UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

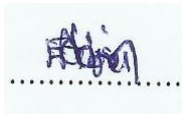# VIOLENCE IN AFRICAN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN AFRICAN STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I, Edwin Asa Adjei do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by me towards the award of Doctor of Philosophy in African Studies.

Except for the references of the work of other people which have been duly acknowledged, this work has never been submitted in whole or in part for any degree.

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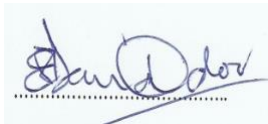
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God who has been my help in ages past and my hope for years to come and to His vessel of blessing, Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo, who has been a tree on whose shoulders I have stood to climb the ladder of academics this far. *Enam dua so na ahama huu soro.* (It is by the help of the tree that the vine saw the sky)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My final appreciation goes to my virtuous wife, Anna Asa Adjei, who braved the turbulence of my academic pursuits with me along with the challenges the turbulence brought into our lives. God bless you so much for being the blessing you are to me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A-level   Advanced level

CODE   Canadian Organisation for Development through Education

GES   Ghana Education Service

GLA   Ghana Library Authority

IGCSE   International General Certificate of Secondary Education

IPV   Interpersonal violence

JACL   Journal of African Children's Literature

JACYL   Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature

KDHS   The Kenyan Domestic Household Violence Survey

O-level   Ordinary level

PABBIS   Parents Against Bad Books in Schools

PTA   Parent Teacher Association

UNESCO   United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

WAEC   West African Examinations Council

WASSCE   West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

WHO   World Health Organization

YA   Young Adult

YAF   Young Adult Fiction

YAL   Young Adult Literature

ABSTRACT

Scholars in the field of young adult fiction agree about the influence of reading on young adults, with research on young adult fiction showing its influence on vocabulary and young adults' views on bullying and teen violence (Alsup, 2010; Campbell, 2020). What is disputed is the place of violence in young adult fiction. While some scholars argue for the inclusion of violence in fiction (Franzak &Noll, 2006; Piotrowski &Harper, 2013), others argue for the exclusion of violence in young adult fiction (Campbell, 2010).

This thesis provides insights into the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction, and how young adults make meaning of the violence they are exposed to in the story books they read. The research follows two main trajectories. First, I undertake a close reading of a range of texts to track the ways in which novelists employ dominant discourses of violence to depict perpetrators and victims of violence. Secondly, I conduct a survey to examine Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of violence and how they make meaning of violence in the story books they read.

The findings show that as a reflection of the occurrence of violence in society on the one hand and for literary purposes on the other, violence manifests in many forms in African young adult fiction. The findings also show that Ghanaian young adults are able to grapple with the violence in the storybooks they read using their personal experiences.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Conflict is an essential component of fiction. Its place in fiction is so important that it is described as "the engine of fiction" (Morley, 2007:173). Aristotle listed the components of play as plot, character, diction, thought, rhythm and spectacle. For him, the characters of a play bring the plot to life by facing and overcoming obstacles which are the means of expressing the conflict in the play (Bywater, 1962). Freitag built on Aristotle's notion of fiction in a play. For Freitag, conflict is what brings together the exposition, rising action, the climax and the falling action. He saw the exposition of a story as the background and an introduction to the characters. This was followed by an introduction to the conflict, which led to the rising action and climax. The climax was the turning point which led to the falling action where the conflict began to resolve itself (Barth, 1982).

According to Perrine (1987:42), "conflict is a situation in which a contradiction occurs in a person. This tells the person to decide (not) to do a particular activity". The conflict can be physical, mental or emotional. Kennedy and Gioia (2007) describe conflict as a clash. For Perrine (1987:42), "This clash is called conflict and it may happen between one or more characters and society. The conflict may happen when the character is pitted against some other person (man against man), in conflict with some external force such as physical nature, society or fate (man against environment), or in conflict with some elements in his or her own nature (man against himself)". For example, a Yoruba proverb says, "the masquerade says he wants to dance; the rain says it wants to fall; and the child says he wants to perform wonders". This proverb is explained by Owomoyela (2005:476) as "conflicting desires pose a difficult problem". If this was a story, the conflict could be between the masquerade, the rain and the child, with each of them wanting to have their way in the story.

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The child could also end up having an internal conflict within him or herself due to the reasons for wanting to perform wonders. The conflict could also be between the society and the masquerade due to the significance of the masquerade's performance or the conflict could be between the society and the child who would be attempting what the society deems impossible for a child. In another story, the conflict would be between the masquerade and the child on one side and the rain on another side due to the rain's ability to interfere with the masquerade's performance and the child's ability to perform wonders at that moment.

Kennedy and Gioia (2007:8) note that "The clash creates a drama in the story. Drama in fiction occurs in any clash of wills, desires, or power". Meyer (1990:46) sums up the argument on conflict in literature by noting that "there is a division of the conflict: internal and external conflict. Internal conflict is a conflict which occurs in a person as a result of the conflict of his own desire, meanwhile external conflict is a conflict of person that happens between himself and other individual or environment". Conflict is therefore a key component of literary texts as without it, an author would find it difficult to develop a story. As Bahri and Dewi (2015) say, the significance of conflict in a story is that it is out of it that basic materials for the plot are constructed and it is the development of the conflict that makes a story impress people and attracts people to it. One of the ways authors convey the conflict in a story or resolve it is through the use of interpersonal violence by characters against their own bodies or against others. An Akan proverb says "*Bere a mmoa rekohye mmara no na osebo nsa si apese so"*. This is translated as "At the time all the animals came to an agreement, the leopard had its paws on the brush-tailed porcupine". Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah (2007:27) interpret this proverb as "violence was from the beginning of time". It is therefore no surprise that violence has been recorded in almost all ancient texts, including religious texts like the Bible and Quran. Several novels address violence through an

expression of clashes between nations, traditions, generations and classes. In African novels, violence has been expressed through slavery, colonialism, racism, tyrannical rule and exploitation. Novels such as Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of A boy Soldier*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* express various forms of violence on the continent through conflicts. A Yoruba proverb says "whoever knows how to enjoy life does not enter into a fight". This proverb is explained by Owomoyela as "the best way to enjoy life is to avoid conflict" (Owomoyela, 2005:164). While a person may enjoy life by avoiding conflict and fights, an author cannot opt to exclude conflict from a novel. As already said, the entirety of novels revolves around the conflict or conflicts in them. Therefore, while people might enjoy life by avoiding conflict, these same people will not enjoy a story without conflict. Conflict is therefore not found in adult novels only; it is also found in novels children and young adults read and is often expressed or resolved through violence or interpersonal violence.

1.2 Violence in Young Adult Literature

Reading is one way through which young adults grow their vocabulary, enhance their imagination and learn more about the world and the various groups of people in it. Through reading fiction, they see their lives being reflected by other people's experiences and they also learn how other people like them, who go through similar challenges as they do, resolve these challenges. Scholars in the field of young adult literature agree on the influence of reading fiction on young adults with research on young adult fiction showing its influence on reading habits, vocabulary and people's views on bullying and teen violence (Hathaway, 2009; Alsup, 2010; Campbell, 2010). What has been disputed is the place of violence in young adult fiction with some arguing for the inclusion of violence in young adult fiction while others argue for the exclusion of violence in fiction for

young adults. Those who argue for the inclusion of violence in young adult fiction have often relied on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory from which he developed the theory of psychosexual stages of development. The cornerstone of Freud's theory of psychosexual stages of development is built on two basic ideas – "people are born savages and must be socialised to behave morally, and sexual identity is not innate but develops out of early family experiences" (Schwartz, 2000:58). For these scholars who support the inclusion of violence in fiction for young adults, the inclusion of violent acts such as genocide, bullying, suicide, rape and murder in young adult fiction is a way of teaching young adults about social justice and provides inspiration to young adults to be problem solvers in society (Franzak & Noll, 2006; Rybakova, Piotrowski, & Harper, 2013). For these scholars, young adult fiction could be the panacea to society's ever-growing challenges with violent crimes of all sorts. Campbell (2010) looks at the various arguments for the inclusion or exclusion of violence in young adult fiction. He notes that those who argue for the inclusion of violence in young adult fiction claim that all humans are born with violent impulses and so having violence in the fiction young adults read is a way for young adults to experience catharsis. Thus, including violence in young adult fiction is a way of preparing young adults to cope. Furthermore, these scholars contend that violence in fiction is harmless because it is just make-believe. This is also in line with Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis.

According to Ryckman (2004:38),

> Freud recognized that society would not survive for long if its members were allowed to express all their impulses… This was because he thought that stronger individuals would take advantage of weaker ones by using their superior force to gain their ends. For example, he thought that social instability could easily result if people were allowed to mate indiscriminately…In Freud's view, individuals must eventually learn to resolve this conflict by seeking realistic ways of gratifying their impulses through behaviour that is in line with the prescriptions of society.

For these scholars who argue for the inclusion of violence in young adult fiction, therefore, the inclusion of violence does not only help the young adults experience catharsis but it also creates an avenue for the authors to satisfy their violent impulses in socially acceptable ways. Sigmund Freud believed that creative sublimations were necessary if society was to survive. Freud referred to writers' tendency to say things for which other members of the society would be sanctioned if they talked about them as sublimation. Sublimation is "a form of displacement in which unacceptable id impulses are transformed into socially acceptable acts and directed at acceptable sources rather than the object at which they are originally aimed. The unacceptable impulses are displaced by ones that are socially acceptable. In like manner, poets and painters may satisfy some of their sexual urges through their art" (Freud, 1946:56).

According to Campbell (2010), scholars who argue for the exclusion of violence in young adult fiction contend that young adults are not old enough and should be shielded from the violence around them. This thesis looks at the issue of violence in young adult fiction through a different lens by examining how violence is depicted in African young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of violence in the fiction they read. Thus, through young adult fiction, this research explores interpersonal violence as a social problem, its portrayal and how young adults conceptualise violence as suggested by Franzak and Noll (2006). They posit that the mass distribution and consumption of young adult novels make them significant for research on the portrayal of violence in societies and for engaging young adults in critical enquiry. In addition to this, Isaacs (2003:50) notes that

> Sex and violence have been topics of YA books since the genre was invented. Realistically, they can't be avoided. They are, to a greater or lesser extent, part of teenage experience or their expectations of the adult world. The same graphic explicitness that has been decried in films and games increasingly turns up in

young adult fiction and is endemic in the fantasy that so many young adults prefer.

Thus, my main research questions are:

1. How is interpersonal violence portrayed in African young adult fiction?

2. What are Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of violence?

The specific objectives that will guide me in answering the above questions are to:

1. Examine the depiction of interpersonal violence in African young adult fiction

2. Investigate Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of violence

3. Assess how Ghanaian young adults make meaning of violence in the fiction they read

1.3 A Summary of the Conceptual Framework

This thesis will be analysed based on a conceptual framework built on the reflection, refraction and reader-response theories. The reflection theory looks at literary texts as reflections of their societies (Watt, 1964; Finnegan, 1977). The refraction theory sees literary texts as ways through which society is impacted (Nanbigne, 2004; Anjana & Bhambhra, 2016). The reader-response theory validifies the various responses readers give after reading a particular text based on their backgrounds, experiences and many other factors that could influence their understanding of a particular text. This theory explains why a person from a war-torn country could understand or explain the same literary text differently from someone who has never experienced war (Rosenblatt, 1978). These theories, used in the framework, enable an exploration of the depiction of violence in African young adult fiction and how Ghanaian young adults make meaning of the novels they read. The framework is fully developed in chapter two of this thesis.

1.4 A Brief Overview of the Study's Methodology

This section provides an overview of my methods and sample for this research. This study was in two parts. The first part was an analysis of how dominant discourses of interpersonal violence are depicted through the portrayal of victims and perpetrators of violence in African young adult fiction. Therefore, the context of violence and how men, boys, girls and women are portrayed in the context of violence was analysed. Scholars are yet to agree on what young adult fiction is or is not. What most scholars agree on is that the target readers for young adult fiction are between the ages of 12 and 19. The debate on what young adult fiction is or is not is discussed in chapter two of this thesis. In the absence of a pre-existing list of young adult novels or a canon on young adult fiction in Africa, I conducted this analysis by purposively selecting twenty young adult novels written in English by African authors based in Africa.

English is a compulsory subject of study in almost all senior high schools located in former British colonies on the continent. English is therefore one of the many subjects on which students are assessed in their final senior high school examinations, with each country having its own set of required readings for the examination. Senior high school students in English-speaking West Africa write the same examination, i.e., West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE). They therefore have to read the same required texts selected by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Other countries in Africa write the Ordinary Level (O-level), Advanced Level(A-level) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). Despite the different names given to the senior high school examinations over the continent, there are similar novels selected by the various countries from what is generally considered a canon of novels by African writers. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a novel written by renowned African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta and Peter Abrahams

being read as required texts by senior high schools all over the continent. As a result, out of the twenty books selected for this study, ten were selected by reason of being considered classics written by African authors and thus required readings for senior high schools in different parts of the continent. Even though these classics did not meet the criteria for young adult fiction in the global North, students in senior high schools in Africa are required to read at least one of these books over a three or four-year period and are tested on their understanding of these books in their final examinations. This model of education where students learn in order to be able to reproduce what they have learnt later is what Freire (1970:45) has referred to as "banking education". While students in other parts of the world would have required readings for their examinations, what makes the required readings in Africa stand out is that the novels have been used for decades as required readings and are currently published for use mostly as required readings.

Students in senior high schools are mostly between the ages of 14 and 19. It would therefore be safe to say that these books are deemed appropriate for young adults by educational authorities on the continent. Also, with students spending almost three years reading the same book over and over and being examined on it each term, one could justifiably say that these books could have some influence on their views of interpersonal violence, especially when many students can recite various portions of these books many years after completing senior high school. Young adult fiction from the Northern parts of Africa was excluded from this research because of the language barrier. Literature from Northern Africa is not in English but mostly in Arabic, with a few of the works written in French and Berber. As stated by Talahite, "it seems more appropriate to speak of North African literatures rather than of one literature: a literature in Arabic which extends beyond the confines of North Africa; an age-old Berber oral literature which has survived in certain areas;

and a literature in French in the countries that were part of the former French empire" (Talahite, 2007: 39).

For the second set of ten books for analysis, I chose all ten finalists for the Canadian Organization for Development through Education's (CODE) Burt all-star awards for young adult fiction in Africa which sought to select the best young adult fiction written by an African over the past ten years. These novels were selected as they are among the most easily identifiable young adult novels which are widely distributed on the continent. They are also among the most easily accessible novels for a lot of senior high school students on the continent because each year, thousands of them are distributed for free to several public libraries and senior high school libraries in both rural and urban areas in some African countries.

> CODE's Burt Award for African Young Adult Literature is an English-language, multi-country prize, supported by smaller national prizes that determine the works eligible for the grand prize. The national prizes are CODE's Burt Award for Ethiopian Young Adult Literature; CODE's Burt Award for Ghanaian Young Adult Literature; CODE's Burt Award for Kenyan Young Adult Literature; and CODE's Burt Award for Tanzanian Young Adult Literature. The objective of the award is to provide African youth with access to engaging, high quality, and culturally relevant reading materials.
>
> (https://www.burtaward.org/sites/default/files/2018_2019_burt_award_for_afri can_yalit_instructions_and_guidelines.pdf)

More on the award and the books selected can be found in chapter four of this thesis where the methodology is explained in detail.

The second part of this thesis was a case study to unearth Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of violence and how they make meaning of violence in the novels they read. The case study involved interviewing a sample of first and second year senior high school students and second year University of Ghana students. As already mentioned, students in senior high school are mostly

between the ages of 14 and 19. Those who are admitted by various tertiary institutions to further their education soon after their senior high school final examinations, begin their tertiary education a few months after graduating from senior high school. Most students in the first and second years of tertiary education are therefore between the ages of seventeen and twenty. After these students had been selected, each was given a young adult novel to read. After this, they were interviewed on the book read. The interview included their views on the novel, their ability to identify various forms of interpersonal violence in the novel and what led them to conclude on that particular actions in the novel as being violent or not violent. I excluded third year senior high school students from this research as they were preparing for their final examinations at the time data was being collected. The selected book to be read by students before they were interviewed was Peggy Oppong's *The Lemon Suitcase* (2010). It was selected as the most read book authored by an African, after randomly sampling the books read by five hundred senior high school students. The students were asked to list the novels they self-selected to read, enjoyed reading and shared with their friends. Out of this list, the most mentioned novel authored by an African was selected. The list of books and the number of students who mentioned them can be found in Appendix E of this thesis. Peggy Oppong's books are among the most read young adult novels in Ghana due to their use as recommended supplementary reading materials in several junior and senior high schools and parents proclivity for them due to their didactic nature. Hence, her novel being self-selected for reading by the majority of students was to be expected. I was therefore not surprised that her book was the most read African authored book.

The Lemon Suitcase tells the story of Mabena, a hard-working young woman who is targeted for murder and character assassination due to her integrity and her refusal to bow to the demands of a corrupt syndicate led by her superior at work. An attempt to implicate her for cocaine smuggling

at the airport backfires as the man hired to plant the cocaine in her travelling luggage rather places cassava flour in the luggage. Through police and private investigations, the corrupt syndicate at her place of work is exposed. For her incorruptible nature, for which she had been framed, the president of Ghana rewarded her by making her the managing director of the company in which she worked. A few months after that, she is elected the flagbearer of a political party, when the party's flagbearer is murdered through poisoning. She wins the election and becomes the president of Ghana while still in her thirties. The story ends with Mabena enjoying her retirement from politics and enjoying life with her family while also participating in seminars, conferences and meetings to encourage women. The book contains contexts of psychological violence, economic violence and physical violence and was therefore well suited to my research objectives. In addition, it presented me with the opportunity to give my research participants the chance to share their views, not only on the forms of violence, but also on the perpetrators and victims of violence in various contexts, as presented in the book. I describe my methodology in detail in chapter four of this thesis.

