TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF GHANAIAN CHILDHOOD(S): AN EXPLORATION OF GHANAIAN CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF IDEAL CHILDHOOD

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Abstract

Children's lives and how they live are mostly laid out for them with very little consideration to their own choices or interests. Most often, the rational is that they are young, inexperienced and vulnerable. A lot of policies are put in place to ensure that children have satisfactory lives. However, all these are done with little consideration to what exactly children themselves want. Most often, research with children concerning their perceptions of life focus on what they want to be in the future as adults thus, very little literature exists on how they want their lives to be as children. This study helps fill the gap on what children want their lives to be as children with the aim of giving them a voice in issues that concern them. Childhood studies theorize children as active social agents whose perspectives and contributions to both their lives and that of other social actors could be invaluable to the society if they are taken seriously. Therefore, childhood studies are grounded in methods which place greater emphasis on the meanings that children attribute to their lives. There are concerns about how best to make their voices heard by reducing to the barest minimum, adults' influences on their perceptions. This calls for particular methods that will put children's views in the fore front of research. To achieve this aim, this study made use of the qualitative reconstructive approach, documentary method, that makes both explicit and implicit meanings form data for analysis. With documentary method, what children say explicitly and how they say it are analyzed to give two levels of meaning with the implicit meaning being knowledge that they are not aware they possess. To achieve the aims of this study, narrative essays about children's fantasy of ideal childhood were collected from 47 children who are between 10 and 13 years old in the Winneba Municipality in Ghana. The documentary method provided evidence that, in their fantasy of ideal childhood, children focus on certain key activities and relationships as fundamental issues. In addition, five orientation frameworks were reconstructed from their implicit knowledge as constructions of Ghanaian childhoods. These orientation frameworks emphasize theories of diversity of childhoods even within the same locality. Finally, the documentary method is recommended as a very effective method for research with children.

Table of Contents

Dedication

To God who planted the idea, whispered words, grew phrases into sentences and declared maturity of paragraphs.

And to my 4 lovely daughters;

Lois

Eunice

Glory

Vivian

who represent change and to

Julius,

who is a beautiful inspiration.

List of tables and diagrams

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This chapter is the introduction and it entails the background of the study, the research questions, objectives and research methodology. It details the inspiration that led to this project, the setting, population and sampling process. Finally, it explains the instrument for data collection and the ethical issues that informed meeting with the research participants and data collection.

1.1. Is it a generational tension or just change?

When my five-year-old daughter insisted on choosing her own Christmas outfit, which I never did as a child, I chose to let her make the choice; after all, she will be wearing it. As a child, my parents gave me what they thought I needed without asking my concerns. When it came to what to wear, the closest I got to the outfit was when my measurement had to be taken. The choice of everything came from my parent. Three decades later, my children are demanding that those decisions be placed in their hands. This experience inflamed my interest in children's fantasies about a kind of perfect childhood.

A second experience that added to my interest in this topic emanated from a project I engaged my students in as indicated in Acquaye (2020). In the project, my undergraduate students who were pre-service teachers were asked to write stories for basic school children. In their stories, they presented children as inferior to adults in many ways and positioned them as needing to be controlled. However, in an interview with some of them, they described a childhood that they loathed. In effect, as adults, they position childhood differently from what they project as children. These two experiences set me thinking about the life given to children; If most adults look back at their childhoods, most often, with regret, and would have changed their childhood experiences, if they could, then what childhood would children want for themselves presently?

As a child, I was made aware strictly that children must be seen but not heard. However, my parent tried their best to give me what they assumed I needed. The idea was that they knew what was best for me and I was too young to bear responsibility for

my actions. An African proverb explains that decision-making comes with heavy responsibilities and children will have a lot of that as they grow up. Hence, while they are young, adults should carry that load for them and this is the kind of upbringing I received. I tell my children that the kind of upbringing I had has made me what I am today, however, my fantasy of childhood bears a slight resemblance to reality. As a parent, I expect to give my children the upbringing that will make them grow into their respective future roles. It was therefore worrying that my children want to make decisions themselves without being aware of the repercussions of their actions which I, on the other hand, am aware of. I have met several parents who express similar sentiments. However, society is dynamic and a lot has changed since I was a child. Children have been reconceptualized from being weak, vulnerable, inexperienced and ignorant to being competent social actors whose perspectives are valuable to society and who deserve to be studied on their own merit.

1.2. The quest

Adults in positions like parents, teachers, guardians, and caregivers, had in time past held the mindset that children are vulnerable, weak, and unable to fend for themselves or even take or be part of a decision-making process on issues that concern them and mold their lives. However, there have been significant developments in our perception of children as generally possessing limited faculties to a more radical conception that sees them as active agents in the negotiation and construction of their lives (Lee, 2001; Ofosu-Kusi, 2014). Child upbringing tactics and methods across social groups globally have undergone changes even as humankind progresses from one era to another. Such changes have slowly but surely progressed from undesirable and abusive techniques of child-upbringing to more acceptable and humane ones which recognize children's innate abilities and the need to understand their unique state and needs. (Galbraith, 2001; de Mause, 1982)

This development comes with the need to take seriously children's own efforts to shape their circumstances and exercise control over their lives. It also implies that established norms may require modification by permitting children to play key roles in matters that concern them (Christensen & Prout, 2003, Swauger et al 2017). Consequently, a lot of studies with and about children which have sought to understand them more have resulted in getting to know a lot about them. Such studies include the

reconstruction of childhood as a unique stage (Aries, 1962; James & Prout, 1997; James & James, 2001; Mayall, 2002), diversity in childhood (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016), the exploration of children's popular culture (Kos-Lajtman & Slunjski 2017; Livingstone, 2013; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002), exploration of children's perceptions, (Aldgate & McIntosh, 2006; Al Arasi, 2013; Barnett, 2013; Galanaki, 2008; Spencer et al, 2015; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013), researching children and the future (Atance, 2008; Elliott, 2010; Holden, 2006; Øverlien, 2011; Zartler, 2015), researching adult's hopes for children (Irwin & Elley, 2012; Lee, 2001; Stearns, 2008) among others. The nucleus of most of these studies is the focus on children as competent social actors (Jenks, 1996; James & Prout, 1997; James & James, 2001; Mayall, 2002; Qvortrup, 1994) who possess a unique perspective on society that can be useful to social constructions (James & Prout, 1997; James & James, 2001).

In the bid to study children as competent social actors, researchers in the area of childhood studies in conjunction with researchers from other disciplines have studied children and the future from different viewpoints such as researching children's perceptions of social structures, (Caruana & Vassallo 2003; Holden, 2006), gender issues, (Elliott, 2010) and future plans, (Øverlien, 2011; Zartler, 2015). Most often the future researched with children look at what they hope to be as adults but when it comes to children's lives, adults make plans and policies (Lee, 2001) based on what they think is good for children and hope they (children) go along with it, (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). However, *my research will shift attention from what adults think is good and appropriate for children, to exploring children's perception of an ideal childhood, to research what they think is important in their childhood and how they would prefer their lives to be.* The quest is to shift from the practice of adults' constructions of childhood to children's constructions of childhood. The results of this study will thus be childhood form from the perspective of children and the importance of this knowledge is based on its source as a primary one which will be more authentic.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child clearly outlines the rights and privileges of children; however, they are placed in adult care making adults the primary implementers of the rights of the child, especially, in Africa. Poverty and other social constraints in Ghana have made some children's lives less than expected according to child rights advocacies. In some parts of the world where governments provide family and

parenting support (Daly et al, 2015; OECD 2009) implementing children's rights could be fully enforced unlike in Ghana, where child upbringing is the sole responsibility of parents. Although the Ghana government has put several policies (for example, free education to the secondary level, a National school feeding policy and free healthcare for children) in place to lighten the burden on parents, child upbringing involves more. For instance, government policies do not support the domestic upkeep of children and in view of this, it is difficult to enforce and even follow-up on the implementation of children's rights.

Also, issues about making children's lives are driven by adults with little or no influence from them; after all, children do not make policies.

1.3.   The research question(s)

The research question plays a key role in a researcher's choice of methodology, methods and theories to guide a study. They are a kind of connection between what is known and what is unknown and they usually determine the appropriateness of the data collection instrument and the data analysis methods. In effect, their relevance is imposed on the success or otherwise of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). In addition, the research question gives the lead as to where to work and with what or with whom.

The research question for this study was not informed only by my personal experience with my children who insist on being allowed to make decisions that affect them directly, but more importantly by the theoretical effect of the paradigm shift in childhood studies. The UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child clearly outline the rights and privileges of children, however, they are placed in adult care making the adults the primary implementers of the rights of the child, especially in Africa. Poverty and other social constraints in Africa have made some children's lives not conform to children's lives as stipulated by these child rights regulations. Also, issues about making children's lives are driven by adults with little or no discussion with children. Hence, embarking on this research is the result of reflections on the state of children's lives and how they feel about it. Thus, this study is driven most fundamentally by the question; to what extent are the livelihoods given to children in Ghana what they imagine for themselves? What are the disparities between children's reality and their fantasies? To what extent will children be able to impart the knowledge

or ideas of exactly what they want their lives to be like? These are some of the questions that contributed to the formulating of the main research questions (as well as the choice of research methods) for this study.

This study aims to explore children's imagination of perfect childhood even as they relate to the different conceptions of their lives and to reconstruct their implicit knowledge that informs their perception of ideal childhood. That is, to learn about their needs and longings in general within the period of their childhood. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to use a research method that puts children's views at the forefront of data analysis. The documentary method gives the advantage of not only constructing the research subjects' explicit knowledge but also of reconstructing the implicit knowledge that is not consciously and immediately accessible to them. Thus, the primary research question for this study is **what is Ghanaian children's perception of ideal childhood?** The idea here is for the respondents to reflect on their current lives and based on that make a projection of what they think would be an ideal childhood. As the research question requires the use of narratives of daily lived experiences, it is expected that they will narrate activities and issues that are an integral part of their daily living. Based on this, the primary research question was supported by three others which are (i) What activities are important to Ghanaian children in their imagined perfect lives? (ii) Which ideas of relationships do Ghanaian children reveal in their imagined perfect lives? and (iii) What factors contribute to the perfect lives Ghanaian children imagine?

1.4. Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to research children's perception of their immediate future (4 - 8 years ahead) to explore their notion of being a child now compared to a kind of ideal they project into the future. That is to explore how children perceive, understand and imagine their lives as children with respect to complexities and complications they experience or envisage in childhood. The idea is to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their current situations and on what they would otherwise have wanted it to be in an environment they construct as ideal for a perfect life. This way, their current lives are the base on which they project a fantasy of ideal childhood.

The children's ideas and opinions about what it means to be a child in Ghana are compared to, for example, adults' notions on the educational or political level in Ghana. This comparison depended mainly on issues the children addressed or included in their narratives as they reveal their ideal childhood.

1.5. Research with children

One of the key prerogatives to enhance childhood studies is to move research with children from focusing on what is said about them to what they say about themselves, (Christensen & James, 2000; Lewis & Lindsay, 2000; Mandell, 1991). Accordingly, this requires most explicitly the use of research methods that will, first of all, give them the needed space to communicate their thoughts (Christensen & Prout, 2003, Swauger, et al, 2017) and secondly, make their explicit and implicit knowledge data for analysis, (Nind, 2014, 2011; Kellett, 2005; Hart, 2008, Kim, 2015).

The aim of this study, therefore, had two levels: the first is to explore the children's imagination of a perfect childhood by studying what they project as important in their current lives and secondly to reconstruct what influences or informs their perception of ideal childhood. The Documentary Method, as posited by Mannheim, (1952) and performed and further developed by Bohnsack (2010), Nohl (2010) and Volkmann (2019) give the advantage of not only interpreting the research subjects' explicit knowledge but also reconstructing the implicit knowledge that is mostly not accessible to them. With this background, this research employed a qualitative research approach situated in the interpretive/reconstructive research paradigm.

1.6. Setting

Ghana was formerly called The Gold Coast until she gained independence from colonial rule in 1957 from the British (being the first African country to become independent of colonial rule). She is boarded by Cote d' Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. Ghana became a member of the Commonwealth after attaining independence on the 6th of March, 1957 (Britannica, 2020) and was one of the 32 independent countries that signed the African Charter in 1963. She signed the UNCRC on 29th January 1990 and was the first country worldwide to ratify the UNCRC on 5th February 1990, (UNICEF Ghana,

2020) As one of the member states of the African Union (AU) that agreed to develop the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which emphasizes specific issues, cultural values and experiences affecting the African Child, Ghana adopted The Charter in 1990 and it came into effect in 1999, (UNICEF Ghana, 2020)

The current population of Ghana stands at 30,417,856 which is 0.39% of the world's population with males making up 50.69% of the population while females make up 49.31%. Children between 0-14 years old make up 37.1% giving a dependency ratio of 62.2. The working-age population is 59.7%. Currently, 56.1% of Ghana's population is urban. The life expectancy rate of females is 66.1 years and that of males is 63.8 years. (Worldometer 2020)

Ghana's economy relies heavily on the agriculture sector which employs more than half of the population on both formal and informal basis. Major crops produced in Ghana include cocoa, yams, grains, oil palms, kola nuts and timber, (Modern Ghana 2020). Ghana exports a lot to countries like India, China, South Africa, Switzerland and the Netherlands and imports more from China, the USA, India, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The top exports include cocoa, gold, and crude petroleum and mostly imports cars and trucks, rice, refined petroleum and frozen fish and animal products, (OEC, 2019). With labor, 33.86% are employed in the agricultural sector, while 18.62% work in the industries and 47.52 are in the service sector. However, youth unemployment rate is at 13.7% and the general unemployment rate is 6.71% which is higher than the world's unemployment rate and Ghana is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, (World Bank, 2019).

Ghana is made up of 16 regions with each having several municipalities. The Winneba Municipality where the study took place is a coastal town located in the Central Region of Ghana with a population of 44,252. (World Population Review, 2021) There are 247 educational institutions, 74 (30%) are public and 173 (70%) are private institutions. There are a total number of 77 primary schools, 26 of which are public and 51 are private schools; the town has 47 Junior High Schools, 22 are public schools and 25 are private schools. There is also one public Senior High School, 3 private ones and 2 Technical and Vocational Institutions in Winneba. The Municipality has a major public university (University of Education, Winneba), a nearby private university (The Perez University), a National Sports College and a Police Staff and Command College. The institutions (not only educational) in the municipality provide

a rich source of employment for the populace. However, the locals are mostly fisherfolks and traders. Other means of informal employment include masonry, carpentry and sewing.

Children from both private and public schools were invited to take part in the research. The idea of working with children from both private and public schools is to give a representative view of children from different backgrounds so that the findings from this study could be generalized to Ghanaian children. Basic Education in Ghana is free, however, public facilities for the children's population tend to be woefully inadequate coupled with large class sizes. Private basic schools are therefore an alternative but come with fee-paying which sometimes is expensive, especially for the working class who forms a vast majority of the population. Hence parents who can afford private schools for their wards usually come from a better socioeconomic background.

1.7. Target population, sampling and instrument

A child is defined in different ways based on particular contexts or the issue at stake but mostly in the interest of the child. Most International Human Rights bodies like the United Nations and the African Charter define a child as any human being below 18 years. In Ghana, the Children's Act of 1998 conforms to the UNCRC by defining a child as a young person below 18 years. This study makes use of that definition of a child; however, the focus of this study is on young adolescents in the Ghanaian Basic School system. Thus, basic school pupils aged between 10 and 13 were selected for the research. The age range is based on the premise that children in this age group would have spent at least 5 years in the basic school and they have at least 5 years ahead of them before they turn 18. Apart from their lives at home from which they have experienced and formed impressions of life from family relationships, they have had several years of basic education which in turn may have provided them with opportunities to relate to the world outside of the home environs which will give the experience needed to make perceptions of an ideal childhood. The participants were purposively selected based on the age range for the project (10-13 years old). One private school and one public school were selected from the Winneba Municipality and children within the age group were invited to participate. Inclusion in the study was strictly voluntary.

The instrument for data collection was narrative essays and the stimulus was, "imagine you have the opportunity to live the way you want (in the immediate future), what will be your perfect life, starting from the time you wake up to the time you go back to bed". My interest is in their perfect lives which span more than a day but the idea of "going to bed and waking up" was to bring order to their narrations and to avoid jumbling up isolated events and activities or just listing events and objects of interest.

What they narrated as their perfect lives and how they did the narration both formed the data for the study.

1.8. Ethical issues

The researcher wrote letters to the Heads of the schools to ask permission to engage the participants in the research. In some situations, school administration demanded access to the children very cumbersome by demanding the process to follow a long bureaucratic procedure which was explained to start from certain educational offices. In some situations, I had to move to more "friendly" schools. When permission was granted, I met the pupils and explained the purpose of the study to them and answered their questions. I also made them aware that participation is strictly voluntary.

1.9. Research Expectations

It is my expectation (i) to reveal children's perspectives on childhood and what they deem important in their lives and to contribute to the construction of Ghanaian childhood(s) (ii) to contribute to childhood studies, especially to the study of children's writings. In my search for literature on research with children's essays, I found that children's essays narrating their fantasies are rare. The one group of such essays I found was written in 1969 by a group of 11-year-olds writing about what they imagined they will be like at age 25. (iv) My research will therefore provide a resource for childhood studies in the form of children's essays about their imagined ideal childhood (v) Documentary method has been used for analyzing group discussions, interviews, videos, drawings and photographs but scarcely for narrative essays; hence my research will add to the literature on its use for narrative essays. Finally, as this study aims at the construction of Ghanaian childhood, I hope that the results of this research will form a rich base for further discourse on childhood in Ghana.

1.10. Organization of the Study

Chapter one is the introduction which includes the background to the study, research questions, the setting, target population, sampling and instrument, ethical issues and research expectations.

Chapter two is the review of literature and chapter three deals with the methodology. Chapter four deals with data analysis and chapters five and six deal with the formation of sense-genetic and socio-genetic types respectively. Finally, chapter seven is the discussion and conclusion and it is followed by the references and the appendix.

Chapter 2: Children and childhood: The present, the recent past and the possible future

Overview

This literature review is an exploration of different disciplines' views on childhood, especially, from historical and futuristic perspectives. The idea is to explore the existing literature from different perspectives having in mind, the multidisciplinary status of childhood studies. This chapter is divided into two main parts; issues on global childhoods and African and Ghanaian childhoods. The first part will focus on general issues about children and childhood studies on the global scene especially in connection with theories of childhood while the second part will look at African childhoods and how the position of children has been investigated and both global and African perspectives on children and childhoods in Africa. This will also include the focus on studies with Ghanaian children, especially on their lived experiences, understanding and beliefs.

2.1. Global Childhoods

Children are an integral part of every society as they represent the future and almost everywhere in the world adults plan how to bring up their children to fit that role. This is because children start life as dependent on adults however, the relationship between the younger and older generation of human beings is that of a kind of reciprocity where the latter prepares the former to take over from them when they are old and needed care. In this case, children grow up to be adults and take over the helm of affairs which include taking care of both the younger and elderly generation. Children, thus, are very important and everything about them is important knowledge. So, who is a child and what have we learned about children and childhood?

2.1.1. Defining children and childhood

Childhood is as simple as it is also complicated and just as one could define children or childhood by simply observing a group of children at play, its complexity is evident, especially in genetic properties that reveal a labyrinth of definitions and views spanning societies and cultures, histories, contemporary and future thinking, disciplines, politics and education (McLeod, 2008; Šagud, 2014). Ordinarily, one will

justifiably link childhood to age limits but that is not enough. So, what is childhood and how far has academia gone to attempt precision in defining it?

Childhood has been defined in terms of purity and innocence by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), as blank by John Locke (1632–1704), and as evil (see for example Hendrick, 1997). It has also been connected to history (Scudder, 1894; Aries, 1962; Pollock, 1983), biological and social age (Séguy et al, 2019), agency and society (Hendrick, 1997; Gittins, 2009; Kehily, 2004; Prout & James, 1997; Woodhead, 2008). Other complementing factors include sexual consent, crime and prosecution, gender and education (Bajpai, 2003). Contemporary childhood is connected to cultural diversity; multifarious social set up and a technologically advanced environment.

Áries' "Centuries of Childhood" with a historical view started the debate on childhood, however current constructions of childhood are situated in particular discourse structures and not necessarily on the physique of the child (Šagud, 2014; Kellett, 2010). It is argued that representations of childhood are adults' incessant endeavors to control and manage childhood and anything connected to it. It is also a means of implementing and reliving adults' notions of ideal childhood (Buckingham, 2000; Šagud, 2014).

Children have been viewed as "adults in the making" (becoming) and this is contrasted with children as being, and it is assumed that adults focus on the discrepancies between their abilities and the inabilities of children to define childhood (Šagud, 2014; Kehily, 2009; Arneil, 2002; Prout & James, 1990). As becoming, they have been constructed as not yet adults and rather focus attention on what they will become. Consequently, their capabilities are downplayed and most often, they are the silent group in the population (Šagud, 2014). As becoming, the focus on children is future-oriented which is to become adults. In this sense, childhood is a kind of preparatory stage for children with the end result being adulthood. This positions childhood and adulthood in a binary relationship of negative and positive respectively. On the other hand, as beings, the focus is on the statutory stage demarcated by chronological age and infused with abilities as competent social actors with perspectives that could be equally important and engaging. Children are positioned as unique from adults and should be treated as such. Other researchers, still, are of the view that although children are both being and becoming depending on the origin or

base of the argument (Uprichard, 2008, Flowerdew & Neale, 2003), both theories present a problematic outlook of children (Huang, 2019)

The global constitution, UNCRC (1989) defines children and childhood in a universal sense with cultural diversity in mind; Members of the UN have the option to carve out their culture-specific childhood from the global one. Consequently, childhood has been defined according to the society in which children find themselves. Childhood can therefore be said to be the space in time in an individual's life that is characterized universally by young age (UNCRC 1989) but bound by factors such as defined by the society (Gittins, 2009; Kehily, 2004; Prout & James, 1997; Woodhead, 2008). In Ghana, both the 1998 Children's Act and the amended version of 2016 define children as young people below the age of 18 years. Childhood is defined by a space in time governed by children's welfare orchestrated and sustained by family, either biological or by adoption, within a peaceful caring environment with the key focus on children's welfare. At this stage, although the family is the fundamental socializing agent, the most influential "external" space and time-demand on children is the school which is characterized by education and socialization of the child.

2.1.2.   Children and childhood studies: a historical overview

The child, as a concept, has become so common in literary writing and research in almost all disciplines that we may not be able to fathom its absence from earlier writings. Childhood and what it means to both "medieval" and "modern" scholars has been the focus of several debates. Most of the pivotal concerns of such debates hinge on Philippe Ariés' claim that childhood, as it is known today, did not exist before the seventeenth century.

Ariés (1962) described how the notion of childhood and children's status changed throughout Western history but before Ariés' conception, Scudder (1894) had researched the presentation of children and childhood in Literature and the Arts and he explained that men, women, lovers, maiden and youth have always been part of literature but the child has been added to the dramatis personae of Modern Literature. That is, the child as an individual with special and unique status was absent in "early" literature. Although children were present in early literary writings, they were presented only as part of nature; specifically, as a small adults. There was nothing of the mystery and uniqueness surrounding children and childhood today. Childhood was characterized by a simple emotion of fear which is juxtaposed directly to adulthood as

strength, courage, and bravery which easily brushes aside the fear portrayed as childhood and provides security and protection. Thus, the child, in the early literature writings conception, was a little human creature without any mystery (Scudder, 1894; Ariés, 1962; Classen, 2005).

Although Scudder made the observation that childhood as a unique stage was not present in medieval times after he had scrutinized literary writings and artworks to buttress his point, it was Ariés' assertion in the 1960s about the lack of recognition of childhood that gained scholars' attention and set off a myriad of research either for or against his views. Ariés (1962) explains that the absence of childhood from medieval art was not a result of incompetence or incapacity but could be more of a lack of place for childhood in that society. In order words, there was no special attention given to or recognition of childhood and as a result, children blended into the society as only a small version of adults. That small "adult" is characterized by dependence and until one weans himself from being dependent, that person is seen as a child. To buttress his argument of children being seen as miniature adults, Ariés sighted among other things, children's clothes also as smaller versions of adults' clothes and games and past times as those similar to those of adults.

Aries' assertion of the lack of recognition of the child as innocent and unique in medieval times has been met with many criticisms. Pollock (1983) is of the view that Aries' assertion is wrong and medieval childhood has a lot in common with the contemporary construction of childhood and what has been used to characterize childhood before the 17th century were only some isolated cases of child brutality. It has been argued that even though children might have been given harsh treatment in some instances, they were not considered insignificant and their parents were not indifferent to their lives. On the contrary, they were perceived as emotionally charged and they represented the future of the adult world (Classen, 2005).

Truscott (1998) arguing against Ariés' findings based her argument on the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer indicating that the poet recognized both the vulnerability and resilience of children, however, they are mostly associated with suffering, cruelty, isolation and pain but there are also positive and optimistic views of the child indicating the presence of both the good and the bad in childhood, (just like it is today). Chaucer, as a poet, wrote both about children and for children and there is evidence of similarities between his and our conception of childhood today.

However, Arthur (2013) is of the view that children were not held dear but rather since they were considered little adults, they were treated as such and thus they were held fully responsible for all their actions although they cannot reason like adults and most often fell into what society considers evil. Since children were considered evil, in the 16th century Puritan and Jewish societies, adults' response to their nature was excessive punishment and children who had lenient parents were seen to be wayward. Children were dealt with so ruthlessly that writings like Lev Tov and Domesticall Duties were written as a guide to dealing with children as far as punishment is concerned and mostly to reduce the harsh treatment given to children. Willful indulgence of children and permissiveness instead of authoritarian in child upbringing was considered sinful (Sather, 1989).

The struggle over childhood constructions seems to emanate from differences in perspectives of researchers rather than historical facts which naturally may be diverse based on cultural backgrounds and class demarcations. The contrasting historical stance of researchers on pre-modern childhood could be just variations in the constructions and reconstructions of childhood based on the social hierarchy. For instance, childhood to the elite is quite different from that of the working class. Resources and education make a big difference in childhood today and the same could be said of the medieval era (Bellingham, 1988).

Culture and religious beliefs have acted as key factors in positioning adults' view of childhood. For instance, the Medieval society possessed an indifferent stance on childhood thus, once children are weaned, they find their place in the society and simply fit in. The Puritans treated children harshly based on their religious beliefs that the child is fundamentally evil and severe punishment must be used as correctional measures (Bellingham, 1988; Sather, 1989) while the 18th-century writers constructed a romantic view of the child as innocent and needed to be protected. Today, we are beginning to see the child as possessing intrinsic abilities and must be helped to fully develop those abilities, making our society move gradually but surely away from the romantic view of the child to the child who is empowered, "independent" and thus is no longer innocent.

Ariés' rendition of the history of childhood and the acceptance by intellectuals and scholars in that area is based on the recognition that parenting styles vary over time and space and parents' behavior is directly related to their idea about childhood,

parents' responsibility and what constitutes abuse and neglect (Johansson, 1987; Classen, 2005; Garver, 2005).

It is acceptable that the medieval idea of childhood is different from what we have today but the very concept of the child is not static and generations from now may see ours as also different.

2.1.3. Childhood Studies: from a theme to a discipline

Research has proved that child mortality in medieval society was very high and thus parents tried to avoid the pain of losing a child by just being indifferent to the child. However, with increased better healthcare for children, the mortality rate dropped and parents began to take more interest in the welfare of their children. As the population of children increased, society became aware of them as different from adults, as future leaders, and needed special care and education to prepare them for their future roles. Thus, childhood, as we know it today, began in the 17th and 18th centuries prompted by several interconnected issues such as reduced mortality rate among children which means that their population increased (Tsaliki, 2015). As their numbers increased, attention was drawn to their special and specific needs such as their clothes, toys, and food, which naturally brought a boost in the economic activities. Children were seen as the future of society and there was a need to prepare them to occupy that position, hence the need to educate them properly. Their education came in different forms like formal and informal education and these also necessitated books about and for them to be produced. As they were constructed as different from adults, there was also specialist care for them as far as health care is concerned giving rise to obstetrician and pediatric hospitals. Since they were considered to be innocent and malleable, policies were made to protect them and to see to their welfare (Kosher, Ben-Arieh & Hendelsman, 2016; Eddy, 2010). Hence both public (state) and private life (family) revolved around the child who became a figure connected to progress, possibility and hope. Thus began the negotiations of children's lives which culminated in institutions like schools, special clinics, children's literature and other child-specific institutions and the mass production of children's toys, clothes, storybooks, etc.

As children and childhood took the center stage of life, issues about them came up in different disciplines of scholarship. Researchers began to look at children closely to try to understand their lives and find ways to help develop their intrinsic abilities fully. They came under scrutiny from different disciplines ranging from the natural

sciences to the social sciences and the humanities but to these "mother" disciplines, children and childhood studies are just themes. It has been argued that Childhood Studies is not yet a discipline since scholars in other more established disciplines treat it as a theme, work on it and move on. It is thus more multidisciplinary (Vehkalahtí 2021; Tesar et al, 2016) which, according to James (2010) and Pufall and Unsworth, (2004), is both an advantage and a disadvantage,

Ostensibly, Childhood Studies tend to borrow concepts and methodologies from other fields of study (James, 2007; Hollway, 2006; Kylie, 2011), consequently, it is suggested that for Childhood Studies to be established independent of other "mother" disciplines, real children's experiences, as well as their daily lives, should be the focus of practitioners rather than adults' perceptions of them. In addition, there is the need to reflect on definitions of its key terms, theoretical basis, origins, and historical and future developments (Wadsworth, 2015). However, Vehkalahtí (2021) argues that discipline is also about identifications with the establishment of various important elements of an academic field such as journals, conferences, research and networks as well as diversities of approach. From this perspective, Children and Childhood Studies identifies as a discipline with several journals, yearly conferences, participatory/child-centered approaches to research, and cultural and cross-cultural studies with children. However, the fact remains that studying children straddles almost every aspect of social life which makes it more multidisciplinary.

Finally, from contributions made by childhood studies to developments of other disciplines in advancing knowledge about children and childhood in all areas of life, Childhood Studies as interdisciplinary studies, is not a "baby" of any discipline or kind of transitory discipline but rather a bigger discipline from which other disciplines benefit. It is, therefore interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature.

2.1.4.   Childhood as a human variation

Most often, using the binary term in a description helps to make mental images of the abstract more concrete, thus childhood is usually put side by side with adulthood to make concepts clearer.

However, such comparisons tend to make the concept defined in terms of the other look like a subordinate to the other. For instance, defining childhood in terms of adulthood makes childhood subordinate to adulthood. That is the issue of defining

children as miniature adults. Consequently, children's abilities used to be calculated using adults' abilities as yardsticks making a weakling out of them.

Scholars of Childhood Studies have disapproved of treating children as passive entities responding only to adult stimuli (Hammersley, 2017). It has been argued that children are active social actors and they possess the ability to contribute to their lives as well as to shape their own lives and even that of adults (Aries, 1962; James & Prout, 1997; James & James, 2001; Mayall, 2002). Scholars have argued that children and adults are very different in almost every way, therefore and it will be wrong to look at children in terms of adults, that is children as adults in the making. The simple age and/or size dichotomy between adults and children just serves the purpose of revealing a clear demarcation between them to establish childhood as an entity that deserves to be recognized and treated both academically and politically as independent, (James, 2010; Qvortrup, 2005; Prout, 2005; Hengst, 2005; Jenks, 1996). However, there remains a relationship between the two and the suggestion is that the connection between childhood and adulthood should be taken as a continuum and not a dichotomy. Hence, childhood could then be studied as a human variation just like adulthood, (James, 2010; Johansson, 2011; Lee, 2001).

2.1.5. Changing conceptions of childhood

Childhood as a theory is easier to manipulate but it becomes a different thing altogether when it comes to reality. James, (2010) explains that the idea of a universal childhood becomes problematic right from its inception and the idea works more when taken as a theory from which the realistic notion can be sourced. Hence the universal childhood serves as an entry point into the study of childhood but becomes diversified by reality and specifics. Thus, the way childhood is construed mostly depends on the place and time of the construction. That is, different societies and cultural backgrounds construct childhood differently even in this era of modernity. "Standard" childhood depends on the society where the child lives and comparison with other childhoods will reveal enormous transformation in children's lives and the treatment given to them. Hence, children experience childhood differently due to cultural diversity (Acquaye, 2020; Shaw & Tan, 2015; Montgomery, 2013; Gittins, 2009; Woodhead, 2008; Kehily, 2004; Prout & James, 1997; Hendrick, 1997).

From historical perspectives, the child has been conceptualized in dichotomizing terms. Such contrasting views include the child as irrational and at worse

primitive and needing to be tamed on one hand and the other as innocent and possessing purity that is unaffected by socialization or civilization. The child has also been constructed as innocent and possessing innate goodness and as weak and thus, needing protection from adults (Honeyman, 2004; Johansson, 2011; Kosher et al, 2016). Kehily, (2004) and Shaw and Tan, (2015) are of the view that social constructions of children emanate from three aspects of their lives; their nature, agency and needs.

The contemporary Western notions of children's nature are situated in different philosophies that construct children with the notion of being "good", "evil" or "blank" (Kehily, 2004; Shaw & Tan, 2015). 'Good' in the sense that they possess inner goodness and purity which degenerates only after coming in contact with the adult world. This was posited by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) in his romantic construction of the child and he emphasized the need to allow children the freedom to experience the world without intrusion from adults (Doyle & Smith, 2007; Israel, 2012; Peckover, 2012). The second construction of the child as 'evil' is based on the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) that children are born with evil tendencies and there is a need for strong discipline and education to correct those tendencies and make them better (Hendrick, 1997; Tesar et al. (2016). The construction of the child as a blank (tabula rasa) was drawn from John Locke's philosophy (1632–1704) which construed the child as knowing nothing at birth and thus all the knowledge that he/she acquired is a result of experience with the adult world (Kehily, 2004; Androne, 2014). These three constructions of the child underscore most scholarly discourses on children and childhood; however, others are more specific, especially, to the needs of the child.

The agency of children is still a central issue in contemporary scholarly research (Kehily, 2004; Shaw & Tan, 2015) and it seems different construction contradict one another as far as children's abilities are concerned. The UNCRC revolves around the provision of children's needs, the protection of children, and allowing their participation in issues that concern them. However, until recently, the first two have been emphasized more than the last one (Ericsson, 2015). Researchers have grappled with children's ability to shape their own lives and circumstances (Woodhead, 2008) and the principal perception of their agency has been that of vulnerability and powerlessness, making social structures the eminent power in shaping their lives (Shaw & Tan, 2015; Ericsson, 2015; Prout & James, 1997). They are deemed vulnerable and susceptible to danger and hurt based on several factors such as their age, their mental

capacity, their inexperience or naivety, and defenselessness (ACPI, 2003). Nevertheless, participation in whatever form it takes also means taking risks and it is necessary to define the extent to which risks would be tolerated when it comes to children (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009; James & James, 2008). Participation means letting guards down to some extent (to take a risk) and protection implies sometimes restricting participation. This brings up the issue of children's own ability to shape their lives and circumstances and this has made children as competent social actors central to contemporary childhood studies (Woodhead, 2008; Kehily, 2004; James & James, 1997). Yet, one cannot talk about participation without talking about responsibility (Hammersley, 2017); if children are allowed the right of participation, should they also be held responsible for their actions and decisions? This brings up the issue of the extent to which children should be given participatory rights and the parameters that should be used.

2.1.6. The reconstruction of childhood and its implication

The reconstruction of childhood as distinctively different from adulthood necessitated a lot of steps to be taken to ensure the place of children in society. Children's lives were integrated into that of adults and they shared in adults' labor, clothes, games, education, etc. To make the distinction between the two phases of life clearly stated, laws were made barring children from productive labor and insisting on compulsory education for them. Clothes, games, toys, books, etc, that are child-specific emerged with the reconstruction of children's lives, (Tsaliki, 2015).

The construction and reconstruction of childhood imply that society adjusts to accommodate such changes. Several factors affect the implications of childhood on society. For instance, the construction of the child as a consumer implies that society positions itself as the producer of children's demands. The implication is that childhood becomes the force that drives society and most areas of life. This is because childhood as a theory has been shaped and reshaped by shifting economic, social, cultural and political positioning which are in turn affected by children's needs and demands (Alaimo, 2002; Kosher et al, 2016).

In scholarly discourse, constructed images of the child include the child as innocent and needing protective measures to be taken to ensure its security (Palmer, 2006). This image implies that "adults" are evil and predate on childhood innocence. Ironically, adults must provide the security that children need. Other images of the child

are the child as deviant (Levitas, 2005; Murphy, 2007; Matthews & Limb, 1999), the child as the hope for a brighter social life (Moss & Petrie, 2002; Woodhead, 2006), the child as a citizen with rights (Roche, 1999; Stasiulis, 2002; Woodhead, 2006; MacNaughton et al, 2007), the child as a consumer (Buckingham 2011; Aitken, 2001; Sinclair, 2004; Cook, 2004) and the child as independent (Dahlberg, 2003; Kjørholt, 2005; Vandenbroeck, 2006; Olsson, 2009). It has been argued that the constructions and reconstructions of childhood have been fueled by principal imaging such as 'romantic', 'evangelical', 'factory', 'delinquent', 'schooled', 'psycho-medical', 'welfare', 'psychological', 'family' and 'nation's' child (Hendrick, 1997; Woodhead, 2008; Shaw & Tan, 2015). These images of the child are clear indications that childhood is not easily definitive and its evolving nature means one can define it only in relation to a period in time or other conditions.

However, it is asserted that these constructions are both adults' means of controlling children and childhood and reflections on their childhoods (Šagud, 2014; Buckingham, 2000). In reflecting on their childhoods, adults may try to make children's lives better than they had experienced. But constructing childhood could not be by adults alone. Children, by their actions and inactions, contribute to the construction of their childhood and that of generations after them. Hence, the two principal characters in the construction of childhood interrelate to create what society accepts as a normal childhood.

2.1.7. Agency and children as social actors

Principal to theories in contemporary childhood studies is the assertion that children are competent social actors (Prout & James, 1990) and that they possess the agency to shape their circumstances, (James, 2010; Mayall, 2002; James & James, 2001). Children's agency has received global acceptance as situated in the UNCRC (1989) legalizing children's participation rights in all issues that concern them. Agency in children is a positive feature, but what are the boundaries of children's agency (Hammersley, 2017) especially in relation to their right to protection? Even though children contribute in their own way to the constructions and reconstructions of childhood, adults hold the veto in that process and children turn out mostly to be what adults construct them to be (Nodelman, 1992; Woodhead, 2009; Hammersley, 2017). As a matter of fact, the idea of children as social actors is adult construction and children are to fit in as expected. Hence, in the mediation between children and adults James and

James (2001) suggested the law as a mediating agent since it is the "regulatory mechanism" in governance and guidance, on policy and regulations in the society, however, laws are also adults' construction since children do not make laws. This does not mean that children are helpless 'victims" carried along by the tide of adults' ideas for them but whatever children decide to be are subject to adults' prerogatives and research has shown that children understand and recognize their limitations, (Newman, 1996; Morrow, 1998; Franklin & Sloper, 2005). Hence, children are social actors but the extent of their participation depends on adults' "permission". Nevertheless, despite the permission factor and the seeming dependency of children on adults in issues of power in psychosocial, sociocultural, and socioeconomic factors, Potter (2021) reiterates that children are competent social actors and whose insights are valuable and this has been reinforced by studies conducted with children over the years.

Agency in children is a key issue in Childhood studies and different researchers have approached it from different perspectives making an absolute definition of the term an elusive one (Hammersley, 2017; Shaw & Tan, 2015; Kehily, 2004). For instance, it has been argued that children possess agency at birth (Alderson et al, 2005) but the counterargument is that children acquire agency as they grow, making agency a social and relational construct (Eßer, 2016; Lee, 2001; Oswell, 2013; Prout, 2005). Before the paradigm shift in childhood studies, children were associated with powerlessness and vulnerability, and the need for protection while emphasizing social structures as a means to develop children's lives (Prout & James, 1997; Shaw & Tan, 2015). Current research on children's agency focus on their ability to make choices and to control and shape their circumstances (Kehily, 2004; Woodhead, 2008; Hendrick, 1997) and they have been overtly identified as capable (UNCRC, 1989). Despite this, children continue to be subject to adults' protection, supervision, and control and this gives agency a relative component to prevailing situations and conditions (Jamieson & Milne, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Consequently, there is the need to specify the controlling indices of agency in children to curtail unavoidable ambivalences associated with child upbringing (Hammersley, 2017).

Thus, several studies have suggested that agency should be treated as abilities that children acquire as they grow up and encounter different life experiences (Robson et al, 2007a; Purdy, 1992) while it can also be distinguished using the choice options available to children (Klocker, 2007). In dealing with the relativity nature of children's

agency, Hammersley (2017), emphasized that agency in children will always be influenced by factors such as biology, social conditions, local culture, moral values and education among others. Hence, due to such factors as diversity in childhood, children's lived experiences, sociocultural and psychosocial tenets which are forces children are compulsorily subjected to, their agency will continue to encounter ambivalent reactions. A case in point is the UNCRC (1989) which to some extent possesses contradictory elements of protection and participation. It is not clear to what extent participation should be allowed and at what stage protection be imposed. Despite such discrepancies, studies have clearly shown that children exhibit agency in their proficiency and understanding (Corsaro, 1997; Haugen, 2008; MacNaughton et al, 2007; Markstrom & Hallden, 2009) and have proven to be resilient in dealing with situations such as illness and death (Bluebond-Langner, 1978), parent's divorce (Smart et al, 2001), deciding on medical treatment (Alderson & Montgomery, 1996), negotiating public spaces (Valentine, 2004), dealing with poverty and lack (Redmond, 2008; Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2013), dealing capably with other children and adults (Danby et al, 2004), among others. On the other hand, research has also shown that children can easily be manipulated and sometimes lack the competence to resist deviant influences (Gifford-Smith et al 2005; Dishion et al, 1999), to distinguish between facts and fiction, especially in advertisement (Williams, 2013; Golin & Campbell 2017; Linn, 2010) and they engage in addictive behaviors despite the adverse consequences, (Weinstein et al, 2015). Hence, Hammersley (2017) suggested that, in dealing with children's agency, there is the need for a middle position in the extent of children's autonomy (which is of a necessity be based on adults' prerogative and which could be quite complicated) where children are not absolutely independent and not totally dependent

Agency as a concept in childhood is intricately associated with abilities and autonomy which are mostly, consciously or not, compared to adults and this presents a problematic view (Vehkalahtí, 2021; Gleason, 2016; Lee, 2001; Graf, 2016) since children and adults belong to different pedestals in life (which is a key focus of childhood studies and the understanding of which, scholars in this field have taken the pains to establish). It is also problematic because although children and adults are different, at least, biologically and socially, they are interrelated which sees children as involuntarily dependent on adults (Graf, 2016; Brighouse, 2003). Converse to already exhaustive arguments on children's agency, researchers like Vehkalahtí (2021) and

Gleason (2016) argue for a change of direction from the dichotomic relationship of agency in children to related areas such as children's own understanding of their agency, emotions in children (Oslen, 2017; Vallgårda et al 2015), child-neglect and related issues, (Sköld, 2015; Wright, 2017), and a host of other lived-experiences of children both past and present as well as children's futurist thoughts and understanding.

As much as children's construction as social actors have moved childhood studies to greater heights than in the past, it continues to lock children and adults in the dichotomous relationship of power-sharing. However, that is only one aspect of children's lives and much more remain to be explored which may not tilt towards the frontiers of children's agency.

2.1.8. Children and adults: the case of authority or experience

No matter how childhood is theorized, children are not placed in isolation of adult "care", (Hammersley, 2017) and thus adults exert a certain amount of control, influence, or authority over children. Childhood as a social space always intersects with the space of adulthood and in this intersection, the adult is placed in both the normative and the realistic position of the superior by virtue of age and experience. Simply put, children always need and depend on adults no matter how they are constructed.

Adulthood is the background against which childhood is set even though adulthood does not necessarily define childhood, (James, 2010). Childhood begins with adulthood and ends in adulthood. This is so in the sense that adults are fully engaged in children's lives almost on daily bases as parents, caregivers, health workers, teachers and educators, security and protection providers and policymakers.

The place of adults in childhood has been the topic of unending debates with dark images such as domineering, predating, authoritarian surfacing and the more congenial focus on lighter images like protection, caring, grooming and educating. The fact is, children need adults and adults need children in every way. The two form unending labyrinths in the process of life, however, various interpretations of child rights leave adults with dilemmas. The adult must protect the child which is the child's right and the adult must allow the child to participate in decision-making, which is also the child's right. In situations where there is a clash of interest or preference, it is unclear whose preference should override the other. When the adult has to exercise control over the child (even in protection), it is an infringement on the child's right and when the

adult allows the child to have his/her way (which could be harmful to him/her), it is also an infringement on the child's right to protection (Hammersley, 2017; Twum-Danso, 2009). This and others are serious ambivalences that adults live with when it comes to child upbringing (Shanahan, 2007).

Most often, children's rights are "permitted" by adults. For instance, parents allow children to participate in issues concerning them or the family, but when there is a conflict of interest, the child usually succumbs to the adult (who is more experienced and mature) and even if the adult decides to go with the child's idea, it is seen as adults' decision and not that of the child. Shanahan (2007) Foucault, Moss and Petrie (2002) Jenks, 1996; Hammersley, 2017).

For childhood scholars to institute childhood as a course worthy of attention, there is the need to establish a dichotomous relationship between adulthood and childhood and this brings the political and academic realization of the legitimacy of childhood studies. From here, the two occupy different pedestals but are still in relation to the other. (Hammersley, 2017; James, 2010; Qvortrup, 2005).

It is asserted that adults define childhood to suit their purpose (Shanahan, 2007; Moss & Petrie, 2002; Dahlberg et al, 2007; Koops, 2003), unfortunately, children have scarcely been put in the position to define adulthood much less to talk about their voices making a difference in adults' life even though the reverse is the case. Hence the relational influence between the two is seen to be that of the more powerful and the less powerful. Despite this, recent research has shown that childhood is the driving force directing most social issues. This is seen in areas such as the child as the consumer directing world economies, the child as patient directing the health sector, the child as the victim directing security policies, and the child as the key issue in politics worldwide. Therefore, the idea of adults controlling childhood is a facade and anyone who looks closely will find it an illusion.

2.1.9. Children as the future

What people hope for and what they fear about the future, to a large extent, influence their intention for the present and how far they are prepared to go as they work towards the future, (Holden, 2006). Generally, hope could be defined as objective-oriented philosophy where the individual possesses the apparent competence to identify a pathway to goals and the enthusiasm to make use of those routes (Snyder, 2003).

Hence, when adults take steps to see and mold children in certain ways, they only show what they want children to be to them.

Adults construct childhood to suit their purpose (Shanahan, 2007; Moss and Petrie, 2002; Dahlberg et al, 2007; Koops, 2003) which they deem to be very important. In other words, children play important roles in adults' life and that is why adults take a keen interest in them, (Shaw and Tan, 2015).

It is asserted that childhood became an institution when adults became uncomfortable with the moral decay among especially working-class children and anticipated the dangers of having such "dangerous characters" running around in their numbers. Hence there was the need to control and educate them to save society the headache of living with them (Tsaliki, 2015, Moorhead, 2013). Adults' aspirations for children are based on their perceptions of several complex factors but at the base of each are adults' hopes for a better future for society. In order words, protecting children's interests today and educating them implies securing an improved future for adulthood, and adults are most often determined to help stimulate a particular kind of future for children, (Irwin and Elley, 2012; Shaw and Tan, 2015; Kleeberg-Niepage et al, 2017).

Every person who poses a danger, in one way or the other, to the larger society, was once a child. Research has shown that an abused or neglected child has a higher percentage of becoming an abusive adult, (Kaufman and Zigler, 1987; Kendall-Tackett, 2001; Moorhead, 2013). Hence by protecting children and insisting on a certain kind of upbringing for them, adults hope to create and leave a legacy of children who will be better prepared to perpetuate the cause of humanity, (UNICEF, 2013; Moorhead, 2013) without jeopardizing it through abuse.

Adults' hopes for children also lie in the fact that they have become the forces that drive most of the world's economies today. Research shows that children's spending power and the purchasing they influence are overwhelmingly enormous (Williams, 2013; Linn, 2010; Golin & Campbell, 2017, Media Foundation Education, 2008), consequently, they maintain the world's economic circumstances and competitiveness (Shaw & Tan, 2015). One of UNICEF's campaigns is to provide children with the best initiatives and proper care which are the strongest foundation for 'their' future, (UNICEF, 2013). However, it is worthy to reflect on whether adults' hopes for the future justify the imposition of their will on children. Children's inherent

and intrinsic abilities to be creative and innovative and to contribute or be part of the creation of that "future" are necessary ingredients in the process of making a future for them. The idea here is that the child, uninvested with any form of power, still possesses insights and remains an independent phenomenon that deserves to be studied.

2.1.10. Children's popular culture

Some theories make an entity unique from another, which sets a defining line between them. Although children and adults are interrelated in different areas of life, even as they are governed by similar social spaces and times and even by an overarching set of cultural practices, some ideas and theories are set to draw a clear difference between them. Just as culture defines a people so do people also define culture. Thus, even within the same sociocultural space, children's spaces are distinctively differentiated by preferences which culminate into a culture of their own. Kissel (2011) and Marsh and Millard (2000) posit that children's culture refers to texts, objects and activities that children, by their preferences demand and institute within the domain of childhood. Such things, by their characteristics, engage children and almost define them and although popular culture usually serves as the distinctive line separating childhood from adulthood, Tsaliki (2015) is of the view that this line has been invented by manufacturers, publishers, toymakers and illustrators who invent things specifically for children and make both children and parents aware of them. Nevertheless, it is the upsurge in children's preferences for toys, books, playthings and others that culminate into their popular culture.

Children's popular culture has been increasingly recognized as part of the local culture within large complex societies. It is so enormous and intricate-looking at the diversity in children's preferences from the local to the global. This is made even more convoluted by children as they improvise during their play (Göl-Güven, 2017). Children's popular culture (as well as popular culture in general) has received very low attention, especially from academics, (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Such cultures need to be investigated to enrich the study of and knowledge about children globally and locally, (Matza, 1969; Corsaro, 2003, Shaw & Tan, 2015; Hammersley, 2017) especially in how such cultures influence children's reality as well as their perception of life. Looking at the influence of children's popular culture, one could understand how the (un)availability or accessibility of such culture could affect how children understand their lives and even their fantasies. However, the paucity of research on

children's culture usually examines children's proclivities in areas such as their play and preferences for and attachment to certain particular objects and activities, (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002). Also, some cross-cultural studies explore similarities and differences in children's popular culture as they engage in the mundanities of their lives and yet others have studied circumstances surrounding their play, (Holmes, 2013).

Play is an integral part of childhood (Kleeberg-Niepage, 2007) and children's play is an age-old culture among children in all the age groups and it indicates children's mastery of the culture and cultural values of the society in which they are brought up (Holmes, 2013; Lancy, 2001). For this reason, applying Western ideals and analysis to non-Western backgrounds create imprecision in literature (Kleeberg-Niepage, 2007) and calls for focus on both the universal and especially, the local play culture of children (Gaskins & Miller, 2009; Gosso, 2010; Holmes, 2013). Their play involved playing with things ranging from simple objects found in their environment to special toys made for them to sophisticated technological appliances made to suit their demands and curiosity. Contemporary literature on children's play culture indicates that as they play, children engage in pretending activities that mirror how they construct adulthood and adult life within their cultural contexts (Gosso, 2010; Lancy, 2002; Lancy, 2007; Holmes, 2013) and by their constructions, they also position themselves as capable of social participation and active agents in their socialization (Holmes, 2013). This also mirrors their typical fantasies and understanding of life. Research also shows that children's play preferences are also embedded in the cultural contexts they find themselves. When it comes to technology and play-oriented objects, Western children prefer manufactured toys and indoor play more while their non-Western counterparts play with traditional toys and improvise with objects from their environments and engage more in outdoor play, (Nwokah and Ikekeonwu, 1998). However, a comparison of the generational play reveals that generally, contemporary children have a preference for hi-tech toys and play indoors more than children of the older generation, but both generations prefer sex-stereotyped toys (Holmes, 2013) and this could inform their understanding of gender issues and manipulation of gender roles in their fantasy play.

There is also a connection between children's play, music, and their daily activities where music is inculcated in children playmaking such activities more lively, communal and therapeutic, especially among children with stressful daily lives (Jones and Hawes, 1987; Marsh, 2009; Campell and Wiggins, 2013).

As children use music to navigate the space between tradition and change to make their voices heard (Emberly and Davhula, 2016), they also forge fantasy relationships with their music icons or celebrities which also influence fantasies of leisure as well as a future career. Research shows that children's popular culture, as evident in their play and/or leisure activities, are incredible platforms for creativity and productivity irrespective of existing conditions, available space, time, and playthings and although such leisure activities possess the propensity to improve children's acquisition of culture, improve their sensitivity to the needs of others and acquire basic skills to navigate both child-specific and universal spaces (Holmes, 2013; Singer et al, 2009), their leisure usually depends on adults' provision of their playthings or leisure facilities (Pavlova and Silbereisen, 2015). Hence, as much as play and leisure should be an integral part of the education and socialization of children, the availability or provision of such amenities should be equally key.

In the contemporary era, parents are of the view that children's free play time which results in experimental learning prospects and activities has been taken over by screen time (Singer et al, 2009; Singer et al, 2006) depriving children of the pleasure of outdoor play and the shared sentiments of doing things together with others. It is also depriving them of the healthy life that comes from such outdoor activities (Singer et al, 2009).

Children's outdoor leisure has a very powerful positive influence on their health and psychological development and sense of well-being. However, playgrounds that encourage outdoor play are being predated on by both human and non-human factors such as criminalities, gang violence and the presence of harmful objects in the playground (Horton & Kraftl, 2017).

Another form of children's play culture takes place on the internet in the form of computer games, video games, and computerized children's toys. Even though research shows that outdoor play and physical activities increase children's quality of life considerably over indoor (screen) play (Gopinath et al, 2012), a lot of children are involved in screen-viewing activities fueled by their access to the internet and the absence of their preferred leisure facilities.

It is asserted that children's internet use ascended from 13% in 1998 to 41% in 2000 to a whopping 89% in 2010 (ChildWise, 2021) and has further escalated to about 95% in 2018 in developed countries, (Anderson & Jiang, 2018, Shaw & Tan, 2015) and

children in the developing countries are also increasingly accessing the internet via mobile phones (Livingstone, 2013; Gasser, Maclay, & Palfrey, 2010). This interest has made the internet one of the most popular children's cultures. Its use permeates almost every aspect of their lives, (Livingstone, 2013) giving the demand for technological gadgets for accessing the internet skyrocketing market, (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003). The positive implication is that this is helping improve their access to information and acquisition of knowledge which is empowering and fostering and enhancing creativity. On the other hand, it is also exposing them to an array of dangers and negative attitudes that can affect their future (Livingstone, 2013; Smahel et al, 2012; Livingstone et al, 2013).

Palfrey and Glasser (2010) are of the view that the internet does not affect children's identity as in possessing split identities; online and offline, as opined. They explain that "Digital Natives" most often do not differentiate between their lives online and offline. They present themselves and establish relationships with others as individuals. Haugen and Musser (2013) express concerns about children's identity and the internet as they reflect on the dichotomizing positions of advantages and disadvantages of the internet in the sense of children's vulnerability to exploitation on one hand and the access that gives them self-expression, socialization and even subversion on the other. Because of this, Vossen and Fikkers (2020) and Oslon et al (2007) opines that young adolescents are vulnerable to the negative effects of the internet. However, Potter (2021) posits that children use media as raw materials, especially in play and leisure activities.

