

“STREETISM”—A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF A
YOUTH PROBLEM IN GHANA

A Dissertation presented to
Candler School of Theology, Emory University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree for
Doctor of Theology

Isaac Ishmael Arthur
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Abstract

“Streetism”: A Socio-Cultural and Pastoral Theological Study
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This study investigates the phenomenon of “streetism”— the manner of life of homeless or unmonitored youth on the streets of Accra, Ghana, and other urban centers in a country where barrenness and childlessness are socially undesirable. The study utilizes a qualitative, ethnographic and critical theory-based approach to present a socio-culturally nuanced addition to the literature on street children. The work engages in theological reflection on the basis of the experiences of poverty and marginalization of the youth on the streets and for their liberation. This thesis also utilizes an intercultural methodology to examine the causes of streetism and liberation praxis for its eradication.

The findings of the study include how poverty, dropping out of school, breakdown of the extended family systems, parental death, urbanization, adventure, and earning of personal income influence the migration of youth to the streets. The study also examines the effects of rape, and the resilient and hopeful attitudes of the homeless youth. The study proposes pastoral responses on three ecological levels. At the *macro* level, advocacy is proposed for addressing the problems embedded in social structures, and government policies and ideologies. At the *meso* level congregational and community response is offered to deal with issues emanating from local communities and institutions. Dealing with the psycho-social effects at the *micro* level, the study offers pastoral counseling for street youth and parents, and individual, group, and narrative counseling approaches for individuals and groups within the community.

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“A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul” **Proverbs 13:19** (NKJV)

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed” – **B. C. Forbes**

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Introduction

This is a socio-cultural study and pastoral theological exploration of a youth problem referred to in Ghana and elsewhere as “streetism.” The study investigates the phenomenon of “streetism”—the living of homeless or unmonitored youth on the streets of Accra and other urban centers in a country where barrenness and childlessness are not countenanced for any reason. As it is in most African countries, child bearing is highly regarded. A childless marriage is considered loathsome, both spiritually and morally, for the couple and for their extended family.¹

Against such a backdrop emerges the problem of youth living on the streets of Accra and most major urban centers in Ghana without benefit of monitoring by any adult. This problem continues to pose problems for politicians, parents, the church and the civil society. In chapter 1, I explain why the study of youth homelessness is important, over and against the backdrop of the concept of childhood in Ghana. Included is an exploration of how children are valued in the Ghanaian and African socio-cultural milieu, and why youth have found their way to the streets rather than living within the confines of their family home. Also provided is a description of who these homeless youths are and the work they do. Additionally, I will consider Ghanaian cultural issues, such as the importance of procreation and fostering, and maternal/paternal lineage.

Chapter 2 is devoted to a review of the literature and other previous, significant studies. The review will shed additional light on why in Africa few of the street youth come from intact families and why they have come to the urban streets for economic reasons or for adventure. This study identifies underlying factors that lead the majority of this unfortunate population to

¹ Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 79.

the streets, factors such as poverty, violence in the home, neglect, divorce in the family, and the death of parents. There is little doubt among researchers that in Africa, in general, and Ghana, in particular, economic and social crisis are among the major compelling factors sending these youths to the streets. The major literature for this review, *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*² will help trace the history of migration in Ghana, a phenomenon which has been in existence even in the pre-colonial era.

The methodology used for the study and exploration of the subject matter is presented in chapter 3. That chapter entails an examination of the phenomenon of “streetism” through qualitative and ethnographic/critical theory model. Ethnographic/critical theory models were selected as these provide the necessary tools not only for the study of the beliefs, language, and behaviors, but also for a critical understanding of the marginalization of these homeless youth by governments and other stakeholders. In the process, Emmanuel Lartey’s intercultural methodology of liberation praxis and the underpinnings of liberation theology’s reflective procedures were adopted to enhance the work of this study.

In chapter 4 I discuss the causes of youth homelessness and the characteristics of the fifteen participants who served as informants for this study. The participants, eight boys and seven girls, had an average age of 15 ½ years. A section of chapter 4 is devoted to the findings from participant interviews and provides details about the living experiences of the participants as revealed in the course of the study. Such experiences include, but are not limited to, health, shelter, economic exploitation, sexual/physical assault, and work.

² John K. Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye, eds. *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana* (Accra, GH., Sundel Services, 2009)

Chapter 5 discusses some of the problems that surfaced during the study and presents my proposals for eliminating streetism. In chapter 5 I engage in theological reflection on the basis of the experiences of poverty, marginalization of the youth on the streets, and acting for their liberation. That discussion will involve an evaluation of the social reality of the situation as revealed by the work done in this research, which will also galvanize me into engaging in writing and advocacy work in both political and ecclesiastical corridors. The dissertation concludes with the study's limitations and proposal for further research work.

A "youth" is defined as a person who is between the ages of 12 and 19. Ghana's definition of a "youth" is a person who is within the age bracket of fifteen and thirty-five.³ According to the Catholic Action for Street Children, "a street child is a child who lives in the streets between the ages of 0-18. For the purpose of this study a "street youth" is a person who is between the ages of 12 and 19. Such a person usually lives on the streets without any parent or guardian but adopts various ways to survive on his/her own.

³ *The Youth Policy of Ghana* (2010) promulgated by Akua Dansua (Member of Parliament) and the then Minister of Youth and Sport (August 10, 2010) 5

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

The Concept of Childhood in Ghana

A study of streetism must begin with an understanding of how children are valued in the African and the Ghanaian socio-cultural milieu. In the traditional African setting, procreation is undoubtedly the ultimate goal of every marriage. In some parts of Africa, customary marriage becomes recognized only when the bride is pregnant and, as such, pregnancy becomes the seal of such a marriage.⁴ That also enables the woman to be fully integrated into the husband's kinship circle, or family. In such societies, childlessness is considered to be the worst human tragedy and humiliation. According to John Mbiti, regardless of the couple's social location, their inability to procreate is considered worse than committing genocide. That is to say that the couple becomes the dead end of human life, not only for themselves, but also for their genealogical line.⁵

The best moment for the childbearing-woman is exemplified in a public honoring ceremony of congratulation after the tenth born.⁶ This, therefore, is a boost for prolific

⁴ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), 143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶ Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, eds. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1950), 262.

❖ During my study of the homeless youth phenomenon, I discovered a misinformation cited by some earlier researchers in anthropology. One of them Meyers Fortes has intimated that the best moment for the childbearing-woman is exemplified in a public honoring ceremony of congratulation after the birth of her tenth child. However, among the Akans of Ghana, that honoring goes to the man who sired the tenth-born. Even if the tenth-born is his only child, tradition favors him to be honored for giving the family of the woman the tenth-born. The man in that honoring ceremony receives a sheep and other gifts from the woman's family. This public ceremony is for showing the man the family's thanks and appreciation.

childbearing, which is a rarity in today's urbanized cities. But it is still a matter of great pride in rural Africa, as children are also believed to be the possible agents linking the living families with their ancestors. Thus, "the children would eventually be in charge of remembering the dead through maintenance of family shrines or other ways."⁷

For the Akans of Ghana (which includes the Ashanti, Akwapim, Fante, and Bono) there is always a critical bond between the child and the mother. It is considered an "absolutely binding moral relationship [and, as such, mothers] stint no labor or self-sacrifice for the good of her children."⁸ Maternal grandmothers also play an especially vital role in nurturing and raising children born into their homes.

Absolute obedience is required of every child. However, no mother would disown the child of her own womb, as she is always reluctant to punish. It is also expected, particularly, that girls will be attached to their mothers throughout their life time. As she grows in constant intimate relationship with the mother and learns from her all feminine skills, it is ultimately important for the girl-child to derive the best character traits from her mother.

Among the Akans, regardless of the relationship which develops between the father and the boy-child, the son grows with his mother as his close and trusted confidant pertaining to all his personal issues. Meyer Fortes, then, posits that "a man's first ambition is to gain enough money to be able to build a house for his mother if she does not own one. To be mistress of her

⁷ Diane Kayongo-Male and Philista Onyango, *The Sociology of the African Family* (London, UK: Longman, 1984), 6.

⁸ Ibid.

own home, with her children and daughters' children round her, is the highest dignity any ordinary woman aspires to."⁹

In a traditional African setting, a child is educated towards the fact that one's private relationship and public behavior towards even one's mother's sister is indistinguishable from the behavior one shows to one's mother. Indeed it is considered disgraceful to distinguish between them in public.¹⁰ It is incumbent upon every Akan family to bring up a child left as an orphan by the mother's sisters and to treat the child as if he or she belongs to that couple.

Among the Akans, every child is believed to carry both the mother and the father's blood (*mogya*), but that there is a unique spiritual bond between the father and the child. R. S. Rattray surmises that the male transmits the spirit (*ntoro*) to the child, suggesting that "conception is believed to be due to the blood (*mogya*) of the woman mingling with the spiritual (*ntoro*) element of the male."¹¹ The general supposition is that every child is considered by law to be the offspring of its father. Ideally, the expectation is that its father and genitor should be the same person is prevalent among the Akans.¹² That means every man is obliged to honor paternity.

Again, for the Akans, the rule of matrilineal descent is the key to their social organization. By matrilineal descent, every person is by birth a member of his or her mother's lineage (*abusua*), and that makes the person a royal (*odehye*). Thus, the person becomes a citizen of the chiefdom in the locality in which that lineage is domiciled.¹³ In all Akan areas, the

⁹ Fortes, 263.

¹⁰ Ibid, 264.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² In accordance with the maxim *okomfo nni ba* (a thief has no child); a child born of an adulterous relationship belongs to its mother's legal husband.

¹³ Fortes, 254.

lineage consists of all the descendants of both sexes by a known genealogy of a single known ancestress in the unbroken female line. Arrangement of succession is solely through the mother's lineage. Hence, nephews inherit the property of their uncles, not that of their fathers. In the patrilineage system, children inherit from their father's line of succession. According to Ghanaian Sociologist Max Assimeng, because children are born into their father's lineage, they belong to (are owned by) the families of their fathers. The various ethnic groups in Ghana which practice the patrilineage system are the Gas, Ewe, Tallensi, and the Dagomba.¹⁴

Scholars believe that child-rearing requires a social group to serve as an agent of socialization, hence, the importance of the lineage systems.¹⁵ Once a child is born into a family, it is given a name that places that child within a specific lineage group. This gives the child a sense of community and belongingness. As Mbiti notes, "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am."¹⁶ The child belongs to everyone in the community and neighbors can chastise children for their waywardness. Babysitting is provided freely by mostly grandmothers, even from other households.¹⁷ The child belongs to everyone in that community as everyone also belongs to that child.

The truism of this is found in the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." In fact, the child belongs to the entire community. This is exemplified in the people's love and care for every "Tom, Dick, and Harry" in that locality. A child can eat, play, and sleep

¹⁴ Max Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana: A Study in Perspective and Change* (Accra, GH: Ghana Publishing Corp., 1999), 77.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁶ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, *ibid.*, 147.

¹⁷ G.K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra, GH: Ghana University Press, 1992), 49.

in any homestead without parental indignation toward or questioning of the child's parents. If a child is punished by any adult in the locality, the child's parent will stand by that action without question—and may even add more punishment to the one already inflicted.

“It takes a whole village to raise a child”¹⁸ is believed to be a proverb of the Igbo and Yoruba (Nigeria). The proverb exists in different forms in many African languages. In the African context, the proverb denotes communal effort. Thus, the responsibility of raising a child is a shared one among the extended family members. Everyone in a given village is also obliged to contribute to and participate in raising the children of the village. The responsibility extends to older children, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. According to the Sukuma of Tanzania, “One knee does not bring up a child.” The Kisi-Swahili-speaking people say, “One hand does not raise a child.”¹⁹

The African proverb, then, conveys the African worldview that emphasizes the values of family relationships, parental care, self-sacrificing concern for others, sharing, and even hospitality. This view of unity and cooperation comes closest to that stated in Ecclesiastes, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (4: 9, 12).²⁰

The locality in which the child is born, coupled with the personality structure of the parents and the general outlook of the community, also provides a good and vital catalyst to the socialization process of every child. Assimeng postulates that,

¹⁸ Joseph G. Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 114.

¹⁹ *The Africa Calendar of Proverbs*, a website which produces proverbs for each calendar day of the year: <http://www.afriprov.org> (accessed January 15, 2012)

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Old Testament Section, copyright 1952; New Testament Section, second edition, copyright, 1971.

socialization is always into the norms and values, the group shared expectations, of a particular group. Each child, in order to interact sensibly and smoothly, is expected to imbibe the customs of a particular social structure or a sub-unit. The child-rearing process will, thus, be not only into the general culture, it would also be into the sub-culture or the cultural variant of the total culture²¹

In traditional Ghanaian society, the home is believed to be the microcosm of the wider community. The extended family system in Africa makes it possible always to have a large number of people around who act as parent-surrogates. This makes the family a good representation of the larger society, and is also a good picture of interdependency. In the exclusive families usually found in urban settings, influences that shape the behavior of children are mostly from the parents, guardians, siblings, and others, such as domestic childcare providers. Still, in the inclusive homes, the responsibility of the child's socialization is incumbent on the entire community.

According to Assimeng, children go through rites of passage which are accepted to be “magic-religious-social activities concerned with changes in the status of individuals or social groups.”²² Coming of age is an initiation which marks the child's acquisition of a new status in society as one grows into adulthood. In Cultural Anthropologist, Peter Sarpong's view, the purpose of the initiation ceremony is to usher the child into adulthood and guarantee him/her the right to perform certain acts that were formerly prohibited.²³ For instance, no child is expected to know anything about sex until he or she has been initiated. Anyone that flouts this injunction becomes a public opprobrium to the family of origin and a disgrace to the entire community.

²¹ Assimeng, 104.

²² Ibid., 110.

²³ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Accra, GH: Ghana Publishing Corp., 1974), 73.

Bragoro is one of the rites of passage for the transition from girl-child/adolescence to adulthood. For the girl, it is celebrated at the first sighting of her menstruation. Mostly in the Akan areas of Ghana, girls, as they go through *bragoro*, are educated to take up their future roles as mothers and housewives. Among the objectives of the *bragoro* is the prevention of infidelity among married women. An objective for boys is to endure circumcision without expressing pain. Otherwise, they must brave alone the odds of darkness to hunt for difficult game in the thick forest. After that, boys are expected to follow their fathers on the various chores or trades of profession.²⁴

Another important concept of the African child is seen in the fosterage system practiced in Ghana, as well as in other African countries. The Ghanaian child could be given away to an affluent member of the extended family to be brought up. In most cases, when a parent is incapable of keeping many children in the family due to poverty (or other reasons), the child is sent to live elsewhere with another family member. Children may also be sent away to live with other family members for schooling or to learn a trade in an urban setting. Nukunya intimates that both paternal and maternal relatives could be potential foster parents, suggesting that in some ethnic groups the child can succeed or inherit from the foster parent.²⁵ Fosterage, therefore, is intended to build close family ties, as well as to create a good and conducive living environment for the child.

As previously stated, it takes more than a loving family to raise a child. Thus, the world needs a committed and loving community (a village) in order to raise today's child. Herbert Anderson and Susan B. W. Johnson give a moving testament to that fact:

²⁴ Assimeng, 111.

²⁵ Nukunya, 40.

‘It takes a village to raise a child.’ Together with other families and individuals we create an environment in which pregnancy and birth are filled with promise, in which nurture and discipline are possible, in which children are valued and families protected for the sake of every individual and for the sake of the community. We call this context a ‘village’ because people are linked together by mutual need and a common covenant. In such a setting, families are no less responsible for the children, but they rely on one another and the institutions they create and sustain to participate in the process of raising children. The image of the village affirms a fundamental truth about the interdependence of all of life.²⁶

In today’s post-industrial era it will take mutual responsibility and accountability of communities around the world to provide that “village” depicted by Anderson and Johnson for our children. As one of their informants notes, there has been a broken covenant that used to sustain the commitment of communities:

Where I grew up, if I misbehaved I could be reprimanded by anyone in town and I knew that my parents would stand behind whatever was said. Neighbors and shopkeepers and teachers and ministers had a covenant to work together to help bring children up right. . . . Today, I don’t know my neighbors and I don’t dare criticize my children’s friends. The covenant has been broken, and we are not better off. I am tired of hearing about what families and parents are doing or not doing for their children as if every social ill were all our fault. We have to figure out a way to get the covenant back and make neighborhoods into villages.²⁷

The primary objective of this study is to “figure out” how to mend that broken covenant that binds the “village” together and retrieve for rearing today’s child what was lost as a result of that broken covenant. This study will give ample testimony to the crying and suffering of the “lost child” on the streets of Accra so as to exemplify the urgent need to address the broken covenant in both the African setting and on the global stage.

Statement of the Problem Explored

²⁶ Herbert Anderson and Susan B. W. Johnson, *Regarding Children: A New Respect for Childhood and Families* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 91.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

This study intends to investigate and respond to the question: “What is the experience of homeless youth in Ghana?” As previously noted, the phenomenon of streetism refers to “the living of homeless or unmonitored children on the street, especially when related to drugs, disease, crime, or delinquency.”²⁸ This population consists mainly of youth in the urban streets, especially in Accra. The homelessness is almost always related to drugs, disease, crime, or delinquency. This phenomenon is known in Ghana, and elsewhere, as “streetism.”

Heinonen claims that the word “streetism,” when it was first used in Ethiopia, was used “to mean children who for various reasons work and/or live in the street. This is also intended to indicate the way of life of the children who consider the street in its widest sense, with its own esoteric rules, customs and vocabulary, as their work place.”²⁹ In Ghana, the word “streetism” seems to have slipped into the local parlance through social commentators. As yet, any connection to an etymological root has not been found.

Social commentators, such as I. K. Gyasi, have used the term in commentaries about the youth problem in Ghana. Gyasi indicates how the problem has been understood in the Ghanaian context, noting that “uncontrolled pregnancies outside the marriage circle have led to a flood of births, with the mothers unable to trace the men responsible. The result is what has come to be known in Ghanaian parlance as “streetism.”³⁰ Another example of “streetism” used in the Ghanaian context comes from the *Accra Mail* which notes that “about sixty percent (60%) of the

²⁸ *Double Tongue Dictionary: A Lexicon of Fringe English, Focusing on Slang, Jargon, and New Words*, <http://www.doubletongued.org/index.php/dictionary/streetism/> (accessed January 24, 2012).

²⁹ Paula Heinonen, *Youth Gangs & Street Children: Culture, Nurture, and Masculinity in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2011), 1.

³⁰ I.K. Gyasi, “Which Way for Education?” *Ghanaian Chronicle*, September 13, 2004.

youth in the [Accra] metropolis are unemployed due to lack of skills and the result is “streetism,” drug and substance abuse, immorality and armed robbery.”³¹

The compounded effect of “streetism” has long been the Achilles heel of governments, social workers, the church, and parents in Ghana. In recent days, there have been screaming headlines in the Ghanaian media reporting rampages of street youth that result in destruction of government property, desecration of school campuses with human excreta, harassment of motorists, arrests for drug offenses, and other heinous crimes such as rape. However, to date, governments have not found any solution to this simmering socio-economic problem in Ghana.

As the youth act out, many come under peer influence and band together to indulge in antisocial behaviors. This begins with minor delinquent acts such as truancy, lying, shoplifting, and bullying. They mature into living together, needing each other to reinforce one another’s antisocial behavior, as well as give support to one another. In order to survive, the street youth are left with three options: join a band or gang of criminals, trade their bodies (especially the girls), or use their strength in physical activity to earn a living. Thus, they become porters and security personnel (especially the boys).

Being a porter is to engage in the head-load carrying business. In Ghanaian parlance this is known as *kaya* and is undertaken by homeless and unmonitored youth in order to keep body and soul together. As dusk descends on the towns and cities, these youth congregate in front of malls. Others act as security personnel for mall owners. A majority of these youngsters have found a settlement which lies by the banks of the stagnant Korle Lagoon in Accra. They have named the settlement, situated on a very congested and small acreage of land, Sodom and

³¹ “People Should Vote Wisely,” *Accra Mail*, July 24, 2002.

Gomorrah. By conservative estimates, the place is inhabited by 50,000 young migrants, casual workers, and porters, a high percentage of which are from the northern part of Ghana.³²

For the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and for other street youths, reports of new rape cases are not surprising, since sleeping outside in the night makes everyone perpetually vulnerable to predators. Of late, the population of Sodom and Gomorrah has increased to include homeless adults, as well as more youth inhabitants. It should also be noted that in Ghana there are now three generations of homeless people, including infants born on the streets of Accra.

This way of life is what Elijah Anderson describes as the “code of the street.”³³ The homeless youth understand the basic rules that apply to their day to day living, always in consonance with this self-imposed street orientation in order to survive. They are obliged to come to terms with lived experience, bereft of basic necessities required for a decent life-style. At the same time, they must do with “fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and absence of hope for the future.”³⁴

According to Heinonen, Ethiopians also believe that when street children live under no parental purview, they end up without any moral inculcation or guidance. No wonder this population easily becomes “juvenile delinquents, prostitutes, drug abusers, petty thieves, vagrants, dropouts, and deviants.”³⁵ For Heinonen, the ever increasing rate of this population has become an unprecedented phenomenon in most urban centers of both developed and developing

³² Mariama Awumbila, et al., *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Migration in Ghana* (Accra, GH: Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, Woeli Publishing Services, 2011), 51.

³³ Elijah Anderson: *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1999), 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵ Heinonen, 3.

nations.³⁶ The youth riots in Britain in June 2011 may attest to the fact that this phenomenon has assumed global proportions.

Globally, the genesis of this disturbing phenomenon has been attributed to different causes at different times. Heinonen traced the history of streetism in Ethiopia to the country's urbanization and founding of Addis Ababa as the capital city in 1887. The cause(s) of streetism, she reports, is strongly related to "civil strife, famines, and social change"³⁷ in Ethiopia and most countries around the globe.

In Ghana, the migration of the youth population has been reported by J. S. Nabila since 1974. However, not much attention or concern was paid to those reports. Nabila stated that mostly Frafra youth from northern Ghana migrate to the south.³⁸ According to K. John Anarfi and M. Appiah, this migration is largely due to the custom of land reverting to their father's brother after the death of the father.³⁹ As to the final destination of these youth in the southern part of Ghana, not much was said about it until recent researchers concluded that most of the youth end up on the streets of Accra, Kumasi, and other urban centers.

Land succession and inheritance in Ghana is practiced in line with the lineage system. In the patrilineal system, Nukunya posits that inheritance of land or succession of status (or office)

³⁶ Ibid., 1.

³⁷ Ibid., 4.

³⁸J. S. Nabila, "Migration of the Frafra in Northern Ghana: A Case Study of Cyclical Labor Migration in West Africa" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1974), quoted in K. John Anarfi and M. Appiah, "The Phenomenon of Independent Child Migration in Ghana in the Context of a Globalized World," in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. K. John Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye (Accra, GH: Sundel Services, 2009), 55.

³⁹ K. John Anarfi and M. Appiah, "The Phenomenon of Independent Child Migration in Ghana in the Context of a Globalized World," in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. K. John Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye (Accra, GH: Sundel Services, 2009), 55.

passes from father to sons or to all his children. According to Nukunya, properties to be inherited are of two types—lineage property and self-acquired property.⁴⁰ Thus, the lineage property is for the exclusive use of those particular lineage members. This system is usually found among the Kokomba, Tallensi, and Krobo. In the case of self-acquired property, the sons of the deceased user of a particular piece of land take over its usage. Nukunya adds that “if the deceased user is not survived by any male heir, the next nearest kinsman within the group may inherit that land and, where the surviving sons are minors, a brother of the deceased may take temporary charge pending the maturity of the direct heirs.”⁴¹

Purpose and Overview of the Study

In the first publication of the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS) in April 2003, the organization categorized the street child as follows: “A street child is a child who lives in the streets. . . . S(he) is often not well dressed, is lean, and not well mannered. The child tries to survive and adopts various ways to do so. The street child is not supported by anyone.”⁴² Such is the lived experience and quandary of the street youth in Accra and elsewhere. They are usually found loitering on the streets without any adult company and easily congregate in open spaces and market places, competing for loads to carry. Many go days without bathing as to have a bath costs more than they can afford. They always patronize food vendors on the streets. This has its attendant health hazards.

⁴⁰ Nukunya, 27.

⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

⁴² Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), *The Ghanaian Street Child* (Accra, GH: Saki Publicity Limited, 2003), 8. CAS considers a street child as one who is between 0-18 years of age.

The Ghanaian daily newspaper *The Daily Graphic*, recently reported that Ghana has an estimated 33,000 street children, of which 75% live in Accra.⁴³ In a subsequent chilling and heart-wrenching follow-up story with graphic pictures, *The Daily Graphic* has given the banner headline and a page for the additional article regarding the plight of the homeless children.⁴⁴ Seeking to depict the stark reality of streetism in Ghana, that publication published an article entitled, “Plight of Homeless Children—They Need Better Care.” The story featured a family of five (the parents and their three children, ages two, six, and ten years old) that for the past two years has been spotted on the streets of Accra and has always been at the mercy of both the vagaries of the weather and mosquitoes.

The question both officials and the general public continue to ask concerning street children is, “Why do children move away from home?” Countless reasons have been advanced in the search for possible causes for the phenomenon. Poverty is one of the major problems which has accounted, globally, for streetism. A report of the International Labor Organization (ILO), cited by Anarfi and Appiah, indicates that it is rural poverty “which has led to more exploitation of child laborers in recent years and particular trends of child migration.”⁴⁵ Lack of employment opportunities in most rural communities in Ghana has been the bane of family

⁴⁰ “Ghana has 33,000 Street Children,” *The Daily Graphic*, June 17, 2011. This figure is attributed to the Country Representative of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Dr. Iyabode Olusanmi, during the celebration of 2011 International Day of the African Child in Accra. However, in one of my interviews in August 2010 with the staff of the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), it was revealed that UNICEF’s recent estimate of street youth in Ghana is about 70,000, with 75% of that number living on the streets of Accra. According to the staff of the center, this figure is the result of a headcount conducted in mid-2010 and is currently in print.

⁴² “Plight of Homeless Children—They Need Better Care,” *Daily Graphic*, August 29 and 30, 2011.

⁴⁵ B. Kumar, B. R. Suwal, K. P. Adhikari, and Y. B. Gurung, “Migration of Working Children in Nepal” (Nepal, IN: International Labor Office, 1997), 3.

cohesion. Today, some families easily split because financial commitments and expectations in marriages remain unfulfilled and elusive.

Anarfi and Appiah argue that “there is a statistical link between not going to school and the propensity of rural children to migrate to work elsewhere. . . . Also, children join the migration bandwagon because of their frustration about the inability of their parents to enroll them in schools.”⁴⁶ Consequently, children growing up without the care of the two parents do not have the wherewithal for their growth and their future development. This triggers in them a strong survival instinct. Such a stark situation of the innocent and marginalized youth requires attention, concern, and advocacy in order to improve the present plight of these children and prevent future generations of children from falling victim to homelessness and marginalization. That is the overarching reason for this study.

Significance of the Study and the Author’s Concern

This study was undertaken to investigate the experience of the homeless youth in Ghana. My interest in studying such a phenomenon stems from my work as a student chaplain in a homeless shelter. While a resident chaplain in 2006-2007 at Deaconess Hospital in Evansville, Indiana, I was allowed to do a six-week observation at Central Homeless Shelter, located about four blocks from the Deaconess Hospital. Seeing the peculiar experience of the young ones allowed into the shelter stirred a desire in me to study their situation and gave me the inspiration for this work.

⁴⁶ Eric Beauchemin, *The Exodus: The Growing Migration of Children from Ghana’s Rural Areas to the Urban Centers* (Accra, GH: Catholic Action for Street Children and UNICEF, 1999), 18.

Along with experience gained as a pastor and a theological student during my chaplaincy, my observation of homelessness among a similar population in Ghana and being the parent of an adolescent boy (who could have found himself in the same position) have galvanized and emboldened this liberation activity in me. The pain of seeing such wonderful lives gone wasted and almost snuffed out as a result of many adverse circumstances impacting the growth of these young people will always ignite in me the embers of “faith that makes its power felt through love” (Galatians 5:6). Such faith and love continue to push me in the work of advocacy for this at-risk population.

Agya Boakye-Boateng contends that Ghanaian (and African) children have “long been denied or had limited access to basic resources, and had their rights trampled upon.”⁴⁷ Children in most of Africa and other developing countries are “forced into adulthood to be able to cope with life, and the dominion of childhood has been threatened, invaded, and polluted by adults.”⁴⁸ In some instances, children mostly “exist in a liminal social realm, vilified as dangerous and antisocial dwarves-enemies of families and civilized society.”⁴⁹ For these and other reasons, children, particularly in Ghana, are entrapped by the sticky situation of social, political, and cultural misunderstandings.

The intent of undertaking this study through ethnography and critical theory is for a researcher to enter into the lived experience of the street children, first hand. This was the impetus for me to examine the causes of the phenomenon of the street youth population, and

⁴⁷ Agya Boakye-Boateng, “Street Children: Experiences from the Streets of Accra,” *Research Journal of International Studies*, no. 8 (November, 2008): 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

advance socio-economic and theological propositions which will be geared towards advocacy, liberation, and transformation of this unfortunate segment of the population.

Chapter Two

Previous Studies and Literature Review

History of Migration in Ghana

Tracing the history of migration in Ghana, J. Agyei and A. Ofori-Mensah report that it is a phenomenon which has been in existence since the pre-colonial era in Ghana.⁵⁰ Early migration in Ghana could be associated with internecine warfare, trade, colonization of new lands, and slavery.⁵¹ In an effort to escape the internecine warfare, every ethnic group in present-day Ghana migrated from another place.⁵² Before 1874, population expansion and internal struggles, coupled with the desire for independence, were the motivating factors for several Akan units within the Bono Kingdom to migrate and find a new settlement in the south. The Akan units migrating included the Denkyira, Twifo, Akwamu, Asante, Akyem and Fante.⁵³

During the Gold Coast Era (1482, when the Portuguese established the first European settlement on the Gold Coast through 1957 when the colony gained independence from the British and became Ghana), particularly as a result of political changes and developments in the eighth and eleventh centuries, ethnic groups within and outside of the country migrated to other places in Africa to build formidable states. When the Atlantic slave trade exploded in the sixteenth century, the ignominy of that business saw huge numbers of conquered Africans

⁵⁰ J. Agyei and A. Ofori-Mensah, "Historical Overview of Internal Migration in Ghana" in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. John K. Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye (Accra, Sundel Services, 2009), 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵² F. K. Buah, quoted by Agyei and Ofori-Mensah, *ibid*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

migrating to the Americas as slaves. Migration, then, turned from its uglier nature to a relational situation. This was due to changes in economic conditions during the Gold Coast Era.

Commercial migration resulted in trading goods such as salt, livestock, food, and other valuable commodities. Local people living in the forest areas traveled to the coast to exchange their food products for salt and fish. During the trans-Saharan trade, traders from Adanse, Asante, Denkyira, and other locations traveled to Banda and Bono to trade in gold, slaves, and kola nuts.⁵⁴ Such travel, in most cases, resulted in the indigenous tribes migrating to those places where they could better their lives through trade.

Search for new and safe lands, therefore, necessitated the migration of people as they traveled from war-torn areas in search of peaceful settlements and land to farm. That need saw ethnic groups such as the Ga, Anum, Akwapim, and Krobo migrating in the 1860s to agricultural lands in the Akyem Abuakwa area. Thus, migration in the colonial era was motivated by trade.⁵⁵ Traders who flocked to the shores of Ghana to trade included nationals from Niger, Mali, and Nigeria. The development of gold mines and cocoa farms between the late nineteenth century and the second half of the twentieth century also attracted migrants to Ghana.

In their efforts to develop raw materials for export to their home countries, the British colonial masters and others developed policies that ensured the easy production of gold, cocoa, timber, rubber, coffee in the Gold Coast. This created an in-flux of labor from the hinterlands to the cocoa farms and mining areas. The migration occurred mainly among people from the

⁵⁴ Daaku. Quoted by Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, *ibid*, 12

⁵⁵ Sudarkasa. Quoted by Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, *ibid*, 13

northern part of Ghana, principally, the Northern Savannah Agro-Ecological Zone.⁵⁶ Those migrants were mostly unmarried young male adults.⁵⁷

Street Child Defined

The definition of the term “street child” has received considerable attention as it has been categorized differently from varied perspectives and persuasions. Judith Ennew defines street children as “those for whom the street more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults.”⁵⁸ Others, like Heinonen, dispute the fact that street youth comprise a population for whom there is no stable state of life and, as such, is in a constant state of destitution and criminality.

According to Heinonen, such a categorization has elicited heavy handedness, severe socialization, and control by the adult world.⁵⁹ She also points to the lack of consensus among researchers about the definition and classification of street youth, citing others who have used different terms to delineate street children, especially in Ethiopia.⁶⁰ These different terms include “on the street,” “of the street,” and “on and of the street.”⁶¹ Heinonen postulates that what differentiates “of” from “on” the street is where the street youth sleep. On the street are

⁵⁶ Nabila, Quoted by Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, *ibid*, 14

⁵⁷ Adepaju. Quoted by Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, *ibid*

⁵⁸ Ennew. Quoted in Heinonen, *ibid*, 1

⁵⁹ Heinonen, 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶¹ Molsa and Radda Barnen; UNICEF/TGE, quoted in Heinonen, 6.

those youth who spend the majority of their time on the street but return to their family/home on regular intervals. The youth that are of the street live, work, and sleep on the street.⁶²

The long-standing, standard definition for street children was adopted from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) categorization of that population, which was developed with Latin America as a focus.⁶³ The UNICEF-based definition states that a street child is "any girl or boy . . . for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults."⁶⁴ Some researchers believe that "street children have multiple identities and relationships off-street and experience complex circumstances which can defy easy definition."⁶⁵

Others argue that such definitions are social constructions because street children, in reality, do not form any clearly defined, homogeneous population. Rather, they have been constructed only in the literature. Sarah Thomas de Benitez suggests that children should be considered as agents or social actors in any study and programming about them. In so doing, she argues, the perspective will shift from them as a population on the margins to focus on them as social actors in their own rights, with varied and diverse lived experiences.⁶⁶

⁶² Heinonen, 6.

⁶³ The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), 2000, 74.

⁶⁴ Sarah Thomas de Benitez, *State of the World's Street Children: Research* (London, UK: Consortium for Street Children, 2011), 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8.

Following Benitez lead, some researchers have reworked their definitions, premising them on the recognition of children as capable social actors. Yet others have postulated definitions informed by the program intervention approach. Some of those definitions are:

- children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives (Brazil)⁶⁷
- independent child migrants (Ghana)⁶⁸
- children in street situations⁶⁹
- street youth (Mexico and USA)⁷⁰
- homeless youth (UK)⁷¹

According to Benitez, these categorizations and definitions are used “to describe children and young people who are away from home or care for lengthy periods of time; who live outside of key societal institutions, such as the family, education and other statutory services; who do not receive any formal sources of support; and are self-reliant and/or dependent upon informal support networks.”⁷²

Some of these definitions have been rejected by researchers because they imply that street children are a social problem and encourage stigmatization of that population. Some governments, like that of Kenya, want to use the street children categorization because shifting the emphasis away from street children as a social problem serves their own political purposes. As Benitez notes,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁸ Kwankye and Tagoe, quoted in Benitez, 9.

⁶⁹ Terres des Hommes, 2010. Quoted in Benitez, 9

⁷⁰ Jones et al, Mexico, 2007; Kidd, et al, U.S.A, 2007, quoted in Benitez, 9

⁷¹ Benitez, 9.

⁷² Ibid.

The term “street children” was felt to be too suggestive of irremediably broken family ties and unworthy parents abusing their offspring to the point of having them turn to the streets. The presence of unsupervised children in the streets would be living proof of the failure of both the urban middle class and the Christian ideal of the family: the children stand for the failure of this model of society, which would particularly be the case if they found new “families” in the street. Labeling them “street children” and “street families” conveys that the Kibaki government’s moral authority is up to the task of converting what are seen as dangerous thugs into future citizens working hard for the Kenyan nation.⁷³

Thus, in defining “street children,” research must refocus on the universal enforcement of children’s rights and should move away from circumstances of particular urban children in urban streets. Researchers and policy makers should avoid using certain terms which, in the long run, over-simplify the issues and compartmentalize policies for children who live multidimensional lives.⁷⁴

Patricia Ray, Corinne Davey, and Paul Nolan have added more to UNICEF’s standard definitional issue, observing that “the use of the street by any one child is fluid, depending on his/her age, gender and experience.”⁷⁵ Thus, in finding suitable terminology for the typology of these street children, some researchers have given the following categories:

- Street living children—those who sleep in public places without their families
- Street working children— those who work on the streets during the day and return to their families at night
- Children from street families—those who live with their families on the street⁷⁶

There is another view of street children which considers the children’s “careers” on the street. Those researchers focused on the “professional” aspect of the phenomenon of street

⁷³ Droz, 353, quoted in Sarah Thomas de Benitez, *State of the World’s Street Children: Research* (London, UK: Consortium for Street Children, 2011), 9.

⁷⁴ Benitez, 9.

⁷⁵ Patricia Ray, Corinne Davey, Paul Nolan, *The World’s Street Children Report 2011* (London, UK: Plan and Consortium for Street Children, 2011), 7.

⁷⁶Ibid.

children believe that the lives of children on the street include a variety of activities. Thus, “the street represents only one phase or facet of many children’s lives and what happens to them after they leave the street.”⁷⁷ Thus, Ray, Davies, and Nolan recognize the term ‘street child’ to be a social construction which they believe reflects society’s disquiet at children who are visible but who are deemed “out of place.” They propose the following:

While recognizing that as yet there is no satisfactory alternative to “street child,” we have adopted the term “street involved child.” . . . We have used this as an umbrella term that encompasses street living children, street working children, and children from street families. We have adopted the following broad definition of street involved children: Children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives.⁷⁸

For the authors of “The World’s Street Children Report 2011,” the definition of “the street involved children” encompasses all children who have something to do with the street, either working and sleeping on the street, working and returning home at twilight, or a combination of all children who have something to do on the street. This helps both in dealing with definitional problems that have beset the research work and in future programming towards the street population.

The Children’s Act of Ghana, 1998 defines a child as “a person below the age of eighteen years.”⁷⁹ Sociologists believe that in Ghana the definition of childhood is considered mostly in line with ethnicity, linguistics, social position, and the region to which the child belongs or with which the child is identified. In that regard, the definition of street child may take a cultural nuance which will include age and gender. For instance, in northern Ghana, girls automatically

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁹ *Children’s Act of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana* (Accra, GH: Assembly Press, 2002), 6.

enter adulthood once they become mothers, while boys are accepted as adults when they acquire wives and have been able to build their own houses.⁸⁰

For his working definition, Agya Boakye-Boaten proposes that children who fall between the ages of nine and eighteen years and spend the bulk of their time on the streets (i.e., either work all day on the streets and return home or sleep on the streets) without responsible adult supervision and who are not enrolled in school or in any educational training program should be considered as street children.⁸¹ However, other researchers have found that in Ghana, children as young as seven and eight years of age can be seen on the streets of Accra working as *kayayei*.⁸²

Poverty and Youth Homelessness

In the course of this study I discovered that one of the major causes of youth homelessness is poverty. That theme runs throughout the literature on street children.⁸³ Parents of homeless children are unemployed, underemployed, or seasonally employed. This results in family poverty that drives children into work. Thus, youth who are not in school and cannot find jobs close to home are compelled to migrate and find work elsewhere.⁸⁴ Further, youth from the rural areas often consider themselves to be “economic agents.” They believe they can contribute

⁸⁰ DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga, “Defining Childhood: A Historical Development Perspective,” in *Children’s Rights in Ghana: Reality or Rhetoric?*, eds. Robert Kwame Ame, et al. (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2011), 17.

⁸¹ Agya Boakye-Boaten, “Street Children: Experiences from the Streets of Accra,” *Research Journal of International Studies* no. 8 (November, 2008): 77-78.

⁸² Anarfi and Agyei, 102.

⁸³ Kumar. Quoted in Anarfi and Agyei, *ibid*, 102

⁸⁴ K. John Anarfi and J. Agyei, “To Move or Not To Move: The Decision-Making Progress of Child Migrants from Northern to Southern Ghana,” in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. K. John Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye (Accra, GH: Sundel Services, 2009), 102.

to the household income and decide to travel to the urban areas in search of jobs.⁸⁵ Parents of these youth may not discourage their children from migrating since the hope is that they can attain a better standard of living elsewhere.

In the course of my interviews with the street youth it became clear that many parents in rural areas directly (and indirectly) pressure their children to leave their homes and villages. In some cases, parents who urge their children to leave are truly unable to care for their children. In other situations, the burden of providing for numerous offspring is too great for the parents. And there are some instances in which the parents believe that a better future awaits their children in the city.⁸⁶

Endemic poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion are named among the root causes of the deprivations suffered by most children and youth in Ghana. It has also been noted that the effects of poverty are more pervasive among children and youth than adults, and that the impact of the deleterious effects of poverty on children and youth is greater than on adults. Thus, the adverse effects of continued poverty on early childhood development may handicap a person's future physical, intellectual, and emotional wellbeing. According to UNICEF, "children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to survive, develop, and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential, or participate as full and equal members of society."⁸⁷

Ghana's poverty trends show that 40 percent of the population are considered to be "poor," and this refers to those with the capacity to meet their "basic nutritional needs but who

⁸⁵ Waddington. Quoted by Anarfi and Agyei, *ibid*, 102

⁸⁶ Beauchemin, 22.

