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Too Much Too Young: An Ethnographic Exploration into Practice Parenting During Adolescence in Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand the experiences of an adolescent in the unique position of practice parenthood. The study was carried out in an orphanage in Accra, Ghana, which is home to 53 children. The orphanage functions through communal child-rearing practices in that there is a shared responsibility among the adolescent members of the group. This was explored using a range of ethnographic methodologies, such as ethnographic interviews, participatory photo elicitation and object elicitation. The themes that emerged through the data concluded that the responsibility placed upon the participants is embedded within the cultural ideology and is therefore normalised. Furthermore, these responsibilities had a range of both positive and negative effects, such as the need for self-sacrifice while also functioning as good practice for future parenthood.

KEY WORDS:	ADOLESCENT	ETHNOGRAPHY	VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY	PRACTICE PARENTING	RESPONSIBILITIES
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Background Literature

Adolescence

Historical Definitions

Adolescence is a stage in the life-span that is triggered by biological change (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). With the beginning and end to the development of reproductive organs and secondary sexual characteristics occurring (Adams & Gullotta, 1989). G. Stanley Hall was the first psychologist to argue that adolescence was a unique stage in the human development. He viewed adolescence as a “period from puberty until full adult status has been attained”, (Muuss, 1996:16). Hall explains the ‘emotional rollercoaster’ that an adolescent goes through, which is a fluctuation of contradictory tendencies (Muuss, 1996).

Expanding further on the developmental stage of adolescence, theorists (Erikson, 1968 cited in Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Keninston, 1971 cited in Arnett, 2000; Levinson, 1978 cited in Arnett, 2000; Zimring 1982) have viewed adolescence as a period of searching for one’s identity, in order to be ready for adulthood through role experimentation. Erikson (1968) views adolescence as a critical period where the individual must gain a sense of a personal and secure identity (cited in Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). According to Erikson, during adolescence a psychological crisis can occur between: identity versus identity confusion. This state is when the adolescent questions who they are, who they will be, to which one must work on finding their identity in order to reduce identity confusion. The process of an individual understanding their identity relies heavily upon social peers and their feedback as well as exploring new identities. Erikson (1968, cited in Tartakovsky, 2009) and Marcia (1980, cited in Muuss, 1996:60) argue that for adolescents to find their identities they need to explore new identities, behaviours, beliefs, sexuality and so on. This exploration is ‘a period of psychological moratorium’. Psychosocial moratorium is the delay of adult commitments and responsibilities in order to experiment with different roles (Arnett, 2000). However Tartakovsky (2009) argues that for an individual to explore their identity they need to have social support, and such individuals are usually from a middle-class family, allowing for the best circumstances to explore their identities. Erikson (1968, cited in Tartakovsky, 2009) argues that once: psychosocial moratorium, identity issues and identity crisis have occurred, the identity should have been achieved and in time for the progression onto the next stage: young adulthood intimacy versus isolation. Additionally Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) viewed the increase in autonomy, choice of future action and thought; along with independence from parents as the full development of adolescence.

Cultural Construction

This is the view that reality as we understand it, is constructed and culture is at the centre of this (Lam, 1997). As culture, functions as a code for understanding reality that contain beliefs and values which shape one’s view and are contingent as they change over time and geographical location (Baron et al., 2006). This view is adapted by cultural relativists who argue that the universalism approach, (the view one’s culture can be generalised on a global scale, Adams, 2008), simplify cultures in a manner that excludes the voices of minority groups (Labadi, 2007).

