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Public's Perceptions of the Phenomenon of Street children: A Qualitative Study of Students and Shopkeepers in Accra, Ghana.

Trondheim, May 2011.

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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY

MASTER THESIS

PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE PHENOMENON OF STREET CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS AND SHOPKEEPERS IN ACCRA, GHANA

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy degree in Human Development, Institute of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.

May 2011

Author

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DECLARATION

I**, Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie**, do hereby declare that except for references to other people's work, which have been duly acknowledged, this work was conducted by me under the supervision of **Dr. Berit Overå Johannesen** at the Institute of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, during the 2010/2011 academic year. This work has neither been submitted in whole nor in part for any degree in this University or elsewhere.

Signed: **…………………………..**   **..…………………………….**

        Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie   **Date**

          (Student)

This work has been submitted for examination with my approval.

Signed: **………………………….**   **..………………………………**

        Supervisor / Advisor   **Date**

      Dr. Berit Overå Johannesen

       (**PhD: Associate Professor**)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

- ✚ All the 'lost children' in the street situation and homeless.

- ✚ The fond and loving memory of my later mother, Deaconess Agnes Afokai Asibey. "Although you have passed on, you would forever remain a heroine in our hearts".

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</u>

ABSTRACT

Drawing on recorded interviews and focus group discussions with shopkeepers, and junior and senior high school children respectively in Accra Central, this study explores the public's perceptions of the phenomenon of street children in Accra, Ghana. A semi-structured interview guide was used. Qualitative analyses of the data indicated that both shopkeepers and school children who participated in this study generally have positive and supportive perception of street children. However, the school children tend to be more empathetic to street children; as they (school children) identify more with the street children's situation. Informants' helping behaviours towards street children were found to be influenced by religious beliefs and media pronouncements and portrayals about street children. The phenomenon was attributed to causative factors beyond the individual street child (e.g., family dysfunctions and parenting deficits, poverty, dysfunctional laws and cultural practices). On preventive and remedial measures, informants suggested cultural, ideological and structural changes in families and the society at large.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAS: Catholic Action for Street Children

CBOs: Community Based Organizations

CSC: Consortium for Street Children

JHS: Junior High School

NDPC: National Development Planning Commission

NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations

NMIMR: Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research

NTNU: Norwegian University of Science and Technology

SHS: Senior High School

STD: Sexually Transmitted Disease

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UN-HABITAT: United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children”

(Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, former president of South Africa)

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background to the Study

In his 2010 state of the nation address, the president of the Republic of Ghana (Professor John Evans Atta Mills) stated bluntly that the spectacle of street children in urban areas in Ghana is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated (Ghana Government, 2011). Approximately three decades ago (January 9, 1979) the International Year of the Child was proclaimed by the UN. The proclamation was aimed at directing the attention of countries round the world onto the need to safeguard and care (in addition to providing apposite legal protection) for children against such problems as (but not limited to) malnutrition and inaccessibility to education (Black, 1986). The declaration thus, brought into focus the plight of, and the need to ensure the well-being of street children, orphans, working children and other 'at risk' or vulnerable children everywhere. To reiterate and buttress this clarion call on all nations, the most recent and maiden world youth report of the UN-HABITAT on the theme, *'Leveling the Playing Field: Inequality of Youth Opportunity'*, posits the need for nations (particularly in the developing parts of the world) to pursue justice, equity and fairness by ensuring social, political, economic and cultural inclusion of their youth (UN-HABITAT, 2010).

For some time now, street children and youth have been the focus of attention from government agencies, NGOs, academics and the general society around the world. The phenomenon of street children is a problem with a worldwide strand and numerous capital cities and urban centres across the globe are now "a haven of survival" for many of these children, more so in Africa (Boakye-Boaten, 2006, p. 3). Children and young people need to be shielded from adverse circumstances and influences capable of disrupting their meaningful development into healthy adulthood.

1.2.   **Statement of the Problem**

It is an undeniable fact and general knowledge that street children are part of the urban scene of Accra. These children depend on the public for their daily survival: they scrounge off the public, they serve as porters at market places, bus and railway stations; they shine shoes, and some of the children steal from the public (Orme & Seipel, 2007).   Available literature on the phenomenon of street children in Accra (and in Ghana) largely focuses on how the children are able to cope with the harsh realities of street life, the activities they engage in, their family background, their health, their perceptions, attitudes, their ambitions and other concerns (see Anarfi, 1997; Baah, 2007; Beauchemin, 1999; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Boakye-Boaten, 2008; Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), 1996, 2000; Hatløy, & Huser, 2005; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Payne, 2004; Wutoh et al., 2006).

However, very little literature exists on the phenomenon from the perspective of the general public (Boakye-Boaten, 2006). There is very little systematic enquiry into public beliefs, perceptions and attitudes regarding the street children phenomenon in Ghana. This situation appears problematic because public and popular perceptions and attitudes towards street children (and the homeless in general) are decisive in the shaping and framing of interventions; and trends in issue-specific public opinions have been found to affect social policy and the enactment of relevant laws (Barnett, Quackenbush & Pierce, 1997; Tipple & Speak, 2004).

Again, the existing research evidence regarding the street-children phenomenon from the perspective of the public in Accra has been established through studies involving participants who work directly with street children (Boakye-Boaten, 2006). These participants include such stakeholders as ministries in charge of children's affairs, NGOs, social workers, government social welfare agencies, and parents of street children (ibid). These are stakeholders whose mission is to advocate and work in favour of street children;

hence, their attitudes to and perception of these children tend, as expected, to be very positive (Boakye-Boaten, 2006; CAS, 2000; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Payne, 2004). However, for a more holistic and thorough understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of the general public, I believe it is necessary to include other members and sections of civil society.

1.3. **Aims of the Study**

Premised on the foregoing background, the following are the specific aims pursued by the present study:

- To explore shopkeepers' and school children's perception of street children in Accra Central.

- To examine the factors accounting for the phenomenon of street children from the perspectives of shopkeepers and school children.

- To find out informants' perspectives as to how the street children phenomenon can be remedied or prevented.

1.4. **Significance of the Study**

In Ghana, the multifaceted realities of street living and the diversities of experiences and responses to street life (from the perspective of the street children) have been acknowledged, extensively studied and considered in intervention programmes designed by government and non-governmental agencies. The majority of these intervention programmes have not yielded the expected positive results, and the situation and life journeys of street children remain ones of continuous pain and suffering, dislocation and marginalization (Orme & Seipel, 2007). According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), the perceptions and attitudes of the larger society towards the disadvantaged (including street children) can help reverse or perpetuate

the oppressive situation of the disadvantaged in society. Knowing these perceptions is the first step to undoing the damaging effects they have on reversing the situation of the disadvantaged. However, the phenomenon of street children in Ghana, from the perspective of civil society, is less well-studied (Boakye-Boaten, 2006). Thus, the findings of this study will bring to the fore the perceptions of school children (students) and shopkeepers regarding the phenomenon of street children in Accra Central.

Additionally, the findings of this study will help mainstreaming advocates, government and non-governmental organizations that work with street children in the development of relatively holistic intervention programmes that take cognizance of and incorporate the larger society's perception of the phenomenon. Apart from contributing to the empirical evidence on the public's perceptions of street children in Ghana, the findings of this study will foster attitudinal change on the part of community towards street children.

1.5. **Motivation for the Study**

As indicated earlier, street children in Accra are dominantly found at market places (compared to rail and lorry stations). Some of them scrounge off shopkeepers; some serve as porters (popularly known in Ghana as *kayayei*[1]) and truckpushers[2] to the clientele of these shop keepers (Agarwal et al., 1997; Beauchemin, 1999; CAS, 2000; Ofosu-Kusi & Mizen, 2005; Van den Berg, 2007); some of them are hired as hawkers and sales assistants to shopkeepers for commission; some of them are hired as labourers (especially teenage boys)

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[1] Kayayei: "kayayei" is the plural of "kayayoo", a term used by the Ga people, an ethnic group in the Greater Accra region, to describe women or girls who engage in carrying goods for a fee. Etymologically, this term is derived from two words, one from Hausa and one from Ga: 'kaya' from Hausa meaning wares or goods, whilst 'yoo' is from Ga meaning woman or girl (Coffie, cited in Agarwal et al., 1997; p.261)

[2] Truckpushers: Men or boys are called tuckpushers because instead of carrying the loads, they use flat-bed four-wheeler wooden trolleys (Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009)

to convey goods from lorries to replenish stalls of shopkeepers; and others are retailers whose activities are seen as business threat to shopkeepers.

What's more, some of these children sleep under the awnings, sheds or in the open spaces in front of market stalls at night (Beauchemin, 1999; kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe & Castaldo, 2007; Kwankye, et al., 2009; Lugalla & Kibassa, 2003). Thus, shopkeepers interact with and play key roles in the daily lives of street children in Accra. In this regard, a systematic examination of shopkeepers' perceptions of street children would bring to bear how street children are perceived within the informal sector of society.

Students (below age 18) are still children going through socialization. They grow to mirror the world they live in and our understanding of the 'flow of life' (Cunningham & Baker, 2007; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Swift, 1996). Students sharing the same locality with street children in Accra Central are also likely to share recreation ground with the street children given the rapidly growing number of street children within Accra Central (CAS, 2000). The students may interact with or have friends who are street children; or have cohorts who have dropped out of school and are now street children in the same locality (CAS, 1996).

Assessing the perceptions of these students about street children will yield a better understanding as to how other children in the society perceive street children. As children grow to mirror the world they live in, the responses of the school children are likely to reflect how teachers, parents, religious leaders, the media and other agents of socialization characterise and present street children to these school children in their various social settings. Finally, a cross-sectional study of this kind will help assess if children's and adults' perceptions of street children vary and the areas in which these variations occur.

1.6. **Research Question**

The guiding research questions I sought to address in this study are:

1. How do shopkeepers and school children position street children?

2. How does the public's perceptions of street children from the perspectives of shopkeepers and school children differ (i.e., if any difference exits)?

3. What causal attributions do shopkeepers and school children make to the street children phenomenon?

4. What do shopkeepers and school children suggest as remedial or preventive measures to the street children phenomenon?

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2009) postulates that the use of theory serves as a lens for finding answers to the research question as well as providing broad explanations. Thus, the theories serving as the explanatory framework for the present study are the social exclusion theory and the bio-ecological systems theory of human development.

2.1.1. Social Exclusion Theory and Street Children in Accra

Social exclusion theory provides a useful framework within which to examine the phenomenon of street children in relation to the public's perceptions as has been exemplified by considerable and different community psychological works on homelessness. These works include typologies of homelessness, accounts from the homeless, access to services, public attitudes to homelessness, mental health and homelessness, paths to, through and from homelessness, policy analyses and social support (Kagan & Burton, 2005; Shinn, 2000). Theoretically, social exclusion is a wider concept than poverty, encompassing both low material means and the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life and in some characterisations alienation and distance from mainstream society (Duffy, 1995). That is, the concept of social exclusion is important because it captures the *processes* of disempowerment and alienation.

Similarly, in Ghana, the draft policy framework for addressing vulnerability and exclusion for the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) defines social exclusion as the "inability to participate in decision making in political and socio-cultural affairs; inability to compete or participate in an event due to discrimination" (NDPC, 2005, p.6). More recently,

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2007) has, based on the outcome of interviews conducted in Ghana on human development, provided some insightful local perspective of social exclusion in Ghana:

> Social exclusion refers to limited/inequitable opportunities and capabilities to participate in decision making, gain access to meaningful livelihood opportunities and social services due to discriminatory institutional practices in the political, economic, social spheres based on gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age, income status, health status, educational attainment, and disability (p.12).

This definition broadens the one provided by the GPRS II as it incorporates limited opportunities and capabilities for accessing basic resources or the strategic edge. In essence, the concept of social exclusion is multidimensional in nature as it does not only relate to a lack of material resources, but also to issues like inadequate social participation, lack of cultural and educational capital, inadequate access to services and lack of power. The human development study by UNDP (2007) in Ghana establishes, for example, the strong links that are often made between social exclusion and lack of opportunity and information asymmetry. It also shows that social exclusion is associated with the lack of capacity of excluded groups to act on their own behalf. Thus, the social exclusion framework captures the multi-dimensionality of the drivers of exclusion; both material and relational dimensions. According to UNDP (ibid) some of the key material drivers of social exclusion in Ghana are insecure livelihoods, rural / urban disparities, income poverty, and resource degradation. The relational dimension includes discrimination (cultural norms, gender, age, disability, health status etc.), low political capital, and low access to information. Interestingly enough, it is the relational dimension or social relations perspective rather than the commonly held view about poverty as a cause of exclusion that emerged from the survey (UNDP, ibid). The report further identifies some of the manifestations of social exclusion in Ghanaian society:

deprivation, isolation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, poverty, vulnerability, weak coping mechanisms, and lack of status and recognition. Thus, the list of manifestations of social exclusion focuses very much on issues of rights and discrimination and reflects processes by which people fall out of mainstream society.

Kagan and Burton (2005, p.296) assert that at the core of exclusion is the marginalization from "fulfilling and full social life at the individual, interpersonal and societal levels". They contend that individuals who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources at their disposal; they may become stigmatised and are usually at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their chances to make social contributions may be limited and they may develop low self-confidence and self-esteem. For instance, if they do not have work and live with service supports, they may have limited opportunities for meeting with others, and may become isolated. Hence, a vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationships means they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. Social policies and practices may mean they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as education and health services, housing, income, leisure activities and work. Kagan and Burton (ibid) observe that generally street children (like all homeless people) suffer all three dimensions of marginalization: poverty/economic dislocation, disempowerment/social dislocation, and psychosocial-ideological threats.

Children and adolescents are expected to be at home or in school, but not in the streets without adult supervision. This fact, according to De Moura (2002), results in street children portrayed as exhibiting socially unacceptable qualities and behaviours thereby placing them at the fringes of society. Street children are not part of the larger community; they form small communities on their own; a sub-culture, which grows within a larger culture (CAS, 1996). This situation can be likened to an in-group versus out-group phenomenon. The in-group

represents the wider community, and the out-group, the street children, where the wider community has a lot of prejudices and stereotypes about the street children and vice versa. As acknowledged by others (e.g. Payne, 2004; Tipple & Speak, 2009), a series of self-reinforcing perceptions of the public helps to keep street children (and other homeless people) as 'others' and 'out of place' in society.

In spite of the resilience developed by street children to make up for, virtually, all the inadequacies in their lives, they still find themselves, on daily basis, battling marginalization from the urban society in which they find themselves (Koller, & Hutz, 2001). Campbell and Williams (2007) assert that street children are marginalized and rejected by virtually all sections of the urban community and are relegated, inevitably, to the position of social reject. Tipple and Speak (2004) found that these negative attributions and ill-informed perceptions of the larger society about street children are self-reinforcing and serve to keep homeless children and people excluded from society: they tend to affect how these children are treated by society.

Thus, street children are seen as a problem, and a threat to society instead of viewed as children with problems who need help from society (Corsaro, 2011). They are seen as victims, because they do not have shelter, clothes, food, or adult protection; they have to work on the streets instead of going to school, are sexually exploited, and so on. They are also perceived as transgressors because they often use drugs, commit robbery, make noise, and are grouped in threatening gangs. The adult environment is usually very hostile to street children because the street is traditionally not a place for children (Koller & Hutz, 2001; Scheper-Hughes, 1995). These negative perceptions and attitudes consequently lead to poorly designed and inefficient intervention programmes aimed at grappling with the street children phenomenon in Ghana (Boakye-Boaten, 2006).

2.1.2. Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development is deployed by the present study alongside the social exclusion framework in the bid to establish a nuanced understanding of the street child phenomenon and further contextualise the public's perceptions of the phenomenon in Accra. The causes or reasons for children taking to living on the streets can be somewhat complex and not attributable to a single factor. Against this backdrop, Maphatane (1994) recommends the identification of the pertinent dynamic interrelationships between street children and the social environment within which they live. In other words, any effort aimed at identifying the causes of the phenomenon of the street children should view the children in relation to their broader social milieu. Urie Bronfenbrenner offers the most "differentiated and complete account of contextual influences on children's development" (Berk, 2006; p.26). Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to the bio-ecological theory of human development as involving "the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing individual person lives" (p. 21). Within this perspective the child is viewed as developing within an intricate system of relationships affected by many levels of the surrounding environment (Berk, 2006). Bronfenbrenner sees the environment as a series of nested structures which include, but transcends, home, school, and the neighbourhood settings within which children spend their daily lives (see figure 1.0). Bronfenbrenner thus proposes that the environment is made up of five interdependent layers or systems with each having a significant impact on the development of children: micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The microsystem, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), is "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p.22). It encompasses the relationships and

interactions children have with their immediate surroundings (Berk, 2006). Within this system the focus is on the patterns of the roles, activities and personal relations that children have in the face-to-face settings that form their particular social encounters (e.g., day care centre, playground and so on.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mesosystem provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem. It "comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25). This includes, for a child, the relations among home, school, neighbourhood, peers, teachers, and child-care centre. That is, this layer concerns the interactions between several microsystems within which children shift between various roles as a result of moving between one microsystem to the other (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the "exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the settings containing the developing person" (p.25). In other words, the exosystem is the social setting that indirectly affects children when they interact with some structures in their microsystem. Children are not directly participating or involved in these social settings but the process and experiences there affect the development of children. These can be formal organizations such as parents' workplaces, their religious institutions, and health and welfare services in the community. Thus any resource made available by the exosystem will either work to enrich or impoverish the quality of interactions within the micro- and mesosytems (Harper & Carver, 1999).

The fourth layer, the macrosystem, is the outermost layer of the model (see figure 1.0 below). It consists of government, policies, laws and customs of one's culture, subculture or social class, broad and social ideologies, and values and belief systems. Berk (2006) argues that the priority this system gives to children's needs affects the support they receive at inner

levels of the environment. Thus, opportunity structures and life-course options for the child exist within this system (Muus, Velder & Porton, 1996).

The fifth level of analysis and temporal dimension within Bronfenbrenner's model is the chronosystem. It involves the socio-historical conditions, transitions and changes in individuals and their environment across time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Cobb and Seery (2001) argue that the chronosystem mirrors the dynamic environmental transitions, encompassing entries, exits, milestones, and turning points over time in the life of the child.