⁸⁷ Agnes Akosua Aidoo, Nii K. Bentsi-Enchil, and Alison Raphael, eds. *Children in Ghana* (Accra, GH: UNICEF, 2009), 25.

are unable to provide for additional necessities such as health, shelter, clothing, and education”⁸⁸ Further, 14.7 percent of the people in Ghana live in “extreme poverty,” which prevents them from meeting some of their basic needs, including their nutritional requirements.⁸⁹ In such situations, children born to poverty-stricken families will likely become their own agents of care and livelihood. This reality has greatly contributed to the migration of the youth from the deprived northern regions to southern Ghana to seek their livelihood on the streets of Accra and other urban centers.⁹⁰

When women are in poverty, it affects family livelihood and “reflects the social deprivations and early socialization of children into the world of work.”⁹¹ The reason for this is that women account for approximately 50.5 percent of Ghana’s population, “with one-third of all households headed by females, a situation that reflects migration trends, divorce, single parenthood, and widowhood.”⁹² In rural Ghana, where poverty is rife, large family size is considered a contributing factor because more children are needed to work to contribute towards the family’s livelihood. There is also a strong correlation between poverty and school drop-outs, youth’s engagement of hazardous and exploitative working conditions, and becoming involved in street life. Undoubtedly, one of the major causes of streetism in Ghana is poverty and the need to earn a living is very common in most deprived areas.⁹³

⁸⁸ Nana Araba Apt, “Confronting the Challenges: Optimizing Child Rights in Ghana,” in *Children’s Rights in Ghana: Reality or Rhetoric?* eds. Robert Kwame Ame, et al. (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2011), 4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ray, Davey, and Nolan, 12.

Ruth Payne postulates that recent economic reforms in Ghana have, unintentionally, been a great trigger of poverty.⁹⁴ Thus, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), the Economic Recovery Program (ERP), the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPCI) and the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) have resulted in the growth of a cash economy with the imposition of macroeconomic reforms.⁹⁵ These reforms resulted in the reduction of government borrowing, cuts in public spending, and restructuring of domestic debt.

According to Payne, these government reforms caused price instability owing to international fluctuations in crop prices, coupled with erratic rainfall patterns, decreasing land fertility due to over-usage of land, and the rising cost of fertilizer. Consequently, rural poor families live hand-to-mouth, compelling the youth to migrate to the urban centers in search of non-existing opportunities.⁹⁶ About 75 percent of the youth in this study, which includes locations such as Galaxy, Azumi, and Manfollow, are on the streets because of poverty.

Another cause of streetism in Ghana, that of youth unemployment in Africa, is related to poverty. Youth unemployment has been linked with the continent's declining economic growth and has resulted in a critical labor absorption problem. Francis Chigunta posits that the startling high rate of youth unemployment accounts for one of the more serious socio-economic problems currently confronting many developing countries in Africa, particularly Ghana.⁹⁷ Survey data indicate that formal employment opportunities for the youth across Africa are minimal.

⁹⁴ Ruth Payne, "Voices from the Street: Street Girl Life in Accra, Ghana." *CEDAR Research Papers* no. 40 (January, 2004): 30

⁹⁵ World Bank, quoted in Payne, 30.

⁹⁶ Payne, 31.

⁹⁷ Francis Chigunta, "The Socio-Economic Situation of Youth in Africa: Problems, Prospects and Options," Paper (draft), *The Socio-Economic Situation of Youth in Africa* (July 12, 2002) 8

One of the major causes of unemployment in Africa is the rapid population growth rate “which has resulted in a relatively young population and a large proportion of youth in the population of the working wage.”⁹⁸ Rural/urban migration also contributes to the unemployment problem in Africa, according to a 1999 report from the United Nations.⁹⁹ It is the key factor influencing youth unemployment. The report indicates that the youth rural/urban migration in Africa is three times that of any other migrants and urbanization in the world. In 1990, the rate of the youth migration was 32% as compared to less than 25% for the non-youth population. The report projected that by 2010, over 50% of the youth in Africa will inhabit urban areas with only limited job opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors.¹⁰⁰

The unemployment problem in Ghana continues to grow due largely to the fact that the mass of the youth migrating to urban areas has little or no educational background required for securing well-paying work. According to survey data gathered in 2005, more than half (50.3percent) of the migrants in Ghana had no formal education, and less than 3 percent had attained an education level of senior high school or higher.¹⁰¹ One third of the migrants indicated that they had gone through only primary level education. Only 12 percent had recently completed basic education at the junior high school level.¹⁰² Further, the 2003 Ghana Statistical Service report indicates that just over 70 percent of street children are illiterate.¹⁰³ Their lack of

⁹⁸ Ibid. 12

⁹⁹ International Labor Organization, *World Employment 1998-1999*, Geneva, quoted in Chigunta. 12

¹⁰⁰ Chigunta. 12

¹⁰¹ Report of the Ghana Statistical Service, 2005.

¹⁰² Frempong-Ainguah, D. Badasu, and S. N. A. Codjoe, “North-South Independent Child Migration in Ghana: The Push and Pull Factors,” in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. K. John Anarfi and Stephen O. Kwankye (Accra, GH: Sundel Services, 2009), 85.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11.

education, coupled with the scarcity of employment prospects in the rural areas, has contributed significantly to the massive migration of the youth into the streets.

Some of the youth interviewed for this study have migrated to Accra because it appeared to them that there is little, if any, hope or future for them in the rural areas where their families live. Thus, when the youth growing up in rural areas are bereft of any meaningful development in terms of adequate health facilities, electricity, drinking water, roads, agricultural methods, and educational infrastructure, they see no reason to remain forever where living conditions are sub-standard.¹⁰⁴ They are easily pulled away to the urban centers, where most of them eventually end up homeless.

Global Numbers of Street Children and Youth

In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. Fourteen years later the same international agency reported: ‘The latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million.’ And more recently still: ‘The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing as the global population grows and as urbanization continues apace.’¹⁰⁵

The 100 million figure of street children has been highly debated and contested globally as there has been no proof that any credible ‘head-count’ has been conducted world-wide to substantiate the numbers. It is alleged that the figure continues to stand as it was twenty years

¹⁰⁴ Catholic Association for Street Children, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Benitez, 4.

ago in order to promote the UNICEF's world-wide programs for street youth. Thus, this same number continues to be the common currency for researchers and authors of various persuasions.

There are, however, those who believe that the "arithmetic is as symbolic as the children involved."¹⁰⁶ The symbolic figure gains credence because the world's population increased by more than 30 percent in that same twenty-year span, from some 5.2 billion in 1989 to 6.8 billion in 2009. Urbanization is also growing at the same rate, with half of the world's population currently living in cities.¹⁰⁷

Benitez concludes that in spite of the world's growing number of street children, the number game has, for several reasons, now become problematic. First, the figures are *guessestimates*, reported in an effort to convey a sense of urgency and with hope that policymakers would be more willing to address larger rather than smaller social problems. Too, there was the expectation that the large numbers would serve to engender public outrage that would mobilize large numbers of citizens. The strategy only worked for a decade. It has now worn thin, especially for worldwide Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), governments' ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), and policy-makers.¹⁰⁸

A second problem with the numbers game is that it has rather "provoked donor fatigue, ill-conceived policies and violent responses towards street children" for those national/local governments and donor communities that were persuaded to address the problem of street children on the basis of numbers.¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, repressive responses from some governments have

¹⁰⁶ Ennew (2000), quoted in Benitez, *ibid*, 4

¹⁰⁷ Benitez, 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

pushed children from visible to invisible street occupancy. This gives the illusion of having in place successful strategies to deal with the problem of street children and serves to persuade the general public that the oft quoted numbers are unrealistic and ill-founded. Finally, reporting the large number of street children has invariably pushed funders away from detailed explorations of children's experiences and circumstances. The underlying intent of supporting programs aimed at reducing numbers of the street children has been aborted and nullified rather than garnering a support base commensurate with those of children's experiences, circumstances, and rights.¹¹⁰

As it is with world-wide estimates, the figures used to count street children in Africa have also become problematic. For instance, the Ethiopian government estimates that there are only 150,000 children living on the street in that country, with 60,000 in Addis Ababa. However, NGO estimates there to be 600,000 street children in Ethiopia with Addis Ababa being home to 100,000 of them.¹¹¹ The figures for Kenya in 2007 were estimated to be 250,000-300,000 children living and working on the streets of that country, with more than 60,000 of them in Nairobi.¹¹²

CAS provides a comprehensive summary of the organization's work since 1993 with these statistics on street children in Ghana:

- 1992 – 7,000
- 1996 – 10,400
- 2000 – 17,181
- 2002 – 19,196¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Consortium for Street Children, "Street Children Statistics," http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/_uploads/resources/Street_Children_Stats_FINAL.pdf (accessed February 15, 2012). Statistics in this report were gathered from June-August 2009.

¹¹² *Youth in Crisis: Coming of Age in the 21st Century-KENYA Nairobi's Street Children: Hope for Kenya's Future Generation*, 3.

¹¹³ Catholic Action for Street Children, 11.

Further, Street Child AFRICA reports that a 2007 “headcount” of street children and young mothers in different parts of Accra indicates that among the population there are 21,140 street children, 6,000 street babies, 7,170 street ‘mothers’ under the age of twenty, and 13,050 urban poor children (most likely at high risk of coming to the street).¹¹⁴ In South Africa there are estimated to be 10,000-12,000 homeless children in South Africa. These children are living on the streets due largely to poverty, overcrowding, abuse, neglect, family disintegration, and HIV/AIDS.¹¹⁵

The Movement of Youth as an Internal Migration

J. Agyei and A. Ofori-Mensah postulate that an important aspect of migration in Ghana now is the movement of children. They state that child migration is precipitated by four main dimensions—fostering, trafficking, independent child migrants, and street children.¹¹⁶ Fostering occurs when children mostly from the northern part of Ghana are sent to live with relatives in the southern cocoa-growing areas. These children are known as foster children and are usually sent to relatives to receive a good education and/or vocational training which their biological parents cannot afford to provide. The decision to “foster” a child is typically made by an adult with the child concerned having no say about migrating away from home to live with another adult in

¹¹⁴ Street Child AFRICA, *Fundraising Pack* (Surrey, UK: Street Child AFRICA, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, “United Nations Study on Violence Against Children,” Report, United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY, October, 2006, 43.

¹¹⁶ Agyei and A. Ofori-Mensah, 24.

another location. Fostering is now a social reproduction role embedded in the tradition of Ghana, with parental roles often assumed by different members of the extended family.

Trafficking in child migration is on the rise and takes many youth to live in urban centers such as Accra, Kumasi, and Sekondi-Takoradi. Each year thousands of children arrive at the shores of Volta Lake to work in the fishing industry. Trafficking also lures children (mostly girls) from northern Ghana to the southern urban centers to undertake work such as head porters, house helps, street vendors, or engage in other menial labor. Agyei and Oforu-Mensah name street children as a fourth element accounting for child migration. And while it is argued that “streetism refers to the use of the street as residence and not migration per se, many of these children and/or their parents are migrants in the cities.”¹¹⁷

Characteristics of the Youth Migrant

Anarfi and Appiah surmise that the typical age for youth migration in Ghana is between fifteen and sixteen years.¹¹⁸ This is true for both males and females, even though some child migrants are younger than age fifteen, perhaps as young as age seven.¹¹⁹ Researchers also report that girls eight years of age are found among the *kayayei* (head porters) on the streets of Accra.¹²⁰ According to a study conducted in Mozambique and Zambia, children do migrate at age fourteen. The study also notes that children as young as seven years were found to be living and working on their own. According to Anarfi and Appiah another study conducted among 165,000

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹¹⁸ Anarfi and Appiah, 51.

¹¹⁹ Punch (1998), quoted by Anarfi and Appiah, *ibid*, 51

¹²⁰ Awumbila, quoted by Anarfi and Appiah, *ibid*

Burkinabe children who migrated to live and work elsewhere within Burkina Faso indicates that those child migrants were between the ages of six and seventeen years.¹²¹

Some researchers contend that child migration in Ghana is now greater among females, with 60.5 percent of the child migrant population consisting of females and 39.5 percent being male.¹²² It has been observed that migration in Ghana, especially over long distances, used to be the preserve of unmarried males.¹²³ However, the new pattern of migration from the north of Ghana to Accra and Kumasi is dominated by females. This is due to the high demand for females to work as head porters, domestic helps, and ‘chop bar’ (local restaurants) waitresses. And while earlier studies reported a higher number of better educated males between ages fifteen and thirty years in the migrant population, the trend now is that both sexes (with little or no education) migrate

The majority of migrants are children and adolescents. Not surprisingly, a large portion of the population is unmarried. According to a study in Accra and Kumasi in which 641 migrants were interviewed, 84.4 were unmarried.¹²⁴ Of the 641 migrants involved in the study, 78 percent reported that both of their parents were living, with 2.5 percent reporting that neither parent was living. Fourteen percent of the migrants in that study reported that their fathers have died, with 6 percent having lost their mothers.

¹²¹ Anarfi and Appiah, 51

¹²² Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe, 83.

¹²³ de Haan. Quoted by Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu and Codjoe, 85

¹²⁴ Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe, 88.

The Concept of Migration Decision-Making

Anarfi and Agyei postulate that the decision to migrate is a two-fold process. First, the youth must determine whether to remain in or leave his/her current place of residence. If the decision is made to leave home, then a destination must be selected. Typically, there are numerous alternatives from which the migrant can choose.¹²⁵ And while the personal characteristics of the youth and his/her family, along with various reason/motives, influence the decision to migrate, the ability to actualize the decision process is also affected by a youth's community context, social networks, and social norms within the society.

Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe note that children's decisions to migrate may not be solely for economic reasons. Deciding to migrate is also a socialization process. Not only does migration present these children with an avenue for pursuing their economic desires, it also affords them the opportunity to be independent and to explore their environment. In their study involving 641 migrants, Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe report that 64 percent of the migrants said it was their own decision to move from their home region to Accra or Kumasi. Only 5 percent involved their friends in the decision-making process.¹²⁶ Further, female migrants (70 percent) are more likely than male (54 percent) to make their own decision to migrate.¹²⁷ The reason for the difference is that parents traditionally do not allow their daughters to leave home alone for an unknown destination. Thus, a determined girl will decide on her own to migrate, leaving home without having involved her parent in the decision-making process.

¹²⁵ Anarfi and Agyei, 102.

¹²⁶ Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe, 90.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

The parents have no knowledge of the girl's decision. The girl does not have her parents' approval, but she avoids being stopped from migrating.

Regardless of who influences the migration decision-making process, nearly 60 percent of the migrants interviewed by Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe paid their own fares to their migration destination. Further, one-third of that number had their fares paid by family relations, usually parents or siblings. Two percent of those migrants said they were lured into migrating. About 10 percent were able to sneak away unnoticed onto trucks, some of them were able to and negotiate with truck drivers to transport them to their destination. In some instances the migrating youth received financial support from friends.

Push and Pull Factors Influencing Youth Migration

According to Anarfi and Agyei, there are multiple reasons motivating youth to become child migrants and leave their homes of origin for various destinations. These motivating factors are known as “push” and “pull” factors.¹²⁸ Reasons for migrating related to the home area of migrants are considered “push” factors. Motivators related to the migration destination areas are “pull” factors. Of the 100 migrants interviewed by Anarfi and Agyei, the decision to migrate was a result of “push” factors for 17 percent. The remaining 83 percent cited “pull” factors as motivators for migrating.

There are several “push” factors that can account for the decision to migrate. Many migrant youth cite lack of privacy and money in the home communities as major “push” factors. Approximately 10 percent leave their home communities because they want to be independent

¹²⁸ Anarfi and Agyei, 92.

and live on their own. Parents' inability to cater to them is a "push" factor for 14 percent of those who migrate, while civil strife in their home communities is a "push" factor for 4.8 percent of those who decide to migrate. Another "push" factor for 2.9 percent of migrating children is their parents' desire to arrange marriages for them. This is particularly true for young girls from northern Ghana. Other issues such as mistreatment by relatives and a lack of desire to continue schooling serve as "push" factors for child migration.

In an analysis of "push" factors by regions, Anarfi and Agyei found that more than 50 percent of migration from all areas is due to parents' inability to provide for their children's needs, while civil strife (particularly in the Upper East region) is a "push" factor for only 14.3 percent of those youth migrating from their home communities. In addition to these socio-cultural factors, the desire to be on their own was a "push" factor for eleven percent of the migrants and four percent decide to migrate away from home because they were no longer interested in attending school.

Anarfi and Agyei report that four out of five child migrants were attracted to the cities of Accra and Kumasi.¹²⁹ The "pull" factor for 80 percent of those migrating to these two cities is work-related. As many as 10 percent of those migrants to Accra and Kumasi report that relocating to the city enabled them to learn a trade, while 2 percent received an education. The allure of city life with its "bright lights" is a "pull" factor for 4 percent of those that migrate. These "pull" factors motivate migration for 80 percent of females and 70 percent of males. The study indicates that 20 percent of male migrants leave home to learn a trade. Only 5 percent migrate in order to further their education. Anarfi and Agyei surmise that the majority of the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 94.

females (87percent) migrate in order to work for money, while only 5.7 percent leave their homes to experience city life or visit relatives or friends.

Push and Pull Factors in the North-South Context of Youth Migration

Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu, and Codjoe argue that migration from the north to the south of Ghana has been a long tradition dating back to the colonial days when there was the dire need for cheap labor. People have migrated, primarily, from the northern, upper east, and upper west regions to the destination centers of the greater Accra and Ashanti regions.¹³⁰ Thus, there has always been movement (seasonal and permanent) by people from Ghana's northern sector seeking work on cocoa farms, in the mining sectors, and other industries located in southern Ghana.¹³¹

The three northern sending regions are located in the savannah woodland belt, which is characterized by grass and scattered with short, drought-resistant trees. The climate is very dry, with a single rainy season from May through October. Numerous, intermittent bush fires occur due to the dry conditions of the area. The region accounts for 41 percent of Ghana's total land, yet it has the lowest population. The low population density of the area can be attributed to the "harsh environment, frequent ethnic conflicts, lack of employment opportunities, migration, and poverty."¹³² The receiving areas of the greater Accra and Ashanti regions have high population densities as compared to that of the sending regions.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹³¹ Ibid., 71.

¹³² Ibid., 77.

Industrial activity in the sending areas of the north is said to be low. This is likely one reason that of the migrant youth in Accra and Kumasi, 55.9 percent come from the northern region, 32.4 percent from the upper east region, and 12.2 percent come from the upper west region.¹³³ The main economic activities of the northern, sending regions are mainly hunting and forestry. These two industries employ 72 percent of the labor force. The main products include millet, guinea-corn, maize, yam, soybean, groundnut, beans, sorghum, livestock, and poultry. Thus, the bleak economic conditions in the sending regions leave the growing youth of that region with only the option to migrate in search of jobs elsewhere.

The Experiences of the Youth Migrants in the Cities

Kwankye and Tagoe state that child migration in Ghana provides opportunities, as well as presenting risks. In their view, “depending on one’s preparedness and fortitude, and the prevailing conditions at the place of destination, this ‘leap in the dark’ could be a big opportunity for the migrant to turn not only his/her life around but also to positively affect the lives of his/her dependents back home.”¹³⁴ Young migrants face major problems such as having no load to carry, no proper place to sleep at night, poor payment for their services, harassment from city guards, the perception of their work being too difficult, heavy loads for less pay, and the increased population of *kayanyo*. This results in increased competition for jobs, low payment for services, and disrespectful treatment and insults from persons who patronize their services.¹³⁵

¹³³ 2005 Child Migration Survey, Quoted by Anarfi and Agyei, 104

¹³⁴ Kwankye and Tagoe, 143.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Often, because of their inexperience and inability to negotiate for the right prices, customers will not pay child migrant workers a fair wage for services rendered.

In addition to suffering these indignations, the work done by child migrants poses for them a health risk. Due to competition and the need for daily bread, these young migrants force themselves to carry loads which are beyond their physical capabilities. This leads to various sicknesses and injuries. Too, sleeping on streets, at the market squares, and in transport stations can jeopardize the migrant children's health. More than 50 percent of female and 25 percent of male child migrants in Accra report that they sleep at market squares and transport stations.¹³⁶ A very small percentage of these young migrants, male or female, spend the night at home with relatives or friends.¹³⁷

Child migrant workers are also at risk for reproductive health issues. Of this population, 76 percent reports not having sex before leaving home and migrating to an urban center. Both female and male child migrants in Accra and Kumasi indicate that they had their first sexual experiences on the streets between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, with the mean age for the first sexual encounter being slightly lower for females than for males. For most, the sexual activity was consensual (80 percent among males and 69 percent among females), with 12 percent of the females and four percent of the males indicating that they were coerced by the opposite sex. Of serious concern is the fact that "some of the migrant girls did engage in unprotected sex and thereby exposed themselves to sexually transmitted infections (STI),

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 147.

including HIV/AIDS.”¹³⁸ There is also the suggestion that some child migrants engage in commercial sex.

Child migrants in the cities are seriously concerned for their safety and that of their property. While some of the male child migrants boast of having the physical strength to protect themselves, males and females, alike, have expressed grave concern about being robbed of their money and other valuable items like cooking utensils, sewing machines, clothes, and buckets.

The child migrants also have concern about their personal hygiene, as they must pay for the washing their clothes and for the use of public toilet facilities. The cost of public facilities is often prohibitive for the child migrants who earn minimal income. The temptation is to forego washing clothes and taking daily baths because of the cost involved. However, to do so can result in not being hired due to customers complaining about the child migrant’s unpleasant odor.¹³⁹

Benitez surmises that youths’ experiences on the streets show their resourcefulness as well as their enterprise. They juggle several jobs in response to demands of the day. As situations shift with seasonal opportunities, cultural festivals, and tourist centers the migrant children develop canny tactics for survival.¹⁴⁰ According to Benitez, the homeless youth population works within the constraints of a few viable job alternatives. As a result, they are able to develop what researchers have termed “tactical agency” or “thin agency.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid., 151.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 154.

¹⁴⁰ Benitez, 29.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

Tactical/thin agency refers to “adversity in which children make decisions to move onto the street and take up work there and the everyday decision-making actions of migrant children in the extreme conditions of the street.”¹⁴² According to Benitez, such profound demonstration of agency in coping with adversity is not usually found in street children research literature. She, however, believes that “the diversity of children’s and youths’ on-street experiences, manifest in the ways they use public spaces to survive, show preferences, and display personalities, suggests multiple possibilities in the use of agency at the margins.”¹⁴³

Boakye-Boaten, who observed the homeless youth at the CAS shelter in Accra, discovered that the daily experiences of the children in his study defy every reasonable definition of a child, given the horrendous experiences they go through. He offers the story of one informant as a testimony to such traumatic on-street experience. *Abi*, a fifteen year old girl, states that “sometimes the boys strip you naked when you are sleeping and rape you. Some of the girls agree to sleep with them and others don’t, so they wait till you are fast asleep. They come between 1 and 2 a.m. to strip you naked and do whatever they want to do to you.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, the children’s experiences are epitomized in abuse, be it physical, emotional, or sexual.¹⁴⁵ Ray, Davey, and Nolan assert that the literature suggests that some of the street-involved children have demonstrated signs of stress, such as nightmares and crying for no reason. They believe that, considering the extremities of violence and discrimination girls go through on the streets,

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁴⁵ Boakye-Boaten, 79.

“there are indications that they have more difficulties than boys in adapting to life on the streets, and suffer more mental health problems.”¹⁴⁶

Opportunities in the Cities

Young migrants on the streets do experience hardships, but there are also opportunities available for them there. Even though a large proportion of the child migrant population depends mostly on informal job opportunities, these workers are able to save some money from their daily earnings. In Accra and Kumasi, males tended to have a higher income per day relative to females in both cities with males in Accra earning an average 2.67 Ghana Cedis daily as compared to the 1.95 Ghana Cedis of the female worker. In Kumasi male child migrants typically earn 4.12 Ghana Cedis per day while females in that population earn an average of 2.39 Ghana Cedis for a day’s work. Child migrants report that they are able to save some money from these daily earnings, with variations depending on how well business flourishes on a particular day.¹⁴⁷ Kwankye and Tagoe maintain that child migrants are faced with “limited option in terms of livelihood opportunities due to their poor educational background, unsanitary living conditions, and the lack of appropriate safety nets to reduce their vulnerability within the urban environment.”¹⁴⁸ Due to these factors, child migrants have adopted several coping strategies in order to live life in the cities.

¹⁴⁶ Ray, Davey, and Nolan, 16.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 157.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 159.

Coping and Survival Strategies

Though most of the child migrants claim to be able to eat three times a day, the reality is that they sometimes forgo one or two meals on a day when they do not have the means to afford it. For cost effectiveness the youth organize themselves in networks of friends that prepare food and eat together. Those who patronize the street food vendors report being prone to contracting infections such as typhoid, cholera, diarrhea, and other gastro-intestinal diseases. In-depth interviews with child migrants reveal that since many often suffer from malaria, stomach ache, and diarrhea, they readily access pharmacies and chemical shops to treat their sickness, with few seeking treatment from the hospitals, clinics, and health posts.

The contention is that the child migrants visit the chemists because they have already determined what treatment they want to buy as shop attendants may not ask adequate questions about the child's condition, thereby putting his/her health at risk.¹⁴⁹ These common practices of self-prescription and self-medication, coupled with buying treatments from unauthorized sources, present a worrisome situation. These child migrants only go to the hospitals when over the counter treatment fails. At that point effective treatment for their condition proves to be quite costly as their condition has already seriously deteriorated.

The need for personal security in places like Agbogbloshie has forced child migrants to rent wooden structures which they call *kayayoo* quarters. Another form of security is sleeping in groups in front of shops and malls. The groups are created based on ethnic lines. In most groups, the males sleep with sharp objects as means of defense against any intruder or outsider who may

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 162.

want to cause harm to anyone in the group. Groups of migrants also rent a common room in which to keep and safeguard their personal belongings and properties.

Orme and Seipel note that there are enough compelling “reasons to expect that street children would develop self-defeating behaviors. Still, some seem able to cope effectively with the harsh challenges they face each day.”¹⁵⁰ Despite the difficulties they face on the streets and the fact that they are considered as deviant and treated with harshness, not all the child migrants manifest antisocial behaviors or hopelessness. In their qualitative study into the coping strategies of the street children in Accra, Orme and Seipel found that through remarkable resilience, a degree of stability is achieved in their lives.

They insist that street children in South Africa are able to maintain resilience and personal autonomy because they enjoy social support from other street children in the form of acceptance, understanding, and companionship.¹⁵¹ Citing Gilligan’s work in Scotland, Orme and Seipel suggest that most vulnerable street children can withstand significant challenges when they have supportive relationships with parents, relatives, teachers, or peers who offer in-depth commitment, encouragement, and support.¹⁵² The behaviors of street children should not be viewed as deviant without a critical evaluation. Such labeling without the benefit of critical evaluation and conclusion leads to stigmatization, exclusion, and the formation of public policies that provide no benefits to street children.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Julie Orme and Michael M. O. Seipel, “Survival Strategies of street children in Ghana: A Qualitative Study,” *International Social Work* 50, no. 4 (July, 2007): 489-499.

¹⁵¹ Le Roux and Smith (2003), Quoted by Orme and Seipel, 3

¹⁵² Gilligan (2003), Quoted by Orme and Seipel, 3

¹⁵³ De Moura (2002), Quoted by Orme and Seipel, 3

In a study involving thirty-five street children in Accra, Orme and Seipel found out that even though the children had similar experiences, each of them had a unique story. All the children in that study worked, or sought opportunities for work, with some of them holding multiple jobs in order to support themselves. These street children considered begging for money or food as unacceptable behavior. The street children in the study relied on each other for money, protection, encouragement, and emotional support. They saw each other as family members and watched out for one another. In fact, they felt they could trust one another more than they could trust adults who they accused of being hostile and, sometimes, abusive to them. The street children live and work through networks of friends who they consider to be surrogate family.¹⁵⁴ When they are experiencing difficulty, these children get their emotional support and encouragement from their network of friends.

The street children's ability and fortitude to cope with the harsh life of the streets could be attributed to their reliance on God to help them work through the insurmountable situations.¹⁵⁵ They report that their belief in God is the basis of their hope, and they would never blame God for their predicament. The street children believe that if they have made it through life to this point in time, then credit must be given to God, hoping God sees them through to the end. The street children in the study had no desire to dwell on the past. They looked forward into the future with vim and vigor. In recounting their childhood backgrounds, they did not blame anyone for their present misfortunes. Little time is devoted to agonizing over the past as the child migrants are always busy, trying to earn a living and survive each day.

¹⁵⁴ Orme and Seipel, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 6.

According to Orme and Seipel, the street children in the study knew about the resources that could help them and were appreciative for what some of the agencies provided for them. They were very grateful for CAS “which advocates for children and offers a variety of educational, vocational, and counseling services.”¹⁵⁶ And while they are thankful for and accepting of the help available from some social services, they are very critical and skeptical of the public agencies for their strictness and because they ask too many questions.

Street children have survived hard times because of their creativity and resilience in adapting to the harsh environment in which they now find themselves. These character traits help them to be imaginative when it comes to maximizing their meager incomes from work and as the porters among them try to develop creative ways for getting as much money as possible from unsuspecting visitors. They are also creative in dealing with the various social organizations from which they seek help. They always try to fulfill expectations by attending meetings or classes for the sole purpose of obtaining required food and money from those organizations.

Returning Home and Re-integration

In a study by Tagoe and Kwankye of one hundred returned migrants, about half of the participants said they found it difficult to decide to return home. The study revealed that more than half of the males considered the decision to return home a difficult one, while less than half of the females found it difficult. Tagoe and Kwankye conclude that this may largely be due to the fact that more responsibility is placed on male children as bread winners and sons who will carry on the family traditions than females, and so by extension, more is expected from the male child with respect to his obligations to the family than from the female. Consequently, if a male

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

migrant does not think he has improved his lot which will enable him fulfill his responsibility as a son, he certainly would find it difficult returning home.¹⁵⁷

The decision to return home is said to be compounded when expectations at home are high. This creates increased anxiety for the returning migrants, especially when an inadequate finance to sustain their street life is the reason they return home. Migrants also worry a great deal about returning home when they know that the peers they left behind are doing well enough, economically, without migrating. Such worries notwithstanding, some child migrants are able to return home. In fact, interviews indicate that four out of ten males and one of every two female child migrants returned home to continue with schooling.

While Tagoe and Kwankye surmise that a higher expectation is placed on the male child than on the female child with respect to the obligation to provide for the family, some figures from their study contradict that hypothesis. Females (12.3 percent) more than males (9.9 percent) indicate that their family's need of them was the motivating factor in their decision to return home. Some females said they were needed at home to care for their ailing relatives, while some males said their reason for returning home was to head the family in the absence of the father or other senior male relative.

Cell phones allow some child migrants intermittent contact with family back home. Others make at least one visit to their home before ultimately deciding to leave the city to which they have migrated to return home permanently. Most child migrants (68 percent) return home within five years of leaving for an urban center, with females (74 percent) being more likely than males (59 percent) to return to their family of origin. It was also found that a higher proportion of the males (40 percent as compared to 26 percent of females) had returned home ten or more

¹⁵⁷ Tagoe and Kwankye, 224.

years after the study, which suggests that the males were more likely than their female counterparts to stay home permanently once they return. Deviating from the initial stepwise fashion of migration, most child migrants (98 percent) now return home directly without stopping anywhere along the way to take up temporary residence.

According to Tagoe and Kwankye, females more than males return home to marry. Additionally, those females who were married before migrating are more likely than their male counterparts to return home. The unmarried child migrants who return home intending to marry are more likely to stay home permanently. Interestingly, 64 percent of the returning child migrants take up residence with their biological parents. This suggests that few live independently once back in their home region from an urban center, which is ironic given that the need for independence is a “push” factor for so many child migrants.

Street Youth and the Family

Orme and Seipel indicate that in Africa few street youth come from intact families. They have come to the streets of urban centers for economic reasons, as well as for adventure. Except in those instances where children under peer pressure migrate, two-parent families do not permit their youth to live on the street. Thus, the majority of youth that find their way to the streets come from one- and no-parent homes due to divorce or death of the parents.

Family neglect and/or family abuse are “push” factors contributing to child migration/homelessness. This includes sexual abuse as well as family violence perpetrated in homes against children. Anarfi and Appiah also add succinctly that bad parenting has often been

cited as a trigger for child migration to the streets.¹⁵⁸ Anarfi and Appiah also suggest that streetism is becoming rampant in Ghana, in particular, and Africa in general because of civil unrest and conflicts which invariably orphan or displace most youth. In those cases the youth are left on their own at a very tender age as they go through a very miserable life.¹⁵⁹ In some parts of Africa it has been noted that AIDS orphans have contributed a large segment of the street youth population.¹⁶⁰

The African Social Support System

There is also a suggestion of another dimension to the problem of street youth. This is a result of the disintegration of the African social support system, particularly in the urban areas in most African countries like Ghana.¹⁶¹ Historically, traditional African societies were firmly grounded in communities comprising members of various extended families and lineages. Akuffo, for instance, believes that as the extended families and members of the lineage lived in close communities, they have acted as socialization agents in the development of most young people.¹⁶² In fact, it traditionally has been believed that African community structures are the foundation and underlying framework for social development.¹⁶³

According to Chigunta, “through various kin and non-kin arrangements, networks of formal and informal relationships were developed which ensured reciprocity and exchange in the

¹⁵⁸ Anarfi and Appiah, *Ibid*, 54

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁶¹ Chigunta, 6

¹⁶² Akuffo. Quoted by Chigunta, 6

¹⁶³ Chigunta, 6

form of service and support. As a consequence [of this arrangement], patron-client relationships involving fosterage and adoption, volunteerism, and collective endeavors have been quite widespread in Africa.”¹⁶⁴ And this was never to be in contemporary Africa—particularly in Ghana. The youth of today in Ghana find themselves in the throes of social dislocation and collapse of the traditional support systems.

Added to that is the issue of a reversal of behavior as the youth progresses from childhood to adulthood in contemporary Ghana, and Africa as a whole. There used to be “compulsory” puberty rites which marked the adolescent’s progression into adulthood. During this rite of passage, the adolescent is initiated into adulthood, being taught many things which include the history and traditions of their tribes, the essence and relevance of the extended family, responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, and most importantly the moral laws and taboos of their particular location.¹⁶⁵

Osei-Hwedie, however, insists that there is now a complete reversal of behavior as the youth transition into adulthood.¹⁶⁶ What was once the norm is no more due to the changing period of time and expanded knowledge through technology (which has broadened the horizon of the youth of today as they live in constant contradiction to the beliefs and practices of their parent’s culture). This has also deepened the cultural dislocation of the youth, and in most cases has caused parent-children problems which result in pushing youths to the streets.

¹⁶⁴ Chigunta, 6-7.

¹⁶⁵ Ghunney, Joseph, “Ghana” in *Pastoral Counseling in a Global Church: Voices from the Field*, eds. Robert J. Wicks and Barry K. Estadt (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 88.

¹⁶⁶ Osei-Hwedie. Quoted in Chigunta, 5

Political and Economic Reasons for Streetism

There is no doubt that in Africa, in general, and Ghana in particular, economic and social crises are among the major compelling factors sending youths to the streets.¹⁶⁷ Chigunta argues that “in a context of declining growth and economic restructuring, the employment situation in Africa has become critical and labor absorption problematic.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, youth unemployment continues to be seen as one of the major socio-economic problems confronting developing countries (such as Ghana) in Africa.¹⁶⁹

Chigunta, again, argues that not many African countries have come up with any comprehensive youth policy “that specifically seeks to address the concerns and needs of their young people within the context of national development plans or broad macro- economic policies.”¹⁷⁰ Even in Ghana, where there have been some instances of provisions of some youth policies, not many youth have been involved in the formulation of such programs. Thus, these programs have been designed with the youth as ‘subjects’ and not as ‘objects’ of policy.

Policy Recommendations

In all their writings, the authors of the *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana* present policy recommendations which are summed up in the following three points. First, it is recommended that since lack of job opportunities is the driving force behind initial migration from home areas, as a matter of urgency the government should develop job opportunities,

¹⁶⁷ Ibrahim Abdullah, “Bush Path to Destruction: the Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36 no. 2: 223-224.

¹⁶⁸Chigunta, 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

especially in the three northern regions of Ghana. Thus, irrigation systems should be put in place to enhance the agricultural activity all year round.¹⁷¹ Second, it is suggested that the Ministry of Women and Children should be made to evolve a program of activity to follow-up on those return migrants. This program would provide the returning migrants with the support of micro-finance schemes that would enable them have a more sustainable economic re-integration. The third suggestion is for the government to initiate and implement programs aimed at capacity building of the youth so as to equip them with skills to be self-employed in the child migrant-sending areas, especially in the northern regions. Orme and Seipel suggest that it was not enough for the government of Ghana to be the first country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Right of Children. Ghana has an obligation to ensure a successful implementation of all the policies connected to the convention. Additionally, community-based agencies and non-governmental organizations must direct services to meet the needs of street children, services that would include food, clothing and shelter.

Since most of the youth involved in the Orme and Seipel study were those who fled home because of poverty, family neglect, and irresponsibility, it is the contention of Orme and Seipel that there must be a mechanism put in place specifically to alleviate poverty. Thus, increasing income through micro-credit schemes should be the focus of the government of Ghana for those in rural areas. This can be done by making small loans available to very poor people who may not qualify for loans from the traditional banking system. This will serve as in impetus for self-employment and income-generation.

According to Orme and Seipel, street youth have often been marginalized by social workers and the unwillingness of others to involve them in the intervention processes. And in

¹⁷¹Anarfi and Kwankye, 244.

the worst situations, harsh treatment has been meted out to the street youth living in shelters and rehabilitation centers. Orme and Seipel, therefore, admonish social workers, pastors, counselors, and other stakeholders to treat these youth with greater regard and empathy.¹⁷²

“Sodom and Gomorrah:” The Hub of Migrants in Accra

“Sodom and Gomorrah” lies a few kilometers away from the business center of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. That stretch of land was said to have been earmarked for the construction of the Korle Lagoon Recreational project. However, the place has been occupied by migrants of different ages and nationalities. According to Ogbamey, a reporter for the Ghana Web,¹⁷³ the original residents of Korle Dudo (or Old Fadama), which stretches from the Korle Lagoon to the Mosque at Abossey Okai, were resettled in the 1960s by the Nkrumah administration at New Fadama, near Abeka, for the construction of the Korle Lagoon Recreational project. However, after the overthrow of that regime, the project was abandoned.

In 1980, after the clash of Kokomba and Nanumba (two ethnic groups from northern Ghana that trade mostly in yams and other food products, and which for some time have been in internecine battles¹⁷⁴), the then government (Limann administration) rehabilitated the Kokomaba

¹⁷² Orme and Seipel.

¹⁷³ Alfred Ogbamey, “*The Untold Story of ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’*” (October 11, 2002), GhanaWeb, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/> (January 7, 2012). *GhanaWeb* is a website established for the dissemination of news to Ghanaians, especially those in Diaspora.

¹⁷⁴ Research prepared by the Research & Information Services Section, “*Refugee Review Tribunal—Australia*, GHA34619, March 26, 2009. These two ethnic groups had internecine battles in 1994 and 2002. The 1994 and 2002 incidents are part of two different conflicts. The 1994 incident was part of an ongoing tribal dispute between the Konkomba and the Nanumba which has its roots in chieftaincy and land ownership. The 2002 incident was part of an ongoing internal chieftaincy dispute amongst the Dagbon. The conflicts between the Konkombas and the traditional kingdoms of Northern Ghana have been described by Brukum (1995) as wars of emancipation, with one group (Nanumba) determined to maintain the status quo and the other (Konkomba) fighting to overthrow it. Realizing the fertile nature of the lands in their host areas, some migrant Konkombas decided to settle as farmers and established permanent villages from Sambu near Yendi in the North, to Dambai in the Kete-

faction of the yam market at the present day Sodom and Gomorrah (the Old Fadama) in order to pave the way for the government to resettle them. Later, according to an article on the Ghana Web, a group of Nzema coconut oil sellers and Kwahu ‘Russian second-hand cloth’ sellers joined the Kokomaba as temporary settlers of the land.

The reporter for the Ghana Web intimated that on the eve of the 1992 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference in Ghana, the street hawkers along the pavements of Accra were asked by the then Accra metropolitan area boss, Kofi Portuphy, to relocate to New Fadama to give the city a beautiful facelift during the period of the conference. By the time the conference ended, the hawkers together with homeless people had relocated to Old Fadama. The reporter said at that time the only medical practitioner who owned a medical facility in the area, Dr. Bart-Plange, warned the new settlers of consequences of pushing to the frontiers of the lagoon as it had become the order of the day at that time. In the view of the medical practitioner, since the place was earmarked for a particular project, the inhabitants’ way of life and building of shelters indicated that one day a government would eventually destroy “Sodom and Gomorrah” as it happened in biblical times.

