International Institute of Social Studies

**Constructing Sexualities Across Transnational Spaces:
Ghanaian Youth in the Netherlands**

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Contents

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
IUD	Intrauterine Device
NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation

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Abstract

This paper discusses the relevance of transnationalism for understanding sexuality. It explores conceptual issues such as place, school and family and in constructing sexualities. The researcher draws her argument by making sense of the different discourses (including, cultural and legal) that surround sexuality at the national levels of Ghana and the Netherlands and how the differences in these two countries though, not always exclusive, often obstruct the sexual socialization of youth who live their lives transnationally. The study focused on the choices that migrant youth of Ghanaian descent living in the Netherlands make while constructing their sexual identities vis-à-vis the compulsory lessons they receive on sexual diversity in high schools in the Netherlands, their exposure to LGBT programmes and socialization in the Netherlands.

By employing an ethnographic approach to qualitative studies, the researcher gathered views of 16 young Ghanaians between the ages of 15 and 23 years and views of four Ghanaian parents living in the Hague and Amsterdam.

The study found contestations and struggles in the sexual behaviour of young people with migrant background often emerging from their parents and other relations and ties they have in Ghana. From the narratives of the participants, it was concluded that the immediate environment of people in the early stages of their formation years has a high tendency of defining young people's sexual identities. Likewise, religion, culture, family, connections between homeland and destination country and school are major influences that plant deep-rooted beliefs and values in young people which are used as guiding principles in constructing their sexual identities.

Relevance to Development Studies

Discriminations based on the sexual orientation of people affects the multiple aspects of the development of people (Fukuda-Parr 2003, Sen 2000). People, especially adolescents in the stages of developing their sexualities take certain decisions that may affect their sexual health. Therefore, being informed is important to shape the perceptions and attitudes that youths develop about their own sexualities and of others.

Keywords

Gender and Sexuality, Homosexuality, Youth Sexual Development, Heterosexuality, Transnational Constructions of Sexualities, Ghanaian Youth, Adolescent sexualities.

1. Setting the Case

1.1 Rationale

> When I was in high school (Dutch high school), I had a homosexual teacher. I found it very difficult to respect him which made me very uncomfortable in school because of how we talk about homosexuals in our country (Ghana). But at school, the Dutch culture teaches us to have respect for everyone no matter their sexual orientation. (Garbrah Hooper 2017: 24)

The above excerpt, taken from a study on young parenthood among Ghanaian immigrants in the Netherlands, relates the experiences of young Ghanaians living in the Netherlands, a country with a legal and high social acceptance of homosexuality. The Netherlands was the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex marriages in 2001[1] and since then, the country has progressively espoused an environment that promotes sexual diversity (Mepschen et al. 2010). Though its liberal stance on sexual diversity is institutionalized in the country, there are still reported cases of victimization based on gender and sexual identities especially in Dutch schools (Kuyper and Bakker 2006).

Since the experience of gender and sexual-based discrimination and bullying were undermining the government's efforts to ensure sexual inclusiveness in the country and to realize the rights of people who identify as LGBT, in 2012, sexual diversity education was incorporated into the curriculum of all high schools in the Netherlands as a step to improve the acceptance of sexual diversity among students. This was an obligatory directive passed down in a policy by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Culture. The goal for the sexual diversity education was stated as: "the student learns about similarities, differences and changes in culture and world-view in the Netherlands; learns to link their own and others' ways of life to this; learns meaning for society to respect each other's attitude and ways of life; and learns to respectfully handle sexuality and diversity in society"[2]. Overall, the sexual education in Dutch schools is to increase tolerance and acceptance of LGBT among students while giving students a comprehensive sexual education on adolescent sexuality. However, as a multicultural state, there is the question of whether the policy of compulsory sexual education considers the interest of immigrants who may not want their children to undertake sex education that includes lessons on LGBT?

A recent study examining "opinions on sexual and gender diversity in the Netherlands and Europe" reveals that attitudes towards homosexuals in the Netherlands have improved over time between 2006 and 2017 (Kuyper 2018). The case of the Netherlands as a multicultural society also has an impact on how efforts to promote sexual diversity has evolved over time. The same study by

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[1] Nag, O.S. (Last updated 2018) 'The First Countries to Legalize Gay Marriage' (a webpage of WorldAtlas.com). Accessed November, 12 2018 https://www.worldat-las.com/articles/first-countries-to-recognize-same-sex-marriages-nationally.html>.
[2] Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science (Last updated 2013) 'The Dutch Cultural System' (a webpage of Government of the Netherlands website). Accessed May 03 2018 https://www.government.nl/documents/leaflets/2013/06/17/the-dutch-cul-tural-system>.

Kuyper (2018) found that low acceptance of LGBT was common among ethnic minority groups as compared to Europeans. The researcher likened the finding to the fact that immigrants held negative attitudes toward non-heterosexual identities because immigrants maintained their homeland culture which was repressive toward LGBT.

The lives of immigrants have been theorized as characterized by a simultaneous multi-stranded social relation across space (Schiller et al. 1995: 48). In view of this, whiles in their destination countries, immigrants continue to maintain ties with their countries of origin. Through these ties, migrants engage in the transfer of social remittances which include ideas, practices, beliefs, identities etc. (Levitt 1998). Similarly, a reverse remittance of practices and ideas from homelands of immigrants to their host countries happen simultaneously (Levitt 1998). Through this same process, some scholars have argued that sexual variations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) infiltrate the global-south from the West (Kalra and Bhugra 2010, Huang 2017). In the same way immigrants may hold on to certain beliefs and attitudes on sexuality from their origin countries. In these ways, transnationalism has stirred up interactions between the global and the local such that current conceptualizations of sexuality are being reformed (Grewal and Kaplan 2001). Transnational sexuality is therefore, a critical approach focused on the linkage between sexual practices and ideas across a transnational field (Grewal and Kaplan 2001).

Further, transnationalism has currently taken shape in informing research studies focused on children and youth in the context of migration. The works of researchers such as Huijsmans (2015) and Somerville (2008) are some of the studies that have captured children and youth in their transnational fields. In their findings, it came to bear that the perspectives of transnational children and youth are informed by multiple relations across space. Therefore, it requires the same transnational perspective to understand the lives of such youths (Huijsmans 2015: 122).

As established by some social learning scholars, children are hugely influenced by what they observe in their environments (DeLamater and Hyde 1998). Thus, the role of place in gender and sexual socialization cannot be overemphasized. Since sexuality is culture-specific, young people are likely to emulate the sexual culture of their society. This may, however, be different in the case of transnational sexuality. A likely explanation is that, youth engaged in transnational lives are open to more than one society (Glick Schiller 1992), hence sexual culture becomes pluralistic. Hence, to understand young Ghanaians constructions of sexuality whiles living in the Netherlands is to understand how these young people are making sense of their received notions of sexuality that are conflate with the multiplicity of sexual orientations evident in their transnational context.

1.2 Essentializing Young People's Constructions of Sexuality Across Space

According to Kehily (2018), sexual socialization for young people happens within the society in which they live. The ways in which young people construct and negotiate their sexuality is an important aspect of realizing their

sexual identities. Their ability to do this is an expression of the agency they possess (Tolman 1999). Sexual identity construction is a complex phenomenon borne out of interactions with one's society, and the cultural environment (Grewal and Kaplan 2001). Likewise, the school, family and media play a crucial role in exposing young people to the ways in which they construct their sexualities (Bay-Cheng 2003).

In an era where human societies are becoming progressively globalized, people and nations are experiencing huge influence from the outer world that affects certain aspects of people's lives including cultural, social and consequently the ways in which people develop their sexuality (Kalra and Bhugra 2010: 118). On migration and sexuality, the link between these two is a two-way phenomenon. As people migrate, they move with their culture, attitudes, perceptions and sexualities to their destination countries. These sexual cultures may intersect or diverge from the practice in the host country as explored by Yeboa-Mensa (2017).

In the wake of transnational migration, it is also not surprising to see some changes that occur in the sexual culture of migrants in their host countries being transferred to their country of origin (Meyerowitz 2009: 1274).

These interconnections and fusion of various sexualities are likely to turn into a complex situation for migrants particularly migrant youths who are in the process of constructing their sexualities (Kalra and Bhugra 2010). Hence, recognizing the dynamics that may occur in youth sexual behaviour as a result of constructing sexuality across transnational spaces is imperative to reduce the psychological imbalance that young people may face in becoming sexual beings and as such helping them to make important choices in relation to their sexual lives (Grewal and Kaplan 2001).

1.3 Contextualizing the Research

1.3.1 Ghanaian Immigrants in the Netherlands

Ghanaian immigrants are a recognized part of ethnic minorities of African descent living in the Netherlands. As of 2017, the population for Ghanaians living in the Netherlands totalled 23, 430 [3] forming a substantial group. Studying different aspects of their lives in the Netherlands, researchers including Knipscheer et. al (2000); Mazzucato (2008); and Kloosterman et. al (2016) are a few of the researchers who have studied the Ghanaian immigrants in the Netherlands.

The Ghanaian community in the Netherlands is a diverse group that represents the multicultural and multi-religious nature of Ghana as a country (Cudjoe 2017). Members are from the many different ethnic groups in Ghana with people of Akan[4] lineage being the dominant group in the Netherlands (Cudjoe 2017).

[3] CBS.nl (Last updated 2018) 'Population' (a webpage of CBS.nl). Accessed 21-05-2018 2018 https://opendata.cbs.nl/stat-line/#/CBS/en/dataset/37325eng/table?ts=1526920526713>.

[4] The Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana located in the middle and southern part of Ghana.

Similarly, known for their religiosity, members of the Ghanaian community are socialized in one of the three major religions which are, Christianity, Islam or Traditional religion (Cudjoe 2017). Presently, Christians dominate the Ghanaian community in the Netherland (van Dijk 2002). As a result, a number of Ghanaian churches have emerged in the Netherlands (van Dijk 2002). As a matter of fact, Baker (2012) after his research on Ghanaians in Amsterdam listed "respect, religious identity and strong family ties" as the three strong features that describe the Ghanaian community.