1.5 Significance of Study

Young adult literature is a relatively young field which has been subsumed under children's literature for many years. Campbell (2010) notes this by stating that by 1983, there was almost no serious scholarship about young adult literature, except *Literature for Today's Young Adults* (1980) by Ken Donelson and Alleen Pace Nilsen. Hunt (1996:5) makes a similar argument when she asserts, after examining a sample of influential texts from 1980 to 1995 that "not a single major theorist in the field deals with young adult literature as something separate from literature for younger children". As Daniels (2006:78) notes, young adult literature "tends to be ignored by many serious literary critics," because it is seen as "a secondary category of child-like storytelling-

didactic in nature-and unworthy of serious literary evaluation". It is therefore not surprising when Osayimwense Osa, one of the most celebrated African scholars in the field of children and young adult literature and founding editor of *Journal of African Children's Literature* (JACL), now *Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature (JACYL)*, states in the introduction of his book *African Children's and Youth Literature* that, "this book's main focus is on the African youth novel, which is a very popular genre in contemporary African children's literature" (Osa, 1995:x). As a result of scholars placing young adult literature under children's literature, not much research has been carried out in the area. Unfortunately, decades after Hunt made his assertion, Wakarindi (2018:16) makes a similar declaration by noting that "The African YA debate did not emerge as early as is the case with its Western counterparts. Many African countries still hold children's literature to encompass both YA and children's interest". This is despite Osa (1995) noting that Ghana and Nigeria were the first to recognize writing for children and young adults in the early 1980s with South Africa following suit in 1987 with a symposium on children's literature.

In addition to this, as documented by Njeru (2013:9), research on African young adult literature is important because "critics of African literature have shunned studying young adults' literature despite the many books that have flooded the markets". Njeru's argument is supported by Stadler (2017) who notes that to date, there has not been widespread analysis on South African youth literature. This could be due to young adult literature being researched under children's literature or the lack of university courses on young adult literature in Africa which has resulted in little knowledge about the area of study and few scholars researching on young adult literature in Africa. For Stadler (2017) the scarcity of research on young adult fiction in South Africa could be because of the publication of most children's and young adult fiction in Afrikaans, with profits of R 33.8 million (approximately 2.3 million US dollars) being made in 2010.

As part of recognizing and promoting scholarship on young adult literature in Africa, Osa (1987) argues that universities should offer courses and organize workshops and conferences on this area of study. Unfortunately, his plea has not yet been heeded by African universities. The challenges with finding and accessing scholarly works by Africans on young adult literature support Njeru's argument and justifies Osa's plea.

Nodelman (2008:133) notes the advice given by PABBIS (Parents Against Bad Books in Schools) on their website thus: "Parents are encouraged to monitor what your child reads like a paranoid hawk on the basis that this will also significantly reduce the chance of your child being exposed to objectionable material". Such a warning, while acknowledging the role of stories as tools for education and socialization, also exposes the dangers associated with reading. Investigating the depiction of violence in young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of it will therefore help to provide a better understanding of the construction of violence in African young adult fiction and the ideas of violence being marketed to young adults.

It is generally accepted that the average Ghanaian child has a poor reading culture, which led the Ghana Library Authority (GLA) to declare 2019 as "year of reading" as GLA aspire "to encourage the youth and students to develop the habit of reading" (https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/general/181279/Ghana-Library-Authority-declares-2019-Year-of-Reading). Despite the poor reading culture, there are increasing numbers of students gaining admission to senior high schools where they are mandated to read required novels and supplementary texts. How violence is portrayed in the books they read, what they read, and how they understand what they read will go a long way to help unearth dominant attitudes and beliefs about violence in the Ghanaian society. It will also contribute to a better understanding of the use of violence among young adults, which is often not addressed from a place of knowledge due to

some forms of socialization, such as young adult fiction, not being considered as possible contributors to it.

This study would therefore contribute to the corpus of literature that isolate and define young adult literature in Africa and also add to the debate on violence in young adult literature. It will also enrich already existing studies on violence in young adult literature, especially the gendered dimensions of violence in African young adult literature. Finally, as Franzak and Noll (2006) note, despite the importance of research on the textual portrayal of violence in young adult fiction, it is underdeveloped. Research into violence in African young adult literature makes this study valuable to authors of young adult fiction, educators and parents as it enhances consciousness of young adults' notions of violence.

1.6 Organization of Chapters

In this chapter, I have introduced the study, the objectives of the research, the research questions the study seeks to answer, overviews of the research methodology and conceptual framework, and the significance of this research. Chapter two provides a review of research on young adult literature globally and in Africa. It also looks at violence and its place in the field of young adult literature. It further examines the framework underpinning the analysis of data collected for this research and how using it helps in understanding the portrayal of violence in young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of violence in the texts they read. Chapter three analyses findings from a workshop on young adult fiction I participated in and the complexities involved in the delineation of books as young adult novels in Africa. Chapter four expounds on the methodology of this study. In chapter five, the findings from the analysis of selected novels are presented. These novels are examined based on their depiction of various forms of interpersonal

violence. The focus of chapter six is an analysis of field work interviews from selected senior high school students and a presentation of findings from these interviews. Chapter seven contains a discussion of the research findings, implications of the findings, recommendations for future research and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at who young adults are and the place of interpersonal violence in young adult fiction. I then focus on the conceptual framework that is applied in analysing data for this research. The reflection and refraction theories of literature are combined with the reader-response theory for this framework. Through this framework, an analysis of the ways in which interpersonal violence is depicted in African young adult fiction is assessed, while also giving room to interrogate young adults' perceptions and understanding of interpersonal violence in young adult novels. These explorations provide a background for this study's discussions on interpersonal violence in African young adult fiction.

2.2 Young Adults

The origin of the term "young adult" is contested. This is because nationally and globally, people are often divided into children and adults. The constitutions of most countries in Africa and the world recognize children as people below the age of 18 and adults as people above the age of 18. The concept of a young adult does not point to a person being an adult or a child and has therefore caused controversy globally on what age group qualifies to be called young adults. While Cart (2016) believes that the term young adult first appeared in a 1944 publication by Margaret Scoggin, Mitra (2018) postulates that the term young adult was coined by The Young Adult Library Services Association in the 1960s.

The term young adult expresses the disputes that come with the age group. This is because in one breath, they are not deemed to be children and, in another breath, they are not seen as adults. This is why young adults are perceived to be in a liminal space. As Coats (2011:325) notes,

"adolescence is a threshold condition, a liminal state that is fraught with angst, drama, and change anxiety". Crowe (1998:121) attempts to define what young adult is without getting involved in the dispute on the age group of young adults and defines 'young adult' to be "a person old enough to be in junior high or senior high school". The period of young adulthood is a time when people's bodies are changing, they are full of energy and are searching for answers about themselves and their societies but has often been fraught with challenges for both adolescents and the societies in which they live. This is because young adults are counted neither among children nor adults which creates ambiguities concerning their place and role in society (Enriquez, 2006; Coon & Mitterer, 2012; Alobeytha, Mohammed & Rahman, 2018).

Young adults are also called adolescents or teenagers. This is an age bracket where young people are constructing their gender, ethnic and sexual identities. As a result, they are often described as vulnerable, prone to peer pressure, rebellion and impulsive behaviour. They are also likely to be exploited by sexual predators and easily ensnared by the lure of drugs and alcohol. All these are due to the uncontrollable hormonal, psychological and physical changes that their bodies undergo at that stage of life (Fatusi & Hindin, 2010; Kokkola, 2013; Lesko, 2012). The World Health Organization (WHO) makes a similar assertion by stating that, "across all societies and settings, adolescents share key developmental experiences as they transition from childhood to adulthood. These include rapid physical growth, hormonal changes, sexual development, new and complex emotions, an increase in cognitive and intellectual capacities, moral development and evolving relationships   with   peers   and   families" (https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/aa-ha-guidance-full-).

Gillis and Simson (2015:10) aptly capture the debate on the term "young adult" and why these debates ultimately do not affect the people being referred to. They note:

> Is teen, adolescent, or juvenile a more appropriate choice? The term juvenile typically carries a negative connotation, conjuring up images of immaturity or even criminal behaviour. Adolescent is a psychology term and feels rather clinical. The term teen is used in many places; for example, Barnes and Noble has a teen literature section, and Teenreads is a popular review website for young adult literature. Ultimately, it may be no more than a semantics argument. For publishers' marketing purposes, teen and young adult readers fall between the ages of approximately twelve and eighteen.

Agyei (2019:8) makes a similar argument as Gillis and Simson by noting that "the concept of adolescence and youth defies a single universally accepted definition. Terms such as adolescence, youth, young people, and young adult are often used interchangeably or invoked to capture varied experiences of individuals who fall within these age classifications". With most definitions of adolescence focusing on age, Ferguson (1993:638) reminds us that "adolescence is a social construct used to understand part of the human experience". This is because age alone does not determine whether a person is a young adult or not in all cultures and the young adult experience is not the same globally. Wakarindi (2018) describes how in some Kenyan communities, males and females are referred to as young adults after circumcision or 'rites of passage' performed by churches. The rites of passage are performed for females at the same time that males are circumcised. These males and females are referred to as young adults till they get married, before they are considered adults. This would mean that a person would be considered a young adult at the age of thirty or fifty if they were not married. She however notes the challenges with using this cultural definition; as in Kenya, no matter how old a person is, the person is referred to as a child once they are in the presence of anyone who is at the same age or a similar age as the person's parents, whether the parents are dead or alive. With the ongoing debate on who qualifies as a young adult, publishers have come up with a category of books whose target is young adults. These books

have been named young adult novels. For the purpose of this research, the WHO definition of adolescents will be used to define who young adults are, as they refer to the same group of people. The WHO defines adolescents as "people between 10 and 19 years of age" (https://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section2/page1/recognizing-adolescence.html).

2.3 Influencers of Violence in Children and Young Adults

An Akan proverb says, "*kenten annwononyie a, na efiri n'ahyease*". This is translated by Appiah et al as "if the basket was not well woven, it is because of its beginning" and explained by them as "failure starts from the beginning" (Appiah, Appiah, & Agyeman-Duah, 2007:141). Children, like a basket being woven, are shaped right from infancy to be able to fit into society. Like the basket, failure to do so, would result in people growing into improperly groomed adults. Approximating humans to a basket, one could also relate deviancy in adulthood to improper socialization during childhood. The focus of scholars on socialization of children in various aspects of their lives is therefore to be expected.

Socialization takes place through many mediums: modelling, reading, positive and negative reinforcements and storytelling among others. It is through socialization that children learn what is acceptable or unacceptable in their societies. A lot of research has been carried out on the influence the media, television and other forms of socialization have on children and young adults with findings indicating that children replicate what they witness in all media. Therefore, it has been established that the more children watch television, the more they are exposed to violence, which promotes the learning of aggression through observation (Yokota &Thompson, 2000; Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Huesman, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003). Research also shows that violence in media such as music, video games, the internet and all forms of media

influence children to be aggressive (Anderson, Carnagey & Eubanks, 2003; Bartholow & Anderson, 2002; Bernthal, 2003; Carnagey & Anderson, 2004; DeGaetano, 2005). Exposure to violence in the media has also been found to suppress sensitivity to violence in real life (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003). Exposure to violence in the media does not only promote the learning of violence or suppress sensitivity to violence, but it also reinforces people's knowledge on violence.

Bandura (1971) posits, through the social learning theory, that aggression is learned behaviour and reinforced positively or negatively. He concludes that imitation plays a role in the expression of violence in children; therefore, children learn to be violent through their observation of violent behaviour and imitating what they see. Reinforcement of aggression could be in the way a child is punished or encouraged. While some parents or guardians would encourage a perceived timid child to be aggressive and positively reinforce the child for showing aggression, other parents frown on their supposedly aggressive children showing any form of aggression. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo threatened to kill his son, Nwoye, several times for not showing enough aggression and praised him whenever he displayed aggressive tendencies. As Kirsh (2010) notes, learning takes place whenever people consume any media, even when they do not have any intentions of learning anything. Therefore, even though people do not go out of their way to learn how to be aggressive or violent from television, they learn these things unknowingly. For Aran-Ramspott and Rodrigo-Alsina (2013) people's cultural background, their reading habits and media consumption practices determine how much they consume from exposure to any media. What is not disputed therefore is that while a person's culture and habits might influence the extent to which exposure to any media might influence them, people still learn from the media they get exposed to whether they mean to or not.

2.4 Literature as a Tool for Socialization

Literature has been used as a tool for socialization for centuries, if not millennia. Plato, in *The Republic*, acknowledges the power of literature and says he would banish poets from his ideal republic because of their ability to use affect and imagination to influence people's emotions and actions (Jowett, 2004). My personal experiences with novels have left me with little doubt about the ability of literature to influence people.

I have always been an avid reader. I spent most of my young adult years reading storybooks and I still read them. My favourite storybooks during my early teenage years were *The Hardy Boys*, *Nancy Drew Case files, The Harry Potter series, Famous five serie*s and *Sweet Valley High*, even though *Sweet Valley High* was mostly targeted at female readers. My favourite among them was *The Hardy Boys*. So much did I love *The Hardy Boys* that I started taking martial arts lessons in taekwondo. After a while, I felt like an expert in the martial arts based on my knowledge of martial arts from reading *The Hardy Boys* and my little knowledge from taking martial arts lessons. Unfortunately, my confidence in my knowledge of martial arts was shattered, when out of overconfidence, I got into a fight at school, got beaten and had to be punished by the school as well. This scarred me mentally and I never got into a fight again and also gave up my dreams of becoming a martial arts expert in future. I developed a love for Chinese movies instead, which enabled me to purge myself of all the pent-up emotions and desire to practice martial arts through the action-packed, martial arts-filled movies. My love for martial arts-filled Chinese movies remains insatiate. As a result, my favourite actors to date are Donny Yeng and Jet Li. My love for movies filled with martial arts therefore has its roots in the kind of books I read as a young adult. This is not a unique experience as Karen Coats, writing on her first experience with young adult literature, notes how as a sixth grader, she had spent a lot of time reading young adult books in a

library which gave her a lot of insight then. As an adult, a return to those books gave her a huge surprise as she realized how much of her daily speech, thought patterns and values had been influenced by the words, values and ideas in those young adult novels she had read many years ago. She notes that these books taught her how to be an American in the 1970s. She therefore posits that due to the influence young adult fiction has over its target readers, who are at a malleable stage in their identity formation, more attention should be paid to the books they are attracted to than Greek classics and other literary texts that they are forced to read by their parents and teachers (Coats, 2011).

As Osa (1995:136) notes, "African children's and youth literature is not just art for art's sake. It has a function. Modern African literature is the repository of the cultural life of the people and is a major source of education for the young everywhere and urban people who have lost touch with their roots". African children's literature and youth literature are therefore one of the ways parents, teachers and the society try to socialize children and young adults. In addition to this, Pearson, (1994) notes that one of the ways that Akan children are socialized is through play songs and games as they teach children how to perceive and interact with their environment along with cultural values that will enable them function effectively in their societies. Just like the weaving of the basket, socialization is not left to chance in order to prevent a result of "badly woven" members of society. While agreeing to an extent with Osa (1995) and other scholars who hold the opinion that African young adult fiction is didactic, I disagree with them on the grounds that African young adult fiction is not always didactic as several African authored young adult novels are mostly a reflection of the experiences of young adults in society. Holding on to the argument that African young adult fiction is didactic would therefore be promoting a narrow scope with which to look at African young adult fiction. This argument is further developed in chapter three

of this thesis which focuses on African young adult literature.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fact sheet number 45 notes that "youth literacy remains low in several countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa". UNESCO (2016) further adds that "the lowest national literacy rates are observed in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia". It is therefore not surprising that most people are more interested in seeing young adults reading than in the content of what they are reading. Even though young adult literature is an avenue for exploration, it can also be an avenue for positive or negative socialization of young adults. This research therefore sets out to find out how violence is portrayed in African young adult fiction and young adults' understanding of these depictions.

2.5 Violence and Interpersonal Violence in Africa

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation"

(https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/). For Leys (1965:170),

> The word 'violence' carries overtones of violating; and we often do distinguish our sense that a particular case of the use of physical aggression against human beings is somehow illegitimate by calling this violence, rather than simply 'force'. Police use force to uphold law and order, violence to persecute blameless victims.

Thomas Hobbes sees "competition for scarce resources, the mistrust that follows from it, and our desire to be respected as the principal causes of quarrel". He notes that "competition leads us to use violence to get what we want; mistrust leads us to use violence to protect what we fear others want; and the desire for "glory" leads us to use violence against those who do not respect us"

(Appiah, 2003:225). These "causes of quarrel" have resulted in many wars world-wide. These include the First and Second World Wars, civil wars in various parts of the world, battles for independence in various parts of the world and ongoing struggles over natural resources, national and global resources. Africa has not been exempted from the manifestations of violence worldwide along with the effects of violence and has often been unfairly portrayed in the Western media as a continent filled with war, starvation, diseases and poverty due to scarce resources, corruption, colonialism, and the influences of the global north in their battle for Africa's rich human and natural resources.

All African countries are signatories to multiple international agreements on the elimination of violence, especially the elimination of violence against women and children. These include Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Palermo Protocol, African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (PACHPRRWA) and Southern African Declaration on Gender and Development (SADCDGD). Despite being signatories to multiple international agreements and having laws against the use of violence against others, most African countries have been unable to quell the violence being perpetuated within their borders. Multiple conflicts that have sprang up on the continent over the years and have resulted in a lot of violence, destruction of properties, physical and mental handicaps, displacement of millions of Africans and the death of many. Some of these conflicts are the Nigeria-Biafra war, the Darfur crisis, the Algerian War of Independence, wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the "Arab spring" in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Sudan and wars in The Democratic Republic of Congo. Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000:244) sum up discussions on conflict in Africa by noting that "over the last 40 years nearly 20 African countries

[or about 40% of Sub-Saharan Africa] have experienced at least one period of civil war". They further postulate that "civil wars in Africa are not due to ethnic and religious diversity and say that "the relatively higher incidence of war in Africa is not due to the ethno-linguistic fragmentation of its countries, but rather to high levels of poverty, failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources" (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2000: 244). While scholars like Elbadawi and Sambanis have postulated on and debated the causes of various conflicts on the African continent, what is not debatable is the aftermath of these conflicts which have often been more violence and more cases of interpersonal violence. South Africa's experiences under apartheid, along with the violence involved in their fight for independence from colonial rule, has often been touted as a contributory factor to the prevalence of violence in the country.

Today, violence in South Africa has become endemic and remains a cause for concern. Research on violence in South Africa has indicated that the death rate in the country is twice that of the global average (Matzopoulos, Norman, & Bradshaw, 2004; Matzopoulos, Prinsloo, Butchart, Peden, & Lombard, 2006). In South Africa, about 75 percent of the population experience at least one violence related traumatic event in their life time, with violence and violence related injuries being the second leading cause of death, and an annual estimate of 1.75 million people seeking health care for violence-related injuries (Abrahams, 2004; Langa-Mlambo & Soma-Pillay, 2014). The effect of violence on the South African economy is estimated to be R 4.7 billion (approximately $330,518,100) which has negative effects on the nation's political, social and economic development (Seedat, van Niekerk, Suffla & Ratele, 2014). Savings (2014) adds that since 1994, South Africa has been tagged 'the rape capital of the world'.