A casual observer of the area for a day or two would affirm that the residents of “Sodom and Gomorrah” have been living up to the biblical name by their lifestyles and behaviors, according to the story. According to a story narrated to Ogbamey by Mamuna Seidu, a porter at the Agboloshie market and a resident of the area, “Rape is normal. Few things surprise few

Krachi district in the Volta Region. It was however in Nanun that trouble developed between them and their hosts. The main causes of Konkomba discontent were that they were compelled, like everyone else in the area, to put in some days free labor each year on the farms of Nanumba chiefs; that the chiefs also intermittently collected tribute in the form of foodstuff and livestock from their Konkomba tenants; and lastly, that it was compulsory to donate the hind leg of any big animal killed, whether wild or domesticated, to Nanun chiefs during funerals.

people. Sleeping outside in the night is an invitation for a predator to strike. Most of us sleep with tight protective underwear—especially with tight worn-out jeans on because you could wake up in the middle of the night to find somebody crawling on you to do his own thing.”

Ogbamey added that “there is an ‘inner city’ law that operates” within Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, for anyone to survive in the area, the person must be streetwise at all times to avoid a life-threatening situation. It is reported that once in a police swoop of suspected armed robbers at Sodom and Gomorrah, twenty-four of the suspects were identified as armed robbers. Others were found with “marijuana” and cocaine. In several instances, according to the author, wanted criminals (including murderers) were found to be hiding at Sodom and Gomorrah.

The 2000 census put the figure of residents at 23,000. Today conservative estimates put the population around 50,000 as Sodom and Gomorrah has become a hub of both external and internal migrants of all ages, including children and youth migrants mostly from northern Ghana. The foreign segments of the migrants are those from the Sudan, Niger, and Chad and other nationals from the neighboring countries.

Limitation of the Literature¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ For the purpose of this study, the following journal articles were also consulted but not used [1] Judith Ennew, “Difficult Circumstances: Some Reflections on ‘Street Children’ in Africa” in *Children and Environments* 13(1) Spring 2003. [2] Samantha Punch, *Migration Projects: Children on the Move for Work and Education* (A Paper presented at Workshop on Independent Child Migrants: Policy Debates and Dilemmas (University of Sussex and UNICEC, Sept. 2007). [3] Sarah Thomas de Benitez, “State of the World’s Street Children: Violence” (London, Consortium for Street Children, 2007). [4] *The State of the World’s Children 2011* (New York, UNICEF, 2011). [5] *The State of Street Children in Ghana: Catholic Action for Street Children Perspective* (Accra, 2009). [6] Ruth Payne, *Voices from the Street: Street Girl’s Life in Accra, Ghana*, CEDAR Research Papers, Number 40, January 2004. [7] 2011 UNICEF *Humanitarian Action for Children: Building Resilience*, New York, UNICEF, 2011). [8] Peter Anthony Kopoka, “The Problem of Street Children in Africa: An Ignored Tragedy” – International Conference on Street Children and Street Children’s Health in East Africa, April 2000

One major book which has been the focus of this review, *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, is a work written from the phenomenological perspective, investigating the youth migration from the northern regions to southern Ghana. It seeks to address some of the factors (which include poverty at the sending areas) that have triggered the wave of youth migration. The work delves into the living conditions of these migrants on the city streets, particularly those of Accra, which expose them to various health conditions and other reproductive health risks.

In spite of their difficulties, the youth migrants were able to send home remittances to support house-keeping expenses of parents, siblings, and other relations left behind. Thus, the life of the young migrants in the city could be described as a mixture of socio-economic enhancement of life and poverty in the midst of myriad of risks. Given those circumstances, policy makers, together with other stakeholders such as researchers and civil society, are in a quandary about the *kayayo* problem on the streets of Ghana.

However, this book is based on the north-south flow of the migration issues in Ghana, disregarding the fact that most of the youth migrants in the streets of Accra and elsewhere are a mixture of all ethnic groups from Ghana. Additionally, studying the lived experiences of these youth migrants through surveys would not have presented accurate data for the researchers without any participation-observation.

Orme and Seipel, through a qualitative study, also highlight the survival strategies of street youth in Ghana. Through formal interviews, the authors obtained most of the information and offer useful insights and serendipitous knowledge as a result of their observation and interaction with the street youth in the four-month period. The main focus of their research was on how the street youth are able to cope with the challenges of street life in Ghana.

What others saw as “anti-social” behavior of the street youth, these authors termed survival and coping strategies. This study was, however, skewed towards only thirty male migrants who were drawn from the Akan, Ewe, and Ga ethnic groups of Ghana. Such a study is not an adequate representation of the youth migrants in the streets of Accra, where the study took place.

This Study’s Contribution to the Literature

This study entails the examination of the phenomenon of “streetism” using qualitative and ethnographic/critical theory models. It represents a different socio-culturally nuanced addition to the literature on street children. The choice of ethnographic and critical theory models was made since these provided me with the necessary tools for the study of beliefs, language, and behaviors, as well as providing a critical understanding of the marginalization of these homeless youth by governments and other stakeholders in Ghana.

This work concludes with a note regarding the ability to engage in theological reflection on the basis of the experiences of poverty and marginalization of the youth on the streets, which will help me to work for their liberation. This, therefore, involves an evaluation of the social reality of the situation from the work done in this research which will galvanize me for engaging in writing and advocacy work in both political and ecclesiastical corridors. This study offers to new and emerging researchers who may find my work to be a path to more work in this new area of study in Ghana and Africa.

The end product of this study would be the development of a socio-cultural and theological theory that might help society examine the conditions of these street youths,

comprehend the underlying causes of their predicament, and help to connect/coordinate the work of governmental and non-governmental organizations, the church, community leaders, parents, and youth leaders in the effort to transform the lives of this unfortunate population. Further, the study seeks to assist the church in recognizing the pivotal role it can play in this transformative process. As Tatab Mbuy points out, Africa is undoubtedly populated with an overwhelming number of youth but “these have been marginalized, exploited for selfish aims, manipulated and misled by political demagogues.”¹⁷⁶ Thus, even in the church, the youth have been reduced to “noisy spectators with little or no say in decisions that concern them and the mission of the Church” in the whole of Africa. Mbuy summarizes with a quote from Ali Mazrui:

One of the striking features of our world trends since the 1960s has been the emergence of relevance as a moral imperative. This revolutionary fever for relevance has been most dramatically illustrated in the students’ movement. From Berlin to Berkeley, from Tokyo to Dakar, the demand of youth for greater relevance has been part of a fundamental re-examination of the values of modern civilization.¹⁷⁷

Therefore, the church, governments, and other organizations must recognize the importance of the youth, their potentials and the contributions they can make, then start planning and marshalling all resources towards the improvement of their lives; and in a very refreshing way overhaul all existing structures in the transformation of youth programs.

The biblical command to parents and all stakeholders who have responsibilities for the upkeep and enhancement of youth that they should allow the young ones to come to him by Jesus is still relevant. The disciples received some stern words from Jesus when they prevented and rebuked the children who were brought to him for blessings (Matthew 19: 13-15; Mark

¹⁷⁶ Tatab H. Mbuy, “The Need for Pastoral Care of the Youth in Africa” *Afer* 38, no. 1 (February, 1996): 1.

¹⁷⁷ Mbuy, 3.

10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17).¹⁷⁸ Jesus is always reminding parents, community leaders, government officials, and all those who have something to do with the youth to be interested in the affairs of the homeless youth, for that will be a blessing if it were done in a compassionate manner.

¹⁷⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural passages are from the New Revised Standard edition of the Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education by the National Council of Churches of Christ U.S.A.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Intercultural Theological Methodology

This study, which entailed examining the phenomenon of “streetism” through qualitative and ethnographic/critical theory models, represents a socio-culturally nuanced addition to literature concerning street children. The choice of ethnographic/critical theory models¹⁷⁹ was made since these provide the necessary tools for the study of beliefs, language, and behaviors as well as for a critical understanding of the marginalization of these homeless youth by governments and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the study also adds a theological perspective to the qualitative and ethnographic study of this youth phenomenon in Ghana and in Africa as a whole.

Emmanuel Lartey’s intercultural methodology of liberation praxis¹⁸⁰ and the underpinnings of liberation theology’s reflective procedures are extremely relevant and useful for this study. The importance of these methodologies cannot be underestimated as they require the researcher to be where he/she observes, asks questions, and seeks clarifications throughout the period of study. The process also required me as a researcher to situate myself where the problem is. This was very helpful to me as I endeavored to reflect theologically on the issue in question in context.

The first step in the process was to engage in the concrete experience of these homeless youth in their place of residence, the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS) in Accra, Ghana.

¹⁷⁹The description of these two models follows in this chapter [pp-76ff]

¹⁸⁰ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 131.

CAS is a social service agency that supports Ghanaian street children by assisting children who choose to get off the streets, helping them to learn a trade, and creating awareness about the plight of these children. At one time, the homeless youth lived at CAS. However, that arrangement no longer exists as a result of unruly behavior by some of the youth residents. Now the homeless youth come to CAS in the mornings and leave in the evenings.

As Lartey rightly posits, the commitment to concrete experience is essential. For “pastoral care to be liberative, it must be inductive, collective, and inclusive.”¹⁸¹ My being at the homeless shelter was critical as it helped me to encounter the real, lived experiences of the homeless youth population. It also helped in grounding my theoretical suppositions as I observed the actual experiences of these unfortunate ones.

Lartey sums up this experiential requirement saying, “This phase is incarnational and suggests that practical theology must continually seek to be close to peoples’ real lived experience. It is here that the God and ‘Father’ of our Lord Jesus Christ is encountered.”¹⁸² The objective of this study could not be achieved solely through the facts and figures concerning the marginalization and suffering of this population and without benefit of observing the real life experiences of these youth. By asking those children participating in the programs at CAS, “What has been your experience since becoming a homeless youth?” I could better harness at this stage of the study the real lived experiences of those living on the street.

For the twelve weeks I interacted with these participants, be it in groups or on an individual basis, none of them shied away from recollecting and sharing with me their painful

¹⁸¹ Lartey, 125.

¹⁸² Emmanuel Y. Lartey “Practical Theology as a Theological Form,” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, eds. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 132.

experiences “since coming to the street” (The participants’ terminology). In order to make the most of my encounters with these street youth, I had always to be present where they lived to see them and observe them in their daily life experiences, to listen to them, judge/evaluate the observations, and act/take reflective action to remedy the situation.¹⁸³

The second phase of the intercultural methodology of liberation praxis is the situational analysis.¹⁸⁴ It is at this point that the combination of the social analytic mediation of liberation theology and the religio-cultural analysis of African theology takes place. Lartey describes this process as multi-perspectival because it brings together varied perspectives from various disciplines as a tool to enhance the meaning and understanding of the situation.¹⁸⁵

Thus, to have a collective seeing that combines visions and multiple perspectives, various professionals with different orientations ranging from history, sociology, economics, political science, and psychology are brought to bear on the situation of homeless youth. This positively contributed to my understanding of the complex situation and its interrelatedness/interconnectedness with other social factors in the system.¹⁸⁶ Drawing particularly from anthropology was relevant for this study of homeless youth. That discipline was indispensable for my discernment of some pervasive patterns such as cultural themes attributed to groups. One important Ghanaian cultural trait which I observed at work throughout the period of this study was “respect for authority.”

¹⁸³ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 84.

¹⁸⁴ Lartey, “Pastoral and Practical Theology,” 132.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

Despite their being on the street for some time, Ghanaian street children retain their respect for those in authority at CAS and for the visitors at the center. According to Peter Sarpong this is due to the cultural teaching that “everywhere in Ghana a person in authority is considered to be sacred.”¹⁸⁷ Thus, appointments with the participants were kept and there was no lateness or absenteeism because the youth knew “a pastor will be there.”

Studying through sociological lenses also helped me to understand what the homeless youth population does every day, including its language, its ordinary settings, and the pervasive patterns of life-cycle events.¹⁸⁸ I found during the period of study that since most of the participants have been on the street from as early as their pubescent years and have not been followed or scrutinized by any adult, some have become undisciplined in their behaviors. As Heinonen concludes from her study of street children in Addis Ababa, this population cannot be said to be or to have a sub-culture, if by this we mean that they form a rule-governed, static, social entity that functions separately from the rest of the community. Besides, childhood being but a transitory phase to adulthood, they do not form a homogenous group.”¹⁸⁹

However, in this study it became abundantly clear to me that Clive Glazer is right in stating that “in order to protect their realm and status, youth subcultures insulate themselves from the outside world and create exclusivity through style.”¹⁹⁰ To that point, Elijah Anderson provides this vivid expression:

¹⁸⁷ Sarpong, 65.

¹⁸⁸ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 71.

¹⁸⁹ Heinonem, 11.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

This environment means that even youngsters whose home lives reflect mainstream values . . . must be able to handle themselves in a street-oriented environment. This is because the street culture has evolved a ‘code of the street,’ which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence. . . . The rules have been established and are enforced mainly by the street-oriented; but on the streets the distinction between street and decent is often irrelevant. Everybody knows that if the rules are violated, there are penalties. Knowledge of the code is largely defensive, and it is literally necessary for operating in public.¹⁹¹

In the course of this study it was revealed that even in certain areas, such as the open markets where they ply their trade as porters, homeless youth need permission from a kingpin before they can operate. Even we needed permission from some “big boys of the homeless community” in order to take photographs for this study. Being granted permission meant I had to make monetary compensation prior to taking pictures. Otherwise, our mission would have been aborted.

The third phase of the intercultural methodology of liberation praxis considers the ways in which “faith perspectives [are] allowed to question both concrete experience and situational analysis.”¹⁹² Thus, certain questions which emanated from my faith with regard to the experiences gained at CAS were brought to bear on the experiences of this population. Lartey suggests the researcher ask of her/himself, “What questions arise from my faith concerning what I have experienced and the analyses of it? How has thought in my faith tradition approached the issues raised?”¹⁹³ He asserts that reading and research will be of help in the “exploration of the issues on the basis of their own faith understanding”¹⁹⁴ and assist generating “innovative responses to the issues from within specific faith traditions”¹⁹⁵ of the researcher’s choice.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, 33.

¹⁹² Lartey, “Pastoral and Practical Theology,” 133.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Thus, my Methodist background was an asset in the theological exploration of how my faith seeks understanding in the context of the homeless youth. The Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17) was ratified with the sign of Abraham's circumcision at age ninety-nine years, and the same rite was to embrace all male children of eight days old born into his household. This therefore requires me, as a Methodist minister/pastor, to uphold the commitment of bringing up children in the care and love of the same God who cared for the children of Abraham's ancestry. I also believe that it is for the care and commitment to the welfare of children that Christ promised the kingdom to young children in his loving words, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Matt 19:14).

Further, my commitment as a Methodist minister to the homeless youth and my obligation to offer them regular pastoral care stems from Jesus' call to the disciples, "Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'" (Mark 9:36-37). Additional words from Jesus undergird my responsibility to the homeless youth: "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). These passages of scripture have informed my ministry since taking my commission oath in 1992, and my subsequent ordination in 1995. I cannot neglect children or youth.

The fourth phase of intercultural methodology of liberation praxis concerns personal faith or tradition that is subjected to the interrogation of the situation. For Lartey, "critical consciousness" is brought to bear in this phase, as it also questions the traditions of faith. It was at this point in the study I identified the need to bring socio-cultural, economic, and political

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

analysis to bear on the experience I gained in the encounter with the homeless youth. That analysis allowed me to ascribe to the experience a new formulation of theological meanings.

The fifth and final phase of intercultural methodology of liberation praxis is the exploration of responses¹⁹⁶ gleaned from the earlier stages of the study. Thus, as I went through this intellectual activity and experience, an engagement of a sort and an intense commitment to the cause of the homeless youth, a new perspective was ultimately achieved. And as I continue to recognize a transformation of my own theological perception, I realize I have also experienced a shift in my orientation toward the work of the youth. Thus, working with the youth as an ethnographer and a critical theory researcher, I am required to respond to the condition of the street youth, advance some propositions which can help officialdom examine its socio-economic policy framework, and to encourage the church and quasi-church organizations to be involved in the transformation of the social and systemic conditions of the street youth.

Overview

Because this project's focus is homeless youth and its subculture of shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language, this study was undertaken using ethnography/critical theory model. As explained in chapter 2, there are scores of young people who have ended up living their lives on the streets in many parts of Africa, particularly in Ghana. This is due principally to the pervasiveness of complex political, socio-economic, and cultural problems. The process of unearthing the causes of why homeless youth act out, succumb to peer influence and engage in antisocial behaviors, and band together as a survival means requires an ethnography study. Ethnography required I be involved in an extended observation of the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 133.

subculture of these homeless youngsters and, as a participant observer, immerse myself in the day-to-day lives of these young people. Additionally, I interviewed the youth to learn of their myriad experiences since becoming homeless and understand the reality of their street existence.

These youth have their own language, behavior, and ways of interacting with one another which are peculiar to their social world. The dynamics of these street relationships are interpreted differently, and the meanings of the language/behaviors of these homeless youths carry different meanings from that of mainstream society. For these reasons it was critical that I place myself in the natural setting of the homeless youth if I was to effectively play the role of participant-observer.

Participants

The study took place in Accra where the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS) has established a shelter which works with a threefold mission—to support children, assist children with leaving street life, and create awareness about the plight of the children.¹⁹⁷ The participants in the study were between twelve and eighteen years of age. Since, as part of the study, this researcher's mission was to create awareness of the unfortunate plight of these children and get them off the street, there was an urgent need for me to delve into this project as a realist ethnographer, one who can provide an objective account of the plight of street youth. Creswell describes a realist ethnographer as “a researcher who gives an impartial account of a situation, and will not write oneself into that account but will present it from the participant's point of view and report objectively on the information learned from participants at a site.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ The Ghanaian Street Child, 8

¹⁹⁸ Creswell, 69.

My visits to the CAS shelter, from the outset, were three days a week for a month. During that time I simply observed the residents who were the potential candidates for further interview in their natural settings. Some of the observations took place at the various places of learning, as well as on play grounds at the shelter. Since these youths were used to visits by researchers, they in most cases seemed not to be cognizant of any “intruder.” This greatly helped my observation as I could watch the participants closely without offending any of them. They being unperturbed by my presence also made selection of participants easier as their “caretakers” and I were able together to identify those that would be the best candidates for interviews and other activities.

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson suggest a researcher keep three important criteria for selection of good candidates for a study—time, people and context.¹⁹⁹ With regards to time, it is believed that peoples’ attitude, behavior, and activities will always change in most significant ways in all social and natural set-ups. In essence, spending extended time at the shelter for a month offered me a glimpse of the residents’ lifestyles, behaviors, and attitudes in a particular time-frame before the selection for interview was made.

Considering the type of people eligible to be in this study, reference was made specifically to the demographic categories of gender, ethnicity, age, and length of time living on the street. Being a participant-observer at the shelter for a period of time prior to the selection of subjects particularly helped me with the issue of context as there was much involvement with the residents in many and varied programs and situations. Thus, my “shadowing particular participants, observing them over time as they moved between different contexts that form their

¹⁹⁹ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 35.

lives or their work”²⁰⁰ was key to the process of successfully selecting the fifteen candidates for the interviews.

Detailed Study Procedure

Assuming such a realist’s position meant my being with these youth at “their base,” the CAS shelter in Accra. To understand the language of these street children is for me to understand their subculture, their lived experiences in the streets, and their perception of their socialization.²⁰¹ This, therefore, calls for a researcher who, as part of the field work, will be with the study population most of the time, respecting their daily lives at the site, and collecting a wide variety of data, mostly via interviews.

Since I had the mission of creating awareness regarding the plight of this population, there was also the need for me to be a critical ethnographer with the added objective of advocacy for the emancipation of the youth on the streets of Ghana.²⁰² This work revealed the added dimension of challenging the status quo of the government’s “business as usual” stance. The Ghanaian government draws up youth development plans and budgetary allocations are made, but due to the lack of political pragmatism, youth programs become white elephants at the end of the day. In attempts to advocate for and address the concerns of this population, “one invariably comes up against the issues of power, empowerment, inequality, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 39.

²⁰¹ Creswell, 70

²⁰² Ibid

²⁰³ Ibid.

There are three governmental agencies that have direct connections with children, youth, and streetism in Ghana. First there is the Ministry of Youth and Sport. This ministry oversees the development of the human capital in youth, as well as enhancing sports and recreation for the youth in Ghana. Next is the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. That ministry is charged with all issues pertaining to women's welfare in Ghana. It is also responsible for addressing those issues that make Ghanaian women and children (ages zero to eighteen years) vulnerable. Finally there is the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. That ministry works towards employment opportunities for the citizenry of the country. The ministry works in constant collaboration with most of the MDAs on behalf of those in society that are especially vulnerable. The work of the three ministries, in most cases, overlaps and they are charged to collaborate and monitor each other's program towards the achievement of objectives.

Initially, I visited the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare with letters of introduction from Emory University, both signed by my supervisor, Dr. Emmanuel Y. Lartey. These letters indicated my research outline and methodology for data and information collection from these ministries. At the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, the deputy minister made a pledge of support. However, he failed to fulfill the initial promise of appointing one of the directors to provide me with the requested data and information needed for this study. After several visits and reminders to the ministry failed to produce the requested information, it became obvious that I must move ahead with the study without the ministry's assistance in my data collection. With regards to Ministry of Youth and Sport, no one there appeared ready for such a study, so I did not return to that office.

Political power was a dominant and unyielding issue in each of these three ministries responsible for intervening in the predicament facing homeless youth. However, since critical research usually “focuses on the productive aspects of power and its ability to empower, to establish a critical democracy, to engage marginalized people in the rethinking of their sociopolitical role,”²⁰⁴ I made several attempts to access this power until finally Sylvester Kyei-Gyamfi at the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs responded and provided me with some information about the ministry’s recent census of homeless girls in Accra.²⁰⁵ Kyei-Gyamfi also directed me to the UNICEF office in Accra where I was given the book entitled *Children in Ghana*²⁰⁶ to assist me in my data collection.

Ethnography/Critical Theory

According to Creswell, critical theory is “defined by the particular configuration of methodological postures it embraces.”²⁰⁷ I adopted that methodology for this study because it enhances the exploration through a scientific study of particular “social institutions and their transformations through interpreting the meanings of social life, and the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles, through which the critical researcher envisions a

²⁰⁴ Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren: “Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research” in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 411.

²⁰⁵ Marilyn Amponsah-Annan and Sylvester Kyei-Gyamfi, “Final Report on the ‘Kayaayei’ Exercise in Metro,” in *A Registration Exercise Undertaken by Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs to Tackle Child Labor and Trafficking in Ghana Between June and November 2007* (Accra, GH: Government of Ghana, 2007).

²⁰⁶ Iddris Abdallah, Madeez Adamu-Issah, Ruth Addison, Augustine Agu, Ernestina Agyepong, Charles Aheto-Tsega (Accra, Ministry of Women and Children and United Nations Children’s Fund, 2009)

²⁰⁷ Creswell, 27.

new vista of possibilities.²⁰⁸ Further, the choice of ethnographic and critical theory research methods was made as these models provided me with the necessary tools not only for the study of the beliefs, language, and behaviors, but also for a critical understanding of the marginalization of these homeless youth by governments and other agencies, and the issue of political power in all the aforementioned ministries.

To understand the political powers at play in the various Ghanaian governmental agencies require me to engage in my own issues of power, while at the same time endeavoring to empower the young homeless population to “transcend the constraints placed on them by . . . class.”²⁰⁹ In an effort to obtain information from the various ministries, I made contact with a colleague who knew someone at the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs. He introduced me to Sylvester Kyei-Gyamfi, who works at the department of the ministry that deals with children’s affairs and provided me all the assistance that I needed at that time.

Such an approach must consistently be taken in the advocacy for and emancipation of these youth who have been marginalized and excluded from the planning and development of national policies.²¹⁰ Moreover, a critical theory approach provides the platform for the ethnographer to amplify the voices of marginalized groups such as the homeless youth. Additionally, my being a real ethnographer combines the roles of ethnographer and critical theorist and allows me to take a position of providing and preserving an insider’s account as I embark upon the advocacy role.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

²¹¹ Hammersley and Atkinson, 97.

At issue here was the working research question which positively elicited the lived experiences of this group. At the outset, the research question was “What is the experience of the homeless youth in Ghana?” Thus, selecting fifteen people from the highly mobile homeless youth at CAS helped put the question into perspective and subsequently helped tease out other related questions that emanated from the conversation.

Thus, the research question was designed to be a catalyst or a trigger which can stimulate conversations related to their experience as homeless persons. These conversations were aimed at producing accounts which could be considered as having “epistemological or ethical privilege.”²¹² In fact, this approach was of vital importance as it seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized individuals, while at the same time adding to the ways of being able to represent and preserve the insider’s account with maximum authenticity.²¹³ Additionally, such an account should be able to, first, produce an authentic account of the phenomenon of the homeless youth in Ghana. Secondly, it should allow us to “analyze them in terms of the perspectives they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even the psychosocial dynamics they suggest.”²¹⁴

Individual In-Depth Interviews

The starting point for individual in-depth interviews was to ask the questions, “What has been your experience as a homeless youth in Accra?” Selected interviewees participated on a volunteer basis. The interviews were open and guided and used to determine how individuals

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

came to find themselves in the situation of being homeless, and how they cope with challenges of street life. My being at CAS for some time before the selection of candidates for interviews necessitated what experts term “theoretical sampling,”²¹⁵ namely the choice of only authentic candidates whose accounts could not be faulted and might be cogent for the development of analytic ideas.²¹⁶

These youth have their own language, behavior, ways of interactions, and many other characteristics which are peculiar to their social world, which carry different meanings from those in mainstream society. The point of contact for the study of behavioral patterns, as well as the culture of these youngsters, was the CAS shelter in Accra. Being able to discern the behavioral patterns such as life-cycle events and some cultural themes in the social world of this group was critical for me in the early stages of the study.

As Spradley points out, the culture of a group such as the group which is the focus of this study (homeless youth) “consists of what people do (behavior), what they say (language), the potential tension between what they do and what they ought to do, and what they make use of, such as artifacts.”²¹⁷ Therefore, the researcher must be particular with observation, listening and paying much attention to what transpires in the group, and describing nonverbal behavior that is prominent.²¹⁸ It was particularly important for me to follow a responsive interviewing style which, in a qualitative research, enables interview questions, probes, and follow up questions,

²¹⁵ Glaser and Strauss, quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson. 106

²¹⁶ Hammersley and Atkinson, 107.

²¹⁷ Creswell, 71.

²¹⁸ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 120.

and for the tenor of the interview to be adapted to each informant.²¹⁹ Such a style of interview elicited a measure of trust and genuineness between the participant and interviewer, and also allowed for adaptation based on the context of the participant.

Content and Duration of Interviews

All interviews began with the social worker acting as an interpreter, explaining to each interviewee the reason for the interview, assuring him/her of confidentiality, as well as informing the candidates of their right to refuse to answer a question or even withdraw from the interview. Together with some senior staff of the center who acted as gatekeepers for this population, there was a concerted effort to maintain an important feature of ethnographic interview, which is “that, within the boundaries of the interview context, the aim is to facilitate a conversation, giving the interviewee a good deal more leeway to talk on their own terms than is the case in standardized interviews.”²²⁰

For academic purposes, I used English as the medium of communication in this study. A social worker known to the residents of CAS translated my questions/remarks into the vernacular since most of the interviewees had never been to school or had dropped out after primary school and had not studied English. Prior to the interviews, I had worked to establish a rapport between the informants and myself. I did this so as to dispel the notion that interview accounts usually do not produce authentic pictures of cognitive and attitudinal base from which a person’s behavior

²¹⁹ Hammersley and Atkinson, 110

²²⁰ Ibid

in ‘natural settings’ is derived in an unmediated way, but rather reinforced the proposition that such accounts “may still be capable of illuminating that behavior.”²²¹

Interviews for this study can be described as having a guided dialogic style of conversation. In all, the average length of the interviews was thirty minutes. Questions guiding the interview conversation emanated from five areas: 1) one’s experience since becoming homeless, 2) kind of work undertaken to support oneself, 3) description of family of origin and any connections with them, 4) if one is religious, and whether or not CAS gives them religious messages, and 5) hopes for the future.

The presence of the social worker, who is well-known and loved by the residents, facilitated the informal, free-flow of the interview, despite the formality suggested by “guided” interviews. The “guided” form took “a more open-ended, conversational interviewing style and generated more engaged personal narratives and candid opinions.”²²² According to scholars, this style “humanize(s) the interviewer and diminish(es) her power and control of the interview process.”²²³

Throughout the period, interviews were always conducted on a one-on-one basis with each of the interviewees. In some cases, candidates were invited back for additional interviews either for clarification or to elicit more information about some peculiar issues pertaining to them. The presence of the social worker at the interview was definitely an asset. Because of her

²²¹ Ibid., 108.

²²² Douglas Foley and Angela Valenzuela, “Critical Ethnography, The Politics of Collaboration,” in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, eds. Douglas Foley and Angela Valenzuela (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publication, 2008), 295.

²²³ Hammersley and Atkinson, 108.

in-depth knowledge about the interviewees, she was able to challenge the accounts given by some of the interviewees.

In the course of my time as participant-observer at the shelter, it became obvious that conducting the interviews at the shelter would be the preferable choice as the population felt relaxed at this familiar, secure place. In fact, the familiar surroundings of the CAS shelter provided the interviewees a sense of home and offered them a space where they might have “insight into their sense of themselves and their world.”²²⁴ Over the course of the study, the choice of CAS for the interview site became important the few homeless youth I attempted to interview on the street walked away, making the excuse, “I don’t want to appear in the news.” It is interesting to note that over the years visitors have flocked to the CAS center. But mostly the visitors are researchers and social work interns from universities in Ghana and abroad. The current generation of CAS residents will not allow for interviews at any outside locations, since according to them “the researchers need them.”

Data Collection

Besides the formal information that was gained from the interviews, I gleaned deeper insights and serendipitous knowledge as a result of my participation at CAS and observation of the participants in some of the CAS programs. Since it was envisaged that the youth would not be able in one sitting to articulate all their thoughts in a coherent manner, I made further visits, observation, and interactions. Because the site is assumed to be where these youth live and have their daily livelihood, the researcher was bound to come up against certain nuances about the interviewees’ private lives. Thus, at every given stage of the study, there was the need for

²²⁴ Herzog, in Hammersley and Atkinson, 116.

sensitivity and carefulness in gleaning information from the population. To that end, it was expedient for me to operate according to the medical ethics principle of “first, do no harm.” As every effort was made to abide by principle, there was from the beginning always the need for an informed consent from the interviewee. The rights of those who were chosen for this study needed to be respected and they needed to be given the option to remain silent or to opt out at any given time.²²⁵

I took advantage of the social workers who were available to help verify the accuracy and authenticity of the interview transcripts since I used English during the interviews and my questions/remarks were translated into vernacular of the street youth. The interviewees’ responses were categorized and organized according to common themes that described the ways in which youth cope with the challenges of life on the streets.²²⁶ For easy readability and coherence of the responses, colloquial words and phrases were carefully paraphrased so that the accuracy of the information was not compromised.

For more accuracy of speech, intonation, and rhythm of the interviews, an audio recording was also used as a means of providing “much more thorough, concrete, and exact information than if you relied solely on notes.”²²⁷ For better quality sound free of interferences and other distractions during the interview, a digital recorder was very beneficial. Choosing audio tapes for this population meant being attentive and focused on the research questions, as slippages and digressions to other issues could easily take place. The anticipated problem with

²²⁵ Moschella, 89.

²²⁶ Strauss and Corbin, quoted in Moschella. 89

²²⁷ Moschella, 124.

regards to audio recording was that the tape might not pick up visual impressions of the conversation which included facial expressions, gestures, body language.²²⁸

Another problem which we encountered during the use of the audio recorder was background noise. It was, at times, intolerable to the extent that interviews had to be suspended for an hour or two. Audio recordings required a microphone and at times the interviewees had to hold the recorder as they answered questions. Listening to interviews after fieldwork, other limitations of audio recordings became apparent. “Not only is non-verbal behavior not captured in audio-recordings, but even such matters as who is being addressed, or how the talk relates to any material objects being used, are often not preserved.”²²⁹

Moschella points out that the use of visual records such as videotapes and photographs has increased in ethnography due to the enhancement of developments in media technology. In fact, permission was sought first before any photographic recorders were used for data collection in this study. As photos helped in the analysis and enhancement of ethnographic writing presentation, such pictures also added more to the interpretation of the social setting, accessibility to the data, greater transparency, and additional knowledge gained from the study.²³⁰

Videography has also become a potential media facility for research and ethnographic research, and much more was gained by the use of videography in this study. Such recording was used for a documentary as this allowed for the rich and evocative interpretation of a situation.²³¹

²²⁸ Ibid., 125.

²²⁹ Hammersley and Atkinson, 148.

²³⁰ Moschella, 1.

²³¹ Ibid.

I employed a team comprising of a camera woman and two social workers. One social worker was responsible for the interpretation during the interviews and another was responsible for fieldwork, leading the team to observe some of the participants where they work and sleep. Later, I employed a young man to compile the interviews and all other information on a DVD as documentary to enhance this study. Since information on the DVD is for academic purposes, CAS agreed I would have it for safe keeping.

Using video recording with this population was bound to draw differing attitudes from those being recorded. However, all those who were selected were attracted to the idea by sheer curiosity. However, as Moschella notes, one downside to using video recording is the “trade-off between creating a filmed record and being present at the event.”²³² Thus, a researcher must choose between being present and participating in an event or staying behind the camera and losing some experiential learning when a researcher is deeply involved in filming events and interactions. I elected to hire an expert to be behind the camera as there was the need to visit locations where the homeless youth congregate in the night, places of being porters, and other work sites.

Data Handling/Storage Procedures and Transcription

Materials gained from ethnographic research need to be stored in a manner that will make access easy when it is to be retrieved. Thus, there was the need for coding the records. Moschella explains this to be a way of coding or indexing all gathered data by marking the record directly.²³³ Post-it tabs or dots were used for labeling records according to the age or

²³² Ibid., 135.

²³³ Ibid., 137.

gender of the homeless respondent homeless and stored in the researcher's study since no secure place was available at the shelter. Additionally, all paper copies of research materials and data, including interview transcripts, were sent to the researcher's study and stored in a locked file cabinet. This ensured that the confidentiality of participants was maintained.

The objective of this storage system is to allow the researcher "to sort and retrieve information easily and to begin to pick out patterns and interrelationships within and between the various categories."²³⁴ Responses from the interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed verbatim two weeks after the interviews. In fact, full transcription became necessary because few notes were taken during the interviews as note-taking slowed the process. Additionally, both the audio and video recordings are preserved as documentaries for public education.²³⁵

Data Analysis

Due to the process of regular field-note taking and conducting interviews, I undertook theoretical notes by working on the data, "relating observations to one another, developing new concepts,"²³⁶ which have emerged from the previous literature. This ongoing process helped to "develop some metaphors, general schemes, or overall pattern for data analysis that accounts for the phenomenon observed."²³⁷ Czarnaiwska's strategy of focusing attention on issues emanating from such study was adopted. This entailed 1) dismantling a dichotomy—exposing it as false

²³⁴ Ibid., 138.

²³⁵ The program for public education is explained in chapter 5.

²³⁶ David R. Krathwohl and Nick L. Smith, *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal; Suggestions for Students in Education & the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 217.

²³⁷ Ibid.

distinction, 2) examining silences—what is not said, 3) attending to disruptions and contradictions—places where a text fails to make sense or does not continue, 4) focusing on the element that is most alien or peculiar in the text—finding limits of what is conceivable or permissible, 5) interpreting metaphors as a rich source of multiple meanings, 6) analyzing double entendres that may point to an unconscious subtext, often sexual in context, 7) separating group specific and more general sources of bias by ‘reconstructing’ the text with substitution of its main elements.²³⁸

In the process of analyzing data, and as concepts, categories and themes emerged from the data analysis, interview probes and follow up questions were used to allow for emerging concepts to be explored with an effort to move towards saturation and to achieve “thick description.”²³⁹ To enhance and manage the data well, I used the software CAQDAS. Its utilization was specifically for analyzing interview transcripts, marking the occurrences of codes in the text, creating hierarchal coding schemes, attaching memos to text segments, and searching for linkages between codes.

Human Subjects Protection/The Ethics of Research

Moschella asserts that regardless of chosen methods and questions at stake, there are certain ethical issues which must be paramount on the mind of an ethnographic researcher. For Moschella, those issues are “informed consent, honest, and intellectual rigor, the sensitive handling of shared personal information, confidentiality, anonymity and the exercise of authorial

²³⁸ Creswell, 155.

²³⁹ Geertz. Quoted in Creswell, 155

power.”²⁴⁰ Moschella, therefore, admonishes researchers to “bring honesty and transparency about our motives to the ethnographic encounter. We need to bring reverence to research relationships. Reverence is profound respect and regard for the dignity of the persons and communities who allow us to see so much of themselves.”²⁴¹ For the purpose of this study, I submitted documents/letters outlining how informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity would be maintained. The Emory University IRB approved of my procedures [See Appendix B].

Informed Consent

Beauchamp and Childress postulate that “an informed consent is an individual’s autonomous authorization of a medical intervention or of participant in research. In this sense, a person must do more than express agreement or comply with a proposal. He or she must authorize something through an act of informed and voluntary consent.”²⁴² Thus, in this study of homeless youth, making them research participants required they be able to give their consent by acting with competence after receiving disclosure of all necessary information about the process, then voluntarily agreeing to participate. Since those in this population are considered to be minors, there was a greater need to reduce risk and avoid unfairness and exploitation. Institutional control was required.

In addition to receiving approval by the Emory University IRB, the researcher was also required by this group to work in the best interests of this population by gaining authorization

²⁴⁰ Moschella, 86.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 87.

²⁴² Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 78.

from CAS before any research was undertaken at the CAS shelter. Beauchamp and Childress make this claim regarding the role of a surrogate:

Under the best interest standard, a surrogate decision maker must determine the highest net benefit among the available options, assigning different weights to interests the patient has in each option and discounting or subtracting inherent risks or costs. The term *best* is used because the surrogate's obligation is to maximize benefit through a comparative assessment that locates the highest net benefit.²⁴³

CAS and the Emory University IRB became the surrogate family for the homeless youth of this study. This helped to protect these young ones, keeping their best interest a top priority. As a pastoral ethnographic researcher, I was required to work with both the CAS and the Emory University IRB in choosing from the predominant cultural values, as well as pastoral values, to make decisions that would ultimately help achieve the threefold mission of the CAS—to support children, assist children who choose to get off the street, and create awareness about the plight of the children.

Prior to the interviews, an assent was required from each participant in the presence of a social worker who was also acted as an interpreter. (In fact, the social worker and another colleague became the gatekeepers for CAS during this study.) The information on the assent form was read and interpreted for the interviewee. Prominent among the terms to which the participants were exposed:

- It is okay to say no if you do not want to be in the study
- You are allowed to quit being in the study at any time
- We have to explain the study to you so you can understand it. You can ask questions.

Participants were required to give their assent by either appending their signature or thumb-print to the assent form, which all fifteen of the selected informants did. This process was painstakingly undertaken since a pastoral ethnographer eliciting stories from this population

²⁴³ Ibid., 102.

should go with both a legal and moral obligation to deal with them with a measure of honor and care.²⁴⁴

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Precaution became the key word in considering the confidentiality and anonymity of the homeless youth participants in this study. Securing the privacy requirement of these young ones was worked out with the authorizing bodies for this study, namely Emory University IRB and CAS. The participants were also given the option to use a pseudonym of their choice to support their narratives. This allowed them a level of privacy, as well as control.²⁴⁵

When the issue of videotaping interviews for the ‘documentary’ arose, I had a discussion with the CAS gatekeepers and secured their consent to record the participants—which they could give as they had the right to control information relating to participants.²⁴⁶ At issue was whether or not the participants’ stories should be told as presented since they might be known by family members and friends. Moschella has noted that “the practice of altering details points to the way that different ethical values sometimes have to be weighed against each other in social research. Thus, the values of truth-telling and historical accuracy compete with the value of protecting privacy.”²⁴⁷

Agreement was reached on the issue, with the understanding that such a document would be used only for educational purposes. And even if it became necessary for it to be a news item,

²⁴⁴ Moschella, 88.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 86.

²⁴⁶ Hammersley and Atkinson, 213.

