights instrument into the school curriculum for students. It can be argued that the convention was ratified in order to get aid from international organisations and donors such as United Nations, World Bank, IMF and so on.

7.3 Duties and responsibilities of children

In Ghana, children are valued for their roles as members of the family or society. Twum-Danso (2009) argues that in Ghana, by giving birth to a child and taking care of the child, adults are issuing out a contract which they expect a pay back once the child is in the position to do so by performing some responsibilities. Therefore, children are expected to do certain obligations according to gender, age, competence, birth order, maturity and sibling composition (Punch, 2001). The study revealed that the first responsibilities of children are *respect* and *obedience*. These two cultural values are entrenched in the traditions, norms and customs of society which are very influential in the relationships between adult and children. Traditionally, children are socialised to respect adults and listen to their advice. They are not supposed to be assertive and challenge adult authority. Both children and adult participants emphasised the importance of respect and obedience during the field work.

In addition, through participatory methods such as story writings, list making and FGDs, I offered participants the chance to provide information about their duties. Most of the data collected from participants concerning their duties were domestic chores. These included running errands, cleaning the compound, food preparation, washing cars, polishing shoes and so on. However, most of the duties identified by children were gender specific.

The data revealed that children perform different kinds of responsibilities at different times in the family. Also, at school, children clean the compound, classroom, chairs and run errands for teachers. They obey their teachers, treat them with respect, and behave appropriately by

following the rules and regulations of the school. Lastly, in order to organise the data from participants regarding the duties and responsibilities of children in Ghanaian societies, I grouped the data under three categories. These comprises: personal responsibility, social rules of conduct and collective responsibility (Taylor & Smith, 2009). The first was 'personal responsibility', this referred to task performed by children for their own well-being for instance good grooming. 'Social rules of conduct' referred to how children are expected to behave in society such as showing respect and being obedient. Lastly, 'collective responsibility' referred to duties children performed for other people such as parents, siblings, extended family and so on as part of a group.

7.4 Gender dimensions of work

Responsibilities of children in Ghana begin early within the household and by the age of 5 or 6, children have tasks assigned to them based on gender, age, size and competencies. Research participants confirmed that most roles in the family are gender specific. Traditionally, the kitchen is reserved for girls due to the cultural idea that they are supposed to cook for the family. Therefore, both young and adult participants argued that one specific duty for females is food preparation. Other explicit duties of girls included; scrubbing the bathroom, sweeping the compound, mobbing the floor, fetching water, emptying dustbin and so on. Since women are responsible for the nutritional needs and nurturing of children, girls are also trained from an early age to take care of their younger siblings. This ensured that in future, they could take care of their own children. As a result, some female participants mentioned that they bathe their younger siblings, change their diapers, feed them and put them to sleep.

For boys, the study showed that they normally run errands for the family. Some participants noted that they are responsible for cutting grasses, cleaning, polishing shoes, washing cars and so on. Most boys especially those from poor homes often engage in monetary activities to raise extra income to support the family. Nevertheless, responsibilities in the school setting can be blurry. This is because in school, both boys and girls are instructed about the same duties and expectations. Many children talked about how "students are obliged to obey the rules and regulations in the school;" or how "Both boys and girls are supposed to respect teachers and the authorities."

These perspectives reveal that it was difficult to know the specific responsibilities of boys on one hand and that of girls on the other hand in the school. Since they are all expected to behave appropriate and follow rules. But duties in the house are clearer to define in terms of gender even though sometimes they overlap.

7.5 Contribution of children to family livelihoods

Another important objective of this research was to find out the vital contribution of children to their families through their labour. Hollos (2002) denotes that in Ghana, work is seen not as an adult domain where children might help, but the role of every member is very essential for the family. This assertion signified why children are socialised and trained to carry out certain duties once they have the abilities to do so. The study found out that Ghanaian children perform unpaid household duties and responsibilities for their parents, siblings and extended family members. In addition to their domestic work, some children especially those from the poor homes also engage in income generating activities to support the economy of their families. Data collected from participants depicted that children run errands and some act as care-givers by taken care of younger siblings. It is worth noting that these unpaid services rendered by children ensure that the domestic unit functions effectively and efficiently relieving parents to do more highly skilled activities.

Children who engage in economic ventures are able to contribute to family income. In Ghana, poverty and lack of jobs had made many parents and guardians unable to provide the basic needs of children. Consequently, in such families, the labour force of children is crucial for its survival and growth. Thus children sell polythene bags, dough nuts, popcorn, toilet rolls, and so on, on the streets to supplement family economy.

Most children in Ghana contribute enormously for the effective functioning of their families. Therefore, any attempt to stop children from working in relation to their ‘rights’ would do them more harm than good. This is because it would aggravate the poverty level in the family and make children more vulnerable. Children are hardest hit by poverty and rights-discourse to ‘free’ children from work could put them at risk.