The WHO has defined interpersonal violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/). Accurate statistics on domestic violence in Africa are scarce (Ofei-Aboagye,1994). Despite this, there is general acceptance that domestic violence remains one of the most pervasive forms of violence in Africa despite its criminalization in all African countries. The WHO estimates that 520, 000 deaths occur globally as a result of interpersonal violence with many more victims requiring hospital treatment, being untreated nor part of heath and criminal justice statistics.

Even though domestic violence affects men, women and children, women and children are more often the major victims of domestic violence (Adomako Ampofo, 1993). This has been attributed to the prevalence of patriarchy throughout Africa, some cultural and religious norms which permit violence against women and children, challenges women and children have in accessing the criminal justice system and stigmatization of victims of violence. One of such norms is the acceptance that it is right for a man to beat his wife under certain circumstances. These dissuade female victims from reporting violence committed against them (UNECA & ACGSD, 2010). In addition to these, the tendency of law enforcement agencies to view domestic violence as mere glitches in family relations and therefore something the concerned families can resolve contributes to the silence of victims of domestic violence (Adomako Ampofo, 1993; Idoko, Ogbe, Jallow, & Ocheke, 2015). In 2016, the then Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection in Ghana, Mrs Nana Oye Lithur, speaking at the launch of the Ghana Domestic Violence Report, noted that "domestic violence continued to be one of the most pervasive of human rights abuses in the world, yet one of the least reported, least prosecuted and one of the greatest threats to lasting peace and

development in Ghana". She further noted that statistics on domestic violence in Ghana, based on research reports, had not changed much since 1999 (Information Services Department-Government of Ghana, 2016).

According to McCloskey, Boonzaier, Steinbrenner and Hunter (2016), several African countries are among the countries with the highest records of intimate partner violence globally, with this type of violence affecting an estimated 36 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa. Just like domestic violence, accurate statistics on gender-based violence is difficult to acquire as a result of the silence of victims of gender-based violence due to similar concerns as mentioned in relation to domestic violence. Findings on violence in North Africa by Sadiqi (2010) show that violence against women and children was prevalent due to socio-cultural and religious acceptance of it and sometimes, the belief that the victim was at fault for their predicament. Similar research in Ghana, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Tanzania, established the prevalence of gender-based violence in these countries, with socio-cultural and religious acceptance, as well as gender inequalities, being identified as the roots of this canker (Adomako Ampofo, 1993; African Centre for Gender and Social Development, (2010); Idoko, Ogbe, Jallow, & Ocheke, 2015; Institute of Development Studies, Ghana Statistical Service and Associates, 2016; UNESCO, 2013). All these conflicts and forms of violence have not escaped the attention of writers on the African continent. These conflicts and forms of violence have therefore been inculcated in various artistic expressions such as poems, novels, proverbs, epics and songs.

2.6 Types of Interpersonal Violence

The world Health Organization categorizes interpersonal violence into five types: youth violence, child maltreatment, intimate partner violence, elder abuse and sexual violence. They define youth

violence as "violence committed by young people", child maltreatment as "violence and neglect towards children by parents and caregivers", intimate partner violence as "violence occurring within an intimate relationship", elder abuse as "violence and neglect towards older people by family, carers, or others where there is an expectation of trust", and sexual violence as "sexual assault, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and sexual trafficking" (https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/ft_violencealcohol.pdf).   The WHO depicts this in the framework below.

Figure 1: WHO Framework of Interpersonal Violence
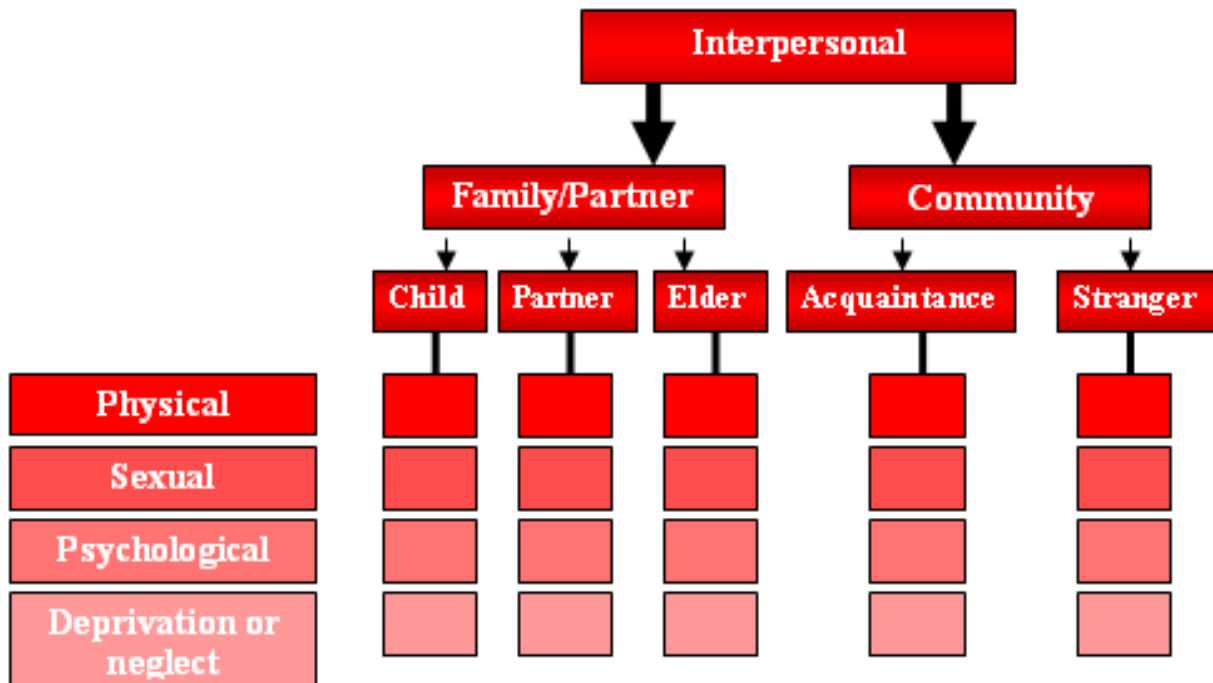
As the types of violence are the same for child, partner, elder, acquaintance and stranger, the types of violence would rather be explored as they are depicted with children, partners, elders, acquaintances and strangers in order to avoid repetition. Physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and deprivation or neglect (economic and social violence) will be analysed in this research based on the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Service

(GSS) and Associates definitions of the forms of violence in their research *Domestic Violence in Ghana: Incidence, Attitudes, Determinants and Consequences* (2016). Even though this study is not restricted to violence that occurs in the domestic space, the types of violence described by the Institute of Development Studies, and Ghana Statistical Service and Associates serve as an umbrella for forms of violence that occur in all spaces.

Physical violence is defined as "slapping, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, dragging or throwing objects at someone; choking, strangling or burning someone; using a weapon, hazardous chemicals or substances against someone; or kicking or pulling someone's external genitalia (for male respondents only)". Sexual violence is "defined as acts of unwanted sexual comments or physical contact; rape by physical force, or otherwise forced sex (for instance, by blackmail or threats); denial of using protection during sex; a sexual partner hiding their HIV status; sexual acts and intercourse that were performed on the basis of feeling there was no option; or penetration with an object against someone's will". Psychological violence is defined as "the use of insults, belittling or humiliation in private or in front of others; threats of abandonment; being ignored or treated indifferently; intimidations and acts aimed at scaring someone; threats of using weapons against someone; or threats of hurting someone or someone one cares about". Economic violence is "defined as the denial of household money for expenses (chop money) even if enough financial means are available; unsolicited taking of money; control of belongings and spending decisions; damage to or destruction of someone's property; denial of the right to work; forcing someone to work against their will; or denial of food and other basic needs" (IDS, GSS and associates, 2016:15-16).

These types of violence, have often been studied from the point of view of people being violent towards each other or to people younger than them. Scholars have taken note of the rising cases of children being violent towards their parents or guardians. This has been named child-to-parent violence. Cottrell (2001:3) defines child-to-parent violence as "a harmful act by a teenage child intended to gain power and control over a parent". For Calvete, Orue and Gamez-Guadix (2013:755) child -to-parent violence "includes acts committed by a child to intentionally cause physical, psychological, or financial pain to a parent". Scholars therefore recognize that the types of violence defined above can be from a child to a parent. The definitions of the various types of violence will therefore be used in analysing cases of child-to-parent violent. Some of the factors which have been given as influencing child to parent violence include aggression from parents to their children, witnessing aggression and psychological violence between parents (Gamez-Guadix & Calvete, 2012:277).

As Itzin, Taket and Barter-Godfrey (2010:59) note, "young people experience multiple forms of abuse and violence: from their peers now old enough and strong enough to be a physical or sexual threat, from their dating partners who may or may not also be adolescents, within their families, witnessing domestic violence and experiencing the effects of living in a violent or disrupted home, and directly from abusive parents". It is therefore important to look at the forms of violence in young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of the types of violence in the fiction they read.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

A framework or "theory of action" "defines how the researcher expects an intervention, event or process to take a case from one situation to the next. In effect, this theory of action will define the

issues to be examined during the analysis, and thereby provide linkages between the research question, propositions and analytic criteria" (Berg, 2004:231). The framework of analysis for this study is built on the reader response theory, reflection and refraction theories of literature. The framework looks at how the forms of violence in society are reflected in young adult fiction and how they are expected to refract society through young adults' reading of young adult fiction. The reader-response theory underpins my analysis of young adults' perceptions and understanding of violence. The refraction and reflection theories highlight the portrayal of violence in young adult fiction. The reflection theory of literature has played a huge role in literary scholars' notions of a society's literature as an imitation of the society. The refraction theory has been the basis of literary scholars' arguments on the power of literature in society. The reader-response theory is one of many theories that place emphasis on the validity of various meanings individuals make of literature. Together, these theories link the writer with the reader by exposing the writers' ideas of violence in society, while alternately giving room to explore the efficacy of the text in educating young adults through their ability to identify and make meaning of violent scenarios in the text.

The types of violence to be explored are the psychological, physical, economic, social and sexual violence as defined by the domestic violence law of Ghana. The scope of each of these forms of violence is broken down in the section on coding.

2.7.1 Theory of Reflection

The reflection theory of literature looks at the relationship between literature and society (Watt, 1964; Finnegan, 1977). For Watt, all writing is a reflection of society as writing contains elements such as language, which is a social product. This makes literary works social products as they always have a relationship with some social traditions or modes of expression. Finnegan makes a

similar argument by noting that "all literature in an indirect and subtle way must reflect the society in which it exists" (Finnegan, 1977: 263). Watt criticized aspects of the reflection theory as he felt the interest of the creator of a literary work might influence the content but was critiqued by Finnegan (1977) who noted that literary artistes attempt to influence their audience is done within a social context in which people use agency to shape their world. Vatsa (2016:116) also says, "a literary man is as much a product of his society as his art is a product of his own reaction to life".

One thing scholars in the field of young adult literature agree on is that young adult literature, like a mirror, is a reflection of society. For example, Donelson & Nilsen (1997) note in their book *Literature for today's young adults,* that young adult fiction often mirrors adolescent problems. Trupe (2006:1) also states that "the portrayal of rape in young adult fiction is a reflection of teenagers' concerns about rape since some might have been raped in the past or could be raped in future". Similar arguments about how young adult fiction reflects society are made by Enriquez (2006), Younger (2009), Halverson (2011), Garcia (2013) and Fatima (2018). It is the way in which adolescent problems are reflected, which includes "problems" with interpersonal violence, that the first part of this research seeks to uncover.

2.7.2 Theory of Refraction

The power literature has over those exposed to it has been known for centuries. In *The Republic*, Plato acknowledged the power of literature and dreaded this power to the point where he said he would banish poets from his ideal republic because of their power over people's imagination which distorted reality. For him, because poetry did not promote logic or analytical thinking, but rather touched the emotions, it had a corrupting influence on its audience. The refraction theory of literature looks at literature as a tool for influencing society. This theory is built on Bertolt Brecht's

assertion that "art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it" (Greinke, 2007:15). Scholars of the refraction school of thought, while agreeing with literature as a reflection of society, also argue that literature does not only reflect society but also influences society. Building on Brecht's assertion, Nanbigne (2004:123) contends that "literature in any society serves both as an indicator of change and an arena where the change can occur". Nanbigne (2008) further claims that literature refracts society through its positive or negative influence. Anjana and Bhambhra (2016:8) make similar claims by noting that "literature is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a beacon of light which guides people to find the right path. It is a fact beyond doubt that the writer is not only influenced by society but he also influences it. Literature not merely influences life but also shapes it". Vatsa makes a similar argument by stating that, "the function of a legislator is to lay down the law, a settled course of action that men may follow. Poetry and literature generally do this in a quiet and unobtrusive way. Novels are known to have changed the direction of the human mind and set in motion movements that have altered our ways of life. The influence of literature on society is felt directly or indirectly" (Vatsa, 2016:117). Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) note how music has an intimate relationship with everyday life and therefore is a significant site for the reflection of the disempowerment of women through images such as women being manipulative, fragile or in need of rescuing; it could also be an avenue for the promotion of the empowerment of women. Whichever way one looks at art, one cannot fail to see the connection between literature and society and how it either reflects or shapes the society. As a reflection of society, literature reflects societal notions of violence, but it can also be "a hammer" with which these notions of violence can be shaped. Literature is able to refract society through the reading process. As Alsup (2010:5) posits, "something everyone seems to

recognize is that literature is indeed powerful. It does do something to the reader, especially when the reader is engrossed in the reading process".

2.7.3 Reader Response Theory

According to (Rosenblatt, 2005: x), "Dewey and Bentley (1949) introduced the concept of transaction to counter positivism's view of reality where the observer and observed are separated and the observer has no effect on the observed. Dewey's transaction described a reciprocal relationship between the observer and the observed. Rosenblatt credits Dewey's work with providing her with the term". There are three similar paradigms under the umbrella of the reader-response theory. These schools of thought have come up based on what they view as the most active aspect of the relationship between the text, author and the reader. The first school of thought, led by Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgand Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, view the experiences of the reader as key in how the reader interprets a text. The second school of thought, led by psychologists, Norman Holland and David Bleich, are of the view that what happens in the brain during the reading process is key to the interpretation of a text. Stanley Fish is the leader of the third model of the reader-response theory. For him a person's social or cultural background is the key determinant in how a person interprets a text. (Hughes, 2011; Anderson, 2012). I employed the experiential model of the reader-response theory in this research as the study sought to understand violence in African young adult fiction based on the young adults' exposure to young adult fiction and violence.

According to Al-Haba (2013), the reader-response or 'reception' was a response to the formalist school of thought which assigned a fixed meaning to a text based on the intentions of the author, revealed through the language and verbal structures in the text. What is accepted by most scholars

is that the reader-response theory was formulated by Louise Rosenblatt in 1938 and initially named as transaction theory (Anderson, 2012). According to Anderson (2012) a version of the reader-response theory, known as the reception theory, came up in Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reception theory, similar to the reader-response theory, was postulated by Wolfgang Iser. The theory argues that meaning is not found solely in a text nor in subjective interpretations by the reader but is generated during the process of reading through an interaction between the reader's experiences (Iser, 1972).

For Rosenblatt, creating meaning for a text is a process in which there is a transaction between the reader and the text within a social context (Fish, 1970). As Rosenblatt notes, "the quality of our literary experience depends not only on the text, on what the author offers, but also on the relevance of past experiences and present interests that the reader brings to it" (Rosenblatt, 1960:305). For Al Fuadi, "reader-response criticism explores three principal questions: 1) Do our various responses to literary works produce the same (or similar) readings? 2) Can literary texts genuinely enjoy as many meanings as readers are able to create? 3) Are some readings essentially more valid and justifiable than others?" (Al Fuadi, 2014: 121). For Beach (2000), the reader response theory explains the variety of responses readers give to literary works.

The reader response theory therefore postulates that there is not one meaning of a text based on the author's intended meaning of the text or one person's reading of the text. It gives room for a wide range of interpretations of a text to have valid meaning based on the reader's experiences, the social context under which the text was read and any other factors such as educational level and gender that could have influenced a person's interpretation of the text. Despite giving room for a multiplicity of interpretations of a single text, in an interview with Nicholas Karolides, Loise

Rosenblatt sounds a warning. She notes that "although there isn't a single 'correct' interpretation of any text for all circumstances, that doesn't necessarily rule out responsible reading. We can consider some interpretations better or poorer than others. Or we can find that readers bring different knowledge and assumptions in different social or historical contexts which may have equally defensible interpretations" (Karolides & Rosenblatt, 1999:163).

For those of the reader-response school of thought, the meaning of a text changes over time and from reader to reader. The theory, therefore, gives room for a person's understanding of a text to change if the person rereads the same text at another time and in a different context. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the most recommended books for senior high schools' final examinations in Africa. Students reading this book in school know that they have to write end of term examinations on that book. These students' approach to reading the book would therefore be different from that of other students who read the same book for pleasure because they have heard it is a classic and want to read it. Rosenblatt (1938) labels reading for pleasure as aesthetic reading and reading with the goal of mechanical comprehension as efferent reading. For her, students should be encouraged to partake in aesthetic reading as students benefit more from it than efferent reading. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, students in Ghana often participate in efferent reading as they read novels for the purpose of examinations. In order to promote aesthetic reading for this research, students were given the books to read at home during a two-month vacation. This was to give them time to enjoy the book and read it at their convenience. They were also informed in advance that their participation or refusal to participate in the research was not going to affect their academics in any way and so should read the book knowing that there was no right or wrong answer in the research.

Scholars such as Imtiaz (2004) have critiqued the reader response theory for being subjective due to its insistence on the analysis of processes involved in readers making meaning of texts (Imtiaz, 2004). The theory has also been critiqued by scholars like Bressler (1999) for its one-sided approach to what readers bring to the table when reading, but not what the text adds to the readers' understanding. In my opinion, these critiques do not take into consideration Rosenblatt's continued emphasis on reading as a transaction between the reader and the text with the reader arriving at conclusions based on not only what they bring to the text but also what the text offers them. African young adult novels, when read by young adults are transactions between the author and the reader. As already mentioned, scholars have often emphasized that the goal of African young adult fiction is to transmit cultural information to African young adults. The African young adults who read them interpret the texts based on their cultural background, educational background and experiences in life. There is therefore an interaction between the author's ideas and the reader's experiences during the reading process. This therefore makes the reader response theory an excellent choice for analysing depictions of violence in African young adult fiction.