2.1.11. Commercialization of Childhood

With issues of children's popular culture comes the concerns of intentionally taking advantage of them for profit. Commercialization of childhood is a deliberate attempt, especially by deceptive means to induce and influence children to buy and also to influence family purchasing. It is usually media properties calculated to sell children and young people not just on products and brands, but on values, morals, and ethics (Golin and Campbell 2017). Although children have long been customers of commercial marketers, the rate has intensified in recent times and this could be because of the privatization and commercialization of education and leisure opportunities (Buckingham, 2011). Relationships between parents and children have also been affected by this commercialization since most often, children feel "loved" and "cared

for" especially when they are given what they desire. On the other hand, parents sometimes "buy their children off" by giving them material things to make up for their unavailability.

Children influence family purchasing considerably (Buckingham, 2011; Caruana & Vassallo, 2003) and their high and increasing population coupled with their influence on demands has made them the target of marketers worldwide (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003; Media Foundation Edu., 2008). Apart from influencing adults' purchasing plans, children themselves also spend a lot of money on various things ranging from clothes to music to toys and internet accessing gadgets (Media Foundation Edu., 2008). The recognition of children's influence on buying has made them the target of manufacturers, marketers and advertisers who use deceptive means to attract children to their wares (William, 2013; Williams, 2006).

Parents bemoan targeting children as adult consumers by playing on their curiosity, gullibility and inexperience to manipulate their demands *(Kempsell, 2010)*. Curiosity is a natural sentiment in childhood and marketers' constantly playing on this is making children more and more materialistic which has adverse effects on their physical health, values and emotional wellbeing. It is also negatively affecting their educational development and relationships with others. In addition, adverts playing on their sexuality are harmful and are encouraging them to be sexually adventurous at very early ages. It has been argued that children's screen programmes and games which contain violence and sexualized images and activities are hampering the proper development of children (Williams, 2013; Golin & Campbell 2017; Media Education Foundation, 2008).

This has positioned childhood as a commodity as the main aim of marketers is to make more money out of children irrespective of the obvious harm their schemes are causing to them. The resultant issues from their tactics include child obesity and other serious child health and value disorders, making the commercialization of childhood one of the main causes of children's health and social problems (Williams, 2013; Golin and Campbell, 2017). The negative consequences of the commercialization of childhood are so enormous that there is a call on governments, regulatory bodies and parents to regulate adverts aimed at children and fine-tune internet access by children to protect them from such harmful outcomes (Golin and Campbell, 2017).

However, Buckingham (2011) opines that portraying the child as prey in the commercial world is like investing them with negative passivity that children are not, and explains that children are neither helpless victims nor competent social actors when it comes to consumption. However, they based on their consumption to build relationships, hence, the issue of childhood and commerce should be explored from the cultural studies perspective which will balance the relationship between children as consumers and marketers as producers.

2.1.12. Children and national policies

Childhood has informed many national and global policies in both modern and postmodern periods. Childhood, as a separate space, is a social construction that is constituted through the collaborative efforts of both adults and children, and, even though adults possess the upper hand in the construction and reconstructions of childhood, research shows that children in their own way shape their lives and that of others (Prout & James, 1990; James, 2010; Mayall, 2002; James & James, 2001). Although adults' efforts is meant to protect children's interests and give them the best in life (Kosher et al, 2016; Eddy, 2010), it is argued that the constructions of childhood are constituted through power relations and based on the interests of ruling governments and people in authority, researchers and professionals. That is, different people construct different images of childhood to suit their contemporary interests and aspirations (Jenks, 1998; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Shanahan, 2007; Moss & Petrie, 2002). Hence, their constructions become policies which run the lives of children and most often they become what they are constructed to be.

The contemporary engaging constructions of children may not coincide with what was known two centuries ago, however, since the 17th and 18th centuries children have always inspired national policies in the interest of especially their education and protection. In 1870, a law insisting on compulsory education for children was instituted in Britain and in the mid-19th century, protective legislature was enacted preventing children from productive work, (Tsaliki, 2015).

Presently, children are accorded special recognition and protection by law and crimes against them in 'any' form is subjected to effective investigation and prosecution. The Indian Government (2013) instituted a policy that declared Indian children as the nation's supreme assets and to reinforce children's importance to governments, incentives have been put in some areas that affect children directly such

as free basic education (Appleton et al. 1996; Mehrotra 1998; Watkins 2000; Deininger 2003; UNESCO 2007; de Kemp 2008; Akyeampong, 2009) and free healthcare (Wang et al 2017). This interest in children confirms their construction as "children of the nation" (Li, 2005; Shaw & Tan, 2015) and such policies mostly work until they run into conflict with the realities of children's lives, (Kehily, 2004).

2.1.13. Diversity in childhood

Diversity in childhood consists of a mass of individual variations and similarities that are identified among children (Wellner, 2000; Hammersley, 2017) and it includes different distinctiveness among children such as race, age, nationality, religion, ethnicity, gender, cultural values, social class and family structure (Meynert, 2018). Childhood as a concept is so broad that it can be difficult to conceptualize in one sense of referring to one particular childhood (Burr, 2015; Weinberg, 2014; Facer et al, 2012; Hammersley, 2017). However, UNCRC, (1989) which has been implemented by majority of nations globally gives a general idea of what childhood is about. In spite of this universal view, it is very obvious that childhood is so diverse that even within the same locality there are different versions of childhoods between the home, the school, the playground, the shopping mall, and other social spaces (Shaw & Tan, 2015; Woodhead, 2008; Jenks, 2004). Also, Hammersley (2017) argues that the idea of a universal childhood tends to weaken childhood studies, and that idea in itself refers more to a Western notion of childhood relegating other childhoods in the process, (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016; Boyden, 1997; Jenks, 2004), however, the argument is that the idea of a universal childhood is to give childhood studies the grounding they need to make an impact both in academia and in politics (Qvortrup, 2005). Obviously, both the universal and the local childhoods are important strands in the weaving of childhood studies hence James (2010) suggests that the universal childhood should be seen as the general idea from which emerges the specifics which forms the local childhoods.

Twum-Danso Imoh (2016) argues that the Global North and the Global South have both differences and commonalities in childhoods and researchers' insistence on the differences creates stereotyping which blurs the actual truths. Hence, there is the need to explore not only the differences but also the similarities (Harris-Short, 2003; Holt & Holloway, 2006; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2011; Punch, 2016). Thus, an exploration of diverse childhoods and same childhoods in diverse spaces has the potential to

reinforce the diversity nature of childhoods and propel childhood studies into giving understanding of not only particular childhoods but childhoods globally.

2.1.14.   The grey area in childhood

No matter how childhood is constructed, adults' influence persists and children are subjected to adults' power in almost all areas of their lives, even as adults construct children in ways that will make them subject to their authority (Nodelman, 1992, Woodhead, 2009; Hammersley, 2017; Moss & Petrie, 2002; Dahlberg et al., 2007) even when they are allowed their participation rights. In this way, adults make laws and regulations in the best interest of children with minimal consultation with children and hope that they go along with them. The fundamentals of such child rights discussions tend to be dualistic with little focus on situations where children choose the space between the two opposing terms (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013; Davidson, 2005; Bessell, 2009; Kleeberg-Niepage, 2007; Woodhead, 1999). Bourdillon, (2006) explains that placing a dichotomous relationship between children and adults tends to mask the reality of children's lives (especially in situations where children are closer to adulthood) and invests them with passivity that is a negation to their autonomous right. In exercising their human rights, children look at situations around them and for the purposes of mostly survival, take decisions sometimes to do what adults may frown on and define as 'unchildly', as in the case of willful child prostitution, (Davidson, 2005) and children taking part in other economic activities usually under hazardous conditions, (Bessell, 2009; Boakye-Boaten, 2008). Studies have shown that children who choose to work usually see their activities as means to solve their problems and they see themselves as exercising their rights which is empowering contrary to adults' views, (Kielland and Tovo, 2006; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013; Hart & Lansdowne, 2002). Such opposition to adults' views poses dilemmas to policy makers and educators however, children's lives, just like adults' are marked with serious complications and exceptions and should be studied as such, (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013).

2.1.15.   A literary genre for children (Children's Literature)

Children's literature is anybody of artistic literary works meant for the education and entertainment of children and young people. This encompasses picture books, fairy tales, folktales, poems and rhymes, songs and lullabies, etc. Children's literature is defined by the needs of the child as far as literariness is concerned. It is not restricted

to children's enjoyment alone since most often, the child survives in the adult making adults too enjoy it. Also, children are not limited to reading and enjoying such works alone. Children also read and appreciate adults' literature when they find it interesting enough to enjoy it.

The definitive term for any form of literature is its subject and the recognition given to it. Hence, children's literature came to be recognized as separate from adults' literature when children were recognized as occupying a social space separate from that of adults. Therefore "children" defines children's literature. Also, Wadsworth (2015) opines that a disciplinary subfield (like children's literature) stabilizes in its own right when scholars in that field engage in reflective practices and interactions with its definitions, theoretical basics, origins, historical and futuristic developments. Serious scholarly researches and activities of practitioners of children's literature in addition to a number of internationally acclaimed research journals that encourage theoretically-based articles that address issues in the field attest and reinforce children's literature as a discipline in its own right detached from the genre of "adult" literature.

However, Nodelman, (1992) is of the view that children's literature is a colonizing strategy to control children and inculcate in them values that adults think are appropriate for them. This makes them inferior to adults since adults write for children and they have to accept what is written. Acquaye (2020) in a study confirms that when adult were children, they protested adults' "dominance" but as adults, they insist that children should be "subservient". This points to the discrepancies in adults writing for children or adults articulating children's views.

To counter this notion, it is indicated that children's literature is a means by which children are taught their cultural heritage (Yita and Komatsi, 2009) which is not inherent. Also, even though children possess innate abilities to shape their socializing process, they are not independent of adults' care and directions. Meek (2001) and Morgenstern (2001) are of the view that in children's literature, both adult and children work together to create and recreate various conceptions of the world which help children to make sense of their environment. It must be observed that children play key roles in stabilizing literature for them as their attitudes, preferences and demands points to what should be produced for their information and entertainment. Their influence can be seen in books and children's entertainment programs attaining the altitude of bestsellers.

According to Flynn (1997) Children's literature scholars are more into childhood studies because they explore both past and contemporary childhoods and try to discern distinctions and similarities which become a sort of building blocks by which literary works are produced for children. Children's literature inculcates things about childhood by trying to creatively see and also project the world from children's perspectives. Hence in childhood studies, children's literature is like a review ground for past childhoods and experimenting grounds for future childhoods. In recent years, children and young people have taken keen interest in adding their voices to the growing corpus of children's literary materials and if publication used to be bottle-necks in making them popular, the explosion of children's activities on social medial has made proliferation of children creative literariness more palpable and boundless. Such a corpus, according to Brodeur et al, (2020), even if not classified as children's literature, is powerful outlet for children to talk more about themselves and for us to learn more from them.

2.1.16. Research with children

A lot of debates have gone into acknowledging the capabilities of children especially in the research process (Christensen and James, 2000; Lewis and Lindsay, 2000; Mandell, 1991) consequently, research has seen a revolution in studies of children since they were theorized as competent social actors whose contribution form an important element in studies concerning them (James & Prout, 1990; James & James, 2001; Montgomery, 2005; Mayall, 2002). This has seen a growth in children's active involvement in empirical studies with researchers applying innovative methodologies and strategies of qualitative research approaches to enhance and deepen knowledge about children and childhood (Christensen & Prout, 2003, Swauger et al, 2017). Such methods are basically to permit children's active involvement in the research and allow them influence research outcomes (Potter, 2021; Nind, 2014, 2011; Kellett, 2005; Hart, 2008, Kim, 2015).

Punch (2002) questions the need for different and specialized methods for research with children if they are perceived as competent social actors and are equal to adults. It is argued that researchers view of children affects the extent to which they are allowed to influence the research process as well as the methods employed to work with them (James et al., 1998; Alderson, 1995; Morrow, 1999; Ennew & Morrow, 1994; Backett-Milburn and McKie, 1999; France et al, 2000; Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995).

Kellet (2005) and Punch (2002) argue that children being experts in their own lives do not automatically qualify them to be participants in research and there is the need to provide them with the needed training and preparation. However, Lundy and McEvoy (2012) argue for children to be given advisory roles instead of leading roles in the research process.

Another area that affects research with children is the issue of ethics, particularly about consent and confidentiality (e.g., Alderson, 1995; France et al., 2000; Lewis & Lindsay, 2000; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Punch, 2002). Most often, the issue of ethics is the divide between research with adults and research with children where with the latter; gatekeepers influence researchers' access to children (Punch, 2002).

Differences in research ethics with children is usually informed by children's position in adult society, adults' mind-set about children and the children themselves (Punch, 2002)

Also, Christensen & Prout (2003) are of the view that researchers who work with children face ethical dilemmas in seeing children as social actors and participants or co-researchers. They suggested that researchers document the problems they encounter as they work with children and their documentations will form the base for discussion among researchers in the field and the finding of possible solutions. They also suggested that researchers treat children's involvement in their studies with respect.

In employing participatory methods in research with children, Hammersly (2017) is of the opinion that research demands that the researcher possess some expertise and skills which are acquired through training and education which children do not possess and in the absence of which the research procedure and outcome could be jeopardized. However, Punch (2002) opines that juxtaposing adults' competencies to that of children's in the research process is very unnecessary since children's incompetence are usually adults' constructions. However, there is the need for someone to take charge of the research process and be responsible for decision making (Dyson and Meagher, 2001).

Although it has been argued that sometimes in employing participatory methods with children, different research ethics contradict with each other or even with the research process itself it is very essential that researchers respect the ethics and values in doing research with children in addition to maximizing the research output

(Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Also, the fact that children are competent social actors in their socialization process does not mean they are limited to their lives alone. Obviously, they are equally capable of contributing to the lives of others and therefore, it is crucial for children's involvement in research to go beyond the boundaries of childhood studies (Uprichard, 2010).

Some innovative methods that researchers have employed in research with children and have yielded successful outcomes include the use of drawings and photographs to depict present situations and future aspirations (Kleeberg-Niepage, 2016; Kleeberg-Niepage & Marx, 2021; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013;

2.2. African/Ghanaian childhood

Children are every society's asset to a better and brighter future and societies have cultural ways of socializing their young ones to ensure the maintenance of cultural heritage (Boakye-Boaten, 2010; Nsamenang, 2008). Consequently, children and childhood in Africa form the core of the mundane life in African societies and childhood is asserted to incorporate both biological and social development as it plays a pivotal role in the organization of the society as a whole. Studies show that within the family, children are the means of perpetuation of adults' identities, aspirations, possessions and they also form the fundamental sites for education and cultural transmission (Boakye-Boaten, 2010; Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998). However, the ways that Africans see and construct childhood differs from the Western perception making global (Western) policies on childhood an imposition on African cultural and social childhoods (Nsamenang, 2008; Howard, 2016, Nsamenang et al, 2008; Nsamenang, 1992a; Weisner, 1997).

For instance, autonomy and participation as stipulated in the UNCRC has divergent meaning in the African and Western sense. Nsamenang (2008) explains that African society sees children's participation as not just giving them the opportunities to express their opinions but also allowing them to take part in activities that make them physically, psychologically and economically active and propel them towards a responsibility-oriented life even at an early age. Hence African societies teach and encourage their younger generation to be part of what the adults engage in but this is done taking the age of children into consideration. However, the influence of Western culture on African societies has dented Africa's ways of socializing the younger

generation by the imposition of Western constructions of childhood (Boakye-Boaten, 2010; Nsamenang, 2008). Consequently, this has had the multiple effects of displacing the African traditional ways of child upbringing in which the child is well protected and trained to fit into the African society and resulted in thrusting the African child, unprepared into adulthood and adult responsibilities.

Although a lot has changed in childhoods and child upbringing norms in Africa yet children continue to be children in many other respects; biologically and psychologically, they are still young and immature, and socially they are inexperienced and vulnerable. Childhood and diversity of children's lives exist in Africa as in other parts of the globe. However, most often, African children's lives are affected by the economic status of their parents (Boakye-Boaten, 2010) in spite of some governments' incentives on some areas that affect children directly such as free basic education (Appleton et al. 1996; Mehrotra 1998; Watkins 2000; UNESCO 2007; de Kemp 2008; Akyeampong, 2009) and free healthcare (Wang, Otoo and Dsane-Selby, 2017).

The negative effects of colonization and Westernization on African cultures have had devastating effects on childhoods and children's lives in Africa and Boakye-Boaten (2010) is of the opinion that the African system should purge itself from the interference of other cultures, which adulterates the African ways of doing things. This is one way by which African childhoods will maintain cultural stability that will continue to identify African children as unique in an environment proliferated by outside influences.

Sub Saharan Africa where Ghana is situated has encountered lots of challenges since the colonial period and the region remains one of the poorest globally with persisting political and socio-economic setbacks (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016; Oxfam, 2015). The dominant adverse conditions in the region have somehow been used to stereotype life in the region, hence most research focus on such challenges to the detriment of more positive issues, (Katz's, 2004; Punch, 2015; Balagopalan, 2014; Panter-Brick, 2002; Punch, 2003, 2015; Panter-Brick 2002; Ansell 2016; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016). In addition, most researchers come to Africa with already predefined notions and/or objectives, typical of which is, to portray Africa in particular dark shades, which, of course, help propagate their agenda. However, is childhood in Africa worthy of research only if it is poor or possess negative-related issues? Research into children's lives has been overshadowed by difficult childhoods in Africa; however,

there are diverse and more positive childhoods in Africa not characterized by lack which is unexplored (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016). There is the need to focus on such other childhood prospects in Africa in other to balance and develop literature on African childhoods.

Holistic children and childhood research in Ghana have seen some activities such as on the participation rights of children (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017), children's narratives, (Hosny, 2020), children's perception (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013), diversity in childhoods (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016; Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016) and others.

2.3.   Childhood studies; the way forward

In recent years, notable researchers in childhood studies have been vocal about the need to steer the study of children to other areas of children's lives (Spyrou, 2019; 2017; Vehkalahtí, 2021; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016; Eßer, 2017; Mazzei, 2013; Mol, 2014; de la Cadena, 2014). This, they indicate, will foster growth and deeper understanding of children and childhoods.

Childhood studies are established as a multidisciplinary study with the key theoretical framework of children being active social actors and who deserved to be studied in their own right. Children and childhood as a single independent entity is full of endless trajectories of life that are unexplored. It is almost impossible to finish exploring and explaining any aspect children's lives because childhood itself is not static. It changes across cultural contexts, generational spaces and psychological positioning. Children's preferences keep changing and, in the process, influence market demands, industry and commerce as well as national economies. The research field of childhood is endless! Agency in childhood is only one aspect of children's engagement and even the idea of agency itself is very broad with equally endless prospects of studies and knowledge waiting to be explored. So, what is the way forward for children and childhood studies.

First of all, there is the need to have well established theoretical and methodological foundations independent of others areas of study as indicated by Wadsworth, 2019.

The paradigm shift in the study of children should not be perceived as a single event that is explored and when it outlives its usefulness is discarded for another paradigm shift. Human life is naturally a social one and studying children as independent entity does not exclude the social relationships with others. Hence, studying children's relationship with other "social actors" should be an important trajectory in childhood studies (Alanen, 2014)

Twum-Danso Imoh (2016) suggests studying global childhoods beginning with similarities in order to eliminate the dichotomizing view of children's lives and rather make the differences a point of departure. With this prospect, children worldwide could be conceptualized from the global perspective and narrowed to the local and in the process eliminate the binary view of global childhoods. This will also foster knowledge of the diverse nature of childhoods and bring to view plurality in children's lives (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016).

Finally, but more importantly, voices of children should be clearly distinguishable in research with them (Castro and Harger, 2017; Potter, 2021; Kim, 2015). Methods in research with children should have clearly defined status and influence of children in the research process and it will be very important that that position be not compromised in any way as their very representation (in whatever form) reveals their perspectives in the research field and subsequently, knowledge about them.

2.4. Current Childhood in Ghana

The participants in this study are between 10 and 13 years old and at this age, the most important social expectation of them is to be in school. Thus, activities planned for them are usually in connection to school activities. With this premise, the average young Ghanaian adolescent is expected to go to bed between 8 and 9 pm and wake up between 5 and 6 am. The time of waking up is usually determined by the time they report to school and activities they engage in around the home environs before leaving for school. Those who wake up at 6 am, usually do not perform such activities as household chores because they report to school at 7 am. However, in the typical Ghanaian traditional household, children are trained and expected to take part in household chores in the morning before going to school. Some of the chores expected of children include, tiding up their sleeping area, washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen and the compound. In homes where there is no access to pipe water, children

fetch from a distance water for the family's use before getting ready for school. These chores multiply in situations where children have younger siblings to take care of. Hence, sometimes, children have to wake up earlier than 5 a.m. in order to engage in work around the house before going to school.

In Ghanaian basic schools, actual classes begin at 8 a.m. However, on the average, school children are expected to report to school by 7 a.m., since a lot happens on the school premises before 8 a.m. Additionally, other dynamics govern the space between waking up and getting to school at 7 a.m. Depending on the distance between the home and the school, the children walk to school, ride bicycles or go by transport. There are children who have to walk long distance to get to school. School authorities rarely take distance into consideration when it comes to checking punctuality, and lateness is most often punished. Hence, for children who go to school on foot, to get to school early, they must wake up very early and start out early. For those who go to school by transportation, the means could be by the parents' private car or hired taxi, public transport or by the school bus. The last option (which a lot of parents prefer for their wards) has its own challenges and advantages. One challenge is that, the school bus has to pick the children up very early in order to be able to get them all to school on time. Hence, they have to wait at vantage points for pick up as early as 6:00 a.m. depending on how far away the home is from the school. The advantage is that those who board the school bus are not punished for lateness. Once in school at 7 a.m., the children clean their compound, classrooms, have silent hour (a time when they reflect on the previous day's work) and have school assembly before going to class to start the day's work.

The average Ghanaian child spends between 6 and 8 hours in school depending on whether the child is in a public or private school and they have two breaks; the morning break lasts 30 minutes and the afternoon break lasts one hour. Schools close between 2 and 4 p.m. and considering the time taken to get home, children usually get home between 4 and 5 p.m. They usually come back home with at least 2 homework which is like an extension of school work. Hence, they tend to spend more than 6 or 8 hours on school activities. Back home, activities like doing homework from school, helping to prepare supper and getting ready for bedtime (like bathing) engages children's attention. All these must be done before going to bed at 8 or 9 pm. The average Ghanaian parents encourage their children to practice their religion.

Christianity is the only religion that is mentioned in the children's fantasy and religious practices among children during their daily routine activities include praying before going to sleep, praying when one wakes up and praying before eating. Sometimes, children are encouraged to have their daily quiet time (praying and reading the bible) in the morning just after waking up. Such religious activities tend to be momentarily and do not take much time.

Conclusion

From the review of literature on childhoods, thus far, the scarcity of research work on African childhoods cannot be overemphasized. Research on childhoods from the Global North have so far overshadowed that of the Global South where Africa is situated. Africa has never lacked childhoods; what has been lacking over the years is academic inquiries on African childhoods and instruments to launch the even scant studies on to the international scene. This makes studies such as this current one very important. Although such studies may not be exhaustive in treating selected areas of interest, the main focus is to initiate and sustain a projection of African childhoods from different parts of Africa, which, when pooled, would give general ideas of the African child, childhoods and children's lived experiences.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Overview

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology and methods employed in this study. The first part discusses the ontological position and epistemological assumptions on which the research methodology is situated. The second part considers the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods, explains the role of theory in qualitative research, and discusses the qualitative research method, (documentary analysis), adopted in this research. The third part describes the research procedure in this study, which includes the motivation to the study, the research questions, the data collection process, the organization and interpretation of the data collected.

3.1. Research methodology

Research methodology is the general ways by which humans seek more knowledge about specific topics and issues in life. It involves activities that are systematically ordered to make inquiries to arrive at particular results, (Silverman, 2000; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Ahrens and Chapman, 2006). It is the logical combination of the different activities undertaken in the research process. Different research interests have allowed classification of similar research areas under one umbrella. Such a cluster makes way for the variables in the cluster to possess similar outlook on certain issues which in turn allow members in the cluster to have certain commonalities. The common knowledge that weaves the variables together is called a paradigm. A research paradigm is the set of beliefs and understanding about how problems should be understood and addressed. It brings a group of scientists who share the believes together to practice their beliefs in problem solving (Kuhn, 1962; Lincoln et al, 2011; Mertens, 2010). It is an established set of assumptions that explain how the researcher should go about the research process. It gives directions on how a study should be approached from the beginning to the end (Henn et al, 2006). Creswell (2014) called them, "worldviews" and explains that they are general philosophical orientations (mostly influenced by the study discipline, researchers' propensity and previous studies) that guide a study. A research paradigm embodies ontological assumptions and epistemological perspectives.

3.1.1.　　Ontological assumptions and childhood studies

The first step that comes to mind about a research prospect is the reality of that situation. That is, the nature of the problem as it is in its natural environment. This forms the base of the research process. This is referred to as Ontological assumptions or how reality is perceived. Ontology deals with the nature and essence of things in the social world (Henn et al, 2006: Creswell, 2014). The two assumptions that come to play here are whether social reality should be viewed as objective and independent of the knower and not influenced by social actors or as socially constructed as a result of interplay between social entities, being subjective in nature (Bryman; 2012; Sikes, 2004). That is, scientists may perhaps view realities of social existence as existing outside of society itself, which makes it autonomous of social influence, and factual in its existence. This assumption relates to the realist school of thought. On the other hand, the relativist school of thought posits reality as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thoughts as expressed through language (Sikes, 2004; Kusi, 2012; Cohen et al, 2007) A researcher's orientation towards either viewpoint determines the path the study will focus on or research design to follow. While the realists' views usually follow the quantitative research approach, the relativists go with the qualitative approach to research.

In childhood studies the ontological assumption is that children are competent social actors and thus absolute child-centered methods should be applied in studies with them. Alanen (2017) reflects on the case of ontology in childhood studies and whether scholars in this field should be concerned about such issues. The rise of childhood studies, born out of the paradigm shift in the study of children and childhood has maintained a steady growth, however, more recently, there has been a call to reconsider, not the status of children as social actors but at the key theoretical backings in understanding children's agency. Spyrou (2019;2017) posit that such ontological stance limits the extent to which children could be studied which calls for a shift to ways that will open up the field to more research prospects (Eßer, 2017; Mazzei, 2013; Mol, 2014; de la Cadena, 2014)

3.1.2.　　Epistemological issues and childhood studies

The ontological assumption is closely related to epistemological perspectives of researchers. Epistemology concerns what is known or should be taken as the acceptable

knowledge in a particular discipline. It is what makes up knowledge and the issues of how to acquire it, understand it and whether it is possible to reproduce or represent it (Bryman, 2012; Kusi, 2012; Sikes, 2004). Kusi (2012) identifies three epistemological considerations, mainly objectivist, subjectivist and constructivist epistemologies. Whereas objectivist epistemology argues that reality exists outside of the researcher and the main aim is to find out such truths using scientific approaches and since researcher's values do not influence the research outcome, thus making the research objective and (in a way) beyond criticism (May, 2011), subjectivist epistemology is of the view that participants possess the capacity to construct knowledge; however, meaning is imposed on the social actors by the objects. On the other hand, constructivist epistemology debunks the view of the objectivist epistemology and propounds the idea that meaning is constructed not discovered, hence, subjects, fashion their own meaning in diverse ways even in the same social situation or phenomenal environment. This epistemological perspective is related to the relativist ontological position (Kusi, 2012).

There has been assertion that in childhood studies, ontological and epistemological perspectives are dominated by the global North which results in theories not working for other parts of the globe, (Pérez, et al 2017; Santos, 2014). Thus, contemporarily, childhood studies are navigating not only issues of redirection in theoretical and methodological issues but also that of geographical tensions. These pressures do not represent weakness in the field of childhood studies but rather it signifies the elastic nature of the field and indicates a wider extend to which scholars ought to go to make this multidisciplinary study also a global one.

Since ontological assumptions about social reality and epistemological perspectives about knowledge form the base for research, they in turn inform the research approach to be employed by a researcher in the research process. Also, one's ontological assumption and epistemological position are directly connected to the research paradigm that informs one's study.

This research seeks to study children's fantasy about their childhood. In many ways, governments and other organizations have sought and are still seeking to make children's lives better. In this direction, children have been theorized in different ways most of which are usually based on adult fantasies in the bid to create a childhood better than that of the previous generation of children. However, research have shown that the best adults thinking and talking for children, are quite different from children thinking

and talking for themselves. Hence, the reality of children's lives and what they fantasize can only be known from listening to them and taking their voices seriously. This needs a collaboration between children as research subjects and the researcher to construct what it is that children imagine as their ideal childhood. Therefore, this research is situated in the relativist ontological position and the constructivist epistemological reasoning.

3.1.3. Positivist vs. Interpretivist paradigm

The varied ways by which people seek to explain the reality of human life and phenomena in our existence have given rise to a lot of philosophical paradigms. However, all these paradigms emerged from what is mostly described as the two traditional paradigms which are the positivist and the interpretivism paradigms, (Esterberg, 2002; Henn et al, 2006; Scout & Usher, 1999; Kusi, 2012; Bryman, 2012).

When it comes to conducting studies on concerns, a central issue is that of whether the social world should be researched in much the same manner as the natural sciences. The position that is for studying the social world just like the natural sciences is known as positivism (Bryman, 2012).

Positivism is related to the realist school of thought that social reality exists on its own, outside of social actors and it is linked to the objectivist epistemological perspective which sees knowledge as independent of the individual and should be accessed using methods grounded in the natural sciences. It lends itself to the argument that social behavior is governed by rules (Cohen, et al, 2007, Kusi, 2012). In positivism, scientific methods are employed with the focus on creating rules and building theories and testing them for confirmation or otherwise. *The aim of the positivist researcher is to discover a set of laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human behavior* (Esterberg, 2002:10). Positivism dwells on the principle of phenomenalism that affirms that only phenomena and therefore knowledge that has been established by the senses can genuinely be acceptable as knowledge. It also entails the principle of deductivism. That is, theory is supposed to generate propositions or hypotheses that can be tested and hence formulate rules and laws that can be used to govern human behavior. It involves the principle of inductivism; knowledge is gained by the used of facts that become the base for laws and finally, positivism condones the principle of objectivism which explains that science must not be influenced by values (Bryman, 2012). Employing scientific procedures means instruments used must have measuring

qualities that are very significant and accurate in their investigations. Therefore, measuring instruments like structured or standardized questionnaire is used to gather data which can be subjected to statistical analysis (Kusi, 2012). Positivism usually informs the choice of quantitative research design.

Interpretivism which is often merged with Constructivism is grounded in the relativist ontological position that explains social reality as socially constructed; that reality is an integral part of the individual and it stems from the experiences with the environment. Bryman, (2012) is of the view that because humans are different based on different factors and one fact cannot be used to explain human behavior, there is a need for a research procedure that reflects the distinctiveness of human nature. According to Honebein (1996), interpretivism /constructivism is a philosophical paradigm that explains that people construct meaning of the world around them and gains knowledge through their experiences and reflection on those experiences. This is based on the premise that the knowledge that people have of life is gained through their everyday experience,

Constructivism/Interpretivists have argued that we can understand the world better if we make the effort to study people from their own perspective rather than explaining their behavior through cause-and-effect processes (Kusi, 2012). They have also argued that social reality is jointly created via meaningful interactions between the researcher and researched in the latter's natural environment (Grbich, 2007; Rugg & Petre, 2007). In addition, Constructivist/Interpretivist acknowledges the feelings, emotions, experiences and viewpoints of its subject as data (Bessey, 1999). In a nutshell, constructivism/interpretivism allows access to the research participants' personal views and recognizes the role of both the researcher and researched in the creation of knowledge and finally it allows an attempt to understand the complexity of a phenomenon in its own social-cultural context (Kusi, 2012). The data collected is usually situated in a rich language environment.

The knowledge sought after in this research is what it means to be a child in the Ghanaian context and what the individual would have wanted it to be. These cannot be known outside of the Ghanaian child. In fact, the Ghanaian adult will not be able to give this knowledge. Therefore, the construction of this knowledge will depend on collaboration between the Ghanaian child and the researcher, with the child providing the data and the researcher interpreting and constructing and reconstructing knowledge

from the data. The constructivist/ interpretivism depends mostly on the participants' view of the situation understudy which is influenced by the historical and social background of the participants. However, the researcher in this situation acknowledges the impact that his/her background has on the interpretation. The intention is to interpret and reconstruct knowledge from the meaning that the research subjects have about the situation being studied (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). Constructivist/Interpretivist researchers mostly make use of qualitative research design.

3.1.4. Quantitative vs. Qualitative research methods

Quantitative research approach can be interpreted as a research strategy that stresses quantification in the collection and analysis of data and it involves a deductive approach to the connection between theory and research. It also integrates the practices and models of the natural sciences especially positivism and it embodies a view of social reality as objective reality (Bryman, 2012). In practice, quantitative research considers humans as passive participants who carry on their assumed roles in a logical manner. It works with data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys or manipulate pre-existing data using computational procedures (Babbie, 2010; Muijs, 2010). It entails testing hypothesis by looking at the connection that exists among variables which can be measured with instruments purposely to generate numerical data that can be analyzed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative researchers test hypotheses deductively in order to eliminate biases, create alternative explanations and pave the way for generalizations and replications. They employ deductive approach to research which implies that they begin the research with a hypothesis and proceed to collect and analyze data that will provide empirical evidence to confirm or reject the theory (Crossman, 2017; Halliday, 2016; Byanjankar, 2016).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, deals with the scrutiny of relationships, activities, situations or materials and lays emphasis more on holistic account of what goes on in a situation or activity (Fraenkel, Wallen& Hyun, 2012). It focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem which makes its data detailed and heavily dependent on descriptions, comprehensive inquiry and personal perspectives and experiences (Kusi, 2012; Fraenkel et al, 2012; Patton, 2008; Creswell, 2018). Therefore, it makes more use of language and words in the collection and analysis of data. In addition, it lays a lot of emphasis on the inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research

thus stressing the generating of theories (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative researchers study real situations in their natural environment as they unfold making them lack predetermined restrictions. That is, researchers study details and specifics of the situations they deal with in order to discover categories, dimensions and interrelationships that are essential to their conclusions, (Patton, 2008). This makes the study inductive in nature which is also in line with the documentary method employed in this study.

Even though quantitative methods aim for accuracy and objectivity, its methods cannot easily apply to all social situations especially since social actors are not easy to manipulate and same situation may vary, making replication almost impossible. Additionally, as George Devereux (1908-1985) explains, the more controlled the research setting and variables, the more results are bound to be distorted. Moreover, perspectives of social actors matter in the research process and outcome. In the end, one's approach depends on the research questions: how best one can get answers to the research questions and theory and methodology "behind" the question,

3.2. Documentary Method

The criticism of the objective nature of quantitative research and the fact that humans can be understood mainly from their own understanding and perspectives made a subjective study more viable. However, subjectivity in qualitative research also means that the researcher's response can interfere with results. Bohnsack, (2010) elucidates that, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge gives a way out to reduce researcher's interference with data analysis and results. The explanation is that, in spite of the relationship between the researcher and the research participants, it is still only the participants' knowledge that underlies analysis and results in the study.

The Documentary method is a qualitative reconstructive method that was developed from the sociology of knowledge by Mannheim (1952) and the ethnomethodological tradition of research by Garfinkel (1967). This method makes available for academic inquiry, two types of knowledge. The explicit knowledge (also known as the objective, immanent, communicative, theoretical, reflexive or public knowledge) of the research subjects which refers to the knowledge that they can easily communicate about. It involves what they know and can divulge easily at the time of communication. The second is the implicit knowledge (or atheoretical, conjunctive,

incorporated, milieu specific knowledge) which is present in their subconsciousness and thus is not easily communicated. This kind of knowledge could be identified by propelling the inquiry to the level of how the communication was engaged in and it is mostly evident and understood by people from similar conjunctive spaces or with common experiences.

When it comes to the level of making sense or meaning in communication, three different meanings (objective sense or meaning, sense of expression and documentary sense or meaning) could be identified, however, documentary method is interested in only two. The objective meaning or sense is basically and for that matter, truthfully, the meaning or truth assigned by the subject at the time of communication. (Mannheim, 1952). That is the literal meaning of the expression; exactly what the subject meant by the expression. In sociological inquiry, documentary meaning, which Luhmann (1990) called, "the second order", originates from, for example, when a researcher reflects on (for instance) an interview and has to decide what might have instigated a particular answer or the underlying ideas of what a subject had said. That is, looking for meanings that were intended (not intentionally) but not evident in the answer given to a question (Garfinkel, 1967). This meaning is not evident from the physique of the expression but is subtly superimposed on it, sometimes, without the explicit intention of the subject. Mannheim (1952) explains these meanings with a scenario of giving alms where the objective meaning is to help but the documentary meaning is connected to hypocrisy because the giver actually alienates himself from the beggar by tossing the coin as far from him as possible. Even though the objective meaning is to help the beggar, in the giver's subconsciousness, he despises the beggar; he does not want any direct connection with him (the beggar).

In effect, the documentary method makes the observer privy to the participants knowledge that they (the participants) may not be aware that they possess. This is acquired by moving inquiry from the literal knowledge of what is known to the implicit knowledge of how it is known (Bohnsack, 2010). Nohl (2010) further explains that the two levels of meaning inherent in documentary method are seen in an ordinary expression which reveals (in addition to the intended meaning) another information that is not evident on the surface and is also mostly unknown to the speaker. The documentary method of data analysis distinguishes itself from other methods in the sense that in practice, it goes beyond the supposed weakness of subjectivity and

objectivity. Its outcome is not restricted to the reconstruction of the common sense of its subjects and it does not lay claim to knowing more about social structures than the social actors themselves. Thus, the explicit knowledge of the social actors is the starting point of analysis but it does not confine itself to the meaning ascribed by them but assumes that they do not really know what they know. The analysis therefore, shifts from what they know to how they know it. Bohnsack, 2010; Nohl, 2010; Volkmann, 2019). Hence, the key issue in documentary analysis, is to make what is implicitly known explicit.

3.2.1.   Why Documentary Method?

The uniqueness of documentary method is in its ability to distinguish between the explicit and the implicit knowledge of the research participants concerning the topic understudy. Its primary aim is the reconstruction of the implicit knowledge as the knowledge that influence or stimulate people's actions.

This is the knowledge that the respondents are not aware that they possess and hence cannot intentionally manipulate it and neither can the researcher lay claim to it because the basic source of that knowledge is the experiences from the respondents' everyday life (their explicit knowledge), (Volkmann, 2019; Nohl, 2010; Schittenhelm 2010). This way, documentary analysis defeats the weakness of both subjectivity and objectivity in research.

Documentary method is more suited for this research based on two different but related ideas. These ideas, though they may be common knowledge, are mostly from personal reflections: people (in this case, young people) are usually not able to say or explain exactly what they mean. In the context of this study, to what extend can Ghanaian children explain what it means to be a child in Ghana in the 21st century and would they be able to explain how they would have wanted it to be like? In practice, even adults sometimes fall short of making sense so it is argued here that it is very probable that young people will not be able to say exactly what is on their mind as they do not have access to the implicit realm because it is based in experience and it is incorporated.

So, how do we get to know what is on their mind, which they themselves may not be aware that they know? In documentary analysis, this is done by looking at the behavioral and attitudinal orientation of the group as they deal with a theme. That is,

focusing on how the group discussed that theme or topic. This is the premise on which documentary method is based; one can reconstruct meaning from not only what a person says but also from how they say it. Thus, although Ghanaian children may not be able to say or explain concisely the kind of childhood they have and fantasize, their orientation, pertaining to relating what they can explicitly, will give ideas about the knowledge they possess but which is not readily available for their explication. This is why documentary method is very appropriate for this study. In other words, this method will make available to the researcher, knowledge, that is not evident in the physique of response given by the respondents to the inquiries made.

3.2.2.   Data in the documentary method

Most of the earlier academic inquiries with the documentary method are in the German language which limits their accessibility to non-German speakers. It has been used, over the years, to analyze group discussions (Bohnsack, 2010; Schittenhelm, 2010; Weller, 2010; Pfaff, 2010; Volkmann, 2019), interviews (Nohl, 2010; Moura, 2010; Nohl & Ofner, 2010) and pictures and videos (Bohnsack, 2010; Geimer, 2010; Sabisch & Mellenthin, 2010). Its approach to data interpretation and analysis focuses, for example, on the research subjects' narrations about their experiences but more importantly, on how they narrate those experiences. The situation of the discussion is also taken into consideration. Thus, in addition to the topics and themes that run through, for instance, their group discussion, the manner in which they carry out the discussion is very key to documentary analysis and subject to analysis too (Schittenhelm, 2010). In this way, the content and the situation of the discussion becomes a tool to unravel the second level of meaning which is the "how". The analysis of the "how" differentiates this analytical stance from others. In doing documentary analysis, it is assumed that an analysis of language in use possess the acumen to unravel other meanings, understandings and divers means of seeing and organizing our world.

3.3.   Instrument for data collection

Accompanying the paradigm shift in children and childhood studies is the need to reconsider methods in research with children. There has been a call to use participatory methods in research with children to enhance their influence in knowledge-building about children (Horgan, 2017; Kleine et al, 2016). This study

employed a threefold instrument (narrative, essay and fantasy) with each part having a unique bearing on the data collected, research process and possible outcomes.

3.3.1. Narratives

Narratives are part of our everyday life activities practiced both consciously and unconsciously. They provide very easy means to construct an orderly flow of our lives, especially as we relate it to others. Through narratives, individuals are able to integrate logic to their past, present and future thereby helping with the process of lifelong learning (McAlpine, 2016). As people narrate the events of their lives, they build their individual identities and continuously restructure their plans to suit their situations (Elliot, 2005; Sfard and Prusak,2005; Reissman, 2008; Holley and Colvar, 2009). Hence, narratives become projections or targets (that are informed by past and present experiences) that can be advanced and worked towards to achieve one's dreams. In addition, narratives are windows into people's understanding of the world around them. They are to recount experiences and explain a sense of logic about things and issues.

Narratives can be explained as a talk which can be verbal or written that is woven around significant events in time (Riessman, 2002). Studies show that by age nine, children are able to give narratives that are structured to include a lot of events (Trabasso and Stein, 1997). That is, children of that age are able to tell stories about events which can include details of numerous experiences. They are able to maintain a logic to their narrations. Narratives are also tools by which people make themselves known to their environment and to others who may be interested in them and the meaning their apply to their daily lives (Davis and Harre´, 1990; Mishler, 1999; Nelson, 2000). These and others make narratives very key to the general development of children, specifically, as they promote language development (Stadler and Cuming, 2005) and also facilitate the developing and understanding of concepts in children (Applebee, 1978).

Narratives, in research, do not recreate the past but try to interpret it by connecting the three dispensations of life - past, present and the future- with the advantage of making the latter better. Hence, narratives are opportunities to recreate life's situations (Riessman, 2005). Øverlien (2011), purports that listening to children's stories gives insights into what children think about and how they interpret the world around them and, in the end, forge a connection between children's lives as it is now

and how it ought to be. In effect, children use narratives to create their personal identifies (Herrmann, 2011; Alvesson, 2010; Brown, 2005), as they select and order events and issues important to them to make up their narratives.

3.3.2. Fantasy

Fantasy is mostly identified with unreality which could range from fantastic ideas in fairytales to mind-blowing mysteries in science fiction. However, fantasy could also be a product of a desire, subtly or self-consciously enacted, for improvement on the reality which is usually a kind of realistic fantasy (Fimi, 2019). In drawing fantasy closer to reality, Bruno Munari (1901-1988) is of the view that when fantasy and motive interrelates the product is a possible reality, (Kong,2019) where the achievement of the fantasy is an improvement on the realty.

Children are experts in fantasy as exemplified in children's fantasy play where they engage in movement between time and space as well as between reality and the nonreality. Fantasy play is described as children's play in which they go through the process of transforming themselves, objects and their environment mentally into whatever possibilities they wish in their present status (Garvey, 1990; Lillard, 2001; Daou, 2011). The ability to stimulate imagination to engage vividly and successfully in fantasy play is deemed a sign of good mental ability which is crucial in the development of learning mechanisms (Vygotsky, 1990) and this is correlated by empirical evidence in studies involving children's cognitive (Lillard, Pinkham, & Smith, 2010), educational (Miller, 1998) and socioemotional skills development (Harris, 2000) although Lillard et al. (2013) suggest otherwise.

Fantasy provides the opportunity to recreate not only personal life situations but also that of others whose lives are interconnected as in the family or even on the national or global level and is a form of escape from reality (Tolkien, 1981). However, most often, fantasy retains elements of reality be they physical or psychological as Vygotsky (1896– 1934), that there is a direct correlation between fantasy and reality where the former emanates from the experiences accumulated from the latter (Vygotsky, 2004).

Thus, in this study, fantasy acted as a tool to create individual versions of ideal childhood which is expected to be an improved version of the reality. The use of fantasy was necessitated by the fact that the participants are to create their own world where everything will be as they want it and unlike in the reality. The ideas used in the fantasy

are their ideas of "what is right for them" which also show how they understand the world around and the ways they make meaning at different levels and in diverse situations.

3.3.3. Essays

Essays are individualistic and research participants will have very little influence on what others write. This way, ideas running through their essays will be the types affecting not only the individual but also the group; a kind of DNA for the group discourse. In writing essays, the writer has the advantage to analytically think through an issue before taking a stance. This way, one's critical thinking abilities are harnessed into making informed decisions. It also helps one to discover more knowledge about the topic at stake. Another advantage is that in writing essays, individuals will write about the same topic but from different perspectives. This way, what one was not able to address may be addressed by another but on the same issue. It also do-away with shyness and inability to express oneself in "public". More especially, it fosters privacy and anonymity which brings about openness to talk about what one may not talk about openly in a group. However, it has the disadvantage of imposing difficult grammatical rules, especially, on second language learners like the children in this study. For this purpose, the ideas in the essay are taken into consideration without any focus on wrong spelling or wrong usage.

3.3.4. Why narrative essays?

There is a clear difference between narratives and answers. With narratives, the narrator is given the opportunity to choose issues that are relevant to the topic at stake and order those events or issues in such a way that there is a coherent relationship fostered by the narrator. Narrative data tends to be active, vocal, multi-voiced, and makes for easy accessibility to issues that are sensitive and difficult to understand through the use of questioning, (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010). Documentary method has been used mostly to analyze transcribed verbal data, however, facial expressions, pauses and body language form part of the data analyzed especial reconstruction of the implicit knowledge. In using it to analyze essays, these paralinguistic features will not be available, thus, sentences and/or groups of sentences that contain similar topics in the essays, are assembled in order to identify the progression of each theme which will

also help ascertain the underlying idea, i.e., the implicit knowledge. Deliberate choice of certain words and expressions as well as metaphorical expressions took the place of the paralinguistic features.

3.4. Data collection process

Several attempts were made to elicit the children's imagined ideal childhood. The first stimulus was, "write a story about what you don't like about your life now and how you would like it to change". To this, the children wrote mostly about what they dislike but not about the change they desired or imagine for themselves. Since the idea is to explore their imagined ideal childhood, this data could not be used. The stimulus was changed for another group of children. The new stimulus was, "what are the things that you would like to have to make your life better?" In working with this stimulus, most of the participants wrote a list of things that they want. After a careful reflection on this data, I came to a conclusion that my background as a lecturer at the University of Education, Winneba made the children conclude that I am going to supply whatever they desire. This set of data, also did not help with exploring their ideal childhood. Having had some experience with the first two data, I reflected on how to make the children understand what is expected of them. I decided that the next stimulus ought to be future-oriented and also have boundaries that will guide the children. Thus, a third group of children were given the stimulus, "if you have the opportunity to live the way you like, how will you like to live, start from the time you wake up from bed to the time you go to bed". This new stimulus was structured to elicit a narration that is future-oriented and not just a list of wants, likes or dislikes. The result was successful as most of the participants in this group narrated their fantasy about at least, a day in their fantasized ideal childhood.

3.5. Data analysis plan

Under this section, I will explain documentary method as the method of data analysis for this study and further explain why it is best situated for this research. I will also give the profile of the participants' background which will include the setting and a summary of their essays.

3.5.1. Comparative sequential analysis

In all the three analytical steps in documentary method (formulating interpretation, reflecting interpretation and formation of types also known as semantic interpretation), comparative sequential analysis of data is key to a successful inquiry. The drive behind the employment of comparative sequential analysis is in threefold; firstly, it is the basic focus of documentary method to analyze systematically the implicit consistency of experiences and reconstruct the implicit meaning entrenched in this consistency. Comparative sequential analysis is used to facilitate the interpretation leading to the reconstruction of orientation frameworks. Here, minimal and maximal contrasting sequence are used to establish implicit consistency which creates a similarity between an idea and the one preceding it, thereby, reconstructing the implicit knowledge that influences mundane activities (Volkmann, 2019; Scheunpflug et al, 2016; Nohl, 2010). Secondly, applying comparative sequential analysis validates the interpretation by reducing the researcher(s)' point of view concerning the topic under review. This is so because, as more cases are included in the comparison to reconstruct an orientation framework, the focus shifts from that of the researcher to the multiplicity of meaning embedded in different perspectives (which is generated from the subjects' own experiences. Thirdly, comparative sequential analysis allows the development of different types of orientation frameworks by distinguishing one framework from another. This is made successful by making evident the differences as well as the similarities in the individual cases and grouping them into types (Volkmann, 2019; Scheunpflug, Krogull and Franz, 2016; Nohl, 2010).

3.5.2. Formulating Interpretation

The plan for data analysis involved several processes which are informed by documentary method's two levels of meaning (as explained earlier); that is the explicit meaning and the implicit meaning. The process of analysis is initiated by what is known as formulating interpretation. This process involved comprehensive thematic organizing of the essays. That is, reading through all the essays to identify common ideas and themes running through them. Three criteria were used in the identifying themes in the essays.

Diagram 1: Analysis process using Documentary Method
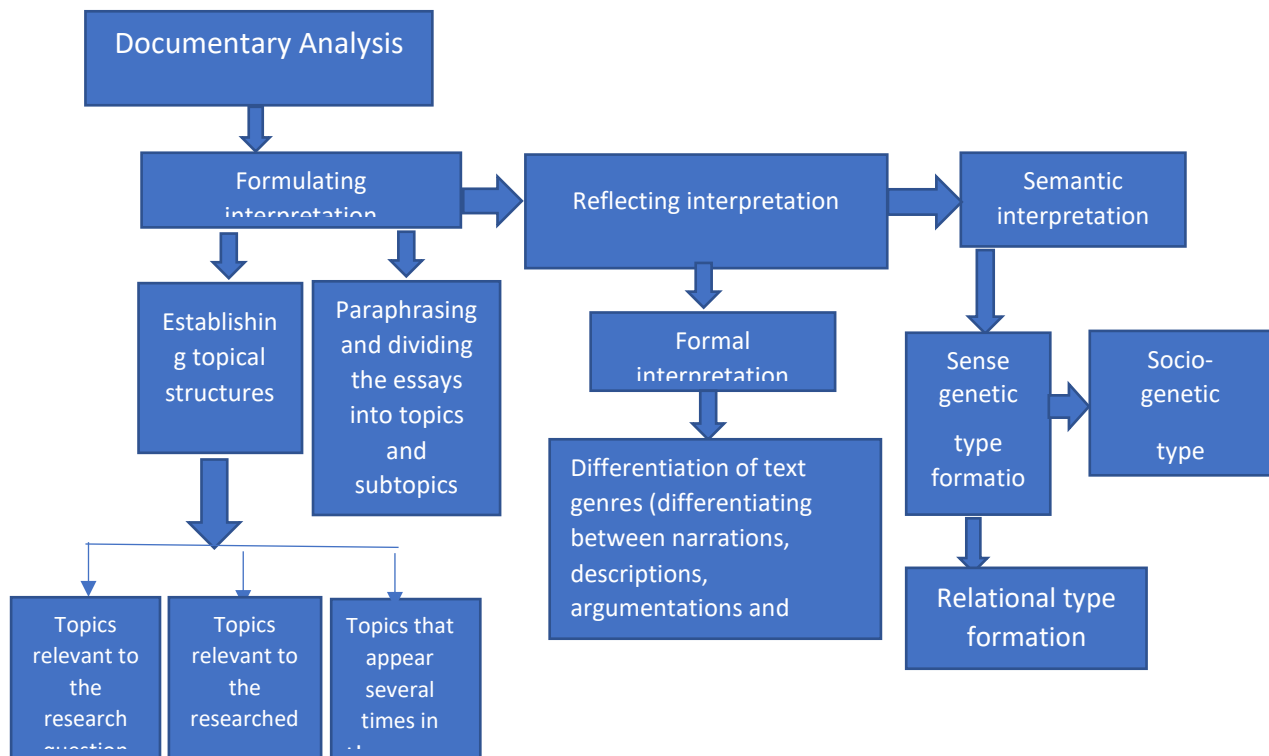
(Analysis process using Documentary Method (Source: Personal collection)

These are topics that the individual participants stressed on and talked ardently about and which they used different metaphors to explain, topics that keep recurring in the essays so that there could be a comparison on the way they treat them individually and how, for instance, the larger society talk about them and topics that the researcher found relevant to the answering of the research question. In formulating interpretation, the final step is, segments or paragraphs in the essays are paraphrased to help bring semantic cohesion to the different ways that the writers communicate the same issues (Volkmann, 2018; Scheunpflug, Krogull and Franz, 2016; Bohnsack, 2010; Nohl, 2010). This step establishes the focus of the analysis of the immanent meaning and at the same time paves the way for the next step which is reflecting interpretation (leading to the analysis of the documentary meaning).

3.5.3. Reflecting interpretation

Reflecting interpretation deals with the analysis of the immanent meaning. This second process deals with meaning that the research participants possess at the time they respond to the research stimulus. For instance, the knowledge of what it is to be a young person, between ages 10 and 13 in Ghana may not be readily available in its

totality to the participants. However, at the time of writing, the child will focus on present circumstances in the immediate environs to give a description or narration. This gives indication of what the child understands to be the knowledge that answers the question. Hence, this step seeks to reconstruct how the research participants dealt with each theme or topic, their orientations and collective meanings (Volkmann, 2019; Scheunpflug et al, 2016; Bohnsack, 2010).

At this level, the method proposes a consideration of the discourse structure in which the discussion takes place (Scheunpflug et al, 2016). That is, it is very essential to determine how the group framed and negotiate each topic. Nohl (2010) argues that, meaning is also embedded in the formal structure of a text, hence, in reflecting interpretation, there is the need to focus on not only the meaning of the text, but especially on the text structure by which meaning is intended. This includes a formal interpretation where the text genres by which the writers frame their communicative knowledge are identified. It involves differentiating between narrations, descriptions, argumentations and evaluations (Volkmann, 2019; Nohl, 2010).

By this, one can identify a pattern (if any) by which the writers individually and mutually approach and deal with a topic, making a way for comparative analysis. Nohl (2010) and Volksman (2019) both, following Fritz Schütze (1983), explain that it is easier to reconstruct the orientation framework of narratives and descriptions in that they are mostly connected to the speakers/writers' personal experience and for that matter, their conjunctive knowledge. On the other hand, argumentations and evaluations emanate more from the speakers/writers' communicative knowledge as they are based on the present situation. However, argumentations and evaluations may be included in the reconstruction of orientation frameworks if the focus of the analysis is on how they are relayed and not on their explicit content, (Volkmann, 2019 citing Nohl, 2012a). Therefore, as Nohl (2010) puts it, it is the conjunctive knowledge that is of interest to qualitative social research, thus, the interpretation of the semantic content is mostly focused on the conjunctive knowledge that is articulated in the narratives and descriptions.

In the context of this study, the stimulus was to elicit a narration of the participants' fantasy. This is made plausible by making the stimulus bound by a duration in time; "start from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed". However, their essays are framed not only in narratives but also in all the other text genres.