Having conducted a number of researches on Ghanaian immigrants in the Netherlands, Mazzucato (2007) found that Ghanaian immigrants are actively engaged in transnational ties with their origin country just as much as they are involved socially in the Dutch society.

A recent study by Garbrah-Hooper (2017) on young parenthood among Ghanaian youth in the Hague, Netherlands has revealed that young Ghanaians between the ages of 17 and 24 are actively involved in sexual activities with some becoming parents in their teens. The study concludes that becoming parents in their teens was however not viewed as a problem by the young parents. Among the reasons stated by the participants of the study include the fact that teen/young parents are financially capable of raising their kids and most importantly that they are of age and in control of their sexualities. The study creates an impression of sexual liberation and agency among young Ghanaians which is compelling to explore.

Aside this, many researchers that studied Ghanaian immigrants in their transnational fields have done so by studying areas such as their political engagements, economic remittances and religiosity. Hence, this research fills in the gap in the literature by exploring how young Ghanaians construct their sexualities in the Netherlands.

1.3.2 Sexuality in Ghana

I never saw gays in Ghana, but I have seen a lot of them here (Netherlands). (Note taken from an interview with Sandra on 11/08/2018)

According to Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah (2014: 3) "sexual socialization in any society is intricately linked to the gender socialization" in that society. In Ghana, gender socialisation is institutionalised with traces in the home, church, school, politics and the corporate world (Quist-Adade et al. 2014). Research on sexuality in Ghana is sparse and not until recently one could not comfortably discuss sexuality in open spaces (Allotey 2015). This is likely because sexuality is perceived as a sensitive subject and considered private. Often, parents are reluctant to discuss sex matters with their children particularly when they are in their teens. In a likely event that they do, parents are focused on encouraging their children to abstain from engaging in sexual activities.

In school, sex education usually falls under the biology subject in which students are taught about the body parts and the human reproductive system. An overzealous and curious young person who shows interest in sex education is may be labelled as bad. There is therefore an information gap between adults and young people on the subject. To a large extent sexuality in youth is enhanced with the interaction between peers and the urge to be adventurous.

The gender socialization in Ghana portrays heterosexuality as the ideal and normative form of sexuality. Although homosexuality is practiced in Ghana, it is unacceptable and illegal making it invisible. The practice is widely disapproved among family settings and various ethnic groups (Allotey 2015). Despite the strong disapproval by many, the act is noted to be practised in secrecy. For fear of their lives, discrimination and persecution, LGBT people maintain unassuming lifestyles in Ghana (Quist-Adade et al. 2014). The criminal code 1960 (Act 104) of Ghana prohibits "unnatural carnal knowledge" which law enforcers have expounded to encapsulate other forms of sexual orientations which are unconventional.

Media and public discourse on whether to legalize LGBT in Ghana are prevalent in recent times following pressure from the international community and human rights organizations on successive governments to implement laws that protect the rights of LGBT people in Ghana. Media representation of LGBT in Ghana has often portrayed a negative image of LGBT people which perpetuates the structural violence against them (Quist-Adade et al. 2014). For example, in November 2017, Ghana Web, a reputable online media reported a mob action on a gay man for attempting to sleep with his male colleague worker [5]. Just this year in February, two polytechnic male students alleged to have been caught in the act of homosexuality were arrested in Ghana (Dotsey. 2018). Recently, two Ghanaians who publicly disclosed their identity change from males to transwomen received a lot of harsh criticism from the public in Ghana (Modernghana.com. 2018).

The criminalization of LGBT in Ghana has caused some LGBT people to flee the country and seek asylum in other countries where the practice is legal. In 2017, two Ghanaian lesbian couples resorted to the Netherlands where gay marriage is legal for their wedding (Modernghana.com. 2018). In light of all these, Ghana's Speaker of Parliament in a recent speech made the following statements about the rights of LGBT people in Ghana:

> if you tell me that a man must sleep with a man so as to show his human rights for Ghana, I can assure you that our Parliament is a real micropause of the rule of Ghana. Ghanaians do not support gay rights, and nobody is going to make any law that will support this kind of thing. (Modernghana.com. 2018)

Public perceptions and attitudes toward enforcing LGBT rights in Ghana have been generally negative and has largely resulted in the condemnation of LGBT people. These acts have not only perpetuated hate crimes and violence against LGBT people in Ghana but have also increased the negative public perceptions and attitudes toward LGBT people (Quist-Adade et al. 2014). LGBT rights are human rights. However, the main arguments given by public officials on why Ghana cannot protect the rights of LGBT people have stemmed out of cultural and religious debates.

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[5] Ghanaweb.com (Last updated 2018) **Alleged Gay Man Beaten Mercilessly in Kumasi'** (a webpage of Ghana Web). Accessed May 19 2018 https://www.ghana-web.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Alleged-gay-man-beaten-mercilessly-in-Kumasi-604903>.

1.4 Research Objective

This paper sets out to explore the choices that young Ghanaians living in the Netherlands, make while constructing their sexualities vis-à-vis the compulsory lessons they receive on sexuality and sexual diversity in high schools in the Netherlands. The study focuses on school and family as spaces where sexual constructions may occur. I make sense of the cultural and legal differences between the Netherlands and Ghana regarding the ways in which the subject of sexuality especially, homosexuality is treated and viewed in the two countries.

1.5 Research Questions

The main question guiding this research is;

How are Ghanaian youth in the Netherlands constructing their sexualities in contested transnational spaces?

The main research question is expressed in the following sub-questions:

1) What meanings and experiences do Ghanaian immigrant youths attribute to the construction of their sexualities?

2) In what ways do families and schools as transnational spaces contribute to the construction of sexualities of young Ghanaians in the Netherlands?

3) What struggles are young Ghanaians in the Netherlands faced with, constructing their sexualities transnationally?

In defining the *transnational space,* Schiller and Çağlar (2009: 180) argue that "it is a system of social relations composed of networks embedded in power relations". Likewise, Mountz and Wright (1996: 415) define *transnational space* as the medium through which migrants organise their lives". Since schooling and keeping family ties are some of the ways in which young Ghanaians in the Netherlands are engaged in social relations, the use of transnational space in this study shall therefore encompass the spaces of migrant socialization with the focus on school and family.

1.6 Organisation of Chapters

This research paper is organized into six chapters. Chapter one sets the case for the research by introducing the rationale behind the research, the context, the research objective and questions. It explains the context and stages of complexities in which young people develop their sexualities and presents a review of literature on how gender and sexuality have evolved over time in the Netherlands and Ghana. The disparity in the sexual socialization and plurality or otherwise of sexual orientation in both contexts are discussed as a foundation to

extrapolate how young Ghanaians in the Netherlands negotiate boundaries of their lived sexual socializations.

In chapter two, I present the methodological orientation of how the research was done and also how participants were accessed. I also reflect on the methods used and discuss positionality in this research.

Chapter three discusses the theories and concepts relevant to explain the phenomenon being studied. The concept of Transnationalism, Sexuality and Gender Heteronormativity as well as Generation are expounded to academically situate the knowledge produced from this study.

Chapter four and five present data generated based on the field work integrated with analysis. These include subjective stories and dilemmas of young Ghanaians who are constructing their sexualities in a sexually pluralistic country. I explore youth understanding of their own sexualities, and what changes have occurred in their perspectives regarding sexual diversity and other questions that guide that research. I discuss and make an analysis of the research findings to bring out the salient discoveries of the research.

Finally, chapter six presents the concluding remarks for this research.

2. Methodological Orientation

This chapter discusses the complete research methodology and defines the peculiar methods employed in this study. Additionally, it explains some practical dilemmas related to fieldwork.

2.1 Why a Qualitative Approach to Ethnography?

At the core of this research is an exploratory enquiry that seeks subjective views of participants about sexuality, thus, the choice for a qualitative approach. Research studies employing qualitative methods attempt to situate members knowledge rather than make a generalization of a social phenomenon (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009a). Doing a qualitative study was however approached with ethnographic perspectives.

Ethnography has long been used by anthropologists to study people and cultures. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:11) and Cerwonka (2007), ethnography combines empiric methods with the theoretical and hermeneutic process to study "social organisations and culture". Ideally, an ethnographic research is done over a long period of time either "overtly or covertly" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 11). Ethnography centralizes on observation as its main data collection method which is a key distinguishing factor from other qualitative methods. Other sources of data for an ethnographic study include videos, photographs, documents, artefacts and interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 11).

I chose an ethnographic approach for this research because not only does it help to gather rich personalized stories of the young people understudy, it also allows the researcher to become submerged in the activities and culture of the participants (2007). Though this, for some, undermines the objectivity of ethnography, Bernard (2011: 256-257), refers to knowledge produced using ethnography, particularly participant observation as "positive knowledge" since it provides researchers with "experiential knowledge" of the subject under study. Additionally, the unstructured nature of ethnography allows a researcher to enter the field as a 'wanderer' who after a thorough exploration of people in their natural setting can unearth emerging themes for analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 11). It became relevant to use ethnography because this research is positioned in a specific context with the aim to deeply understand the everyday processes, actions and struggles underlining constructions of sexuality among youths. The goal is to produce a rich set of data that reflect "a partial perspective of the world" and not to claim universality of the knowledge produced (Rose 1997:308).

To achieve this, I combined participant observation, in-depth face-to-face individual interviews and focus group discussion as my primary source of data collection. These methods were useful to develop the situatedness that this research requires.