Even though the reader response theory has been used by several scholars in the field of young adult literature globally and in Africa, the spirit of the theory can be found in several African proverbs. While these proverbs have been used in relation to people's experiences in life, they can also be used in relation to people's understanding of the texts they read. Owomoyela (2005:67) gives one such example of a Yoruba proverb. The proverb says, "it is a person with limited experience of life who thinks there is none as wise as he". He explains this proverb thus: "No wise person claims he or she is the best there is". de Ley (1998:85) gives another proverb from Senegal. He does not specify what language he collects this proverb from or explain it as the book is a collection of proverbs from the continent of Africa, translated into English. The proverb says "The

child looks everywhere and often sees nought; but the old man sitting on the ground sees everything". The proverb can be explained as follows: because of experience, the old person is able to see what the child does not see. The old person is able to see what the child does not see because of experiences he or she might have, which the child has not yet had. The reader response theory postulates one person's understanding of a text is not more valid than that of another. This is exactly what the Yoruba proverb above seeks to express. As people gain more experience in life, they realise that other people's experiences and wisdom is as valid as theirs and therefore they are more open to better appreciate the wisdom of others when making meaning of "similar text" and appreciate what each person's cultural, social, economic and educational background contributes to their understanding of a particular text. In a similar manner, while the old person and the child might be introduced to the same text, their understanding of the text would differ, not because one's understanding is wrong, but because the older person would interpret the text from a wide range of experiences that the young person might not have had. The older person might also have a different educational background, cultural background, economic back ground and social background with which analyse the text and might be reading the text for reasons different from that of the young person. This would mean that the old person and the young person might have different interpretations of the same situation or text and the young person might not see what the older person might see, but it does not make what the young person sees invalid. One would therefore not be surprised to have different views of the same text from an 8-year old and a 20-year-old. The same way, one would not be surprised to have different interpretations of the same text from males and females of the same age as they might be of the same age but their social, educational and cultural differences would not be the same, resulting in varied interpretations of the same text. In relation to violence, males and females might also experience violence differently

and therefore their understanding of violence in a text would also be different. With this in mind, young adults at different levels of education in Ghana were selected for this research. This was to enable me unearth their varied views of violence based on various factors that influence people's perceptions of violence.

Figure 2: Diagram Conceptualizing the Relationship Between Young Adults, Young Adult Fiction and the Social Environment
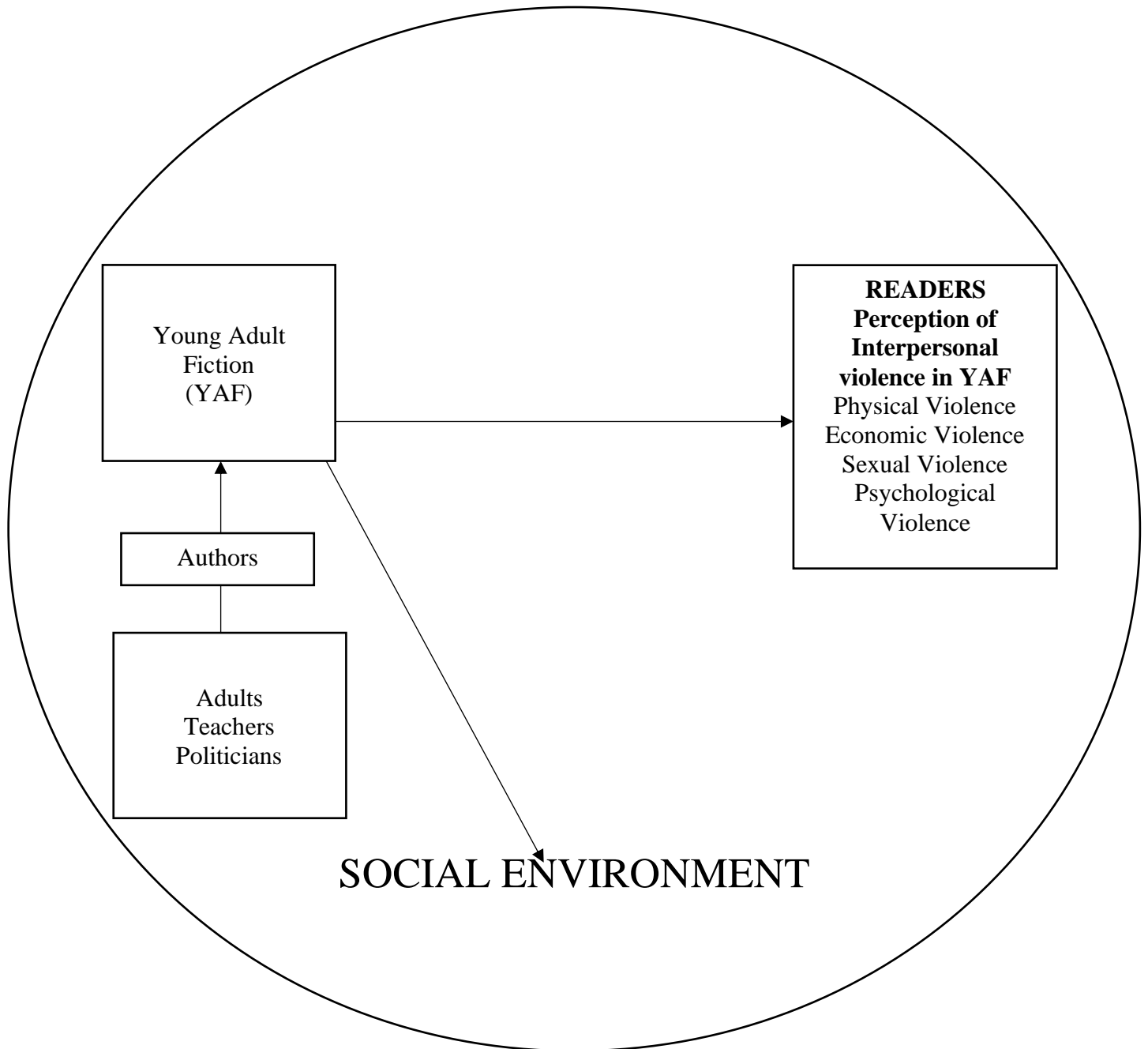
In this diagram, I postulate that since all human beings live in a social environment, the social environment influences people's interpretations of literature. The social environment also influences authors of young adult fiction, whose goal is to reflect and refract society. Within the social environment, there are several influences on young adult fiction. One of these is parents and guardians, who purchase most of the books young adults read. Because of this, authors, in writing young adult novels, try to make the plot not only interesting to the target readers, but also appealing to parents and guardians. Teachers and the ministry of education also have some influence on young adult fiction. Not all authors seek to have their books approved as supplementary readers for junior and senior high schools. A lot of authors are however motivated by the assured market and financial security that having one's books approved as supplementary reading material for junior and senior high schools provides. The challenges these authors face and the implications for their writing is well expressed by Banda-Aaku (2018:111) who states:

> Recently a publisher in East Africa asked me to make some changes to the manuscript of my latest book for teenagers/young adults. The suggested change was for the teenage male protagonist to turn down a beer with the statement, 'I do not drink alcohol because it is bad for children.' Granted, it is conceivable that an adolescent male can resist peer pressure and turn down alcohol on moral grounds (although if he did he wouldn't tell people like that), but the character I had crafted in the story was not that kind of teenager. My character was a typical 17-year-old and he did what most teenagers his age would do.
> In the past, I probably would have changed the plot for the sake of getting published. But having had my fiction for children published by various publishers on the continent of Africa, I felt the time had come to stand my ground for creative fiction that portrayed society without any air brushing.
> However, I confess to feeling trepidation for refusing to change the story line – the character un-inebriated would have had implications for the whole plot. This is because I know that the biggest customer for children's and young adult fiction in most of the countries in which I have been published is biased towards stories with morally sound versus morally devoid characters and storylines that have a clear-cut lesson. I am also very aware that to a large extent the main client of these publishers determines what gets published and what doesn't.
> The reality of most publishers on the continent (and I am talking mainly Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa), is that to survive as publishers of fiction, they have to depend on the ministry of education or whichever department funds

reading material for school children. That is where the sales are significant enough to make publishing books for children a profitable venture.

The general lack of a reading culture and high levels of poverty contribute to the fact that books don't sell in high volumes in bookshops in most of Africa. So, publishers rely on the government to buy books for children to read in schools as supplementary reading material. While it is good for the government to buy books for schools that can't afford them, there is a price to pay. For a book to be bought by the ministry, it has to be approved as "suitable" by a board people who are mainly educationalists. This raises the issues of what then constitutes a "good" or "suitable" book.

Banda-Aaku's experience resonates with Ghana as well. Ghanaian authors, in order to get their books approved by the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service have to meet certain criteria. As discussed in chapter three, these criteria include the novels teaching certain values and being didactic. Through these criteria, authors are influenced by these agencies on what they perceive is appropriate for the consumption of young adults.

Head teachers and teachers do not directly influence authors in terms of criteria as they rely on the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and GES to select books for their schools. Despite this, head teachers and teachers play an influential role in determining the books that get into their students' hands as they select the books that students read as supplementary reading materials each term. The focus of this thesis is not on the role politicians, head teachers, teachers and parents play in determining what gets published as young adult fiction in Ghana, even though they determine to an extent, the novels that end up in the hands of young adults in Ghana. Young adults also live in society and are influenced by society. Through young adult fiction, young adults can see themselves and the world reflected in various ways including mirroring interpersonal violence in society. They interpret the novels they read based on their interactions with society such us their educational background, social media use, socio-economic background, religious background, homes and personal experiences. It is this interpretation of interpersonal violence by young adults

that is the focus of this thesis.

2.8 Conclusion

Socialization of children and young adults takes place in several ways: through imitating what they see their parents and others do, reinforcement for various decisions and actions taken by children and young adults, and through various media that young adults get exposed to. As has been established, young adults also get socialized through both written and oral literature. Therefore, through exposure to young adult fiction, young adults' notions of violence are either reinforced or challenged. Studies on the media, music, video games and movies have found that there is a relationship between these forms of socialization and aggressiveness thereafter expressed by children and young adults. One can therefore infer that similar results might be found on the influence young adult fiction has on young adults. This study, does not delve into how much influence there might be between violence in young adult fiction and young adult behaviour. It rather looked at the portrayals of violence and what the depictions mean to young adults. Using the reader-response theory, this study explores the various forms of violence expressed in young adult literature and the ability of young adults to interpret this violence.

CHAPTER THREE
African Young Adult Fiction

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two of this thesis examined socialization and young adult fiction as a tool for socialization and the framework that was used to analyse the data collected during this research. Since the research is on African young adult fiction, this section explores not only what young adult fiction is and its history, but also investigates what African young adult fiction is, along with its history. In addition to this, contestations in the field of young adult literature are identified. One of the objectives of this thesis was to unearth the portrayal of interpersonal violence in African young adult fiction. To be able to do this effectively, understanding the conception of young adult fiction in Africa was important as it would influence the selection of books for this thesis. I was fortunate that this period of attempting to understand what African young adult fiction is coincided with a literary workshop to groom future authors in various aspects of writing in Africa, including young adult fiction. An important aspect of the methodology for this thesis was participation in the *Pa Gya* literary festival which sought to ignite passion in the literary arts and groom future generations of writers. This chapter looks at the conceptualization of young adult fiction from the perspective of young adult fiction authors and participants who participated in the *Pa Gya* workshop and the implications of these perceptions for the study of young adult fiction in Africa.

3.2 Young Adult Fiction (YAF)

The history of young adult fiction is disputed. For some scholars, the history of young adult fiction in the world began in 1967 with the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (Hunt, 1996; Crowe, 2000; Trupe, 2006; Campbell, 2010; Halverson, 2011; Baxley & Boston, 2014; Cart, 2016). Other scholars claim the first young adult novel was Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer*

which was published in 1942 and young adult fiction rather came of age with the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (Bright, 2016). What is generally accepted though is that literature for young adults existed long before the creation of terminology to describe it in the 20th century (Donelson & Nilsen, 2005; James, 2007; Cart, 2010).

Like any budding area of study, scholars in the field of young adult literature are yet to come to an acceptable definition of what young adult literature is. Garcia (2013:5) states that most definitions of young adults place them between the ages of 12 and 19 and therefore defines young adult literature as "genre books that at first tended to be written about and for adolescents". Cole (2009:49) also says that "Over the last half century, experts have struggled to define young adult literature. Young adult literature, adolescent literature, juvenile literature, junior books, children's literature, books for teens, and books for tweeners describe texts that bridge the gap between children's literature and adult literature". Alsup (2010:1) defines young adult literature as "literature written for readers between the ages of 12 and 20". Donelson and Nilsen (1997:6) define young adult literature as "anything that readers between the approximate ages of 12 and 20 choose to read." Bushman and Bushman (1993:2) define young adult literature as "literature written for or about young adults having themes and conflicts of interest to young people". For Cart (2010:16), young adult literature is designed for people aged 11-19. Crowe (1998) in defining young adult literature looks at both the author and marketing dimensions. Crowe therefore defines young adult literature as "all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults" (Crowe, 1998:121).

One thing these definitions have in common is their reference to young adult literature as written texts. These definitions, despite the best of intentions, ignore types of young adult literature that

might not be written but would still qualify as young adult literature. They therefore feed into the argument that an imaginative piece qualifies as literature only if it is written. As deGraft Hanson (1991:1) argues, "it is now generally accepted that literature need not in spite of its etymology always be the written product of the creative imagination". Killam and Kerfot (2008:318) make a similar argument about the emphasis of young adult literature definitions on writing. They state that "there are problems with the definition of young adult literature, since traditionally children experienced storytelling as a part of the oral communication of culture. Traditional forms like legends, songs, riddles, ancestral sagas, cautionary anecdotes, and heroic panegyrics were all fundamental to community life and not just within the boundaries of childhood". With oral literature being primarily spoken, defining young adult literature to include only written text excludes oral literature such as love songs, storytelling, riddles and other forms of oral literature that young adults are exposed to in Africa but are not written. This argument is supported by Irele (2007:79) who notes that

> There is an obvious sense in which oral literature can be considered as the 'true' literature of Africa. It is the literature that is still the most widespread and with which the vast majority of Africans, even today, are in constant touch, and it still represents that form of expression to which African sensibilities are most readily attuned. The reason for this is not far to seek, for despite the impact of literacy, orality is still the dominant mode of communication on the continent, and it determines a particular disposition of the imagination of a different order from that conditioned by literacy.

This thesis takes cognizance of the fact that both written and oral literature exist in Africa and the boundaries between children, adult and young adult literature are not always clearly defined in oral literature. For example, a story teller would tell the same story to an audience of children, young adults or adults. While the core cliché would remain the same, aspects of the story might be emphasized or slightly diluted depending on the audience or context. In the same way, an epic would be chanted or recited to an audience without altering the main story line but with emphasis

on aspects of the epic depending on the audience and context.

For example, in the epic of Sundiata, Sundiata is portrayed as being exceptionally accommodating and just. When Sassouma Berete, his mother's jealous co-wife sends nine witches to destroy him, the witches hatch a plan to steal from Sundiata's mother's plot of land and to kill Sundiata if he should assault them for stealing. This plan is unsuccessful as Sundiata, at seeing elderly women in need, is moved to compassion and encourages them to take what they need. The witches are overcome by his demonstration of unexpected compassion towards them and promise to protect him from henceforth. Most importantly, Sundiata spares the lives of the entire population of Kita after the fall of their king and sets out to build a new empire in a manner that combines policy with fair play. All these moral lessons which have been embedded in oral presentations by griots, serve to teach preferred ways of conduct and behaviour in the society. Therefore, while a griot performing the epic of Sundiata to a group of young adults or children would not change the storyline, he could place emphasis on these aspects of the story as a way of contributing to their socialisation. The griot, performing the same epic to a group of men could tell tailor the performance to focus more on the wars Sundiata and his generals fought to create the Mali empire.

A griot, performing the epic of Kambili to a group of men at the funeral ceremony of a chief, could place emphasis on aspects of the epic that talk about death. Death is usually referred to in metaphorical language in order not to offend the sensibilities of people. The griot, when chanting the epic to young adults could refer to aspects that deal with death in metaphorical ways but would use a different approach when chanting it to adults. In chanting the epic of Kambili to adults, the griot could therefore place emphasis on aspects of the epic such as: "Death does not pass by a man if he has a great family. Death does not pass by a man if his life be easy" (Bird 1974:10). "The

debt of death is never passed by for the living. Death does not pass a man by if he has raised a great family. Death does not pass a man by if he has mastered the world" (Bird, 1974:11). "No matter how tall the man, he'll end up one tall mound" (Bird, 1974:35). Similar examples as those found in *The Songs of Seydou Camara* are visible in *Gassire's Lute.* A performing griot has the opportunity to alter a performance based on the audience. An example of this in *Gassire's Lute* is, "All creatures must die, be buried, and vanish. Kings and heroes die, are buried, and vanish. I, too, shall die, shall be buried, and vanish" (Jablow, 1990:24). When performing *The Songs of Seydou Camara* to young adults, the griot could maintain the storyline, while placing emphasis on morals in the epic. Examples of such morals in *The Songs of Seydou Camara* are:

> Falsity is not good, master. The jealous one doesn't become a hunter (line 103)
> Ah! Lies are evil, Kambili (Line 115)
> Ah! Do not make fun of the outcast woman-child! (line 326)
> If I insult the king, I have insulted Allah! (line 510)
> Treachery always ends up on its author (line 1150)
> Should you see a man with bad habits, you've seen a man who'll die young (lines 2037-2038) (Bird, 1974)

It would therefore be difficult for one to ascribe particular folk tales or epics to adults, young adults or children as it is only their mode of presentation that is slightly modified based on the audience and context. I therefore define young adult literature as creative oral and written fruit of the imagination targeted at young adults. The focus of this study, however, is on written literature for young adults. Written literature is made up of poetry, drama and prose. This study focuses on prose as it is the genre of literature that educated young adults consume most. By African young adult fiction, this work refers to novels that are written by African authors for and marketed to African young adults. Young adult fiction should be an area of concern to scholars because unlike other texts which young adults are forced to read against their will, young adults seek out young adult fiction to read. As Cole (2009:61) states:

> Young adult literature offers a window through which teens can examine their lives and the world in which they live. Unlike classical texts, young adult literature addresses modern day issues - peer pressure, family relationships, sexuality, bigotry and racism, and it connects teens with the pop culture world in which they live. This connection with modern-day issues and culture peaks interest and hooks at-risk readers and non-readers.