Cultural Construction of Adolescence

Seginer & Halabi-Kheir (1998:310) contended that autonomy is “mainly valid in Western societies,” in that it is an ethnocentric goal. This leads onto the perspective that Adolescence can be viewed as a culturally and historically contingent developmental stage, as structural changes in education, timing of parenthood and marriages (Arnett, 2000), as well as the growth of technology, has altered the understanding of adolescence (Fexia, 2011). Furthermore, Lam (1997; 2005) also agrees that traditional theories claims universality on the developmental stage that is adolescence. He argues that previous research and theories are embedded within Western society, to which he argues that previous theories lack cultural relativity and thus bias. Lam (2005) viewed adolescence as a stage that is relative to the culture that the individual is a part. Supporting this view, Sigelman & Rider (2009) argue that the specific age grades of adolescence are socially constructed, and are important as they influence the way individuals carry out their lives according to the society they live in. This determines what is appropriate for their age and constructs what they should be doing. As argued previously, in western societies, adolescence age grades range from 12-20, or until the individual has gained autonomy and is carrying out adult roles, whereas in many other countries across the world this differs. Additionally, Fexia (2011) noted that it is hard to pin-point exactly the existence and length of adolescence in sub-Saharan African societies. For example, primitive societies, such as Pygmies’, share the value that puberty is a celebration, due to the biological significance in the reproduction of society. Pygmy societies view the end of childhood with the initiation of Elima. Elima for girls is when they have experienced their first menstrual cycle, after which they are ready for marriage and motherhood. For boys the rite of Elima is either when they killed their first large animal, proving they can provide for their family, or when they have spent a night with a girl who has entered Elima. Once both productive and reproductive abilities have developed, the individual is accepted into the adult world (Fexia 2011). This is an example, of how Lam (2005) would argue that there are some universal patterns of behaviour, but developmental stages differ from culture-to-culture.

Cultural Constructions of Child-rearing

Biological parents contribute to the genetics of a child. However, once the child is born it is exposed to a range of individuals, not just their parents, who all together shape the experiences of the child’s life through the child-rearing practices used (Griffith & Grolnick, 2014; Bornstein & Cheah, 2005). There are many styles to child-rearing, all of which are rooted and derived from the culture that the parents (and in many cases the wider family) are a part of (Ijzendoorn, et al. 2005). Therefore, understanding and recognising other child-rearing practices in the context of the culture is important as this can highlight different types of styles carried out (Griffith & Grolnick, 2014).

Kibbutz Community in Israel

The Kibbutz lifestyle is an example of a culturally diverse child-rearing practice. Kibbutz individuals live in a community that involves collective ownership, living and education (Rabkin, 1968). This involves educating the children on the norms and values of the Kibbutz culture in reinforcing the collectivist attitudes and discouraging

individualism. The Kibbutz community views parenting as satisfying the needs of each child without the mediation of the family, (Ijzendoorn, et al. 2005). The Kibbutz community carries out communal child-rearing, where the children are raised by a series of socialisation figures such as parents, nurses and peer groups (Rabkin, 1968). In this communal setting, the children live in a separate house to their parents. The nurses (meteplet) care for the children in the day, and then the children see their parents during family time in the evening (Ijzendoorn, et al. 2005).

NSO society of Bamenda

Heidi Verhoef (2005) looked at how one ethnic community (the NSO's) raised their children. NSO individuals, who live in Bamenda, North West Cameroon, view "a child is only its mothers in the womb" (Verhoef, 2005:373). The cultural ideologies of the NSO are similar to the Kibbutz, in that they believe in a collective community which shares the responsibility of child-rearing between mothers (Nsamenang & Lamb, 1993). Children are perceived as treasures that should be shared with the community in order to build up the family. The more extended family members the child has socialising them, the better chances they have at successfully surviving in the world. Furthermore, most believe in the notion that once a child is born, it has many mothers.

Hunter Gathers of Ituri Forrest

Tronick et al. (1987) conducted a two year long study on a group of Efe (pygmies, also known as hunter gathers), located in the Ituri Forrest of Zaire. They found that the Efe carried out a system of multiple caretaking, in that many mothers cared for the children of the community. This form of care also extended to breastfeeding. They argued that this system of child-rearing had numerous fulfilments, such as psychosocial and health benefits. Additionally, as this community was collectivist in cooperation and sharing, this form of child-rearing reflected such unity.