Premised on the foregoing, it can thus be said that Bronfenbrenner's model of human development posits the development of children to be neither controlled by environmental conditions and circumstances nor engendered by inner dispositions. Rather, children, whether on the streets or domiciled, are both products and producers of their environments; hence both children and the environment form a "network of interdependent effects" (Berk, 2006; p.29).
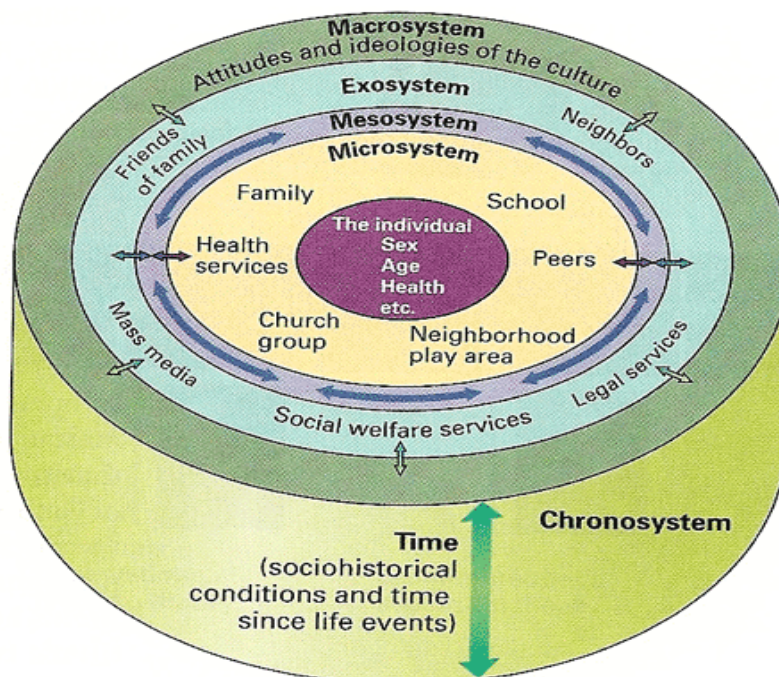
Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner: ecological theory of child development (*Source:* Santrock, 2008; p.33)

2.2. Review of Related Studies

2.2.1. Children and Childhood in the Ghanaian Context

Ghana is a multi-ethnic society with different languages and religions, separated by geographical and climate diversities. The family institution remains at the hub of the social structure although faced with ceaseless social changes. The family continues to be the most fundamental social unit in Ghanaian society. According to Salm and Falola (2002), the Ghanaian family structure differs variously across the ethnic groups but its internal values are similar, if not the same. The family has a hierarchical structure (with children at the base) that espouses and determines roles and responsibilities of each member within the household and the community. In their book, *'Culture and Customs of Ghana'*, Salm and Falola (Ibid) argue that,

> These roles are determined, in large part, by age, gender and status. Traditional household relationships revolve around rules of family etiquette that demand certain patterns of interaction and determine behaviour models. The movement of an individual from infancy to youth, to adulthood, and to old age influences the nature of these interactions, in terms of providing for and drawing on family resources according to one's abilities and needs (p.138).

Children are expected to meet certain requirements as they go through socialization in the Ghanaian society. These include (but are not limited to) cultural and economic expectations. Culturally, Salm and Falola (Ibid) discuss that the child is expected to develop mentally and physically by observing adults and partaking in games that reinforce social values and the mores of the society. Economically, from a very young age children are encouraged and expected to contribute to the household's subsistence. From the age of four or five they are helping with tasks such as caring for their siblings, running errands, caring for small

livestock, cleaning, and guarding crops. Between seven and thirteen, they gradually begin engaging in almost all those tasks that adults are carrying out, although in a more limited sense in terms of work occupying their time and the extent to which they have the physical capacity to achieve as much as an adult. In essence,

> Work is thus seen as age-appropriate behaviour for children. This is not merely related to the necessity of children's labour for domestic production, nor for teaching children the skills required to secure their livelihoods as adults. It is a process of enculturation into their roles in the domestic economy and wider community (Hashim, 2007, p.914).

In the Northern parts of the country, for instance, by the age of fourteen children are carrying out all those tasks that adults of their gender are able and expected to do (Hashim, 2005). By this stage, like adults, they are also engaging in private farming (where individuals work an area of land for personal profit or consumption), petty trading or casual work. This work is particularly imperative, as by this age the children are expected to provide for themselves those personal items that are seen as the responsibility of the individual, and also to begin to buy the items necessary for their progression into adulthood; namely pots, basins and bowls, in the case of girls, and livestock to rear in the case of boys (Hashim, 2004). As a result, from about the age of ten children are given their own small plot of land to start farming for themselves, in the same manner in which adults farm private farms; frequently with the help of their mother. In the contemporary urban areas, children are still important contributors to the domestic environment of the family: they assist in their parents' work; however, because the economy of the household includes the pursuit of individual enterprises, it also involves establishing a sense of self-reliance (Hashim, 2007; Salm & Falola, 2002).

Ghana was the first country to sign and ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 2009). Ghana's child protective system is governed by the 1992 Ghana's

Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Children's Act 1998, the CRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Ampong, 2005), and the Juvenile Justice Act 2003. All these policies, legal framework and conventions envisage an internal obligation to ensure the survival, growth, development, and protection of children in Ghana. This formal child protective system is further composed of various institutions and professionals. Unfortunately, the enforcement of these laws and conventions, and the functional efficiency of these institutions, ministries, departments, agencies and organizations are inadequate. This fact is owed partly to the under-resourced nature of most of these institutions. Hence, only limited state actions have been taken to supervise and implement the spirit of these conventions and other child welfare policies and protective statutes (Ampong, 2005; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Oguaah & Tengey, 2002). Boakye-Boaten (2006, p.93) observes that;

> In spite of these elaborate legislative and policy framework, the issue of street children is rarely acknowledged. Conspicuously missing from the Ghana Report to the United Nations Committee of the Rights of the Child is any elaborate policy on street children.

According to Kagan and Burton (2005) individuals who are severely marginalized have their selfhood and their humanity threatened, and are seen as having their fundamental human needs compromised. Children living on the streets are still children undergoing psychological, social and physical development, despite their life conditions. It thus, remains unethical to do nothing about the social exclusion or marginalization of street children. As recommended by others (Anarfi, 2007; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Kwankye et al. 2007; Orme & Seipel, 2007) the need to re-integrate or mainstream street children into proper functioning citizens of the Ghanaian society has become very imperative.

2.2.2. **Conceptualizing and Representing Street Children**

At the hub of research on the phenomenon of street children is a controversy surrounding the acceptance of a common definition for the term "street children". There have been so many discrepancies in the attempt to provide an all-encompassing definition and typology for the term. There are those definitions adopted by non-governmental agencies, academics and researchers, and the media; and another considered a legal definition adopted by various legislators. The issue of measurability and accessibility, the elements of time and space as well as the idea that individuals are active agents in the construction of social reality have made researchers hesitant to accept any one particular definition for street children as universal (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003). Compared to other categories of children who might be identified by their physical and mental abilities, street children cannot be described by precise criteria. Rather, theirs, *street children,* is a generic term that denotes young people with a special relationship to the street, their families and the public at large (Bar-on, 1997). The term 'street children' is commonly used in Africa and South-America, while in Europe, North-Americas, and Australia, the terms homeless children, runaways, throwaways, and push-outs are more common (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). The widely accepted definition of the term is the one provided by the United Nations (UN):

> Any boy or girl...for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults (Lusk, 1992, p.294).

Although widely accepted, the foregoing definition also has its share of controversy. Muchini (cited in UNICEF, 2001) notes the problems associated with the last part of this widely accepted definition of a street child: "...and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or

directed by responsible adults". Muchini (ibid) contends that this part of the definition fails to acknowledge the role played by children in shaping their own destiny. Again, this part reflects society's perception of a child as someone who must live within boundaries delineated by adults. According to Corsaro and Johannesen (2007), children actively make contributions to culture and cultural change but do not merely internalize society. Muchini presupposes that it might be possible that more and more parents are unable to adequately protect, supervise or direct and provide for their children. The result is that these children assume the roles that were originally considered parental roles.

In a report by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa (cited in Schurink & Mathye, 1993), a street child is,

> Any girl or boy who is under the age of eighteen and who has left his/her home environment part time or permanently (because of problems at home and/or in school, or try to alleviate those problems) and who spends most of his/her time unsupervised on the street as part of a subculture of children who live an unprotected communal life and who depend on themselves and each other, and/or not on an adult, for the provision of physical and emotional needs, such as food, clothing, nurturance, direction and socialization (p. 5).

Three elements common to street children could be deduced from the various aforementioned definitions: the children live or spend a significant amount of their time on the street; the street is the children's source of livelihood; and street children are inadequately cared for, protected, or supervised by responsible adults. Again, irrespective of which authority defines street children, the children's relationship with their family is considered a crucial element of the definition (Le Roux & Smith, 1998).

Equally important, the term "street children" is a repository of various typologies. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 1984), provides three types of street children: 'children at risk', 'children *on* the street', and 'children *of* the streets'. Children at risk live in families but work on the streets to supplement the family income. They are poor children with particular risk factors, such as poverty and lack of schooling that may lead to their expulsion from the home and spending their life on the street. According to UNICEF, this is the largest group; they are children of the urban poor and they form the reservoir from which street children spring.

Children *on* the street work on the street during the day and return home at night. Their jobs often consist of menial labour, such as shoe shining; selling of confectionery, lottery tickets, magazines and news papers; carrying goods and peddling cigarettes among others things. A significant number attend school on a part time basis (Lalor, 1999).They sometimes have some family support but usually they live, sleep and work on the street without any family support.

Children *of* the streets have very limited family contact and very remote family ties. The main living place of the children is the street. A subgroup of this category, according to UNICEF, is "abandoned street children", who have no contact with their parents; this includes orphans, runaways, refugees, and others who have no contact with carers. In terms of lifestyle and daily activities, abandoned street children are very similar to children *of* the street. They are distinguishable, in that, all ties with family have been severed, either through death, displacement, or abandonment (Lalor, 1999).

Apteker (1994), however, sees the phenomenon of street children as a *process* (but not in discrete categories) starting with the potential street child spending a small amount of time away from home, and progressing gradually to the total adoption of the street lifestyle

and culture. Researchers have identified these *categories of street children* and *process* of formation in Ghana and other parts of Africa (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994; Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Schurink & Mathye, 1993; Wutoh et al., 2006).

In Ghana, two main types of street children have been identified by previous studies (CAS, 2003; CSC, 2003): the "typical" street child who lives and works on the street; and the urban poor child who survives daily on the street but still has some family ties. Both groups live in sub-standard shelters, sometimes attend school and go onto the street mainly to engage in economic activities.

With regard to the representation of street children, Panter-Brick (2001), argues that the characteristics of street children: their weak or broken (and possibly non-existent) connections with families and independence from adults, are not in line with popularly held views about what constitutes 'proper childhood' in modern thinking. Common images of street children as victims or villains rest upon particular representations of children and twentieth century discourses about childhood which emerged among the wealthier classes of the western industrial world (Boyden, 1990). The juxtaposition of 'street' and 'children' indicates that street location is a peculiar and significant symbol of identity outside the normal frame: in any case, children are also found using fields, lofts, and gardens without there being any apparent need to formulate terms such as "field children", "loft children", or "garden children" (Glauser, cited in Panter-Bricks, 2001; p.15156). According to Hecht (1998), street children upset broad expectations both about the street (a place for commerce, men, and prostitutes) and about childhood (a time for carefree and protected innocence). From the modern Western viewpoint, children who are not at home and nurtured by responsible adults are 'forsaken' or 'deviant,' and street children in particular are 'out of

place' in society and 'outside childhood' (Connolly & Ennew, 1996). It has been argued that such portrayals are actually unhelpful to the children themselves (Ennew, 1994). Many interventions which emphasise a vulnerable and 'lost' childhood have focused on 'rescuing' children from the streets by placing them in institutions or back with a family; this tends to ignore the social networks and coping strategies developed by the children, and generally have failed to provide lasting solutions. The focus of children's activities 'on the street' has also tended to promote unidimensional accounts of their lives; for instance, it is not often realized that children who live on the street commonly attend school and retain contacts with their families (Ennew & Milne, 1997). Thus, it is now generally acknowledged that children actively construct their worlds, and that street children's worlds cannot be distinguished by a simple division between 'home' and 'street', but rather with respect to several of what Lucchini (cited in Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; p.3) calls "domains." These include public and private spaces; institutions such as the justice and police systems; government and civil society programs; groups of adults such as street educators, market vendors and other street workers; as well as such varied 'inside' spaces as prisons, orphanages, cinemas and shopping malls. The children appear to view the streets as a series of spaces between those offered by family and social institutions. Aptekar, Cathey, Ciano, and Giardino (1995) observe that in line with African tradition, the streets have always played an important role in the lives of children and young people in Africa.

Therefore, the conceptualization and social construction of *street children* represent more than just a mere description of a social phenomenon. Additionally, it involves the creation of a scheme to explain street children, a characterization of individuals and their families which "draws heavily on moral values and the conception of an isolated street society" (De Moura, 2002, p.359) and has some very important implications. It can lead to

the stigmatization of poor families and street children, and can as well help to perpetuate their social exclusion and marginalization.

2.2.3. **Incidence and Magnitude of Street Children in Ghana**

Every city in the world has some street children, including the biggest and richest cities of the industrialized world (UNICEF, 2006). The State of the World's Children report (UNICEF, 2003) estimated that 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. Three years later the same report (UNICEF, 2006) acknowledges that:

> The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing as the global population grows and as urbanization continues apace (pp. 40 - 41).

Similarly, the Consortium for Street Children (CSC, 2009) contends that it is debatable whether numbers of street children are growing globally or whether it is the awareness of street children within societies which has grown. While there are understandable pressures for policies to be informed by aggregate numbers, estimates of street child populations, even at city levels, are often hotly disputed and can distract rather than inform policy makers (CSC, 2009). UNICEF (2006) observes the situation as follows:

> Street children are among the most physically visible of all children, living and working on the roads and public squares of cities all over the world. Yet, paradoxically, they are also among the most invisible and, therefore, hardest children to reach with vital services, such as education and health care, and the most difficult to protect (p.40).

Thus, the nature of the life style of street children is associated with such fluidity that it is virtually impossible to get data which can stand the test of time on the phenomenon. This has

however not deterred researchers from undertaking demographic and other studies aimed at identifying street children in the cities of the world.

Across the African continent the figures are staggering. Statistics released by the CSC (2009) shows that around one million children (of which a greater proportion had dropped out of school and a significant number had never been to school) are believed to be on the streets of Egypt, most in Cairo and Alexandria. This high number was found to be as a result of child abuse (at home or at work); neglect; peer pressure; and sensation seeking. The report further showed that conservative estimates indicated that 300,000 children live and work on the streets in Kenya, with over 50% of them concentrated in and around the capital Nairobi. In order to survive on the streets, these children were found to often beg, carry luggage, or clean business premises and vehicles. Some collect garbage, and help load and unload market goods, earning them up to a dollar (US $1) a day, and girls are forced to resort to prostitution in order to get clothes or food. Over 95% of the children on the streets of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, have been stigmatised as "witches" by pastors and abandoned to live on the streets by their parents. There are estimated $10 - 12,000$ homeless children in South Africa. These children find their way onto the streets because of poverty, overcrowding, abuse, neglect, family disintegration and HIV/AIDS. The situation is not very different from other African countries including cities in Ethiopia (Abebe, 2008), Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia and Ghana (the country in focus for the present study).

Ghana is a West African country which shares boundaries with three countries, Cote d'Ivoire in the West, Burkina Faso in the North and Togo in the East. It shares a frontier in the South with the Gulf of Guinea. It has 10 administrative regions with Greater Accra as the capital city and the seat of government. According to the provisional results of the recent, 2010, population and housing census released by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), the country's population stands at approximately 24 million (GSS, 2011). A year prior to the said

census, the population was estimated to be approximately 22 million of which 41.18% fell within the 0-14 years bracket and people of ages 15-64 years constituted 55.35% (Ghanaweb, 2009). Thus, a significant proportion of Ghana's population is young.

Studies (usually, surveys) aimed at providing information on street children's backgrounds and to estimate the number of street children have been carried out across the 10 regions of Ghana. According to the Catholic Action for Street Children's "headcount" statistics, there were 10,401 street children in Accra alone as of 1996 (CAS, 1996). Beauchemin (1999), in a seminal study on the problems of street children in Ghana under the co-sponsorship of CAS and UNICEF, showed that there were about 15,000 children living and working in the streets of Accra. The headcount repeated in 2002 by CAS estimated that there were 19,196 street children in Accra alone (Hatløy & Huser, 2005). According to Baah (2007), statistics in 2003 showed that about 23, 000 porters roamed the streets of Kumasi (the capital city of the Ashanti Region), with the number increasing each day. Baah explains that, mostly these are indigenes from the three northern regions; their business is to carry any load whether heavy or light for a fee. The charge depends on load size and distance involved. The females carry the loads with headpans whereas; their male counterparts do so with their trucks. Another headcount by CAS again in 2006 amounted to 21,143 which confirmed the increasing number of street children in Greater Accra region alone. What made it more "heart breaking" is the emerging trend found during CAS recent research: the new group of children that falls in two main categories called the 'urban poor' and 'second generation'. The urban poor children are those who have 'some kind of a home' to go to at the end of the day on the street or can choose to go home or not. Second generation children, on the other hand, are children who are born on the street with their 'parents' also being children living on the street who are below the age of 18 years. CSC (2009, p.3) categorizes the results of a 'headcount' of street children and young mothers in the different parts of Accra as follows: 21,140 street

children; 6,000 street babies; 7,170 street 'mothers' under the age of 20; and 14,050 urban poor children (most likely at high risk of coming to the street).

Nationwide, some 50,000 street children (between the ages of 10 and 18, though there are many who are far younger) are believed to be living in Ghana, with many of them living in Kumasi, Ghana's second city (Streetkid News, 2007). Accra and Takoradi are ranked second and third respectively with reference to the number of street children living in the cities of Ghana (Wutoh et al., 2006). According to Orme and Seipel (2007), some public social welfare agencies (e.g. the Integrated Community for Employment Skills and the National Youth Council) offer several services from job training to shelter in order to help the children. The lack of resources has made it difficult for the government to provide a full range of services that support and strengthen families at the national level. Numerous NGOs also play active roles in providing social services because of this gap. However, most of the children seldom use these public social services even when they are available to them. The street children are generally sceptical of the public agencies' ability to meet their needs. Some children feel public agencies are either too strict or ask too many questions (Orme & Seipel, 2007).

2.2.4. Causes of Street Children Phenomenon in Ghana

Boakye-Boaten (2006) carried out a qualitative study on '*an examination of the phenomenon of street children in selected communities in Accra*'. He examined the lives of street children, and how they and others (parents and stakeholders) perceive them. Stakeholders here are the Department of Social Welfare, Ghana National Commission on Children, and CAS (an NGO). Parents were represented by a mother who had children who were street children. Analyses of the interviews revealed (among others) that street children in Ghana are perceived as legitimate occupiers of the urban public spaces. They render invaluable services

to the general public, and the general public show many of them compassion. Thus, parents of street children and stakeholders who work directly with these children tend to have positive perceptions and attitudes toward them.