Alsup (2003:160) states that "young adult literature is something that adolescents want to read, as opposed to being forced to read by teachers". Alsup (2003:160) further posits that young adults indulge in young adult fiction because "it makes them feel as if they are not alone". Bushman and Bushman (1993:2), in defining what young adult literature is, assert that it is "literature written for or about young adults having themes and conflicts of interest to young people". These scholars recognize that above all, young adult fiction is something that is attractive to young adults. As opposed to books that young adults are forced to read by teachers, young adult fiction makes young adults feel part of a community who are just like them. This gives them a sense of belonging outside society in which they are seen as misfits because they neither count as children or adults.

It is therefore not surprising that Koss and Teale (2009) note that young adult fiction is one of the most profitable genres of fiction in the US. This is because as Meredith Barnes, a literary agent notes, while three thousand young adult novels were published in the US in 1997, thirty thousand novels were published in the same country in 2009 (Grady, 2011). Bluemle (2013) also states that young adult novels are the fastest growing sector of published books in the US with books such as *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* making record-breaking sales in the US and globally.

One could postulate that it is the sense of belonging by which young adults identify with characters going through similar struggles and how they resolve these struggles that makes young adult novels most attractive to young adults. Young adult novels focus on a wide range of issues that

young adults face such as death, rape, child abuse, coming of age, suicide, friendship, heart breaks

and love through the lens of a young adult who is either the narrator or protagonist in these novels.

Scholars in the field of children and young adult literature agree that the goal of producing young

adult fiction is to guide young adults during a tumultuous period of their lives and also subtly train

them for adulthood (Osa, 1995; Glasgow, 2001; Alsup, 2003; Younger, 2009). Unfortunately, not

much attention has been given to the portrayal of interpersonal violence in the existing young adult

novels.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 by the UN General

Assembly states

> Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and
> educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental
> violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or
> exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal
> guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

One of the ways in which young adults can be harmed psychologically is through what they get

exposed to in any form. Africa has often been tagged a young population due to the consistent

number of people under the age of 18 on the continent. According to UNICEF estimates for

January 2019, the population of children in Africa will be one billion by 2055, which would make

it "the largest child population among all continents" (https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-

in-africa-child-survival-brochure/). With an already young population and an increasing

population of children and young adults on the African continent, African authors have not been

left out of the young adult novel market on the continent.

3.3 Contestations in the Field of Young Adult Fiction

Academic disciplines have often begun in a state of unrest with lots of contestations over definitions and scope. These contestations within the academy have contributed to the growth of disciplines with the documentation of critical debates between Plato and Aristotle in *The Republic* and the *Poetics* showing how far back these have been common. Literature has had contestations over its definition, content and scope with debates over forms of literature in various parts of the world having gone on for decades. Reinelt argues that it is the "volatility within the discourses that affords an opportunity for forging a new understanding of both their practices and of the consequences of their usages" (Reinelt, 2002: 201).

The controversy surrounding what name to call young adult fiction is not surprising as the teenage years are characterized by some confusion in the lives of people as this is a time during which people are finding themselves. Cole (2009:49) makes a similar assertion as Gillis and Simpson (2015) and concludes that "Given the negative connotations of the words "adolescents" and "teens", most experts today agree upon young adult literature". With most experts in the field of study, the publishing and marketing industries preferring to use the term young adult, I also use the term young adult in my research but limit young adult literature to young adult fiction as explained already. Furthermore, the term young adult literature has been used by most African authors and publishing houses because of the complications of the border between childhood, young adulthood and adulthood (Killam & Kerfoot, 2008).

One of the key contestations in the field of young adult literature in Europe and North America has to do with what distinguishes it from children and adult literature. Trites (2000) and Inggs (2009) distinguish between children and young adult literature using the deployment of social

power in a narrative. For Trite, children's literature places emphasis on a child's understanding of security which is embodied by family and home while adolescent literature teaches the protagonist about "levels of power" in society and how to negotiate their way through the numerous social institutions within which they must navigate their lives. Appleyard (1990) finds the difference between children and young adult's literature in their complexity. For Appleyard, children's literature portrays a harmless world with happy endings where evil is vanquished at the end of the day while adolescent books deal with a multitude of issues with the line between good and evil not as clearly drawn but enmeshed with the ups and downs of the main characters' lives. Nodelman (2008) does not give a specific age range for children or young adult literature but sees the difference between children and young adult literature in the age difference between the audience who are either children or young adults. Williams (2010:18) sums up the arguments on what distinguishes young adult literature from children's literature by noting that

> Young adult fiction as a category distinct from children's and adult literature has proven notoriously difficult to define for academics, critics and publishers alike. It is generally accepted that novels in this category are aimed at readers in their teens; however, defining the age parameters of this audience is a complicated task.

As has been said earlier, the lines between what qualifies as children, young adult or adult literature in Africa's oral traditions are blurred. The debate on what separates written children's young adult and adult fiction in Africa has also not began yet. Even though I have attempted a definition of what African young adult fiction should be in this thesis, more debate by African scholars on this issue would help bring more clarity to this subject.

The next contestation in the field of young adult fiction has to do with who determines that a piece of fictional writing is for young adults. Garcia (2013) notes that young adult literature does not have a defined age range while also noting the rise in popularity of supposedly young adult

literature amongst adults. Coats (2011) adds her views by asking if it is the author's intentions that determines if a book is for young adults. She questions if a book like Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* whose author intended it to be read by adults, but has ended up being one of the most acclaimed young adult literature books of all time can be considered as young adult literature. *The Chocolate War* is set in a fictional high school and is about how a school's acting headmaster uses a secret student organization to manipulate the school's student body till they develop a mob mentality against a student who stands up to the school's corrupt culture. Even though the book has won several awards, it has been banned in several schools and was third on the American Library Association's list of the top banned/challenged books from 2000-2009.

Coats (2011) further asks if the reception of books should be the criteria for determining how a book should be labelled. She gives examples of books such as *The Lovely Bones* (Sebold, 2002) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (Kidd, 2002) whose authors wrote them for adult readers, but have become popular reads for young adults and wonders whether they should be considered young adult literature or adult literature. *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold is a story of a teenage girl who was brutally raped and murdered by a neighbour but is able to watch what unfolds on earth after her death from heaven. *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of a fourteen-year-old girl who accidentally shoots and kills her mother and is left with her abusive father and a maid. With the help of the maid, she escapes from home and has to face both her past and a future she dreams of. For Coats (2011) and Nodelman (2008), just as children's literature has been defined based on its audience, young adult fiction should also be defined based on its audience, and not based on the writers or publishers.

With all the contestations on what qualifies a book as young adult fiction, scholars have tried to

come up with criteria for determining which books qualify to be called young adult literature and

which ones do not. These criteria are not universally agreed on but they do have some similarities.

For Campbell (2010:75), for a book to qualify as young adult fiction,

> it must have a teen protagonist, (an adult book may have a teen protagonist but
> the action is seen from the vantage point of an adult memory looking back), the
> central action is essentially internal (in the mind of the adolescent), voice is the
> key difference from adult literature. Must have a teen protagonist speaking from
> an adolescent point of view with all the limitations of understanding this
> implies… A book must have a climactic epiphany of new maturity as the subtext
> and be told in the YA voice from the limited adolescent viewpoint. It must be
> relevant to the lives of young readers in a way.

Campbell (2010) adds that a book does not qualify as young adult fiction if its subject or setting is

not within the scope of interest of present-day teenagers and focuses on a child or adult for

prolonged periods in the story. For Gillis and Simpson (2015:10),

> Young adult literature is typically defined by one or more of the following
> attributes or features: (1) The protagonist is a young adult; (2) the story is told
> from the perspective of a young adult; (3) the story is written in the voice of a
> young adult; (4) coming-of-age issues relevant to young adults are addressed;
> (5) the story is marketed to young adults; (6) the story is one that young adults
> choose to read.

Beach and Marshall (1991) have seen their criteria for young adult literature used by many

scholars. For them, a book qualifies as young adult literature if it has the following characteristics:

it is written for and marketed to young adults; has a teenage or young adult protagonist; adult

characters are in the background; contains current slang; has compressed time span and familiar

settings; has few subplots; has a positive resolution and has 123 to 250 pages.

Cole (2009:49) also gives criteria for the inclusion of a book as young adult text. For Cole, a book

is young adult text if:

> The protagonist is a teenager, events revolve around the protagonist and his/her

struggle to resolve conflict, the story is told from the viewpoint and in the voice of a young adult, literature is written by and for young adults, literature is marketed to the young adult audience, story doesn't have a "storybook" or "happily-ever-after" ending-a characteristic of children's books, parents are noticeably absent or at odds with young adults, themes address coming-of-age issues (e.g., maturity, sexuality, relationships, drugs), and books contain under 300 pages, closer to 200".

Carlsen (1980) as cited in VanderStaay (1992:48) says,

> Young-adult literature is literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. Such novels are generally of moderate length and told from the first person. Typically, they describe the initiation into the adult world, or the surmounting of a contemporary problem forced upon the protagonist(s) by the adult world. Though generally written for a teenage reader, such novels-like all fine literature- address the entire spectrum of life.

In the face of all these criteria, globally acclaimed young adult novels like the *Harry Potter series* and *The Hunger Games trilogy* have not met a lot of these criteria but have been accepted by all as being young adult novels. In view of this Bright (2016:311) suggests that "It may be useful to view "young adult" as a marketing term that is increasingly lucrative to publishers in the twenty-first century, meaning that it is a body of literature that might appeal to many types of readers, and is distinguished from adult fiction by its label rather than its content". A similar argument is made by Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson and Nilsen (2013) in which they note that young adult literature is a genre that has been deliberately made up and marketed in a manner that would make it appealing to young people, especially adolescent young women. The criteria that qualifies a novel as young adult fiction in Africa, to the best of my knowledge, is yet to be explored by African scholars. The approach used for this thesis therefore focuses on books young adults are required to read in school and the books that are deliberately written and marketed to young adults on the continent.

3.4 Young Adult Fiction in Africa

African young adults often have their earliest experiences with fiction through storytelling as children, and later, written fiction. As Gyekye (1996:85) notes,

> Folktales are, in the traditional setting, an effective means of inculcating virtues in children. Also, many of the maxims dealing with practical aspects of life appropriate to children, such as respect for elders and obligations to blood relatives are used to show children the acceptable standards of social behaviour.

In addition to their experiences through storytelling, there are some play songs that teach African young adults similar lessons. While some of these songs carry the message, some songs tell a story that carries the message (Pearson, 1994).

Africans have been producing literary texts since the ancient Egyptian civilization about 6,000 years ago. Some of the literary texts they produced included fiction and poetry (Sutherland-Addy, 2013).

According to Gikandi (2016: xvi),

> There were about six well-known novels written by black Africans in English before 1948-Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930), R. E. Obeng's *Eighteenpence* (1943), and three novels by Peter Abrahams, *Dark Testament* (1942), *Song of the City* (1945), and *Mine Boy* (1946). Of these, four novels were by writers from Southern Africa which, given its large white settler population, had a thriving literary culture connected to European centres of publishing and institutions of interpretation.

Publishing of young adult fiction in Africa coincided with the end of colonial rule in most African countries. It was around the same period that there was a boom in the publication in novels for adults on the African continent. Gikandi (2016: xvi) writing on the publishing of novels in Africa, states that

> The publication of novels accelerated in the 1960s. For example, in 1962, Heinemann Educational Books published five titles in its new African Writers Series (AWS); by the 1980s, the series, which was to become identified with the institution of African literature, would have a total of 270 titles, most of them

novels. In Nigeria, only a handful of novels were published before 1960, the year of independence, but by 2000, Wendy Griswold was able to "locate, read, and analyze" 476 titles.

This was because during the colonial era, books were published for educational purposes to fulfil Eurocentric goals. Coupled with the low levels of literacy during the colonial era, this left little to no room for the publication of indigenous texts (Alembi, 1999; Attwell, 2004; Chakava, 1998; Izevbaye, 2004; Killam &Rowe, 2000; Yitah & Komasi, 2009). According to Killam and Kerfoot (2008), one of the reasons for the emergence of young adult fiction in Africa was the emphasis on reading and writing after colonialism began to lose its hold on the African continent. This resulted in more focus on written, rather than spoken forms of narration. One could postulate that this might be due to the need to build a solid back bone for a more educated labour force that was more knowledgeable about their country and continent and able to effectively promote and execute the Pan-Africanist agenda in various sectors of the newly independent African countries. As Kimbel (1963) and Miescher (2005) note, during the colonial period, the most intelligent males were trained as teachers, interpreters, catechists or local preachers, with some of them being ordained as reverend ministers. The majority of educated males were trained in masonry, carpentry and craftsmanship. For females, the focus of their education during the colonial era was on them being good wives and mothers. Therefore, they were trained to excel in the domestic space in tasks such as sewing, cooking, laundry work and farming (Bowie, 1993; Miescher, 2005). It is therefore unsurprising that Gregorio (2001:15) makes the assertion that "following independence, the focus was on developing indigenous written literature, with leading figures such as Chinua Achebe appealing to African authors and illustrators to save African children from the 'beautifully packaged poisons' imported from Europe". Achebe (Quoted in Osazee 2004: 2) buttressing the arguments of Gregorio, writes:

> Before 1960 Nigerian children read nothing but British children's books and had to be left to figure out what was meant by Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square and the Thames. The poems he was forced to memorize talked about bleak and chilly mid-winter, snowflakes, men who galloped by whenever the moon and stars were out, great ports and swarming cities, and of course the Pied Piper – subjects and images which convey no meaning and no feeling to the average Nigerian (African) child in his natural environment.

What is obvious then is that the desire to produce fiction for young adults in Africa began when African countries gained independence from colonial rule. The goal for the production of young adult literature in Africa has been to educate young adults against vices in society and encourage them to practice values such as respect for self and others, justice, honesty, integrity, hard work and diligence (Khorana, 1994; Opoku-Agyeman, 2012; Osa, 1995). The dream of producing fiction for young adults on a large scale however did not materialize until Macmillan Pacesetters established Macmillan Pacesetters Series to accelerate the production of young adult fiction in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. This was partly in response to many young Nigerians reading a lot of romance novels by Hadley Chase, Denis Robins and Mills and Boons (Osa, 1998). This is corroborated by Ogechi and Ogechi (2002:170), who note that:

> In the early years of independence, the publishing industry was dominated by overseas firms like Oxford, Macmillan, Longhorn, Heinemann and Evans Brothers (Ogechi & Ogechi, 2002: 170). They propagated a new form of colonialism that determined what Africans could read or write. Since the multinational companies were in Africa to make money, they focused mainly on textbooks where they were assured a ready market for their products or they published only those indigenous writers and books that would sell internationally. Under such circumstances, the indigenous literatures remained limited.

In South Africa, young adult literature in English and Afrikaans has its roots in French, English, German and Dutch literature which were introduced to young adults during the colonial period. Black South African authors, however, produced literature which was different from that found in East and West Africa due to their different political circumstances. This is anticipated as Williams

(2010:1) states that "unsurprisingly, the effects of colonialism and apartheid have had a pervasive influence on the history of South African literature". Gikandi and Vambe (2016:15) make a similar assertion by noting that

> There were significant regional variations in the institutionalization of the novel in English-speaking African countries. In Southern Africa, where white settlement was established through wars of pacification, violence, and the alienation of their land, the rise of novel reflected the conflicting interests of Europeans and Africans.

Jenkins (2004:107) makes a related argument for children's literature by noting that "nineteenth-century children's books set in South Africa, both fiction and non-fiction, epitomise colonial and imperialistic assumptions of power and the right to strip colonised lands of their natural assets".

Writing of novels in East Africa began later than in West Africa but there was an accelerated production of novels from that region in the 1960s and 1970s (Lindfors, 2007). Currey (2008:1) sums up the history of young adult fiction in Eastern Africa:

> The launching of the Heinemann's African Writers Series was like the umpire's signal for which African writers had been waiting on the starting line. In one short generation, an immense library of writing had sprung into being from all over the continent and, for the first time in history, Africa's future generation of readers and writers-youngsters in schools and colleges-began to read, not only David Copperfield and other English classics that I and my generation has read, but also works by their own writers about their own people.

According to Mpe (1999) Heinemann's contribution to the promotion of African authored novels was in two forms: making financial resources, which had been lacking available for the establishment of the African Writers Series and ensuring that African writers would be spared "the tyrannies of censorship in Africa". Mpe (1999) notes that censorship took many forms: crippling editing, patronising reviews of the novel, omitting literature written by blacks from the category known as South African literature and political censorship.

Gikandi and Vambe (2016:19) make a similar assertion:

> If the fate of African writing in the 1950s depended on the interests and desires of metropolitan publishing houses, by the end of the twentieth century the majority of African novels were published in Africa for local audiences and reflected both global concerns and very localized interests.

Chakava (1998) further notes that the establishment of several publishing houses in Eastern Africa in the 80s and 90s, led to the publication of books for children and young adults in English, Swahili and other indigenous languages in East Africa. However, according to Osa (1995), novels written in English for young adults in Kenya only gained recognition in 2005.

Unfortunately, as Osa (1998) notes, the dream of producing a lot of inspirational stories for young adults in Nigeria is not yet a reality despite Ghana and Nigeria being among the pacesetters in the production of young adult novels on the continent. Regrettably, this is true for most countries in Africa. In an interview in April 2019, Ruby Yayra Goka, a Ghanaian and an award winner of several local and international awards for young adult fiction responded thus when asked why she opted to write books for young adults:

> There were very few books for African children and young adults. When I started writing this was something I wanted to help change. I want African kids to know their stories matter, that they matter. That they are good enough as they are to be represented in the pages of a book. I hope in the next ten to fifteen years, if Booksie asked a writer which stories/books did they love as a child, there would be some African names in the list as well.
> https://medium.com/@mybooksiebox/author-spotlight-ruby-yayra-goka-f1fc1f4eb22c

She, however, acknowledged that there are more young adult novels by African authors now than when she was growing up. The failure to achieve the dream of publishing more than enough novels by Africans for African young adults could be because more than ninety percent of books published in Africa are educational due to the ready and huge market for educational texts (Bgoya & Jay, 2013).

The biggest influence on African young adult fiction is oral literature (Khorana, 1998; Killam & Rowe 2000; Osa, 2007; Yitah & Komasi, 2009). This is why Osazee (1991:74) defines African young adult fiction thus:

> That piece of literary creation which draws its subject matter from the African world view and which is written in a language and style the African child can comprehend. It must be seen as promoting African culture and enabling the child or young adult to understand and appreciate his or her environment better and it must give him or her some pleasure.

