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Representations of Childhood and Child Poverty in Rural Communities in Northern Ghana

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Representations of Childhood and Child Poverty in Rural Communities in Northern Ghana

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Social and Political Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology and Methodology of Social Research

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis entitled REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD AND CHILD POVERTY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN GHANA

was carried out by me for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology and Social Research Methodology under the guidance of Professor **ROBERTA BOSISIO** (main supervisor) and Professor **ANTONELLA MEO** (co-supervisor) both from the Department of Cultures, Societies and Politics of the University of Turin, Italy, under the NASP-WEST programme led by the University of Milan, Italy.

The content of the thesis; including interpretations, analyses and discussions was written solely by me through fieldwork conducted in Ghana and readings and understanding from secondary materials. All secondary materials which I have utilised have been duly acknowledged at their respective places in the text.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the children of Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

Ideas which adults hold about children and child poverty are important contributors to the well-being or ill-being of children, and knowledge about the social constructions of childhood and child poverty are important for addressing overall poverty in developing countries. However, child poverty studies premised on the representations of children and child poverty are very limited. Hence, this research explored representations of children/childhood and child poverty in rural communities in Northern Ghana. The research adopted a qualitative approach, using the agency/structure debate as a theoretical framework for interview analysis. The study was carried out in 4 rural communities in northern Ghana with 2 in the Lawra district of the Upper West and 2 in the West Mamprusi district of the Northern. Both primary and secondary materials were collected. The former were generated from purposively selected household members (both adults and children) and institutional level representatives, and the later gathered from selected institutions. An interview guide and a focus group guide were constructed and used as the main instruments for data collection. The study involved 123 participants from the community level including 55 children, 48 adults and 20 older persons and 18 participants from the institutional level.

We explored the normative representations of children (what children should be and behave) and children "in practice" (what they actually are and do in the narratives of the research participants), and we classified them according to different analytical dimensions identified in the research. We also pointed out and analysed the differences in representations of children according to child's gender and among the different generations of adults. Findings from the research confirm that children's representations have relevant impact on their poverty status. The implication is that, to address children poverty, policy actions need to give attention to social representations of children and to the specificity of child poverty in the local context.

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CHAPTER 1 – GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Ideas which adults hold about children and child poverty are important contributors to the well-being or ill-being of children, and knowledge about the social constructions of childhood and child poverty are important for addressing and reducing child poverty and overall poverty in developing countries. Child poverty is part of overall poverty and also different from it. In fact, overall poverty reduction strategies are usually designed based on knowledge about the people living in poverty and their locations for effective targeting. Yet, little is often sought about why children are poor to facilitate specific policies and programmes for addressing the underlying causes of children poverty. The persistence of children poverty have the tendency of increasing the number of future poor adults and the likelihood of their own children living in poverty is high; a situation usually referred to in as intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Ghana's poverty reduction strategies I and II indicated in the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS) (2006 – 2009) document were formulated based on the reports of the Ghana Living Standards Survey 3 and 4 which highlighted the poor in Ghana and their locations. According to this document the incidence of poverty was analysed and categorised based on regions and used to formulate GPRS I but because it resulted in limitations in targeting poverty reduction interventions, GPRS II was based on further analysis of income poverty at the district level. Ghana Living Standards Surveys including the rounds 3 and 4 are the main sources of poverty data in Ghana because they are carried out every four years by the Ghana Statistical Service to determine the living conditions of Ghanaians. In each of the rounds, the poverty situation is highlighted including areas where the majority of the poor are concentrated.

Again most social protection policies in developing countries in Ghana are crafted based on knowledge about those who are vulnerable and need social protection. The Social Protection Policy being implemented currently in Ghana – Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) was founded on the results of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 5 which indicated the number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty and the districts of the country where the poor are largely concentrated. The link between overall poverty reduction strategies in Ghana and knowledge of who are poor and their locations highlighted above suggests that, in order to address poverty relating to children, it is important to move beyond where they are located and to understand why children are poor because of their dependence on adults and how adults represent children and child poverty can contribute to making children poor or improve their well-being.

Most developing countries including Ghana have had support from the international community such as the: European Union (EU), World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom to reduce poverty. Also, non-governmental organisations (both international and local) are common in most developing countries and some have worked for decades to enhance the livelihood and well-being of the people. Others are child-focus organisations/institutions e.g. UNICEF, Plan Ghana, Canadian Feed the Children and a host of others have been working to improve children's well-being and to reduce indicators of poverty associated with children such as enrolment in school and child mortality. Child rights organisations have also contributed their bit to ensure that children enjoy their rights as prescribed in both international and national legal documents. In the context of all these, poverty levels in general in Ghana have been declining. However, there are evidences of rising child poverty and vulnerability of children to poverty. We assume that socio-cultural

and institutional constructions of children are important for understanding children's poverty due to children's dependent position as a social group. If children's position in society in general is juxtaposed with children's position in the family which is the smallest unit of society, children could lack their basic needs, even though their families do not lack because the children do not control the family purse or resources and yet depend on it for their needs. This situation could arise depending on the notions that adults in households hold about children and child poverty. This raises some questions. How do the institutions responsible for addressing issues relating to children poverty and children vulnerability to poverty construct or represent children? What ideas or notions do adults in rural communities have about children and child poverty, given the differences in the positions of children and adults in social space and as different social categories? Do notions that adults hold about children in particular socio-cultural context as well as notions children themselves hold about childhood explain why children are poor and/or are increasingly vulnerable to poverty?

1.2 Background

Child poverty studies premised on the representations of children and child poverty are very limited. Hence, attempts to establish children poverty in Ghana are usually pulled out from the overall poverty data (UNICEF, 2009). The major sources of poverty data in Ghana include the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS), the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), and the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS).

Like most societies in Africa, Ghana is made up of rural and urban communities and there is a sharp contrast between rural and urban areas in terms of the overall poverty level. As a result, poverty data are usually disaggregated by rural and urban localities. Poverty in Ghana is a rural phenomenon (UNICEF, 2009; GSS, GLSS 5, 2007) and child poverty is more pronounced in the northern part of the country (UNICEF, 2009; GSS, 2008). Ghana is made

up of 216 districts, municipal and metropolitan assemblies as at June 2012. These are the second stage classification into which the country is divided for the provision of second level administrative structures for local governance and each is made up of several communities. The Department of Social Welfare, mapping of poverty districts in Ghana to facilitate the selection of poor and deprived districts for the implementation of Ghana's social protection programme – LEAP, in 2008 indicate that poverty and deprivation is wide spread in some districts than others. In the northern part of the country only 3 districts, were not earmarked for the implementation of Ghana's Social Protection Programme. In other words, only 3 districts in the northern part of Ghana are either not deprived, not earmarked for emergency intervention of the LEAP programme, not considered for LEAP to be expanded to or are not among the initial 21 poor districts the programme started LEAP implementation throughout the country in 2008.

Despite the lack of specific studies about child poverty in Ghana, extrapolations of child poverty from overall poverty data suggest that child poverty and vulnerability of children to poverty are largely in northern Ghana. Child poverty, operationalized as the prevalence of severe child deprivation in health, food, education, information, water, sanitation and shelter, indicate that child poverty is real in Ghana (UNICEF, 2009). Nearly a quarter (20-25%) of Ghanaian children of school going age are not in school, only 24.2% of children 15-17 years completed primary school for the data set used and only 45% of those who completed basic school proceeded to the next level (UNICEF, 2009). Again, food intake is related to growth, weight and health of children and 1 out of 5 children was reported to be stunted and 20% of children 0 to 50+ months were found to be underweight.

These indicators of children poverty and vulnerability of children to poverty are not evenly spread across the districts in Ghana. The spatial-cultural arrangement of some districts put

children in a disadvantageous situation in attracting adequate social amenities and services that will enhance their well-being. Yet districts that have these advantages do not automatically perform better in enhancing children well-being. The dispersed nature of communities in the Upper West and Upper East regions (two regions in northern Ghana) make them the worst regions in terms of access to basic education compared to the Northern Region. Yet the Northern Region (also of northern Ghana) has the highest (36%) prevalence of severe child deprivation in education compared to Upper West (26%) (UNICEF, 2009). Similarly, severe child food deprivation is also high (15%) in the Northern Region than Upper West (8%). Studies indicate that, the recent phenomenon of independent migration of children from rural communities to the major cities in Ghana is associated with children from northern Ghana. Within northern Ghana, there are differences in the numbers coming from each of the three regions that constitute northern Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions). Of the independent child migrants from northern Ghana in Accra and Kumasi (Ghana's two largest cities), 60%, 29.3% and 10.7% are respectively from the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions (Anarfi and Appiah, 2009) and the West Mamprusi district in the Northern Region had the highest (25.4%) in the district categorization of independent child migrants by the authors.

Although independent child migration is not an indicator of child poverty in child poverty literature, its prevalence in Ghana puts children at the risk of attracting some child poverty indicators. The studies of independent child migrants and also street children indicate that most children migrate from the north to the south and are on the streets to search for money and other material needs. Hence, in an attempt to address material poverty by becoming economic child migrants in the major cities, they suffer other dimensions of child poverty such as not being at school or without a guide of adults. Again, majority of street children in

Accra (62%) are from the Northern Region and only 8% and 1% are respectively from the Upper East and Upper West regions (Hatloy and Huser, 2005). This indicates that, only 29% of street children in the two major cities in Ghana hail from the remaining seven (7) regions in Ghana. The Lawra district is one of the districts in the Upper West Region. It is largely rural and was among the initial 21 poor and deprived districts selected in 2008 by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) for the implementation of LEAP. Yet, it is one of the districts in the Upper West region that has not been listed for street children or independent child migration. The discussion above suggests that childhood and child poverty could have different representations in different context. Hence, this study seeks to explore representations of children/childhood and child poverty in households/communities and child centred governmental departments.

1.3 Statement of the research topic and its scientific importance

As mentioned, though there are research efforts to understand child poverty, they are limited and most of them extrapolate child poverty from the overall poverty data (UNICEF, 2005 and 2009). By doing so, child poverty is always concealed in adult poverty and the overall national poverty indices. But child poverty is different from adult poverty because there are differentials in the needs of adults and children and among children, depending on their ages (Jones & Sumner, 2011).

Child poverty is a multidimensional concept and its multidimensionality nature has been highlighted by different scholars (Young Lives, 2012; Campfield, 2010 and Muninjin et al, 2006). The well-being approach to defining child poverty outlines material, subjective and relational dimensions and these are important for deeper understanding of child poverty. Children who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources they need to survive, develop and thrive and are unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full

potentials or participate as full and equal members of society are living in poverty (UNICEF, 2005a).

Also, different conceptions of childhood are likely to influence children experiences of poverty differently. Childhood is both a biological and a social construct which places children in different social and power positions in relation to adults. As a matter of fact, notion of childhood changes over time, because it is related to the socio-economic and historical context (Zelizer, 1994; Ansell, 2005), and depends on the value adults attach to children (Zelizer, 1994).

There are different social framings of childhood (Uprichard, 2008; Honwana & De Boeck, 2005). Some of these framings enhance child participation and protection while others exclude and deny children from enjoying some of their rights. Childhood have both normative and descriptive elements (Ansell, 2005). Normative and descriptive elements of childhood are important for understanding child poverty because some practices and descriptions associated with childhood could be considered normal and promoted, yet they are detrimental to the well-being of children.

If adults perceive children as contributors to the survival needs of the household and are made to work to contribute materially to the household instead of attending school and to also utilize other opportunities provided by the state and/or other development agencies, they are denied the right to utilizing child poverty reduction opportunities provided.

In the context of declining overall poverty (poverty that applies to adults and children) but, simultaneously increasing signs of child poverty, the phenomenon of child poverty can better be understood by exploring from adults in households/communities and those who are not living with children in their households but are involved in their education on ideas they hold

about childhood and child poverty. Household expenditure and the proportion of household income spent on food are determinants of poverty in Ghana. This is based on the assumption that such expenditures reflect (equally) in the standard of living of both children and adults. However, the translation of increase in income of households to living situation of children depends on how households respond to increase income (Barrientos and Dejong, 2006). This makes knowledge about representation of childhood and child poverty important for the understanding of child poverty.

Therefore, to study and understand child poverty, we need to understand the conception of childhood in specific historical, cultural and economic context. There are evidences that, children well-being and their perspectives are usually hidden and silenced in mainstream development literature and to capture the complexities of child poverty, it is important to carry out studies that capture intra-household dynamics and community-child relations (Jones and Sumner, 2011). The distinctively different nature of child poverty has already been stated and the social construction of child poverty from the perspectives of adults and old people is important for deeper understanding childhood poverty.

Studies of child poverty from children's perspectives in Ethiopia reveal the reality of child poverty (Young Lives, 2012; Campfield, 2010) and that poverty have telling impact on the lives of children who experience it (Ridge, 2009). These studies have provided important literature on child poverty from the perspectives of children but failed to look at child poverty from the context and contextual conceptions of childhood and child poverty.

In Ghana, literature on child poverty is almost non-existent. A UNICEF 2009 country report for Ghana prides itself with the first ever child poverty study in Ghana. However, UNICEF's study largely extrapolated child poverty from data sets such as the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), Ghana, Living Standards Survey (GLSS) and Multi Indicator Cluster

Survey (MICS) which are mostly quantitative studies to measure poverty and some material well-being of both adults and children. Since the inception of GLSS (the major data for determining poverty in Ghana) in 1987/88 – poverty has been measured mainly by economic index: income, expenditure and consumption with households as the unit of analysis. A trend analysis using these indices indicates a downward trend in the poverty situation in Ghana. The percentage of Ghanaians living in poverty in 1991/92, 1998/99 and 2005/2006 are 51.7, 39.5 and 28.5 respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008).

But studies of street children in Ghana (see Beauchemin, 1999, Hatloy&Huser, 2005, Agya, 2007 and Alenoma 2012a) and independent child migration in Ghana (Anarfi & Appiah 2009), where street children are mostly the study participants, have provided useful (but not exhaustive) clues of child poverty and vulnerability, such as health and nutritional indicators.

Health and nutritional status of children are important determinants of child poverty. These are mostly measured by the height and weight of children and are dependent on food intake and the incidence of infections among children (ICF Macro, 2010). According to ICF Macro, 28%, 9% and 14% of children between 6 and 59 months in Ghana are respectively stunted, wasted and underweight, and rural children are more likely to be stunted (32%) than urban children (21%). Prevalence of anaemia among the same age group is 78% and more in rural areas (84%) than urban areas (68 %). These analyses are based on data from the 2008 GDHS which also use households as unit of analysis.

Though the above provide some evidences of child poverty in Ghana and elsewhere, they are limited because they exclude the conceptions of childhood and child poverty. Again, as a purely quantitative study, "thick descriptions and nuanced insights of qualitative analysis" (Jones and Sumner, 2011, pp. 30) are missing. The authors argued qualitative

analysis in the study of child poverty offers understanding of the dynamics within households as well as the social processes which produce the numbers in quantitative analysis.

In the literature of child poverty, the phenomenon of street children or children 'streetism' is not an indicator of child poverty, but poverty in households, including children poverty has generally been blamed for children being on the streets. However, Alenoma (2012b) argued that, before the early 1990s when the phenomenon of street children started emerging in Ghana, families were poorer and yet there were no street children. What explains the new turn in the lives of some children? Could it be changes in the way children are constructed by adults and how children construct themselves?

Generally in Ghana, children are regarded as assets and security for their parents at their old age and there are values such as love for children which must reflect in how adults ensure their welfare and also the adherence to the value of collective responsibility towards children. Nukunya (2003) argued that the notion that Ghanaians love children which in the past reflected in all the efforts mothers in particular will put to ensure that their children do not suffer cannot be considered valid anymore. His reasoning is still relevant in the light of current increasing signs of child poverty and vulnerability of children to poverty in Ghana.

There is clearly, knowledge gap on how social constructions of childhood and child poverty explain child poverty which my study stands to fill and contribute to the literature on the fields of sociology of childhood and sociology of development.

1.4 Research questions

Within the theoretical framework presented above, the main question of the study is the following:

How are the socio-cultural constructions and social representations of children/childhood connected to children poverty in rural communities in northern Ghana?

The overall question can be better articulated through the following more specific research questions:

- 1. How is childhood constructed in contemporary times? Are children perceived, considered and treated as children in accordance with their chronological ages or they are perceived and considered as children with respect to their chronological ages but treated as adults?
- 2. How do current social constructions of children/childhood differ from the past?
- 3. What are the differences if any, in the constructions of boy children and girl children?
- 4. How do contemporary socio-cultural representations of children and childhood contribute to the social representation of child poverty?

1.5 Research objectives

Main objective of the study

This study sought to explore the socio-cultural constructions and social representations of children/childhood and children poverty in rural communities in Northern Ghana.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the representation(s) of children/childhood and child poverty among different categories of people (adults, old people and children themselves) in rural communities in northern Ghana.

- 2. Find out if there are different representations of child poverty among different categories of people as a result of differences in socio-demographic characteristics.
- 3. Explore how district level child-centred governmental institutions represent children/childhood and if there are differences in their representations of children/childhood from representations of children among people in rural communities.
- 4. Identify linkages between social representations of children and how children are treated by adults in rural communities.
- 5. Find out (if any) connections/disconnections between representations of children/childhood and social representation(s) of child poverty.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Notions of children and childhood in Western countries

Western notions of childhood to a large extent are linked to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, where children are defined as people below 18 years. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) subscribes to this definition, but there are specific enactments in different African countries that provide some other definitions. Definitions of children in these global and continental legal frameworks make the definition of a child based on conventional age nearly universal. The definition of children as persons below 18 years is widespread in documents. But the likelihood of other age definitions of children is high because Honwana and De Boeck (2005) have argued that the way children are defined and how children define themselves is influenced by some socio-cultural variables such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, responsibilities and expectations. Again, James and James (2001) contended it is impossible to make reference to children as though it is a general concept. Honwana and De Boeck and James and James arguments suggest that there are varied dimensions in the definitions and notions of children/childhood depending on the context particular children find themselves.

There seems to be a general agreement among childhood researchers and researchers who research about young people in both the developed and developing countries that "childhood" is a social construct (see Aries 1962, Zelizer 1994, Jenks 1996, James et al 1998, Ansell 2005 and Honwana and De Boeck 2005

Aries 1962 in (James et al 1998) pointed out that ideas which people have about childhood are framings of the adult generation within particular historical and political context and they shape the life experiences of children but are subject to change. Aries's conclusion based on

different notions of childhood observed at different times in history and James and others' arguments are relevant for understanding representations of children/childhood and child poverty in rural communities in Northern Ghana. In the view of these authors, adults determine who children are and what they do or should do. Who adults say children are and what they should or should not do have consequence for their living situation and well-being. Furthermore, as already mentioned, adults' constructions or representations of child poverty also have consequences for children's well-being. Leaning on James and James (2001) and Honwana and De Boeck (2005) argument that children are differently defined based on the socio-cultural context in which they are located, I am also arguing that children in rural communities in Northern Ghana belong to and live in a particular social, cultural and economic context and who adults say they are, what they do and how all these shape the well-being of children is/are unknown.

In her book *Pricing the Priceless Child: the Changing Social Value of Children*, Zeilizer (1994) underscored how different constructions of children in the United States of America between 1870 and 1930 connected to different economic and sentimental values of children; where children were sometimes priced low, and other times high, depending on how they were constructed or represented by adults. Zeilizer's work is very revealing because she used secondary data which had voices of primary materials obtained from children's insurance, documents on compensation for wrongful death of children and adoption and sale of children. While her work drew a linkage between Sociology of Childhood and Economic Sociology within the context of a developed society, this study of the representations of children and child poverty in Ghana in a developing country context seeks to push the boundaries of childhood studies further.

In Ansell (2005), it is explained that in western societies there exist two distinctive notions about children: Dionysian and Apollonian. On the one hand, childhood is considered as a time for discipline and protection; children should be seen and not heard (Dionysian) and on the other hand, children should be happy, passive, play and not work, they are innocent and need adult protection from the world (Apollonian). But in the medieval era, children were perceived as evil, innocent and immanent (James et al, 1998). What is clear in the arguments and conclusions of these authors is the social constructivist and changing nature of childhood. Though some studies have been done, Ansell (2005) has argued that notions of childhood remain at the abstract level and there is the need for empirical studies that can help validate the ideas about childhood.

2.2 Notions of children and childhood in African countries

Drawing from secondary materials, in the introductory chapter to *Makers and Breakers:* Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa, Honwana and De Boeck (2005) portrayed children as actors or beings capable of changing existing models of kinship and moral principles of reciprocity and solidarity, gerontocracy, authority structures and the relations between men/boys and women/girls. Contrary to Western notions of childhood particularly of the 'Apollonian' type, the authors suggested that many children working and caring for themselves, by and large, is becoming the norm in Africa rather than the exception because the few children who are cared for by their parents are enjoying a luxury. Children are becoming active players in a broad spectrum of social life probably not because they are exhibiting their agency, but the specific economic, social and cultural context which they find themselves forces them to become active participants in social and economic life. As Honwana and De Boeck (2005) pointed out, they could be socially constructed in particular ways in their social and cultural contexts and their actions stem from what their societies say

children are and what children should or should not do as well as who and what children themselves think they are and should do in social and economic life. Although notions of childhood in most African countries – as suggested by Honwana and De Boeck – may appear to contradict notions of childhood in western societies and by implication violates the rights of children enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, Gokah (2006) argued the diverse nature of African culture, and the different elements there in, make synchronisation of African culture into laws already in existence difficult although some violate the rights of children.

Gokah's point is similar to Honwana and De Boeck's in that, social and economic activities that children participate in Africa could be considered unlawful within the context of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child, but are deemed lawful within some African countries. Though national laws supersede folk laws, acts associated with children in specific communities could be normal within their context, yet in contravention of the national laws. Gokah argues the absence of harmonised African culture into national and international laws make implementation difficult.

In the world view of Africans human beings have a life cycle which comprises spiritual, social and ancestral selfhoods; and the first cycle which, begins sooner after a child is conceived or believed to be existing before conception and only waiting to be re-incarnated, usually ends with a conferment of name on the child and after which the child is deemed being incorporated into society (Nsamenang, 2006). The second phase which, according to Nsamenang, is where children's childhoods take place is composed of seven developmental stages, because each of these stages is characterised by distinctive task which are determined within the context of the cultural realities and what the people of particular cultural group want to achieve (Nsamenang, 1992 in Nsamenang, 2006). This second way of viewing

children among Africans demands that sooner after a child is born he/she becomes an integral part of the social and economic life of their communities and families and by so doing children live their childhood life as social beings rather than as individuals. The social phase of the life cycle of human beings among Africans, as Nsamenang (2006, 295) noted, is "premised not on an independent or autonomous frame; its foundational principle is interdependent or relational script". For most African parents, as the author stressed, a lot of social responsibility is expected of children and this begins early in their life through assignment of task perceived to match the stage of their biological development.

Among the Dagombas of northern Ghana, childhood begins sooner after a baby has learned how to walk, weaned and until he/she goes into marriage, remains a child and a lot is expected of him/her in terms of roles and responsibilities; children belong not only to their biological parents, but their entire kin group (Oppong, 1971). For this reason, among the non-centralized societies in northern Ghana, where child fostering is not necessarily part of their tradition, like the Dagombas, people have no problem with parent-child separation (Abu, 2012). Child fostering is a practice where a paternal or maternal relative of a child takes him/her from the child's biological parents to permanently live with him/her. The responsibility of care and training becomes the responsibility of the relative the child lives with. The practice is nearly institutionalized among the centralized Dagomba ethnic group of northern Ghana. Although there are cultural similarities in northern Ghana, this practice is not part of the cultural practice of all ethnic groups. Yet, most parents especially in rural communities do not have problem with being separated from their children. Independent migrant Dagaaba children who are not more than fifteen years old from the Upper West Region of Ghana can be found in farming communities in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions doing contract farming Nanbigne (2012). Yet, exemplified by the names Africans

give to their children, they are perceived to be sweet, glorious, valuable, precious and worthwhile (Gyekye, 1996). As a result of the wide age differences between children and their parents/other adults and the desire by adults for children to acquire the desired character traits and acceptable way of doing things in their society, children are expected to be humble, respectful of adults and not to show that they are superior to their parents (Gyekye, 1996). Drawing from Gyekye, children are valued and considered worthy of having. Their sentimental value notwithstanding, children are also sought after for their economic value because children are regarded as key contributors to the household economy since a household without child labour is not viable as a domestic and economic unit (Oppong, 1971 and Oppong et al, 2012). It is assumed among the Dagombas of northern Ghana that, by age six, a child is useful to the household and, by age ten, he/she has become a significant labour asset to the household as an economic unit and especially so in farm work (Abu, 2012).

Some contradictions in the notions of childhood among the Dagombas and Africa at large can be observed from the works of Oppong, Gyekye and others. Though they are, according to Gyekye (1996, 84) the "most precious of possessions", the clearest way by which children can show they are not superior to their parents and other adults is to present themselves in the opposite: showing that they are 'inferior'. It could be argued that although children are perceived to be precious, valuable and important contributors to the household or domestic economy, they are also thought to be inferior to adults until they move out of their status into the status of adults. Their inferiority hinges on the nearly universal adage in Gyekye (1996) and which most adults make reference to "children have never been adults before, but adults have been children before" in the Ghanaian society. There are a number of rhetorical adages among the Dagaaba/Wala of Upper West of Ghana which are often referred to, to emphasize the superiority of adults and inferiority of children among them include

'penis can never be bigger than the thigh' Adults always say they have come first and then children say they know first'. The first adage is saying that because children are smaller (in age and size) they will never know what adults know until they become adults. While the second is suggesting that because adults are older, they are more experienced and know what children do not know and children should not think they know better than adults.

This idea about childhood is ambivalent because formal and informal education, as well as the processes of globalization, makes correlation between age and experience/knowledge – as is often stressed by adults – problematic. While the above ideas provide some clues about how children are socially constructed in years past, social, economic, political and cultural changes which almost always affect the thinking and way of life of people in societies justify an investigation into the contemporary framings of children, particularly in rural communities in northern Ghana.

Again, literature indicates a contradiction between the romantic manner in which the Dagaaba of northern Ghana portray children and how children are represented or treated in practical life situation. In a study *Helping them grow their teeth*, by Nanbigne (in Oppong et al, 2012), he reported sharp differences in how children, deemed to be precious and valuable, are treated when they are sick compared to elderly persons among the Dagaaba of northern Ghana. While no assistance is sought from out-migrants family members (who are important contributors to the household/family back home) to send a sick child to the hospital, help is most likely to be sought from the out-migrants when an elderly person is sick.

There are contrasting views, supported by empirical evidence regarding children deviation from or conformance to western ideals about childhood (see Ansell 2005 and Maria et al 2010). Ansell highlighted that, those against child work often hold on to provisions in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) about some work being hazardous to children, work

taking children away from formal schooling and the likelihood of children being exploited. The author further noted that, in societies where poverty is pervasive and/or technology is low, formal schooling may not be beneficial to children as they move into adulthood and children working could aid schooling rather than inhibit it. According to Ansell, what is/are perceived to be unconventional activity/activities for children based on western ideals about childhood/children, have shown to produce positive outcomes in the lives of children in poor countries; citing children working to raise money to pay school fees and completing school or discontinuing school because of their families inability to pay school fees. Similarly, Maria et al (2010) examined children's accounts of their work and associated potential benefits to their psycho-social well-being and which they analysed within a resilience framework. The authors concluded that children's work have potential positive benefits to them and their families. In particular, self-employed children, those who carry out domestic and agricultural work for their families, children who work in the factory or service sector and on the streets were found to make positive impacts on their own lives as children and in their adulthoods. Although Ansell and Maria and others positions on child work appear to be arguing for child work, opinions about child work depend on how children/childhood is represented.

Maria et al (2010) conclusion is comparable to Gokah (2010) argument that African cultural practices are often tagged as outmoded due to practices which deny children some of their rights such as education, health and others enshrined in international documents, but overemphasizing African cultural practices as hindrance to progress, he noted, could lead to policy losing out on the real challenges hindering children's progress such as corruption, incompetence and bad administration.

The literature on notions of children/childhood highlighted and discussed show a general consensus that childhood is a social construct and varies across different societies and time.

James et al (1998) have edged researchers in the field of the new sociology of childhood to look beyond the social constructivism of childhood in the light of current developments in sociology of the body; refusal to do this, the authors claim, put childhood researchers at risk of appreciating the place of embodiment in the processes through which children exhibit their agency.

This caution is relevant for a study of the representations of childhood and child poverty in rural communities in light of arguments about children's participation in social and economic life. Although the literature discussed suggest that adults as well as cultural norms and practices construct children in terms of who children are and what children are expected to do in households, children are physiologically different from adults and also go through processes of development as indicated by Jean Piaget before they become adults.

Legal and institutional frameworks, particularly those concerned with the welfare of children, usually have framings of children which are social constructions but also according to James, et al (1998, 147) as "material bodies" with distinct age different from adults. Hence, the next section talks about the legal and institutional definitions and constructions of children/childhood in Ghana.

2.3 Institutional and legal definitions of children in Ghana

In Ghana, there are a number of institutional and legal documents which define children; including provisions to ensure that children live dignified lives as citizens and children. Important among these documents are the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana and the 1998 Children's Act (Act 560). The 1998 Children's Act of the parliament of Ghana provides a definition of a child, and several other provisions in this document provide a framework for all institutions who work with and for children in Ghana.

In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, section 1 of the 1998 Children's Act (Act 560) define a child as a person below the age of 18 years. The threshold of 18-year-old is established starting from a biological conception of a child because it has to do with the physiological and chronological development of children in the life course. However, other provisions in this Act and the UNCRC make room for flexibility for other non-age definitions of children.

Furtherance to the provisions under Article 5 of Act 560 (parental guidance) which states that Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly, UNCRC states clearly that it does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. Article 32 protects children from engaging in harmful and exploitative work but does not prevent parents from using children for work which they believe is appropriate for their ages. Determination of what work is appropriate for children (a heterogeneous category) is not only subjective but also at the discretion of parents and guardians. The 1998 Children's Act of Ghana and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child are models of the UNCRC with some few additions that reflect the specific context of Ghana. Though some social and cultural notions about children are brought to bear on the Act, two important questions can be raised in the context of the flexibility of the 1998 Children's Act of Ghana.

To what extent do notions of children in the Ghanaian society conform to the ideas about children in these legal documents? Ghana is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society and section 13 of the 1998 Children's Act, for example, protects children against betrothal and marriage and sets the minimum age for marriage at 18. However, the 2010 population and

housing census report of Ghana on social, economic and demographic characteristics captures the marital status from age 12; an indication that children or people below age 18 marry in some parts of Ghana.

What are the notions of children in specific socio-cultural context in Ghana? Do community people ideas about children and how children should be treated conform to or contradict with these legal provisions? How do their ideas about childhood play out on children's everyday life and well-being?

In recognition of the Ghanaian concept of childhood, including that every child relates to a family, a recent Ghana Child and Family Welfare policy defines a child as a person who is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessaries of life (Government of Ghana, 2014). This current definition from governmental circles is deconstructing children merely as biological/chronological objects – that mature or grow with increasing age – to socioeconomic construction which is dependent on ability of the biologically/chronologically matured child to be able to provide his/her own means for survival.

2.4 Theoretical approaches in childhood studies

It is observed in the literature of childhood studies that most researchers root their studies within the broader Structure versus Agency debate in modern sociological theory. In social theory there are contestations about the relative importance of these two frameworks for explaining social phenomena. On the one hand there is the idea that social phenomena can be explained or understood by analysing the structure or social structure because society is patterned and exert powerful constrains on people and hence what they do (Structure). On the other hand, it is believed that social phenomena can be explained by analysing individual actions because people in society are social actors, capable of acting freely or act on their free

will (Agency). There are some efforts to integrate both perspectives by Giddens and Bourdieu (Ritzer, 1996), and social researchers recognise the importance of both Structure and Agency for understanding social phenomena. However, a cursory review of the existing literature on childhood show dominance of studies based on agency than structure.

In childhood studies, children are mostly studied as social actors (James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; in James and James, 2001). Although they are different from adults they are competent in their specificity and as such they are capable of being studied as research subjects in their own right. They are also conceptualised as 'Beings', 'Becomings' and 'Belongings' (Uprichard, 2008). The 'Being' conceptualisation of childhood, regards children as social actors or active agents in their own right capable of actively constructing their own childhood, have their own perspectives and experiences about being children and consequently, capable of providing their own views on issues. The 'Becoming' children are seen as 'adults in the making' lacking universal skills and features of the 'adult' they will be, when they grow up. The 'Belonging' child is given some space in adult spaces depending on the social and cultural environment. The author believes children deserve to be targeted as research subjects especially on matters that affect them.

Uprichard's push for children's involvement in research from her conception of children as 'being' is similar to arguments made by other authors who research from both developed and less developed country context for children's involvement in research as subjects and these can be found in Davies (1998), Aitken (2001), and Nsamenang (2006). Their arguments for considering children as research subjects are rooted in the agency framework with emphasis on children's competence.

Within the different types of academic writing on children and childhood, there are varieties of children's voices (Davies, 1998). However, Davies argued the extent to which all the

voices of children are captured in results of researches carried out with children most often depend on and/or are affected by prejudices of the researchers. Therefore, he called for the use of a reflexive approach in studies aimed at identifying the voices of children. This call is very relevant for a study of contemporary representations of childhood/children because, although children's voices are diverse from the point of view of Davies, Aitken (2001) argued because the adult world dominates that of children, there is no just or unprejudiced voice of childhood. Aitken (2001) made a distinction between studying about childhood and studying about children; referring to childhood as an adult abstraction which suggest a state of being and is about how parents parent children and how children are made to be part of the act of parenting. The study of children according to the Aitken is about obtaining the voices of persons considered to be children.

Children's competence especially among Africans is also pointed out by Nsamenang (2006). But, children's competence within the African context, the author stressed, is often associated with the stage of development of a child which most Africans believe is gained through training. In African societies children are believed to have different cognitive abilities which emerge as they grow and so intelligent behaviours of children are determined by the daily routines and activities they participate in their families and communities through their training process which are mostly designed to inculcate in them social competence and social responsibility (Nsamenang, 2006). It could be argued therefore that, among Africans, although children are believed to be competent, without going through a training process within their families and communities they are incompetent beings because intelligence and competence are acquired through nurture. Therefore, notions of children's agency within the African context are more likely to be Uprichard (2008) concept of children as 'Becomings' and which she observes dominate the social construction of childhood. Representation of

children as 'becoming' is deeply rooted in the social representations of childhood but usually with underlying assumptions about children's competence which are problematic and also oppose to notions of children as 'being' or persons in their own right (Uprichard, 2008). Uprichard's observation about ideas of children's competence is relevant for analysis of contemporary presentations of children. This is because, social, cultural, economic and technological changes are taking place in nearly all corners of the world and are likely to influence the thinking or notions about childhood/children. Drawing from the work of several childhood researchers, Uprichard (2010) has argued for researchers to adopt a generational perspective in the study of childhood as this paves the way for explaining children both as 'beings' or social actors in their own right and simultaneously constrained by structure and social position.

Children and young persons are also studied within a framework of 'makers' and 'breakers' (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005). As makers children are competent individuals not to be ignored in knowledge generation, especially on issues concerning children. But as breakers children are capable of breaking the normative culture of a society to serve their interest as children. Both 'makers' and 'breakers' put children and young people as important research subjects if researchers are to understand how issues affecting them can be addressed and why they engage in acts of deviance or exhibit non-conformist behaviours. Though children are breakers, their dependent status in society also puts them at risk of being mishandled or abused depending on how those they depend on perceive them.

Also, it is common knowledge that the younger group of human beings among other mammals is particularly helpless and depends on their adults much longer time than other mammals, placing limitation on the extent of children's agency and the extent of their ability to influence structure. Notions of children as makers and breakers are similar to

Uprichard's 'being' and 'becoming' ideas about children and childhood. Although analysing from makers and breakers perspectives, children are capable of being mishandled, notions of children as 'being' or 'becoming' do not reduce children's agency.

Ebrahim (2008) in her paper on situated ethics for carrying out research with very young children, she conceptualize children as active participants in the knowledge generation process and as experts in communicating about childhood. Again, Malmquist et al (2014) study of how 5 to 8 year olds in planned lesbian families understand daddy and the ideas they have about their families was also carried out within the agency framework. These researchers sought answers to their research questions by using very young children as the main research participants. Their papers demonstrate that children are not only social actors capable of acting freely, but also, competent beings capable of contributing to the knowledge generation process on issues that affect children. Clearly, both studies were based more on the 'agency' theoretical framework. Moreover, this conceptual framework for childhood studies is similar to George Herbert Mead's idea of the 'self' where he associated children's competence with both physiological development and mastery of societal norms and values. Though childhood researchers do not downplay the competence of particular category of children, they recognize differentials in the ability of different categories of children to understand issues at different levels of abstraction and thus, emphasis is put on identifying the right tools for different categories of children (Ebrahim, 2008).

International concerns about child trafficking hinges on the conceptualisation of children as innocent, vulnerable, dependent and lack the type of maturity, intellectual, emotional and physical capabilities that adults have (Boyden 1996, in Agbu, 2009). This is to say that fights against child trafficking based on empirical evidence of children being trafficked is premised on children being helpless and at the mercy of adults who decide what they do with them.

Such conceptualizations of children are in contrast with aspects of children's agency if children are viewed as active and capable beings in their own right in socio-economic life.