Regarding the causes of the phenomenon of street children in Ghana, Boakye-Boaten (ibid) places them into macro and micro causes. Poverty, rural-urban disparity, cultural practices, urbanization and structural adjustments programmes were found to constitute the macro causes, while micro causes were composed of dysfunctional families, single parenthood, physical and sexual abuse, and unemployment. Boakye-Boaten (ibid) further observes that the micro-factors are the most disturbing because they point to endemic degrees of child neglect by the family system. "The family has failed to be a safe haven for some children" (p.212). Therefore, poverty and dysfunctional families are significant causal factors of street children in Ghana. Kopoka (2000) explains that:

> Poverty is a major cause of street children. Africa is today a continent characterized by extreme poverty. It is poverty that is resulting in children being forced to work on the streets to support themselves and their families. It is poverty that is also causing many families to break up with parents being unable to support their children. It is rural poverty that is making rural populations including children to move to urban areas with the hope of a better future. Poverty causes malnutrition and poor health and reduces a family's ability to work thus creating conditions for children to move to the streets (p.8).

Kopoka (ibid) further maintains that street children in Africa are the victims of short-sighted policies, or lack of policies. "They are victims of an uncaring community that is increasingly being characterized by poverty, breakdown of family life, violence and economic hardships" (p.8). It could be deduced thus that the causes of the street child phenomenon in Ghana (and

Africa in general) are attributable to circumstances and factors beyond the individual child and as such the child is, largely, not to blame for living on the street.

Although the foregoing observations and conclusions are relevant, they fail to reveal a holistic picture of the public's perceptions of street children in Ghana. For instance, the informants in the study by Boakye-Boaten (2006) were a parent[3] of street children and other stakeholders who work directly with and ensure the well-being of (street) children in Ghana. These are individuals, institutions and organizations whose mission, orientation and/or commitment is to ensure the welfare of all children in the society, hence their positive perceptions and attitudes. The point in contention here is that the perception of the wider civil society is lacking in this study. For instance, knowledge of the perceptions of teachers, shopkeepers, the police, law-makers, drivers, students, health workers, peers, city authorities, pedestrians, passengers, religious institutions, households (and so on and so forth) regarding the phenomenon of street children in Ghana has not been systematically established through research. What's more, these are individuals, groups and institutions whose lives and/or activities in the city affect or are affected by the phenomenon of street children (CAS, 1996; Ubels, 2006).

Orme and Seipel (2007) found that typically, children end up in the streets as a result of the death of their parents, poverty, sexual abuse, violence in the home, neglect, divorce in the family and the like. Public social welfare agencies (government organizations and NGOs) offer services from job training to shelter in order to help the children. Some of these organizations, for example, the Catholic Action for Street children (CAS), assist children who choose to get off the street, and create awareness about the plight of the children (Beauchemin, 1999). De Moura (cited in Orme & Seipel, 2007) suggests that neither street children nor their behaviours should be seen as deviant without a critical evaluation: an

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[3] In the referred study the parent was a mother of a child who was in the street situation.

uncritical conclusion can engender stigmatization, exclusion and the formation of public policies that provide no benefits to street children. Despite the fact that government organizations and NGOs who work with street children in Ghana are limited in terms of resources for meeting all the needs of street children, they maintain positive perceptions and supportive attitudes toward street children (CAS, 2003; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Ubels,2006). Thus, parents, social workers, street workers, government and non-governmental organizations concerned with ensuring the welfare of children in Ghana have been found to have extensive knowledge about and positive perceptions and attitudes to street children.

Nonetheless, in a study on '*attitudes to and interventions in homelessness: insights from an international study*', Tipple and Speak (2004) found that people living on the streets are perceived by the wider society as villains, beggars, immoral, transients, non-citizens, and loners.

2.3. **Operational Definition of Terms**

Shopkeepers: shop and stall keepers at the market in Accra Central.

Students / School Children[4]: Individuals within the ages of 12 and 17 years who live and attend government owned Junior High and Senior High Schools situated within Accra Central.

Street children: This study focuses on the two main types of street children in Ghana identified by previous studies (CAS, 2003; Consortium for Street Children, 2003):

(1) The "typical" street child who lives and works on the street.

(2) The urban poor child who survives daily on the street but still has some family ties.

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[4] I used both terms; 'students' and 'school children', interchangeably in this study.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection Site

The Greater Accra Region is the smallest of the 10 administrative regions of Ghana in terms of area size. It covers a total land area of 3,245 square kilometres (i.e. 1.4 per cent of the total land area of Ghana). It has a population of 3,909,764 representing 16.1 per cent of Ghana's total population (GSS, 2011). Accra Central is the administrative and cultural centre of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. It is the location for many government ministries, hotels, businesses, and the headquarters of many major financial institutions and NGOs in Ghana. Geographically, it is difficult to define the limits of Central Accra, although Ring Road has been identified as a perimeter separating Accra Central from the outlying suburbs (Kallulu Jr., 2010). Ring Road is a multi-lane motorway which forms a C-shape around some of the oldest districts in Accra and the Gulf of Guinea. Stretching from the Gulf of Guinea in the south, Accra Central extends from the Korle Lagoon in the west, north to Kwame Nkrumah Circle, following east to the Independence Avenue, and following on to Osu/Christianborg.

Previous studies that, partly, sought to identify and enumerate street children in Accra have identified several different localities where street children live (Beauchemin, 1999; CAS, 2000; Hatløy & Huser, 2005; Payne, 2004). Within these localities, street children are usually found within a market, near bus stations or train stations (Hatløy & Huser, 2005). I chose Accra Central as the setting for this study, largely, because of the availability of the two categories of informants (shopkeepers and students) and with the assumption that these are individuals who are most likely to have direct contact and interactions with street children on daily basis. More so, proximity, and convenience were other factors that informed this choice.

3.2. **Participants/Sample**

The informants for this study were shopkeepers and students sharing the same locality with street children living in Accra Central. I used purposive sampling technique to recruit the informants for this study. The essential selection criterion I used was that each informant should be living in Accra Central for that past twelve months. I considered this sampling procedure appropriate because it is consistent with focus group interviewing and individual interviewing (Twohig & Putman, 2002).

There are different opinions as to what should be the optimum group size for focus groups; however, the groups should be representative of the characteristics of the participants in the main study as well as the issue under discussion (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001). Krueger (1994) recommends that, whichever number of informants is selected, allowance should be made for ten to twenty-five percent of participants not arriving. For this study, I selected 12 students (six from junior high school and six from senior high school), aged between 12 and 17 years, for focus group discussions with equal numerical consideration for boys and girls. I began the sampling process with a visit to a government run junior high school and senior high school in Accra Central. My choice of government owned schools was underpinned by the general fact that such schools are attended by all categories of children. I first, sought the permission of the heads of the schools having presented the letters of introduction and ethical clearance from NTNU, and the aims of the study explained in detail.

At the junior high school, the head teacher, after agreeing to my mission, led me to the classroom of the form 3 students where he introduced me as a researcher to the class. In the bid to get informants for the study, I explained the purpose and the roles of informants of the study to the class. Twenty-one students volunteered to participate, however, 15 of them

were disqualified on the basis of the selection criteria: they were either living outside Accra Central or did not fall within the ages of 12 and 17 years. This disqualification was further confirmed by the head teacher based on the students' official records. In all, I selected six junior high school students (three females and three males).

At the senior high school, the head teacher assigned another teacher (of whom I later observed the students to be fond of) to take me to the form 2 class because most of the students in that class were aged 17 and below. Here too, I explained the purpose and other details of the study and the roles of the informants to the class. Exactly three boys and three girls volunteered to participate; all six students had been living in Accra Central for the past 12 months and fell within the age range of 12 and 17 years.

Similarly, I also selected four shopkeepers (two males and two females) purposively using the same selection criterion and interviewed them individually. Generally, traders in Ghanaian markets are formally organized and have leaders, popularly known as 'market queens' or 'market kings'. They are the spokesperson of the shopkeepers within a specified range of the market area. They are accessible to everyone as they are shopkeepers themselves within the market. To select my informants, I first of all approached a shopkeeper (upon entering the market) who showed me the shop of the market queen so I could seek her permission. Upon meeting the market queen in her shop, I explained the purpose of the study and other relevant details to her and the need for her permission for me to proceed with the data collection in the market. Once granted, I went from shop to shop to purposively select interested shopkeepers: I explained the purpose and other details of the study and the roles of the informants to every shopkeeper I approached. I selected shopkeepers who agreed to participate based on the criterion that they had been living in Accra Central for the past 12 months. As planned, I selected four shopkeepers: two females and two males.

3.3. **Design**

The general methodological approach to this study follows a perspective which provides that the human world is socially and linguistically constructed. Thus, the design is qualitative in nature. This choice was based on the aim of the study to explore and gain insight into the perception of the phenomenon of street children among shopkeepers and students in Accra. In qualitative research there is a subjective understanding of knowledge, where the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of a theme (Limb & Dwyer, 2001). More so, as indicated by others (Kitzinger, 1995; Hammersley, 1992; Pope & Mays, 1995; Toomela, 2007), qualitative research allows for the study of areas that are not feasible with quantitative research and has the added merit of discovering issues and concerns that are not expected or taken for granted by the researcher; a limitation inherent in the use of quantitative method.

Further, the present study had an ethnographic orientation, as I sought to build an understanding of the perceptions and perspectives of shopkeepers and students about the phenomenon of street children in Accra through the use of interviews, focus group discussion, and participant observation (Hartley & Muhit, 2003; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Again, a qualitative approach was considered apposite for this study because the issue of the public's perceptions of street children in Accra is a relatively new area of investigation.

3.4. **Materials**

I used a tape recorder to capture or record the individual interviews and focus group discussions; I constructed a semi-structured interview guide containing the types of questions to be asked - opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions (see appendix i). I used a notebook to take field notes from the observations and informal conversations to serve as supplementary and complementary information to the recorded interviews (see Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

3.5. **Procedure/Data collection**

The procedure for the main data collection proceeded in three sequences: focus group discussions with students, individual interviews with shopkeepers, and participant observation at the market.

3.5.1. **Focus group discussion with students**

According to Kitzinger (1995),

> The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview. Group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities (p.229).

Focus group interviews or discussions bring out human tendencies such as attitudes and perceptions relating to a phenomenon, concepts or products (Krueger, 1994). Similarly, according to Fontana and Frey (1994), focus group discussion, as a method of data collection provides an opportunity to the researcher to gain insight into other perspectives on the research questions that might not be available through interviews: it encourages a variety of views on the topic in focus for the group and also allows the researcher the chance to observe interactions among a group of individuals in response to specific questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). With specific regard to the use of focus group discussions in the Ghanaian context, Kumekpor (2002) explains that it is required of Ghanaians to take interest in the affairs of others, and that it is unrealistic to insist that interviews should be carried out in the strictest secrecy. "In fact most informants in ...Ghana would themselves insist for others to be

around to help fill in whatever discrepancy there might be in details of their information" (pp.191-192). Lastly, I deployed focus group discussions to enable me to assess how the meaning and perception of the phenomenon of street children are constructed in the various groups.

For this phase of the data collection, I gave two copies of a letter (see appendix iii) to each selected student seeking the consent of their parents or guardians (as the case may be). These letters were to be signed by their parents or guardians indicating their approval and consent for their ward's participation. On an agreed future date (the following day), each selected student returned a copy of the signed letters to me and I made them sign an actual consent form (see appendix ii) and assured them of their freedom of participation. "Some barriers between children and adults may be bridged when interviewing children in natural settings" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 146. Also see Eder & Fingerson, 2002). On the basis of this I interviewed the students in their school environment. The plan was to hold the discussions in a classroom allocated for that purpose with the permission of the heads of the schools.

However, the focus group interview with the junior high school students was held under a tree on the school compound as the school had no spare room to be designated for the focus group discussions. Again, the head of the school allotted me an hour within which to finish both interviews. Against this backdrop, I brought all three boys and three girls together into the same focus group for the interview.

At the senior high school, it was the final week of teaching prior to the end of term exams. This precluded the head teacher from getting me a slot to interview my informants during school hours. I held the focus group interviews with the students after school hours in one of the empty classrooms. In the end I had to buy lunch for some of my informants at the

school's canteen as they complained of hunger, having stayed on after school to take part in the interview. Each focus group discussion, on the average, lasted for one hour, and approximately, one and a half hours, maximum.

3.5.2. Interview with shopkeepers

I explored shopkeepers' perceptions of street children in Accra using one-to-one interviews. The aim was "to capture how those being interviewed (*the shopkeepers*) view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences" (Patton, 2002; p. 348) with reference to the phenomenon of street children.

To proceed with the interviews with shopkeepers, I first let the selected shopkeepers sign an actual consent form (see appendix ii) and assured them of their freedom of participation, after I had explained the details of the study to each of them. I held each interview with a shopkeeper in his or her shop as none of them could leave his or her shop and wares unsupervised to grant me the interview in a more quiet place. On the average, customers spontaneously called in three to four times on a shopkeeper during each interview. This "interrupted" the interview process because in each case I had to pause the tape recorder for the shopkeeper to attend to the customer and recapitulate the final response made before the interview resumed when the customer was gone. The hustle and bustle of the market sometimes interfered with the informants' concentration on the interview; sometimes I had to reiterate the questions. On the average, each interview lasted 30 minutes and the longest, for 45 minutes.

3.5.3   **Participant Observation at the market**

Participant observation is one of the key techniques used in ethnographic studies. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2001), 'living and working with the people that one is trying to understand provides a sense of the self and the other that is not easily put into words' (p.8). The purpose for which I deployed this method was, largely, to gain deeper knowledge and nuanced understanding of shopkeepers' perception of street children to contextualize what they had reported during the one-to-one interviews held earlier. Dewalt and Dewalt (ibid) posit five different degrees of participation: non-participation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation. For this study, moderate participation was deemed most appropriate, which implies that I was present at the scene of the action, identifiable as a researcher, but not actively participating. What I did was observe behaviour in public places. Specifically, I was part of the people moving in the market; doing 'window shopping' sporadically as I observed the behaviours and interactions between street children and shopkeepers and other members of the public within the market.

Street children are easily identified in the market setting: the girls (Kayayei) are easy to recognize because of the headpans they use, and the clothes they wear; the boys (truckpushers and *shoemakers*[5]) are also easily recognised because of the truck, their wooden tool box, and the clothes they wear. Their behaviour and interactions with the shopkeepers can thus, be observed. On any day at the market, I observed the girls (kayayei) carrying goods to the lorry station for customers who had bought goods from the market; doing the window shopping enabled me to observe how these girls negotiate and haggle with their customers over the fee for carrying their (customers') goods. A few times I observed shoemakers mending and polishing footwear and sometimes leather bags for shopkeepers and

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[5] Shoemakers: In Ghana this term is used to mean cobblers. Their job is to repair and/or polish shoes or footwear in general.

other members of the public within the market; I observed boys carrying (and in some instances using trucks to convey) sacks of rice from a lorry outside the market to shops in the market. Occasionally, I observed how some shopkeepers shared pleasantries with the kayayei, shoemakers and truckpushers. These observations informed me as to the social interactions that exist between street children and shopkeepers, and the vulnerability of street children. I spent two weeks doing the participant observation within the market setting.

Accra experiences frequent rains during the months of June and July. It was during this season that I went for my field work; it rained consistently. Usually, activities and movements in the market come to a halt when it is raining due to the open nature of the market structure. This made it difficult for me to be at the market consistently to undertake the participant observation. Thus averagely, I spent four hours participating and observing; on a typical day without rain, over the two weeks period. As recommended by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), I recorded my observations during (and sometimes as soon as after) the observed action to avoid forgetting and diminished note quality of the episodes.

3.5.4. Secondary Data

Besides doing focus group discussions with students, individual interviews with shopkeepers, and participant observation at the market, I was able to gather some data through spontaneous informal conversations with street children. These were street children I ran into within the market area before or after each day's participant observation. I introduced myself to each potential participant as a student undertaking a research on the public's perceptions of the phenomenon of street children in Accra. Then I solicited their consent and willingness to have informal conversation with me about the phenomenon. While in the process of the data collection, I was thinking through the various interesting information I had gathered thus far from the perspectives of shopkeepers and students. My basic aim in this study was to build a

nuanced understanding of the public's perceptions of the phenomenon of street children from the perspectives of shopkeepers and school children in Accra Central. However, thinking the gathered data through while in the field prompted me to include the views (and hidden voices) of the street children themselves. My assumption was that, doing this would make the basic aim of the study relatively holistic.

3.5.5. Choice of Language

Ghana is a multi-ethnic society and as such a multi-lingual society. Albeit there is ethnic diversity, Ghanaians of each ethnic group are found in every part of the country (UNDP, 2007). English is the official language spoken and written in Ghana. Accra is a cosmopolitan society where Ghanaians of each ethnic group are found. Ga, the language of the indigenous people of Accra, and the Akan language, Twi, are the widely spoken languages within Accra Central: immigrants from other parts of country easily learn both (or one) of them. As acknowledged earlier, this study follows the postmodernist perspective which posits that the human world is socially and linguistically constructed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Thus, the choice of language (spoken and understood by both the researcher and the informants) becomes very imperative for any study within this perspective.

Generally, in Ghanaian junior and senior high schools, teachers are thought of as strict disciplinarians and authorities whose interactions and relationships with students are confined within some formal boundaries. For example, it is a punishable offence for a student-teacher (or even a student-student) conversation to be held in vernacular. English is the language of interaction within the school environment. This "norm" (and seemingly, social fact) is held and adhered to by both students and the general public. Therefore, at the schools, I had to ensure that my informants did not mistake me for a teacher; I needed to ensure a balanced power relation in the context of the focus group interviews. So prior to the start of any of the

focus group interviews, I introduced myself as a fellow student and gave the students the options of making their submissions in English or in any of the local languages, namely, Ga or Twi. Again, throughout the focus group interviews, I maintained frequent nods, smiles, chuckles and generally, a friendly countenance; non-verbal expressions that students find sparing in their interactions with teachers. Somehow, virtually all submissions by the students during the focus group interviews were made in English except local concepts or terminologies for which the students had no English equivalents (e.g., "sakawa", "kayayei" etc.). At the market, shopkeepers opted to speak Ga or Twi during the interviews. I am a native speaker of Ga and have ample working knowledge of and proficient in the Twi language.