In interviews and group discussions, it is easier to identify a group's orientation towards a particular topic as the members in the group focus on each other's responses and attitudes to generate subtopics and reactions. Also, in an interview, the direction and prompting of the interviewer and the body language of the interviewee brings to focus what could not be otherwise written. For instance, in transcription, a frown or a chuckle could be accounted for. This is not the case in the analysis of essay data. Essays are individualistic and each essay's point of view is taken as holistic and uninfluenced individual's point of view. Uninfluenced in the sense that the writer does not receive cues and prompts from anyone and is not affected by the body language of other respondents or the researcher. However, the collective orientation is generated from the common trends running through all the essays. This is to say that, even though the writers wrote the essays individually (without influencing each other), they are still talking about the same thing. Therefore, a perspective that is common to their essays, points to their unified positioning.

3.5.4. Semantic interpretation (Formulation of types)

The next step in this analysis is the semantic interpretation where the orientation frameworks from the individual essays are extracted and condensed into types of implicit knowledge on a more theoretical level.

The common topics and the different ways that the individuals relate to them (orientation framework) are the sense-genetic types formation. Different sense-genetic types and the way individuals navigate through them (conjunctive realms) in relation to social norms or contexts lead to the socio-genetic type formation. That is, while sense-genetic types show how different orientation frameworks are in which the research participants deal with the research focus and problems, socio-genetic types focus on the social contexts and patterns in which the orientation frameworks occur. For instance, while sense-genetic types will reveal the different ways that adolescents deal with sleep problems, socio-genetic types will reveal the social norms about sleep and how and why the adolescent will relate it to, for instance, formal education. Also, socio-genetic type formation discloses, for instance, how the way an adolescent treats her mother is related to her intrinsic desire for autonomy or on how the way a basic school child navigates economic freedom is (un)related to a desire for formal education.

Sense-genetic type formation

Comparative sequential analysis is used to reconstruct the orientation framework in which topics are elaborated on in an essay. The topics are identified as topics that (as explained above) the writers focus on most and elaborated on with some passion. In addition, the topics are those that the researcher find relevant in answering the research questions and finally they are topics that keep recurring in the essays. Therefore, the first topic is extracted as, for instance, orientation framework A. The other frameworks that are differentiated from framework A become framework B, C, D, E, etc. These frameworks are self-sufficient and are not explicated in relation to framework A. The orientation frameworks that are reconstructed from the essays are abstracted and formulated into types. These types are then identified in other essays so that the orientation framework does not belong to the first essay alone (a single case) but to a community of others. Here, the types formulated from the individual essays are generalized to become a kind of roots from which individual cases can be explained. The generalized results can be arrived at by comparing and contrasting how the individual essays approach each type and then drawing a conclusion which depicts a relationship between them (the individual essays).

Hence, the different ways in which the social environment is experienced (conjunctive realm of experience) in relation to the different kinds of implicit practical knowledge are reconstructed into what is known as socio-genetic type formation. It is the formation of the socio-genetic type that provides information on inquiries about social contexts and the beginning of an orientation framework.

Socio-genetic type formation

Finally, documentary method aims at reconstructing the conjunctive realms of experience associated with the various implicit knowledge realized by the sociogenetic type formation (Volkmann, 2019). To achieve this, correspondence analysis is used to analyze the particular environment experiences that produced a particular type of documentary knowledge. In using correspondence analysis, the various types of orientation frameworks achieved in the sense-genetic type formation are analytically set in relation to already existing social norms or social positioning on the topics in the types (Volkmann, 2019). These social norms or social positionings are conventional principles that indicate diversity in society thereby creating differences in the way society is structured. Such structures include class, generation, education, etc. The

implication here is, two obviously different perspectives are combined in the analysis. These are, the reconstructed orientations influencing mundane activities and the outcome from a standardized data collected. The latter mostly depicts a potential conjunctive realm of experience, which, however, can be proven to be communal only by empirical evidence.

Consequently, it is the purpose of the sociogenetic interpretation to reconstruct the conjunctive realms of experience as related in the narratives and descriptions by the research subjects in their essays. These are the dimensions of experiences proposed by the writers themselves and are recognized based on the intensity and frequency with which they refer to them with the aim of establishing them as relevant. It must be noted that in writing about their ideal childhood, it is the activities and entities that the writers allow or restrict (with passion) that must dominate their narratives and descriptions.

In the formation of sociogenetic types, a relation is fostered between one kind of orientation framework and other dimensions of conjunctive realms of experience. That is, there are overlapping relationships between a sense-genetic type and several conjunctive realms of experience which gives rise to multidimensional sociogenetic type formation. Here, there is a systematic analysis of how specific types of conjunctive experiential spaces (age, education, relationships, etc.) interact and in the process create different implicit knowledge. This gives the possibility of determining the elasticity of a particular sense-genetic type and additionally portray its generalizability through sociogenetic type formation (Volkmann, 2019; Scheunpflug et al, 2016; Nohl, 2010).

Generalization in Documentary method points to the ability of a type to be generalized and this depends on how one type is overlapped by others can be demonstrated and thus be positioned in a typology. (Nohl, 2010). However, this generalization of analysis can be made possible only by data sample that is diverse enough to allow systematic variation of the different conjunctive experiential spaces (Volkmann, 2019). In a situation where this (sociogenetic type formation) is not possible, Volkmann (2019) citing Nohl, (2013; 2012b) proposes the use of relational type formation which reconstructs how the sense-genetic types formed, systematically relate to each other.

The choice of documentary method for analysis in this study was based on the research question, the research participants as well as the theoretical underpinnings of the documentary method. Additionally, the research question(s) demand narratives and

descriptions but apart from the meaning deduced from the physique of the responses, there is (almost always) underlying ideas that only documentary method can make explicit. Also, children may not be able to say exactly what is on their minds and documentary method gives the advantage of reconstructing that implicit knowledge.

The nature of qualitative research makes the contribution of the researcher an integral part of research outcome. In the use of documentary method, interpreting the data still imbibe a lot of ideas and contribution from the researcher, which in long run, can influence the final results. To reduce this influence to the barest minimum, group analysis was organized for, especially, the generation of sociogenetic types.

3.6.   Representative sample (final sample) used for the analysis

After careful and iterative observation of the exhaustive nature of documentary method, the logical conclusion was that only a limited number of samples could be included in the analysis as indicated by Volkmann (2019). Hence a representative sample was extracted from the overall sample. This was done by looking at the topics elaborated on in the essays. If a group of essays have several topics in common, the ones with the more topics are selected to represent the group. However, some essays with less topics were selected because they elaborated on specific topics more than the others. At the end of this process, 32 essays were selected to represent the original 47. Age was the criteria by which the original sample was selected, that is, young people between ages 10 to 13. In the representative sample, 12 out of the 32 are between 10 and 11 years old and 20 are between 12 and 13 years old. In the original sampling, one public school and one private school were selected and they are represented as 20 and 12 respectively.

Table 1: The final sample

Serial number	Essay number	Sex	Age	Socioeconomic background
1	1	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
2	2	Boy	11	Lower middle-class
3	3	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
4	5	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
5	6	Did not state	10-11	Lower middle-class
6	7	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
7	10	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
8	11	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
9	12	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
10	13	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
11	14	Boy	11	Lower middle-class
12	17	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
13	20	Girl	12	Working-class
14	21	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
15	22	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
16	23	Boy	12	Working-class
17	26	Girl	12-13	Working-class
18	27	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
19	28	Girl	13	Working-class
20	29	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
21	32	Girl	12-13	Working-class
22	34	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
23	35	Girl	13	Working-class
24	36	Girl	13	Working-class
25	37	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
26	39	Did not state	12	Working-class
27	40	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
28	42	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
29	44	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
30	45	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
31	46	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
32	47	Did not state	13	Working-class

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Overview

This chapter discusses the process of identifying the topical issues in the essays for the study. It also looks at how the participants deal with each theme and how they collectively postulate meanings in reflecting interpretation.

4.1. Formulating interpretation

In fantasizing about their childhood, the participants discuss topics and issues from three key perspectives or approaches which include activities that they deem very important to their childhood and these are put into three broad thematic categories., relationships they wish to be part of (or otherwise) in their childhood, things that they protest against or the absence of which they protest against in their present childhood, (that is, things that they protest against in their present life, will not be part of their ideal childhood and the absence of things they protest against, will be part of their fantasy childhood) and philosophies of life which are mostly their reminiscences and understandings about life. With this, six broad themes are derived from the data for analysis. These are (i) daily routine activities, (ii) leisure activities (iii) spiritual activities (iv) relationships (v) protests and (vi) philosophies of life. These broad themes further produce several subthemes under each of them. Under the daily routine activities what they find important are sleeping, eating, doing household chores, doing school activities and learning, earning and spending money. Leisure activities reveal physical leisure, digital leisure and adventure as their focus. With relationships, they elaborated on their friends, mothers, teachers, fathers, siblings, domestic workers and the needy in the society. When it comes to protests, they protested against caning, inequality, poor teaching methods, stress at school and home and thefts. Finally, their reflections about life are categorized according to how they understand and thus expect life to be like. In identifying the themes in the essays, each theme is assigned a color code to make for easy identification.

How themes were identified in the essays (formulating interpretation)

In basic school, essay writing is taught with the format of giving the essay a heading and dividing it into 3 distinct parts of the introduction, the main body and the conclusion. The main body is divided into paragraphs with each paragraph addressing

a different issue or topic. The conclusion is usually a summary of the content in the main body. Most of the participants make use of this knowledge of essay writing in these essays.

Example 1

My Perfect life

1. *I am a ten-year-old girl. This is how I want my perfect life to be. I will like to wake up at*
2. *2:30pm. I will work but not too much. I will like to work for about one hour. After working*
3. *I will like to watch television for about 1hour, 30 mins. After watching the television, I will*
4. *also like to learn for about 31 mins. After learning, I will like to read my story books or*
5. *note for about 40 mins. After learning, I would bath, brush my teeth and have my breakfast.*
6. *I would like my breakfast to be indomie with chicken and sausage stew. My lunch Banku,*
7. *pepper and tilapia. My dinner, curry fried rice with fried egg. I would like to go to my best*
8. *friend's house and spend about one week, before going to my house. Before I forget, I will*
9. *like to visit my uncle in his mansion, buy girly stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iPhone,*
10. *e.t.c), visit the beach on Saturdays and Sundays after church, go to dreamland to buy Jeep*
11. *and Range Rover for my parents. Then my nuclear family will get a lot or a whole lot of*
12. *money and go to Paris then spend at least one month and get a a lot of friends then come*
13. *back to Ghana and spend two months.*
14. *After the two months, I will go to Canada to spend a whole year and some months (three*
15. *to four months) continue my schooling at Canada, get the best grades (11, etc.) I want to*
16. *get a free scholarship, go around the world, learn, play and have lots of fun. Then I will*
17. *go to a Chinese restaurant and order four pizza, sushi. And I really wish I could sleep in*
18. *the Skyland; it is a mall located at my grandfather's house near a beach. I want my perfect*
19. *life to be full of joy, peace, love and care.*
20. *In my perfect life, I would like to invite Kuami Eugene, Ading, MzVee, Sakordie, Ak*
21. *songtress, Sinach, Joe Mettle, Dope Nation, Ed Shereen, DJ Cally, Rahiana, to feature me*
22. *in their songs, help me to sing and travel all the world with them. I want to be the happiest*

23. *girl/lady on earth, have a sharp mind, look smart, smell lovely, help others, and respect*
24. *the elderly people.* *Preach the world of God, lift God on high.* *This is how I want my perfect life to be.*

The essay begins with a declaration of age, sex and purpose of the study in line 1. The actual narration commences with the statement of the time of waking up which is 2:30 pm in lines 1 and 2. It is stated in a short simple sentence, with no explanation for the choice of time. This leaves the reader wondering about the choice of that time as it is unusual, being so late in the day. However, the silence on an explanation for the time of waking gives a sense of unquestioned finality where the writer is autonomous in that choice and does not need to explain why. Hence, the time of waking up (sleep) as a topic emerges as important because it implicitly allows portraying a status of being in control of one's life which is a key issue in a perfect life.

This is closely followed by a stance towards performing household chores in line 2. This stance is a negotiation of how much time will be spent on it.

I will work but not too much. I will like to work for about one hour.

This negotiation implies a recognition of the need to do work in the home on the one hand and having a sense of choice on the other hand. That is, there is the awareness of a need (performing chores in the home) however, the response to that need is not an imposition but rather a choice. This sense of choice is important to being in control of one's actions. Hence, household chores are presented as an essential part of the ideal childhood in which one has the power to make choices or provide alternatives. This gives household chores a thematic status as it occupies the central position of eliminating the absolute power in the hands of adults in the intergenerational relationships in the home and projects the child as also possessing the power of choice.

Leisure activities are a pivot to all the other activities. In the essay above, working around the house is followed by a series of leisure activities; watching T.V. and reading in lines 2-5. These activities are assigned time durations but the activity perceived as leisure takes the longest time.

After working, I will like to watch television for about 1hour, 30 mins.
After watching the television, I will also like to learn for about 31 mins.
After learning, I will like to read my story books or note for about 40 mins.

This gives a clear indication of the place and importance of leisure activities in the life of children. Additionally, this is not the only mention of leisure. Another thing that makes leisure key to the perfect life as described in the essay, is its position in relation to other activities. It comes immediately after a necessary activity (working in the home) and before toilette and breakfast. Leisure is supposed to be engaged in one's free time but, in this case, it is done, almost immediately after waking up. This gives it a professional status where leisure becomes a kind of productive activity.

The description given of eating makes it stand out. After rushing through bathing, breakfast is given a detailed attention, followed by lunch and dinner.

> *After learning, I would bath, brush my teeth and have my breakfast. I would like my breakfast to be indomie with chicken and sausage stew. My lunch Banku, pepper and tilapia. My dinner, curry fried rice with fried egg.*

The indication here is that eating is very essential in the perfect life. Food is mentioned in other parts of the essay but this time, the focus is not on what time of the day it is supposed to be eaten but rather on the place of access (Chinese Restaurant) and the social status assigned to it (pizza and sushi). Its importance is not just based on the routine activity of eating, but the quality, quantity and social status of food are also significant.

In narrating the perfect life, friends receive the most significant focus in relationships and time spent with friends gives an indication of their importance in the ideal childhood.

> *I would like to go to my best friend's house and spend about one week, before going to my house. Before I forget, I will like to visit my uncle in his mansion, buy girly stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iPhone, e.t.c), visit the beach on Saturdays and Sundays after church, go to dreamland to buy Jeep and Range Rover for my parents. Then my nuclear family will get a lot or a whole lot of money and go to Paris then spend at least one month and get a lot of friends then come back to Ghana and spend two months*

They are presented as ideal playmates with whom numerous days are spent. The emphasis on time spent with friends also emphasizes time spent on leisure. This is

evident in spending a whole week with the best friend before going back home. The next relationship mentioned is an uncle but the focus here is more on the uncle's financial status (mansion) than the uncle himself. This is reiterated in shopping right after visiting the mansion, enjoying time at the beach and purchasing expensive gifts for the biological parents. The parents are also positioned as becoming rich to sponsor adventures outside the country. Hence, while friends are portrayed as an opportunity to engage in leisure, older family members are portrayed as means to engage in financial exploits. Thus, both personalities are positioned as important in the imagined perfect life.

In Ghana, religious activities such as church services are very important but these are portrayed as necessary but less important as they are glossed over for more important activity.

> *visit the beach on Saturdays and Sundays after church, go to dreamland to buy Jeep and Range Rover for my parents. Then my nuclear family will get a lot or a whole lot of money and go to Paris then spend at least one month and get a a lot of friends then come back to Ghana and spend two months.*

What makes spiritual activities key is the low tone given it here. Hence, the idea is doing it, probably because it is obligatory but not really preferred. However, in another part of the essay, preaching the word God and worshipping God is mentioned.

> *Preach the world of God, lift God on high. This is how I want my perfect life to be.*

Although there is a distinction between these activities, attending church service and preaching the word and lifting God high, they all combine to form spiritual activities. However, the distinction between them makes spiritual activities significant. Whereas church service is a public affair and may be imposed on young people, the other two activities are personal choices. Hence, spiritual activities are portrayed as both public and private issues where the individual has a certain amount of choice. This focus on them gives them prominence in the young people's fantasy of a perfect life.

School activities in Ghana are not explicitly mentioned here but it is hinted at in activities such as learning. However, there is a preference for going to school abroad which gives adventure of traveling and having fun while learning.

After the two months, I will go to Canada to spend a whole year and some months (three to four months) continue my schooling at Canada, get the best grades (11, etc.) I want to get a free scholarship, go around the world, learn, play and have lots of fun.

The focus here is more on the adventure than actual school activities. Hence, this part of the essay is not taken as focusing on school activities but rather, on traveling. This focus on traveling and adventure is also evident in having relationships with celebrated musicians with whom one would travel to perform in different countries.

In my perfect life, I would like to invite Kuami Eugene, Ading, MzVee, Sakordie, Ak songtress, Sinach, Joe Mettle, Dope Nation, Ed Shereen, DJ Cally, Rahiana, to feature me in their songs, help me to sing and travel all the world with them.

Hence, traveling becomes very key in the ideal childhood.

Finally, there is a clear definition of expectations in the perfect life such as a perfect life should be full of joy, love and care, of being smart, helpful and respectful. These will be achieved in conjunction with activities engaged in and people related to in the perfect life.

From this essay, issues of sleep, household chores, leisure, eating and traveling emerged as prominent in the fantasized ideal childhood. In addition to these are spiritual activities and relationships with different people for different reasons.

Example 2

17. MY PERFECT LIFE

1. *I am a girl of ten years and during my perfect life, I would like to wake up early in the*
2. *around 6:00am and sleep late in the evening around 8:00. When I wake up I will brush*
3. *my teeth, bath and dress. When I am done, I plan to go to School I want to go to school*
4. *because I want to finish education and get a job to live a Perfect Life. After I come from*
5. *school I want to Pick a car and go to the "West Hills Mall". When I arrive, I Plan to buy*
6. *nice dresses, books, pens, Story books, Shoes and other items needed for school. When I*
7. *am done I will go to the cinema and watch about two or three movies. Then I will go*
8. *home and sleep.*

In example 2, the essay begins with the declaration of age and sex and is followed by issues on sleep. Here, the time of going to bed and waking up is both stated and after the usual toilette, school activities are introduced. Unlike in Example 1, there is no mention of chores but a direct connection is fostered between sleep and school and reasons are assigned for interest in school. Prominence is given to sleep in that both times of sleeping and waking up are mentioned emphatically. This emphasis is also directly linked to a future aspiration which is a perfect life through school activities. Hence, sleep forms part of a process that is deemed to be very important. School is presented as a means to an important end and although the focus is more on the final destination, school is positioned as also important to achieve that end. This makes the school stand out in the fantasy although there is no elaboration on it.

What receives more elaboration is shopping which happens right after the usual school day and this is also connected to school activities as items shopped for are necessary for school.

> *After I come from school, I want to Pick a car and go to the "West Hills*
> *Mall". When I arrive, I Plan to buy nice dresses, books, pens, Story*
> *books, Shoes and other items needed for school. When I am done I will*
> *go to the cinema and watch about two or three movies.*

Shopping is made prominent because of the vivid description given it here. It is also connected to leisure activities as the shopping is done also for the fun of it and it is followed by actual leisure activity, going to the cinema. This is done after school and shopping and it is positioned as important because the emphasis is on spending as much time on it as possible. That is watching two or three movies before going to bed.

Hence, the fantasy of a perfect day in a perfect life is shared between sleeping, school activities, and leisure.

Example 3

23. <u>MY PERFECT LIFE</u>

1. *I am a boy of twelve years of age with many dreams and ambitions in life. Some people in*
2. *this world think this world is perfect for them because of the little money they have.*
3. *People even go to the extent of playing songs and stating that the world is sweet or in our*
4. *local language, "wease yɛ dɛ" forgetting that they can fall ill and die one day. Below is a*

5. *description of how I wish if a perfect day is given, I would like it to be.*
6. *I don't know the one reading this but I would like to say; imagine a time where there is*
7. *no pain, no death, no sorrow, how will life be like? Of course it would be a very good one*
8. *to live. This is the first thing I would like to see on a perfect day.*
9. *For the second one, I know you are a government worker (the one reading this) and*
10. *works very hard before you get money to feed yourself or your family. But just think of a*
11. *time where you don't need to work, you just stay at home and plant some food crops for*
12. *them to grow and process it to eat.*
13. *Additionally, if we don't need to work hard before we can feed ourselves or family, then*
14. *there is no need for us to go to school. The point I am making is that, we go to school*
15. *starting from cretch, nursery, Junior High School (JHS), Senior High School (SHS). The*
16. *University is even not left out. So after all this learning process, you can become maybe a*
17. *government worker in future to get money. So if we do not need to go work very hard to*
18. *get money, then we don't need to go to school.*
19. *Finally, I will like to live in a life filled with peace and unity, where no one will be killed*
20. *by another person or hurt one another.*

In this third example, the first focus on the perfect life is a life without pain, sorrow, or death. How this would be achieved is not made clear but there is misgiving about people's conception of and attitude towards life-based on money without considering the possibility of illness and death.

> *I am a boy of twelve years of age with many dreams and ambitions in life. Some people in this world think this world is perfect for them because of the little money they have. People even go to the extent of playing songs and stating that the world is sweet or in our local language, "wease yɛ dɛ" forgetting that they can fall ill and die one day.*

Hence, the initial perception of a perfect life is the one in which there is the absence of any agent of pain. On the other hand, perfect life is perceived as a whole and that whole is all based on money to spend on food or to make a livelihood. Schooling as an activity is connected to making money for food and survival but school is described as too hard work.

For the second one, I know you are a government worker (the one reading this) and works very hard before you get money to feed yourself or your family. But just think of a time where you don't need to work, you just stay at home and plant some food crops for them to grow and process it to eat.

Additionally, if we don't need to work hard before we can feed ourselves or family, then there is no need for us to go to school. The point I am making is that, we go to school starting from cretch, nursery, Junior High School (JHS), Senior High School (SHS). The University is even not left out. So after all this learning process, you can become maybe a government worker in future to get money. So, if we do not need to go work very hard to get money, then we don't need to go to school.

Hence, the suggestion is to focus on a less strenuous activity that would generate what school is supposed to give without going through school. The prominence given to school here is positioning it as unnecessary and suggesting a better replacement for it. Here too, money that others esteem is debased so that it is no longer important. However, this perception about money, instead of making it of no value, kindles an interest in how other fantasies of perfect lives will position issues of money. Thus, issues of earning and spending money become a key issue here. Finally, the essay ends with a fantasy of a world where there will be peace and unity.

Example 4

22. <u>My Perfect Life</u>

1. *As a child, my present life seems to be okay to me, but I always dream of having a better*
2. *life, a perfect one. A perfect life, to me, a perfect is a life full of joy, freedom of speech, no*
3. *sadness, no sorrow, no overtiredness, freedom to explore, be innovative and be creative.*
4. *Below is a brief and vivid description of my perfect.*
5. *My perfect life will begin with a morning as the old saying goes "A journey of a thousand*
6. *miles begins with a step". When I wake up in the morning after a good night sleep, I will*
7. *like to see my family,* *eat breakfast, take a refreshing bath and go to school. At school, I*
8. *will learn and take zero canes throughout the day, play with my friends, eat lunch, and*

9. *when we close go home. After school, I will like to see my family, have a few chores and*
10. *after performing them, have siesta. When I wake up, I take a refreshing bath and have*
11. *classes. After classes, I will watch television from 7 p.m to 8 p.m and go to bed.*
12. *In my perfect life, I would like to have my family in it, choose for myself when we go*
13. *family shopping, have fewer chores that will not out-do me, zero or less canes when I go*
14. *to school. I will like to be given the chance to be innovative, creative and explore in my*
15. *perfect. I would like to be given the chance to express myself through speech without*
16. *anyone shutting me up. I would like to be able to help the needy and show them love. Just*
17. *like everything is sure to have problems, when a problem arises in my perfect life, I will*
18. *pray, seek advice and try to solve it. To wrap up, all I want my perfect life to be is a*
19. *happy, free and creative life. I am aware that I may not attain this perfect, but I pray that*
20. *God will help to improve my present life day by day.*

The essay in example 4 reinforces several themes identified in the preceding examples but describes other new areas of interest. The narration begins with an appreciation of the present life and it is followed by a description of what a perfect life is supposed to be, prominent of which is freedom. This is followed by issues of sleep however, here, the focus is on the quality of sleep rather than the time involved. Family is positioned as the most important human element in the ideal childhood as its presence is reiterated three times in the narrative.

Household chores are also mentioned and negotiated to some comfort level of it being fewer in the ideal childhood. The focus here is not to avoid them but to feel comfortable performing them. This attitude gives the perception that they are important in the perfect life but one has a choice when it comes to performing them.

A description of activities at school also positions the school as important in fantasy. However, the mention of corporal punishment in school in line 8 and repeating in line 13 gives it some prominence.

> *In my perfect life, I would like to have my family in it, choose for myself*
>
> *when we go family shopping, have fewer chores that will not out-do me,*
>
> *zero or less canes when I go to school. I will like to be given the chance*

to be innovative, creative and explore in my perfect. I would like to be given the chance to express myself through speech without anyone shutting me up.

In the repetition, there is a negotiation on avoiding it or reducing it at school. This repetition and negotiation make it stand out as a form of protest against its existence in school. This protest is also seen in the mention of freedom to exercise certain rights especially of speech and of decision-making. Here, there is the addition of protests to the other themes identified in the earlier examples.

After identifying the key topics, I used the MAXQDA software to help derive the subtopics from all the essays. The essays were keyed into the software as documents and the topics as broad sets. The subtopics were fed into the software as a lexical search and it identified the keywords in all the essays. What the participants wrote about each theme was brought together and analyzed based on what they had said about each theme. This interpretation brought to fore the immanent meaning and in the process, the level of communicative forms of knowledge.

In the analysis, the essays were ordered chronologically and each participant is identified by the number allocated to his or her essay. However, the nineteen research subjects from the private school are positioned between one to nineteen and those from the public school from twenty to forty-seven.

The table below shows the themes derived from each essay.

Table 2. Summary of the children's essays

Essay	Age/sex						Themes			
1	G11			Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
2	B11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
3	G11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
4	G10	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
5	G10	Sleep	Chores	Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
6	-				School	Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
7	G10	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
8	G10	Sleep		Eating		Leisure			Relationships	

#	Code	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
9	G10	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	
10	G11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities			
11	B10	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School				Relationships	
12	B10	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure		Money		
13	B10	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	
14	B11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	
15	-			Eating		Leisure			Relationships	
16	BII	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
17	G10	Sleep			School	Leisure		Money		
18	G10	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money		
19	G11	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure				
20	G12	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
21	-					Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
22	-	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
23	B12			Eating	School					
24	B			Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	
25	-	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School		Spiritual activities			
26	G-	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
27	-	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
28	G13	Sleep			School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
29	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
30	14									
31	14									
32	G	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
33										
34	-	Sleep			School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
35	G13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
36	G13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
37	-		Chores		School				Relationships	
38	B13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
39	-12				School		Spiritual activities			

40	-	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities		Relationships	
41	-12	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
42	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	
43	G12	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure				
44	12-13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	
45	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities			Protests
46	12-13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure				Protests
47	-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	

4.2. Reflecting Interpretation

It has been suggested that adults' interest in children's time use is based on the desire to control the way children spend their time mostly with the intent of protecting their interests as in the case of the UNCRC (1989) and ensuring that they achieve certain milestones in their developmental stages. However, it has also been suggested that in some societies, children are made to do tasks that adults are not interested in undertaking (Kielland & Tovo 2006). The activities that children are involved in are intimately connected to moral principles and power relationships in the society with its nucleus as the family or the home. Poverty or otherwise affects the way children spend their time so that children from different socioeconomic backgrounds have their time structured around very different activities (Vogler et al, 2009; Liebel, 2004)

In describing their perfect lives, the participants talked about a lot of activities that they will involve in. They talked about the activities from two perspectives; they describe activities that they are already involved in and based on that; they describe what they will want to be involved in their perfect lives. The latter are those they deem very important to them. Some of these activities are sleeping, eating and relating to others. Although these activities are natural, they are socially embedded so that their acts are more social than natural. Others are socially structured and imposed on children such as school and spiritual activities and the rest are personal such as leisure activities and reminiscences which are described as philosophies of life. Their fantasy is divided into broad themes with each having sub-themes. The routine activities mentioned in 4.1 above are further broadly divided into daily routine activities, leisure activities and spiritual activities

Broad themes

- DRA (daily routine activities)
- R (relationships)
- LA (leisure activities)
- SP (spiritual activities)
- Protests
- Philosophies of life

2. Sub themes

- DRA: sleeping, eating, school activities, household chores and earning and spending
- LA: physical, digital and adventure
- R: parents, sibling, other family members, friends, teachers, needy, laborers
- SP: public rituals, personal rituals, expectations from God
- P: physical punishment, inequality, social vices (stealing, gossiping, insulting)
- Philosophies of life

Diagram 2 showing the broad themes
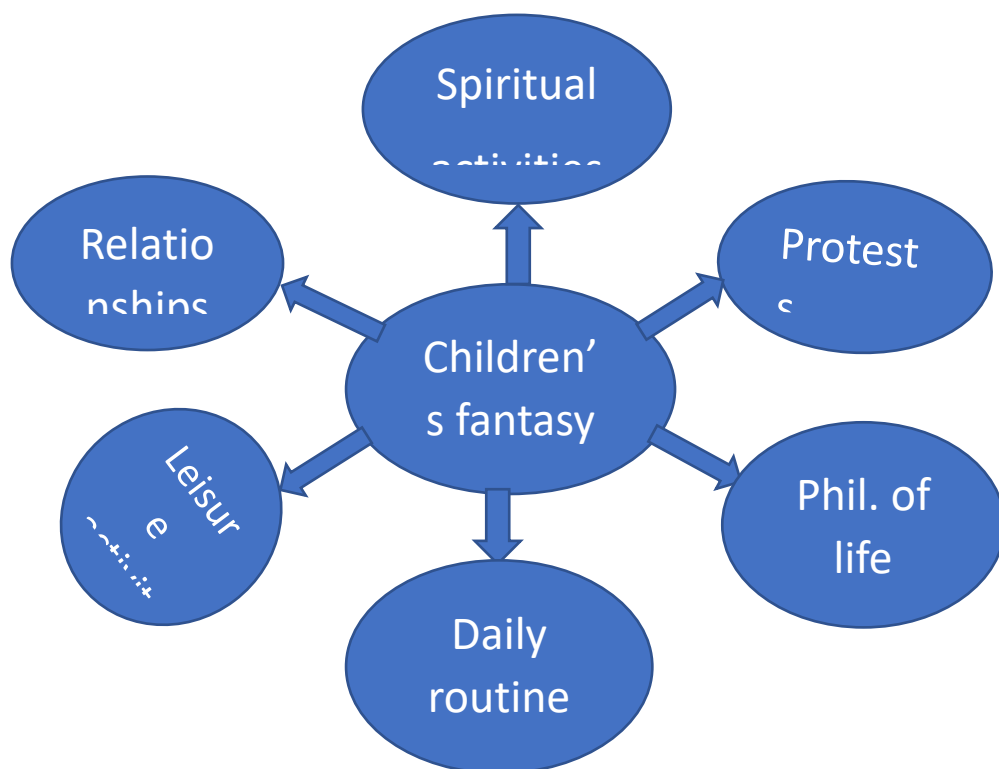
(A presentation of broad themes in children's fantasy of ideal childhood (Source: Personal collection)

The fantasy of ideal childhood encompasses six broad themes which are (i) daily routine activities with sub-themes of sleeping, household chores, eating and school activities (ii) Leisure activities which depict personal choices of what to do for pleasure. These include the sub-themes physical leisure activities, digital leisure and adventure in the form of shopping and traveling (iii) Protests which encompasses protest against physical punishment, inequality and social vices like stealing, gossiping, and insulting (iv) Relationships which involves sub-themes of relating to parents, friends, teachers, laborers and the needy and (vi) Philosophies of life.

4.2.1.   Daily routine activities: Sleeping

The stimulus for writing the essays was "what is your idea of a perfect life", "if you have the opportunity to choose the way you want to live, what will your perfect life be like", "start from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed". The stimulus makes sleep an integral part of the perfect life, hence most of the subjects start the essay with waking up in the morning. Even though the essay is about fantasy which is future-oriented, one is able to glimpse the past as well as the present life patterns in the essays. This is because they narrate several issues in connection with sleep and mostly describe their present state of sleeping before proceeding to fantasize about sleep.

Sleep is a complex theory, categorized by changes in brain activity, breathing, heart rate, and other physical and biological functions (National Sleep Foundation, 2006). It is defined as "a reversible behavioral state of perceptual disengagement from and unresponsiveness to the environment" (Carskadon & Dement, 2011; 16).

Most discourses on sleep focus on problems caused by insufficient sleep in both children and adults. The period of sleeping is essential in human life as it allows the body to revitalize after vigorous physical and mental activities during the day and thus, keeps the body and mind healthy and functioning properly (Chaput et al, 2018). This period of sleep is so important that, if not done sufficiently, the human body tends to protest in ways that affect both physical and psychological faculties of the human anatomy (Chaput et al, 2018; Chattu et al, 2018: Gerber, 2014: Orzel-Gryglewska, 2010) which manifest in a wide spectrum of morbidities.

Sleep as freedom

For children, sleep does not represent only a time of rest and revitalization but also a state of freedom in connection with, especially, decision-making related to

intergenerational relationships in the home. Although the human body will naturally indicate the need for sleep, issues of sleep such as when to sleep, where to sleep and how long to sleep are all socially constructed and in the case of children, these social norms become an imposition revealing power play where children are positioned as passive recipients. Hence, an opportunity to reconstruct these social norms even in fantasy is an opportunity to rearrange these existing structures that place children in the inferior position of being vulnerable and needing direction and protection to being active and equally able to take charge of their own lives.

The participants in this study acknowledge the need for sleep and agree mostly with the conventional duration for sleep but some have different ideas of the time to sleep, where to sleep and when to wake up. In addition, there is a focus on issues that affect sleep and how those issues would have, otherwise, been dealt with. The acknowledgment of sleep habits or patterns that conform to social norms does not reinforce adults' ideas about sleep, even as children are outside of such discourse, but rather projects children as also possessing the ability to identify what is appropriate for their growth and development in areas of sleep. To put in equilibrium the ability and power in issues of sleep, children position themselves as constructing sleep habits to conform not necessarily to existing norms but the demands of their biological needs. In this sense, children in this study project different sleep habits based especially on the time of waking.

Some of the children want to wake up as early as between 3:30 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., others want to wake up between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. others prefer to wake up between 7:00 and 7:45 a.m., 8:00 and 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 12:00 and 12:30 pm, and yet other want to wake up at 2:30 pm. Others did not state the exact time but simply want to wake up in the morning and others prefer to wake up early in the morning. Some want to sleep late and others want to wake up at whatever time they prefer. Others did not mention the time of waking up but related getting more sleep to the time school begins and some of them did not mention the time of waking up at all.

Several issues affect sleep time and children negotiate such incidences in ways that bring balance to daily life as it is supposed to be. Thus, being rational is not just an adult thing; children can be equally rational in dealing with problems that arise in their lives. This is evident in an explanation given to the choice of sleeping time which is supposed to be later than in real life.

Some things that sadden my day is the thought of waking up at 5:00. When I even wake up at 5:00, I am so tired I find myself yawning in class which to me is quite embarrassing. So I wish or in my perfect life, I want school to start at 8:00. But in mystical terms I wish the night was longer but there really is nothing you can do. When school starts at 8:00, I can get extra hours of sleep and still wake up early. Okay, I think 8:00 is too much; okay 7:30. (essay 1: girl 11years)

Logical reasoning accompanies projecting sleep as an area to portray children's freedom and ability to deal with life. This is apparent in negotiating and adjusting existing conditions to arrive at and institute a more comfortable setting. This negotiation of sleeping time, as much as it is to solve a problem, reinforces the "being in charge and knowing what to do" sentiment that children also possess. That is, the power to identify an existing problem and the ability to solve it is here connected to the individual's freedom to act. Thus, in adults' discourse on children's sleep, if children are presented as not knowing, it is because they are not given the freedom to demonstrate what they know.

Structuring children's sleep is not only to protect them but more importantly, to protect social constructs so that society would move according to adults' ideas. For instance, in social discourse on sleep, research shows that young people between 10 and 13 years need a minimum of 9 hours and a maximum of 11 hours' sleep; less than 7 hours and more than 12 hours sleep are not recommended. In children's fantasy of ideal childhood, they fantasize about an average sleep duration of 9.7hours; sleep.

I am a girl of ten years and during my perfect life, I would like to wake up early in the around 6:00am and sleep late in the evening around 8:00. (Essay 17: girl 10 years)

I am a ten-year-old boy, I would like to wake up at 8:00am when I wake up, I would like to brush my teeth and take my bath. … After I went to bed at 9:30pm. (Essay 19: girl 11years)

In their fantasy, children plan the time to wake up and the time to go to bed and the duration of their sleeping time, no matter the time they go to bed or wake up, will make them comfortable. This means that, in fantasy, after doing everything that they wish to do, children will still have enough sleep, so why the imposition of sleep habits

on them? Such impositions on children are just to protect adults' theories connecting or relating to different activities during the day. It also proves that society as we know it, is an adults' world and children are expected to conform to its ideals. Through their fantasy, children prove that although they are part of society and they can competently relate to it, they are not given the freedom available to adults.

Sleep as knowledge

Another means by which children talk about sleep is by positioning themselves as possessing knowledge about sleep and the need for it. As children have been constructed, mostly, as ignorant and needing to be tutored, talking about sleep is an opportunity to portray that they are not ignorant but are as many custodians of knowledge as adults.

> *"I want to sleep and wake up around 7:45 because sleeping makes me fit for the day". (Essay 9: girl 10 years)*

> *As young as we are, now that our body is developing well to prepare for the adult world, we need a good body and enough rest. We will all love to spend number of hours on bed resting. (Essay 28: girl 13)*

Varied research has shown connections between sleep and children's physical and cognitive development. Research shows that sleep plays a critical role in the memory function of the human brain and how much one can recall. The discourse on young people's sleep, development and physical fitness has yielded a myriad of knowledge on such issues. However, although they may not be involved in such social discourse and their influence on it is probably, non-existent, children position themselves as possessing the requisite knowledge to make critical decisions on sleep and good health. Consequently, they reveal the correlation between enough sleep and proper physiological development. Most of the time, children are degraded because of their young age and lack of experience however, in talking about sleep, they exhibit knowledge that portrays them as knowledgeable. With this knowledge, sleep is directly related to body fitness and it is seen as a necessary commodity for everything done during the day. Insufficient sleep used to be an adult problem but presently, it has become a problem among children too. With this awareness comes the knowledge of the repercussion of sleep deprivation and the subsequent desire to avoid it.

Sleep as a sense of responsibility

Everyone, irrespective of age or social status, has 24 hours within which to accomplish daily tasks. Being a responsible person, sometimes, means managing the time available to accomplish set tasks. Most often, when responsibilities are not met, one finds strategies to cope with such responsibilities to perform them. One of such strategies is to adjust sleep time to make time for other responsibilities.

> *"In my perfect life, I would like to wake up at 5:30am, so that I will go to school earlier. Some of the problems I face is that, I arrive at school around 8:15am even though I wake up at 6:00 am. I have house chores to do in the morning". (Essay 11: boy 10 years)*

Children position themselves as also possessing this sense of responsibility as they deal with sleep issues in connection with their daily routines. There is a clear indication that they take their household responsibilities seriously enough to, sometimes, adjust their sleeping time to enable them to perform their duties. This adjustment is not to reduce sleep so that they do not have enough sleep but even after this coping strategy, sleep is still sufficient. This position, reveal children as equally possessing a responsible attitude towards what they know is the right thing to do.

Sleep as conflict

There are situations where individuals' desires tend to conflict with other expectations even among adults and this is the same with children. As much as they are competent in dealing with their own lives, they also portray contradictions that project possible conflicts, especially between them and their parents. Such contradictions are even evident in child rights laws where parents or caregivers are to respect children's decisions on the one hand and on the other hand, they are to ensure their right to education which also involves making sure the child goes to school regularly. Activities in children's daily lives are mostly connected with one leading to the other. This is especially the case in sleeping and going to school.

> *We will all love to spend number of hours on bed resting. Parents may say if that is the case then go to bed early. No what about those who sleep very late because of some reasons. Imagine a child who sleep at 12 midnight and wake up at 4:30 am. How will such a child feel? How will he be? The child will feel restless and very tired every single day. **We will also choose to sleep late but this time wake up late**.*

Adolescents in general likes chatting with friends far and near. We may spend time with friends until it is late. When we have long time resting, we will grow well with healthy bodies. (Essay 28: girl 13)

Essay 28 is among those who include the school in their perfect lives but will not want to wake up early enough to be on time for school. The position here is not personal but communal and portrays this sentiment as being encountered by children in general. Sleep is seen as a period to rest which is desired and there is a mutual consensus between young people and their parents. However, the conflict arises on how or when this rest is to be achieved. Although this conflict could be a personal or internal one where the child contemplates doing what is right and what is desirable, it is placed between children and adults. The implication is that this conflict is a radical attempt to expose inequality in the intergenerational relationship between children and adults and the intrinsic desire for equality with children recognizing their position as the oppressed. Once this position is established, the next is to protest and elevate one's own ideas and in the process seek equality. Comparison between adults' and children's status to refer to in stating emphatically the source of that conflict, "***We will also choose to sleep late but this time wake up late***". The point made here is that adults sleep and wake up, irrespective of the time or reason given, at the time that they desire and children also deserve the same. Chatting with friends, which is the main reason for sleeping late, may seem an unproductive activity, but in this situation, who is to determine what is and what is not productive? Just as adults determine what is good for them, children also possess the competency to do the same with equal value.

As children talk about their ideal childhood, they reveal that their position as children does necessarily make them disadvantaged however, the tenets of society to order life activities position them in adults' world where they do not make the rules but are expected to conform. Their position on sleep shows them as protesting against the imposition of sleep habits which they are equally able to formulate given the freedom. In addition, they portray themselves as knowledgeable in issues of good sleep and the dangers of insufficient sleep. also, they can adjust, like any other adult, their sleeping time to take care of their responsibilities. Finally, project sleep as an equalizing agent where both they and adults should have the power to determine what influences their sleep habits.

4.2.2.   Daily routine activities: Domestic/household chores

Household chores have been the subject of debate over the years, especially, since the inception of the UNCRC, developing countries such as Ghana, have come under the lenses of research on the topic. Contrasting views have been shared on the topic requiring more closer look. Household chores are activities that play the dual roles of getting housework done and instilling a sense of responsibility and cooperation in children. Additionally, it brings members of a family together and thereby fosters a bond between parents and their children which can be lifelong (Li. 2016: Zolten & Long (2006). Research has also shown that children who engage in it appear to be better off health-wise (Francavilla & Lyon, 2003).

Adolescence is a very crucial transitional period in the life of humans where critical and mental developments take place. Most often, behavioral trends, such as fairness and commitment, adopted during this period tend to have positive implication on the individual's later life (Mmari et al., 2014: Zolten & Long (2006). Also, during this period and through activities like household chores, gender norms are "solidified, rejected, or transformed" (UNICEF, 2016).

In a study, Klein et al, (2009) observe that the children they worked with reported higher rate of performing household chores than they usually do. The implication is that the children are aware of the importance and the need to perform chores around the house and the sense of being responsible that accompanies it but they have an aversion to them. It is also suggested that children are aware of the need to help their parents at home, however, most often what is expected of them is usually not very clear and consistent and this impacts negatively on their participation.

Household chores are integral part of the Ghanaian society and they serve as essential components in equipping children with the skills they need for their future roles. In the typical traditional Ghanaian society, it is expected of children to take part in household chores. Such chores used to be gender specific, but with time, such divisions are merging (Abebe, 2007).

The research subjects in this study mention household chores but from different perspectives. In general, four main ideas explain the perceptions on household chores. The first is the group who are oblivious of such chores in the home although they engage in activities like eating and bathing that results in the need for, especially cleaning. For them, they do not exist, hence, they fantasize a childhood without them. The second

group acknowledges them but are silent on getting them done. The third group acknowledges them but fantasizes about having domestic assistants perform them. The final group position themselves as performing the chores. From the sample, only eleven fantasize about performing household chores in their perfect lives, which is a clear minority.

> *I will wake up in the morning to do my household chores (Essay 25: 12-13)*

> *When it is around 4:30, I will do my chores as well as sweep the compound. (Essay 46: 12-13)*

Most often, household chores are allocated by the parents who usually supervise to make sure they are done. However, in this context, there is no mention of the supervising adult but just the professing to do them. This, means children sometimes internalize such responsibilities, just like adults, and they do not need to be told what they are supposed to do. This way, they view themselves with the maturity with which adults understand their responsibilities.

For others, it is not about getting all chores done but having just a few so that they can be completed.

> *After school, I will like to see my family, have a few chores and after performing them, have siesta. (Essay 22: 12-13)*

> *I will work but not too much. I will like to work for about one hour. (Essay 4: Girl 10)*

Sometimes, it is the number of chores to be done that discourages one from attempting to start working on them. This context does not provide the satisfaction that one gets for getting a job done successfully.

This, also implies that an aversion for household chores could result from having too many of them. Children usually find themselves performing most of the chores in the house, and since such chores are cyclical, one is not able to completely get them done. Thus, fantasizing about fewer chores is not being lazy; it is about being able to get them done.

In situations where children have too much household chores to do, they tend to react by creating an aversion for them, and this makes them try to avoid them. This is the case in;

> *I wake up feeling tired, go the kitchen … whoa! The dishes are washed. I put water on the fire for the rest of the family before other chores but … whoa, again it's all done … My last stop is to dump the rubbish; (I hate this particular job sooooo much) but looks like today my angel decided to go human and visit me. No rubbish, (Essay 35: girl 13)*

> *When I don't wake up early, I want my mother to sweep for me and also wash my bowls and everything. Before I will come to school, I have to bath my younger sibling, go to the rubbish dump after sweeping, wash bowls, sweeping rooms and halls. All this plenty work will clear off if I want to live my perfect life. (Essay 37: 12-13)*

In these cases, it is obvious, that the children are not lazy, but they have too much to do. Hence, in spite of the need to perform simple chores like cleaning and washing, they fantasize a childhood in which they will not perform them.

There are situations where children are aware of the need to perform household chore but do not want to be the one to perform them.

> *When I wake up in the morning, brush my teeth our servant will sweep (Essay 38: Boy 13)*

> *I wish I would be woken up by my servants at 8: O'clock am and I will command them to perform their various activities. (Essay 42: 12-13)*

Not performing household chores does not mean they will not be there, even in fantasy. Hence, just as in situations where adults are unable to perform such chores, they hire help to take care of them, children also fantasize about servants performing them. This positions children as not necessarily as running away from their responsibilities but rather as able to strategize in every situation to find solution just like adults do.

On gender disparities in performing household chores, it is noted that only one boy mentions chores in his essay and that is to explain why he goes to school late.

Some of the problems I face is that, I arrive at school around 8:15am even though I wake up at 6:00 am. **I have house chores to do in the morning**. *(Essay 11: boy 10)*

This shows that girls are more inclined to perform household chores than boys; although there could be other explanations, it is more of cultural and social construct that girls are supposed to perform those chores just as women are considered home-makers than men.

The place of household chores in the participants ideal childhood means that they understand that household chores are important and position themselves as getting them done. owever majority of children fantasize a childhood without household chores. This may stem from issues such as putting too much pressure on them or asking too much of them. It is possible, that they do not understand the need to perform them.

4.2.3.   Daily routine activities: Eating

Consumption of a balanced diet with access to wide-ranging dietary items coupled with the establishment of healthy eating habits, promotes young people's health, growth, and intellectual development throughout their lifetime. When young people eat healthily, there is a considerable reduction in cases of sicknesses and diseases and premature death. According to the World Health Organization (2016), a lot of ill-health among young people has been traced to inappropriate food consumption and poor eating habits.

Consequently, eating is very important to the participants in this study, and compared to the other activities, it is rated the highest among children. The WHO has postulated that young people between 10- and 14-years old fall within the developmental stage where there is the need and demand for higher nutritional value since it is within this phase that nutrition plays an essential role in outlining favorable growth and development conditions (Silva et al 2014).

However, in this study, the prime interest is in the social embedding of eating that young people allude to in their imagined perfect childhood. Hence, the social positioning of food here is constituted by young people themselves in a form of youth culture that is normative. The understanding of food in this context is based on three main concepts; when to eat and why, what to eat and why, and where to eat and why?

In focusing on eating habits from these three perspectives, young people position food and eating as very important in their ideal childhood.

When to eat and why

An indication of the key status of food and eating is perceived in deliberately planning meals and taking time to choose what is supposed to be the best or favorite meals, not only on the personal level but more importantly, on the social level.

> *On the dinning table, according to plans I would like my breakfast to be fruit salad and toasted bread with a mug of coffee. ... after that I would like to go to the kitchen and take my lunch, my lunch would be banku with grilled tilapia and pepper with onions and chicken on the dining table and my desert would be pastries like cake, meat pie etc with shampaign or fruit juice like donsimon, fruitelle etc. ... In the evening, my supper would be fried rice with chicken and vegetables with a little stew and take a mug of hot milk (Essay 9: girl 10 years)*

> *I would drink tea with toasted bread and salad in between. After this I would drink an orange juice. ... I would order for pizza and hot dog. ... I would eat my favourite meal banku with okro stew. I would eat full roasted chicken. ... I would eat nutritious food. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)*

The three key meals in a day (breakfast, lunch, and supper) are well represented and they possess both health and social status connotations. With health, regular good quality meals are associated with a lot of benefits which include high-level energy for both physical and cognitive activities as well as enhanced developmental processes. It is perceived that young people choose their meals with the knowledge that they need regular consumption of food for their growth and development. On the other hand, having three square meals is associated with the affluent in society. According to the 2020 report on The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, Africa has the most food insecurity worldwide and children are the worst hit. Hence, most people face serious problems with food affordability, and thus, having three square meals with accompanying dessert and snacks, as fantasized by these young people, positions them as part of the privileged in the society.

What to eat and why

The choice of what to eat has more to do with both the social status of the food and the health benefits but this position tends to tilt more to the former than the latter. This means that young people choose their foods with health in mind but what people think about the food is more important to them, hence, they refer to exotic foods more than local (healthy) foods as evidenced in;

> *In order to be healthy, I have to eat nutritious food (Essay 20: girl 12-13 years)*

> *I would like to eat a delicious, but balanced diet, and fruits such as mango, apple and oranges (Essay 11: boy 10 years)*

> *I would take fruit salad because it gives me more strength and vitamins. After take a nice and delicious breakfast (Essay 9: girl 10 years)*

From the quotes above, it is obvious that health, to some extent, impacts children's choice of food as they show awareness of the need for healthy foods. Fruits represent an important component in their choice of food, especially, breakfast. This is because they are aware that fruits are good sources of nutrients and vitamins. However, there is another touch to the choice of food which is to eat "rich" foods.

> *I will prepare my breakfast in a rich way but not sugar with water and bread. (Essay 20: girl 12 years)*

> *I will like to eat things like Fried rice, rice and sausage stew, pizza, gizzard and Sushi (Essay 19: girl 11 years)*

The idea here is twofold; "rich" as in the food being rich in nutrients or "rich" in the sense of the food being exotic and expensive. In both cases, the idea is to portray themselves as affluent and able to afford whatever they want to eat especially, those foods that are considered expensive.

Research shows that the early adolescent stage (10-14 years) is a period that is characterized by high nutritional demands.

> *I like eating breakfast but I wish there was more of it in my perfect life. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

> *After the bath, I will eat milo, hamburgers, sandwich, pizza, pancake, kebab, cupcakes, cakes, rokies, meatpie, polo, biscuits, spiced fried egg,*

coke, sprite, Fanta, 7up, bread with condensed milk and wele, spiced
fried ripe plantain. (Essay 2: boy 11 years)

This is evident in young people's fantasy of eating more than in real life. the idea here is to eat as much as they desire. However, inappropriate eating habits which can be harmful physically and psychologically to the well-being of the individual are usually developed from childhood just as healthy eating habits in childhood can also extend to adulthood.

The position on what to eat is made clear by the fact that, although there is a local equivalent of healthy foods, there is a preference for the foreign ones. Exotic foods like pizza and sushi are not very common to the average Ghanaian as they are very expensive, however, they are positioned as status foods, especially, on social media. This gives the view of being wealthy if one could afford them and obviously, it is the rich who can afford such preferences. Hence, the choice of what to eat is based more on socioeconomic status than on other issues. Thus, those who include such foods in their fantasy, did so to show they belong to a higher social class or have been seen as "cool".

Where to eat

For most people, eating outside the home represents higher socioeconomic status and some popular restaurants are positioned as "cool" by popular youth culture. Most children, thus, fantasize about eating outside the home; mostly in restaurants and shopping malls.

After West hills mall, I will go to Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)
"Adabraka" Branch to buy: Fried Chicken with Potato Chips, Fried-
Rice with Salad and shawarma, after K.F.C, I would go to "Papaye" to
buy: Soft drinks and hamburgers. (Essay 12: boy 10 years)

Then I will go to a Chinese restaurant and order four pizza, sushi. (Essay
4: girl 10 years) ... after that go to Accra mall, by some pizza, eat some
there, and bring some home (Essay 9: girl 10 years)

Fast foods, most of which are not Ghanaian local dishes, are very prominent in the children's fantasy about eating and these can be bought from equally "prestigious" restaurants and fast-food joints. Association with such places tends to make those who visit or eat there more respected, rich, and "cool" in the eyes of, especially, their peers.

On the whole, specific foods were mentioned one hundred and eight times in all the essays; twenty-nine were Ghanaian local foods and seventy-nine were "foreign" foods. Some of the Ghanaian dishes are banku and grilled tilapia with hot pepper sauce, fufu and ground-nut soup, fried plantain, and the "foreign" foods include pizza, sushi, hamburgers, sandwiches, salads, Kentucky fried chicken (KFC), potato chips and shawarma. This means that fast foods and "foreign" dishes are very important to them. Their preference for these foods clearly shows the influence of social media advertisements for such foods and the popular youth culture associated with them.

Children influence family purchasing to a great extent and in addition to that, they also buy a lot of things. Hence, there has been a deliberate attempt to induce them to buy by attaching a certain prestige to some of these things. Unfortunately, children are so gullible that they fall for these deceptions. For instance, KFC is the coolest food to eat, and consuming it puts one on top and among the favorites. As far as children are concerned, being "cool" is a necessity. Despite their preference for "prestigious" foods, the children also fantasize about eating not only delicious foods but also nutritious foods. In as much as children will fall for the deception of advertisements and marketers to consume junk foods, they also envisage healthy eating in their imagined lives. This implies that they are aware of bad eating habits and they would go for good eating habits in their perfect lives.

An interesting observation in the fantasized eating habits of the participants is that those in the lower-middle-class show the most preference for "exotic foods" and eating outside the home. Most of those in the working-class are satisfied with just eating or eating their favorite foods. In all, as young people imagine their eating habits in an ideal childhood, they position themselves as eating foods that are healthy but more importantly, as engaging in eating habits that will portray them as wealthy and socially popular.

4.2.4.   Daily routine activities: School Activities

The children in this study are pupils in classes 5 and Junior High School (JHS)1 and 2 in the Ghanaian Basic School System. They have spent between five and eight years in school already (pre-school years not included) and they have between one and four more years ahead of them to complete the Basic School. Hence, they have fair ideas of what school is about and they can form opinions about school and learning at school.

When talking about sleep, the commencement of daily school activities highly impacted the children's opinion. Formal school activities usually begin from 8:00 in the morning, however, a lot takes place between arrival at school and settling down for classwork as explained in *2.4*. Each child is expected to take part in all the school activities. It is therefore deemed appropriate that they report to school latest by 7:00 a.m.