Children are also studied like any minority group located within the context of the adult world (Bourdillon and Sangare, 2012). Children like any minority group, until the past few decades, were not thought to be worthy and capable subjects of research on what concerns them as children or society in general, and so were left outside the net. However, it is increasingly being accepted among childhood researchers that nobody is more knowledgeable on issues that concern children other than children themselves. In this case, children are studied within Amartya Sen's capability framework. There is the realization that it is important to give children a voice to contribute to issues that affect them because they are capable of doing so.

On the other hand, the Structure framework is used by researchers who are interested in examining how it is like to live as a child in society given their position in a patterned society (James and James, 2001). The everyday life experiences and actions of children are located in, and determined by structured societies which also define their space and position within the social structure. As documented in an ethnographic piece by Oppong (1971), it is a customary practice among the Dagomba of northern Ghana for a child to be ceremonially and spiritually relocated from his/her parents to his/her maternal kin members for training. In the process of training, boy children are deconstructed as children and represented as adults once they are able to raise100 yam mounds in the farm because it shows a boy child's ability to till the land to grow food to feed a family of his own.

James and James (2001) argued that when analysed critically, the Agency and Structure approaches to childhood studies are not diametrically opposed, but a matter of emphasis. Children are independent beings and social actors, they are worth of study in their own right,

have a voice and are capable of expressing their views given the right tools, but children, just like adults, wherever they are, live within a structured society where there are constraining elements. The difference between adults and children is that the last ones are not only constrained by structure, but their social space is also determined by adults. Adults determine when children are 'beings', 'becomings' or 'belongings'.

Childhood is also a relational concept because it is one of the two social categories (children vs. adults) and children are located within a generational relation and their disadvantageous situation in society is similar to women in gender analysis and gender relations highlighted in (Alanen, 2005) and (Connell, 2002)., 2001).

Alanen has pointed out that just like notions about gender have both biological and sociocultural elements, the social construction of childhood also has both biological and sociocultural underpinnings and so there are similarities between the social constructions of gender
and the social construction of childhood. Biological constructs of children is similar to the
meaning of sex in gender studies because biological/physiological difference between men
and women are the key elements in the definition of sex just like physiological difference
between children and adults are important in the definition of a child. Moreover, the sociocultural meanings of childhood are similar to the meaning of gender as both childhood and
gender are socially constructed. Although there is a socially constructed aspect to meanings
of childhood which suggest the meaning of childhood/children could be context specific,
children almost everywhere in the world are first defined and identified by their physical and
age differences between them and other people (adults). Also, there are similarities between
childhood studies and minority/ gender studies (Alanen, 2005)

Based on the argument that the agency and structure theoretical frameworks are not in conflict James and James (2001) have pointed out that, in childhood studies, it is important to demonstrate the linkage between Agency and Structure.

2.5 Towards an operational definition of child poverty: the concept and measurement of child poverty

Literature on child poverty both from a conceptual point of view and empirical evidence suggests that, like childhood, child poverty is a social construct and is believed to be different from poverty in general or poverty associated with adults. As a result, child poverty has different conceptualisations and indicators depending on the context and what is considered relevant to the well-being of children within each particular context. In the literature on child poverty, it is observed that there are relativity, deprivation and equality perspectives as well as varied indicators, and this has led to a general agreement among researchers that child poverty is multi-dimensional and different from poverty associated with adults (see Abebe, 2014; Young Lives, 2012; UNICEF, 2011; Campfield, 2010; Muninjin et al, 2006; Thomas, 2005 and Witter and Bukokhe, 2004). The effects of poverty on children are damaging and permanent compared to adults and also unlike adults because children are dependent and more vulnerable (UNICEF, 2011). Moreover, child poverty is believed to be gendered, and female children are more likely than male children to be poor (UNICEF, 2011).

Different conceptualisations of child poverty are well outlined in Muninjin et al (2006) and Jones and Sumner (2011). The conceptualisations of child poverty, the authors observed, are predominantly based on the rights-based perspective where poverty is considered as a violation of right and so in attempt to define child poverty; child survival, child development, child protection and child participation are usually considered. Interest in this way of looking at child poverty is useful because a child, who is offered the opportunity to survive, will be able to experience the other means provided for the well-being of its citizens (children inclusive) by duty bearers such as the state. Jones and Sumner (2011) noted that conception of child poverty based on child survival has more popularity, but argued this is likely to

overlook other aspects of well-being. They stated further that material indicators of child development are popular among development agencies such as the UN, UNICEF, and Save the Children etc. in determining child well-being, but argued such indicators usually do not provide adequate data regarding how particular children are thriving in specific societies.

One is tempted to go with their arguments when one do a careful analysis of the measurements and indicators of child poverty in a UNICEF country report for Ghana on Global study on Child Poverty and Disparities published in 2009. Child poverty was conceptualised to include aspects of well-being and which is similar to an earlier conceptualisation by Gorden et al (2003) where they defined child poverty from a material perspective and associated child poverty with children who are deprived some identifiable needs considered basic to survival and the well-being of children. In both studies child poverty indicators were largely tied to indicators of child survival, and excluded children's lived lives and experiences. Though children's relational needs such as having to be brought up by their parents or other adults came up to be worthy of being unearthed in the Global study of child poverty by UNICEF (2009), this was identified only as an issue and not investigated because of the seemingly over reliance on available secondary materials of quantitative nature.

Other indicators of child poverty highlighted in Abebe (2014) and UNICEF (2011) include child mortality, nutritional status of children and the incidence of maternal mortality. Children who are deprived from Malaria preventive efforts such as the use of insecticide treated nets are poor (UNICEF, 2011).

Similar to Abebe (2014) and UNICEF (2011) highlight of issues relating to children's health as indicators of child poverty, Hallett and Prout (2003) earlier argued that although some

health indicators of children are not associated with child poverty because their poor health could be explained by factors that are not necessarily linked to child poverty; citing genetically unhealthy children and other factors, they pointed out that there is evidence that rates of low birth weight, infant mortality, child mortality child mental health, issues surrounding children's dental health, youth suicide and girl children who smoke are higher among poor children than non-poor children. The association of child poverty with issues relating to the health of children is indisputable because the health of all human beings including children is connected to their access to and consumption of the necessaries of life which guarantee the well-being of people. It is a well-known fact that the state of health of people is connected to their consumption of balanced meals, living in well-ventilated and good sanitary conditions and therefore poor health status could be a reflection of the lack of these. The meaning of child poverty appears to be further expanded in Abebe (2014) because the definition of child poverty extends to the impact of social change on the lives of children while further highlighting the importance of children's health in the conceptualisation of child poverty. Children, who go hungry and also do not attend school, have no access to potable water, primary health care and the prevalence of diseases that are preventable among children, lack sanitation facilities and experience negative impacts of urbanisation, monetisation and globalisation are suffering child poverty (Abebe, 2014).

Although school attendance is often stated in the definition of child poverty or as child poverty indicator, the wellbeing and health of people are also connected with their level of education. When people are educated they acquire skills for work which earns them income to provide the needs which enhance well-being. Again, when people attain an appreciable level of education, their health status is more likely to be better than those without any level of education because of their ability to read and appreciate healthy life practices.

Various meanings of child poverty based on children's perspectives have emerged from both developed and developing countries where children are conceptualised as active agents in the knowledge generation process. Using food intake, housing conditions and children combining schooling and work as indicators of child poverty, Young Lives (2012) established that most children in Ethiopia live in poverty. Just a few children ate between mid-day and evening meals and the food is mostly of lower quality and in small quantities. Ethiopian children perceived children who live in poverty as those who struggle to eat once a day, fell hungry and tired most of the time, put on worn out clothes and old shoes and also lack school material such as exercise books, pens, pencils, and school bag (Young Lives, 2012). This is similar to Camfield (2010), where Ethiopian children understanding of poverty was observed to be a reflection of how they experienced poverty. Also, (Witter and Bukokhe (2004) reveal that Ugandan children associate child poverty with children's lack of a wide range of indicators spreading across several dimensions.

Child poverty indicators usually reflect the realities of the societies in which the studies were carried out (Ridge, 2009; Muninjin et al 2006).

For children in the West, not having adequate money to buy the right clothes, have the right friends and things for Christmas and birthday parties and lack of childhood possessions like toys and games are indicators of child poverty (Ridge, 2009; Muninjin et al, 2006). In a study which involved 29 industrialised countries in the world by UNICEF (2012) child poverty was measured from a deprivation and relative perspective where a child qualifies to be labelled poor if the child lacks two or more of the 14 indicators of child poverty the study listed. The main source of data for the study was the 2009 round of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). This suggests that these child poverty indicators were constructed based on Eurostat EU-SILC. Some of these indicators are not mentioned by children in developing countries. More specifically:

Three meals a day

At least one meal a day with meat, chicken, or fish (or vegetarian equivalent)

Fresh fruit and vegetables everyday

Books suitable for the child's age and knowledge level (not including schoolbooks)

Outdoor leisure equipment (bicycle, roller-skates etc.)

Regular leisure activities (swimming, playing an instrument, participating in youth organizations etc.

Indoor games (at least one per child, including educational baby toys, building blocks, board games, computer games etc.)

Money to participate in school trips and events

A quiet place with enough room and light to do homework

An Internet connection

Some new clothes (i.e. not all second hand)

Two pairs of properly fitting shoes (including at least one pair of all-weather shoes)

The opportunity, from time to time, to invite friends home to play and eat

The opportunity to celebrate occasions such as birthdays, name days, religious events, etc.

(UNICEF, 2012 pp. 2 and 6)

These indicators of child poverty are consistent with Ridge (2009) assertion that the United Kingdom children's understanding of child poverty are consistent with social and cultural demands of their society regarding what childhood entails and the life children are expected to live. It could be observed that while Ethiopian children associate child poverty with children who go hungry all the time, that without taking any food most of the time, in developed country context there seems to be emphasis on the quality of food children eat (At least one meal a day with meat, chicken, or fish (or vegetarian equivalent) and fresh fruit and vegetables everyday) which are among the indicators in UNICEF (2012). Again, outdoor leisure equipment (bicycle, roller-skates etc.), regular leisure activities (swimming, playing an instrument, participating in youth organisations, the opportunity, from time to time, to invite friends home to play and eat and the opportunity to celebrate occasions such as birthdays, name days, religious events, etc. — among the list of child poverty indicators in the context of developed countries when compared with indicators of child poverty in developing country context, at least at this time in point, will be nearly unimaginable to children as there are no clues of them being indicators of child poverty from the perspectives of children in developing country context indicated in Young Lives (2012), Campfield (2010) and Witter and Bukokhe (2004). It could be observed that the child poverty indicators constructed in the

UNICEF (2012) report when compared with children perspectives on child poverty in both developed and developing countries highlight the context specificity of child poverty. Generally children's views and explanations of child poverty in developing countries point to issues of survival while those of children of the developed countries are about enhancing the quality of life.

In contrast, Gordon et al (2003) study of child poverty in the developing world used more broad deprivation indicators with each indicator graded according to severity of the deprivation; mild, moderate, severe and extreme.

The indicators included: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information and basic social services. The indictors were considered basic to human survival and hence a child who suffers two or more severe deprivations in any of these indicators is considered to be living in absolute poverty.

Table 2.1 summaries their findings for all developing regions in the world in comparison to that of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 2.1- Percentage of children severely deprived in basic needs

Child poverty indicators	All developing regions in the world (%)	Sub-Sahara Africa (estimated from graph) (%)
Shelter	34	62
Sanitation	31	38
Information	25	39
Water	20	54
Food	15	20
Health	15	27
Education.	13	30

Source: Gordon et al (2003), in their elaboration.

Table 2.1 clearly tells the contribution of Sub-Saharan Africa (which Ghana belongs) to the overall indices of child absolute poverty of the developing world. Although the authors attributed the child poverty indicators they constructed for their study to availability of data, it could be argued that these indicators are a reflection of the every situation of most children

in developing countries. This is because the data set they used was generated from developing countries. Again, (Young Lives, 2012; Camfield, 2010 and Witter and Bukokhe, 2004) qualitative studies in developing countries have revealed child poverty indicators similar to those constructed by (Gordon et al (2003).

Juxtaposing conceptions and extrapolation of child poverty by UNICEF of both the developed and developing societies to children's lived experiences of poverty in developing countries revealed by Young Lives, Camfield and Witter and Bukokhe, it is clear that a conceptual definition of child poverty for research and policy for child poverty reduction at the macro and micro levels, especially in developing countries, need to be broad and reflect the varied meanings of child poverty some of which are believed to be out there in the field yet to be explored because children live in different social, economic and cultural context and ideas about what child poverty means are not static.

Increasingly, child poverty is being conceived of as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Young Lives; 2012, Jones and Sumner 2011; Ridge 2009; Witter and Bukokhe, 2004). But a well-being approach to understanding child poverty is made of three dimensions (3-D) (Jones and Sumner 2011). When used as an approach to study child/children poverty, it captures material indicators of poverty as well as children subjective and relational well-being indicators. The literature indicates both the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty as well as its prevalence in developing countries.

Gorden et al (2003) report that 1 billion children in the developing world are severely deprived of at least one of the indicators of child poverty they listed, 37% are suffering from absolute poverty and the greatest percentage (65) of this is in Sub-Sahara Africa.

In Table 2.2, indicators of child poverty and its dimensions from Ugandan children's accounts which emerged from Witter and Bukokhe's study is extracted and presented.

Table 2.2- Dimensions and indicators of child poverty from the perspectives of Ugandan children

Dimension of child poverty	Indicators
Personal, emotional, and spiritual	 always wandering around with nothing to do submissive to those with more lack of dignity because of having to give sex for money always worried and never happy, maybe crying all the time has mental problems low self-esteem plays in soil and sand because of nowhere else to play has no time to spend with friends feeling overwhelmed by problems, feeling miserable and even 'regretting why one was born at all' having no peace of mind feeling inferior does not pray or go to church
Environmental	 living in an area susceptible to landslides, floods, and drought lack of clean and safe water lack of latrines
Political	 living in a war-affected area, including being displaced and abducted
Physical and intellectual	 always sickly child with disabilities who cannot look after her/himself has a big head compared to the rest of their body unable to think clearly has AIDS swollen stomach
Financial and Material	 stealing from other people to survive eating from the dustbin sleeping anywhere, including under people's cars, in people's latrines living by begging wearing torn and dirty clothing doing hard child labour seeking domestic work

Source: Witter and Bukokhe (2004, 648 and 649)

Ugandan children's account of how they experience poverty show evidence of children poverty and also differences in the indicators of child poverty from that of a developed country context as indicated in UNICEF (2012). A cursory look at the indicators of child poverty from the perspectives of children in this Table also show that there are indicators of child poverty, at least among Ugandan children, which could also be almost unimaginable among children who participated in Campfield's study with children in the United Kingdom. For instance, "eating from the dustbin" and "sleeping anywhere, including under people's

cars, in people's latrines" are nowhere closer to the indicators of child poverty from children's account of what child poverty is and how they experience it in Campfield (2010).

The necessity for further exploration of representations of children/childhood and child poverty is further highlighted in Hallett and Prout (2003) as well as Barrientos and DeJong (2006) argument that increase in household income does not automatically translate into better living situation of children but rather hinges on how households respond to increase in income.

Using secondary materials and analysed from an inequality perspective of child poverty Hallett and Prout (2003) stated that children do not benefit as much as adults from any increase in household income. After analysing goods and services which are usually purchased for the consumption of household members (children's goods, adults' goods and common goods), they argued further that because of children dependence and limited or no participation in decisions on purchases made or to be made for the household, there is doubt that goods and services obtained for children will automatically enhance the well-being of children. Hallett and Prout point suggests that children could be living in non-poor households and yet still live in poverty because their needs are different from adults and yet they do not take or participate in decisions about what should be purchased for the consumption of household members and the likelihood of purchases of households not reflecting their needs are high. A review of literature from both developed and developing countries by Campfield (2010) on what poverty mean to children revealed non-material indicators and include those which lead to their exclusion or children's own withdrawal from activities of their peers and which consequently affect their interaction with other children. Yet, these are likely to be taken for granted by adults in their decisions on what the needs of children are because, as Hallett and Prout (2003) noted children hardly participate in

decisions on goods purchased or to be purchased for the consumptions of household members and adults, in most situations determine the needs of children.

Evidences from Campfield's review is in line with Hallett and Prout (2003) scepticism about the use of expenditure and consumption patterns of households and in particular, the assumption that household goods and services (including those bought by adults without children's input into decisions made about them) actually enhance children's wellbeing.

Literature on child poverty from children's account about their experiences of poverty further indicates the relativity and context specificity of child poverty. Children's definitions of child poverty are mostly informed by their life experiences and the indicators normally spread across personal, emotional, spiritual and family dimensions (Campfield, 2010 and Witter and Bukokhe, 2004). Some children, in addition to these dimensions attribute their poverty situation to politico-historical factors (Witter and Bukokhe, 2003). Child poverty indicators generated from children in different communities and by locality (rural vs. urban) presented in Campfield (2010) do not only highlight the relativity and context-specific nature of the meaning of child poverty but show differences in meanings of child poverty among children of different age category and by gender.

When children experience poverty, it infiltrates every aspect of their life (Ridge, 2009). Summary of the major areas of concern to children in their accounts of their experiences of poverty in a developed country (United Kingdom) and which are outlined by Ridge (2009) is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Meaning of child poverty from the experiences of children in the United Kingdom



Source: Author's construct based on Ridge (2009)

The conceptualisations and evidence of child poverty highlighted above, further show the relativity, context-specificity, socially constructed and changing nature of the concept of child poverty. Thus, a definition and what the indicators of child poverty are remain inconclusive in childhood and child poverty research, which my study seeks to contribute to. The literature suggests that what constitutes child poverty and its indicators could be non-exhaustive. Therefore, explorations of the representations of children/childhood and child poverty within the context of rural northern Ghana, is hoped, to contribute knowledge to both the social constructions of childhood/children and child poverty.

From the literature highlighted in this section, an operational definition of child poverty has been adapted based on the 3-D (three dimensions) definition of child poverty by Jones and Sumner (2011). This operational definition is used to help in analysing meaning(s) of child poverty among rural people in northern Ghana. Although various meanings of child poverty

have been highlighted from both developed and developing country context as well as from children's own perspectives of what poverty means, the context within which some of these meanings of child poverty emerged are different from the context of this study. While those from developed country context appear Eurocentric – as for example Ridge (2009) and Hallett and Prout (2003) – those from developing country context are coming from countries whose politico-historical background are different from the Ghanaian context. However, because Jones and Sumner 3-D approach is a well-being approach, this is considered applicable to all contexts. Again material, subjective and relational dimensions of child poverty are capable of capturing other aspects of child poverty in the case of researchers whose findings indicate there are more than three dimensions of child poverty, such as Witter and Bukokhe (2004). Thus, based on Jones and Sumner (2011), the operational definition of child poverty for this study is presented below.

Figure 2 - Operational definition of child poverty

Material (based on deprivation and survival)

- •Insufficient food intake (quantity, quality &frequency)
- No access to and/or utilization of formal education opportunities
- •Lack the required educational materials (books, uniforms, footwear etc.
- Lack of clothes
- No access to housing (bad sleeping place, no access to and utilization of improved sanitation at home
- •Health (health needs are not met in times of illness)
- Work (Child engage in work that jeopardize their physical development and future

Subjective Children:

- •do not find any meaning in life
- •low level of satisfaction with their families and communities
- •aspirations and hopes in life are shattered
- have no sense of worth and dignity in life

Relational Children:

- have no say in family and community decisions especially on matters that affect them
- neglected and not protected against exploitation, abuse and violence by family and community
- do not interact very well with parents/guardians and are not loved and cared for
- •cannot rely on other relatives and community members for support

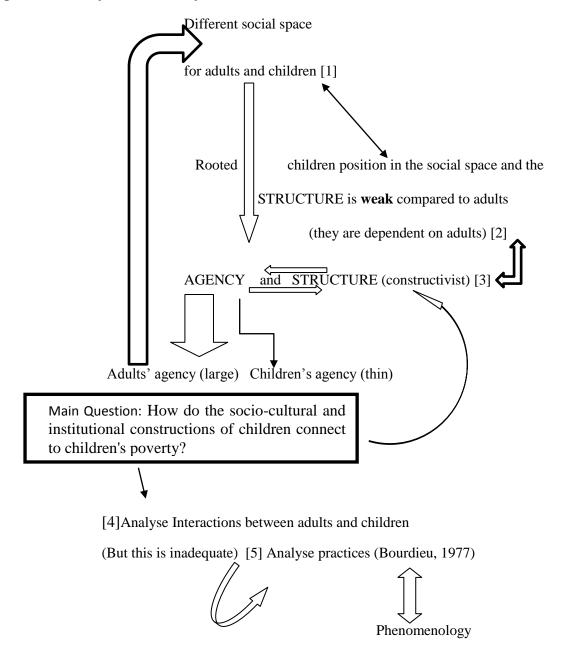
Source: Author's construct

The next section outlines and discusses the theoretical framework based on which the study was carried out.

2.6 Theoretical framework of the study

Leaning on Bourdieu idea of social space, the theory of practice and how these relate to the analysis of agency vs. structure, a conceptual and analytical framework for the study is outlined in Figure 4. Following the directions of the arrows in the figure, which have been labelled [1] to [5], this framework is considered broad, integrated and appropriate to help investigate and understand the social construction/representation of children as well as child poverty in rural communities in northern Ghana. Apart from Bourdieu' ideas of "social space" and the "theory of practice" this conceptual and analytical framework is also based on Structure vs. Agency theoretical framework – mentioned above – well known in sociology and particularly among childhood researchers. In the discussion which follows Figure 3, [1] to [5] are made reference to so as to aid understanding of the diagrammatic conceptual and analytical framework for the study.

Figure 3 - Conceptual and analytical framework



In Figure 3, I am arguing that, in order to understand representations of children and child poverty including how child poverty is connected to representations of childhood/children, there is the need, first and foremost, to recognise the nature of the social space that children occupy in relation to that of adults. Children's position in social space is weak compared to adults because they are dependent on adults for nurture [1]. Again, when children develop

beyond the early stages of their life, which they are particularly dependent and vulnerable, their position in society is still determined by or rooted in the structure of society which is patterned and constructed by adults and also define what children should or should not do as 'social actors free to exercise their agency' [2]. Children are expected to be 'childlike' because they are considered as an exclusive category of people with their own space which is created for them in order to regulate their actions through adults' determination of what is right or not for children and what acts or actions children should avoid (Aitken, 2001). But increasingly, children are exhibiting behaviours which are believed not to be childlike because of children's resistance against children's and adults' boundaries in social space and engaging in acts considered to be within the domain of adults (Diduck, 1999). Human societies usually have goals which members are expected to strive to achieve and although the goals are often accompanied by acceptable ways of achieving them, people do not always conform to both the goals and prescribed ways of achieving them because there are different ways of adapting to the dictates of society (Merton, 1949).

It has already been underscored that agency has been widely used as a theoretical framework in childhood studies. However, the idea of social space has also provided a basis for studies with children due to the recognition that children are different from adults and depend on them.

Therefore, studying representations of childhood and child poverty within only the agency and social space framework is considered inadequate because children's agency within social space is thinner compared to that of adults [3]. Nonetheless, children and adults live together

and in a study aimed at investigating representations of childhood and child poverty it is important to analyse interactions between them [4] and also practices [5] (Bourdieu, 1977).

As a result, an expansive framework that encompasses agency, structure and also practices within the social structure is considered appropriate for this study.

Although children's voices are important in understanding children poverty as highlighted by Young Lives (2012) and Camfield (2010), it could also be argued that children poverty could also be rooted in the structural arrangement and practices in society. Bourdieu's idea of 'practice' is both methodologically and theoretically relevant to understanding representations of childhood/children and child poverty. Bourdieu attempts an explanation of 'practice' and why it is relevant to analyse structures alongside practices as a framework of studying social phenomenon.

It is not easy to define rigorously the status of the semi-learned grammars of practice – sayings, proverbs, gnomic poems, spontaneous "theories" which always accompany even the most automatic practices, checking the functioning of automatisms or more less successfully, making good their misfirings – and of all the 'knowledges' produced by an operation of the second power being the product of the same generative schemes as practices they claim to account for, even the most false and superficial of these "secondary explanations" only reinforce the structures by providing them with narrow limits, the fact remains that whenever the adjustment between structures and dispositions is broken, the transformation of the generative schemes immanent in practice and the norms produced by reflection on practices, which impose new meanings on them by reference to alien structures. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 20)

To study a social phenomenon from this perspective, the researcher needs not study structure and practices as 'objects', as put forward by Emile Durkheim. Bourdieu argued this has been the success of anthropologists despite condemnation.

The anthropological tradition would not have survived all the denunciations of the legalistic formalism if it had not had an affinity with the presuppositions inscribed in the relationship between the observer and the object of his study, which impose themselves in the very construction of his object so long as they are not explicitly taken as an object. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 17)

Hence, analysis of interactions that take place between adults and children in relation to their respective positions in social space, their agency and locations within social structure, as outlined in Figure 3, unpacked in-depth qualitative data through a phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Rationale and justification for the research approach.

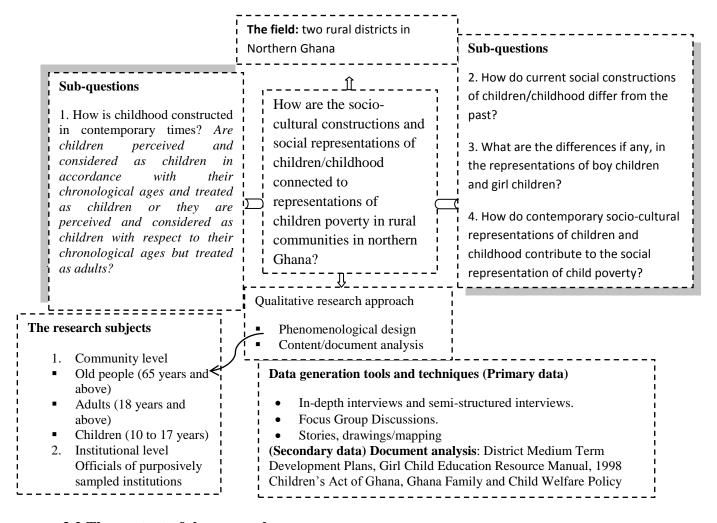
In this chapter I provide an overview of the socio-demographic, economic, cultural and ethnic elements of the study, highlighting the differences that pertain in Ghana as well as the country's multi-ethnic nature. I provide also the theoretical context based on which the empirical setting was selected, the rationale and justification for the research approach and the research design, methods and sampling techniques and the unit of analysis. I also explain the strategies used for gaining access to the field and ethical issues which were considered. The concluding part of this chapter presents the challenges encountered in carrying out fieldwork and how I surmounted them as well as how I managed and analysed empirical materials.

From the literature highlighted so far, institutional constructions of children and the ideas that individuals and households have about children could combine to form how society as a whole construct children. Also, how children are treated and cared for depends on the notions and ideas people have about children within the social context particular children are located. To understand children poverty deeply, in relation to how children are constructed or represented within specific socio-cultural context, requires an exploratory approach. In Ghana, poverty reduction strategies and social protection programs rely on data from nationwide surveys, where variables for measuring poverty are predetermined and administered to household heads and no efforts are made to investigate the particular situation of poverty associated with children located in their particular socio-cultural as well as the institutional context. To explore children poverty within how children are socio-culturally constructed requires a research approach that entails face-to-face interaction in a

natural setting with both adults and children from communities and officials of institutions as participants.

Because my study is focussed on the representations of childhood and child poverty from the viewpoints of adults and children, my research adopts an interpretive theoretical perspective. This theoretical perspective is the most appropriate for this study as it will allow for interpretation and understanding of meanings of children/childhood and child poverty generated from interviews and/or focus group discussions of adults and children at the community level and officials of district level governmental organisations/institutions.

Figure 4 - Schematic presentation of the research design and the subjects of the research



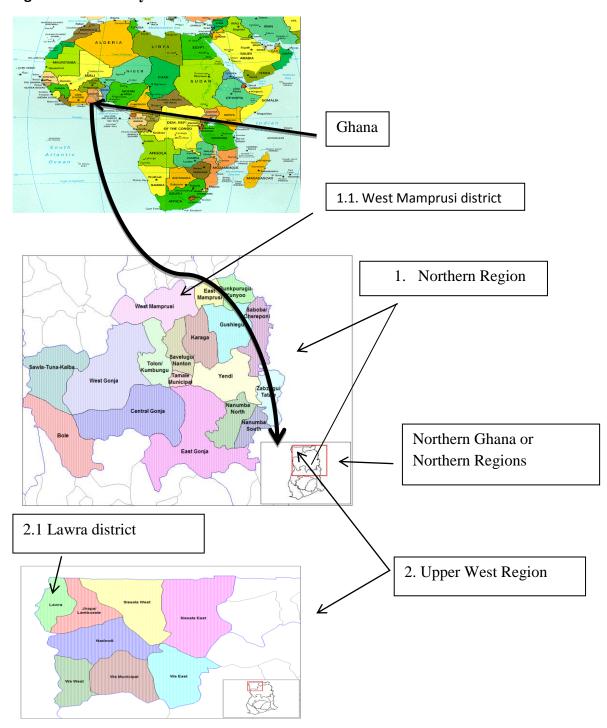
3.2 The context of the research

Ghana is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country with total inhabitants of 24,658,823, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana (PHC). The population is more youthful, with people between less than 1 and 14 years being 39.9%, 15 and 19 years being 10.3% and those aged 65 years and above constituting only 4.1% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). Based on a definition of urban community as settlements with population of more than 5000, the population of Ghana is 50.9% urban and 49.1% rural, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census. But northern Ghana is largely rural with percentage of rural population for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions being 69.7%, 79%, and 83.7% respectively.

Ghana is partitioned into 10 administrative regions with the youngest (the Upper West region) created since 1983. Regions are first level government administrative structures that play a coordinating role. The Upper West, Upper East and the Northern Regions combined are referred to as northern Ghana. However, the northern part of the Volta and Brong Ahafo regions are usually added to "northern" Ghana for classifications based on climatic conditions.

Each region is divided into districts; which are second level administrative structures. Beginning with 110 districts in 1988/89, the numbers of districts have undergone revision over the years and the total number of districts (including metropolitan and municipalities) stand at 216 as of June 2012. The West Mamprusi and the Lawra districts (all located in northern Ghana) are two of these districts to which the literature points to for the fieldwork of the study. The study area is indicated in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - The study area



Source: adapted from Google maps.com

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the majority of people in Ghana, more especially for rural dwellers. However, the urban areas are dominated by informal sector

activities which create a lot of menial job opportunities. Classification of the population of Ghana by economic activity by age and gender according to the 2010 PHC report of Ghana, starts with age 5, suggesting that children as young as 5 years are participating in economic activities in Ghana.

African societies including Ghana have several cultural values that cut across all its social institutions, including the economic institution and economic organization. The ethic of hard work is considered a moral obligation for both the young and the old and is inculcated in children through maxims, tales and songs in repetitive manner for them to appreciate hard work (Gyekye, 1996). Although Gyekye did not indicate whether the ethic of hard work as moral obligation runs through all social classes in African societies, Kassa (2016) suggests that this is particularly a value cherished and adhered to by African societies even in recent times. Kassa (2016) shows both rural and urban Ethiopian parents try to inculcate the ethic of hard work in their children early in life, but differences exist between rural and urban Ethiopian parents regarding the nature of work children must do as a result of differences in ideas about children, and valuation of children among parents in rural and urban areas. Children of rural Ethiopia are expected to labour both within the household and outside of it as a form of training towards acquisition of skills for life and even those in school are reminded to start work at the household level as soon they return. Although urban Ethiopian parents appear to have an obligation to instil the ethic of hard work in children, it centres on children's work associated with formal education which they believe can guarantee children's success in life. Unlike rural Ethiopian children, their urban counterparts in middle class households are exempted from house chores, but they are expected to take schoolwork, such as assignments, seriously (Kassa, 2016)

The belief system in Ghana is mixed and the main religious affiliations are Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. Christianity is the dominant for all the regions of Ghana except the Northern Region where 60% are affiliated to Islam according to the 2010 Ghana PHC.

There are 8 main ethnic groups in Ghana, according to the Bureau of language classifications (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). These include Akan, Ga-dangme, Ewe, Guan, Gurma Mole-Dagbani, Grusi, and Mande. Each of these has several sub-divisions. The exact number of languages and dialects spoken in Ghana is unknown. The debates about the number of languages and dialects indicate that between 79 and 250 languages/dialects are spoken. *Mampruli* is the main language spoken in the West Mamprusi district, while *Dagaare* is the main language spoken in the Lawra district. Other cultural differences such as beliefs and practices vary among the various ethnic groups though there are similarities.

In traditional societies in Ghana, social life is built around organized groups and social relationship which are themselves based on kinship ties and relations (Nukunya, 2003). Kinship permeates all aspects of the social life in Ghana. The respective positions of children and adults, mother and child, father and child are prescribed by kinship (Nukunya, 2003). Kinship system in Ghana is mixed with the Akan well known matrilineal system, partrilineal system associated with the Ewe, Ga, Adangme and the Krobo and the bilateral system of most ethnic groups in northern Ghana including but not limited to Gonja, Dagomba, Mamprusi, and Wala (Nukunya, 2003).

The ethnic, religious, kinship and other cultural diversity in Ghana, alongside the several parts into which the country is partitioned, may suggest that a study that aims at understanding the social constructions of children/childhood and children poverty should consider these as important variables from data generation to analysis. However, the nature of the parts into which the country is divided, that is districts being in line with homogeneity in

culture, makes the use of these variables particularly for in-depth qualitative study, especially at the point of data generation, unnecessary.

The districts in Ghana can best be described as *homo-heterogeneous* in terms of sociocultural variables like kinship, ethnicity, religion, because there is largely homogeneity within
districts in terms of cultural variables and then, among districts, there is heterogeneity. A
quick look at the statistics on ethnicity of Ghanaians by birth by region indicates that, the
Greater Accra region is the only region which has more people from an ethnic group (Akan)
other than Ga-Dangme, the indigenous ethnic group for the greater Accra region (Ghana
Statistical Service, 2012). This can be attributed to the fact that, Accra, which is the capital
city for Ghana, is located in this region and so, it is not only home to public servants from
other ethnic groups but also attracts non-formal workers from all part of the country. The
Akan is the largest ethnic group spread across six of the 10 regions and is sub-divided into
sub-ethnic groups such as Fanti, Achim Asante and Bono. Each sub group is the indigenous
people of one of these six regions.

Computations of the percentage of Ghanaians by birth in the Northern and Upper West regions (two of the three regions in northern Ghana) from the 2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census report indicate that the majority of Ghanaians by birth in the Upper West region (73%) and in the Northern Region (52%) belong to the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group. Similarly, 73.8% of the total number of people by birth in the Volta region is Ewe by ethnicity and only 0.47% is Mole-Dagbani. In the Central region, Ghanaians by birth constitute 81.7% and only 1.75% is Mole-Dagbani. The distribution of the population by other cultural variables by region, such as religious belief and practice, are not different from that of the ethnic distribution. The report did not provide the distribution of the population by ethnic and other cultural variables by district. However, rural districts, particularly those in

northern Ghana, are mostly inhabited by the indigenous ethnic group due to the limited economic opportunities that exist there and make them unattractive. People who belong to other ethnic groups other than the Mole-Dagbani ethnic in northern Ghana mostly reside in the metropolitan/municipal and other urban areas. Hence, a study that intends to use spatial and cultural variables like kinship, ethnicity and religion must cover the length and breadth of Ghana to be able to come out with any meaningful conclusions. This certainly requires a quantitative approach which is not suitable for a deeper understanding of the social constructions of children/childhood and children poverty. The main question for this study (do the social constructions of childhood/children matter in the understanding of child poverty in rural communities in northern Ghana?) provides particular setting (rural) for the study. The highlights of the social and cultural characteristics of Ghana indicate that any empirical setting (area) selected for the study came with socio-cultural setting which is in a way different from other areas of Ghana. Therefore, the data collected and analysed for this study came from the specific ethnic, kinship and religious context of the study districts.

Northern Ghana covers a vast area of the total land mass of Ghana and is made of several communities (urban and rural). Reflecting on the site to be selected to generate qualitative data for my project, I took into account four key factors: 1) possibility of having access and entry; 2) high chances of getting a rich mix of the subjects I am interested (children, adults, older people and processes, i.e. community level activities); 3) the likelihood of building trust relations with the study participants and 4) a reasonable guarantee of the data quality and credibility as highlighted by Marshall and Rossman (1999). Though the authors believe that these considerations are ideal types in the process of selecting a site for a study, to understand children poverty within how children are constructed it is important to carry out the study in communities where there are some drivers of children poverty and vulnerability to poverty.

The gap in development between northern and southern Ghana and between rural and urban areas as well as between rural savannah particularly of northern Ghana, and rural areas of other ecological zones have been pointed out by the Ghana Living Standards Survey 5 (Ghana, Statistical Service, 2008). Northern Ghana lags behind the rest of the country in terms of development couple with one farming season amidst changing climatic conditions. In this context, most people living in this part of the country are exposed to the risk of being poor, but children are particularly at risk due to their position in society at the household, community and institutional level, as extensively explained above.

"Child poverty is a grim reality in Ghana" (UNICEF, 2009, p. 18), it is more a rural phenomenon than an urban one and higher in northern than southern Ghana. The 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana Report indicates that most districts in northern Ghana are largely rural based on a definition of urban areas as settlements with less than 5000 inhabitants. Most children who migrate from rural areas to major cities to engage in menial jobs and those who live on the streets in the two major cities (Accra and Kumasi) in Ghana are from northern Ghana and especially, the Northern Region (Anarfi and Appiah, 2009; Hatloy & Huser, 2005). Majority (62%) of street children in Accra is from the Northern Region and most of them come from the West Mamprusi district (Hatloy & Huser, 2005).