The Adolescent Parent

Research surrounding adolescent parenting predominantly takes a negative view towards the impact on the parents and the children being raised (Unger, et al. 2000; Molina et al., 2010). For example, James et al. (2012) argues that being an adolescent parent not only has medical implications, but can also have a negative effect on the adolescent's education and future career, due to the large number of young girls having to leave school, or not having enough time to complete their education. Additionally, Haynes-Lawrence (2008:1386) states that adolescent mothers are viewed as "at great risk for abusing and neglecting their children." This is argued to be because young parents are associated with lacking the parenting skills needed to raise their children (Furey, 2004; SmitheBattle, 2007), such as placing their own needs above the child's (Haynes-Lawrence 2008). Moreover, they may not be prepared for parenthood and thus force maturity to occur (Beers & Hollo, 2009), because they are performing both the role of adolescence as well as the "non-normative transition to parenthood" (Toomey et al., 2013:826). Therefore, the outcome of adolescent's as 'good' parents depends heavily upon the adolescent's progression to young adulthood in gaining psychosocial maturity (Kramer & Lancaster, 2010). As, Gluckman & Hanson (2006) argue that young mothers are socially less prepared in becoming adequate parents due to not being able to achieve psychosocial maturity at a young age. In addition, Kramer & Lancaster

(2010) view differences in social experiences as contributing to levels of psychosocial maturity, for example, they argued that individuals with extended adolescence had delayed maturity, whereas stressful and dysfunctional families can create early maturity.

On the other hand, some argue that parenting during adolescence does not have to be a negative attribute. For example, Kamp & Kelly (2014:2) argue that early parenting “can also be a powerful motivating force for previously disengaged students.” With support from Higgenbottom et al. (2006), who found that many adolescent mothers saw motherhood as the push into adulthood, and rejected the view that they can no longer pursue an education or a ‘good’ career. However, the only struggle they encountered was the feelings of being at a disadvantage due to material deprivation. In addition, Geronimus (2003) argues that adolescent parenting can have positive outcomes, providing they have developed psychosocial maturity prior to parenthood. Furthermore, Beers & Hollo (2009) disputed the idea that adolescent parenting is universally viewed as a negative life event, as for some families, regardless of the age, becoming a parent is positive and a celebratory event.

Research Question

What implications are there for adolescents performing the role of the parent, in a Ghanaian orphanage?

The research aims of this study are:

1. An exploration into the unique responsibilities of adolescent parenting.
2. To explore an example of a culturally diverse parenting style in Nungua, Accra.
3. To explore the above using a variety of ethnographic methods.

Methodology

The Researcher

I am a 22 year old, white female student. I chose to study this topic as it became clear during my visit to Ghana that these young girls have a lot of responsibility and their experiences were unique, from my perspective.

Setting for the study

The fifth Pan-African conference held in Manchester, England in 1945 aimed to liberate African countries from the control of colonialism and “to inspire African leaders to regain control of their countries” (Abegunrin, 2009:143). Organizer of the conference Kwame Nkrumah returned to Ghana (his country) to see this through (Quist-Adade, 2007), and “In 1957 Ghana became the first African nation to achieve independence from its Colonial ruler” (Horton, 2001:2141). The people of Ga are the local Ethnic group in Accra, which is the capital of Ghana. They speak English but the two local languages are Twi and Ga (Ichino & Nathan, 2013). This study is located in Nungua, Accra.

Participants for the study

For this study, I interviewed five female participants, four of females were 18 years old, and one was 20 years old. The demographic location of the participants is a town called Nungua, in the city of Accra, Ghana. Additionally, the owner of the orphanage and chief of the local area (Otinnor), who is aged 40, was also interviewed as he is in charge of all the children and delegates roles to them. Convenience sampling method was used to gather participants. Convenience sampling involves using participants who are accessible and easy to contact (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). This applies to this study as the participants were easy accessible through the orphanage.