In imagining their perfect life, the children display a lot of ambivalence about school. Although most of them include school in their perfect life, quite a number of them fantasize about an ideal childhood without school. Those who mentioned school in their essays display different sentiments about school. Comparing gender positions in school, more girls than boys include the school in their perfect lives. This shows that boys show more negative attitudes toward school than girls and this is consistent with the literature on children's gender attitudes towards school (Francis, 1992). Those who showed a positive attitude to school gave reasons like,

> *When I am done, I plan to go to School. I want to go to school because I want to finish education and get a job to live a Perfect Life. (Essay 17: girl 10 years)*
>
> *I will work hard so that I pass my examination. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)*
>
> *So at school, I like to study because I want to be a legend in the future. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

School and successful academic work is connected to great life achievements and admiration from society which are very desirable to the children. In most Ghanaian schools, performance in examinations is made public and those who do well win the respect and admiration of peers, teachers, parents and those who hear about their exploits. This is one of the recognitions that makes children want to go to school and excel in their perfect lives. Here, school means an opportunity to stand out, excel or show promises of a great future.

Even though they fantasize about going to school in their perfect lives, they have a fantasy about what they want school to be like. In this sense, time of going to school, subjects to be taught in school, and how teaching should be done in general are very important to the children.

Time of reporting at school impact highly on school children as it determines the time of waking up and by extension, sleeping time, time spent on household chores and time spent on personal preparations, and finally time spent making the "journey" to school. All these activities demand a lot of energy and in the end, one gets to school already tired. Hence going to school is not the problem, but these preliminary activities tend to sap the fun out of school.

> *In my perfect life, I would like to wake up at 5:30am, so that I will go to school earlier. (Essay 11: boy 10 years)*

> *Some things that sadden my day is the thought of waking up at 5:00. When I even wake up at 5:00, I am so tired I find myself yawning in class which to me is quite embarrassing. So I wish or in my perfect life, I want school to start at 8:00. But in mystical terms I wish the night was longer but there really is nothing you can do. When school starts at 8:00, I can get extra hours of sleep and still wake up early. Okay, I think 8:00 is too much; okay 7:30. (essay 1: girl 11 years)*

The children are aware of the need to go to school early, but they are also aware of the effect of less sleep on their academic work. Since punctuality is a virtue that they intend to keep in their ideal life, they decide on measures to keep them punctual and still have enough sleep. That is, they will want school to begin later than the usual time. Research shows that delay in the time school begins (in the morning) has the potential to increase adolescent sleep which in turn will improve their mood, behavior, and academic performance in general (Minges & Redeker, 2016: Chang et al, 2017: Illingworth et al, 2018). Hence, the children's wish for school to start a little later than usual is consistent with existing literature on the adolescent need for more sleep and its importance on their academic work.

School curricula are designed for children's education, most often with the end of preparing them for their future roles in society. At the Basic School level, all subjects are compulsory for all children and they are expected to write and pass examinations at the end of each term. These subjects have nothing to do with learners' preferences or interests and most often, they sit through lessons without really understanding the need to study them. This is the case for the participants in this study.

> *I want school to be like a school with lessons like Dance, music etc. I want the school to become like a Ballet school. (Essay 39: 12 years)*

Mainly in Ghana, I wish we don't learn all subjects in school but during our infancy stages our guardians will study us and know the subject we like best so that we will be taught or train in that same tend like how this is done in the American countries. (Essay 40: 12-13 years)

And in school music, history Dance, English and P.E. is what we will learn every day. (Essay 43: 12-13 years)

In my perfect life, at school, I would love to have a swimming pool and learn how to swim. It will make school more interesting and I have read that swimming benefits us a lot. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

There is a clear disconnect between what they do at school and what they are interested in. hence, they do not see the need to study some of the things they study at school as indicated above.

Children feel forced to learn subjects that they do not find relevant to their interests and their future. On the other hand, subjects that they find interesting are not part of the school curriculum. This shows that school, as an educational institution, although, is very important to the children, they do not agree with everything that makes up the school curriculum. It is their fantasy that the school system and curriculum would change to accommodate more of what they find interesting than what adults deemed necessary. In this case, school means the imposition of adults' ideas on children who find themselves in the subordinate position of strict compliance.

Another issue in school that is key is the time of the day that certain subjects are taught.

In the afternoon lesson hour, when mathematics is being taught people don't understand so different subject like P.E should be taught. (Essay 29: 12-13 years)

What this means is that children are aware of the effect that the time of the day that subjects are taught on their ability to learn some subjects. This shows that disposition to learning based on the time of the day can affect learners' performance, especially in educational institutions. Through this fantasy, children are indicating that they can maximize their productivity at school.

The teacher factor in the teaching-learning process is very important not only to children but to all stakeholders in the children's education. A lot of research has focused

on the conduct of teachers and how it impacts children's academic performance and most often, the results show that teachers' attitude strongly influences children's experiences at school and their ability to learn. The explanation young people give for their reliance on a good teacher's attitude is evident in;

> *When I get to school, teachers should teach me in such a way I will understand and show me some love when teaching, eg If I see a teacher likes me, I will learn hard in his or her subject (essay20: gir12 years l)*

> *When I go to school, I want the teacher to crack some jokes before teaching. (Essay 44: 12-13 years)*

> *In my perfect life, I will not wish to have a teacher who likes insulting, canning and doing things which is boring. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)*

The need for a quality learner-teacher relationship in the bid to improve learning abilities and academic performance among children cannot be overemphasized. The perception is that, when a teacher who is caring, encouraging, interesting, and friendly is placed in a learning environment, learners are apt to achieve good results. In addition, varying the teaching-learning strategies and environment, as in out-of-school learning and extracurricular activities, impacts positively learners. Research shows that when schools position good teacher-learner relationships coupled with a conducive learning atmosphere and interesting teaching methods as marks of better academic achievement for learners, they, in turn, will work harder, enjoy coming to school and be emotionally more willing to learn (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2008). By this, the position of the teacher in the education process is given recognition and although children may not have a voice in such matters, they position themselves as knowledgeable and possess relevant perceptions.

Ghanaian children are expected to clean their school environment and their classrooms each morning before settling down for each day's school activities. To make sure that each child takes part in the clean-up exercise, the school compound is divided into sections and plots and allocated to groups of children. A duty schedule is prepared for the cleaning of the classrooms and every class member's name is put on it.

Learners, tidying up their learning environment has been given thumbs up for several reasons. It performs the dual task of continually having a clean learning environment and instilling in young people a sense of responsibility which is a lifelong

ethic. Additionally, young people tend to be less messy if they know that they are responsible for cleaning up the mess (Cox, 2020; Orti, 2019). Mostly, young people are aware of the effects of a dirty environment on their academic performance and the expectation is that they will clean up naturally. The young people here indicate clearly that tidying up their school is important. However, compared to cleanliness in general, it is observed that their focus is more on rewards and avoiding punishments as there is a clear preference for clean-up exercises at school.

> *I have to go to school early so to do my duties. … At school everyone does their chores and duties perfectly, no lazing around (Essay 35: girl 13 years)*

> *In the morning I will tell my servant to sweep the compound so I will come to school early to work in the school and sweep my class. (Essay 21: 12-13 years)*

Essay 33 (in household chores) fantasizes about all her house chores being done miraculously but demands school clean-ups be done to perfection. Similarly, Essay 21 prefers servants perform household chores so that she will come to school early to clean up her classroom. What accounts for the different attitudes towards similar chores but in different environments (home and school)? It could be argued that two reasons could account for this disparity.

Usually, when part of the school compound is not tidy, the group responsible for cleaning that place is punished. This may be one reason why there is a preference for performing chores at school over those in the home as indicated by Essays 21 and 35. Also, marks are given to each group daily, according to how well they perform their cleaning duties and at the end of the week, the marks are collated and the group with the highest mark is adjudged the best group. Hence two ideas come to play in the children's views about clean-up exercises in school; one is to avoid the embarrassment of being punished for being irresponsible and the second is the excitement of being publicly declared the best and most responsible group.

In a possible absence of rewards and punishments for clean-up exercises, there is a recognition of the need to clean up the school environment, however, the suggestion is that laborers (adults) perform it.

I wish when I go to school the compound work will be done already so that when we come, we can be in class and learn ahead of the teacher's teachings. (Essay 40: 12-13 years)

I would also like school that school would be fun. Like labourers would sweep our plots for us (Essay 36: girl 13 years)

Thus, it could be concluded that children associate tidying up with rewards and punishment and that is why they prefer to engage in it at school where they could easily get rewards or avoid punishment on that account. The implication here is that work, rewards, and punishment are intertwined and young people negotiate such activities to their advantage. It is therefore possible that the association between these three elements has blurred the desire for and the need to personally take up such responsibilities.

Globally, countries are encouraging young people to take part in tidying up their school environment for reasons such as inculcating in them a sense of being responsible for their environment and helping create and maintain clean and healthy surroundings. Also, a clean school environment impacts positively on children's clean lifestyle behavior (Harahap, 2018). Teachers are, thus, encouraged to make their students responsible for the majority of the cleaning responsibilities in the school environment (Cox, 2020; Orti, 2019). It is equally important the children are encouraged to undertake such activities as a kind of their civic responsibilities which will make them patriotic and good citizens. From such a perspective, they will have an intrinsic or natural desire to perform such tasks and not attempt to overlook them.

Alternative to school

Even though a majority of the participants include the school in their fantasy, others did not. Some give reasons why school is not part of their perfect lives.

I wish there was no school. I like to go anywhere but I don't like going to school. … If I grew up, I will marry my husband and give birth to two children. I will have my own company. (Essay 10: Girl 11 years)

But just think of a time where you don't need to work, you just stay at home and plant some food crops for them to grow and process it to eat. Additionally, if we don't need to work hard before we can feed ourselves or family, then there is no need for us to go to school. The point I am

making is that, we go to school starting from creche, nursery, Junior High School (JHS), Senior High School (SHS). The University is even not left out. So after all this learning process, you can become maybe a government worker in future to get money. So if we do not need to go work very hard to get money, then we don't need to go to school. (Essay 23: Boy 12 years)

For essay 10, school is not part of her perfect life, however, she intends to set up her own company in the future. This is rather contradictory because to set up a company of any type, one needs a certain level of education or people with education.

Essay 23 gives a very idyllic and simplistic view of life that does not need formal education. Here, formal education is described as very hard work and its main purpose is to get money to earn a living. Therefore, farming is suggested as an alternative to formal education. The idea is to grow what one eats. I use the term "formal education" because to engage in farming, one needs to be educated on some farming strategies in order to get constant and high yields.

The school is positioned as a structured formal institution with a regular curriculum that must be followed to succeed. Although school is society's way of educating young people and getting them equipped for the future, most often, young people do not entirely agree with the ways that school is run. The school of their perfect life is a place where they meet friends, have good relationships with teachers, and in general, have fun. Their fantasy of perfect life is without the regular strident school system but with the education of another sort, probably, informal or non-formal education.

An interesting observation about the children's inclusion of school in their fantasy is that of the twelve who did not include the school in their perfect lives, eleven come from the lower middle-class background and only one comes from a working-class background. From their essays, it seems that the "rich" children are less enthused with the school as compared to their less privileged colleagues.

4.2.5.   Daily routine activities: Earning and spending money (shopping)

Money is an essential commodity that young people are very particular about. The idea of having money and spending it in any way one wishes gives a very nice feeling of freedom and autonomy, especially for young people. The participants in this

study are no exception. Having money and spending it freely is very important to them. However, earning money and spending it are two very different activities and they talked more about the latter than the former. Out of the 47, only two talked about earning money and only one of the two explains how she will earn the money.

> *So I also would really like to earn money and spend it in any way that I please. In my perfect life my parents will give allowance 50GHC every week*. . *In my perfect life a trip to Dubai every year will just be a breeze. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

> *I will go to work in the day. I will be a famous singer and dancer working for Nickolodeon and at night I will be an inventor and bringing lots of gadgets that don't exist unless I make them and I'll also be an actor in the afternoon.* **I will get paid 205% of what an average person gets every month. The only thing different is that I'll get paid that amount in a day. … Then on Wednesday, I will send money to my mother and I will buy six cars that are being sold in Korea**. *Then I would send two cars to my caretaker when my mother not around. (Essay 3: girl 11 years)*

Essay 1 gives the impression that earning money is very important with the resulting reward of getting satisfaction from spending it in the way she pleases. However, the most probable means of earning money is getting it from her parents. This means that, although children have ideas of their own, they understand their dependency. They also understand that money, and for that, financially being capable, gives one the freedom to do what one wants. Hence, as indicated in the quotes, when they earn their own money, they can spend it in any way that they wish.

Essay 3 is more specific about how to earn a lot of money. One, as an inventor or manufacturer and secondly as an actor. This means that children are aware that industry and entertainment bring lots of money, hence, the wish to be associated with those areas. In spending money, though, the focus here, is more on spending on family, specifically on her mother and caregiver. This means they are very important to her.

Shopping and spending money on especially material things are so important to the children that most of them perceive it as very key in their ideal childhood. They imagine themselves shopping for all kinds of things ranging from the latest cars to

technological gadgets to fashionable foods. They position themselves as spending a lot of money.

> *I will go to the Melcom I buy dresses, shoes, ice cream, drinks and biscuits. (Essay 10 girl 11 years)*

> *I will buy a 90 inch curved Flatscreen tv with Play station one (1), two (2), three (3) and four (4) (essay 12 boy 10 years)*

> *After I come from school I want to Pick a car and go to the "West Hills Mall". When I arrive, I Plan to buy nice dresses, books, pens, Story books, Shoes and other items needed for school. (Essay 17 girl 10 years)*

> *I will go to West hills mall and shop then after shoping. I will order video games, phone watch, Amazan fire tablet and Liverpool football kits and bag (Essay 12 Boy 10 years)*

The children's interest in shopping and spending money is multi-dimensional. They are interested in buying both personal wants and things that could be used by the whole family. Some are specific with things they will shop for such as in;

> *Before I forget, I will like to visit my uncle in his mansion, buy girly stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iPhone, e.t.c), (Essay 4 girl 10 years)*

> *In my very beautiful perfect life, I will shop twice a year and when I go to the shopping mall, I will buy these things, dresses, shoes, hand sanitizers, bags, lipstick, story books, pens, pencils, rulers, panties, braziers, underwear, verse, socks and sweets like biscuits, tofees and go to the cinema to watch an interesting movie. (Essay 7 Girl 10 years),*

Others are more interested in the destination for the shopping.

> *I will have some shopping in two shopping malls in England. I will go to five shopping malls in New York (Essay12 boy 10 years)*

> *During vacation, I would love to go to Dubai or shop online for clothes and makeup (Essay 1 girl11 years)*

Others too are just interested in the act of shopping,

> *on Thursday; We will go and shop at the market (essay 38 Boy 13)*

In my perfect life, I would like to have my family in it, choose for myself when we go family shopping (Essay 22 12-13 years)

Shopping is therefore seen as an activity that involves picking what one wants and not necessarily what is needed. In addition, the term "shopping" is invested with a kind of class or prestige connotation which makes it a fashionable activity. Hence, in going shopping, the children position themselves as doing what is considered "cool", especially among their friends. Also, by the act of shopping in the ideal childhood, children position themselves as wealthy, independent, and capable of taking decisions on what they want.

Gender issues in shopping

Fifteen mentions were made of shopping; eight girls, five boys, and two did not indicate their sex. The things that the girls would shop for are particularly "girly' things such as,

*Before I forget, I will like to visit my uncle in his mansion, buy **girly stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iPhone**, e.t.c), (Essay 4: girl 10 years)*

*In my very beautiful perfect life, I will shop twice a year and when I go to the shopping mall, I will buy these things, **dresses, shoes, hand sanitizers, bags, lipstick, story books, pens, pencils, rulers, panties, braziers, underwear, verse, socks and sweets like biscuits, tofees** and go to the cinema to watch an interesting movie. (Essay 7 girl 10 years)*

From the above, it could be realized that girls are more interested in items that pertain to their personal use. However, the boys would not shop for such personal things.

*I will buy a **90 inch curved Flatscreen tv with Play station one (1), two (2), three (3) and four (4)** (Essay 12 boy 10 years)*

*At 9:30, my parent said we should go to West Hills Mall. When we got to West Hills Mall, we entered and we bought **play station five, DSTV, Skate board, skating shoes, school bags, travelling bags, tablets, laptops, computers**, pizzas and leather belts. (Essay13 boy 10 years)*

*I will go to West hills mall and shop then after shoping. I will order **video games, phone watch, Amazan fire tablet and Liverpool football kits and bag** (Essay 12 boy 10 years)*

Rather they would shop mostly for electrical/technological gadgets and sporting items some of which are for family use. This shows a clear disparity in gender preference in shopping and this is consistent with existing literature (Craik, 2009: Dholakia, 1999: McGrath, & Otnes, 2001: Kuruvilla et al, 2009: Bakewell, & Mitchell, 2004).

Earning and spending money could also be a means by which children express power and the freedom that comes with having lots of money. Their fantasized shopping spree indicates that they have the power to get whatever they want, even when they do not need those things. The idea here is not to buy what they need but just to position themselves as capable and this position comes with having money. Thus, children also understand that money is power.

Children have long been known to "partner" marketers in determining what comes on the markets. This is seen in their interest in and influence on what, especially, the family purchases. However, the rate at which children and young people buy and influence buying has increased tremendously. Many factors account for this. The children in this study see shopping, not as a necessity but mostly as a recreation. In other words, they will spend money shopping because they enjoy it and not necessarily because they need those things. This has been blamed on advertisement and marketing strategies that mostly target children.

4.2.6. Leisure activities

Research has established the fact that leisure activities are very important to psychological well-being and physical health of, especially, adolescents (Caldwell, 2005) as well as to the social development (Caldwell & Witt 2011: Auhuber et al, 2019). Leisure is understood as activities that are not work and that one enjoys and freely chooses to pursue during one's free time (Holder et al, 2009: Kleiber, 1999). In adolescence, young people begin to develop a sense of autonomy which sees them wanting to do things their own way. At this stage, what parents may prescribe as "family leisure activities may no longer be interesting to adolescents who will want to choose their activities for leisure and recreation. (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). Hence freedom to choose their leisure activities becomes an essential element in helping them to internalize social norms and in the long run help them to socialize successfully (Haggard & Williams, 1992). Therefore, adolescents' leisure activities are different from their academic activities since the former involves a certain level of freedom and

they use those activities to develop healthy relationships with their peers (Caldwell & Faulk, 2013). However, key factors that affect adolescents' choice of leisure activities are mostly outside of the adolescents themselves, (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015).

Leisure activities are so important to the participants in this study that it is equaled only to eating. The young people here, in their imagined ideal childhood, position themselves as taking part in a lot of recreational activities and some creative work. From the data, it is observed that the leisure activities that children fantasize about could be classified into 3 broad areas; (i) physical leisure (ii) digital leisure, and (iii) adventure. However, leisure activities that adolescents choose are influenced by several factors which depend more on adults than the adolescents themselves. Structural facilities, finances, and the attitude of socializing agents modify the adolescents' choice of leisure activities, (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). The choice of leisure activities is therefore limited to those that are easily accessible.

Physical leisure

Physical activities here encompass outdoor activities like ball games, biking, and swimming and indoor activities associated with music like singing and dancing, and others are reading and writing. Children show interest in ball games for leisure, irrespective of gender and they position these activities as important both for physical and emotional wellbeing and for socialization, especially with peers and their celebrity figures. However, with specificity, more boys show interest in football as a leisure activity as evident in;

> *Playing football and other games makes me happy. (Essay 24: boy 12-13 years)*
>
> *I will go to my best friend to play football. (Essay 14 boy 11 years)*
>
> *I will go to Anfield to meet my favourite team Liverpool FC and my favourite footballer Mohammed Salah then I will train with them (Essay 12 boy 10-11 years)*
>
> *In my perfect life, I will visit the netball court at least two times in a week. (Essay 7 girl 10-11 years)*

whereas girls focus on netball as a ball game for leisure. Additionally, boys indicate engaging with others (friends and soccer celebrities) whereas girls did not mention engaging with others. The boys' engagement with others, probably, stems from

easy accessibility to places where they can play football and the fact that playing football is a very common pastime in Ghana. For instance, in Ghana, young people can play football almost anywhere. Hence, it is easy for them to decide on playing football as a form of leisure activity rather than other activities that require special spaces and abilities. On the other hand, netball facilities are not very common and even those available are under the auspices of schools and are accessible only when children are in school. Hence, it is possible that not many girls are interested in netball. The number of mentions of ball games, judging from gender representations, indicates that in Ghana, boys show more interest in them than girls. There is also an indication that such activities improve emotional well-being as indicated by Essay 24 and give opportunities to socialize with others as shown by Essays 11 and 12.

Children also show interest in activities that involve bouncing which is not very common but could be found mostly at children's parks in the big cities and occasionally at big shopping malls.

> So, when my mother agrees, **I run fast and jump on the bouncy castle**. So when I was tired I came to my mother and take some money to buy some toffees ice cream. (Essay 14: boy 11 years)

> I will like to do Olympic game like: bouncing castle and trampoline to my house. I will like to bounce and bounce on till it is 4:0pm in evening. (Essay 18: girl 10 years)

On, especially, national holidays and whole community celebrations like festivals, vendors who possess the material for such games, engage children at a fee. The most common view of a trampoline is in movies and sporting activities aired on T.V. such as the Olympic games. This indicates that some children's fantasies are inspired by social media and make them Western in nature. This is very evident in swimming as a leisure activity among Ghanaian young adolescents.

> In my perfect life, at school, I would love to have a swimming pool and learn how to swim. It will make school more interesting and I have read that swimming benefits us a lot. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

> Later I will go for swimming classes. (Essay 41: 12 years)

> I then learn after that I entertain myself in the swiming pool. (Essay 47: 13 years)

Although Winneba is a coastal town, few parents allow their children to go and play at the beach for fear of drowning (which is common among young people). The most common places where one can find swimming pools are at hotels and guest houses and these may be difficult to have access to.

Swimming as a leisure activity is also connected to other benefits apart from just for pleasure. Although the other benefits are not specified, they could be connected to healthy living. Some of the children in this study have access to digital satellite T.V. (DSTV) and which gives access to foreign programs and by this, they have come into contact with a lot of Western ideas of leisure activities that they fantasize about engaging in. However, spending time at the beach with friends, especially on public holidays, is considered a recreation as it is possible to engage in other forms of leisure activities there.

And also, I will want to go to the beach every Saturday of every week (Essay 5: girl 10 years)

I would eat nutritious food and bath at the beach. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)

Then will take my mother to the beach and we will have some in, then I'll take her back. (Essay 3: girl 11 years)

On Saturday, I will go to the beach to enjoy myself. (Essay 21: 12-13 years)

In their fantasy, children position themselves as having fun at the beach. In contrast to the occasional visits to the beach on holidays, having fun at the beach regularly is preferred, which makes it very important to the children. However, it is to be done on Saturdays, when there is no school. This means children understand both the need for productive work at school and the need for leisure, play, and recreation.

Biking is another activity that is mentioned in the children's fantasy. Although a minority activity in the essays, it is a popular activity among young adolescents in Ghana.

Then I would have machines I invented to help me do my daily activities and after that I would ride my foldable bike fifty kilometers without getting tired. Then I would ride back to my mansion by the time I come

back, my bathtub would be full of water, which is warm. (Essay 3: girl 11 years)

Most parents are not able to afford personal bicycles for their wards, however, it is possible to have access to one by hiring it. It is a popular means of transportation but most often children hire bikes mostly for the pleasure of riding. Biking as fantasized is purely for the fun of riding although the fantasy is to ride it for 50 kilometers which is a long distance.

For physical leisure, children show a lot of interest in indoor activities like singing, dancing, drawing, and creativity in general.

*When I want to stay happy, I will entertain myself with activities like **singing, dancing, drawing and creating things** from my own thinking. (Essay 20 girl 11 years)*

I like singing so I would love to be an artist but not only that I want to be like my mum and grandmother, a jack of all trades, more like a Jill of all trades. So I would like Kwame Eugene to feature me in a song. That will help me pursue my music career. I would love him to mentor me in singing. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

And a room for dancing when my friends visit; that room will have sneakers and a big TV with free Wi-Fi. Some TVs are connected to YouTube, so that is how mine will be like, so we can search for latest dance moves. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

These are undertaken for pleasure but sometimes with hopes of making a career out of them as in the case of singing. Children acknowledge that these activities make them happy which is important for them as evident is "*When I want to stay happy*". Children most often want to be happy because being happy provides a rich background for them to thrive emotionally and have better total development. The importance of such activities to them is seen in the allocation of one whole room just for singing and dancing.

Reading is one of the commonest leisure activities but it depends on the availability of the desired reading materials. It is mostly an indoor activity and very individualistic. Reading gives children the opportunity to enter the world of fantasy where everything is possible.

when I'm done playing the game, I take a story book. (Essay 14 boy 11 years)

After learning, I will like to read my story books (Essay 4 girl 10 years)

In my perfect life the thing I will do the most is to go to the library, read a lot of story books which I like doing and also even borrow some. ... In my perfect life, I will spend a lot of time for reading and writing and doing what I like best. (Essay 7 girl 10 years)

I would like writing books like fairy tales and other stories to raise other people's mind. (Essay 19 girl 11 years)

Hence, children position themselves as engaging in it a lot and by this, focus more on the availability of storybooks and library facilities. The importance of reading storybooks is seen in their making sure books will always be available as they will also engage in writing storybooks.

Digital leisure

The most common activity they prefer to do during their leisure time is watching television. It was mention thirty-two times in the children's essays. While watching television would be the last activity before going to bed for some children, others would do it even at or just after breakfast.

*In the evening, my supper would be fried rice with chicken and vegetables with a little stew and take a mug of hot milk and drink it and **also watch a little television** (Essay 9 girl 10 years)*

*I will like to get home at 4:30 and take a short shower and after having lunch I will do my homework and **watch television for the** whole night and go to bed at around 8 o' clock. (Essay 46:12-13 years)*

*In my perfect life, I would like to woke up in the morning at 5:30am, brush my teeth, bath and dress then take my breakfast and **watch television** (Essay 19 girl 11 years)*

Watching television is less active but it is the commonest form of leisure among the children in this study and they engage in it for several reasons. One of the reasons is that, there is no time for other activities that require more time and probably more space at the time they watch television. When they return from school, it is usually too

late to go out to do anything else, so they have to stay indoors. Hence, watching television becomes the only activity available to them before bedtime. On the other, some of them watch television to get themselves acquainted with what is going on nationally or globally as in listening to news. Most often, children are very boisterous, however, most of them resort to watching television which is passive and casual because they do not have the time and space to engage in more active leisure. Moreover, most households possess a television, and in cases where they do not, children are able to watch television programmes in neighbors' homes.

Children fantasize playing football not only, as a physical activity as on the field, but also as mental activity as computer/video games.

> *When I am tired, I will take my **computer to play game like football**, volley, Tennis when I'm done playing the game, I take a story book. (Essay 14 Boy 11 years)*

In this way, children who likes playing football as leisure but do not have opportunities to engage in it, resort to the digital soccer games that are very common. Not every child has access to such digital gadgets, but, commercial places like internet café make it possible for children interested in digital leisure to have access at a fee.

Adventure/Travelling

As they imagine their perfect childhood, the children position themselves as engaging in adventurous activities, most of which involves travelling. This adventure is imagined to take place both within Ghana but especially abroad with different motivations, although the fundamental fact is for pleasure. Traveling is mention twenty times in the children's essays, and motivations for travelling can be grouped under fun and recreation, practicing sports and music (especially with celebrities), tourism, education and paid work or business activities.

> *Then my nuclear family will get a lot or a whole lot of money and go to Paris then spend at least one month and get a lot of friends then come back to Ghana and spend two months. (Essay 4 girl 10 years)*

> *On the following day I will like travel to U.S.A//United State of American. Because the place is nice and beautiful for me. (Essay 18 girl 10 years)*

I would like to go to places like New York City, England, U.S.A, Dubai,

UK and India and will like to live in a mansion (Essay 19 Girl 11 years)

The main interest here in is to have fun, however, when children travel for adventure, having fun serves different purposes like fostering attachment and bonding between in the family. It also gives children the opportunity of exploring new environments and making new friends. While having fun, children, indirectly, learn different ways of doing things and learn to adjust to or accept others which is vital in their socialization process.

In having adventure, children focus on Tourism which is a means of reinforcing the learning that takes place in the formal setting (school)

I would travel around Ghana's tourist sites ... (Essay 32 girl 12-13 years)

I want field trips to places like Kahum National Park and Elmina Castle. At school, we learn about those places, it would be thrilling to come face to face with the actual places. It brings more understanding to me because you have a feel. (Essay 1 girl 11 years)

Tourism in children's fantasy is directly linked to learning experiences and it helps children in gaining pre-determined experiences that have the advantage of providing lasting and enduring educational and cultural values and which can have positive influences on children's life courses. This proves that children, even in fantasy, perceive having fun as opportunities to learn.

Apart from having fun and learning, children travel to do business and for paid employment.

Then on Saturday, I'll travel to Korea and go and be an actor there on Saturday. (Essay 3 Girl 11)

I will be a famous singer and dancer working for Nickolodeon (Essay 3 Girl 11)

I will wake up the follow day and go to the airport and board an aeroplane to New York City when I get to New York I will lodge at the tallest Hotel in New York then I will buy two spring bicycles and one Bughati car with building materials and ship it to Ghana with two Audi

cars after I will buy a 9-inch curved Flatscreen tv with Play station one (1), two (2), three (3) and four (4) ... (Essay 12 boy 10 years)

Another area of interest in their traveling is to "bond" with their celebrity heroes in sports and the music industry. In their imagination, travelling to be with such personalities would encourage them to also achieve their own dreams.

*In my perfect life, I would like to invite Kuami Eugene, Ading, MzVee, Sakordie, Ak songtress, Sinach, Joe Mettle, Dope Nation, Ed Shereen, DJ Cally, Rahiana, to feature me in their songs, help me to **sing and travel all the world with them**. (Essay 4 girl 10 years)*

Then I will go to the airport and take a flight to England and as soon as I get to England, I will go and meet the queen of England and have a lunch with her and right after there I will go to Anfield to meet my favourite team Liverpool FC and my favourite footballer Mohammed Salah then I will train with them and after training I will have some shopping in two shopping malls in England.) (Essay 12 boy 10 years)

I would then buy tickets to go abroad. There I would meet my superstars. Firstly Drake, then J.Z, then Bionse, Rihana, and Kardashian. (Essay 32 girl 12-13 years)

In children's fantasy, travelling abroad gives the adventure of spending time with celebrities such as footballers, musicians and actors. It also provides opportunities for shopping abroad which is considered very "cool" and gives one a certain amount of prestigious status in fashion and socio-economic class. Their fantasy also positions them as actively involved in social media activities and knowledgeable about global entertainment news.

The love for adventure in travelling on business trips gives the indication that children are aware of the economic and industrialization situation in the country.

Then on Wednesday, I will send money to my mother and I will buy six cars that are being sold in Korea. (Essay 3 girl 11 years)

In this, they exhibit knowledge of where to transact business to make the most profit or to get what they desire. It also presupposes that they are aware of the economic situation in the country.

Exploring educational opportunities outside Ghana is another reason for the children's interest in travelling.

After the two months, I will go to Canada to spend a whole year and some months (three to four months) continue my schooling at Canada, get the best grades (11, etc.) (essay 4 girl 10 years)

I want to get a free scholarship, go around the world, learn, play and have lots of fun (Essay 4 girl 10 years)

In my perfect life, I would like to travel every single day to another country every single day because I want change so that I can explore to have a feeling of change and excitement (Essay 6: 10-11 years)

Children are aware of the availability of educational opportunities abroad and they give reasons for their interest in this area as the desire for best education, learning through fun and exploring new ways of doing things; that is change. The children's fantasy is to be better trained to become marketable worldwide. In all these ideas and perceptions about travelling, having fun stands out as the background against which all others are set. This reinforces the position of leisure, recreation and play in children's lives as very important in children's total growth and development.

4.2.7. Relationships

Naturally, humans are social beings and are expected to relate to each other in the society, the nucleus of which is the family, hence, children grow up with other members of the family and this makes it imperative for a relationship of different kinds between children and other family members. Outside the family, they meet and socialize with others both in horizontal relationships with their peers and in vertical relationships with others older than them. Additionally, adolescence is a period of transition both physically and psychologically characterized by biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Obiunu, 2015; Smetana et al, 2006) which occur simultaneously. The adolescent, at this stage, is easily irritated and suffers from mood swings, low self-esteem, anxiety, and in some cases depression (Montemayor et al, 1993; Seidman et al, 2003). At this stage, adolescents, most often depend on support from significant others such as parents but more essentially peer friendships. It is therefore the expectation that even in their fantasy, children will give a lot of attention to relating with other people.

In fantasizing about an ideal childhood, young adolescents position themselves as relating to different people in different ways. Their most basic relationship is directed at their friends and then at their parents with the mother receiving the most attention. They also mention siblings, teachers, drivers, servants, laborers, and finally the needy in society.

Friends

In early adolescence, friends or peers become more important, and closely relating to them provides both emotional and physical support (Deater-Deckard, 2001). Empirical evidence shows that friendship at this stage supports those in the friendship to acquire values and qualities that could have lifelong effects. Friends are known too, to have a significant contribution to each other's well-being and adjustments to especially difficult situations (Obiunu 2015: Knickmeyer et al, 2002: Daley & Hamen 2002).

Most often children are very conscious of the effects of friendship on their lives, hence, they fantasize about particular kinds of friends that they would have.

The kind of friends I want to have are those who can help me in my life. (Essay 11: boy 10 years)

This means, children have pre-defined conditions for friendship and although the idea of "help" is very broad, it basically refers to emotional support as well as physical or financial support as evident in;

Furthermore during break time I want to have a great time with my friends. Also, I want some of my friends to share because they are too stingy. (Essay 44: 12-13 years)

What this means is that children have ideas about what defines good friends and they position their friends as such. Additionally, they are aware of bad attitudes that some friends possess which they do not like as seen in;

Gossiping is one of the things I detest so when my friends gossip, I get sad and hurt a lot. So in my perfect life there should be no such things as gossiping ever. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

I will just like everyone to be my good friend but not friends who gossip, hurt each other, tease too much and mock. ... Even if I got a friend who just tease a little, I would like it. ... (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

As such, they fantasize about childhood with friends who would not hurt each other in any way. As friendship is reciprocal, children also position themselves as being good friends to others. At this age, most young people strive for autonomy, especially from adult influence, however, they are aware of friends who could be as domineering and "pushy" as adults. Thus, as much as, they envisage having a lot of friends in an ideal childhood, they would not want friends who will dictate to them.

> *We do not want any adult to decide for us how to live comfortably.* **Neither do we want our friends to do that**. *... An adolescent, surrounded with friends who have an electronic device who do not own any of the electronic devices feel bad and lonely around his or her friends. (Essay 28: girl 13 years).*

The implication is that, although friends are very important to children and thus idealize a childhood full of them, the perception is friends will not take away each other's independence. On the contrary, children fantasize about friendships that will be empathetic, supportive, and with equal access to resources irrespective of their source. In this case, friends are expected to share, especially, their digital resources as a form of emotional support.

In fantasy about ideal childhood, relationship with friends is projected as activity-oriented, one of which is chatting both physically and on digital devices such a mobile phones and tablets.

> *On Saturday; I will learn and when it is 12:00 pm, I will stop and watch tv, play games* **and call my friends especially Essey, Nana Adjoa and Herbert**. *... (Essay 38: boy 13 years)*

> *On the next day early, I would brush my teeth, and take a bath and drink a mug of hot milk* **and chat with my friends on the tablet for some time like 20 mins**. *(Essay 9)*

> *... Adolescents in general likes chatting with friends far and near. We may spend time with friends until it is late. (Essay 28: girl 13 years)*

Chatting with friends is so important that its engagements occur at different times of the day and it is carried on over long periods including late into the night. Children also fantasize about visiting friends and also being visited by them.

On tuesday; Like when I wake up in the morning and the other stuff. But this time when I come back from school, we will go and visit all my friends. (Essay 38: boy 13 years)

On Tuesday, I want my best friends like Leticia, Erica, Jessie to come to my house to play with them. (Essay 21: 12-12 years)

The whole idea is to spend a lot of time with friends and this so important to them that they even idealize a situation where all friends are close neighbors.

And I forgot to mention that all my friends and mates are actually my real close neighbours. That's the coolest part. (Essay 35: girl 13 years)

I love happy moments. So, parting with friends is hard because they are the reason why these moments are so special. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

This way, they can always get involved in the leisure and play activities.

then go to my friend's house and chat with him and play with him. … After that I would go to my room and play Play Station with my friend for three hour (Essay 2: boy 11 years)

At school, I will learn and take zero canes throughout the day, play with my friends, eat lunch, and when we close go home (Essay 22: 12-13 years)

Apart from visiting and playing with their friends, they imagine walking to school and the library with them.

We walk to school together and look again! there goes my friends …. Everyone is my class is here and we are walking down to school, all hugs; and other classes join and it's almost a whole school together …. I get home at 8:30 pm after a fun day with my friends; (Essay 35: girl 13 years)

… will even walk and chat with some of my friends, and also go to the library (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

This means that spending time with their friends will not be limited to the home but also school. At school, the fantasy is about sharing ideas and having lunch together.

Talking with my friends about science and ICT makes me soo happy. Also when it is first break and me and my friends are eating, it is a special moment for me. ... Thirdly, showing my talents and potentials to my friends also makes me happy. (Essay 24: boy 12-13 years)

When I hear a song I put my own words in it, my friends kept telling me I will be a good musician, but my brother told me I will be a teacher. (Essay 34: 12-13 years)

Children fantasize about a childhood where friends make meaningful input in their academic life. This implies that they value constructive contributions that friends make in their academic life and would value such in an ideal childhood.

Shopping with friends is also important to young people as they imagine going on a shopping spree with them.

After that, I will also like to visit my friends for about 5 weeks and then also like to go to the mall, like West Hills, Shoprite, Melcom and buy things. (Essay5: girl 10 years)

Then gather some of my money and tell my friends that I will come and give them a lift to the mall and they should be ready and after that go to Accra mall, buy some pizza, eat some there, and bring some home. (Essay 9: girl 10 years)

Although children perceive shopping as an important activity in a perfect childhood, the idea here is to do it with friends. In this case, the idea is to spend time with their friends. This is emphasized in even traveling alone with them both home and abroad.

On November, lets say almost the ending of November, I would like to travel with my friend to America and balk a hotel, a bigger room, with 4 bedrooms each with toilet and bath, 1 kitchen, a television in every room and also at the hall. (Essay 9: girl 10 years)

My friends and I would move to another renowned hotel known as Holy Trinity Spa. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)

In my perfect life, I will go out for a little camping with friends and good teachers. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

In situations where they have to be accompanied by an adult, the focus is still on their friends.

Friends are so important in the ideal childhood of this research participants that, they imagine going to church to thank God for not only their family but also their friends.

On Sunday; I will do nothing but thank God for the life he has given me and my parents and my friends and my grandma. (Essay 38: boy 13 years)

Finally, to make sure that they are also the desired kind of friend, they intend to share their good fortunes with not only family but also friends.

All these things mentioned I would love to share with my friends and family; my cousins as well. They make me happy a lot, a whole bunch. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

All the children's fantasies about engagements with friends indicate that friends are of significant value in childhood, hence, friendship is a key factor in both their reality and their fantasy. Young adolescence is a stage where children have natural tendencies to spend more time with friends as this presents opportunities to interact and socialize with peers and explore opportunities that foster trust and a sense of belonging which is key to developing self-identity. Also, friends are very important at this stage because, whereas parents would be more controlling, friends and peers encourage exploration and adventure which children find very exciting as it promotes participation and productivity. Hence, they find and develop a new form of intimacy and interdependency that may be absent from family relationships.

Finally, at this stage, young people become more curious and demand more attention, which, most often, the family is unable to keep up with or provide. However, friends and peers tend to provide such support and such a sense of being accepted that tend to even defy logic (especially in the case of negative influence.

Parents

The family, as the nucleus of the larger society, responsible for child upbringing, is a key factor in individual subjective well-being throughout one's life. This is especially so in childhood and adolescence (Diener & Diener 2008). Empirical evidence indicates that in early adolescence, high life satisfaction fostered by positive

relationships with parents has a higher percentage than other variables (Ma & Huebner 2008; Schwarz et al. 2012). Research also shows that although peer influence takes on significant influence among adolescents, parents continue to be the most important agent of socialization all through this developmental period (Youniss & Haynie, 1992). Therefore, as children live with adults, be they biological parents or caregivers, it is expected that they will play key roles in the children's fantasy of ideal childhood. The multiple references to parents in the essays indicate that parents are very important to the children, however, different perceptions of parents' role influence how children position them in their fantasy. In their narrations, they initially protest against reality and then proceed with the fantasy. It is observed that they position their parents from differing perspectives of availability, financial or emotional support, responsibility, and (in)dependence. These perceptions give ideas about what children will want their parents to be in their ideal childhood.

Availability

Availability, here, is defined by the parent's inclusion is especially outdoor activities such as shopping and recreational activities like going to the zoo and the beach. It is also acquainted with parents being outdoors (for one reason or another) with their children.

> *At 9:30, my parent said we should go to West Hills Mall. When we got to West Hills Mall, we entered and we bought play station five, DSTV, Skate board, skating shoes, school bags , travelling bags, tablets, laptops, computers, pizzas and leather belts. .. The time was 4:00pm my parent and my senior brother fixed the DSTV. (Essay 13: boy 10 years)*

> *My siblings, my parent and I packed the things we bought at the boot of the car. We sat in the car and my father drove as to the house. When we got to the house the time was 3:30pm we removed all the things we bought from the boot of the car. We sent them inside the room and looked at all the things we bought. The time was 4:00pm my parent and my senior brother fixed the DSTV. (Essay 14: boy 11 years)*

> *I want my parent to take me to school every day and come and pick me after closing. But I don't get it that way. I will have to wake up early and go to school. What even provokes me is I always have to walk to school.*

I want my parent to pamper me and show me love. (Essay 29: 12-13 years)

The focus here is on spending time together as a family and children perceive such times together as very important. The fundamental need here is for parents to be available to engage in these outings with their children. Children pick a lot of things (attitudes, desires, preferences, etc.) from their daily experiences, however, having their parents around them, and doing things together tend to shape the way they see the world. It fosters love, care, and emotional support. This fantasy reinforces children's desire for role-model parents whom they can be proud of and whom they can show off as evident in "parents taking their children to school and picking them up after school. In this relationship, young adolescents position themselves as being in control and thus getting their parents' attention as desired. This is the case in Essay 3, where the child takes the mother to the beach instead of the other way round, which is usually the case. This is also seen in Essay 14 where the mother is at the beck and call of the child. The result is a happy child. The opposite is evident in Essay 29 which is a typical exhibit of parents who are not available. In this situation, the parent's availability is equated to love and care.

In availability, mothers are expected to be more available to attend to children's needs as evident in;

And in school, my mom will allow me to take my tablet and iPod to school, whatever we learn it will stick in my head (Essay 38)

My mother gave us our tablet, on my tablet downloaded dream league soccer 2019, sniper, assassins After I played all the games. (Essay 13: boy 13 years)

In this situation, mothers are given the responsibilities of keeping things like playthings and making them available to children when they ask for them. Mothers are supposed to be there, present whenever she is needed, however, the father is not mentioned in this regard. Also, when children want to make direct demands on parents, it is mothers who are addressed as in,

So when it was getting to 1:00pm I told my mother we should go and visit the zoo. So when we arrived I was so happy to be there (Essay 14: boy 11 years)

In children's fantasy of parents' availability, whereas parents go shopping with their children and fathers drive the car, mothers receive the direct "order" to go out with the child. This could be interpreted as, in parents' availability to their children, mothers are confronted with the order to be present to do as children wish, hence, more is expected of mothers than fathers when it comes to spending time with children.

Financial support

Financial support is defined by the expectation that parents fund their children's basic needs as well as their wants. Although in fantasy children wish to earn their own money purposely to spend it without adults' constraints, they understand their position as not able to earn money and thus settle on their dependency on their parents. Hence, parents are positioned as financiers of childhood expenditure which also includes anything children fancy to acquire.

> *So I also would really like to earn money and spend it in any way that I please. In my perfect life my parents will give allowance 50GHC every week. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

> *After I will tell my driver to take me to school **and I will collect GHC 10 from my parents**. (Essay 42: 12-13 years)*

> *In my perfect life, I would like my parents to at least send us to restaurants, Accra mall once every two months. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)*

In the above examples, the financial support that children require from their parents is not connected to basic needs of life like food, shelter, or clothing. These are not part of childhood fantasy because the assumption is that those things will be automatically provided for. This way, children position their parents as being responsible for their fundamental human rights needs irrespective of their economic status. Things that children explicitly envisage provision from their parents are things that they focus on as evidence of care, love, and availability. Thus, when parents give their children allowances, it is explained as they love and care about them.

Although both parents are positioned as financial support, there are disparities in what is expected of each parent.

> *After my **father** went to buy a very nice car name Honda, spare runner. (Essay 13: boy 10 years)*

*And my **Dad** will buy me a new bicycle and a new tablet and an iPod. Oh and a new laptop. The other one is too old. (Essay 38 boy 13 years)*

*My **mother** would then buy me a new pair of shoes, bags and a hand purse. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)*

*So when I was tired I came to my **mother** and take some money to buy some toffees ice cream. (Essay 14: boy11 years)*

From the above, children project fathers as shopping for very expensive items including cars whereas mothers are positioned as shopping for ordinary items like shoes, and bags and giving money for toffees. In this regard, fatherhood is enshrined in affluence however, motherhood is situated in the financial mundanities of family life. In effect, children position fathers as rich or wealthy but mothers as ordinary in financial support.

As financiers, parents are expected to not only give allowances but be present or part of the spending escapades and give their consent to every demand. In situations where this adventure is not possible, financing and availability are intertwined, in parents, especially fathers coming home, as expected, with expensive gifts which are not accidental but anticipated.

My father comes home after 10:30 pm and I meet him. Yeah! He has bought me a new phone, a new laptop, ice-cream and loads of goodies. He's not drunk, like he usually is or acting stupid or scary, shameful but good, free-minded, coolest DAD on earth. No mums allowed, ever!!! (Essay 35: 13 girl years)

Availability here is not only physical but directly connected to emotionally available as evidenced in "not drunk". In this situation too, children demand privacy especially, their fathers or more accurately, the less available parent. In this scenario too, mothers are projected as less prone to giving expensive gifts. This may be so as mothers are more connected to the mundane activities and therefore needs in the home. Thus, mothers are more likely to come home with groceries or daily provisions for the family than with laptops or digital gadgets.

(In)dependence

There is more engagement with independence among adolescents than dependence and this is dichotomized between the need for distance physically and

emotionally for the sense of maturity and the need for closeness as a form of reassurance. Independence here is given the status of freedom especially in decision-making and making choices. In engaging with independence, children theorize parents' protection as a statement of their (children's) weakness or insufficiencies. In this sense, the state of being weak is seen as belonging to babies and parents' protection is likened to a cage.

> *In my perfect life, I wish my parents would stop keeping me cooped up like a bird in a cage, because they think am still a baby (Essay 1:: girl 11 years)*

> *My mother arrives at 10:00 but doesn't come to my room, asks me questions, talk or bug me whatsoever, (Essay 35: girl 13 years),*

This independence is seen from different perceptions, one of which is to be allowed to be oneself physically; no longer be seen as an extension of parents' shadows. Hence, the adolescent's seeking for autonomy and self-identity is connected with weaning oneself from parents' physical influence. This is seen in babies' mobility being directly connected to that of their parents. The second reference is liberty towards "benefits" which means that at this age, children know what they want and they do not need their parents to make that choice, unlike babies. This is a direct statement indicating a maturity of a sort. On one hand, this could be a reference to the parents' "immaturity" in not knowing when to let go, and on the other hand children's maturity in knowing what they want.

There are situations too, in which parents make decisions for children that they could have easily made for themselves and although they would have resorted to the same decision, children perceive parents as being "nosy" because they (children) already know what to do.

> *A perfect life is supposed to be a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutely nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents…. (Essay 35: girl 13 years)*

> *We will all love to spend number of hours on bed resting. Parents may say if that is the case then go to bed early. (Essay 28: girl 13 years)*

In this situation, decisions are seen as parents' imposition and the implication is that they could not have made the same or even similar decisions which is not the case.

Given the opportunity, children would make decisions for themselves which would satisfy both parties (children and parents). Sometimes, children would like to make decisions and then make adjustments and this is a sign of maturity.

> *Since I was born, my parents especially my mother have been making choices for me till now. And sometimes they make choices that I don't feel comfortable with them. (Essay 27: 12-13 years)*

> *My perfect life will be ruined if this happen; .. **My parents always making choices for me which are just small**. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)*

In their fantasy, children differentiate between big decisions and small ones, and their main focus is on at least being allowed to make the small ones. The focus is on decisions that are not comfortable for the one who is to face the results of the decision. If children are allowed to "experiment" with making choices, then they could adjust and learn from previous experiences for better ones in the future.

A lot of studies show that in early adolescence, children tend to strive for autonomy and that being allowed to make certain decisions help them foster self-identity and emotional strength.

> *my parents would give me freedom and treat me like an 11-year-old and not as a baby when it comes to benefits. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

Hence, when young adolescents strive for independence at this stage, it is expected that parents will understand, however, in situations where they do not, then it is the parents who are seen to be "immature" and not the children because they (the parents) should know.

In some situations, too, children position independence as a coping strategy against parental conflicts.

> *… my mother and father don't talk because of something. So I stay with my mother in an uncompleted house in Winneba - SSNIT. … Now a perfect life is perfect, when I come to school, I always pray to God that I should always do well in exams and forget about my parents. (Essay 34: 12-13 years)*

Here, children wean themselves of parents' influence so that they will not be affected, especially, emotionally, by conflicts between parents.

Although children fantasize about being independent of their parents in several ways, it is observed that they are dependent on their parents' reassurance of their status. This is seen in children depending on their parents' attitude to feel emotionally fulfilled.

In my perfect life I would like my parents to treat me like they would on my birthday. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

On birthdays, children are given special treatments like making choices and being in control. These make them feel loved, cared for, and important. Children project such incidences as what makes them feel accepted and important. In this case, they are dependent on parents' attitudes, especially for emotional well-being.

This dependence is also seen in family relationship with God that is envisaged to result in the whole family being blessed.

My family is always after God so with them by my side everything wouldn't matter at all (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)

In this case, even without a personal relationship with God, the family one is deemed enough to realize divine benefits.

Responsibility

Responsibility here refers to what children expect their parents to do at home as a form of duty to them with most of them being household chores. Most of the activities indicated are routine in the home and they are mainly associated with mothers and, even when children acknowledge that they also have a responsibility to perform some chores in the home, they still expect their mothers to "come to their aid". The most expectation is with the preparation of food and even in fantasy, children will have none other than mothers to cook.

In my perfect life, I would have wanted a cook but my mum can cook better than any cook I know. So, in my perfect life, I want my mother to serve my favorite food for me. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

When school closes and I go home, I want my mother to prepare some delicious food and eat it to my satisfaction. (Essay 44: 12-13 years)

I will like to take my breakfast and the breakfast I will take; I will tell my mother to prepare it like I will say it… (Essay 5: girl 10 years)

125

Children put mothers in the position of cooks as seen in the excerpts above and this gives the impression of mothers as servants. This impression is deepened by her cooking as "instructed" by children. Why associate motherhood with servitude even in fantasy where it could have been the opposite, at least to lessen mothers' "burdens" and give a more appreciative image? Children's fantasies about mothers as cooks could be interpreted from different perspectives. First of all, cooking is a key activity in children's fantasy probably because they are aware of its importance to life and such activity demands the expertise of an equally important personality. These positions mothers, not as servants but as important to children. Secondly, in their fantasy, children want only the best food to be cooked for them. Adjectives in their description of food like "delicious" and "nutritious" overturn the notion of servitude in their asking only mothers to cook. From this perspective, only mothers possess the knowledge and skills to provide the best food. In this sense, mothers are positioned as knowledgeable and skillful. Finally, it is only when one cares about another that one will take the time to give one's best, thus, mothers are portrayed as caring and available for their children. This way, mothers are masters in the art of cooking children's favorite and most delicious food. From these perspectives, children are positioned as masters (in control) demanding the best, and mothers as masters, give just that.

In performing household chores, children position themselves as having responsibilities but look to mothers to perform or complete their tasks making mothers solely responsible for their inadequacies.

> *When I don't wake up early, I want my mother to sweep for me and also wash my bowls and everything. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)*

In some situations, children view household chores as mothers' responsibility, and performing them is doing her a favor.

> *So when we came back home, it was 12:30pm, I will help my mother to wash her bowls. (Essay 14:11 boy years)*

With this notion, children feel that being asked or made to perform household chores are constraints on their lives. In fantasy (as in reality) household chores are not part of their plans and performing them makes life difficult. This is made worse by the fact that they have other things they would rather spend their time on.

They don't allow me to learn. Every small thing is me who has to it which is really not good. I want my parent to allow me to learn the way I like to learn. What I even hate is that even if I am sleeping, they called me and send me which is not good. (Essay 29: 12-13 years)

In all these, mothers are positioned as the ones to give permission, the ones who run the affairs in the home, and the ones with whom children have a lot of frictions.

And in school, my mom will allow me to take my tablet and iPod to school, (Essay 38)

My mother gave us our tablet, on my tablet downloaded dream league soccer 2019, sniper, assassins After I played all the games. (Essay 13: boy 10 years)

In general, the mother role is invested with a lot of ambivalences which makes it multidimensional and very complex. Mothers are, bosses in the home giving instructions as to what children must do or not do, servants to be instructed on what to do, especially when children need to accomplish tasks, and sensitive, caring, and available for children. In contrast, the father role is conceptualized as a single story that projects it as unavailable (rare) in childhood and it is this "rareness" that gives it a higher demand than the mother role in childhood. Thus, when father comes home and he is hailed a hero, it is because he is not available.

Reciprocity and Gender issue

Despite the many conflicts that arise between mothers and children, they are most appreciated in later life. In the traditional Ghanaian culture, children are brought up with the understanding that, as their parents take care of them when they could not do so themselves, they are also expected to take care of their parents when they are old and cannot take care of themselves. This sense of reciprocity is exhibited in childhood fantasy as portrayed in;

Then on Wednesday, I will send money to my mother and I will buy six cars that are being sold in Korea. Then I would send two cars to my caretaker when my mother is not around. … Then on Friday, I'll go and visit my mother and my caretaker, … Then will take my mother to the beach and we will have some fun in, then I'll take her back. (Essay 3: 11 girl years)

127

Here, children portray the situation when the tides have turned and they hold the financial strength to take care of their parents. They position themselves as reciprocating the love they received in childhood in the form of availability and financial support. Interestingly, whereas in childhood, it is the father who brings expensive gifts, it is the mother who is positioned as receiving expensive gifts from children. However, this reciprocity is not necessarily gendered in favor of especially mothers but rather on the parent is who is more available as evident in;

As for my family I will only take care of my Aunties and only my father.
But only my mother will lack for living me just like that even I have made
a mistake my father gave birth to me. (Essay 26: girl 12-13 years).

In this scenario, it is the father who is available, and even though, in bringing up his children, he receives help from "Aunties", the absence of the mother is substantial. Thus, in applying reciprocity, those available in childhood (father and aunties) get all the attention and the one who is unavailable (mother), is made impoverished. In this way, the parent-child relationship is understood as reciprocal. It could be concluded that even though children want so much that demand financial support, it is parents' availability that they value the most.

This also points to the fact that children do not necessarily show biases in their relationship with their parents as in creating or extending social gender stereotypes. In this sense, children assign existing roles to the gender present or available. Hence, "*dad could be the best cook*" and the expression "*no mums allowed ever!!!*" could also be "*no dads allowed ever!!!*.