It could be argued that child poverty and the vulnerability of children to poverty, independent child migration and children streetism associated with northern Ghanaian children is a reflection of the poverty of their parents or families due to the entrenched position these regions always occupy as the first three poorest regions in poverty rankings in Ghana by region between 1988 and 2006. However, poverty was worst in these parts of the country before the 1990s than in 2000s, due to the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme, but there were no such phenomena as independent migration of children and street children

among children in the Northern, Upper East or Upper west regions. Also, these phenomena are not prevalent in all the districts in northern Ghana. The northern Region is relatively better as the poverty trend by region indicates. However, it contributes much to the phenomena of independent child migration and children streetism than the Upper East and Upper regions. What is new about migration from the north to the south of Ghana is the independent migration of children, since north to south dates back to the colonial era (Anarfi and Appiah, 2009). The occurrence of street children in Ghana was first identified as a social phenomenon after a commissioned research by Apt, et al (1992) in Accra, when poverty in northern Ghana was not worse than the 1988s.

Although child migration and children streetism are often not highlighted as indicators of child poverty, they expose children to experiencing the indicators often listed in the material, subjective and relational dimensions of child poverty. For example, an independent child migrant or street child is likely to engage in work which will hinder his/her physical development and also prevent him/her from attending school. Again, independent child migrants and street children in major cities in Ghana are likely not to have a sense of worth and dignity in life as they are often treated with scorn by people they come into contact with and are also likely not to be satisfied with their families and communities, especially when they compare themselves to other children experiencing childhood differently e.g. dressed up and going to school. Moreover, children who are neglected and not protected against exploitation, abuse and violence by family and community and do not interact very well with parents/guardians and are not loved and cared for are among the relational dimensions of child poverty listed in the literature and which child migrants and street children are likely to encounter.

In the ranking of regions by poverty, the Northern Region is better than the Upper West region, yet Upper West is relatively better in terms of child well-being indicators than Northern Region. Poverty ranking for the three poorest regions in Ghana for 3 waves of the Ghana Living Standards Survey is summarised below:

Table 3.1 - Percentage of people living in poverty in the three poorest regions in Ghana

Year	Upper East	Upper West	Northern
1991/92	67	88	63
1998/99	88	84	69
2005/2006	70	88	52

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2007

The dispersed nature of communities in the Upper West and Upper East regions have made them the worst regions in terms of access to basic education; yet Northern Region has the highest prevalence of severe child deprivation in education (36%) compared to Upper West (26%) (UNICEF, 2009). Similarly, severe child food deprivation is also higher in the Northern Region (15%) than Upper West (8%).

To conclude, two rural districts that are similar in terms of general poverty situation but different in terms of how children are handled by adults through independent child migration/streetism in major cities in Ghana, were selected for the study: the Lawra and West Mamprusi districts, in the Upper West region and Northern regions respectively. Two districts rather than one were considered because this was envisaged to provide a rich mix of data for comparative analysis of how children are constructed at the household/community level in rural communities in northern Ghana.

The association of child migration and street children with the West Mamprusi district (see Anarfi and Appiah, 2009; Korboe, 1997 and Apt et al, 1992) rather than other districts could be due to differentials in notions about childhood and how children are handled in different communities. Anarfi and Appiah (2009) report that parents are actively involved in the

decision-making process for their children to migrate and other relatives and friends of children also influence them to migrate to search for wealth. It could be argued that if parents push their children to migrate because the household is poor or parents lack the means to provide children with their needs, parents rather than children could migrate to search for economic opportunities since they are more likely than children to better manage challenges and risk associated with living as economic migrants in cities and other urban areas of Ghana. According to Anarfi and Appiah, migration of northern Ghanaians to the south in search of economic opportunities is not a new phenomenon. However, what is new in north-south migration in recent times in Ghana is the migration of children (most of them are from the West Mamprusi district of the northern region) and the phenomenon of street children became an issue after Apt et al (1992) study of street children in Accra.

The Lawra district is located in the Upper West region which is the worst in terms of overall poverty rankings between 1991 and 2006 though it only managed to be slightly better than Upper East region in 1999. This district is largely rural people (87,539) compared to urban people (13,390), though it is one of the first three districts in the Upper West region from which two other districts have been carved out. Its location particularly makes it more vulnerable to poverty and child poverty because, like most rural communities, agriculture is the main livelihood activity and the soil fertility of this district is known to be low couple with erratic and unpredictable rainfall pattern associated with the entire northern Ghana.

3.3 Sampling and subjects of the research

The soundness of any research project is based on well-developed sampling decisions, and selecting the empirical context is an integral part of making good sampling decisions and this should be theory driven (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In selecting specific communities to generate primary data, willingness of individuals to participate and accessibility were

important considerations. The study was carried out in 4 rural communities: 2 in the Lawra district and 2 in the West Mamprisi district, located in the Upper West and Northern Regions respectively.

These districts were purposively selected due to the points highlighted above. Again, a list of all communities which have benefited from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme (a cash grant transfer programme implemented by the Government of Ghana since 2006 to help the very poor in the society move out of poverty) was collected from the Department of Social Welfare of the two districts. By implication, communities in the district which were not on the LEAP list were relatively better off in terms of poverty situation. Hence, four communities: two from each of the two districts not on the LEAP beneficiary list were purposively selected. Also, these communities were rural and remote but accessible. It must be noted that the study districts were among the 21 poorest districts that were selected for pilot of the LEAP programme. LEAP communities were avoided because the likelihood of respondents associating my study with the programme and providing me with responses they think are appropriate was high. Again, LEAP beneficiary communities usually benefit from sensitizations by state officials and the content of such sensitizations could influence responses to research questions that ultimately aims at understanding representations of children/childhood and children poverty.

The study participants at the community level comprised 20 old people, 48 adults and 55 children. Also, 18 people from the sampled institutions participated. It was important to listen to old people, adults and children at the community level and also officials of institutions because notions of children/childhood are likely to vary among different generations at the community level and also between community people and officials of institutions.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the target research participants (adults, old people and children at the community level and the study institutions. However, individual

respondents at both the community and institutions were randomly picked. The criteria used to select individual community level respondents included:

Children

The:

- child should be between 10 and 17 years
- child's parents/guardians have consented to the children participation in the study
- child has responded willingly to the call to participate in the research
- child live in a family/household and under the guidance or care of a parent(s)/guardian(s)
- child come from a household other than those other children already selected come from
- child willingly and actively participated in the warming up activity

Adults

- Only one adult male or female from a household could take part in the study
- The person should be between 18 and 64 years
- The person should be living with children and caring for them as a parent or a guardian

Older people

- Only one older person from a household where an adult respondent has not been selected
- The person should be 65 years and above

Table 3.2 - Composition of the sample

COMMUNITY LEVEL RESPONDENTS					
Category of respondents	Lawra District	West Mamprusi District	Characteristics of respondents		
Children 10 to 17 years	14	41	Children/grand		
	(7 girls and 7 boys)	(21 girls and 20 boys)	children		
Adults 22 to 64	14	34	Parents		
	(men and women)	(men and women:16			
		individual interviews and			
		18 for FGD)			
Older persons 65+	9	11	Grandparents		
	(women and men)	(women and men)			
Sub-total	37	86			
	INSTITUTIONAL LEVE	L RESPONDENTS			
Institution/department	Number of respondents	Designation			
Department of Social Welfare	2	Social workers			
Department of Children	2	Fieldworker and Director			
Ghana Education Service (GES	8	Basic school teachers			
Girl Child Education Unit	1	Girl child education officer			

Ghana Health Service	3	Community Health Officials
District Assembly	2	Women and children's committee members
Sub-total	18	

Sample selection in qualitative research is driven by the type of generalization the research aspires (Gomm et al, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Samples selected for qualitative research could be little and yet explain so much (high leverage cases) or so much and explain so little (low leverage cases) (King et al, 1994). Studies that aim at understanding social reality, meanings and also interpretation are better studied by the use of a phenomenological approach and have their corresponding research methods with ideal sample size 5-25 individuals (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

In all, 141 individuals participated in the study. The composition of the sample size is provided in Table 3.2. The sample size is far above the one suggested by Leedy and Ormrod for a phenomenological design because of the nature of the unit of analysis, which includes individuals/household/community and institutional levels. Also, the character of the specific research questions required the inclusion of different category of people to enable adequate data collection and generation. Again, the need to carry out the study in two districts makes a sample size of 25 or less a challenge. Only institutions/officials at the district level who work with and for children were selected. District level institutions which participated in the study include: the district assemblies/Children and Women Sub-committee, Girl Child Education unit of the Ghana Education Service and the communities' school teachers, the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Children and Health officers at the community level.

Notwithstanding different studies demonstrated that very young children are competent research subjects, capable of contributing to the knowledge generation process, I decided to include only children who aged 10 to 17 years because their opinions and experiences could be different from adults' representations of children and childhood and therefore, can help in

understanding representations of childhood and child poverty in society. Moreover, while I recognise the agency and competence of very young children like 5 year olds in the search for understanding phenomena concerning children, I also recognised the challenge of having to get very young children who live in a rural setting speak to issues during data generation exercises. Regardless of the availability of data generation tools appropriate to the specific ages of children data production, exercise with rural children who do not attend pre-school and where children hardly associate with other children outside their household can be difficult and sometimes not successful (Camfield, 2010).

Again different studies which involve children (Bosisio and Ronfani, 2016; Malmquist et al, 2014 and Ebrahim, 2008) have used children of different age categories. This suggests that different age groups of children are used or can be used as research subjects depending on the social and economic context and the research problem being investigated.

Children were included in the study in order to understand how children represent themselves and also contribute to the representation of children/childhood in the study districts. Also, old people were included in order to generate data on how children were represented in the past to help analyse changes in the construction of children/childhood in the study districts. Because knowledge in most African societies is generally not documented in the form of writing, old people are generally referred to us the store houses of knowledge in their communities. For this reason any information and histories to be sought about the past – including representations of children/childhood in the past, particularly in rural communities of Africa – must necessarily include old people. Again, in Ghana, old people are mostly the landlords of their communities, revered and important people whose voices and contribution are sought after in matters concerning their communities.

In this study, old people comprised people aged 65 or more. Though retirement age in Ghana is 60 years, the active population is defined as persons aged 15 to 64 years. Finally, "adults" are defined as persons 18 to 64 years.

The unit of for data collection data analysis and analysis comprised individuals/household/community and governmental institutions. As far as the last ones, is concern, only institutions (district level) whose work is connected to or with children were sampled. These included the Department of Children, Department of Social Welfare, District Assembly, Education and Health. The unit of analysis under consideration is driven by the specific research questions to be addressed. The involvement of different categories of respondents also served triangulation purposes in data analysis stage.

The household is considered the basic institution and occupying a major position in the social representations of children, while, the community's role is a mid-way between the household and the institutions. Though at the onset of the research three level of analysis were intended, this was revised to two during analyses of empirical material because of the difficulty in separating household issues from community ones.

The ages of adults and the elderly who participated in the study at the community level range between 19 and 100 years, and 20 were more than 64 years. Most of them are married (38) and not formally educated (38). Male participants were a little more than females (27 vs. 23). The greatest proportion of the respondents at the community level claimed they were either Muslims or Christians, with a prevalence of Muslims (27 vs. 18). All respondents who claimed they were affiliated to Islam were from the West Mamprusi district while all those who claimed to be Christians were from the Lawra district. Peasant farming appears to be the dominant occupation among all the community level respondents and this is explained by the setting of the sampled communities which are rural. Most of the respondents have between 6

and 10 children in their households. The socio-demographic background of adults and old
persons combined is presented in table 3.3.

Table 3.3- Summary of the social and demographic background of the study respondents

(adults and old persons) at the community level (individual interviews)

(adults and old persons) at the community level (individual interviews)					
Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents	Distribution of the respondents				
	(Adults and the elderly)				
A (D) 1 1 10 (1	n=50				
Age (Respondents 19 -64					
19-28	5				
29-38	6				
39-48	11				
49-58	4				
59-64	4				
Total	30				
Age (Respondents over 64					
66-70	11				
71-80	7				
81-90	1				
91+	1				
Total	20				
Highest level of education attained	20				
None	38				
Primary	5				
Senior High School	5				
Tertiary	2				
	2				
Sex					
Male	27				
Female	23				
Marital status					
Married	38				
Widowed	7				
Single	3				
Separated	2				
Religious belief and affiliation					
Islam	27				
Christianity	18				
Traditional	5				
Occupation					
Farmer	41				
Trader	3				
Butcher	1				
Formal sector	1				
Dependent	1				
Number of children in household					
None	6				
1-5	17				
6-10	20				
11-15	4				
16-20	3				
21+	1				

In all, 55 children aged 10-17, made up of 27 boys and 28 girls, participated in the study.

Most of them live with their parents together with grandparents; only 5 do not attend school.

The list of the children and their ages are presented in table 3.4.

Table 3.4- List of the study children and their ages

Ages of the study c	hildren		- 0			
10 -13				29		
14-17				26		
	of children in Focus (Froup Disci				
Boys			Girls			
Codes	Names of boys	Age	Codes	Names of	Age	
				girls		
Group 1			Group 1			
1.1.B	M.W	14	1.1.G	S.N	12	
1.2.B	S.H	14	1.2.G	A.R	10	
1.3.B	M.N	13	1.3.G	I.R	13	
1.4.B	S.J	10	1.4.G	Id.R	10	
1.5.B	A.F	13	1.5.G	S.F	11	
1.6.B	M.A-R	13	1.6.G	B.M	11	
1.7.B	Z.L	10	1.7.G	B.A	11	
1.8. B	D.H.	12	1.8.G	Y.A	14	
1.9. B	M.M.	11	1.9.G	D.C	14	
1.10.B	M.I	10				
1.11.B	S.L	10				
Group 2			Group 2	Group 2		
2.12. B	M.H	15	2.10.G	F.R	14	
2.13. B	S.A	15	2.11.G	A. Am	14	
2.14. B	K.N	12	2.12.G	S.A	13	
2.15. B	F.N	13	2. 13.G	M.A	14	
2.16. B	A.S	14	2.14.G	H.R.	10	
2.17. B	W.M.	13	2.15.G	N.R	15	
2.18. B	S.I	14	2.16.G	A.K	10	
2.19. B	K.M	14	2.17.G	S.R	10	
2.20.B	H.A-R	12	2.18.G	M.F	10	
			2.19.G	A. An	12	
			2.20.G	A.R	10	
			2.21.G	S.S	10	
Group 3		I.	Group 3			
3.21.B	S.Y	15	3.22.G	F. K	17	
3.22.B	M.S	15	3.23.G	L.N	15	
3.23.B	P.B	14	3.24.G	M.S	14	
3.24.B	D.E	17	3.25.G	D.B	17	
3.25.B	D.B	14	3.26.G	C.N	15	
3.26.B 3.27.B	T.G A.B	14 10	3.27.G 3.28.G	C.M P.K	15 15	

Source: Author's construct *Names of the children are replaced with their initials for ethical reasons

At the institutional level a total of 18 people from 6 different governmental institutions/departments were interviewed and relevant documents gathered. The ages of institutional level interviewees range from 32 to 59. Description of the participants and the institutions they were drawn from are summarised in table 3.5.

Table 3.5 - Institutional level participants

Institutions/departments	Number of	Description of participants
	participants	
Department of Social Welfare	2	District officers
Department of Children	2	1 Regional Director and 1 field officer
Teachers	8	Classroom teachers at the basic level
Girl Child Education Unit	1	District Girl Child Education Officer
Community health officials	3	Community health officer, Physician
		Assistant and mid-wife
District Assembly (Women and children	2	Women and Children committee
committee)		members
Total	18	

Source: Author's construct

3.4 Data collection: techniques and tools

A combination of qualitative data production tools and techniques, including in-depth and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), stories and drawings/mapping were used to generate data from children, adults and the elderly at the community level as well as individual officers from the sampled institutions. The mixed data generation tools were driven by the specific research questions and the heterogeneous targeted participants.

Interviews were conducted with adults and old people at the community level and also with institutional level participants. FGDs were carried out with male and female children and also with adult men and women who were not individually interviewed in the West Mamprusi district. FGD was conducted in the West Mamprusi district and not in the Lawra district study communities because it was observed during fieldwork that more people than those required for the research were ready to contribute to individual interviews. In order to not to appear rude but also generate more data I decided to organise a FGD with others who were not individually interviewed.

Participatory activity was carried out only with children in both study districts. In the Lawra district the participatory activity preceded FGD, because the children appeared timid and less willing to talk, even in separate groups of boys and girls. The participatory activity served both data generation and play purposes, to help in familiarisation among the children and also

between the children and the researcher. In the West Mamprusi district, children were more willing to talk and hence FGD preceded participatory activity. FGD with both boys and girls and participatory activity in the West Mamprusi district took place on different days because children needed to go and carry out their routine activities and it was not possible to keep them continuously for both processes of FGD and participatory group activity. Children were asked a simple question: "how do you see yourselves or who do you think you are?" in a Focus Group Discussions of boys and girls in three of the study communities in the study districts.

Interview guide (the main tool for fieldwork) designed to collect primary data from individuals and institutions was elaborated and used for fieldwork. The tool for field work was arranged into sections, and only sections applicable to each category of respondents were used.

In addition to FGD with children, participatory activity was used with these little participants because literature suggests that even among children, their level of understanding of issues differ, depending on their stage of development, and participatory activity could work for some children and not FGD. Topics and issues listed on the tool for primary data collection for all the categories of respondents are summarised in Table 3.5, and list of documents gathered for secondary data is presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 - Summary of issues covered in interviews with the research respondents

	vel respondents
Category of	Issues
respondents	
Old people	1. Changes in the experiences of children compared to experiences of childhood of old people
(Interviews)	2. Old people talked about their childhood
	3. Norms, rights and descriptions associated with children when old people were young
	4. Adult perception of children when they were young
ļ	5. Stories and proverbs about children when they were growing up
	6. When and under what circumstance(s) they were considered as adults
ļ	7. How they understand children suffering from poverty and/material deprivation, social
	exclusion and vulnerable children
Adults	1. How and when children cease to be children and considered as adults in their household
(Interviews)	and community
	2. Typical day of a child in the household and why it is children who engage in activities they
	indicated
	3. Typical practices in the household and the category of household members the practices
	are associated with and reasons
	4. Common sayings and proverbs associated with childhood in the community and their
	meanings
	5. Norms (dos and don'ts) associated with children in the household and reasons
	6. Rights of children in the community and families
	7. Descriptions associated with children in households and the community
ļ	8. Roles expected of children in the household and reasons
	9. Responsibilities parents have towards children in respondents' households and parental
	responsibility more generally in respondents' opinion
	10. Social expectations associated with children in respondents' communities and surrounding
	communities in terms of (1) rights and (2) responsibilities
	11. Norms (dos and don'ts) associated with children in community life in the areas of:
	o funeral ceremonies and celebrations
	o political party activities
	o religious activities
	o traditional festivals/dance gathering
	o community meetings
	o open air market
	12. Responsibilities of the community towards children
	13. Responsibilities of the District Assembly (DA) towards children
	14. Differences between boy children and girl children in the opinion of respondents and why
	or why not if there are no differences
	15. Differences in norms for male and female children in households and community and
	reasons for difference or no difference
	16. Gender or sex preferences for children and reasons for preference or no preference
ļ	17. Their understanding of children suffering from poverty and/material deprivation and also
	social exclusion and who vulnerable children are
Children	1. How and when children cease to be children and considered as adults in their communities
(FGD)	2. Descriptions associated with children in their communities
	3. How they see themselves in their households/families and why
	4. Nature of interaction between adults and children in households
	5. Narration of a typical day as a child in the household and reasons for what they do
	6. What children will do or not do and why
	7. Norms associated with children in the household and their opinion about the norms
	8. Rights associated with children in the household
	9. Criteria for grading children in households or determination of seniority among children
	10. Roles and responsibilities of male and female children in households
	11. Explored their material, subjective and relational needs (male children compared their
	situation to their sisters and female children compared their situation to the brothers)
Institutional le	evel respondents: Department of Children, Ghana Education Service (GES), Girl Child

Institutional level respondents: Department of Children, Ghana Education Service (GES), Girl Child Education Unit, Ghana Health Service, District Assembly (Women and children sub-committee

members)	
Category of	Issues
respondents	
Girl Child	Why there is a girl child unit and not boy child unit
Education	Differences regarding the provisioning of the material, subjective and relational needs of boys
officer only	and girls within the framework that the girl child education division operates
(Interview)	
District	All issues directed at adult respondents at the community level
Assembly,	
Department of	
Social	
Welfare and	
Community	
health	
officials	
(interviews)	
All	Their understanding of children suffering from:
respondents	1. Poverty and/material deprivation
of the selected	2. Social exclusion
institutions	Vulnerability
except health	
officials	
(Interviews)	

Table 3.7- Documents gathered and the information sought (secondary data)

Document	Inf	ormation sought	
District Medium Term		Issues relating to children	
Development Plan (Composite		Definitions of children/childhood	
Plan, hence, it includes plans for		Representations of children and also male and female children	
all sampled institutions)		Provisioning and support for male and female children	
		How children material, subjective and relational needs are addressed	
		in the document	
Girl Child Education Resource		Definitions of children and representations of female children	
Manual		Provisioning and support for female children	
		Reasons for support to girl children and not boy children	
The 1998 Children's Act of		Issues relating to children	
Ghana		Definitions of children/childhood	
		Representations of children/childhood	
		Rights and responsibilities of children	
		Parental responsibilities	
		The beginning and cessation of childhood	
Child and Family Welfare Policy		Issues relating to children	
of Ghana		Definitions of children/childhood	
		Representations of children/childhood	
		Rights and responsibilities of children	
		Parental responsibilities	
		The beginning and cessation of childhood	

In separate groups of boys and girls on different days in 3 of the study communities, the sampled children were facilitated to draw a typical household and community that depicted all the categories of people and other things which exist in the household and the community.

This was followed by questions based on their drawings after they explained what they drew and why they included particular things in their drawings. Even though some of the things they included in their drawings did not initially seem to be relevant to the research questions, discussions around some of them eventually led to the children talk about issues that related to the research questions.

There were constant reflections on what actions were likely to influence respondents' responses during rapport building process so as to minimize the introduction of bias. In particular, I was aware of community level respondents' tendency to associate the study with potential remedy to poverty or associate the study with activities of Non-governmental Organizations. Therefore, the purpose of the study was explained to each participant before interaction began.

All interviews and FGDs were voice recorded. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 1/2 hours and group activities lasted between 1 and 2 hours. The process for data collection and generation was fairly similar for all the four communities fieldwork took place and district level participants.

All community level data were collected in the local languages (Dagaare in the Lawra District and Mampruli in the West Mamprusi District). I speak Dagaare and so, I solely collected all the data in the study communities in the Lawra district with the aid of a voice recorder. I did have to worry about writing down all notes while I interacted with the research subjects. Although I understand little of Mamprulii because of the similarity of it to Dagaare, I collected data in the West Mamprusi district with the help of an interpreter who holds a first degree in the Social Sciences, works at the District Assembly of the West Mamprusi district and therefore, understands the culture of the people and the protocols to follow while we interacted with community people to collect data. Institutional level data were all collected in

English except with teachers in one of the study communities in the Lawra district, where they preferred the use of both English and the local language. The voices of some of the respondents have been captured as they said it and then translated. This is done to highlight points made by respondents and for the reader to appreciate the results which emerged from translations and transcripts from the field

3.5 Ethical issues and access to the field

To obtain permission to carry out the study in the Lawra and West Mamprusi districts I visited the District Assemblies of these two districts in March/April 2015. In both districts I met the Deputy Coordinating directors, introduced myself and my project and there after presented a copy of my data collection guide which contained consent forms for all the targeted categories of participants. Both officers indicated their willingness to grant me access to the study communities and the secondary materials I needed.

In rural communities in northern Ghana both traditional and local authority structures exist and in gaining access to a community, any one of these structures or both are channels one must use depending on the community.

With the exception of institutional level participants, nearly all the adult participants at the community level (people aged 18-64 years and persons over 65) could not read. So, before the interview commenced, the consent forms were interpreted to them in the local language. The 13th adult respondent in the Lawra district opted out of the study after 30 minutes of interview because she felt the process was taking too much of her time which she needed to attend to important matters. The decision of this respondent to opt out of the study signalled that participants understood the interpretation of the consent form. Her views were respected and consequently I discontinued interview with her and expressed thanks to her for her time and decision. For the children consent was sought first from their parents/guidance and the

children themselves. In all the communities, interviews with adults and the elderly preceded that of children. Consent to talk to their children at a later date after I was done with them was sought.

Ebrahim (2008) made distinction between seeking consent and assent as important ethical considerations in carrying out research with children. As a result of children being under the care and control of adults, researchers need consent from their parents or guardians to involve them in the research as participants. However, because children are persons like adults and they could be involved only if they agree to participate, she argued that researchers also need assent of children. Children's decision of not participating overrides the consent of their parents/guardians.

In line with the accepted protocols in the study districts, I sought permission first from the chief to include children (10 to 17 year olds) in the study and also from adults and older persons whom I contacted (some were interviewed and others were not). On the date of data generation with the children in each of the communities I informed the chiefs apart from one of the communities where I was told to contact the assembly person (representative of the local people at the district assembly) that it was time to talk to the children. The messaged was relayed to most of the households I visited. It must be noted that in the study communities almost everybody knows the name of everybody's house and the name of the head of household and so getting children from the adults whose permission was sought was not a difficult task. I waited for about 45 minutes in each occasion and a lot of children conveyed: one at the community school and the other communities under trees. On each occasion their response to the call implied consent from the chiefs and also their parents/guardian and I sought their assent.

Though I planned to live in the study communities throughout the days of data collection this was not possible due to lack of accommodation. As a result, I lodged in nearby communities; mostly district capitals and commuted to the communities.

Data collection in the communities in the Lawra district commenced at 12 noon every day and on each day I paid courtesy call to the chiefs as the community protocol demanded. Sometimes I did not meet them but left a message of the continuation of fieldwork. In the Lawra district I did not need an interpreter because I speak and understand the language of the local people. However in the West Mamprusi district, I engaged a translator because I do not speak the local language though I understand a little because it is closer to the dialect I speak. Fieldwork for both districts lasted for 7 months.

Raffety (2014) called for researchers who carry out research with children to adopt strategies as they emerge from the field in order to minimise what she referred to as "social distance" which has to do with the internal dynamics of building relationship between the researcher and children. She argued that, most of the times the researcher is socially, demographically and even sometimes, culturally and racially different from the children. She claimed that childhood researchers who do participatory research often concentrate on reducing "social difference" which appears to have a lot of popularity in the literature. Raffety's standpoint is similar to Ebrahim (2008: pp. 6) idea of the need for investigators who research with children to take strategies for "effective disabling of power relations" between children as research participants and researchers. Though I took steps to reduce social difference not only with respect to processes leading to data generated from children but adults (including the elderly) who are peasant farmers living in rural communities by the way I dressed: wearing the same clothes (ordinary) most of the times, covered my hair with a simple hair gear and sat wherever the interviewee sat: mostly on the roots of trees in front of their houses, I agree with

Rafftey's idea of minimising social distance during interactions with children and Ebrahim's idea of deflating power relations.

When the targeted children indicated their willingness to participate in the study they (the first group of children) upon arrival at the venue made reference to me as "madam", "a pog" (the woman) when they were calling other children who were approaching to hurry up. "The woman" connotes a stranger while "madam" (the same way they called their female teachers, connotes someone highly educated. I was not sure of how they interacted with the female teachers and so I did not take it for granted that this would not create power relations. After asking how many of them have seen me before and getting mixed answers such as: you have been moving from house to house asking people questions; you have been coming and going etc. This paved the way for interaction with them to begin. I acknowledge that I was not a native of their community and that I am also educated, but I saw myself as an illiterate to what they know about their community and what happens in it and that explained why they always see me move from house to house to interact with their parents and grandparents in order to learn about their community. I then told them my conviction that children are also knowledgeable about their communities and also have experiences and opinions different from adults and that explained why I asked for permission from their parents to talk to them.

Researches which require good rapport between the investigator and the research participants, according to Quedrago and Cardoso (2011) demand the use of tools and techniques of investigation which do not make the researcher foreign to the subjects. Hence, apart from steps which were taken to minimise both social difference and social distance, data collection with all the children began with the mapping of the community with the investigator as facilitator. This enhanced familiarisation among the children and between the children and the investigator for all the stages of data generation with them.

3.6 Challenges encountered in the field

Initially, I planned to conduct face-to-face interview with all sampled participants and also carry out a group discussion with members of existing community based groups. However, individual interviews with children were not possible after pilot of community level data collection. On the first day of data collection I treated it as a pilot and interviewed 2 people from each of the community level targeted groups (adults, older persons and children). This was done for 3 reasons. Firstly, to assess how easy or difficult it will be translating the interview guide into the local language. Secondly, to ascertain if the questions translated were clear and understood by the respondents and thirdly whether face-to-face and individual interview could work for all these groups. While interviews with the adults and older persons were smooth, interviews with a 14 year old girl and 16 year of boy were not successful beyond questions which sought for social and demographic data of respondents; the children remained quiet most of the time to most of the questions asked and sometimes said they did not know.

Children's competence has been used to argue for their use as research subjects, but researchers who include children or use children as research subjects are challenged by both social difference and social distance because of the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between adults and children as well as the socio-demographic background of the researcher (Rafetty, 2014). While, Rafetty acknowledge the need for researchers to take steps to minimise both social difference and social distance, she argued for researches who use children as research subjects to work towards minimising social distance. This is because they are bound to experience social distance due to the perceived power and size of adults in relation to children. Social difference is inherent in adult versus children relationship.

The ideas which researchers have about children often determine the tools and methods for data generation or collection with children as research participants (Punch, 2002). Children's competence and social actors in their own right appear to dominate the justification of using children as research participants. Some of these arguments can be found in (Ebrahim, 2008), (Uprichard, 2008) and Young Lives, 2012). But their arguments are often accompanied by emphasis on using the right tools and techniques appropriate for children. However, some of the methods often thought to be child-centred sometimes have disadvantages (Punch, 2002). Punch called for researches who use children as subjects to pay attention to clarity of language, the social environment where the research is carried out, rapport with the children and methods because these are applicable to both research which are carried out with adults as well as children. These theoretical literatures were used as a guide to overcome some of the challenges encountered in the field

I carried out interviews with children because research methods such as interviews and participant observation which are traditionally used for conducting research with adults are also appropriate for children because it can help children to display their competence as persons in their own right (Punch, 2002). There is no particular technique of data collection or generation with children which is the best and fits all researches with children (Gibbs et al, 2002; Punch, 2002 and Kellett, 2005. Continuous reflection is important to help the researcher adopt techniques which are appropriate depending on the context or social environment. Though I had planned to generate some aspect of data from children using group activity like drawing/mapping and stories, I combined this with group interview and dropped individual interviews with children because they remained quiet to most of the interview questions when I attempted to carry out individual interviews.

3.7 Data collection and organisation

Data analysis commenced with data collection for constant reflection over data generated day after day. Interview guide was the main data collection instrument and was structured along the specific research objectives. Each specific question was reframed as a main theme in the data analysis process. All primary data were voice recorded. Transcription was carried out every day; starting from 22nd July 2015 and ended in the middle of October 2015.

Hence, transcription and constant perusal of the data helped in constant reflections. This was the case for community level data from the Lawra district because I had advantage of speaking the dialect of the interviewees.

In the West Mamprusi however, I only listened to the voices before the next visit because my level of understanding of the local language is very little for effective transcription. Later I outsourced a polytechnic graduate who spoke the native language and he translated the voices.

Organisation of empirical materials was done at various stages. At the first stage, transcripts of each respondent were identified with an ID which was unique to each respondent throughout the analysis. All transcripts from adults were captured in one file as "adults" underscored the initial of the district they were from: Adult underscored LD. In the same vein, there were "Older persons" underscored WMD", "Institutions underscored LD etc.....

At the second stage, data were re-organized according to which research question they belonged. For example, all the respondents from all the categories responded to all subquestions in the interview guide for research question 1. This re-arrangement was done for all the specific research questions.

CHAPTER 4 – FIELDWORK REPORT

4.1 Introduction

It is important to note that although the study was carried out in two distinct districts for reasons already highlighted in chapter three, the results did not show any significant differences in all the specific research questions which were investigated. Hence, this presentation is based on combined data from the Lawra and the West Mamprusi Districts and only few differences which were found are reported. As mentioned, the study was carried out in rural communities in Northern Ghana. Hence, the findings are to be understood within this context.

We start the presentation of the findings focusing, in section 4.2, on two main themes which have been developed from the empirical materials, that is to say what we called normative childhood and childhood "in practice". Normative childhood emerged from the narratives of respondents and documents of governmental institutions about who children are and what childhood entails or is about. Childhood "in practice" emerged mainly from interview transcripts on what children do in practice in the study communities.

Six dimensions of normative representations of children were identified. Childhood "in practice" is presented in five dimensions at the household/community level of analysis and supported by evidences which emerged from the institutional level of analysis.

Although household and community members are the people who live with children and therefore were in a position to provide a lot of information about what children's daily life entail, interviews with institutional level respondents generated rich information (some of which contradicted household level respondents narratives and others supported their views). While this could have been used for triangulation, most of the institutional level respondents

work closely with community members and the number of years they have worked in the study districts range from 2 to 20 years, making a separation of their perspectives important for further analysis and discussion in chapter 5.

In section 4.3 changes in the socio-cultural constructions of children which were revealed from interviews conducted with the elderly are presented. The study revealed differences in socio-cultural constructions of male and female children and these are discussed in section 4.4.

Further analysis of data on the contemporary representations of children showed both coherence and incoherence in the normative representations of children/childhood and childhood "in practice". In both situations of coherence and incoherence between the normative representations of children and childhood "in practice", it reflected the respondents' understanding of child poverty and also displayed some indicators of child poverty. Community level respondents explained their understanding of child poverty, vulnerable children and social exclusion of children. Their understandings of these concepts were observed to be different from their meanings at the national and international levels. Thus, section 4.5 talks about childhood poverty indicators which are embedded in sociocultural representations of children/childhood and 'meanings' of child poverty, vulnerable children and social exclusion of children from the perspectives of community level respondents.

The last section, which is 4.6, presents gendered poverty indicators which emerged from gendered representations of children.

Generally, the results are discussed at two levels of analyses: the household/community and institutional levels.

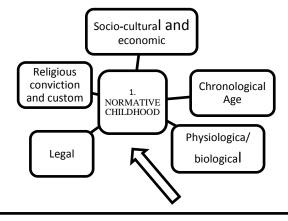
4.2 Contemporary representations of children and childhood

In the presentation and analyses on contemporary representations of children/childhood, we make a distinction between normative representations and childhood "in practice" This differentiation was developed based on analyses of the empirical materials. The dimensions of both normative representations and childhood "in practice" were sub-themes which emerged from analyses of the empirical materials.

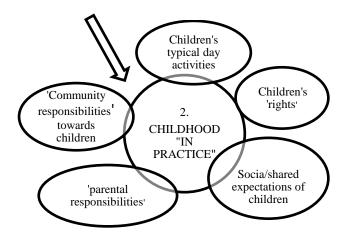
4.2.1 Normative representations of children at household and community level

Analysing the answers and comments of community level respondents we could observe that the normative representation as a whole could be classified based on five dimensions or directions. Although nearly all these dimensions are interconnected, for analytical purposes they are separated. Childhood "in practice" also comprises five dimensions. The five dimensions of normative representations of children and also of childhood "in practice" here presented emanate from interviewees (children, adults and old people) responses to interviews conducted in all the study communities. Figure 6 summarises contemporary representations of children in rural communities in Northern Ghana.

Figure 6 - Contemporary representations of children and childhood at the household/community level



Representations of children in rural communities in Northern Ghana: Household/community level analysis



Dimension 1: Chronological age

At the household/community level in the Lawra district, few respondents defined or represented children using age. Most adults and the elderly said because they are not formally educated they do not keep records of the ages of their children and therefore chronological age is less important in separating people considered as children from those called adults. Instead, children are represented by the other dimensions as I will show later in the following paragraphs. One of the respondents talked about how and when children cease to be children and considered as adults in one of the study communities.

When a girl child develops breast, she has become an adult and she has to marry. When a boy child grows up to a point and is able to go on seasonal migration to Techiman 2 times, he has become an adult. We do not use age to determine if a child has become an adult or, is still a child because we don't keep records of the ages of children because we are not educated. If we want to use age to determine whether a child has transitioned from childhood to adulthood we will miss it. In addition, as soon as they get married they have become full blown adults (woman 41 years, Toto community, separated and not formally educated).

For the few who defined children using age, most denoted children as persons below 15 years and few of them labelled persons who are below 10 years as children.

The minimum age for persons deemed as children cited by most of the children themselves who participated in the study was 14. While a few cited persons who are less than 18 years. The study children who defined children as persons less than 18 years might have had this from school because most of the sampled children were attending school.

Dimension 2: Biological features

All community level respondents distinguished children from adults by some biological visible and invisible features. The lack of these features makes a person a child and the exhibition of them makes him/her an adult. Biological features which, when exhibited in the bodies of persons or experienced by them, move them from the status of children into adulthood include, female children developed breast and began menstruation, while for male

children: broaden chest, deep voice, hairy face, impregnate a girl and wet dreams. Having pubic hair and a baby applied to both female and male children.