2.2 Sources of Data

As it may be for most ethnographic studies, I began this research with an observation of the research field. The field here, practically refers to the Hague and Amsterdam, Netherlands. On September 4, 2017, I arrived in the Hague from Ghana to pursue my master's degree programme at the International Institute of Social Studies. My encounter with some members of the Ghanaian community in the Hague during my master's programme was the starting point to this research. Staying in the research field for a period of ten (10) months before actively gathering data was useful in making me become not only familiar with, but also experiencing the context in which the research participants live. I became submerged in the field and as a matter of fact, it was through observations of the field that the research topic emerged.

Whiles in the Hague, I visited a few Ghanaian churches, including the Methodist church, and the church of Pentecost, I also attended some African festivals of which 'Africa in the park' was one of the biggest ones. Other events were barbeque parties and making contacts through friends, meeting people in the market and other public places. All of these created an avenue for me to come into close contact with the Ghanaian community in the Hague. During these events, I made some general observations though mostly passive of the Ghanaian community as a group before narrowing my observations down to specific participants during active data collection. Since I was just settling in, I also had a lot of informal interviews and interactions with members.

By July 2018, when the research process had actively begun, I engaged closely with participants to maximize the data collection methods used in this research. Some of the meeting points with my participants were at the football pitch, department stores, the Hague city library, barbeque party, and on the campus of the Hague University of Applied science. I recorded observations by mostly making quick notes of some actions of participants that may strike me and that which I find interesting for my analysis. At times when it was difficult to jot down information depending on the situation, I kept actions in my mind and reproduced them later. For reasons that not everything can be observed, the study also utilized other qualitative methods to engage participants to record their views on the subject under study since ethnography is also concerned with the meanings that participants make of their own worldview.

Further, individual interviews were carried out to generate data. Though I went to the field with a prepared interview guide, the interviews mostly started with informal conversations. Having an interview guide prepared me for the interviews while still allowing some degree of flexibility to include more questions or exclude some.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b), using the semi-structured interview technique is useful especially in the case where a researcher has only one chance of meeting with participants. They argue that it is a way for the researchers to direct the interview and maintain control of their interview focus. I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 10 young Ghanaians who were the primary focus of this research. Interviews lasted between an hour and 15 minutes to two hours when interviews from various days are put together. Usually, on the first days of meeting participants, I only tried to build friendship with them to make it easier for our subsequent meetings. Once participants

became comfortable around me, some of them invited me to barbeque parties where I recruited other youths for the study. All 10 participants, six males and four females lived in the Hague. Venues for conducting the individual interviews were decided on by participants for their convenience.

From the responses gathered from the interviews with the 10 participants, it was apparent that certain actions and inactions of parents were at the centre of participants' narratives. Hence, I extended the interviews to include parents of participants for some verifications. Some participants expressed discomfort about meeting their parents for fear that I might disclose some confidential information to their parents. For this reason, I only interviewed parents of participants who gave me their consents. In the end, I interviewed one parent each (two males and two females) of four participants. Interviews with parents were pre-planned and took place in their homes.

Additionally, a focus group discussion was conducted among six (6) young Ghanaians who were recruited separately in Amsterdam. An interview or discussion among six to ten people on a specific topic can be termed as a focus group discussion(Cronin 2008). What distinguishes a focus group from individual interviews is that data is generated from interactions among members of the group (Cronin 2008). The idea was to explore the views and interpretations of participants through an informal group conversation.

On 28th July 2018, I attended one of the barbecue parties that I was invited to by one of my research participants. The barbeque was organized by Ghanaian youth of the Methodist church in Amsterdam for themselves. Meeting this vibrant group of people who fell within the targeted ages for my research, I decided to use the opportunity to generate an interaction among them. In this respect, I recruited six people (three males and three females) from the attendees. The focus group discussion was conducted the same day at the barbecue grounds at Bijlmer Arena in Amsterdam, a community with a dense population of Ghanaians. Methodologically, focus group discussions are usually conducted on the same participants who are interviewed individually to gain certain insights from participants that may be missed by the researcher in the individual interviews. However, I still found it useful to conduct this focus group discussion on this separate group in Amsterdam because it was difficult organizing one among my participants in the Hague. The reason being that almost all the participants were engaged in summer jobs and could not agree on a date and time together. This implication for this may not be visible as the variables for recruiting all participants were checked.

2.3 Methodological Dilemmas

2.3.1 Positionality

Issues of positionality are some of ethnographers' dilemmas before and on the field. Often, researchers are faced with different power relations between them and their subjects of study (Rose 1997: 307). It becomes important for researchers to be reflexive about the multiple positions that they assume on the field and their epistemological implications.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 64-66) point out that ethnographers face the challenge of being rejected on the field particularly in places where researchers are new. On the contrary, I found that my entry and acceptance into the Ghanaian community was a bit easier than I had anticipated. The likely explanation for this is that being a Ghanaian myself made it uncomplicated for participants to identify with me. On the field, I identified myself as a Ghanaian female young adult pursuing my masters here in the Netherlands. Connecting with the Ghanaian youths came across as easy considering the fact that I am young myself and share some cultural codes with them. This position provided me with the "insider/outsider" dual role for which many scholars have questioned its objectivity in ethnography. I ensured objectivity by making sure that participants own meanings of their views did not get lost in my attempt to interpret them.

Most of my interviews started with conversations about Ghana. However, it was not long after introducing my topic to participants that they required to know more about me as many of them initially felt uncomfortable discussing the topic. The discomfort was mostly from the girls as I found that many of the boys were willing and forward from the onset of introducing my topic to them. An attempt to understand this brings me to reflect on what Holland et al (1999) point out that adolescent males are socialized to possess more sexual agency whiles their female counterparts are socialized in ways that make them passive about their own sexualities hence, their unwillingness to talk about it.

I describe myself as a heterosexual female who developed her sexuality without any conscious effort to do so. I have lived in Ghana all my life prior to moving to the Netherlands for my master's. While developing my sexuality during my adolescent years, there was not much information to rely on, therefore I believe my immediate environment had an enormous influence on how I constructed myself sexually. Firstly, I am a young Ghanaian female going to interview Ghanaian youths and I keep asking myself how my target group are going to receive me. Some of them may have travelled to Ghana for vacations and others not. Regardless, they may have learnt a lot about Ghana from their parents, Ghanaian peers and from social media. The thought of being a Ghanaian on the initial stage sounds like a good thing. By good, I mean it gives me an insider position and the chance to utilize my practical knowledge of how the subject of sexuality has developed over time and is practised in Ghana. Being aware of how people in Ghana are uncomfortable in discussing issues related to sexuality, this insider position helps me to be quite diplomatic in my choice of language and guides me on the best approach I can use to make people open up on the subject under study. But on a second thought, it also means people are likely to expect me to know better when making references to Ghana and may be reluctant to answer certain questions which they may think has an obvious answer.

Additionally, I am a Christian and though Ghana has a diverse religious composition, the population is predominantly Christian. Therefore, it is my expectation that I will come across a lot of Christians in my target group. Religion is one topic that has constantly emerged in research concerning sexuality. Knowing that the Christian belief originally does not condone other forms of sexualities other than heterosexuality challenges my standpoint on going to interview other Christians on a subject that they are likely to decline to speak on with the reason that it is against their faith. How about finding myself

in a Muslim household, what dimension will this position take. Would a Muslim be comfortable discussing their sexuality with a Christian? During the fieldwork my engagement with the only Muslim participant I came across indicated that he had a very open mind and willingly discussed the topic with me.

2.4 Doing Ethnographic Research, Reflections on Theory and Practice

This research was conducted over a period of three months. Data were collected during four weeks of fieldwork in the summer period in The Hague, The Netherlands. At the time of the fieldwork, between late July and early August 2018, schools in The Hague were on summer break. For this reason, my access to Ghanaian immigrant students was through social organisations, such as churches, youth organisations, festivals, barbecue events where they were present and through friends. Some of my methods at the initial days of my fieldwork to gain access to participants proved ineffective. For example, I visited the Methodist Church of Ghana (a church with only Ghanaian members) in the Hague and attended a summer festival for Africans with the intent to recruit Ghanaian youths for this research.

In these two places, I was unable to recruit participants for my research. The Methodist Church has quite a number of young people who were eligible to participate in my research however, there were already some academic researchers conducting research on these youths which meant that my presence would be overwhelming for the youths. Since these two entry methods did not work, I looked at other alternatives through which I could access Ghanaian youths in the Hague. I, therefore, decided to contact the few contacts I have in the Ghanaian community to introduce me to some young Ghanaians.

I have lived in The Hague for almost seven months prior to this research. During this time, I established some contacts in the Ghanaian community. Therefore, to find participants for this research, I fell back on these contacts as an entry point. Selection of participants for this research was done through contacts in the community introducing me to other young members.

Summertime in the Netherlands is quite a busy one and young people are not exempted. Most people around this season travel for vacation or the vibrant ones take on summer jobs. Most of my participants were engaged in the latter. Their busy schedules suggested that I maximize the time during every meeting with them.

Unlike studies that may require one to travel to new places for fieldwork, my participants were situated in the same City as me and in Amsterdam which is not far away. The good thing about this is that I do not have to face the challenge of having to familiarize myself with the place which could have happened supposing I travelled to a different place for fieldwork as argued by Bernard (2011: 268).

2.5 Introducing Research Participants

The composition of participants for this study included young Ghanaian immigrants currently living in the Netherlands as a place where they are growing up. To be eligible, participants are expected to have socialized in Dutch society for a minimum of five years. For example, by having gone through elementary or high school education in the Netherlands. Participants were sampled using the purposive and snowballing methods. This means that though some existing participants aided in reaching other participants, it was ensured that all participants met the eligibility criteria before they were recruited. Purposive and snowballing being non-probability techniques are said to have an increased chance of biases. Hence a deliberate effort was made to reduce biases by diversifying by research participants in terms of gender, age and generation. The relevance of using these sampling techniques is that they ensured for only targeted participants to be recruited to improve data quality. The sampled population included nine males and seven females between the ages of 15 and 23 in the Hague and Amsterdam.