²⁴⁷ Moschella, 98.

participants would be protected by covering their faces on the screen. This was done because it has been suggested that “when participants do not ‘own’ the data they have furnished about themselves, they have been robbed of some essential element of dignity, in addition to having been abandoned in harm’s way.”²⁴⁸

Meeting all other ethical requirements which this research occasioned, it was an issue of professional expediency for the researcher to consider the involvement of the human subjects in this research to bring along some social and scientific benefits and so moral virtue and right judgment was required. Beauchamp and Childress postulate that any justified research must satisfy some basic conditions which include: (1) a reasonable prospect that the research will generate the knowledge that is sought, (2) the necessity of using human subjects (3) favorable balance of potential benefits over risks to the subjects and (4) fair selection of subjects.²⁴⁹

Evaluation and Validation

After working through the rubrics of engaging research participants back and forth, and being able to weave the story together, it was put to the acid test by evaluation and validation methodology. Two of the methodologies used were peer review and participant validation. Creswell considers peer review as an external source which helps in the debriefing of the study to be what Lincoln and Guba describe as the “devil’s advocate,” which researchers believe keeps the researcher honest by asking questions about “methods, meanings, and interpretations.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Lincoln and Guba, 236, quoted in Moschella, 98.

²⁴⁹ Beauchamp and Childress, 26.

²⁵⁰ Creswell, 208.

Creswell also points out that this provides the researcher a room for catharsis as someone sympathetically listens to the researchers' feelings.²⁵¹

Since this research was undertaken in Ghana, peer groups from both Ghana and the United States functioned in that direction. Especially in Ghana, peers were those who were also undertaking social work and psychology courses in Ghanaian universities. There were also colleagues from the United States who read the data and provided feedback. This was done to establish the credibility and validity of this work as the set standard practice in qualitative research demands. That method also ensures that the data collected, its analytic processes, and the conclusions drawn from the study are trusted and believable.

Swinton and Mowat advocate for participant feedback as a way of validating a study. Since this homeless youth participating in this study are minors, nothing should be taken for granted. Therefore, I returned to them with the interview transcripts and the interpretation of the data for their validation.²⁵² This process allowed me to solicit the views of the participants about the credibility of the findings and their interpretations. The end product was the clarification of any biases, prejudices and interpretations.²⁵³

Triangulation is described as the process of comparing data from the same phenomenon but collecting from different fieldwork sources, with "different points in the temporary cycles occurring in the setting, or the accounts of different participants differently located in the setting."²⁵⁴ Thus, the different observers' data must compliment that of the others rather than

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London, UK: SCM Press, 2006, 123 .

²⁵³ Mochella, 208.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

facilitate the triangulation. In this study, links between concepts and indicators were checked by recourse to published newspaper articles which in recent times had become a daily occurrence in Ghana.

Data from interviews, fieldwork notes, work by some other investigators, theoretical frameworks, and multi-dimensional aspect of experiences from the participants formed the analytical triangulation. As well, some of the negative reactions gathered from participants' validation were integrated into the data analysis. This was done in an effort to focus attention on some of the data that do not fit major categories of analysis, as well as to add variation and a depth of understanding.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Ibid

Chapter 4

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of the Homeless Youth in Ghana

I was a participant-observer at CAS for five weeks prior to the selection of the interviewees. That time provided me with a conducive and rich framework for this study. It was obvious to even any casual visitor or observer at CAS that female residents at the center outnumbered male residents. However, all other stratifications pertaining to the participants were carefully delineated, as any generalization made in such studies can jeopardize the outcome.

Research indicates that in Accra three out of four street children female.²⁵⁶ Further, some studies indicate that the disproportionate female-male ratio is true of the homeless youth population throughout Ghana, with females accounting for the largest portion of street youth in the entire country. However, no underlying reasons or causes are provided as to why this true of the street population. Those who are able to survive on the street include many young mothers who, in various situations, resort to a range of survival strategies.²⁵⁷

Most of the research on homeless youth in Ghana reports the age of those in that population to be between fourteen and eighteen years of age. Yet girls as young as eight years old can be found on the streets of Accra, engaged as *kayayei*.²⁵⁸ Across Ghana and elsewhere Africa, researchers have found homeless youth outside this age bracket. For instance, in

²⁵⁶ Benitez, 12

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 13

²⁵⁸ Anarfi and Appiah, 51

Ethiopia the average age of street youth is eleven years of age.²⁵⁹ In Sudan the average age is for male homeless youth, which accounts for 60 percent of that population is thirteen years of age.²⁶⁰ CAS in 2003 reported 15.5 years as the average age of the homeless youth frequenting the Accra shelter.

For this study, I aimed at selecting a participant group with an average age of 15.5 Fifteen homeless youth were chosen, eight males and seven females. Two of the males were age nineteen years. They were included because they had been on the street for more than five years. Additionally, their long association with the center made them quite suitable for this study. The names, ages, and home regions of Ghana of the participants in this study are provided in Table 1. All the names are pseudonyms coined by the youth for themselves.

Name	Age	Gender	Region
Galaxy	19	Male	Brong-Ahafo
Cisse	15	Male	Eastern
Kabu	17	Female	Greater Accra
Shadow	15	Male	Eastern
Bonney	19	Male	Brong-Ahafo
Baby Naa	15	Female	Greater Accra
Azumi	17	Female	Upper East
Kohwe	16	Male	Volta
Mina	17	Female	Western
Scholes	15	Male	Central
Lady Nash	18	Female	Western
Aberwa	14	Female	Central
NDC	15	Female	Volta
Manfollow	18	Male	Central
Stone	14	Male	Western

Table 1. Interviewees

The interviews indicate that work for most of the youth normally is portering and street-vending as sources of daily income. Additionally, all the females have experienced early sexual activity. It was also noted that most of the participants continue to have contact with their family

²⁵⁹ Heinonen, 2

²⁶⁰ Ibid

of origin, contrary to what some of the literature suggests.²⁶¹ Some of the researchers, such as Lewis Aptekar, have suggested that prior to reaching adolescence, these street children were regarded as lovable. However, that view quickly changes as full-blown adolescence sets in and they are perceived as thugs and thieves.

In the course of this study, I found that the current generation of homeless youth at CAS works to earn a living, however minimal and erratic that might be. Further, they try to live decent lifestyles, albeit without any adult guidance or supervision. The underlying motivation for this behavior is the desire to enroll in the center's sponsorship program. The program allows the youth to participate in vocational training such as dressmaking, carpentry, animal husbandry, and the like. Thus, they need to evidence good behavior in order to qualify. The training program, which is wholly sponsored by CAS, helps the youth avoid certain delinquent behavior which is often the norm of the street population. This, in no small way, has served to erase the public perception of homeless youth as deviant or delinquents.

Sarah Benitez has a different view of that negative public perception of homeless youth. She contends that "traditional stereotypes of street children as 'victims' or 'delinquents' reflect public attitudes towards them, rather than any realistic representation of characteristics of the children or their situations."²⁶² For Benitez, since society's continued view of street youth as delinquent is not based on any empirical research, that regard needs to change so that the population is seen as a neglected segment of society in need of serious attention. Benitez intimates that if media and public attention were to sharply focus attention on the structural causes of the homelessness of the youth on the streets of most urban centers of the world, "the

²⁶¹ Benitez, 11

²⁶² Ibid

stereotypical characterizations of the individual children, who could so easily be depicted as either victims or delinquents, helpless victims of hunger and violence or drug-taking criminals lacking morality and respect for the social order,” will cease.²⁶³ As a result, a pragmatic approach can then be taken to address the phenomenon on global basis.

When governments take pragmatic economic and political action, this will help correct imbalances in the distribution of national income. Benitez cites such an instance in Brazil. In 1998, that country had the highest number of street children on the continent. At the time, Brazil had “one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the world, with the top 20 percent of the population receiving twenty-six times the income of the bottom 20 percent, and half the population surviving on 14 percent of the national income.”²⁶⁴ Such is the attention the vulnerable in society, which includes the homeless youth, have been denied by most governments.

Causes of Youth Homelessness

Poverty

Seventy-five percent of the informants for this study cited poverty as the single, greatest trigger for their migration and subsequent homelessness. *Galaxy*, a nineteen year old who has lived on the street for five years gives this account:

I used to live with my mother who had earlier divorced my Father. My mother has four other children with another man. During my stay with her it was difficult catering for all

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

of us and so we made a contact with my father for maintenance. My father's response was that unless he took custody of me he would not give any maintenance. So I went to stay with him but my step-mother maltreated me to the extent that I could not bear it any longer. She did not allow me to attend school regularly as she sent me on errands during school time, and sometimes too I sleep outside the house.

All these developments happened in my father's absence so he did not believe the stories that I told him about the kind of treatment I was going through. In fact his work took him away from home most of the time. As this maltreatment continued I decided to go back to my mother, and that also brought the abrupt end of the maintenance from my father. From then on, it became obvious that my mother was incapable of catering for all five of us so I decided to travel to Accra to find a job.

Shadow's story is even more poignant as it reveals the impact of poverty on families in Ghana. *Shadow* is fifteen years old and came to live on the street after his father's death. His mother could not support or care for four school-aged children, so *Shadow* ended his schooling at the primary level and left home.

I come from Somanya but lived in Koforidua before coming to the street. My father died when I had just completed the primary school and ready for the junior secondary school. However, my mother told me that she would not be able to sponsor my education from then on since she cannot afford taking care of four of us in school.

I was always in the house and moved around with a certain friend. It was through that friend that I ended up in Accra through his suggestion. I was unable to connect with my family 'til CAS undertook a social survey of all residents and that is when they heard about my whereabouts. With regards to guardianship, a certain woman elsewhere is parent to me.

Earning Personal Income

One cause of youth migration to the streets is the desire for personal income.

In the course of interviews with participants, I learned that some of the youth have been captivated by the use of mobile phones and bicycles in their localities. Desire for these and other

material possessions, coupled with the consumerism of the prevailing environment, creates a need for personal income. For instance, one of the informants, *Manfollow*, admitted that

at my home town I used to play with friends who owned bicycles. I requested that my mother bought me one but she said she was incapable of doing that because she did not have the means to do so. So one of my friends told me that if we travelled to Accra we can work to buy our own. When we came to Accra we worked as porters and got the money but did not go back to our hometown.

Another important migration trigger for some youths in the northern part of Ghana is the need for basic marriage necessities which can be acquired in the southern region. Thus, youth migrate to those places where employment opportunities are abundant rather than remaining in their home regions which, typically, are bereft of jobs. Such was the case of *Azumi*, a seventeen year old female Bawku in the upper east region. *Azumi* was living with her mother prior to migrating, when at age seventeen she looked into the future with aspirations of marriage. This was a catalyst for her migration:

I used to live with my mother at Teshi-Nungua in Accra. My father is still in Nigeria where I was born. I was brought to Ghana by my mother and she did not return to my father and I think that was the end of their marriage. She has since remarried another man and has got two more kids. In all we are nine and I'm the fifth born. Apart from the fact that some of us don't get on well with our step-father, I decided to come to the street to work for my livelihood. Life at home was always difficult and it was not getting better. I then decided that if I can prepare myself well for marriage then I need to do it now hence my departure from home. I'm a porter and working hard to get some money and things I can take to my marriage in future.

Azumi's story corroborates *Beauchemin's* earlier findings on youth migration from the northern regions to the southern part of Ghana. A new bride in the northern region of the country is expected to go into marriage with her own household acquisitions such as pots, pans, aluminum bowls, cooking utensils, traditional cloth, as well as money. Thus, it is disgraceful when adolescent girls enter marriage without these items, and they are considered a scorn to their families. Hence, the desire among females to acquire such useful items.

Adventure

Some youth also have the notion that travelling to the cities will, in addition to enhancing their chances of obtaining luxury items they see adults acquiring, surely be an adventure. With modern technological advancement and the attendant trappings, the youth imagine how they might easily earn a living *and* enjoy the thrill of life. The youth see these trappings. Their desire for adventure and new experiences, coupled with a longing to live a new lifestyle, reflect a need to escape the rigidity and restrictions of life imposed upon them by parents.

This drive to escape parental control usually lands them in the cities where they rarely have family relations and are hardly able to work due to their young age. Adventure of this nature landed one informant for this study in Accra, where he is now a homeless. , *Stone*, who is only fourteen years old, relates this story:

I'm from Wasa Akropong in the western region where my parents live. We are six in number and I'm the second born. One day I requested that my mother buy me a cell phone but she refused. In my effort to get one I stole her cell phone and sold it and later absconded with the money and traveled to Accra. It was my desire to own a cell phone because I used to see some of my friends using cell phones. I have been on the street for only six months.

When I asked *Stone* if he would like to return to his parents if I got him a cell phone, he was adamant about not returning to Wasa Akropong, saying, "I want to enjoy city life and hope one day I can get some of these gadgets and go back but not now. I have got many friends and have been able to visit so many important places I used to hear about in school when I was in my hometown. I will not return now but later."

Parental Death

The death of one or both parents often precipitates youth migration to the streets of the urban centers. When parents die and their children are not well cared for by the extended family, this can be a catalyst for migration. *Mina's* story is a case in point:

According to my grandmother, my mother died when she was giving birth to me and so I was raised by her. I also do not know my father's whereabouts as he absconded when I was an infant. My mother had given birth to four of us before her untimely death. As I was growing, life became very difficult for us as my grandmother was not working to be able to take good care of us. I was forced to stop schooling at the primary school and came to the street at the age of twelve.

Migration is greatest among the youth who have lost one or both parents, as the loss of a parent has drastic implications for the economic situation in the family. The change in the family dynamics, along with the dire economic situation, is a powerful catalyst for youth migration. When children perceive that they cannot be well cared for by either the extended family or the remaining parent, they take to the streets. *Cisse's* story lends credence to that claim.

My mother died when I was just two years old and I have never seen my father before. He had travelled to Nigeria just after I was born. Together with my siblings we lived with our maternal grandparents. I later lived with one of my aunts till I was thirteen years old but requested that I was sent back to my grandmother since life with my aunt was a difficult one. Since my grandparents were also not working and unable to even pay my school fees. There was also no one in the family who was ready to buy my school uniform and provide for my other basic needs. One day when I was sent on an errand I travelled to Accra with the money given to me for that purpose and never returned.

School Drop Outs

In my interview with Shadow, he observed that he was on the streets of Accra as a result of being forced to drop out of school when his father died and because of the indifferent attitude of his extended family members toward him and his welfare.

My father died when I had just completed the primary school and was about to enter the junior high school. However, my mother told me that she would not be able to sponsor the education for all four of us. This always left me home and I was able to move around

with a certain friend who suggested to me one day that we travel to Accra and get a job. He convinced me that we can find work to get some money for ourselves. Hence my being on the street of Accra since we knew no one here to live with when we arrived.

There is a suggestion that the youth migrate to the streets because they are disappointed that their parents are not able to send them to school. Others claim that many of these youth have a tendency to migrate out of a desire to find work and earn money to sponsor their own education. It was revealed during interviews that some of youth, after their initial failure and disappointment at not earning money for education, work towards earning enrollment at and sponsorship of CAS. They enroll in CAS vocational training programs and acquire skills for trades which they ply and work to earn a decent livelihood in future.

Divorced and Single-Parent Families

Most of the participants in this study are from divorced and single-parents parent families that were unable to care for them. *Galaxy*, *Bonney*, *Azumi*, and *Baby Naa* all came to the street due to divorce and parental neglect. *Bonney*, for instance, alluded to the fact that his father left his mother and moved to Gabon when *Bonney* was just a child. *Bonney's* father never returned to Ghana, not even after *Bonney* migrated to the streets. *Bonney* says,

According to my mother, when I was a child my father left Ghana for Gabon for a very long time so my mother re-married another man and got two children out of that relationship. Since I had been forced to drop out of primary school because of financial difficulties, I became a “shoe-shine boy.” One day when I returned home from my “work” to meet my mother quarreling with my step-father about me. The cause of their fight was my presence which my step-father did not like. He wanted me out of the house immediately because he was not ready to care for someone’s child. I was later taken away from Sunyani to Yamfo (about six miles away) to live with my grandmother. My grandmother at that time was too old to work hence her inability to cater for my needs. Even though I was later transferred to one of my aunties, it was still difficult to cater for myself since I could not undertake my “shoe-shine” business in both places I lived. It was out of that experience I decided to travel to Accra to work for my livelihood.

The story of *Aberwa* is even more pathetic. She was not even allowed to play with her siblings because she belonged to another father and was forced onto the streets by an unaccommodating step-father. *Aberwa*, who is fourteen years old, migrated to Accra from Essiam in the Ghana's Central Region. This is her story, narrated during the interview:

Sometime ago my grandmother told me that my father refused to accept the paternity responsibility of my mother's pregnancy and that caused my parents' divorce. I grew up in the care of my grandmother. Due to my grandmother's inability to provide all my needs she sent me to my mother who was then married to another man. Unfortunately my step-father did not like me and will not even allow me to play with my siblings who were his children. My continued living with them made me feel uncomfortable all the time as there was uneasy relationship between me and my step-father. As time went on I saw that there was not going to be any change with the conditions at home so I went out to the streets of Accra at nine years.

Urbanization as a Trigger for Migration

Some of the youth interviewed for this study migrated to Accra because it appeared to them that there was little or no hope for a future in the rural areas of their birth. Such was the perspective of *Scholes*, a fifteen year old from Mankessim in Ghana's Central Region. *Scholes* used to live with his parents in Accra before becoming homeless. When I asked why he came to the streets, *Scholes* noted that,

My parents are still married and are living at Kasoa with my other three siblings. Formerly we lived at Odorkor, a suburb of Accra. Sometime later my parents decided to relocate to Kasoa but I decided not to go with them. One of the reasons for my refusal to move with them was that since they were not able to cater for my needs in Accra, I did not see how they were going to be able to do that at Kasoa, a smaller town. Also the area in which my parents were going to live at Kasoa has not got facilities like electricity and water. I wanted to remain in Accra so that I can work and fend for myself. First I became a driver's apprentice to learn driving as a trade and also to earn something for my livelihood. Unfortunately the lorry was not always on the road and that forced me to the streets to work as a porter to earn a living out of that.

Breakdown of the Extended Family System

Interviews with the informants at CAS revealed that about 50 percent of the residents were given to fostering. However, the fostering system did not work in their favor. *Baby Naa*, a fifteen year old, came to the streets at the age of thirteen, got pregnant, and after giving birth, gave the baby to her maternal grandmother to care for as she her life on the streets. This is her story:

I used to live with my maternal grandmother with four other siblings at Sunyani in the Brong-Ahafo region. Life with a grandmother who was just a farmer was difficult financially I was later sent to my paternal grandmother in Accra to live with her. Over there too, it was difficult for me to cope with life and so I went to my mother who was also without a job in Accra.

I had to work for food every day. One of the jobs was to clean the bathroom morning and evening. The bathroom was not cemented so the work was very tedious for me. I always had to gather the waters and throw it outside the building. I can go back and forth for about five times depending upon the number of people who used the place at a given time. It was just unbearable for me so I ran to the street at the age of thirteen.

When I enquired as to her father's whereabouts, *Baby Naa* explained:

My maternal grandmother once told me that when my mother was pregnant she took the pregnancy to another man because the one responsible for it was jobless. After she delivered the other one also did not accept it because everyone saw that I was like a "carbon copy" of my mother's first boyfriend. When I was told this story I believed it because I looked like that man. One day I went to him with my case but he also rejected me with the excuse that because my mother had cheated on him and so he was not interested to have me as his child. Seeing that there was no hope for me and no family member was ready to help me to get into any apprenticeship of a sort I came to the street.

Homeless Youth Reflect on their Experiences of Living on the Street

This study was undertaken to answer the question: "What is the experience of homeless youth in Ghana?" This section reports the ways in which street youth make meaning of their

existence and the dire circumstances they endure. Some of the stories of daily experiences on the streets of Accra are horrendous. I was, at times, incredulous and amazed at what I was told. The reality, however, is that the youths' physical their very appearances, in most cases, corroborate the stories they tell. They carry on their bodies scars of the numerous adversities they have suffered. They are the embodiment of people living on the margins. of life. And while I go to great lengths to report the stark reality of the youths lived experiences, as expressed in their own words, it is not my intention to portray these youth as helpless victims who are without hope.

The street youth I encountered continue to endure dreadful living conditions that jeopardize their health, economic exploitation, and physical/sexual assault. In fact, they face life's adversities as a group from the margins of ordinary lives and do not seem to have any rights or voice whatsoever. Still, they exhibit resilience and tenacity of purpose in the face of great adversity, are adaptable, and have developed a coping mechanisms for surviving on the streets. And their stories depict how insensitive some of the stakeholders are in handling the issues of the Ghanaian street youth.

With the exception of a few non-governmental organizations such as CAS which continue to advocate for street youth and work for the elimination of youth homelessness, most of the stakeholders in Ghana have turned a blind eye to the issues pertaining to children and youth and have "swept under the carpet" matters such as streetism. Such behavior is hypocritical and disingenuous in a country which was among the first to ratify the United Nation's Children's Right Convention in 1989. Based on the lived experiences reported in interviews I conducted with children, their rights, as ratified in the 1989 convent, are not being protected.

Homeless Girls' Encounter with Rape on the Streets of Accra

Almost all the seven girls I interviewed have been raped once or more. Because of that experience, they have resorted to sleeping with male friends as a safeguard against further rapes. Some sleep in groups in the open and public places where they congregate at night to avoid gang rape. I went with a team to have a first-hand glimpse of where some homeless youth sleep in groups. We readily observed how sleeping in the open is an invitation for predators to strike and assault these innocent girls. A girl, age fifteen and known at CAS and by all her friends as *NDC*, said she had been raped multiple times. She tells this story:

I have been sleeping at Cold Store and have got a boyfriend who helps me with feeding. I've also been raped several times. I am no more raped because sometimes I sleep at CAS with some friends. When I'm not at CAS then I would have to sleep with my boy friend otherwise I'll experience rape. A girl sleeping alone means you're exposed to being raped all the time. There is no point in arguing with those boys when they intrude into your sleep in the middle of the night. One has to give in for them to do their own thing and leave you to have your peace.

One of the girls revealed that they also endure gang rape, which involves number of boys and young men, some of them homeless themselves. *Azumi*, a seventeen year old girl, talked about suffering multiple gang rapes before deciding to sleep in a group with other girls. *Azumi* recounts the following story:

On the street some men or big boys in the vicinity can come for you for gang rape. If you live on the street without a boyfriend, there is always the danger of rape or gang rape lurking. After going through all kinds of rape I decided to have a boy friend since he can protect me from the other boys who will only come to rape me. The boys who engaged us in these gang rapes include homeless youth and grown-up men in the vicinity. Together with other girls we now sleep at someone's basement at Abossey Okai.

When I asked *Azumi* why for protection against rape she prefers taking boyfriends (which can result in pregnancy) instead of sleeping in groups with other girls, she answered that "it is

not only against rape that is why we go in for boyfriends but also for our daily bread.” The following stories corroborate *Azumi’s* tale.

The Story of Fifteen Year Old Baby Naa

On the street I was told if I don’t get attached to any boy friend it will be difficult for me to get money to feed. Considering my age at ten and also my smallish stature [she is about 4 feet and 5” tall] I could not cope well being a porter. Some of my friends advised me to take a boy friend who would help me with feeding and protect me against other boys in the neighborhood who rape streets girls at will but I did not agree with them. I used to sleep at a workshop of a nearby school with some friends. In the nights some boys and young men who are marijuana smokers would come and rape us and if we refused them they beat us mercilessly. I also went in to sell confectionaries to get money to feed but the proceeds was not enough for me to feed every day.

Life then became very difficult for me so I gave in to have a boy friend. I was then given to a certain youngster who is also on the street and I got pregnant through that relationship. Surprisingly my boy friend denied responsibility of my pregnancy. I then went home to stay with my grandmother in Accra ‘til I delivered. After delivery I left my baby in the care of my grandmother and came back to the streets. I usually visit home to give some money to them. Later I took another boy friend but he was arrested and imprisoned because of his involvement in a theft case.

The father of my child later came to apologize and promised to cater for me and the child. He is doing it in a small way by giving some remittances to the child. I also get some financial help from a certain old man in our vicinity at Tabora in Accra. This man said he is helping me so

that I don't take to prostitution. According to this old man, it is easy to take to prostitution when one is on the street and I'm too young for that.

The Story of Seventeen Year Old Mina

When I came to the street for the first time I worked with a certain woman by selling sugar cane for her. I did that for some time and that helped me with everything I needed at that time. Later the woman left the area and I had to be on my own. I have lived, worked, and slept on the streets and I have also experienced rape and beatings most of the time at Kaneshie Cold Store. I took a boy friend for protection against rape and beating but unfortunately it was through that relationship that I got pregnant.

The boy accepted responsibility and he takes care of the child by giving some money as maintenance. I'm unable to work because I cannot carry loads with the two-year old child strapped at my back. At certain times that I have tried to work with him at my back, my child got sick and I have to use all the money on me for medication. So I stopped working with him. I now rely on money I get from CAS Ubuntu drama group participation.

Where the Homeless Youth Work and Sleep on the Streets of Accra

In the course of my study at CAS (July to September, 2011), I had the opportunity to visit some of the places the homeless youth sleep at night. Common sleep locations are the Cold Store at Kaneshie, Agblobaloshie Market, Overhead Bridge at Kaneshie, and Tema Station. The homeless youth do not care much about the surroundings where they sleep or on what they. What is most important to them is to find a place to pass the night peacefully. Their major

concerns are to avoid being in harm's way and getting a few hours of rest so that they can continue with life the following day. Their earnings are erratic and minimal. Often their concern is "which landlord or landlady will rent a house to the street youth."

In Ghana, the government does not own shelters that can accommodate street youth along with the aged homeless. The CAS shelter is not designed as a residential facility for the youth who flock to the center. In fact, it is intended as a learning and vocational training center, and for administering first aid medical attention. There are only a few centers which have housing facilities for those who have been selected to participate in a period of vocational training. The CAS affiliate center, Hope Land at Ashiaman-Tema, is such a facility meant only for those who are enrolled in programs such as animal husbandry and carpentry.

There are few viable, alternative work options for homeless youth. Employment opportunities are typically limited to working as porters, street vendors, and security personnel. The most viable of all the options is portering. It requires no prior knowledge of the job, only a willingness and ability to do the work. Work as a *kaya* (porter) on the streets of Accra and in other urban centers attracts most of the youth who have migrated from the northern part of Ghana to the south and into the streets of Accra.

As the number of the youth migrants continues to increase, the street youth are forced to compete among themselves for loads. Securing permission of the kingpins is can also be an obstacle to earning wages. In order to be accepted as an employee in some stations, a new migrant must "buy" his/her way into the station and into the job of carrying loads. This was reported by many of those I interviewed at CAS.

Most of the homeless youth sleep in the open space at the Cold Store at Kaneshie. This is a large warehouse used to store refrigerated fish for sale to the public. The storage facility is

close to the Kaneshie main shopping mall where the street youth ply their trade during the day, then use the front space as a “bedroom” at night. The only thing they can use as bedding in the open space at the Cold Store at Kaneshie is a lightweight paper board. A place to sleep is available to those able to reach there on time in the night. No one owns the open space at the Cold Store at Kaneshie. However, the kingpins of the homeless youth sometime come over to demand money before a new-comer is allowed to use the space. At the Cold Store, harassment and beatings are not as common as in other places since those sleeping there are in a group, with both girls and boys using the space available in the night.

Aberwa, Age Fourteen

Since I had nothing on me when I first came to the street I was solely dependent on the generosity of my friends but they also started treating me badly. For instance if I used a dress belonging to any one of them I would be charged to pay for its usage. Some of them even got me stripped off naked in public as I was using their clothes. I sometimes sleep at Cold Store together with some friends and often times too I sleep with my boy friend and that protects from being raped. I’ve been raped twice since coming to the street.

One might wonder why *Aberwa* did not work so that she could purchase and clothes for herself and thus avoid the trouble that resulted in using those of her friends instead of patronizing friends’ clothing. Her answer follows:

Initially I was unable to work as a porter since it was a difficult job for me. My friends were helping me with feeding and some of the needed necessities so I was not bothered. I started being a porter when I saw that I have outlived my welcome and so I became a porter and sometimes too did sell sachet water. When it was difficult for me to get money through work I ran away with monies some people have sent me on errands with. I was first introduced to CAS by a friend and thereafter was sent to Hope Land²⁶⁵ at Ashiaman. I have been sent back to CAS to be able to learn a trade. I absconded from this center during my first stay and that interrupted my being enrolled in a sponsorship program. I’ve been under observation since my return.

²⁶⁵ Hope Land is an affiliate center to CAS where those who are enrolled in farming and animal husbandry training take courses for nine months and are provided boarding and lodging. Those who are admitted are not required to contribute anything towards their training for one year.

Those who sleep at night in other places suffer beatings and harassment. This is revealed in Shadow's story. *Shadow*, age fifteen, slept in places other than Cold Store because, according to him, it is difficult to get a space at Cold Store.

I have been on the street for four years. By living and sleeping on the street I have suffered much in the hands of some of the big boys around. They make life miserable for me by taking away my money by the use of threat and force on many occasions. In some cases too they would send me on errand with say two Ghana Cedis but would require me to buy them stuff worth five Ghana Cedis. I'm a porter at Kaneshie Lorry Park that helps me to feed myself every day.

As to how he feeds himself when he has no money, *Shadow* explained that he has to find a means of getting money for food. Sometimes that means borrowing money from friends on the streets—which can have harsh consequences.

Thus whenever I did not get money through work, I borrow money from some of my friends but I had to pay back with 100 percent interest. My finances improved a bit when I started coming to CAS as we were always given some money after participating in some activities. Sometimes too I depend upon some friends for my upkeep. Often times when we sleep someone would pour iced sachet water on us or some shop owners would also drive us away.

Adults afflict the homeless youth in other ways. Some take delight in duping, harassing, and beating the street youth. According to the street youth, they are vulnerable to harassment because they are not protected by anyone on the streets, not even the law enforcement agencies. When they are harassed or beaten, they are not eager to report the incident to the police or a law enforcement agency because the experience is that the Police will not arrest anyone that attacks a street youth. This leads the homeless youth to believe they have no right to protection.

Bonney, Age Nineteen

I was thirteen years when I first came to the street, about six years ago. I decided to give part of the money I was earning to a certain man who has helped me initially for safe keeping. I did that because I was told by friends that some big boys would come in the night and would take all your money away with force. Unfortunately it proved to be a

nightmare as this man after he has received some monies from me later said I have not given any money to him and that I was trying to dupe him. I could not retrieve the money I've given him as he started fabricating some stories about me. I did not report to the police as they will not arrest him because I'm a homeless youth. Most of the times I work as a "shoe-shine boy" and could also make sandals for sale. I sleep at the Cold Store even though it's not a pleasant place to sleep. We use cardboards as beds in the night and in most cases you must be there on time to get a space for yourself. It's good to use that place since in a group you will not be harassed by anyone in the night or your money won't be stolen.

During the interview with *Bonney*, I asked him why he has decided to stay on the streets in spite of all the hardships he was going through. *Bonney* answered that he would be willing to return home except that his mother is now married to another man who does not like him. He sees no reason to return. He has, therefore, become *persona non grata* to his own family.

In the course of time I met some friends from my hometown who told me my grandmother was seriously ill so I took to selling sachet water to be able to raise some money to be able to visit her. Unfortunately I only reached there when she was already dead. I then got a shocking message from my mother that I was not welcome to her house. When the time came for the funeral my mother repeated her earlier warning that she did not want to see me around. I then came back to Accra and had continued with my life on the streets ever since.

I once again pressed the question with *Bonney* regarding his ability to make sandals for sale and why he would want to stay on the streets. He answered unequivocally, "Making of sandals in large quantities involves lot of money which I cannot get whilst on the streets and no one will also give a loan to a person on the streets. So I do the little I could to make life easier for myself 'til I get enrolled into CAS sponsorship for a vocation."

Bonney is not the only one of the interviewees to be *persona non grata* in his own family. *Cisse*, who also came to the streets as a result of absconding with the money with which he was sent on an errand, has also been told not to return home.

Cisse's Experience

When I came to Accra I used to walk down one of the lanes at Kaneshie all the time trying to get a load to carry. In the course of time I was noticed by a certain woman who asked me where I came from and the reason for my “loneness.” I narrated my story to her and she offered that I should be helping her with the packing at her shop. I did that for some time before being accepted as a porter by the big boys in the Kaneshie Lorry park. During my early days of becoming homeless it was very difficult one since I could not get loads to carry and some time too I slept without food. I later met a friend who took me to CASC and we started coming together. Later a certain woman who knew me at Nsawam also asked about my predicament and decided to take me back to my family. At Nsawam however, one of my uncles was very furious with me because, according to him I’ve ran away with their money. I was told not to enter into their house again and will never be welcomed if I did. Since I was refused entry into the family, I returned to Accra and to the streets.

Experiences from their work as porters have not been positive for some of the homeless youth as they try to cope with adversities that come their way each day. In fact, the interviews indicate that many land on the streets with little or no knowledge of the kind of the work they will undertake or how they will fend for themselves. As they come unprepared for work as porters, they experience physical pains and other ailments at the early stages of their stay on the streets. The following stories shed light on the predicaments many faced by many.

Galaxy’s Experience on the Streets of Accra

After coming to the street I needed to become a porter to fend for myself. Initially I struggled with this new job because I did not have any experience. I therefore had body pains and exhaustion after each day’s work. The big boys at the various stations especially Kaneshie would also not allow me as a new comer to carry loads because they said I was not part of their group. This continued for some time before I could pay for my entry into that group. All this while I struggled to feed myself each day. I also joined the other porters to sleep at Cold Store but when it rains it becomes very difficult to have a space. We either stood up or sat till the rains were over.

For other street youth what at first light appeared to be a good opportunity turned out to be a dreadful experience that would never to be forgotten. At the beginning of their life on the

streets, *Kabu* and others found what they thought was a Good Samaritan. However, later, when that relationship was abruptly ruptured, life on the streets became very dreadful for them.

The Experience of Kabu, Age Seventeen

I have been on the street for seven years. I came to the street not knowing anyone and had to walk for days without a bath. I also relied on some scanty food given me by some of the *kayayei* to feed on. One day a certain woman who had seen me around her shop asked why I looked so dirty and wearisome. After narrating my story to her she asked that I stayed with her to sell sachet water so that I can get some money for my upkeep. After living and working with that woman for sometime her husband asked her to get rid of me but the woman would not budge since according to her she loved me. One day when the woman was attending a funeral out of town the husband took all my belongings and threw them out of the house. She then warned me not to return to the house any more. I also worked for another woman who was a food vendor by washing her utensils every day. Unfortunately I had to leave because this woman complained a lot about everything I did so I decided not to stay with her any more. From there I went to Cold Store and started my street life once again. At the Cold Store during the nights the big boys on the streets will come and do whatever they want with you by taking your money away or rape you and if you resist, they beat you up. I sometimes beg for money because I'm incapable of being a porter. I've not been able to go back home because the last time I went there my sister physically abused me.

One bittersweet story of life on the streets of Accra is that of *Lady Nash*. The initial adversity she encountered turned out to be an opportunity for her to learn a trade that will serve her now and in the future. She believes this has been a life-changing experience for her and would not spurn it in any way. She seemed to me to be cultured and well-mannered compared to the others I interviewed for the study, both at CAS and on the streets. When I asked how it was that her appearance was decent and so very different from most of her colleagues on the streets, she had this story to tell:

On the street I was forced to take a boy friend that would provide for my needs as I was unable to get even money for food and that got me pregnant. After coming to CAS I was sent to Street Girls Aid and that organization took care of me 'til I delivered. After that I returned to CAS and got involved in beads making as a trade-learning activity. Through that I came into contact with a certain white lady who took me as a friend and became

interested in me. She decided to help me with an amount of money to buy the raw materials for beads making. After the initial success with both the production and its sale I went back home to my family so that I could make beads for living.

When asked why she returned to the streets when she was able to earn a living through a respectable trade, this young lady said that she would leave the streets when she had the capital to ply the skills of an accomplished beads-maker and live somewhere other than her hometown. *Lady Nash* claimed that when she first returned to her hometown, she was disappointed and was compelled to return to living on the streets.

Back at Takoradi and to my own home, the people who patronized the product refused to pay and wanted it for free. As I could not get enough money to feed myself and that of my child, I therefore decided to return to CAS. I later got in touch with my white lady friend at Street Girls Aid, also in Accra, and she decided to help me again. She took me back to Street Girls Aid for another project called Ban on Neglect, which also offered me a project work for eighteen months. Currently I have done six months and would have to work with them for the remaining twelve months to complete the project. The project involved sponsorship which required that I work as a trainee in my choice of work and get some allowances as I get the necessary training towards becoming an accomplished beads maker. It is through this project that I earn a living and cater for my child too.

Manfollow, Age Eighteen

Life on the streets requires fortitude and tenacity to endure the many hardships these young ones encounter. *Manfollow*, at the age of fourteen, was given an “initiation” into the streets life which he will never forget. He explained to me that because he tried to keep out of harm’s way and refused to smoke marijuana offered him by some of the big boys. But this resulted in beatings from the big boys and left him afraid to venture into certain areas of the Kaneshie Market and the Lorry Park.

When I was fourteen years old I worked as coconut seller for someone to get money to feed myself but that did not go well for me for some time so I became a porter, and through that I have continued to work and fend for myself. I sleep at Cold Store and had to go through all kinds of bitter experiences; from being beaten and my money taken

away, to standing in the night when it rained. One of my bitterest experiences on the street was when a friend of mine introduced me to some big boys on the street. They gave me marijuana to smoke and when I refused I was assaulted and beaten by them and my money taken away. I'm still a porter and sleep at the Cold Store with some friends.

Some of this young homeless population goes without food some days due to missed work opportunities. Besides trying to win the hearts and minds of the staff at CAS and earn sponsorship for vocational training, they frequent the center for a daily activity in order to earn money for their daily bread. Since they have no secured employment and rely on daily portering and street vending for income, fluctuation of the market affects their earning potential. Thus, some sleep without food. This was the case for Scholes, who often looked frail and disturbed. He caught my attention, and I questioned as to how and when he ate daily. He provided this narrative.

When I first came to the street I became a drivers' conductor for some time but I was not getting enough money to take care of myself. I was later introduced to CAS by a friend I have met earlier on. I also used to sleep on the bus when I was a conductor, but now I've been sleeping at the Cold Store or a friend's house. At the Cold Store for instance when it rained in the night it meant I was unable to sleep because I got wet. If I don't come to CAS for an activity then I may go without food that day. It's also difficult to get someone to give you food when you don't have money on you. It's also difficult to borrow since you pay 100 percent to the lender and at the end of the day you gain nothing out of that.

As to why he will not go home to his parents and family who are living at Kasoa, just nine miles from Accra, Scholes speaks of the frustrations the homeless youth experience when they decide to return home.

I suffer on the street but I have also decided not to go back home because whenever I go home I get insulted or beaten for a minutest offence I commit. One of the reasons that have prevented me from going back to my family is that I got punished for any fight or struggle I picked up with my siblings. Whether or not it's my fault I get punished and sometimes pushed outside out of the house and insulted so I've decided to be on the streets till I've got a trade to live on.

Kohweh

Kohweh, who is fifteen years old, paid a glowing tribute to CAS for being of great help to him and too many of his homeless colleagues in Accra. *Kohweh* feels that if he had not come to the center he would not have survived the horrific experience of street life. When I asked him to name specific types of help he has received from CAS, *Kohwe* cited the daily activities such as the Ubuntu drama activities that allow him to earn him some money. Additionally, the basic education in reading, computer literacy, and vocational training provided at the center has been very beneficial. He also mentioned that when he was sick he received first aid medical attention at the center. *Kohweh* further noted that the possibility of CAS sponsorship for on the job training at an affiliate organization like Hope Land at Ashiaman (near Tema) was very beneficial.

Being on the street is not a good thing at all. I have experienced some hardships in the hands of the big boys as sometimes they come for my money earned after a day's work as a porter. Also when I'm asleep in the night some people can come and drive me away. I've spent two years on the street and normally get a day's feeding money from being a porter. CASC also takes care of me and the rest of the residences when we are sick by the provision of first aid.

Since I want to be an actor in future I always attend the Ubuntu program. In addition to that, I earn some money whenever I attend that program. This usually compels me to be at the center most of the time. Not only I who do that but most of my colleagues concentrate on earning money from activities at the center. In fact we will forever be grateful to CASC for coming to the aid of the homeless youth here in Accra

Thematic Analysis

The purpose of this section is to elucidate some of what I believe are the prevalent themes of the experiences of the homeless youth. These themes surfaced regularly during my study of the homeless youth in Accra. Swinton and Mowat suggest that the themes are

like knots in the webs of our experience, around which certain lived experiences are thus spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universe of meaning we live through. By the lights of these themes we can navigate and explore the universe.²⁶⁶

Family Dysfunction, Extended Family Breakdown, and Youth Migration

During my interviews with the homeless youth, I realized that an aspect of the Ghanaian family life is either broken or non-existent. Thus, most of the youth in this study have either lost one of their parents to death or divorce/separation, or the children have completely lost contact with their parents. Those whose parents have divorced are faced with new relationships as one or both of their parents have re-married. Often, they cannot be part of the new family and are denied the expected family care that all children and youth need.

Often, those youths whose parents have re-married became peripheral members of the new family. In some situations the step-fathers or step-mothers have made it clear to the step-children that they are *persona non grata* in the new families. Thus, these youth feel they must make a life on the streets. In other cases, the remaining parents are not incapable of taking care of the children left in their care and could not stop these youth from migrating and living on the streets. Traditionally in Ghana, when parental death occurred, the children of that person would be cared for by the deceased parent's siblings. However, such a practice is fast fading in Ghana due to the turbulent economic conditions affecting most developing African countries. Another reason for the disappearance of that practice is the dysfunction and breakdown of the extended family system in Africa, particularly in Ghana.