The absence of breast and menstruation was emphasised by nearly all the respondents in their representation of children/childhood for female children. On the other hand, narrow chest, lack of pubic hair and hairy face appeared frequently in the representation of boys. The notion that male children who experience 'wet dreams' cease to be children featured only in the responses from the West Mamprusi district respondents. The responses of three of the interviewees on when and how children cease to be children exemplify the representation of children in relation to dimension 2 (biological features) representation of children and childhood.

When he starts getting wet dreams, pubic hair as well as age, like 19 years. With girls, the breast will change and she will begin menstruation (man, 46 years, married, farmer, 17 children in household, Boamaasa community).

...if they are girls, they start menstruating and if they are boys they grow beard and start having wet dreams (woman, 68 years, Kparigu community).

When a child is born and is natured until he/she grows up to a point ...if she is a girl as soon as she begins menstruation she is completely a woman and has become an adult and if it is a boy and grows up to a point...when he has hair on some parts of his body he is also completely a man (woman, 82 years, Toto community).

The first and the second excerpts are from respondents in the West Mamprusi district while the third is from the Lawra district. Clearly, all these are highlighting biological features which are commonly identified with adolescents. It appears then that in the process of human development from childhood to adulthood, adolescence; which comes between childhood and adulthood does not exist among the study participants because the exhibition of adolescent features are taken as maturity to adulthood.

Dimension 3: Socio-cultural and economic aspects

Socio-cultural dimension of normative representation of children which emerged from the narratives of respondents are many, varied and recurred. These were in the form of social and cultural practices which persons must experience in order to be considered as adults. In other words to be labelled or represented as a child, a person should not have experienced the following practices:

- ✓ being embarked on and/or returned from seasonal migrant (boys)
- ✓ being married
- ✓ have experienced elopement (girls)
- ✓ have been engaged in courtship

Also, to be considered as a child such a child should not be able to:

- ✓ carry out household activities
- ✓ carry out adult task

'Child seasonal migration' featured prominently in most of the narratives of adults and the elderly. Excerpts from two respondents' transcripts exemplify child migration is part of the socio-cultural dimension in the normative representation of children/childhood.

When a child climbs a vehicle and goes somewhere and works for money, he/she has become an adult. It is the very small ones that is my worry.

Q. What about age? Doesn't it determine childhood or adulthood?

No! No! It is not important. Those who know how to earn income are no longer children. When children begin earning income, they don't listen to their parents, so we leave them to fend for themselves (Female respondent, 45 Toto - Lawra district).

Going to Techiman is here with us. Young people migrate to Techiman at the end of the farming season here. So when a boy goes to Techiman and returns, he has become a man. These days by age 14, boys go to Techiman and come. Those, days they used to get to 18 to 20 years before they go to Techiman (male respondent, 49, community opinion leader; Dazuuri - Lawra district).

The above voices highlight social and economic dimensions which child migration present for the representation of children. It appears then that, a child migrating after the farming season is a cultural and a social practice which has been part of the culture of the people as suggested by the second narrative.

One of the old people who participated in the study was asked to talk about a person who is or is not a child in his community and his response was translated as follows:

There are difference between how girls become adults and how boys become adults. When the chest of a girl is full of breast and she begins menstruating, she has become an adult; she is no longer a child. Those days, boys did not wear anything so we use to observe their physical features and their genitals to determine whether they have become adults. But these days even babies wear clothes. So what we use to determine whether they have passed childhood is seasonal migration of young person's to the south. Going to Techiman is here with us. Young people migrate to Techiman at the end of the farming season here. So when a boy goes to Techiman and return, he has become a man. These days by age 14, boys go to Techiman and come. Those, days they use to get to 18 to 20 years before they go to Techiman and also start 'chasing' women. But not these days, some of the boys migrate in the dry season and others hung around until it is time for clearing the field for the next farming season (Man, 78 years, Dazuuri community)

The voice of this older person highlights both dimension 2 (biological features) and dimension 3 (socio-cultural and economic) normative representations of children and childhood. It also shows that representations of children and childhood in a society change with socio-economic change.

The transcripts show that both adults and old persons, in their normative representations of children and childhood, refer to five dimensions (Table 4.1):

- Dependence/Protection:

The responsibility of the children is on me: paying of school fees, school uniforms and feeding them, because they are children and cannot do anything for themselves (Man, 49 years Kparigu, West Mamprusi).

A child cannot just go out without permission and so it is the duty of adults to ensure compliance. ... Children should not go hungry. The girls in school in particular must have their needs such as soap, pomade, sandals, books, pencils etc. provided. A girl that is attending school but lacks these can easily be lured by men to engage in sexual intercourse in return for items like these (Woman, 51 years Dazuuri, Lawra district).

For example, in order to protect children from both physical and a moral danger, adults believe that children must get approval from them before they go out. Also, because children are perceived to be dependent on adults until they move into the adult world, adults consider it their responsibility to provide children their basic necessities.

Children-Adults:

... These days, most children don't really get to physical maturity and deliver babies in the case of girls or make a girl pregnant. When this happens, such a child [the child who has made

a baby] has become *bebil-nengkpong* (child-adult) (Man, 83 years, Dazuuri, Lawra District).

For example, in the local context where this study was conducted, child bearing is often thought to be an adult activity. Therefore, persons who have not physically matured to be considered as adults but bear baby or babies are considered as adults as well as children. In other words, they are both children and adults because they exhibit characteristics of both persons in childhood as well as adulthood.

- Work:

When a child climbs a vehicle and goes somewhere and work for money, he/she has become an adult (Woman, 45 years, Toto, Lawra District)

One of the adult interviewees from the West Mamprusi district responded to a question on what separates a child from an adult.

In this community and also in my household, it is at the age of 17, the work the person does, the body and face will change (man, 48 years, farmer, married, no formal education, and has 15 children in household)

For example if a child is able to carry out work on the farm in a manner that an adult does it, this signals he/she has matured into to an adult.

- Laziness:

Children should not be lazy. Children tie the grass for the animals. ... Farming is our tradition and they must learn that. ... The love for a child is dependent on what the child does. If the child is hard working, the child will be loved (Woman 55, Kparigu, West Mamprusi district)

....hahahaaa! Don't be lazy! [Referring to a girl child] She can go for *kayaya* [go to the city and carry loads for people for a fee] and get money to help pay her school fees (Man, 65 years, Boamaasaa, West Mamprusi district).

For instance, because children are expected to learn the livelihood activity of their parents [which is peasant farming for most of the community level respondents], laziness is not tolerated in childhood and although paying school fees is claimed to be the responsibility of adults; particularly parents, children can help raise funds to pay school fees if they are not lazy.

- Belonging to the community:

Community members who are adults have a responsibility to leave a mark in the minds of children in the community. If even a child does not belong to a particular adult and he/she sees that a particular child has no clothes the person can buy clothes for such a child and this child will never forget. Similarly, they can give food to a hungry child in the community even if that child is not his/hers (Man, 40 years Toto, Lawra district).

For example, a hungry child can eat from other households where food is ready and he/she is around and grownups in such a household are expected not to treat this child differently from his/her children while they eat.

Depictions of children under the classifications Protection/Dependence, Children-Adults and Work appeared more frequently in the narratives of most adult and old respondents, while few respondents talked about representations associated with children belonging to the community. Also, about half of the adults and the elderly or old persons at the community level depicted children as persons who should not be lazy.

Table 4.1 - Normative representations of childhood/children per dimensions used

Dependence/Protection	Children-Adults	Ability to work	Laziness	Belong to community
Need protection Immature Not to travel independently	Make a house complete Must be courteous always To be respectful of adults	Must work hard Are stronger and active Need training Difficult to train	Must avoid laziness Should go hungry if they are lazy	Must be trained by all and be beneficial to all
Not to take independent decision Are not independent of parents Are to stay away from family secrets and adult conversation Are capable of malice Should not to eat every meat Are to be protected from sex	Keep a distance away from adults but closer enough to serve them Must be wise Relationship with parents is reciprocal Have superior memory Are subordinate to adults Must be pampered			

Source: Author's construct, March 2017; based on field work

Apart from representations of childhood/children which suggest children belong to the community. The social and cultural depictions of children presented in table 4.1 bear similarity to Uprichard (2008) conceptualisation of children as 'being', 'becoming', and 'belonging'. In the typology below are summarised the similarities between representations

of children as children-adults, children needing 'protection' and depictions of children in relation to work and laziness on one hand, and children as 'being' 'becoming' and 'belonging' on the other.

Table 4.2- Conceptions of children as 'being', 'becoming' and 'belonging' and normative representations of childhood/ children

Children as 'being' similar to children-adults	Children as 'becoming' similar to 'Dependence/ Protection'	Children as 'belonging' Similar to 'Work' and 'laziness'
Children: make a house a home, are stronger and active have superior memory must be wise	Children: are believed to be immature and therefore are dependent on adults and need protection, cannot travel all by themselves, cannot take decisions on their own, need to depend on their parents and to avoid acts and issues believed to be the preserve of adults (sex, adult's conversation and family secrets and specified meat of the family)	Children: must work hard because they are stronger and active, need training but are difficult to train, must avoid laziness and should go hungry if they are lazy

Source: Author's construct 2017

'Being' children are considered as social actors or agents in their own right. Children are considered to be capable of actively constructing their own childhood, they have their own views and experiences about being children and therefore, they are capable of providing their own views on issues. This conception of children is similar to some of the *children-adults* representations of children (children: make a house a home, are stronger and active, have superior memory and must be wise).

However, the *child-adult* is also depicted to be subordinate to adults, must be courteous and respect adults, be closer enough to serve adults but keep a reasonable distance. Also, how the *child-adult* is treated or handled by adults is dependent on how he/she conducts himself/herself especially with adults. A *child-adult* who does not respect adults or do not do what adults expect of him/her is left to his/her faith.

Hence one could say that, represented as *children-adults*, children occupy dual positions; at least in the study communities. On one hand, they are depicted as *children-adults*': active

social actors in their own right. On the other hand, adults determine when a *child-adult* is a child and should act as child and when a *child-adult* is an adult and should conduct himself/herself as adult. This makes the representation of children as *children-adults* similar to the Uprichard's 'being' children, but at the same time also similar to Uprichard's 'becoming' children, because they are alternatively human beings in their own right and their position and actions in society are similar to that of adults they are also seen as adults in the making (adult-to-be), because adults think they lack universal skills and features of adults until they grow up as adults in terms of chronological age.

Again, in table 4.2, 'Dependence/Protection' depictions of children/childhood reflect the conception of children as 'Becoming'. Children need protection because they are believed to be immature and therefore depend on adults, need protection, cannot travel all by themselves, cannot take decisions on their own, need to depend on their parents and to avoid acts and issues (sex, adult's conversation and family secrets and specific meat of the family) believed to be the preserve of persons who have become adults and not those who are 'becoming'. Most of the protection depictions of children suggest vulnerability of children or associate childhood with helplessness. This probably explains why within the broader protection representation, children are also perceived as persons who should be scolded in order to keep children in check so as to prevent them from engaging in behaviours considered by adults to be risky or dangerous to children.

In the cultural and social representations of children in the classification "Work" and "Laziness", there appear to be connections between notions relating to work and notions regarding laziness. Both work and laziness representations of children appear to be the same as Uprichard's 'Belonging' conceptualisation of children/childhood where children are given some space in adults' spaces. International laws and conventions such as the International

Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which most African countries have signed onto often frown on children working. Instead, developing the skills and potentials of children through formal schooling are often stressed. However, representations of children in relation to work revealed in this study, suggest children are given the opportunity to participate in work. Work is often thought to be for adults especially in international discussions. Representations of children in the "work" and "Laziness" classification which emerged from this study is in line with the "Belonging" conception of children where children are given some space within adult spaces.

In this study most respondents emphasised children participation in work and more so, hard work because they are considered to be stronger and active and engaging in work is a form of training for them to acquire life skills. This suggest that in rural communities in northern Ghana acquisition of skills and a training of children more generally, is believed not to be within the domain of formal schooling. On-the-job training is emphasised through children participation in work at the household level. Because of the perceived importance of work to children, they are depicted as persons who should not be lazy and to ensure that children work and avoid laziness; children who exhibit lazy behaviours are believed not to deserve to eat. Representation of children as belonging to the community could be interpreted as a way through the 'work' and 'laziness' depictions of children/childhood could be further achieved. Training of children to help them acquire life skills is believed to be a collective responsibility of the community because children are depicted as 'communal property' to be trained by all and to be of benefit to all.

Analysis and reflections over ideas which adults have about children indicated several negative description of children and also contradict other notions which emerged from their narratives. For example, they portrayed children as immature, independent, in need of

training, protection, and discipline and pampering. Yet, they also depicted children as persons who cannot be trained and guided, capable of malice and also labelled contemporary children as 'children-adults' as explained above.

In the typology in table 4.2, depictions of children which could be viewed to fall under the broader representation of children as "children-adults" show positive representations of children and also indicate adults and older persons desire to instil in children the cultural values of their society.

Contemporary children are represented as 'Children- adults' because they do not conform to all behaviours and engage in actions perceived by adults to be appropriate for children and also engage in behaviours and actions perceived by adults to be for adults. In other words because children resist adults' determined boundaries for children and adults or according to Aitken (2001) are not childlike, they are represented as children-adults. By engaging in acts and activities such as sex, independent migration and refusing to follow the orders and counsel of adults, children become 'children-adults. A further interpretation could be that children-adults are persons who have not attained adulthood by biological age but have become adults socially.

These opposing depictions of children which emerged from the responses of adults and the elderly necessitated further exploration of children's own perception or representation of themselves.

The data showed slight variation between how the children represented themselves and how adults represent or socially construct children/childhood. Notions such as "children to be trained and children to be respectful of adults" appeared in the narratives of both adults and

children. Again, in the narratives of children, they indicated reliance on adults for survival and stressed their dependent nature which are also notions held by the adults and the elderly.

A Child of one of the boys' Focus Group Discussions explained:

Children: are to be cared for and provided with their needs, are to be trained on their 'God given roles', to be put in school, to desist from relationship with the opposite sex, are in need of adult protection, are incapable of managing life alone and are to be respectful of adults. (Group1; boy 14 years)

The slight variation in the ideas of adults and the elderly on one hand, and children on the other about children/childhood in the study communities show that there are challenges associated with children living their lives as children, parenting and what parents or adults consider as parental responsibility.

Images of children relating to their economic contribution to the household appeared in the transcripts of adults, the elderly and from Focus Group Discussions with children. Children are represented as persons who are: unable to do work like some other persons (adults), not able to work and earn money, unable to provide their own feeding needs as well as persons who have not embarked on and returned from seasonal migration [done largely for economic purposes].

One criterion which is important economically, for separating a person who has matured into an adult from one who is still a child includes: engaging a child in work or assigning a particular task which is believed can be successfully carried out by persons who have matured into adults. A few of the voices of some respondents succinctly illustrates this.

I will engage the child in work. The child's ability to do the work will indicate that he/she is no longer a child. If he/she is able to do the work, he/she is an adult (an older person from Boamasa; West Mamprusi district).

Ahha!... carrying water, cooking, farming, are used to determine if children have matured into adulthood or are still children (A woman in her 50s from Kparigu, West Mamprusi district).

We also use work. If a child has not reached the age of 15, but works like an adult and behaves like an adult, he/she has become an adult because he/she can carry out activities to help himself or

herself (Said, a 51 year old woman, from one of the study communities in the Lawra district).

Clearly in the above excerpts, work children do at the household level are criteria used by adults in determining their status – either as children or deemed matured as adults. Such work they do or to be done are at the discretion of adults or their parents/guardians and these could fall within or outside work which are considered appropriate for children nationally and internationally. Again, the above voices show how children are represented in the economic dimension and the normative representation in relation to work in the classifications in table 4.1.

Contextually, 14 and 15 year olds are represented as adults because they are able to carry out some social and economic activities believed can only be carried out by persons who have matured as adults. Juxtaposing these representations of children to the general definition of children stated nationally and globally, we can see that many children (persons below age 18) in the study communities and by extension in rural Ghana could be living their lives as 'premature' adults because they have not attained the age of 18 but are considered as adults by the use of social and economic standards and norms.

Dimension 4: Legal aspects

Adults and the elderly were asked questions on the social expectations associated with children in terms of rights and responsibilities. Most of the respondents enumerated an array of responsibilities expected of children in households and communities but did not indicate any rights. For most of the respondents, further probing yielded this response "children have no rights". Notions held about children and rights among people in northern rural Ghanaian communities clearly contradict normative representations of children in national and international legal frameworks such as the 1998 children's Act (560) of Ghana, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UNCRC. Children who participated in

the study did not show any indication of having knowledge of children's rights when rights and responsibilities were put for discussion at FGDs. The notion of children not having rights from community level respondents was validated by nearly all the institutional level respondents who reported their observations and work with community people with respect to rights and responsibilities of children. Notions of children not having rights could be viewed not merely as children not entitled to the kind of rights outlined in national and international legal frameworks, but respondents consider the idea of children's right to be foreign to their culture and upbringing of children.

Dimension 5: Religious conviction and custom

In the West Mamprusi district, nearly all respondents were Muslims while in the Lawra district some claimed to be Christians and others traditionalists. Hence, the study revealed a blend of traditional and religious beliefs culminating in the ways children are perceived, represented and treated [how children are treated will be presented later under 'childhood 'in practice'"]. Community level data revealed representation of children in relation to traditional and religious believes. Children are believed:

- to be taken care of by God,
- know something which adults do not know,
- come from God,
- please God,
- not all (children) are blessed by God.

Because children are believed to be given by God and cared for by God it is believed that they should be born as long both couple are fecund. It is believed that God desire human beings to have many children when one has many children it please God.

This believe conforms to polygyny which promotes the reproduction of many children and also fits into Islamic religious practice of men permitted to marry more than one wife and which in most cases lead to one man having many children.

The narrative of a respondent reported below typifies religious conviction and customary practice in the representation of children and childhood.

You know, in our tradition you have one man marrying so many wives. So, sometimes it becomes difficult. Average number of children in a household in the community is about 15. We have a perception, especially we the Muslims, to have 'plenty' children and it is commonly said that it's God that takes care of children. Most of us have this belief that one does not know which of your children God will bless and some even belief that it may be the last of the so many children to be given birth to by a father or mother, so we just produce children (Teacher and native, age 31, Kparigu, community, West Mamprusi district).

Several proverbial expressions/common sayings which normatively depict children in line with dimensions identified and presented above appeared in the narratives of adults and older persons and are outlined in table 4.3.

Table 4.3- Proverbs and common sayings associated with children

Categories of proverbs	Proverbs/ common sayings	Translation	Interpretation of the proverb	Representation of children in the proverbs
A	Belbil wone e be yiiere, ole nu be buoleneng-kpeeh. Bebil wong ba yienne, ona la ka babuolo nengkora .	A child who hears, but does not forget, is the one being referred to as an adult. A child who hears but does not forget, is the one being referred to as an elderly person.	Children are the store house of knowledge and can help in the transmission of oral tradition	Children have capacity for thought, but when this manifest, they are considered as adults.
В	Bietaah dogru, kye o bataah kaara, o bataah tonnu.	A child has someone who gives birth to him/her but no limit to who cares for him/her or who sends him/her.	The care and upbringing of children is a collective responsibility of family members, communities and societies	Children are communal beings in terms of their care and benefit
C	Bibile enng-babuoro ole nu meng yeng gbe- bame. Bebil tonzagra ba dire bonkaagh. Bebil tongzagra ber dire bonneeh. Bebil tong kong-zagre onale dire bong	The child who is not lazy is the one who puts on bracelets on his/her legs. The child who does not refuse when he/she is sent, is the one who eats "oily food" [good food] A child who refuses when he/she is sent does not eat. The child that goes when he/she is sent is he/she who eats "oily food" [good food]. A child, who listens, adults' "oils", he/she will eat.	Children are expected to work hard. They are expected to labour for their present needs and develop an attitude of hard work for their future.	Children must or are expected to work hard. Children must labour for the food they eat. Children who are lazy do not deserve to eat.
	khaagh. Bebile nang kyelle yelle, nenkpong kaagh, o nang na di			

D	Bebil bawono, ona le guru nu kpeerene zampo. Bebil bawono ona le nyogru gbaah zuure.	It is a stubborn child that gives blow on hedgehog It a stubborn child that holds the tail of a python.	The child who refuses to listen to expert advice will face the consequences of his/her actions because nobody guides him/her against unsafe acts	Children must be obedient and respectful
	Belbil kong wong wuluu, pandaare na wuluu yenng.	A child who does not heed to advices, the stage for a corps will teach him/her alesson.		
E	Oh mang yieh wieh a waana kaba dogi oh saah	One returns from the farm and sees his/her father being born.	Some children are children by age, but accorded adult status because of their position in kinship relations	Some children are 'children-adults'
F	Bebile mang zo faa nolee silaa zie	It is a child who chases the hawk to salvage a chick.	Children are expected to be smart in their thoughts and their actions to enable them take advantage of opportunities in their environment	Children are smarter, have the capacity for thought and capable of taking advantage of opportunities around them
G	Bebil zing nyaazaa, onang mang yelaah zaa	A child, who sits and sees it all/witnesses everything, says/narrates it all.	Children are discouraged to participate in adult or community meetings; stifling their initiatives.	Some children are stubborn and disdain. Such children deserve suffering
Н	Bebile nang zenekogro ningkpong, bamang yelee yeltigre koro o.	A child who gets closer to adult, is revealed to a lot of customs	Children are expected to sit with adults and listen to words of wisdom for their future development	Children shun adults
	Not available	The child that has clean hands, mashes dawadawa [wild fruit which is used in various ways as food] for adults.	Only 'well- behaved' children get favours from adults.	Children must be well- mannered
I	Bebile bagyiere bondiree	A child does not refuse food.	The nourishment of children is of concern to adults and so children are expected to eat and not to refuse because they are scolded.	Children are capable of refusing to eat when they are disgruntled
		dwork: May to October 2015	A child is expected to listen to adult advice no matter how painful it is and abide by it.	

Source: author's construct from fieldwork; May to October 2015

In table 4.3 proverbs/common sayings associated with children that were gathered from adults and old people are presented. The proverbs/common sayings were grouped and categorised into A to I. Each of the categories (A to I) consist of proverb(s)/common saying(s) which are similar and hence we provide interpretations which are the same or similar for them. The third column provides translation of the proverbs while the fourth column provides the author's interpretation of the proverbs/common sayings. In the last column which is "representations of children", we go behind the proverbs/common sayings provided by the respondents to indicate how children are represented or perceived by adults and old people. A cursory look at the proverbs and representations of children therein, show no difference from the normative representations of children/childhood and childhood "in practice". However, these proverbs/common sayings provide vivid and forceful expression regarding community level respondents (adults and old people) representations of children/childhood.

Also, it could be observed that most of the expressions, their meanings, and interpretations fit into the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of normative representations of childhood/children which emerged from individual interviews with adults and older persons at the community level.

Children representations of themselves and childhood

Responses from boys and girls from both study districts did not show much difference except that boys in the Lawra district represented themselves as "the strength of their families", but girls did not see themselves as such. The girls saw themselves to belong to some people's families which they do not know yet and will know when they get married. Girls referred to themselves; as *numba mene yiri numba* which means "belong to some other families". This notion held by female children themselves could be a reflection of the adults' representation

of girl children in their communities generally. Female children's future status as wives affects their present status as children. In other words, because female children become members of the families they marry into when they become adults, they are not regarded as true family members even as children in their families of birth. Again, to have a 'family', female children upon maturity must get married (creating sense of compulsion in marriage for female children). This idea of girl children belonging to some other families other than the families they are born into implies female children do not consider themselves as true members of their families they are born into.

Results from both the boys and girls FGDs in the Lawra district on whether there are differences or not between boy children and girl children were similar except that boys represented girls as promiscuous. However, this did not appear in the discussion from the girls. Both boys and girls portrayed boys as having a distinct and important role and this is believed to be ordained by God. They perceived boys to be more important than girls and indicated boys are members and the future of their "uterine families" or families of birth. The boys represented girls as people who do not pay attention in school and investment in them yields no results. Just like the girls themselves, the study boys frequently made reference to girl children as *nuba mene yiri nuba* (belonging to some people's family).

The way boy children perceive girl children came up more clearly in a participatory activity where they drew a typical community in their district. In their drawings, they indicated a school with children standing by the school which they labelled "school boy". Excerpt on the conversation with them about their drawings gave further insights into representations of female and male children.

Interviewer: Why did you add school boy but did not add school girl? Did you forget to include them?

Children: yes! No! (Divided, yes (4) and no (3)

They explained:

The girls... some are attending school o.k... but most are not. When they are in school, most don't even get to JHS and get pregnant. Some go to their boyfriends when school closes and creates confusion between parents and the teachers because the parents expect their girls to be home at a certain time and the teachers also know that the girls are home but they are not. As for girls schooling, a bataah par [translated as, it is nothing to write home about]. That is the reason why we forgot about them in our drawings.

This statement made by one of the 3 boys who responded "no" was supported by the other 4 boys. This voice further highlights boy children's representation of girls as promiscuous, less important and will waste families' resources if they are enrolled in school. Other members of the group added that some of the girls who attend school also like going for *record dance* (entertainment) and by doing this they enter into sexual relationships with men and get disinterested in schooling, drop out and get married. However, notes from the FGD with girls in the study communities in the Lawra District, indicate girls attributed their inability to do well in school to carrying out more domestic activities than boys leading to fatigue and inability to study especially at home compared to the boy children who have less activities and do study at home.

Both boys and girls depicted themselves during focus group discussion in ways which did not appear in the representations of childhood/children by the adult respondents and the following were written down.

Upright, dutiful, at the mercy of adults, are exploited, respectful of adults, 'workers', the strength of the family (boys), helpless and suffering for nothing, different capacity for work, in need of cordial interaction with parents, future adults, need to know and learn adult responsibilities, have no say or contributions in adults' matters (Boys and girls FGD; Dazuuri Lawra district)

Also, data generated from children showed work related representations of children/childhood. While children of the Lawra district mentioned during FGDs that girls

who are able to prepare a big pot of *Tuozaafi¹ or T.Z* unaided and boys who are able to carry a big log and/or build a room within their households are usually considered as adults and treated as such, the West Mamprusi study children said children who are able to carry out task within the domestic sphere or in the farm comparable to that of adults are adults. The association of girl children's ability to prepare this food with adulthood could be interpreted as the activity demanding the use of physical energy and strength which can be done only by girls who are physically matured and hence their ability to do it signals a cessation of childhood and readiness for marriage. Also, the association of boy children's ability to build a room within their household could be interpreted as boy children's being ready for marriage. As indicated earlier, children who get married are represented as adults and at marriage, a couple needs privacy and there is the need for a room to themselves. Since female children do not have 'families' and male children do, when a male child builds a room within his household this could signify a desire for privacy, readiness for marriage and hence cessation of childhood.

When a child grows up to 18 years he/she ceases to be a child. That is what the adults always say. When you reach this age they often tell you to stop childish plays because you are an adult. Also, the adults also use work to separate childhood from adulthood. When a child is able to work like an adult he/she is considered an adult even if the person is 15 years. (F.K, girl, 17 years in JHS 2, Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

When a girl is able to stir big pot of T.Z and a boy is able to carry a big log alone, they are no longer considered as children but adults. (C.N, 15 years, girl JHS 1, Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

When girls develop breast, they are often considered as adults. At this stage they are frequently told to be mindful of whatever they do, because they must know that they are no longer children. (D.B, girl 17 year JHS 1, Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

The above voices of children on when and how childhood end, are not independent of how adults define children. They define themselves according to who adults say they are even

¹Tuozaafi or T.Z is a Northern Ghanaian dish which is prepared from maize or millet flour and requires a lot of energy to stire.

though as indicated earlier they depict themselves as helpless and working for nothing, as persons who have no say in adult matters which adults did not consider in their representations of childhood/children. The above results again highlight biological and economic or work dimensions in the normative representations of children in rural communities in northern Ghana. The first voice however said children who have attained 18 years cease to be children and indicated that is what the adults always say. But on the whole the results of this research show chronological age is rarely used in the definition of children. This child's definition might have been influenced by the school and the adults he attributed the chronological age definition to may his teachers.

Other children however have their own ideas about who a child is as well as what and how a child's childhood could be terminated and he/she moves into adult status. Four responses from one girl and three boys are presented below.

... his work... some the voice. 18 years and above... breast... yes that is all. Because they may change hahaha! ...adult something will happen and that time they go to their boyfriends... something will happen... they will be pregnant (B.A, Girl 11 years, primary 3, Boamaasaa, West Mamprusi district)

When a child grows up to 15 years, he is able to build a room in the house and at this point he is no longer a child. (A.B, boy, 10 years, not attending school, Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

When a child is up to 21, he is no longer a child. At age 21, a person has become a big...adult. (D.E, boy, 17 years, in JHS 2, Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

When is child is able to get his own groundnuts seeds and plant, harvest, sell and is able to by a bicycle, he is no longer a child but an adult. When a girl child becomes pregnant she is no longer a child but an adult. (M.S, boy, 15 years, in JHS, 1 Dazuuri community, Lawra district)

The above representations of children are similar to adults' representations which emerged at the community level. They show that children's ideas about who a child is and when childhood cease or ought to cease is a reflection of how adults define children and construct childhood.

In response to "how do you see yourself as a child"? in each of the six FGDs, nearly all the children responded saw or considered themselves as good and obedient children and attributed this representation of themselves to the fact that they do all that their parents ask them to do, and cited specific house chores which their parents always instruct them to carry out and which they normally comply.

It could be said therefore that the children's representations of childhood/children or themselves emanate from what they hear from adults, themselves and their interactions/encounters with adults.

Institutional Representations of Children/Childhood

Representations of children from both primary and secondary data gathered were largely normative ideas the institutions/departments hold about children. The dimensions under which these representations are presented and discussed are similar to those discussed at the community/household level. But, ways in which children are depicted are not the same for the community and institutional level respondents and secondary materials. Again, institutions normatively represented children as persons who need protection, representation, provisioning and support. These representations of children are linked to the dimensions age and biological, economic, legal and psycho-social under which the institutional representations of children/childhood are to be presented and hence presented appropriately. Protection means that children need to be protected; representation means that children need adults to represent them on issues of legality and when they come into conflict with the law, provision means duty bearers like the state and local authorities have a social responsibility to provide some needs of children and support means that children need the support of duty bearers.

Normative representations of children/childhood at the institutional level:

Age and biological dimension

In terms of age, both primary and secondary data from the sampled institutions did not define children differently from the standard definition of children as persons below 18 years. Although overall biological definitions of children did not emerge from most of the institutional level respondents and the secondary materials reviewed, some "biological portrayals" of children emerged from few of the respondents.

"Children with big bodies but less than 18 years are children and children with small bodies but more than 18 years are adults, persons who have not started menstruation (girls) or experienced wet dreams (boys) are children". (Male, 38 years, Department of Social Welfare who has worked for 8 years)

The first part of this respondent's definition of a child is in line with the standard definition of children but highlights the importance of making a distinction or connection between the physiological body of a person and his/her chronological age in order to make the chronological age definition of children meaningful. The second part of the definition also points to some biological changes which human experience in their process of developing from children to adults and indicates that such biological experiences are different for male and female children in the process of transitioning from children to adults. Recalling from household/community level analysis, biological dimension featured prominently in the representations of children in rural communities. Hence, this could be a signal that the standard definition of children could be too simplistic and meaningless for the bulk of rural people in most African countries where they do not keep records of their children and institutions mandated to compile and keep records on age are ineffective.

Children needing protection was widespread in secondary materials reviewed. These included the 1998 children's Act (560), the District Medium term Development Plans (DMTDPs) of both study districts, the Ghana Child and Family Policy and the Girl Child Education resource manual. The DMTDPs are composite plans which involve all decentralised departments at the district and so, they are broad and incorporates plan of work within a four year period for several departments/institutions that work within the districts. The representation of children as persons needing protection is related to notions of children being chronologically under aged and biologically immature. Yet, few of the narratives of institutional level respondents talked about children needing protection. This suggests that the professionals who work with these documents are either not aware of this aspect of their working documents or do not share in the notion of children needing protection.

Economic

Both primary and secondary data from the sampled institutions revealed representations of children not as a single category opposite of adults, but nuance, where some are capable of working and others existing in the meantime as useless. Primary data revealed that children less than 11 years are considered to be economically useless as they are considered immature to be used for economic activity either at the household/community level or can do anything economically for themselves. While primary data revealed that children between the ages of 11 and 17 years are capable of contributing economically to their households and themselves, the documents reviewed indicated 15 to 17 year old children are capable of engaging in "light" work which are not "hazardous" to their health, physical development or interrupting in their schooling.

Again, notions of children needing to be provided things of both material and social character dominated the secondary materials reviewed while nearly all the respondents from the sampled institutions talked about institutions responsibility to provide for children. This particularly emerged from respondents' responses on the role of the District Assembly to children. Most respondents mentioned provision of school infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and teachers as the responsibilities of the District Assemblies towards children. The institutions thus, view social and economic rights (provision) as duty or responsibility of adults towards children. Children's socio-economic rights are viewed as needs of children and not as rights of children.

Probably, because some category of children, in the meantime are believed to be economically useless the bulk of the narratives from institutional level respondents showed children needing adult care and institutional support. But children needing support is also based on the belief that some children are vulnerable than others and so in the DMTDPs reviewed, "support needy but brilliant children" featured prominently. Again children who are perceived to be vulnerable are also believed to need support in cash through their families. A respondent from the Department of Social Welfare indicated that through the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, small grants are disbursed from central government through their department to selected qualified families, that is, families identified to have vulnerable people including vulnerable children.

Legal / Psycho-social dimension

Both primary and secondary data perceive children as capable of breaching laws, needing justice when they come into conflict with the law, incompetent to independently face the law when they are in conflict with it and are represented as 'legal objects' who can be permanently transferred from one person to another through adoption after legal processes

have been followed and completed. Again, documents of the sampled institutions and narratives from the sampled officials, indicated notions of children having rights on a broad spectrum of social and economic life, including: the right to participate in sporting activities, right to access reading materials and to be free to relate to adults working for them or with them as though they were their parents. Children are believed to have some level of criminal responsibility, and also have "best interest" which must be considered, especially on matters relating to criminality and custody. They are perceived as persons who need to be controlled and sanctioned because they are capable of mischief.

The data also revealed that children are depicted as persons who need adults to represent them on issues of legality or where children have to face the law for criminal responsibility. For example, where parents compete over custody of a child after divorce or separation and any of the parents takes a legal action, the Department of Social Welfare represents the child at the family tribunal and ensures the parents follow the rulings.

Similarly on issues of adoption of children, adults must stay in for children on all the processes leading to their transfer from one person or family to another. Respondents of some of the institutions emphasised that because children cannot represent and defend themselves when they are in conflict with the law and also determine what is good for them, institutions play supervisory and regulatory role over early childhood development centres, children's homes, remand homes, rehabilitation centres and orphanages as required of them in some of the secondary materials reviewed

Notions of children needing adults to represent them stems from children being depicted as persons capable of coming into conflict with the law, have criminal responsibility and yet are incompetent to independently face the law. Also, they need adults to represent them because they are 'legal objects' who can be permanently transferred from one person to another

through adoption after legal processes have been followed and completed, yet they are believed to be incapable of independent reasoning to determine what is good for them. Adults always know what is right for children, what is their best interest, without listening to them.

Most of the sampled institutions/departments work requires that they work within the framework of the 1998 children's Act of Ghana (Act 560) which is an offshoot of both the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UNCRC. Responses of the institutional level respondents generally reflected the frameworks within which they operate when their narratives were compared to reviews of the secondary materials. The likelihood that of the respondents' ideas might have been influenced by the legal frameworks within which they operate became evident in the representation of children in terms of rights by some of the respondents who do not work directly with frameworks such as the 1998 children's Act. This group of respondents expressed scepticism about children having rights and lamented over how "the rights of children" are negatively affecting children's development into responsible adults. Excerpt from the transcript of one of the respondents illustrates the doubt about children having right.

These days there is freedom, freedom is everywhere. Independence have come to Ghana, everybody is free. Look! When I was young, they will be drumming and dancing in my court yard, but I could not go out. ... But now 'socialisation' [modernisation] has come, people go to videos, children go to videos in their neighbour's houses even if you don't have TV in the house and your neighbour is having, your children will leave your house to go and watch videos and you don't know what happens there and the type of videos they are watching. These are some of the things... The children should not be forced, child rights, the children should not be forced to do this... I was a pampered child. If not because of the school training, I wouldn't have done anything, may be marry early, that would have been the only way out. I was naughty, I wasn't doing anything, you see, but as for school, oooiii! I will go because if I don't go they will punish me. I feared cane, I feared punishment. But now, all that is not there, [no more] the parents can't discipline them, [children] teachers are not allowed to discipline them

[children]. But our teachers used to discipline us (Woman, 56 years, Physician Assistant, living and working in one of the study communities)

The worry expressed by this institutional level respondent typifies community level representation of children in terms of rights and also signifies a possible misinterpretation of children's rights to mean that children should not be guided and should be allowed to do what they like. The narrative highlights how the respondent's current status as a Physician Assistant was achieved through discipline instilled in her which helped her avoided social and entertaining activities like drumming and dancing which had the possibility of diverting her attention from school and helped her remained in and completed school.

It must be noted that aside institutional level respondents' representations of children in respect of legal matters, some aspects of their representations of children could better be described as 'psycho-social' (the mental abilities of children and what they are capable of doing in the (social) environment. Although children are believed to be incapable of independent reasoning and easily lose concentration, they are perceived to be capable of comprehension of issues in their environments. These representations of children are related to children's mental capacity or their capacity for thought perceived to be lower than that of adults and this could explain the legal representations institutional level respondents associated with children. This idea about children from the institutional level respondents did not appear in the data generated from community level respondents.