Participants for this study are categorized as first and second-generation Ghanaian migrants. The first-generation immigrants consist of migrants who arrived in the Netherlands as children and naturalized. On the other hand, second-generation applies to those youths who were born and raised in the Netherlands but with Ghanaian parents. A detailed explanation of the generations is explained in chapter 3 of this paper. Recruiting young people from these two generations was useful to diversify the population and explore the dynamics surrounding them.

In total 16 eligible young Ghanaians were recruited for the study as the primary participants. The 16 participants were recruited separately as two groups from two cities in the Netherlands. The first group of 10 participants who partook in the individual interviews were recruited in the Hague (see appendix 1), whiles the second group of six participants who partook in the focus group discussion were recruited in Amsterdam (see appendix 1). I have explained in item 2.2, how I came up with these two separate groups and why it was relevant for me to do this despite the methodological concerns.

Also, at some point during fieldwork, there was the need for the recruitment of secondary participants who consisted of parents of some of the primary participants located in the Hague. Four parents (two males and two females) were individually interviewed for this purpose.

In the nutshell, there were twenty respondents in this study. Sixteen young Ghanaians and four Ghanaian adults who were also parents of some of the sixteen young Ghanaian participants.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Every research raises ethical issues with the aim to understand how research participants are protected for taking part in research and how researchers may address some ethical dilemmas they encounter during the research process.

Research ethics was enforced in areas of confidentiality and seeking participant consent.

I ensured that all participants gave me their consent at the beginning and at the end of the interviews to ascertain that they are still in agreement of me using their information for my study. Consent was derived from participants by word of mouth. The research involved mostly young people and for fear that they might feel intimidated to sign documents, I sought only verbal consents from my participants.

Further, I explained to all the participants the implications of participating in the research which includes their personal stories being documented in a thesis report. For this reason, participants agreed that their names will be replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identities against any future repercussions.

Also, venues for meetings were often conveniently selected by the participants themselves. For participants whose parents were further interviewed, I sought participants consent first and made sure that I did not disclose any confidential information from the interview with participants to their parents.

2.7 Piloting

For this study, I conducted two separate interviews at the beginning of my research to test my questions, methods and how to get participant open up to participate in this research by minimizing sensitivity. Two young Ghanaians, a male and a female aged 21 and 19 respectively were used for piloting. The male participant was still pursuing his high school education at age 21 just as the 19-year-old female. This is contrary to the usual age set by the Dutch education ministry to complete high school which is 17 years. I found from them that Ghanaian immigrant youth who migrate to the Netherlands in their early ages often enter into high school in the Netherlands quite older than Ghanaian youths who were born here. This is because when Ghanaians migrate here as children, they spend some years enrolling for Dutch language courses before they enrol in the high schools or any other institutions of their level. This discovery affected my initial plan for participant recruitment.

The initial plan was to sample youths who were between 15 and 19 years. However, after piloting, I discerned that it was reasonable to expand the age range from 15 to 19 to the range 15 to 25 years. The reason is that Ghanaian youth in the Netherlands particularly first generation and 1.5 generation immigrants generally obtain their high school education at a later age compared to the second-generation immigrants because of the compulsory Dutch language acquisition prior to entering high schools.

Also, following the piloting process, I noticed that some of my questions needed to be modified as they were understood differently by the two participants. I reconstructed these questions in a simpler way to help subsequent participants to understand them in the same vein.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Transnationalism

Some researchers in the past, have viewed migration as a movement by which immigrants become homogenized in a new country and "leave behind" their home and origin countries (Takaki 1993, Handlin 2002). For the past two decades, however, migration studies have retreated from the long-established notion of "leaving behind" to a new notion of "living across" borders (Levitt 2000). This shift in migration studies has been advanced by scholars such as Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc who argue that "contemporary immigrants cannot be characterized as uprooted" (Schiller et al. 1995: 48). They argue further that whiles immigrants are becoming established in their destination countries, they still maintain the connections and ties to their countries of origin (Schiller et al. 1995: 48). This new conceptualization of migrants is understood as transnationalism.

According to Schiller et al. (1995: 48), "transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement". Thus, immigrants who are engaged in multiple connections and ties across international spaces are called transmigrants (Schiller et al. 1995: 48).

The early 1990s marked the emergence of debates in academia on transnationalism (Dahinden 2017: 1475). After about a decade of intellectual exercises and justifications, transnationalism became grounded as "mainly a paradigm shift in migration research that advanced an alternative stance on migration issues" (Dahinden 2017: 1475).

By the 20th century, transnationalism gained its popularity in academia after migration researchers Alejandro Portes, Luis Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt in their (1999) article, "The Study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field" revealed some research orientations regarding transnationalism and pitfalls of the concept (Portes et al. 1999). They argue that the transnational field "represents a distinct form of immigrant adaptation and encapsulates even those (generations of immigrants) who were not present at the time of the migratory process (Portes et al. 1999).

Transnationalism was initially used quantitatively to study a large sum of immigrants involved in sending remittances from their host countries to their homelands (Levitt 1998). Recently, transnationalism has made some theoretical progress not only in migration studies but also in the social sciences (Dahinden 2017: 1478).

The theory has been useful in studying a vast area of migrant activities in their homeland and host countries including migrant political activism, social connections and economic activities. Present in the literature on transnationalism, research studies such as Vertovec 2001, Mazzucato (2007) Baker (2012), Berckmoes and Valentina (2018) have established among others, the many ways in which immigrants reconstrue the various aspects of their lives embedded in multiple societies.

Evidently, these empirical studies have proven that transnational fields are real as well as heterogeneous. Transnationalism, therefore, maintains its relevance in academia as it pays attention to some principal aspects of immigrants lives, that is their socio-economic engagements and political constraints (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1181).

In this study, transnationalism is the main theory used to explain the phenomenon under study. It is used in relation to how sexualities are constructed across space. I argue that focusing on sexualities through a transnational perspective broadens the frame of sexuality construction that reveals other dimensions of contestations and hegemonies. Additionally, it also helps us to examine the resistances that may follow. This approach discusses questions of diffused boundaries, national and cultural differences between and among nation-states in constructing sexualities. It emphasizes the role of culture, family ties, place, transnational organisations and trends in the global world in producing sexualities.

In this study, I demonstrate the importance of transnationalism in reference to sexuality as a theoretical approach to analyze the subjectivities of youth sexual constructions by living in a particular transnational field. I do so by exploring the ways in which these youths seize the loop of knowledge produced in the transnational field within which they are present to produce their own sexual selfhood.

3.2 Sexuality and Gender Heteronormativity

Sexuality has been theorized in several ways. Whiles some positions address the nature-nurture controversy there are a lot of discourses surrounding compulsory heterosexuality and a plethora of knowledge on queer sexuality in the literature. The two schools of thoughts on sexuality to be addressed in this framework include the essentialist and constructionist views on sexuality. Essentialism originated from Plato's classical essentialism and later in a related concept, modern essentialism. The essentialists view of sexuality is characterized by the underlining assumption that certain phenomena are natural and biologically determined. This concept regards sexuality as fixed and "resides in the individual in the form of hormones, personality, traits and so on".

In contrast, social constructionists view on sexuality is under the assumption that sexuality is constructed socially, through cultural, historical and with interactions of things embedded in one's society. Therefore, conceptualizing sexuality as "natural" as done by essentialists is simply not enough as meanings ascribed to sex have social and cultural underpinnings to them. According to Vance,

> Sex is not simply a natural fact, as earlier essentialists theories would suggest. Although sexuality, like all human cultural activity, is grounded in the body, the body's structure physiology and functioning do not directly or simply determine the configuration or meaning of sexuality (Vance 1984: 8).

Consistent with Vance's (1984:8) view, Berger and Luckmann (1991) in their widely read book, "*The Social Construction of Reality*" agree with the essentialist view that sexuality is "grounded in biological drives" (Berger and

Luckmann 1991); however, it takes not only biology to decide "where, when and with what object a person engages in sexual behaviour (DeLamater and Hyde 1998). Some theorists mostly with the social science bent, have rejected this essentialist view and applied a constructionist perspective (Gagnon and Simons 1973; Laws and Schwartz 1977; Foucault 1978). The common denominator among these scholars is that they applied the social constructionist paradigm in their works on human sexuality to reinforce the notion that "sexuality is not an essence" neither is it universal nor fixed (DeLamater and Hyde 1998).

Critics of the essentialist and constructionist school of thoughts have formulated some limitations in relation to both approaches. The constancy of sexuality as was propounded by essentialists theorists has largely been criticized with the changes that have occurred in sexuality overtime for example, in sexual "preferences and practices" (DeLamater and Hyde 1998): 16). On the other hand, the individual's role in social constructionism has been criticized as passive as such, the effects of biological determinants have been undermined (Wrong 1961).

Rubin (1984: 308) asserts that "gender affects the operation of the sexual system". Hence, this section also discusses how the concept of gender is applied in this research. Gender constitutes a socially organized binary of femininity and masculinity. Applying Scott's (1996: 167-69) definition, gender is understood in two ways; first, as "social relations that are based on the perceived differences of the sexes" and secondly, as "relations of power". Scott argues that the first definition of gender, constitutes other elements through which gendered social perceptions are formed and normalized. These include cultural symbolic representations, social institutions and subjective identities. Gender defined as power relations explains the ways in which power at all levels in society may be shaped by gender.

Gender norms and sexual practices are perpetuated through heteronormativity. The term heteronormativity was developed in 1991 by Michael Warner to criticize the normative description of sexuality as heterosexual. Toomey et al. (2012: 188) define the concept of heteronormativity as a societal hierarchical system that privileges, and sanctions individuals based on presumed binaries of gender and sexuality; as a system, it defines and enforces beliefs and practices about what is "normal" in everyday life".