3.5.6. **Reliability and Validity**

According to Hammersley (as cited in Silverman, 2000), reliability has to do with the extent of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer but on different occasions. In other words, it concerns whether informants will change their responses during an interview or whether they would give varied answers to different interviewers. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) contend that "although increasing the reliability of interview findings is desirable in order to counteract haphazard subjectivity, a strong emphasis on reliability may counteract creative innovations and variability" (p. 245). At the same time, the process must be devoid of superfluous subjectivity. Thus, the establishment of reliability in qualitative research involves reporting and proper documentation but not necessarily obtaining the same results (Opare-Henaku, 2006). This study, hence, adequately documented the procedures employed to facilitate consistency, precision, evaluation and repeatability (*replication*).

The concept validity, within the confines of qualitative research, is used to mean truth (Silverman, 2000). It refers to the extent to which the data collected give a true measurement

or description of social reality. Thus, the conditions surrounding the production of the data should be revealed clearly and truthfully (Hirsjärvi *et al*. in Nieminen, 2010). Creswell (2003) points out that validity assesses if the findings are accurate from the view of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of the account. To this end, the present study used different methods of data collection: focus group interviews, individual interviews and participant observation. This also helped the researcher to achieve a round understanding of shopkeepers' and students' perception of the phenomenon of street children in Accra. More so, the themes according to which the data were analysed were formed by and emerged from the data itself.

3.6. **Transcription and Analysis of Data**

According to Atkinson (1998), there are two major steps in interview data analysis, namely, transcription and interpretation of interviews according to predetermined objectives. I transcribed the audio recordings of the focus group discussions word-for-word in normal national text, English. However, local concepts and terminologies which have no direct English equivalents were maintained. I translated and transcribed the one-to-one interviews held in Ga and Twi into English for easy interpretation and analysis. Similarly, local concepts and terminologies which have no direct English equivalents were maintained. I used selective protocol to organise the field notes based on the themes: trends, patterns, key words and phrases. Strauss and Corbin (1998) posit that "events, happenings, objects, and actions/interactions that are found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning are grouped under more abstract concepts termed categories" (p.102).

I followed the iterative process (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2001) of reading, thinking and writing, and re-reading, re-thinking, and re-writing to allow the themes (according to which the data were analysed) to emerge naturally from the data itself. Then I collated texts from different interviews under the identified themes. I looked for the relationships and positioning

between the various individual texts on a number of characteristics including religion, age (child or adult), and status: shopkeeper or student. I did this in a manner consistent with discourse analysis. Following from this stage, I interpreted the findings in the light of theory, literature and the broad Ghanaian socio-cultural context.

3.7. **Ethical Considerations**

Every stage of the research process - from research designing stage, data collection and analysis to report writing, requires the researcher to be aware of the relevant ethical issues (Silverman, 2006). Adhering to ethical requirements helps promote, among other things, the purpose of the research through original knowledge production rather than fabrication and misinterpretation of data. Ethical consideration was imperative in the present study as young people (students) less than 18 years were involved (UNICEF, 2000).

To safeguard the ethical position of the present study, I first sought ethical approval and clearance from the Ethical Committee in Norway (the Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics, REK). However, REK referred my project description to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (see appendix iv) for clearance as the subject matter of the study was not health related. Upon arrival in Ghana, I consulted the Ethical Committee in Ghana (NMIMR) for further approval and permission prior to the data collection. Similarly, I was referred to the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, for clearance as the subject matter of my research does not fall within the sphere of medicine and health; the areas of concern of NMIMR. The Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, thus, issued me with a letter introducing and confirming my research protocol (see appendix v). Additionally, I sought the permission of the market queen (of the market), and the heads of the schools I used for the study. However, these were not much guarantee that all ethical concerns were covered. Therefore, I observed the following in addition.

Informed consent: According to Silverman (2006), this is central to most ethical guidelines, requiring that the participants in a research are given detailed but non-technical account of the nature and aims of the research. In this study, I gave detailed information to the intended informants as to the nature and purposes of the study in the language they understood. To show their consent, I made the informants sign an actual consent form (see appendix ii). "In Ghanaian culture, any agreement which requires signature connotes a level of seriousness, bureaucratic, and often misconstrued with trustworthiness" (Boakye-Boaten, 2006, p.121). In addition to signing actual consent forms, I gave each selected student two copies of a letter (see appendix iii) seeking the consent of their parents or guardians (as the case may be). These letters were to be signed by their parents or guardians indicating their approval and consent for their ward's participation. On an agreed future date, prior to signing an actual consent forms themselves, I requested each student to return a copy of the signed letters sent to their parents or guardians.

Confidentiality: I addressed this by ensuring the anonymity of the informants. I made sure that informants were not asked questions requiring identity information (e.g. name, residential address etc.). In order to assess which informant said what, and for the purpose of data analysis, I identified each informant using letters or alpha-numeric designations (e.g. shopkeepers were designated, SK 1, SK 2, in that order, and students were identified by using the designations S1, S2, S3 and so on). I also allowed the informants to use pseudonyms instead of their real names. The recorded interviews were secured and not made public; informants' identity information were not included in the report or publication of the study.

Freedom of participation: I assured all informants of their freedom of participation: each informant had the right to decide on participation and withdrawing from the study at any time they so wished. Informants could refuse answering questions they feel uncomfortable about.

Debriefing: I held sessions for debriefing after each interview to help allay any discomfort caused to the informants resulting from participation.

Transcription: As much as possible, I ensured accurate representation of the accounts of the informants at the transcription stage. Again, I built intermittent consensus with the informants as the interviews and focus group discussions progressed.

3.8. **Practical Challenges**

I encountered some challenges during the field work of this study at the schools and market where the data were collected. The procedure/data collection subsection of the methodology chapter of this thesis is interspersed with some of these challenges. I had to keep my composure to negotiate them successfully. Some informants, particularly shopkeepers, misconstrued me as a government official in a position to directly do something to solve the street children problem in Accra. This, perhaps, was because government demographers usually come to the market to take statistics of events and people for state fiscal purposes and records. Although I had introduced myself as a student earlier, I had to re-explain my position as a student and a researcher to the shopkeepers.

Chapter Four

4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three major themes which emerged (the ideal Ghanaian child, the typical Ghanaian family, and religiosity) show mainstream, dominant public social and cultural ideologies and discourses within Ghanaian society. The discussions of these themes are premised on the assumptions that "understanding the lives of children who live and work on the street entails finding out about the lives and roles of children in any culture" (Ennew, 2003, p.9); and that "...people exercise agency within a set of structural and ideological constraints which are historically specific" (Desiree, 2003, p.7). Thus, the themes of the ideal Ghanaian child, the typical Ghanaian family, and religiosity appeared to be the standards against which informants positioned or categorised street children.

4.1. The Ideal Ghanaian Child

This theme covers the discourses of informants as to the life trajectories of the typical Ghanaian child and how childhood is constructed within Ghanaian public opinion. It encompasses the traditional privileges of the child and what is expected of the child within the family and community circles. From the interviews (with shopkeepers) and focus group discussions (with school children) I gathered that the ideal Ghanaian child is found in the home or family setting. *"As a child, you are brought up in a family and you have parents who would cater for you and provide you with anything you need"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). This indicates that, the locus of childhood is found within the family circle, and children are not required to provide and cater for themselves - the duties of parents. Another 17-year-old SHS girl puts this differently,

> *I would describe street living in Accra by children as ...not having a home or a house*
>
> *to live in, not having someone to care for you. It's like you are your own mother and*
>
> *your own father, and you are your own siblings.*

This further suggests that the life trajectories and development of a child are largely shaped by the roles played by mothers, fathers and siblings, and the interactions the child has with these individuals. The ideal Ghanaian child needs to develop within a social nest in which members are bonded by familial relationships with each member playing some specified roles. For instance, a shopkeeper describes her daily roles as a mother as follows, *"I am a mother of three children. Every morning, I bathe, feed and take them to school before coming here"* (SK 2). This description posits that the family members, specifically parents, take care of the health, nutritional and educational needs of the child. Thus, within the family circle children do not provide these things for themselves.

Apart from the parental warmth children receive at home, they are also given parental or adult supervision. A 16-year-old SHS girl shares her situation: "*if I go home my mom would check to be sure I am well dressed and other things. So if you are at home there are certain things you would not do or say and certain places you won't go*". This supposes that children are supervised by parents to ensure that they adhere to the norms, public etiquette, mores and values of the society with regard to what they say, do and where they go. That this is a common practice is confirmed by Salm and Falola (2002: p. 9), "societal elders give moral and ethical instruction to children so that they can satisfy the needs of the community and understand its traditions". It can also be deduced that the daily life paths of children are largely delineated by adults, in this context by parents or adults in the family. The same 16-year-old SHS girl adds that, *"most street children do not obey rules and regulations because there are no rules in their lives"*. This indicates that the ideal Ghanaian child is supposed to live a life governed by rules and regulations. Rules and regulations set forth, most certainly,

by adults or precisely parents, teachers and societal elders. The infraction of these rules and regulations can sometimes attract varied corrective consequences. For instance, a 16-year-old JHS boy mentions that, "*children at home are punished when they do something wrong or parents talk to them against it so that they would stop, and sometimes when they want to do something they inform their parents before doing it*". This response further points to the idea that the ideal child is not only given health and nutritional nurturance, but is also provided with training and teaching through the use of punishments and reinforcements to meet the standards of the society. More importantly, the ideal child negotiates daily life under the supervision and consent of parents or adults.

Informants mentioned that outside the family nest, the next place of importance the child is expected to be is the classroom. Adults are to work and children are to attend school. On daily basis, except on holidays and other non-school days, children are expected to be in school. *"Those* (children) *at home go to school but not those on the street"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). The school is a significant social space the legitimate occupants of which are children. Thus, the ideal child is educated through the school system in addition to socialization within the family. Aside from the formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability (Kneller, 1971), educational experiences at the school serve to reinforce societal norms and values.

> *We who are in school are taught manners, RME[6], courtesy and other things. They (street children) are not taught so, so they do anything that makes them comfortable; they do anything anyhow; they are deviants. Nobody teaches them, nobody trains them (a 17-year-old SHS girl).*

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[6] RME: Religious and Moral Education; a compulsory subject in the school curriculum for all basic levels of education in Ghana.

This shows that the ideal child does not only know the etiquette, mores and norms required of a child to fit into the society, but actually practices these cultural elements. It further corroborates the idea that the ideal Ghanaian child lives in a world the boundaries and contours of which are already drawn by adults (Salm & Falola, 2002).

More so, the ideal child also forms social relationships beyond the family: friendships. The discourses of informants revealed that the ideal child enters friendship relationships with other children in the community with strong emphasis on instrumental benefits not only in the present but also in the future. A female shopkeeper captures this implicitly in her submission that *"the street child goes out with friends who are not good or other children who would not be of any benefit to him or her in the future"* (SK 1). This also suggests that the underpinning value and belief of friendship among children include limiting one's interactions to a small group of persons that one knows well but not necessarily for the enhancement of self-worth. This could be anchored in the research evidence that the exchange of instrumental aid (e.g., children's anticipation to help each other with schoolwork) is an important feature of interpersonal relationships and community cohesion in some collectivistic societies (French, Pidada, & Victor, 2005). Another female shopkeeper observes within the market area that, *"some (street children) are in gangs who go about stealing"* (SK 2). This indirectly buttresses the norm that the ideal child's relationships with other members or children in the community yield some benefits to the community or help maintain the social order but do not deviate from the social norms and values. A 16-year-old SHS girl shares her thoughts as follows,

> *...as a school girl you have to study, but...if you take a boyfriend... You may be in trouble if may be the man or boy influences you with a little money and sleeps with you. You get pregnant and...your parents may not want you at home.*

It appears the ideal child must 'arm' him or herself with pieces of advice and knowledge against bad influences and deceit of friends. Some school children shared their experiences and opinions as follows: *"my mother for example, I live with her, she comes home very late, I don't even see her face. She doesn't know the kind of friends I have and what I do. So here you are on your own and that is where peer-pressure also sets in"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). To a 16-year-old SHS boy, *"some parents too don't advise their children, they allow them to do whatever they want, so friends can easily deceive them to lead bad lives and at the end they can get pregnant or impregnate a girl"*. Another 17-year-old SHS girl recommended that, *"children should heed good advice and not follow peer pressure"*. It is clear from the foregoing quotes that parents play an important role in the friendships of their children. Parents are the main sources of the knowledge and pieces of information children require to building fruitful friendships with their peers. This could be due largely to the facts that parents have rich experience of their culture and life in general, and are the close adults to children.

Thus, the choice of the Ghanaian child to enter other social relationships outside the family is influenced not only by the interest of the child but more importantly, the interests of the family (which largely reflect the norms and values of the larger society) and the caution not to strain or breach the relationship with the family, especially with parents.

The discourses of the school children revealed another social space within which the child is considered a legitimate occupant and participant: the church or mosque. According to a 16-year-old SHS boy, *"those (children) who live on the streets are not God-fearing; they don't go to church"*. This suggests that the ideal child adheres to religious beliefs and practices. On religious days, the child is expected to be in church, mosque or be part of a religious community to ensure supernatural security. Interestingly, of the 12 school children who participated in this study, eight were Christians and four told me they were Muslims.

This perhaps makes the child at home to be dissociated (at both perceptual and behavioural levels) from certain seemingly "unacceptable" religious acts such as sorcery, witchcraft, and "juju" (black magic). As against children at home, *"some of them (street children) are agents of witches and wizards. They would bewitch you using whatever you give them as the means to getting at you. I get scared when I see them sometimes because of this"* (a 17-year-old SHS boy). The supposition here is that the presence of the ideal Ghanaian child in social space evokes calmness and comfort, allaying fear on the part of other participants present on religious grounds.

Another significant revelation about the ideal Ghanaian child is participation in economic space. *"Our mothers should stop making us overwork. For example, I help my mother to sell pepper and sometimes I can be so tired because she makes me work too much"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). Although the voice of this boy sounds more of a complaint, it does indicate that the Ghanaian child has some space of participation in terms of work or economic activities. More importantly, it shows that the activities of the child within the economic space do not exceed a certain threshold (i.e. the child must perform child-appropriate and child-friendly tasks) under the supervision of an adult. This corroborates the position of Salm and Falola (2002) that children in the urban Ghanaian family remain important contributors to the domestic environment and assist their mother's or father's work.

Premised on the foregoing discourses within public opinion, it could be said that the ideal Ghanaian child is one whose life is governed by rules and regulations as required by society and lives and/or must be found under the care and supervision of parents or adults within the family circles; goes to school; is religious; and has supervised economic space.

4.2. **The Typical Ghanaian Family**

The discourses of informants also gave a representation of the Ghanaian family. As referred to earlier, a 17-year-old SHS girl points out that, *"as a child you are brought up in a family and you have parents who would cater for you and provide you with anything you need"*. This suggests that the Ghanaian family is the basic social environment within which the development of children takes place. The family is basically constituted or formed by parents and child(ren) where the parents provide the nurturance and growth needs of their child(ren). Between the parents, the roles played seem gender specific. A 17-year-old SHS girl asserts that, *"it's our moms who raise children..."*. The idea here seems to reflect more of what is contained in the submission made by the female shopkeeper who said that, *"I am a mother of three children. Every morning, I bathe, feed and take them to school..."* (SK 2). Thus, women or wives are in charge of nurturing children on daily basis.

> *"We know in Ghana...the father is the head of the family so he is able to train the children. But most times the father divorces the wife, leaving the children with the woman and the woman can't do much as the man"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl).

This response implies that the typical Ghanaian family is patriarchal in nature as men or fathers are deemed heads of their family units. In terms of roles, fathers are considered to be disciplinarians: they are in charge of training children to meet family and societal standards (Nukunya, 2003; Salm & Falola, 2002).

The assertion also gives an indication as to the organization of the relation of power within the family structure. It seems, relative to wives or women and children, more power is bestowed on fathers or men. Fathers have the power to divorce their wives or disown their children. For instance, *"some fathers do not want to hit their children so they disown them"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). Mothers also have control over children. As we remember, a 16-

year-old SHS boy asserted that, *"our mothers should stop making us overwork. For example, I help my mother to sell pepper and sometimes I can be so tired because she makes me work too much"*. This supposes that mothers supervise the economic engagements of children and have the power to define the extent of involvement. Thus, among the core members of the typical Ghanaian family unit (father, mother and child), the child appears to be at the base of the hierarchy of power relation (Salm & Falola, 2002).

The power relation in the family seems to mirror the adult-child power relation that exists in the larger society. A female shopkeeper said for instance that, *"for the girls, men can easily take advantage of them and use them in any which way they want"* (SK 2). A 17-year-old SHS girl shared her experience as follows, *"...I saw a boy, I don't think he was even five years old, selling pure water [7] and some drivers at the station bought the water and wouldn't want to pay him; they were cheating him"*. The adult dominance over children could attract punitive consequences when children attempt resisting control:

> *I saw this girl selling Ghanaian flags and other paraphernalia...at the entrance of a 'trotro'[8]... to the passengers on board. The driver ordered her to leave the place but she wouldn't listen and the driver came down to slap her and drag her from the door, and nobody could say anything... (a 17-year-old SHS girl).*

That nobody could say or do anything is perhaps an indication that adults' dominance over children is an acceptable and socially approved norm in adult-child interactions even outside the family circle.

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[7] Pure water: Filtered water in sachets

[8] Trotro: The local term for commercial buses owned by private individuals who are into the transport business of conveying commuters.

Another value of the Ghanaian family that emerged is its size. A male shopkeeper stated that, *"some parents do not have money but they have given birth to so many children they cannot take care of. Some of the children do not even get their daily bread..." (SK 3)*. A 16-year-old SHS girl puts it differently, *"families should do family planning. They should cut down on the birth rate. This is because some families do not have the means yet they give birth to so many children they cannot cater for..."* These responses suggest that having many children in a family is a socially desirable value. This fact is because even in the face of social change (e.g., contraception, economic meltdown etc.) families still continue to give birth to numerous children they cannot afford.

Closely related to the value of large family size are certain cultural practices associated with marriage and parenting. Informants identified child betrothal and child fostering. On child betrothal, *"if a girl child is born, an old man would come and say, 'I would marry her', then he would bring some drinks, so as the girl grows she is introduced to the old man as her husband"* (a 17-year-old SHS boy). Another 17-year-old SHS girl observes that *"some mothers too give their children in early marriage to older men but the children run away"*.

> *In my informal conversation today with Cee[9] (a 15-year-old girl in the street situation), I asked her what made her come to Accra. She said she was to be given in marriage to an old man; a man she estimated to be older than her grandfather. So she ran away to Accra when the ceremony was soon to take place (Field diary, July 15, 2010).*

Although the cultural practice still remains within the family circle, it appears the school children in this study and girls in the street situation (who have fled from the practice to the

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[9] Name is a pseudonym.

streets) are not really comfortable with child betrothal and as such any potential girl to be given into marriage early finds ways of resisting. According to Nukunya (2003), the influence of education has led to an incessant decline in child betrothal, a common practice, as it were in the traditional Ghanaian society.