4.2.2 Childhood "in practice"

Children's typical day activities

Adults and the elderly were asked to narrate what children do on a typical day in their households. Nearly all the respondents provided a gendered description of what a typical day of children entails; starting from the time they wake up until they go to bed when night falls. Most of the respondents provided their narratives in line with what children do in the farming season. This could be explained by the period of the fieldwork; May to October 2015 which is the farming season in northern Ghana. A few respondents re-counted what a typical day of a child is, in the farming season as well as the dry season. Children's typical day activities and number of respondents are summarised below:

❖ Go to school (34 out of 50 respondents).

- ❖ Go to the farm and work (36 out of 50 respondents): weed in the farm/weed allotted plot in the farm boys weed the millet field and the girls weed the groundnuts field, clear/prepare the field for the next farming season.
- ❖ Carry out gendered "designated children's work/activities" at the domestic level (50 out 50 respondents); start age to begin carrying out children's work is 6 years minimum and 10 years maximum.
- Boys attend to domestic animals
 - Girls carry out house chores.

In the summary above, it is clear that going to school is not part of the routine of children for 16 of the respondents. For 36 of the respondents, going to the farm is an important daily routine for children. This means that is very common that children combine school with farm work as well as domestic activities. All community level respondents reported it is a daily routine for children to carry out gendered "designated" children's work. Respondents justified the typical day activities of children. Their justifications were summarised and include the following:

- Continuity of parents work tradition which is farming
- Need for children to labour for and contribute to the food they eat
- Activities of children are fixed by God
- Children must carry out the activities they do as a training/learning/skill acquisition process towards becoming responsible adults
- Children should help raise income for their education / Need to help children to be responsible adults
 when they pass childhood/ Important for girls to be trained to become good wives when they marry
- Children must work to prevent idleness and waywardness
- Fear of children not getting employed after school when they are in adulthood
- Children need to help raise money for their clothes

Respondents' justifications of children's daily activities show further representations of children in socio-cultural, economic and psycho-religious dimensions. However, the dominance of economic dimension in the normative representation of children is very glaring

in both accounts of children's typical day activities and the justifications given because. It appears the economic value of children overrides other values such as sentimental value.

"Rights" of children's in households

To get community level respondents' views on what rights children have in their households, the question was posed in terms of rights which children have or are entitled to by virtue of their status as children. Responses largely indicated privileges which children do not have and a few of the respondents who understood a little of English and the concept of right as they often hear from social workers and some officers of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) sought clarification by combining English and the local language to repose the questions asked in the local language by asking whether the interviewer wanted to know if children have rights in their households. After the interviewer responded in the affirmative to the question seeking clarification, they responded forcefully "children have no rights". The clarification sought was very useful as it indicated clarity in the question posed in the local language to respondents who did not understand any English at all or have little idea about the concept of right as it is in national legal frameworks such as the constitution of Ghana. The Ghanaian concept of right is not different from its overall meaning but among most ethnic groups there is no a single word which correspond to the word 'right'. For example, human right is translated as *song-mengebigre* and 'right' is translated as *taah sore* among the Dagaaba. The absence of taah sore (right) in the translation of human right tells there is no one word for the concept of 'right' and difficulty in getting a single word for it. The two words, taah which means (have) and sore which means (can) are put together to mean right. Also, in the translation of human right, bigre is used to refer to right but when it stands alone, it means law.

Nearly all the respondents indicated children do not have rights and provided some details to their responses: children have no right to move out of the community without permission, enrol in school by themselves, do as they please in the family, share meat/take their share, and take family menu decisions.

In all the study communities, meat is separated from the food prepared for household members. One member shares the meat to correspond to the number of persons in the household and one after the other and according to the ranking of people in the household each person picks. The ranking of people is based on who is senior over the other and determined by age and gender in most households. The rule in most households in the study communities in the Lawra district is that males are seniors to females. Household heads usually take their share before the meat is shared. It is in this context respondents said children have no right to share meat in the household or take their share like the heads of households do. This is a privilege only adult member of the household can enjoy. Children not having the right to share meat can be interpreted as children eating less meat than adults. Because children are at the low end in the ranking of household members children take their share after all adults have taken and so if a child is given the opportunity to share he/she is likely to share the meat equally among members. On the other hand, because adults know that all adults take their share before children, an adult is likely to share the meat in an unequal proportions because among the common sayings/proverbs which normatively represent children is "children do not eat meat", children must crave for 'food' and not the meat that comes with the food, "Food" excludes meat.

Using schooling and feeding as starting point to probe, some rights of children emerged from respondents; including right to go to school, have their school needs provided, do what they deem good, stay with parents, have their school fees paid and have the right to food, shelter and clothing. Children are also privileged to help their parents and learn their professions.

Nearly all the community level respondents mentioned the above as rights of children when they were probed on what privileges children have in their households.

Clearly, from the daily practices of households with respect to children's rights or privileges it can be observed that there are similarities between what children do in practice and "normative representations" presented earlier; particularly under the legal dimension. The representations and practices suggest that children are not legal beings due to the belief that they are incompetent, immature and culturally among the Dagaaba, they are not supposed to enjoy some privileges at the household level. It could also be observed that community level respondents' depictions of children regarding rights are not in opposition to depictions of children in terms of rights by professionals.

Shared/social expectations of children: rights and responsibilities

Aside children's daily activities which they customarily engage in and which have already been presented, social expectations associated with children within the context and setting of the study were revealed. Most of the adults and the elderly interviewed indicated it is generally expected that children should be given some space in some adult activities if children are able to make financial contributions to family problems solving. Most of them explained it is a shared belief that children must participate in activities which have to do with their traditions and also get vaccinated. Lengthy array of social expectations in terms of responsibilities of children were outlined by most of the respondents. In the Lawra district, children are expected to (and must) look up to adults for direction, work, save money and contribute to solve family problems, work hard and make savings, make financial contribution to community matters, learn how to solve problems in the family, play a 'watchdog role', learn adult roles, avoid presence at adult places, exhibit skill and talent, be around for adults, learn their traditions, be obedient, learn the livelihood activity of their parents and not to do anything without adults' approval. Thus, the shared expectation among people in the study communities is that children are asked responsibilities but they are not recognised to have rights.

What distinguished the social expectations in the West Mamprusi district from the Lawra district is the expectation that female children or girls must go for "kayayei". This is a phenomenon well known in Accra and Kumasi (two major cities in southern Ghana) where northern rural migrant children carry people's load on their heads to specified destinations for a fee.

In terms of rights, most of the respondents cited "go to school" and, "learn and acquire a skill" as rights of children which are shared by most local or community people.

Only one respondent mentioned play as a right of children which he claimed is generally expected of children. From the daily routine of children presented and also the "rights" of children in households, this claim of children having the right to play being a social expectation could be interpreted to be limited to very young children. This is because, when children are not working it means they are "idling" and this idleness of children is prevented by engaging them; most of the times in "designated children's activities leaving very young children (children below 6 years) because they are believed to be incapable of engaging in any economic activity.

Responsibilities of parents towards children

Children's well-being and their lived lives are not independent of adults' responsibility towards them.

Both the respondents from Lawra and West Mamprusi districts mentioned among parental responsibilities teach children acceptable norms and train them to acquire a skill. But respondents from Lawra district also added teach gendered roles and ensure children carry out their daily routine. While respondents from West Mamprusi district mentioned feeding, shelter, enrol children in school, pay school fees, clothe, provide children's health needs, counsel, pray for them and make children work to finance their education.

Although the parental responsibilities outlined by the West Mamprusi district respondents appear broader and closer to common notions of parental responsibility (meeting the feeding, clothing, shelter, health and educational needs of children), rather than parents claiming responsibility of financing children's education, this is shifted to children themselves. The parental responsibilities outlined by the Lawra district respondents are not different from the children's daily activities they indicated and the justifications they outlined and which have already been presented. This again, further shows the representation of children through the economic dimension already presented under "Normative" representations of

children/childhood at the household/community level. The slight difference could be attributed to differences in the religious affiliation of respondents from these districts. Even though community people in the West Mamprusi district were in their farms some hours of the day, most adults were visible under trees doing nothing or having conservation and rushed to the mosques in response to call for Muslim prayers compared to the largely Christian respondents in the Lawra district who were busy on their farms and were not seen rushed to Church even on Sundays.

Community responsibilities towards children

At the early stage of data generation, it was revealed that one of the proverbial expressions normally stated by community people from the study communities in the Lawra district in reference to children is "Bie taah dogru, kye o ba taah kaara, o ba taah tonnu" translated as: a child has someone who gives birth to him/her but no limit to who cares for or sends him/her. Similar sayings also appeared in the West Mamprusi district. This adage frames children as a communal property with communal benefits. Hence, community responsibilities towards children were explored through individual interviews for further insights. Explanations of community responsibility towards children varied between the Lawra and the West Mamprusi district respondents.

Among people of the Lawra district children are represented as communal property, with communal benefits and therefore, the total and desired growth/development and success of children in the community is a collective one. Summary from respondents on responsibility of the community to children are as follows:

- Ensure children don't roam around aimlessly during school hours
- Leave positive marks in the minds of children
- Ensure children go to and remain in school
- Correct children

- Collectively bring up children
- Teach children community livelihood work for skill acquisition
- Ensure children are morally upright
- Ensure children know and follow taboos and totems
- Invoke the god's for children's protection and success in school.

In the West Mamprusi district however, all respondents said emphatically there is no communal responsibility towards children; with some saying the practice of community responsibility towards children functioned only in the past and not in contemporary times. They attributed this to modernisation and individualism in the correction of children due to parents' and children resistance to scolding and correction from other adults.

This is a positive notion about children which if taken seriously and supported could enhance children's well-being in communities. Among the West Mamprusi district respondents it is clear this notion about children is not foreign to them, but they appear to have alienated themselves from the practice and could revert to it with some sensitisation on its benefits.

"Parents want quick returns from their children. They expect them to begin making material contributions to the family as soon as possible" (Department of Social Welfare officer who has worked closely with community people for 8 years)

This remark was made during informal conversation with the officer. His demeanour while making this expression showed a disapproval of children making material contributions to their parents. His perception about children making material contributions to their household/parents could be influenced by the 1998 children's Act of Ghana which is the framework within which the department of Social Welfare and other child centred governmental institutions operate. Although the remark made by the social welfare officer is not different from analysis at the household level regarding children's everyday life activities and experiences in their households and communities, it highlights children's role in

household economies in rural communities and suggest children are sought after by rural people for their economic value. One of the institutional level respondents who lives and works in one of the study communities also explained:

Children do a lot of things on their own without telling their parents even travelling 'down south'....Children can decide to go to school or not to go to school and roam around, or skip school to help their parents in the farm, they travel down south during holidays to 'look' for money. They go and return any time they like without any adult preventing them from going. This is just a normal thing to them. Some even encourage their children to go when they see other children who have gone and returned with something. These are very normal way of life associated with children and their parents take it to be normal. When you the non-native questions why they allow the children to travel 'down south' all by themselves, they normally reply that their children have some needs. They asked for pencils, pens and school things but since they [parents] cannot provide, they have to allow them to go and 'look' for money to meet their needs (key informant in one of the study communities).

It is worthy to note that the narrative of the key informant emerged from an informal conversion. Another institutional level respondent's narrative on parental responsibility further deviates from the nearly half of the community level interviewees who claimed parents have a responsibility for clothing and enrolling children in school and which most parents do.

...During holidays, a number of children, the very day they closed (vacate), they even carried their polythene bags to the school and so when they just closed they were at the station to travel 'down' as usual. ... If a child can bath and do things by yourself, [himself/herself] you [the children] are considered grown up. ...parents are shunning from responsibilities, so they push 'them' 'down there' and they are free. When they go 'down', they don't feed them, when they come back they don't ask for school uniform from parents and so at their ages they have to start fending for themselves...Some were very, young, 10, 11 years even 9 years going all by themselves (women and children's committee member of the Lawra district assembly who worked for 8 years).

Again in the case of the Women and Children's Committee Member she was not asked about child migration but what the committee to which she is a member does for children. Her account emerged from a story about how the committee tried to rescue children traveling to southern Ghana.

Both narratives highlight adults or parents/guardians' perception or belief about children being capable of working and earning money to help themselves or their families. Again, the stories show the nature of parenting and what parents consider as their responsibilities. Although feeding and clothing children are commonly considered basic in the responsibilities of parents, the Women and Children's Committee member talked about parents shunning their responsibility of feeding, clothing and providing school needs of children and instead push children to do these for themselves at least for the period of seasonal migration. The other story highlights similar parental irresponsibility including parents not interested whether their children go to school or not.

From a distant, the attitude of parents towards children [most often, their own children] could be attributed to poverty because the study districts are known to be among the poor districts in Ghana. However, key informant at the health facility of one of the study communities argued:

...it is not because the children's parents are *neng-baalperepere* (living in abject poverty). In my opinion I think the parents 'like' the children more than themselves and so when the children are doing something that demands correction and scolding they just look on.

This excerpt suggests that children's living situation may not always reflect the general economic or material conditions in their households/communities. The argument of the key informant further suggests that it be thought by many that children migrate because their parents together with them are living in abject poverty but children of parents who are not living in abject poverty do engage in independent migration. Parents "like" their children more than themselves is rhetorical and is used to show that parents are either afraid to correct their children or care little about what children do with their lives. Nearly all the institutional level respondents interviewed reported rural parents and adults normally take children as "instruments for work" and children are expected, in addition to carrying out activities labelled "children's work", they must help adults with whatever work adults do.

Although childhood "in practice" which emerged from institutional level respondents is not entirely different from that of household/community respondents, it highlights further the economic dimension of the normative representations of children/childhood. How these representations of children/childhood improve children's living conditions or negatively affect their lives as children and their journey towards what their lives will be in adulthood is discussed in chapter 5.

The end of childhood

Although in the various dimensions of normative representations of children/childhood there are clues about how the childhoods of children in the study communities end children, adults, the elderly and children themselves were asked specifically how and when children cease to be children and considered as adults. Also similar question was posed to respondents of the sampled institutions. Again a search for how and when children's childhood end was sought from the secondary materials reviewed.

It was necessary to explore how children's childhood ends because in the literature of childhood studies, childhood is considered as both permanent and temporary. Permanent because it is a state of life in the life course and will fore ever exist as long as humans reproduce their offspring who are not immediately like others in the life course labelled as "adults". It is also temporary because persons labelled as children and living in their childhoods transition into the adult category of humankind and also because "now" adults were ones children and experienced living as children but did not remain in the state of life "childhood". Community level responses did not show any difference between the standards and dimensions used for normatively constructing children as already presented. Secondary materials largely showed when children exit out of childhood -18 years, but failed to show how they exit out of childhood. Only the Family and Child Welfare Policy indicated that

when children are 18 years they are adults by age and so have rights and obligations associated with adults in Ghana. In addition, completion of school (largely Senior High School) and the young adult's ability to economically fend for himself/herself were emphasised in the cessation of childhood. This difference in the Family and Child Welfare Policy document about the end of children's childhood could be explained by its current nature (came into being in 2014) and might have observed the gaps in other child-centred frameworks as well as the everyday realities of children.

In interviewing adults and old people at the community level they were asked to talk about when and how children cease to be children. Responses of two adults and an old person which are typical of most of the responses are presented below.

Look at this child that is being backed, by the time he is between 3 and 5 years the child's mind is not the same as when he/she is about 6 to 7 years. At this age, the child's behaviour is not the same as he is being backed. ... When this child is 15 to 20 years he/she is no longer a child but an adult. As for 20 years, he/she is a full blown adult and is within the realm of adults. It is not only age we use to determine that a child has passed childhood. We also use work. If a child has not reached the age of 15, but works like an adult and behaves like an adult, he/she has become an adult because he/she can carry out activities to help himself or herself. (Female, 50 years, married, peasant farmer, not formally educated, Dazuuri community)

The age and physical body of the person. That is, 15 years. When the person has a child and develops breast. This is what most people in the community use to determine if a child has grown into adult. (Male 63 years, Kparigu community)

... When the chest of a girl is full of breast and she begins menstruating, she has become an adult; she is no longer a child. Those days, boys did not wear anything so we use to observe their physical and their genitals to determine whether they have become adults. But these days even babies wear clothes so what we use to determine whether they have passed childhood is seasonal migration of young person's to the south. Going to Techiman is here with us. Young people migrate to Techiman at the end of the farming season here. So when a boy goes to Techiman and returns, he has become a man. These days by age 14, boys go to Techiman and come. Those, days they use to get to 18 to 20 years before they go to Techiman and also start 'chasing' women. But not these days; some of the boys migrate in the dry season and others hung around until it is time for clearing the field for the next farming season. (Woman, 82 year, Toto community).

The excerpts above clearly show how cessation of childhood is determined and also how the determination of the end of childhood is linked to the classifications of the normative representations of children/childhood already presented. Both the first and the second excerpts suggest the determination of the end of childhood for children in the study communities are related to the age and the socio-cultural and economic dimensions.

In the third excerpt, the onset of menstruation shows a girl ceases to be child while a boy child's status on seasonal migration is used to determine his status (child or adult). The older person further highlighted physiological indicators were used in the past to determine the end of childhood for male children. However because children are clothed in contemporary times, it explains why the determination of the end of childhood vary slightly between male and female children. But again, this excerpt also shows the determination of the end of childhood is related to the age, biological/physiological, and socio-cultural and economic dimensions of the normative representation presented earlier.

4.3 Representations of children among different generations

Changes in the social and cultural representations of children/childhood are based on primary data generated from the elderly (persons 65 years and above) purposively selected from the study communities. All secondary materials gathered from the sampled institutions contained issues about children from the late 1990s to the present. Although efforts were made to obtain working documents of the sampled institutions, which came after those of the late 1990s, none of them was able to provide any such documents about children. Hence, the analysis in this section is only at the household/community level. Estimating from the youngest and the oldest, respondents who were respectively 65 and 100 years, the changes in the socio-cultural representations of children/childhood in this presentation and discussion, are changes since the 1970s and below with the assumption that the youngest respondent's childhood ended when he was 19 years in 1970 and 65 years in 2015 when data for this study were generated.

Respondents' accounts of the childhoods of children at the time they were young mostly ended by comparing that to the childhoods of contemporary children and these were mostly similar to the normative representations of children/childhood and childhood "in practice" in contemporary times at the household/community level already presented. However, for analytical purposes, representations of "then" children, that is to say representations of children since the 1970s and below is compared with respondents' explanations of how "now" children are depicted and treated in their accounts of childhood in the past.

4.3.1 Representation of "then children" and "now children"

The summary in table 4.4 show clearly changes in the socio-cultural representations of children/childhood in rural communities in the Northern Ghana and these representations are generally normative. In both the representations of past and contemporary children, there are social, economic, educational, psycho-social and moral and as well as health dimensions

through which children were and are represented. For example, past children were portrayed as children who did not engage in sexual activities and also did not consume had liquor compared to the fact that contemporary children do these. Children of different generations are represented through a moral lens where past children are perceived to be morally decent compared to contemporary children. Also, psycho-socially, past children were believed to be obedient and respectful of adults, foolish, learned little and were not enlightened compared to contemporary children. This dimension represents both past and present children in the negative and also in the positive. Although past children were perceived to be obedient, they were also portrayed as foolish and not enlightened compared to contemporary children. Table 4.4 below summarises representations of "then" and "now" children.

Table 4.4 - Representations of "then" and "now" children

"Then" children	"Now" children
Dependence/Protection	Dependence/Protection
Were beaten to be corrected and disciplined	Are less protected
Adhered to norms (not to attend funerals)	Enjoy better health
Had more food	Are not resistant to illness
Were 'owned' by adults, controlled and protected	Are 'children-adults' who engage in adult matter
Were foolish, learned little and not enlightened	
Suffered poor health but were resistant to illness	
Were 'real' children who stayed away from adult	
matters	
Did not attend school	
	Children-adults
Children-adults	Need persuasion to be corrected and disciplined.
Went naked (putting on clothes marked a transition into	Are not disciplined and controlled by parents
adulthood).	Are disrespectful of adults.
Did not engage in sexual activities	Disregard norm of staying away from attending
Did not consume hard liquor	funerals.
	Childhood has shortened
Lazines	Put on clothes (this is no longer sign
Gathered and played and had more time for play	of having transitioned out of childhood).
Had prolonged childhood	No longer gather and play and have
Suffered sleeping on poor beddings (limited markets	little time for play
for children to make their own money and buy	Enjoy better beddings
beddings)	(children are able to buy their
	beddings from money they earn from markets)
Work	Engage in sexual activities
Farming was the only economic activity for children	(this makes them become pre-mature adults
	Are exposed to hard liquor and consume it
Belong to community	Are disobedient of adults
Were obedient and respectful of adults	Are wise and enlightened
Did not fight with parents	Fight with parents
Belonged to the community	Fight with parents
	Lazines
	Have less food
	Work
	Attend school/combine school with farming

Attend school/combine school with farming

Belong to communityBelong to their parents

Source: author's construct, 2017

4.3.2 Norms associated with children: continuity and change

Narratives of the elderly reveal that some norms associated with children in the past have persisted and appeared in their outline of norms and beliefs associated with children currently. Few of the norms associated with children in the past did not feature at all in the list of permissible and not permissible behaviours or actions of children in contemporary times. However, both permissible and impermissible behaviours of contemporary children

have expanded (see table 4.4). Although, the elderly relied on their memories to list norms of the past and this might have accounted for a shorter list of norms for children emerging for past children, this is considered both continuity and change in norms associated with children because it is the same respondents who narrated the norms for both the past and the present. Therefore, they have lived through both the norms associated with children in the past and the present and once they were able to point out what pertains in the present, any norm of the past which did not come up as part of present norms could be considered to have withered away.

Permissible actions and beliefs which are on the list for contemporary children and not for past children include: children going only to places that are approved by adults or their parents/guardians, children must limit their conversations to the realm of children, children's relationship with their parents being a reciprocal one, children must stay away from visitors but must be close enough to serve them and children must work hard.

Again, children not to steal, eat some meat, and stay away from family secrets and adult conversation; children not to independently embark on a journey and take independent decisions are on the impermissible actions/beliefs expected of contemporary children and not on the list of past children.

The seemingly, expanded norms associated with and expected of contemporary children suggest not only changes in norms, but also suggest that these additions might have been necessitated by social and economic changes in their communities/societies. For example, children not to embark on a journey independently or take independent decision associated only with current children and not children of the past could be an indication that, the social and economic conditions in communities and societies make it much easier for children to engage in these actions but which are thought to be inappropriate for children and hence the

"law" to check them. Table 4.5 summaries norms associated with past and contemporary children.

Table 4.5- Norms associated with children in the past compared to the present.

Norms in the Past	Current norms	
Permissible standards/Beliefs	Permissible standards/Beliefs	
Children:	Children:	
Children were to:	are not independent of parents	
learn from adults/ learn the work of adults obey adults always/ be of good behaviour speak inoffensively or politely to adults be truthful always see themselves as belonging to the community	must be courteous, respectful of and be obedient always to adults and comply to their actions must be hard working must keep a distance from visitors but be close enough to serve them and their parents' relationship is reciprocal go to approved places only are to limit their conversations to realm of children be honest	
Not permissible Children were to:	Not permissible Children:	
avoid sex and fondling with the opposite sex	not to steal	
limit their participation in traditional rituals	must not fight	
avoid adult social spaces	do not eat some meat or food	
avoid insults on adults /shun fighting with parents	do not engage in sexual activity	
	to distant themselves from family secrets and adults conversation	
	do not embark on a journey independently	
	do not play with the opposite sex	
	not to take independent decisions	
Source: Author's construct 201	7	

Source: Author's construct 2017

4.3.3 The end of childhood: past and present

As stated earlier, childhood is generally regarded as a permanent and a temporal category in the life course. Though temporality of childhood is universal, how childhood ends for any child or group of children could be context specific and could vary from generation to generation. The elderly were asked when and how they were considered as adults and not children when they were growing up. Their explanations mostly ended with how the childhood of other children at their time ended.

Compared to adult respondents' explanations of how and when childhood end for contemporary children I interpret the outcome as both change and continuity in the termination of childhood for current and past children.

Collecting taxes of children through their parents, children participation in communal labour, children engaging in hunting expeditions and children beginning to cover their nakedness are some social and economic criteria which were used in the past to move children out of the status of being children into the realm of adults. For contemporary children, these are not part of the principles or benchmarks for terminating their childhood. Clearly in the summary presented in table 4.6, the minimum age for admission into adulthood in the past was 18 compared to 14 for contemporary children. Moreover, other criteria for admission into adulthood for contemporary children such as children's ability to earn income independently and having embarked on and returned from seasonal migration are not part of standards used in the past for ending children's childhood. Taxation and communal labour among the standards used to move children from childhood to adulthood could be explained by the Indirect Rule system which was a system of governance in British colonies. Chiefs collected taxes from their subjects and organised people in their communities for communal labour for community development. These obligations were limited to adults and therefore young adults or children who were taxed through their parents or made to take part in communal labour logically, were deem as adults and not children anymore.

Table 4.6-The end of childhood: past and current generations compared

When childhood ended for children in the past	How childhood end for children currently
Children:	Children:
developed breast/breast began sagging (girls)	are able to earn income on their own
onset of menstruation (girls)	marry
got married	give birth
developed physical features semblance of	embark on and return from seasonal
adults	migration
were taxed through their parents	are 14 years minimum and 20 years
began participating in communal labour	maximum
began hunting expeditions	can carry out household work/activities
worked on the farm like adults/carried	become hardworking and demonstrate
household activities like adults	intelligence
were between 18 years minimum and 25 years	onset of menstruation
maximum	have pubic hair
stopped exposing nakedness	have enlarged chest (boys)
	can impregnate a girl (boys)
0 1 1 1	

Source: author's construct 2017

4.4 Representations of boy and girl children

Differences in representations of boy and girl children emerged from both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from household/community level respondents while secondary data were obtained only from the sampled institutions/departments.

Primary data from institutional level respondents were reports and stories from their observations and interactions with community people through their work with community people. As a result primary data generated from institutional level respondents reflected differences in the representation of male and female children in households/communities in the study districts and not representations from the institutional perspective. Hence, although the discussion/analysis in this section is at both the household/community and institutional levels, results from primary data obtained from institutions are discussed at the household/community level.

4.4.1 Boy and girl children in the household and community level

Normative boyhood and girlhood

The study revealed, socio-culturally, divergent representations of boy and girl children. The greater part of the notions of boyhood and girlhood presented (see table 4.7) recurred in the narratives of nearly all the respondents; except "girls being trustworthy" and "vulnerable" and "boys being dishonest". In particular, respondents stressed gendered roles of boys and girls and the positioning of boy children and girl children in the family structure; considering girls as "outsiders" living in their fathers' families and boys as "true members" of their families. Respondents perceived girls as needing more protection as opposed to boys needing less protection. The opposing nature, by which boy and girl children are culturally represented and socialised, particularly at the household level, culminates in a belief by most of the respondents that 'roles for boys and girls are created by God.

Table 4.7 -Normative girlhood and boyhood

Representation of girl children	Representation of boy children
Representation of girl children Girls: are expected and must carry out activities that are within the house do some boys work are living not in their family (that is, their family of birth which they currently live) position in the family is the same as women (subordinate to boys) training and upbringing is informed by the roles expected of women take the role of mothers	Boys: o are expected and should carry out activities outside of the house o do not do girls work (nearly a taboo) o belong to the family (the family they are born into and where they currently live) o position is similar to men (superior position to girls) o training and upbringing of boys is informed by the expected roles of men o take the role of fathers
 take the role of mothers are trustworthy and merciful are vulnerable/weaker not attached to their fathers need more protection 	 are dishonest are stronger are closer to their fathers need less protection

Source: author's construct from interview narratives of 20 older persons and 30 adults (May to October 2015)

Respondents emphasised some rules and regulations which guide the upbringing of male and female children. While most community level respondents in the study communities in the Lawra district stressed that roles for boys and girls are not interchangeable, the West Mamprusi respondents explained boys and girls carry out different domestic/housework but, it is not a taboo for boys and girls to carry the role of the opposite gender. Most respondents said both boy and girl children are taught the same values: honesty, respect and hard work and are both guided to do the right thing.

Summary of gendered acts and roles for male and female children which emerged from adult respondents in the Lawra district are presented below.

- It is a taboo for boys to dip their hands in the "koro" or pot. Only girls can do this. [The commonest dish of the study group is known commonly in Ghana as T.Z (tuozafi) and this is preserved and stored in a pot of sour water and remove by hand when needed]
- Culturally, roles for boys and girls are not interchangeable
- Boys and girls do not play together because it leads to immoral acts
- Girls' work is not compulsory for boys, but boys can carry out designated girls' activity where there are no girls
- Only boys can participate in traditional rituals and sacrifices

The summary above highlights again, permissible and impermissible acts for male and female children as well as different privileges accorded children by virtue of their gender. Boy children being forbidden from taking food from the pot appears disadvantages to male

children because they cannot take the food and eat when they are hungry but girls can do. However, it also shows that male children should or are to be served by female children and not the other way round.

The relative position of children in households/families

Since children are not a single category but made up of male and female and different ages, I explored the relative position of children in household/families and also explored further the gendered normative representations of children they highlighted in their responses to earlier questions and their relationship to the treatments of male and female children in households/families.

Using how seniority is determined among children in a household as a starting point, the relative position of children and how their positions are determined emerged from their narratives. I expected respondents to go by the obvious mode of determining seniority, which is age. Nevertheless, interview narratives from respondents in both study districts revealed that, children's age, sex/gender and kingship ties determine whether they are seniors or not relative to other children in the household. The data indicated that, age does not matter at all for determining whether a child is senior to another or not and this is especially so in communities in the Lawra district.

The main determinant of seniority from the narratives of respondents in the Lawra district's study communities is sex/gender; to the extent that a small boy is considered senior to adult females. An excerpt from the interview transcript of a 40 year old man with 6 children succinctly illustrates this point.

...Seniority is determined by sex. Let's say something is shared in the household, we use the traditional way of determining seniority and who should take after the other. Just like my mother cannot be head over me though am younger than her in age, a boy child who is younger in the midst of his siblings who are older than him in age but are girls, is senior and will have to make his choice before the girls if anything is shared among them.

He explained the rational for the seemingly pre-determined senior position of boy children and junior position of girl children.

A pogbil eeh nuba meneyire nuba, kye ka a dogbil e deah nuba (the girls are members of some other families but the boys are members of this family). So the boy is senior. We use age to determine seniority only if all the children concern are girls or boys.

Hence, the status of being "senior" or "junior" in the Lawra district for boy and girl children are ascribed based on a child's sex at birth. Boy children are "seniors" or superior and these come with some privileges and girl children are born "juniors" with fewer privileges.

Most respondents in the study communities in the Lawra district explained further why boy children are seniors to girl children not withstanding their ages. Male children's position in their families is permanent while girl children's position is temporal. Male children will continue to be members of their families of birth while female children will cease to be members of their families of birth when they become adults. The temporality of the position/status of girl children in their families of birth or what I am referring to as their "uterine families" makes them "juniors" to boys. Reasons cited by nearly all the 14 adult respondents in the study communities in the Lawra district for boys' superiority over girls were summarised and presented below.

- o Boys are seniors to girls because they live in their families. Girls have no family and will have one only after marriage
- O Just as women cannot be seniors to men and cannot be heads of families, girls cannot be seniors to boys their ages not withstanding because the girls do not belong 'here' (the family)
- o Girls will leave the family when they become adults, hence they cannot be seniors to boys
- O Boys' status in the household is superior to girls; hence, in the event of limited resources the boys will be favoured. Therefore, boys are senior to girls.
- Only boys can carry out some family obligations and this makes boy children seniors to girl children even if they are far younger in age.

Apart from sex/gender which is used to automatically position children as seniors or juniors, kinship relations were also mentioned more frequently by respondents as a variable for determining who is senior or otherwise among children. The maxim: *Oh mang yieh wieh a*

waana kaba dogi oh saa translated as one returns from the farm to see that one's father has just been born was mentioned by most of the respondents in the Lawra district to explain how kinship ties and not age is used in the positioning or ranking of children in the household/family.

Data from community level respondents largely revealed that there are children who are younger in age but are considered seniors to other children and even some adults. During FGDs with boys and girls in the study communities in the Lawra district, they corroborated the ideas of the adult respondents and referred to a child with such a privileged "kinship-determined" status or position as *bebil neng-kpong* (child-adult) who is extended to, some rights and privileges of adults or suffer some consequences for his [this child- adult was mostly referred to as male] dual status of child and adult.

Results from both boys and girls FGDs on differences or otherwise between boy children and girl children in the study communities in the Lawra district, were similar accept that boys represented girls as promiscuous. However, this did not appear in the discussion from the girls. But, both boys and girls portrayed boys as having a distinct and important role and this is believed to be ordained by God. They perceived boys to be more important than girls and indicated boys are members and the future of their "uterine family". The boys represented girls as people who do not pay attention in school and investment in them yields no results. Both boys and girls frequently made reference to girl children as *nuba mene yire nuba* (belonging to some people's family). The way boy children perceive girl children came up more clearly in a participatory activity where they were facilitated to among other activities; draw a typical community in their district. In their drawings, they indicated a school with children standing by the school which they labelled "school boy". Excerpt on the

conversation with them about their drawings gave further insights into stories they provided earlier.

Interviewer: Why did you add school boy but did not add school girl? Did you forget to include

them?

Children: yes! No! (Divided, yes (4) and no (3)

They explained:

The girls.... some are attending school o.k.... but most are not. When they are in school, most don't even get to JHS and get pregnant. Some go to their boyfriends when school closes and creates confusion between parents and the teachers because the parents expect their girls to be home at a certain time and the teachers also know that the girls are home but they are not. As for girls schooling, *a bataah par* [translated as, it is nothing to write home about]. That is the reason why we forgot about them in our drawings.

This statement made by one of the 3 who respondent "no" was supported by the other 2 and 2 of the 4 who answered "yes", providing similar explanations. This voice further highlights boy children's representation of girls as promiscuous, less important and will waste families' resources if they are enrolled in school. Other members of the group added that some of the girls who attend school also like going for record dance and by doing this they chase and engage in sexual intercourse with men, get disinterested in schooling, drop out and get married. But from the FGD with girls in the study communities in the Lawra District, girls attributed their inability to do well in school to carrying out more domestic activities than boys leading to fatigue and inability to study particularly at home like the boy children do. It must be noted that the kinship-determined position or status accorded to some children, was more pronounced in the narratives of the study respondents in the Lawra district than the West Mamprusi district. Most of the respondents in this district said age is the main criteria for determining seniority for purposes of material things being shared among children. But, in terms of superiority of boys over girls it is the same as indicated by the Lawra district study respondents. This slight difference could be an indication of some cultural differences between the two study districts.

Preferred sex/gender of children and reasons

Respondents (19 to 64 years old) were asked their preferred sex/gender of children and why.

Their responses were categorised and the results are presented in table 4.8.

Table 4.8 - Preferred gender of children

Preference	Number of respondents
Boy children	15
Girl children	4
No preference	11
Total	30

Author's construct from interviews with 30 adults in the study communities

It is clear, in the table the preference of male children to female children. All the 4 respondents who prefer female to male children were female respondents while all those who prefer male to female children or have no preference for a particular gender of children were both male and female respondents.

The main reason for the preference of male children is "continuity of the lineage" or family tree while female children being sympathetic and merciful at all times is the main motive for their preference. Others cited the usefulness of girl children for domestic activities in addition to being merciful for their preference over male children.

However, a supernatural belief was a reason given by most of the respondents who said they have no preference for one gender over the other. The reasons for not having preference of male over female over male include:

- All children are created by God and it will be offensive to God for one to have preference
- The gender that will be supportive to parents at their adulthood is unknown
- Each of them (boys or girls have their benefits)
- Both are human beings

Although those who have no preference is slightly lower than those who prefer male to female children, stories of institutional level respondents on their observations and years of living with and working with community people indicate that most people prefer male to female children: particularly fathers. This suggest, further the superiority and importance

attach to boy children over girl children. Logically then, the handling and support for "superior and important" children (boys) and "inferior and less important" children (girls) are likely not to be the same.

4.4.2 Boy and girl children in the institutional perspective

Stories from institutional level respondents on the differences in the representations of male and female children indicate the extent of difference in the representations of male and female children in the study area. A few of their stories were extracted from their interview transcripts.

In terms of determining seniority particularly in the area of sharing something, excuse me to say it's one of the areas that the boy child is considered more a 'human being' than the girl child and is made to take first even if the girl child is older or if there is some kind of meeting the boy child is given the opportunity to participate and not the girls. They determine seniority in most instances by sex and not age. In some cases you wonder whether the girl child cannot contribute to discussions. There are several community meetings that when you go and schedule demanding both adults (men and women) and children you are likely to meet adults and boy children and the girls may be somewhere doing house chores. Again, in some instance you call for a community meeting asking for only adults and you will go and meet adults (men and women) and also boys but no girls. So you may see the boys and their father sit down with hands washed and waiting for the food and the girl child may be busy doing something but they will still shout at the girl child to bring the food and this is acceptable. (Male officer, one of the study district's Department of Social Welfare).