It is a "tool to analyze systems of oppression and contributes to an understanding of how more general gender structures and hierarchies are constructed in society" (Herz and Johansson 2015: 1011). Heteronormativity is inarguably deep-seated in our societies. Analyses of it uncover a broad spectrum of how behaviour and practices around sexuality and gender are marginalized and made the norm. Research studies on heteronormativity have often been directed at analyzing families, schools, cultures etc. In one of such studies, Toomey et al. (2012: 193 - 196) reported evidence of heteronormativity among Latino youths in high school as gender nonconforming students were often bullied by their colleagues. Similarly, some studies have established that school curriculums reinforce the production of heteronormativity in schools. Undoubtedly, the family is also one organization where heteronormative norms are reproduced.

Weeks (1986: 23) states that to analyze sexuality, one must question "how sexuality is shaped? How is it socially constructed? How and why has the domain

of sexuality received such critical organizing and significance in Western culture and what is the relationship between sex and power".

With the view that society and institutions can shape people's sexuality, this study applies the social constructionism view of sexuality to understand how school and family is shaping the sexuality of young Ghanaians living in the Netherlands.

3.3 Conceptualizing Migrant Generation

In 2017, some 258 million people were reported as migrants staying abroad ('International Migrant Stock'2018). This accounts for an average of 2.3 per cent increase in the number of people living outside their country of birth in the last seventeen years. As more and more migrants become settled in their destination countries, they and their descendants are defined by generational statuses and classified either as first, second or third generational immigrants. Kertzer (1983: 126) explains generation in general terms to denote "the succession of people moving through the age strata, the younger replacing the older as all age together". In migration, however, a generation goes beyond "birth cohort to apply to any succession through time" (Kertzer 1983: 126). The composition of Ghanaian youths for this study includes the first-generation and the second-generation immigrants. First-generation immigrants are perceived as foreign-born migrants who have naturalized in a host country. Whereas, second-generation immigrants are the descendants of the first-generation, born and socialized in the host country. Sometimes the second-generation is expanded to include those children under 17 years who are settled in their host countries.

When studied in light of transnationalism, research on first-generation immigrants have revealed different levels immigrant's integration in their host countries. For example, researchers like Ndika (2013), Murray et al. (2014) and Osei-Kwasi et al. (2017) in their studies found that whiles some immigrants retained their heritage cultures to some extent in their new societies, others became more integrated in their new societies with other significant factors such as gender, ethnicity and age playing a role in the results of the findings.

Unlike the first generation, the second-generation immigrants are natives of the host societies with their ancestral roots being their parents' homelands. Nonetheless, some studies have observed the involvements of the second-generation also in transnational activities which have led many to question the sense of belonging and identity of the second-generation immigrants. In addition, with some first-generation immigrant parents having interest in maintaining some of their heritage cultures suggest the likelihood that they transmit these cultures to their second-generation children. However, studies show that immigrant parents and their second-generation immigrant youths adapt differently which poses some discrepancies among immigrant families and their integration processes (Kwak 2003, Costigan and Dokis 2006). One such challenge pertaining to the second-generation has been established by Berry and Sabatier (2011) as the difficulty in living between the "parents cultural heritage and the culture of the host society". Kurtz-Costes and Pungello (2000) explain that this challenge for second-generation immigrant youths is likely to escalate due to the "power positions" that parents hold over their second-generation

children. Again the "attitudes and lifestyle" of parents and often the quest to transmit and retain their heritage culture into the second-generation immigrant greatly influence the integration outcomes for the second generation (Kurtz-Costes and Pungello 2000).

4. Sexuality Construction Among Young Ghanaians in the Netherlands

In this chapter, I present findings from the field integrated with analysis. The stories gathered address the research questions stated in the previous sections. To recall, the main research question is; How are Ghanaian youths in the Netherlands constructing their sexualities in contested transnational spaces?

Without assuming that transnational youths make sense of their sexualities and construct them without any complexities, this chapter introduces young people's own articulations of their sexual self and the meanings they ascribe to them. The stories below are accounts of individual narratives of participants as well as stories that arose from a focus group discussion. All the names mentioned are pseudonyms and not real names of participants to protect their identities.

4.1 Childhood, an Important Stage for Constructing Sexuality

> Its fine let's start the meeting, that is what you get when you want a nice shape and a sexy body. (Notes from interview with Akosua 17years, on 16/07/2018)

When I first met Akosua for our interview, she was limping on one leg. She narrated to me how a dumbbell fell on her left leg during her fitness session at the gym prior to our meeting. I felt sorry for her and got a little uncomfortable that she still showed up to our meeting despite the pain she was feeling. But immediately, she muttered some words (the quotation above) to suggest that I should not be sorry and that it was her own fault. She said

I found that her statement was a good opening for our conversation to begin with. Underpinning her statement, was a social construct that girls should look sexy, a commodification of the female body. At this end, I wondered how often thoughts and engagements of young people revolve around sex. I asked Akosua why she needs a sexy body. She laughed and said; "it makes you feel good and all your outfits look better on you". Her response may be just a harmless thought done subconsciously but her knowledge of what is sexy is not. It is what (Kehily 2018), explains as a reflection of how society socializes children sexually particularly, making girls become aware of their bodies right from childhood.

As DeLamater and Hyde (1998: 10) said, "early childhood is also the period during which each child forms gender identity". In most of my interviews with participants, some of their responses generated a look back into participants early childhood and how understanding their sexual identities began for them. Answering this question was a bit tricky for most of the participants as they struggled with getting their words. It was not that the question was unclear however, it was the fact that most of them had to cast their minds back to a few years of their adolescence. Some of the participants explained that they became aware of their sexual identities after having an attraction for the opposite sex.

I started having feelings for girls when I was quite young so that was how I knew that I like girls. (Notes taken from interview with Edwin, 19 years on 19/07/2018).

Edwin was born and raised in the Hague, but he has travelled to Ghana twice in his life for vacations and still keeps contacts with relations over phone. Just like Edwin thinks the start of his sexual construction was manifested through his feelings for girls, Kofi and some of the other male participants had similar thoughts.

I was still very young when I was in Ghana and at that age, nobody will discuss sex matters or that sort with you. I played with my friends about having girlfriends and some of my friends were even indulging in sexual activities, but I never did…but I had feelings towards some of the girls at school though (smiling). (Notes taken from interview with Kofi, 15 years on 18/07/2018)

According to DeLamater and Hyde (1998: 10) interest for sexual activities is likely to start in children between the ages of three and seven. During this same period, gender socialization for children is in process. As a result, children begin to notice the differences in the genitals for males and females and may also engage in opposite sex play. DeLamater and Hyde (1998) argue that these childhood sexual engagements may have minimal influence in children by the time they reach adolescent.

Rahman and Jackson (Rahman and Jackson 2010) have stated that sexual attraction is one dimension of one's sexual orientation. Once people are able to know who they are or are not attracted to is an important step and makes it easier for individuals to navigate their sexual choices. The implication for not knowing this is that young people are delayed from having a concrete understanding of their sexual identities. In a typical example, Kwesi narrates how he is still not sure of his sexual identity.

I think I am still young, and I don't want to rush and say I am heterosexual or gay. I have had instances where I had a crush on some female friends but the same way, I have liked a guy too. I would rather say I am still exploring. (Notes taken from interview with Kwesi, 16 years on 21/07/2018)

Kwesi's situation is a confirmation of an unsettled orientation. According to Nagoshi et al. (2014: 60) it may take as long as becoming an adult for people to become solidified in their sexual orientations. Gottscahlk (2003) cited in Nagoshi et al. (2014: 60) argues that;

childhood gender nonconformity is not causally related to same-sex sexuality and that any correlation between the two may, in fact, be the result of struggling to conform to a patriarchal society's pressures for normal gender and sexual roles.

On the other hand, Frank narrates some episodes of his childhood on how discovering himself sexually, was characterized by the uncertainty of practising his sexual preference from the onset.

I found myself most of the times in the company of girls but never had any feelings for them. I have only liked the same sex sexually. But It was quite difficult for me coming out as a guy who likes a guy…and even more difficult was that I have a Ghanaian root. You know people will try to make you believe that something is wrong with you and try to change you…and back then, while I was still a bit younger, I did not understand myself, so I tried to suppress

myself because I acted different, but I could not continue like that anymore. (Note taken from interview with Frank, 22 years on 27/07/2018)

Frank was born and raised in the Netherlands and was the only participant who identified as gay in this research study. As a Ghanaian who identifies as gay, his sexual orientation comes off as a huge deviation from earlier narratives of other participants. He mentioned that he personally knew he liked boys ever since he was a child. However, he kept that as a secret since he did not observe anyone around him doing same. This proves that Frank never doubted his orientation though pressures from society tried to repress his identity which is in consistent with Nagoshi et al. (2014: 60) assertion that sexuality construction among homosexual individuals has shown that homosexuals do not "question their gender identity and sexual behaviour, rather they maintain a focus trying to define their identities.

What Frank and Kwesi have in common is that they were both born in the Netherlands. They both made it clear that growing up in the Netherlands has been sexually empowering for them because they are actively involved in their sexual construction processes. In a contrasting view, some participants who spent their formative childhood in Ghana before migrating to the Netherlands expressed the belief that the meanings, they associate with their sexualities are partly in a strong way shaped by their socialization in Ghana. For instance, Joshua 21 years, who lived in Ghana for nine years before migrating to the Netherlands states;

> I am heterosexual because that is how I was brought up. Maybe if I grew up seeing men and men together often, I would have taught it is normal but as it is now, part of my formation years was spent in Ghana where things like lesbianism and gay are not common, so all I did was to follow the path. (Note taken from interview with Joshua, 21years on 11/08/2018)

Joshua's story reinforces the constructionist view of sexuality in which sexuality is a social construct where place and time are critical components in the constructions of sexuality (DeLamater and Hyde 1998). Becoming a heterosexual male for Joshua was as a result of the dominant heterosexual culture he observed in Ghana. This confirms Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah's (Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah 2014) observation that heterosexuality is institutionalized in the Ghanaian culture.