Even though Osazee (1991) acknowledges the influence of fiction from other parts of the world, she argues that since the African children and young adults cannot comprehend them and relate to them as well as they can relate to African young adult fiction, they could not be considered African young adult fiction. I disagree with Osazee on the grounds that Africans in the diaspora are still Africans and their writing qualifies to be called African literature. Despite this, young adult fiction by Africans in the diaspora was not included in this study as there has been a lot of research on young adult fiction by Africans in the diaspora. The focus of research on young adult fiction by Africans in the diaspora has been on the discovery of their voice, oppressions of blacks, racism, gender in the lives of African American women, cultivating brotherhood and sisterhood, class and relationships (Panlay, 2016). The focus of this study is therefore on works by Africans on the continent as it is their publications that are most available and accessible to young adults on the continent.

3.5 What is African Young Adult Fiction?

What qualifies as young adult fiction in Africa remains unexplored by African scholars. This might be due to African scholars relying on definitions and criteria for young adult fiction from the Global North. Publishers and authors have also relied on the criteria for young adult fiction used in the global north. At the workshop on young adult fiction, when I asked what qualifies a book as

a young adult novel in Ghana or Africa, one author summed up the responses of the authors and

publishers present at the workshop by responding thus:

> You are asking what qualifies a book as young adult writing. I think that's a
> discussion that we should have because I've always found that question difficult
> to answer. I think it depends on the culture that you are writing on. Who your
> audience is. When I was in Canada last year, somebody recommended a book
> which I read which was written by an indigenous Canadian woman and it was
> an extremely violent story which was very difficult to read. It was a book about
> very painful events very graphically described. Very violent. A rape which was
> carried out with a glass bottle. I just thought wow! This book is not for the faint
> hearted. If it hadn't come highly recommended, I wouldn't have read it. It was
> months after reading it that I realized that this book was the winner of the Burt
> award for young adults in Canada that year. It had won for that year. I thought
> to myself, how in the world is that book appropriate for young adults. When I'm
> writing for awards, I ask myself, what is tame enough for young adults? When I
> say this, will people say this is not for young adults. This is for big adults. I'm
> so conscious of this. To me, it was deeply shocking that this was considered
> appropriate for young adults because I don't know what the definition of young
> adult is but I think it's before eighteen. I would never have given this to my child
> to read. I think it's an excellent book but I don't think it's appropriate for
> anybody under the age of eighteen. So clearly, it was considered appropriate for
> young adult classification in Canada. But then again, Canadian teenagers are
> completely different from Ghanaian teenagers. They are exposed to a whole lot
> more over there. It's a whole different world over there. Children grow up much
> faster so what you would classify as a young adult book there is so different from
> here. If you are writing a novel to classify as young adult, it all depends on where
> you are. Even here in Ghana, so many different strata of society. Some people
> are exposed to social media, some people are not. Some people belong to
> different religions that have a lot of rules on what they can do and not do for
> boys and girls and so when you are writing a book for children or young adults,
> you have to be very careful.

McCallum (2006:216-217) makes a similar argument as this author. He notes that

> Literature for young people is culturally bound through its concerns with specific
> cultural and social formations. However, this does not mean that books simply
> reflect culture. Literature for young people also shapes and to some extent
> produces the culture by determining what issues are deemed to be relevant to
> young people and by representing what it means to be a young adult in
> contemporary society.

From this, one can understand the challenges that authors who have opted to write for African

young adults' face. They are writing for people of diverse cultures and religions and are walking a tightrope in order not to offend people of a particular religious or ethnicity orientation. They are also trying to meet certain demands parents of different backgrounds and opinions might have of the novels they want their children to read.

 In addition to all these, they are also ensuring their books are interesting enough to the young adults who are also from different educational, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds and therefore have different expectations of what a novel that is targeted at them should contain. As the author clearly states, she would not allow her child who was a young adult to read a book like the one she read in Canada. In addition to this, the categorization of young adult fiction in Africa is yet to be divided into age categories. Therefore, authors try to write novels that will appeal to all ages of young adults, an almost impossible task considering the expectation of young adults at various ages. In my opinion, this causes most of the young adult novels written by African authors and targeted at young adults difficult to assign to particular age groups, which makes some books unappealing to older (15-19 years) or younger (12-14 years) young adults. The words of the author also bring into view the sharp contrast in socialization in countries such as Canada and Ghana and how people of this age group are viewed in these countries. While older young adults in Canada are given certain liberties, young adults in Ghana are considered children and therefore have their parents purchasing most of the novels they read or their schools prescribing what they should read. Another author brought another dimension to the debate on what qualifies as young adult fiction in Ghana and Africa. She said,

> Ghana is a very challenging case. It's extremely challenging because as soon as you go below the private schools where literacy is guaranteed, then even the mere issue of literacy becomes an obstacle. It's not even about whether the book is appropriate. Can the child actually read it and understand it? Is their literacy functional enough to be able to read it and understand it? This is part of the reason it's adults who are often found reading it. So then do we pitch the books

towards adults or not? For example, young adults think about sex all the time. It's part of being a young adult. But are we admitting that they think about it all the time? If you don't put it in there, in some shape of form, maybe it's going to be boring for them. Maybe it will be like this is not a young adult book. This is a children's book. So, I feel there must be some romance in a book. But then, how far do they go? Do they touch? Do they kiss? How far is too far? At the end of the day, you are really just trying to get past the award judges because the country is such a complex thing because you don't even know if your 16-year-old in school in a rural area may even be capable of reading the first page meanwhile your Ghana International School 16-year-old is saying this is a baby book. I don't want to read it. You don't really know where to pitch it. So really, you just have to get past the judges. That's the bottom line. Whatever the judges think is what matters.

The third author at the workshop made similar arguments as the other authors. She said,

I'm saying that as a writer, in Ghana, there is such a heterogeneous profile and really, the majority of readers who could be classified as young adults do not have the literacy level to read a book like this for pleasure. It's just too challenging because they've not been taught reading well enough. At the other end of the scale, you have children in the private schools who can read it but are not interested in reading it because they want to read something a bit spicier. So, if you are writing for a competition, then you just have to pitch it so it gets past the judges. The natural profile of readership is just so complex and uneven. To me, that's a big question for young adult writing. Issues like sex are big issues for young adult writing. How much of it is allowed? How do you frame it? How far do you go? Who are you going to offend? Who are you going to bore.

These authors throw more light on the complexities of writing for young adults in Ghana and Africa by noting the problem of literacy in Africa. As the second and third authors note, they pitch their books in a manner that will win over the judges of contests and not to appeal to the young adults due to the complexities of the African terrain. These complexities also affect how much violence an author can display in a young adult novel. Just like the issue of romance and sex, an author would ask: How much violence is appropriate? How vivid should the description of violence be? Would parents approve of their children reading books with this much violence? From personal correspondence with Professor Sutherland-Addy, a leading scholar in African literature, and also my supervisor, she acknowledged the focality of conflict in the plot of

storylines. She noted that one of the key differences in the use of violence in the African novels termed classics and young adult fiction is that in the classics, violence is a focal point of creativity and so the authors use violence to enhance their creativity. In young adult fiction however, as one of the authors said, violence is a requirement for authors of young adult fiction but there is a lack of clarity on how much violence is allowed in young adult novels. As a result, the incorporation of violence sometimes hampers the creativity of the authors in a way, as they try to include some form of violence without the violence really developing the story. While arguments on the differences in the use of violence in the classics and young adult fiction is important, that is not the focus of this thesis.

A workshop participant made a similar argument about the challenges with defining young adult fiction and who a young adult is in Ghana. He said:

> What I've found out is that even books that are categorized to be read by people who are 12-19 years old, are not being read by 12-19-year olds. They are being read by adults. So, if you are to take 12-19-year olds not in private schools but in "normal schools", they are not reading these so it comes down to the definition of young adult because with these books I find more senior high school students and some university students are the ones reading them. On one side, you have people that these books are meant for but they are not getting those books and then you have people in some schools in class 3, 4 or 5 reading these in a day or two. So, it depends on a whole lot of factors. You just can't say 12-19 is young adult.

Most students being educated using the Ghanaian curriculum are likely to be between the ages of 9 and 11 by the time they are in classes 3,4 or 5. This participant refers to the government schools as "normal schools" as these are the schools that majority of Ghanaians attend. For most of these government sponsored schools, literacy levels are not as high as they are in the private schools. This discrepancy in literacy levels complicates attempts at writing for young adults just as the

authors and workshop participant have said as the same book written for the same age group would be boring to some, beyond the literacy levels of others and too explicit for the remaining members of the age group. The authors and participants' responses on what young adult fiction is, showed that authors face challenges in writing books specifically for young adult audiences in Africa and these challenges have an impact on their writing. As a result, I began to suspect that no matter what book was selected to examine Ghanaian students' perceptions of violence and how they made meaning of violence in the book, some readers would not be able to relate to the experiences of characters in the novel or feel any sense of "narrative intimacy" (Day, 2013). Authors of young adult fiction in Africa are not alone in the challenges they face in their bid to conceptualize young adult fiction and their inability to unravel the mystery that it is. Aronson (2001) notes that globally, teachers, reviewers, publishers, booksellers and librarians are yet to reach an accord on what young adult fiction is. The lack of consensus between these stakeholders in the young adult fiction industry has influenced scholarly research in the field of young adult literature, especially the selection criteria of novels for research. It has also contributed to the ongoing debate on which authors can be considered authors of young adult fiction.

3.5.1 Who is Writing African Young Adult Fiction?

The conundrum on what young adult fiction is or is not globally and in Africa has also influenced who is considered a young adult fiction writer and who is not. This puzzle is best exemplified by the exclusion of some authors like Amma Darko from being considered authors of young adult fiction. As Gilligan says, "To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act" (Gilligan, 1993: xvi). Young adults, often considered children in the African terrain, are speaking everyday but they are not being listened to because they have not been accorded a voice in most

African societies. Amma Darko, in her novels *Faceless* and *The Housemaid*, voices the concerns of down trodden young adults in society. These are people whom society has ignored as if they do not exist, even though they exist in all societies. Gilligan again says that, "by voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural" (Gilligan, 1993:xvi).

One would be tempted to ask what voice African societies have given to young adults? Where do we get to hear them speak of their core needs? In relation to young adult fiction and children's literature, one would wonder if it does not account for the scarcity of scholarly research in the areas of children and young adult literature. Why would societies that do not give voice to children and young adults be concerned about what is being written about them in literature and invest resources into finding out what they think is important to them as expressed through these avenues? Amma Darko's *Faceless* talks about the challenges children and young adults face with child neglect, and its influence on their lives. As Gyaban-Mensah (2015) notes, the most frequently occurring form of maltreatment in Ghana is the neglect of children and adolescents and this affects their lives both in the short term and long term and has lasting effects on their lives. Awitor (2014:126), in relation to Amma Darko's *Faceless,* notes that,

> "Even if there is a story behind every street child, it is obvious that parents, society as a whole and government have failed to cater for them. Their plight is overlooked, ignored or seen as normal. Sacked from home by their own parents, they find refuge in the 'devouring jaws of the streets'. Odarley, Baby T and Fofo's muddle in *Faceless* echoes many children's suffering because they lack basic needs –shelter, food and clothes – to keep their soul and their body in harmony".

The dream of these children and young adults is very simple. One may think these children's dreams will be material things. Instead, what they need is just a helping hand. They need to be

secured and know that somewhere there is somebody who cares for them. Unfortunately, they are abandoned to the streets like a vulgar and unwanted burden. Around them there is a void of sympathy and attention.

As children, they are already at the margin of their society. The violation of these children's rights is blatant and they have nobody to turn to. They suffer from lack of affection and protection. Beyond these children predicament, it is the 'moral decay' of Ghanaian society that is spotlighted (Awitor, 2014:126). Once on the streets, children are exposed to different kinds of vices, abuses, and violence (drug, sex, alcohol, pornography, rape, thieving, pickpocketing, harassment) among others. Fofo and Odarley, for instance, drink directly from bottles of the local gin, *akpeteshie* (kill me quick) and watch pornographic movies. They steal, pickpocket and do odd jobs to survive. The girls are vulnerable because they quickly become the targets of the bullies and the sadistic persons like Macho, Poison and his group. They rape them and rob them of whatever money they have on them. Some of the street girls (children) are merely seven years and 'rape was their first sexual experience'. In addition, many were child prostitutes. They are sexually active before their teens. It seems that because of hopelessness and hardship on the streets, children take drugs and alcohol to soothe their pain.

In scholarly analysis of Amma Darko's books, Maria Pia Lara's notion of illocutionary force has often been used in analyzing how fictional representations of people enduring various scourges of society are presented in the literary text. In *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in Public Sphere*, Lara (1998:2-3) argues that "women's writings address those in power with powerfully imaginative speech framed as self-disclosure in order to claim recognition, visibility and social inclusion for those excluded or disregarded or unjustly treated". This theory has often been used

to show how the writings of Amma Darko and other female authors bring problematic issues into the public sphere to produce powerful narratives that provide an account of the lack of justice created by a situation of marginalisation, oppression or exclusion. Amma Darko's writings have therefore been termed "an exploratory moral quest" which allows readers to identify with the characters in her novels; and occupies the thoughts of readers to the point where they empathize with the experiences of characters. While the arguments on Amma Darko's novels are valid as they express the challenges of females in the society, what has been ignored is the fact that while most of her characters are female, they are mostly children or young adults and her novels bring into the public sphere the trauma violated children and young adults go through, the effects of bad parenting, sexual assault and sexual predation have on them, the trauma they go through as a result of these experiences and their lack of voice to express these things to their societies. Amma Darko, therefore gives these children and young adults voice in her novels. Nussbaum (2001:xiv) makes a compelling argument in support of the role narrative literature can play in public reasoning:

> If one were to argue that public reasoning involves engaging with the problems facing society with the aim of finding solutions or methods of alleviating them, then the texts under discussion in this paper convene a platform at which the traumatic experiences of children and women can be debated. Can such a debate convened by fiction set an agenda in the public sphere to theorize troubled childhoods? Can such an engagement with troubled childhood demystify the phenomenon?

According to Nussbaum, the answer to the above question lies in how narrative literature generally allows us to imagine the dreadful lives of the child protagonists. Nussbaum's argument echoes Lauren Berlant's questions: "Does a scene involve one person's suffering, or a population? When we want to rescue X, are we thinking of rescuing everyone like X or is it a singular case that we see? When a multitude is symbolized by an individual case, how can we keep from being overwhelmed by the necessary scale that an ethical response would?" (Berlant, 2004:6). Darko's

protagonists invoke empathy because, existing as they do on the margins of society, they are severely endangered physically and psychologically.

Set in Accra's popular slum, Sodom and Gomorrah, *Faceless* commences with the story of a fourteen-year-old street girl, Fofo. Her predicament and ordeals reveal some profound truths about the lot of the street child out there on the streets. At the start of the story, she is sleeping in a stall at the Agbogbloshie market and is nearly raped by Poison (the notorious street lord of Sodom and Gomorrah). As she escapes from this rapist, readers are hit by the very first danger these street children are exposed to—sexual abuse, and its consequences. Amma Darko immediately seizes this opportunity and educates her readers on the plight of street children. Through her authorial comments, she shows how street children lack parental control, and are exposed to alcohol, pornography, sex, and all kinds of immoralities. She concisely captures their plight as follows:

> Fofo would have spent the Sunday night into Monday dawn with her friends across the road at the squatters' enclave of Sodom and Gomorrah watching adult films her fourteen years required her to stay away from, drinking directly from bottles of akpeteshie, or at best, some slightly milder locally produced gin. Ultimately, she would have found herself waking up on Monday morning beside one of her age group friends, both of them naked, hazy and disconcerted; oblivious to what time during the night they had stripped off their clothes and what exactly they had done with their nakedness. Sucked into life on the streets and reaching out to each new day with an ever-increasing hopelessness, such was the ways they employed to escape their pain (Darko, 2003:25)

Amma Darko adds that, "Filth and sin, suffering and ignorance, helplessness and woes ruled the days. And caught in the middle of it all, were girls like Fofo who grew up never ever really experiencing what it means to simply be a child" (Darko, 2003:93-94).

In *The Housemaid,* another of Amma Darko's novels, Amma Darko continues to tell the story of more voiceless young adults in the society. In the story, Tika is a thirty-five-year-old single, childless business woman who lives in Accra. The narrator hints that her present state as an

unmarried woman is the direct result of her sour first relationship with Owuraku, a schoolmate of hers in form five, when she was eighteen years old. Though unmarried, Tika is embroiled in gross promiscuity with various men, just like her mother, Sekyiwa, as a result of what she had observed and experienced while growing up with her mother. Unknowingly, Tika herself, grooms her house help, Afia, an eighteen-year-old, to take up a lifestyle of promiscuity when the house help, through observation notices the promiscuous lifestyle of Tika and begins to indulge in it. The house help eventually gets pregnant after being coerced by her mother and grandmother to allow herself to get "innocently" pregnant so they could use the excuse of Tika not taking good care of their daughter as an excuse to blackmail and extort huge sums of money from Tika. Unfortunately, the plan does not succeed as the housemaid blames a sterile but very rich married man for her pregnancy. When the truth of the sterility of the man "supposedly" responsible for the pregnancy sinks in, Afia aborts the pregnancy, as she has no way of knowing which of the many men she has slept with is responsible for the pregnancy. Afia disposes off the foetus on a rubbish dump. The discovery of the dead foetus results in a detective story seeking to unravel the mystery of the dead baby.

Amma Darko's novels are therefore not only concerned with gender issues as have been emphasized by feminist scholars. Although Amma Darko's main characters (Mara, Fofo, Tika and Ma) are females, she tells their stories in such a way that the reader is able to read beyond these females, since they (the female characters) are only symbolic representations of the down-trodden and the voiceless in society such as children and young adults. The mutilated face of Baby T in *Faceless* comes to symbolize all the downtrodden, destitute street children who are faceless. Their identity is erased. They are invisible minorities whose plight is not heard. They are voiceless. Their invisibility or absence gives probably the title to the novel *Faceless*. Darko's novel, *Faceless,*

offers a commentary on a diseased society which has lost its control over its children. They are offered cheaply and without remorse to the streets where they are sold, exploited, abused, sexually assaulted and forced into prostitution. Daughters are exchanged for material gains, especially for money. The issues raised in Amma Darko's are related to females and have been justifiably studied expansively by feminists. The lack of research on these books by scholars in the discipline of young adult literature points to one of the challenges that the study of young adult literature faces. This challenge is the overshadowing of the study of young adult literature by other areas of study. Just as Amma Darko's novels have been acclaimed by feminists, but ignored by scholars in the field of young adult literature, other novels such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Peter Abraham's *Mine Boy*, and Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* have been extensively publicised through research by scholars in areas of study such as gender studies, history, anthropology and sociology but ignored by scholars in the field of young adult literature even though these books, for years have been published mostly for a young adult audience who are required to read them as part of their senior high school compulsory English courses.