This respondent's story further shows the relative position of male and female children in households/families and how their positions are determined as already discussed. The respondent stated further that in traditional households in the study area, there are rules governing boy and girl children's consumption of available meat. Meat from traditional sacrifices is mostly forbidden for girls but not for boys. House chores are strictly for girls and tilling of the land strictly for boys. It must be highlighted that in traditional northern Ghanaian communities meat is hardly in sufficient quantities in meals and most of the times absent. Consequently, meat is not served with food but shared separately according to the number of people in the household after key people like the male head of household has taken his share. Other things which must be distributed among members of the household or any

category of persons such as children in the household are shared among members and they take one after the other according to who is "senior" over the other.

Again, explanations from two other institutional level respondents' further points to normative representations of male and female children as already presented from community level respondents narratives.

If you ask community members they will tell you the norms are the same for all the children; boys and girls. But, in reality you will see that there are different norms for boys and girls. But if you observe, you will see the differences. For example, when they come from school you will see the girl working through out until she goes to sleep. Then the boy will come you will see that he only drives the animals to go and sleep. The girl is very busy and the boy is free. So you will see that the work load for the girl and boy are not same. When a boy and a girl are to go to school and there is no enough resources, the girl will stay and the boy will go because they see the boy as a landlord in future he will stay and the girl will be married out and if the girl goes to school she will marry and the other family will benefit from whatever she acquires so they don't pay much attention to girls education. (Woman, 51 years, Women and Children's Committee member, Lawra district)

In communities, the boy child is rather more important than the girl child, because, a girl child belongs to a different 'house' (family). But a boy child is in his 'house' (family). Locally they will say...this child [referring to a girl child] is from a different house. ... Which means, she is not an 'indigene' of the house or the family house, she is just part of it. They see girl child as somebody from different 'house' because you [the girl] will be married to settle somewhere. ... Boys are seniors to girls. No matter how old the girl is the boy is senior even to the mother. In a house, when the man dies, leaving widow and orphans, and the last born of the widow is a boy, if you go to that house, and say you want the Landlord, they will tell you the last born is the Landlord, Yes, the mother will tell you the last born is the Landlord. Why because, he is the male. But you see, we can have landlord and landlady (Man, 40 years, Department of Social Welfare, West Mamprusi District).

Although community level respondents in the West Mamprusi district claimed age determines seniority among children and most of them indicated no preference of one gender of child over the other, the narrative of the Department of Social Welfare officer of this district suggest ascribed senior status for male children. One of the health officials in one of the study communities in the West Mamprusi District who is also a native told a story about the preference of male over female children.

They [community people] attach importance to boys than girls. I have been quarrelling with people over deliveries of boys and girls. When the birth of a baby girl is announced it is mostly received as follows: "a woman too".[referring to the baby girl]. And you will see from their facial

expressions that they are not happy of the delivery of a baby girl. (Midwife retired and volunteering, 62 years, Health Centre Kparigu, West Mamprusi District)

... If a woman delivers a girl, the father 'has no hand' or care about her. The fathers don't care whether they go to school or not. (Woman, 56 years, Physician Assistant, living and working in one of the study communities)

One of the respondents also said that if a boy child and a girl are computing for limited household resources to continue school, the girl child will be dropped. But where it is the mother who takes care of their schooling the girl child will be favoured. Most institutional level respondents said parents and guardians in rural communities will claim boy and girl children are treated equally but the practice, according them is, there are differentials in the treatment of children base on their sex or biological make up.

Secondary materials obtained from the sampled institutions/departments showed minor differences in the representation of boy and girl children. The few differences which were observed were largely from the Lawra District Medium Term Development Plan (DMTDP) and the Girl Child Education Resource Manual (GCERM). After a keenly review of the DMTDP of the Lawra district; looking for themes relating to boy and girl children, the following were observed relating to girl children.

- Sensitise community people on the importance of girls education
- Support pregnant girls and adolescent mothers to complete school
- Establish procedures and systems related to girls education
- Establish girls' clubs in all schools

All the points above can be summarised as 'girl children needing education and also in need of support to stay in and complete school because they are disadvantaged. It must be stated that representations of girl children in the DMTDP are driven from the GCERM. While DMTDPs are district specific but rooted in the overall national development agenda of Ghana, the GCERM is the same for all districts in Ghana. During, covert observation of

teacher-student interaction at a basic school in one of the study communities in the Lawra district some teachers denoted girls as poor time managers and cheaters at examinations. This representation of girls by some teachers in this school, if it is widespread, goes further to reinforce gendered representations of children which exist in households and communities and has the potential of lowering the self-esteem of female children in schools.

4.5. Childhood poverty indicators and socio-cultural representations of childhood

Results in this section are presented and discussed only at the household/community level of analysis. Child poverty indicators within the socio-cultural representations of children/childhood were explored by further analysing data on the socio-cultural representations of children; identifying coherence and in coherence between normative representations of children /childhood and childhood "in practice" as well as local understandings of child poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion of children. Indicators of child or children poverty found in the coherence and incoherence between normative childhood and childhood "in practice" are outlined and discussed in chapter 5.

4.5.1 Coherence and incoherence between normative childhood and childhood "in practice"

Consistencies between normative childhood and childhood "in practice" were noticed from representations which emerged from data generated from adults, the elderly and children in the study communities. Summary of the consistencies between normative childhood and childhood "in practice" which were observed are presented in table 4.9

Table 4.9- Coherence between normative childhood and childhood "in practice"

Normative childhood	Childhood "in practice"
Children:	Children:
Cannot work like adults	Carry out activities designated as "children's
	work" (believed to be fixed by God)
Do not behave and think like adults	Must demonstrate intelligence, but exercise
	their minds as adults only when they become
	adults
Learn from home	Attendance of school is not compulsory. They
	are expected to learn and practice the
	occupation of their parents through early
	training on the job and which they do
Are partners in the provision of household survival	are expected to engage and do engage in
needs and must work hard	income earning activity, contribute to family
	income and participate in farm work
Have superior and retentive memory	(boys) participate in traditional activities and
	some community meetings not as contributors
	but to listen
Do not embark on seasonal migration	who have embarked on and returned from
	seasonal migration become adults and lose their
	status as children
Are not to experience elopement and courtship	lose their status of being children after
(7) (111) 11 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	elopement/courtship and considered as adults
(Some) are "children" in one breath and "adults" in	(this category) are treated like all other
other (bebil-neng-kpong) "child-adult"	children, but also treated as adults in some
	situations; such as participating in traditional
	sacrifices (as observers) or taking the role of
	adults in the absence of an adult or absence of a
NT 1	capable adult to play his/her role.
Need to suffer in order to gain	work and contribute to finance their education
are capable of mischief	are trained to acquire skills, instilled with
A	society's acceptable morals and made busy
Are stronger and active	carry out their designated tasks and also help
Ahd:	parents in whatever they do. are not to determine their own domestic and
Are subordinate to adults	farm activities or determine what adults should
	do
Vnovy comothing adulta don't Irrayy	
Know something adults don't know	are allowed to do what they deem fit

Source: author's construct from interviews carried out with 20 older persons, 30 adults and 55 children (May to October 2015)

In the table above, what the everyday life of children entails or how they live as children in practice in the study communities are consistent or line with the way children/childhood are/is normatively represented. Although these consistencies exist, not all that children do are indicators of child well-being and neither do all these practices positively impact on children well-being. In the table, some of practices which could be interpreted as indicators of child poverty include:

- Attendance of school is not compulsory for children and rather children are expected to learn and practice the occupation of their parents through early training on the job.
- Children are expected to engage in and they do engage in income earning activity,
 contribute to family income and participate in farm work.
- Children who have embarked on and returned from seasonal migration become adults and lose their status as children
- Children lose their status of being children after elopement/courtship and considered as adults
- Children work and contribute to finance their education
- o Children are allowed to do what they deem fit

Some of the institutional level respondents' data were used for triangulation. They were asked their observations about what children do in communities in the districts they work. Their responses largely corroborated most of the practices summarised in table 4.9. In addition, most of them reported parents in the study districts usually consider children as persons who are capable of working and so use them like "slaves" or "instruments for work". Analysing further the relationship between normative representations of children/childhood and childhood "in practice", inconsistencies were also observed. Most of the practices involving children which were found not coherent or logically linked to how children/childhood are/is represented are related to child poverty indicators or could be regarded as 'symptoms of child ill-being'.

In table 4.10, children are to be pampered; they make a house a home and its associated childhood "in practice" seems to be the only incoherence between normative childhood and childhood "in practice" which present both indicators of child well-being as well as child ill-being. All the other incoherence in the table presents largely indicators of child ill-being or child poverty.

For instance children learning adult roles while they are children may be considered part of the socialisation process to ensure that children acquire some skills they will need in their adulthood. Again, children helping their parents to raise money for their clothes and education are incoherent with the notion that children should be pampered. However, this could have positive benefits for children rather than children not doing anything at all if their parents alone cannot provide children with clothes and money for their education. The observed practices which are incoherent with normative representations of children are summarised in table 4.10.

Table 4.10- Incoherence between normative childhood and childhood "in practice"

Some aspects the of normative childhood	Childhood "in practice"
Children are not physically and biologically matured and incapable of working or using their intellect like adults	Children marry, give birth, have a long list of activities as daily routine, and help parents in every activity they carry out: boys helping their fathers and girls helping their mothers. Boy children are heads of the household in the absence of their fathers. It is permissible for children to do what they deem fit
Children belong to the community/society not parents only	Parents are individually responsible for their children
Children are to be disciplined, controlled, scolded and corrected. They are incapable of distinguishing right from wrong.	There are no sanctions for non-compliance because children are deemed to be above reproach "they cannot be trained" said most respondents. Children are allowed to decide whether they want to go to school or not after they are enrolled
Children cannot work and earn income Children are in need of protection, they are vulnerable and can be harmed	Children work and raise money for purchase of their clothes They migrate all by themselves to other parts of the country to work for money
Childrenare to be pampered; they make a house a home	Children labour for and contribute to the food they eat, learn expected adult roles before they become adults, and help to raise income for their education and clothes. Have a long list of daily routine and must participate in parents/guardians domestic and farm activities.

Source: author's construct from interview narratives of 20 older persons, 30 adults and 55 children (May to October 2015)

The results presented in table 4.10 are based on summary of responses of adults, the elderly and children. The practice of children migrating at some time of the year appears to be widespread in the study districts. It must be highlighted that during pre-data collection visits to the study communities in the West Mamprusi district (few days after basic schools had

vacated), several hours were used to convince the parents of two sisters who were set to leave the next few hours for *kayayei* in Kumasi. Their father pointed to their clothes which were washed and hanged on drying lines while they were drawing water to the house. Their mother had already secured their lorry fare (60 Ghana cedis) which she borrowed and promised the lender the girls will send to her to pay off when they get to Kumasi. The girls, 14 and 13 years respectively in Junior High School (JHS) 2 and 1 were expected to begin raising money towards their school fees for the next level of education which is Senior High School (SHS).

4.5.2. Child poverty, social exclusion and child vulnerability: local perspectives

Local perspectives of child poverty, child vulnerability and social exclusion of children were explored. The study respondents' understandings of these concepts largely do not correspond with their conceptualisations and meanings as they appear in development literature or the meaning of child poverty highlighted in chapter 2, even though most of the child poverty indicators came up in the definitions of a poor child. Again, respondents' explanations of these concepts further give clarity to the consistencies/inconsistencies between how they normatively represent children and what they make children do in practice.

Respondents' definition and understanding of child poverty and vulnerable children

In response to an open question: who is a poor child or a child suffering from material deprivation and also a vulnerable child? Explanations of vulnerable children were very close to those provided for child poverty. Most often respondents made reference to the same response they provided for a poor child; signalling a close link between poverty and vulnerability. There were slight differences in the meaning of child poverty or who a poor child is between the Lawra and the West Mamprusi district respondents. Indicators of child poverty which are common to both the Lawra and the West Mamprusi district respondents are related to children lacking or facing challenges in respect of some material things like

clothes, foot wear, insufficient food intake, ill-health as well as being lazy and/or do not occupy themselves with any productive activity. However, children with abject poor parents, children who are orphaned (one or both parents is/are deceased) children who do not own animals and children who are unable to pay dues of community-based groups are indicators of child poverty which emerged from the Lawra district but did not appear among meanings of child poverty which came up from the West Mamprusi district. Children with abject poor parents and children who are orphaned as indicators of child poverty could be highlighting the relationship between child poverty and children's dependent situation. Although in the definition of child poverty in the literature, differences between the needs of children and that of adults are often stressed to show the difference or importance of distinguishing child poverty from poverty in general or poverty associated with adults, children generally dependent on adults to meet their material, subjective and relational needs. Logically then, children whose parents or care givers are living in abject poverty could be defined as poor children. Similarly, 'orphanhood' is an indication of child poverty probably because respondents in the Lawra district are aware that parents are the primary carers or providers for their children and once a child's parents are deceased, the material, subjective and relational needs which the child depended on the parent(s) for are likely not to be met. But the emergence of children who are orphaned as an indicator of child poverty in the Lawra district show that the notion of children "being a communal property with communal benefits" and the associated conception of children as a collective responsibility of the community in the normative representation of children from the data which came up from the Lawra district may not be taken seriously. Certainly if collective responsibility for children is operational, then when children lose their parents or primary providers, a practice of collective responsibility for children should be able to help children to meet their material subjective and relational needs through other members of the community and hence, the issue

of associating orphanhood with child poverty could be a misnomer. In the explanations of children's daily activities in both study districts, children (boys) caring for domestic animals is among the important daily routine and children without animals (domestic animals) of their own, emerged as an indicator of child poverty in the Lawra district but not in the West Mamprusi district. This shows that although children care for domestic animals and adults are aware that children owning domestic animals can help in children overcoming child poverty not all children own them. The indicators of children living in poverty which appeared in the definitions provided by the Lawra district respondents include; children:

- o with poor or abject poor parents
- o who lack clothes/foot wear
- o who are lazy
- o without food or insufficient and irregular food intake
- o who are orphaned
- o who lack guardian /relational support/ without willing relations in urban areas
- o whose health and educational needs are not met
- o suffering ill-health
- o who do not wash down or have bath/lack toiletries
- o who are emotionally instable
- without animals
- o children who are unable to pay dues of community-based groups

In contrast indicators which emerged from respondents in the West Mamprusi district

include children:

- with torn school uniform/without school materials, clothes and lack foot wear,
- who do not eat irregularly from home
- who are unkempt
- who are stunted
- children who roam aimlessly

Clearly meanings of child or children poverty from the view point of respondents in the Lawra District encompass more indicators of child poverty than meanings from the West Mamprusi District. However, indicators from both groups of respondents are dominated by material indicators of child poverty, but also have relational elements. But, definition of a

poor child as a child who is lazy, without animals and one who roams aimlessly appear to be definition of child poverty which are outside definitions in the literature of child poverty. These other understandings of child poverty could explain the consistencies/inconsistencies between normative representations of children and what children do in practice as already presented. Material indicators of child poverty: children experiencing insufficient/irregular food intake, lacking educational materials and lack of clothes appeared in the explanations of most of the respondents. Again, children with poor parents and children who are lazy were cited by most of the respondents as indicators of child poverty. Nearly half of them cited lack of guardian, absence of relational support and children suffering ill-health as indicators of child poverty. However, few respondents mentioned children not having their bath, lacking foot wear and toiletries, emotional instability, children without animals of their own, without willing relatives in urban areas and children unable to pay dues of community based group(s) in their explanations of child poverty or children living in poverty.

Again, few respondents indicated that community-based groups help a great deal in the living situation of members. But for one to benefit one should be paying dues to the group. Even though membership is opened to all (adults and children), few children are able to belong to such groups because one respondent claimed children are unable to pay the dues. Also worthy of note is the indicator 'children without willing relatives in urban areas'. Family relations who are relatively better off are expected to see it as their duty to support their kin in rural communities. This implies that children living in rural areas with perceived better off relatives who live in urban areas but who are not willing to support them with their needs are deemed to be poor. It also suggest that children with willing relations in urban areas who themselves lack the means to support are equally poor. Respondents who cited stunted growth in their explanation of children poverty explained that when a child is smaller than

children he/she were born around the same period either in height, body size or both, it is an indication that the child is suffering from poverty.

A few of the voices of respondents on the meaning of child poverty which exemplifies those of other respondents are presented.

A poor child is a child that is orphaned. Interviewee: [Have you seen this mother hen and its chicks? Interviewer: yes!] Chicks can hunt for food but these are too young to fend for themselves. If this mother hen dies and leaves these chicks, they will suffer; they may not grow because they cannot take care of themselves. If we say a child is poor...we know what poverty is... poverty is not because one has no money or not having fowls, goats or cattle. It is when one has no parents or other people around willing to support. A poor child, that is, one without mother or father but if such a child has some God fearing people who can provide the things that children also need and put such a child in school and take care of him/her through school, then such a child will not be poor. If there is a God fearing person who is willing to give such a child some domestic animals to rear and own it, such a child will not be poor because from these animals he can meet his needs (R3 adult, 46 year old farmer, male married with 6 children in Toto community; Lawra district,).

Although this respondent recognises the importance of material things in enhancing the living situation of children, his definition emphasises relational poverty as an important aspect of defining children poverty due to children's biological immaturity as well as their dependence. This respondent's definition of child poverty could be useful in rethinking and possibly the need for ranking of the dimensions of child poverty for better policy strategies and actions. The material things necessary to enhance children's well-being could be available but children (as normatively represented) could need their relational poverty tackled first because of their particular situation as children before they can get to enjoy such material things to address their poverty.

A poor child is a child that is lazy. A child that do not have father or mother but is ready to work hard to help himself/herself and is enduring can meet his basic needs and overcome poverty.... a sick child is poor. [Responding furiously]... A child that is not willing to do work to help his parents to make money so that the parents can in turn help him or her is the child that is poor. The child could have more energy than the parents and instead of working hard to help the parent raise money to help him/her through school or take care of him/her when he/she is sick, he loafs around

and does not listen to the counsel of his/her parents...this is the child that is poor (R4, a widow in her early 50s with 5 children in Toto community, Lawra district).

Both respondents indicated how children can get out of poverty; which is, owning and rearing an animal in the case of respondent R3 and not being lazy but working to help parents to raise money to support them (R4). But their expressions also indicate what adults do for and with their children or expect children to do. Child or children poverty could manifest as a result of unwillingness on the part of those they depend on to help or provide them with their needs. Generally, local understandings of child poverty from both study districts are narrow in terms of dimensions and indicators compared to the dimensions and indicators of child poverty from the experiences of Ugandan children presented in Witter and Bukokhe (2004) and that of children of the United Kingdom indicated in Ridge (2009). This is not surprising because the contexts are different. Again, in the case of the study by the Ugandan authors and Ridge in the United Kingdom, the dimensions and indicators of child poverty were based on children's experiences of poverty. However, both adults' and children's explanations of child poverty could be informed by the context. For instance, a political dimension of child poverty emerged from Witter and Bukokhe's study and the indicators include children living in a waraffected area, including being displaced and abducted but this in not common in the literature of child poverty either in developed or developing countries. This is understandably so because of the generally known political situation in Uganda in a period preceding their study and where a lot of children were abducted.

Although, for this study child poverty was operationalised based on the 3-D (three dimensions) of child poverty by Jones and Sumner (2011), the results presented above on local definitions and understandings of child poverty are largely within the scope of the material dimension. Children who engage in work that jeopardise their physical development and future as well as children who have no access to housing, that is, sleep in bad places and

do not have access to and utilise improved sanitation at home are among the material indicators of child poverty in the operational definition of child poverty adapted from Jones and Sumner (2011). These appear not to be indicators of child or children poverty from the local understandings and indicators of child poverty summarised above for both the Lawra and the West Mamprusi districts. Instead, children are expected to work, own animals and care for them to show that they are not poor children and these are without any consideration of whether it negatively affect their future when they become adults or not. Children who are not hard working or do not like to work are labeled as lazy and 'laziness' of a child is an indication that that particular child is poor. Juxtaposing the indicators of child poverty which emerged from this study to the literature and conceptual definitions of child or children poverty, one could say that, what may be considered as child poverty in contexts based on which these definitions and indicators of child poverty are popularised are normal way of life expected of children in the context of this study.

Few indicators (children who are emotionally instable and children who roam aimlessly) could be regarded as subjective indicators of child poverty and the relational dimension and its indicators did not emerge from the respondents' narratives on the meaning of child poverty or the indicators associated with poor children in their communities.

Social exclusion of children

Most community level respondents could not provide their opinions of social exclusion. However, in an informal conversion with 3 women who were having a conversation just after interview with one of them, it came up forcefully in their discussion that:

A Child cannot make contribution at gatherings or community meetings. If a child has any contribution to make, he/she has to channel it through an adult.

This view could be considered as an aspect of child social exclusion and also suggests that at community meetings or gatherings children are not entirely excluded. They are expected to be passive participants and their opinions should only be shared through adult participants.

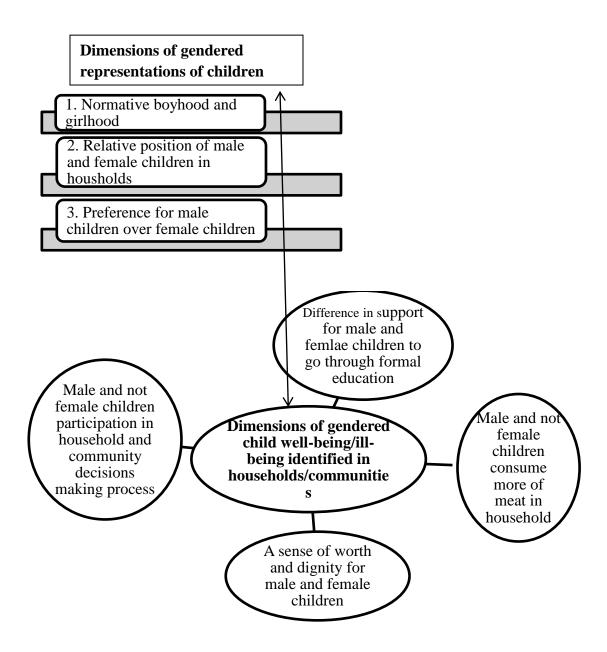
4.5.3 Child poverty and gender

In this section gendered child poverty indicators found within gendered representations of children are presented and explained. Gendered child poverty emanated from further analysis of gendered representations of male and female children and how the representations are connected to how male and female children needs are provided and/or how each gender of children get household/family support for purposes of enhancing their well-being. Knowing that child poverty indicators from the literature of child poverty are gender neutral, I expected child well-being indicators (if they exist) in the gendered representations of children to be gender neutral. However, after a careful reflection over the gendered representations of children which emerged from both household/community level perspectives as well as institutional level respondents' point of view, further analysis of the data from which gendered representations of children emerged was carried out; looking out for relationships between privileges/support boy children enjoy and which emanate from how boy children are represented both normatively and "in practice". Again, relationships between how girl children are represented (both normatively and "in practice") and treats and support they get from households/families were explored.

Data analysed for this section were generated from the household and institutional levels respondents. At the household level data from adults, the elderly and children were considered. Although institutional level respondents do not live with children in the households, they live in the communities and most of them have worked with community people spanning from 2 to 20 years and hence, were able to provide sufficient information for separate presentation and discussion. However, because institutional level respondents' narratives reflected what happens in communities and not their institutions/departments, the results are discussed only at the household/community level of analysis drawing on data

generated from both community and institutional level respondents. Differentials in treatments and privileges for boys and girls which emerged from the analysis were made up of four dimensions and all are in favour of boy children and not girl children. A relationship between the four gendered dimensions of children well-being and differences in the representations of male and female children was established and diagrammatically presented in figure 6. Details of results on normative boyhood and girlhood, the relative position of male and female children and the preference of male over female children have been presented in section 4.3. Details of results of the relationship between these gendered representations of children and gendered dimensions of child well-being which emerged from the study are presented from the household and institutional level respondents perspectives.

Figure 7 - Dimensions of gendered child well-being and their relationship to differentials in socio-cultural representations of male and female children



Difference in support for male and female children to go through formal education

Data from all groups of respondents in this study show that male children are favoured when both male and female children are competing for limited /household/family resources for education or male children will be placed first in the event that boys and girls and are competing for household resources to continue to be in school. This advantage for male children and disadvantage for female children stems from the normative representations of

male and female children which include: male children are "members of the family", permanent family members and lineage builders and girl children as "outsiders", temporary members of their father's family, without a family and will have one after marriage. These ideas associated with male and female children are related to the patrilineal kinship system, which is the practice among most ethnic groups in Northern Ghana. In marriage children belong to their father's family. This means that the children of daughters will belong to their husbands' families when they mature and marry and upon marriage a woman moves, joins the family of her husband and become a member of that family. This aspect of the culture of the people thus make people particularly rural parents perceive investments in male children to be more rational action than female children who are merely temporally members of their "childhood families". Nearly all the interview transcripts of institutional level respondents show investment in male children is preferred to girls in rural areas because of these differences in the cultural representations of male and female children and also the representation of girl children as "promiscuous" which will lead to "child pregnancies" and drop out of girls from school. A review of the Girl Child Education Resource Manual (GCERM) of the Ghana Education Service revealed that one of the constraints of girl children's education in Ghana is that poor parents mostly prefer to invest in boys' education and not girls because investment in girls' education is perceived to have less return.

During FGDs with children, one of the topics put before them and which they discussed freely, was how limited resources will be used for the education of boy and girl children in their households. In discussing this theme, the girls (7) were unanimous and expressed sadness while they explained one after the other what the likely decision will be. The girls were of the opinion that the boy child will be supported with the limited resources to be educated and the girl will be dropped. One of them led them to explain why, using how

limited resources will be used for two siblings (boy and a girl) who have graduated from Junior High School (JHS) and are moving into Senior High School (SHS).

If a boy and a girl in a family both make the grades from JHS to go to SHS and the money is not enough for both to go and the family is to make a decision of who to go and who to wait, it is the boy they will use the money on for him to go and the girl to wait or withdraw.

She indicated the likely reason the family will give for such an action. "they will say that it is the boy who will remain in the family and farm to take care of them but we the girls belong to someone else's family and we will leave for that family" [The girl said this with sadness and a low voice with all the others contributing similar likely reasons with sadness and hopelessness].

But in the boys FGD, their responses were mixed. One after the other, they expressed their views.

Respondent 1: The resources will be used to educate the boy child. Facilitator: Why?

Respondent 1: Because *dauncere* (record dance) is always everywhere and girls attend, in no time they get pregnant so if they invest the little resources on her it will not yield any results.

Respondent 2: It will be the boy child. No matter what, a boy child is better than the girl child. When the girl child goes to school with the limited resources, she will not pay attention to the studies. For her she is going there to chase men and in no time she will get pregnant and the money will be a waste. As for the boy he can make somebody pregnant but, he can continue to go to school.

Respondent 3: It depends on the two children competing for resources. If the girl child is observed to be well behaved, they will let the girl go while the boy waits and possibly embark on seasonal migration to work as a farm labourer to raise money and come and continue. If the girl is left to wait, in no time she will be eloped.

Three (3) of the boys supported respondent 1 and 2 and made similar contributions.

While 2 respondents supported respondent 3 and also expressed similar views.

Although the girls believed boy children will be favoured because of their status as permanent family members and girls as temporary family members, the boys linked the favouring of male children over female children to girl children being promiscuous. This is consistent with a general representation of girls as promiscuous among the study respondents presented in section 4.3. One of the boys made mentioned of boys making girls pregnant but

continuing their education. But as the results in section 4.3 suggest, there are no notions of boy children being promiscuous.

In the West Mamprusi District a few interviewees talked about how girl children are sometimes sent for *kayayei* to raise money for the payment of their brother's school fees and not the other way round.

Male and not female children consume more of meat in households

Most of the community level respondents indicated that meat consumed at the household level are of two types: one coming from the meals prepared for the household members and meat which come from traditional sacrificial practices. While meat from traditional sacrifices is generally not forbidden for male children, it is mostly a taboo for female children to eat such meat. Most of the adult respondents provided a reason for boys' consumption of such meat while girls are denied: Boy children's position in the family is permanent and they are the future landlords of families. The consumption of this category of meat in traditional communities of northern Ghana by male children and girls' denial is related to the representation of male children as seniors, superior, future heads of families and "true family members" and female children as juniors, inferior, and without a family.

The other source of household meat could be bought from the market or come from an animal of the household/family. The meat is usually separated from the rest of the food after preparation and handed over to the head of household when meals are served. From the voices of some adult respondents captured on how seniority is determined among children and presented in section 4.3, respondents made reference 'to sharing of something'. This something most of the time is the meat from household meals. After sharing, members of the household make their choices one after the other according to who is senior to the other until it gets to the last person or the youngest member of the household. How seniority is

determined among children and subsequently, ranked in households in the study communities in the Lawra district in particular has already been presented and one of the voices is revisited:

Seniority is determined by sex. Let's say something is shared in the household, we use the traditional way of determining seniority and who should take after the other. Just like my mother cannot be head over me though am younger than her in age, a boy child who is younger in the midst of his siblings who are older than him in age but are girls, is senior and will have to make his choice before the girls if anything is shared among them (40 year old man with 6 children from one of the study communities in the Lawra district).

This respondents' explanation of how children (boys and girls) are ranked in a household/family for the purpose of distributing something, including meat from household meals, is based on gender and not age or order of birth of children. Boys are ranked on top of the list and girls at the bottom. Girls, however their ages, are considered juniors to boys. Most of the institutional level accounts regarding ranking of children for purposes of distribution material things and other privileges hinges on gender and not age. It must be noted that the use of gender in determining seniority especially for purposes of distribution of material things including meat from household meals was more pronounced in the Lawra District than the West Mamprusi District.

Notes from one of the boys Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), further highlight differences in the consumption of meat by male and female children in households/communities. The boys reported that, the role of boys when they participate in traditional sacrifices is to carry the basket of sacrificial fowls and to remove them one after the other when they are ordered to do so while observing how the sacrifices are carried out. After the fowls are slaughtered, it is their duty to dress them and hand over the meat to the adults while keeping the intestines, gizzards and livers. These are disembowelled or cleaned, roasted and eaten by the boy children while they wait for their share of the rest of the meat being prepared by the adults (males). They reported that, this meat, most of the time, is forbidden for women and girl children, indicating clearly that the consumption of this type of meat is limited to only adult

males and boy children. The boys also explained that partially incubated eggs which are believed cannot hatch, are mostly given to boy children to prepare and eat and girls are forbidden to eat this because it is believed that girls who eat this type of eggs will experience miscarriages when they mature into adults and begin reproduction.

A sense of worth and dignity for male and female children

Further analysis of data from children showed expression of worthlessness by female children and worthiness by male children stemming from various normative representations of male and female children. "No matter what a boy child is better than a girl child" said one of the boys in one of the FGDs. The proverb: Oh mang yieh wieh a waana kaba dogi oh saah which means one returns from the farm and sees his/her father being born are notions associated with male children which make male children feel more worthy than female children. The opposite of this proverb is to replace "Saah" (father) with "mah" (mother). However, most of the respondents who had this proverb in their narratives used the one with "saah" and not "mah. Notions of male children are seniors, superior, future family heads and true members of family as opposed to girls being "outsiders to their parents' families and juniors were observed to make girl children feel worthless. During FGD with girls, they constantly made reference to "we the girls will eventually go to someone's house [married off], "we the girls will be busy and the boys are free" "we the girls, they always say we belong to someone else's family"; indicating a feeling of being less important human beings or not worthy members of their parents. These expressions from female children indicate that it is not only the cultural constructions of girl children that make them worthless as explained above, but girl children themselves feel valueless as compared to the feeling expressed by male children throughout the discussion.

Conversation and excerpt from one of the boys' group during FGD and a participatory activity in one of the study communities further explains the worthiness expressed by male children compared to female children.

Activity: They drew their community indicating all categories of the people and other features of the community. They explained their drawings and the facilitator asked questions.

The boys explained:...Men are here [pointing to the rooms roofed with aluminum sheets] and the women are over there [pointing to the thatch rooms]. The girls sleep with the mothers in the thatch rooms and the boys with their fathers in these rooms [those with aluminum sheets].

Facilitator: why don't the women and the girls sleep in the zinc (aluminum sheets roofed rooms)? One boy responded: They are... fear. ...when it is raining the zinc makes noise and they fear, that is why they don't sleep there.

Facilitator: Do you all agree to what your colleague said?

Most of them responded and stressing No! No! It is because they are women. That is why they sleep there. Women and the girls cannot sleep in zinc rooms while their husbands sleep in thatch rooms. Even if it is the woman that builds it she must give it to the man to sleep in.

Facilitator: What else is in your map do you want to talk about?

Nearly all of them talking ... This is a boy playing. The place is bright because of the solar panel and the girls are in the house cooking. The boys are playing because they have returned from the farm and they are waiting for the girls to cook.

Clearly the excerpt from the facilitator's conversation with some male participants of the study suggest that male children perceive and consider themselves more worthy than female children and even women.

Male and not female children participate in household and community decision making process

...There are several community meetings that when you go and schedule demanding adults (men and women) and children you are likely to meet adults and boy children and the girls may be somewhere doing house chores. Again, in some instance you call for a community meeting asking for only adults and you will go and meet adults (men and women) and also boys but no girls are part... (Official of the Lawra District Department of Social Welfare)

The excerpt from this institutional level respondent exemplifies the responses from community level respondents on male and female children participation in household/community decision making process. From community level narratives, children are allowed to participate in some meetings at the household/community level because children are believed to have retentive memory and can remember some important issues

discussed even if adults forget. Although the perception or believe in children having retentive memory is gender neutral, only male children are allowed to participate in household decision-making process as indicated by most of the community level respondents. Most respondents justified the participation of male children and not female children to male children being "members of the family" and future landlords and seniors to girls and girls being "outsiders"

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH: ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the key findings are highlighted and discussed in light of the theoretical literature and the analytical framework. The chapter comprises five sections. Section 5.1 discusses contemporary representations of children within a specific socio-cultural context in Ghana; highlighting the multiple dimensions through which children are normatively represented. The next section also discusses differences in the childhoods of different generations and then moves to section 5.3 to discuss the gendered constructions or representations children. In section 5.4, indicators of child poverty which were found in the socio-cultural representations of children are discussed. Chapter 5 closes with a discussion on differentials in boy and girl children poverty which emerged from gendered representations of children.

5.1 Contemporary constructions of childhood within rural Northern Ghanaian communities: paradoxes and parallels

Physiological, socio-cultural and socio-economic constructions

The UNCRC, ACRWC, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana as well as the 1998 Children's Act, 560 all define children as persons below the age of 18 years. However, this study shows that, at the community level in rural Northern Ghana few people define children by age and among the few who consider age in defining children, it is not those below 18 years but those below 13 years (the lower limit) or below 15 years (the upper limit). In other words children who are between 13 and 15 years were portrayed as adults by most community level respondents. One explanation for few people not using age to define

children is that parents/guardians do not know the ages of their children because most cannot read or write and no records are documented on the births of their children. Hence, it could be very difficult for parents to keep the years of their many children in mind as they grow up.

Instead, children are defined and represented largely by physiological development, sociocultural and socio-economic characteristics. Adolescents' features were observed to be particularly used in the representation of children. The presence of adolescent features in children (such as the onset of menstruation, developed breast, commencement of reproduction, and change in voice, beard, broaden chest) signifies such children have become adults whether they are 18 years or not as defined by these international, regional and national frameworks.

On the contrary, few institutional level respondents represented children by physiological characteristics. However, one of the institutional level respondents who had worked for 8 years as a social worker with rural people attempted a definition of a child which had elements dominant in community definitions of children and also in global and national frameworks: "... children with big bodies but less than 18 years are children, and children with small bodies but more than 18 years are adults, persons who have not started menstruation (girls) or experienced wet dreams (boys) are children". This institutional level respondent's definition points to the size of the body and biological maturation in the definition or representation of children. His definition appears to be a blend of both institutional and community or local definitions of children.

This suggests that biological and physiological features are important particularly for local people in defining children and what children do, can or cannot do. Community level accounts of what children do in their everyday life in both study Districts suggest that, because children are perceived to be physiologically immature like adults, there is role or

activity differentiation according to stage of life, that is whether one is an adult or child and, among children, there is further differentiation according to gender. Paradoxically, most of adult community level respondents' accounts (16 out of the 27) of children's daily activity in the West Mamprusi District indicate that children carry out work or are expected to do farm work just like adult without reference to children difference in maturity compared to adults. In the Lawra District almost all community level respondents' (20 out of the 23) recount children's daily activities and include children going to the farm.

But consistent with their perception of children lacking the physiological maturity like adults, respondents in the Lawra District said work which is appropriate for children and their gender are often accordingly assigned. Children are usually allocated specific plots on which they work. But one interpretation of assigning children to specific plots in the farm to work could be to ensure that children work hard and achieve specific targets (all as the training processing).

Children are portrayed as persons who must work hard and contribute to household survival needs. Boy children weed in the millet field and girl children in the groundnut field in the study communities in the Lawra District is indicative of respondents believe in children carrying out farm task which are appropriate to their physical strength because weeding of groundnut field is considered less tedious than millet field and boys are perceived to be stronger than girls.

These notwithstanding, physical or physiological maturation or characteristics of growing children are missing in the definitions of children in the legal frameworks at both national and international levels. For instance, the 1992 constitution of the republic of Ghana defines persons who are 18 years as adults and therefore, can vote and also marry and persons below 18 years of age are children and as a result cannot vote. By the local conceptions of childhood

and adulthood, the results of this study suggest persons who have begun menstruations and developed breast (girls) and person with beard or experienced wet dreams cease to be children. By implication, these "adults" can marry or fend for themselves, at least within their context.