²⁶⁶ Swinton and Mowat, 118.

Payne and others argue that the breakdown of the extended family in Africa, particularly Ghana, has contributed to the “exodus” of the youth from their towns and villages to the streets of Accra and other urban centers.²⁶⁷ According to the CAS, “the extended family system has been the vital link of African culture and traditions. It has also been the bedrock for Africa’s social network for the young, elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged.”²⁶⁸ For that reason, the breakdown or dysfunction of such a system has affected the raising, care, and nurture of the young ones in the family settings.

Nukunya points out that the extended family is a group comprised of families which have close affinities of either matrilineal or patrilineal descent. Thus, it could be said to be a collection of nuclear families headed by one person, usually a man.²⁶⁹ Kanyongo-Male and Onyango offer this apt description of the extended family system:

The most significant feature of African family life is probably the importance of the larger kin group beyond the nuclear family. . . . Members of the extended family still have a lot of say about the marriage of younger relatives. These family members are also linked in strong reciprocal aid relationships which entail complex rights and responsibilities. Households in urban areas have extended kin members in residence for years. The relatives may or may not be contributing financially or in terms of helping in the division of family labor, yet they are allowed to remain. Children may go to live with distant relatives for schooling or special training courses. Relatives may also have much influence over the decisions of the couple.²⁷⁰

Payne opines that such a system is now undermined by sociological changes such as population displacement, environmental degradation, depleted resources, and structural adjustment.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Ruth Payne, 33

²⁶⁸ The Ghanaian Street Child, 20

²⁶⁹ Nukunya, 52.

²⁷⁰ Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 7.

²⁷¹ Payne, 33.

Some of the informants I interviewed intimated that they came to the streets because the family members in whose care they were left after parental death or migration could not adequately provide for their needs. *Cisse*'s mother died when he was just a young child. His father migrated to Nigeria. Together with his other siblings, *Cisse* was left in the care of grandparents at Nsawam. Eventually, *Cisse* had to drop out of school because those in the family who could help him were not willing to do so.

The situations these youth experienced before their migration to the streets confirm that the extended family has long lost its traditional vitality due to urbanization, individualism, and, to some extent, the western influences which have affected the Ghanaian way of life. CAS intimated in its review work that the extended family system is no longer as valuable as it once was. As such, Ghanaians need re-orientation for its resuscitation. Such a re-awakening could serve as a coping mechanism as well as a socialization agent for families that have lost vital members, particularly fathers or mothers. The erosion and breakdown of this time-tested system has left a gaping hole in the Ghanaian family system. The system must be re stored and its positive features preserved in order to help address the matter of orphans and the inability of poverty-stricken family members to take care of their children.

In the course of the interviews with the residents of CAS, it was revealed that one trigger for youth migration to the street is the death of one parent or both parents. Iman Hashim found that being orphaned or losing even one of the parents might contribute to the youth's migration in Ghana.²⁷² This study found that this mostly motivates the youth who are involved in the

²⁷² Iman M. Hasham, Qouted by Anarfi and Appiah, 55

economic situation in the family to migrate. Those youth believe they are not well catered to by either the extended family household or the remaining parent.²⁷³

Parental death as a trigger for youth migration to the streets or urban centers is not peculiar to Ghana. Parental death is prevalent in most African countries due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Thus the death of parents is a catalyst for youth migration throughout Africa. Some studies suggest that AIDS orphans account for large percentages of the street children in the towns and cities of Zambia and Uganda.²⁷⁴ Severe, society-wide economic crises, along with some difficulties children face (e.g., maltreatment by extended family members, rivalry between children, disrupted schooling, etc.), have been identified as triggers for youth migration to the streets.

As a result of the family dysfunction, breakdown of the extended family system and parental death many, of those interviewed for this study dropped out of school, usually at the primary level. Several of the youth interviewed at CAS also alluded to their parent's inability to sponsor their education as the reason for their being on the street. Parents often are not able to sponsor their children's education beyond the junior high school level due to the cost of buying school materials and paying for some facilities as required by the educational system.

In Ghana, education from the primary school to junior high school is free and the government provides textbooks. However, because the supply of textbooks to schools is erratic and inadequate, parents are called upon to supplement this cost.²⁷⁵ Because many parents are not working or only have seasonal jobs, it is very difficult for them to cover such expenses for

²⁷³ Anarfi and Appiah. 54

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ Beauchemin. 15

their wards. Some parents their expect children to help pay for their education, and this has forced the youth to leave home and work. Anarfi and Appiah quote Castle and Diarra to argue the point that there is a statistical link between the youth not in school and the possibility of migration by mostly rural youth to find work.²⁷⁶

Rape in the System

The seven girls interviewed for this study had been raped more than once, and this has compelled them to live with boyfriends and with the concomitant result of unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. Surprisingly, some of the rapes were perpetrated by the girls' street peers, while others were committed by adults living in the vicinity. The homeless youth living on the streets of Accra and elsewhere face many difficult situations, but it is especially sad the females in that population subjected to such heinous experiences. One after another, each of the seven girls narrated their ordeals at the hands of homeless, as well as young and old men frequenting the localities in which the girls live.

In earlier research, Boakye-Boahen found out that street girls are subjected to "the most gruesome sexual attacks on the streets."²⁷⁷ The girls' peers often orchestrate these sexual attacks by giving the girls beverages to which sedatives have been added, then violating the girls as they sleep.²⁷⁸ According to Boakye-Boahen, these girls shy away from talking about the sexual exploitation and abuse they have endured because of the cultural connotations it carries in

²⁷⁶ Castle and Diarra, quoted by K. John Anarfi and M. Appiah, "The Phenomenon of Independent Child Migration in Ghana in the Context of a Globalised World" in *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, eds. Anarfi and Kwankye, (Accra, GH: Sundel Services, 2009), 53.

²⁷⁷ Boakye-Boahen, 80.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Ghana. The stigma attached to sexual abuse and rape prevents these girls from being open with their stories. No one that has experienced sexual abuse or rape wants to be perceived as weak or as having invited the heinous act upon themselves.²⁷⁹

Such barbaric acts have not met with harsh punishment in the Ghanaian community as people, including the homeless youth themselves, contend that sleeping on the streets is an invitation for predators to strike. And even though homeless youth, particularly the girls, endure such atrocious experiences, there is scant literature addressing the issue. Statistics concerning rape and sexual abuse in Ghana is almost non-existent.

Of the 273 rapes reported in Ghana in 1977, the victims were “mostly house girls, babysitters, and were like the offenders, mainly in the lower social class.”²⁸⁰ Augustine Ankomah notes that because of prevailing attitudes, very little research has been done on the issue of rape in Ghana.²⁸¹ For instance, the minimum sentence for a rape offender is twelve months jail time. According to Ankomah, the 1993 attempt by the female caucus of Ghana’s parliament to increase the sentence for convicted rapists to three years was vehemently opposed by their male counterparts. Further, a rape victim is expected to pay between fifteen and thirty Ghana Cedis for a medical form signed by a medical practitioner before the case is processed for any court action. *The Accra Daily Mail* in a feature article once reported that because of this requirement and given that rape victims in Ghana stand little chance of winning a legal judgment against their attackers, many prefer “to let sleeping dogs lie.” Even though rape victims are entitled to free

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Augustine Ankomah, “Sexuality,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, vol.1, ed. Robert T. Francoeur, (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 518.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

medical treatment, they are still expected to incur the cost of the bureaucratic paperwork. Considering victims typically have little or no financial resources, this requirement for taking legal action against an attacker causes “more than half of rape victims simply to give up their hope for justice.”²⁸² Such has been the quandary for sexual abuse and rape victims in Ghana.

Ghana’s criminal code defines rape as “an unlawful carnal knowledge against any female. When the assaulted woman is physically incapable of resistance to force, rape does not have to be proved.”²⁸³ This definition, as it stands, is inadequate and lets offenders off the hook as the parameters of the definition are lacking in their comprehensiveness. After watching the film, *Accused*,²⁸⁴ I would dare to say that in Ghana and elsewhere rape cases always need to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. It is little wonder that the male caucus of Ghana’s parliament (equivalent to United States’ congress) opposed the bill to increase the mandatory prison sentence for convicted rapists from twelve months to three years. After heated encounter over that bill, Ghana’s main national newspaper, *The Daily Graphic*, published an editorial in which the behavior of the male caucus was called a “sheer display of male chauvinism and lack of respect and understanding of women’s sensitivity.”²⁸⁵

Pamela Cooper-White notes that the Michigan in the United States defines rape as “penetration of any bodily orifice with any part of a person’s body or any object, and intentional touching of the victim’s genital area, groin, inner thigh, buttocks, or breasts (either with skin

²⁸² “Ghana: Rape Victims Stand Little Chance,” *The Accra Daily Mail Article*, September 7, 2007.

²⁸³ Ankomah, 518.

²⁸⁴ *Accused* is a film about a rape victim, released in April 16, 2002, and directed by Jonathan Kaplan. In the film Jodie Foster gives an Oscar-winning performance as the hard-living, fiercely independent Sarah Tobias, who is gang-raped in the back of a neighborhood bar. But that is only the beginning of her ordeal. Sarah finds herself battling the legal system, not once but twice, as she and her attorney go after both her attackers and the onlookers whose cheering fueled and encouraged the assault. (Synopsis culled from the Amazon website).

²⁸⁵ Ankomah, 518.

contact or through clothing).²⁸⁶ Cooper-White adds that “the presence of a weapon, two or more assailants, or incapacitation of the victim (whether unconscious, mentally disabled, drugged, etc.) constitutes ‘aggravated’ sexual assault. This law does not require penetration of a vagina by a penis.”²⁸⁷

The preceding definition of rape is definitive and comprehensive within its parameters. It encompasses many issues and areas such that no assailant can easily escape prosecution for the crime. Any rapist, or anyone who attempts rape, is answerable to the law regardless of the assailant’s class or status, whether or not there is a penetration. Once intent is established, the proof of the act is enough for prosecution and subsequent conviction.

Traditionally in Ghana, a women’s body is considered sacred and special, and absolute care is expected in handling it. Even tickling a woman’s palm, pulling or playing with her nose, ear, or any other body part is considered immoral and offensive. This is particularly aggressive behavior in the case of a married woman and is considered indecent when done by a man other than the woman’s husband.²⁸⁸ Such action calls for sanction by the traditional rulers and ridicule by the public which, in most cases, forces the offender to leave the locality for many years in self-imposed exile.

Contrary to this long-standing tradition, the Ghanaian courts have been slow prosecute and convict such offenders, and have yielded to protests that these cases should be proved beyond all reasonable doubts. Further, because they live in a patriarchal, chauvinistic, and promiscuous society, little attention is paid when women and girls report cases of rape. It is only

²⁸⁶ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church’s Response* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 81.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ankomah, 518.

in recent years that efforts and campaigns by women's groups and local radio stations in Ghana have made this issue an important, daily news item.

The Domestic Violence Victims Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service

The DOVVSU, formerly the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), is a branch of the Ghana Police Service. It was established in 1998. The task of the unit is to prevent, protect, apprehend, and prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence and child abuse in Ghana.²⁸⁹ The creation of the unit became necessary as a result of public outcry against the police's attitude toward wife battering and violence against women/children as family matters that it should be settled within the parameters of the family. The Ghana Police Service was tasked to establish the unit to curb the incidences of/eliminate domestic violence and create a conducive environment for the timely and equitable response to victims of abuse.

The unit responds to any threatening, violent, or abusive behavior which between adults who are or have been in an intimate relationship with one another. Such incidences can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, or emotional in nature. The "violence" can be between any combination of family members, including in-laws and step family. In all the regional offices, the unit has in its staff professionals such as clinical psychologists and counselors who provide free services to the general public. The unit also employs social workers who are responsible for the issues of non-maintenance, child custody, and marital issues.

²⁸⁹ Domestic Violence Victims Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service: www.ghanapolice.info (Accessed in January 28, 2012)

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 was enacted and promulgated “to provide protection from domestic violence particularly for women and children and for connected purposes.”²⁹⁰

The Act defines domestic violence as any act constituting harmful behavior towards a person within an existing or previous intimate relationship. Such behavior must also be in consonance with the Ghana Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29). Section 1 of that code states that a domestic violence is an act

which constitutes a threat or harm to a person under that Act, specific acts, threats to commit, or acts likely to result in physical abuse, namely physical assault or use of physical force against another person including the forcible confinement or detention of another person and the deprivation of another person of access to adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, rest, or subjecting another person to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.²⁹¹

Further, the Act addresses sexual abuse as any forceful sexual contact or sexual act with any person which may degrade or humiliate such a person’s sexual integrity. For instance, if a person with the knowledge that he/she is infected with HIV/AIDS engages in sexual contact with any person without that person being given prior information of the infection, the person with HIV/AIDS is guilty of sexual abuse.²⁹²

The Act also covers economic abuse, which is defined as deprivation, denial, or destruction of any economic or material interests of another person. Abusing a person economically also implies “the deprivation or threatened deprivation of economic or financial resources which a person is entitled to by law, the disposition or threatened disposition of

²⁹⁰ An Act of Parliament [732] enacted and promulgated by Parliament of Ghana and assented by the President on May 3, 2007.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 4.

moveable or immovable property in which another person has a material interest.”²⁹³ Further, the Act protects women and children from verbal or psychological abuse. The Act defines such abuse as “any conduct that makes another person feel constantly unhappy, miserable, humiliated, ridiculed, afraid, jittery/depressed, or inadequate or worthless.”²⁹⁴ The Act also prohibits domestic harassment, which includes sexual harassment, intimidation by inducing fear in another person, and “any behavior or conduct that in any way harms or may harm another person, endangers the safety, health or well-being of another person, undermines another person's privacy, integrity or security, or detracts/is likely to detract from another person's dignity and worth as a human being.”²⁹⁵

The meaning of domestic relationship, according to the Act, is a relationship involving family members. Thus, any relationship analogous to a family relationship in a domestic situation that is currently in existence or has existed before is considered a domestic relationship.²⁹⁶ Thus, any abuse or violent acts, be they verbal, psychological, sexual, economic, or emotional, constitute domestic violence. As such, these acts are subject to legal action under the purview of Ghanaian Court of Jurisdiction. The Act carries a punishment of three years imprisonment when a respondent is found guilty of an aggravated offence.²⁹⁷

One would think that such a well intentioned Act and a branch of the police service (DOVVSU) would have great influence in Ghana's civil society for the purpose of ridding life of

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.

all sexual assault. Yet the opposite appears to be the case. The slow implementation of the Act has generated much criticism from the media, academia, and the civil society. Reacting to such concerns expressed by civil society, the minister for Women and Children's Affairs, Juliana Azumah-Mensah, informed the general population that the government welcomes gentle and constructive criticisms regarding the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act.²⁹⁸

Feedback from the general population indicates that the Act is seen as just a government document which is enthusiastically enacted, promulgated by the Parliament, and assented by the President of the nation, only to be shelved to gather dust. Further, the delayed implementation of the Act, which has been attributed to financial, infrastructure, and human resource deficiencies, has given offenders greater leeway to molest and harass their victims with impunity. When such offenders are arrested for domestic violence, it is alleged that the police do little other than give a verbal warning and dismiss the case. That practice may account for the continued high incidences of sexual assaults and various forms of domestic violence in Ghana.

Robin Warshaw,²⁹⁹ Cooper-White, and others contend that many women and girls are raped by men they know. Chilling statistics on rape indicate that “50 to 78 percent of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim. As many as 46 percent of rapes are committed by family members (husbands, ex-husbands, fathers, step-fathers, and other relatives).”³⁰⁰ I would

²⁹⁸ The minister made such an appeal when she addressed a policy advocacy meeting on June 3, 2010. The forum was organized by the Action Aid Ghana and the Ark Foundation which also brought in other civil service organizations in Accra. The organizers intended to elicit government's reaction to public appeal for the swift implementation of the Act which was already three years in existence.

²⁹⁹ Robin Warshaw, *I Never Called it Rape: The Ms Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape* (New York, NY: Harper, 1988), 11.

³⁰⁰ Cooper-White, 88.

argue that these statistics (extrapolated from data collected in the United States) pertain to other countries. However, in certain countries these statistics are under reported news items.

The under reporting in the media could easily be attributed to male dominance and chauvinism prevalent in the institutions. Coupled with the male chauvinism is the fact that most rape cases reported in the Ghanaian media domestic workers, baby sitters, secretaries, and other female subordinates. Because of the stigma associated with rape, it may be that rape cases involving women of the higher social strata may not be reported.

It can also be contended that under reporting of rape cases is due to the fact that 38 percent of rape victims were between the ages of fourteen and seventeen at the time of their assaults.³⁰¹ This fact was confirmed in my study as all seven girls interviewed had been raped at least once; and such rapes were the girls' first sexual experience.³⁰² Many of the girls also knew the boys before they became their rapist. In some instances, the rapes resulted in pregnancy. Those perpetrating the rape and responsible for the resulting pregnancies often reject paternal responsibility. Still, others accept it and become boyfriends of these unfortunate street girls.

Girls ages of fourteen to seventeen are very vulnerable and typically naïve regarding men's seductive advances. It is surprising that girls can be so gullible and unsuspecting of men's intentions, even when they have moved and lived among them. They are like Sarah Tobias in *The Accused*. Even when she and the would-be rapist were kissing hard, Sarah did not seem to suspect that she was about to be the victim of a brutal gang-rape. Each day, rapists of all ages take advantage of the vulnerable and gullible street girls at an alarming rate. Some of those I interviewed indicated that they have been gang-raped by three or four boys or men before

³⁰¹ Warshaw, xxv.

³⁰² Ibid.

deciding to live with their attackers as boyfriends, even if they receive no financial support from them.

As part of the study, I attempted to collect reports of rape cases involving the street girls, but no such reports were found. This is likely due to the fact that street youths, particularly street girls, constitute an insignificant segment of the population. Another reason may be these children's perception of themselves as people on the margins. They attach no importance to the harrowing experiences endure and see no urgent need to make a report of injury suffered to a law enforcement agency.

A most distressing aspect of the street girls' experience is that most of those interviewed had endured a gang-rape. Considering the ages and physiques of the victims at the time of this traumatic episode, the experience was very troubling to them. Not all girls in the range of fourteen to seventeen years could be said to adequate physical and emotional maturity to endure the horrendous atrocity of gang-rape. However, these girls are subjected to such inhumane abuse by their fellow street boys and other men in their vicinity.

Susan Brownmiller notes the following regarding gang or group rape:

Group rape may be defined as two or more men assaulting one woman. . . . When men rape in pairs or in gangs, the sheer physical advantage of their position is clear-cut and unquestionable. No simple conquest of man over woman, group rape is the conquest of men over woman. It is within the phenomenon of group rape, stripped of the possibility of equal combat, that the male ideology of rape is most strikingly evident. Numerical odds are proof of brutal intention. They are proof, too, of male bonding . . . and proof of a desire to humiliate the victim beyond the act of rape through the process of anonymous mass assault.³⁰³

³⁰³ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York, NY: Fawcett Books, 1975), 187.

Thus, gang-rape could be compared to combat involving enemies where each combatant is eager and enthusiastic to conquer and claim superiority. In that sense, men have found women to be a weaker ‘enemy.’ The promise of a sure victory swells their ego more than winning a conquest of equals. Realizing such a fantasy then fulfills an evil side of masculinity and bonding.

It is gruesome and uncivilized that men (and boys) assault women through gang rape as a means of asserting their masculinity and bonding with other males. It is despicable that men who undertake group or gang rape do so to satisfy their male anxiety about their status in a “hierarchy of power, expressed through denigration of women and erotic bonding among men, and rooted in the misogynist joking culture of athletic teams.”³⁰⁴ This is illustrated in the stories of systematic rapes/gang-rapes and the gruesome atrocities meted out to women during the wars in Vietnam and Bosnia/Kosovo. Researchers believe that in their effort to satisfy anxiety over their identities, young people, especially boys and young men, resort to group identity to temporarily help one another. This is part of their identity formation. Capps postulates that this “identity is the consciousness of being a ‘coherent self,’ which ‘means having a sense of ‘I.’”³⁰⁵

As they intended to achieve male or self or “I” consciousness, they do so by embracing a group ideology or parochial dogma. As none of them would want to be branded “a child” and would want to be seen as a “grown man,” they bond together and act on impulse rather than reason and commit such barbaric acts as group or gang-rape against defenseless woman and

³⁰⁴ Michael A. Messner, “The Triad of Violence in Men’s Sports” in *Transforming A Rape Culture*, eds. Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher and Martha Roth (Minnesota, MN: Milkweed, 2005), 30.

³⁰⁵ Donald Capps, *Life Cycle Theory & Pastoral Care* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983), 26.

girls. It is distressing also to learn that such a heinous act as gang rape is used as a male control mechanism or social control to keep women in line.³⁰⁶

Some cases these males find themselves in sporting activities and the military where the use of brute force is the norm. However, because of misguidance or a misunderstanding of themselves in relation to others within relationships, they go on brutalizing the opposite sex as a means of achieving what is not easy to achieve in the ordinary male context. Another disturbing issue about gang rapists is that some of these acts occur in the military where those in uniform have undergone education and training that is intended to instill discipline before sending the soldiers off to defend their nation. Further, some of these boys and men engage in similar behavior while in college or as part of an athletic team. It is an accepted societal norm that any person, be they a student or a professional, who has gone through some sort of training is expected/required to be disciplined and sensible. Thus, one wonders where and when such good character traits deserted them, moral training failed, and they made the choice to participate in a rape.

No matter why rape occurs, acts of gang rape in Ghana against women and girls cannot be ignored. Voices must be raised against machismo in whatever form it manifests itself in the culture. Education is a major piece of advocating for the eradication of uncivilized and cruel acts of group/gang rape from our world. Advocacy on behalf of the marginalized in society, especially the street youth, is one of the reasons for this study.

³⁰⁶ Brownmiller, 285.

Resilience and Creativity

Toward the end of my study of the homeless youth on the streets of Accra, I undertook with a team several tours of various parts of the city where some of the homeless youth ply the common trade of portering and those place where they sleep. The team with which I toured usually of a social worker and a camerawoman who covered all the interviews. We encountered some resistances at some spots because of the camera which some market women and kingpins of the street youth considered as intrusive. At one location which was a constructed wooden cinema hall, we were driven away on several occasions without any coverage. We discovered that this wooden structure was being used as a place for prostitution by the street girls. The people who regularly patronized this heinous and insidious trade were older men who could easily have been fathers and grandfathers of these street girls.

Several trips to the wooden cinema hall confirmed my earlier observations regarding the resilient character of these street youth as they continue to live and work on the street. In the face of enormous adversity and challenging life situations encountered on the street, the homeless youth have developed a resiliency that enables them to survive the street. Realizing they have burned bridges behind them, they come to the street, find themselves encountering insurmountable obstacles, and realize they needed something which can see them through life's troubles. And while the homeless youth do not seem to be worried about what they were going through now, they always brace themselves for all the challenges life will throw at them.

Faced with limited work options and minimal/erratic income, the street youth developed “thin agency” in order to cope with on-the street experiences.³⁰⁷ Thin agency refers here to

³⁰⁷ Klocker, 85, quoted in Sarah de Benitez, *State of the World's Street Children* (London, UK: Consortium for Street Children, 2011), 29.

everyday actions and firmness taken by the individual street youth as he/ she carries on within the highly restrictive context which is characterized by few viable alternatives.³⁰⁸ In fact, these street youth have made individual decisions to be out of their homes and are now living on the streets every day.

On the street they have lived experiences that not the best situation for people of their age. However, they must live there and so they develop buoyancy, a defiant attitude as coping strategies for enabling them to handle all adversities that would defy even adult reasoning. As these youth fight for loads to carry as a means to earn a minimal income that does not even afford them of decent place to sleep and only limited access to health facilities, it takes spiritedness, optimism, and creativity to live. Some of lives exigencies covered and put together as documentary (on DVD) reveals the inner strength homeless youth have developed over time as they continue to endure the various adversities they confront on the street.

Two of my informants now live on their creative and agentic character traits and enjoy the successful outcome. *Bonnie* and *Lady Nash* are earning limited incomes with the trades of sandal and bead making, skills they acquired by on-street experience. *Lady Nash*, for instance, is under sponsorship for eighteen months in the Ban on Neglect program and has decided to complete it before she moves out to begin working and living on her own. *Bonnie* has yet to acquire sponsorship, but as he waits to be awarded sponsorship, he makes a limited number of sandals to sell. He is not able to earn enough money through the sale of sandals to open or own his business, so he looks forward to completing a nine month training program for a vocation of his choice so that he, too, can be on his own.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

John Coleman contends that resiliency is a process rather than an innate characteristic of a human. He believes that resiliency cannot be a human trait one is born with because that characteristic is a result of an interaction between risk and protective factors, or a response to life's difficult situations.³⁰⁹ A summary of the learning about homeless youth and Coleman's resilience theory follows.³¹⁰

With the street youth, there is a protective factor in the form of group identity. This helps equip the homeless youth with the capacity to endure the hardships of the on-street lived experience. The street youth rely on friends and acquaintances in times of need for relief or consolation after having weathered a certain disaster. For example, if one is beaten and robbed by some of the big boys, most of the friends rally around that person to discuss the issue, get the victim food, and advise them as to how they should deal when next confronted with such a situation. Even though they may not be able to retaliate or reclaim the valuables/money taken from victim, those rallying around the person that has been victimized can offer words of consolation, soothe the pain, and help the victim move on.

The risk factors confronting street youth are continuous and severe. In addition to the "protective factor" of the group identity for enduring these challenges, the homeless youth must rely on an inner strength if they are to survive street adversities. This confirms my earlier assertion that homeless youth develop a buoyancy and defiance in order to live through the hardships of street life. That the young street girls endure rape/gang and continue with their daily lives speaks of sheer determination and spiritedness to survive. It could be said that in such

³⁰⁹ John C. Coleman, *The Nature of Adolescence* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 222.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

situations that the “potential strength of the individual” street girl enables her to live through such calamity.

There is no doubt that these street girls are emboldened with what Coleman calls “optimism or pro-social behavior in relation to family or neighborhood.”³¹¹ This appears to be true of most of the street youth interviewed for this study. Their family and their neighborhood is CAS where they meet with friends, social workers, and teachers who fortify the street youths’ optimism, providing them advice, instruction, and small allowances for participating in the center’s programs.

The street youths’ developed resilient character continues to stand the test of time because of their exposure to the exigencies of their daily lives. According to Coleman, “resilience is most likely to develop through gradual exposure to difficulties at a manageable level of intensity, and at points in the life cycle where protective factors can operate.”³¹² Coleman refers to this process as “steeling experiences.”³¹³ The street youths’ resilient characteristics displayed today have been gradually developing over time. It is interesting to note that during the study, I observed that some of the older street youth were very magnanimous to the younger ones when they arrived at the center. The older ones served as guides, big brothers and sisters, and even mentors who were always prepared to take the “novices” under their wings as they navigated street life.

³¹¹ Ibid., 221.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

Spirituality, Hope for the Present, and Future Focus

As CAS is a religious organization that provides street youth a safe place to congregate, I keen on knowing whether or not they are oriented the youth towards certain religious thoughts. All those interviewed confirmed that this was not the case. What I found was that a few of those who migrated to the streets with religious orientation received from their families of origin said still believed in God. However, they do not have the time or means to attend a church service on their own and CAS does not provide any religious services at the center. According to CAS officials, it is against the laws governing its existence and operation to enforce religious orientation its clients, especially minors.

Some of the homeless youth mentioned that God is their source of hope for a better future, even in the face of the extreme deprivations in which they now live. They are holding fast to any religious teaching and inculcation received from their families during their childhood. As Orme and Seipel rightly note, the street youth consider living and working through their present predicaments as more important than recounting their past experiences.³¹⁴ They not blame their parents' for their inability to care for them and keep them from being homeless. They are more concerned about establishing a viable existence for the present and the future rather than ruminating over past misfortunes. They all believe they can work to attain their imagined good future that for now lies beyond the horizon.

³¹⁴ Orme and Seipel, 6

The Unexplainable Hope

On the whole, the street youth are very hopeful for the future. They believe they will one day achieve the promise that led them to migrate to the streets. They are very optimistic and highly spirited as they envision their future of their lives. This hope for the future is often misunderstood and regarded by others as delusion or “living in a day dream.” These street youth have hope which Capps suggest “involves an imaginative projection and is therefore more than a cognitive act, as cognition has primarily to do with reality as we know it. Because hoping envisions the not yet or the yet-to-be, it is more appropriate for us to describe it as an intuitive or perceptual process than as a cognitive one.”³¹⁵

There is little reason to believe that these youth will actually achieve what they now envisage for themselves. As they talk about their hopes for the future, it may seem to those who hear these seemingly unrealistic expectations that the youth are “eking water from stones.” But the street youth seem to be sure good fortune awaits them beyond the horizon. This “unexplainable” hope may be the intuition Capps describes. According to Capps, unexplainable hope has no proof to back what is envisioned or evidence to show that what one wants and believes will happen.³¹⁶ Some of the street youth speak about God helping them to get sponsorship to complete a program of study, find a spouse, and raise a wonderful family. Considering their present current circumstance it is seems highly unlikely this will happen and to say that these youth are living in a fantasy world. But this unexplainable hope, this intuition, seems to keep the homeless youth focused on the better future that awaits them.

³¹⁵ Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Eugene; OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 54.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Hope as a Response to Deprivation

My interviews with the street youths revealed that they all feel a deep sense of deprivation and loss. They chose to migrate to the streets because the outlook for them at home is bleak due to parental death or other ruptures in their family of origin. They perceived that life on the streets would be better for them and afford them the opportunity to obtain the economic security they desired. Unfortunately they had little or no accurate information about life on the streets. Even after coming face to face to the hard realities of street life, they refuse to abandon the hope of the better future that prompted their migration.

Capps argues that hope is a natural response to the felt deprivation of something one cannot live without, that we hope because we perceive that there is something we lack in our lives.³¹⁷ Because of his father's death, *Shadow*, one of informants for this study, was denied the opportunity to continue his education through junior high school. His mother did not have the financial resources to cover the expense of sending Shadow and his three siblings to school. Thus, Shadow traveled to Accra from Koforidua in search of what his family could not provide for him.

Throughout my time at CAS, I observed *Shadow* in the center's library either reading a book or working on the computer. According to *Shadow*, he wants to take advantage of the facilities at the center to improve his reading ability and become computer literate. He hopes to obtain sponsorship and enter a year-long training program in auto mechanics at Hope Land. *Shadow* also hopes to continue the pursuit of his interest in computer training, an interest he has had since he was a young child. And though *Shadow* is still on the street and unable to get the

³¹⁷ Ibid., 60.

schooling he desires, he continues to hold fast to his “strong sense of wanting and needing”³¹⁸ to be computer literate. Capps suggests that,

what other people have and we lack may stimulate us to hope for what they possess, but it is our own deep sense of lack, coming from inside us, that causes the yearnings that lead to our most heartfelt hope. One reason our hopes are sometimes so difficult to identify or define is because the lack we feel is deeply personal and these deep personal deprivations are hard to put into words.³¹⁹

Shadow and his street peers, like *Lady Nash*, have experienced this personal sense of deprivation. That is why they are on the streets. *Lady Nash* was deprived of parental care from early childhood. Her mother left when *Lady Nash* was only nine months old. Her father remarried. His new wife would not welcome *Lady Nash* in the home, so *Lady Nash* was left in the care of her grandmother. *Lady Nash* migrated to the streets and after on a few months living there became pregnant and she now has a child. She vows not to deprive her child of the parental love and care she did not experience. To this day *Lady Nash* has no idea as to her mother’s whereabouts.

Lady Nash talked about how she longs the love and care of her parents which as a young child she did not receive. She resonates with Capps who claims that “if we hope for our loved one to be restored to us, we hope in vain, and we face the stark and bitter truth that our deprivation cannot be erased, however long we live.”³²⁰ *Lady Nash* is working hard to complete her apprenticeship in bead making so that she will have a viable vocation for life. She believes that her continued longing for her parents is what motivates her to position herself to work in a profitable business so that she can take good care of her child and the children she may have at

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 61.

³²⁰ Ibid., 63.

some point in the future. The child lives with *Lady Nash's* grandmother. *Lady Nash* tries to see her child every other day so the child has the love and care *Lady Nash* did not receive when she was young.

Hope as Response to the Sense of Loss

Lady Nash's attachment to and care for her child is inspired by her own sense of loss and deprivation. She does not want her child to experience the same situation. However, it is that sense of loss and deprivation that inspires *Lady Nash* to seek a vocation that will provide her a meaningful adult life. It also serves to help sustain her hope for a better future. Of the CAS residents, *Lady Nash* is one of the few who earn a decent living life by making beads in a small quantity. The income provides for her upkeep and that of her child. Thus, *Lady Nash's* loss of parental love has yielded a better life and increased her very capacity to hope and demonstrates that hopes are typically inspired by our sense of deprivation.³²¹

It seems that special hope and poignancy surround *Lady Nash's* desire to recover her loss.³²² She holds hopes against hope as she perseveres in the face of the challenges of street life. Though the loss of parental care sent her to the street and that lack of care threatens her very existence, *Lady Nash* still envisions something new and better for herself and her child. According to *Lady Nash*, her hope and vision of nurturing her own daughter and providing her a solid foundation and secure future are what help *Lady Nash* stay away from the unhealthy lifestyles common to a street existence.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid., 62.

Hope as Future Projection

Capp posits that “because hope is projection, and thus involves images that play against the screen of the future, hope is a certain way of seeing, of visualizing, of foreseeing.”³²³ Thus, hope helps us to envision our yearnings and longings which have become mental images that we carry throughout life. As a future projection, hope helps us to live with certain mental imaginations which, according to Capps, “make the future more palpably real and present to us.”³²⁴ Such visualization and foresight into the future is helpful to two of those youth interviewed for this study.

Kohweh wants to be an actor, hence his choice of a pseudonym that is the name of a Ghanaian acting legend. *Kohweh* is sixteen years old and part of the Ubuntu acting group at CAS. His desire is to be a comedian and that goal is an impetus for his commitment to the Ubuntu group’s activities. He never misses a performance, and there is no doubt that in everything he does at the center he is shedding his old life and patterning his new life on the actor, *Kohweh*. He chooses his attire and opts for a certain lifestyle so as to be easily identified *Kohweh* the acting legend.

Cisse, a fifteen year old regular at the center, wants to be a soccer player. His with his small income he bought a soccer training kit and endeavors to be like the soccer ace of France who now with Queens Park Rangers in England. The young *Cisse* is visualizing and envisioning a new future for himself on the street. He claims he trains regularly with a colt team in the vicinity and hopes that one day he catches the eye of a scout from a big club in Accra.

³²³ Ibid., 66.

³²⁴ Ibid.

When I pressed them to give an alternative vocation should their current plans not materialize, both *Kohweh* and *Cisse* were adamant and unmoved. They maintained that all it takes to achieve their goal is hard work and a strong belief that they are well suited for their chosen career. They cling steadfastly to their plans for to relinquish their goals would be tantamount to losing hope.³²⁵ As Capps notes, “hope is created and sustained through the image, and the image is a stay against the personal despair that [they] found themselves fighting, day after day.”³²⁶ These young ones have chosen certain images to help them live through life’s adversities. The choosing as their pseudonyms the names of personalities they hope to emulate bolsters their hope for achieving their goals.

These young street youth resonate with Andrew Lester who contends that those with hope more easily wait for the present tragedy to pass as they trust that the future will bring surprises, and that things could change for the better.³²⁷ Their perseverance and resilience in the face of life’s adversity depict their strong hope as “the possibility and openness toward the meaningfulness of the future which keeps faith alive and active in the present.”³²⁸ In fact, their continued stay on the street and their refusal to quit indicate that “they are filled with a certain worldview that transcends the present moment,”³²⁹ even though others see their street existence as a meaningless life without any future. They strongly hope to one day overcome their present circumstances, however long this might take.

³²⁵ Ibid., 68.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 68.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

This chapter addresses some of the issues emanating from my study of the homeless youth phenomenon in Ghana. The discussion stems from the socio-economic issues and flows through some cultural problems and to educational matters related to that phenomenon and suggests three ecological levels of social justice work (macro, meso, and micro) interventions. Macro intervention involves social structures, ideologies, and government policies.³³⁰ Interventions at the meso level are social and institutional in nature and include congregational and community organizations. Governmental institutions and organizations are considered at the meso level even though, because they continue to hold to political ideologies have not benefited the youth of Ghana, they are not functioning as envisaged at the time of their creation. Finally, micro level interventions, which include counseling the homeless youth and small groups, are considered.

Macro Level Intervention

Issues Militating Against the Homeless Youth

Socio-economic, cultural, and educational issues are among the many triggers of the migration that has created the homeless youth phenomenon. My study of that population frequenting the CAS reveals that there are multiple factors affecting the existence, survival, and growth of this population. The statistics pertaining to the street children in Accra, collected in

³³⁰ Lawrence H. Gerstein and Doris Kirkpatrick, "Counseling Psychology and Nonviolent Activism: Independence for Tibet!" in *Handbook for Social Justice in Counseling Psychology: Leadership, Vision, and Action*, eds., Rebecca L. Toporek, et al, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2006), 464.

2010, are alarming. According to the CAS official newsletter, “50 (Gold),” the number of street children in Ghana has doubled every five years since the first headcount in 1992. At that time the number of youth living on the streets of Ghana was reported to be 4,000. In 2012 it is projected that the figure will reach 32,000. However, new statistical data recently reported indicate that the figure could be even higher with the figure now estimated to be 61,492 street children in Accra.³³¹ There are multiple factors stacked against the survival and growth of these homeless youth on the streets of Ghana. The factors include but are not limited to socio-economic conditions, cultural realities and the educational matters.

The Socio-Economic Factors

Considering the push and pull migration factors identified in the course of this study, I would conclude that the major triggers for migration and causes of youth homelessness are socio-economic in nature. In this study, 75 percent of the informants migrated to the city in search of jobs. According to those that have migrated, they are on the streets because of their desire to earn a living which they were not able to do in their home towns and villages. Most of the street youth are uneducated because poverty has rendered their parents unable to pay for the costs associated with their schooling. As a result, the future became bleak for them and it was evident that there was no hope for them should they remain in their home town, hence, they

³³¹Otu Asiedu, the director of the social welfare department for the greater Accra region made this disclosure in Accra and posted it on *VibeGhana* on March 18, 2012. He made this known when he promoted a book entitled *The Courage of Trust-Thoughts on Reshaping the Current Machinery Affecting Street Children in Ghana*, authored by Kwadwo Addeah Prempeh. *VibeGhana* is an on-line program for the Vibe FM in Ghana.

migration to an urban center in search of employment. Urbanization, then, has been a major catalyst for youth migration and its attendant homelessness in Ghana.³³²

Galaxy said his mother told him it was difficult caring for him and his three siblings because school remittances were not forthcoming from his father. *Cisse* said that due to the death of his mother and his father's migration to Nigeria it became difficult for his grandparents to take care of him and his siblings. Due to these circumstances he migrated to the streets. *Mina*, who had lived with her grandmother until she was twelve years old, ended her education at the primary school level because she lacked school fees and other support. *Mina* reported that, "As I grew older life became difficult for all of us since my grandmother was not working and was not able to care for us." *Scholes* reported, "My decision to go out to the street was due to the fact that my parents were unable to care for my needs and sometimes meals for us were a problem."

All the participants in this study come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and have a limited or no educational background as a result of their family's poverty. This confirms that "technically, the typical porter migrates to the cities to seek better economic prospects for themselves and their families. . . . They see the cities as offering more options in terms of job prospects which are preferable to staying at home and being restricted to farming."³³³ Since none of the participants in this study could attest to any economic wellbeing in the family, they decided to migrate and fend for themselves for the present and future survival.

³³² Jacob Songso, 3-4. There was been an urban surge long before Ghana's independence in 1957. Ghana's rural-urban migration increased between the periods of 1948 to 1960 by 98 per cent. Thus, by 1984, the number of urban settlements increased almost fourfold from 41 in 1948 to 203 in 1984. The corresponding urban population also increased almost six fold from 570,597 persons in 1948 to 3,938,614 persons in 1984. The overall urban population in the 2000 census count was 8.3 million.

³³³ Muriel Adjubi Yeboah and Kwame Appiah-Yeboah, "An Examination of the Cultural and Socio-Economic Profiles of Porters in Accra, Ghana," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 14.

For many, many years, the lack of economic opportunities for the current youth of Ghana has been part of the manifestos of most Ghanaian political parties. During the election campaign, candidates promise better futures for the younger generation. But the promises do not come to fruition. These promises easily translate into youth policies which more often than not remain on paper until a given government is out of power. Government after government continues to exhibit a lack of political will-power and pragmatism in translating youth policies into employment opportunities for the youth. In fact some governments' solutions for the youth problems have been reactive instead of proactive, producing ad hoc measures and interim solutions. Such measures usually fall away with time. Pressures to act subside and nothing takes place.