Method for the study

Ethnography

This research takes an qualitative emic approach, to explore the participant's beliefs, thoughts and attitudes through their own words and in their culture (Gregory & Ruby, 2011; Schlegel & Hewlett, 2011; Warner, 1999). To do this, ethnographic methodology was carried out. Ethnography involves immersion into the culture of study (Price, 2013; Schlegel & Hewlett, 2011), and to learn from and build a rapport with the participants (Oudshoorn et al., 2013; Zickar & Carter, 2010; Law, et al., 1998; Spradley, 1979). Furthermore, Sarah Pink (2007:22) defines ethnographic methodology as "an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society" and "a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers own experiences." Ethnographic methodology was achieved by living and volunteering in Accra for eight and half weeks. Whilst there I lived with a local family, ate the local food, attended a wedding, travelled on local transport and most importantly I worked closely with the participants, learning about their culture through their chores, watching television and attending parties with them. Additionally, the use of multiple methods of ethnography further aided my understanding, immersion into the setting and rapport with the participants (Zickar & Carter, 2010; Lillis, 2008).

Accessing the field as an 'Obruni'

As this research was grounded in ethnographic methodology, one of the main procedures before carrying out any research is to gain access into the field. Schensul et al. (1999) argues that this is an imperative process, where entry into the field is the development of one's presence and relationships in the setting they wish to collect data. However, the first part of this process is to obtain official permission (Schensul et al., 1999). The permission is usually obtained via the 'gatekeepers' as they are usually the first point of contact in research settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). On arrival, I met the owner of the orphanage, the gatekeeper (an individual who regulates access to people and usually hold formal positions in the community) (McKenna & Main, 2013). An explanation of the research was provided and he gave permission. However, I still had to gain permission from the participants and to do this a rapport was needed first (Schensul et al., 1999). At the beginning, this was problematic as I was viewed as an 'Obruni', which is the local term for "white man" (Holsey, 2013:509). This placed me as an outsider to them (Gregory & Ruby, 2011). To overcome this, one-to-one activities were carried out, such as helping them with the washing and trips to the hospital, which really helped to build

rapport and trust that was needed to ask permission to interview them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Ethnographic Interview

In-depth, open-ended ethnographic interviews were carried out for this research. Schlegel & Hewlett (2011) viewed emic ethnographic interviews as offering a unique opportunity to capture the adolescent's perspective. Careful wording of questions was crucial in order to maintain the already established rapport, as this is important when gathering rich qualitative data (Westby, 1990). The questions mainly developed from the interview itself, in response to the participant's answers, with some form of guide (appendx 1) from research questions and literature (Westby, 1990). Spradley's (1979) three main types of ethnographic interview questions (descriptive, structural and contrast) influenced the style of questions asked. The interviews were digitally recorded and varied in length, depending on the participant and their schedule.

Setting for Interview

Another aspect to ethnographic interviews is the environment that they are situated within. The setting can be a useful source to understanding the perspectives of the participant, but also "are rewarding locations for the ethnographer" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:99). The location of the interviews was the 'office' that was in the compound of the orphanage, as this was a familiar setting to the participant, an area that was quiet and away from the rest of the children for privacy (O'Reilly, 2005). Due to minimal responses during the interviews, this led onto to the combination of using other ethnographic methods: participatory photo elicitation (Pink, 2007) and object elicitation (Kroger & Adair, 2008), as a way of drawing out more emotions, offering more interaction between us and aiding an understanding of contextual factors (Bagnoli, 2009). This can be seen in Wall & Higgins's (2006) study that used visual stimuli to reduce tension between researcher and participants. Furthermore, the development of multiple methods has turned this research into using ethnography as a methodology as opposed to a method (Lillis, 2008).

Participatory Photo Elicitation

Participatory photo elicitation is a method of visual ethnography (Pink, 2007). Participatory photography is a collaborative approach used to involve both the participant and the researcher, where the participant can illustrate their experiences through the photographs produced (Aldridge, 2007; Brace-Govan, 2007). This is the first stage to this method, followed by the interview where the photographs are used to elicit a conversation between the researcher and the participant (Pyle, 2013; Oh, 2012). This form of method has widely been used with adolescence, as it gives them a form of control allowing them to teach the researcher about issues they wished to talk about (Stevenson, 2006). Furthermore, this method further develops the emic ethnographic methodology of this research to understand and learn from the culture through the pictures taken. This is encapsulated by Sarah Pink's (2007:38) view on photographic interviews, which "allow ethnographers and informants to discuss images in ways that create a 'bridge' between their different experiences of reality." It is important to note that there are ethical issues when using photographs (Castleden & Gavin, 2008) (see ethical considerations section).