Similarly as regard to child fostering, it was basically identified by the school children involved in this study. A 16-year-old SHS boy mentioned that, *"if a child is an orphan or may be loses both or one of the parents ...the child has to live with an aunt or other relatives"*. The same boy lamented that, *"...our mothers should stop giving us out to live with our aunts. I am an example; sometimes they treat us so badly"*. These responses seem to suggest that the school children are not against the practice in itself. However, it appears the children are not happy with the practice on two counts: when the original parents of the fostered child are alive but the child has to live with a foster-parent; and when there is ill-treatment and continuous punishment by the foster-parents. A female shopkeeper, revealed that, *"some people go to the villages and bring other people's children to the city with the promise of taking good care of them but they come to the city and do not honour their promise"* (SK 2). Although some sections of society do not approve of the practice in recent times, child fostering is still an active practice within the Ghanaian family (Goody, 1982; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Nukunya, 2003). It seems to be a practice which draws the nuclear family unit to the extended family members as children from nuclear family units are parented by extended family relations. It also appears to make parenting a shared responsibility within both the nuclear and the extended family units (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Nukunya, 2003).

Thus, it seems the family practices of child betrothal and fostering underpin the unbridled child bearing by some parents. This trend could be because the practices somehow

lead to a reduction in the number of children parents have to cater for given their limited means for doing so (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Serra, 2009).

In connection with the bio-ecological theory of human development by Bronfenbrenner (1979), it could be deduced that the relationship between the Ghanaian child and the family appears to be very important, and that the roles played by the family cannot be over emphasized in the development of the child. The Ghanaian child seems to develop within a series of nested structures dominated by adults. The child has to behave bearing in mind the appropriate ways of behaviour set forth by elders in the family and must remain under constant supervision of adults. Parents, particularly, appear to be minders of virtually the entire repertoire of activities and participation of children in communities, cultural practices and in traditions within the micro- and mesosystems.

4.3. **Religiosity**

The expression of religious beliefs and practices in everyday life is another theme that emerged. The religiosity of the Ghanaian has been found to be a core constituent of his/her worldview of social action (Nukunya, 2003) as it appears to pervade virtually every sphere of social life (e.g., family, school, helping and coping behaviour of individuals and economic life). As identified, of the 12 school children in this study, eight were Christians and four, Muslims: and as referred to earlier, *"those (children) who live on the streets are not God-fearing; they don't go to church"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). These are indications that religiosity and the expression of spirituality exist within the family. Children at home (including the school children who participated in this study) are socialized into the religious beliefs and affiliations of their families, perhaps the religious affiliations and beliefs of their parents (see Nukunya 2003; Salm & Falola, 2002). The element of *God-fearing* (as in the foregoing quote) represents a belief in a transcendental being or transcendental roles. It seems

to influence the common good by providing meaning to individuals thereby influencing values, attitudes, emotions, and behaviour (Maton, Dodgen, Sto Domingo & Larson, 2003). For instance, in response to a question as to what should be done about the street children situation in Ghana, a 16-year-old SHS boy had this to say,

The bible says, 'do unto others what you want others to do for you'. Our parents should learn to forgive their children and also those of them who are rich should help other children in the community who are poor.

Thus, the Ghanaian goes beyond having a religious affiliation to giving practical expressions to the associated beliefs within the family circle and beyond. A 17-year-old SHS girl contended that, *"on the issue of (street) girls being prostitutes, I don't agree, because some of them fear God and they would like to live a righteous life"*. This response supposes that the choices in life Ghanaians make are strongly influenced by their religious beliefs. Religiosity in Ghana therefore constitutes the key definitional element of the Ghanaian's outlook on life and worldview in general (Salm & Falola, 2002).

Similarly, as said by a 17-year-old SHS girl (referred to earlier), *"we who are in school are taught manners, RME, courtesy and other things. They (street children) are not taught so, so they do anything that makes them comfortable; they do anything anyhow; they are deviants"*. RME is the acronym for Religious and Moral Education, a compulsory subject in the school curriculum for all basic levels of education in Ghana. This indicates that religiosity and moral uprightness are somewhat intertwined and are of great value in Ghanaian society (Abotchie, 2008; Nukunya, 2003; Salm & Falola, 2002). Children in the classroom, irrespective of their family or ethnic backgrounds, are given both religious and moral education with emphasis on practice.

The practical expressions of religious beliefs seem to manifest in coping with difficult situations and in helping behaviours toward significant others. For instance, a male shopkeeper says, *"I see them (street children) often and I try talking to them to be good boys and girls so that God would change their situation someday" (SK 4)*. This response further suggests that "being good" or living a righteous life is a means to attracting providence to improve one's difficult situation. It is a mechanism for coping with situations beyond one's control. Some school children shared their experiences as follows: *"I always try my best to help when I can. I tell him (a boy in the street situation) not to lose faith because I believe God would favour him someday"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). *"I always pray that God grants me that ability and the chance to help them (street children)"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). It can be deduced that religion serves as a key frame of reference in providing informational support to people in difficult situations. It also appears both adults and children use this religious frame of reference in offering support (be it material, financial or informational) to people in particularly difficult situations.

It was also evident that religiosity finds expression in seeking economic or financial success. *"Some people catch the (street) children and use them for money rituals, now called 'sakawa' "* (a 16-year-old JHS girl). A female shopkeeper (SK 2) adds that, *"these days too children are being used for 'sakawa'... "*. Sakawa is generally known in Ghana as a locally coined generic term encompassing such traditional religious acts as sorcery, divination, witchcraft and juju (black magic). More recently, sakawa has been used loosely to refer to sorcery and/or juju (Owusu, 2009) as explained by a 16-year-old SHS girl, *"if you give them something like a coin, they would use it for 'juju' – they would take it to the spiritual realm to harm you or get something from you"*. As to the mechanics of sakawa, an individual seeking financial help through this means consults a fetish priest (juju man, or specialist sorcerer). The kind of financial assistance the individual receives from him is known as 'blood money'.

This is because the fetish priest demands the blood of a baby, a boy, a girl, a woman or a man to perform the ritual. The individual in need of the financial assistance must bring any of these people; who are often killed for their blood. The type of blood demanded depends on how fast and how big an amount the individual wants to have per week or month (Owusu, 2009). As indicated by the opinions of the informants in this study, although the existent of sakawa as a practice in contemporary Ghana is disputed by a good number of Ghanaians (largely as a result of education), the belief, as a religious act, appears to influence people's views and understanding of social actions and phenomena (Salm & Falola, 2002; Nukunya, 2003).

4.4. **Positioning of Street Children**

This theme derives from the analyses of informants' responses to questions bordering on the activities street children engage in and their daily life rhythm in general. Responses of the shopkeepers and the school children indicate that both categories of informants acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon of street children in Accra Central. For instance, a 17-year-old SHS girl stated that, *I see them every day; in fact, we see them sometimes every minute unless we are in class.* A female shopkeeper said:

> *My shop is at a vantage point so I see them in their numbers every moment... I always hear on radio and television, advert and campaigns about this street children situation... The living situation of these children is bad. Children's living on the streets is not a good thing because the streets are not places where children are to live... (SK 2)*

These suggest that informants are not oblivious to the existent of the street children situation in Accra Central. They also describe the living conditions of street children as awful and that the street is not inhabitable for children. These are consistent with previous studies on the phenomenon of street children in Accra (Beauchemin, 1999; Boakye-Boaten, 2008; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; CAS, 2000; Hatløy & Huser, 2005; Payne, 2004).

Consistent with the concept known among positioning theorists as "deliberate positioning of others" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999: p.27), informants tend to take a stance on the daily life styles of street children. Both the shopkeepers and the school children characterise street children as active urban economic agents, vulnerable, and deviants.

4.4.1. **Active Urban Economic Agents**

Street children have access to the urban informal labour market and they take advantage of this by rendering services which 'cannot be dispensed with' in the typical Ghanaian urban market setting. A male shopkeeper observes that,

> *In their daily lives, the majority work for money. Some sell things along the streets, others shine shoes, some do the 'kayayei' job, the boys push truck... Some of them go to 'chop bars'[10] and work there as dish washers (SK 4).*

A 16-year-old SHS boy added that, *"they sell for people. For example, some girls hawk around selling roasted plantain for the one who roasts the plantain to pay them after selling."* Female shopkeeper, SK 1, also stated that, *"they sell polythene bags and pure water..."* It appears most of these children end up in the street situation either having gone through the economic phase of socialization at home (Salm & Falola, 2002), or having the consciousness to achieve self-reliance. Thus, upon taking to street life, children work and

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[10] Chop bar: A local restaurant where typically traditional Ghanaian meals are served

socialise on the streets, carving out niches for themselves at the low end of the informal economy (Bar-On, 1997). It seems, as explained by Dordick (cited in Conticini, 2007), streetism (or homelessness in general) encourages a process in which personal relationships are mobilized in trying to produce what the physical environment fails to provide. Although the public consider these jobs done by street children as "on the edge of legality or acceptability" (Tipple & Speak, 2009; p 198), patronage appears to be necessitated by the nature of the market and business districts of Accra. For instance, the central business area of Accra is crowded to the extent that humans, vehicles and goods all compete for space (Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009); the movement of vehicles is extremely limited and access to market centres is almost impossible (Agarwal et al., 1997). Even within the market area the use of shopping trolleys is virtually not feasible. Against this backdrop, 'kayayei' (porters) are employed by travellers, shopkeepers, general shoppers, or traders to offset the difficulty of vehicles accessing the centre of the markets to load or discharge their goods.

The informants' responses referred to above also suggest that street children seem to have carved gendered economic spaces for themselves. That is, some of the works engaged in by street children are gender specific: the girls are usually the 'kayayei' and the boys, 'truckpushers'. I also noticed from my participant observation that the sale of polythene bags (shopping bags) and some food items (including confectionery and pure water) is a role played by both boys and girls.

Again, panhandling or begging for money or food seems to be an unacceptable behaviour within the sub-culture of street children in Accra. A female shopkeeper captures this vividly in her assertion that, *"they don't beg, rather, they ask if you can give them any job to do for you, for instance, carrying your loads or cleaning, so that you can give them something when they are done" (SK 2).* This further emerged in my informal conversation with a child in the street situation.

> *I met KK[11] today, a 13-year-old kayayoo. We talked about a varied number of issues including her survival strategies as she is also in the street situation. KK said she does the kaya business. Additionally, she works as a cleaner in a nearby local restaurant. Sometimes the restaurant's manageress gives her food or paltry as wages. KK confesses that it is difficult but she has to do it because she can't go begging or stealing (Field Diary July 15, 2010).*

The above shows that children in the street situation make use of their versatility by doing multiple jobs to earn their living. However, they appear to lack the power to negotiate appropriate pay, especially with their adult employers and/or patrons of their services. This reflects the general adults' dominance over children in power relation in Ghana.

The absence of begging in the behaviour of street children in Accra has been found to be a distinguishing feature of the Ghanaian street children from other street children in the sub-region and across Africa (Hatløy, & Huser, 2005; Orme & Seipel, 2007). That street children in Accra do not beg (from the public) could also be anchored in the fact that the Ghanaian child is socialized economically to be self-reliant (Salm & Falola, 2002).

4.4.2. **Vulnerable**

Informants reported that the arduous nature of the work street children do, their sleeping places and the overall nature of their living conditions make them (street children) susceptible to numerous social and health problems. Some informants shared their thoughts as follows: *"... children on the streets do not have good accommodation" (a 13-year-old JHS boy). "Those (children) on the street get malaria and cholera because the gutters are not covered and they don't sleep in mosquito nets" (a 17-year-old SHS boy).* Street children themselves acknowledge their problem with decent accommodation.

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[11] Name is a pseudonym

I conversed with TT[12] today. He is a 14-year-old street boy and a cobbler within the market area. I asked him where he sleeps as he has no home to retire to after each day's work. He said there is a shed in the market where he sleeps with other boys as a group in the evening. Sometimes owners of the place sack them but they always manage to get a different place (Field diary, July 15, 2010).

Similarly, a male shopkeeper (SK 3) who happened to have been in the street situation during his adolescent years shared his experience, *"we slept at the lorry parks, in lotto kiosks, and at Tema station. Falling sick was a normal thing for us: the atmosphere was always choked with dust and smelly gutters"*. Sleeping in the open makes, particularly the girls, susceptible to rape: as acknowledged earlier, *"some men take advantage of the girls: for example, they have forced sex with them and if the girl is not lucky and the man has STD she also gets it" (a-16-year-old SHS boy)*. This is consistent with the finding by Orme and Seipel (2007) that girls are especially prone to sexual harassment and some end up with unwanted pregnancies or contract sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Sleeping at night together as a group in the open has been found to serve as a protective mechanism against attacks by thieves and rapists (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). However, these street children still remain exposed to the bites of mosquitoes in the open. Malaria is a common occurrence among street children because they are exposed to mosquitoes while sleeping out in the open (Orme & Seipel, 2007). According to Yeboah and Appiah-Yeboah (2009) the group of kayayei who sleep in front of stores or on city pavements during the night are the "most vulnerable" (p. 3).

Still on the health vulnerability of street children, the over-crowded nature of the business environment is an indication that the working conditions of these children in the street situation are basically poor and unhealthy. For example, as shared by SK 3 above,

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[12] Name is a pseudonym.

many experience excessive dust and dirt, and prolonged exposure to the direct scorching sun (conticini, 2007); situations which put their health in danger.

Street children were identified to be susceptible to traffic accidents. *"They carry heavy loads for people and they cross the streets carrying these loads. They can be hit by vehicles at anytime... which can render them maimed for life or even death can result" (SK 2).* Most street children engaged in the informal sector of the urban economy are forced to weave in and out of traffic, competing for limited space with vehicles, pedestrians and shoppers on congested roads and market areas. They do this so they could either sell their wares to passengers on board busses and travellers, or so that kayayei and the truckpushers can get to their destinations quickly. This usually results in accidents and fatalities (Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009).

Another area of the manifestation of the street child's vulnerability is exploitation. Most street children are exploited and abused on a daily basis (Agarwal et al., 1997; Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Orme & Speipel, 2007; Yebpah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009). *"They (street children) are cheated when they sell things to people" (a-14-year-old JHS boy).* Kayayei and truckpushers are exploited by their patrons and are sometimes harassed by the police, drivers, and '*aaba ei*' (city guards). Patrons sometimes refuse to pay them or pay less for the services they perform. As referred to already in my informal conversation with KK, "*she said, she does the kaya business. Additionally, she works as a cleaner in a nearby local restaurant. Sometimes the restaurant's manageress gives her food or paltry as wages". (Field Diary July 15, 2010).* This suggests that although adults wield more power than children generally in the Ghanaian society, street children appear to be powerless and pushed to the passive ends of exploitation. The ideal Ghanaian child, as identified earlier, is located at the base of the power hierarchy (as against adults at the top) within the family and in public spaces (Salm & Falola, 2002). In other words, the ideal child

relatively wields a little power. However, it appears because the street is frequently associated with deviance and criminal lifestyles in the eyes of the public (De Moura, 2002), street children tend to be virtually powerless, especially in their interactions with adults. This is corroborated by the following previously acknowledged experiences shared by the informants. *"...I saw a boy, I don't think he was even five years old, selling pure water and some drivers at the station bought the water and wouldn't want to pay him; they were cheating him"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). Another 17-year-old SHS girl shared her experience as follows:

> *I saw this girl selling Ghana flags and other paraphernalia...at the entrance of a 'trotro'... to the passengers on board. The driver ordered her to leave the place but she wouldn't listen and the driver came down to slap her and drag her from the door, and nobody could say anything...*

It appears in their daily economic lives, street children face much hostility at the hands of the adult population (as found by Koller & Hutz, 2001; Scheper-Hughes, 1995). They are also harassed by patrons who insult, reproach and ridicule them. There are instances when they are beaten if they spill, lose or damage patrons' goods (Agarwal et al., 1997; Beauchemin, 1999; Opare, 2003; Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009).

Informants' responses also point to another fact that street children are suggestible: they are vulnerable to deception and other kinds of bad influence. *"Some of the children, particularly the boys, can be lured into gangs doing nothing good but stealing and robbing"* (SK 2). According to a 15-year-old girl, *"men take advantage of the girls: they lure the girls to bed that they will give them this or that but after doing everything they just sack them"*. As referred to earlier, *"the street child goes out with friends who are not good or other children who would not be of any benefit to him or her in the future"* (SK 1). *"... Some of them join gangs and they use drugs and smoke..."* (SK 4). The suggestion here is that street children

tend to be gullible to bad influences from both the adults and children population. It seems the informants' assumption is that the street child lacks the information or the awareness and the adult supervision required to ward off these influences as in the case of the ideal child at home. For instance, a female shopkeeper (SK 2) bemoaned as follows, *"...it feels so bad and sad seeing these children living on their own without somebody taking care of them or supervising what they do and where they go... and these days too children are being used for 'sakawa'..."* The latter part of this statement unveils another dimension of vulnerability among children in the street situation: they are vulnerable to be used as objects for rituals to achieve the goals of 'evil forces' (sakawa; sorcery). This assumption further seems to inform the assertion that, *"some people also catch the children and used them for money rituals, now called 'sakawa'"* (a-16-year-old JHS girl). This suggests that street life makes a child defenceless against physical and psychological pressures and spiritual influences from certain recalcitrant adults and children 'out there'.

4.4.3. Deviants

The analyses of informants' responses to questions regarding street children's activities further revealed that street children engage in unlawful and socially unacceptable activities which lead to the categorization as deviants. For instance, *"some of them are pickpockets at the lorry parks"* (a-17-year-old SHS girl). *"Some are in gangs who go about stealing. Anytime they come close-by I advise them, but you see because of what they would eat they can't stop"* (SK 1). A male shopkeeper also asserted that,

> *...Some of them are thieves: they snatch phones of unsuspecting passers-by, some actually steal from shops. But you cannot blame it all on them, these children need to survive...some of them too are very good at lying or they are tricksters: they can fabricate sad stories to appeal to your conscience and emotions so that you give them money...* (SK 4).

The foregoing assertions point to the fact that generally many street children do not have any reliable or decent sources of livelihood: some support themselves by engaging in such unacceptable activities as stealing, and fabricating of stories to get something in return from the public. This has been found in previous studies on street children in Accra (Beauchemin, 1999; Orme & Seipel, 2007).

Culturally, children are required to remain at home or in the classroom, but not in the streets without adult supervision. As argued by De Moura (2002), this situation leads to street children to be portrayed as exhibiting socially unacceptable qualities and behaviours which place them at the fringes of society. Informants made assertions pointing to the fact that, the idea that street children are deviants cannot be wholly blamed on the children but on the absence of the family and the school in their lives. For instance, as quoted earlier,

> *We who are in school are taught manners, RME, courtesy and other things. They (street children) are not taught so, so they do anything that makes them comfortable; they do anything anyhow; they are deviants. Nobody teaches them, nobody trains them* (a 17-year-old SHS girl).