7.6 How does culture influences adult-child relationships in Ghana

Culturally, in Ghana three values which underlie adult-child relationships are respect, reciprocity and responsibility (the latter has been discussed earlier on). These values form the bases for all interactions and communications in society. As noted by Twum-Danso (2009), from an earlier age children are trained to respect adults and submit to their authority. All the research participants mentioned 'respect' as a very important structural principle in Ghana. Since Ghanaian society is structured hierarchically, adults generally occupy the top position and children are at the bottom, children are obliged to respect adults. Therfore, 'titles' are used to call adults to show respect. Children address elderly people with their particular titles such as Mr., Mrs., or *bra* or *sister* for older boys or girls respectively. Additionally, as a sign of respect, participants noted that when children are talking to adults they must use the word *mepawokyew* which is translated as *please*. The young participants noted that respecting adults is essential because if you do not do that you cannot get your needs. On the other hand, children who are disrespectful and do not behave appropriately are seen as social deviants. People rain insults on them and other call them witches. This is because such children are perceived as not well-cultured.

The ethos of reciprocity is also fundamental in regulating the relationship between adults and children in Ghana. According to Pellow (1977:42) in terms of reciprocity "if one party gives or does something to (for) another, there is an 'equivalent' return to be made... One does not receive something for nothing". This statement means that reciprocity is a two-way affair, thus it involves two parties, and each party has a duty to perform by reciprocating what the other has done. For instance, during an individual interview, a business man illustrated this point: *The child has the right to eat and also have the duty to clean*. In line with this statement, a baker also asserted that: *In our culture, nothing is for free*. Also, from the perspectives of adult participants, children are valued as an investment in old age. In other words, parents and guardians are of the opinion that children will reciprocate their love and care for them by taking of them when they are old. This means that reciprocity accounts virtually as one of the reasons why parents and adults make investment of sentiments, devotion of time, protection, and provision of financial resources for children.

Most children in Ghana are aware of this culture, therefore they do their best to reciprocate the care offered to them by their parents so that their own children will do the same for them.

Following this argument, it is worthy of note that even though the UNCRC advocates for inalienable rights for children, Ghanaian children see themselves as part of their families. This is because it is within the family where they can have their livelihoods. Therefore, they show respect to family members, obey adults, reciprocate their care and perform complex duties and responsibilities for the growth and management of their families.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions are drawn. Culturally, Ghanaian children are highly valued for their socio-economic roles and domestic duties they perform. This view is in line with article 31 of the ACRWC stipulates that children should work for the cohesion of the family, institution and the state as well as show respect to adults. The study revealed that children are dutiful in society and they are socialised to perform multi-faceted duties and responsibilities within the family. Through their labour, they are able to contribute through both financial and or material means for the effective functioning of their families.

The research also depicted that both the young and adult participants did not support the idea that children should have separate rights or equal rights as adults. This is because children in Ghana are trained as part of the family and not as individuals as seen in the West where the UNCRC originated. It is worthy of note that "to muster resources needed for viable livelihoods children 'in Ghana' depend critically on family collectives and social networks of support and not the state" (Abebe, 2012:17). As a result, by focussing on individual rights, participants argued that children will be left more vulnerable. Because; it is within the family that children interact with other members in order to have rights fulfilled.

The study has also demonstrated how cultural values such as respect, reciprocity and responsibility play a critical role and influence the interpersonal relationships between adults and children. Adult-child relations in Ghana cannot be detached from these values. Therefore, the argument here is that when implementing children's rights instruments like the UNCRC, it is crucial for both academics and policy makers to consider the importance of cultural values, norms and traditions in other countries before policies are enacted and enforced. In sum, the argument still holds that children are dutiful in Ghanaian societies. They perform complex duties and responsibilities and work for the cohesion of the family. Therefore, they do not consider themselves as autonomous individuals bearing separate rights

but as interdependent human beings whose rights are interconnected with that of the family collective.

7.8 Recommendations and future research areas

This thesis has sought to divert attention from the conventional way of excluding the views of children from research. As a result, by drawing inspiration from the theories of the Social Studies of Children and Childhood that sees children as social actors, this thesis is proposing that future research in Ghana must take into account the views of children. This is because it is high time children are involved in research especially those concerning them. It is worthy of note that individuals have the best knowledge of their own experiences. Therefore, it is not only right to seek the perspectives of adults and ignore that of children.

There is a need for future research in this area to have a broader understanding of the duties and responsibilities of children in Ghana. In spite of the knowledge produced from this study, lack of time and financial constraint within which the research was conducted did not allow for thorough investigation of larger sample population. Therefore, I recommend that a larger sample size for instance in a PhD dissertation can be used to ascertain the perspectives of other people concerning the research topic. This can include participants from the department of social welfare in Ghana, MOWAC, police and some traditional elders in the Ghanaian society. Moreover, since this research was conducted in the Ashanti region of Ghana, specifically in Kumasi, it would be worthwhile to replicate this research in other parts regions like Cape-coast, Sunyani, or Accra. This will enable to see how the opinions of children and adults in these places regarding duties and responsibilities is congruent with the findings of this research or not, and why.