Procedure

Participants were asked if they wanted to take photographs of their responsibilities at the orphanage. Three of the five participants took photographs using a digital camera. They returned to the office, where we started the interview using the photographs. Additionally, I took some photographs of them carrying out their house chores that were also discussed in the interviews. An example of a photograph each participant took can be found below. All of the photographs highlight how each individual, including myself, have different perspectives on their house chores (Pink, 2007).



Figure1. Dee took a photograph of the kitchen where they cook for 53 children.



Figure 2. Photograph of the shower that Dee scrubs everyday



Figure 3. Gloria got someone else to photograph her mopping



Figure 4. This was a photo that I had taken of Dee washing clothes and teaching one of her assigned children how to do it.

Object Elicitation

Object elicitation is where objects, for example drawings or personal items, are used to encourage participants to voice their feelings (Bagnoli, 2009; Kroger & Adair, 2008). This method is another example of visual ethnography, as the objects that were used were visual cue cards (Sherringham & Serle, 2010) with faces of emotions on each of the six cue cards, and were used to further understand the participants perspective. The six emotions (unsure, happy, upset, angry, sad and tired) were used in an interview 'game' where we took turns asking each other questions and responded using one of the emotion cue cards, explaining why we felt that way. This method derived in the field upon reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), as it became apparent that although the participants engaged in participatory photo elicitation interviews, giving detailed accounts of their responsibilities and their

culture, their feelings and emotions were not explicitly clear. Similarly, Spindler (2008) reported similar problem that led onto him using drawings as an object to elicit responses.



Figure 3. Emotion cue cards used during object elicitation interviews.

Field Diary

Furthermore, a field diary was used as a way of engaging in reflexivity. Reflexivity is grounded in ethnography methodology, as it documents the researcher's emotions, struggles and challenges in the immediate setting, which often can influence the course of the research (Punch, 2012).

Thematic Analysis

After the interviews each of them were transcribed (the data) (appendix 2), and were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to find emerging themes from the data during analysis (Parker, 2012), in that overarching themes are extracted from the data (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson 2009). Themes can be viewed as codes in the data with two main features to help identify them: the reoccurrence and importance of such codes (Buetow, 2010). Braun & Clarke (2006) six phase process of analysis was used in this research. The first phase is the process of familiarity, which was done by reading and re-reading the data. Second phase was the creation of the initial codes, this is where summary notes were made on each of the transcripts (appendix 3). The third stage involved searching for themes. This was done by reading the initials codes and highlight any reoccurring patterns as well as using different colours to code commonality. Stage four was the production of a thematic 'map' of analysis (appendix 4). This stage highlights the process of branching from basic themes, to organized themes and then finally to global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This led onto phase five, the creating of theme names. Finally, phase six was the production of the report.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics are seen as a system of moral principles that should be carried out during any research (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). As part of this research, I obtained

ethical approval from the university (appendix 5) after following the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2010). The following was given to the participants at the beginning of the study: an invitation letter (appendix 6), information sheet (appendix 7), and a consent form (appendix 8). Finally, after the invitation letter and the information sheet was given, if they were happy to continue, they were asked to sign the consent form and to choose a pseudonym name to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally at this stage, the option to withdraw was always possible. After the study had taken place a debrief form (appendix 9), where discussion took place.

As this research involved the use of photographs, careful ethical procedures had to be carried out (Aldridge, 2007). Information on the reasoning for taking photographs was provided to them in the information sheet and then again, in the consent form with additionally information on how these photographs were to be used (Castleden & Gavin, 2008). Therefore, before attaining written consent, it was explained that their pictures would be used in a write up report, that may be viewed by many others (Schembri & Boyle, 2013).