A female shopkeeper also stated that,

> *At home a child has parents to whom she can take her problems; parents can give the children counsel and advice, but on the streets, the children are for themselves and they do just anything they feel like doing. There is nobody to control or train them...* (SK 1).

The two assertions above suggest that street children are not wholly blameworthy for being deviants for the reasons that: they lack the information and training (children acquire from home and school) required to fit into the society. For instance, *"most of these children are not*

educated so they litter the environment with the sachets from which they drink water or throw them away anywhere and anyhow...This can cause malaria and other diseases" (a 16-year-old SHS boy). Secondly, street children lack the parental presence, control and supervision with regard to what they do and where they go. Thus, although informants describe street children as deviants, the blame for this is pinned largely on the unresponsive and uncaring attitude of society toward street children's plight of ignorance. For example, a 17-year-old SHS girl recommends that,

> *The Ghana Education Service should move and conduct a kind of mass education of street children. Even if they would not go to school, they should be educated on their health and other habits so that they would not be contracting and be spreading diseases here and there.*

This response suggests that society as a whole is not doing anything much in terms of enlightening or informing the children in the street situation on issues affecting their health and general well-being. This uncaring attitude on the part of society appears to demotivate some street children from conforming to the norms and ethics of society even if they know such norms and ethics. According to a 16-year-old SHS girl, *"children on the street dress anyhow and behave anyhow. There is the feeling that, 'I am on my own and nobody cares'"*. The argument here is that, at home when children put up good behaviours they are given some kind of reinforcement (be it material or words of praise) by parents and/or adults to encourage such behaviours. However, on the street, children who previously (prior to entering the street situation) had been socialized with regard to the accepted ways of behaviour in the society, seem not to uphold such behaviours any longer. This could be anchored in the fact that they lack the reinforcement provided by the presence and supervision of parents and/or adults. Secondly, as found by De Moura (2002), street children

are portrayed as exhibiting socially unacceptable qualities and behaviours and this inevitably pushes them to the fringes or margins of society.

In sum, street children make use of their ingenuity and versatility in the attempt to provide what the physical and social environments in which they find themselves fail to provide. They meet their livelihoods by rendering services that are indispensable but on the edge of legality or acceptability in the markets and along the streets of Accra. Thus, shopkeepers and school children tend to position street children as active economic agents. However, street children are positioned as vulnerable largely because their sleeping place, nature of work and powerlessness make them susceptible to health problems and exploitation in society. Similarly, street children appear to be uninformed, ignorant of society's standards, lack parental and/or adult supervision and control, and lack decent employment. These lapses in their lives, according to the informants, make them deviants as they engage in behaviours that contravene the requirements of the norms and values of society.

4.4.4. Juxtaposition: The Child and Adult Informants

In this section I juxtaposed the school children with the adult informants (shopkeepers) in this study in the light of their respective daily relational experiences with street children in Accra Central. I sought to tease out the commonalities and differences in terms of their emotional and behavioural responses to and evaluation of street children.

4.4.4.1. Adult Informants (Shopkeepers)

Shopkeepers appear sympathetic to the situation of street children. A female shopkeeper had the following to say about how she feels anytime she encounters street children in the market area, "*I feel so sad and sympathetic: I ask myself if these children do not have parents. This is because living on the street can create a whole lot of problems for the children*" (SK 1).

Another female shopkeeper lamented that, "*I have children, I feel so bad and sad seeing these children living on their own without somebody taking care of them or supervising what they do and where they go*" (SK 2). A plausible suggestion here is that the sympathetic feeling on the part of these shopkeepers for street children stems from their assessment that these children are vulnerable. The shopkeepers seem to perceive adult or parental control and supervision as a shield and a protective cover against the vulnerability and exploitation of children in the society. Thus, the adult informants seem to have the conception that street children lack protection from adults or parents. This conception appears to inform their reaction toward street children. For instance, according to SK 1, *"when they come to me I ask them about their families, their parents and where they come from". "...Most of the children I talk to come from very poor families..."* (SK 2). These assertions suppose that, in their interactions with street children, adults try to get information leading to the familial origin of street children. The aim could perhaps be to assess the possibility of getting these children back to their parents or families for protection. Thus, adults adopt a "questioner-advisor" approach in their interactions with street children. They ask street children questions regarding their family background and attempt to advise the children. For example, as referred to earlier, some shopkeepers shared their experiences as follows, *"I see them often and I try talking to them to be good boys and girls so that God would change their situation someday"* (SK 4): *"anytime they come close by I advice them..."* (SK 2): *"I always try to share some of my experiences with them when I meet them, but some of them do not listen to advice"* (SK 3). These suggest that shopkeepers perceive street children as persons who need protection and as such attempt to provide them with the information they may need to remain protected. Some adopt a religious frame of reference in providing street children with informational support as evident in the assertion by SK 4 above. The fact that adults who have direct contact with street children ask the children a lot of questions and are sympathetic

toward them has been found in previous studies (Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Orme & Seipel, 2007).

4.4.4.2. **Child Informants (School Children)**

Responses of the school children to questions regarding their actual encounters with street children show that the school children tend to identify more with the children in the street situation. Some school children empathized as follows: *"their situation makes me feel sorrowful. I wish they have my situation but it's unfortunate"* (a 16-year-old JHS boy): *"I am not happy when I see them, because the way I enjoy life I also wish they are enjoying but they don't get it"* (a 16-year-old SHS girl): *"...if I see them, I wish they were like me. Although my situation is not all that good, I think if they were to be me it would have been better for them..."* (a 15-year-old JHS boy): *"some are my friends, I feel sorry for them. Sometimes I feel like taking them to my home..."* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). These suggest that the school children tend to be more empathetic than adults shopkeepers to the situation of their counterparts in the street situation. The responses also show that the school children build friendship with street children even though street children do not fall within the framework of who an ideal child is in the Ghanaian society. Some school children shared episodes of their friendship with some street children as follows:

> *I have friends where I live who live on the streets. During rainy season when the sand is removed from the choked gutters we wait till the sand dry up then we use magnet to fetch coins from the sand. At times we use our bare hands to look for coins in the sand* (16-year-old SHS boy).

> *There is a girl in my neighbourhood who used to live with her aunt. The girl is almost like a friend to me... she has now run away from home and living on the street. Whenever I meet her she complains to me but I try to console her to still go home* (a 16-year-old SHS boy).

The immediate 16-year-old SHS boy (referred to above) further adds, *"I also have a friend who is an orphan. I always try my best to help when I can. I tell him not to lose faith because I believe God would favour him someday"*. Unlike the adult informants, it appears street children are more comfortable with their counterparts in school. They interact and share recreational space. The school children (like the shopkeepers) also perceive the home or family environment as the ideal place for children to live. This could be tied to the reason shared by a 17-year-old SHS boy as follows: *"I keep telling them to go home because that is where they would get somebody to care for them, no matter how difficult"*. Additionally, the school children also adopt a spiritual or religious frame of reference in offering both informational and monetary support to street children. However, it seems some portrayals of the media have threatened or neutralized the helping behaviour of some school children toward street children. Some school children shared their experiences as follows:

> *Some of them are not real human beings... when you give them money they can used it for rituals or 'juju' so that you the person giving them the money would lose all your money to them. Actually, we saw it in a film, so people don't want to help... anymore* (a 16-year-old JHS girl).

> *Sometimes it's difficult to give them something when they ask because some of them are agents of witches and wizards. They would bewitch you using whatever you give them as the means to getting at you. I get scared when I see them sometimes because of this...* (a 17-year-old SHS boy).

> *... These days there is a rumour in the movies that some of these children are not human beings. For instance, if you give them something like a coin, they would use it for 'juju' – they would take it to the spiritual realm to harm you or get something from you. So I, for one, it has become very, very difficult for me to give them something...* (a 16-year-old SHS girl).

That street children are stigmatized as 'witches' and abandon to live on the streets, has been found in Nigeria (CSC, 2009). The school children in the present study seem to mirror in their behaviour toward street children the ideas they have from society regarding street children. The portrayals of the media (precisely, television) appear a strong influence in this regard. It has made some school children ambivalent or neutral in their attitude and behaviour toward street children. In Ghana these portrayals are usually seen in Ghanaian and Nigerian movies shown by television stations. It is a general knowledge in Ghana that hardly a day passes without any television station showing a Ghanaian or Nigerian movie. This is similar to the finding by Barnett *et al.* (1997) that some informants expressed less considerable concern and sympathy/support for street dwellers owing to greater desensitization to the plight of the homeless by informants' exposure to (often unflattering) media portrayals of homeless individuals. As argued by Le Roux & Smith (1998), through media pronouncements, street children are largely believed to be a threat to society: they are viewed as a problem instead of been perceived as children with problems who need help (see Corsaro, 2011.pp. 271-74; Rosier, 2009). These media portrayals and pronouncements usually lead to the labelling of street children as undeserving and deviants and as such push the street children more deeply into antisocial behaviour and isolate them to the margins of society thereby intensifying their exclusion and victimization.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid religious or spiritual reservation, some school children still have a positive attitude toward street children. For instance, *"I treat them as my own siblings. I believe we are all human beings. They have their own problems but I still treat them good"* (a 16-year-old SHS girl)*: "I treat them as how I want somebody to treat me because if I were in their shoes I wouldn't like it if someone treats me badly"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). These reflect human dignity, empathy and goodness. It appears some school children are entrenched in their positive attitude and reactions to street children because of

their belief in human dignity, empathy and goodness. Thus, the perception and behaviour of the school children toward street children seem to be contingent upon which frame of reference is adopted. If reference is made to the unflattering, negative media portrayals and pronouncements, the corresponding perception and behaviour become negative and unsupportive. However, human dignity, empathy and goodness as a frame of reference are associated with positive and supportive perception and reactions towards street children.

Analyses of the responses of the school children to questions regarding the causes of the street children phenomenon, partly, revealed some shared experiences of Ghanaian children irrespective of whether they live at home, in the streets or go to school. A 16-year-old JHS girl captures this as follows:

> *Our parents do not give us sex education but when a daughter gets pregnant out of ignorance, instead of helping her, she is sacked by her parents out of the house. This leads her to the streets where she may even give birth to a child who may also grow up to be a street child.*

Another 16-year-old SHS boy stated this similarly:

> *Our parents... are shy to teach us about sex and our teachers at school too are shy or they force us with fear to learn it. So all these things bring ignorance and lead children to be pregnant and live on the streets.*

The school children adopt such terms as 'we', 'our' and 'us' in making causal attribution to the phenomenon of street children. This generalization suggests that the school children also find themselves in similar predisposing factors which have led some children into the street situation. They are treading on the same or similar pathways which lead to street living. Thus, it seems the school children perceive themselves as potential street children. This finds

support in the following submissions made by some school children in response to what should be done to prevent the street children situation in Accra.

> ...our parents can be a serious factor. They need to be patient with us. We are children and they should know best how to treat us so we would not run away from home to the streets... Children should also be obedient; we have to listen to the counsel and advice of our parents. Our mothers should stop making us overwork. For example, I help my mother to sell pepper and sometimes I can be so tired because she makes me work too much (a 16-year-old SHS boy).

"I think our mothers should stop giving us out to live with our aunts. I am an example; sometimes they treat us so badly" (a 17-year-old SHS boy). These suggest that the school children identify more with their counterparts in the street situation largely because they (school children) find themselves going through similar or same experiences (causal conditions) which lead to or have led other children into the street situation. This fact could stem from the school children's personal reflections of vulnerability or likelihood of being street children someday. These findings are in line with Barnett *et al.* (1997) who found that heightened degrees of concern for the homeless were expressed by younger respondents than older participants, partly as a result of the associated feelings of personal distress or vulnerability on the part of the younger informants. Thus, the school children appear not to perceive themselves as *ideal children* (see the earlier discussion of *the ideal Ghanaian child*) as held in mainstream cultural ideology of childhood in Ghana. This perception is tied to their identification of the fact that although they are at home and in school, they find themselves in the conditions that can lead them into the street situation.

Generally, it could be stated that the adult informants (shopkeepers) have positive attitude and perception toward street children. However, the child informants (school

children) identify more with the street children and have a more positive perception and attitude toward them, although this is influenced by media portrayals and religious beliefs.

Inferring from the positioning of street children by the informants, and in the light of the definitional constituents of social exclusion provided by the UNDP (2007), it could be said that street children in Accra are victims of social exclusion. They have no opportunity - and are deemed incapable - to participate in decision making (e.g., have no say in child related issues in the society; they cannot bargain for good pay for the services they render in the informal economy and so on). They have no access to meaningful livelihood and social services largely because they have limited educational attainment; some are disabled, and the fact that they are children whose place of living is the streets.

4.5. **Key Causes of Street Children Phenomenon in Accra**

The branched chart below (figure 2) shows the main causes of the street children phenomenon in Accra as reported by shopkeepers and school children in this study. Analyses of the informants' responses to questions in relation to the causes of the phenomenon led me to develop the chart below which covers all the causal attributions made by the informants.
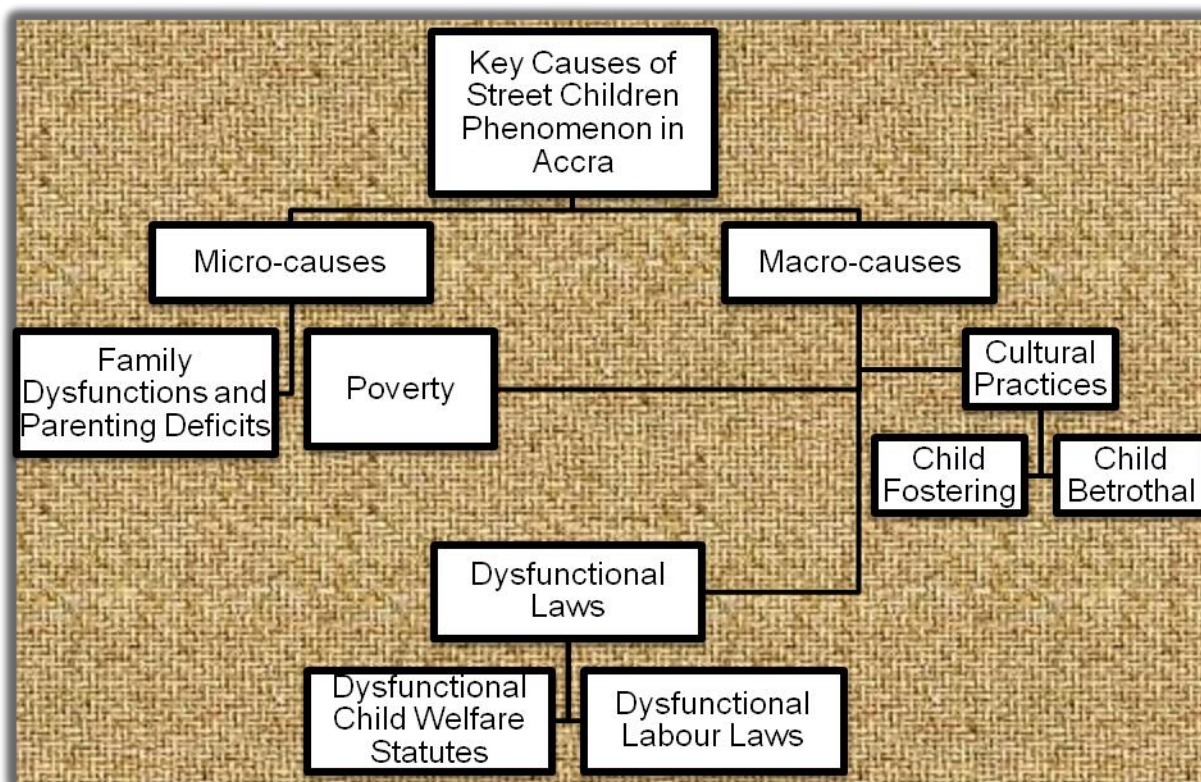
Figure 2. Key causes of street children in Accra as identified by Shopkeepers and School Children.

I categorized the key causal factors into micro- and macro-causes. The micro-causes cover family dysfunctions and parenting deficits whereas the macro-causes encompass poverty, dysfunctional laws and cultural practices. A similar structure has previously been found in a study on the phenomenon of street children in some selected communities in Accra by Boaky-Boaten (2006).

4.5.1. Micro-causes

Causes under this category are those experienced within the immediate environment of the child, namely, the family circle. These causes seem to have a direct effect on a child's decision to take to street life. Specifically, the micro-causes identified by informants are sub-categorised into family dysfunctions and parenting deficits.

4.5.1.1. **Family Dysfunctions and Parenting Deficits**

Under this sub-category, informants identified such factors as weakened extended family system, ecological transitions, family poverty, parental irresponsibility and poor family choices and relations. On the weakened extended family system, some informants made the following attributions: *"some of the children have lost both parents and the other family members don't care about them"* (SK 4). *"Some mothers are abnormal or have mental problems and have been rejected by their families. So children of such mothers usually take to street life..."* (SK 2). The suggestion here is that the extended family provides help to needy members both in routine circumstances and in crisis conditions: support is rendered to relatives in times of trouble (Nukunya, 2003). As stated earlier, *"if a child is an orphan or may be loses both or one of the parents ...the child has to live with an aunt or other relatives"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). In the words of Nukunya (2003; p. 162), within the extended family system in traditional Ghanaian society, there existed a "collective responsibility for the welfare of the child". In the extended family system, chances are relatives especially close ones would take care of children who are rather young but have lost their parents (ibid).

However, in recent times the extended family in urban communities (from the foregoing responses) appear unable to offer the needed support to it members in trouble. According to Abotchie (2008), the inadequacy of incomes in the urban centres has forced migrants and families in the cities to prioritize their expenses, focusing on providing only for their spouses and their own children to the exclusion of aunties and uncles at home, or nephews, nieces, cousins, sisters or brothers. In other words, due to urbanization there appears to be weakening of the extended family system and the inherent welfare system for its members, particularly children.

Closely related to the weakened extended family is what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls "ecological transition": the occurrence "whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting or both" (p. 26). Put differently, transitions along the life course the occurrence of which affect the family to the extent that in most cases members must make significant adjustments in their roles and/or environment. For instance, according to a female shopkeeper, *"...divorce is the cause of the situation of most of the children I see here every day"* (SK 2). To a 17-year-old SHS girl, *"...death is another factor. Some parents die early leaving their children orphaned...".* Female shopkeeper 1 also asserts that, *"some children are in the streets because they have lost both parents to death or divorce and... each of the divorced parents seeks new relationships neglecting the welfare of the children they have from their old marital relationship"* (SK 1). These assertions support the finding by Orme & Seipel (2007) that, typically, children end up in the streets as a result of the death of their parents, poverty, neglect, divorce in the family and the like. It seems when these ecological transitions (e.g., death of their parents, family poverty, single parenthood, and divorce) occur, the adult family members are able to cope and find alternative solutions (e.g., a divorcee seeking a new relationship). However, the children become helpless and have no option but to adopt street life as the child welfare system in the extended family system is weakened.