Siblings

Siblings in the children's ideal childhood are an issue that they treated with ambivalence. While others will gladly have their siblings in their fantasy, others display so much loathing for them that they have no place in their idealized childhood.

In my perfect, I want my father, mom, I want my siblings and my friends
like Leticia, Herbert, Erica, Jessie to be part of my perfect life. (Essay
21: 12-13 years)

In my perfect life, I want my mom, my dad, uncle sami, ... and
*my **annoying brother Louis**. (Essay 38: boy 13 years)*

Siblings are included in the children's fantasy for no apparent reason. Their importance is not highlighted. The most engaging mention of them is in family shopping;

My siblings, my parent and I packed the things we bought at the boot of the car. … The time was 4:00pm my parent and my senior brother fixed the DSTV. (Essay 13: boy 10 years).

And/or as an extension of the family.

…. and also build five mansions for my family members and siblings (Essay 5).

Hence, their inclusion may be just to maintain family ties.

On the other hand, their presence in other essays is purposely associated with rejection.

My perfect life will be ruined if this happens; my siblings stick around me every time which means not getting some privacy. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

*A perfect life is supposed to be a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutely nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents and **no annoying siblings**. … I get home to a quiet house which is what I like. **My little siblings go to a Primary Boarding School for a year, with no vacation**. (Essay 35: girl 13 years)*

I was with my sister and she left for school. So my house chores became plenty. … Before I will come to school, I have to bath my younger sibling, go to the rubbish dump after sweeping, wash bowls, sweeping rooms and halls. I have to do that before I myself will bath. All this plenty work will clear off if I want to live my perfect life. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)

In their real life, their siblings, especially younger ones, are hard work for them which they will not want in their ideal life. If they have to associate with them, it would be from a distance, like mentioning that their younger siblings are in the boarding house.

The implication here is that young adolescents are made the extension of parents and they are expected to fulfill responsibilities that go with those assignments. In the Ghanaian traditional upbringing, this is a form of socialization to prepare children to take up their future roles. Thus. children usually play adults' roles in children's play which is fun, however, in this situation, children do not bathe only dolls but also real babies. This could be fun as long as children are interested in doing it but once the fun weans, it becomes work and a difficult one too.

Other family members

Apart from the immediate family of parents and siblings, children relate to members of the extended family, however, in their fantasy, they are not presented as a key focus. Mostly, they are mentioned in reference to something else. Grandmothers are the most mentioned of the other family members and she denotes several ideas in children's fantasy. This is evident in;

> *I like singing so I would love to be an artist but not only that I want to*
> *be like my mum and grandmother, a jack of all trades, more like a Jill*
> *of all trades. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

where a particular self-identity is connected to family identity. This connection is important in trying to position oneself as belonging to or as defending or justifying a position. In this case, the idea is that whatever the child is running in the family (a kind of generational thing). This reference also shows fondness and pride in the association.

Another reference to grandma in;

> *On Friday, I want to tell my grandma to go to the hospital but she won't*
> *go. (Essay 21: 12-13 years)*

Shows children's care and attention to the older generation. In this situation, children position themselves as taking care of the elderly or having concern for their wellbeing. However, grandma is also portrayed as a source of hope in childhood. This is where biological parents are not available and grandma takes over the child-upbringing responsibilities.

> *To conclude, madame, if I was given the opportunity to leave a perfect*
> *life I would do a lot of hilarious things, that is why God has seen to it*
> *and given me a grandmother even though I don't have parent. She was*

given to me by God to protect me and give me the perfect life that I need
at the stages on my life. (Essay 36: girl 13 years)

In this case, her presence is associated with divine intervention because she becomes the children's sole hope for a better life. For this reason, children acknowledge her importance in;

On Sunday; I will do nothing but thank God for the life he has given me
and my parents and my friends and my grandma. (Essay 38: 12-13
years)

Grandmothers are projected as part of childhood and their presence in childhood fantasy shows that children are very fond of them. One of the reasons could be that they are usually the first help available to their daughters, especially during pregnancy and childbirth. They take care of grandchildren when their daughters have to go to work. Hence, most children see a lot of their grandmothers and this may account for the fondness that children have for them. Most often, too, grandmothers act as children's aids in domestic conflicts between mothers and children. They are more understanding and tend to dote on or pamper their grandchildren.

On the other hand, the grandfather is mentioned only once in the whole data and it is in reference to his house which is near a shopping mall where the child will like to spend the night.

And I really wish I could sleep in the Skyland; it is a mall located at my
grandfather's house near a beach. (Essay 4: girl 10 years)

Although this reference is more to another place, the fact that grandfather has a house near such a place positions him as wealthy and by associating with him, children get to feel wealthy too, at least, an envy of those who think it "cool". An observation here is that, whereas grandmothers are associated with care, grandfathers are associated with wealth; similar to that of mothers and fathers and also similar to that of uncles and aunties in;

*Before I forget, **I will like to visit my uncle in his mansion**, buy girly*
stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iPhone, e.t.c), visit the beach on
Saturdays, ... (Essay 4: girl 10 years)

If I got one week to live my perfect life, I will travel with my aunty and
stay with her. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

Although children may make references to other family members for no specific intentions, such references may serve to give hope in cases of caregiving and of higher status in relationship to wealthy relatives.

Teachers

For children who perceive school as important in their ideal childhood, teachers are equally important and the focus is mostly on teachers' attitudes in their professional practice in the classroom. It is very important for children that their teachers will not treat them badly or unfairly and not use abusive language on them.

> *I will not wish to have a teacher who likes insulting, canning and doing things which is boring. ……... In my perfect life, I will go out for a little camping with friends and good teachers. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)*

> *I know sometimes we children are stubborn and unruly but there is really no need for canning because lot of times we are caned for no mistake of ours but because of others but I don't blame the teachers either. ... I would love that at school teachers don't stress us with homework so that we can have our personal study at home. (Essay 1)*

> *We do not want even our teachers to disturb us or even burden us we want to be free, truly free. (Essay 28: girl 12 years)*

From children's fantasies about teachers, one could conclude that they have experienced teachers who are abusive and as much as teachers are important to them, they do not want such teachers. Their fantasy about good teachers is connected to teachers who are friendly, fair and easy-going, and patient. They, however, attest to some untoward behaviors of children but still appeal to teachers to be better composed in dealing with such children, as they end up affecting even the innocent ones. The focus is also on teachers who will not burden them with homework and other activities that they are not interested in. Additionally, children idealize teachers who are jovial, empathetic, and playful.

> *When I get to school, teachers should teach me in such a way I will understand and show me some love when teaching, eg If I see a teacher likes me, I will learn hard in his or her subject. (Essay 20: girl 12 years)*

Furthermore, I will like any teacher who will teach to sing songs, entertain ourselves and also crack jokes and tell stories before he or she teaches. (Essay 42: 12-13 years)

When I go to school, I want the teacher to crack some jokes before teaching. (Essay 44: 12-13 years)

This is in direct reference to teachers' teaching methods and techniques and these are of so much value to children because it affects their ability to learn.

At school I pay attention to what everything the teacher says. So, I am one of the best students in class. (Essay 47: 13 years)

Children fantasize about doing very well at school, but this is connected to teachers' conduct and professional practice and that is why they value their teachers. Whereas some of them do not want to be bothered by their teachers, others want them to put pressure on them so that they will learn.

When a teacher comes to class, he should drill us of what we did the previous class so that we will be pressured to learn at home before coming to school. (Essay 40: 12-13 years)

This is quite contradictory but the whole idea is for teachers to be considerate, fair, and friendly. The emphasis on how much teachers mean to children is evident in;

After I finish university, I will be a teacher so that I can teach my students to be the greatest students in the whole world. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)

That is what children want teachers to help them to achieve; greatness. For this purpose, teachers are important in their ideal childhood.

Servants (hired help)

The children also fantasized about hired help such as servants, butlers, drivers, and laborers. The most explicitly mentioned is domestic help and what makes them important in their ideal childhood is performing household chores that they (children) are supposed to perform.

In the morning I will tell my servant to sweep the compound so I will come to school early. (Essay 21: 12-13 years)

I would wake up at 6:00 am and have my servants sweep my room. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)

On Mondays: When I wake up in the morning, brush my teeth our servant will sweep, (Essay 38: boy 13 years)

Children do not fantasize about a childhood without household chores and they show awareness of their responsibilities to perform them. Hence, they introduce servants into their ideal childhood so that they will take responsibility of those chores. They also idealize the luxury of being served.

I would be awake at 10am and I will have a butler to serve me with breakfast in bed. (Essay 3: girl 11 years)

After that my servant serves me with breakfast. (Essay 47: 12-13 years)

They also fantasize about a life where they would have their own cars and drivers at their service.

After I will tell my driver to take me to school. ... When school closes and I am about to go home, I will call my driver for him to pick me home. (Essay 42: 12-13 years)

Later my driver drives me to school in my private car. ..... At 4:00 am When we close from school my driver then came and pick me up. By 4:30 I will be at home. (Essay 47:13 years)

The presence of drivers in the children's ideal childhood is meant to serve the dual purpose of making them go to school on time and also giving them the prestige of having their own cars and drivers at their beck and call.

One thing that takes the fun out of school is having to do clean-up exercises on the school compound.

I would also like school that school would be fun. Like labourers would sweep our plots for us. (Essay 36: girl 13 years)

Children are aware of the need to clean their school environment but do not want to do that themselves. Hence, they fantasize about laborers doing that.

The inclusion of hired help in children's fantasy could be interpreted from 2 perspectives. First of all, the presence of hired help means less work for children and

the result is more time for them to do what they enjoy doing. Secondly, the presence of hired help gives a sense of higher socioeconomic status; only the wealthy can afford them. Hence, in their fantasy, children position hired help as evidence of a higher social class.

The needy

The needy and poor in society is the final group of people that the children fantasize about in the ideal childhood. This group is defined as orphans, school drop-outs because of financial constraints, and the poor in general. It is part of childhood fantasy to help such people.

> *And also I will like to visit the orphanage to spend time with the needy and share things to them. Things like dress, food stuff, drinks, story books, e.t.c. (Essay 5: girl 10 years)*

> *I would like my driver to be a giant who is a woman to drive me to places where people are needed of things such as clothes, food and others like parental care for those loss of parents, pay school fees for the poor who are ready to go to school without school fee. (Essay 26: girl 12-13 years)*

> *I will also like to visit orphans and people in need to help them with what they need. (Essay 27: 12-13 years)*

It is a wonder that the children did not fantasize about a life where no one is poor or needy. The importance of the poor in their fantasy could mean that they have the desire to engage in philanthropic activities and therefore they need the poor for that purpose. On the other hand, it could also mean that, even in their fantasy, the children are being realistic with the fact that society will always have poor people. In both cases, the young people here see it necessary to include the poor and the needy in their ideal childhood.

Children understand that no one is an island and as social beings, they need to encounter and live with others. Hence, in their fantasy of ideal childhood, they position themselves as relating to different groups of people such as their parents, friends, teachers, hired help, and the needy in the society. However, it is observed that in relating to others, children position themselves, mostly, as in control of the association. This is the case worldwide as most adults' engagements revolve around children's needs and childhood in general.

4.2.8.   Protests

The children are expected to write about how they will want their childhood to be and it is expected they will describe only the things that are important to them. However, there are some issues that they also talk about not with the intent of having them in their childhood but rather emphasizing the need for their absence in their ideal childhood. Such issues are described as issues they protest against in their real life and place emphasis on their absence in their imagined life. Such issues include corporal punishment at school and parents' infringement on their right to speak freely. Others are problems they anticipate and fantasize about how to solve, such as problems with thieves. These are categorized under physical punishment, inequality, and social vices (stealing, gossiping, insulting).

Physical punishment

Physical or corporal punishment is defined mainly as the use of a cane in lashing children's palms, back, or legs when they offend in school in the form of lateness to school, failure to tidy up the school environment, and not doing homework, and sometimes for poor academic performance.

Although there have been moves to ban corporal punishment from Ghanaian schools, the practice is still very prevalent mostly because it is perceived as the most effective form of correctional measures. It is very important for children that caning be abolished from school as indicated in;

> *In school, I will like to suggest that the canes are too much for us as well as the shouting. But I want that there should not be any canes at school. (Essay 46: 12-13 years)*

> *One thing I wish would be banned from school is caning. I know sometimes we children are stubborn and unruly but there is really no need for caning because lot of times we are caned for no mistake of ours but because of others but I don't blame the teachers either. But I would give any of my items to not be caned. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

Children's stance on physical punishment indicates that most often whatever they do wrong to merit that punishment is no fault of theirs. In the case of lateness, a lot could make children late for school. A typical example is seen in children's chores at home before coming to school.

> *Before I will come to school, I have to bath my younger sibling, go to the rubbish dump after sweeping, wash bowls, sweeping rooms and halls. I have to do that before I myself will bath. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)*

In such a situation, children are torn between obedience to parents and school authorities. Hence, the explanation that children are punished for no fault of theirs is very plausible. Also, if the punishment for lateness is caning, what happens when adult employees come to school late, are they also canned?

Another argument is that everyone is prone to make mistakes in one way or the other, both children and adults, and using physical punishment is not appropriate in the sense that it will not change the nature of children or stop them from making mistakes. If adults are permitted to make mistakes without getting punished with corporal punishment, why should children be?

However, children do not blame teachers for inflicting physical pain as a form of punishment. In taking this position, children try to understand teachers' positions as having different kinds of children in their care with some intentionally making things difficult for them. A typical example is in;

> *Afterwards I will brush my teeth, take my bath and dress for school. **And I will reach school at any time I want**. There will be nothing like caning. (Essay 45: 12-13 years)*

Whereas some children will do all in their power to not be caned, others willfully flout school regulations and hope to not be punished. In such a situation, teachers could use other forms of correctional measures other than corporal punishment.

What this means is that children understand that sometimes they go wayward but corporal punishment should not be the means to correct them.

They also find it very important that their parents treat them like grown-ups. Grown-ups, in the sense that they are no more babies who cannot speak for themselves.

Inequality

Children also protest against inequality, especially in their rights to freedom of speech. In most Ghanaian upbringing, children are to be seen not heard and they are to speak only when they are addressed. This way, they are expected to be silent when adults are around or when adults are having a discussion, even when it concerns them

(children). This is where they have a lot of problems because in most cases, decisions about them are made without their having a say, and in some cases, they do not like what is decided for them.

> *Since I was born, my parents especially my mother have been making choices for me till now. And sometimes they make choices that I don't feel comfortable with them. (Essay 27: 12-13 years)*

> *One more thing, as a child I always want to speak but I am shut down. (Essay 6: 10-11 years)*

> *I would like to be given the chance to express myself through speech without anyone shutting me up. (Essay 22: 12-13 years)*

Being allowed freedom of speech is very important to children because until they are allowed to speak no one will know that they also have great ideas.

> *Also, I think gown ups should have a listening ear for us children and I thank you for embarking on this project. But in my perfect life, grownups do have a listening ear for us children, because we also have great ideas too. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

When it comes to children, the most important issue for them is their parents' availability and support. With these firmly in place, they can make decisions that they can work with or be happy with, and in situations when those decisions turn out to be not favorable, it becomes a learning experience for them. After all, experience is sometimes the best teacher and it is also a way to maturity.

Social vices

Childhood is not a time of only playing and having parents worry about all others. Children share in problems that are considered adults and they contemplate how to make life better for themselves and those around them. Social vices, in this sense, refer to any untoward behavior that results in getting hurt emotionally or financially. With vices that could get one hurt emotionally, children focus on gossiping and verbal abuse.

> *Gossiping is one of the things I detest so when my friends gossip I get sad and hurt a lot. So in my perfect life there should be no such things as gossiping ever. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

I will just like everyone to be my good friend but not friends who gossip, hurt each other, tease too much and mock. Even if I got a friend who just tease a little, I would like it. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

Most of the vices are situated in schools and the culprits are teachers, friends, and classmates. Children position those occurrences as emotionally disturbing and hence should be avoided. Their position on such issues shows that either they have been victims or witnesses of such vices and they do not want such to be perpetrated because it could have devasting effects in childhood.

The final vice concerns thieves and stealing and children theorize that as wealth increases so would people who will envy and steal from them.

Okay so having all these things I will be disturbed always with thieves so to solve my thief problem; I would get lots of trained dogs to guard the house. That would give the thieves a good fright and they won't venture near and I would have electric wires on the gates of the entrance of my home. (Essay 6: 10-11 years)

Then on Thursday, robbers may come to my house and I produce dangerous gadgets and I will use an electric fence; the thief gets past that I will put thorns that can go through shoes as thick as a truck tire. If he/she gets past that I will use death ray guns to heat up his buttocks to 500 Celsius so that the thief will get caught so easily. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)

Children's fantasy does not exclude the reality of human nature because they know that no matter how much society will change for the better, there will always be people with criminal minds. This anticipation propels them to prepare for any eventualities in the form of security measures. The implication is that, the children are aware of social problems, they share adults' concerns and they know the fact that society cannot totally do away with some of these problems, even in their fantasy. Hence, they position themselves as poised to deal with them even before they encounter them.

The things children protest against in their fantasy position them as knowledgeable and sensitive not only to their safety but to that of the larger society. It

also shows that they possess the presence of mind to accept reality and promote future-oriented measures to curb social problems.

4.2.9.   Spiritual activities

Most parents train and expect their children to follow their religious beliefs and their way of worship. Although there are other religious groups in Ghana, the children in this study talked only about Christianity. Spiritual activities are very important to children as they refer to God in several ways in their fantasies. They refer to daily rituals that Christians engage in as evidence of their belief or faith in God. These rituals can be classified into public rituals and personal rituals and expectations from God.

Public rituals

Public rituals here refer to the assembly of Christians to fellowship mostly in the form of Sunday church services as well as other meetings on other days in the form of bible studies and prayer meetings. As an expression of their faith, children fantasize about attending church services.

> *I will go to church and attend any church meetings. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)*

> *Then on Sunday, I'll go to church and then I'll go to China and visit Kim Jun Un. (Essay 3: girl 11 years).*

> *On Sunday, I will go to church to thank the God I serve for giving me my life (Essay 21: 12-13 years)*

In attending these services, children did not refer to their parents giving the impression that they are not there because of their parents but because it is their choice to be there. In this context, their relationship to God has nothing to do with adults' influence and positions them as in control of their faith. They also assign reasons for going as a form of appreciation and devotion to God. This devotion is also exhibited in putting up structural facilities for fellowship as in;

> *And also, I will like to build my own physical hospital, church and my own company (Essay 5: girl 10 years)*

> *I will have my own company **and churches**. (Essay 10: girl 10 years)*

Children's projection of building a church could refer to the idea of providing a place for worship for the public. It could also refer to their interest or aspiration in

taking up church business as a form of full-time work or being in control of church activities. In both cases, children portray themselves as serious believers by choice.

However, this devotion is not always in the public domain as, in some cases, children do not fancy going to church but it is situated in personal spiritual activities;

As for church is my hobby not to attend but I will pay my debt in my church, offer money to develop my church. (Essay 26: girl 12-13 years)

This emphasizes the perspective of choice in how children practice spirituality in that in situations where they do not engage in public rituals, they are knowledgeable in ways to still practice their religion.

Personal rituals

Personal rituals are activities that individuals engage in as affirmative to their faith and a kind of lifestyle whose engagements occur both in the conscious and the subconscious. They are not necessarily structured as in church services but are practiced in conformity to individuals' schedules and convictions. They include praying at different times and for different reasons, supporting the church financially, and a choice of holy lifestyle.

When it is 9:00 pm, I will recite the Lord's prayer and sing a few praises to God. I will also read the bible a little before I sleep. (Essay 45: 12-13 years)

To continue my perfect life, when I wake up early in the morning, I will pray in my room before I come out from the room. (Essay 20: girl 12 years)

Secondly, I will pay my offerings and tithes in huge amount of money to develop my church and also spread Christianity. With this perfect life, I will not stop preaching the word of God as usual. (Essay 27: 12-13 years)

Although sometimes parents may engage children in family devotions, the focus here is more on the personal level and again, on choice. This reinforces the notion that children know and understand these rituals as important to their spirituality and they oust the adult factor by personalizing them and instituting them as their own.

Children understand their relationship with God in the hierarchical order of God being the all-sufficient and they being insufficient and thus in need of the provisions of God. This is evident in their focus on God as a source of hope for both their present needs and their future.

> *Just like everything is sure to have problems, when a problem arises in my perfect life, I will pray, seek advice and try to solve it. To wrap up, all I want my perfect life to be is a happy, free and creative life. I am aware that I may not attain this perfect life, but I pray that God will help to improve my present life day by day. (Essay 22: 12-13 years)*

> *And I know the almighty God, will help me live a perfect life in future. Is just faith, believe that you have to get in order for you to stay focus in life. I have the faith and believe that God will help me live a perfect life in future. (Essay 20: girl 12 years)*

In this too, children acknowledge lapses in human life which could be taken care of only by God. A typical example is a hope for the future which is not yet known but seen as inevitable and in which problems are anticipated. They are aware of the inevitability of problems even in their fantasy and focus on God as the only solution.

The various stance from which the children present spiritual activities in their fantasies indicate that such activities are very important to them in their real lives as well as in their ideal childhood. There is also the indication that children possess the ability to relate to God in ways that they understand without the influence of adults.

4.2.10.   Philosophies of life

In their fantasy of ideal childhood, children make references to some theories and ideas about life that reveal their understanding of what perfect life could be. Most of such ideas have got to do with what they understand as a perfect life. In this situation, there is a reference to the dictionary meaning of the word "perfect" and this is translated into life as a form of borderline or hedge within which ideal life should occur. These theories include perfect life as a state in which everything goes according to the individual's plans and /or situations in which one has no regrets as well as total control. However, perfect life is also treated with ambivalences where on one hand it depends totally on the individual, and on the other hand, it depends on the people around. It is

also viewed with a sense of temporality as life is a cycle of perfection and imperfection. The philosophies of life in the children's fantasy are classified into 3; (i) Perfect life as an individual construct (ii) Perfection as a communal construct and (iii) Perfect life as temporary

Perfect life as an individual construct

A perfect life is positioned based on the individuals' views of life, which are associated with emotional stability and the absence of problems. Emotional stability here means being in control of one's life, being happy, and having opportunities to do what one likes most.

> *To me a perfect life is a life when everything goes my way in my perfect life, my life would be normal but all the things that makes my bad day worse will change to make it perfect. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

> *In my Perfect life, I want my life to go according to my plans. (Essay 9: girl 10 years)*

> *A perfect life is a life that will make me lose all my problems and make me feel comfortable. (Essay 11: boy 10 years)*

In this situation, individuals who will be hindrances are exempted from the individual's life, including people from the immediate family. In this perspective, children position themselves at the center of their world with everything revolving around them.

> *I don't think my life is perfect at all! Not in my terms anyway. A perfect life is supposed to be a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutely nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents and no annoying siblings. (Essay 32)*

This position also presupposes there is the availability of everything that children will need and /or desire. Does that mean that children with this perception will be alone in their perfect lives as in being solitary? In fantasy, children plan to spend a lot of time playing with friends, going out, and having fun, hence, the individual construct does not necessarily mean being solitary but rather having others in their control and making them do what will make them (children) happy. Hence, the individual construct of a perfect life here could also refer to being in control of the people in their lives.

Perfect life as a communal construct

This is directly in contrast to perfection as an individual construct because perfect life is seen as a communal activity. It depends on the people around and the activities they engage in. In this context, socialization among people is very key to perfect life and everyone works for the happiness of others.

> *My perfect life would be selfish if things only go my way. So my way and everyone's way will add spice to my perfect life. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

> *To begin with, a perfect life is a type of living where by a person gains his/her freedom, peace, good health and always enjoy with his/her friends he/she finds him/her self among them and gets the love that he/she requires. As very human being has feelings sometimes, people needs some kind of love from others. All what I have mentioned above, anyone who lives a perfect life can't live a perfect life without a single of what I have mentioned above. (Essay 20: girl 12 years)*

It is based on the idea that no one is an island and everyone needs someone for one reason or another. Additionally, there is the promotion of everyone's interest in such a way that everyone is happy. This perception positions children as aware of their need for others and the need to sacrifice for others too.

Perfect life as temporary

The idea of a perfect life is seen to be a temporary condition as conflict is part of human nature and for that matter part of life. Thus, although perfect life is desired, there is the understanding that it is temporary or even momentarily.

> *I have had so many days both horrible, entertaining and uplifting days. My view of a perfect day is a day without problems, worries and no wrong acts. It is a day of exploring the world, having fun, chilling with pals and eating and enjoying anything of my choice. Perfect days never seem to exist in this life. Just when everything seems to be going on well, something bumps in. In one way or the other, everyone has a perfect day, funny moments and friendly moments. (Essay 32: girl 12-13 years)*

> *I would like to say that in everyone's perfect life there will be ups and downs but still if the person is determined to have a perfect life, the*

person can have it, even the bible says the hands that doesn't work, doesn't eat. (Essay 6: 10-11 years)

In these quotes, perfect life is portrayed as not permanent and life is seen as a continuous cycle of happiness and sadness, good and bad, easy and difficult. This is so because of individual differences and the fact that humans depend on each other. Thus, one could be up today and down the next.

The perfect life is treated with ambivalence where on one hand, its existence is situated in the abilities of the individual and on the other as a result of a communal effort. It is also believed to be an illusion which at best could be temporary and the real happiness as envisaged in a perfect life depends on how the individual negotiates the events in life.

Conclusion

Children's time and how they spend it has been the focus of not only local authorities as in the family but also of global bodies. This is evident in policies seeking to shape how children spend their time. In conceptualizing children's time use, sleep. leisure, work, and education have been used as parameters (Vogler et al, 2009). However, most conceptions about children's time use often tend to be Western in nature (Kleeberg-Niepage, 2007) and based less on children's imaginations or even on their realities.

In reflecting interpretation, it has come to the fore that as they fantasize about their ideal childhood, children focus on particular issues and topics that they deem important to them. Their perceptions and meanings they attach to these topics indicate that they understand life as both a personal and communal construct. Life as a personal issue is seen in their position as taking decisions that concern them and practically taking control of their lives. As a social issue, they acknowledge the influence or presence of key personalities with whom they engage in relationships at diverse levels. Their communal view of childhood as indicated by the common themes that run through their essays indicates childhood is a universal construct with similar needs. However, they view these themes from different perspectives based on different influences in their present lives which shows that they experience childhood differently and these differences are mostly orchestrated by different environmental influences chief of which is the economic environment they find themselves in. However, despite all the

differences impacting their fantasies, their focus unilaterally points to diverse experiences as part of and common to their ideal childhood. In addition, even in fantasy, children show awareness of realities that are part of human nature and as such cannot be eliminated (even in fantasy where everything could be possible). The position of children, in this case, as in the case of adults too, is to face the problems head-on and be adequately prepared for any eventualities.

This chapter has discussed children's explicit knowledge of what they deem to be ideal childhood, however, there is more to what they know than what they have revealed. As social beings, how they relate to other social actors and how they reveal such relationships will further deepen knowledge about their perceptions of childhood. The next chapter discusses their subconscious stance that affect the meaning they attach to the themes discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Sense-genetic types formation

Overview

This chapter discusses the sense-genetic types identified in the data. This is done by moving the inquiry from the level of what is the participants' fantasy of an ideal childhood to the level of how they revealed their knowledge of an ideal childhood. The analysis brings into focus the relationship between children and other social actors and how they carry on such relationships. Their modus operandi in dealing with the other social actors is reconstructed as a framework for their perception of ideal childhood in Ghana.

5.   Formation of Sense-genetic types

As social beings, children are expected to fit into the society where they find themselves. In addition, society has ways of socializing children so that they will not turn out to be social misfits. In the socialization process, Ghanaian social norms and for that matter, the average Ghanaian adult requires obedience from the younger generation. This value fosters interdependence and collaboration in the parent-child relationship, where children do as they are told (Boakye Boaten, 2010; Sam, 2001) and parents provide both basic and secondary affordable needs of children (Ansong et al, 2018). This relationship does not only serve to keep the basic core of the society (family) functioning as it should but also serves the function of socializing children, developing in them, the character and values that they will need as adults in the future. This relationship, if successful, integrates responsibility and reciprocity in children as well as a sense of obligation towards others such as siblings (Oppong 2006). Research results by Boakye-Boaten (2010), Twum-Danso, (2009) and Twum-Danso Imoh (2012, 2013) reveal that parents in Ghana wish their children to understand that they earn their keep by being obedient and performing duties assigned to them within diverse social contexts. Some of these duties are planned to affect children on a wider scale through social institutions like formal education (school) while others are more domestic and policed by parents and caregivers, such as household chores.

Although the focus of this research is on the children's fantasy of ideal childhood, their attitudes towards the existing social norms as they narrate their childhood fantasy is of prime interest. That is, how they talk about their fantasy creates

a different level of meaning which is accessed by the documentary method. Thus, although what they talk about, such as sleep, school activities, leisure, relationships, etc., are of interest, the focal point here, is how they approach these topics. This issue of "how" results in the formation of sense-genetic types as explained in *3.5.3.1*. Hence, this chapter will discuss the different frameworks by which Ghanaian children relate their fantasies about their ideal childhood.

The age of the respondents in this current study is the age at which the prime responsibility that society expects of them is to go to school. Hence, most, if not all other activities that they engage in, are planned in harmony with school activities, so that, the Ghanaian society, represented here as the average Ghanaian adult, expects that children and young people will wake up early, engage in cleaning activities around the house, prepare for school and get to school early to also take part in all activities at school. Secondly, it is expected that as children live with adults, they will be obedient and adhere to adults' demands and instructions in all other activities that they engage in.

In analyzing the orientation frameworks by which children approach thematic areas in their ideal childhood, it was observed that they positioned themselves from five main approaches or perspectives. These approaches are their modus operandi (patterns of behavior or methods of approaching the themes) as compared to existing social norms or constructions of children and childhood or general/public discussion on those themes. The results of the comparison are their orientation frameworks of ideal childhoods and these are reconstructed as (a) the obedient child; childhoods conforming to adults' or social constructions/conventions of childhood (b) the grumpy child; childhoods complaining about but conforming to adults' constructions of childhood (c) the autonomous child; childhoods diverting or charting new or own ideas about childhoods (d) the convenient child; childhoods conforming to some adults' construction of childhoods while charting their own childhoods and (e) the rebellious child; childhoods confronting existing norms of childhoods.

5.1. The obedient child (Type 1); childhood conforming to adults' or social constructions/conventions of childhood

The modus operandi of young people with the conformity type orientation is to do things according to adults' expectations and even whatever they fantasize to do

outside of those expectations, is not very unusual or unexpected in the larger Ghanaian society. Five young people make up this type.

Of the six themes found to run through the children's fantasy, the participants with the conformity orientation type emphasize engaging religiously in daily routine activities (waking up early, performing household chores, going to school early), relating to different people, and engaging in leisure activities that are mostly very domestic. Their protests are more like pleas and they espouse a closer relationship with God. Finally, they have no elaborate eating schedules or preferences for exotic food habits. The modus operandi of conformity runs across these themes and based on the commonalities in their fantasy of ideal childhood, seven areas of conformity are reconstructed; (i) conformity as the only option (ii) selective conformity (iii) conformity as means to an end (iv) conformity as a coping strategy (v) conformity as a process for change (vi) conformity due to indifference and (vii) conformity as dependence.

5.1.1   Conformity as the only option

Young people in this type submit to adults' rules despite the discomforts and difficulties that they may feel in the process. The explanation in chapter 2.4. gives a clear indication that the processes that children go through in performing daily routine activities are very rigorous, energy-sapping, and sometimes very uncomfortable. Despite all these hassles, all the young people in this type fantasize about waking up early to get to school early as required. They indicate that they understand the demands of school discipline and position themselves to work harder to adhere to them even in their fantasy. Hence, in this regard, they conform to adults' or social expectations of waking up early, performing household chores, and getting to school on time. They go through all these activities despite the discomforts and inconveniences.

Their position could have emanated from several factors which may include a situation of helplessness or winning adults' favor or admiration. For instance, adults hold the trump card when it comes to the adult-child relationship and if children do not conform to adults' expectations and rules, then they will not take care of their (children's) needs. Also, household chores are responsibilities that are shared by all family members, and children who perform their share religiously are acclaimed to be "good" and hardworking; an "award" most children will like to possess. Thus, their position in conforming is a result of a lack of options or alternatives to achieve social expectations of them.

5.1.2.   Selective conformity

The idea of conforming to adults' rules and expectations runs across the themes and although a majority of children in this type conform, some select areas to conform. This selectiveness is evident in situations where some themes are not mentioned at all. Thus, whereas all of them conform to waking up early with the focus of going to school early, not all of them conform in the same way to performing household chores.

> *I would like to wake up early in the around 6:00am and sleep late in the evening around 8:00. When I wake-up I will brush my teeth, bath and dress. When I am done, I plan to go to School (Essay 17: girl 10 years)*

> *In my perfect life,* **I wish to wake up at 4 O'clock am and perform my morning activitie***s. (Essay 44: 12-13 years)*

> *In the morning I will tell my servant to sweep the compound so I will come to school early (Essay 21: 12-13 years)*

Hence, it is obvious that though they conform, sometimes they do selective conformity by choosing particular areas to conform to. Apart from doing selective conformity, they also approach conformity from two different perspectives as seen in performing household chores; that is, they position themselves as having a choice between performing chores themselves as expected or getting the chores done using alternatives like hired help (e.g., servants). Their perspective here is that the result is more important than how the result is arrived at. Thus, they do not fantasize about a childhood without such responsibilities as household chores but rather fantasize about different alternatives to performing them.

Although they all conform to some of these activities, it is their divergent orientation to this conformity that sets them apart from each other. These differences do not make them different from each other but rather diversify their orientation on how the same thing will be done in different ways. The analogy is that it is expected of children to take up certain domestic responsibilities in addition to the social ones and children in this type conform (in their own ways) to at least three of these expectations.

The social responsibilities come mostly in the form of actively engaging in school and school-related activities. At the age of between 10 and 13 years, society expects that children will be in school and take part in all school activities. In conforming to social norms, all the children in this orientation type conform to going

to school and getting there early. As they go to school early, it is expected that they take part in the cleaning activities that precede actual classroom work.

I will come to school early to work in the school and sweep my class.
(Essay 21: 12-13 years)

In Ghanaian schools, actual classroom work commences at 8 a.m. but, school children are expected to be in school by 7 a.m. as explained in *2.4.* above. One main reason is for them to sweep their classrooms and the school compound before daily lessons begin. Children with this orientation also conform to such social expectations, however, here too, they do selective conformity as some conform to going to school but not to taking part in clean-up activities in school.

The attitude of selective conformity may be influenced by particular conjunctive spaces of experience. This is so because this attitude is common to the group from the lower middle-class background. It is possible that in the reality, they do not engage in such activities, hence, naturally, they do not envisage undertaking those activities in their fantasy of ideal childhood. Those from the working-class who undertake those activities in their realities might have internalized the need to do total conformity. It is most probable that engaging in those activities comes naturally to them.

5.1.3.   Conformity as means to an end

Although they conform, other dynamics influence that stance. For instance, they do not conform just to please adults or society but more essentially, they conform to such social expectations of children as in going to school because that conformity promises achievement or fulfillment of a future dream.

When I am done, I plan to go to School I want to go to school because I
want to finish education and get a job to live a Perfect Life. (Essay 17:
girl 10 years)

For children with this orientation, going to school is a means to an end. Hence, the main reason for going to school is to get a job in the future to live a perfect life. However, it was observed that children with this orientation do not give an elaborate description of their school activities. Their main interest is in the future result of their being in school and activities that will go into this preparation for the future is not really of much interest here. The idea is to conform to all expectations so that that end could be achieved. Thus, there is no elaboration on actual day-to-day school activities.

However, there is a fantasy about something that does not conform to any known expectation in Ghanaian basic schools; sending mobile phones to school.

> *On Monday, I want to come to school with my iphone and my tablet so that I can learn with it so that I will be clever in class always. (Essay 21: 12-13 years)*

The fantasy, however, points to an end that conforms to a social expectation of children learning and becoming clever. In this fantasy, mobile phones would be used purposively for research and thus, will not get in the way of school work. The new curriculum being implemented in Ghana aims at developing certain core and transferable skills in the learners. One of such skills is digital literacy which can be fully implemented by the use of mobile phones. Children are expected to be innovative and creative in their learning process and although the idea of mobile phones does not conform to social expectations now, the young people here aim to use their mobile phones as ICT tools to enhance their academic work.

5.1.4.   Conformity as a coping strategy

Another reason for their conformity is to avoid punishment, especially at school. Hence, conformity here is a means by which they cope with adults' rules and regulations. The implicit knowledge here is to engage in all activities in the school environment as expected without attracting punishment. Punishment, as part of the school setup, is frowned on by the children in this type but instead of kicking against it, they intend to conform to expectations in a way that they will not attract it. However, in a situation where they offend in any way, they fantasize about not getting punished. With this idea, children with this type of orientation, position childhood, and for that matter life, as not infallible. Thus, although they orient themselves to conform to social norms, they also make provision for situations where human error is foreseeable.

Another area where they conform as a coping strategy is in waking up very early to perform all their household chores. The average Ghanaian adult would not want children to take it for granted that they will be catered for whether they are obedient or not. One correctional measure that is used on children is to withdraw the "services" that they desire most. It is also on record that adults "threaten" to not pay children's school fees or give feeding money if they do not obey. Hence, children in this type go to all

lengths to conform to adults' expectations so that such "services" will not be withdrawn.

Their interest in school is another form of coping strategy. For children with this orientation type, school represents the only way to gain a good future and probably become independent. Hence, they focus a lot of their energies on working extra hard to achieve the best in school both morally and academically. Thus, conformity to adults' ideals about school is their only hope for great achievements in the future. This is reinforced by the fact that children are most often made aware that if they are not obedient at school, they will not perform well in school and they will not get good jobs in the future.

5.1.5. Conformity as a process for change

Young people with this orientation do not only conform to social norms but also fantasize about changing to some of the norms. In this scenario, their conformity is a means by which they suggest or "recommend" changes. Their reconstructed implicit knowledge consists of not rebelling against the existing norms but suggesting ways of making those norms better for themselves after they have fully adhered to them. A typical example is when they suggest ways of making their class and the teaching-learning process more lively and "bearable" for them. Implicitly, they find the teaching techniques of their teachers faulty and probably not effective, however, they still opt to go to school and take part in the lessons.

Another means by which conformity is used as a means for change is in family shopping. Children in type 1 do not enforce personal shopping sprees even though they yearn to be given a choice in what they want. Instead, they remain agreeable to family shopping with the hope that one day, they will be allowed to choose for themselves. This stance gives the perception that others are in control of their lives and they can only allow themselves to be carried along until such a time that recognition is given to them and what they desire.

5.1.6. Conformity due to indifference

Young people with this type of orientation display a lot of indifference towards some activities that children in other types pay attention to. For instance, they pay very little attention to food and eating in their fantasy of ideal childhood unlike others in other orientation types. The majority of them did not fantasize about food and any

special eating habits. Only one mentions food and eating as a significant part of the ideal childhood and even in this situation, it is mentioned just in the passing. Similar indifference is seen in their fantasy of leisure activities where they settle mostly for watching T.V. at home. This form of leisure activity is very usual for the Ghanaian child since television is the commonest form of entertainment in most households. Since children with this type of orientation conform to social or adults' construction of childhood, they do not complain about or are not bored with the leisure activities in the home. However, knowing young adolescents and how they tend to be very active and explorative, it could be concluded that their conformity is more of indifference. This indifference could arise from the knowledge that their parents cannot afford to give them more than they already have. On the other hand, it could also mean that they are unable to imagine beyond what is usual to them. Hence, they conform to whatever is expected of them.

Although the implicit knowledge of young people with this type of orientation can be considered to be liberal towards social or adults expectation, it does not mean that they cannot fantasize about leisure outside the home environs. Hence, despite their supposed indifference, they exhibit the propensity to want to be outdoors too but even with that, they situate that fantasy to be congruent with what is expected of them, such as outdoor leisure activities to be in the form of school excursions.

5.1.7. Conformity as dependence

The implicit knowledge of young people whose fantasy conforms to adults' or the social construction of childhood points to the orientation that they understand their dependency and will adhere to it even in their fantasy, especially, when it comes to earning money. None of the children with this orientation mentioned any form of money-earning activities. However, they indicate spending money, but even their choice shopping list conforms to expectations as most of the things they idealize buying when they go shopping are mostly school items. These things do not fall outside of what parents will buy for their children.

Choosing things for themselves is very typical of most young people. The difference with the children whose fantasies conform to adults' expectations is that the things they choose to shop for are mostly what adults would purchase for them. Additionally, they do not fantasize about alienating their family when it comes to shopping or spending money but they engage in family shopping where the family

needs are the overarching focus. This shows that, for them, conforming to adults' ideals also means depending on adults for everything they did. Ironically, children are not expected to engage in money-earning activities, especially those that could be hazardous. Hence, confirming by depending totally on adults is a social expectation of children and with this view, their relationship with adults is characterized by high dependency, especially in financial terms.

This dependence is also evident in their spiritual activities in which they focus on God as the all-sufficient and themselves as the insufficient. Thus, in their spiritual activities, they focus on God as the one who will solve all their problems and provide whatever they need. With this insight, they tend to acknowledge the inevitability of problems in life and do not blame others for their woes.

However, type 1 children also position themselves as being dependable, especially with the aged adult in the family such as the grandparent. This dependency, however, has more to do with the provision of care services for ailing grandparents. The reconstructed implicit knowledge is that everyone has his/her usefulness which is characterized by individual abilities. Thus, despite their high dependency on adults, they also have something that they can offer back to the adult world.

In the conformity type, children idealize a childhood where children conform to adults' ideals of the Ghanaian child who is obedient, grateful, hardworking, and religious and accepts his or her dependency on parents or other adults. Their fantasy is characterized by a detailed description of daily activities where they do what they are told to do. In positioning themselves as the epitome of an obedient child, they conform to adults' ideas from diverse perspectives. The intrinsic principle behind their conformity as reconstructed from their implicit knowledge is that adults know better than them and thus, whatever they are asked to do is the best for them. By this, they comply with an inferior status of the child in comparison to adults and this makes them accept whatever situation they find themselves in as normal. This is, however, not the same with children in other types with similar perceptions of conformity. For instance, while children in this type position conformity as a reaction to helplessness with little or no complaints, type 2 children also focus on conformity but in a way that shows that they are not happy with their childhood.

5.2. The grumpy child (Type 2); childhoods complaining about but conforming to adults' constructions of childhood

Affiliation in this type is fantasies of ideal childhood that complain about existing childhood constructions but still conform in most ways. The sample is made up of four young people. The implicit knowledge reconstructed in this type revolves around the theory of "obey before complaining" where children are expected to do what is expected of them first before protesting. Hence, their modus operandi is doing things as adults expect but complaining in the process. With this orientation, there is an engagement with issues of (i) conforming and complaining as a means to attract sympathy (ii) conforming by decreasing the comfort zone but complaining about it (iii) conforming and complaining as nothing is enough (iv) conforming and complaining as a means to escape to freedom

5.2.1. Conforming and complaining as a means to attract sympathy

Children in type 2 complain about almost every activity they involve in or about everyone they have to relate to. Their position is mostly to portray themselves as victims and they do so in a way that will attract sympathizers. A typical example is seen in their juxtaposing sleep with school activities and blaming household chores for getting to school late.

> *In my perfect life, I would like to wake up at 5:30am, so that I will go to school earlier. Some of the problems I face is that, I arrive at school around 8:15am even though I wake up at 6:00 am. I have house chores to do in the morning. (Essay 11: boy 10 years)*

The complaint here is against a triangular relationship between the three activities (sleep, household chores, and school activities) and this complaint is made in such a way that children will be seen as suffering because they have a lot of work to do. With issues of sleep, they try to adapt to what is expected of them even, while subtly, complaining about it. This is evident in the high demand for enough sleep, however, compulsory activities like going to school get in the way with the blame on activities like household chores. However, the complaint is preceded by a description of efforts being undertaken to solve the problem. This positions child in this group as "sufferers" despite all that they are doing to conform to adults' rules. This is meant to attract sympathy.

Another such search for sympathy is in their position in relating to others where they portray themselves as "good" and others as problematic. Hence, when something goes wrong in a relationship or when conflicts arise, observers will be sympathetic towards them because they are the good ones.

5.2.2. Conforming by decreasing the comfort zone but complaining about it

In their philosophy of life, young people in type 2 aspire for a life without any pressure and explain perfect life as one in which they lose all their problems. However, one strategy they use to enforce conformity is to decrease their comfort zone (which is sleep time) to make time for what is expected of them.

> *I am a ten (10) year old boy and I would like to write about my perfect*
>
> *life. A perfect life is a life that will make me lose all my problems and*
>
> *make me feel comfortable. (Essay 11: boy 10 years*

This depicts a strong ambivalence and it is problematic because it goes against their very philosophy of life. So, why do they do it? This is a clear indication of their implicit knowledge of conforming but not willingly and being grumpy about it. Decreasing the comfort zone gives an illustration of adults as demanding and callous and in so doing their grumpiness is justified.

This same sentiment is revealed in their relationship with others as they try to portray themselves as the receptive type and others as at fault. In friendship, they claim to want friends who are not quarrelsome, gossip, and tease, however, they will go along even with friends who tease a little. The implication here is that the attitudes they claim to abhor are rather what others find in them and thus they do not have friends and that is why they have to lower their "standards" to get friends. In this case, they decrease their comfort area just so they could make friends.

In this type, school activities are placed within the peripheral of the perfect life and are addressed as after-thoughts. The initial focus is on activities like traveling and other leisure activities and the orientation towards school is that it cannot be escaped, so although other activities precede it, children of this type still fantasize about going to school early as expected. The perception here is that since it is expected of them to be in school, they have no alternative but to reduce the activities that they desire most to make way for school activities. Thus, contrasting images are associated with school here. More positive images include excelling at school as a form of personal satisfaction

and social acceptance and going on camping with friends and good teachers. However, these are activities that will bring them into the limelight of peers and adults and will give them satisfaction and happiness. Therefore, in this situation, decreasing the comfort zone is meant for their benefit.

On the other hand, school is also associated with fighting, teasing, insulting, and intimidation. However, these attitudes are not associated with only others but also with the complainants themselves. Therefore, decreasing their comfort zone to accommodate others also means changing their negative attitudes for better ones that will also make others accommodate them.

5.2.3. Conforming but complaining as nothing is enough

Children in type 2 could be described as grievously dissatisfied with almost anything they are involved in including issues with sleep, household chores, and relationships and this makes them very grumpy.

In issues of sleep, they have to reduce their sleeping time to conform to adults' demands on performing household chores before going to school. However, not getting enough sleep could have very dire consequences on children's health which in a way affects adults' life and daily activities since they will have to spend time with their sick children both at home and in the hospital. Thus, although children here may be irritated about having to reduce sleep time, their implicit knowledge could be to protect themselves from sleep-related deficiencies and, in the end, protect the time and finances of adults who are responsible for their upkeep.

They complain about every person in their childhood and fantasize about a change in the way they relate to them. This is because some of these people like parents and teachers, hold the position of power over them and thus fantasize about an ideal childhood where there will be power-sharing between them and these significant others. Others like friends and siblings, who do not have any kind of control over them possess attitudes that are not desired in ideal childhood.

> *… in my perfect life, I will not wish to have a teacher who likes insulting, canning and doing things which is boring. … My perfect life will be ruined if this happens; my siblings stick around me every time which means not getting some privacy. My parents always making choices for me which are just small. Not getting my own bedroom. Friends*

gossiping, backbiting, teasing too much and insulting. (Essay 7: girl 10 years)

One can only change people and situations when one possesses the power to do so and children in this type fantasize about possessing this power. Thus, in their fantasy, children will change how all these people behave to make them do what is suitable and appreciated; teachers will not insult, cane and will not be boring. Siblings will not intrude on privacy, friends will not gossip, tease or be insulting and parents will not be so controlling. Privacy and autonomy will be very much respected in this ideal childhood.

Just like with other types, parents are positioned as financiers of children's fantasy of expensive living. However, this type displays ambivalence towards relating to them; on one hand, they fantasize about a perfect life without them. On the other hand, they fantasize about having them in their perfect lives because they are to provide money for their expenses. This indicates that young people understand their position as a dependent. Thus, their fantasy is to reduce the influence of such adults to the barest minimum. As much as they acknowledge the superiority of adults, they do not position themselves as inferior but more as victims.

In relationships that do not require those power relations, children in this type make use of coping strategies to be more accommodating to others such as accepting friends who tease but just a little. They also position themselves as having the power to choose the kind of people who will be part of their perfect lives. Therefore, although they complain about some of the people they relate to, they still include them in their fantasy probably because they need them. However, whatever is found undesirable about those people will change to be perfect for the ideal childhood. In situations where this change is not possible, coping strategies are employed to salvage the situation. One of such strategies is to channel one's attention and strength into academic work which gives hope for a better life.

The reconstructed implicit knowledge of young people here is that they yearn to be autonomous which is quite far-fetched in their present situation. Thus, they complain about whoever and whatever they engage with which does not give them that status, however, they manage to cope with any situation they find themselves in. This way, they are more victims in almost every situation.

5.2.4.   Conforming and complaining as a means to escape to freedom

Children of this type conform but complain about adults' ideals of childhood and for this purpose, they tend to prefer being far from adults' influence. This is evident in their giving a lot of attention to outdoor leisure activities like traveling, going to the library, shopping, and outdoor sports and in relationships, they choose to be closer to their friends and teachers they deem to be good.

These are opportunities to escape from adults, especially, parents' attention, and get the freedom they desire. Watching television which is very common in the other Types is almost not engaged in with this Type. This is because watching television as a leisure activity usually takes place in the home, where parents are present to referee children's activities. Hence, Type 2 children fantasize about leisure activities that parents do not have control over. This way, they portray themselves as victims and adults as intruding and overbearing but who can be escaped through clever maneuvering.

Friends and peers tend to be less controlling and this makes young people of this type want closer relationships with them. This way, they are free to do and be whatever they desire to be. In the situation of teachers, they are specific about the kind of teachers they want to be with. The adjective "good" is relative and in this situation, they define what "good" means as "good teachers". With their yearning to be autonomous, "good teachers" could be teachers who allow them to do things on their own with very minimal intrusion. Thus, going out with such adults and friends is an escape from the controlling conditions they find, especially, at home.

School is also used as bait to escape other responsibilities like performing household chores since adults are interested in children excelling at school. The reconstructed implied knowledge in this type is to continue to conform to what is expected while looking for any possible means to escape. Hence, they idealize a life where they conform to one expectation and based on that attempt to forgo another. Children in this Type possess this attitude because they are aware that they do not have many options available to them and that adults are unrelenting in their position of power. Additionally, to emphasize their need for personal freedom, they fantasize about a lot of outdoor school activities such as school excursions, camping, and outdoor school sporting activities. All these are opportunities for an escape to freedom.

This Type proposes coping strategies to bring stability to existing constructions of childhood because adults are seen to possess higher superiority based on experience, chronological age, or power relations. This stance tends to defy personal logic with only one attention which is to the voice of the adult. With this disadvantaged position, children with this type of orientation desire privacy as having their own bedroom and private space. Probably, it is in this space that they have the freedom to be themselves.

The protests of children with this orientation are more like complaints against what is going on in their real life. They complain about corporal punishment, verbal abuse, and pressure at home and in school. Their orientation is to seek solutions by making suggestions and not necessarily be imposing, however, in most cases, they end up with strategies to cope with the situation rather than change it. This is why they yearn to escape from the situation.

It could be concluded that children with this orientation forgo personal happiness to do what is expected of them albeit complaining. With this stance, children position themselves as having little or no alternatives even in fantasy. The position of being helpless is so ingrained that even in fantasy, they could only fathom complaining and adaptability strategy. As a result, they adhere to the social positioning of children as inferior to adults not based on intellectual abilities but rather on social power, where that power is by the order of chronological age. Thus, their search for autonomy is restricted by other social actors whose advantage over them is by being older than them. This is very unlike young people with type 3 orientation who do not allow chronological age to be a restrictive factor to the autonomy.

5.3. The autonomous child (Type 3); childhoods diverting or charting new or own ideas about childhood

Young people with this type of orientation have fantasies about ideal childhood that divert from the average Ghanaian adult's principles or construction about childhood. Their modus operandi is to develop their own ideas about how to achieve what society or the average Ghanaian adult expects of them. To divert from the norm of ideals of childhood means to go contrary to what is stipulated for children of this age. Ten children make up this type.

Analysis of the data from the essays reveals that the young people within these cases view childhood from the viewpoint of adults' activities. That is, their focus is on

positioning themselves as adults with all the perceived freedom associated with adulthood. This freedom mostly includes being in total control of their lives and being autonomous of adults' influence. However, diversion from adults' ideals of childhood does not mean creating a different world and institutions with their accompanying norms and principles just for them. On the contrary, their fantasy recognizes the existing social institutions but where they divert is in the modi operandi of these social institutions. So, for instance, they accept the idea of school but not the way school is run. Hence, they fantasize about having school as a form of formal education but based on their principles of time, teaching-learning activities, rewards and punishments as well as relationships with teachers.

From the data, it is realized that the young people with this type of orientation propose diversion from adults' ideals of childhood by leveraging on different levels of autonomy. Firstly, they indicate autonomy where they are aware that conformity is expected of them as in formal education. Secondly, they exhibit autonomy within their "private life" (i.e., what they see as affecting them personally but where significant others have control over such as issues of sleep, leisure, performing household chores, eating, and spiritual activities). Thirdly, they divert from adults' principles and constructions of childhood even in an understanding of their dependency as in the issues of relationships, protests, earning, and spending money. Finally, they exhibit autonomy through reflective practice by focusing on certain philosophies and basing their arguments on their experiences or those of others.

Concerning the themes identified across the cases and the orientation framework of diversion from adults' expectations and constructions of childhood, five areas of diversion are reconstructed; namely (i) diversion as equalizer (ii) diversion to show difference (iii) diversion as change and (iv) diversion as creativity

5.3.1. Diversion as an equalizer

Children in this type divert from expectation because they perceive the diversion as a means by which they become equal with adults. In their view, adults do things the way they want and nothing dominates or influences their decisions. This, they perceive, as a mark of adulthood and maturity and they position themselves in this way. Hence, although they did not create a new world of their own, they develop their ideas to do what is expected of them.

162

As explained in *2.4.*, every Ghanaian child between the ages of ten and thirteen is expected to be in school at least by 7 a.m. Hence, it is expected that they will wake up before 7 a.m. and engage in activities of getting ready to go to school. However, the young people in this type propose rather liberal sleep habits that do not conform to those expectations. They divert from what is expected of them by fantasizing about waking up earliest at 7:30 a.m. and latest at noon. Their time of waking indicates a complete diversion from what is expected of them. This is an indication that they want to do things according to their own ideas just like adults do.

Also, there is a clear disconnect between their time of waking up and the time they are supposed to go to school. When it comes to the issue of going to school, children in this type are divided in their perception as some included school in their fantasy while others did not. However, attending school does not affect their choice of sleep habits. Hence, they choose when to wake up and when to go to school without any recognition of the rules of the school concerning attendance and punctuality. Thus, regarding waking up in this type, it does not matter whether they will go to school or not, they choose to wake up later than expected. This shows a sense of ambivalence in that, the school as an institution has rules and regulations governing its activities and those who join the institution are expected to adhere to them. However, the children with this orientation type who wish to go to school wish that the school changes its time settings to accommodate them. Just like children are expected to adjust to laid down rules, regulations, and expectations, young people here wish adults to adjust to what they (children) want to do with their lives. This is a prerogative of adults, especially in the Ghanaian setting.