Representations of children by the use of physical body of children and the physiological maturation revealed in this study resonates James et al. (1998) call for researchers in childhood studies to look beyond the social constructivism of childhood in the light of current developments in sociology of the body so as to appreciate the place of embodiment in the processes through which children exhibit their agency. This finding shows that adults use children's bodies to frame them either as adults or children. Depending on whether persons are children or adults, by tradition, they are supposed to do things in accordance with their status.

In the discussion above, it could be argued that although the definition of children is fixed in legal and structural frameworks in Ghana and which by themselves are influenced by western culture, adults at the rural level are capable of influencing this structural definition of children due to the nature of their position in social space [which is stronger than children's because of children dependence on them] and the nature of their agency [which is larger than children's].

In chapter four it could be observed that children define themselves in line with what or who adults say they are. This could be attributed to their weak position in social space and the small or 'thin' nature of their agency compared to adults.

Western notions or representations of childhood/children as a period for discipline and protection and children to be seen and not heard (Dionysian) (Jenks, 1996 in Ansell 2005), and the immanent, innocent and evil construction of children in the past as stated in Aries's

historical study about children bear similarity to contemporary representations of children in rural communities in Northern Ghana. Summaries of representations of childhood from adults and older persons in this study suggest that, childhood is considered to be a period for: scolding/discipline, training, protection, staying away from adult conversation and from visitors. It is perceived as a period of dependence on parents and the highest level of courtesy must be exhibited by children.

Again, community level respondents perceived children to be capable of playing mischief/malice, they are disobedient and considered difficult to be trained, they are immature, less knowledgeable (but have superior memory) and without children 'a house is not a home'. These representations of children are similar to the immanence, innocence and evil constructions of children discovered by (Aries, 1962) in (James et al., 1998).

Children needing protection and support and to be provided with their needs dominated the representations of childhood at the institutional level. Children are also perceived to be incapable of representing themselves especially when they come into conflict with the law and hence need adults to stay in for them. This view of children corresponds to community level chronological, physiological and psycho-social representations of childhood, in that because children are perceived to be immature physically and in age and lack the capacity to think like adults they are to be protected, provided for, supported and defended when they fall into acts of criminality.

The challenge with institutional level representations of children is that they emphasise things intended to be done for children and not what are actually done, they answer starting from their institutional/professional position. In that sense they refer to the normative representation of children. As for example "children to be protected" is not the same as children are protected and children to be cared for is not the same as children are cared for.

Most institutional level respondents in their representations of children indicated several issues they are expected to do for children spanning protection, to representing children when they come into conflict with the law, supporting needy children through school and provide school infrastructure, teaching and learning materials but which they do very little due to lack of funds.

Contrary to the widespread western ideal and representation of childhood as age of happiness, freedom from responsibility and work (Aries, 1962), in James et al., 1998), the findings of this study suggest that children are represented as persons who *must* work hard or *need* to work hard and not be lazy: children are partners in the provision of households survival needs, they make financial contributions to their formal educational development and it is believed that they should go hungry if they are lazy.

Very few of the research respondents believe that children need pampering.

Independent seasonal migration, marriage/elopement, courtship and ability to carry out household activities are perceived to be for grown-ups and not children, when or if children experience any one or all of these social and cultural practices are represented as adults. This suggests that children cease to be children in their context because they have experienced any of these social and cultural practices, notwithstanding their age.

The socio-cultural as well as physiological and age-based representations of children/childhood which emerged from this study bear similarities as well as differences from western notions of childhood highlighted by Aries (1962), Jenks (1996); James et al. (1998) and Ansell (2005). These representations also bear resemblances and differences to national and international legal laws regarding children. For example both the CRC and the 1998 children's Act of Ghana frown on children working, yet children between age 15 – 17

are permitted to engage in work both within and outside of the household and parents are permitted to let their children do what they deem is appropriate for their biological/physical stage of development.

In totality however the findings support Honwana and De Boeck (2005) consideration that the way children are defined and how children define themselves is influenced by some socio-cultural variables like ethnicity and gender that determine responsibilities and expectations associated with children. It also supports James and James (2001) argument that 'the child' and 'childhood' do not exist, because what and who children and childhood are is influenced by the specific context. The empirical setting of this study presented a specific research context and respondents with specific characteristics: rural dwellers belonging to Dagaaba and Mamprugu ethnic groups; Christians, Muslims or traditional religious believers, and belonging to that specific social and cultural context.

As far as expectations of adults toward children, the results suggest children are socially expected to migrate to cities in southern Ghana to engage in menial jobs to support themselves and their families. They are expected to work hard on the farms to contribute to the production of household feeding needs. Although the representations of childhood/children "in practice" revealed in this study might have been influenced by the way the respondents normatively construct or define children and by implication within socio-cultural variables of their context (Honwana and De Boeck, 2001), it contradicts how the respondents define children by referring to their "economic value". Most community level respondents professed children as persons who are unable to work or work like adults and earn money, provide their own feeding needs and cannot embark on seasonal migration.

These contradictions are however not surprising because parental responsibilities which respondents carved for themselves fell short of provisions in the legal frameworks of Ghana

such as those stated in the 1998 children's Act 560. Parental responsibilities commonly mentioned by community level respondents in the Lawra District included: teach children the acceptable norms - teach gendered roles, train children to acquire a skill and ensure they carry out their daily routine. In many African countries, including Ghana, policies of compulsory basic education featured after the pronouncement of the MDGs which had in it a goal of attaining universal primary education by 2015. The United Nations July 2015 report on the MDGs suggests that although many developing countries have made achievements in increasing enrolment in primary education, by the close of 2015 several children of school age in Asia and Sub-Saharan African, which Ghana is a part, will still be out of school. This prediction is in line with the results of this study which show parents in rural communities in the Lawra District excluded anything about the process/processes leading to children attaining, at least, primary education in the parental responsibilities the adult respondents enumerated for themselves.

Clemensen (2016) indicate that rural Zambian parents are doubtful about formal schooling's ability to aid their children to get paid work and more importantly becoming self-reliant and respectable people in their communities. Probably, parents in rural communities in the Lawra District of Northern Ghana share in the fears of rural Zambian parents and which is why their emphasis is on training children all by themselves to acquire skills and excluding anything about ensuring their children acquire formal education in the parental responsibilities they outlined.

Also, in the West Mamprusi District the summarised parental responsibilities from the respondents included: feeding, shelter, enroll children in school, clothe, provide health needs, counsel, pray for children, make children work to finance their education and provide school needs. The parental responsibility which frequent in the responses of the West Mamprusi

District study respondents was 'make children work to finance their education', suggesting they, unlike the Zambian parents and also parents and older persons in the Lawra District, they believe that children need formal education.

Although the parental responsibilities outlined by this category of respondents appear to be more expanded than what emerged from the Lawra District respondents, rather than parents claiming a responsibility of working to finance their children's education, they believe their responsibility is to let the children work and raise money to acquire formal education. Again, the normative representations of children/childhood and what children do or are expected to do in everyday life in the study communities highlight adults' exercise of their specific agency, position in social space and in structure or the social and cultural context in which they are.

The results also show further that both children and adults see the relationship between children and adults as a reciprocal one; children must work hard, be obedient, respectful of adults and in return adults care for them and ensure their survival needs are met. One interpretation of the representation of children this way is that within their cultural setting children are not merely there 'to make a house a home' (one of the normative representations of children which featured and indicates the emotional value of children) but they are useful and do have responsibilities and a lot is expected of them. Unlike among wealthy urban parents of Ethiopia whom children are only of social and emotional values, for their counterparts who are peasants, in addition to social and emotional values, children also have economic value and a lot of cultural expectations hangs on them (Kassa, 2016). Material things such as furniture and fittings are commonly believed to turn a house into a home. However, this could be to the extent that they are useful materially and economically to the occupants of the 'home'. Similarly, the idea that, it is children who 'make a house a home'

could be to the extent that children are useful in the 'home' economically before they turn adults.

Again the findings indicate that boy children see themselves as 'the strength of their families'; understood not only in terms of their economic contributions, but in terms of the continuity of their family tree or lineage. Boys, unlike girl children will remain with their patrilineal families, marry and produce children. Linked to boys representation of themselves as the strength of their families, the study revealed boy children are socially and culturally constructed as 'members of the family', 'insiders' 'family members' and girls as 'someone else's family members', 'outsiders' 'without a family'.

The idea of boys being family members and girls being outsiders is linked to the formation of families or the family as the basic institution of society and as well as the kinship arrangement in Northern Ghanaian societies. As Nukunya (2003) indicates marriage is the foundation of families though a family could be formed without marriage. Northern Ghana is a patrilineal and a patriarchal society and in marriage the children belong to the families of their fathers. This means that at marriage, daughters together with their offspring become the family members of their husbands. This explains why male children are represented as 'members of the family' and also 'strength of the family', making female children less valued and portrayed as 'outsiders'. Girls are forbidden from eating some meat and denied participation in traditional sacrifices and these are linked to traditional religious beliefs and practices as well as their status as temporary members of their families of birth.

Adult respondents both at the community and institutional levels perceived children to be mischievous, disobedient and capable of malice and lamented over children engaging in some acts early in life compared to their ages and physical maturity especially when juxtapose to the childhood of current adults. Hence, children lose their status as children once they engage

in acts such as independent migration, courtship/love relationships, deliver babies, and work like adults within and outside the household.

Regardless of the positive or negative connotation attributed to the behaviours above mentioned – in doing so these children could be demonstrating their agency, however thin it is, compared to the agency of adults once they consider the outcome of their actions favourable to them as children. As social actors in their own right, capable of thinking and participating in social and economic life, they are expressing themselves in social life however others (adults) think of their actions as well as challenging existing social and cultural beliefs about who and what children are and what children should or should not do. As Clemensen (2016) highlighted, just like adults, children commonly exercise and utilised existing power structures whenever they find them to favourably sustain their position and also vigorously challenge and isolate themselves from such power structures when they find them unfavourable. Again, the children's behaviours could be their modes of adapting to both the goals of their society and the prescribed standards for achieving them (Merton, 1949)

Another interpretation could be that there is fusion of cultures as a result of globalisation aided by information and communication technology. In most communities in Ghana, the waves of local FM stations exist and with a small radio or a cell phone one is updated on what is happening within the country and beyond in the local language. The latest releases in the entertainment industry particularly feature on daily bases. In the narratives of adults, institutional and community level respondents alike made reference to girls getting pregnant and dropping out of school because of their interest in attending record dance. Children's rights, which are believed to be foreign to the local culture, are to be blamed for the ills and immoral acts of children according to the narratives of most of the study respondents. Similar to parents in Ethiopia complain about the school's inability to control children while they

attend school and, at the same time, weakening parental power and control over children's time due to the changing experiences of childhood which includes formal schooling (Kassa, 2016), the study respondents claimed because of children rights, children enjoy a lot of freedom and a way of life which has made them 'children-adults', and since parents cannot control children they allow them to fend for themselves.

Most of the study respondents at both the community and institutional levels made mention of children traveling to southern Ghana, particularly during school vacation and which most parents and guardians support. The migration of children from the study communities in the West Mamprusi District revealed in this study is not surprising because Anarfi & Appiah (2009) indicate that the bulk of independent child migrants in the major cities in southern Ghana are from the West Mamprusi District. It is however surprising that independent child migration for economic purposes seems to be a phenomenon parents and local authorities are sometimes in conflict in the Lawra District because I did not find any mention in the literature on child migration in the Lawra District. One of the community opinion leaders reported that children used to mature into adults (18 to 20 years) before they embarked on independent migration and their migration was not solely for economic reasons but both economic and the acquisition of social status of 'having been down south before'. This suggests that child independent migration in the Lawra District is rather a recent phenomenon. While at the institutional level children are represented as vulnerable and needing protection, institutional level respondents reported they are unable to prevent and/protect children from potential risk they will encounter by engaging in independent travels for economic reasons.

At the community level parents may not know the distinctions between child labour and child work and what children do could be considered by them as child work since they mostly believe it is part of the socialising process. Nonetheless, Oppong (1971) and Oppong et al. (2012) indicate that among the Dagomba of Northern Ghana a household without child labour is not viable as a domestic and economic unit and children are considered key contributors to the household economy. The findings appear to be consistent with this literature in that children have their designated economic activities or work which must be carried out towards providing household needs and their maturity into adults is also tested by the work they do. Children are expected to work and make contributions materially and financially to their households.

Interpretations which could be given to what children do or are expected to do socioeconomically within the empirical context of this study are that children are represented as
capable beings and which is why they must make material and financial contributions to their
household needs, they are considered as 'instruments' for work, they are allowed to embark
on independent economic migration and are made to participate in every work adults carry
out at the household level. Nevertheless, children's demonstrate ability to work like adults,
migrate and work for money also signal their maturity into adults and when these happen,
they are re-represented as adults and not children. Again, children who are able to engage in
all or some of these socio-economic acts are also perceived as persons who are capable of
making life by themselves and accordingly, considered as adults.

The findings further suggest that Nukunya (2003) argument against Ghanaians loving children could be valid. This research confirms this because mothers, whom according to Nukunya used to do everything possible to ensure that their children do not suffer, do push, particularly, girl children to embark on a journey to cities in southern Ghana without worrying about where they will sleep and what work they will do.

As Honwana and De Boeck (2005) noted, the norm rather than the exception in Africa is that many children work and care for themselves. The findings of this study show that notions or ideas about what children do and are expected to do lead to deconstruction of children as children and reconstruction into 'pre-mature' adults. In other words, there are children who are within the generic age of childhood but are portrayed as adults in their societies/communities by virtue of the socio-economic abilities they exhibit to meet their needs and that of their families.

The results presented in chapter 4 indicate that not much difference exist in the representations of children in the Lawra District in the Upper West Region and the West Mamprusi District in the Northern Region (all of Ghana). This could be a reflection of cultural similarity among the people of Northern Ghana. Oppong (1971) reported that childhood, among the Dagombas of Northern Ghana begun sooner after a baby had learned how to walk, weaned and until he/she went into marriage, remained a child and a lot was expected of him/her in terms of roles and responsibilities. Socio-cultural representations of childhood, the results show, include a child's marital status and marriage is an indication of the end of childhood, supporting Oppong (1971) on the beginning and end of childhood among the Dagombas of Northern Ghana. But, the role of marriage in constructing childhood appears to be changing because the results of this study show children could have their childhood terminated not because they are married but as a result of other criteria already outlined and summarised below.

The findings show that rural parents in the two study Districts regard their children as adults once they: "have climbed a vehicle and gone somewhere and returned", are able to carry out some adult determined and assigned task or are able to work and earn money. This implies that children, by their socio-economic representations and what is expected of them could do

anyone or a combination of these economic activities but not married and yet deconstructed as children and represented as adults. However, more than 4 decades Oppong (1971) revealed that, among the Dagomba's, boys who were able to raise 100 yam mounds a day were deconstructed as children and represented as adults. This finding bears similarity to the varied socio-economic angles by which children are represented in contemporary times.

Again, the socio-economic representations or constructions of childhood revealed in this study are clearly in opposition to western ideas about childhood and which Ansell (2005) and Renata et al. (2010) have pointed out. According to these authors, the opposition is based on the idea that, some work could be hazardous to children, prevent children from formal schooling and/or lead to the exploitation of children. Although socio-economic representations of children revealed in this study could lead to their deconstruction as children and constructed as adults, Ansell (2005) argues such activities have positive outcomes in the lives of children in poor countries. Again, the socio-economic representations of children and what children do in their daily existence as revealed in this study, support Renata et al. (2010) conclusion that children's work – in particular selfemployment and domestic activities and agricultural work for their families – have potential positive benefits to them and their families. As narrated by some of the institutional level respondents and highlighted in chapter four, the District Assembly or Local Authorities in the Lawra District had a serious problem with rural parents coming for their children whom they had intercepted and prevented from travelling all alone to southern Ghana to engage in menial jobs on one occasion during school holidays. Most institutional level respondents explained that, when children travel for economic reason their parents do not feed them anymore, and when they return children do not ask for school materials from their parents and so, some of the parents of children intercepted warned the local authorities were to

provide the needs of the children when school re-opened after they had prevented them from embarking on an economic travel.

In Renata and others (2010) analyses, the way children are socio-economically represented – as revealed in this study – and subsequently what children do in socio-economic terms have the potential of improving their psycho-social well-being, in that children feel proud about contributing to their household needs or solving their household problems. Again, children consider work especially at the domestic and household level to be a collective responsibility between children and adults if households are to produce enough food for their needs and for children to acquire relevant domestic skills for their futures (Kassa, 2016).

Several researchers have shown and in most cases emphasised the competence and capability of children as research participants. (see Jenks, et al. 1998; Nigel and O'kane, 1998; Darbyshire et al., 2005; Kellett, 2005; Uprichard, 2008; Ebrahim, 2008; Renata et al., 2010; Young Lives, 2012; Malmquist et al., 2014 and Raffety 2014). The general consensus is that children are knowledgeable and capable of contributing to the knowledge production process especially on issues about children or children's childhoods. Children are believed to be active social actors and social agents in their own right and can express their opinions. Contrary to these assertions, the results of this study show that children are represented as persons with low mental capabilities, lack the ability to think and exercise their minds like adults and incapable of independent reasoning. Children are however perceived to be capable of comprehension of their social and physical environments. These constructions of children could be valid or invalid depending on the experiences that adults in this specific social and cultural context have had with children. Most adult respondents in this study believe mental capabilities increase or emerge with increased chronological age and maturity and once

children have not grown to this level of maturity, then they cannot have mental abilities to think and act like adults.

It could be observed that, this way of viewing children relates to the low age range of persons considered as children, that is, persons below 13 years (the lower limit) or those below 15 years (upper limit). Children who are able to reason in ways similar to adults or demonstrate capacity for thought are perceived to be adults. Few respondents represented children as persons who also 'know' or understand something adults may not understand. Though few respondents held this notion about children, it corroborates sociology of childhood researchers' argument for children's participation in the knowledge generation process.

The findings also indicate children are perceived to come from or given by God, taken care of by God and please God. This representation of children may be contended by biological sciences where children are believed to be produced through scientific process of reproduction. One interpretation of the notion of children coming from God could be the idea that children cannot come about through scientific process of reproduction without the power of God and culminating in a divine representation of children over shadowing biological constructions among the respondents. Similarly, the idea of children being taken care of by God is to be viewed as God or the Supreme Being, being the all-powerful (Nukunya, 2003; Gyekye 1996) takes care of children not by Himself but through human beings. An Akan (the largest ethnic group in Ghana) adage in Gyekye (1996: pp. 36) which is similar to the psycho-religious representation of children revealed in this study is "when a person descends from the heaven he descends into society". The author interprets the notion of a person descending from heaven as a belief that children come from God, but born into society through human beings.

The general agreement among researchers who research about children and young people in both the developed and developing countries that childhood is a social construct (see Aries 1962, Zelizer 1994, Jenks 1996, James et al. 1998, Ansell 2005, Honwana and De Boeck 2005) is confirmed by the findings presented and discussed in this work. These findings show that a) childhood is represented using multiple dimensions that refer to both nature and culture, and b) these representations can conflict with each other. More specifically they show the coexistence of elements that can be sometimes attributed to the traditional representation of childhood commonly shared in the rural communities involved in the research, and sometimes to the influence of the western culture that permeates the international and national legal documents on children's rights and well-being. But the findings also show that in the two rural districts considered in the study the end of childhood is mostly determined on a case by case basis, according to the experiences each child undertakes, and less in relation to age or to what it is stated by the law or the culturally believes about who and what child should be.

. The above discussed supports Aries (1962) in Ansell (2005) and James et al. (1998) claim that notions about children and childhood are specific constructions of adults and such constructions not only shape the life experiences of children, but are also subject to change. The constructions or representations of children and how it shapes the life experiences of children are exposed in the discussion in section 5.4. However, the next section discusses changes in the representations of children revealed from this study.

Socio-legal constructions

The results also show a mix of interesting socio-legal constructions of children. Interesting because, some aspects of the socio-legal representations of childhood, which emerged from both community and institutional levels, were similar and other aspects were conflicting. All

categories of respondents including children themselves perceived children as persons needing protection, from physical, psychological and moral danger because they are believed to be incapable of representing themselves and needing adult care. But children being vulnerable or at risk to physical, psychological and moral danger and having rights were stressed only by the institutional level respondents and not by the community level respondents. Supported by a few of institutional level respondents, nearly all community level respondents represented children as persons without rights but having responsibilities. One angle of viewing the representation of children as "right less" or persons without right is to look at it with the lens of the African cultural values. Although community level respondents' notion of children in terms of rights could be a reflection of norms and values of Africans regarding children and their relationship with adults because local people are the repository of tradition, few institutional level respondents' (who are exposed to global laws and frameworks regarding children and children's rights) referred to the idea of children's rights as "a foreign thing".

This study shows that within the context of rural communities in Northern Ghana, children are believed not to have rights. But among Africans including Ghanaians they are the "most precious of possessions" Gyekye (1996, pp. 84). Though the notion of 'rightlessness' of children when juxtapose with their 'preciousness' could be considered contradictory, the 'rightless' notion held about children could be due to a desire by adults to train children to acquire desired character traits and also for them to abide by the norms within their specific cultural and generational context but which they believe conflict with the notion of children's rights. In other words adults in the study communities expect the childhoods of contemporary children to be a 'replica of their own childhoods' despite variations in the context of children of their generation and contemporary children. According to Gyekye (1996) children within

the context of African cultural values must be humble, respectful of adults and are not to show they are superior to adults. This could explain why children are perceived not to have rights or the seemingly friction between some community and institutional levels constructions of childhood and children.

At the institutional level, data from both primary and secondary sources revealed children are represented as distinct beings with several rights including care and protection. The idea of children having no rights revealed from community level data corroborates Nanbigne (2012, in Oppong et al.) findings that show that sharp differences exist in how sick children are treated compared to sick elderly persons among the Dagaaba of Northern Ghana; the ethnic group to which the study respondents of the Lawra District belong. When a child is sick according to the author, out-migrant family members are unlikely to be contacted for financial support to take the child to the hospital but help is likely to be sought when an elderly person is sick. This suggest that children's right to health or to have their health needs met is not as crucial as that of elderly persons among this ethnic group of Northern Ghana especially in rural communities. It could be argued that among the Daggaba the life of a child is of lower value compared to that of an elderly person.

Apart from analysing community and institutional level socio-legal representations of children within the African cultural lens, a second dimension one could view such depictions of children is to look at it in the light of the Ghana's 1998 Children's Act 560. This Act could be described as an offshoot of the 1989 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which also emanated from the UNCRC. The findings of this study suggest local people perceive children as persons without right and some institutional level respondents refer to children's rights as a "foreign thing". These notions are contrary to the Children's Act of Ghana which is nearly two decades old and 26 sections of the part 1 of the Act outlines

various rights of children beginning with a definition of a child. The friction between community and some institutional level respondents and provisions in the Children's Act of Ghana; in terms of children's rights, makes the legal and institutional framework for children within the Ghanaian context superficial in that, there appear to be a sharp difference between theory and practice. This is in line with Gokak (2006) argument that the lack of harmonised African culture into national and international laws make implementation difficult.

Although Gokak's argument could be valid, it could be argued that it is not merely a lack of harmonised African culture into national and international laws which make implementation difficult but rather, national and international laws usually reflect largely western ideals and less of the African ideals. The tension between rural northern Ghanaian parents and the institutions in terms of children's rights could be attributed to the fact that the notion of rights is a western concept which reflects the individualism that characterises western society.

Among rural parents they could be abiding by some of the 26 sections outlined as rights of children in the Ghana's 1998 children's Act, yet they construct children as persons without rights. Some institutional level respondents highlighted that even in the cities it is only some educated parents who believe that children have rights and abide by them. This further suggest that the processes leading to the enactment of the Act did not carry local people along in order for them to understand and appreciate the idea of children's right and to share in and believe in them.

5.2 Changing childhoods and childhood representation in Northern Ghana

Older persons were able to recount their childhoods and the childhoods of children generally in their communities when they were young men and women. Their accounts of the childhoods back in their time were juxtaposed with representations of contemporary children generated from all non-children respondents in this study. The research indicates that regardless of the current context of socio-economic change, there are still beliefs and representations of the past in relation to gender representations of children.

Explanations from older persons suggest that, in the past, children were depicted as persons who: needed to be beaten for correction/discipline, were respectful and obedient of adults, adhered to cultural norms, played, avoided sexual activities, did not consume alcohol, needed protection, did not fight with parents, stayed away from adult matters and belonged to the community. Aside the descriptions reported above 'then children' were represented as foolish, irrational and resilient to diseases, had prolonged childhood and enjoyed more food than contemporary children.

These representations of past children suggest that past children were believed to be good and upright because all the 'don'ts' were not done by them and all the 'dos' were done. Due to the believed 'foolishness' and 'irrationality' of past children they were subject to obedience and to follow all the norms imposed by adults without questioning. They were passive recipients of societal norms.

Contemporary representations of children/childhood are the direct opposite of what the representations of children were about 4 to 5 decades ago (see table 9 in chapter 4). The findings of the study thus, further supports Aries (1962), in Ansell (2005) and James et al., (1998) assertion that ideas about childhood are particular constructions of adults and they are

subject to change. Today's children are depicted as persons who are doing all the 'don'ts' which past children did not do and not doing all the 'dos' which children in the past did. This is because most elderly and adult respondents stressed contemporary children disregard all the permissible and impermissible behaviours highlighted in table 4.5 in chapter 4 but which past children adhered to.

These changes in childhood and/or representations of children could be attributed to socioeconomic and cultural change and other factors of change such as the media, facilitated by information and communication technology, improved transport, rural-urban migration and monetisation of societies. It could be recalled from chapter 4 that one criterion for reconstructing a child as an adult is when he/she embarks on and returns from migration from southern Ghana and the findings show this is pervasive in the two study Districts. Children's childhood is shortened by this practice which is aided by the accessibility of transport and 'easy to raise lorry fare'. Children engage in varied economic activities in their own communities or nearby towns which they get paid and so, making possible for children to easily raise their lorry fare which they need to embark on a journey. The results of the research show that the way children represent themselves, what adults compel them to do and what they are compelled to do due to the socio-economic context in which they find themselves all contribute to change representation of childhood. Also, children's accessibility to communication technologies and information, transportation services and paid work give them the opportunity to actively contribute to change what childhood is believed to be, give them a space for action and to assert their agency.

Contemporary children's exposure to such factors of change and their contextually different social environment from that of their parents and grandparents could explain their actions and consequently, their depiction in opposition to past children by current adults.

On the one hand, contemporary children are believed to be wise, enlightened and rational. These positive representations of children which I am attributing to the socio-economic change mentioned above, have not resulted in older persons' representations of in the positive generally. On the other hand, children are portrayed negatively, and for this reason children are left to fend for themselves. These respondents assert that contemporary children "think they are rational, wise and know better than adults" but they aren't. And because of their arrogance children are left to fend for themselves.

It could be argued that while contemporary children are compelled by the context they find themselves to engage in acts and experience childhood different from past children, adults view them in the negative. Instead of viewing current children in the negative, adults and the elderly could reflect over their own actions and interactions they have with children and also adults' advantageous position in social space, agency and structure compared to children and then see children as social actors or agents in their own right in order for them to appreciate the actions and inactions of contemporary children. For instance, Zelizer (1994) indicates, changes in the cultural meanings and social constructions of childhood emanated from changes in the social, sentimental and monetary values of children which rose and fell and eventually children became priceless by the mid nineteenth century in Europe and the United States of America.

Similarly, changes in the social representations of children in rural communities in Northern Ghana could be the result of changes in the social and family expectations of children and what children are used for. Honwana and De Boeck (2005) suggest children are capable of changing existing models of kinship and moral principles of reciprocity and solidarity, gerontocracy, authority structures and the relations between male and female. It could therefore be argued further that because of the different social context which contemporary

children find themselves they act in ways which are contrary to the existing norms and arrangements, especially at the household level, leading to changes in the way childhood is constructed and how children are perceived or represented.

5.3 The moral status of children

The findings again suggest that due to how children are normatively constructed and what is/are expected of children in their day to day life and interaction with adults, they are suppressed from talking intelligently with adults and before adults. Children are believed to lack the capacity for thought and demonstration of intelligence until they become adults. To show that they respect adults they are expected not to talk in a manner that signal that they are more intelligent than adults. Children particularly male, who are sometimes privileged and allowed participation in family and community meetings or gatherings, are expected to express their views through some adult participants.

Paradoxically, there are proverbial expressions (chapter 4), particularly among the respondents in the Lawra District, about children's superior memory and consequently when they are present at a community or family meeting, there is guaranteed replay of important issues discussed at such meetings or gatherings even when adults who were present forget. However and probably for the believe in the low capacity of children for thought, children who exhibit such retentive memory are labelled as 'adults' or 'elderly persons' as in this Dagaaba proverb: *Bebil wong bayienne, ona la kaba buolo nengkora*, translates as *A child who hears but does not forget, is the one being referred to as an elderly person*. Although this highlights children's intellectual capability, it also suggests that not all children are endowed and so children are not to contribute when adults are having a discussion. In addition they must not talk with adults as if they are more intelligent.

Such norms, although could achieve societal expectation of children being respectful of adults, suppress children from expressing their views intelligently and participating actively in the discussion of issues which affect them and interacting very well with their parents or other adults. Poor interaction between children and their parents and suppression of children from talking intelligently further has the tendency of making children grow to be timid, unassertive and uncritical adults.

5.4 Gendered constructions of children in Northern Ghana

The findings also suggest gendered constructions and representations of children. Responses to questions on social norms, the position of children in society and respondents' preferred sex or gender of children, show respondents at both community and institutional level indicate that children are differently represented depending on whether they are male or female (see chapter 4, section 4.3). Female children are denoted as inferior, juniors, 'strangers' in their parents' families, 'outsiders', without a family until they mature and marry, less important beings, promiscuous and not worthy of having. These representations of female children are similar to a general "stereotype of young girls and women as promiscuous, irresponsible and 'weak'" widespread in Zambia (Clemensen, 2016, pp. 326). The only positive adjectives attributed to female children are, honest, trustworthy and sympathetic or empathetic.

On the other hand, male children are symbolised as superior, true family members, important and worthy of having. But, they are also negatively represented as dishonest persons. These differences in the representation of male and female children were observed to be related to what is expected of male and female children in everyday life, what they actually do daily in their households and communities and how they are generally socialised (see chapter 4, section 4.1.2 childhood "in practice").

It could be observed that representations of boy and girl children presented earlier in chapter four are dichotomous. Again, the manner in which female and male children are represented is similar to the findings in Hussein (2005). In Hussein's study of how masculinity and femininity are socially and ethno-culturally constructed in African proverbs, it is revealed that several African proverbs construct women as inferior, irrational, lacking integrity, objects with low and high values in the marriage market depending on the status of their virginity and have families only after marriage, while men superior. The following proverb of the Ethiopian ethnic group of the Oromo is a good example: "Males are the iron pole of a house, while females are the outside that belongs to others" (Hussein, 2005, pp. 70).

We can see that female children are portrayed as outsiders or aliens to their families of birth. Hussein explains:

As in other African societies, the Oromo female children leave their family upon marriage. Implied in the proverb, thus, is the patriarchal view that upon marriage, females are passed along to "the possession of their real owners," the husband and his relatives. Unlike female children, male children remain in the family and inherit the estate. A male child is called the "iron pole of a house" to symbolise his potential in bearing the family name as well as in extending the father's masculinity. The proverb thus indoctrinates boys into masculinity and girls into femininity. The same is true with the Yoruba proverb, "A male child is the pillar of the family, a female one is a seasonal stream." (Hussein, 2005 pp. 70)

The portrayals of male and female children revealed in this study could be a reflection of the nature of gender relations and power dynamics between men and women in the study communities, whose roots are nurtured beginning with children in the socialising process. Most adult respondents at the community level justified the gender division of labour for boy and girl children to the need for girls to be trained to be 'good' wives. They are to learn things which are expected of wives before they turn into women. Boys are conditioned to position themselves to be served when they become husbands. Female and male children, the findings suggest, are made to begin internalising gender discriminatory practices and confinement of girls (future women) into reproductive and the domestic sphere and boy

children into public and productive sphere. Ghana performed relatively better in achieving a number of the recently ended Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, MDG 4 (attaining gender equality) was among those the country did not fare well. Hence these gendered representation and socialisation of children have the tendency of perpetuating gender inequality in Ghana and Africa at large.

5.5 Child poverty in the different representations of children

Because the focus of this study is to explore the socio-cultural constructions and social representations of children/childhood and how it relates to children poverty in rural communities in Northern Ghana, in section 4.4 the results showed consistencies and inconsistencies between the normative representations of children and what children usually do or are expected to do, on one side, and the indicators of child poverty used in chapter 3, on the other side.

Although notions of childhood held by most of the study subjects have in them child poverty indicators, most adults' respondents did not see the situation in which children in rural communities in northern Ghana find themselves as such.

This was evident in their definitions of poverty, vulnerable children and child social exclusion presented in chapter 4.

Child poverty has been operationalised in this study based on the three dimensions of child poverty: material, subjective and relational. In this discussion CMP (Child Material Poverty), CSP (Child Subjective Poverty) and CRP (Child Relational Poverty) are placed in front of the manifestations of child poverty which emerged from the social and cultural constructions of childhood in this study to indicate which of the three dimensions of child poverty the

emerged indicator belong. In this discussion, where normative representations of children and what children normally do in everyday life presents indicators which enhance child well-being, are also highlighted.

Child poverty indicators which emerged from the various representations of childhood/children which are for discussion in this section are summarised into eight as follows:

- 1. Child Material Poverty (CMP) indicators
- Children are use as "tools" for work (CMP)
- Children contribute to family income and/or are expected to engage in income earning activity (CMP)
- No compulsion in children going to school (CMP)
- Children work to finance their education and others fend for themselves (CMP)
- Children eat less meat or eggs from household meals (CMP)
 - 2. Child Relational Poverty (CRP) indicators
- Independent child travel or seasonal migration exposes children to abuse and exploitation and affect interaction between parents and children (CRP)
- Children are suppressed from talking intelligently before or with adults (CRP)
 - 3. Child Subjective Poverty (CSP) indicator
- "Gendered sense of worth" (CSP)

5.5.1 Children as "tools" for work

At the community level, adults, older persons and children on one hand and official of institutions on the other all made reference to children carrying out work; which at the

household and community levels are mostly determined by adults and are believed to be divinely created for children. Children carry out 'designated children's work' in their everyday life. This is not only coherent with representation of children as persons incapable of doing 'adults work' but also supports Ansell (2005) and Renata et al. (2010) arguments about the positive side of children working. This notwithstanding, the findings show that children are used as 'tools' for work due to the desire by adults for children to begin the process of acquiring skills (mostly skills of their parents) at a very young age - 6 years old lower limit and 10 years old upper limit. Because children's work is seen as a skill acquisition process, they are made to carry out work considered appropriate for children and in addition, they must assist adults they live with (parent/guardians) in any other work they do. These activities span from domestic activities, to farm work as well as caring for animals. The practice of children carrying work beyond what is designated as children's to contribute to the household survival needs is inconsistent with the normative representation of children as persons: who cannot meet their feeding needs and not physically and biologically matured for adult roles. As indicated earlier in chapter 4 most institutional level respondents reported children in rural communities are normally treated like slaves or servants and are expected to work most of the time and serve adults always.

Although what adults engage children in, with respect to work, may have their positive aspect, using children to get work which are labelled "children's work" done, in addition to children participating in all other work carried out by adults is likely to hinder children's physical development, acquisition of formal education and the development of their talents and acquisition of skills different from that of their parents. In most cases the children are treated this way not only to get them to contribute to the household food and other needs, but also because of the desire for parents/guardians to transfer their skills to their children. Phiri

and Abebe (2016) show how the intense use of children for work (including their use as household food and income contributors through their labour within and outside the home) and children's desire to be 'good children' (forcing them to do all that is expected of them as children), push children into other deprivations in rural Zambia. In particular, voices of parents in Phiri and Abebe (2016) indicated how children's work in the farming season was given priority over children attending school due to parents idea that children need to produce the food they will eat when they go to school and return.

From the socio-demographic data of respondents presented in chapter 4, 41 out of the 50 adults and the elderly indicated they were peasant farmers, and according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2008) poverty in Ghana is a rural phenomenon. Using children as 'tools' for work as a result of how they are represented does not only present an indicator of child material poverty but also likely to lay the foundation for what Young Lives (2012) referred to as intergenerational transmission of poverty. Desire by poor peasant farmers for their children to acquire their own skills imply the children living like their parents and guardians at their own adulthood. Children's participation in work was also mostly justified by community level respondents by virtue of the fact that children eat and must labour to contribute to the food they eat. This is similar to the notion held by rural Zambian parents and highlighted in Phiri and Abebe (2016). Ideas held by rural adults that suggest children must work because they eat, is in opposition to provisions in the 1998 children's Act 560 of Ghana. The act stipulates clearly that children have the right to be fed and cared for and not engaging in work which take them away from school.

This view means that parents are responsible for the well-being of their children, without expecting that children refund parents in any way as for example children doing some work.

The next pointer of child poverty identified in the normative constructions of children and what children do in their everyday life in the study communities is closely related to the above point discussed.

5.5.2 Children as contributors to family income

The findings also show that in children's everyday life they contribute to family income and are expected in most households in the study communities to engage in some income earning activity to contribute to the household income or provide their own needs such as clothes and school materials. These practices and/or representations of children are also consistent with the normative representation of children as persons 'who need to suffer in order to gain'. This idea appeared in most of the responses from the West Mamprusi District. However, this contradicts representation of children as persons who cannot work and earn income which appeared strongly in the responses from the Lawra District. Paradoxically again, the findings show children in both study Districts are expected to travel to southern Ghana to labour for money.