Furthermore, since this research has highlighted the interdependencies existing between adults and children, I recommend that further research must be conducted on a larger scale to see the extent to which children's lives are interconnected and intertwined with the family. Lastly, this study has brought to light that children in Ghanaian societies are valued for the roles they perform in the family. And they contribute by performing domestic chores for the maintenance of the home. Others also engage in trading to earn money to support family income. Therefore, policies and interventions aimed at restricting children from work will put them at risk and jeopardise their future. As a result, policy makers must consider the socio-

cultural and economic conditions and contexts of children's lives because it is constructed differently geographically before policies are being enacted.

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NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)

NOWERGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)

Semi-structured interview guide for children

- Age?
- Gender?
- Grade?
- What do you know about children's rights?
- What rights do children have?
- Knowledge about UNCRC and ACRWC?
- Do children have the same rights as adults? [If not, how are they different? If yes, why?
- Individual rights vs. interdependent rights?
- Priority of rights?
- Children's responsibilities at home, school, towards parents, towards siblings, community? Etc
- Do children have the same responsibilities as adults? How different or similar?
- Do boys have the same responsibilities as girls why or why not?
- Benefits of children's duties?
- What is your family size?
- Structure of the family?
- Do you participate in decision-making in the family?
- What about the school and community?
- Do you think your voice is heard or children's voice must be heard more?
- Final comments or questions?

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)

NOWERGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)

Focus group guide for children

- Introduction
- Have you heard about children's rights before? Where?
- Do you think children have rights? Why or why not?
- Can you tell me some of them? In school, home and community.
- Are children's rights the same or different from that of adults?
- Do you participate in any decisions at home or school?
- Are your views been heard in these settings? Can you give me an example?
- Do you have responsibilities as children?
- What are some of your responsibilities at home, school and community?
- Do you like your responsibilities in these contexts? Is it hard or not?
- What are the benefits or disadvantages of having responsibilities?
- In your view are children suppose to have responsibilities? Why or why not?
- Do you wish you only go to school and play without any responsibilities?
- Any comments or questions?

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)
NOWERGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)

Focus group guide for teachers

- Introduction
- Gender?
- What is a right?
- Do children have rights?
- Mention some of their rights in school as well as the community?
- Do you think children have the same rights as adults? Why or why not?
- Individual rights vs. Interdependent rights?
- Do children have individual rights or interdependent rights in the Ghanaian culture?
- Do you consider the views of children for instance in programmes and activities?
- How do cultural values or perceptions of Ghanaians affect adult-child relationships?
- What do you think are the challenges to children's rights in Ghana?
- How can children's rights be enhanced especially in school? What is a responsibility?
- How do you enforce children's responsibilities at school?
- What are children's responsibilities at school and in the community?
- Are children's responsibilities gendered?
- Importance of duties children perform?
- Do you have a specific curriculum about children's rights and responsibilities?
- Any comments or questions?

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)
NOWERGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)

Semi-structured interview guide for parents

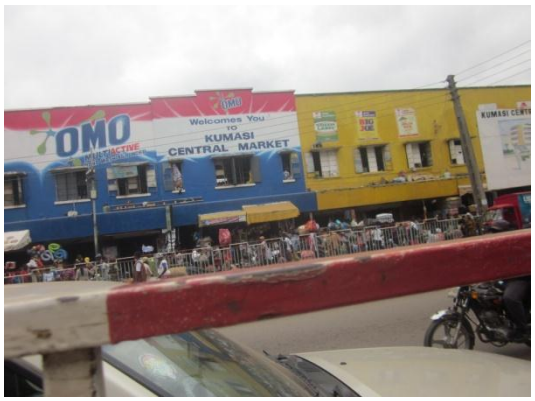
- Gender?
- Age?
- Marital Status?
- Number of children? Birth order?
- What is a right?
- What kind of rights children have within family, school etc (Do you think children have rights at all)? Why or why not?
- Do children have the same rights as adult?
- Who makes decisions in your house?
- What are the kinds of decision children make? What are the decisions children can't make? Why?
- Children's individual rights vs. what are family rights?
- Which of the two kinds of rights important, why? In Ghana, do children have individual rights or Interdependent rights with the family?
- How do cultural values or perceptions of Ghanaians affect adult-child relationships?
- In what way or ways is your family structured?
- Responsibilities?
- What kind of responsibilities do children have? At home, community?
- Do you have specific tasks for your children? Like male and female tasks? Why?
- Name some of the gender responsibilities for children?
- Contribution of children to family livelihoods?
- Role of extended family members in nurturing children?
- Do you think children should only play and go to school without any responsibilities? Why are responsibilities so important in the Ghanaian context?
- What constitutes a good childhood? A bad childhood?
- Do you have any comments or questions?

Figure 3: Pictures from fieldwork: used by informed consent

Children at school with teachers

Carpentry shop

Kumasi central market



A girl selling pure water on the streets