Analysis and Discussion

From carrying out thematic analysis, the following three themes were both important and recurrent in all transcripts: Upward mobility and self-worth, traditional roles and practice parenting.

Upward mobility and self-worth

“When I learn hard, and I take my education seriously I will be a better person in the future one day” (May, L153-154)

This theme emerged through all of the transcripts, in that all the participants placed high value on gaining a high education. It could be argued that this is a result of political movements to encourage girls to attend school (Esia-Donkoh & Mariwah, 2011). This is evidenced by, all the participants having high level of ambition in terms of career “my professions are many I want to be an actress, a model and a business lady” (Penny, L36-37). The motivation behind these high levels of ambition was that it would lead onto being better individuals in the future and achieving upward mobility. Upward mobility refers to rising up the socio-economic ladder, reaping economic rewards in the process, with education being at the core (Mandel, 2013). The two sub-themes: adolescent’s role and parent’s duty explains the high level of significance placed on education.

Adolescent’s role:

This sub-theme is the view that learning and gaining an education is the adolescent’s responsibility (transcript 5, L92-93), for example, in response to “do you think there are things that teenagers must do” Dee said “yes you have to take your books serious” (L310). The view that it is their role to learn, dominates aspects of their lives such as the friends they choose “I make friends that will learn” (Penny, L332-333). As well as their structure for the week “Monday to Friday its serious learning” (May, L23-24), as they go to silent studying session everyday from 7.20 till 9.20, although, this is only true for the girls who are at the hostel during the week. Nonetheless, the girls who are at the home, who have more house chores, still make

time after to fit in their readings, (transcript 7, L40-45). Additionally, all the participants reject being parents now as they want to concentrate on their studies and go to university (transcript 3, L265) (transcript 9, L77-79). Furthermore, their future self-worth hinges upon their success in education, this can be seen through Gloria's response to school "I believe in education I believe that without education I couldn't make anything in life" (Gloria, L47-48). This supports the view that learning is of high priority to them as it is the key to achieving autonomy. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) characterise autonomy as the freedom of independence, which can be seen to be reached by the participants through education and subsequently financial stability that signifies the shift from adolescence to adulthood. This is a comprehensive counter-argument to Seginer & Halabi-Kheir (1993) view, that autonomy is a western centred goal as it is also clearly valued by the participants.

Parent's duty:

This sub-theme occurred in responses to questions surrounding what makes a good parent. For example, "a good parent, someone who erm always ready for their children and also seen to it that their education is well fit" (May, L131-132). This explains the view that providing an education for your child is a core role of a parent, that it is their duty to make sure their children are educated (transcript 4, L168). This is supported by the cultural trend, where parents are fostering out their children so they can gain a good education and to achieve upward mobility (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985). For the participants, they even say that they starting to teach the younger children (transcript 3, L227-233). Therefore, they may not be able to pay for education, but they can see to it that the children are given help. This makes it seem that importance of education is culturally valued, as socialisation agents pass this value on.

Traditional gender roles

"House chores is a thing that every women should know how to do"
(May, L255)

Another theme embedded in all transcriptions is that house chores are to be learnt by girls. Tenkorang et al. (2013) found that gender inequality is dominant in sub-Saharan Africa due to a patriarchal system, which could explain the traditional gender roles found. The house chores that adolescent girls perform are: cooking for 53 children; cleaning inside and outside the home, washing their clothes and their assigned children's clothes; and taking care of the children (transcript 2, May L96-100). Doku et al. (2013) argues that it is the norm for adolescent girls to perform such household chores in Ghana. Furthermore, it became clear that the boys only look after themselves (transcript 3, Dee L213-222), such as, washing their clothes and keeping their room clean, further adding to the inequality in gender roles. The two sub-themes (for the future and juggling chores) explain the how the participants carry out their chores, and there purpose.