Contrary to the constructionist view, two heterosexual participants who believe that they did not become heterosexuals by conforming to a gender heteronormative society said they were born heterosexuals.

> I am straight. I didn't learn to be straight. That was just how I was born. Like in Sunday school we were told about the bible where God created Adam and Eve so that is just normal. (Note from interview with Sandra,18 years on 11/08/2018. She has lived in Ghana for 7 years and 11 years in the Netherlands)

> I don't know how I became straight. I think it is automatic. (Note taken from interview with Rashid, 20 years. Lived in Ghana for 5 years, Egypt 3 years and 12 years in the Netherlands)

Critical feminist scholars have made attempted to denaturalize heterosexuality by arguing that through heteronormativity, particular institutions and practices are sustained and regarded normative. Hence, the argument that

sexuality is natural and determined biologically is uncomplete because young people are influenced by the social context (DeLamater and Hyde 1998).

Further another female participant expressed that she became heterosexual without a choice.

> I know I am heterosexual because it is not as if when I was growing up, I could choose between being straight or being a lesbian. Heterosexuality was all I knew. (Note taken from interview with Linda, 17 years on 15/08/2018. Born in the Netherlands)

This is perhaps a good example of what (Rich 1980: 632) defines as compulsory heterosexuality where women are perceived as "innately sexually oriented towards men". Also, a likely explanation for what (Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 443) argue that the "expectation that heterosexuality and gender identity follow from genitalia produces heteronormativity".

4.2 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed findings on how and where constructions of sexuality started for young Ghanaians in the Netherlands. This was addressed to also understand how participants are making sense of their sexualities. Ten participants were interviewed individually for this section of which eight (8) identified as heterosexuals, one (1) identified as gay and one (1) participant suggested that he is still "exploring". Participants who identified themselves as heterosexuals used keywords such as "automatic, normal and natural" to express what it means to be heterosexual.

Understanding these initial years of participants was crucial to know the stages in which participants are currently in the constructions of their sexuality. The places they lived before their transnational engagements were necessary to explore. For instance, from the narratives discussed, slight differences are observed in the experiences of participants who lived their childhood formative years in Ghana and those who were born in the Netherlands. Participants who lived their formative years in Ghana were all heterosexuals and their views were largely a reflection of the gender relations and sexual norms present in Ghana. On the other hand, though some participants who were born in the in the Netherlands also identified as heterosexuals, two male participants had a non-heterosexual identity. This indicates that a disparity in perspective due to 'place' which leads to the next stage of analysis of the research findings.

5 Adolescent Sexual Constructions Across Space

5.1 Dutch Schools as a Contested Space

This section addresses what sexual education in Dutch schools constitute and how participants make sense of lessons on sexuality and sexual diversity in the school. The second part of the question looked at the influence that the information gathered from schools on Ghanaian immigrant youths and consequently affecting the choices they make. The question was addressed in individual interviews in the Hague as well as in a Focus Group Discussion[6] among six young Ghanaians (FDG) in Amsterdam. All participants agreed to have taken lessons on sexuality whiles in high school and for some, also in elementary school. However, from their narratives, it was identified that the scope of the information they received varied per the school. The FDG raised and reflected upon the following themes;

- Topics covered on sexuality in various Dutch schools
- What are the positions of teachers and how do they present material on sexual diversity
- How are participants making sense of the information they have received from school?
- Are students exposed to LGBT in school and what is the level of acceptance among students?

5.1.1 Discussion of Themes

On sheets of papers, participants listed topics that included lessons on contraceptives, functions of the sexual organs, lessons on abortion and pills, pregnancy, sex, sexual attraction, LGBT, distribution of condoms and sexually transmitted diseases and their prevention as the topics that constituted their sexuality lessons in high schools. Below are some excerpts from the FGD that describe information that students received on sexuality in school.

> Just last term, we had lessons on sexual orientation, how to use condoms, and which size to buy and we were made aware that when you have sex with a girl, she can become pregnant. That one can use pills etc. to prevent pregnancy and there is also abortion. And they even gave us condoms. My teacher told us that at our ages, it is normal to have feelings towards girls or boys and other kinds of orientations such as lesbianism or gay were discussed. I am still reading the book they gave me in school on sexuality. (Ivy 18 years. Born in the Netherlands)

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[6] The Focus Group Discussion was conducted on 28th July 2018 at a barbeque party which started around 14 O'clock at Biljmer Arena, Amsterdam.

My teacher taught us more about contraceptives and preventing sexually transmitted diseases but not a lot on sexual orientation. (Joyce 18 years. Born in the Netherlands)

I was taught at our age, we will be having feelings for the opposite sex or the same sex which is normal. They taught us about protecting ourselves with condoms if we decide to have sex and gave us condoms. We were taught about STDs and other forms of contraceptives also. (Victor 19 years. Born in the Netherlands)

I remember in my biology class we were thought sexuality mainly about the genitals and how to wear condoms. My teacher was not so explicit on homosexuality though I heard it a couple of times in class /…/ my teacher had a Christian background and so she was not for that. (Lizzy 20 years. Born in the Netherlands)

I was taught about sexuality and in class, we discussed the functions of the vagina, penis, contraceptives etc. I don't remember being taught about sexual diversity. It was only recently in my nursing training that we discussed the subject of homosexuality. (Stanley 21 years. Lived 11 years in Ghana, 10 years in the Netherlands)

I remember there were classes on STDs, Abortion and the use of contraceptives, and LGBT. (Nana 20 years. Lived 8 years in Ghana, 12 years in the Netherlands)

Though all members agreed to have been taught a combination or all these topics, participants stressed that teachers focused more on certain topics than the others. Teachers positions during lessons were also discussed to assess any bias inclination that teachers might have exhibited for certain topics under sexuality particularly LGBT. Some participants raised that the teachers who thought them sexuality were themselves gay. Those participants who dislike homosexuality found this problematic while other participants thought that teachers' sexual identities in itself were not a problem because they could not substantiate how in any way, a teacher's identity impacted how they construct their own identities.

I had a lady teacher who was gay herself, but I don't think she used her position to influence anyone. (Lizzy 20 years. Born in the Netherlands)

Also, one participant indicated that there were moments when she thought her teacher was herself not comfortable discussing homosexuality because of her Christian background.

In my case, I think my teacher rather did not like the subject of homosexuality, so she only touched it briefly as compared to the other topics ... she is Dutch but also a Christian, so maybe that is the reason. (Joyce 18 years. Born in the Netherlands)

Aside taking lessons on sexuality in schools, another way that students learned to construct their sexual identities in school was through engagement with their peers. The following excerpt was taken from an interview with Kofi.

Me: So, was there any gay in your class?

Kofi: No but there is this girl in my class who is bisexual.

Me: What do you think about her.

Kofi: I asked her once why does she like girls then she asked me why do I also like girls and not boys? So, I told her but that is normal. Then she said it's the same way she feels. Which is disgusting.

Me: So, in your opinion, you think it is disgusting?

Him: Yes, and in the church I was told it's a curse.

Me: Really? Which church is that?

Him: Roman

Me: Here in the Hague or in Ghana?

Him: In Ghana. You know God created a man and a girl and not a man and a man or girl and girl. So that they can give birth to other humans

Meanwhile, as Kofi talks about LGBT, he registers his displeasure for it through the expressions on his face. Though he has stayed in the Hague for five years and has just started learning about sexuality in details in school, he was quick to say that the act of homosexuality is disgusting. He tells me that he draws his inferences from what he was taught at Sunday school back in Ghana (a learning session for children at church) which taught him that homosexuality is a curse. On the other hand, in his new environment, Kofi has received sexuality lessons in school which teaches him that being homosexual is normal and LGBT are acceptable sexual orientations.

This is an indication that young Ghanaians are exposed to different perspectives on sexuality; one that reflects the accepted practices in Ghana and another that relates to their studies on sexuality in schools in the Netherlands.

Bay-Cheng (Bay-Cheng 2003: 62) has argued that sexuality taught in schools is a "fundamental force in every construction and definition of adolescent sexuality". However, it may become problematic when in the transnational space, sexual lessons are only reliant on Western understandings and categories of sexuality (Blackwood 2005). There is a question of how constructing sexuality in the transnational space then has led to a "new self-consciousness or awareness of sexual identity?

Below are some responses from participants from the focus group discussion;

I think I do pick a lot of knowledge from there to guide my sexual life but definitely not something to transform me to become gay. (Stanley, 21 years. Lived 10 years in the Netherlands and 11 years in Ghana)

Being here, I am more in control of my sexuality without having to think of the next person judging me. I use an IUD birth control that my boyfriend and I agreed to have, and my parents don't even know about it. (Ivy 18 years. Born in the Netherlands)

It may seem apparent to say that the sexual education received by young Ghanaians in high schools in the Netherlands is leading to a sense of sexual agency among the youth.

5.2 Family as A Contested space

> Whether migrants physically move back and forth or participate in the lives of
> their places of origin from a distance through remittances and communications,
> their experiences cannot be understood from the perspective of the destination
> country alone (FitzGerald 2015: 132).

One important way by which migrant youths maintain ties to their countries of
origin is through their parents and their broader family connections (Levitt
2009). This section makes an attempt to understand the contributions of the
transnational family to the constructions of sexuality among Ghanaian youths in
the Netherlands.