Although I interpret children's making contributions to family income through varied economic activities as an indication of child poverty due to its potential of depriving children of their other needs (material and non-material), this practice could enhance the well-being of children from very poor and deprived households/families. In Ghana where poverty is largely a rural phenomenon (GSS, 2008) monetary contributions by children to their families through various economic activities they engage in could enhance the living situation of themselves and their households/families. Rather than children in rural communities in Northern Ghana living their childhoods as their counterparts in the west where childhood is constructed around play and school attendance and not work but receiving no welfare support from the state because they lack some needs as children, they take steps to meet their needs through

varies economic activities. According to Renata et al. (2010) children could have their psycho-social well-being enhanced because of their ability to contribute to meeting the needs of their families, and Ansell (2005) indicate this could possibly help children to remain in school because their school fees could be paid through the monetary contributions they make to their families.

These notwithstanding, children engaging in work which threatens their physical development and future as well as not attending school or utilising formal educational opportunities are indicators of child poverty within the general conceptual definition of children poverty. In an attempt to have children contribute financially to their education in social environments different from that of their parents/guardians (particularly for children who migrate during school vacations for work), children are left unsupervised and unprotected and they are likely to engage in acts which are inappropriate for their ages and hence hampering their physical development and possible termination of their education. Notwithstanding children are asked to work to pay for education, the opportunity to gain money involves the risk that education becomes less important from point of view of these children. In support of this, Mahati (2012), in Bourdillon and Sangare) highlights how migrant children from Zimbabwe, working in a South African border town, became so disinterested in attending school as they questioned the non-governmental organisation which sought to shelter, feed and care for them in school why they should not be working but attend school since they earned money through work to support themselves and sent remittances to their families in their home country. Hence the notion held by our respondents in the West Mamprusi District that children need to work to finance their education is most likely to terminate some children's education. By earning money, children are likely to see no reason why they should waste time in having formal education to acquire skill for work in order to

earn money. In addition, most institutional level respondents talked about girls who travelled to southern Ghana to work for money and returned pregnant and hence, ending their education before they complete Junior High School. When I visited a basic school in the Lawra District for fieldwork after schools had re-opened for three weeks, the headmistress lamented a lot of children had not reported because they had not returned from their travel to southern Ghana for income earning activities when school vacated.

If one justifies children's income contributions to their families and also their work to the poverty or lack of money of their parents, then Nukunya (2003) argument about the invalidity of the notion that Ghanaians love children will remain factual because rather than parents, particularly mothers going all the way to ensure that their children do not suffer, they appear to take back stage when conditions are hard and push children to the front to suffer. In the West Mamprusi District, most community level respondents talked about sending their children for kayayei (load carrying on the head to specified destination for a fee) and institutional level respondents in this District explained that mothers in particular encourage their female children to go for kayayei. That, the Ghanaians love children, especially among the Dagaaba, is again questioned by Nanbigne (2012) and Oppong et al. (2012). They report about the unresponsive manner in which sick children are likely to be treated compared to older persons in terms of seeking for funds to take them to a health facility. As discussed, children making income contributions to their families is closely related to their work and independent travels or migration and these are embedded in the material dimension of children poverty. But independent children traveling for economic purposes also exhibit relational dimension of child poverty as it affects the relationship between children and their parents.

5.5.3 Independent child travel and seasonal migration

Hatloy and Huser (2005) and Anarfi and Appiah (2009) indicate that the bulk of street children in Ghana's capital are from Northern Ghana especially the Northern Region and in the District categorisation, West Mamprusi District pulled the highest percentage of 25.4% of street children. The study results from this qualitative study support the findings of these authors. However, the Upper West Region where one of the study Districts (Lawra) belongs had few street children and independent child migrants in their studies. Nonetheless, the findings show independent child migration in this District is pervasive. The disparities between the findings of this study and that of Huser and Anarfi and Appiah regarding child migration from this part of Northern Ghana to Southern Ghana could be explained by differentials in the destinations of child migrants and child workers from Northern Ghana. The destination for children from rural communities in the Upper West Region from the responses of most of the study respondents is the Brong Ahafo region, and not Accra or Kumasi which are the destinations for children from the Northern Region and where the studies of independent child migrants and street children were carried out by these authors. The results presented in chapter 4 indicate that children in both study Districts embark on seasonal migration to cities and farming communities in Southern Ghana (especially in Brong Ahafo region) for economic opportunities.

In the study communities in the Lawra District children are portrayed as persons who do not embark on independent travels, and consistent with this believe those children who engage in independent migration or travels are re-constructed as adults, despite according to national and international legislation children under 18 who have had the benefit of independent seasonal migration is still a child.

As children with no skill or bargaining power, who desperately 'hunt' for work to earn income, they are more likely to be exposed to exploitation and abuse by people who hire them. Far away from their parents/guardians, they live and work without parental protection and guidance.

Again, this practice is also likely to negatively affect interaction between children and their parents/guardians. Phiri and Abebe (2016) show one of the indicators of child poverty highlighted by rural Zambian children was children who disregard their parents and disrespect adults and which the authors consider as a manifestation of child social-relational poverty. In the study communities in the Lawra District in particular, one of the reasons why children lose their status as children and re-constructed as adults after they have had a taste of seasonal migration is that most adult and older person respondents at the community level lamented children do not respect or obey them after they embark on a journey and return. Hence, they leave such children unguided and allow them to do whatever they deem appropriate and bear the consequences if the outcome of their actions are negative.

5.5.4 Child poverty and school drop-out

The results suggest that, for most rural parents, there is no compulsion in children attending school. Most of the community respondents believe that children cannot be forced to go to school and so even those enrolled can decide not to attend school on some days and adults should not compel them to go. This however contradicts the study respondents' normative portrayal of children as persons who are incapable of exercising their minds on what actions are right or wrong. After children are enrolled in school, those who want to attend school daily are allowed to do so and those who choose not to, are not compelled by adults or their parents to go. Community level respondents' account of children's daily activities mostly excluded attendance of school and only added as part of children's daily routine after

probing. This finding could explain why, according to UNICEF (2009), school attendance in the Northern Region is worse than the remaining regions of Northern Ghana although access to education is relatively better in this region compared to the two other regions of Northern Ghana. The United Nations (2015) report expressed pessimism about the attainment of MDG goal 2 "achieve universal primary education" as it headed towards the end of 2015 because an estimated 57 million children of primary school age from the developing regions were out of school at the time the report for the MDGs was prepared. The greatest percentage of these estimated children was from Sub-Saharan Africa which Ghana is a part.

In the material definition of child poverty, children who have no access to formal educational opportunities and/or denied formal education demonstrate an indicator of child poverty. Ghana's Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy; implemented since the early 1990s aimed among other things at achieving MDG 2. But according to the Sustainable Development Goals 2016 report the world (Ghana inclusive) fail to achieve this goal by the close of 2015. The SDG 4 which is captured "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning" appear to hinge on the assumption that all stakeholders including parents are willing and desirous of seeing all their children enroll in school (which is related to MDG 2) and therefore the need to move beyond getting children enrolled in school to ensuring the quality of education (highlighted in SDG 4). This notwithstanding, the emphasis on technical and vocational education training in the SDG 4, if taken seriously by Ghana and other developing countries such as Zimbabwe is likely to alley the fares of adult respondents in this study about the ability of formal education to provide their children skills and job.

Apart from the fact that leaving children to decide whether they want to go to school or not contradicts respondents' normative representation of children as persons who are not matured

in their thinking, mischievous and needing discipline, it makes children attainment of this indicator of child well-being a complex task for states and international bodies such as the UN. Access to education is largely the responsibility of the state. However, utilisation of educational opportunities by children in their communities rest largely on the shoulders of households and communities particularly parents. Again, notions held about children with respect to schooling the study results revealed, could explain why according to the UNICEF report 20-25% of Ghanaian children of school going age were not in school, only 24.2% of children 15-17 years old completed primary school for the data set used for the study and again, only 45% of those who completed basic school proceeded to the next level.

5.5.5 Children as contributors to finance their education and basic needs

The results also suggest children work to finance their own education while others generally fend for themselves even though they live with adults. This is closely linked to point 5.4.2, 5.4.3 and 5.4.4., already discussed. Both institutional and community level respondents represented children as persons capable of contributing to financing their own education. Consistent with this depiction of children, there were signals of children labouring to finance their education in the normative representations of childhood. The findings also suggest it is a shared expectation in the study communities that children through their work on the household farm or engagement in menial jobs in Southern Ghana during vacation, must help raise money for their school needs and fees. This supports Ansell (2005) point about children work aiding schooling rather than impeding it and Renata et al. (2010) argument about children demonstrating resilience in the face of parents/guardians inability to finance children's education.

Children may be able to continue schooling because they are able to finance their own education. However, the likelihood of them being wooed by the meager incomes they earn

through menial jobs at the expense of acquiring formal education to acquire lifelong skills is high. This is because children will not be forced by their parents to continue school if the children backslide. They desire their children to learn and acquire their traditional way of earning livelihood and to be household income contributors.

Hence, children working to finance their education and others fending for themselves though appear to be positive or capable of enhancing children's well-being, could also present negative aspects for child material well-being especially staying in and completing school as well as developing their full potentials.

5.5.6 Food and gender and intergenerational hierarchies

The study reveals that, due to some notions associated with children as presented in chapter 4, children eat relatively less meat than adults and girl children in particular eat less household eggs than boys as a result of specific constructions of girl children. It is believed that girls must not eat eggs whose embryos have begun formation; else they experience miscarriages when they become adults and begin reproduction. Again, it is believed that girls who eat eggs will in the future eat all the eggs in their households when they become pregnant and this could bring about scarcity of chicks. During FGD with boys in one of the study communities in the Lawra District they explained that, for this reason, although it is not a taboo for girls to eat eggs, it is boys who mostly eat eggs in households when they are available.

When food is served with meat, it is right for children to crave for the food and not the meat which comes with it and their share of meat is determined by adults. In traditional Northern Ghanaian societies meat is viewed separately from the food with which the meat is served. Adults take their share, and the remaining is shared according to number of children who then pick according to their rank or position among other children in the household. Institutional

level respondents who have been working with community people indicated children generally eat less meat than adults. Although these practices could be in harmony with local beliefs and customs, it is well known that children require more protein than adults for their growth and development. UNICEF (2009) indicates 1 out of 5 children under the age of 5 in Ghana are stunted, while ICF Macro (2010) reports 28%, 9% and 14% of children aged 6 to 59 months are respectively stunted, wasted and underweight, and the prevalence of anemia among them is 78%, and more in rural Ghana (84%) than urban Ghana (68%).

The findings from the qualitative analysis presented in chapter 4 on both normative construction of childhood/children and how children daily life play out particularly on their consumption of animal proteins from households, could explain these statistics from UNICEF and ICF Macro. These statistics on children's growth and health in Ghana could be connected to adults denial of children some foods which could balance their diets.

5.6 Gendered child poverty in gendered representations of children

As previously discussed, female and male children in the study communities are unlikely to get the same support from their households to go through formal education, consume meat equally from their households, have equal chances of participating in household and community discussions or decision-making processes and have different sense of worth stemming from differences in notions held about male and female children. In addition, differentials in boy and girl children having sense of worth have been discussed in the preceding section. The remaining gendered child poverty indicators which emerged from gendered representations of children are discussed in this section.

5.6.1 The position of girl children in their families of birth

One of the study objectives was to find out the differences, if there are any, in the representation of male and female children and if the differences connect differently to boys

and girls poverty. The results of this study show girl children are more likely to be dropped out of school in the face of limited family resources due to different normative representations of boy and girl children in the study communities. The finding of this specific objective corroborates Alhassan (2010) findings on socio-economic and cultural determinants of girl child education in the Gushiegu/Karaga District in the Northern Region of Ghana. The author revealed parental preference for male over female children culminate in the perception that educating girl children is a waste of resources and there is also the notion that women belong to their husbands. As a result, it is largely preferred that girls get into marriage rather than go to school. Again Alhassan indicated girls are more likely to be dropped out of school in Muslim *polygynous* families when resources for the education of children in the family are inadequate.

One interpretation which could be given to this discrimination against girls is that rural parents do a lot of rationalisation before they expend their limited resources; taking into account which use of their resources maximise the most results and benefit to their families. Since girl children are culturally perceived not to belong to the families into which they are born and the perception that even if their value increases through education it will be used for the benefit of their to be husbands and husbands' families, the rational decision to make if a girl child and a boy child are computing for limited household resources is to use it on the boy child. But this reasoning and discriminatory practice in favour of boy children have the tendency of further creating gendered child poverty and entrenching gender inequality in general. In the recent concluded MDGs, the United Nation reports gender parity has been achieved in the area of primary and not secondary and tertiary education for most of the developing regions of the world. The likelihood of female children being dropped from school in the phase of limited household resources imply a further strain on efforts towards

achieving gender equality in other levels of education, employment (especially in the formal sector) and political representation because beyond primary education the next levels of education are critical to the realisation of complete gender equality.

Again, this emerged gendered child poverty pointer inherent in gendered representations of children could explain why the United Nation (2015) report shows an estimated 55% of the 33 million children of primary school age in Sub-Saharan Africa out of school were girls.

5.6.2 Access to food for boy and girl children

Due to the subordination of girl children to boy children, most respondents said male children take their share of meat before girl children when meat is shared because children pick shared meat base on their position on the hierarchy of children until it gets to the last child on the ranking. As presented in chapter 4, the categorisation of children on the children's hierarchy is not based on age but on gender, where male children are generally considered seniors to female children in most households in the study communities.

One other window by which meat emerges in rural households in in the study Districts is through traditional sacrifices carried out by households/families/communities. Since only male children participate in these activities they are more likely to eat meat from these sacrifices and not girls because most of such meat are prepared and eaten at the place where the sacrifices are carried out. Again, most of such meat, one of the male focus group discussants explained, is forbidden for females (women or girls).

5.6.3 Male and female children's participation in household and community meetings and decision-making process

In chapter 4 section 4.5.3, the findings suggest that female and not male children are more likely to experience the above stated child relational poverty indicator in the study communities. Since male children are believed to be permanent family members they are given some space in household and community meetings, nevertheless, as passive

participants. Some respondents explained this is done to offer boy children the opportunity to observe and learn about issues regarding their families and communities and also to help in the reconstruction of history in the future when adults forget anything important talked about in the past. This symptom of child relational poverty, more likely to be experienced by female children has consequences for their experiences of other indicators of child subjective poverty such as girl children not finding any meaning in life, low level of satisfaction with their families and communities and no sense of worth, especially when they juxtapose their situation in terms of involvement in household meetings and public life with that of their male siblings. As indicated in chapter 4, a District official who schedules community meeting; indicating the participants as only adults is more likely to meet adults and male children but not girl children.

5.6.4 "Gendered sense of worth"

From the operational definition of child poverty indicated in chapter 3, children who have no sense of worth and dignity and do not find any meaning in life, have low level of satisfaction with their families and communities, their aspirations and hopes in life are shattered and are suffering from child subjective poverty.

The findings show that children have differentials in their sense of worth and dignity according to their gender due to differences in the representation of female and male children as we already showed.

During FGDs with boys in the study communities, boys generally expressed sense of worthwhile and as important members of their families because they perceive themselves as "lineage builders". Since their societies represent them as *deah nuba*, that is family members or true family member. Boy children saw themselves as more important than their female counterparts because in their adulthood, they remain as members of their families of birth

together with their own offspring. On the other hand, girls portrayed sense of worthlessness because they are often referred to as persons without families until they become adults and marry. They are constantly reminded of their role as future wives and their training is tailored towards serving a future husband and his family so as to belong to and have a family. This relates to girls' representation as "outsiders" or belonging to someone else's family but which will only be known when they move out of childhood and marry. Hence, girls see themselves as less important and boys as important.

Being a male child is associated with some privileges, as presented in chapter 4, at both household and community level. The way female children were portrayed by adults, older persons and boy children results in the low self-esteem of girl children could also be guessed to manifest the other indicators of child subjective poverty for female and not male children.

CHAPTER 6

Concluding Remarks

6.1 Knowledge and Policy Implications

The study shows that, in the representations of children by adults, the elderly and children themselves, adulthood starts earlier, in terms of both chronological age and activities children engage, compared to what is stated in national and international legal and policy frameworks, such as the 1998 Children's Act 560 of Ghana and the 1989 UNCRC. In addition, comparing elements of the contemporary representations of children/childhood in Northern rural Ghanaian communities to the childhoods of children in the past, in the same location, the period of childhood has shortened.

The study also showed a gendered dimension in both the normative representations of children and in children's everyday life practices. Children are represented not merely as children, but as male and female aimed at laying the foundation for perpetuating desired gender relations in adulthood.

By digging deeper into community people's representations and understanding of children/childhood and child poverty the study has shown that local people understanding of child poverty is different from definitions of child poverty in the literature. In addition to definitions of child poverty similar to the three dimensions conception of child poverty highlighted in the literature, local people also defined a poor child as a child who is lazy, without animals and one who roams aimlessly. It does appear that child poverty is always considered from a subjective and individual perspective and this way of viewing child poverty does not help in promoting change.

As reported previously in the study, UNICEF (2009) determined the presence of child poverty in Ghana by extrapolating quantitative data from data sets such as the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, the Ghana Living Standards Survey and the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey. Young Lives (2012) contributed to an understanding of child poverty by studying child poverty from the perspectives of children themselves as competent research subjects and as the most appropriate people to contact for the understanding of children poverty because children and not adults are the ones who experience children poverty.

Although children are better placed to help researchers understand how it is to live as a poor child, children's dependence on adults make understanding of children poverty only from children's perspective narrow. Knowledge of adults' representations of children/childhood and child poverty are also important for addressing children poverty and this study has explored.

This research has shown that, cultural norms and values, practices within and outside of the household/families, social expectations of children and household/family dynamics in rural Northern Ghanaian communities depict children in varied ways that can affect children's poverty.

Going back to the gendered constructions of children, this study has shown that there is no uniformity between male and female children in the experiences of children who may be living in poverty. At least, within the context of rural Northern Ghana, if children are living in poverty, the likelihood of girl children being poorer than their male counterparts is high. What then, are the implications of the findings of this study for policy? Children's poverty is gaining serious attention, and efforts are being made by international organisations, non-governmental organisations and governments to address it especially in developing countries. In the context of better economic indicators generally in Ghana in contemporary times

compared to the 1980s, some child poverty indicators show that children are suffering of poverty.

The literature suggests that children who suffer poverty are likely to transfer their poverty to their own children and grandchildren. Hence, it is important to address children's poverty in order to sustain gains made in overall poverty. But addressing children poverty require a clear and broad understanding of why children are poor and what makes them poor. For example, targeting poor children with educational infrastructure or social protection policy programmes which hand in cash directly to selected households with poor and vulnerable children as the case is in Ghana in order to address children poverty are likely not to take poor children out of poverty without addressing notions held by adults about children which are deeply seated in cultural norms, values and practices which drag children into poverty. For example, most adults, the elderly and children themselves represented children as persons capable of embarking on independent seasonal migration for economic purposes and children are considered as household survival needs contributors. Although children could meet some of their material needs through independent seasonal migration, they lose their status as children and left unguided and uncared for by adults upon return and the likelihood of their disinterest in school after making little money is high.

Therefore, to reduce children poverty especially in rural communities, policy actions to address ideas and notions held by adults and older persons in households and communities about children are important, as well as listening to children. Although not all the cultural norms, values, practices and social expectations of children revealed and discussed are harmful to children, tackling children poverty only through traditional strategies such as provision of material things without addressing children poverty which are induced by culture

and tradition will achieve little in reducing or eradicating children poverty in developing countries. Initiating policy actions to do away with cherished and longstanding cultural norms, values and practices which cumulate in the ways children are represented could be challenging. But knowledge about how children are represented could help in addressing them. Above all, policy targeting children poverty reduction need to recognised its gendered nature.

6.2 Conclusion

This research explored representations of children/childhood and child poverty in rural Northern Ghana at both the household/community and institutional levels. The findings discussed, have shown that there are varied ways through which rural people and institutions represent children/childhood. Although there appear to be tensions in the representations of children between local people and institutions, there is no significant difference between representations of children/childhood at the household/community and the local institutional level.

Based on the Agency versus Structure debate, we have argued that contemporary representations of childhood and child poverty in rural Northern Ghanaian communities emanate from the nature of adults' agency, their position in social space and in structure (which are larger) compared to that of children, children representation of themselves and some factors of change already elaborated. Adults use their position in social space and in structure as well as their specific agency to normatively construct children in terms of dependence and/or needing protection, children-adults ability to work, laziness and belonging to the community.

The study participants from the community level deconstruct persons who are still children from the perspectives of institutions at the national and international levels into 'adults' or pre-mature adults, they expect and make children live their lives in practice as though they were adults. This is partly because of the local meanings and representations of child poverty which is different from its meaning as is conceptualised in the literature. Thus, local meanings of child poverty show clearly that there is a relationship between social representation of children and child poverty but no indications that poverty vary between or among social classes. Contrary to the believe that child poverty can better be understood using only the Agency framework to explore child poverty from children's lived experiences (see Young Lives, 2012 and Campfield, 2010), this research has shown that by using both Agency and Structure as well as "Practices" as framework to explore representations of children and children poverty in rural communities also contributes to knowledge on children poverty. Findings from the research confirm that children's representations have relevant impact on their poverty status. The implication is that, to address children poverty, policy actions need to give attention to social representations of children and to the specificity of child poverty in the local context.

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Appendix

1. Data collection instrument

Guide/ Instrument for field work.

Title of project:

Representations of Childhood and Child Poverty in Rural Communities in Northern Ghana

Ethnical issues and informed consent

Before the commencement of data generation from each sample participant or group of participants, explain the purpose of the exercise to them and ask for their consent. For children, consent should be first sought from their parents/guardians and before the start of interaction; assent should be sought from children themselves. Their decision not to participant supersedes that of their parents.

Informed consent for adults

My name is Grace Alenoma and PhD student in Sociology and Social Research

Methodology and as part of my training I am here to learn from your district which was
purposively selected and your community randomly selected. Also, you have been
purposively and/or randomly selected as a participant in my learning process because
you are among the target participants who can provide information about the questions
I seek to address in this learning process for me titled Representations of Childhood
and Child Poverty in Rural Communities in Northern Ghana. This is purely for
academic work and the outcome of my experiences with you and your
community/institution/department will not be associated with anyone of you I will
interact with. Confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed from the beginning of our
interaction to the final report of my learning experience with you. My learning from
you and your community/institution/department is a process and will take some time.

Sometimes I will come back for more interaction if I need to learn more after preliminary analysis of notes generated earlier. Today's interaction with you will last between 1 and 2 hours. Please indicate whether you are willing to participate in the research or not.

a) I agree to be a participant and we can begin interaction right away ()
b) I agree to be a participant, but cannot start the interaction today ()
c) I don't want to participate ()
d) If b), indicate rescheduled date
Date of consent
Signature of participant

Informed consent for parents of sample children participants

Signature of researcher.....

I am carrying out a study, titled: Representations of Childhood and Child Poverty in Rural Communities in Northern Ghana. It is part of my training as a PhD student. The main objective of my project is to explore the socio-cultural constructions of childhood and the social representations of children poverty in rural communities in Northern Ghana. It is important for children to participate in the study because child poverty is directly experienced by children and hence the process of knowledge seeking about child poverty must include the voices of children. As a result your son/daughter has been selected participate in for interaction with me. It will include discussions with other children and there after drawings of a typical family in the community and explanations of their drawings followed by questions to each of the individual children e.g. What children will do or not do in this community and why? As the parent/guardian of the sampled child I want to interact with, I wish to respectfully ask for your permission for his/her participation in this learning process for me.

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a. agreed [ ] b. disagreed [ ]
```

Informed assent for children

You have been selected and your mother/father/guardian has agreed to your participation in study which I am here to do in your community to learn from you and your community.

I am interested in issues that concern you as children and your experiences and I see you as the experts on issues you have experienced or issues that directly affect you. For these reasons you are the most appropriate people to ask questions to and to learn from. My study seeks to explore the Socio-cultural constructions of children/childhood and how children poverty is represented in how children are constructed in Northern Ghana

I am relying on your opinions to understand how childhood and children is/are constructed in contemporary times and the differences in the way boys and girls are perceived and treated

I am therefore asking for your agreement to take part in discussions for this study. Though your mother/father/guardian has agreed to your participation, your decision not to participate overrides that of your parent/guardian.

```
a. agreed [ ]b. disagreed [ ]
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Table 1. Basic profile of respondents (household level) (adults, older persons and children)

Socio-demographic data of respondents
Name of District
Name of Community
Respondent's name (optional) use
address/name of the house for
identification in case there is need to
revisit
Age
Sex
Marital status
Religious affiliation
Occupation
Level of education
Number of children in household

Table 1. Basic profile of respondents (Institutional level and community-based groups)

J .	ata of respondents	(institutional level participants	
Respondent's name (optional)			
name of institution or position	n of the		
interviewee			
Age			
Sex			
Marital status			
Religious affiliation			
Level of education			
Occupation			
Number of years you have be	een with the		
organization			
Position in the organization e	.g. coordinator		
Main research objective: To explore and understand	the socio-cultural and	structural constructions of children/child	hood
To explore and understand		structural constructions of children/child al communities in Northern Ghana?	hood
To explore and understand			hood
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to ch	ildren's poverty in rura		
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to ch To: Objective 1. Explore hotimes. Explore the physical explore in	ow childhood and cl	nildren is/are constructed in contempositional social and structural/macr	orary
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to chemother To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physic framings or constr	ow childhood and cloogical/ chronological uctions of children in	nildren is/are constructed in contempolical, social and structural/macroontemporary times	orary o level
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to chemostric To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physic framings or construction of Explore the connection.	ow childhood and cloogical/ chronological uctions of children in ctions/disconnections	nildren is/are constructed in contempositional social and structural/macr	orary o level
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to che To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physical framings or construction social construction.	ow childhood and cloological/ chronological uctions of children in ctions/disconnections as of children.	nildren is/are constructed in contempolical, social and structural/macroontemporary times	orary o level
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to chemostric To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physic framings or construction of Explore the connection.	ow childhood and cloological/ chronological uctions of children in ctions/disconnections as of children.	nildren is/are constructed in contempolical, social and structural/macroontemporary times	orary o level
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to che To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physical framings or construction Explore the connection Social construction NB Primary and	ow childhood and cloological/ chronological uctions of children in a ctions/disconnections as of children.	nildren is/are constructed in contemporary times between biological definitions of children	orary o level
To explore and understand to and how it contributes to che To: Objective 1. Explore how times. Explore the physical framings or construction social construction.	ow childhood and cloological/ chronological uctions of children in ctions/disconnections as of children.	nildren is/are constructed in contempolical, social and structural/macroontemporary times	orary o level

	1	
A. PRIMARY DATA Adults 18 - 64 years 30 people Aged 65+ 20 people	In-depth interview	a. Talk about how and when children cease to be children and considered as adults in your (i) household (ii) community. b. What a typical day of a child in the household looks like. Follow up with why? e.g. why is it that it is the child that
		1. What responsibilities do the community

		has towards children? Probe. Ask why to the
		responses given.
		m. What responsibilities do the District
		Assembly (DA) has towards children? Probe!
Children (11-17 years) 30 children - both boys and girls)	Group activity (Drawings Stories/narratives)	 First explain the essence of the exercise to the children. They should draw a typical household in their community NB Let the children discuss among themselves and agree on how the drawings should look like e.g. what should be included, size of the people, mood, etc. What is important is that adults (men and women) and children (boys and girls should be represented). The drawings should depict a typical household in their community; summary of all that go on in the community for the various categories of
		 community for the various categories of people 4. They should also draw a typical day in their community with all segments of the population represented. 5. Tell the children to explain their drawings for both the household and community (each child contributing to the discussion). Take note of what they agree or disagree on. 6. Use the drawings to ask questions relating to this research objective.
		 7. Also use the drawings to ask questions about what they did not include in their drawings or did not talk about in the stories/narratives they gave about their drawings Further interaction A. Talk about how and when children cease to be children and considered as adults in your community B. Probe with why? how? Instances of how? C. Descriptions associated with you and other children in the community. D. How do you see yourself in your households/families and why? E. Ask for the nature of interaction between
		adults and children in households

		F. Narration of a typical day as a child in the household. Follow by why and how?G. What children will do or not do and why?H. Norms(dos and don'ts associated with children in the household. How do you find them?I. What rights are associated with children in the household?
Members of Community- based groups organizations (CBOs) and activities (mix group of men and women who belong to identified groups in the study districts) Number of people to be determined from the total number of members in the group	key informant interview	 I. Composition of the members II. Determinants of the group members III. If particular category of people are excluded/included e.g. children, why are they excluded/included. IV. Identify activities of the group and who benefits from the activities V. Participants in group activities (e.g. It is opened to children? VI. Why it is opened to or not opened to children.
Officials of Institutional/ governmental structures (at the district level) Gender and children's sub-committee Department of children (2) Department of social welfare (2) Teachers (both primary and JHS (To be determined from the number of teachers in the sampled schools) Health personnel in the study districts (CHPS compound or Health centre) (2)	unstructured interview FGD (only teachers) In-depth interview (only teachers)	 a) First review the working documents of each of these institutions b) Second use the content of the documents that has to do with children as the basis for interview c) Probe on framings of children outside the framework or working document of their respective institutions; using the guide for the household level for adults and older persons i.e. guided questions a. to j. Norms (dos and don'ts) associated with children in the school in this community and why? What responsibilities do the District Assembly (DA) has towards children? Probe! (ask to only gender and children's sub-committee). Repeat question to department of social welfare and department of children
B. SECONDARY DATA Documents from Department of children, Department of Social Welfare, District Assembly, Education and Health	Content analysis Question! How do the working documents of these	 i. Identify issues relating to children in each of these documents more generally ii. Scrutinize the documents to identify main themes relating to children

	institutions construct childre	iii. Identify themes relating to definitions/constructions of children/childhood.
of children and child explore the social explore structure documents and	tio-cultural construction ral/institutional constructed child related departments.	ons from the 1990s and below tructions of children at the macro level through rtments from the 1990s and below (e.g. Ghana Department of Social Welfare)
Target participants/institution s/documents	Data generation technique	Interview/FGD guide
A PRIMARY DATA Aged 65+	 Repeated and retrospective interviews. Stories 	 A. In your opinion, are there changes in the experiences of children now compared to your experiences of childhood? Why? B. Talk about your childhood when you were growing up. How did adults see you and how did you see yourself? C. Talk about norms and rights associated with children in your society when you were a young man/woman D. Descriptions associated with children when you were a young man/woman E. How adults perceived children when you were young. F. A story about how children were viewed by a adults when you were growing up G. When and under what circumstance(s) were you considered an adult and moved out of childhood? (In each case, probe for further insides into the responses) NB In each case, let interviewees estimate or provide the time period e.g. In the 1970s, 1980s or 40 years ago, 30 years ago. To be carried at least 2 times.
B. SECONDARY DATA Documents from GNCC/department of children/GCS DSW, DA,	Content/document analysis	How are children positioned in the working documents of these child-centered departments/institutions? Review and identify themes, definitions and framings of children in the documents of the
Education, Health 1998 children's Act, Child		framings of children in the documents of the targeted departments/institutions between the

labour act		1980s and 1990s.		
Objective 3. Explore the differences if any, in the constructions of boy children and girl children Socio-cultural constructions Structural/Institutional level (macro level)				
Target participants/document s	Data generation technique	Interview/FGD guide		
A. PRIMARY DATA Adults 18 - 64 years	In-depth interview	 NB Take note of information that may answer some aspects of this question in the interactions for research objectives 1 & 2 and don't ask again. A. In your opinion are there, differences between boy children and girl children? why? B. In your family and your community are there norms (dos and don'ts) and rights for boys and girls? Why? Details of the differences or details of why there are no differences. C. The most preferred (i.e.) between boys and girls and why? D. Male group and female group discussion. Use the same guided questions for 7 to 11 years old under research objective 1. E. How is a typical day of a boy child like in your family/household? That is from morning to evening. Use the response for further questions. F. How? why? G. How is seniority between boys and girls determined in your household? Ask how? what? why? if necessary H. What roles and responsibilities are associated with a. boy and b. a girl in your household? 		
Teachers	Observation In-depth interview	Ask why? a. Participant observation (covert and overt observation) during lessons and spend some time in the schools in the study area to observe daily interaction and practices between teachers and boys on one hand, and between teachers child girls on the other. b. Use outcome of observations for interview with teachers. Why? What? How?		
Assemblypersons (2 persons)	In-depth interview	c. Use the guided questions for A to J above		

Officials of Girl child education division	Interview	b.	Working document of the girl child education office Review document and use as the basis for interview. i.e. why girl child? and but no boy child? Ask what? how? if necessary
SECONDARY DATA	Content/document	1.	
Documents from	analysis.		these documents more generally.
department of	Are there	2.	Scrutinize the documents to identify main
children/Gender,	differences in the		themes relating to the constructions or
Children and Social	construction or		definitions of boys and girls.
protection, Department of	framing of boy		
Social Welfare, District	children and girl		
Assembly, District	children?		
education office, 1998			
children's Act, Child			
labour act			

Objective 4. Explain how contemporary framing or constructions of children and childhood contribute to child poverty.

☐ Explore contemporary constructions of children (socio-cultural and structural) in relation to children material, subjective and relational wellbeing.

Note: (Probe and dig deeper to generate data during data generation exercise for research objective 1

If necessary do preliminary analysis of data generated for objective 1 to generate guided questions for research objective 4.

questions for research		T
Target	Data generation	Interview/FGD guide
participants/docume	technique	
nts		
Adults 18-64 years	In-depth interview/ Repeated interview	Use responses to questions under objective 1 that highlights perceptions/meanings/definitions of children and childhood to ask questions about how such perceptions/meanings of childhood and definitions of children influence the provisioning of children's material, subjective and relational needs. (Refer to Box 1) for details about these three dimensions of defining child poverty) What does it mean to say that children are suffering from: a. material deprivation? b. social exclusion? What does it mean to say that a child or a particular group of children are vulnerable? Probe! where necessary
Aged 65+	In-depth interview	Do!

Children 11-17 years	Narrations/stories	Do!
Officials of Institutional/ governmental structures (at the district level) Note.gender and children's sub- Department of children (2) Department of social welfare (2) Presiding members (2) Teachers (both primary and JHS (To be determined from the number of teachers in the sampled schools)	Structured-interview	What does it mean to say that children are suffering from: a. material deprivation? b. social exclusion? What does it mean to say that a child or a particular group of children are vulnerable? Probe! where necessary
Secondary data Documents from department of children, Social Welfare, District Assembly, District education office, 1998 children's Act, Child labour act, framework for implementation of LEAP (Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty) program	Content/document analysis	Search for themes and framings/constructions of children in these documents and how the address children's material, subjective and relational needs
	rstand how variations	if any, in the constructions of boy children and
· ·		ys and girls experiences of poverty
Ü	·	•
The state of the s	ig deeper to generate o	lata during data generation exercise for research
objective 1	1:	
If necessary do pre questions for resear		data generated for objective 3 to generate guided
Target	Data generation	Interview/FGD guide
participants/document	_	Interview/FOD guide
12 -	cennique	
S		

A. PRIMARY DATA		Use responses to questions under objective 2
	In-depth interview	Use responses to questions under objective 3 about perceptions/meanings of boy children and
Adults 26- 64 years		girl children to ask questions about how differences (if there are) in the
		meanings/definitions/perceptions of boys and girls
		relate to their respective experiences of poverty.
		(Refer to Box 1 for details about child poverty as (material, subjective and relational deprivation or lack).
		Between boys and girls who will go to school or proceed to the next level of the education ladder if there are resource constraints in the household? Why? Probe for boys and girls vulnerability to material,
		subjective and relational poverty.
Young Adults 18-25	FGD	Do focus groups discussion a young adults (men)
years	Young men group	and (women). Explore differentials in how they
(different participants		were perceived vis-à-vis their counterparts of the
from those already	Young women	opposite sex when they were children.
contacted)	group	Explore the provisioning of their material, subjective and relational needs.
Boys 11- 17 years	group interview	Explore their material, subjective and relational
(to be selected from	group interview	situation (the extent to which these needs are
household where adults		provided within their households.
and older persons are		Probe and ask for comparison of their situation to
selected		their sisters
Girls 11- 17 years	group interview	Explore their material, subjective and relational
		situation (the extent to which these needs are provided within their households.
		Probe and ask for comparison of their situation to
		their brothers
Official of Girl child	Interview	a. Working document of the girl child education division
education division (district level)		b. Review document and use as the basis for interview.
		b. i.e. why girl child? and but no boy child? Ask
		what how if necessary. c. c. Differences regarding the provisioning of
		the material, subjective and relational needs
		of boys and girls within the framework that the girl child education division operates
L SECONDARY DATA	Content analysis	1 Identify issues relating to children in each
SECONDARY DATA Documents from	Content analysis ? Are there	1. Identify issues relating to children in each of these documents more generally.
SECONDARY DATA Documents from department of	Content analysis ? Are there differences in the	 Identify issues relating to children in each of these documents more generally. Scrutinize the documents to identify main

Children and Social	boys and girls	3. Identify themes relating to or not relating to
protection, Department of	experiences of	boys or girls in relation to the provisioning of
Social Welfare, District	poverty? i.e.,	their respective material, subjective and
Assembly, District	material,	relational needs.
education office, 1998	subjective and	
children's Act, Child	relational?	
labour act		