For the Future:

This sub-theme is the view that the participants perform their house chores to prepare them for marriage, in order to look after the home (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985). For example, "In Ghana because of marriage you have to learn everything these are things you will have to know for home," (Penny, L238-240). Additionally the cultural ideology reflects that house chores are to be learnt at a very early age and to

mastered by adolescence, “my mother said you have to know how to do everything so three years you will start washing” (Dee, L205-206 and transcript 4, Gloria L85). “Yes in Africa here they expect you to do the house chores it’s also part of their training in every family” “most of the adults go to work then they take like a house slave a small girl to help in the house” (transcript 6, L3-6). From this, we can see that, girls are to perform duties around the house so that the parent’s can go to work, thus can be viewed as “social assets to households” (Esia-Donkoh & Mariwah, 2011:31).

Juggling Chores:

Another sub-theme is that the act of juggling for the participants. The participants carry out their chores before school “when I wake up at four I will sweep” (Gloria, L260), “first when I wake up in the morning I have to wash the utensil and clean the kitchen or clean our room” (Lilly, L21-22). Then they carry out chores when they get back which places a lot of strain on them, for example:

“I feel bad cause I am tired [holding up the sign] and I am supposed to do it I am supposed to work like right now I am supposed to wash the uniform and the children’s after school” (transcript 7, Dee L41-43).

Additionally, Doku et al. (2013) have found that domestic chores can have implications for adolescent’s education, due to not getting enough sleep after having completed chores. However, they do not always view their responsibilities negatively, as they see them as a part of themselves (transcript 4, Gloria, L169-171). They view carrying out chores as a display of ‘good work ethic’ which is an admired attribute, whereas laziness in the form of not doing so much is negatively viewed (transcript 1, L357-361). In addition, this early emphasis on work ethic could help to develop psychosocial maturity, as Kramer & Lancaster (2010) argue that social experiences, such as these, can develop levels of maturity. Although, maturity is not seen to the participants as being determined by social experiences, rather they see this as characterised by independence (transcript 5, L180-191).

Practice Parenting

“daddy said we should learn how to take care of the children so that if you grow you can take care of your own children” (Dee, L197-198)

This theme signifies the fact that it is the adolescent’s responsibility to care for and guide the child through enculturation (Brown, 2006 cited in Esia-Donkoh & Mariwah, 2011), in the manner that a parent would. This fulfils the function of preparing them for future parenthood. They do this through “sometimes bath for them and wash their things and make sure they are always clean” (Lilly, L30-31). They also socialise the children to learn how to wash their own clothes so that when they are around 10-12 years old, the children can do this themselves. When this occurs the participants feel a sense of pride “I want to teach them the right thing yeah and also hope that they will be a great boy in the future” (Penny, L264-265), “I feel happy cause I teach them what I know” (Dee, L63-66). Additionally, as part of practice parenting the participants are seen to carry out a self-sacrificing role, in that they are seen to suppress their adolescent individualism in favour of a communal good (transcript 3, L70-71; transcript 5, L212-213). This idea of performing self-sacrifice behaviours conflicts with Haynes-Lawrence’s (2008) view, that adolescent’s would be bad parents, as they put their own needs first. However, this is not to say that the

participants do not face an internal struggle on this matter (transcript 2, L267). In addition, there are a further two sub-themes which illustrate practice parenting in action: sister and mother, and not ready.

Sister and Mother:

All of the participants viewed themselves as carrying out parental responsibilities for the children. In some cases, they were viewed as their assigned child's mother, "the other children call me Jake's mum, I feel good I like it" (Gloria, L115). On the other hand, despite performing parental responsibilities and in some cases being perceived as a parent, they often view each other as 'sisters' and use the terms 'mum' and 'sister' interchangeably, "some people call me hope's mum some will come and say sister" (Penny, L277). This could indicate the implications of the dual role performed by the girls. This is further evidenced by the struggles they have in disciplining the children "I have to force her, I can't punish her" "he [daddy] punishes the children" (Dee, L112-114). This represents a confusion of terms, in that the adolescents perform the role of parenting, without having the authority of a parent. This can be seen as the reason behind the terms 'sister' and 'mum' being used interchangeably because the adolescents only fulfil the role partially. Toomey et al. (2013) seems to indicate that this dual role will have negative implications for the successful upbringing of the children. However, it can be argued that these negative implications are relieved by the girls self-sacrifice, and that the only thing prohibiting them from being successful parents is that they only have partial authority.