In *Faceless* and *The Housemaid*, Amma Darko uses her characters as symbols of the oppressed and the marginalized in society. In this regard, Amma Darko serves as a voice for these voiceless people, of whom children and young adults are a majority. While a writer like Amma Darko has received wide acclaim globally and in Africa for her works and has been tagged a feminist writer and accepted in feminist circles, she has not been labelled an author of young adult fiction. Scholars have also not studied her works as young adult novels. She has also not been accepted by authors of young adult fiction as one of their own. Could it be because she has not submitted her novels for young adult fiction awards or won any awards for young adult fiction? Or does the absence of an event that transforms her characters from childhood to adulthood disqualify her books as young

adult novels? These are questions I do not have answers to but what they reveal is that a novel is not considered an African young adult novel, simply because it has protagonists aged between 12 and 18. Peggy Oppong's *The Lemon suitcase* which does not have a protagonist between those ages, but is published and accepted as a young adult novel is a clear example of this. What is of interest to this research though is that Amma Darko's book, *Faceless*, was added to the list of required readings for senior high school students in West Africa for the 2016 to 2020 academic years.

Much has been said about the goal of writing and publishing of young adult literature in Africa, which is to teach morals that young adults are supposed to imbibe and apply in order to properly fit into their societies. As succinctly expressed by Stadler (2017:1), "children's and youth literature often include a didacticism which aims to guide readers in their development into full- fledged members of society". Ganz-Koechlin in her research among teachers in Tanzania received answers that back arguments that African young adult fiction is necessarily didactic. Ganz-Koechlin (2014:9) notes,

> For my Tanzanian colleagues, the answer is clear: stories are specifically meant to convey values and not meant to be 'merely for entertainment'. The values mentioned are solidarity, truth, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, not stealing, respect, peace and personal integrity, which one participant describes as "universal values", whereas two others list 'national identity, good manner, respect for and readiness to work, civic responsibility and obligation, tradition and worship'… 'respect for elders, sincerity, humility and moderation' as specifically African values.

For Awuzie (2015) the presence of didacticism in a novel is very significant as it enables one to trace its roots to African oral tradition. Awuzie further postulates that despite African literature borrowing from European literary culture in the areas of form and language, didactism was not

borrowed from another culture and therefore is a true marker of African writing. Awuzie (2015:160) further develops the argument on didactism in African writing by noting that:

> In African traditional society, it is not heard of that stories devoid of lessons are told. Little wonder, they are usually told by adults while the children listen. Stories are told to either teach or inform or educate children, and sometimes adults, on some of the values of the society. This is, most times, done through either using animal characters together with rural symbols or through using human characters together with rural symbols—symbols that would spur questions from the audience as to why they were used and really get them thinking. And usually, at the end of the story, the storyteller or even a member of the audience, in order that the lessons in the story may be made known, makes one or two statements as it concerns the lessons that are learnt from the story. Now in its written form, this is what African literature seems to be doing.

Awuzie (2015) sides with Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa & Madubuike (1980) and makes a strong argument that concepts such as realism and naturalism do not exist in the African traditional society and as a result, stories which are not didactic would not be considered as stories at all. While these scholars make convincing arguments based on the several volumes of novels and stories which can be found in Africa, the assertion that stories and novels from Africa have always been didactic is a bit misleading. This is because there are several African tales and novels which are not educative. For example, during a field trip to collect stories at Larteh, a town in the Eastern region of Ghana, one storyteller told the story below.

One upon a time, a woman lived with her children. There was severe hunger so the woman ate all her children till she was left with only one. One day, the woman decided to go to the town and eat her last daughter upon her return. The daughter heard her mother's plans so she ran away to a man in the forest and told him to hide her under his bed since her mother had plans of eating her. The man hid her under his bed. When the woman returned from the market, she fiercely attacked the man and the man told the girl he was incapable of protecting her so she should flee for her life. The girl ran to several people and each time they agreed to hide her but the mother attacked them

so fiercely that they let the girl flee. Finally, she met a hunter who agreed to hide her and said if the mother came, he would cut her into pieces. When the mother came, the hunter cut her into pieces. One would not say that this story is not an African story because it is not educative.

In line with the supposedly overarching objective of young adult fiction in Africa, WAEC has indicated in its syllabus that the teaching of morals is one of its key objectives for the senior high school English curriculum. WAEC has also made the learning of values its main goal for including supplementary readings for senior high school students. This is in line with arguments made by Freedman and Johnson (2000) who note that educators censor certain books from their reading list or schools to avoid confrontations with parents, guardians and school administrators. GES and WAEC have continuously included the majority of African authored books read by the first and second generations of senior high school students since the independence of most African countries. These books have been tagged classics and form a part of required readings for students in senior high schools, many years after independence. The continuous and sometimes contentious selection of these books, in the light of many widely acclaimed African novels written within the past twenty to thirty years could point to WAEC and GES attempts to avoid confrontations with parents, guardians and school administrators.

The Ghana Education Service (GES) syllabus for senior high schools lists one of its objectives for teaching reading comprehension and summary as helping students "acquire the skills of deriving moral and other passages /texts". The syllabus also lists one of its objectives for teaching writing as helping students "compose pieces containing human values". Finally, included in the syllabus as one of its objectives for students indulging in the reading of African novels is helping students "derive ethical values from literary works" (Ministry of Education, 2010: 36). What makes the

selection of books as required readings by WAEC a bit puzzling is that while the WAEC English syllabus requires that senior high school students learn values from their required readings, most of the books on the required reading list were not written to be didactic, even though they have some moral lessons in them. In relation to supplementary reading materials, the GES syllabus states that, "The teacher is further encouraged to constantly look for other supplementary material that will enhance the teaching and learning especially of the sections on listening and speaking and reading. Materials that focus on moral, ethical and social values such as honesty, diligence, integrity are particularly recommended" (Ministry of Education, 2010: xviii). The selection of books for supplementary reading is, however, left to individual schools, subject to the approval of the books by the Ghana Education Service. Schools that do not prescribe or give out supplementary readers to their students are therefore not penalized in any way by the Ghana Education Service or WAEC.

With the mystery of what young adult fiction is unresolved by authors and publishers on the continent, and a lack of clarity on reasons authors like Amma Darko have not been accepted as authors of young adult fiction, I had to come up with my own criteria for selecting young adult novels to analyse for the portrayal of interpersonal violence in this thesis. This criterion was books authored by Africans and marketed to African young adults. This influenced the decision to select award winning young adult novels and required readings for senior high schools as part of the sample analysed in this thesis. These books which have been tagged classics are mostly published now for the consumption of senior high school students as required readings for English. Including the classics and award-winning young adult novels in my sample therefore gives a more inclusive sample from which to draw conclusions for this thesis. I therefore define African young adult

fiction in this thesis as novels that are written by African authors and marketed to African young adults.

3.6 Conclusion

Experiences at the *Pa Gya* workshop gave illumination to the understanding African authors and publishers have of the concept of young adult fiction. As a result, authors face several challenges in writing books that would appeal to all ages of young adults in addition to being attractive to young adults no matter their socioeconomic, cultural or educational backgrounds. The lack of research on some novels written by authors such as Amma Darko, who could be tagged authors of young adult fiction, due to their focus on the exposition of the challenges of neglected young adults in their novels, further complicates the concept of what young adult fiction is in Africa. The debate on African young adult fiction is made murkier by the acceptance of some novels by Peggy Oppong as young adult novels. These books are accepted as such and therefore used as supplementary readers for senior high schools, without these books focusing on young adults or their challenges. While this chapter does not fully resolve this puzzle on what young adult fiction is in Africa, it helps in coming up with criteria for the selection of a sample of novels from which to draw conclusions for this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR
Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, I examined the concept of young adult fiction in Africa and some of the controversies around it. I also assessed some African authors' concepts of young adult fiction and how it influenced their writing. In this chapter, I look at the research design and methodology that I used to carry out this research. I look at the processes used to select novels for analysis and the process of analysing these texts. I also address the procedures used in selecting participants for in-depth interviews. Other related subjects such as content analysis, study measures, coding procedures, transcription, reliability, and validity of the research are addressed. Finally, ethical concerns relating to this study and how they were addressed are discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Participation in Workshop

To gain more understanding of young adult fiction in Africa, I partook in a literary workshop for authors, publishers and aspiring authors on the continent. The workshop was organized by Writers Project of Ghana. The *Pa Gya* literary festival was held at the Goethe Institute, Accra from 19th to 21st October, 2018. It was organised by the Writers Project of Ghana and Goethe Institute Ghana. According to the organizers, the purpose of the festival was to "bring together writers and lovers of literature to enjoy readings, create networks, and foster friendships and collaborations between writers and the public". The festival brought together writers and publishers from across the African continent and included various activities such as workshops, readings, panel discussions, talks and publisher interactions with the goal of "igniting passion in the literary arts in Ghana". Hence, the choice of name for the festival, "*Pa Gya*, means 'to ignite (as of a flint)', and depending on pronunciation, also means 'lift up'" (https://writersprojectghana.com/pagyafest/).

The literary festival had several workshops on short fiction, young adult fiction, blogging, poetry, fiction and comics. It also had panel discussions on contemporary children's writing and publishing in Ghana, creative writing programs in Ghana, memory and history as writing genres and other interesting issues relating to literature. I partook in the workshops on young adult fiction, creative writing programs in Ghana and the discussions on contemporary children's writing and publishing in Ghana. All the workshops had award winning authors facilitating them. The participants included aspiring authors, editors from various publishing houses on the continent and myself. Each participant of the workshop was required to submit a short self-written story that they thought suited the particular workshop as a requirement for admission to participate in the workshop. These stories were shared with all participants to read in advance and discussed at the workshop. After contacting the organizers, I was granted permission to partake in the workshops without having to submit a self-written piece but I was required to participate in all assignments during the workshop and contribute to discussions during the workshop. I was also granted permission to ask questions related to my research and quote speakers if I could ensure their anonymity as participants could share aspects of their lives that they would not want to be publicised. Some topics discussed at the workshops included the audience of young adult fiction, writing for awards in young adult fiction and the controversy surrounding what qualifies as young adult fiction. Participation in the workshop on young adult fiction gave insight on young adult fiction in Africa from the point of view of upcoming writers, award winning writers and publishers from the continent of Africa.

4.3 Sample Selection for Young Adult Fiction

The process of selecting texts to analyse for this research was in two parts. In the first part, I

selected books that are in bulk supply in several African countries and likely to be easily accessible to young adults due to their availability at reduced prices or for free in some places. This led me to CODE's Burt awards for African young adult fiction. I selected the ten books which were finalists for the grand prize of CODE's Burt award for African young adult literature for 2017 and 2018. This award scheme was launched in Tanzania in 2008 and has grown to include Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia. In addition to rewarding excellence in young adult fiction, the award also promotes the development of reading materials for young adults. This is done through purchasing three thousand copies of the grand prize winner and honour book for each participating country and distributing them within the four participating countries. This ensures that in each year at least, twenty-four thousand copies of the participating countries' wining book and honour book are distributed in schools, libraries, community centres and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. In 2017, CODE's Burt award introduced the all-star award which would reward the author of the best African young adult fiction since the inception of the awards in 2008. All books which had won the award for the best book in their respective countries since 2008 were shortlisted and five were selected as finalists. I selected all these five finalists. For 2018, the winning book and the second placed book in each of the participating countries was shortlisted and five books were selected as finalists for the all-star award. These five books were included in the sample. I selected these ten books as winners and honour books of this award have their novels being freely accessed by many young adults in many countries in Africa, in addition to being some of the most promoted books on the continent as part of the winning package (https://www.burtaward.org/fr/news/code-announces-new-burt-award-for-african-young-adult-literature).

In addition to the ten books, I randomly selected a representative sample of sixty books by African authors containing some violence. Out of these, I purposively selected ten novels which have been ascribed the status of classics in Africa. The basis for which I selected these books was that these are books that, as a result of their status, have been made required readings for young adults in senior high schools in various parts of the continent. The purposive sampling approach to research is used when "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about a group to select subjects who represent this population" (Berg, 2004: 32). To ensure equal representation of male and female authors in the sample, I included five books by male authors and five by female authors.

As already stated, I excluded books from Northern Africa due to challenges with the languages of writing in Northern Africa. I selected this sample size to guarantee "theoretical saturation" and thereby make findings from this research conclusive as "theoretical saturation is becoming the most common approach to sample size" (Beittin, 2012: 244).

I selected Peggy Oppong's *The Lemon Suitcase* to be read by participants of the study after randomly sampling five hundred young adults at Madina, a suburb of Accra. The bus terminal at Madina provides transportation to many students travelling to various schools all over the country when schools reopen. I spent one week of September 2018 at this station during the first week of reopening for senior high schools. I introduced myself to five hundred young adults in school uniform during that period who used the station. I gave each of these young adults a small sheet of paper which demanded the student's age, school and the storybooks they self-selected to read on their own, and shared with their close circle of friends. Most students obliged since it took about a minute to provide the information. After collating the answers, two novels by Peggy Oppong placed first and second in terms of consumption by the young adults. I realized that more than half

the list of books being read by the young adults was not authored by Africans with books by Shakespeare being the most read since they are required readings for core English and Literature at the senior high school level.

Peggy Oppong's *The Lemon Suitcase* was the most read book authored by an African. Since *The Lemon Suitcase* contains various scenarios of violence, I selected it for reading by participants in this study.

4.4 Content Analysis

Babbie (2010: 333) defines content analysis as "the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings, and laws" while Krippendorff (2004: 18) defines it as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". What is obvious in both definitions is that content analysis involves making deductions from text. The "manifest" and "latent" content of the selected text were analysed. Babbie defines manifest content as "the concrete terms contained in a communication" and defines latent content as "the underlying meaning of communication" (Babbie, 2010: 338). There are three kinds of content analysis: directed content analysis, inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis. "Inductive content analysis is used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when it is fragmented. A deductive approach is useful if the general aim was to test a previous theory in a different situation or to compare categories at different time periods" (Elo & Kyngas, 2008: 107). I used directed content analysis to analyse text of selected books as this type of content analysis allows for analysis based on a theory (Hseih & Shannon, 2005).

The first phase of this study focused on the analysis of characters as they were portrayed in twenty

young adult novels in relation to their depiction in violence related activities. The books selected

can be found in the tables below.

Table 1: African Classics Selected for Textual Analysis

TITLE OF BOOK	NAME OF AUTHOR	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	AUTHOR'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
Mine Boy	Peter Abrahams	1946	South Africa
Things Fall Apart	Chinua Achebe	1958	Nigeria
The River Between	Ngugi Wa Thiongo	1965	Kenya
The African Child	Camara Laye	1953	Guinea
The Concubine	Elechi Amadi	1966	Nigeria
The Joys of Motherhood	Buchi Emecheta	1979	Nigeria
So Long a Letter	Mariama Bâ	1979	Senegal
Nervous Conditions	Tsitsi Dangaremba	1988	Zimbabwe
When Rain Clouds Gather	Bessie Head	1968	South Africa/Botswana
Faceless	Amma Darko	1996	Ghana

Table 2: Burt Award Winning Books Selected for Textual Analysis

NAME OF AUTHOR	TITLE OF BOOK	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	AUTHOR'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
The Twelfth Heart	Elizabeth-Irene Baitie	2010	Ghana
Face Under The Sea	William Mkufya	2011	Tanzania
Living in the Shade: Aiming for the summit	Nahida Esmail	2011	Tanzania
Waiting for the Sun	Elshadai Tesfaye	2015	Ethiopia
The Step-Monster	Ruby Yayra Goka	2016	Ghana
To Kiss a Girl	Ruby Yayra Goka	2018	Ghana
Finding Colombia	Kinyanjui Kombani	2018	Kenya
Somebody's Daughter	Hiwot Walelign	2018	Ethiopia
Ebony Girl	Vera Akumiah	2018	Ghana
The Lion's Whisper	Elizabeth-Irene Baitie	2018	Ghana

4.5 Coding

Coding is "the process whereby raw data are transformed into standardized form suitable for machine processing and analysis" (Babbie, 2010: 338). In order to make inferences from the books to be analysed and the interviews conducted, I designed the table below which contains the coding structure for this study. Coding was carried out as defined by IDS, GSS and Associates (2016). The types of violence do not occur on their own. They often occur along with one or more other

types of violence. The divisions of the types of violence in the coding and analysis have been done for purposes of analysis in this thesis.

Table 3: Coding of Types of Interpersonal Violence

TYPE OF VIOLENCE	ACTIONS/INACTIONS
Physical violence	Slapping, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, dragging or throwing objects at someone, using a weapon, hazardous chemicals or substances against someone, kicking or pulling someone's genitalia, pulling a person's hair, biting, choking, strangling, burning someone
Sexual violence	Forced sex through blackmail or threats, denial of using protection during sex, a sexual partner hiding their HIV status, consensual and non-consensual sex between an adult and a child below 16 years, sexual acts which a person performs against their will (e.g., Oral sex, anal sex, lap dancing)
Psychological violence	Use of insults, belittling or humiliation in private or in front of others, threats of abandonment, being ignored or treated indifferently, intimidation and acts aimed at scaring someone, threats of using weapons

	against someone, threats of hurting someone or someone one cares about
Economic violence	Denial of household money for expenses, unsolicited appropriation of someone's money, control of belongings and spending decisions, damage to or destruction of someone's property, denial of the right to work, forcing someone to work against their will, denial of food and other basic needs

These forms of violence and their forms of expression were also examined from the gendered perspective where necessary, that is in situations where "violence is directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture" (UNESCO, 2013).

4.6 Interviews

"Valid representations of children's views and voices are hardly possible if the most valuable sources of the perspectives of children—children themselves—are not active participants in research" (Black & Busch, 2016: 221). This is why the second phase of the research involved interviewing young adults after they had read one young adult novel. An interview guide was drafted for interviews. To verify the suitability of the interview guide for the study, I conducted a pilot study before the main data collection for this study was undertaken. This was to ensure that the interview guide would be an adequate tool for data collection (Teijlin, Rennie, Hundley & Graham, 2001).