 The findings show that parents and family ties of migrant youths especially
participants who were born and raised in the Netherlands played a crucial role
in contributing to how sexuality is constructed by the Ghanaian youths in the
Netherlands. Whiles families of those participants who were born and raised in
the Netherlands actively and consciously enforced certain ideologies that
participants regard as 'Ghanaian', those participants who migrated from Ghana
had already received an orientation in the Ghanaian society which is important
to mention. A statement by one participant who was born and raised in the
Netherlands but have only travelled to Ghana twice indicates;

> Though I was born here, (referring to the Netherlands) I was born within a
> Ghanaian community and certain things are done the Ghanaian way. Aside
> going to school, when I return home, everything else I did was Ghanaian.
> (Victor, 19 years)

This statement by Victor is one that made me wonder what things are
classified as 'Ghanaian way' and what could be termed as the 'Dutch way'. One
such characteristic about the Ghanaian community identified by some
researchers Knipscheer et al. (2000), Mazzucato (2007) and (Knipscheer et al.
2000, Mazzucato 2007, Dietz et al. 2011) is that Ghanaian immigrants are deeply
involved in transnational engagements across Ghana and the Netherlands. These
engagements though mostly for economic purposes, many times also involve
the reverse transfer of ideas and knowledge from Ghana to the Netherland.

Also, the notion that migrants leave behind their culture and integrate into
their new society following migration has far been debunked by transnational
scholarships and this finding actually supports the new literature in that
Ghanaian parents in the Netherlands do not fully integrate in the Dutch society
and thereby, pass on certain ideologies considered 'Ghanaian' to their migrant
children. This is in consistent with Baker's (2012) finding establishing that
Ghanaian immigrants assume a non-permanent residence in the Netherlands by
identifying themselves as "travellers" with the thought of going back to Ghana
where they call home someday regardless of the fact that they may be legal
permanent residents in the Netherlands. This finding by Baker (2012) may be a
possible explanation of why Ghanaian immigrants especially the older
generation may remain rigid in their beliefs and maintain their Ghanaian values
regarding gender and sexuality.

Some participants acknowledged that their parents' attitudes on sexuality
particularly when homosexuality is mentioned does not help them to explore or
construct their own sexualities without restrictions. For instance, Kwesi with an

unspecified sexual identity expresses his hesitation on why he is unable to align himself to certain sexual identities at the moment;

> … I choose to say I am exploring because there are times, I feel I am gay, but it is difficult to say. If I want to follow that path, I may not be able to… I will be letting my parents down because I know they are not in support of it. (Note taken from interview with Kwesi, 16 years on 28/07/2018, born in the Netherlands)

As mentioned earlier, sexuality in Ghana is widely heterosexual with a high intolerance for homosexuality. This unwillingness to accept other sexual identities aside heterosexuality was acknowledged by some participants as deeply rooted even in the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands.

It was also found that sexuality is not a common subject discussed explicitly among Ghanaian families in the Netherlands. Participants opined that despite the contested space in which they find themselves, their parents avoid any open discussions concerning their sexual constructions. According to Linda;

> I have never discussed that personally with my parents, but I remember my brother, raised that topic once and my mother brushed it off. I think my mum does not discuss these with me because she probably thinks I know it is not right. (Note taken from interview with Linda, 17 years on 15/08/2018, born in the Netherlands)

The second part of Linda's statement suggests an underlining assumption by her parents regarding her sexuality or perhaps an expectation they have of her to know what is right. What then becomes right to Linda, in this case, is questionable. During her sexuality lessons in school, Linda is taught all other variations of sexuality including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and she is told that they are equally acceptable and normal. Now at home, Linda's parents do not condone LGBT but only heterosexual relationships which is contrary to what Linda learnt in school. Linda's experience stated above was confirmed by other participants who narrated the discord in the information they receive on sexuality at home in the Netherlands and what they receive(d) in their various schools. Edwin's story is quite similar to the experience of Linda. Below he states;

> I have never had a conversation with my parents on sexual stuff, they are not aware that I have a girlfriend and we have sex. It's not a subject I can discuss with them when they have not even asked me.

It became apparent that young Ghanaians sexuality constructions were surrounded by secrecy. Though some participants stated that they prefer a non-disclosure of their sexual lives to their parents, others expressed that they would prefer if their parents could discuss the subject of sexuality with them openly to help them navigate through their sexual constructions in a space where multiple information prevails.

5.2.1 Engaging Parents

Following the concerns of these participants, I reached out to interview some parents of the migrant youths who participated in this study. Some of the participants were jittery about me meeting their parents for reasons that I may

disclose their views to their parents even after assuring them that it will not happen. As a result, I interviewed only parents of four participants who consented to my request. More information on how this was done is addressed the research methodology in chapter one.

Parenting within immigration has been described by some researchers to pose more complexities than it would have been within the home countries of immigrants (Ochocka and Janzen 2008: 87-90). When migration is involved, parents have to contend with cultural differences and contextual factors within the host society regarding their parenting style (Ochocka and Janzen 2008: 87-90). This is particularly accurate when parents in question are new in their host countries. Sims and Omaji (Sims and Omaji 1999) have established the dissonance that sometimes emerges in migrant families due to the cultural differences as mentioned above.

What is more, the scope of research studies on migrant families have changed to include transnational migration. Several transnational migration research studies have questioned the relationships of parents and the children they leave behind in their home country (Dito et al. 2017, Coe and Shani 2015, Baldassar and Merla 2013). It is clear from the mentioned studies that outcomes of children with transnational parents are mostly negative than positive. Though all participants interviewed in this study live with at least one parent in the Netherlands, it was important to mention transnational parenting as some of them spent some initial years of their childhood with a close kinship tie in Ghana and reunited later with their parent(s) in the Netherlands. Additionally, some participants have at least one of their parents residing in Ghana who contributes to the parenting role from afar. Also, since it takes a whole family to raise a child in the Ghanaian context the kinship ties that participants have in Ghana is crucial in understanding the dynamics within transnational parenting and its impact on the youth.

This was crucial to explore as it formed part of narratives of the Ghanaian parents establishing how they raise their children in the Netherlands with the objective of imparting Ghanaian morals and values in their children so that they grow up with more knowledge of their Ghanaian roots and attitudes depicting 'Ghanaian' rather than 'Dutch'. It is thus, not surprising that a research by Dito et al.(Dito et al. 2017) on the effects of transnational parenting involving Ghanaian parents in the Netherlands, revealed that some parents prefer the educational system in Ghana to the Dutch school system for reasons that the school system in Ghana impart "stricter disciplining norms" into children. Hence some parents will send their children to Ghana for reasons like the above or raise their children in the Netherlands in a manner that depicted such.

For example, during one of my interviews with a parent on the discussion of sexuality with their children, she explains;

> I may not explicitly discuss with my children on sexuality, but I do it through other means. It is part of the reasons I take my children to Ghana for a vacation to experience how things are done there though I gave birth to them here and they are considered Dutch. (Father, 45 years)

Her views are not completely different from another mother who said;

> We are guilty of not having a relationship with our children as parents which may not be our fault because nobody taught me about these things when I was

their age…it is not part of our culture that you discuss issues of sexuality with the young ones. (Mother, 48 years)

During these interviews, I discovered that the subject of culture is very important to Ghanaian parents and that explains why they make efforts to pass on certain Ghanaian beliefs and attitudes to their young children. One of such is the heteronormative assumptions of sexuality. The kind that Nagoshi et al explain vividly as;

> The traditional heteronormative view of gender is that gender role, gender identity, and sexual orientation/identity are all of one piece, such that an individual with a female gender identity is essentially predisposed to engage in predominantly feminine behaviours and appearances and to only be sexually attracted to those with a male gender identity, while an individual with a male gender identity is essentially predisposed to engage in predominantly masculine behaviours and appearances and to only be sexually attracted to those with a female gender identity (Nagoshi et al. 2014: 107).

In view of this, unlike Gardner (2012) who argues that the second-generation are unlikely to engage in their countries of origin, all participants, both the first and second generations in this study were found to be strongly impacted in the transnational social field. This is not only demonstrated through their movements between Ghana and the Netherlands, but also evident in their endearment for Ghanaian food, songs, fashion, and other Ghanaian practices. Also, important to mention is that all participants speak some level of the common Ghanaian language called Twi.

5.3 Struggles of Young Ghanaians Constructing Their Sexualities in the Netherlands

Some salient issues were raised by participants during interviews that indicate that the spaces within which they receive information in the process of constructing their sexualities often posed some frictions that young Ghanaians have to deal with. This section highlights some of the difficulties that participants constantly faced in reconciling views of sexuality from the family and from the school.

For instance, Kwesi's (participant with unspecified sexual identity) sexual identity construction reveals a back and forth process between himself and the social context. There is the issue of whether to submit to the repression from family or to express one's internal sense of self. It was revealed that one way that participants have found themselves out of the situation is to do their sexual explorations in secrecy. The implication of this includes the possibility of youth engaging in sexual activities in the dark which may lead to some sexual health problems. Also, for heterosexual youth it may lead to a higher tendency of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood among young Ghanaians in the Netherlands as has been found by Garbrah-Hooper (2017). Rashid confirms his observation of teenage pregnancy among Ghanaian youth with his statement below;

> I don't know if you have noticed but teenage pregnancy is very rare among the white girls but common among the Africans here. It means something is

missing. It will be good for parents to engage their children. (Rashid 20 years, 23/07/2018)

Reflecting on a similar struggle faced by another participant, Frank mentions some of the difficulties he has faced as a young gay.