More so, that, *"...each of the divorced parents seeks new relationships neglecting the welfare of the children..."* is an indication of irresponsibility and poor family choice. Some parents shirk their responsibilities to ensuring the welfare of their children. The irresponsibility on the part of some parents to care for their children was identified as one of the key factors within the family circle which 'push' children out of the home to the streets. This was predominantly identified by the school children perhaps because children are

usually at the passive or receiving ends of parental responsibilities. For example, a 16-year-old SHS boy offered this explanation:

> *Some parents too don't give advice to their children, they allow them to do whatever they want, so friends can easily deceive them to lead bad lives and at the end they can get pregnant or impregnate a girl, and because they are afraid they run away to live on the streets.*

The suggestion here is that limitless parental permissiveness and lack of parental control and advice lead innocent children into situations which subsequently land them in the street situation. A 16-year-old JHS girl also puts her illustration as follows:

> *Our parents do not give us sex education but when a daughter gets pregnant out of ignorant, instead of helping her, she is sacked by her parents out of the house. This leads her to the streets where she may even give birth to a child who may also grow up to be a street child.*

A plausible suggestion here is that beside the irresponsibility on the part of some parents toward their children, some parents make some bad family choices which lead the children to the streets (e.g., sacking a pregnant girl-child from the home). A 16-year-old SHS girl shared her view on some parents making bad family choices as follows,

> *Some parents give birth to so many children yet they do not have the money and financial strength to take care of them. Some mothers in this situation would let the older children stop school and go and sell along the streets to supplement the family's income. Eventually some of the children adopt the streets as their homes.*

To a male shopkeeper (SK 3),

...most of the children come from very poor homes. Some parents do not have money but they have given birth to so many children they cannot take care of. Some of the children do not even get their daily bread, so in the process they struggle to come to the streets to get what they need.

It appears one of the challenges the ordinary Ghanaian family face is poverty. Poverty in families is largely owed to the high rate of unemployment which pervades the Ghanaian society in general (Boakye-Boaten, 2006). However, it seems some parents give birth to too many children even in the face of their resource inadequacy to taking care of these children. Perhaps, the cultural practices of child fostering and child betrothal could underpin the seemingly conservative attitude of some parents towards unbridled child bearing. These practices have been found to reduce the number of children parents have to cater for given their limited resources (Goody, 1982; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Serra, 2009).

On poor family relations, a 15-year-old JHS boy explains as follows,

When the parents like fighting; fighting so that if the child takes his needs to the mother, she in turn directs him to his father who also directs the child back to his mother, in that order. The frustration that results from this compels the child to leave the home to the streets.

That family violence, severed family relations and child neglect lead to the street children phenomenon have been found in previous studies (Boaky-Boaten, 2006; Orme and Seipel, 2007). Therefore, it could be said that the micro-causes are very immediate within the child's environment and as such have a direct decisive influence on a child's choice to take to street life. The micro-causes have been found to be "the most disturbing" as they indicate the endemic extent of child neglect within the family system, considering the weakening of the extended family system in recent times (Boakye-Boaten, 2006; p. 212).

4.5.2. **Macro-causes**

The causes categorised here are those factors the strands of which exist in the larger society, with the family circle not an exception. Basically, the causes identified here are poverty, dysfunctional laws (namely, dysfunctional child welfare statutes, and dysfunctional labour laws), and cultural practices (specifically, child fostering, and child betrothal).

4.5.2.1. **Poverty**

Poverty seems to pervade the general Ghanaian life as it is experienced at both the family and national levels. Female shopkeeper 2 shares her experience as follows, *"...most of the street children I talk to come from very poor families"* (SK 2). A 16-year-old SHS boy explains that, *"some parents don't have jobs so their children have to go to the streets to sell so that they can also bring something home"*. The idea here (as found by Boakye-Boaten, 2006) is that poverty prevails in families mainly because parents are unemployed. Compared to 11% in the year 2000, Ghana's unemployment rate was 20% as of 2008 (Daily Guide, 2008). Selby (2010) argues that even though research shows that unemployment rate is around 21% among youth between 20-24 years, the lack of decent work in the country is three times the percentage of unemployment. The unemployment situation in families appears to compel children to engage in economic activities on the streets to fend for themselves and/or help supplement their family income. As explained by a 16-year-old SHS girl, *"some families do not have the means...so...at the end of the day the children have to sell pure water on the streets..."*. Female shopkeeper 2 throws a broader light on this situation based on her experience in the market area with a little girl as follows:

> *Just two days ago, I ran into one of them when I got here: a very young girl, who could perhaps be around five or six years, carrying pure water. Immediately, I called and asked who ordered her to come and sell, she told me her mother. Seeing how she*

was sweating and looking tired and weak, I bought the entire sachets of water and asked her to go home. But close to about an hour later I saw the same girl carrying another bag of sachet water. This time, I promised to give her one Ghana cedi (GH ¢ 1.00[13]) every day if she would go to school. Her reply was that she lives with her mother with other siblings and that she must also work to help her mother to take care of them...You see, it's so worrying. But I think it is poverty, you know? (SK 2).

It appears from the aforesaid encounter that, single parenthood, large family size and unemployment have a strong link with poverty in the family. It also indicates that the deprivations of children are correlated with monetary poverty (UNICEF, 2009). This brings about an ecological transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) leading to changes in the position and roles of children in the family circle; in this case engaging in work along the streets which eventually can lead to the adoption of street life.

As to the prevalence of poverty at the national level, a 16-year-old SHS boy illustrates that,

"In Ghana, the upper parts are less developed compared to the southern parts; you have good roads, electricity, good employment, good schools, hospitals and others in Accra. These force some of the children to move from the villages, especially the Northern parts, to Accra".

This suggests that the phenomenon of rural-urban child migration is largely engendered by the poor nature of the places of origin. Comparatively, some parts of the country (precisely, the rural areas) are underdeveloped and this 'pushes' people (including children) to migrate to the cities. As reported by others (Baah, 2007; Wutoh et al., 2006) most street children in

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[13] GH ¢ 1.00: Ghana's lowest note denomination, equivalent to US $ 0.60

the three main cities of Ghana (Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi) have migrated from the northern parts of Ghana as poverty is high in those regions. This finds corroboration in my informal conversation with TT, a street child who had migrated from the north.

> *I asked TT what made him come to Accra as Accra also has its share of problems and difficulties for its inhabitants. In response, according to TT, life is difficult in the north. One has to do laborious farm work and there is flood. He said it is difficult to go to school because one has to walk a long distance to school; classes are held under trees; and teachers are not many (Field diary, July 15, 2010).*

It appears that although Accra is already bedevilled by numerous social problems, child migrants (many of whom end up as street children) have the understanding that relatively, the level of life difficulty in Accra is less than what exists in their places of origin. Hence, the motivation to move to Accra; where they finally end up on the streets as kayayei and truckpushers among others (see Kopoka, 2000; Kwankye, *et al.,* 2009). UNICEF (2009) reports that,

> *While overall poverty was almost halved in a decade and a half, from 52% in 1991/92 to 28.5% in 2005/06, one-quarter of the population still lives below the poverty line and 18.5% of Ghanaians live in extreme poverty, with inadequate resources even to meet their basic food subsistence needs (p.1).*

In this vein, a 15-year-old JHS boy stated that, *"...even if the government really wants to help them (street children), it means the little available scarce resources would be used to help them come out of their street situation"*. A probable suggestion by this assertion is that at the national level poverty still prevails as resources available even to the government is inadequate as against the numerous developmental and social intervention projects it must carry out.

4.5.2.2. **Dysfunctional Laws**

This causative factor is related to dysfunctional child welfare statutes and labour laws. On dysfunctional child welfare statutes, male shopkeeper 3 asked me rhetorically, *"...we have laws about children's welfare and other issues but I don't think these laws are really working and effective; if they are, why should these children be struggling?"* (SK 3). This suggests that the inefficiency of Ghana's child welfare system and the fact that the implementation of these conventions and policies is lacking are not oblivious to the ordinary Ghanaian. It has been found that very limited state actions have been taken to supervise and implement the spirit of the charters, conventions, protocols and other child welfare policies and protection promulgations (Ampong, 2005; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Oguaah & Tengey, 2002). A 17-year-old SHS girl sheds further light on the situation as follows,

> *Some children are on the streets because they are disabled or physically challenged. Compared to the schools of the children who are not disabled, the schools of the disabled across the country are very few and the structures there are nothing to write home about. This forces the disabled children to go onto the streets begging and doing other things like that.*

The evidence here is that children with disability have also not received any significant state attention: legal and political frameworks regarding the welfare of these children lack full implementation as well.

With regard to dysfunctional labour laws, a 16-year-old SHS girl illustrates that,

> *Another thing I think society should check is, if you go to some work places or companies, the workers are the aged; they refuse to retire for the young people to*

> *gain employment. This makes life difficult for young parents with children to take care*
> *of.*

These are impressive and insightful analysis of societal dysfunctions by youth. The suggestion here is that the regulations and legalities regarding labour or work in Ghana also lack full implementation. The latent fear is that, if left unchecked, this situation could assume a generational trend: workers due to retire would do so very late owing to the fact that they entered the labour market early but were actually employed late. They would like to work extra years, perhaps to save enough toward their pension. This is a factor underpinning the unemployment situation that exists in some families.

4.5.2.3. Cultural Practices

Cultural practices found to inform children's decision to leave the home for the streets are child fostering and child betrothal. As referred to earlier, a 16-year-old SHS boy mentioned that, *"if a child is an orphan or may be loses both or one of the parents ...the child has to live with an aunt or other relatives"*. The same boy lamented later that, *"...our mothers should stop giving us out to live with our aunts. I am an example; sometimes they treat us so badly"*. It seems, as noted already, the informants (especially the school children) are not against fostering *per se*; however, the bad treatments that some foster parents mete out to the children make the practice unacceptable to the fostered children. Similarly, a female shopkeeper noted that, *"some people go to the villages and bring other people's children to the city with the promise of taking good care of them but they come to the city and do not honour their promise"* (SK 2). This suggests that when fostered children receive bad treatments and the promises to take good care of them are broken, the place of "freedom" available to them to go is the street. Thus, fostered children take to street life because of punishments or ill-treatments in the foster-homes.

As to child betrothal, a 17-year-old SHS boy explains that,

If a girl child is born, an old man would come and say, 'I would marry her', then he would bring some drinks, so as the girl grows she is introduced to the old man as her husband. But the friends of the girl would be mocking her as going to marry her 'grandfather'; she would have so many pressures beside her immaturity for marriage. So she would run away to the city. But she doesn't have anybody or know anybody in Accra so she has to live on the streets.

According to Nukunya (2003), the influence of education (i.e., formal classroom education) has led to an incessant decline in child betrothal, although it was a common practice in the traditional Ghanaian society. Another 17-year-old SHS girl observes that *"some mothers too give their children in early marriage to older men but the children run away"*. This suggests that some families still adhere to the practice in recent times although formal education appears to have suppressed it (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Serra, 2009). Again, as referred to earlier,

In my informal conversation today with Cee (a 15-year-old girl in the street situation), I asked her what made her come to Accra. She said she was to be given in marriage to an old man; a man she estimated to be older than her grandfather. So she ran away to Accra when the ceremony was soon to take place (Field diary, July 15, 2010).

It can be deduced thus that there are no discrete lines of differentiation between the micro- and macro-causes of the street children phenomenon, as identified by the informants. This is plausibly anchored in the inter-related and intertwined connections between the causes. For instance, poverty exists both in the family and in the larger society. What is clear though, from the various causal attributions made is the absence of victim blaming. Informants appear

not to make dispositional attributions or blame the individual child for living on the streets. The causal attributions were made to conditions and factors beyond the individual child's control (i.e., situations within the family and the larger society).

It is evident here (within the framework of the social exclusion theory deployed for this study) that there are certain existing and potential pathways in the Ghanaian society which lead children to taking to street life; the consequence of which is social exclusion. Materially, the existence of financial or income poverty in the family (as a result of high unemployment rate), northern-southern (or rural-urban) development differences and high child poverty are some of the pathways to the street children phenomenon which in turn leads to social exclusion of the children. The relational dimensions identified by informants include the weakened extended family system (and its inherent child welfare system), severed family relations due to family violence and divorce; punishment and ill-treatment of children in foster homes, child betrothal; dysfunctional child welfare statutes and dysfunctional labour laws.

More so, the causal attributions made by informants are indicative of existing inadequacies, lack of development opportunities and frustration within the various interdependent layers or systems of the environment; namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The bio-ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) establishes that children are both products and producers of their environments; hence both children and the environment form a "network of interdependent effects" (Berk, 2006; p.29). However, it appears the interdependent layers or levels of the environment are not viable and fully functioning; in the case of children who take to street life. Thus, the inadequacies, lack of development opportunities and frustration within the various environment levels and the desire of the children to 'produce' favourable

development opportunities and environment for themselves, compel them to take to street life.

4.6. **Street Children Prevention**

Analyses of informants' responses to questions regarding the prevention of the street children phenomenon revealed two basic categories, namely, micro level prevention and macro level prevention: thus, following the logic from the causes identified as underlying the phenomenon. On the micro level prevention, informants suggested personal and relational changes, particularly, within the family setting. Personal changes cover those that fall within the individual domains of the child at home. These were suggested through and through by only the school children. For instance, *"...children should heed to good advice and not follow peer pressure* (a 17-year-old SHS girl). *"Children should be content with what they are provided at home because that is what their parents have"* (another 17-year-old SHS girl). This implies that children at home can avoid becoming street children by being obedient (to adults, particularly, parents and teachers) and be self-content.

On the relational side, informants suggested changes in the parent-child relationship and parental attitude in the home environment. A 16-year-old SHS boy argues empathetically as follows:

> *...our parents...need to be patient with us. We are children and they should know best how to treat us so we would not run away from home to the streets. The bible says, 'do unto others what you want others to do for you'. Our parents should learn to forgive their children and also those of them who are rich should help other children in the community who are poor, because some of the children are very intelligent but there is no one to help them. Our parents should learn to forgive each other and stop the broken home situation...*

This assertion appears replete with many suggestions. Paramount among them is that parents should not simply demand obedience but also exercise a greater degree of agency within the family setting in the bid to prevent children from taking to street life. A 14-year-old JHS girl stated that, *"parents should not leave education in the hands of teachers alone. They should also educate their children at home, especially about sex..."*. Male shopkeeper, SK 4, suggested that, *"parents must stop giving birth to too many children they cannot take care of"*. This suggests that parents must prioritise providing the needed nurturance and up-bringing of their children by themselves and this should inform their decision regarding parity. Hence, parents must not allow giving out their children into fostering and early marriage to inform their choice to bear many children. Thus, it appears much of the changes required in the family circle to prevent children from taking to street life lie within the roles, and power of parents.

On the macro level prevention, ideological and structural changes were suggested. Ideological changes suggested include providing street children with mass education:

> *"... Government, the Ghana Education Service should move and conduct a kind of mass education of street children. Even if they would not go to school, they should be educated on their health and other habits so that they would not be contracting and spreading diseases here and there"* (a 17-year-old SHS girl).

Labour laws also need implementation to regularise the unemployment situation: *"Our labour laws should be implemented or changed so that older people would be forced to retire so that young parents can get work to do to provide the needs of their children"* (another 17-year-old SHS girl). Informational and material empowerment of families was also suggested:

> *"...government should set up a task force to find parents of street children...parents found should be given the necessary help by means of counselling or financial assistance and be ordered to take their children back home and take care of them.*

> *Government should also arrest and deal with parents who give birth but refuse to take good care of their children"* (SK 4).

On the structural changes, building of schools and the provision of free education for street children by government were suggested: *"just as we have orphanages, the government can put up places where these children can be taken to and cared for; they can call it 'street academy', so that they give the children free education and a home."* (a 17-year-old SHS boy). The provision of training programmes for street children was also suggested: *"there are some street children, no matter what you say or do for them; they would not go to school. They are interested in work, so government should provide them with jobs or training like catering, trading, carpentry, sewing or something"* (a 16-year-old SHS boy). In doing these informants suggest a bottom-up approach: the incorporation of the street children's ideas into the designing of any intervention programme.

> *I believe strongly that children living on the streets have something to say; they have something they want to share with society but they are deprived of doing so. So TV stations and radio stations should interview them about what they have to say, what is bothering them, so that they can be helped in some way. May be one would buy something material for them, but that may not be what they really want; we need to hear what they want. Sometimes some of them are taken as house helps but men take advantage of the girls and women take advantage of the boys, so they need the chance to say what is bothering them* (a 17-year-old SHS girl).

These insightful suggestions buttress the recommendation that stakeholders concerned with street children should be pragmatic oriented backing their works with theories emphasizing working *with* street children but not *on* street children (CSC, 2003). Similarly, a male shopkeeper (SK 3) suggested that,

> *"...government should find a way to ask them exactly what they want. Some would not want to go to school but work, others would readily accept to go to school, and there are others too who must be forced off the streets".*

It seems within the larger society (macro level), the entity with the greatest responsibility (and perhaps, power) to bring changes to prevent children from taking to street life is the government. According to a male shopkeeper, *"it is only government who can do something to help these children. Individuals like us can help but not very much"* (SK 4). A female shopkeeper also stated that, *"I think it is only government who can do something significant to stop the problem"* (SK 2).

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Chapter Five

5.0. **GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

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5.1. **Overview of Findings**

Previous studies have addressed how street children are able to cope with the harsh realities of street life; the activities they engage in; their family background; their health; their perceptions; attitudes; their ambitions and other concerns (e.g., Anarfi, 1997; Baah, 2007; Beauchemin, 1999; Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Boakye-Boaten, 2008; Hatløy, & Huser, 2005; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Payne, 2004). How stakeholders such as government and non-governmental organizations perceive street children in Accra has also been addressed (e.g., Boakye-Boaten, 2006; Tipple & Speak, 2004). However, this study sought to explore shopkeepers' and school children's perceptions of street children in Accra Central. It was also of interest in this study to examine the factors accounting for the phenomenon of street children from the perspectives of shopkeepers and school children. Additionally, it was aimed in this study to find out informants' perspectives as to how the street children phenomenon can be remedied or prevented.