Programs such as Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) gives cash grants to the extremely poor people in selected areas of Ghana. Such grants, together with other short term measures, should be geared towards long term projects like irrigation which can help peasant farmers to farm successfully and not be at the mercy of the weather. Some small scale industries, such as tomato factories, could be sited at Techiman and other towns where the country continues to experience excess production between June and October but experiences shortages at other times.

This study revealed that Ghana has a large number of youth, including those on the streets, who are at the margins in terms of education and employment. Their problems could be considered chronic because as they live past the age of adolescence without basic, formal education and their ability to acquire job training may be forever limited. Such youth, like those in this study, will live without any substantial social and economic support for themselves or

their families. In that regard, human talents will be wasted as most youth will fail to progress from education to a job placement. What I found in the course of this study is that

a significant number of youth fail to participate or take advantage of education and training opportunities, and there is loss of human talent, not only at present, but with negative consequences for the future. But it is not just the individual youth themselves who lose out. There are costs to the entire society beyond the loss of goods and services that might have been produced. Further, there are costs to the taxpayer for additional government supports. To the degree that youth lack sufficient education and work, they are likely to require public services and contribute minimally to tax revenues that support government services.³³⁴

The potential of such youth will be diminished forever as the opportunity to harness their talents and abilities will be missed. The youth whose opportunity to accumulate human capital in school or college is lost will be limited in terms of securing any gainful employment.³³⁵ It is no surprise that youth like *Galaxy*, *Cisse*, *Mina*, and *Scholes* drift into a chronic stage which triggers teenage pregnancy, incarceration, substance abuse, criminality, and streetism.³³⁶ Studies on youth issues point out that the impact for society/the nation of economic burdens on youth are as follows:

Families of youth suffer an enormous financial impact because they must bear the cost of providing a residence and health care of those individuals without any economic independence. NGOs are expected to expend funds on these youth, especially the homeless ones, in order to ameliorate their delinquency and suffering. The present predicament of the youth not only impacts and remains with them. It becomes an intergenerational trend. Thus, “economic or health-related [cost] is transferred from the youth to their children.”³³⁷

³³⁴ Clive R. Belfield, Henry M. Levin, and Rachel Rosen, “The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth,” paper presented for the Corporation for the National and Community Service and the White House Council for Community Solutions in Association with Civic Enterprise with support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Washington, DC, January 2012), 4.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

Ultimately, the end result is that most youth are prone to a life of crime because of limited possibilities for earning a living. Since they have limited or no educational background, these youth find it very difficult to maneuver themselves into decent work situations. Typically the end up engage in drugs, gun violence, gang activity, and are prone to alcohol/drug abuse, as well as other crimes. Most of these youth will be incarcerated which results in further cost further cost for the state to maintain them.³³⁸

A twenty year old that spends some years in incarcerated for any serious misdemeanor will incur both fiscal and social costs long after the age twenty-four. After dropping out of high school, a sixteen year old girl will likely encounter an adulthood of lower income and severely limited economic opportunities. Thus, if a youth is currently earning 50 percent less than other youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four years, it is likely that youth will ultimately earn 50 percent less during his/her lifetime than those who complete high school. This, therefore, becomes the perpetual burden of streetism and unproductive youth for any country that fails to address that problem of youth homelessness at its root causes.

It is not an overstatement to say that the lack of strong economic policies is the root cause of poverty and that poverty consistently triggers migration of youth to the streets. Benitez contends that “to reduce childhood poverty significantly a combination is required of general development policy to promote the livelihoods and wellbeing of the poorest groups and the specific services and support programs to promote the social development and wellbeing of children and young people.”³³⁹ Thus, the first policy direction for the Ghanaian government is to review the development and implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs, Poverty

³³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³³⁹ Benitez, 59.

Reduction Strategy Papers, Millennium Development Goals, and Millennium Declaration. These are developmental projects undertaken with development partners, and in some cases issues brought from abroad may not be very beneficial to or and sustainable in developing countries like Ghana. However, it behooves the government of Ghana and her development partners to see to it that optimum benefits are accrued from each embarked upon project.

The second policy direction for the government is to acknowledge that as a result of skewed government economic policies, the national budgets have not allocated adequate resources to reach children and youth in poverty. Consequently, there is a lack of resources for the development and implementation at the local level of programs that enhance the growth and welfare children and youth. This has compounded the economic woes of the government's MDAs that were instituted for the purpose of ensuring the welfare and development of children and youth. The economic structure and policies of the MDAs have severely limited the building of schools and other facilities for that group. Thus, Benitez contends that in developing countries "economic structures and policies work against the interests of the poor and there are limited job opportunities for marginalized youth in a formal market which has high educational demands."³⁴⁰ Benitez argues further that because street youth are often not specifically named among the vulnerable groups, some governmental approaches have been only "charitable or social work performed largely at the expense of, rather than complementary to, a strategic poverty reduction strategy for children."³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 61.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 59.

Land Tenure System and Poverty

Another problem revealed in the course of this study is the effect of the land tenure system in Ghana. Some parents of homeless youth are peasant farmers and do not own land in their home region. Thus, they must contend with leasing land to farm. Such an arrangement impacts their farming activities and limits income because it renders them unable to raise the substantial capital needing to engage in large scale farming. Those who cannot raise enough capital to purchase their own land must continually negotiate with land owners to farm on a leasing basis as settler farmers. Settler farmers are required to farm leased land for specific number of years and pay a certain percentage of the harvest to the owners. Settler farmers can be required to pay land owners as much as 50 per cent of their farm's yield. Such a practice is common in the land tenure system in Ghana and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

Those interviewed for this study whose parents are settler farmers in rural areas indicated that they sometimes endure torrid times with the land owners, especially when there is crop failure due to lack of rainfall. Since land owners have the right of ownership, they can demand and get their percentage, regardless that the weather has negatively impacted crop production. When settler farmers have little to show for their time and energy in the fields, that seriously reduces expected income. In the long run, this impacts parents' ability to meet their financial obligations to their families.

The land tenure system has seen no changes in policy since its implementation. With the system still intact as originally conceived, it is not economically feasible for youth to remain in the rural areas and undertake farming. Even those who have gone into large scale agriculture and

other economic development have witnessed the negative impact of this land tenure system.³⁴² Many of these farmers find themselves entangled land litigation and their income negatively impacted.

Ten out of the fifteen of the informants in this study who migrated from the rural areas claimed that their parents are settler farmers. They farm just a few acres of land using cutlass and hoe. The income these farmers earn is so small that little or nothing is left for savings, schooling, or other essential family requirements. In most of the farming communities in Ghana there is an absolute reliance upon the rains. Irrigation projects are the privilege of the few. Those who lack irrigation on their land are always at the mercy of the weather to the extent that when the rain fails to fall, farmers yield not crop despite their work in the fields.

Ameliorating the Socio-Economic Woes

Developing an antidote for the huge socio-economic issue of homeless youth in Ghana needs a bold approach by the government. Recently the government issued a laudable youth policy for the citizenry, albeit amidst some controversies among the opposition parties. The theme of the Youth Policy of Ghana, implemented in 2012, was “Towards an Empowered Youth, Impacting Positively on National Development.”³⁴³ The essence of the policy is captured in section 6.1.5, “Youth and Employment,” which states inter alia: “Employment creation

³⁴² Theodora Mantebea Mends and Johan De Meijere. By the Customary Law the land tenure system in Ghana regards lands as belonging to a whole social group and not to an individual and its ownership vested in a collective (family, lineage or a clan) while the individual within that group enjoys virtual unrestricted rights of usage. The head of such a collective or community becomes the symbol of the residuary, reversionary, and ultimate ownership of all land held by the collective. Outsiders moving in are required to obtain rights of access to land by agreeing on terms stipulated by the owners. Since 1894 several governments have made attempts of interventions of statutorily regulate and control land tenure system in Ghana but to no avail.

³⁴³ Akua Dansua, Member of Parliament and the then Minister of Youth and Sport, promulgated the Ghana Youth Policy 2010 on August 10, 2010.

remains a major priority in the country's development agenda and it is the goal of Government to provide the youth with opportunities for employment and labor market information." Thus, the policy aims to

- build the capacity of the youth to discover wealth-creating opportunities in their backyards and environment;
- enable the youth to have access to reliable and adequate labor market information;
- create opportunities for young people to take advantage of available jobs;
- train and prepare the youth for the global market.

The policy statement is impressive and gives the youth a sense of future wellbeing. The deciding factor is how to translate such wishes into opportunities for the entire youth force, not just those that are homeless. An important point to consider is the government's ability to keep youth in school and from loitering in the streets. Further, the government must successfully engage them in vocational training programs to develop valuable skills for a lifetime and enhance their opportunities in the job market.

Breakdown of the Family and Unstable Homes

A critical issue that must be addressed if we are to curb the menace of streetism is the myriad causes of the breakdown of the family. Over the course of this study I found that unstable home life is one of the main triggers for migration and concomitant streetism. Among the many reasons the Ghanaian family is deteriorating, the prominent causes of instability are family conflict, lack of adequate housing, violence, mental health issues, and early parenting.³⁴⁴ This study of the homeless youth phenomenon confirms the suggestion that "family mediation as a prevention effort should be a core component of any government's effort in addressing the

³⁴⁴ Celeste Arista, et al., *Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in Worcester: An Analysis of 2011 Point in Time Data and Service Provider Referral Networks* (Worcester, MA: Clark University, 2011), 3

problem of youth homelessness in any country or locality.”³⁴⁵ Most of the information I gleaned from the interviews with homeless youth confirms that streetism is directly connected to turbulent, weak or broken family and community connections, and that a systemic approach encompassing the matters of poverty, income inequality, social exclusion, and weak child protection is essential if governments are to effectively address the issue of youth homelessness.³⁴⁶ The story of *Bonney* illustrates the consequences of a weak family system:

According to my mother, when I was a child my father left Ghana for Gabon for a very long time so my mother re-married another man and got two children out of that relationship. Since I had been forced to drop out of primary school because of financial difficulties, I became a shoe-shine boy. One day when I returned home from my work I found my mother quarreling with my step-father about me. The cause of their fight was my presence which my step-father did not like. He wanted me out of the house immediately because he was not ready to care for someone else’s child.

I was later taken away from Sunyani to Yamfo (about six miles away) to live with my grandmother. My grandmother at that time was too old to work hence her inability to cater for my needs. Even though I was later transferred to one of my aunties, but still it was difficult to cater for myself since I could not undertake my shoe-shine business in both places I lived. It was out of that experience I decided to travel to Accra to work for my livelihood.

To think we can address the problem of streetism without considering the deprivations children and youth suffer because of family problems is to only scratch the surface of the problem and allow the problem to persist. District governments and other assemblies, particularly in the northern regions of Ghana, must design and implement integrated programs in neighborhoods to support families. These programs must offer a variety of supports that will prevent the youth from migrating to the streets. Further, Ray, Davies, and Nolan contend that there must be a

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

³⁴⁶ Benitez, 64.

supportive effort by the government to re-integrate those who are already on the streets.³⁴⁷ Re-integration programs for the youth who have long lived on the streets are also necessary and must be funded by both the central and local governments.

Creating awareness of and educating the public about the causes of streetism in Ghana is of paramount importance in a society that places a high value on child-bearing. In communities where homelessness and streetism is rampant, groups could be formed to identify sources of streetism and work to eradicate those causes. To that end, Ray, Davies, and Nolan suggest that educational programs should target the least advantaged youths and their families, working to create and awareness of their “circumstances and their rights and by promoting community action and responsibility for their wellbeing.”³⁴⁸ Ghanaian communities can contribute free labor to supplement the local district assembly common fund intended for building schools, hospitals, clinics and other social amenities. Such an effort will help put an end to unfinished projects that dot the countryside in many rural areas. Opinion leaders, such as pastors, must be involved in these efforts if the desired end result of eliminating streetism is to be achieved.

I would contend that since the number of children and youth in poverty is small in terms of the total number of children and youth in Ghana, prevention of streetism requires a minimal investment that will produce larger than expected savings for society over time.³⁴⁹ It is therefore incumbent on all MDAs to earmark a portion of budget allocations for the support of youth, particularly street youth. This is a directive of The Children’s Act, 1998 [16 (1)]: “A District Assembly shall protect the welfare and promote the rights of children within its area of authority

³⁴⁷ Ray, Davies, and Nolan, 23.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

and shall ensure that within the district, governmental agencies liaise with each other in matters concerning children.”

The expectation is clear. Metropolitan assemblies where streetism is prominent must budget to support programs assist homeless youth in leaving the streets and settling them settled in training programs. Other municipal and district assemblies must also begin budgeting for programs that move school drop-outs into vocational training and re-schooling. Training programs are essential in ameliorating the myriad problems youth face if they are not equipped with the basic skills to enter a country’s existing job market. If they do not at least have the requisite good language and mathematics skills, self-discipline, and other desirable personality traits, they will not likely find gainful employment and will end up homeless and living on the streets.³⁵⁰

Governments must work in tandem with firms doing business in the areas where street youth reside. In particular, Accra Metropolitan Assembly must work with centers to enroll the youth in on-the-job training programs. Incentives, such as tax exemptions, may be needed to motivate companies and corporations to work with governments to identify and address the needs of street youth and plan for their development so that they will be qualified to take advantage of employment opportunities throughout their lifetime.³⁵¹ Government should also offer incentives to businesses that invest in economic development there has been massive youth migration. For instance, investors should be encouraged to boost the economy in those parts of northern Ghana where shea-nuts, tomatoes, and cattle are raised. This will require that there is

³⁵⁰ Belfield, Levin, and Rosen, 27.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

“provision of irrigation dams to ensure all-year round agricultural activity [which] will also create opportunities for the teeming non-migrant youth and those that have returned.”³⁵²

Long-term plans must also be developed for reintegrating and settling the youth that return home after living on the streets so as to preventing further massive migration. Such efforts must vocational training programs for batik-tie-and-dye, soap making, etc., with district assembly common funds earmarked for that purpose. Priority must be given to establish such programs in those areas from which the majority of youth migrate. Trainees must be taught and encouraged to form cooperatives in order to pool resources, as well as attract loans from the banks in order to undertake their own projects. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sport is expected to be the driving force designing and implementing a plan for vocational training and entrepreneurial programs for the youth. Anarfi and Kwankye suggest that if the government is going to succeed in getting the homeless youth off the street and reintegrated into their home communities, those two ministries must arrange for “micro-finance schemes to enable them have a more sustainable economic re-integration”³⁵³

Educational Matters

Information collected in the course of this study confirms that some parents consider the cost of educating their children is an investment in the wellbeing of the entire family. If the financial obligation for the child’s education is going to be problematic for the family and affect the family’s financial resources, a way is sought to reduce the cost. One possibility for reducing that cost is to consider the child’s perceived interest and scholastic ability in relation to the total

³⁵² Anarfi and Kwankye, *Independent Migration of Children in Ghana*, 304.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 307.

wellbeing of the entire family. Against that backdrop, if the child's scholastic ability cannot ensure the completion of a senior secondary education, that endeavor will not be undertaken. Such was the case of for *Mina* and *Cisse*, whose grandparents thought they could not contribute any amount from their meager resources to the education of their grandchildren. They did not see that expenditure enhancing the total wellbeing of the family.

Currently in Ghana most of jobs are filled by those who hold a certificate beyond the basic education level. Thus, those interviewed for this study (and many of their peers on the street) are ineligible for most job openings. However, the Policy Priority Areas of the National Youth Policy of Ghana states unequivocally that "education and skills training are critical to the development of a young person's productive and responsible life. The main goal of the policy is, therefore, to ensure the development of a knowledgeable, self reliant, skilled, disciplined, and a healthy population with the capacity to drive and sustain the socio-economic development of the nation." The policy also provides for the following:

- Development and delivery of education and skills training more responsive to the labor market, which can be achieved through the constant review of the training and education curricula
- Increase access to post basic education skills training
- Arrest the issue of school dropouts by developing programs that will keep pupils and students in school until they complete relevant levels of education
- Make learning a life-long vocation
- Use education to narrow the gap between young persons and their environment;
- Provide apprenticeship training for out-of-school youth

This study also confirms the statistics regarding street youth that indicate a link between not attending school and migration to the streets.³⁵⁴ Beauchemin also points out that one of the triggers of youth migration to the streets is disappointment that their parents have failed to send

³⁵⁴ Anarfi and Appiah, 52

them to school.³⁵⁵ Consequently, youth more often than not drop out of school before they complete basic education and migrate to the cities.³⁵⁶ Punch also argues that for the rural poor, education is not considered a necessity in relation to other opportunities for both adults and children.³⁵⁷

Hashim, therefore, makes a strong case for linking education to migration. She notes that “the benefits of education were not evaluated only in terms of its merits for a child, but also in terms of securing households’ wellbeing, and that education was not considered of benefit unless a child completed secondary school, since formal job opportunities were minimal without a senior secondary school certificate.”³⁵⁸ Such was the cases of *Shadow* and *Bonney*. *Shadow* tells the following story:

My father died when I had just completed the primary school and ready for the junior high school. However, my mother told me that she would not be able to sponsor my education from then on. I was always in the house and moved around with a certain friend. It was through that friend that I ended up in Accra through his suggestion that we can find a job there.

Bonney tells a similar story and attributes his problem to his father’s migration to Gabon and subsequent re-marriage of his mother to another man who would not allow him to live with them. That precipitated his migrating to the street because there was no family member to take care of him and pay for the cost of his schooling.

I would suggest that if the government is serious about addressing the educational problems of the youth, it must start with the issue of enrollment. For instance the School

³⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁶ Iman M. Hashim, 13

³⁵⁷ Punch, quoted in Hashim, 14.

³⁵⁸ Hashim, 17.

Feeding Program, introduced in 2006, should be reviewed and possibly extended to every region of the country. Such an effort would allow the rural poor to enjoy a facility with the capacity for augmented enrollment. This proposition is based on the fact that the school feeding program has become an incentive for parents to keep their children in school receive nourishment in the form of free meals and other supplies.³⁵⁹

I would also submit that if the government wishes to achieve the objectives of the National Youth Policy, then free education at the basic education level should include free textbooks and school uniforms for those living in the rural, poor regions of Ghana. To finance the expenditure, the government could secure financial assistance from large corporations such as the Cocoa Board (which oversees the affairs of cocoa production in Ghana). The Cocoa Board scholarship for senior high school and university students could be extended to those living in the cocoa growing areas so that wards of farmers there could enjoy the fruits of their parents' labor. Legislation to enforce the free education program will be necessary. Further, if the school dropout rate is to be arrested, I contend that implementation of the youth policy should include a system by which youth returning home can resume their education. This could include a vocational training program that provides skills dropouts and street youth retraining home can use as they are reintegrated into their home community.

³⁵⁹ Yeboah and Appiah-Yeboah, 15.

On the Cultural Front

This study confirms what earlier studies have revealed regarding the technological underdevelopment on the continent of Africa.³⁶⁰ This lack of infrastructure has greatly impacted part of the population that continues to be drawers of water and hewers of wood because of outdated technology. According to Ocholla-Ayayo, most of Africa's population still uses "rudimentary cultural elements which are ineffective to exploit natural resources necessary to feed its families and growing population."³⁶¹ For Ocholla-Ayayo, if in the twenty-first century any group of people are bereft of developmental ideas and this is not the catalyst for "fostering unity, common goals, the ideal of good life and security for survival and for bridging the gap between traditional and modern technological development," then it will be impossible for that country to achieve any economic progress.³⁶² For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa most of the population that are farmers continues to use cutlasses and hoes. In those places, too, the respective governments have made little effort to mechanize agriculture. When a culture is static, seems to have a propensity resist any change, and shows no sign of growth there is technological poverty.

The land tenure system and the primitive modes of agriculture for affect life in Ghana from politics to agriculture, urban development to economic growth. In societies such as Ghana, there are multiple triggers for the migration of youth to urban centers where they search of non-existent jobs. Furthermore, due to social changes, certain institutions have disappeared which

³⁶⁰ A.B.C. Ocholla-Ayayo, "The African Family in Development Crisis in the Second Millennium," *The African Anthropologist* 7, no. 1 (2000): 86.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

traditionally have helped in the inculcation of norms and values in children. As those entities disappeared, no new mechanism has evolved to put in place and preserve the rich Ghanaian cultural values. This being the case, I must agree with Ocholla-Ayayo who says that “today children are passing the age of norm and value implanting. They are missing the rules and moral which make a human being a cultural being, distinct from other animals.”³⁶³

The youth on the streets live in a cultural milieu with different norms and values from those of the mainline culture. Being with the street youth for the ten weeks I became acutely aware of how their morals have been compromised and corrupted. The words they use and the clothing they wear depict how sullied they have become as a result of being deprived a home life where they would receive tutelage on morals and values, and now living without parental care. I agree with Ocholla-Ayayo and Ogutu that

belief systems and ethical prescription once established by a given population in a given environment tend to generate customs and traditions, habits, and prejudices, loyalties and allegiances as well as practices that can drastically affect efforts to transform this potentially rich rural land. These belief systems and value systems as well as ethical prescriptions once established have a strong propensity to resist change. Thus, within a given environment . . . traditional values and beliefs of a people tend to remain constant or change only slowly and therefore, it is possible to analyze their impact on socio-economic development of a rural environment . . . where a number of agricultural schemes and other developmental projects are being initiated”³⁶⁴

Such resistance to change should have been an exception rather than the norm. In fact, twenty-first century urban African is seeing some changes. However, the rural set-up and its systems do not easily bend to change.

³⁶³ Ocholla-Ayayo and G.E.M Ogutu, quoted in Ocholla-Ayayo, 91.

³⁶⁴ Ocholla-Ayayo, 90.

Cultural change is more difficult when values and practices are deeply entrenched and highly esteemed by the people. This makes it very difficult to replace any cultural institution once it has been affected by any social change. For instance in Ghana, the Akan nubility rite (*bragoro*) which initiates a girl into adulthood has lost its essence and no longer imparts the moral knowledge it once did. Unfortunately, too, there has not been any institution to replace it for the purpose of inculcating cultural values. Even the church's confirmation classes and young adults groups are lack programs that might function as the nubility rite.

In the face of such cultural stagnation and the propensity of some to resist change, I contend that the cultural system needs to undergo a revolution. There is the need for transition to a system that will build of more schools in towns and villages. That system must have capability to develop the potentialities of the youth and withstand the Ghanaian cultural system's propensity for resisting change.

Ocholla-Ayayo suggests, then, that the static educational process must give way to critical thinking and "the qualities that engender progress: imagination, dissent, creativity, professionalism and competence, a sense of responsibility and duty, love for a job well done."³⁶⁵ A change in the educational system must teach the young African time management which will affect productivity and maintenance of its infrastructure. Such a change must also encourage girls to attend school, with scholarships given to them for further studies, particularly in mathematics and science. Education for girls should be the norm and not the exception, especially in rural Africa. Further, education should not be only for the privileged class, but for all citizens.

³⁶⁵ Ibid

However, the street youth I studied have only limited access to education at CAS and other centers. Too, there is the problem of combining their education with the need to earn a living. Before they migrated to the streets, earning a living was the responsibility of their parents. Now that arrangement is only enjoyed by those youth still living at home with their families. Those on the streets, and particularly those I interviewed, have only limited time for formal education and training. Due to these time limitations, most programs offered by centers such as CASC have become hands-on-trade learning. That is, a student chooses to train in a skill he or she can learn without much classroom time. This does not allow the street youth to improve their reading ability and other academic abilities that would improve their chances of securing meaningful and profitable work.

I perceive that Ghana (and all of Africa) in recent years is seeing a move towards pluralism as the continent leans towards Western forms of democracy and more populist participation/engagement in politics. But Africa's politics need to see more reforms which will ultimately bring tolerance and engender merit. Such political reforms will go a long way toward affecting the socio-economic policies of a country. In fact, good socio-economic policies coupled with a congenial political environment could serve as a catalyst for and invitation to both local and foreign investment, which in turn could promote employment opportunities for the youth of the country.

In the area of economics, where Africans have always been treated as producers of raw materials, there is a need for a revolution. It must start with the enforcement of regional integrations among African nations which hold potential for wider markets than those in which they currently engaged. For instance, trade among the fifteen member states of the Economic Commission of West African States should be encouraged to promote export and import within

the West Africa corridor. Additionally, if trade among the fifty one member states in the African Union is facilitated properly, that could help widen the markets for the imports and exports for the continent. I would contend that such an economic change could serve to eradicate youth unemployment and give hope to both school-going youth and drop-outs, alike. Employment opportunities must be a right of every citizen, not a privilege of a certain class.

Socialization of children in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa has become part of the basic educational system. The socialization of Africans must deal with the outmoded injunction on children which does not allow them to express themselves in the presence of adults. Thus, the notion that a child must be seen and not heard and the inferiority complex that stance engenders must give way to self-expression, especially in Ghanaian society. Children and youth must be allowed to make mistakes as they grow and learn from the experience. According to Ocholla-Ayayo, to escape cultural poverty African societies must “have more confidence, more trust in one another, and a commitment to a progress that benefits all.”³⁶⁶

The Rights of the Homeless Youth in Ghana

Of the seven girls interviewed for this study, four have been raped or gang-raped at least once. After enduring these gruesome attacks and suffering the humiliation and degradation of the assaults, these girls resigned themselves to having no protection or recourse via the justice system. The girls seemed to feel they have no rights whatsoever and that even if they reported their ordeal to the police, nothing will come of it. The girls feel that since they are homeless, no one cares for them or take their issues seriously. That, indeed, seems to be society’s position, too.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

My interviews also revealed that for about half of the street youth, having irresponsible fathers and mothers is an issue. According to my informants, they have not seen their fathers in a very long time. Some fathers have moved away and abandoned their families. Others have divorced their children's mother and re-married. In the case of *Galaxy*, his mother and uncle took his father's irresponsibility for him to the social welfare department. But they tired of the process and abandoned the case for lack of response from that department in the Brong Ahafo region. *Galaxy's* father continues to live with and work to support a different family while his son lives on the street. Such situation begs the question as to whether the Ghanaian child or youth has any rights or advocates.

Even though Ghana ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on February 5, 1990, this has not guaranteed implementation of or adherence to the tenets of that convention. In fact, judging from the historical existence of the convention in Ghana, one could easily assert that nothing concrete in terms of policies, programs, or institutions related to children's issues has been achieved.³⁶⁷ In the course of my study, I found that since the convention was ratified, governments have not made it a priority to allocate resources and put the infrastructure in place to facilitate and enforce the implementation of the convention's tenets. Furthermore, I realized that there are not adequate socio-political policies to back the tenets of the Convention. Hence, the insurmountable challenges which have resulted in a "huge gap between rhetoric and reality."³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Robert Ame, "Conclusion: The Future of Children's Rights in Ghana" in *Children's Rights in Ghana: Reality or Rhetoric?* eds. Robert Ame, Nana Araba Apt, DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga, and Albert Abane (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2011), 215.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

My study of the Children's Act indicates that ratification of the convention provides the opportunity for legal and other agencies the needed legitimacy to pursue the objective of protecting the rights and interests of children and youth in Ghana. Without the convention and the subsequent laws enacted as a result of the convention, organizations would have indulged in illegally pursuing violators of children's rights. The positive side of that is that the ratification and promulgation of other related laws, together with the Criminal Code Amendment Acts in 1994 and 1998, have endorsed and given platform to "human rights advocates, NGOs, and child protection agencies with the ability to pursue violators of children's rights."³⁶⁹

I am convinced that after enactments and promulgation of every law, including the UNCRC, the Children's Act, and the Domestic Violence Act in Ghana, trickle down the people of Ghana will take a proactive role in the process of promoting and enhancing children and youth rights. Thus, laws by themselves cannot guarantee the achievement of children and youth rights in Ghana. If left to the government of the day to take actions and initiatives of get the best out of the convention, most of the laws will gather dust on shelves.

It is when the citizenry takes responsibility for pursuing the interests and rights of children and youth that children and youth will be guaranteed adequate rights and protection for proper growth and development. Individual citizens, traditional rulers and governments, NGOs, and other institutions should embark upon and champion the cause of children and youth rights in the Ghana. The government should be challenged to live up to the obligation of providing human capital, budgetary allocations, and infrastructure for the enactment and enforcement of those laws, instruments, and policies intended to protect and prosper children and youth.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

I suggest that there is an urgent need for an attitudinal change in Ghana. It is a fact that a man can sire a child without taking any parental obligations and no sanctions are brought against him. In the course of this study it was revealed that there is little enforcement of the laws of child support. Further, the department of social welfare does not have adequate staff to the arrest and prosecute those who violate the child support laws. Parents, especially fathers, must change and honor their paternal obligations. As Robert Ame suggests, they should “take advantage of some of the new programs such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) of the National Social Protection Strategy.”³⁷⁰ Through LEAP, poverty stricken individuals and communities (particularly in rural areas) receive funds from the government for basic social services.³⁷¹

Parents are also encouraged to see children and youth as people with rights that must be respected, not treated as property they can abuse with impunity. In Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, children and youth are considered as “social insurance.” Thus, if parents treat their child well in childhood, when that child comes of age, he/she will take care of the parents in return. It is a “law” of reciprocity and is exemplified by the African maxim, “If someone looks after you to grow your teeth, you must also look after him [or her] to lose his [her] teeth.”³⁷²

Discussing the law of reciprocity between parents and children in Ghana, Afua Twum-Danso also made a point that children are expected to look after their parents as they looked after them when they were born and raised. She done quoted Awedoba to amplify her point by saying that

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 218.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

³⁷² Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 89.

The reciprocities between African parents and their children are life-long ones and are backed, not by legal requirements necessarily, but by normal and religious obligation. Society does not spare those African parents and children who fail in their reciprocal obligations. The recalcitrant child or parent may be ridiculed or gossiped about by concerned others. The aged parent may curse the negligent child who neglects that aged parent. Not only is this reciprocity life-long, it continues after the death of the parent and finds expression in religious presentations such as sacrifices and offerings at shrines erected to deceased parents in many African societies (2002:90)³⁷³

The “law” of reciprocity is the reason in most parts of Africa there are no old age homes or assisted living facilities for the elderly. It is considered shameful for grown children to send a parent to such institutions. It is considered as neglect of a parent who has taken good care of his or her children from birth. Adult children, motivated by reciprocity, are not only to show respect to their aged parents, but also should be able to make them feel wanted and venerated as a means to self-fulfillment in old age.³⁷⁴ Thus, a parent ought to cater for the growth and fulfillment of the child who in turn will give back to the parent when they cannot fend for themselves.

The Children’s Act of 1998 makes the strong point:

No parent shall deprive a child his welfare whether a) the parents of the child are married or not at the time of child’s birth, or b) the parents of the child continue to live together or not. . . . Every child has the right to life, dignity, respect, leisure, liberty, health, education and shelter from his parents. . . . Every parent has rights and responsibilities whether imposed by law or otherwise towards his child which include the duty to a) protect the child from neglect, discrimination, violence, abuse, exposure to physical and moral hazards and oppression, and b) provide good guidance, care, assistance and maintenance for the child and assurance of the child’s survival and development.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ Afua Twum-Danso, *Assessing the Progress of the 1998 Children’s Act of Ghana: Achievements, Opportunities, and Challenges of the First Ten Years*, in *Children’s Rights in Ghana*, *ibid*, 163

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁷⁵ The Children’s Act of Ghana, 1998 is Act 568 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, Date of Assent: December 30, 1998.

Another area of concern which I discovered in the course of this study is the maintenance and welfare of children and youth as explicated in the Children's Act. It is a well known and not surprising fact that in Ghana some men sire children and walk away without taking any responsibility for the child's welfare. Children like *Galaxy*, *Baby Naa*, and *Mina* will grow into adolescence without a father's provision of good guidance, care, assistance, or maintenance. Even the effort of *Galaxy's* mother and uncle to seek the assistance of social welfare to address the irresponsibility of *Galaxy's* father ended in frustration. That branch of the social welfare department which is expected to take the up issue was of no help to *Galaxy's* family, and so they abandoned their case.

It is my position that any parental negligence, violence, abuse, or exposure of a child or youth to physical and moral hazards and oppression should be severely punished. It is difficult to comprehend that in Ghana, because of a re-marriage, the child of previous marriage can become a *persona non grata* in the home. Parents like those of *Galaxy*, *Baby Naa*, and *Mina* should face the full rigors of the law for allowing that circumstance to befall their children. And as it is stated in section 19 of the Children's Act, in some instances of negligence and abuse children should be removed from the homes of the parents. Social welfare agencies, together with all institutions charged with working for the promotion of children's and youth's rights, must be empowered and resourced adequately so as to be able to carry out that mandate. Otherwise, child abuse and neglect will never cease and children and youth continue to be destitute on the streets of urban centers.

Having read the findings of the May 2005 NGO report to the UNCRC concerning the implementation of the Convention by the Republic of Ghana, I realized that virtually all the institutions related to and working for children's rights face serious resource and capacity

challenges in the form of budgetary allocations, human resources (i.e., staffing, training and development, remuneration, and logistical challenges). The implication is that these organizations, which include government agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service, are handicapped financially and in terms of human resources allocation and are not able to undertake their roles for the betterment of children.

My study also revealed another noticeable missing link for the preservation and implementation of the rights of children in Ghana. There is no explicit mention of street children in either the UNCRC or in the Children's Act of Ghana. This makes addressing the issue of street youth and children problematic since it gives the impression that the phenomenon is non-existent. As a result, it is very difficult for any organization in Ghana working for the rights of street youth to enforce the tenets of the UNCRC or the Children's Right. Because there is no explicit mention of street children in the UNCRC, Benitez argues that "street children do not belong to any vulnerable group whose special situation is recognized in international law and therefore their special needs are not addressed and [consequently] there is no enforcement mechanism to guarantee the principle of children enjoying their rights without discrimination or distinction"³⁷⁶

The problem which has brought about such an unfortunate situation is that the UNCRC does not mention or reference the street children/youth in that enactment, hence no government or service provider who is even signatory to the Convention can be held accountable for their inability to protect and provide service to this vulnerable group. This also means that

³⁷⁶ Benitez, 54.

organizations with assisting this population in most cases find difficulty in using the courts on behalf of street children.

Whatever the reason for the omission of street children and youth from the UNCRC, it is my contention that the government of Ghana must work with parliament towards the amendment of the Children's Act of 1998 to include street youth as a vulnerable group. In the real lived experience, street youth are more vulnerable than the youth living with their families in their homes. Already street youth have been orphaned by the negligence and abuse of their parents. The state should take the necessary action to avoid their being orphaned a second time. Street youth need adequate cover and are entitled to the protection of the laws and statutes of the land. When these laws are enacted and promulgated with the full backing of the government, the homeless youth, and all other vulnerable groups, stand to benefit greatly.

I conferred with officials at the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (specifically at the Children's Department of the Ministry) during this study. They confirmed for me that the provision of budgetary support and resource assistance led to the successful implementation of the School Feeding Program and the Capitation Grant. Under the Capitation Grant, the government offers sponsorship money in addition to a feeding program for a given number of pupils in each school selected for the scheme.³⁷⁷ These are model approaches that can work to move homeless youth off the streets. Other sources of financial help that could be harnessed to benefit the development of Ghanaian youth are banks, multi-national companies, and some foundations which have been established to address social issues. Should they respond positively to appeals for funds and contribute to the work for youth's and children's rights and relieving economic problems in Ghana, the institutions must enjoy some tax exemptions.

³⁷⁷ Ame, 108.

Pastoral Response and Implications for Ministry

As a result of interviews and analysis, the comments here are subjective (unavoidable) and objective (as expected in an academic setting). It is a situation described by Melissa Wilcox as “dancing on the fence.”³⁷⁸ I have considered my loyalty to the homeless youth because as Wilcox notes, “sitting on the fence turns out to be advantageous; not only does it grant us a view of both sides, but it also prevents us from getting too comfortable.”³⁷⁹ In fact, I began this study of the homeless youth phenomenon by “dancing on the fence,” but that made me uncomfortable as these young ones continue their migration to the street and live through marginalization and abuse with little intervention. I have also been made uncomfortable by the stories of these homeless youth whose present predicament stems from no sin of theirs against God or humanity, but circumstances which have plunged them into the quagmire. Being uncomfortable has, therefore, precipitated in me the desire to “get off the fence” and respond, even if only in a limited way, to the woes and cries of these marginalized and defenseless youngsters.

The worst of the stories I heard came from the seven girls interviewed for the study, who endured multiple rapes and gang rapes, with some now having unplanned children while still children themselves. My response to the rape issue extends to all women and girls, but

³⁷⁸ Melissa M. Wilcox, “Dancing on the Fence: Researching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Christians,” in *Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion*, eds. James V. Spickard, et al. (New York, NY: University Press, 2002), 59.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* I went into the study of the homeless youth with the view of doing academic work but a passion of pastoral inclinations urges me not only to be theoretical and intellectual. I’m passionately inclined to take the lived stories of these insiders of this troubling phenomenon, the homeless youth, very seriously and work assiduously towards eradication of youth homelessness. Also doing this work as pastoral ethnographer impressed upon me to abandon detachment and partiality which has always been the hallmark of objectivity. Rather, as I listened to the narratives of these informants, reflected upon them, and went back to them for further conversation, it was not a surprise to me that later I saw all my defenses crumbled and became more and more involved with my attachment and loyalty to these young lives.

particularly to those homeless youth whose presence in harm's way precipitated their being raped, often by their own homeless acquaintances. My pastoral position on the homeless youth issue, encumbrances, therefore elicited my strong conviction to pursue social justice work.

Karen M. O'Brien defines social justice work as "actions that contribute to the advancement of society and advocate for equal access to resources for marginalized or less fortunate individuals in our society."³⁸⁰ Social justice work, therefore, becomes for me an activity undertaken to eradicate the sources of streetism in Ghana. That activity will also include enhancing the lives of those already on the streets. That they engage in menial work at such young ages and live in squalled conditions is nothing compared to heinous acts of rape and abuse they endure on the street each day of their lives. These homeless youth seem not to have the rights of other Ghanaian youth. Therefore, they have limited or no access to the resources of the nation.

Bridging the gap between academia and social activism, the hope is to promote further research and inspire actions aimed at affecting existing structures, policies, and practices concerning homeless youth. Those activities will be formulated to help the vulnerable in society access the tools of self-determination.³⁸¹ The structural support system for children and youth in Ghana is very weak, particularly for the homeless youth population. As previously noted, they are not even listed among the vulnerable groups in government policies. In spite of the pomp and fanfare which welcomed the assent to the United Nations Children's Rights Convention, the

³⁸⁰ Karen M. O'Brien, "Empowering Undergraduate Students to Be Agents of Social Change: An Innovative Service Learning Course," in *Handbook for Social Justice in Counseling Psychology: Leadership, Vision, and Action*, eds. Rebecca L. Toporek, et al. (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2006), 60.

³⁸¹ Margaret E. Bell and Lisa A. Goodman, "Seeking Social Justice for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence: Real-World Struggles in Pursuit of Systemic Change," in *Handbook for Social Justice Work*, eds. Rebecca L. Toporek, et al. (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2006), 155.

Ghanaian government has yet to establish a shelter for the homeless populations.³⁸² Further, no legislation exists naming them as a vulnerable population, not even in Children's Right Act (1998) and National Youth Policy of Ghana (2010). This is but one aspect of the weak structure on which the future of the homeless youth population hangs. The system is in serious need of change and the change can come from advocacy work I envision.

The rationale for the creation a center for advocacy work is that the needed institutional changes cannot be effected by the effort of one person. Neither can they occur in a few weeks or months. The needed changes may take decades, but with agencies and institutions working together in a concerted effort, change may come about more quickly. This will require networking and linking with institutions that exist and operate with similar goals and objectives. Such organizations include but are not limited to CAS, churches, NGOs, child advocacy groups, governmental and private children's homes, and other kind-hearted institutions that aim at helping society to understand streetism, helping street youth to get off the streets and into stable living situations, and creating awareness regarding the plight of street youth.

With the street youth population recently estimated to be 61,492, efforts on behalf of that population require the arduous work of many that can utilize the maximum resources of the country. As a group work, we can work toward achieving the objectives set to the benefit the street youth. Without this group effort, they will remain unserved as the statutes, laws, and policies designed to protect them remain dusty files on the shelves of ministries, department, and agencies. The child advocacy groups I can work with include the Empowerment and Development Initiative Center and Curious Minds of Ghana, along with leaders of those

³⁸² Due to the lack of any governmental provision of shelter or any other alternative settlement arrangement for the homeless youth, this vulnerable group continues to live at the mercy of NGOs and churches, especially the Catholic Church which founded CASC.

children's homes which have been at the forefront on children's issues. With a few like-minded people together, we can begin our work starting with writing proposals to parliament regarding the enactment of a bill recognizing the homeless youth as a vulnerable population. Further, the bill should aim at taking concrete steps to address the problem of streetism.

This group can work to bring pressure to bear in seeking funding from sources such as the Board of Social Responsibility and Rural Development (BSRRD) of the Methodist Church Ghana and the Christian Council of Ghana. The Council once had a fund called "The School Dropout Scholarship Program," established for the Liberian refugees in the Buduburam settlement near Accra. The suggestion to the Council would be to reactivate the fund for the purpose of vocational training for homeless youth at the Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church. Funding should also be available to those who want to be reintegrated into the formal school system. The end result will be that youth acquiring skills necessary for gainful employment will not to continue to depend on help from government offices, agencies, and organizations.