Not ready:

This sub-theme refers to the juxtaposition between the participants carrying out parental responsibilities and their unwillingness to have a child of their own. In their view, they are not ready as all participants relate being a parent to financial factors. For example, in response to the question, why can't adolescents be parents? Gloria answered "they can't cater for the child" (L166) (transcript 2, L240-253). In this way, the participants equate the ability to be a parent and levels of maturity with financial stability. Additionally, in the view of James et al. (2012) who argue that parenthood has medical implications, some participants also shared this view, "in Ghana yes because your womb is very matured but 16 below 17 you are not matured" (Lilly, L74), this offers the idea that parenthood is impacted by biological stages. Additionally, for example the adolescence age stages are all different across the participants; some say ages 12-19, others 13-20, therefore if the age at which adolescence begins and ends is variable then it is difficult to devise a conclusive account as to when the participants feel they would be ready. This is in line with Sigelman & Rider's (2009) view that age grades are socially constructed, and determine what is appropriate. This implies that the definition of what is socially appropriate is determined by the individual's interpretations. This supports a cultural relativist approach, in that there is scope for individuals to interpret the code of culture differently (Esia-Donkoh & Mariwah, 2011).

Conclusion

At the beginning of the research, I set out to explore what implications there were for adolescents carrying out parenting roles in a Ghanaian orphanage. As a result of the ethnographic methodology, which allowed me to immerse myself into the Ghanaian

culture (Schlegel & Hewlett, 2011), I was able to succeed in this. The main findings were that the participants had to suppress their own adolescent individualism, in order to care for the home. Furthermore, it was shown that they believed they were not ready to be parents themselves, yet they were already performing these roles. However, there were positive outcomes for the participants in performing this role as they professed their pride in taking care of the children and they saw this as good practice for their eventual transition into parenthood. In addition, due to the setting of the orphanage, performing the role of parent did not prevent the participants from pursuing an education. This was shown to be of great importance to them, as it is their route to achieve autonomy (Mandel, 2013). This can be seen to lend support to the universalistic account, as the pursuit of autonomy cannot be considered a purely western desire. Furthermore, although this research has been very successful, there were certain limitations. For example, due to time constraints I chose to focus solely on the females, as their perspectives are that of a parent. However, had I been given more time, I would have liked to have explored the males perspectives at the orphanage on this issue. This would have provided a more rounded view on gender roles. Furthermore, it would have also been beneficial to had explored the accounts of the younger children, as it is apparent now that this process begins at a young age, unfortunately due to ethical considerations I was unable to do this. Overall, the main strength of this research was the innovative methodological approaches that allowed rich qualitative data to be extracted. In particular, the object elicitation (Kroger & Adair, 2008) was particularly affective in engaging with the participant, and should be recommended for further research into the field of adolescence perspective.

Reflexivity

I have immensely enjoyed carrying out this research. The ethnographic methodology really helped me to gain an understanding of the culture and the participant's perspectives. This research allowed me an insight into the lives of the girls and I felt honoured that they had let me. The journey in gaining a rapport with the girls was tough but worth it, as I realised you cannot just enter into a setting, be accepted and expect people to give personal information. This research has become a passion of mine, as looking back every obstacle, every laugh I had with the participants was an amazing experience. These girls have inspired me, and carrying out this research was a way of showing this. It was hard at times being so close with the girls, as I would get upset to see how hard they work and to be referred to as 'house slave' in a conversation. It highlighted how easily the researcher can be placed in an uncomfortable position and not having the right to speak out. This also made me realise the need to take into account cultural differences, as I do not think he meant the term 'slave' as I know it, in the way it is recognised in a Western context. However, I would carry this research out again in a heartbeat.

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