> When I first became open about my sexuality, I was about 17 years old. It was my mum who found out first. I begged her not to tell my dad for fear of being rejected. Eventually when he knew, he was very disappointed … and told our pastor about it so that he could help me. (Note taken from interview with Frank 22 years on 03/08/2018)

Whiles Frank thought his sexual identity was equally normal just like heterosexuality has been described by most of the participants, his parents thought that he needed a spiritual intervention to get him to become straight. The word religion was also one word that constantly appeared in the narratives of participants to justify the normalization of their heterosexual identities. One of the participants noted;

> The Bible teaches me that a man is to a woman, so I don't understand why a man will be sleeping with a man and a lady, sleeping with a lady. (Note taken from interview with Abigail, 17 years on 13/08/2018)

Religion has been viewed by Sanjakdar (2018) to hold an intolerant position on new sexual variations. Participants noted that their Christian and Islamic beliefs contradicted with what they were thought on LGBT in high school which leaves them in a state of contestation. Underlining religion is also the issue of morality which parents enforce on their adolescent children. Whiles young Ghanaians may face these struggles and more, during their sexuality constructions, the choices they make draws from more than a single perspective.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the contributions of family in a transnational field and sexual education in Dutch high schools to young Ghanaians sexuality constructions in the Netherlands. It was found that whiles sexual education lessons were changing perspectives of some of the participants in this study, the family views were instilling in the young Ghanaians, sexual norms that reinforced heteronormative sexual orientation.

6 Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This research has studied adolescents and young people's constructions of sexuality with a specific focus on the contributions of the school and the family as spaces within which sexual constructions take place in a transnational field. The research was conducted with the specific objective to explore the choices that young Ghanaians living in the Netherlands, make while constructing their sexualities vis-à-vis the compulsory lessons they receive on sexuality and sexual diversity in high schools and the role played by families embedded in a transnational field. To address this, I made sense of the cultural and legal differences between the Netherlands and Ghana regarding the ways in which the subject of sexuality especially, homosexuality is treated and viewed. The main research question that guided this research was; *How are Ghanaian youths in the Netherlands constructing their sexualities in contested transnational spaces?*

Using an ethnographic approach to qualitative study as the methodology, findings of the research illustrate that having experienced different perspectives on sexuality from their family and school, participants' views on their own sexual orientations were no longer restricted to a single perspective from the Netherlands or Ghana, rather a fusion of experiences across space with different viewpoints. Though it was found that living in the Netherlands and the sexual education received in Dutch schools were insightful for all participants as well as empowering for some, the influence of the family in perpetuating heteronormative gender relations in participants was high and undermined the efforts of Dutch schools for their sexual education program which aims to ensure acceptance and respect for other people's sexual orientation.

Also, the findings showed that there are contradictions in the information that young Ghanaians receive from the school and from their family on sexuality especially regarding LGBT which is affecting young people's perceptions and attitudes towards LGBT and creating an uncomfortable situation for those participants who are not heterosexual. Also, the family as the first contact often for gender and sexual socialization was highly influential in shaping participants', perception of sexuality. In essence, participants are either fed with negative beliefs of being sexually active or there is a spiral of silence on sexuality at home with an underlining requirement of sexual innocence. However, Dutch schools remain spaces that are explicit on adolescent sexual constructions. In view of this, the findings unpack an element of secrecy that surroundnds sexual behaviours of young Ghanaians in this study.

An important finding that was not a focus of this research but greatly affected the findings is the fact that the research revealed low level of integration of participants into the Dutch society. Surprisingly, the second-generation participants were not any different.

6.2 Conclusion

By studying how sexuality is constructed across transnational spaces by young people of Ghanaian descent living in the Netherlands, the research revealed that sexual constructions were founded on stereotypical gender and sexual behaviours mostly, a reflection of the gender socialization in Ghana. The impact of sexual education in Dutch schools and close contacts with non-heterosexual identities on the sexual behaviours and choices of young Ghanaians are considerably partial. Owing to the fact that participants were selective in processing the information on sexuality available to them. Constructing sexuality among young Ghanaians living in the Netherlands then is a fuzzy process that involves selectively combining information and sexual practices from the Netherlands and their country of origin, Ghana.

I argue that the context of sexual interaction is crucial to how young people develop themselves sexually. Whiles the information gained by young people of Ghanaian decent from their families on sexuality was usually one-sided to promote abstinence and to deter young people from engaging in same-sex relationships, sexual education in Dutch schools was found rather useful by participants in giving them broader insights on sexuality and helping them make the right choices about their sexual life. However, information on LGBT received in schools contradicted with views of families and their religious beliefs which participants found challenging. Therefore, participants were more satisfied with lessons on contraception rather than LGBT.

Nonetheless, though most of the participants do not accept LGBT, they hold views that lessons and exposure to knowledge about LGBT were not enough to influence young people to change their sexual orientations. Likewise, religion and (Ghanaian) culture often appeared in narratives of participants as major influences that plant deep-rooted beliefs and values in young people as such, guiding them to make right choices whiles constructing their sexual identities.

In the nutshell, applying the constructionist view on sexuality, the concept of sexuality and gender heteronormativity were very useful in analyzing the research findings. The research supports the constructionist argument on asexuality with the view that the social context remains important to constructing young people's sexuality.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Studies

As this study can be used as a preliminary reference point in understanding constructions of sexuality by young migrants in the Netherlands, future studies looking at constructions of sexuality can consider covering other immigrant populations in the Netherlands.

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Appendix 1

Information on the 10 participants recruited in the Hague

Participant	Sex	Age	Sexual identity	Years of Living in the Netherlands	Stay or Visits to Ghana
Kofi	M	15	Heterosexual	5	Stayed 10 years
Joshua	M	21	Heterosexual	12	Stayed 9 years
Akosua	F	18	Heterosexual	Born in the Netherlands	3 times visit Ghana
Linda	F	17	Heterosexual	Born in the Netherlands	2 times visit to Ghana
Frank	M	22	Gay	Born in the Netherlands	3 times visit to Ghana
Kwesi	M	16	unspecified	Born in the Netherlands	2 times visit to Ghana

Abigail	F	17	Heterosexual	Born in the Netherlands	4 times visit to Ghana
Edwin	M	19	Heterosexual	Born and raised in the Netherlands	Spent 2 years in Ghana
Rashid	M	20	Heterosexual	12	5 years in Ghana, 3 years in Egypt
Sandra	F	18	Heterosexual	11	Stayed 7 years in Ghana

Meeting Places for Participants Recruited in the Hague

Name	Venue	Dates	Time
Kofi	The Hague City Library and At a Barbecue	18/07/2018 20/07/2018 11/08/2018	15:00 – 15:45 15:00 – 15:30 13:00 – 18:00
Kwesi	Holland Spoor took a stroll in his vicinity Football Pitch in the Hague	21/07/2018 28/07/2018	12:30 – 13:00 15:00 – 17:00
Edwin	The Hague City Library	19/07/2018	11:00 – 12:30

Rashid	The Hague University of Applied Science	23/07/2018	14:00 - 15:45
Joshua	Barbecue	11/08/2018	13:00 – 18:00
Frank	McDonalds The Hague University of Applied Science	27/07/2018 03/08/2018	16:00 – 17:00 16:00 – 17:00
Linda	Hema	15/08/2018	10:00 – 11:15
Abigail	The Hague City Library	13/08/2018 15/08/2018	15:00 – 15:45 15:00 – 15:30
Akosua	Hema	16/07/2018 15/08/2018	11:00 – 12:00 11:30 -12:00
Sandra	Barbecue	11/08/2018	13:00 – 18:00

Information on the six participants recruited in Amsterdam for the Focus Group Discussion

Participant	Sex	Age	Years of Living in NL	Stay or visit to Ghana
Lizzy	F	20	Born in the Netherlands	Stayed 12 years
Joyce	F	18	Born in the Netherlands	2 times visit to Ghana
Ivy	F	18	Born in the Netherlands	

Victor	M	19	Born in the Netherlands	2 times visit to Ghana
Stanley	M	21	10	Stayed 11 years in Ghana
Nana	M	20	12	Stayed 8 years in Ghana

Information on Parents

Name	Sex	Age	Years of Living in NL
Mother 1	F	40	15
Mother 2	F	48	20
Father 1	M	55	30
Father 2	M	47	25

Appendix 2

Interview Guide

Central Research Question

How are Ghanaian youths in the Netherlands constructing their sexualities in contested transnational spaces?

Characteristics of Interviewees

Name

Age

Sex

Relationship status

Place of Birth

Time of stay in the Netherlands

Which places have you stayed apart from the Netherlands?

Research Sub-questions

1) **What meanings and experiences do Ghanaian immigrant youths attribute to the construction of their sexualities**

   A. How would you define your sexual identity?
   B. How did you know about your identity?
   C. How did you learn to become the choice you identify with?

2) **In what ways do schools and families as transnational spaces contribute to the construction of sexualities of young Ghanaians in the Netherlands?**

School

   A. How long have you schooled in the Netherlands and to which level?
   B. Going to school, have you ever come across a discussion on sexuality?

C. What topics were you taught under sexuality?

D. Were there people who identified as LGBTQ in your class or school? What were your attitude towards these people?

E. Apart from school, have you had discussions on sexuality at other places? Say home, church, an event you attended? How was this done?

Family

A. Do you talk about sexuality with your parents?

2) What struggles are young Ghanaians in the Netherlands faced with, constructing their sexualities transnationally?

   A) What challenges have you encountered whiles constructing your sexuality in the Netherlands?

Questions for Focus Group Discussion

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word sexuality?
2. Do you remember the first time you came across this word and in what context?
3. Have you discussed sexuality in your homes, schools, among your peers or other places?
4. How was it explained to you if you have?
5. What cues have you taken from these exposures and how have they helped you in understanding your own sexual identity?

Questions for Parents

1. Do you discuss matters about sexuality with your children? If yes, what do you talk about? If no, why?
2. What is your knowledge of the practice of sexuality here in the Netherlands and how different it may be from Ghana?
3. What is your stance on homosexuality and would you accept your child as one?

4. Are you aware that your children are thought about sexualities in their schools which includes homosexuality and other kinds of sexual orientations?
5. How do you feel knowing your children are exposed to different information on sexualities and have the legal rights in the Netherlands to practice any sexual orientation they align with?
6. What accounts for the reasons you have on homosexuality and sexuality in general?

Participant Observation

1. Close observations of participants verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews of the subject matter.

2. Participants' integration into Dutch society.

3. Other observations