Another important source of funding and assistance is the Otumfuo Educational Fund. The basic objective of that fund, by the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, in 1999, is to provide for the growing youth of Ghana equal learning opportunities to build a better future for themselves. Alleviation of poverty of in the entire society is also an objective of the fund. Since its establishment, the fund has assisted over 3,000 students from the first cycle to the tertiary level. According to the data provided at the fund's website, between 2000 and 2008 the fund assisted 900 students at the tertiary level; 1,200 at the second cycle level, and 730 at the first cycle level.³⁸³

³⁸³ Otumfuo Educational Fund, www.Otumfuo-charityfoundation.org (accessed August 8, 2012).

The fund has also contributed to the provision, renovation, and rehabilitation of some selected schools. Among the beneficiaries are Ola Girls Senior High School/Kenyase, SOS/Asiakwa and Tema, Achirensua Senior High School, and Ada Senior High School. The fund could help put some of the homeless youth back to school and others in vocational training. These youth will be encouraged to seize on this opportunity to develop themselves as no one but they can make them who they want to be for their future wellbeing.

The Methodist Church Ghana through the BSRRD seeks to help the poor and disadvantaged in communities, giving rural development and environmental protection high priority in its programs and services. Thus, the BSRRD could assist in organizing fund-raising campaigns and establishing scholarship schemes for some of the homeless youth who make it to senior high school and university. Additionally, universities will be enjoined to help with grants and financial aid for those deprived in society, such as the homeless youth and those from the poverty-stricken areas of Ghana. There is also a system in Ghana (similar to United States' Office of Affirmative Action) which guarantees university admission to students from the deprived areas of Ghana. However, the system fall short of the cut-out grade to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Kumasi), which could also be solicited as a place where homeless youth can pursue higher education.

Meso Level Intervention

Theological and Congregational Response

The choice of three ecological levels of interventions was based on my understanding of Jesus' identification with the homelessness and his subsequent response to their situation. Two biblical passages in particular passages, Matthew 8:18 and 25:40 seem relevant in this regard. In Matthew 8: 18, there is an encounter between Jesus and would-be disciples. In the ensuing discussion he responds to each person's situation. The response to the first is as emphatic as it is vivid in its confrontation of the request made by an unnamed but determined person: "And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'" (Matthew 8:20).

Jesus responded to this enthusiast by referencing his own homelessness and insecurity. In so doing, in my opinion, he demanded that all his disciples should be prepared to share in his deprivations and suffering. Jesus' answer also gave hint to how he lived his life all the while of his ministry. He showed how he had lived an unprotected life throughout his ministry and promised nothing short of that to his would-be disciples. In the conversation he reiterates the fact that if the master lives that way, so should the disciples.

Biblical scholars, such as Walter Brueggemann, believe that homelessness can be a condition which involves not only physical but social dislocation. Homelessness means one is no longer related to the family of origin and becomes a member of a community of wanderers. Being separated from his family of origin was part of Jesus' trajectory of life throughout his life and ministry. When he was just twelve years old, Jesus was left behind (or he stayed behind) after a festival visit to Jerusalem (Luke 2:43-49). And he was always on the move away from

home to the extent that even when his family came to visit him he identified himself with the people who seemed to be homeless like himself (Luke 8:19-21).

Identifying himself with such wanderers and the socially dislocated, and imposing this as an obligation for discipleship may not be an ideal and pleasant qualification for present day discipleship since by so doing one is instantly made to disown one's family of origin. But what is at issue here is that Jesus did not shy away from being a homeless person or a person living at the margins. The strange part of this is the fact that he made it one condition of discipleship. I see in this scenario a condition which circumstance imposed on Jesus. He, therefore, warned his would-be disciples to take note of that aspect of life. Some people will suffer, not by choice, but due to circumstances.

There is no denying the fact that some of the homeless youth I interviewed chose to be homeless. But in some cases this was due to the fact that their options were very limited. Others, out of ignorance, voluntarily chose to live on the streets. However, the crux of the issue here is that Jesus identified himself with prostitutes, thieves, tax-collectors, and many other social outcasts of his days. If the master did it why not his disciples? Matthew seems to suggest there is another requirement for winning a place in the kingdom of God: "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25: 40).

In pronouncing judgment, Jesus points to why the righteous merited the king's favor. According to Jesus, caring for his kin—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner—society is caring for him. Thus, serving his designated representatives is equal to serving the king, the Lord. The way in which Jesus refers to his representatives—the least—denotes marginalization and people at the fringe of life.

Christ states his involvement and relationship to such social outcasts. Thus, in that sense, I strongly agree with Brueggeman that whoever chooses the path of caring is “deeply involved with such people [and it] means to be implicated in their predicament, to be incriminatingly linked to their situation, and no doubt to be guilty by association.”³⁸⁴ This goes beyond caring by giving Christmas Day basket or occasional donations to those in need. Identifying and caring for the homeless youth means being deeply involved with them and being implicated in their predicament. They are an excluded people in society like those in the category Jesus mentions in Matthew 25. Their situation, therefore, calls for something more profound than the altruistic endeavors. It needs more practical and comprehensive planning towards such care.³⁸⁵

The church’s apathetic approach to the homeless youth in Ghana means being found guilty, according to this passage from Matthew: “Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me’” (Matthew 25:45). The homeless youth I have encountered in the course of this study are in this dire situation not by choice but because they have been pushed and pulled into it by many factors, including poverty, death of parents, divorce, family neglect, parents inability to provide for their children, youth who want to be on their own, to find work, and being attracted by both work and social amenities in the cities. As Jesus draws attention to his own homelessness, I believe he points the church’s attention to such people in society today. The people called Christians may not need to be homeless by their choice in order to be disciples of Jesus, but they can identify themselves with such needy people around them.

³⁸⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Based on the NRSV-Year A* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 577.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

In Ghana, I realized that only the Catholic Church has a comprehensive program for the homeless youth. Most of the churches may be engaged in other social programs but none appears ready to embark on such a public obligation as caring for the homeless. Preaching and exhortations from the pulpit on caring for the needy, especially the homeless, is not enough. Churches need to take it as their public role and obligation to address this social menace in Ghana. The church in Ghana must act, and act now, as it continues to hear the indictment of Jesus' teaching: "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matthew 25: 45).

Social Justice Work as Pastoral Response

In undertaking this study, I discovered that if I am to be of help to these homeless youth in Ghana, then I must work as an advocate through social justice work to combat the phenomenon of streetism. This will enable me work hand in hand with other professionals such as social workers, journalists, political activists, and community organizers endeavoring to eradicate streetism. My choice to advocate through social justice work and not remain working only as a pastoral counselor should be understood in context. The gargantuan proportion of streetism in Ghana confounds reasoning. I believe more "activism" is required to address the issue than one can do in the counseling setting. Because the city of Accra is home to over 60,000 homeless youth, more than counseling and occasional write-ups is required to help these marginal youths. The situation calls for consciously and conscientiously bridging the divide between activists and theoreticians. My shift to from pastoral counseling to social justice work, then, is an effort to adopt an innovative methodology. According to African Womanist scholars

Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, it is necessary to “bridge the divide between the activist and the theoretical space at times.”³⁸⁶

During my ten-week study and stay in Ghana, I realized that reporters, columnists, and scholars would occasionally write for media houses pieces on issues related to streetism. Discussions and phone-ins occurred whenever issues about the homeless youth appeared in the print media. The issue would heat up within that week, then fade away without any action being taken by activists or the government. In all these instances, I perceived that there was lack of coordination and leadership for seeing an issue through to a logical and productive conclusion.

The central plank of the strategy which emerges from this study is the creation of a hub, a kind of an epicenter, which will bring together activists for study-reflection and action-study aimed at the eradication of streetism. The center will be a rallying point for the coordination and leadership of activists whose focus is eliminating streetism in Ghana.

Such center can link and relate well with the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The Circle is “engaged in theological dialogue with the cultures, religions, sacred writings and oral stories, which shape African context and define the women of this continent.”³⁸⁷ It is an organization which welcomes all committed women in the study and writing of religion and culture which can use literature to change the African system embedded in patriarchy. As concerned theologians who work towards the elimination of patriarchy and all sorts of inimical activities against humanity, it is for a good reason that such a wonderful organization to be involved in the eradication of streetism in Ghana. This is *sine qua non* to any

³⁸⁶ Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, “*Treading Softly but Firmly*,” *African Women, Religion, and Health in African Women, Religion, and Health: Women from the Margins: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, eds. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 7.

³⁸⁷ Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2006) 21

comprehensive Christian commitment towards humanity, especially the youth and the vulnerable in this society.

Teaching Interventions within the Church Community

Helping homeless youth and parents, and other parents could start with an existing church structure from which to launch the effort. Such a structure would be a good platform for elucidating the important issues related to youth homelessness, such as child development in Africa. Providing a deeper understanding of scripture will enable members to render practical services to God, which is one of the basic principles of the organization. It also means helping them apply the Christian faith to their personal, social, and economic life as they grow into adulthood.

Teaching the homeless youth will begin in a group of their own peers and help them integrate into the larger community so that they might relate well with everyone. As these homeless youth fellowship on a weekly basis with members of the church community, it will help erase any false perception the larger community might have about those on the street. This can also bridge the gap between both populations and serve to build self-confidence in the street youth.

Early Childhood Development in the African Context

Michael Nichols says that no child can develop without a “sublime indifference to the interpersonal world.”³⁸⁸ The ideal and enabling environment for the healthy growth of every

³⁸⁸ Michael Nichols, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2010), 222 .

child is, according to D. W. Winnicott, “an average expectable environment with good-enough mothering.”³⁸⁹ Winnicott has postulated earlier that “the good-enough ‘mother’ (not necessarily the infant’s mother) is one who makes active adaptation to the infant’s needs, an active adaptation that gradually lessens, according to the infant’s growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration.”³⁹⁰

Thus, a good-enough parenting is a mother’s capacity towards the provision of security for the child. Additionally, the child’s healthy ego development is contingent upon the mother or the caretaker’s own security. The good-enough parent ought to exude security in everything she does and be able to channel the same to the infant. All her energy is exhausted in the caring of the infant, thus robbing herself of many pleasures from life and even marriage to be able to focus on that of the infant.³⁹¹ Since the early attachment of the child to the mother or caretaker mother is very crucial for a healthy maturity, this is a lesson every mother or prospective mother should know.

According to Robert LeVine and others who studied the Gusii people of Morongo, Kenya, there is a cultural script for the early development of children. Their research examined the lives of Gusii people as compared to the lives of those in the suburban environment of Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States.³⁹² For the purpose of this work, I will use only the

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, UK: Routledge, 1971), 13.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Robert A. LeVine, *Child Care and Culture: Lessons from Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 248.

cultural script from the Gusii people as it is a good representation of the way in which child development occurs in Ghana.

Universal child care and development are based on three premises: moral direction, a pragmatic design, and a set of conventional scripts for action. LeVine posits that the moral direction is the normative assumption about how mothers and caregivers can achieve the ideal goals for the development of an infant. The pragmatic design is devoted to the attainment of those goals mothers are devoted to and “specific behavioral devices used, and the schedule for their deployment over infancy and early childhood.”³⁹³ Their conventional script for action explains the “expected sequences of caregiving behavior in specific situations, such as responding to the infant’s states and communicative signals. They are considered not only normal but natural and necessary.”³⁹⁴

Acquiring Respect and Obedience

Respect and obedience in the Ghanaian as in Gusii setting are long-term goals of socialization. In parent or mostly mother-child relationship, “the mother does not ‘inculcate’ these virtues once and for all; she provides age-appropriate experience constituting preparation for the next setting in the child’s life.”³⁹⁵ Thus, the child learns skills and other virtuous behavior by participation in the domestic setting. Again, it is the mother’s expectation that the child will also learn what is necessary from the older siblings who might have been delegated “tasks that

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ LeVine, 265.

need doing and general responsibility for the home in her absence.”³⁹⁶ In fact, where there has been a problem for the growing child is the application part of the ‘Respect-Obedience’ model which states: Look down, don’t initiate speech, don’t talk back, do what you’re told, and get away as soon as possible. The wisdom in this domestic “code” does not come close to authorization of “a closed system of authorization repression for the child but guided participation in appropriate face-to-face relations with those above the child in a hierarchy.”³⁹⁷

The growing child of the twenty-first century has a problem with such arrangements and there is always a growing tendency of rebellion among most youths. I believe such codes were enacted in a certain historical context which is different from the present times. Therefore, its application continues to result in parent-child clashes in most households. Parents who strictly apply the code are bound to clash with growing adolescent like *Azumi* who wanted her mother and step-father to listen to what she believes is right. Thus, even if *Scholes* has protested against leaving Accra to live in Kasoia with his parents because of his perceived lack of amenities in the new settlement. He could have been dissuaded from leaving. Instead, as he was scolded and beaten. So he left home for the street without their knowledge and he has remained there since.

The respect-obedience code could be taught to the mothers in selected communities, as well as to the growing number of homeless mothers so as to avoid some pertinent mistakes made by their own parents. Such an approach could be of immense help in stemming the tide of parent-child confrontations that beset and disrupt the harmony in many families.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 266.

Micro Level Intervention

Counseling the Homeless Youth

In this section I propose a program of action which involves pastoral care and counseling for street youth and families, small groups, and mentoring programs to help alleviate the problems facing this population. Street youth are a population that is being pulled away from a problem they have found unsolvable or are unable to deal with in their homes. They are “running from” unsolvable problems at their home situations such as “sexual abuse, family conflict, changes in family structure, or excessive parental expectations and control.”³⁹⁸ Those who migrate to the streets are also pushed to where they believe they will find hope, even if it is false. They are “running to” some pleasures, places, and people elsewhere, attracted to what they are unable to what they do not find in their own home. Thus youth run to things they believe will offer them a better fate, or run away from situations cause them frustration and despair.³⁹⁹

Researchers have found that “the stresses of homelessness and the lack of an adequate support system threaten the psychological and physical well-being of runaways who are trying to survive on the streets. These youth experience exploitation, depression, drug use, and suicidal thoughts.”⁴⁰⁰ I observed this to be true of the street youth in Ghana I interviewed for this study. In fact, most of those who participated in the study have indulged in unprotected sex, have been raped, and continue to be exploited on the streets on daily basis. Consequently, this population is in need of support to cope with their circumstances. Individual, family, and group therapy would

³⁹⁸ Andrew J. Weaver, John D. Preston, and Leigh W. Jerome, *Counseling Troubled Teens & Their Families: A Handbook for Pastors and Youth Workers* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 132.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

serve to “productively address issues that will prepare the youth for successful independent living.”⁴⁰¹

Counseling the Homeless Youth through Psychotherapy

Most of the homeless youth I observed and those who participated in my study have been away from home for at least one year. Others have not visited their families of origin in the last year, and may not see them in the next few years. Without the guidance of parents, these youth need assistance in the organizing their lives for adulthood. A counselor is the likely person to help them see ways in which they can grow to become well-groomed adults despite the injuries to their “selves” they carry now. These youth need a healing relationship which could prevent the stunting of their growth. Such healing relationship could help them recover from the self-inflicted injuries they have experienced during their lives on the street.

The pastoral counselor/therapist who assists the homeless youth could be the one who provides a relational touch, the balm for their wounds. The counselor could be the “missing parent” they have long needed. According Kohut, there is a stage in a person’s life when there is the need to have nourishment from others:

Throughout his [her] life a person will experience himself [herself] as a cohesive harmonious firm unit in time and space, connected with his [her] past and pointing meaningfully into a creative, productive future, [but] only as long as, at each stage in his [her] life, he [she] experiences certain representatives of his [her] human surroundings as joyfully responding to him [her], as available to him [her] as sources of idealized strength and calmness.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (ed) Arnold Goldberg (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 52.

The understanding here is that in everyone's life there is the need to help shore up the self which may be lacking strength, calm, or in need of experiencing the presence of certain essential likeness. For Kohut, it is important for a person to draw on nourishment for healthy living. That need is present from early childhood (when the child needs the parent at certain important junctures of its life) through adulthood. Kohut identifies three essential needs for healthy living—the “need to experience mirroring and acceptance, the need to experience merger with greatness, strength, and calmness, and the need to experience the presence of essential likeness.”⁴⁰³

For most of a person's life there is always the need for the experience of acceptance, in good or bad times. A person needs to experience mirroring, which he or she takes beyond the present into the future. The “presence of essential likeness” is what parents and significant others normally offer children as they relate with over the course their life time. When that important presence is missing, a certain vitality that brings the illumination of significance will also be missing.

Kohut used his relationship with one of his clients, Miss F., to illustrate the impact on a person when they are denied the “presence of essential likeness.” When time came for Kohut to take vacation and tell Miss F. of his impending absence, it became apparent that Miss F. was going to suffer from the loss of a significant one, news which she loathed to hear. According to Kohut, Miss F. had been sustained by his presence during their time together. As he put it, “her self was sustained simply by the presence of someone she knew was sufficiently like her to understand her and to be understood by her.”⁴⁰⁴ Miss F. was in no position to countenance the

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 192.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

loss of that significant other, that selfobject, which helped to shore up what was missing in her life and make her the human she needed to be. She detested the absence she was about to endure. It would be painful and she needed no one, not even Kohut, to remind her of that.

The homeless youth who participated in my study, as well as many others on the street, continue to live their lives outside their families of origin are missing that important “presence of essential likeness.” They need the nourishment and substance that presence can offer their personhood now and in the future. Empowering of the homeless youth by a counselor or therapist can help them transition out of the streets and into normal life apart from a homeless situation.

Empathy in Counseling

According to Kohut, empathy should be the best of all channels through which the counselor could help this particular patient. He posits that empathy is “vicarious introspection” and believes it even defines psychoanalysis.⁴⁰⁵ For Kohut, empathy is a “person’s attempt to experience the inner life of another while simultaneously retaining the stance of an objective observer.”⁴⁰⁶ It is through empathy that an analyst verbalizes the patient’s feeling back to him or her. Thus, through empathy, the analyst is able to express to the patient his/her inner state and “demonstrate to him [her] that he [she] has been understood.”⁴⁰⁷ It is through empathy, then, that

405 Kohut, 175.

406 Ibid.

407 Ibid., 176.

when a friend puts the hand to another person's shoulder there comes the feeling that someone is expressing care and understanding.⁴⁰⁸

Even when the patient has deteriorated and descended into the abyss of despair and frustration, with empathy the counselor is expected to lift the patient up from that depth. Kohut goes on to explain that there are three types of patients who the analyst could help heal and restore into a psychological healthy person. The first type of patient is the one that is consumed by grandiosity. According to Kohut, this patient is the one "in which the damaged pole of ambitions attempts to elicit the confirming-approving responses of the selfobjects."⁴⁰⁹ For this patient, it is through the reflective mirroring back of the person's perceived grandiosity that makes the person feels well. The patient is made to believe that he or she is capable of achieving one's ambition no matter how illusive it may be. Such patients are misguided by their false perception of themselves.

A second type of patient are "those in which the damaged pole of ideals searches for a selfobject that will accept its idealization."⁴¹⁰

408, Ibid, 192

409, ibid

410, ibid

Thus, there is idealizing transference which makes the patient idealize the analyst as a selfobject. In those cases, the analyst allows him/herself to be idealized so as to permit the relationship to work. The analyst could even be idealized as a superhuman when he/she is able to perceive the inner feelings of the patient.

The third type of patient is the one “in which the damaged intermediate area of talents and skills seeks a selfobject that will make itself available for the reassuring experience of essential likeness (twinship or alter ego transference).⁴¹¹ This is when the patient believes he or she shares the same talents and skills with the analyst. Robert Dykstra reports the case of a younger man, John Turner, whose encounter with Elijah Anderson presented an example of a youthful narcissist. Dykstra reports that “from the beginning and throughout their relationship, Anderson assumed the role of a reflective mirror, giving relatively passive but deeply attentive audience to John’s feelings, needs, and desires. . . . He believed and supported John at a time when the young man desperately needed both. This mirror transference likely was enhanced because Anderson felt little need to play a role of moral counselor to John.”⁴¹²

In another instance, after John Turner had introduced Anderson to his mother at the courthouse where he had been scheduled for hearing, Dykstra notes “that John initially chose to introduce himself to Anderson at all indicates that he likely esteemed Anderson from afar. The idealizing transference is equally evident at times when John perceived as magical Anderson’s ability to transform legal fixes and to obtain jobs for him.”⁴¹³ Then Dykstra made a case of twinship transference about Anderson’s and John’s relationship, positing that “one could argue,

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 193.

⁴¹² Robert C. Dykstra, *Counseling Troubled Youth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), 75.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

for example, in support of the twinship transference—of John’s assuming that he is like Anderson.”⁴¹⁴

Such could be a counselor’s relationship with the homeless youth. It is possible an analyst will be in relationship with some of these youth and have all the three transferences taking place. John Turner was once homeless and a convict who made all the transferences played out in the relationship with his therapist. A homeless youth would want a counselor to be a reflective mirror for him/her by believing in him or her no matter the extent of illusion and grandiosity he/she he perceives in him/herself.

It will not be any wonder if a homeless youth idealize a counselor as a magician who could do everything for him or her in whatever situation. Such high hopes have always been there in the homeless youth who perceive that some people, such as pastors, social workers, and counselors, are capable of doing anything. In some cases, the youth even convince themselves that they are as wise and intelligent as some of the researchers whom they have encountered.

Counseling the Homeless through Narrative Approach

Narrative pastoral care can be a very important tool for counseling the homeless youth. It is a process in which a counselor can give voice to the homeless youth, helping them to construct meaning of their own experiences and bring to the fore their own identity and inherited resources. This narrative approach to pastoral care with homeless youth will ultimately help me give authority to them to become authors of their own life story, while at the same time minimizing any external authority. Using the narrative counseling model with these youth in a

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

church community and meeting them in groups or individually will position me to help them reclaim their voices even as they continue in their homeless situations.

The pastoral counselor can use a personal story spoken in the voice of this population. This can be life-enabling for the homeless youth, more refreshing and empowering than stories that others talk about to them.⁴¹⁵ Giving these homeless youth the space and opportunity to tell their own stories with acceptance, positive regard, and without blaming them will enhance their confidence and give them courage to meet the challenges they face in their lives. As Carl Rogers notes, the self is greatly enhanced when the pastoral counselor “considers these homeless youth to be persons of unconditional self-worth, in fact of greater value in spite of some of their present anti-social behavior.”⁴¹⁶

The narrative counseling approach will also help the homeless youth to re-author their own life stories. With storytelling, the pastoral counselor can help this population to understand how Africans participate in communal life with its formal and informal experiences, and verbal, musical, and interactive ways. This can be essential for their day to day living. With the narrative counseling approach the homeless youth can understand how important a story is for conveying to people God’s presence in day-to-day life. Biblical stories can help them make a choice as to whether or not they will walk with God.⁴¹⁷

Stories about noble people such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, and Nelson Mandela can inspire hope and vision to these despairing youth whose lives are on the verge of being stunted. They can learn how, in spite of danger and death, with courage and tenacity of

⁴¹⁵ Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women. A Narrative Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 87.

⁴¹⁶ Carl Rogers: *On Becoming a Person. A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 185.

⁴¹⁷ Oduyoye, 17.

purpose, these people helped their countries gain freedom from their colonial masters. Teaching the homeless youth the history behind Ghana and other African countries' independent anniversaries and telling them the stories of struggles from the shackles of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism give them hope and inspire them to persevere.

It is my hope and vision that through these lessons the homeless youth and all those who participate in such classes will come to believe that they can move from their present life situations to another level of life if they can act on their own resourcefulness with perseverance and strength. Continuing to live by looking to others for help will only fuel dependency and keep them stuck in their homeless and helpless situations.

Adopting the Collective Narrative Practice in Counseling

Collective Narrative Practice in Counseling could be used for children and youth who have experienced rape, being abused, abandonment, neglect, denying food, chasing children away from home, children living on the streets, and many other problematic issues.⁴¹⁸ Such a narrative model could help the homeless youth to talk about their sadness, physical hurt, and any harm experienced. This is a collective conversation form of sharing their experiences as how they came by the streets and how each and every one of them is coping with life out there on the streets. Being knowledgeable with each other's problem and hurt, help them to protect themselves. This can help the homeless youth who participate in such a counseling process develop enough coping skills as well as learning how to use their own agency in a productive way.

⁴¹⁸ David Denborough, *Collective Narrative Practice: Responding to Individuals, Groups, and Communities who have Experienced Trauma* (Adelaide, [South Australia], Dulwich Center Publications, 2008) 86

Individual Cognitive Therapy with the Homeless Youth

A homeless youth is an adolescent in crisis. Therefore, any pastoral care and counseling approach should take that particular situation into consideration. To be a pastor offering pastoral care and counseling to these youth in their peculiar situations demands that the counselor put a premium on interpersonal factors such as non-possessive warmth and interpersonal integrity as he/she sits with these children. An open, above-board approach and the ability to empathize with each troubled teen (who has likely become suspicious of and rebellious toward any adult's authority) is crucial.⁴¹⁹ The homeless youth who sits with the counselor would want to know and understand that the pastoral counselor's role is to help build a trust between them. In a crisis situation this requires conscious effort on the counselor's part to be deliberate, direct, and in control of any meeting.⁴²⁰

Every effort must be made to make the homeless youth to feel safe and comfortable with the questions the counselor puts forward and, reciprocally, to feel free to ask questions of the counselor. In whatever situation the pastoral counselor encounters the homeless youth, it must be borne in mind that homeless youth are persons of unconditional self-worth, in fact of great value in spite of some of their present anti-social behavior.⁴²¹

This regard will communicate to the adolescent his/her importance to the counselor. To premise the therapeutic relationship on the importance of this homeless youth allows the pastoral counselor or therapist to ask what Ron Taffel labels as "unaskable questions." The unaskable

⁴¹⁹ G. Wade Rowatt Jr., *Pastoral Care with Adolescents in Crisis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 59.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴²¹ Rogers, 185.

questions address issues of sex, drugs, eating habit, love, and second-family (acquaintances on the street) which are deemed gray areas that often are not discussed in most families but should be on table with the homeless youth.⁴²²

My experience with street youth suggests that one of the best option for counseling this population is through cognitive therapy. This approach can be immensely helpful in modifying homeless youth's behavior and changing a distorted thinking.⁴²³ Often the homeless youth feels he/she is unacceptable because he/she has a negative self-image due to the environment in which he/she lives, lack of hope for now and the future, and depression.⁴²⁴ Rowatt contends that "cognitive therapy is particularly helpful with adolescents [because it enables them] to think more accurately about themselves, their environment, and their future, as thought distortions are corrected, and depression and hopelessness are replaced by hope and a corresponding sense of joy."⁴²⁵ Cognitive therapy, in a sense, can help homeless youth towards productive actions which can generate behavioral change. Rowatt suggests cognitive therapy sessions should be brief, with regular encounters and certain positive reinforcements attached to them.⁴²⁶ Positive feedback for those who find themselves in therapy will serve as reinforcement, which will encourage them to return for further therapeutic encounters.

⁴²² Ron Taffel, *Breaking Through to Teens: A New Psychotherapy for the New Adolescence* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005), 79.

⁴²³ Rowatt, 67.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

Group Counseling for the Homeless Youth

Group counseling should be among the therapeutic used with homeless youth. Such a model can address the needs of many in this population within a short amount of time. The group setting will be easy for some of the homeless youth as the growth of their “self” has been stunted and inhibited in many ways. In the course of my interviews with the fifteen selected youth, I found most have developed some personality disorders. Arthur Freeman and Jessica Stewart suggest that these disorders are “long-standing, compulsive, rigid patterns of perceiving, interpreting, and responding to one’s environment and to oneself that are characteristic of the individual’s functioning and generally present across a wide range of life situations.”⁴²⁷ Such disorders can account for occasional interpersonal relational problems such as kicking others, the use of abusive language, stealing from each other when these homeless adolescents come together.

My encounters with the selected group, along with my observation of others in the homeless youth community, enable me to consider such personality disorders as issues which surface and, along with other social skill deficits, cause interpersonal difficulties.⁴²⁸ The schemas of the homeless youth have become so powerful and unyielding that they have unrealistic beliefs about themselves, others, and the world. To address such a problem requires the adoption of cognitive-behavioral therapy, which is goal oriented in the short term and problem-oriented in

⁴²⁷ Arthur Freeman and Jessica Stewart “Personality Disorder” in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy in Groups Ed. Peter J. Bieling, Randi E. McCabe, Martin M. Antony (New York, The Guilford Press, 2006) p 324.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

the long term.⁴²⁹ It is reasonable, therefore, to provide immediate attention and attend to the many who are experiencing such problems with group counseling.

In order to gather homeless youth for group counseling, it is ideal for the therapist to adopt and start with those who are at Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church in Accra and use that as the center for such a program. That church has adopted a handful of the street youth and they are engaged in basket weaving. Using this existing “group” of homeless youth, one does not have to “start from the scratch” and can work within and expand the existing structure. During the time of my study, I visited the church and briefly encountered the group of homeless youth training at the center. This group can meet twice in a week for group counseling. With an orientation program, the street youth could be educated about the norms of such group meetings. Ideally, fifteen is the maximum number of participants for the group sessions.

Reasons for Group Therapy Engagement

In each group setting, the counselor can teach the street youth to understand that what Freeman and Stewart refer to as “self-control of thoughts, feelings, and behavior is not only possible, but it is also an essential goal of therapy.”⁴³⁰ It is in this setting that they can encourage each other to be active participants in the process of treatment as they have come to believe that such a group promotes collaboration in agenda setting, role playing, and self-help exercises.⁴³¹ This will be possible when activities and programs of the group become interesting and attractive

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 327.

⁴³⁰ Freeman and Stewart, 327.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

to them. In such a setting, a therapist would be able to glimpse the individual's "repertoire of interpersonal responses."⁴³² The amount of time spent in a meeting would be forty minutes. I found it to be the case that when my sessions with the homeless youth extended beyond forty minutes, they appeared bored, tired, and disinterested.

Universality, Related, and Support System

By participating in group activities and sharing their daily experiences with one another, the participants learn that "they are not alone in their suffering and that other people have problems of a similar nature."⁴³³ Their encounters with others who have experiences similar to theirs can provide insights not available in an individual therapy setting, and it is difficult to dismiss what they hear from their street peers. Additionally, a group can become like their families of origin from which they have been separated from for a very long time. Thus, a group can fill the void created when the youth migrated from their families and homes. It can also help promote appropriate relational skills. It is in such a group setting that they can be helped to modify external life stressors which beset them regularly on the street.⁴³⁴

Psycho-Education, Modeling, and Social Skills Practice

Group therapy settings for the homeless youth as envisioned here could increase the desire for them to come together for information sharing and discussion. Thus, certain specific

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Freeman and Stewart, 328.

psycho-educational issues could be addressed in a format suitable for group participants. This would enable the therapist to teach and reinforce the basic principles of cognitive behavioral therapy on experimental basis.⁴³⁵ Moreover, a group setting is important in that it offers group members the opportunity to model the good behaviors of other group members. It is in such a setting that effective coping strategies like assertiveness, empathic responses, goal setting, and problem solving can be learned. A well-structured group setting can also enhance the development of social skills as participants learn, discuss, and participate in role-playing.⁴³⁶

Various Groups

Groups can be arranged according to various personality disorders of the homeless youth. The disorders that may be found in the homeless youth population include antisocial/delinquent, avoidant, and dependant personality disorder. However, it is desirable include in a group of youth with a specific disorder those do not suffer with a personality disorder. These individuals serve as positive role models for those needing treatment for a disorder.

Antisocial/Delinquent Personality Disorder

According to Freeman and Stewart, the antisocial or delinquent personality disorder is an “enduring pattern of irresponsible, impulsive, and aggressive actions, as well as irritability, a low frustration tolerance, and anger.”⁴³⁷ This type of disorder abounds among the homeless youth.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 328-329.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 336.

Their pervasive patterns of life are exemplified in their violation and disregard for the rights of others, their inability to conform to certain social norms, as well as their manipulation and deceitful dealings with others.⁴³⁸ Those with the antisocial/delinquent personality disorder find it very difficult to change their behavior due to their perception that the world is hostile and others are out there to get them.

I found that *Kabu* and *NDC* have an antisocial/delinquent personality disorder. They are want to disregard with impunity any rules at CAS. They have been discharged from the center a couple of times. When re-admitted, their behavior is worse than before they were dismissed. Youth like *Kabu* and *NDC* are ruled by self-interest. It takes good leadership in group therapy to motivate them towards behavior change. Initially in a group setting, those with an antisocial/delinquent personality disorder will always mistrust others in the group. They will have no interest in revealing their vulnerabilities as they fear being mistreated by others.⁴³⁹ Long-term goals are very difficult for people with this personality disorder and they are not easy counselees with whom to work.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is best for participants with antisocial/delinquent personality disorder “because it offers an opportunity for like-minded patients to provide feedback about the impact of each other’s behavior and an opportunity for role playing to develop more communication and problem solving skills.”⁴⁴⁰ Once comfortable in this

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 337.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

therapeutic environment, they are capable of confronting other group members' evasive or manipulative pattern of life. They help each other to deal with any counterproductive attitudes.⁴⁴¹

Avoidant Personality Character Traits

When I first met with *Cisse* at CAS, I thought he was seriously withdrawn. He had limited language skills, both English and Akan. However, in time I realized that he rarely speaks in any group setting. Over time, I came to understand that he did not speak because he feared rejection and being humiliated by others in any group setting. He revealed that his father rejected for reasons unknown to *Cisse*. Later, *Cisse's* mother found her financial resources made it impossible for *Cisse* to live with her. Scholes' experience was that he did not complete the junior high school because his family did not have the money. He finds talking in group problematic. He moves around mostly with *Cisse* because both fear a repeat of the "mess up" they endured in the presence of their street peers. Scholes also finds it difficult to pronounce any English words. Hence his withdrawn appearance during group activities. Both *Cisse* and *Scholes* confided in me that their acquaintances call them "village boys" because they migrated from a rural area. This makes difficult relating with others.

Those youth like *Cisse* and *Scholes* with avoidant character-trait usually appear to be socially withdrawn when actually they are timid, socially uncomfortable, and fear being negatively evaluated by others.⁴⁴² In fact both *Cisse* and *Scholes* were always wary of criticism and being embarrassed by others. For those reasons they have limited social interactions even

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 341.

though they desire interpersonal relationships. The motive for avoiding interactions stems from their belief that “they are unacceptable to others and will therefore be humiliated, hurt, rejected, and devastated if they attempt to initiate close relationships.”⁴⁴³ I found *Cisse* and *Scholes* always vigilant for any signs that their behavior might result in their humiliation or hurt. I noted, too, that they are also prone to misinterpret most every action of their peers. Thus, *Cisse*’s and *Scholes*’ self-protection instincts motivate them to avoid confronting their own painful thoughts and feelings as they relate with others. Because they believe they could not adequately cope with distress in interpersonal relationship, they avoided certain groups of people.⁴⁴⁴

Forming a therapeutic working relationship with youth like *Cisse* and *Scholes* has its own problems because of the cognitive distortions and wariness caused by their negative self awareness.⁴⁴⁵ They can only participate and engage in interpersonal relationships if they believe they will be accepted. Before they can trust in a group setting, they must be re-oriented in short-term, individual therapy where they can learn social skills that allow them to navigate basic interactions and communications. Such a therapeutic relationship in a benign, non-threatening environment can lead to their being able to cope with group interactions.⁴⁴⁶

Counseling the Depressive Homeless Youth

Mina’s mother died when giving birth to her. Her father then absconded when *Mina* was an infant. She had to quit primary school and subsequently drifted to the street at age twelve

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 342.

because her grandmother, with whom she was living, was poor and could not care for her. On the street, *Mina* encountered many adversities. She was beaten, raped, and became pregnant. She now has a two-year old daughter. She cannot work as a porter because the child gets sick too often when she carries the child with her to work. So *Mina* relies on her participation in Ubuntu drama at CAS for subsistence. My encounter with *Mina* revealed that she sometimes go without food for a day. Finding money to purchase her child's medication is also a problem.

Weaver believes that there are some stressful life events which can easily trigger depression for adolescents like *Mina*. Those life events include but are not limited to death of a parent and the bereavement that follows such a crisis.⁴⁴⁷ Depressed teens are also believed lack general coping skills. They are prone to drug and alcohol use. According to Weaver, before youth are diagnosed as having major depression, they should have experienced two weeks or more of feeling sad, gloomy, depressed, irritable, or experiencing a loss of interest, motivation, or enjoyment in usual activities.⁴⁴⁸ Additionally, a depressed adolescent must have experienced four of the following symptoms: fatigue/loss of energy, lethargy/increased restlessness (agitation), loss of appetite/weight or excessive appetite/weight gain, difficulty sleeping/sleeping too much, loss of social/sexual interest, feelings of worthlessness/excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, feeling that life is not worth living, and wanting to die/feeling suicidal.⁴⁴⁹

Mina had lost a considerable amount of weight. Often she appeared to be extremely tired after in Ubuntu drama. Additionally, her social interactions were limited. Questions to her

⁴⁴⁷ Weaver and Jerome, 164.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

during our interviews had to be repeated more than twice as she easily lost her concentration. *Mina*'s sleeping habits caused her peers label her as lazy as she could sleep hours on end.

According to Weaver, approximately 20 percent of those who suffer from manic-depressive disorder in adulthood initially experienced the disorder in their teen years.⁴⁵⁰ Further, they are impulsive and often make serious financial, social, and occupational blunders. People experiencing manic disorder are always considered at high risk for suicide attempts.⁴⁵¹ Most importantly, adolescents whose parents suffer with manic-depressive disorder are three times more likely to experience major depression in their lifetime than those with non-depressive parents and grandparents.⁴⁵² "In large measure, this exponential increase [of depression] is as result of a high-stress society with a diminished sense of community and faith."⁴⁵³ *Mina*, like others who have lost contact with their family of origin and find themselves on the street, endures a hectic, chaotic, and high-stress lifestyle.

All those in the homeless community who experience depressive tendencies could be treated with combination of medication, cognitive therapy, and family therapy. Intervention for *Mina* and others like her will involve both group and individual cognitive therapy which will focus on Weaver refers to as "automatic thoughts," or what people think about themselves in particular situations.⁴⁵⁴ Depressed teenagers like *Mina* think negatively about themselves, their future, and their environment. With both group and individual cognitive therapy, the thought

⁴⁵⁰ Weaver and Jerome, 164.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 165.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 166

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

processes and negative errors of those with depressive tendencies will be identified and interventions designed to modify them.⁴⁵⁵

Therapeutic Encounter with the Abused Victims in the Church Community

Each of the seven girls who participated in this study has had a multiple rape experience. As they narrated their ordeal to me it became apparent that some help is needed for these girls (and others who have had similar experiences) to recover and heal. Kristen Leslie, herself a rape survivor, argues that these young rape survivors need a counselor “to listen, believe, provide information, be an advocate, and assist them in finding supportive sources of healing.”⁴⁵⁶ This should be the beginning of the empowerment process of caring for these young rape victims.⁴⁵⁷ For the empowerment process to have its desired impact, a counselor must recognize that the story of the victim is hers’ from beginning to end of any encounter with her in an individual counseling. A therapist does not have all the answers. There is the need to leave that to the person going through such crisis by mostly listening to her during their encounters. Cooper-White suggests that

perhaps the most important rubric of all is that it is not necessary to have the answers to her problems. . . . She alone has them. When we lose sight of this, we can bear in mind the sacredness of her story. It is her story from beginning to end. If we honor the ‘thou’ in her—even when she herself does not—by believing her, by reminding her of her courage, her power, her God-given right to abundant joy, and if on a practical level, we keep her safety always as a first priority and are scrupulously clear about our boundaries, then we are not likely to make ‘mistakes.’⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Kristen J. Leslie, *When Violence is no Stranger: Pastoral Counseling with Survivors of Acquaintance Rape* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 133.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Cooper-White, 229.

A counselor's ability to listen to a rape survivor's story will facilitate the expression of her feelings, confusions, and pain.⁴⁵⁹ Since the survivor is in cognitive and emotional confusion, active listening, which helps to mirror back to the storyteller what has been received, amounts to facilitating a deeper healing process.⁴⁶⁰ This also involves "nonverbal signs of attentiveness such as eye contact and a relaxed but alert and interested body position."⁴⁶¹ In such situations, everything which distracts attention from listening must be dealt away with.⁴⁶²

In many cases it is very uncomfortable to hear a rape survivor's story. It is in such situations that I as a helping professional am expected to bracket my own emotions and judgment. Azumi, one of those I interviewed, endured many rapes and gang-rapes. She says,

On the street some men and big boys in the vicinity come for you for gang rape. If you live on the street without a boyfriend, there is always the danger of rape or gang rape lurking. After going through all kinds of rape I decided to have a boy friend since he can protect me from the other boys who will only come to rape me. The boys who engaged us in these gang rapes include homeless youth and grown-up men in the vicinity. Together with other girls we now sleep at someone's basement at Abossey Okai.