Another idea by which children in this type position themselves as equal to adults is by putting themselves in control of what they eat. That is, they choose what to eat, whom to cook it, and even who to serve it. Being in charge here is evident in giving instructions (even to mothers) as to what to prepare and how to prepare it. To reinforce the idea of being in charge, the usual breakfast is described as "sugar with water and bread" which is inappreciable, and to avoid such foods for breakfast, they fantasized about being in charge of their food. This is a clear diversion from what the average Ghanaian adult expects from children. It is expected that children will accept and appreciate what is given to them, especially when food is so expensive and adults have to work very hard to put food on the table.

The average Ghanaian child between ten and thirteen years old is not expected to work to earn a living. On the contrary, they are expected to be in school and depend on their caregivers to provide for their needs. They are particularly expected to accept what is provided to them and appreciate the efforts made for them. The attitude of children whose ideal childhood deviates from adults' constructions of childhood towards earning and spending money is that they will work to earn their own money. They possess a huge appetite for shopping for very expensive commodities which is a kind of leisure activity for them. Their flair for such commodities is probably what informs their desire to work to earn their own money. In this case, money is seen as something that sets adults apart from children and which sort of makes adults more powerful than children. Thus, earning money is positioned as a means by which children can become equal with adults.

However, their view on earning money is quite ambivalent because, even though they fantasize about earning money, they still look up to their parents for money to spend in the form of allowances. The implied knowledge here is that children understand their dependence on their caregivers, however, being autonomous in nature makes them want to do things in their way which the adults they depend on may not afford or not allow them to. Hence, when they earn their own money, they can spend it in any way that they wish. This is a clear diversion from the ideals of adults toward children because even when children make money, most often, their spending is directed or monitored by their parents or caregivers. Additionally, some of the merchandise they fantasize about possessing are mostly adult-oriented. For instance, they want to possess expensive cars of different models at the same time, however, none fantasize about getting a driving license which will inform their ability to drive. The implicit knowledge reconstructed here points to a childhood where children can have anything they want irrespective of financial constraints. As far as these young people are concerned, there will be nothing like poverty that will prevent them from having what they want. This shows the picture of a more superior society where anything is possible, especially for children. The idea of being superior is seen where children are autonomous of adults' constraints and any dependence on them is by choice.

Children's fantasy of equality with adults is also evident in the kind of leisure activities they fantasize about. The commonest of their outdoor leisure activity is shopping which they embark on mostly on their own. Most of these shopping sprees

also take place abroad and the adventures described are mostly devoid of adults' direction or even involvement. This is a clear diversion from what a Ghanaian adult would expect. No parent or caregiver will allow young people to embark on such trips alone. Hence, this fantasy, although portraying children as capable of embarking on such escapades and thus portraying them as capable as adults, diverts from social norms. This is because young people are not expected to travel all by themselves. It is obvious too, that these young people are not aware of international travel issues such as applying for a visa and making flight arrangements. Probably, in their fantasy, all these bottle-necks will not exist and that makes their fantasized life superior to reality.

When it comes to shopping locally, the young people here still display a diversion from adults' expectations by going shopping for all kinds of items on their own. The most emphasis is on their doing these things all alone with no restrictions from adults. The reconstructed implicit knowledge of the children here is to portray themselves as independent of adults' influence; they can take care of themselves even as they involve in activities that they like and choose to do.

Another idea reconstructed from this implicit knowledge is their possessing the ability to influence people (especially celebrities). In reality, getting close to some celebrities is virtually impossible, however, such famous people can be influenced by others and these young people, whose fantasy deviates from adults' ideals, position themselves as possessing enough influence to "be featured in songs with popular musicians", "have lunch with the Queen of England" and "play soccer with international footballers".

Although their fantasy deviates from the ideals of the average Ghanaian adults, they also fantasize about engaging in usual leisure activities such as watching T.V., singing, playing video games, dancing, drawing, and general creative activities. These usual activities demystify their stance as being autonomous and "special". Hence, although they position themselves as being able to possess whatever they want, going wherever they desire and meeting with whomever they intend to, they still engage in "ordinary activities" which also make them ordinary children. That is, their extraordinary life does not take away their childhood. Despite their position as equal to adults, they remain children. They, therefore portray the image of childhood as being not inferior or even equal to, but superior to the childhood given to them and even superior to the average adult life.

5.3.2. Diverting to show that life is dynamic

The young people with this type of orientation divert from adults' expectations to show that life is dynamic and the same thing could be achieved by diverse means. In relating sleep to school, they propose very liberal sleep habits which divert from what is expected of them, however, they have in mind to go to school. In this case, they suggest different ways by which school could be organized. Thus, they advocate for school activities that will allow children to sleep late and still make it to school. The reconstructed implicit knowledge is that school time could be adjusted and the same objectives of school could be achieved. Their stance is that the process could change but the end could still be achieved. A typical example of change is the time that children want to spend at school. The indication here is for children to spend less time in school. On average, the Ghanaian child spends seven hours at school; hence, just an hour at school is a clear digression from the norm, however, this is meant to show that how school is organized could change.

With this stance, they position teachers as changing their style of teaching to what the learners desire and will make them appreciate school the more. Teachers are also expected to be more liberal with young people's shortcomings so that even when they break school rules and regulations, teachers will not punish them.

On the other hand, those who did not include the school in their perfect life but still fantasize about a good life perceive success in life as not only influenced by school. If the school, in time past, has been the only source of a successful life, the young people here position life as dynamic, and thus, other means of achieving this same success exist. Therefore, not including the school in their ideal childhood does not mean they will not be successful. On the contrary, they will find other means of achieving the same success.

When it comes to eating, they idealize changes to their eating habits and they propose very elaborate plans for food issues. Their fantasy about food borders on issues such as the quantity of food, the quality of food, and the nature of the food itself. They are also particular about who cooks and food services in general. Furthermore, they are very interested in eating (especially lunch) outside the home. A typical change to their food habit is the quantity of food they eat. However, the quantity they refer to is far more than an individual could consume at a sitting. Thus, the quantity is not necessary to satisfy their hunger but rather to probably change their status to having more than

necessary to eat and also more variety to choose from. Thus, their fantasy is characterized by a change from their present situation to a life of affluence which includes living in huge mansions. The idea of living in a mansion could be the genesis of having feasts even at breakfasts, which informs the number of food items on demand.

Children in this Type included relationships in their ideal childhood and they project a special relationship with their mothers but they inverted the order of dynamics in the relationships by putting themselves in control of every relationship they involve in. Thus, despite the fervency with which they want to draw closer to family, especially, their mothers, they prefer to live on their own, even in mansions purposely to avoid close family relationships in which adults may be in control. In situations where they have to bring in adults like parents, they position those adults as doing everything to please them. Hence, they are more on the demanding side while placing the adults in the position of giving to them. Also, in spending money, even though their parents provide the money, they are still in control of how the money is spent as all the things shopped for are particularly in their interest.

However, despite their being in control, they still position their parents as financiers. In fantasy, where children could have anything they desire, positioning their parents as financiers indicate that they understand their dependency and the extent to which they can be in control. Hence, although, they fantasize about change in who wields the power to control, their parents still have to provide for their needs.

In the same way, they position themselves as in charge of spiritual activities and they change the usual way of worship from being public rituals to ones that are personal. Spiritual activities such as church services are very rife in Ghana and the average Ghanaian adult would want the younger generation to take their religious activities very seriously. However, when it comes to spiritual activities, the young people whose fantasy of ideal childhood diverts from adults' expectations form a minority. They do not fantasize about engaging in spiritual activities a lot but in situations where they do, the change they envisage is being in control. One way of being autonomous of adults' influence in church activities is to own the church. Thus, children in this type propose that children should take charge of church activities.

The implicit knowledge reconstructed here is that the young people with this type of orientation, divert from adults' expectations as means of instituting change of the age-old status in which adults have total control of life in the society.

5.3.3.   Diversion as change

The young people with this orientation divert from adults' expectations to institute change. This kind of diversion is mostly towards activities that they do not care to undertake or wish others to perform. This is their way of saying that society must change and although they do not say this explicitly, maybe, due to fear of being punished or being deprived or forced to engage in those activities, their implicit knowledge points to their call for change.

A typical call example is seen in their attitude towards household chores. Their desire for change is evident in their desire for "machines" to perform those chores. This also implies that these young ones are more technology-oriented probably than the older generation. Their call for change, as proposed here, is not for others to take up those chores but for robots to do them. This means they also see the need for others not to undertake the chores. It is also obvious that, whereas they want to change, they may not be aware that change comes with responsibility and in this case, there is the need for someone to operate and service those machines.

In another instance where they did not mention machines, they relegate the chores to adults. This is done both in the home and in the school environment. Their implied knowledge here is the kind of change that comes as a result of an upward adjustment in the performance of chores. Here, the change is for adults to take over chores that children perform at school. A major reason is for them to have time to do other things, chief of which is to study at home. In this situation, mothers are the main focus of this kind of change. However, in the cases of chores at school, the suggestion is for laborers to be employed to perform them.

There is an obvious discrepancy between machines performing household chores and laborers weeding and performing clean-up exercises at school. The children position the home as a place where technological change must first start. Two ideas come to mind here; they position their family as rich enough to afford such technological gadgets. On the other hand, the school which is representative of the society is positioned as not capable to engage in such technological advancement. The implicit knowledge here is that the family is supposed to be at the forefront in introducing and equipping children to fit into this age of technology.

Although they position the family as instituting technological advancement, the school is also expected to change both in physical infrastructure and social relations. With physical infrastructure, furniture is expected to change from the wooden ones to electronic ones and teaching and learning materials are expected to be computerized. In this way, electrical boards will replace markers or chalkboards and electric pens will replace chalk, markers, or any writing materials. Thus, another thing that will change is their mode of writing and the materials that they use in the writing engagements.

With social relations, adults are expected to come to school first to welcome children to school instead of the other way round. The implication here is for adults to come to school early, undertake clean-up exercises, and welcome children to school to engage in their most important occupation. Such social relationship is deemed to be necessary for children's success in achieving both their goals and that of the society for them. Implicitly, children are calling on society to play their role in helping them (children) to focus on their occupation.

The change they implicitly allude to is also their call to maximize one's area of specialty. As children, their main occupation is with school activities and the change is for them to focus wholly on that so that they can achieve the best. In this case, they propose that all other chores should be taken away from them so that they can learn at school, excel, and become "legends" in the future. A typical example is that most often when children are writing examinations, most parents and school authorities exempt them from chores. The idea here is that childhood is a crucial time when children have to learn to excel and if that will be possible, there is a need for a change in how they are engaged.

Another call for change is in the area of how information is disseminated or how knowledge is imparted. Typically, children are usually glued to their seats for long hours while teachers "lecture" them. The change sought is for children to be allowed to get first-hand information in the form of going on excursions to interact with actual situations and places. Going on excursions is part of the school curriculum, however, most often, required excursions and field trips are not embarked on due to especially, financial constraints. However, the idea of the importance of such trips is emphasized by the children with this type of orientation and this calls for a change in attitude towards how children learn.

5.3.4.   Diversion as a choice

Most often, especially in the Ghanaian set up, children are portrayed as having very little choice. Adults are positioned as knowing what is best for children and they are expected to accept whatever is given to them by adults. However, children in this type divert from this expectation by positioning themselves as having a choice. For instance, they understand the need to go to school however, most of them position themselves as not going to school in their ideal childhood. The main idea here is not to be illiterate and uneducated, but rather to portray themselves as having the power to choose what they want to do with their childhood. Hence, although they kick against the idea of formal education, they position themselves as harnessing all the advantages that school gives.

Also, when they choose to go to school, their reconstructed implicit knowledge indicates that they still exhibit that attitude of choice by choosing to forego two types of activities. First of all, they fantasize about a childhood without household chores; this is because the time they will wake up will not allow them to do any other thing than prepare for school. Secondly, they will not be part of whatever happens between the time school children get to school and the time actual lessons begin. This is indicated by the fact that, by the time they get to school, lessons would be about to commence or would have been well advanced. Otherwise, the rational thing to do would have been to look at the time of going to bed and then adjust it to give enough sleep. However, they take this position just to show that they have a choice.

Children of this type also display this autonomy in making choices on issues of food such as choosing what, where, and when to eat. Although they are very elaborate and exotic in their choice of food, the main idea is to draw attention to their sense of independence which also portrays them as capable and in control of their lives. This sense of having a choice is so important to them that they even position themselves as choosing how to engage in spiritual activities where they choose mostly to engage in private acts of worship rather than public ones. Thus, the idea of diverting from adults' expectations is to show that they are autonomous.

5.3.5.   Diversity as creativity

Another implicit knowledge reconstructed under this type is that children divert as means to exhibit creativity. Children in this type deem creativity to be a very

necessary part of their life and adults' expectations tend to stifle this trait. Hence, to be able to exercise their sense of creativity, they divert from adults' expectations. This diversion depicts their sense of creativity, which apart from diffusing boredom, is like innovative suggestions that can make life more comfortable not only for themselves but also for others in both the home and the school environs.

A typical example is their suggestions of ways of undertaking household chores. In this case, they display their creativity by "creating machines" that will perform the chores. Although they do not wish to undertake household chores, they are aware that such chores do exist and someone must perform them. Also, being aware that children are supposed to take part in such chores, they use their creativity to design ways and means of getting them done.

Another way by which this creativity is observed is in how they wish school activities to be made interesting. They spend most of their time at school, mostly sitting down for long hours which they describe as very boring. To curtail this boredom, they wish that interesting subjects should be added to the school curriculum.

> *In my perfect life, at school, I would love to have a swimming pool and*
> *learn how to swim. It will make school more interesting and I have read*
> *that swimming benefits us a lot. (Essay 1: girl 11 years)*

The idea of a swimming pool at school is very foreign as far as the Ghanaian school curriculum is concerned and this, in itself, is a clear diversion from the already existing norms. This is because swimming pools are mostly associated with hotels and guest houses. Access to them comes at a cost that is quite expensive and most basic education institutions (be they public or private), will not be able to afford it. The most probable solution would have been to relay this cost to parents which is also problematic since the majority of parents will not be able to afford it too.

They also suggest creative ways of making time spent at school more bearable and interesting. This is by the use of new sets of furniture which are automated or computerized. Young people have so much interest in such technological gadgets and their presence in school will make school more interesting. With methods, techniques, and attitudes in the teaching and learning process, they posit that teachers should tell jokes and interesting stories as introductions to their subjects.

Spending a long time at school implies that learners would be tired and hungry which hinders active participation and productivity at school. An innovation to curtail this is to provide children with interesting snacks during the afternoon break. This will help alleviate some learning difficulties associated with hunger and poverty issues at school. This is already done in some public schools in Ghana, where the Government provides free lunch for the children. This is, however, not the case in all schools and this fantasy may be a call to extend such services to other schools. Also, the focus here is not on ordinary lunch but snacks which will rejuvenate interest in school. Although it may be quite difficult for most schools, the idea is to make school more interesting and, in the process, maximize children's productivity at school.

Children in this type display creativity in solving problems in the way they learn by suggesting that subject allocations for the day should be done by taking into consideration what subject is studied best at a particular time of the day. This creativity, as observed, is meant to make school more interesting and comfortable for them. In this way, it is fantasized that a subject like mathematics would be taught in the mornings and others like Religious and Moral Education and Physical Education would be taught in the afternoons.

Creativity as a diversion from adults' expectations comes up as ways and means by which young people intend to make life more interesting, alleviate boredom and maximize productivity in different areas of their lives. This diversion is not to ignore what is expected of them in the end but rather to use diverse means to achieve the same end. It could also be observed that young people with this orientation do not divert wholly. On the contrary, they divert where how adults expect them to achieve particular objectives is not interesting and/or goes against their sense of autonomy and equality. Their implicit knowledge reconstructed here shows that they believe that adults are not always right and children possess the ability to control their own lives. They do not comply with the inferior status of the childhood as accepted by the children in the conformity type. They, not only seek equality with anyone else but also aspire for the status of the child who is knowledgeable, competent, autonomous, adventurous, and creative. Their fundamental belief is that children can be children without occupying the subordinate position that society ascribes to them.

5.4. The convenient child (Type 4); childhoods conforming to some adults' construction of childhoods while charting their own childhoods

Children with this orientation represent a kind of squint-like posture in that they conform to some of the adults' ideals but mostly divert from them. They do what adults expect in some issues and follow their own fantasies in others. With this orientation, they select which areas to conform to and divert in all others. Five respondents make up this group. They position themselves as doing what adults require of them as long as it suits them. Three ideas are reconstructed from their implicit knowledge; (i) conforming and diverting as a deliberate choice to appease (ii) conforming and diverting as means to bridge the generational gap and (iii) conforming and diverting to show spiritual viability or maturity.

5.4.1. Conforming and diverting as a deliberate choice to appease

Children with this orientation portray themselves as conforming to adults' expectations. However, it is also equally important for them to feel not compelled to conform. The idea here is for them to deliberately assess each situation and choose how to deal with or comport themselves so that there will be no offense. They respect adults' views but they will not allow anyone to impose things on them. With this attitude, children here have a divergent relationship between the themes identified.

Sleep is a key theme that is related to other themes such as household chores and school activities. The expectation is for children to wake up early, perform household chores and go to school early as conformed to by children in Type 1. In this Type, children approach this focus from two opposing views. When conformity is realized on one level, diversion follows that level. On the other hand, when diversion begins a process, conformity follows it. This is observed when the waking up time is 5:30 a.m. which conforms to adults' expectations but the next is going out to play which is a diversion from the expected. In other situations, the waking up time is at 8 a.m. which is a diversion from what is expected but followed by going to school, which conforms to expectations. This gives a notion of being controlled but also being in control; a means of coping with a situation so that one tries to remain balanced. The balance here is to choose to please oneself on one hand and appease adults on the other hand. Hence, they will wake up early to please adults but will not go to school as

expected or they will wake up late to please themselves but go to school to appease adults for waking up late.

The children with this orientation combine the defiance of diverting and placatory of conforming to adults' ideals of childhood. By straddling these two stances, they fantasize about a childhood in which everyone gets what he/she desires. This is also portrayed in issues where expectations are met but not necessarily through the expected means. With household chores, the fantasy is to have a home where servants do the work. Thus, if adults' focus is to get household chores done, they are done. That is, there is an engagement with alternatives that bring satisfaction to both sides; in that, adults expect household chores to be done and they are done. Children fantasize about a childhood where they do not have to take part in household chores, however, the chores are performed anyway.

Similarly, the issue of going to school is treated from two diverging perspectives to reinforce the status of having a choice. Where there is an emphatic stance on going to school, school activities are portrayed as very important and there is a focus on details of learning and life in the classroom. However, there is a diversion in the way they expect teaching to be done. For instance, while they hold the view that it is necessary to be pressured into learning, they also fantasize that the school curriculum should be personalized to suit each individual.

> *When a teacher comes to class he should drill us of what we did the previous class so that we will be pressured to learn at home before coming to school. … Mainly in Ghana, I wish we don't learn all subjects in school but during our infancy stages our guardians will study us and know the subject we like best so that we will be taught or train in that same tend like how this is done in the American countries. (Essay 40: 12-13 years)*

In this quotation, this type's orientation towards learning is for pressure to be applied to learners to learn. This goes against the very idea of learning as learners tend to learn better in a more congenial atmosphere and at their own pace. This concept of pressure is probably from trying to please others or simply making a choice that goes contrary to expectations. On the other hand, this Type is oriented towards choosing what they want to learn and not every subject taught at school. Implicitly, there is the view that learning what one is not interested in is a waste of time and other related

resources. The fantasy is to give parents and caregivers the responsibility of identifying children's predisposition towards what is learned so that they will focus on that area alone. This also indicates making choices between what one wants and what is expected.

5.4.2. conforming and diverting as means to bridge the generational gap

Most of the time, conflicts in the home are caused by differences in how family members perceive, understand, and treat each other. A typical one is a conflict caused by generational gaps where the older generation may want things done in a particular way whiles the younger generation wants to do it in another way. Children with this orientation type conform to and divert from adults' expectations as a means of bridging the generational gap.

For instance, in the case of leisure activities, they would engage in a domestic form of leisure because adults want them around the home environs but they also make sure that at the least opportunity, they go out to engage in their own ideas of leisure. The implicit knowledge of children in this type on leisure activity is linked to freedom of movement in time and space without restrictions. With the orientation of doing both what is expected of them and what they wish, they similarly perceive other entities. Hence, staying at home and having leisure is palpable while going on an adventure outside the home is also allowed. This type is oriented towards freedom of movement without any legal or immigration restrictions. Additionally, transportation across space and time is viewed with a speed that does not exist yet.

In the case of school activities, the generational gap is bridged by getting adults involved in the choice of subjects they want to study at school. This is done by a proposal that adults should study children to determine their area of interest and recommend that they study only those subjects. In this way, any misunderstanding between the two would be eliminated as both would be involved in the decision-making.

Orientations in this type feature relationships with persons such as mothers, servants, and celebrities. Although this conforms to social expectations, the conspicuous absence of fathers and siblings and the few mentions of friends divert from social expectations. Mothers, who feature a lot in this type's relationship, are positioned mainly as financiers. The possibility here is that mothers come handier in the children's

reality than fathers. Hence, mothers are the favorite of the two parents in their fantasy. Also, most intergenerational conflicts in the home take place between mothers and children. Hence, conforming to some adults' expectations is meant to bridge that gap and bring "peace" between children and their mothers. However, even as they bridge that gap, they divert in their expectations of the role they want their mothers to play in their childhoods. For instance, where they perceive chores to be for their mothers, they position themselves as helping them to perform them. However, in situations where the chores are their responsibilities, they envisage their mothers performing them. In situations where it is possible to afford paid help, servants (who are adults) are introduced to undertake the chores. The importance of servants in their fantasy is purposely for them to have ideal childhood in which chores are done but not by children. Additionally, the orientation towards servants goes beyond ordinary household chores to a kind of fairytale-like disposition where children and young people are dressed and undressed by maidservants. This fosters a kind of personal relationship between children and their professional caregivers. Where such relationships are positive, children have cordial relationships with such caregivers where some even become the children's confidants thereby bridging another kind of generational gap.

Another feature of this type is hero-worship where children fantasize about a childhood where they have easy access to celebrities such as popular musicians, actors, footballers, and politicians. While this is not out of the ordinary, the idea of having a kind of close relationship with these celebrities is what diverts from the expected. First of all, these celebrities are far away, and even traveling abroad is very cumbersome. Secondly, it is not easy to meet them, not to talk about "chilling" with them. They are very busy and sometimes are unable to spend time even with their families. In this regard, the children's fantasy deviates from the expected but the purpose is to bridge not only generational gaps but also that social and financial differences.

Another attempt at bridging the generational gap is evident in the focus on teachers which is directly linked to their professional practice where their methods of teaching and general composure are important to children. They fantasize about a classroom situation where teachers make jokes to liven up the teaching-learning situation. The idea here is for teachers to be friendly and cordial which in turn will give children the opportunity to draw closer to them.

5.4.3.   conforming and diverting to show social viability or maturity

One key feature of children with this orientation is that they position themselves as they understand the need for adults' influence in childhood. This shows that they understand social structures and to some extent "allow" such structures to function naturally. This position gives them a look or feel of maturity. For instance, they display an understanding of adults' influence on issues concerning their education. They acknowledge the fact that their parents or guardians are the best people to identify areas of their strengths, especially in school. This acknowledgment does not mean they are weak or inferior to adults. On the contrary, it shows that they are realistic and possess the maturity to harness resources available to them without engaging in any form of unhealthy competition. Children here understand their status as children and the need to depend on adults as the societal structure demands.

Another attitude of theirs that depicts them as serious and understanding how society works is their relationship with their peers or friends. In other types, children mention friends a lot and they engage in all kinds of play activities with them including leisure and school activities. However, children in this type do not engage so much with friends. This is a kind of diversion from what is expected because children are expected to engage other children in all kinds of activities. This diversion, however, is supposed to portray them as more concerned about "serious issues" such as learning.

Finally, children in Type 4 show a certain level of maturity by choosing the way they want to engage in spiritual activities. Their implicit knowledge reveals conforming to and diverting from the average Ghanaian adult's expectations of religious practices. As would be expected, religious rituals such as praying, reading the bible, and general expressions of faith are very key in their fantasy, however, there is not a single mention of attending church service, which is very key in Christian religious practices. Hence, they fantasize about childhood with a private relationship with God but devoid of the public ones. This way, they keep their relationship with God private. This depicts a very high level of maturity and sincerity in a country where almost every geographical space and social media platform is occupied by people displaying their spiritual activities.

The key feature of this type is conforming to adults' expectations but having the freedom to also divert to personal interests. In doing so, children fantasize about perfect lives in which they conform and also divert in issues of sleep, school activities, leisure, relationships, and spiritual activities. The focus here is to make every significant person

(including themselves) happy. With this orientation, children position themselves as being in control of their choices as they choose where to conform and where to divert from adults' expectations. This pose portrays children as not inferior to adults but that they consider adults' positions in childhood. Therefore, there is adherence to a kind of self-imposed reverence for adults as they could have diverted wholly but they do not.

5.5. The rebellious child (Type 5); childhoods confronting existing norms of childhoods.

The children in this type kind of have a head-on collision with adults or the social construction of childhood. They pointedly criticize existing practices of adults as far as childhood is concerned which positions them as deliberately rebelling against social norms. They do this by juxtaposing adults' domination with children's suffering and helplessness at adults' onslaught. They fantasize about getting equal rights with adults although they understand their dependence on them. Another means by which they rebel is openly choosing the less overbearing adult.

With the modus operandi of confronting adults' ideals of childhood, four facets of confronting are reconstructed which are (i) confronting as a means to reveal inequalities (ii) confronting as a means to call for change (iii) confronting as a means to call for change and (iv) Confronting for comfort. These represent their implicit knowledge as they rebel against adults' expectations. Basically, in any way that they rebel, implicitly, they are communicating one of these ideas.

5.5.1. Confronting as a means to reveal inequalities

One of the key issues for children with this orientation is that of inequalities between children and adults. Such inequalities are defined by adults having the veto power in the society and which gives them the power to impose their will on the younger generation. Consequently, their stance in confronting or rebelling against adults is to reveal such inequalities, one of which is evident in issues of sleep. The confrontation that comes in the issues of sleep is due to conflicts of interest between children and adults. This is because, at the time when children want to sleep, adults would want them to be doing something else and at the time adults want them to sleep, they want to do other things. A typical scenario is evident in;

What I even hate is that even if I am sleeping, they called me and send me which is not good. I too have my freedom to sleep at night nobody can tell someone not to sleep. God created it special. (Essay 29: 12-13 years)

As young as we are, now that our body is developing well. To prepare for the adult world, we need a good body and enough rest. We will all love to spend number of hours on bed resting. Parents may say if that is the case then go to bed early. No what about those who sleep very late because some reasons. Imagine a child who sleep at 12 am and wake up at 4:30 am. How will such a child feel? How will he be? The child will feel restless and very tired every single day. We will also choose to sleep late but this time wake up late. Adolescents in general likes chatting with friends far and near. We may spend time with friends until it is late. When we have long time resting, we will grow well with healthy bodies. For us, we will be happy when we wake up in the morning and it contribute to a perfect living. (Essay 28: girl 13 years)

In such situations, children position themselves as in control of their lives and possess the ability to decide on what to do. Thus, a confrontation ensues where adults' demands of children collide with what children want. In this confrontation, adults are projected as intruders because both children and adults are subject to the same "powers" when it comes to sleep as explained in "*I too have my freedom to sleep at night nobody can tell someone not to sleep. God created it special*". The implication is that, since both are subject to higher "powers" of sleep, none should govern the other.

This confrontation on sleep is so controversial, especially when related to other activities, specifically, school activities. This is because the time of waking up is directly connected to the time school begins and if the former is not planned well, it affects the latter and since children cannot control school, it is expected that they will adjust to it. The confrontation ensues when adults tell children to do what they (children) are already aware of and know how to adjust; thus, the confrontation emanates from the adults' position of telling children to do when they (children) already know. This situation is made worse (on the part of children) by the fact that children do not have the power to impose on adults. This gives a clear idea of inequality with children being in the inferior position.

The argument of who has the power when it comes to determining when children should go to sleep may be explained and defended from different perspectives. The most obvious shows that adults protect themselves from such impositions. Naturally, when one does not sleep early, the implication is that one will wake up late and, in this case, one will not be able to attend to other responsibilities as evident in;

> *When I don't wake up early, I want my mother to sweep for me and also wash my bowls and everything. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)*

However, those responsibilities must be taken care of and in this case, it falls on adults, especially mothers, to perform children's tasks when they are unable to. Hence, adults' intrusion in children's sleep issues is actually to protect themselves from being given extra responsibilities in the home. The direct demand for mothers to take up undone tasks implies that they assigned those responsibilities to children in the first place. Children with this type of orientation position adults as their equals so that if adults assign them responsibilities, it presupposes that they (adults) could perform them. Hence, when the tide turns, as in when children are unable to perform them, they, in turn, assign those tasks to adults; a direct affront to adults' authority.

Children in this type have their own ideas about life and children's lives which are mostly projected to equate to that of adults. Whatever these ideas mean to children, they are in direct contrast to adults' conceptions of childhood. Even in the UNCRC which encapsulates children's rights, children are placed in adults' care, and most often, their rights depend on the adult caregivers. However, children here do not focus on social constructions of power but the universalism of human life. Thus, adults' sentiments are directly juxtaposed with that of children on the level of both being humans, and with this position comes the fact that all humans are equal. If that is the case, then children with this orientation perceive themselves as in charge of their lives.

> *In this world we are living in, everyone wants to be free and live good. Both adults and children have this same feeling. They feel so in order to have an enjoyable life free of charge. They want to be free in a way that no one will disturb them. Of course, when you are not disturbed you will be surely free. As you are free your living is good. True everyone wants to be free in order to live a perfect life but how? Everybody has their own way of living a happy and perfect life suitable to them. What about Adolescents, is it the same way too? Yes, the same with adolescents. We*

do not want any adult to decide for us how to live comfortably. Neither do we want our friends to do that. (Essay 28: girl 13 years)

From the above example, it could be observed that children position themselves as solely responsible for their happiness, however, this is made possible only when adults and significant others realize their position in children's lives and keep it that way. This is quite ambivalent as the expected happiness still depends on others' conduct. This is in contrast to the perception of Type 4 children who position their happiness despite the significant others.

Another idea reconstructed from the implicit knowledge of Type 5 children is the idea of judgment and restrictions. Both ideas denote a dichotomy of superiority and inferiority which children find problematic because as humans, we are not perfect. Moreover, in this dichotomizing relationship, children are placed in an inferior position as compared to adults. Hence, adults undertake judgments and place restrictions on children which creates inequalities between the two. Here again, children remove the binary relations of childhood and adulthood and place both at the level of humanness which makes both equal. Thus, humans are not perfect and since both children and adults are prone to error, one should not judge or restrict the other.

5.5.2. Confronting to show society as backward

Type 5 young people confront adults' expectations of children by portraying society as backward. In the typical traditional Ghanaian social discourse, this backwardness would be described as being a villager or uncivilized. The backwardness of society is enshrined in children's disappointment in their parents. Parents' socio-economic background directly influences children's lives and they are expected to understand their parents' situation and accept or make the best of it. Children in this Type pointedly confront their parents' failings and blame them for their plight in not getting the best life. The implication is that children expect parents to do more or work harder to give them the kind of life they desire. This is seen in children venting their spleen on their parents in situations where they are unable to afford private cars which will send their children to school and pick them up after closing. For children with this orientation, a life of affluence is the kind of life worth living and this is also characterized by parents' availability and love, in the absence of which the parents are blamed. They kind of detest their parents for not being rich and they expect that if their parents are unable to give them the kind of life they want, then they (parents) also lose

their power to influence them or give them responsibilities. By this stance, they portray a society in which parents are unable to provide lavishly for their children as backward.

Another idea of society's backwardness is reconstructed from their perceived relationship between school activities, better life, and parents' attitude. They see the school and learning as opportunities for a life better than what their parents can offer and therefore loathe it when parents interrupt their learning and ask them to, especially, perform chores at the home. Thus, confrontations between them and their parents stem from their perception that parents cannot give them better lives and they also stand in the way of children's activities that could give them the life they desire. This they portray as characteristic of a backward society represented here by their parents

At school, children with this orientation type do not mince words about how they feel about teachers or the way teachers teach. In their fantasy of the way they want their teachers to behave at school, they reveal the nature of teachers in reality to which they object. Their pose towards teachers here is a kind of mockery of the true nature of teachers which they think would not change. They do not suggest positive attitudes toward teachers (in their fantasy), but rather ridicule teachers' composure. For instance, what could be the nature of a teacher who is never calm except in children's fantasies? What does it mean for teachers to be biased? Teachers who are regressive in their professional practice.

Type 5 children demand attention from their teachers and in situations where this attention is not forthcoming, they become very critical. This confirms children's views that they are supposed to be, as individuals, at the center of the teaching and learning process. When focus shifts from one or is prolonged on another person, then, teachers are described as biased. With this perspective, children in this type find problems with teachers which results in friction at school and total disregard for school. For this purpose, they figure out alternatives for school.

Despite their focus on school as a means to a better life, they also perceive school as hard work which is quite unnecessary as there are other means to the life they desire. With this perception, society is projected as simplistic instead of multifaceted and progressive.

Another example by which young people here rebel against society by portraying it as backward is evident in their notion of cultural practices. For them, their rebellion is justified by the fact that some practices and beliefs are not convenient. Their

stance on culture is that it must favor the people practicing it and if it does not, then it must be modified or discarded. The focus here is on the culture that forbids children to talk in the presence of adults and by extension, any other cultural practices that give adults power over children. The bone of contention here is that children also have great ideas that are worth listening to and that could be even better. Another implication here is that children are as knowledgeable as adults and being children is not equivalent to being empty-headed. Thus, adults' control is perceived as a tactic to restrict children's capabilities probably to stop competitions that could make adults lose that status of being superior to children. Such a society is deemed to be backward.

5.5.3. Confronting as a means to call for change

Even as young people with this orientation rebel against society because of its backwardness, their rebellion could also be interpreted as a call for society to change. Society, they perceive, has been run in particular domains that have not favored, especially, children. It is, therefore necessary for adults to change such ways for more progressive ones. A typical example is in the area of the use of technology by young people. The average Ghanaian adolescent does not have access to such technological advancements as smartphones and the internet. This, they deem to be very sad and bad for them. Hence, as they call for change by confronting society's expectations of children, they expect that they will be allowed access to such things.

Their reconstructed implicit knowledge also shows that society's focus on school as the only means to make life better must change. They expect that there must be diverse ways by which children would be educated to become responsible citizens. For them, society, especially, parents connect school to money and a good life. In most cases, children are made aware that if they do not go to school and also excel in school, they will be poor when they become adults. Parents, most often, blame their present predicament (of being poor) on their not having attended school as a means to encourage children to be serious at school. However, as much as school is important in childhood, young people with this orientation think that it should not be the sole channel of education.

When children rebel, it could also be interpreted as they want to shift the source of their happiness in life from others to themselves. Most often, adults decide on what children need to be happy and provide for them. The implication is that children's

happiness depends on adults. This is what they want to change. Their stance is to revolutionize existing norms as they are not conducive for the younger generation.

> *My perfect life is doing what I want, the time I want, where it would occur, how; have absolute control over the details of my life. (Essay 35 girl 13 years)*

Their position is that when their happiness depends on others, then those people become more significant and influential in their lives. To avoid this, they position themselves as resolute and question longstanding ideologies of culture that makes adults more significant in childhood. Thus, as children resolve to have perfect lives in which they are the most significant, they give attention to details that will affect their happiness in ideal childhood such as being in control of the time and space for activities. They portray themselves as being the sole determinant of their happiness although they will make adjustments for family.

Another idea of change through a rebellion is suggesting to society to see God as the one who controls life in all forms (both that of children and adults) and who is the first and foremost source of help. Type 5 children rebel against the idea that adults are in control and rather position God as such. As far as children are concerned, adults put themselves in the place of God which is wrong. In as much they cling to the idea of freedom which is interpreted as being allowed to do anything that one desires and being antagonistic to adults' ideals of childhood, they have the awareness that they are not self-sufficient and thus will need help in different forms. However, they do not want adults to be that source of help because that would put them in a subordinate position.

Accordingly, they position God as their first source of help and adults as channels through which that help comes. The idea could be to detach their expected source of help as far from any known adult as possible. The implication is that both adults and children are dependent on God, hence, both are not self-sufficient and adults' help which is a means by which they control children must stop.

5.5.4. Confronting for comfort

Finally, when type 5 children rebel, they do so for comfort, especially in situations in that they feel uncomfortable either physically or emotionally. They usually do not suggest alternatives but demand absolute termination of whatever adults are doing that makes them uncomfortable.

With sleep, they expect that they are allowed to deal with issues in their own way. As they confront adults' ideals on children's sleep issues, they position themselves as opposing, not only adults' decisions on sleep but all decisions in general. The main focus of this confrontation is their lack of comfort which results from adults' impositions on them. Here, parents decide when children should go to sleep and when they should wake up. Between the time of going to sleep and the time of waking up is exactly nine and a half (9½) hours which is appropriate for children's health. Thus, the problem has nothing to do with the amount of sleep but with who decides on sleep. Emotionally, they feel uncomfortable with being told when to go to bed and when to wake up. What this means is that Type 5 children would like to make decisions connected to personal issues like sleep.

Also, they cling fiercely to their freedom and privacy and fantasize about a childhood without anyone who will be an added responsibility. Their perception of perfect childhood is fundamentally about them and their choices.

A perfect life is supposed to be a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutely nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents and no annoying siblings. (Essay 35)

I get home to a quiet house which is what I like. My little siblings go to a Primary Boarding School for a year, with no vacation. (Essay 35 girl 13 years)

Before I will come to school, I have to bath my younger sibling, go to the rubbish dump after sweeping, wash bowls, sweeping rooms and halls. I have to do that before I myself will bath. All this plenty work will clear off if I want to live my perfect life. (Essay 37: 12-13 years)

In family relationships, siblings, especially younger ones, are positioned as extra work and a major source of discomfort, therefore, their presence is not required for perfect childhood. This seems to be an affront to parents' desire to have more children. However, the proposition here is not a fantasy of one- a child family but more of a family with older siblings. The implication is that adults shed their responsibilities for younger children on young adolescents and although this could be fun in the sense of playing with real babies instead of dolls, once the fun weans, what is left is work which is very demanding for both physically and emotionally.

Children with this orientation type develop coping strategies that will enable them to avoid the overbearing adult in the family. This they do by espousing the company of the parent who is most often not available or more accurately, who is the least "nosy". The reality is that most available mothers tend to ask all the questions and assign duties and also play the supervisory roles of seeing that tasks are performed. Hence, most domestic conflicts between children and parents, tend to ensue between children and mothers, hence, they tend to court the attention and company of their fathers.

However, despite all the confrontations which result in discomforts, children with this type of orientation do not fantasize about a childhood without adults but rather one with reduced or without adult dominance. Hence, in their ideal childhood, it is either children are in control of their lives or there is equal power-sharing between children and adults.

The indication is that children are aware that their perceptions of ideal childhood may conflict with that of others, especially adults, however, instead of being imposed on, their desire is for them to make adjustments for others to fit into their lives. There is also the awareness that it takes absolute determination to realize one's dreams and aspirations, hence, their attitude of rebelling against adults' intrusion.

By confronting adults' constructions of childhood, children in this type demand recognition of equal status with adults on the scale of humanness and knowledge. Their share in society is not to play second fiddle to adults but to be treated as equal to them. This is because present social constructions of childhood limit children's capabilities that project them as inferior to adults. Another perception is that adults need that status of being superior and for that to be realized, someone must be made inferior; in this case children. However, children are of the view that there is no need for this binary relationship as each has something substantial or beneficial to offer. Hence, they propose an egalitarian world in which everyone, irrespective of age or social status, has equal opportunities. However, there is also the perception that the equality they seek works as long as it favors them.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to reconstruct children's implicit knowledge as they relate their ideas of ideal childhood. Their implicit knowledge reveals that their modus

operandi in dealing with childhood is a comparison to adults' ideals or social expectations of children. Five orientation frameworks identified depict their viewpoints or perceptions of children's lives. Thus, the obedient child framework positions children as willingly conforming to adults' expectations even when it is not convenient for them. The grumpy child framework depicts children who are seemingly helpless because although they have their own ideas, they are unable to follow them, so they conform but complain in the process. The autonomous child refers to those who focus first on what they desire and on their own ways of achieving objectives for childhood. They position themselves as knowing what is appropriate for them and any form of consideration to others is their own choice. The convenient child orientation refers to children who make efforts to please both themselves and adults. Hence, they go to lengths to do what is expected of them but this they do only if it is convenient to them. If not, they do what will please them. Lastly, the rebellious child illustrates childhoods in which children oppose adults' conventions of children and seek equality on all fronts in life.

Although these frameworks portray a complete distinction between how different Ghanaian children experience childhood, in reality, they do not play out wholly separately. What this means is that, most often, children straddle, at least two of these frameworks. For instance, an autonomous child may conform to circumstances that which the child cannot depend on him/herself and needs to be guided. Hence, although the frameworks are theoretically different from one another, in practice, they could occur side by side.

All participants in this study are from the Winneba Municipality and have several common external or environmental factors affecting their childhood. However, they experience childhood differently. What, therefore, are the overarching influences on the children's lives that result in such diverse orientation frameworks of childhood? What conjunctive spaces of experiences affect their implicit knowledge which culminated in the 5 types discussed in this chapter? The next chapter attempts to unfold what influenced their implicit knowledge in the form of sociogenetic type formation.

Chapter 6 Socio-Genetic Type Formation

Overview

This chapter deals with the formation of socio-genetic types and discusses the findings of the study in relation to the five orientation frameworks identified in the sense-genetic types. The aim is to identify the social backgrounds which influenced the sense-genetic types.

6.1. Correspondence Analysis and Socio-genetic Positioning: Attempting Generalization

In this section, there is an attempt to reconstruct the relationship between the types identified and discussed in chapter 5 and the various mundane activities, practical experiences, and the children's conjunctive spaces of experience that contributed to the initial positioning in the sense-genetic types through sociogenetic type formation. This attempt is based on empirical evidence to explore how particular types of conjunctive spaces of experiences such as gender, age, and socio-economic class, relate and in the process create another type of implicit knowledge (sociogenetic types) that makes way for generalization. This generalization is achieved by exploring the elasticity of a particular sense-genetic type. Additionally, the sociogenetic type interpretation aims to reconstruct the spaces within which the research subjects engage in daily practices and experiences as indicated in their narratives and descriptions in their essays. Thus, these relevant conjunctive spaces of experience are the dimensions of experiences that the subjects themselves recommend as important.

To examine the specific background of experiences that generated a particular type of implicit knowledge, correspondence analysis is employed as a basic step (Volkmann, 2019). This establishes the participants' heterogeneous social backgrounds and the relevant conjunctive realms of experiences they propose. These two, pave way for the analysis of the origins of various practical knowledge reconstructed in the sense-genetic type formation.

Also, some of the cases in the types do not permit conclusions to be drawn on the origin of the commonality in their orientation, hence, the documentary method recommends relational type formation as a means of taking the analysis further

(Volkmann, 2019). The purpose of the formation of relational types is to reconstruct how the different orientation backgrounds analytically relate to each other. It must be noted that it does not usually lend itself to the drawing of conclusions that leads to the creation of generalizations.

6.2. Correspondence Analysis

Correspondence analytical view indicates that 5 young people represent those whose fantasy conforms to adults' or social constructions of childhood. One of them is a ten-year-old girl. However, the other four who are between the ages of twelve and thirteen did not indicate their gender. Four out of the five come from the working-class socioeconomic background and one comes from the lower middle-class background.

With type 2, children are oriented towards conforming to adults' ideals but complaining in the process. Children position themselves as having no alternatives or options but to do as they are told although they are not happy with what they are doing.

A correspondence analytical look at the children in this type show this is one of the most heterogeneous groups. Four children make up this group; 2 from the lower middle-class and 2 from the working-class. The former consists of a boy and a girl, both are ten years old. The latter comprises 2 children between 12 and 13 years old. One is a girl but the other did not state the gender. Although this group is also very heterogeneous, the subjects here are very homogenous in their views.

Ten young people form type 3; that is those whose fantasy diverts from adults' expectations or constructions of childhood. Out of the ten, three of them are boys, and seven are girls. One of the boys is eleven years old and the other two are ten years old. Three of the girls are eleven years old, one is ten, and three of them are between twelve and thirteen years old. Seven are from the lower middle-class while three are from the working-class socioeconomic background.

For type 4, children are oriented towards conforming to some adults' ideals but diverting from some. Their stance is to make everyone, including themselves happy or satisfied. Most of their focus is to give the adult-desired results but by their own means.

Five children make up this type and a correspondence analytical look indicates that one is an eleven-year-old boy from the lower middle-class. The other four are

between twelve and thirteen years old and are from the working-class, two of them are girls but the other two did not state their gender.

Children in type 5 are oriented toward confronting adults' ideals of childhood. With this stance, they speak against adults' ideals on children's sleep and domestic chores. They view the relationship with adults from a universalistic perspective and possess revolutionist ideas of existing cultural practices. Thus, although they espouse egalitarian views, they are self-centered.

A correspondence analytical outlook indicates that there are seven children in this type; one boy, and two girls and the rest did not state their sex. The boy is 12 years old; the 2 girls are both 13 years old; one is between 10 and 11 years old and the rest are between the ages of 12 and 13 years old. One comes from the lower middle-class background and the rest are from the working-class background.

The correspondence analysis done so far indicates that three social experiences are key in the formation of the sense-genetic types. The three, namely, gender, age, and class run across the types but in diverse ways and their influence form the genesis of the children's attitude toward their fantasy of ideal childhoods.

6.3. Socio-genetic Type 1: Socioeconomic Class across the Sense-Genetic Types

Of the three conjunctive spaces of experience that affected the formation of the sense-genetic types, socioeconomic class is the most influential. The lower middle-class and the working-class are the two identified in the study. Looking at disparities between the two classes across the sense-genetic types, it was realized that whereas working-class background is the most influence on the conformity type, the lower middle-class influenced the diverting type the most. Similarly, the working-class has the most influence on both the confronting type and the convenient type (conforming and diverting). However, with the grumpy type (conforming but complaining), class does not seem to offer any particular influence as both classes have equal impact.

This means that children from the working class have a higher propensity to conform to adults' ideas by being obedient children. However, the same group of children also possess a higher probability to rebel against those same ideals. Finally,

they are also apt to maneuver through those ideals for their convenience. What might be the causative factors for such contrasting positions among working-class children?

First of all, the Asch theory of conformity indicates that people tend to conform when they are confronted with a unanimous majority (Larsen, 1990). In this study, working-class children conformed, despite the inconveniences, because, they perceive that, adults form the majority, but from different perspectives. First of all, adults form the majority in the sense of chronological age. This means that working-class children see adults as knowing better than them because they have higher chronological age. Adults also have a majority when it comes to experience in life because they have both childhood and adulthood experiences and for that purpose, they are more experienced. Being older also means they possess a financial majority; a status which children lack but need. This means that adults work to earn money to provide for the needs of children which gives adults the most power in the children-adult relationship. Even in countries where the state supports child upbringing, it is still the adults who control the family resources and thus have the final say in how resources should be spent. Hence, adults have the means by which children's livelihood would be perpetuated and for this to be possible, working-class children deem it necessary to be obedient to them. It is not uncommon to find situations in which adults withhold children's benefits as a form of punishment or correctional measures for nonconformity. Thus, working-class children conform to adults' ideals of childhood because, concerning chronological age, experience in life, and financial status, adults have the majority.

However, these same working-class children are more prone to rebel against adults' expectations of them. This rebellion could emanate from two possibilities. First of all, this early adolescent stage is a period where children begin to develop a sense of identity and autonomy. This development is characterized by a certain amount of sporadic rebellion, insubordination, dissatisfaction, confusion, restlessness, and inconsistencies. All of these emotional upsurges are deemed to be normal at this stage irrespective of children's background.

Secondly, the rebelling could be a result of pent-up emotions which could no longer be held in check. For instance, irrespective of socioeconomic background, chronological age unites all children under certain commonalities and interests that come with age and developmental stage. What makes the difference is parents' ability to satisfy children's demands at each stage. Whereas lower middle-class children, most

often, get what they want, working-class children usually have to live without such things. However, as their parents cannot afford a lot, they are expected to work extra hard to support the family. Understanding the situation may keep them conforming but over time, they may evolve from conforming through being grumpy in the process to taking the convenience status and finally to absolute rebellion. The final state could occur because, they can become fed-up, especially when they see other children living "better" lives. Stinchcombe (1964) hypothesized that young people from the middle-class who have problems at school, especially with their academic work have a higher probability ofof rebellion than their counterparts from the working class who find themselves in similar academic situations. However, this study found that working-class young adolescents have a higher tendency to rebel against adults than their counterparts in the lower middle-class. Although Stinchcombe (1964) conducted the study among only high school boys, this study involved young adolescents not just in school but in all aspects of life. This study posits that young adolescents from the working-class have a higher tendency to rebel against adults' expectations because of the unavailability of resources and when they are burdened with adults' responsibilities. This is because, in the rebellion type, it was observed that, the quest for equality, lack of access to some adolescent desires, and the drudgery of taking up adult roles form the base for rebellion among working-class young adolescents. Although there is a large variation between Stinchcombe's work and this study, the social class background-oriented results make the two similar and this makes the differences in the findings of this study significant.

On the other hand, higher rates of diverting from adults' expectations (which is explained as seeking autonomy) are identified among young adolescents from the lower-middle class background. The difference between diverting and rebelling here is that, whereas in diverting, there is the desire to look for own ways of arriving at the same expected results, rebelling is simply refusing to both accept instructions and to even explore own alternatives. A typical example of diverting is when alternatives are given as to how to get work done in the home instead of children performing them. On the other hand, rebelling is simply taking the stance of "I am not doing this anymore".

What accounts for the higher rates of diverting from adults' expectations among lower middle-class young adolescents? What makes the lower middle-class children prone to seek autonomy more than their counterparts in the working-class? Whereas

working-class children possess the tendency to conform and also rebel against adults' expectations, lower middle-class children are more prone to divert from adults' expectations by seeking autonomy in matters that concern them. The main differentiating factor between the attitude of the two groups is the availability of resources.

Lower middle-class families are usually able to afford basic luxuries for their children, unlike working-class families. By basic luxuries, I refer to things such as technological gadgets, computer games, and own bedrooms. In having such things, they tend to be ahead of their counterparts in the working-class. Thus, they turn their attention to the world outside their home environs to explore other possibilities. This makes them seek to be autonomous which usually manifests in their desire to experiment with their own ideas. This diverting is not interpreted as an affront to adults' authority as research shows that higher socioeconomic class parents endorse such quests for autonomy.

6.4 Age across the Sense-Genetic Types

The ages of the respondents in this study are between 10 and 13 years and this is further categorized into 10-11- and 12-13-years age groups. Observation of the influence of age on the sense-genetic types indicates that these age categories have bearings on the types. The most significant age distribution across the types is evident in the conformity, diverting, convenience, and rebelling types where 12 and13-year-olds are found to have higher tendencies towards obedience, convenience, and rebellion in relation to adults' ideals of childhood. On the other hand, 10 and 11-year-olds show more inclination to diverting. Although this age discrepancy is very important, the socioeconomic background of the age groups makes definite conclusions difficult. This is because all the 10 and 11-year-olds come from the same class background and the same applies to all the 12 and 13-year-olds. Thus, although age is a factor in the sense-genetic types formed, it does not allow for conclusive evidence of its effects. This would have been different if the respondents are all of the same age but from different socioeconomic backgrounds or are of different age groups but from the same social class.

6.5.   Gender across the Sense-Genetic Types

Gender also has similar setbacks in the sense-genetic types formed where majority in one group of respondents (12-13-year-olds from the working-class) did not indicate their gender. Whereas it is easier to conclude on the genesis of the sense-genetic types among the 10-11-year-olds from the lower middle-class, it is not possible for the 12-13-year-olds from the working-class. For children from the working-class, gender plays very little role in their conforming to, or rebelling against adults' expectations.

However, using relational types, it could be concluded that girls dominate in all the types. That is, girls (more than boys), are prone to conform to, divert from, take the convenient stance, and rebel against adults' ideals of childhood. This does not give absolute evidence on which conclusion could be made since there are more girls than boys in the sample under study.

However, gender, as a concept, affects how respondents relate to adults' expectations of children. For instance, girls, conform more than boys probably because they have lower expectations and are more people-oriented (Galambos et al., 2009; Su et al., 2009) and they try to avoid conflicts and competitions and deal with differences in a more cordial mode than boys. However, the finding from this study indicates that girls are the most to rebel. This could be because they have the most domestic responsibilities. Typical of such instances is the fact that girls are expected to engage in sibling caregiving and cooking family meals more than boys. Also, they sacrifice their time for family time-use and once they become fed-up, rebellion becomes quite natural. However, research shows that boys are more prone to explicit shows of aggression than girls (Hyde, 2005) and in this regard, the findings here are contrary to that of the existing literature.

6.6.   Multidimensional typology (The Relatedness of Conjunctive Spaces of Experience)

Age, gender, and socioeconomic class interrelate to influence how young people maneuver through their daily activities in relation to adults. The findings from this study indicate that 12-13-year-old girls from the working-class have a higher tendency to be obedient or conform to adults' expectations. On the other hand, they also have a similar

stance towards rebelling against adults, however, they get to this stage after having experimented with finding the convenient tuft of trying to please everyone including themselves. It could be concluded that young adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 13 years old from the working-class have a clear majority over their male counterparts in being obedient, rebellious, and occupying the terrain in-between the two.

When it comes to being autonomous, 10-11-year-old girls from the lower middle-class possess a greater propensity to seek to be autonomous than their male counterparts and more than older young adolescents in the working-class. However, both 10-11 and 12-13-year-olds from both social classes are equally prone to grumpiness although girls have a higher inclination than the boys.

The findings above show the groups which form the majority but are not absolute in the description or distributions. What this means is that, for instance, lower middle-class children are also obedient to adults' expectations but are in the minority as compared to that of the working-class children.

When it comes to relating physically with adults, it was observed that the lower middle-class children are more individualistic than the working-class children. The former seeks to detach from their parents purposely to seek autonomy and explore alternatives to what parents offer. On the other hand, the working-class children are more people-oriented and tend to seek closeness with parents and significant adults mostly for recognition and also for support.

Bretherton (1992), on John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory, explains that children form an attachment to significant others for the purposes of security and emotional and behavioral well-being. Conger and Donnellan (2007) and Rawatlal (2015) further studied the effect of socioeconomic status of parents on attachment among adolescents and concluded that lower socioeconomic status negatively affects adolescent-parent relationships. Additionally, Shaw and Vondra (1993) posited that adolescents in families with lots of socioeconomic problems are likely to have attachment problems which imply that families with higher social class status may have better attachment situations (Diener et al, 2003). However, the findings from this study show that whereas children from the lower middle-class class seek to detach from their parents, those from the working class seek closer attachment with their parents. Also, contrary to Shumow and Lomax (2002) who explicated that

decreased interaction with children could also hamper attachment during adolescence, the study shows that adolescents seek attachment to parents who are mostly not available to them. However, there is a strong attachment to mothers from both social classes but mostly with the focus on her providing domestic assistance. This class-based attachment status of young adolescents in this study is therefore contrary to existing literature. The attachment issues of young adolescents in this study portray the idea of more individualistic lower middle-class children striving for autonomy on one hand and on the other, working-class children striving for attachment with parents to keep the family support system and to aim for social recognition in their formation of personal identities.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on identifying the conjunctive spaces of experience that might have given rise to the implicit knowledge reconstructed in the sense-genetic types. Social class, age, and gender are the three social backgrounds that are key and common to all the respondents. However, it is observed that socioeconomic class in the most influence on the reconstructed implicit knowledge of the young people in this study. Apart from the proposition that working-class children are prone to rebellion against the backdrop of unavailability of resources and taking up adult responsibilities which are contrary to research findings in earlier studies, this study supports the literature that girls have higher tendencies to conform to adults' expectations than boys. However, for reasons that may emanate from the cultural construct of gender, girls also tend to have a higher tendency to rebel against adults' ideas of children. Again, this is contrary to existing literature which finds boys to be more prone to rebellion than girls.