The findings indicate that both shopkeepers and street children acknowledge the existence of the street children phenomenon in Accra Central and conceptualize it as a social problem. This is predicated on the acknowledgement by the informants that the phenomenon is problematic to families, government and the children involved (Rwomire, 2001). Both groups of informants position or characterise street children as active urban economic agents, vulnerable, and deviants. This positioning appears to be informed by informants' knowledge of the lives and roles of children and other cultural ideologies in the Ghanaian society: the ideal Ghanaian child, the typical Ghanaian family and religiosity in Ghana. Informants

adopted these background knowledge as the criteria against which they matched and characterised street children.

Shopkeepers tend to be sympathetic towards street children: they perceive them as persons who need protection and as such attempt to provide them with some informational supports they (street children) may need to remain protected. Shopkeepers adopt a religious frame of reference in offering this support. Religiosity has been found to be the main constituent of the worldview of social action in Ghana and in essence, it is deep-rooted in the Ghanaian culture playing a major role in the principles of everyday life thereby keeping the Ghanaian culture alive (Bedu-Addo, cited in Payne, 2004; Nukunya, 2003)

Similarly, school children show positive perception and sympathetic feeling towards street children. When they encounter street children, school children tend to offer both financial and informational support; although in recent times, unflattering media pronouncements and portrayals about street children sometimes neutralize this helping behaviour. Nevertheless, the school children express high concern and empathy for the street children as they (school children) identify more with the street children's situation. This is largely premised on the fact that the school children seem to be treading similar or the same pathways leading to the adoption of street life. School children seem to find themselves exposed to the factors which lead (or have led other) children to adopt street life. The school children adopt such terms as 'we' 'us' and 'our' in talking about the shared, common childhood experiences in the Ghanaian society. Here we see the power of peer culture which is often underestimated in research in social sciences (Corsaro, 2011). School children build friendships with street children sharing activities and playing space together. Thus, the school children tend to have feelings of personal distress or vulnerability to becoming street children someday (Barnett *et al.*, 1997). On the whole, shopkeepers have sympathetic feelings and positive perception toward street children. However, the school children tend to identify and

empathise more with the street children and have a more positive perception toward them (street children), although this is influenced occasionally by unflattering media portrayals and religious beliefs.

Further discovery was that street children are victims of social exclusion (UNDP, 2007). They have no opportunity (and are deemed incapable) to participate in decision making (e.g., have no say in child related issues in the society; they cannot bargain for good pay for the services they render in the informal economy and so on). They lack access to meaningful livelihood and social services owing to the idea that they have no good educational attainment; some are disabled, and the fact that they are children whose place of living is the streets.

On informants' causal attributions to the street children phenomenon, I categorised the responses of informants into micro-causes (causative factors experienced with the immediate environment of the child, namely, the family circle); and macro-causes (those causative factors existing and experienced within the wider society). The micro-causes encompass family dysfunctions and parenting deficits. For instance, weakened extended family unit and its child-welfare system; ecological transitions (such as death of parents, divorce, unemployment of parents etc.); family financial poverty; parental irresponsibility; and poor family choices and relations (including family violence, and unbridled child bearing).

The macro-causes identified are poverty; dysfunctional laws (namely, dysfunctional child welfare statutes, and dysfunctional labour laws); and cultural practices (specifically, child fostering, and child betrothal). Essentially, both micro- and macro-causes are indicative of existing and potential pathways in the family and in the society at large which lead to the adoption of street life by children; the consequence of which is the social exclusion of these

children. Within the lens of the bio-ecological theory, it was evident that taking to street life by children is an attempt to *produce* a new environment which 'stimulates' child growth and development. Children take to street life in order to make up for the inadequacies and frustrations that exist in their families and the society at large. Thus, it was evident that street children are not blame-worthy for being in the street situation. Informants blame the phenomenon of street children in Accra Central on the inadequacies, dysfunctions and unfavourable situations in the family and in the wider the society. It is these inadequacies, dysfunctions and unfavourable situations which 'push' the children from the family and mainstream society onto the street, but not the (biological) dispositions of the children. The absence of victim-blaming perhaps could be a factor underlying informants' positive perception of street children (e.g., Barnett *et al.*, 1997; Rosier, 2009; Tipple & Speak, 2004).

Finally, informants' perspectives as to measures to remedy or prevent the street children phenomenon followed the logic from the identified causes that account for the phenomenon. Informants suggested changes within the micro and macro levels of the social environment of the child. At the micro level, children at home must avoid the tendency of taking to street life by heeding to parental advice and be self-content with what parents provide them; given the limited means of their parents. However, it appears parents have more roles to play in the attempt to reverse and change many of the inadequacies, dysfunctions and unfavourable situations which exist in the home; which push children onto the streets. For instance, parents have to avoid shirking their responsibility towards educating their children; avoid giving birth to many children they are incapable of supporting; and parents must prioritise ensuring peaceful parent-child relationship at home.

Changes suggested at the macro level were ideological and structural in form. The ideological changes include the provision of mass education by government to children in the street situation about their health and habits. Additionally, laws regarding labour and child-

welfare should be fully implemented by government. On structural changes, there were suggestions that government should provide families with informational and material empowerment. In this vein, several major programmes have been launched by government; some with a strong focus on children. These are (adopted from UNICEF, 2009; pp 2-3): *National Health Insurance Scheme* (NHIS) was established in 2003 to provide equitable health insurance for all. *Education Capitation Grant* was introduced in 2005 and expanded nationwide to all schools in 2006, in order to improve enrolment and retention by providing schools with grants to cover tuition and other levies that were previously paid by households. *School Feeding Programme* was introduced in 2004, with the aim of increasing school enrolment and retention by providing children with a daily meal at school. *Public works programmes* provide jobs for unemployed and underemployed youth, including the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP). *Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty* (LEAP) programme was initiated in March 2008 to provide cash transfers to extremely vulnerable households, including those with orphans and vulnerable children. Although these are laudable social protection programmes, full effective implementation appears to be hindered by systemic (e.g. political institutions); societal (e.g. public attitudes); and institutional constrains (UNICEF, 2009; p. 3). Thus, it appears on the macro level, government is seen as the entity with the greatest responsibility (and perhaps, power) to bring changes to prevent children from taking to street life.

Inferring from the findings of the present study, it can be said in sum that shopkeepers and junior and senior high school children who participated in this study generally have positive and supportive perception of street children in Accra Central. However, the school children tend to be more empathetic to street children; as they (school children) identify more with the street children's situation. Informants' helping behaviours towards street children were found to be influenced by religious beliefs and media pronouncements and portrayals

about street children. In addition, street children are not blame-worthy of their particularly difficult life situation on the streets. Finally, the street children phenomenon can be remedied or prevented by reversing the dysfunctions, inadequacies and deficiencies that exist in families and the larger society.

5.2. **Limitations of the Study**

The procedure followed in this study was useful in exploring shopkeepers' and students' perceptions of the phenomenon of street children in Accra. However, the choice of data collection process followed cannot be said to be without any limitation.

First, the hustle and bustle of the market and the spontaneous call-in on shopkeepers by customers during the interview sessions might have interfered with shopkeepers' concentration on the interview. This might have limited the depth of information and the expected "uninterrupted, smooth flow" of the interviews at the market.

Further, informants (shopkeepers and school children) used for this are individuals who are most likely to have direct contact and interactions with street children within Accra Central on daily basis. Largely, the responses of the students (individuals aged 12 to 17 years) would qualitatively reflect how street children are perceived by other children within Accra Central. Similarly, shopkeepers' responses reflect how the phenomenon of street children in perceived in the world of adults. However, depending on how this is viewed, the sample size, although appropriate for an exploratory study of this kind, limited me from generalizing the findings across the entire Ghanaian public.

5.3. **Strengths of the Study**

Despite the foregoing limitations, the present exploratory study provides some useful insights into the public's perceptions of street children. It has helped document shopkeepers' and

students' perceptions of the phenomenon of street children in Accra Central. It offers a useful heuristic point of departure for future studies aimed at deepening the understanding of the complexities of the public's perceptions of the phenomenon of street children in Ghana.

5.4. **Implications and Recommendations**

5.4.1. **Community Psychological Interventions and Praxis**

The perceptions of the public can help reverse or perpetuate the particularly difficult situation of the socially excluded in society. The first step to undoing the damaging effects these perceptions have on reversing the situation of the socially excluded is knowing these perceptions. The present study offers empirical evidence on the public's perceptions of street children; one of the socially excluded groups in the Ghanaian society (UNDP, 2007). There is a clarion call (see Boakye-Boaten, 2006; CAS, 2000; Orme & Seipel, 2007; Payne, 2004; UNDP, 2007) for mainstreaming or a social responsibility to engage actively with the prevention and change of the conditions that put these children at risk. I believe this call is significantly directed at community psychologists; as mainstreaming, integration, social justice and empowerment of the disadvantaged and socially excluded in society are some of the core concerns, values and principles of the field (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

This study reveals that unflattering media pronouncements and portrayals about street children negatively influence the public's perceptions about street children. Perceptions are known to beget reactions; although not always. Through media pronouncements, street children in Ghana are largely believed to be a threat to society: they are viewed as a problem instead of been perceived as children with problems who need help (CSC, 2003). Against this backdrop, community psychologists (working in concert with other advocacy groups, NGOs and CBOs) should educate public media on the damaging effects of their pronouncements

about street children. These media pronouncements usually lead to the labelling of street children as deviants and as such push the street children more deeply into antisocial behaviour and isolate them to the margins of society thereby aggravating their victimization (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). The aim is to turn the pronouncements of the media into those of advocacy. It then becomes imperative for community psychologists to form alliance with and partner the media to in turn educate the public on the realities of the street children situation and the probable repercussions on the future of the children and the society as a whole.

Community psychologists, again, have to lobby the legal system to include children's rights and equal opportunities for all children (including children in the street situation) to have access to education and adequate care and housing. More importantly, community psychologists (in collaboration with other child-rights organizations) have to advocate the full implementation of the various conventions and other legal statutes regarding the rights and welfare of children in Ghana.

Community psychologists can collaborate with street workers, educational providers and social workers to serve as the significant adults in the decisions that a street child makes regarding his/her future. Through frequent contacts with the street children, the community psychologists, street workers, educational providers and social workers can be able to facilitate the provision of basic services to these children, far and above the required interventions such as counselling, para-legal assistance, home visits, and referral to hospitals and to residential/drop-in centres (Orme & Seipel, 2007).

5.4.2. **Research on Street Children Phenomenon**

The present study offers empirical evidence on the public's perceptions of the phenomenon of street children from the perspectives of only shopkeepers and school children: those who participated in this study have generally positive perception of street

children and treat them with sympathy. In order to establish a holistic insight into the dynamics of the public's perceptions of the phenomenon, future studies should be conducted with a broad range of samples, including teachers, the police, law-makers, drivers, health workers, city authorities, religious institutions, households among others. It is probable that these individuals and groups may have different perceptions of and reactions to street children in Accra (and Ghana in general)

Additionally, future research should endeavour to establish clearly the difference between causes and correlates of the phenomenon of street children. For example, such efforts may assess the relationship between child related cultural practices (such as child fostering and child betrothal) and children's decision to take to street life.

Finally, this study clearly shows the importance of the agency of children and youth; as seen through the eyes of the school children involved and their impressive perceptions and suggestions for change. We also see from the findings the agency and adaptive strategies of street children themselves.

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1–21

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Interview Guide (semi-structured)

Knowledge about the street children phenomenon

    i.   How would you describe street living in Accra central by children?

    ii.   What are some of the activities street children engage in, daily?

    iii.   What differences have you noticed between street children and other children in the community?

    iv.   What influences or effects do you think living on the street has on the children?

    v.   In what ways do you think children living on the street of Accra affect the city (or the country) as a whole?

Causal Attribution

    i.   What do you think are the causes of the street children phenomenon in Accra?

Emotional and Behavioural tendencies towards Street Children

    i.   How often do you see and/or interact with street children?

    ii.   What do you feel when you encounter a street child?

    iii.   Can you tell me about your experiences with street children?

    iv.   How do you treat street children when you encounter them?

Remedial measures

1. What do you think should be done about the street children situation in Accra?

Do you have any other comments?

Ending Question

Let us summarise the main points of our discussions. (The researcher presents a résumé of the responses to the key questions). Is this summary complete? Are there any additions or changes you would like to make?

Appendix II

<u>Informed Consent Form</u>

INFORMATION

My name is Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie, a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Human Development student at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). I am currently spending part of my graduate programme in Ghana collecting data on the chosen area of study for my master's degree thesis. The topic of my research is, "**The Public's Perceptions of the Phenomenon of Street Children: A Qualitative study of Students and Shopkeepers in Accra, Ghana**". The study will involve interviewing shopkeepers and focus group discussions with students (with consent from their superiors and parents/guardians). The interviews and focus group discussions would be audio recorded so that your responses can accurately be recorded. This would enable the researcher to review the topics and responses later for analysis so not to miss any details. Participation is possible if only you are willing to have the interview or discussions recorded.

BENEFITS

This study is significant in that the perceptions of the larger society about street children can help reverse or perpetuate the diabolical situation of these children in Accra. Knowing these perceptions is the first step to undoing the damaging effects they may have on reversing the situation of street children. More so, very little is known (through research) about street children in Accra from the perspective of the wider society and this study would help in that regard.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participation is strictly anonymous: you would not be identified by your name or organization or market or school of affiliation. All information provided in this study will be held in absolute confidence; the tapes would remain in the custody and control of the researcher always and would not be given out for any purpose to anyone who is not working directly with the researcher. The researcher will not share information which could identify you with anyone or in publication.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right not to answer any question(s) you feel uncomfortable with and you can withdraw from participation at any time if you do not want to continue.

CONTACT

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me at *quarshie@stud.ntnu.no,* or by telephone, 0208835716. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Berit Johannesen at *berit.Johannesen@svt.ntnu.no*.

_____   _____

(Signature of Researcher: Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie)   (Date)

Consent of Informant

I certify that the purpose of the study has been thoroughly explained to me in English/mother tongue to my satisfaction and I have received a copy of the consent form. I understand that any information obtained from me for this research will be kept confidential. To further ensure privacy, I have the option of using a pseudonym. I understand that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. I agree to participate in this study.

_____   _____

(Informant: Signature/Initials/thumb Print)   (Date)

Appendix III

Letter of Informed Consent to Parent / Guardian of Student

Dear Parent / Guardian,

INFORMATION

My name is Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie, a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Human Development student at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). I am currently spending part of my graduate programme in Ghana collecting data on the chosen area of study for my master's degree thesis. The topic of my research is, "**The Public's Perceptions of the Phenomenon of Street Children: A Qualitative study of Students and Shopkeepers in Accra, Ghana**". The study will involve interviewing shopkeepers and focus group discussions with students (with consent from their superiors and parents/guardians). The interviews and focus group discussions would be audio recorded so that your responses can accurately be recorded. This would enable the researcher to review the topics and responses later for analysis so not to miss any details. Participation is possible if only you are willing to have the interview or discussions recorded.

BENEFITS

This study is significant in that the perceptions of the larger society about street children can help reverse or perpetuate the diabolical situation of these children in Accra. Knowing these perceptions is the first step to undoing the damaging effects they may have on reversing the situation of street children. More so, very little is known (through research) about street children in Accra from the perspective of the wider society and this study would help in that regard.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Taking part in this study is strictly anonymous: your ward would not be identified by name, or by organization or school of affiliation. All information provided in this study will be held in absolute confidence; the tapes would remain in the custody and control of the researcher always and would not be given out for any purpose to anyone who is not working directly with the researcher. The researcher will not share information which could identify your ward with anyone or in publication.

PARTICIPATION

Your ward's participation is entirely voluntary. If your ward decides to participate, she/has has the right not to answer any question(s) she/he feels uncomfortable with and can withdraw from participation at any time if she/he does not want to continue.

CONTACT

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at *quarshie@stud.ntnu.no,* or by telephone, 0208835716. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Berit Johannesen at *berit.Johannesen@svt.ntnu.no*.

_____   _____

(Signature of Researcher: Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie)   (Date)

Consent of Parent/Guardian of Student

I certify that the purpose of the study has been thoroughly explained to me in English/mother tongue to my satisfaction and I have received a copy of the consent form. I understand that any information obtained from my ward for this research will be kept confidential. To further ensure privacy, my ward has the option of using a pseudonym. I understand that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which my ward is otherwise entitled and my ward may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which my ward is otherwise entitled.

I agree to allow my ward, _____, to participate in this study.

_____   _____

(Parent's/Guardian's Signature/Initials/thumb Print)   (Date)

Appendix IV:

Letter of Ethical Clearance from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), Norway

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

(NSD)

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Berit Overå Johannesen
Psykologisk institutt
NTNU
Dragvoll
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 02.06.2010   Vår ref: 24171 / 2 / KH   Deres dato: Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 07.04.2010. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

24171	*The Perception of Street Children among Shop-keepers and Students in Accra, Ghana*
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Berit Overå Johannesen
Student	Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, vedlagte prosjektvurdering - kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.08.2011, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim   Kjersti Håvardstun

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Håvardstun tlf: 55 58 29 53
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie, Herman Kragsvei 01-31, 7050 TRONDHEIM

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:
OSLO: NSD. Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD. SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

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Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering – Kommentar

24171

The sample will consist of approximately 20 shop-keepers and students in Accra, Ghana, and will include both adults and minors.

Written information about the project will be provided, and written consent will be obtained from the informants/participants. When it comes to minors under the age of 16, their parents must give an additional concent.

The Privacy Ombudsman (Personvernombudet) finds the information sheet satisfactory provided that it is made explicit the data will be anonymised within completion date, august 31th 2011, and that also observation is used as a method of gathering data.

The information is registered on a private computer and on a tape recorder. The Ombudsman presumes that the use of a private computer is in accordance with the routines for information security of the NTNU.

All data will be anonymised no later than the registered completion date (August 31th 2011). This involves deleting the tape recordings and all directly identifying information (the list of informants' names), and either deleting or altering all indirectly identifying information such as name of school or market affiliation.

Appendix V: Letter of Introduction from the Psychology Department, University of Ghana, Legon.

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Tel: (233-21) 500381 Ext. 3309/3310   P. O. Box LG 84,   Legon -Ghana   e-mail:psychology@ug.edu.gh
028 955 04 63

Our Ref. No. ....

July 5, 2010

To Whom It May Concern

Introduction of Researcher and Confirmation of Research Protocol

I hereby introduce **Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie** as the researcher on the topic *"The Perception of Street Children Among Shop-keepers and Students in Accra"*. He is a former Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree student at the University of Ghana, and now a student in the Master of Philosophy in Human Development program at the Department of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. This letter confirms that his research protocol has been duly evaluated, approved and cleared by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) in Trondheim, Norway and the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon.

Your support and cooperation with him towards a successful data collection is implored.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charity S. Akotia
(Senior Lecturer)

(For Head of Department)