A counselor can express strong belief in a survivors' story with the provision of safe harbor for the victim. This also aids in the healing process because it allows the survivor room for cathartic therapy. There is also need for the counselor to affirm the survivor's intuitive skills. This goes a long way toward helping her regain and reclaim her respect. A counselor's ability to be a witness to a survivor's story is what Leslie calls "helping her to see that her 'inner voice' is actually a

⁴⁵⁹ Leslie, 133.

⁴⁶⁰ Cooper-White, 240.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 231.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

well-developed tool stemming from her synthesis of many environmental clues.”⁴⁶³ Such a tool is believed to be a sensing device the survivor uses in her interaction of the outside world. As such, it should be recognized and affirmed in her.

A pastoral counselor working at the congregational level may have an advantage in that he/she can educate the church community on the issues of sexual violence. Once the church community to understand that sexual violence is not “an unmentionable sin,”⁴⁶⁴ it can join the crusade to eradicate such violence. Survivors of such situations need to come to terms with the idea that the issue should be in the open. This means it should be talked about at the congregational level, as well as the larger community.

This should not merely be a rhetorical statement. The congregation, by word and action, needs to articulate their assurance of God’s love to the victim/survivor. They can also show their abhorrence of the perpetrators’ heinous acts by participating in services dedicated to the victim’s healing, as well as joining protests and street demonstrations. This will help “assure the victim-survivor of God’s love and provide her with an opportunity to build a spiritual support community for herself.”⁴⁶⁵ If the church can do this, then it can learn more about all aspect of rape and domestic violence which has permeated into our society with impunity.

Some of the vital lessons for such education can be drawn from what Cooper-White describes as “the role of a spiritual community in healing.”⁴⁶⁶ This calls the church to join in a movement to help break the silence surrounding the menace of rape and other domestic violence

⁴⁶³ Leslie, 136.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁶⁵ Cooper-White, 249.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 248.

and restore justice where these acts occur. Cooper-White poignantly adds that “this is a call, an anointing of each and every one of us.”⁴⁶⁷

The church and religious community must consider itself as a community “called to see and hear the truth.”⁴⁶⁸ A pastoral counselor’s role is that of pastor and teacher who can facilitate the delivery of this message to the congregation. Through this pastor/teacher role, the counselor can help the congregation to learn about sexual violence from the homeless youths like Mina and Baby Naa, whose attackers strike daily with impunity. A congregation can come to understand that domestic violence is pervasive in the Ghanaian society. This can be forum that can help the church and society overcome the “social inertia and unconscious collusion”⁴⁶⁹ which has bedeviled it for a so long a time. A pastoral counselor’s leadership role can also help the church come to grips with the facts and figures as they relate to the trends of domestic violence in the community.

A second issue for congregations is learning to name the violence as violence. Leslie suggests that as we listen to the rape victim’s story, we need to “be attentive to the words that a survivor uses, but not introduce euphemisms for the violence.”⁴⁷⁰ The church community is also admonished to stay focused on the survivor and her story instead of shifting and doubting her story or wondering if she did something wrong. Our focus, according to Cooper-White, must be on the one who committed the unmentionable sin.⁴⁷¹ Pastoral leadership should also impact the process of creating awareness of how the perpetrators of domestic violence have crossed the line

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Leslie, 134.

⁴⁷¹ Cooper-White, 249.

of civility; and that the community has the right to hold perpetrators responsible for their reprehensible acts of violence toward another human being.

The church must go beyond not showing anger and express sympathy and seek justice for the abused. Calling for justice means mobilizing the congregation to take “responsibility as a community to say to perpetrators that violence is unacceptable, that we will not resort to quick fixes and cheap, premature forgiveness without true repentance and change of life, and that we will stand for the righting of these wrongs—in our policies and our relationships.”⁴⁷² The sort of healing the church can offer survivors of rape and domestic abuse such as *Kabu* and *Aberwaa*, is confronting the violence head and fighting it, regardless of who opposes them.

Finally, the church is “called to restore right relation, not just between individual men and women, and not in the sense of premature or cheap forgiveness, but in the sense of the whole community.”⁴⁷³ A pastoral counselor as a religious leader in this case must not use any language that will undermine the very act which is being fought against. Thus, in sermons, teachings and other forums, the pastor and the congregation must take care with what Cooper-White describes as “unwitting words of exhortation and themes like, forgiveness, endurance, sacrifice. Otherwise we would rather victimize the abused who will be in our midst rather than enhance her healing.”⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Ibid., 250.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

There is no doubt that all the girls who were participants in this study have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder in various forms. The outbursts of anger, irritability experienced by some of them, and sometimes aggressive behavior expressed by some of them indicate their exposure to trauma. PTSD is described as

Exposure to an extreme traumatic stress disorder involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.⁴⁷⁵

Kristen Leslie explains that persons who are exposed to “rape, combat experiences, natural catastrophes, assault, and serious accidents” experience PTSD and respond with “fear, helplessness, or horror.” Leslie adds that there are common occurrences of issues of psychospiritual integrity, threat of injury, and threat of death.⁴⁷⁶ The common symptom of PTSD I witnessed with the girls who participated in this study irritability or outbursts of anger. Such irritability and frequent outburst of anger which occurs as result of PTSD explains the behaviors of *NDC* and *Kabu* among the girls who participated in this study.

Sometimes their behaviors make them nuisance to the homeless community at CAS and no wonder they have been discharge more than twice. For *Mina* it has been lost of concentration as that also prolonged the interview time with her. *Mina*, like *Kabu* and *NDC* have all experienced rape and gang-rape and she continually showed that during the study. During my

⁴⁷⁵ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.; American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 424

⁴⁷⁶ Kristen Leslie, *ibid*, 42

interview time with Mina there was frequent cognitive confusion as it exemplified in her inability to complete any issue which called for her “ability to complete tasks that call for intellectual abilities.”⁴⁷⁷ Sometimes it was frustrating getting her to answer questions but gradually I did allow her time to process and complete at her own pace.

Pastoral Care for those affected by PTSD

Pastoral counseling for those affected by PTSD especially rape survivors found at CAS as well as those in the larger community will take cognizance of other symptoms like effects to forget the rape, memory loss, difficulty in falling asleep, and estrangement from others. Leslie argues that pastoral counselors, clergy, and families know that the effects of PTSD are pervasive and it affects every facet of human living.⁴⁷⁸ It is also suggested that women who come for counseling with the problem with relationships or who experience depression, anxiety or phobias, eating disorders, addictions and other related symptom should give clue to the counselor for the possibility of exploring the past for abuse.⁴⁷⁹

To help the homeless youth especially the girls who have been raped or gang-raped is to offer the needed support which goes beyond platitudes. According to Cooper-White, a rape survivor is in need of massive “support, belief, and nonintrusive caring,” as this can offer her “spiritual sustenance, a fortified sense of justice, and hope.”⁴⁸⁰ Any person affected by PTSD

⁴⁷⁷ Kristen Leslie, 47

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 50

⁴⁷⁹ Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 2001) 115

⁴⁸⁰ Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, ibid, 96

especially rape survivors is in state of cognitive confusion and disorganization. Such a person may have lost of control of her own life. Christie Cozad Neuger posits that “a woman has been violated through losing all control of her life in the experience. She has often been intentionally humiliated and her sense of herself has been violated.”⁴⁸¹ Counselors who offer help should do away with platitudes which seem to offer biblical messages, cheerfulness, or encouragement.⁴⁸²

Giving pastoral care demands that girls and women who have experienced trauma should be given space and time to “discover and name their own experiences and give narrative to the often fragmented, nonverbal memories of abuse as they are able.”⁴⁸³ It is through time and space allowed to this type of client will allow her the possibility of retrieving her memories of the abuse. The homeless girls who have been violated and needed counseling should be given a non-anxious support to be able to deal with the psychosocial and psychospiritual problems issued out from her rape and other abuses they have gone through. The other important issue is a male counselor dealing with rape survivors is to acknowledge that anger towards him. Such anger is a reaction of the rape to all men which even includes family members. Neuger suggests that “if a male clergy is the main resource person for the rape victim ... it might be especially important for her to be in a support group of women survivors or have a female conversation partner or advocate.”⁴⁸⁴ A male counselor who provides pastoral care should also bear in mind of the rape survivors’ aversion to touch. Rape survivors need non-anxious support in dealing with the trauma they have experienced. When they are given a non-anxious support and non-threatening

⁴⁸¹ Christie Cozad Neuger, 111

⁴⁸² Cooper-White, *ibid*, 97

⁴⁸³ Neuger, 115

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 117

space in counseling, dealing with the problem through catharsis will give them courage to engage the counselor in more sessions.

Pastoral counselors can be of immense assistance to rape survivors as they provide a listening empathy to them by maintaining boundaries between narrative stories and counseling sessions.⁴⁸⁵ Such a listening helps the survivor to be able to externalize part of her narrative which has been internalized albeit hurtfully.⁴⁸⁶ Thus during a reflective listening process and as a survivor talks about being fearful for instance, “the counselor externalizes fear from being an essential part of the counselee, to being an outside force constantly threatening her sense of well-being”⁴⁸⁷ by reframing her story. Reframing a survivor’s story is by effective empathic listening. Reframing in a positive way is to bring to her attention some positives out of the survivor’s story. Thus by bringing to her attention “her courage in sharing her pain with you and in reaching out, good things in her life that she herself has mentioned ... even her ability to feel so deeply as a sign of her sensitivity and worth.”⁴⁸⁸ This is important for someone who has been overwhelmed by a rape crisis. Effective listening provides non-anxious moment for rape survivors. Such a support can empower the survivor to a realistic hope and begin the process of retrieving her lost self.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, 122

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, 123

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸⁸ Cooper-White, *ibid*, 233

Deconstructing Patriarchy in Counseling

Neuger also suggests that pastoral counselors can help empower survivors by asking them where they learned certain assumptions about their lives. By helping them deconstruct means asking them at the appropriate time, “who first taught you that you had to honor your father even though he was abusing you?”⁴⁸⁹ This method also helps to explore all sources of problems the survivor is facing. By giving her own narrative in non-anxious space could help the survivor to provide clues for “familial, cultural, and theological analysis that will help put the counselee’s story in the context of the larger stories of harm.”⁴⁹⁰ Embedded in the Ghanaian culture is patriarchy which underlies the male dominance of every facet of life in that country. Society gives men prominence and issues of men are prioritized to the exclusion of all others. This may be a universal issue but little has been achieved in terms of women gaining their own grounds.

According to Mercy Oduoye “patriarchy exists wherever one finds systemic and normative inequalities and subordination.”⁴⁹¹ Such inequality and subordination continue to elicit harmful acts like domestic violence and rape against women. In such environment it is very difficult for a rape survivor to have a voice. In some cases when a rape survivor dares and put the rapist to court of jurisdiction, the survivor may find herself rather being on trial. Oduoye quoted Michael Gelfand (1973:34) to amplify the marginalization of women even in marital relationships.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid

⁴⁹¹ Mercy Amba Oduoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women & Patriarchy* (New York, Orbis Books, 1995) 131

The wife is part of the family, a co-partner in a unit. She dare not lay a finger on her husband although he may beat her. She cannot take him to the local court unless there is unfair, excessive and repeated punishment ... As a woman is completely dependent on him she respects her husband.⁴⁹²

In fact wife beating in Ghana is pervasive and widespread but “a heavy cloak of silence is drawn.”⁴⁹³ The worse part of the situation is the fact that some men could boast about beating their wives into submission and compliance.⁴⁹⁴ The establishment of the Domestic Violence Unit of the Ghana Police Service coupled with the promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act (2007) notwithstanding, the problem of domestic violence persists because of the entrenchment of patriarchy. African as well as Ghanaian women have been socialized to respect and submit to men’s dominance and authority without questioning. Women may found themselves in situations as depicted by Michael Gelfand and society scorn on women who challenge such status quo and may be branded dare-devils. Even though the normative of patriarchy is very injurious to women but they continue to imbibe and live it daily.

Neuger posits that for women to find themselves and develop “an authentic voice and narrative, they must be able to separate the definitions and beliefs about themselves that have been developed as part of the process of harmful adaptation.”⁴⁹⁵ This process helps women to unlearn some aspect of the Ghanaian culture which marginalize them. Women and girls whose interest are trivialize need to be empowered during counseling so that they may find their voices. To do justice to women and girls, counselors must listen to them “when they speak about the

⁴⁹² Ibid, 164-5

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 167

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

⁴⁹⁵ Neuger, 131

God-ordained dignity of every human person and the consequent need of each person for respect.”⁴⁹⁶ As women and girls navigate through the unlearning process of socialization they can reclaim their authentic voices and their real “selves.”

Gender-Based Violence

One thing which was evidenced during my study was boys’ sexual abuse. Due to the focus of this study no attempt was made to inquire about male sexual assault in Ghana. Since no questions were asked about it nothing about it was also said about it from the participants or CAS officials. Another issue which is taking toll on NGO’s and other governmental organizations in Ghana is child-trafficking. That is a huge problem for both the government of Ghana and stakeholders related to that problem. Once again, due to the narrow focus of this study—to investigate the phenomenon of streetism in Ghana—this study will not take the issue beyond stating that it is a nagging issue which many researchers have taken it seriously.

One of the most important reasons why the Ministry for Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC) was formed was to coordinate, monitor, and review for the formulation of gender and other important children policies for its implementation within sector ministries.⁴⁹⁷ The mission of MOWAC which was established in February 2001 is to:

Champion the cause of all women and children, through the promotion of gender equality and the survival, development, protection and participation of children, to to achieve equal status, equal opportunities and equal rights for women, men, and children in the development of Ghana⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ Oduyoye, 171

⁴⁹⁷ Afua Twum-Danso, *Children’s Rights in Ghana*, *ibid*, 153

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*

From the time MOWAC came into existence gender issues especially that of women and girls have come to limelight. The ministry has helped towards the democratization of all different units established towards the same goal. Gender-based violence in Ghana continue to be a problem and that led the MOWAC together with the Police Service established the Domestic Violence Victims Services Unit (DOVVSU). According to DOVVSU 13,224 gender related cases were reported and many more go unreported.⁴⁹⁹

MOWAC also work for the implementation of National Gender and Children's Policy (2004) which was also established with the goal to achieve "mainstream gender concerns into the national development process in order to improve the social, legal, civic, political, economic and cultural conditions of the people of Ghana particularly women and children."⁵⁰⁰ Gender-based violence usually highlights the problem of violence towards women and girls and it continues to make headlines in Ghana.

According to Ghana Country Gender Profile, a study conducted with 3,047 women and men across the country, 72 percent of the participants reported violence targeting women in their communities. In the same report 25 percent of the men interviewed reported that they continuously beat their partners.⁵⁰¹ Such gender-based violence triggered a national outcry for the establishment of DOVVSU in May 2007. Presently in Ghana some of the NGO's at the forefront fighting against gender-based violence include: Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Ark Foundation and the Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE). They also

⁴⁹⁹ Yeshiareg Dejene, *Ghana Country Gender Profile, 2008* (Human Development Dept., African Development Fund, 2008) ix

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, vi

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, 29

engage in advocacy work, sensitizing and counseling especially girls and women who are victims of domestic violence, and training of judges, paralegals and the police.⁵⁰²

Pastoral Response to Gender-Based Violence

Sexual activity in relationship is deemed to be of mutual consent and consensual. Kristen Leslie postulate that “sexual activity is, by definition consensual and takes place in a context of mutuality, respect, equality, caring, and responsibility. Sexual violence is, by definition, nonconsensual and takes place in the context of exploration, hostility, and abuse.”⁵⁰³ In Ghana women have been socialized with the belief that abuse by men towards them is normative and not a strange thing to be reported to outsiders. As Mercy Oduyoye said, a woman is part of the family “she dare not lay a finger on her husband although he may beat her. She cannot take him to the local court unless there is unfair, excessive and repeated punishment.”⁵⁰⁴ This has also conditioned women and girls to the extent that report of sexual violence like rape in and outside relationships are very scanty.

As pastoral counselors who engage in therapy with women and girls who have been abused, should avoid asking consensual questions which invariably blame the survivor instead of helping her. Counselors should not concern themselves with the detail information about the rape. Survivors are not to endure any pain by victim-blaming. That is blaming the survivor for being in harm’s way by what she wore, how she screamed, and other consensual questions.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Ibid

⁵⁰³ Kristen Leslie, 110

⁵⁰⁴ Oduyoye, *ibid*, 131

⁵⁰⁵ Kristen Leslie, 112

Survivors need care and healing. In the words of Kristen Leslie, “when a woman is raped, her sacred body desecrated; the temple has been violated. Healing of her sacred body is directly connected to healing of her soul. When the victim is a Christian, she is a member of the body of Christ and a creation embodied by God; violence to a woman’s body affects her faith and her ability to make meaning.”⁵⁰⁶

Issues of Divorce and Step-Parenting

Parental divorce is one of the major causes of youth homelessness. Weaver defines divorce as “dissolution of a socially and legally recognized marital relationship that alters the obligations and privileges of the two persons involved.”⁵⁰⁷ Divorce may be precipitated by many factors among them are: sexual issues and money; power and control; parenting problems and in-laws; and the issues of influence.⁵⁰⁸ This means there are host of problems which underlie every divorce and they stem from psychological, socio-economic, cultural, and religious factors. Divorce is a life changing issue which usually faces couples and it could be beneficial to one party whereas it becomes a challenge to another.

Divorce precipitates changing of schools, being rejected by an angry parent, moving intermittently from one place to another, and lack of adequate parental care and love. Such a stressful life can easily force a youngster to drift away from home and to the street. The disruption and disorganization a family experiences immediately after divorce can trigger fear in

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 113

⁵⁰⁷ Weaver and Jerome, 107.

⁵⁰⁸ Philip J. Geurim, Jr., Leo F. Fay, Susan L. Burden, Judith Gilbert Kautto, *The Evaluation and Treatment of Marital Conflict: A Four-Stage Approach* (New York, Basic Books, 1987) 50

children and adolescents as they misunderstand the entire the event. Some even believe that they are responsible for the divorce.⁵⁰⁹

Those youth that migrate to the streets as a result of parental divorce can benefit from involvement in pastoral counseling in a group setting. The group can serve as community of support for these children. Weaver, again, states that pastoral counseling within a church community which shows wisdom in understanding the reality of divorce—without stigmatizing—could give nurture to both the adolescent and the custodial parent.⁵¹⁰ Providing pastoral care for the homeless youth from divorced families will serve as emotional encouragement, care giving, inspiration, and can enhance the adjustment to their current state of living. Pastoral care can also help these youth deal with rejection, trust and intimacy issues, and the anger that results from parental divorce.⁵¹¹

Four of the fifteen interviewed for this study lived with step-parents. This arrangement was a major trigger for their migration to the streets. Some of the problems they faced included lack of clear and open communication with their parents which may have helped them take responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings and actions.⁵¹² *Azumi*, one of the participants of this study, bemoaned the lack of instant love and lamented the problems related to adjusting to

⁵⁰⁹ Weaver and Jerome, *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵¹¹ I will limit the discussion of divorce in this section due largely to the focus of this study. I must admit that divorce per se is not a major cause of streetism. However from my study most of the participants alluded to their parents' divorce as the reason why some of them were thrown out of their homes. Whereas others blamed their parents' divorce as the cause of their inability to continue with their education. Thus there is a hint of the larger socio-economic issues having a huge impact on marital relationships which could easily lead to breakdown of some marriages.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 115

her new blended family, which precipitated her eventual homelessness. She was thirteen at the time of her mother's re-marriage. Her desire for autonomy, independence and instant love were not satisfied. Rather, she faced rejection in this new and blended family. Little time and attention were given to *Azumi* by her parents. There was no discussion about her need for autonomy and independence. Dissatisfied and lacking an understanding of her own physical and emotional growth, *Azumi* drifted into the streets and began a life of homelessness.

Bonney was certain he would enjoy life as the only child of his parent. Unfortunately all those expectations were dashed when his father migrated to Gabon. His mother then re-married. *Bonney's* step-father would not allow him to be part of the new family. During the interviews for this study, *Bonney* expressed his painful leaving of his mother. He wondered he did wrong to deserve the maltreatment and the forced exit from his home he had to endure. According to *Bonney*, he sometimes wept over it. It has been four years since he left home and came to the street. However, has not overcome the painful experience of being forced to leave home and his mother.

Pastoral counseling for youth such as *Azumi* and *Bonney* and their families could have been the strong foundation for a new family and a well-functioning marital relationship. Had *Azumi's* and *Bonney's* step-families participated in pastoral counseling there was the possibility for family tolerance, improved adjustment, and the provision of moral guidance. Pastoral care could help facilitate decision making, as it is expected to help minimize conflicts in the new homes, and increase the family commitment among new parents and the blended step-children.⁵¹³ *Azumi* will need pastoral counseling to deal with isolation, excessive anger, and guilt. A caring therapeutic environment and pastoral counseling can enable *Azumi*, *Bonney*, and others

⁵¹³ Ibid., 118.

from circumstance such as theirs, to work together with their families to be active, flexible, and resourceful in co-existing in harmony.

Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy

Another intervention necessary for the families of homeless youth and homeless mothers is cognitive behavioral family therapy. This type of intervention is also suitable for both individual and group settings. The basic intent of this approach is to extinguish undesired behavior and reinforce positive alternatives in conflicted families. That is my basic reason for choosing this type of intervention—to be able to help extinguish the undesired character traits that have developed among the families of homeless youth and in their lives on the street. For instance, “parents of a child with temper tantrums might be taught to ignore the tantrums and reward the child for putting her feelings into words.”⁵¹⁴ Such an intervention is helpful now, as well as for the future. When such problem-children grow up without any parental guidance and discipline, it is obvious some of them will subsequently run away from home to a life on the street where they are exposed to drugs and violence.

Cognitive family therapy is exemplified in: (1) care assessment to determine the baseline frequency of problem behavior, to guide therapy, and to provide feedback about the success of treatment; and (2) strategies designed to modify the contingencies of reinforcement in each unique client family.⁵¹⁵ Families could be helped not only to reexamine distorted beliefs to solve specific complaints, but also to teach them how to use cognitive strategies to resolve problems in

⁵¹⁴ Nichols, 249.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

the here and now and the future.⁵¹⁶ Through the cognitive family therapy setting I can help families to understand dynamics of communication, problem-solving, and negotiation skills in the family.

The underlying assumption of cognitive family therapy is that the family, not the individual is the problem and for that reason the entire family should be brought to therapy for solution. However, if parents consider a child to be problematic, a parent or both of them, together with the child meet with the therapist for as many times.

Therapeutic Technique of Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy

In an effort to accelerate behavior change, cognitive family therapy can begin with the Premack principle. This principle says that a high probability behavior should be chosen to reinforce behavior with a low probability of occurrence. According to Michael Nichols, “any behaviors chosen more frequently can serve as reinforcers for those chosen less frequently.”⁵¹⁷ The point here concerns determining which behaviors to increase and which ones to decrease. In the application of the Premack principle, families can be taught how to determine what to use as “reinforcers” to encourage those behaviors they desire to increase.

Thus, parents can also be taught which effective rewards should be chosen and how to shape desired behavior by reinforcing successive approximation to the final goal. For instance, the parent of a child who likes riding a bicycle more than watching television should know right away what she/he can use to reinforce good behavior. Additionally, a gradual increase of

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 252.

reinforcements is recommended contingent upon evidence of the desired behavior. Families should be made aware that for a behavior to be enduring, the intermittent reinforcement schedule should be increased.

In order to decelerate a behavior, time out is recommended, even though that may not be the desire of any child. In some situations it is recommended that the child be isolated for about fifteen minutes if, after being warned against a behavior, the child does not heed to the warning. In isolation, children are not allowed to play with their siblings or to engage in any pleasure activities. Other techniques recommended for decelerating a behavior include verbal reprimand and ignoring.⁵¹⁸ Parents should be made aware that reprimanding does not mean the usage of abusive language to shame the child.

Parents are also taught to ignore a child who throws tantrums. Parents will be helped to understand that children who throw tantrums have a penchant pressuring parents with their behavior. Parents dealing with this type of child will be taught about exercising restraint and patience in the face of such persistent and uncontrollable tantrums. Failure to hold firm to one's position will perpetuate the behavior and could jeopardize the entire program.

Mentoring the Homeless Youth

Mentoring is more than simply advising and usually emerges from an extended relationship. Mentoring, therefore, depends upon the activities and experience of both the mentor and the one being mentored. The mentor's roles, according to Capps, include the following tasks:

1. teacher—contributing to the acquisition of skills and intellectual development
2. sponsor—facilitating the young man/woman's entry and advancement into the occupation of his/her choice

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

3. host and guide—welcoming the young man/woman into a new professional and social world and acquainting him/her with its value and customs
4. exemplar—exemplifying virtues, achievements, and a way of life that the younger man/woman can admire; and
5. fostering the dream—believing in the young man/woman, sharing the dream and giving it his/her blessing.⁵¹⁹

As mentor, the counselor's role in the supporting homeless youth is to help them in their struggle to find what Edward Wimberly calls a "healthy identity [that] must begin by affirming the irrevocable value of all people that is foundational to our spiritual traditions."⁵²⁰ Through teaching in groups, mentors begin to extol the virtues that are inherent in the youth in the group. This could be the platform on which they can build their own future.

It is a fact that if adolescents are to flourish and enjoy a productive future, they need exemplars to mirror their lives.⁵²¹ This is critical for homeless youth and to fill the void of exemplars created by living on the street, they need a "variety of resources . . . [like] stories of heroes and heroines to inspire them."⁵²² Those stories about important personalities will serve to challenge and motivate these youths to move forward in confidence, believing that they will also make it by dogged determination and perseverance. In taking up the mantle to mentor youth, one serves the very crucial function to foster for a youth what Levinson describes as the realization of the dream.

This is developmentally the most crucial one: to support and facilitate the realization of the Dream. The true mentor, in the meaning intended here, serves as an analogue in adulthood of the "good enough" parent for the child. He [she] fosters the young adult's development by believing in him [her], sharing the youthful Dream and giving it his [her]

⁵¹⁹ Capps, 15.

⁵²⁰ Edward P. Wimberly, *Relational Refugees: Alienation and Reincorporation in African American Churches and Communities* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 67.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

blessing, helping to define the newly emerging self in its newly discovered world, and creating a space in which the young man [woman] can work on a reasonably satisfactory life structure that contains the Dream.⁵²³

Being a mentor means also means being an exemplar, and it always behooves the mentor to be able to inculcate through precept and being proactive with examples from one's own life stories which the youth can use in times of crises.⁵²⁴ Most importantly, these homeless youth need to hear about the trajectory of the mentor's life story and that of other homeless youth who have been where the youth are but, through hard work, have advance beyond homelessness.

A mentor and teacher must be trusted by those he/she mentors/teaches if he/she is to foster and inspire dreams and visions in the face of adversity. Some of the homeless youth have lost hope of ever realizing their dreams. They desperately need to assurance from the mentor that he/she will always be there for them, and that he/she respects them and the choices they are learning to make on their own. Even as the mentor maintains limits and parameters intended to keep the youth safe, the youth would want to trust his/her as role a model on which to pattern the building of their own lives. As Wimberly suggests, this will provide them a secure home from which they can fly on their own.⁵²⁵ If a mentor is able to offer this assurance and hope to the homeless youth, their future will not be wasted.

Drama by the Homeless Youth

During my ten-week stay at CAS for this study, I witnessed rehearsals of the Ubuntu drama troupe. The troupe is comprised only of homeless youth. The drama I saw them practice

⁵²³ Daniel J. Levinson, *Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1978), 99.

⁵²⁴ Wimberly, 72.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

was about the plight of youth who live on the streets. CAS management informed me that an expatriate group was arranging to have the piece performed on stage in November, 2011, at the National Theater in Accra.

Winnicott suggests that “it is in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”⁵²⁶ The homeless youth are learning about drama and staging performances themselves. This helps them realize their innate talents and creativity which have gone unrecognized until now. This helps them realize that they can change their destinies through venues such as dramatic performance. Additionally, through drama and the staging of plays in public arenas, they can earn some income for their subsistence.

I hope to form a drama group for the youth I will work with at the Ernest Bruce Methodist Church. The youth can then learn about and stage dramas about issues concerning homeless youth such as poverty that impacts families, parents that cannot care for their children, and the frustrations and abuses homeless youth endure on the streets. If financial assistance is available, air time can be purchased to air these presentations television and radio. This study includes a recording of the interviews with homeless youth. The recording covers topics such as how various youth came to the streets and what they have experienced while living on the street, and will be part of the drama aired on television or radio. The youth’s participation in activity means they are using their own resourcefulness and agency in helping to lessen, and ultimately eradicate, streetism in Ghana.

⁵²⁶ Winnicott, 73.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

This was a study of a socio-cultural and pastoral theological exploration of a youth problem referred to as streetism in Ghana. This phenomenon of streetism is about the living of unmonitored youth on the streets of Accra, particularly at the shelter of the Catholic Action of Street Children. In chapter one, I explored the problem of streetism in Ghana and other places where the problem has become endemic. In addition the chapter was used to discuss some of the cultural issues such as the importance of procreation, fostering, maternal/paternal lineage system in Ghana. Chapter two was devoted to review of literature and other significant studies which threw light on how the problem came about in Ghana and elsewhere and the reaction of the both governments and non-governmental organizations.

Chapter three dealt with the examination of the phenomenon of streetism through qualitative and ethnographic/critical theory model. That model helped me with the tools for the understanding of the beliefs, language, and behaviors. The model also helped for the critical understanding of marginalization of the phenomenon. In addition, the intercultural methodology of liberation theology's reflective procedures was adopted. Chapter four was also devoted to the causes of streetism. The participants involved were fifteen with an average age of 15 ½ years. The chapter also dealt with findings emanating from interviews which provided details of their living experiences. Discussion of the findings was done in chapter five. Furthermore I did a theological reflection on the basis of the homeless youth's experiences of poverty and marginalization in this chapter. Section of the chapter was also used for the evaluation of the

social reality of the situation as revealed by the study and how to work towards the elimination of streetism in Ghana. Solutions to the problem of streetism were offered on three ecological levels- macro, meso, and micro.

During my study of the homeless youth phenomenon, I noticed some misinformation cited by some earlier sociological researchers, namely Meyers Fortes. He has intimated that the best moment for the childbearing-woman is exemplified in a public honoring ceremony of congratulation after the birth of her tenth child.⁵²⁷ However, among the Akans of Ghana, that honoring goes to the man who sired the tenth-born. Even if the tenth-born is his only child, tradition favors him to be honored for giving the family of the woman the tenth-born. The man in that honoring ceremony receives a sheep and other gifts from the woman's family. This public ceremony is for showing the man the family's thanks and appreciation.

During the course of this study, I realized that there is more to the story of rape, which is very real danger for the homeless youth, especially the girls. The experience of gang-rape, which most of my informants have suffered, is a traumatizing and distressing part of street life. As these homeless girls (like other girls and women) go through these traumatic and life threatening ordeal of rape they are always troubled by that horrendous experience. These atrocious experiences usually go unreported as law enforcement rarely takes seriously these stories of the homeless youth. This dismissive attitude of the police and other law enforcement agencies allow the perpetrators of these attacks to continue with impunity terrorizing this vulnerable population. The abuse will continue until such time law enforcement recognizes these reports as legitimate and serious.

⁵²⁷ Fortes, 262.

Socio-Economic Issues

In the course of this study, the matter of socio-economic burdens of the homeless youth repeatedly surfaced for both the local communities the nation. The number one issue is that families that cannot bear the cost of caring for their children. Often they are unable to provide them housing, health care, or schooling. When a child or youth leaves home seeking his/her economic independence but is not educated and is without marketable skills, that person becomes a burden the community and the nation. Should the homeless youth ultimately return home, the family as well as the nation must bear the cost of re-integration of that person in terms of settlement, health issues, and daily needs.

NGOs are expected to expend funds on these youth in an effort to ameliorate their delinquency and suffering so that they are not lured into a life of crime and other vices. The present predicament of the youth does not simply impact them alone. Rather it becomes an intergenerational trend. Thus, the socio-economic cost is transferred from the youth to their children. That will result in most youth being prone to crime because of their low income. Since they have limited or no educational background, such youth find it extremely difficult to avail themselves of employment opportunities. They are the “typical” youth that engages in drug use, gun violence, gang activity, and alcohol/drug abuse, as well as crimes in school. Most of the youth who engage in such crimes end up incarcerated. Thus, the cost of caring for the homeless youth does not end as the expense of maintaining them in prison falls to the state.

I imagine that a twenty year old youth who would spend some years in incarceration for any serious misdemeanor will incur both fiscal and social costs long after age twenty-four. A sixteen year old girl is going to encounter an adulthood of lower income and severely limited

economic opportunities after dropping out of high school. Thus, if a homeless youth is currently earning 50 percent less than his/her educated counterpart between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four, it is likely that youth will ultimately earn 50 percent less during his/her life time. This, therefore, sums up the lifetime burdens of streetism and unproductive youth for any country which fails to address those problems. The claim that the lack of strong economic policies is the root cause of poverty, which consistently triggers migration of youth to the streets, cannot be overstated.

Resilience and Creativity

This study revealed that with the street youth there is a protective factor in the form of group identity. This helps equip them with the capacity to endure the hardships of the experiences they encounter on the street. They always rely on friends and acquaintances for relief or consolation in times of need and when they have endured a particular crisis. For instance, if a homeless youth is beaten and robbed by some of the big boys, most of the friends rally around him/her to discuss the issue, get the victim food, and advise him/her as to how to deal with such situation the next time round. Even though they may not be able to retaliate on behalf of the victim or recover the victim's money/valuables that were taken, words of consolation are balm and some consolation for the pain of the victim is experiencing and helps them to move beyond the crisis.

Again, the risk factors for the street youth are constant and severe. That they have been able to survive these dangers confirms that the protective factor offered by their street peers is important for endurance and is there for the taking. Thus, in addition to the group identity, they have an inner strength that allows them to survive the adversities of the street. This confirms my

earlier assertion that the homeless youth have developed a sort of buoyancy and defiance that enables them to live through hardships on the street. For instance, it is sheer determination and spiritedness that allows those street girls that have endured the atrocity of rape to survive the ordeal and continue with their lives.

The street youth have survived hard times due to their creativity and resilience in adapting to the harsh environment in which they now find themselves. These character traits help them to be imaginative when it comes to maximizing their meager incomes received from work as the porters. Many develop creative ways of getting large sums of money from unsuspecting visitors.

During my study I came to realize that some of the homeless youth do visit their families of origin, though some literature suggests that they do not return home once they have migrated to the streets. In fact some, like *Galaxy*, *Bonney*, *Baby Naa*, and *Lady Nash* have all returned home at least once since coming to the street to visit their family. And though some of them were not well received at the time of those visits, that has not deterred them from visiting again.

Policy Recommendation

The first policy direction I suggest is that the Ghanaian government of review the development and implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Millennium Development Goals, and Millennium Declaration. These are developmental projects undertaken with development partners. In some cases, issues brought from abroad may not be beneficial to or sustainable in developing countries like Ghana. Still, it would behoove the Ghanaian government and her developmental partners to determine the optimum benefits that might accrue from embarking on those projects.

There must also be adequate financial support and infrastructure in order for youth to complete their schooling and enhance their skill so that they might secure employment. Also the government must shelters for these homeless youth where they can participate in vocational training programs. Finally, there must be adequate resourcing and financial provision for the Ministry of Social Welfare and Employment. That ministry's objective, among others, is to work for the betterment of the lives of the vulnerable in society. But the ministry does not function as it should because it does not have the financial assistance required to carry out its mandate, particularly that of ensuring parents can care for their children and that those who neglect their parental responsibilities are arrested and prosecuted.

Creating awareness of streetism in Ghana is of paramount in the Ghanaian society which puts a high premium on child-bearing and is intolerant of childlessness in marriage. In those communities where homelessness and streetism is rampant, groups could be formed to identify sources of streetism and endeavor at all times to eliminate those causes. Educational programs should be embarked upon that target the least advantaged youths and their families, thus creating awareness of their "circumstances and their rights and by promoting community action and responsibility for their wellbeing."

Communities must also be educated to contribute free labor to supplement the local District Assembly Common Fund for building of schools, hospitals, clinics, and other social amenities. Such an effort will help put an end to unfinished projects that dot the rural areas due to lack of funds. In that regard, opinion leaders, such as pastors, must be involved in activities for the enhancement and achievement of its end result.

Whatever the reason for the omission of street youth as a vulnerable group from the Children's Act of 1988, I contend that the government of Ghana must work with Parliament

towards the amendment of the Act. Street youth are more vulnerable than of the youth living at home with their families. Already some street youth have been orphaned by the negligence and abuse of their parents. The state should take the necessary action to avoid their being orphaned by their country. Street youth also need adequate cover from the enforcement of the laws and statutes intended to protect their well-being. When these laws are enacted and promulgated with the full backing of the government, the homeless youth and all other vulnerable groups stand to benefit greatly.

During the study it came to light that Ghanaian women and girls are reluctant or feel pressured not to report rape and other forms of domestic violence meted to them by their male partners, acquaintances and other perpetrators. The study revealed that the overarching cause of such reluctance is the embedment of patriarchy in the Ghanaian fabric life. It is my suggestion that lot of civic education will be undertaken to educate the population about the resources available. Among the resources are Domestic Violence Victims Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU), Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Ark Foundation and the Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE). In addition churches train some personnel who will be of service to victims of domestic violence and other sexual assault.

Limitation and Recommendations for Further Research

This focused only on the homeless youth problem in Accra and surrounding environs, though the problem extends to other urban areas in Ghana. Moreover, the survey sample included on fifteen homeless youth. This is likely not a representative sample of all areas in the country. Additionally, the study examines the issues related to youth homelessness through the

lenses of an ethnographer and theologian. Due to that limited perspective, the area of study, as well as its findings, was skewed to suit a particular outcome.

Since this study is the beginning of a new research area, future research should be considered the subject from perspective other than ethnography and theology. When further research does work through the same ethnography and theological lenses, it should investigate the following:

- Pastoral psychology, the changes in the family systems, and child rearing in Ghana
- Pastoral psychology, social and educational programs for school drop-outs and street youths in Ghana
- Pastoral theology, streets youth, and HIV/AIDS

It is hoped that engaging these areas of study, contributions will be made towards a comprehensive understanding of the problem of streetism and the solutions required for its complete elimination.

Appendix A

Terms

1. Street child/youth. For the purpose of this study, only the terminology ‘street youth’ was used; and it is defined as the unmonitored youth who are between the ages of twelve and eighteen, and who spend their time working and sleeping on the streets.
2. Kaya. Etymologically is derived from the word *hausa*, which means a person who carries goods or wares. To be a porter is to engage in head-load carrying business. This type of business is undertaken mostly by street children/youth so that they may keep body and soul together. In Ghana of late, it is not only the homeless youth who ply this type of business, but youth from low-income families have found their way into this source of income.
3. Kayayo (singular). Denotes a girl porter who is usually a homeless youth and plies this trade in the markets and around malls in the urban centers. The plural form changes to *kayayei*, which denote girls who ply the *kaya* trade.
4. Kaya-nuu (singular). Denotes a boy porter who is usually a homeless youth and plies this trade in the markets and around malls in the urban centers. The neutral form of the word is *kaya-nyo*, which could mean a boy or girl. The pronouns *yo*, *yeyi*, *nyo*, and *nuu* are derived from the language of the Ga people—an ethnic group domiciled in and around the greater Accra region of Ghana.
5. Bragoro. One of the rites of passage for the transition from girl-child/adolescence to adulthood. For the girl it is celebrated at the first sighting of her menstruation. Girls in mostly the Akan areas of Ghana go through *bragoro* in which they are educated to take up their future roles as mothers and housewives.

Appendix B

Assent Form

Title: A Study of Youth in Ghana

The Person in Charge of This Study:

Isaac Ishmael Arthur, Pastor and Emory University Student

We invite you to be in a research study at Catholic Action for Street Children. “Research” is an organized way of learning about something. There are some important things you should know before saying “yes.”

- It’s okay to say no if you don’t want to be in the study.
- You are allowed to quit being in the study at any time.
- We have to explain the study to you so you can understand it. You can ask questions.

We want to know the causes of youth homelessness in Ghana, especially in Accra and other cities. You probably won’t be helped directly by being in this research study. But we think we can help youth on the streets to get back to home and school by learning more about them.

We want to do several interviews (about 30 to 45 minutes long each) with you. There will be about three questions, and the interviews will be recorded. And we also want to observe you in your daily activities. You will be asked to come up with a fake name for yourself that we will use. This is to make sure that no one else is able to connect your answers or your information to your real names.

Usually, researchers write papers about research studies when they are done. If a paper is written about this research study, your name won’t be used in it. We will keep all your information private. Only people who work for the Catholic Action for Street Children and Emory University or are involved in this study will be able to look at your information. You will be given a payment for spending time to be a part of this study.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. What has been your experience since becoming a homeless youth?
2. What kind of work have you done to support yourself since becoming homeless?
3. Can you tell me about your family of origin? Do you still have any connection with them? If not, who have you looked to as your “parents” or “family” since becoming homeless?
4. Are you religious? What do you think of the religious messages you hear at CAS?
5. What sort of things do you hope to achieve or obtain in your future? How are you working towards these goals now?

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