Chapter 7: Towards construction of Ghanaian Childhoods

Overview

The aim of this chapter is twofold: The first part discusses the methodological issues and the implications for research with children. The second one is to empirically answer the question of what Ghanaian children's perspectives are concerning ideal childhood. In doing this, I will summarize the findings of this study and continue to discuss the theoretical implications. The chapter concludes with the research limitation and prospects for further research.

7.1. Issues of Methods

This study is a qualitative study that employed the documentary method with narratives essays of children's fantasies of ideal childhood. Forty-seven essays were collected from two basic schools in the Winneba Municipality in Ghana. Out of the 47 essays, 44 were selected for the entire study and 31 were sampled out for the final analysis.

Using the documentary method with narrative essays was very difficult and tricky, but, in my opinion, it is one of the best methods for research with children. The original plan for this study was to collect three different types of data; group discussion, photos and essays. The first two have been commonly used with the documentary method. However, this original plan changed and those two were dropped. Although the method could also have been changed, I perceived its use with essays as a gap and a challenge. Also, I was curious, especially about the idea of implicit knowledge.

Using the documentary method with essays was difficult in the sense that I had limited literature to rely on. Existing literature that came closest is on interviews and group discussions and meaning is achieved based on a line-by-line transcription. This was not made possible by the kind of data I had. Narrative essays of fantasy hardly permit logical and coherent presentation of ideas. This is because, although the essay has a definite structure and the narrative gives a choice of important events or activities, fantasy is spontaneous. The stimulus gave a time frame to bring order to the narrations, however, this did not wholly change the spontaneity of narrating fantasy. Hence, the result was more of a jumble up of ideas as they occur to the writers and this made strict

analysis according to the method very difficult. In the end, I made use of idea-by-idea analysis. However, the documentary method proved to be very key to the final findings due to its uniqueness in making the implicit knowledge also, data for analysis. The findings show that the documentary method is very plausible for research with children especially in combining it with narrative essays of fantasy. The use of narratives in research with children has already been established as very successful (Hosny, et al, 2020; McAlpine, 2016; Elliot, 2005; Sfard & Prusak,2005; Reissman, 2008; Holley & Colvar, 2009; Reissman, 2002). However, using narrative essays of fantasy and with documentary method is rare and this research is a step towards bridging that gap.

Using the documentary method was tricky as I had to empty my mind of all "adultness" by striving to reduce all personal biases in order to understand the children's perspectives in the essay. This was a tug-of-war between the adult, the woman, the mother and the wife inside me and it took the intervention of group interpretation of the essays to straighten things up, especially, when it came to the formation of sense-genetic types.

Although the three-fold instrument used was one of the problems I had to deal with, it also turned out to be one of the strong factors that contributed to the findings in this study. The use of an essay demands deep reflections on situations concerning the topic before starting to write. Fantasy, on the other hand, gives the power to transcend current conditions and give the individual freedom to explore and navigate powerful discourses. Narratives provide the tool to make important choices about what is essential to individual perspectives in life. This combination provided a very strong opportunity for the children to step into the world of fantasy where they are free to do as they wish. Finally, the documentary method combines all three to not only construct the meaning of what the participants construe to be an ideal childhood but also to reconstruct their implicit knowledge which they are not aware they possessed and which provided the framework for constructing Ghanaian childhoods.

A contentious issue in using this method could be its origin as based on Western epistemological foundations and it being used in non-western cultural contexts as well as in a very different research field. Although the documentary method. originates from the West, the underlying idea of different layers of knowledge is not only Western. There is diversity in meaning in languages across different cultural contexts and even within the same cultural context, meaning is affected by such factors as age or

generation, educational background, occupation and others. This theory of levels of meaning is evident in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, adages, riddles and figurative language in general which are very common in Ghanaian languages and daily language use.

What would have been the most probable answer that the participants could have given to the question of what Ghanaian childhood is? Even adults would grapple with such a question. However, without asking such direct questions (which would not receive an answer, anyway), using the documentary method, this study has been able to reconstruct the participants' ideas of Ghanaian childhoods. Hence, I will recommend the documentary method for research with children.

In a review of interdisciplinary research on children's time use, Vogler et al, (2009) posit that studies in anthropology, over time, have resulted in our reconstructing our insights about, particularly, how poor children position themselves as active agents in how they use their time. and conclude that;

> *by looking at how social characteristics affect children's time use we can see how children's activities are shaped by structural constraints as well as by their own decision-making. This, in turn, sheds light on how adults, children and others negotiate their roles in a given society, (Vogler et al, 2009; 20).*

However, children's life and how they use their time are mostly orchestrated by adults and general social constraints on children's time use. Their current lives are what society has given them, however, in their fantasy, we are made privy to the life that they will want for themselves. Fantasy acted as a means by which children project their understanding of life and expectation of both the present and the future with their past and immediate present acting as the base for the fantasy This makes fantasy a very useful tool in research with children, especially, when researching children's perspectives on socio-cultural issues. The finding from this study is empirical evidence that children's fantasy helps us to understand how they construct meaning about the world. This will lead us to a clearer understanding of and closer to giving children lives that will give them more satisfaction in life.

Using narrative essays of their fantasies as an instrument for data collection, it was possible to glimpse the state of the participants' current lives and a projection of what they expected it to be through reconstruction of their implicit knowledge using the

documentary method. Thus, it was found embedded in children's fantasy of ideal childhood, six main themes, namely children's daily routine activities (which include sleep, household chores, eating and school activities), relationships, leisure activities, spiritual activities, protests and children's philosophies of life. Some of these themes are consistent with Slot et al (2019) and Ben-Arieh's (2002) work on measuring children's daily activities and confirmed by Aldgate and Mcintosh (2006). However, in analyzing the essays, it was not possible to focus on line-by-line analysis because the writers wrote as ideas occur to them even after deep reflection. Hence, the essays were analyzed based on ideas without really focusing on where those ideas appear in the essay.

7.2. Challenging terrains

Despite the notable gaps that this research seeks to fill in the existing literature and the exciting adventure into children's fantasy and their understanding and perceptions of the world around them, this study could not deal emphatically and decisively with certain issues.

For instance, a lot more could have been accomplished but for such setbacks as evident in gender issues not properly addressed. In the essays, most of the participants did not indicate their gender, hence, it was difficult to look at issues from a pure gender perspective. If this had not been the case, it would have been possible to draw more absolute conclusions on how gender affected the children's perspectives.

Also, as much as the documentary method reduces researchers' influence on the data to the barest minimum, it is still researchers' engagement with the data that results in interpretation and findings. The implication is that the background and experiences of researchers, in one way or the other could influence the way that the children's fantasies were perceived. Thus, even though lots of effort was made to reduce such biases, I wish to acknowledge that my background as a mother has implications on the way I perceive the children's views. Also, being a woman is an essential classification that affects how I see children and probably the world, especially, from the point of view of a married woman with domestic responsibilities. This may have implications too on the way I understand gender issues from the children's perspectives.

Another key limitation might have arisen from the combination of fantasy, narrative and essay. Fantasy as a work of imagination demands reflection, spontaneity

and negotiations of experiences which, the rigidity of essay writing will not lend itself to. This resulted in a lot of contradictions and almost unintelligible expressions and ideas in some of the essays. In others too, there were repetitions of similar ideas in other parts of some essays which were like afterthoughts, but which the writers were unable to add to the previous paragraphs. This made line-by-line interpretation evident in the analysis of interview data impossible.

Additionally, the small sample size makes it difficult to make a conclusive stand on the findings to project it as a national perception. Also, the setting of the study is only a small municipality in one of the 16 regions in Ghana. Hence, extensive research encompassing a bigger area would provide findings that could best be generalized.

7.3. Theoretical issues

The main theoretical reasoning behind this study is that children are equally knowledgeable and capable members of society and they possess psychosocial tenacities which are equally important to propel society to greater heights or who possess insights that can give us more understanding of the world around us. The discussions so far focus on Ghanaian young adolescents' implicit knowledge of their childhoods in relationship to the average Ghanaian adults' ideas about childhood. Looking at the five types analyzed, one could observe different childhoods from two extremities with lower-middle-class childhood representing childhoods that divert from adults' expectations at one end and that of the working-class depicting childhoods that conform at the other. In-between these two extremities are other forms of childhood that are implied in relationship with the two key ones. However, the most radical of those resultant childhoods (confronting adults' ideals) come from the working-class and this is because children from the working-class face the most adults' constraints. For instance, the working-class children construct childhoods with the most responsibilities from household chores and sibling caregiving. This could be a result of more children but limited resources in working-class families.

On the other hand, childhoods that divert from adults' expectations are predominantly from the lower-middle-class and the most focus is on creating distance between children and adults to reduce adults' influence and to develop autonomy and self-identity. Factors that appear to be the most constraints on children are adults-control related. In situations where siblings are referred to, it is to older ones. Lower-

middle-class children have no sibling-related and household chores responsibilities probably because parents here have fewer children and they can afford hired domestic help. However, in all the different childhood frameworks, children directly or indirectly allude to their dependence on adults.

Also, although three variables - age, gender and socio-economic class- emerge as key initiators of conjunctive experiences of the subjects in this study, the third is the most influential. This is because, with age, 10-13 years is considered the stage of young adolescence, hence, experiences constrained by age may be communal to all the participants here. Gender played a very little role because most of them did not indicate their sex. However, the class background affected most of the children's childhoods and for that matter, how they construct their fantasy of ideal childhood. This is consistent with the literature on the effect of socio-economic status on children's socioemotional development ((Bolger et al. 1995, Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Lahey et al. 1995, McCoy et al. 1999).

In the following sections, I will discuss the main findings on the important activities and ideas in children's ideal childhoods and on each of the five childhood orientations reconstructed from the children's implicit knowledge. This will be done by focusing on the general research question and the three specific ones.

Ghanaian children reveal their perception of childhood by constructing childhoods, on the explicit level, that are characterized by children's involvement in important mundane activities and on the implicit level by creating different frameworks of childhood using a modus operandi that compares to adults' ideals of childhood.

7.3.1. What activities are important to Ghanaian children in their imagined perfect lives?

To answer this research question, the documentary method gives a structure to identifying the answers from the subjects' essays as indicated in *chapter 3.5.1.* which makes it necessary to focus on certain key issues. This study identified important themes in children's lived experiences and activities that they project as very important in ideal childhood through formulating and reflecting interpretation. With important activities, it was observed that young adolescents focus a lot on issues of sleep, household chores, eating, school activities, leisure activities and spiritual activities.

From here, I will summarize the findings and proceed to discuss how they are related to existing studies with children.

The young adolescents in this study imagine an ideal childhood in which they would have an average of 9.7 hours of sleep which is consistent with Suni (2020). However, they associate sleep issues with power relations in inter-generational relationships at home and although they do not want sleeping and waking up times to be imposed on them, their imagined sleep duration is still enough for healthy living and it is consistent with research findings on children and young adolescents' sleep needs. They associated sleeping time with freedom; the time that they are most free from adults' interferences, knowledge; they, just like adults, know that sleep is necessary for good health and development and responsibility; they can adjust their sleeping time in order to perform or fulfill their responsibilities.

Young adolescents' perception of sleep issues converges with adults' views mostly on the number of hours of sleep they need; however, they also diverge in the times of going to sleep and time of waking with most of them fantasizing about sleeping late and waking up later than adults expect.

The findings from this study show that young adolescents fantasize about an ideal life without household chores as only eleven of forty-four cases mentioned household chores in their ideal childhood. Although the participants are egalitarian when it comes to issues of power in inter-generational relations, it was observed that this perception does not matter when it comes to taking up responsibilities in the home contrary to Leonard (2009) who observed that young adolescents participated in household chores willingly for reasons like reciprocity in the family and acquisition of skills for adulthood. It was also observed that gender played a key role in children's perceptions of parents performing household chores in general. Mothers are associated with work around the home environs (Evertsson, 2006; Schober, 2013) while there is a clear disconnect between fathers and domestic responsibilities.

In addition, gender disparity also shows in, of the minority who mention household chores, only one is a boy and this is consistent with Bonke (2010). This gender disparity is a cultural construct where traditionally, women and girls are associated with work in the home. Girls are not very happy with being solely confined to taking responsibility for the home chores. However, in their construction of Ghanaian childhood, this culture persists. The implication of this to society is that the younger

generation would perpetuate cultural practices without due diligence to their effects on life. This also means that social change would not be initiated by the very people who are negatively affected by traditions and social practices. Observation of the gender stance as influenced by higher social class indicates that even higher social class does not affect culture. This is evident in the perception of children from both socioeconomic classes on the cultural construct of the female's position in the home.

Although children in this study acknowledge the need to do household chores, they show more preference for performing clean-up exercises at school and rather suggest the involvement of hired domestic assistants in the home. Hence, when it comes to sharing responsibilities in the home, the majority of the research subjects here fantasize childhood as a period characterized by a lack of responsibilities in the home and this is consistent with Li (2016), McCready (2015), Squires (2013), Williams (2010), Twenge and Campbell (2009) and Twenge (2006). There is a clear preference for clean-up responsibilities at school over the ones at home. The causative factor that could be the most notable reason is the fear of punishment. When children are responsibility-conscious only because they want to avoid punishment, then their attitude towards those responsibilities when the "punishment factor" cease to function, would be very lackadaisical.

With regards to the importance of household chores in the home and also to the socialization of children, it is important that adults negotiate with children and find ways to make chores more attractive to them. It is also very important that educators, parents and caregivers desist from using household chores as punishment or correctional measures since this will only fuel their resentment towards them. Finally, chores should be clearly outlined for children and young people to understand what exactly is expected of them.

Empirical evidence shows that adolescents attach a lot of importance to healthy eating (Bester & Schnell, 2004; Demory-Luce & Jensen, 2009; Rea, 2007; Roberts, Maxwell, Bagnall, & Bilton, 2001; Lattimore & Halford, 2003) and this is corroborated by the young adolescents in this study as 84% of them include eating and food-related issues in their fantasy of ideal childhood. However, the reconstructed implicit knowledge of eating and food in this study shows that young adolescents' eating behavior is influenced by multiple factors, (Rea, 2007; Amos, et al, 2012) characterized by what to eat when to eat and where to eat. In this regard, the young adolescents here

focused on healthy, nutritious and favorite foods as criteria for what to eat. When to eat is characterized by the 3 main daily foods (breakfast, lunch and supper) with accompanying snacks. With where to eat, breakfast is mainly situated in the home. However, lunch, supper and snacks are mainly eaten outside, mostly in shopping malls and restaurants and this is consistent with Bugge, (2011) and Bugge and Lavik, (2010). The interesting point is that there is a social class connotation, especially, regarding what and where to eat. This way, what one eats and where the activity takes place gives an indication of being wealthy or leading a life of affluence which they project as very essential in ideal childhood. Although this is important to children, in the school space, it is more important to eat with peers (Bugge, 2010).

School as an institution for formal education of children is treated with ambivalences characterized by factors of social class, gender and age. Although school is positioned as an opportunity to have a good future (Alms et al, 2019; Presson 2008), it was observed that 57% of the children from the lower-middle-class did not include school in their fantasy of ideal childhood. On the other hand, only 11% of those from the working-class did the same. It could be concluded that lower-middle-class children have less interest in school. What may account for such views? Children in the working-class focus on school as a means to join the middle-class, thus, they hold school in high esteem and work very hard towards the achievement of that dream. On the other hand, the children in the middle-class already have "all that school has to offer" and thus fantasize about something more, a life of wealth and excesses. Probably, they take for granted what their parents provide them. However, it was realized from the findings that children's aversion to school is a system critique (i) of subjects taught in school which they do not see the need to study or thought of as irrelevant, and this is consistent with Noddings, 2007 and Wood 1998; (ii) of teachers' negative attitudes in school which is key to the success of the teaching/learning process as indicated by Steinberg and McCray (2012); Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004), Wentzel (2012); (iii) of unfavorable teaching/learning methods and techniques as indicated by Certo, Cauley and Chafin, (2003) and (iv) of irrelevant or lack of teaching/learning aids and accessories in the absence of which learning at school becomes boring, confusing, rote and less successful (Adjei et al, 2015; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015 and Nwati Munje & Jita, 2020). Wood (1998; 90) describes young people's sentiments about the subjects they study at school vividly in,

Equations are solved, chemical formulas written, novels reviewed, dates memorized . . . with little explanation of why students are doing these things.

The current curriculum puts all children into the same teaching and learning situation irrespective of their interests or abilities. This could either destroy such talents or cause them to be stunted, (Certo, Cauley & Chafin, 2003; Noddings, 2007). This study also reveals that the time of the day at which subjects are taught affects learners' ability to learn effectively and this is consistent with Hartley and Nicholls (2008) and Sjosten-Bell, (2005). This is because different people possess different learning abilities depending on the time of the day. Research also indicates that the part of the human brain that dominates the individual affects the time of the day that the person learns certain subjects (Klein, 2001). Hence, most people would like that such tendencies would be taken into consideration when school timetables are planned. However, learners in each class have a different orientation to best performance according to the time of the day, hence, as Wile and Shouppe (2011) suggest, there is the need for more research to determine the best time that, especially, core subjects should be taught for higher learner performance. This study reveals that the children are trying to find ways of maximizing their productivity at school.

Findings from this study indicate that leisure is one of the two most important issues in children's fantasy (equaled only by eating), (see table 3) and by extension in their reality as indicated by (Hendry et al. (1993) and their perception of leisure activities is classified under physical, digital leisure (Auhuber, 2019) and adventure which is mostly in the form of traveling. However, it was observed from the findings that digital or screen leisure is the most common activity among the young adolescents with watching T.V. as the most preferred or more appropriately, the most available for them. This is because their daily routine activities leave very little time for other forms of leisure that is time and activity-oriented. Also, most of them choose to watch TV during their leisure time because that is what is readily available to them as most Ghanaian homes possess a T.V. set. Although watching TV is considered passive leisure (Nishino and Larson, 2003) or casual leisure (Stebbins, 2007) and is engaged in usually by adolescents who are uninvolved in active leisure activities, (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015), the young people here engage in it because that is what is made

readily available to them. This means that children's leisure mostly depends on adults' provision of leisure facilities for them as posited by Pavlova and Silbereisen, (2015).

The study participants also fantasized about adventure in the form of traveling both home and abroad as a form of leisure and this is very important to them, (Sunderland, 2017; Edensor, 2001). Moisă, (2010) is of the view that children and young people show interest in traveling for diverse reasons including leisure and such adventure has lasting and enduring educational and cultural values and which can influence children's life courses, (Dallari & Mariotti, 2016) as indicated by the children in this study. In their opinion traveling is fun and it provides better learning opportunities. In addition, traveling with their parents gives opportunities for family bonding and healthy relationship between members of the family (Agate, et al., 2009; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The findings also show that the children's interests in traveling and meeting others, such as in children's camp, helps them to be properly socialized into accepting others and helps build better and positive communication (Lehto, et.al., 2009; Shaw, 2008; Smith, 1997).

The findings on what social experiences affected their fantasy of leisure show that children from the lower-middle-class fantasize about more diverse leisure activities than their counterparts from the working-class who focused mostly on watching T.V. Hence, it could be concluded that socio-economic class affects children's choice of leisure activities. In addition, and conclusively on leisure, the children suggest that since they spend most of their wake-up and productive time at school, leisure should be made an integral part of school activities.

Issues of spirituality are very significant in adolescence as young people strive to establish self-identity (King et al, (2008); Lerner et al, 2008) which creates opportunities for sustainable progress in personal and social commitments (King & Roeser, 2009). Erikson (1968) conceptualized religion as part of individuals' broader psychosocial development which provides an excellent worldview, moral beliefs, behavioral norms as well as a community of believers who serve as role models. From the study, it is obvious that religion and spiritual activities represent a transcendent source of hope and self-identity for young adolescents as indicated by King, (2008); Roeser et al, (2008) and Smith and Denton, (2005). However, although parents are theorized to be the key interpreters of religion to their children and their religious beliefs and practices are usually the base on which their children build their own religious

ethics, the findings from this study show that children do not merely replicate adults' ways of relating to God. On the contrary and in their fantasy, young people position themselves as relating to God in ways that they understand and deem appropriate. Rather than replicate adults' ways of practicing spirituality, they personalize their relationship with God and by so doing indicate that they have a choice in relating to God without adults' interference. This is done by conceptualizing spiritual activities into the categories of public and private/personal practices and choosing where to fit their practice of spirituality. Finally, in line with studies by Smith and Denton (2005) and Wallace et al., (2003), more young adolescent girls include spiritual activities in their fantasy of ideal childhood than the boys.

7.3.2. Which ideas of relationships do Ghanaian children reveal in their imagined perfect lives?

Relationships play a very key role in Ghanaian children's fantasy of ideal childhood and the key ones are immediate family relations with resulting gender issues and intergenerational relationships and friendships with peers. Although relationships with other personalities emerged, they are connected to important activities like teachers to school activities and hired help to household chores.

The findings indicate that, as much as young people want closer relationships with their parents, they have their own dynamics by which they interpret parental involvement in their lives as indicated by Sy (2015) and The Australian Raising Kids Website (2021) in interviews with young people on their family relationships. In this study, it could be concluded that children's perception of their relationship with their parents is characterized by parents' availability, financial support, responsibility towards their children and children's (in)dependence on their parents. However, it was also observed that all these factors are fundamentally situated on parents' availability which, in children's fantasy, is defined or "controlled" by them (children).

With gender issues, it was observed that children could not transcend social positions on gender stereotyping and gender roles in the family as indicated in studies by Gere and Helwig, (2012) and Japaridze et al (2013). The mother role is domesticated (Lewis et al. 2001) whereas the father role is depicted as not available in childhood. Hence, children project mothers as more supportive than fathers (Letha, 2013; Richardson et al, 1984). This study's findings show that young adolescents fantasize about spending time with their mothers more and those who fantasize about spending

time with their fathers do so because the fathers are less available, however, Baxter 2017 posits that it is the availability of the parent that makes children spend more time with them.

With gender roles, it was also found that most often, children assign roles to the gender present and do not necessarily create stereotypes. Thus, for instance, in the absence of the mother, children look up to their fathers for the support they require from their mothers and vice versa.

In their fantasy of ideal childhood, children position themselves as in control of their lives and position adults in the peripheral whose roles are assigned and/or influenced by children. This implies that children position childhood as a stage in which they are in control and adults' part is by their (children's) permission or adults' negotiation. Thus, most family conflicts occur as a result of issues of children and young people's freedom and responsibility, (Richardson et al, 1984). It could be concluded that, with the issue of intergenerational family relationships, children fantasize about egalitarianism in the family which is consistent with De Goede (2009) and Gere & Helwig, (2012).

Several studies have elaborated on the benefits of adolescent caregiving practices (Goodnow & Lawrence, 2001; Kuperminc et al., 2009; Burton, 2007) while others have also observed the disadvantages of the same to adolescents (Dodson & Dickert, 2004; East & Weisner, 2009; Earley et al, 2007). However, the findings from this study show that young adolescents, emphatically, refute such caregiving practices as those activities represent added responsibilities that young people at that stage are unwilling to take up. Earlier studies mostly focus on adults' perceptions of adolescent caregiving practice; however, this study contributes to that scholarship by concluding that, young adolescents fantasize about a childhood where they will not have to engage in such sibling caregiving practices and in view of that, they imagine a childhood without younger siblings.

Friends play very key roles in children's fantasy of ideal childhood as it is evident in a study by Sy (2015). However, this focus on friends is brought about as a result of parents' "conduct" towards their children. These so-called "conducts" include parents' (un)availability, (un)needed emotional and physical support and (un)yielding of control. It was also observed that in their fantasy of ideal childhood, when children spend time with their friends, they engage more in leisure activities and expect friends

to support them emotionally. It could also be concluded that children expect their association with friends to shape their psychosocial lives positively, (Mastern et al. (2012)

From the children's perceptions of relationships, it could be concluded that they understand that they are social beings and thus they need to relate to others at different levels. However, they position themselves as being in control of those relationships.

7.3.3. Ghanaian children's constructions of Ghanaian childhoods

Imbued in the children are individuals who can negotiate the complex trajectories of life just like adults and given the needed opportunities, they will probably make decisions that are equivalent to those of adults or even better. Most of our anxieties about their vulnerability are about our fear of their making decisions and mistakes that will cost us in one way or the other. Thus, our claim to protect them is more about protecting ourselves, but, it is quite agreeable that most lessons learned in life come from experiences.

Children negotiate childhoods according to the situations they find themselves in and in their fantasy of ideal childhoods, they construct five main pathways or frameworks of children's lives in relation to adults' ideals of childhood. With each orientation framework comes myriad trajectories into important topics and activities that children try to negotiate to the best of their knowledge, and abilities and to their advantage. These are the different childhoods in Ghana or ways that Ghanaian children experience and thus, construct childhoods.

The first orientation is conformity to adults' ideals of childhood which portray the image of a child who is obedient to adults. Children in this category are mainly girls from the working class and between 12 and 13 years of age. Their childhood is based on adults' principles or ideals, hence, they do as they are instructed. They focus on school and have a high dependency on adults' financial support. Their leisure activities are mostly domestic (T.V.) and academic-oriented. They are family-oriented but display high dependence on and attachment to mothers but yearn for the company of their fathers who are mostly not available. They have very few complaints and their protests are more of pleas. They project an inferior status of childhood which is adult-dependent because they have limited alternatives. Their primary focus on school is as a means of "salvation" from adults' dominance. Reflecting on this framework, one

could conclude that children with such orientation could only reproduce the kind of society that they find themselves in. However, if our child upbringing practices would give children experiences to reproduce only the already existing, then what future are we looking at? That is, if our children seek to be just like us, then our future will be just like the present with no progress. Thus, this orientation does not portray a positive image of childhood as children are not empowered or prepared for the future we envisage.

The second orientation in childhood is the one in which children conform to adults' expectations but complain every step of the way and it is characterized by the image of a grumpy child. Children with this orientation come from a cross-section of both socio-economic backgrounds and they are between ages 10 and 13. Their main focus is on adults' ideals albeit grudgingly, thus their mindset could be summed in the expression "I will obey but I hate doing it". For this reason, their engagements are mostly in outdoor activities as a means of escape. For them, school is an afterthought and purposively for personal gains and social acceptance. They are grumpy in their relationship with others and usually focus on coping strategies. They are dependency-oriented and have no alternatives or options. Although they crave privacy and autonomy, they possess a sense of ingrained helplessness such that, they could only fathom adaptability. They project themselves as not inferior but victims of adults and generally paint a picture of sullen childhood.

If children feel this way about their childhood, then what kind of life are we, as adults, giving them and what will they turn out to be considering that, even in fantasy, they could not change their situation? What kind of future leaders are we grooming from such hostile sentiments? Because, even though it is appropriate to allow them to be children while they are within that stage, the fact remains that they will take over the helm of affairs in the near future and most childhood attitudes persist even long after childhood is over.

The third framework is the one in which children divert from adults' ideals of childhood and it is framed in the images of autonomy. Most of the children here are from the lower-middle-class and they project a childhood in which children are in control of their lives, time use and relationships. Although they make use of existing institutional structures, they have different ideas about how they should be run. They have diverse forms of leisure and they reduce adults' interferences to the barest

minimum. Thus, they create a superior status of childhood in which children are free-spirited, possess unlimited alternatives and school is only one option to a successful and fulfilling childhood. Childhood in this category presents a more progressive or change-oriented future as children are more exploratory and empowered to take control of their own lives. Children's creativity and curiosity that culminates into personal achievements and a hopeful future is fueled mainly by the availability of resources. The implication is that lack of resources, in all different forms, inhibits children's abilities which when lost in childhood, would not be regained anywhere else.

The fourth orientation is the one in which children try to create a balance between adults' ideals of childhood and that of children themselves by conforming to some adults' principles and diverting from others. This is characterized by children taking the stance that is convenient to them. Most of the children here are young adolescents from the working-class and they position themselves as having self-imposed reverence for adults but still possessing some control. Children with this orientation focus on adult results but through their own self-orchestrated means and in this way make both happy. They position childhood as child-centered but acknowledge the influence of significant adults. In this framework, children are portrayed as free-spirited, and have unlimited alternatives but mostly focus on going to school. This projects a picture of childhood in which everyone is happy but children have the power to make choices. The idea here is more of equity promoted by children themselves.

Childhood in the final orientation is characterized by confronting adults' ideals of childhood and it is framed in images of rebellion. The majority of children here are from the working class and are between 12 and 13 years. Orientation among this group is characterized by questioning or challenging adults' authority, detesting adults' failings and blaming adults for their plight. They possess a reductionist idea of school and would look for alternatives to school. To avoid responsibility for younger siblings, they fantasize about a single-child family and show open discrimination in relationships. However, they are vulnerable to adults' misconduct and their criticism or rebellion is to find a life of comfort for themselves. They exhibit conflicts of interest and could be described as self-centered. As they promote revolutionizing existing norms, they project a universalistic view of human life by doing away with the binary relationship of children and adults. However, although they project egalitarian ideals, those ideals are only good when they are comfortable.

The discussion focused on the generalizations that could be realized from the socio-genetic types formation and the general findings from the study. The proceedings so far indicate that children have their own understanding of the world and their negotiation of childhood based on their individual experiences which culminate into communal theories of childhood indicate that they are competent in negotiating life in the society and their perceptions put us in better positions to also understand the community and social life that we share with them. Thus, activities that are important to them are part of the larger society and their constructs of childhood are in relationship to adults' involvement in children's lives.

7.3.4.   Acquaye's Theory of Ghanaian Children's Constructions of Ideal Childhood in Fantasy

Current constructions of children and childhood are based mainly on their agency and less on their own perceptions. However, findings from this study have led to the development of a theory in which children, themselves, construct their childhoods which is also appropriate within the Ghanaian socio-cultural contexts. Ghanaian young adolescents want to determine who they are and whom they want to be and would want society to accept them as such. This is a matter of constructing one's status versus being constructed and Ghanaian children want to be the key personalities in the construction of their childhoods. Emanating from children's own sentiments and perceptions, this theory respects children's views and gives an understanding of their lived experiences.

The core of this theory is, that Ghanaian children determine what their childhood should be within the framework of how children relate to adults with the subcomponents of (i) the obedient child framework in which children do what adults tell them to do (ii) the grumpy child framework in which children do what they are told but complain as they do (iii) the autonomous child framework in which children do what they want but to achieve communal aims (iv) the convenient child framework in which children try to please themselves and all significant others and (v) the rebellious child framework in which children confront and seek changes to what adults want of them.

What they are or what they feel they are should be a factor of their own determination rather than what society wants or expects of them. Society should only be a guiding figure and not an imposition because between these ages (10-13 years), they have been brought up and influenced by particular backgrounds by which they can

make choices. From the study, young people choose whether to conform or divert, or rebel when it comes to social norms. By respecting their choices, children will feel that society appreciates them and one major consequence would be a reduction of intergenerational conflicts between children and adults. When young people understand social norms and standards, they would make choices and conform to their choices and society would not be uncomfortable with their choices because whatever they choose would be what they have learned from the society.

7.4. Conclusions

The idea of the fantasy of perfect life is an opportunity to create a world where, in my view, everyone is happy, no pain, no sorrow, people love and they are loved. A world where there is no conflict and one gets whatever one wishes for; a kind of utopian society (Fernando et al, 2019; Martell, 2018; Levitas, 2016). The findings show that the children did not create a new world in their fantasy of ideal childhood. They engaged in what could be described as "realistic fantasy", where present conditions and situations prevailed even when they have the power to change things. This could imply one of two ideas; the first one is that the reality of their lives is so ingrained that they are unable to transcend their situation to think of something more than the present. Here, one could also conclude that they are so dependent on existing cultural constructions of childhood that it has become the only life they could fathom.

The second idea is that they understand that the world will not change for them and thus they have to make do with what is available. Both ideas reinforce the powerlessness of children as portrayed in cultural constructs of children. Of the 44 participants, only ten (a clear minority) of them fantasize about a childhood that is slightly different from their reality and that difference is a result of non-dependence on adults. What does this mean to us? The implication is that today's children are limited in their perception of life and the future by the upbringing being given to them.

7.4.1. What does this mean to childhood studies?

The findings from this study indicate that although children are competent social actors and generally possess individual as well as communal perspectives that are important contributions to the discourse on children and childhood, their competency is predicated by external factors such as the socioeconomic background of the parents.

This is evident in the quality of childhoods idealized by the children from the two socioeconomic backgrounds identified in this study. The implication is that whatever children will be or become depends on factors that are beyond their control. The implication is that studying children as beings or becoming asynchronously tends to exclude vital parts of their existence without which theorizing about children and childhood becomes inadequate which has characterized most of the studies concerning them. It will therefore be necessary to focus more on these external factors such as intergenerational relationships, and how children understand and /or relate to them in their own ways.

Western ideologies of childhood are so far from the reality of children's lived experiences even in the Western world and to propel childhood studies to the status where we could authoritatively claim knowledge of the world's children, then the focus should be on localized studies of children (Punch, 2015; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016) even as this study has proved that within the same locality, children experience childhood differently. Also, we can only understand children enough to theorize their lives only when we allow them to be physically and emotionally involved in the corpus that conceptualizes them.

Most often, research on childhoods, especially in Africa, tends to focus on problem childhoods (Bordonaro, 2011; Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012; Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004) and the studies of child-right advocates are taken as childhood studies which is wholly not supposed to be so because they approach the research field with only one focus – children in distress. However, there is more to childhood than that as explained by Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi (2016). It is very problematic to approach childhood in Africa with predefined concepts and notions because the African situation is quite unlike any other. It is, therefore, necessary to include African perspectives in childhood studies without comparison to already existing and more developed forms of childhood. A holistic look at African childhood can contribute significantly to studies on global childhoods. Finally, as much as African childhoods have a lot to learn from other childhoods, the inverse is also true.

I cannot confidently claim knowledge of childhoods in Africa or even in the West African sub-region where Ghana is located because, although ideas of childhood do not stop at national or regional borders and although we have cultural similarities,

situations are different. Hence, I could only lay claim to an aspect of childhood in Ghana and Africa.

This is because the region has seen many political conflicts that have affected the lives of many children. However, Ghana has not encountered such conflicts, thus based on this, I can say that childhood in Ghana is not affected by such political conflicts, however, political conflict is not the only problem that plagues childhood in Africa. But which country does not have problems? Even then, amid such conflicts and other problems, there is more to children's lives that could be a very rich field of research for childhood studies. In the case of Ghana, this study is a bold step toward theorizing Ghanaian childhoods.

7.5. Reflecting on my position as a researcher

When researchers reflect on their position in a research process, two things come to play; first of all, the personality of the researcher and how they relate to that particular study and how that relationship influences the study both in theoretical and methodological terms. The second is, in the end, how the research process and outcome affect the position of the researcher. This reflection is very important, especially, when conducting research with subjects who have certain socially preconceived limitations. Children (based on their young chronological age) are thought to be inexperienced, irrational and selfish and need direction and there is a high possibility of looking down on them. As I reflect on my position as a researcher, I focused on my initial position as influenced by my diverse background and also by the household social discourse on the Ghanaian child. Another focus is on how global discourse on children and childhood affected my positioning and impact on children's lives in the Ghanaian context. Finally, I also thought about how the methodological underpinning of this study impacted both my position as a researcher and my understanding of the research focus.

I was, at first, very disoriented, especially, by the participants' narratives. I believe my multi-background experiences and positions brought this up. The positions of a wife, mother, guardian, teacher and researcher of children's fantasy brought a lot of conflicting sentiments which could have crowded rationalization expected of a qualitative researcher. As explained earlier, as a child, I was brought up in a home where children do what they are told (albeit general childhood "misbehaviors"). Hence, as a mother, I expect my children (and for that matter children in general) to be obedient,

generous and grateful for what is done for them. It was therefore shocking and offending when I read the essays and mothers are treated otherwise (explicitly). The offense came in the light that I and for that matter, mothers, are sacrificing so much for their children to have good lives (as much as they can afford) and only for them (the children), in their fantasy, to ask for more and contribute even less than expected of them. By household social discourse, I am referring to issues about children that keep coming up anytime parents meet to deliberate on children in such gatherings as Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Key to almost every discussion in such meetings is the complaints of children's negative attitude to school activities, learning and household activities. Most parents, especially mothers, are at their wits end on how to deal with such children's attitudes. In one of such meetings, a parent (a father) asked if parents have observed how their attitudes are impacting their children's behavior. This current research and especially the use of the documentary method, is changing the way I understand children. Now, I have come to understand that, what children and young people say and do should not be taken personally as there is more meaning embedded than seen on the surface.

However, the same mother sentiment coupled with my academic background, made me agree with the children on some of the issues they fantasize about school. As a teacher and trainer of teachers, I have the knowledge to impart, and naturally expect my students to pay attention to and do what I tell them. In the department of Basic Education, at the University of Education, Winneba, where I teach, teaching methods and techniques, and dynamics concerning teachers' attitudes to professional practice are very key in our curriculum. I reacted to the children's demands of teachers and teaching in their fantasy in two ways; first of all, I thought the teachers they talked about are at fault because (as a good teacher) I do not fall within the category, they (the children) described and would have reacted similarly as a child. Secondly, I agree that the declining standard of education in Ghana could partly be blamed on teaching methods and techniques that do not work and finally on teachers' attitudes. Hence, I was quick to join the children to point accusing fingers at the so-called teachers that they rule out of their fantasy school. I, however, disagreed with some of the ways they want school to be like taking into consideration both cultural and financial background vis-à-vis children's rights on participation and protection.

The global discourse on childhood has been on children's rights and how to protect them. In some cases, these rights are so theoretical that their reality in some cultural spaces is quite unrealistic. Such absurdities are evident in the children's fantasy. "I want to do it my way and still achieve the level of success expected". That is not always possible and to what extent can children be held responsible for their actions? Should children be left to the fate of their actions or should they be "corrected" to avoid "future" catastrophes and to what extent should they be corrected?

In view of the above reflections, the methodological approach acted as a lee-way to gradually change my position towards the research focus and the research subjects. The documentary method changed my stance in this research from trying to explain the children's fantasies to trying to understand them. It has also impacted positively on the relationship I have with my children and children's responses in general. I believe I am more tolerant and open to further discussion with children mainly on the horizontal level of discussion.

7.6. Further research

Research with the documentary method and essays is rare and although the research fills that gap, other gaps need to be filled with this combination. Typically, is the use of the documentary method with essays but not fantasy or even narratives.

In the interpretation of the data, the themes that were identified as important in the participants' childhoods are in themselves key in the study of children. Thus, each theme represents a gap in the studies of the perspectives of Ghanaian children and both their knowledge and fantasy of ideal childhood.

The findings of this study are influenced mostly by the social class background of the participants. Another gap that could be explored is the exclusive study of children from a particular socio-economic background. This could fill the gap in the actual influence of class on Ghanaian childhood.

Power distribution in the inter-generational relationship in the family and gender issues from children's perspectives are other areas that further investigation could help bring clarity to the Ghanaian family structure.

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Appendix

Table 1: the final sample

Serial number	Essay number	Sex	Age	Socioeconomic background
1	1	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
2	2	Boy	11	Lower middle-class
3	3	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
4	5	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
5	6	Did not state	10-11	Lower middle-class
6	7	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
7	10	Girl	11	Lower middle-class
8	11	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
9	12	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
10	13	Boy	10	Lower middle-class
11	14	Boy	11	Lower middle-class
12	17	Girl	10	Lower middle-class
13	20	Girl	12	Working-class
14	21	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
15	22	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
16	23	Boy	12	Working-class
17	26	Girl	12-13	Working-class
18	27	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
19	28	Girl	13	Working-class
20	29	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
21	32	Girl	12-13	Working-class
22	34	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
23	35	Girl	13	Working-class
24	36	Girl	13	Working-class
25	37	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
26	39	Did not state	12	Working-class
27	40	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
28	42	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
29	44	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
30	45	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
31	46	Did not state	12-13	Working-class
32	47	Did not state	13	Working-class

Table 2: the final sample with the themes

Essay	Age/sex	Themes								
1	G11			Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
2	B11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
3	G11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
5	G10	Sleep	Chores	Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
6	-				School	Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
7	G10	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
10	G11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities			
11	B10	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School				Relationships	
12	B10	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure		Money		
13	B10	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	
14	B11	Sleep		Eating		Leisure		Money	Relationships	
17	G10	Sleep			School	Leisure		Money		
20	G12	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
21	-					Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	
22	-	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
23	B12			Eating	School					
26	G-12-13	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
27	-	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	Protests
28	G13	Sleep			School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
29	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	Protests
32	G 12-13	Sleep		Eating		Leisure	Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
34	-	Sleep			School		Spiritual activities	Money	Relationships	
35	G13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure		Money	Relationships	Protests
36	G13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities		Relationships	

249

37	-		Chores		School				Relationships	
39	-12				School		Spiritual activities			
40	-	Sleep		Eating	School		Spiritual activities		Relationships	
42	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	
44	12-13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	
45	12-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure	Spiritual activities			Protests
46	12-13	Sleep	Chores	Eating	School	Leisure				Protests
47	-13	Sleep		Eating	School	Leisure			Relationships	

Table 3: the final sample according to age and gender

Essay	10 years	11 years	10-11 years	12 years	13 years	12-13 years
1		Girl				
2		Boy				
3		Girl				
5	Girl					
6			Unknown			
7	Girl					
10		Girl				
11	Boy					
12	Boy					
13	Boy					
14		Boy				
17	Girl					
20				Girl		
21						Unknown
22						Unknown
23				Boy		
26						Girl
27						Unknown

Essay						
28					Girl	
29						Unknown
32						Girl
34						Unknown
35					Girl	
36					Girl	
37						Unknown
39				Unknown		
40						Unknown
42						Unknown
44						Unknown
45						Unknown
46						Unknown
47						Unknown

Table 4: the final sample according to age, gender and class

Essay	10-11 years	12-13 years	Social class
1	Girl		Lower middle-class
2	Boy		Lower middle-class
3	Girl		Lower middle-class
5	Girl		Lower middle-class
6	unknown		Lower middle-class
7	Girl		Lower middle-class
10	Girl		Lower middle-class
11	Boy		Lower middle-class
12	Boy		Lower middle-class
13	Boy		Lower middle-class
14	Boy		Lower middle-class

17	Girl		Lower middle-class
20		Girl	Working-class
21		Unknown	Working-class
22		Unknown	Working-class
23		Boy	Working-class
26		Girl	Working-class
27		Unknown	Working-class
28		Girl	Working-class
29		Unknown	Working-class
32		Girl	Working-class
34		Unknown	Working-class
35		Girl	Working-class
36		Girl	Working-class
37		Unknown	Working-class
39		Unknown	Working-class
40		Unknown	Working-class
42		Unknown	Working-class
44		Unknown	Working-class
45		Unknown	Working-class
46		Unknown	Working-class

The essays used as data for the study

MY PERFECT LIFE

To me a perfect life is a life still when everything goes my way. In my perfet life, we my life would be normal but all the things that makes my bad day worse will change to make it perfect!!
Some things that saddens my day is the thought of waking up @ 5:00. When I even wake up at 5:00, I am so tired I find my self yawn! in class. Which to me is quite embarrasing.

So I wish or in my perfect life I want school to start at 8:00. But in mystical terms I wish the night was longer but there really nothing you can do. When schools starts at 8:0. I can get extra hours to sleep and still wake up early ok I think 8:00 is too much ok 7:30.

So after bathing and so on, I eat breakfast, I like eating breakfas but I wish there was more of it in my perfect life. So at school I like to study cause I want to be a legend in future. One thing I wish would be banned from school was canning. I know sometimes we children are sturbborn and unruly but there is really no need for canning because lot of times we are caned for no mistake of ours but because of others but I dont blame the teachers either. But I would give any of my items to not be cane.

Gossiping is one of the things I detest so one m when my friends gossip I get sad and hurt a lot so in my perfect life there should be no such things as gossiping Ever. I just wish that my driver will stop shouting on me when I delay him because am on duty.

When In my perfect life I wish my parents will stop keeping me cooped up like a bird in the a cage because they think am still a baby. In my perfect life all these things will be my way. In my perfect life a trip to Dubai every year will just be a breeze.

But even in my perfect life there would some problem like if my life is perfect I wouldn't learn much. Some people would envy me and my perfect life and find ways and means to make my life disastrous. So I dont really want to be so rich I want to be the way I am now I am not rich not poor

Kind of like in the middle. I like singing so I would love to be an artist but not like only that I want to be like my mom and grandmother a jack of all trades more like a jill of all trades. So I would like to ~~have~~ Kuami Eugene to feature me in a new song. That will help me pursue my musical career.

I would love him to mentor me in singing. In my perfect life I would like my parents to treat like they would on my birthday. I am quite sensitive so when am insulted I don't take it lightly. Which also in other words I get angry easily but I try to be friendly and peaceful as I can be. So that I can be befriendable and easy to appro

So I also would really like to earn money and spending it in anyway that I please. ~~twe the~~ In my perfect life my parents will give allowance 50GH¢ every week.

In my perfect life I would live in a mansion with different rooms like a music room where my voiling and piano will be. Instead of it being under my ~~table~~ dusty table

And a room for dancing when friends visit that room will have sneakers and a big tv with free wifi some tvs are connected to youtube, so that is how mine will be like so we can search for latest dances.

~~In~~ In my home it impratical to have sleepovers so in my perfect life my parents would give me my freedom and treat me like an 11 year old not a baby when it comes to benefits. Most of these things I have talked about are material things. But theres more to that than that.

Material things dont lead to happiness or maybe they do but you need loved ones to share these material things with but having those things wont be bad. Oh so having all these things I will be disturbed always with thieves so to solve my thief problem I would get lot of trained dogs to guard the house.

That will give the thieves a good fright and the wont venture near and I would have electric wires on the gates to the entrance of my home. In my perfect life I would have wanted a cook but my mom can cook

better than any cook I know. So in my perfect life I want my mother to serve my favourite food for me.

During vacation I would love to go to Dubai or shop online for clothes makeup. And after school in my perfect life I would love to gobo a pizza hut for pizza with some smoothies to quench my sweet buds.

All these things mentioned I would love to share with my friends and family. My cousins also. They make me happy a lot a whole bunch. I love happy moments so parting with friends is hard cause they are the reason why those moments are so special.

So in my perfect life I wouldn't have to part with them ever again. Have you ever heard a quote " The beauty of a woman lies in the hair. I may not be a woman yet but my hair builds my self esteem. When I cut my hair I didn't feel fine so I left some on it. I don't know what problem school has with hair. It is God made part of us so I just don't get it.

~~hair~~ In my perfect life I would have the choice to cut my hair or not. I would love that at school teachers don't stress as with homework so that we can have our personal study at home. ~~In~~ In my perfect life at school I would love to have a swimming pool and learn how to swim. It will make school more interestings and I have read that swimming benefits us a lot

(we want feild trips @ places like Kakum National Park and Elmina castle. At school we learn about those places it would be thrilling to come face to face with the actual place. It just brings more understanding to me cause you have a feel.

Also I think grownups should have a listening ear for us children and I thank you for embarking on this project. But in my perfect life grownups do have a listening ear for us children, cause we also have great ideas too.

My perfect life would be selfish if things only go my way. So my way and everyones way will add spice to my perfect life. In my perfect school life ~~the teach~~ birthday celebration wont be prohibited. Cause birthday's need to be cherished and

celebrated with friends and loved ones. I understand competition but there can be a way to solve it with some critical thinking.

I love reading and in my perfect life of coarse novels will be part of it. I would love to borrow books from a library. Biographies, novels, comics are care amazing, if they are not Part of my perfect life my life is not perfect.

In my perfect life I want to be treated like any important erson will in fact everyone should be treated like a celebrity. What is so different about them? Nothing really!! In my perfect life there is peace and unity, neighbourliness everyone is a good Samaritan. Always helping one another will be a perfect life for everyone. I seek peace # and human equality.

So peaceful and united. It would be just right. I also wish ladies girls who are unfortunate and unprivilaged deserve to stand up for their rights. Cause girls are special. They are unique and exquisite. So in my perfect life there are no such things as rape, child abuse exposing of a girls breast as traditional wear and child marriage those things make my life unperfect. Just the thought of having a perfect life while others are living a life of misery is not perfect. This # inequality solved I will appreciate it.

So with all these problem solved will make my life fatastic. A life with peace being able to share special moments with them. This is my perfect life.

My Perfect life

I am a boy of 11 years and this is how I want to live my perfect life. I will wake up at six o'clock. I say my prayers brush my teeth and bath. After the bath I will eat milo, humburgers, sandwich, pizza, pankake, kebab, cupcakes, cakes, rokies, meat pie, polo, biscuits, spiced fried-egg, coke, sprite, fanta, 7 up, bread with condense milk and wele (Spiced fried riped plantain)

After eating I will put everything in order. I will live in a mansion all by myself. Then I will watch TV from 9:00 to 10:30 am When I finish I will watch movies and play game fo 1030 to 11:40 The I will take a health walk for an hour then go to my friends house and chat with him and play with him. After that I would take a ride in an air conditioned plane and while I am taking the ride I will eat fried rice, Jollof rice, Kebab, shito, salad with salad cream, well spiced onions, Fanta, Bell orange, Special oram, Royal orange, with a big delicous chicken thigh from KFC (KING turkeys fried chicke wele (Spice fried plantain), sandwich, Kobi fried tilapia also spiced tomato sauce, egg stew, chicken stew, red stew, sausage stew and fried eggs spiced eggs, pizza and pankake after the ride I will learn small and make a car that is very fast. When I finish I will go to any park and exercise myself. After that I would go to my room and play play station with my friend for three hours and I will pray to God and go take my Dinner and I will eat milo, hamburgers, sandwich, meat pie, polo rokies, kebab, cupcakes and special orange. I will pray before I sleep and sleep.

3 MY PERFECT LIFE

I am a girl of 11 years and if I am to have a perfect life, it starts like this. I would be awake at 10am and I will have a butler to serve me with breakfast in bed. Then I would have machines I invented to help me do my daily activities and after that I would ride my foldable bike fifty kilometers without getting tired. Then I would ride back to my mansion by the time I come back, my bathtub would be full of water, which is warm. Then after my bath in my giant bathtub, I will go to work in the day. I will be a famous singer and dancer working for Nickelodeon and at night I will be an inventor bringing lots of gadgets that don't exist unless I make them and I will also be an actor in the afternoon. I will get paid 200% of what an average person gets every month. The only thing different is that I'll get paid that amount in a day. All that happened on Monday (I'll sleep at 10pm)

On Tuesday, I'll perform the same duties but for breakfast I would eat bread with egg. Then for lunch I would eat pizza. Then for dinner I would eat jollof and chicken. Then I would perform the same thing as Monday.

Then on Wednesday, I will send money to my mother and I will buy six cars that are being sold in Korea. Then I would send two cars to my caretaker when my mother not around.

Then on Thursday, robbers may come to my house and I produce dangerous gadgets and I will use an electric fence the thief gets past that I will put thorns that can go through shoes as thick as a truck tires. If he/she gets past that I will use death ray guns to heat up his buttocks to 500 celcius so that the thief will get caught so easily.

Then of finday, I'll go and visit my mother and my caretaker, then after that I will present the thief to the police. Then I will take my mother to the beach and we will have some fun, then I'll take her back.

Then on Saturday, I will travel to Korea and go and an actor there on saturday. Then on Sunday, I'll go to church and then I'll go to China and visit Kim Jun tler. Then I'll not go to school the whole week.

4 MY PERFECT LIFE

I am a ten year old girl. This is how I want my perfect life to ~~wake up at~~ be. I will like to wake up at 2:30pm I will work but not too much. I will like to work for about one hour. After working, I will to watch television for about 1 hou 30 mins. After watching the television, I will also like to learn for about 31 mins. After learning, I will like to read my story books or note for about 40 mins. After learning, I would bath brush me teeth and have my breakfast. I would like my breakfast to be indomie with chicken and sausage stew. my lunch Banku, pepper and tilapia. My dinner, Curry fried rice with fried egg. I would like to go to my best friend's house and spend about one week, before going to my house. Before I forget I will like to visit my uncle in his mansion, buy girly stuff (pink shoes, black bags, pink iphone. etc.) Visit the beach on saturday and sunday after church. go to dreamland to buy jeep and Range Rover for my parents. Then my nuclear family will get a lot or a whole lot of money and go to paris then spend at least one month and get a lot of friends then come back to Ghana and spend two months.

After the two months, I will go to canada to spend a whole year and some months (three to four months) Continue my schooling at canada, get the best grade (11, etc). I want to get a free scholarship, go around the world, learn, play and have lots of fun. then I will go to a chinese restaurant and order four pizza, sushi And I really Wish I could sleep in the skyland; it is a mall located at my grandfather's house near a beach I want my perfect life to be full of joy, peace, love and care In my perfect life, I would like to invite kwami Eugene, Adina, Mzvee, Sarkodie, Ak songstress, Sinach, Joe mettle Dope nation, Ed Sheeran, Dj Cally, Rahiana, to feature me in their songs, helps me to sing and travel all the world with them, I want to be the happiest girl / Lady on earth, have sharp mind, Look smart, smell lovely, help other, and respect the elderly people, Preach the world of

God, lift God on high. This is how I want my perfect life to be.

5. MY PERFET LIFE

I am a ten year old girl and this is how I want my perfect life to be. I will like to wake up around 12:00pm. And also. I will like to work but not too much for about 1 minute. After working, I will take a bath, brush my teeth and then, I will like to take my breakfast and the breakfast I will like, I will tell my mother to prepare it like I will say it and also I will like to watch television for about 1 hour, 30 mins and

I will also like to read my note and story books for about 1 hour. After that, I will also like to visit my friends for about 5 weeks and then also like to go to the mall, like weethills, shoporitaMelcom and buy things. Then also I will like to travel outside Ghana to like U.S.A, Canada, Germany and India.

And also, I will want to go to the beach every Saturday of every week and eat and drink like indomie, jollof rice, fried rice a tilaria, sasoge, kebab, pizza, sushi and hot dot or sunwise and also, I will like to be the princess of Canada, Nigeria, U.S.A and India.

And also, I would like in a mansion for my aren't and also build mansion for my family members and siblings and I will also buy cares like jeep, opentop, range over, linozean, furrini And I will also like to be the President of Canada, U.K., USA and Nigeria. And also I will like to have my own mansion and (55) fifty five a.c in the bedroom and have my own phones (60) phone only my. And also I will like to visit The orphanage house to spend time with the need and share things to them. Things like dress food stuff, drinks, story books, etc. I will like to also be able to meet all musicians in Ghana like Kwame Eugene, Kidi, Sarkodie, shatta wale, Misvie, Adina and also Stoneboy. And in my perfect life, I will like to meet the funny master (Kojo Akansah Liwin. Akrobeto, and Nana Amamad Brown. And also I will like to build my own physical hospital, church and my own Company and I will like to rap like

Sqrkytie (Lokidiponpidn) and I will like to build a new and fresh UEC(University of Education, Canada) for the new students going to the university. OH!! I forgot on thing to sleep for, the time will wake I will like to go to bed on 1:00pm. This is how I want my perfect life to be.

MY PERFECT LIFE

A perfect life is a life with luxury and comfortability. My perfect life is a life of ~~easy~~ no difficulty. In my perfect life there are a lot of things that I want because it my perfect life. My perfect life I know some of my family members will not agree because some parts of my perfect life is not cultural.

My perfect would be a life that I can make adjustments for also my family. In my perfect life people would not like but as for me that is my life I want as my perfect life. The word perfect which I derived from the Macmillan dictionary means to make something completely free from faults or complete as possible. In my perfect I would like to travel every single day to another country every single day because I want change so that I can explore to have a feeling of change and excitement. Everybody in this world would like to go out and make friends, have anything you want and make sure that the life you will live there is Godly but is a perfect life for you. I always think that culture is culture but I think that we have culture we must practice it but it is not all that children should always say ye although I know its culture for elders but I ask do those elders ask themselves whether ~~ther~~ their culture is a perfect life ~~from the~~ for the next generation and the generation now. The next thing I would want no homework and exams in school. I always wonder that the Americans or even people living at abroad their children are very free and they are not stressed out I don't ~~understand~~ understand us Ghanaians, they were the one's ~~brought~~ who made to be liked by african people because of inventions and other creations africans became interested at first everyone goes about just loo-

king for jobs that will sustain themselves. Peopl who live in abroad don't stress their childre because they know that learning is not compulsory. because sometimes a teacher will put a work on the board but they wont do it because its not compulsory. It is not like that in Ghana or some african countries I know if you don't do you you be punished severely I wouldn't want that in my perfect Life. My perfect without homeworks and stressed out coming to school and sitting i class for long hours.

In my perfect there should be no restriction I think as a child there is no way you will not ma a mistake. This is because life itself is perfect but not perfect for everyone but as a humanbeing you ca make it perfect with adjustments of what life has g iven you. This is the reason why there should be no restrictions because life is not perfect so if th ere are restrictions it makes life miserable for. I am not saying there should be no restrict ions make life boring and hard to live. It closes door to those who have potentials. There are some restrictions that are fun and those are some o restrictions I want in my perfect life that even if I am going through a situation I will remember that fun restrictions that will make so meone fill loved by the nation. Restricti Restriction are good but I woul would not want it in my perfect Life. My perfect life will be fun life but also a limited life. I will make sure if I was suppose t have a perfect life and it that perfect life comes to e ven a day I will make sure it is a memory and so— mething that will last long, for the next generation to also have a feel of what this generation call a perfect life and a life of more memory

Another way you can call my perfect Life is not always learning. The word learn means to gain knowledge or some exp experience. The word learn itself it not been stressed out because we are suppose to value learning but in nations and state immediately the adolescent are about to go to the university, they pop the big question it is time for you marry. I think marriage is always there but learning is not. Dr. Kwegir Aggrey said IF you educate a man you educate a family but if you educate a woman you educate a nation. It also time we hear the voices of women and children. Children are future leaders. I want to value learning but sometimes you can't because stress from the house, and school. I don't know how I can even value learning. I thoughts of this essay very well because I wanted it to be perfect because its my perfect life. I can learn to value learning by the help "entertainment". Entertainment is mosly done for children because its brings joy to the Life. The entertainer is suppose to add a bit of learnin and achievements. Through learning the children will achieve something.

I would like to say that in everyone's perfect life there will be ups and downs but still if th person is determined to have a perfect life the person can have it, even the bible says the hands that doesn't work doesn't eat.

I am determined that one day I will have which me brings memory and joy to me a happy a joyful person always praises the Lord. My perfect is something I won't dream about but it would be a reality for everyone to see. One more thing, as a child I always want to speak but I am shut down.

In my perfect life there would be no some people who will say you what you are doing is not good or what you are doing is not Godly. I know someone will say that but our life world or even or nation is not perfect so, I'm not sure that somebody is suppose to judge my works or doings, this is because the person does not have perfect life. The people who judge should always think about what their judging, the kind of nation or country they are in. If they are suppose to first think about all these things. In my perfect life, there should fair and just. If there is just there will be no quarelling.

In my perfect life people should not underestimate anyone because doing that is bringing the person down to the lowest esteem. Self-esteem matters to a lot of people because it shows how and who they are. In my perfect life I wouldn't like anyone to the lowest esteem. I would like to explain the meaning of self-esteem, self esteem meaning the feeling that you are as good as other people and that you deserve to be treated well. In my perfect I will be treated well. My perfect is a life full of memories and none difficulties. A perfect life is a life everybody will dream of, but if it really comes true the person really really wants a perfect life, like me. I always want my perfect life should be in my children's age. My perfect life is being dreamed by me. It is a dream that I know will come to reality.

My perfect life reality will come true because I believe it because I can feel it that I deserve a perfect life. Everyone deserves a perfect, but does the person believe that he/she deserves a perfect life? I believe that I will have a perfect life. Perfect life a life full of Laughter and joy. My perfect life people would want the same thing.

My perfect life.

I am a ten year old girl. In my perfect life, this is how i will want to live. I would like to get my own bedroom at my age and also a little space and privacy. If i got one week to live my perfect life, I would travel with my aunty and i stay with her when i am back i will eat my favourite food, and if i had a computer or desktop i will just play a little games do some research my teachers ask me to and even prepare my own food. I will even walk and chart with some of my friends, and also go to the libarary. In my perfect life the thing i will do the most is to go to the libarary read a lot of story books which i like doing and also even borow some. In my perfect life, i will even eat a lot of chicken, travel outside Ghana, have a room which is full of story books and even build a storybook mansion. In my perfect life, I will go to school early and when i go to school i will not anyone to fight with me or i fight with them i will just like everyone to be my good Friend but most friends who gossip hurt each other, tease too much and mock. Even if i got a friend who just tease a little i would like it. In my perfect life i will not liked to be forced to do anything i don't want to do like, each any. Food which makes me react, and in my perfect life I will not wish to have a teacher who likes insulting, caning and doing things which is borring. In my perfect life, I will learn hard and passin my exmas to make my parent proud, Ghana proud and my self proud and to do that i will like not them to load a lot of work on me so that i can learn in my ledger time. In my perfect life, i will go out for a little camping with friends and good teachers. In my perfect life, I will visit the netball court

at least two times in a week. And in my perfect life I will like to make setting of petty decisions myself. In my perfect life i will like to live a very very very holy life. I will go to church and attend any church meetings. In my perfect life i would like my parents to at least send us to restaurant, Accra mall once every two months. In my perfect life i would get everything i want on my birthday. I also will do everything to wake up at 6:00 am and sleep 9pm.

In my very beautiful perfect life i will shop twice in year and when i go to the Shoping mall i will buy these things; dresses, Shoes, hand sanitizers, bags, lipstick, storybooks, pens, pencils, rulers, panties, braziers, underwear, verse, socks and sweets like biscuits, tofees and go the the cinema to watch an interesting movie.

In my perfect life, I will spend alot of time for reciding, writing and doing what i like best. In my pefect life i will like it if the school i go on more excursions. In my perfect life if i get the priudedge to go outside Gbana i will go to Canada and when i go, i will learn how to dance balley and also go to the gym to keep me strong and fit. In my perfect life i will hate it if someone disturbes in the time i'm seriously busy. I also thinks in my perfect life, i will let my parents to buy me new storybooks every three months. The last thing i will wish in my perfect life is to get myown bedroom and be allowed to go to the library.

My perfect life will be ruined if this happen; my siblings stick around me every time which means not getting some privacy. My parents always making choizes for me which are just small. Not getting my own bedroom. friends

268

Gossiping, backbiting, teasing too much and insulting. Not getting to go to the library. Not buying story books for me. ~~But~~ The school doesn't go on much excursion. Putting a lot of pressure on me. Asking questions that angers me. Being sent all the time without any break. Eating foods I don't like. Not getting some privacy. One last thing is not watching my favourite movies in once a day and calling people nicknames by friends which you don't like it, example, ~~you~~ Bub tiny and other things and also sometimes not being allowed to do i want.

MY PERFECT LIFE   08

I am o Ten year old girl, and this is how I want my perfect life to be. I will like to wake in the morning at 12. o Clock. when I wake up I will like to have my breackfast on bed after that I will bath and dress yp with a very beutyful dress after I will take one of my cars. after I will go to one of the biggest Reteurent in the word after eating my Pizza I will go to a dress shop and go and shop for a little dress after I will go and to the mall to go and shop after I will go home and tell my mades to CoDK for me as waiting I call some poel to talk to when the food is redy I eat the food and go to bed at 10 clock. In the evening. In the morning, I will wake yp and eat after, go to most of the celebratees to go and talk with the some celebratees like kwouni Eugine, mzvee, Adina and Phrltity of them afte go and do my pasport and my visa to go anoth-er country after doing the passport I will go and sleep in o hotel for the night. In the morning I will rush fast back to the airpot so that I will not miss I Flight on the way I will ask air hoster to give some hot dogs or Pizza a if the dont have Bny they may have sand witch. So they will give me any of the with some Pinnapple Juice when we reach I will look for a house and stay. when I enter I will fast to sleep on the bed and sleep. The ned ooorning is my to birthday And because of ya know not knowing the same of my school mare were there the told some of the Canadians to come and help the celebrate my birthday. when I wake up and went to eat after that I want to talk to some of my Canadian friends So I went to their rooms and when I went they were egnoreing me. So I decided to go and sleep in my room Small time then one of my friends came to call me at the Palace for a special occassiong when I got there the all

shouted that Sourprise after the all congradullated me tha happy birthday we cut a very very big royal Princess cake. after It was time for the gift Plenty People brought gift and the King and Queen were there so the gave me a very special gift tha was cars like Jeeps, Rangovers, toyotas, corollas and any more cars after they lets us eate some oods like Friedrice, Indonmie and many food of the how was offer I had to go home so I went after Some time I won a Price of the ost beutiful girl ever because of that price I ecame rich Just like a billoniar. After tha many eople wanted to be my friend because I had luck nd was beautiful. This is How I wont raw realy ont my PERFECT LIFE TO BE.

THANK YOU

I am a girl of ten years. In my Perfect life, I want my life to go according to my plans. In my perfect life I want to sleep and wake up around 7:45 because sleeping make me fit for the day. After taken a cool and a nice bath I would like to brush my teeth and take my breakfast on the dinning table according to plans I would like my breakfast to be fruit salad and toasted bread with a mug of coffe. After a nice A would to take a fruit salad because it gives me more strength and vitamins. After take a nice and delicious breakfast. I would play for an hour then would take a bath and take my tablet and play games and also chart with my friends for sometime and after that I would like to go to the kitchen and take my launch, my launch would be banku with grilled tilapia and pepper with onions and chicken on the dining table and my desert would pastries like cake, meat pie etc with Shampaign or fruit juice like donsimon, fruitelo etc.

In the evening my supper wouk loe fried rice with chicken and vegetables with a little stew and take a mug of hot milk and drink it and also watch a little television and take a bath and brush my teeth by eating and and doing all those then it will be the done around 6:10 and after that I would take my tablet and sleep on my bed and lower the brightness of the phone and start to play gai I want my bath and washroom to be inside my bedroom not sharing the bedroom with any body

On the next day early I would brush my teeth and take a bath and drink a mug of hot milk and chat with my friends on the tablet for some time like 20 mins. then gather some of my money and tell my friends that I will come and give them a lift to the mall and they should be ready and after that go to Accra mall by some pizza eat some there and bring some home and before doing all these my breakfast would American cereals or corn flakes and leave the house take my tablet and be ready to leave the house and after doing that and a bath after I have arrived on November let say almost the ending of November I would like to travel with my friend to American and bulk a hotel a bigger room with 4 bedrooms each with toilet and bath 1 kitchen a Television in every room and also et the hall

This is how I want to plan my perfect life

My Perpect Life,

I am 11years old girl. I am coming to write my perpect life. Peet Perpect mean complete total. it made perfect sence. Life means the condition of being able to function and grow. In the morning I like to wake up 8:30am in the morning, I will brush my teeth and bath. I will watch television. I will eat jallof and chicken. I will go to Melcom I buy dresses, shoes, icecreams, drinks, and biscult. I like to have my own car. In the evening, I will to cook in the kitchen Kitchen, I will prepare Rice and stew and fried fried chicken. In next, the morning I will pray and play gram on my to Laptop Laptop. I like wish there was no school. I like to go anywhere. But I like don't like going going to school. If I grew up I will marry my husand and give birth 2(two) children. I will have my own company and church. I like to have mango tree, orange tree, banana tree, water melon, plant. I like to have my personal phone In the afternoon, I will drink cocoa, fanta fanta and bread. In the evening I will eat fufu and groundnut soup soup.

This is my perpect life.

116

My Perfect Life I am 11 years old girl.

If I wake up in the morning, I will brush teeth and I will bath. I wish I wake up 8:30 am. When I finish doing all these I will go and watch television. I will eat jollof and chicken. When I finish eating I will go to Melcom. I will buy icecream, cupcake, drink, biscuit, I will buy shoe, dresses, watches. If I come home I will go and play games. In the evening

MY PERFECT LIFE

I am a ten (10) year old boy and I would like to write about my perfect life. A perfect life is a life that will make me lose all my problems, and make me feel comfortable.

In my perfect life, I would like to wake up at 5:30 a.m., so that I will go to school earlier. Some of the problems I face is that, I arrive at school around 5:15am even though I wake up at 6:00am. I have house chores to do in the morning.

The kind of friends I want to have is those who can help me in my life. I want to have many books that I can learn. I want to attend a good school. I ~~want to~~ would like to eat a delicious but balanced deit diet, and fruits such as mango, apple and orange, I would like to sleep at least 8:00 PM I would like to go for a tour in some popularly known places in Ghana, such as Kwame Nkrumah Meseum, Malls, Castles, etc. This how I want my perfect life to be.

MY PERFECT LIFE

62

I am a Ten (10) years old boy. A perfect life is the highest standard of life without fault and complete which is complete and/or absolute. I will wake up at 7:30 am if I have been given an opportunity to leave my perfect life, and I will go to school and at the close of school or when school is closed I will go to West hills mall and shop then after shoping, I will order video games, phone watt watch, Amazon fire tablet and liverpool football kits and bag. After West hills mall, I will go to Kentucky Fried Chicken (K.F.C) "Adabraka" Branch to buy Fried Chicken with and Potato chips, Fried-Rice and Salad and sharwama; after K.F.C, I would go to "Papaye" to buy Soft drinks and humburges. Then I want to I will go to the airport and take a flight to England and as soon as I get to England I will go and meet the queen of England and have a lunch with her and right after there I will go to Anfield to meet to meet my favourite team Liverpool FC and my favourite footballer Mohammed Sallah then I will train with them and after traning I will have some shopping in two shopping mall in England. Then I will have a sleep over with most handsome player in Liverpool F.C.

I will wake up the follow day and go to the airport and board an aeroplane to New York City when I get to New York I will Logde at the tallest building Hotel in New York then I will buy two spring bye bicycles and one Byghati car with building materials and ship it to Ghana with two Audi cars after I will buy a 90 inch curved flat screen tv with Play station one (1), two (2), three (3) and four (4) then I will go to meet Jayson Jordan a famous basketball

shopping malls in New York then I will go to Chicago and have fun then I will go back to the hotel and order for gizzard pizza and I will also order humburger from burger king; then I will have a sleep over and the following day I will go to London Dubai and when

Day: Wednesday

Date: 12th June, 2019

Topic: My perfect Live

Class: Basic (5th) Five

13. MY PERFECT LIVE

     I am a ten year old boy, I would like to wake up at 8:00am when I wake up I would like to brush my teeth and take my bath. After taking my bath I would like to take my breakfast at 8:30am, after, I would like to play video games like Sanandreas, GTA 5, GTA V. city.

     At 9:30, my parent said we should go to West Hills Mall When we got to West Hills Mall, we entered and we bought play station five, DSTV, skate board, Skating shoes, School bags, travelling bags, tables, laptops, computers, pizzas and leather belts.

     After my father went to buy a very nice care name Hunda, spare runner, my siblings, my parent and I packed the things we bought at the boot of the Car. We sat in the car and my father drove as to the house. When we got to the house the time was 3:30pm we removed all the things we bought from the boot of the car. We sent them inside the room and looked at all the things we bought. The time was 4:00pm my parent and my sinor brother fixed the DSTV. After we connected our play station to the DSTV so I was left with four play stations.

     At 4:30pm we started to play games like dream league soccer 2019, Sanandreas, GTA 5, GTA V city, need for speed most wanted, ford racing 3D and 2K19. My mother gave us our tablet, on my tablet, on my tablet downloaded dream league soccer 2019, Sniper, assassins After I played all the games.

     At 6:00pm I went to eat my supper, it was fried rice with salad and chicken with. After I went to watch television and I went

to play dream leggue soccer 2019 on my tablet. The time was 8:50pm. After I went to bed 9:30pm.

In calculation, I wish this will become the true life my life. This is MY PERFECT LIVE.

DATE: 12th June 2019.
DAY. WEDNESDAY

14

Title/Topic: MY PERFECT LIFE.

I am a eleven (11) year old boy. And my perfect life is, I would like to wake up at 5:30 a.m and brush my teeth and bath. After bathing I will go for my breakfast. So After eating I went to sit at the living room to wacth TV. When I finish wacthing Tv I will go to my best friend to play football. After playing I will came back home to play some games on my i pad. So when I feel tired I will eat banku and grind peper with sardine. After eating my lunch I will go to west hill mall with my parent to enjoy some fun there. So when we arrived to the mall I told my mother I went to go and play at the kid park. So when my agree I run as fast and I jump on the buncy castle. So when I was tired I came to my mother and take some money to buy some toffees, ice cream. So when we came back home that it was 12:30 p.m, I will help my mother to wash her bowls. When I was tired I went to take my Computer to play game like football, Voll Tennis. When I was done playing the game I take a story books. I will also close the door, window, Cantains, and on the Air Condition. And I will call messi, Ronaldo on my Smart phone I will wish to say how are you. After, calling messi, Ronaldo. So when it was getting to 1:00pm I told my mother we should go and visit the Zoo. So when we arrived I was so happy to be there, and I saw animals like lion, elephant, Tiger and wate frog. So I gave some of my bananas to them

THIS IS HOW MY PERFECT LIFE WILL BE.

My perfect life

I wish that when I get up from Bed
they are serving me in my room wiht
tae and Bread with fry egg then they tell
will tell me tha me my brother and my sister
that we are going to west hills mall

In the aftopoon the I will go and
put on my nice dress dressie and enter the
car wiht my two sister and Brother my father
will drive me to the mall to go for
shoping for dressie toy and other things
we had and we will ellote of fun play
to the evening like normall children it
will be ellote of fun

I the evening ther is a fest on the tabl
when we came home then we will eat and ea
and eat till none is left the we will
warch the televetion to 12 oclakin the eveni
or up to the mornig at 7 oclock and
sleep at 7:30 pm after go to child
park and make me go to the bouncing
castill et and jump up to the eve
Still The we will go to a restran
to go and get same friedrice with
the two chicens meat iarded to and eat
only the meat

16   My Perfect Life

I am an eleven year old, boy and I am coming to write about my Perfect Life. A Perfect Life is a Life without any faults or defeelts. In my Perfect Life, I would like to wake up at 12:30pm and I would like to report a stelling problem when my parents or an elderly Person is around. And I would like to have about 20 cars and with 6 houses added to it.

And one thing I would like to have this fasteres car bugati verone. And Ferary I would like to have my fun with is an actor name Kojo Nkansah Liwen and I would like to have footballers like Ronaldo, Messi, Asamoah-Gyan, Jordan-Ayew and oder.

I would like to have musicians like Stone bowe, Shatta Wallea, Kuami Eugene, etc. And I would like to eat food like: pezza, handberger, etc. OOO!!! I almost forgot I would like to have many toys as: a remort contrual cars, A toy gun, etc.

And im my perfect Life I would like to be riches buy I Ghana, and in my perfect life would like everybody should not are either my mother my father, my teacher my sister or my elderly Person. And In my Perfect Life I would like to be the King in India. I would like to be a superhero!!! like Batman, superman, Ironman, Speiderman, Cat boy, Gerko etc.

And again in my Perfect Life I would like to have an airoplains, money, Televison etc.

Yours Friendly

THANK YOU

17. My perfect life

I am a girl of ten years and during my perfect life,
I would like to wake up early in the around
6:00 am and slep late in the evening around 8:00.
When I woke brush my teeth, bath and dress. When
I am done I plan to go to school because I want
to finish education and get a job to live a perfed
life. After I come from school I want to pick a ca
and go to the "West Hills Mall". When I arrive, I plan t
by nice dresses, books, pens, story books, shoes
and other items needed for school. When I am
done I will go to the cinema and watch about two
or three movies. Then I will go home and sleep.

This is how I want to live "My perfect life".

Day: Wednesday
Date: 12th June 2019
Topic: My prefect life

MY PREFECT LIFE

I am ten(10) year old girl. My prefect life I will like to wake up on 10am in the morning and go to bed on 10pm in the evening. On that first day I will watch television from 11oaam to 12opm. I will like to learn how to slove mathe beause I really hit mathe. After learning the mathe I will go to shopping to shop for some items like; cake, cooked rice and buy my favorite ice-cream named - Vanialla ice-cream. After shop I will like to return back home. I will like to do olmpic game like: bounino castle and trumpoline to my house. I will like to bounce and bounce ontill it is 6opm in evening.

I will take my bathe and eat some pringles whilst enjoying my soft drinks. On the following day I will like travell to U.S.A //United State of American. Because the place is nice and beautiful for me.

That is how I want my prefect life to be.

My Perfect Life

I am a eleven (11) year old girl. To me, a perfect life is a life without faulths or defects and the existence of an indivial. In my perfect life, I would like to wake up in the morning at 5:30am, brush my teeth, and bath and dress then take my breakfast and watch television. Go to Shoprite, Marina mall and papaye. I would like to go to places like New York City, England, U.S.A, Dubai, UK and india and will like to live in a mansion. I would like to use cars like ararii, bugatti, rangerover, v8 and limozean. And I would like to go to universities like University of Education Winneba, Oxford university and Kwame Nkrumah university of Science and Technology. I will like to eat things like Fried rice, rice and saugage stew, pizza, gizzards an Sushi. And I would like to be an amazing person at my age. I wou like to writing books like fairy tales and other stories to raise other people's mind. I would like my name to high in school. To keep every thing that we have learnt in the classroom in my mind. I will like be good in my life. I would like to do good to people who do me bad or and I will love people who hates me. And I would like to go to bed at 8:30pm in the evening. That is how I would like my perfect life to be.

20. A Perfect Life (Girl)

Growing up as a, I have been asked to write different description about certain things like about my father's best friend, my best friend the Person I love best in my life, a true friend and about my life time and so many more. Below is a vivid description of what I will do when I live a Perfect life.

To begin with, a Perfect life is a type of living where by a person gains his/her freedom, peace, good health and always enjoy with his/her friends he/she finds him/her self among them and gets the love that he/she requires as every human being has feelings Sometimes, People need some kind of love from others. All what i have mentioned above. I have to live more conciousely each day in order to live a Perfect life. Which means I have to stop Sleepwalking through life. Life is to be experienced and not coasted through. Another way of living a Perfect life is to know your inner-self these means that, knowing what you are and what and what you represent Be clear of your Personal identity. Discover my life Purpose I always, set a mission Statement of my life One that will drive my life to the fullest.

To Continue my Perfect life, when I wake up early in the morning, I will Pray in my room before I come out from the room I will prepare my breakfast in a rich tea but not Sugar with water and bread. While taking my breakfast, I will on my television to listen and watch some news afterwards I will get Prepared and get ready for school. When I get to school, teachers should teach me in such a way I will understand and show me some love when teaching, eg If I see a that a teacher likes me e I will learn hard in his/her subject. And when it's break time, the School should Provide us with snacks to enjoy. In the af noon lesson hour, when maths is been taught People don't unders

So different Subject like P. E Should be taught. When I close back from school, I will come and eat the food my mother has prepared for me. And have some rest. I will later wake up and do all my homeworks after that I will watch television and listen to some musics and learn. And sleep on time.

In order to maintain a perfect life, I will still live the way that I think I will get freedom, Peacce, enjoy, stay happy and healthy. Ino ~~other~~ order to be healthy, I have to eat Nutritious food, and do things in order to peace with others When i want to stay happy, I will entertain my self with activities like singing, dancing, drawing and creating things from my own thinking.

In a nutshell, I would like to live a better, Perfect life more than what I have mentioned above in the future And i know the almighty God, will help me live a Perfect Life in future is just faith, believe that you have to get in order for you to ~~stacy~~ focused in life I have the faith and believe that God will me to live a Perfect life in future.

(21) **My Perfect.**

In my perfect, I want my father, mom, I want my siblings and friend like ~~Jes~~ Leticia, Herbert, Erica, Jesslord to be part of my perfect life. In the morning, I will tell my servant to sweep the compound so I will come to school early. To work in the school and sweep my class.

On Monday, I want to come to school with my iphone and my tablet so that I can learn with it so that I will be clever in class always.

On Tuesday, I want my best friends like Leticia, Erica, Jesslord to come to my house to play with them

On Wednesday I will go to the castle at Elimina to look at the castle.

On Thursday, I don't want to go to the market I want my servant to go.

On Friday, I want to tell my grandma to go to the hospital but she won't go

On Saturday, I will go to the beach to enjoy myself.

On Sunday, I will go to church to thank the God I serve for giving me my life and I want Leticia and Herbert to come to my house

no gender no age

My Perfect Life

12th June, 2019

As a child, my present life seems to be okay to me, but I always dream of having a better life, a perfect one. A perfect life, to me, a perfect life is a life full of joy, freedom of speech, no sadness, no sorrow, no over-tiredness, freedom to explore, be innovative and be creative. Below is a brief and vivid description of my perfect life.

My perfect life will begin with a morning as the old saying goes "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a step". When I wake up in the morning after a good night's sleep, I will like to see my family, eat breakfast, take a refreshing bath and go to school. At school, I will learn and take zero canes throughout the day, play with my friends, eat lunch, and when we close, go home. After school, I will like to see my family, have a few chores and after performing them, have siesta. When I wake up, I take a refreshing bath and have classes. After classes, I will watch Television from 7p.m to 8p.m and go to bed.

In my perfect life, I would like to have my family in it, choose for myself when we go family shopping, have fewer chores that will not out-do me, zero less canes when I go to school. I will like to be given the chance to be innovative, creative and explore in my perfect life. I would like to be given the freedom to express myself through speech without anyone shutting me up. I would like to be able to help the needy and show them love. Just like how everything is sure to have problems, when a problem arises in my perfect life, I will pray, seek advice and try to solve it. To wrap up, I want my perfect life to be is a happy, free and creative life. I am aware that I may not attain this perfect life, but I pray that God will help to improve my present life day by day.

Thank You.

My Perfect Life

~~I am a boy of twel~~   14th June 2019

I am a boy of twelve years of age ~~and~~ with many dreams and ambitions in life. Some people in this world think this world is perfect for them because of the little money they have. People even go to the extent of playing songs and stating that the world is sweet or in our local language, "weasé yɛ dɛ" for tting that they can fall ill and die one. Below is a description how I wish if a perfect day is given, I would like it to be.

I don't know the one reading this but I would like to say; imagine a time where there is no pain, no death, no sorrow, h will life be like? Of course it would be a very good one to liv.
This is the first thing I would like to see on a perfect day.
For the second one, I know you are a government worke (the one reading this) and works very hard before you to fe get money to
yourself ~~and~~ or your family. But just think of a time where you don't need to work, you just stay at home and plant som food crops for them to grow and process it to eat.
Additionally, if we don't need to work hard before we can feed ourselves or family, then there is no need for us to go to school. The point I am making is that, we go to school starting from cretch, nursery, Junior High School (JHS), Senior High School (SHS). The University is not even left out. So after all this learni ~~to go to work~~ process, you can become maybe a government worke in future to get money. So if we don't need to go work very hard to get money, then we don't need to go to school.
Finally, I will like to live a life filled with peace and unity, wh no one will be killed by another person or hurt one another.

My perfect life

I am coming to talk about my perfect life. How many life is good and bad. What makes it me very happy are stated below.

Firstly, learning science and ICT is one of the things that makes me happy. Getting good grades and participating in class also make me happy. Talking with my friends about science and ICT makes me soo happy. Also when it is first break and me and my friends are eating, it is a special moment for me.

Secondly, eating me favourite food which is banku and Okra stew and banku and tilapia. Playing football and other games makes me happy. When it is closing and I have gotten home, I always do my homework which makes me feel good and watching me favourite football game or cartoon also makes me soo happy and exciting.

Thirdly, showing my talents and potentials to my friends also makes me happy. Playing computer games and any ball games are my hobbies. They all make me happy. Last monday we went to south campus to watch an activity about children, MOCHA which is Movement for children Association. The first speaker spoke about potentials which is what you can do. When I also use electronics or I'm playing with electronics, I feel good

Lastly, I am coming to tell you makes my life bad or what make me feel bad. When someone has disappointed me, it makes me feel bad. When people judge and laugh at me it also makes me feel bad. Some people also insult and torture me with their languages. When I am watching a very nice movie and the hero has been defeated or when I am watching romantic mo like Die Drams makes me fee bad. My is very good but sometimes some people makes it become a little bad

MY PERFECT LIFE

As times goes on, I think of having good life between chilc ood stage and adulthood stage. If I'm given the chance to spec y life freely in my own wish with everything needed for life to in. It always my dream to be very rich and kind in a very short me when future arrives.   5

As a poor student like me, If I'm given a perfect life than, I ould like to get up early in the morning, take my bath than set u o heaven for my breakfast with the Lord than come down to rush my teeth and go to school, learn about few things and ome back home about an hour or less than an hour. Get in ny Golden aeroplane full of Diamond in it. I would like my dri o be a ga gaint who is a woman to drive me to places wl eople are needed of things such as, clothes, food and others ke parental care for those lost of parent, Pay school fees for ne poor who are ready to go to school without school fe

I would also dress in my best dresses wear nice andals and necklace with a bit of makeup to make me ery beautiful. With this I will not stop praying to my God will pray hard for longlife and good moral life. As for hurch is my hobby not to attend church but I will pa ny dept in my church, Offer money to devolop my church I wish wishes comes true. My perfect life in my child. ood stage will be wonderful and perfect of all. As for y family I will only take care of my Anties and my on! ather. But only my mother will lack for living me, just like at even I have made a mistake my father give gave br o me. I wish my heavenly father will help me with my erfect life.

My Perfect Life

Scince I was born, my parents especially my morther have been making choices for me now. And sometimes they make choices that I dont feel comfortable with them examples; sleeping at exactly 6:00p and waking up at 3 or 3:30 am and many more. But below is how would like to make my own choices.

Firstly. I would like to wake up at 7:00am and take a walk wit my servant smartly dress in a night gown for exercise. Few minutes Later, I will come back and take my bath, sit down for my breakfa which is oats with a jar of milk with small amout of Sugar Afi eating I will go to the high school in the world with the fastest aeroplane. This will make me brialliant and intelligent. I would also to be famous and the leader of Ghana to promote development, discip and law enforcement. I will also like to visit orphans and people in need to help them with what they need.

Secondly, I will pay my offering and tithes in huge amount of mo to develop my church and also spread christianity. With this perf Life, I will not stop preach the world of God as usual.

MY PERFECT LIFE.

In this world we are living in, everyone want to be free and live good. Both adults and children have this same feelings. They feel so in order to have an enjoyable life free of charge. They want to be free in a way that no one will disturb them. Of course when you are not disturbed you will be surely free. As you are free, your living is good. True, everyone want to be free in order to live a perfect life but how? Everybody have their own way of living a happy and perfect life suitable to them. What about Adolescents, is it the same way to too? Yes the same with adolescents. We do not want any adult to decide for us how to live comfortably. Neither do we want our friends to do that.

As adolescents, we have many wishes. We wish to become and have a lot. To as, if we are granted our wishes, our living in this world will be perfect. We will live a life we want to live and be in a world we like to be in. Indeed we will stay perfectly. The wishes adolescent have that will help us live a perfect life are many. They include a lot. We wish for good resting place with proper ventilation. Devices to entertain us and we also yearn to sleep for long lasting hours. During our day, activities that will benefit us, those that will benefit our family and friends is well.

As young people as we are, when we are given a portable resting places, we feel greatful. A good sleeping bed at a good place with no proper ventilation is like fetching water into a basket, which will result in your waste of time. Similarly, when we are being provided with good resting place with no good ventilation, it results nothing. Some adolescents work very hard during the day and at night.

6

13 13

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23

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295

time to rest he or she goes to sleep on the floor in a hot room. How will such an adolescent feel? Very misearable. It will make his or her night bad and in the morning, the child will begin his day with pain. How bad that is. So, when an adolescent is given proper resting place with no ventilation it is no good. While we are provided these ones we will rest well. We will dream well. We will be able to overcome body pains.

Young people now adays like entertainment. They like to entertain themselves, entertain others whiles others entertain them. They entertain with musics, videos, stories and games. When people of this hobby are been given electronic devices such as phones, tablets or computers to entertain more, they get happiness. Happiness will then lead to their perfect life. As we entertain ourselves it helps us put our troubles and sorrow away. An adolescent, surrounded with friends who have an electronic device who do not own any of the electronic devices feel bad and lonely around his or her friends. The joy we experience when an adolescents get an electronic device is much more than that of a man who has found a gold. All this contribute in a living perfectly.

As young as we are, now that our body is developing well. To prepare for the adult world, we need a good body and enough rest. We will all love to spend number of hours on bed resting. Parents may say, if that is the case then go to bed early. No, what about those who sleep very late because of some reasons. Imagine a child who sleep at 12:00am and wake up at 4:30a.m. How will such child feel? How will he be? The child will feel restless and very tired every single day. We will also choose to sleep late. but this time wake up late. Adolescents in general like charting with friends far and near. We may spend time

with friends until it is late. When we have long time resting, we will grow well with healthy bodies. For us, we will be happy when we wake up in the morning and it contribute to a perfect living.

Our Perfect life depends on we our selves. We want to be free. "With God all things are possible". So when we also have God we can live a perfect life. During our day we want to engage in activities that will benefit and give us joy. We do not want even our teachers to disturb us or even burden us we want to be free, truly free. But for a change, we need advice also. To be truly free and live perfectly we need some advise, from God and man.

This is how and why a girl of thirteen years want to live her life to be perfect. Adolescents, when provide these things will truly be happy. But what brings Perfect life? It is happiness. It is good living and being free.

My Perfect life

Growing up as a child I have seen so many children in these world. Some don't have parents but some too have parents but their parents treat them badly, some too are cripple they don't have poe people to take care of them. Some too are blind they cannot see, they don't have even opportunity to see the world. Some girl stay with his step mother and she treat her badly. She always slap her everyday. And a a child God created us especially so that we can become good people. She don't even allow the child to even go to school. Us children we have right to go to school. Every child has the right to go to school. I wish the children I am talking about would have some peace in the house and the step mother too can love them. Us I am a child I want to wake up in the morning at exactly 7:00 am and take my bath. After that I will brush my teeth and go to school. When they close from school I want to eat at the evening. Some don't give their children food in the evening. After eating I take my bath and read my story book. After that I will watch television and go to sleep at exactly 10:00am. If someone provoke me and I fell said I always want to Kwame U.G. song. Because it makes me fell happy. The gam I always like playing is oware. I want my parent to take me to school everyday and come back and pick me after closen. But I don't get it that way. I will have to wake up early and go to school. What it even provoke me is I always have to walk to school. I want my parent to pamper me and show me love. They don't allow me to learn to learn the way I like to learn. What I even hate is that if I an sleeping they called me and send me which is not good. I too have my freedom to sleep at nigt nobody can tell someone not to sleep. God created it special. When I grow up I want to become a nurse in future.

32. MY PERFECT DAYS (GIRL)

I have had so many days both horrible, entertaining and uplifting days. My view of a perfect day is a day without problems, worries and no wrong acts. It is a day of exploring the world, having fun, chilling with pals and eating and enjoying anything of my choice. Perfect days never seem to exist in this life. Just when everything seem to be going on well, something bumps in. In one way or the other everyone has a perfect day, funny moments. Some memorable moments will be the moments I share with my family. My family is very expedient to me. Via them, one can accomplish many dreams and aspirations. It is cumbersome to understand my people say there is nothing like perfect when there is the word perfect. The say perfect days can only be dream of. I would like to share with you my happy view of perfect day.

I would wake up at 6:00am and have my servants sweeps my room. I would go and bath and dress up in a white straight dress with pink shoes and a handbag to match. I would go and have my breakfast. I would drink tea with toasted bread and salad in between After this I would drink an orange juice. I would then watch some Block buster movies. I would travel around Ghana's tourist site and move to kimpinski hotel around noon. I would chill with my pals and family members. I would order for pizza and hot dog. I would eat my favourite meal banku with okro stew. I would eat full roasted chicken. I would then buy tickets to go abroad. There I would meet my superstars. Firstly Drake, then J.Z. then Bionse, Rihana, and Kardashi About 3:00pm in the afternoon I would move to Disney world. I would explore the state of liberty and their other renowned tourist sites. I would move to their clubs and other enjoyable places. I would socialize with others to know their lifestyle. I would return to my

Motherland Ghana. My friends and I would move to another renounced hotel known as Holy Trinity Spa. I would get a nice massage to release some stress and refresh my mind. I would then go and have swimming lessons. I would meet president Nana Akuffo Addo. I would go around the country in lasvegas car. I would eat nutricious food and bath with at the beach. My mother would then buy me a new pair of of shoes, bags and a hand purse.

In the evening, I would watch my favorite Tiv program "Ashoka Samrat" from 6 to 7 pm, listen to the news. We would ~~watch my~~ do our daily bible readings and devotions to usher ourselves into God's hands. At 12pm midnight, I will go to bed and enjoy my rest. At 4:00am, I will take a drink and at 5:30am watch Alabaster International Ministries with prophet Kofi Oduro. After which I would do whatever comes to mind.

To conclude, this is my view of a perfect life. So far as it consist of his majesty Jesus christ everything is okay. My family is always after God with them by my side everything wouldn't matter at all. Days have come and went but there is one thing I know. The above listed will surely come to past.

no gender

MY PERFECT LIFE

As I wake up in the morning I firstly thank the Almighty God because He is the loving person I never had. I prepare for School and my family a rich poor I mean poor in some ways, my mother and father don't ~~don't~~ talk because of something. So I stay with my ~~bro~~ mother at some uncompleted us in Winneba - SSNIT. I always cry when I'm going to the school because the money that she gives me is very small. I take it like that and I appreciate it. Because my is even better than someone. In school, I always think who I want to be, I'm someone who can imagine very well. when I hear a new song I put my own words in it, my friends kept on telling me I will be a good musician, but my brother told me I will be a teacher. Now a perfect life is a perfect life, when I come to school I always pray to God that I should always do well in exams and forget about my parents.

My Perfect Life

Hmmm! My perfect life. Perfect life. I don't think my life is perfect at all! Not in my terms anyway. A perfect life is supposed to be a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutedly nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents and no annoying siblings. My life could be perfect if I could see right into my future and change or correct any mishaps before they occur. Hmm! My perfect life is doing what I want to do, the time I want, where it would occur, how; absolute control over the details of my life. Like.........

I wake up at 4:00am or sometimes 4:30 to 5:00 depending on when I want to wake up (or actually, how heavy my chores are). I wake up feeling tired, go to the kitchen...whoa! The dishes are washed. I put water on fire for the rest of the family before other moves but...whoa, again, it's all done; speck and span. I go have a very long refreshing bath and get dressed. My white top looks too neat to be true; socks too blue to be neat and my uniform too sharp to be blue.

I have to go to school early so to do my duties. Wow, my shoes are actually black and sharp and Oh! my lord! my teeth is cleaned, shiny like in a commercial. My last stop is to dump the rubbish; (I hate this one particular job sooooo much) but it looks like today my angle decided to go human, and visible. No rubbish, no through hand-washing after a clean bath. I pick my supposed heavy bag but, oooh! as light as a feather. I hit the black bell on the wall and there is a very loud ring and the family is rustling up from bed. I don't have to greet my mom good-bye and ooops! my money!. I go to my father but he's there; already handing my money over to me; (I do not have to steal it this time, like I do) and I sashay on my way to school and look it's Larbi, coming for the keys. We walk to school together and look again! there goes my friends. Nancy; same old Nancy, chatterbox, friendly, very cool, Terba my favourite, not bossy or boastful, Vero

302

...vely Vero, Abigail, tall and lanky, no annoyance, Gloria, Linda, Linda again, Gyaaba, Ruth, Prayerful Beauty, infact everybody. Everyone is my class is here and we are walking down to school, all hugs; and other classes join and its almost a whole school together. At school everyone does their chores and duties perfectly, no lazying, no dupes.

After Assembly; we go to class and yes!; we have have Maths. (I don't usually like maths but today we are having my favourite topic which I'm very good at). Modam Aggie is calm, teaches so well we grasp it quickly (not a very usual thing but, you know ...) and not being bias. Then comes English, no insults then finally French soo exciting! I'm feeling kind of tired but |HURRAY|!!!! it's break for a full hour, (usually 30 minutes). The bell boy rings the bell whenever I want and it's back to class again. Home Economics is also insult-free and FINALLY, Modam Maura isn't angry at Abigail. It's all cool, fun, exciting from I.C.T to English again, more maths and french, a little R.M.E but no Fantse or Social Studies; not for today, anyway; (It's kind of boring, no offence here!). Then it's arts, arts, arts, free period then break again till 8:00pm. It's 8:00pm now but it still looks bright as day. I get home at 8:30pm after a fun day with my friends; I now talk to Kow Annan, a little but no Chibuzor to spoil my day; neither Portia nor Georgina (Pooh! so sorry for her). I get home to a quiet house which is what I like. My little siblings go to a primary Boarding School for a year, with no vacation. My mother arrives at ~~then~~ 10:00 but does'nt come to my room, askes me questions, talk or bug me whatsoever (which is'nt how my life is). Before that I read, and read and read and read and read and read and read read and read and still new books appear from now here though I don't mind cause I love to read. I don't need to eat; I eat once a day which is for real. I'm also a vegetarian : no fish, meat, egg, yam but lots of plantain; So I'm Mrs: Skinny all bony.

My father comes home after 10:30 pm and I meet him. Yeah! He has brought me a new phone, a new laptop, ice-cream and loads of goodies. He's not drunk, like he usually is or acting stupid or scary shameful but good, free-minded, coolest DAD on earth. No mums allowed, ever!!!! I play on my laptop watch movies, then read and read again till I yawn; it's now 12:30pm in the afternoon (but it's still yet to night). I pray for 5 minutes, then fall asleep. No rats, no noisy vehicles, no mouse, no roaches, no ink-infested walls no lizards; speckly span room with lavender and rose scent-producing air conditions. I wake up again the same routine only better. Gosh! there's an air-condition in my classroom as well as television, game pads and flexible, comfortable, massaging chairs. No heat, no noise, everything just the way I like it. And I forgot to mention that all my friends and mates are actually my real close neighbours. That's the coolest part. I get new cloths, all the designs I like, ... WOW! list is endless. OR superflous! as Lazarus, my sitting mate would say. It's night-time again; Last night was AWESOME but tonight is UNDESCRIBABLE!! A lot of adventurous dreams involving everyone; ooh! I've haven't ever slept such sweet sleep before; mmm! wowww......

"SENA, SENA!!! Won't you wake up? Go wake your siblings!; put water on fire!; sweep!; throw the rubbish away!; why are you soo lazy?; you are soo dirtly, ..." Oh! Darn it! Back to my horrible life. See what I mean. My life's not perfect. And it would never be, either would yours cause, it's all wishes you will never ever get and since you can't rule over what's already being governed and set a long time ago or the people in it; I'm sorry! But it's a nice and good try to think about it. MY PERFECT LIFE; hahahahahaaa!!! Oh! but seriously, if ever my life could be like that, I wouldn't regret exchanging

And besides, even though my life isn't all round perfect,
Like some parts of it like the cherished memories. ←
ny shoes for them cause it'll be the best thing that
ver happened to me. So let's go and get it; after you!
. Belinda S·Y (13)
Unipra North JHS
form 2(B)

AUTHOR'S NOTE:
ear Madam,
ou told us that it's not neccessary to write our names
ecause of privacy but to me, I'm not shy of using my
ilent of writing at all. even if it's set to expose things.
esides it called CREATIVITY, So most of the bad things
. my story are'nt true; but actually,

HIS IS THE BEST TOPIC OF MY LIFE;
and I mean that.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
! ! ! !

SORRY FOR THE ORANGE SMUDGES)

36. MY PERFECT LIFE (GIRL 13)

My perfect life. I have lived a life of perfection all the years of my life but they are some don't and do that I would have liked to change if only I was given the chance to. A perfect life is supposed to ea a life where there are no mistakes, no setbacks, absolutely nothing I dislike and no, no, nosy parents and annoying sibling.

My life could be perfect if I could see right in to the future and change or correct any mishaps before they occur. Hmm! My perfect life is doing what I want, the time I want, where it would occur, how I have absolute control over the details of my life. Like ....

I wake up the time I want depending on my choice. I would wake up and walk straight to the kitchen and food has already been prepared especially for me only. Then I would walk to wash room, paste and bath. Then I would come back and eat my breakfast. There would be no need to go and wash my dish there would be some to take them immediately am done. No work for me to do. Excellent I would also like school that school would be fun. Like labourers would sweep our plots for us. Wait I forgot something. I would like to wake up and my uniform a neatly ironed and shiny. There would be a chauffeur waiting for me at my door to ussher me into a ferrari spider web 365 with luxurious welcome into the car and whoa! I enter and the car starts to speak to me and asks me what I want and I tell it a want a castle of candies and again what I it brings it right in front of me. I sat in the car and the last minute I realised I'm in school and the headteacher comes out to welcome me into the school. when I get to my class and I am welcomed by a fresh breeze of air and I get settled on an electrical chair and table. we would learn with electronical board and tablets. There would be no need for writing and no need to get chalk stains in your dress. And whoo! all my most favourite place at school and my most favourite book is there waiting for me with their titles boldly written on them which is, Love is a challenge by hope dyope, Just between us, Hundred, etc. I just pick up and read them and when am about to leave I remember one of my favourite story

306

titled The mad hunter and the pact of death the full edition. I just grab it and put it into my bag without going anyone for permission. I go home anytime I want especially when I feel the school is boring I just take my bag and walk through the door and off to my house

When I felt home, my food would have already been served and I will eat. Then I would get to the television and I would watch all the television programs I like, like friends to the rescue and Sam and the Cat and other programs for kids. When I'm tired I go to bed. I wish the same routine would happen everyday.

To conclude, madame, if I was given opportunity to have a perfect life I would do a lot of hilarious things, that is why God has seen to it and given me a gradmother even though I don't have parents. She was given to me by God to protect me and give me the perfect life that I need at the stage on my life.

37. MY PERFECT LIFE
How to live my perfect life.

When I don't wake up early, I want my mother to sweep for me and also wash my bowls and everthing.

I was with ~~my~~ my younger siblings, sister and she left for school so my house chores became plenty. Before I will come to school, I have to bath my younger sibling go to the rubbish dump after sweping, wash bowls sweeping rooms and halls I ~~will~~ have to do that before I myself will bath. All this plenty work will clear off if I want to live my perfect life. I will work hard so that I pass my examination. After I finish university I will be teacher so that can teach my students to beth greatest students in the whole world. Living a perfect life will not be easy like porridge. So my fellow students my schoolmate fahers and mothers lets teach our salfs so that ~~africa~~ be the richest World in Arica. Thanks You

38. MY PERFECT LIFE.

In my perfect life, I want my mom, my dad, uncle Sami and mama Cifty, Essey, Efua, Betty, Mariama, Citoria, Vannessa, Augestina, Grandma. and some of my friends which i can't mention their names Gideon, Mensah, Albert and Herbert to be part of my perfect life and my annoying brother Louis. In my perfect life;

On Mondays; When I wake up in the morning, brush my teeth our servant will sweep, I will take my bath and watch tv until it is 8:00 before I go to school. And in school, my mom will allow me to take my tablet and ipod to school, whatever we learn it will stick in my head and they will double my food money by GHC 15.00 so that my food money will be GHC 20.00 plus food and drinks. When I come back to the house, food will be ready and I will eat, learn and sleep.

On Tuesday; Like when I wake up in the morning and the other stuff. But this time when I come back from school, we will go and visit all my friends.

On Wednesday; just like when I wake up in the morning and the other stuff but we will go and visit the king of Apam.

On Thursday; We will go and shop at the market and also do good things because I was born on Thursday by my handsome parents.

On Fridays; I will go out with my new ~~bicycle~~ bicycle.

On Saturdays; I will learn and when it is 12:00pm, I will stop and watch tv, play games and call my friends especially Essey, Hana Adjoa and ~~Herbert~~.

On Sunday; I will do nothing but thank God for the life he has given me and my parents and my friends and my grandma. And my dad will buy me a new bicycle and a new tablet and an Ipod. Oh and a new laptop. The other one is too old.

Thank You.

(89)   My Dream come true

I am 13 years old, when I wake up, I wish school will start at 8:00 am and close at 12:00 pm. I want school to be like a school with lessons like Dance, music etc. I want school to become like a Balett school.

When I wake up in the morning I pray Read the bible and wash my clothes. Affer washing I take my bath and brush my teeth. Then I learn for other subjects. And I wish I am staying in my own house and my things

40. MY DREAM COME TRUE

I will wake up at 3:30 and do all my homewor after this I will learn the subject note we hou the next morning before I go to school. After learning stops at 5:30am, I will take my bat! brush my teeth and take my breakfast beaca: se it is necessary and it helps the brain.

I wish my uniform is ironed and hanged by someone else before the next day tha I will wear it. I will dress up and go to our "praying room" and pray to the Almighty God to remind me of what I learn and thank him that I am alive.

After all these learning, I will take a sheet of paper and recall all that I have lear. If there is a part that I don't understand, when I go to school about 6:15am I will revise again and again. I wish when I go to schoo the compound work will be done already so the when we come to class we can be in class an learn ahead of the teacher's teachings.

When a teacher comes to class he should drill us of what we did the previous class so that we will be pressured to learn at home before coming to school.

I wish that when I come to school my class mates will not disrupt me by bearing false withness an I don't want to be insulted. I wish that a subject like science we will be having praticals some days after the topic. I wish the school has a science lab

Mainly in Ghana, I wish we don't learn all subject in school but during our infancy stages our guardians will study and know the subject we like best so that we will be thought or train in that same tend like how this is done in the America Countries.

And also I wish that a least day should contain 4 homework because mathematics homework take a long period of time to solve it. And not for. myself but my classmates should always take the french subject serious because when the french teacher is teaching they don't pay attention and they will be joking and that affects me in my french studies.

And also when I reach home like 4:30 pm I will take my bath and eat after I will sleep. And wake up at 3:30 am through the same process.

41

MY DREAM

My dream is that when I wake up in the morning, I will be eating ice cream with KFC chicken and potato chips. After I will go for shopping and buy all my favourite items. Later I will go for swimming classes. Then for my second wish I wish I will wake up to at 10:00pm and when I come to School there will be only one teacher. Again, I wish that my parents were rich and whatever I Say they will buy it for me.

For my third wish, I wish Ghana School was like American School, the time you like is the time you will go to School and many holidays.

44

42

MY PERFECT LIFE

I wish I would be woken up by my servants at 8:O'clock am and I will command them to perform their various activities. After I will tell my driver to take me to School and I will collect GH¢10 from my parents. When I reach to School, I will go to the canteen and get some food to eat. After I will go to class and learn my notes to prepare for the next or upcoming Subjects.

Furthermore, I will like my any teacher who will teach to Sing Songs, entertain ourselves and also crack jokes and tell stories before he or she teaches.

When School closes, and I am about ~~about~~ about to go home, I will call my driver for him to pick me home. When I reach home I let my servants remove my dress and dress me up and also prepare my favorite dishes for me and eat well to my satisfaction.

At Six O'clock, I will do my various homework for about thirty minutes depending on the homeworks being given after I will learn for about an hour, watch television for about an hour, get some ice cream and popcorn to eat.

After this, I will go to bed and sleep at 9:O'clock.

43.

I am a 12 years old girl who has a lot of dreams. I wish when I woke up from bed I wish there will be a lot of story books and ice cream on my bed.

There will be chocolate ice cream and pizza for breakfast. And in school music, history dance, english and P.E. is what we will learn everyday.

44 MY PERFECT LIFE

In my perfect life, I wish # to wake up at 4'clock am and perform my morning activites I go to school I want the teacher to crack some jokes # teacher. Also, during break time I want to go to the librari to read some storybooks and learn new vocublaries Furtherome dot during brak time I want to have a great time with my friends. Also of my friends to share because they are too stingy.

Whe she school closes and *I go home, I want my moth to prepare some delicous food and eat it to my Satisfaction

At 8 o'clock I want to wath some interesting move for thirty minutes. After read though my homework and at g go'clock ck go to bed

45. MY PERFECT LIFE

I wish I will wake up at 5:30 am and I will not jill like sleeping and I will also do all my homework and finish at 5:40 am. then I will study till 6:00 am in the morning. Afterwards I will brush my teeth, take my bath and dress for school. And I will reach school at any time I want. there will be nothing like canning.

When it is 2:00 pm, I will close from school and come and take my bath. I will go to the kitchen and take my lunch already prepared at the kitchen. After eating I will sleep for 2 hours and wake up around 5:00 pm. I wish I will sit in my varrunder and feel the fresh natural air blowing around me. After 30 minutes I will come to the hall and watch television till news and listen to the news to 8:00 pm in the evening.

Again, I will take my books and learn for the next I will be knowing the next day. When it is 9:00, I will recite the Lord's prayer and sing a few praises to God. I will also read the bible a little before I sleep.

46. MY PERFECT LIFE

To begin with, If I get the opportunity to live a perfect life I would go to bed at exactly five o'clock and wake up at three thirty and study. When it is around 4:300, I will do my chores as well as sweep the compound. After all this, I would Just take my bath and breakfast. I will get to school exactly 6 o'clock.

In school, I will like to suggest that the cains are too much for us as well as the shoutings. But I want that there should be not be any cains at school. I will like to get home at 4:30 and take a short shower and after having lunch I will do my home works and watch television for the whole nights and go to bed at around 8 o'clock.

In conclusion to this I want to live a life that there should not be any treasuring. I want to do what I say and also I hit shouting that is what I dislike in my life. This is how I want my life to be.

47. MY PERFECT LIFE 13

In my perfect life I will wake up at 8:00 am. Brush my teeth and then take my bath in my bathroom. After that my servant serves me with breakfast. After that I dress for school.

Later my driver drive me to school in my private car. When I reach to school my driver then take my bag and send it to class whiles I walk to class. At school I pay attention to what every the teacher says.

So I am one of the best student in class. At 4:00 am when we close from school my driver then come and picks me up. By 4:30 I will be at home. When I get home food will be restly. I take my bath and then eat my food and then do my homework. I then learn after that I entertain myself in the swimming pool. After that I watch television when I am tired I go to bed.

Multidimensional Typology (age, gender and class across the sense-genetic types)

AGE

| 10 yrs | 12 - 13 years |

Conformity Type
the obedient

SOCIAL CLASS

| ML | Working |

GENDER

| Girl | unknown |

AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	GENDER
- 10 years	Middle lower	Girl
- 12 − 13 years	Working	Unknown

AGE

| 10 | 12-13 |

the grumpy child
Conforming but complaining

SOCIAL CLASS

| LM | WK |

GENDER

| boys | UK | girls |

AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	GENDER
- 10 years	Middle lower	Girl
		Boys
- 12 −13 years	Working class	Unknown

320

AGE

| 10 | 12-13 |

SOCIAL CLASS

| ML | WK |

**Diversity type
the autonomous child**

GENDER

| boys | girls |

AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	GENDER
- 10 years	Middle lower-class	Girl
- 12 −13 years	Working-class	Boys
		Unknown

AGE

| 11 | 12-13 |

SOCIAL CLASS

| ML | |

the convenient child

Conforming and diverting

GENDER

| boys | unkno wn | |

AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	GENDER
- 10 years	Middle lower	Girl
- 12 −13 years	Working class	Boys
		Unknown

AGE

| 10-11 | 12-13 |

the rebellious child

Confronting Type

SOCIAL CLASS

| ML | Working-class |

GENDER

| boys | unknown | girls |

AGE		SOCIAL CLASS		GENDER	
■	- 10 years	■	Middle lower	■	Girl
■	- 12 –13 years	■	Working class	■	Boys
				■	Unknown