As recommended by Berg (2004: 90), pretesting an interview guide should be in two parts. These should include "the schedule being critically examined by people familiar with the study's subject matter and several practice interviews to assess how effective the interview will work and whether the type of information being sought will actually be obtained". The first part of pretesting was carried out by my thesis supervisors. They made suggestions on improving the interview guide. The second part of pretesting was carried out by randomly and conveniently selecting ten senior high school students from different schools. These students were between the ages of 13 and 19. They were interviewed after they had read the selected novel. During the pilot study, the young adults complained of being overwhelmed by school requirements and therefore having inadequate time to read the story book. It was therefore decided to give more time for students to read in cases where interviews had to take place during the term; or give books to students to read during the vacation where possible. It was also decided that form three students would be excluded as their final exams was close and both the schools and their parents would be reluctant to let them participate in the study, along with the students being overwhelmed by their academic demands.

The young adults also indicated their lack of understanding of the term "interpersonal violence", hence their challenges with responding adequately to questions during interviews. However, it was noticed that the young adults understood the term violence in line with the definition of interpersonal violence. As a result, I decided to use violence, instead of interpersonal violence for the interviews and the second part of the research.

4.7 Procedure

The Ethics Committee for the Humanities of the University of Ghana granted ethical approval for this research. Prior to this, discussions had taken place between me and the heads of some senior

high schools, who had approved data collection pending ethical approval. However, challenges with obtaining ethical approval for my research caused several schools to refuse participation in the research as by the time I obtained ethical approval, the government had introduced one of its flagship programs known as free Senior High School Education. This was a way of increasing attendance to senior high schools in Ghana with government bearing almost all costs of students who attended government senior high schools. As a result, of the overwhelming increase in the number of people who had gained admission to senior high schools, the government had revised the senior high school time table to ensure that even though students would spend fewer months in school per term, they would be able to complete the same syllabus as those before. This resulted in a lot of confusion as heads of senior high schools not only had to find ways of accommodating the many students but also how to manage them with the limited human and financial resources provided by the government.

After getting ethical approval for my research, official letters of introduction were obtained from the Institute of African Studies and sent to the two senior high schools whose headteachers had agreed to let their students partake in the research: Achimota Senior High School and Suhum Presbyterian Senior High School.

Permission was sought from the lecturers of the University of Ghana Required Courses (UGRC) to select students in their class for this research. UGRC is part of students' academic schedule to make them more rounded as students. They include Critical Thinking and Practical Reasoning, Numeracy Skills, Academic Writing, Earth Resources, and African Studies among others. Students are required to take four UGRC courses in their first year and two UGRC courses in their second year. During the semester within which I selected students, most of those in their second year were

taking courses in African studies. This gave most second year students an equal opportunity of participating in the research. Furthermore, it gave me the opportunity to select students from a variety of courses and backgrounds.

4.7.1 Selection of participants

I planned on selecting twenty students (ten males and ten females) between the ages of 14-18, who were interested in participating in the research, from each school. Students within this age range were targeted because as has been established by Williams (2010: 18) "What can safely be established is that young adult fiction is usually intended for adolescent readers, approximately of high school age, and the protagonists of these novels are almost invariably of a similar age". This makes them most suited for this research as they would have a good understanding of young adult text and be able to contribute more to the research. Also, "young women and men (15–19 years old) are substantially more likely to have experienced domestic violence than other age groups" (Institute of Development Studies, Ghana Statistical Service and Associates, 2016: 18). This puts them in a position of having more informed views of violence. To give room for those who would change their minds or not read the book and those whose guardians would not sanction their participation in the research, I selected twenty-four students from each school.

Selection of young adults from Achimota Senior High School, Suhum Presbyterian Senior High School and the University of Ghana allowed for a comparison of responses by sex, academic opportunity and social circumstances. In addition, Alsup (2003) notes that students within this age range are the publishing companies' target market for young adult literature. Each student was given an exercise book to note their own views of the story as they read. Interviews took place after students had completely read the storybook during a one and half month vacation. The reward

the students got for participating in the study was that they got to keep the book they read after the interview.

Ghanaian senior high schools are ranked by the Ghana Education Service (GES) based on students' academic performance over a period of time. The best schools are ranked category A. Next after category A schools are category B schools up to category D. The two senior high schools (one category A and one category B school) were selected based on the willingness of the heads of schools to allow their students to participate in the study. During the final year of junior high school, students are given the chance to select three schools that they are interested in furthering their education in. After the Basic Education certificate Examinations (BECE), students are assigned a senior high school based on their performance in the BECE. This is done through a computerized system where the best performing students are assigned to the best senior high schools and others who do not perform so well are assigned a category B or C senior high school.

Scholars have faced challenges in conducting research with students. One of these challenges was obtaining the consent of various stakeholders such as headteachers, parents, students and their teachers. Other challenges include access to a school setting that would enhance confidentiality of respondents' responses, and reduce the potential for psychological and social harm (Felzmann, 2009; Asselin & Doiron, 2016). Having read about the many challenges researchers who partake in research on people under the age of 18 face, I was a bit fearful of the prospects of my study being approved by Achimota Senior High School, one of the topmost senior high schools in Ghana. I was, however, left almost speechless by the reception of the headmistress and the assistant headmistress in charge of academics. They took so much interest in my research and gave me maximum support to undertake the research. Due to their support, I was able to conduct interviews

with the participating students of Achimota Senior High School without any challenges or delays. This was despite the introduction of a new academic calendar with a much-changed daily schedule for senior high schools which had brought about much consternation to senior high schools all over the country. At Achimota Senior High School, twenty-five students indicated their willingness to participate in the study. All twenty-five students were given copies of the selected novel to read. However, on the day the school assigned for interviews, only fifteen students had obtained parental consent and were interested in being interviewed as part of the study.

Finding another school in another category whose authorities were willing to allow their students to partake in this study was not easy. Most head teachers I approached were unwilling to let their students participate in the research due to time constraints the newly introduced academic calendar had brought. For these heads, participating in this research was going to divert students' attention from their academics and take precious time from students as schools and students were hard pressed for time to prepare for their end of year examinations. Despite assurances that final year students who were preparing for their final examinations would not be included in the study, the head teachers would not oblige. They felt the new academic calendar demanded students' full attention for them to prepare adequately for their final exams due to the shortened nature of the academic year. The headteacher for Suhum Presbyterian Senior High School showed a lot of interest in my research and was interested in the idea of her students partaking in the study. Fortunately, I met her a week before a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting. The PTA meeting was to involve parents, teachers and students of the school. She therefore gave some time after the PTA meeting for me to select students for the study and also assigned teachers to help with the balloting process so the students could obtain consent from their parents to participate in the interview.

To select participants for the study, a simple random sample was used. This was to give all interested participants in the school an equal chance of being part of the sample (May, 2001; Berg, 2004; Babbie, 2010; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interested students were therefore made to ballot. Students were divided into male and female. Two boxes, each containing folded sheets with twelve YES, and NO was passed round for the male and female students to each pick one. This was to ensure an equal number of males and females for the study. Students who picked yes were included in the study. On the days assigned to me by the school for interviews, twenty students had parental consent and were interested in partaking in the interview.

Young adult students in their second year at the University of Ghana were included in the study in order to observe any transitions between responses by senior high school students and those at the tertiary level. First year students were not included in the study since they had gained admission to the university a few months prior to this study and their responses were expected to be similar to those in senior high school. Second year students at the University of Ghana were purposively sampled based on age and interest in participating in the study (Babbie, 2010). There are sixteen African Studies courses to cater to the various interests of students as part of UGRC. These include African Music, Our African Heritage Through Literature, Issues in Africa's Population, Culture and Development, Appropriate Technology for Development, African Dance, Gender and Development, among others. An announcement was made in each of these classes for students interested in participating in the study to meet me at the end of the class. In some classes, no one was interested in taking part in the study. Twenty-eight students were interested in partaking in the study and they were all selected to give room for those who would opt out and those who would not read the book. Students indicated suitable times for interviews and interviews were conducted at the Institute of African Studies and at lecture venues.

4.7.2   Conduct of Interviews

For this research, the goal of the interviews was to seek young adults' perceptions and understandings of violence and how they made meaning of violence in the fiction they read. Therefore, the experiences of participants, the books they read and their ability to identify various types of violence and share their thoughts on them were a key part of the interviews. As Marvasti (2003: 21) notes, "in-depth interviewing is founded on the notion that delving into the subject's 'deeper self' produces more authentic data.... First, understanding the deeper self in this context means seeing the world from the respondent's point of view, or gaining an empathic appreciation of the his or her world".

All interviews in senior high schools took place on the school premises and in spaces assigned by the schools. Interviews at the University of Ghana took place at lecture centers or the premises of the Institute of African Studies depending on the students' academic schedule and convenience. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants. Interviews were guided by an interview guide (Appendix 1). Further questions were asked when necessary. All interviews lasted between twenty and thirty minutes. All interviews were transcribed to make it easier to make inferences from them.

4.7.3 Ethical Considerations

I applied ethical principles which protect human research participants in the conduct of this research in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) Ethical Code and as explained by May (2001), Berg (2004) and Babbie (2010). First, I applied for ethical approval to carry out the research from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities, University of Ghana. After this, letters of introduction were obtained from the Institute of African Studies,

University of Ghana, to the head teachers of schools which had agreed to participate in the research. This was to enable me gain permission from the head teachers of the schools from which data was to be collected to enable me recruit students for the study. Students who volunteered to participate in the research were given consent forms to be filled by their parents (Appendix B). The students also had to fill assent forms. In order not to interfere in students' academics, a copy of the selected storybook was given to students before vacation so they could read during the vacation. This was also to give room for them to seek parental consent for their participation in the study.

The first set of questions in the interview was designed to build rapport between the participants and me (Babbie, 2010). I also briefed students on the purpose of the study and their role in the study. As part of the briefing process, students were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and interviews would take place on a one-on-one basis to ensure confidentiality. All students were assured that their participation or refusal to participate in the study would in no way have bearing on their academic life. Students were assigned pseudonyms based on numbering on their assent form to protect their identity. They were also informed that where they felt particular questions evoke negative memories, they could refuse to answer them. Participants were also given room to ask questions and also make their reservations about the research known in writing or orally. Students could decide at any point of the study, to refuse to partake in the study with no fear of punishment. Finally, participants were informed that my contact details including name, email address and phone number had been provided on the consent and assent form so that participants or their parents/guardians could contact me for further clarification or additional information on the study. They were also informed that interviews would last about thirty minutes per student and would be tape recorded with the data stored on a password protected device.

Debriefing after interviews involved a clinical psychologist to ensure that students who were affected in any way through reading the prescribed text and interviews were given the necessary help.

4.8 Validity

The content analysis of twenty young adult novels and interviewing fifty-five young adults after they had read one young adult novel served as a rigorous methodology to answer the questions this study set out to answer. As Neuendorf (2002: 112) asks in relation to validity of a research methodology, "are we measuring what we want to measure?" This study collected data through content analysis of text by looking at language and characterization in these texts along with the interviews of young adults on sample text. Through these processes, validity was established.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a sketch of the methodological processes used to collect data for this study. I have indicated the processes through which I selected young adult fiction to be analysed for this study. How data will be extracted from the texts for analyses has also been explained. The processes used to select schools and participants for the interviews have been outlined. Finally, I have described ethical issues related to this research and how I resolved them. The next chapter is an analysis of how young adults make meaning of violence in the texts they read.

CHAPTER FIVE
The Construction of Violence in African Young Adult Fiction

5.1 Introduction

My first research question was "how is interpersonal violence portrayed in African young adult fiction?" To answer this question, I purposively sampled twenty novels written by Africans: ten classics that are used for senior high school final exams and CODE Burt award winning books that had elements of violence in them. This chapter presents a summary of findings based on textual analysis of selected young adult fiction. How various forms of violence are portrayed in African young adult fiction through characterization is explored, along with how men, boys, girls and women are portrayed in the context of violence. It answers the following research questions: how are various forms of violence portrayed in African young adult fiction and how are men, boys, women and girls depicted in the context of violence in African young adult fiction. I acknowledge that each category of violence is not discrete because the lines between the types of violence are often blurred. For example, it would be difficult to separate sexual violence from psychological violence or to separate physical violence from psychological violence. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, I have treated the forms of violence separately as they have been conceptualized by the WHO and literature which was reviewed, even though in the real world, they do not necessarily exist like that.

One of the most predominant spaces in which interpersonal violence takes place in young adult fiction is the domestic space. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Ona was raped by Agbadi on his compound to humiliate her because Agbadi felt embarrassed that she had refused to marry him. In *Things Fall Apart*, *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Nervous Conditions*, wives were threatened at home by their husbands on various occasions because of their status as women and wives and what

they stood to lose if the husbands divorced them or refused to provide for them financially. The many examples of various forms of violence in the selected novels are indicative of the prevalence of interpersonal violence against women in African societies. Amoakohene, Smith and Tietaah (2019: 32) in their research on domestic violence are of the opinion that,

> Generally, male partners were mostly perpetrators while female partners were predominantly victims; however, there were a few female participants who reported verbally, emotionally and, sometimes, physically abusing their partners. Those women reflect current trends. The Domestic Violence Unit shows a rise in female-to-male violence in Ghana. This trend suggests that abuse may just be a human phenomenon although more males than females are still recorded as perpetrators.

Most violence is perpetrated by men, as indicated by statistical records and this is reflected in novels by African authors. For example, the Ghana Demographic Health Survey (GDHS) conducted in 2008 discovered that 38.7 percent of women aged between 15 and 49 years had experienced psychological, physical, economic or sexual abuse from a male spouse at some point in their lives. During that same research, it was established that 25 percent of men reported having experienced psychological or physical violence from their spouses. The Kenyan Domestic Household Violence Survey (KDHS) in 2014 also found out that 38 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 years had reported experiencing physical violence in the previous year while an additional 14 percent of women in the country had experienced sexual violence in the past year (https://kw.awcfs.org/article/shocking-statistics-on-status-of-gbv/). Violence is a human phenomenon perpetrated by both males and females. Based on these statistics, one could say that males find themselves in a position to perpetrate more violence based on their position in society along with their socialization.

The books which were analysed and the types of violence found in them can be found in the table below.

Table 4: Selected Novels and the Types of Violence in Them

BOOK TITLE AND YEAR OF PUBLICATION	AUTHOR'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	TYPES OF VIOLENCE FOUND IN THE NOVEL
Mine Boy (1946)	South Africa	Physical violence psychological violence
Things Fall Apart (1958)	Nigeria	Physical violence psychological violence
The River Between (1965)	Kenya	Physical violence psychological violence
The African Child (1954)	Guinea	Physical violence Psychological violence
The Concubine (1966)	Nigeria	Physical violence Psychological violence
The Joys of Motherhood (1979)	Nigeria	Sexual violence Psychological violence Physical violence Economic violence
So Long a Letter (1979)	Senegal	Economic violence Psychological violence
Nervous Conditions (1988)	Zimbabwe	Physical violence

		Economic violence
		Psychological violence
When Rain Clouds Gather (1968)	South Africa/Botswana	Psychological violence Physical violence
Faceless (1996)	Ghana	Physical violence Psychological violence Economic violence Sexual violence
The Lion's Whisper (2018)	Ghana	Physical violence psychological violence
Ebony Girl (2018)	Ghana	Physical violence Psychological violence
Somebody's Daughter (2018)	Ethiopia	Physical violence Psychological violence Economic violence
To Kiss a Girl (2018)	Ghana	Psychological violence
Finding Colombia (2018)	Kenya	Physical violence Psychological violence
Waiting for the Sun (2015)	Ethiopia	Physical violence Psychological violence
The Step-Monster (2016)	Ghana	Physical violence Psychological violence Sexual violence

Living in the Shade: Aiming for the Summit (2011)	Tanzania	Physical violence Psychological violence
Face Under the Sea (2011)	Tanzania	Psychological violence Physical violence
The Twelfth Heart (2010)	Ghana	Psychological violence Economic violence Physical violence

5.2 Construction of Physical Violence

The World Health Organization considers physical violence under three umbrellas: child maltreatment, which is perpetrated by parents and guardians on children; intimate partner violence which occurs in intimate relationships; and youth violence, which is committed by young people. Physical violence is the most described form of violence in African young adult fiction. Both males and females are portrayed as capable of inflicting physical violence on others. The most described form of physical violence in the sampled books was bullying by age mates or people in similar age brackets, followed by several examples of men inflicting physical violence on women and children. Young adults were also portrayed as able to wreak physical violence on adults. A few of such examples were found in the sampled books. In *The African Child*, the explicitness of bullying among students cannot be missed. As Laye states,

> If the work was not going as quickly as the headmaster expected, the big boys, instead of giving us a helping hand, used to find it simpler to whip us with branches pulled from the trees. Now, guava wood is regrettably flexible; skilfully handled, the springy switches used to whistle piercingly, and fall like flails of fire on our backsides. Our flesh stung and smarted, while tears of anguish sprang from our eyes and splashed on the rotting leaves at our feet. In order to avoid these blows, we used to bribe our tyrants with the succulent cakes of Indian corn, the couscous made of meat or fish which we used to bring for our midday meal.

And if we happened to have any money on us, the coins changed hands at once. If we did not do this, if we were afraid of going home with an empty stomach or an empty purse, the blows were redoubled. They were administered with such furious generosity and with such diabolical gusto that even a deaf mute would have gathered that we were being flogged not so much to spur us on to work, but rather to lash us into a state of submissiveness in which we would be only too glad to give up our food and money (Laye, 1954: 69).

In other examples of bullying among colleagues, readers are told in *The Ebony Girl* that "Asabea recalled how she had slapped Allan Carter so hard for calling her ugly that she had to nurse a bloodshot palm for a week (Akumiah, 2018: 5). In the same novel, another example of bullying among school colleagues occurs.

"You, Jonathan!" said Asabea pointing her finger at him. "How dare you." Then, catching him unawares, Asabea grabbed him by the collar and shook him so hard that he lost his balance and slipped onto the floor (Akumiah, 2018: 6).

In *The Lion's Whisper*, David attacks Leo because Leo had stood by silently as his dog mauled David's sister's favourite fowl to death.

David! Leo lunged forward, propelled by a force within him that he was unable to control. All he wanted was to kill David. David wheeled around, just in time for Leo's fist to connect with his jaw. He let out an angry yell and staggered, falling back onto the potholed road. The bag of bottles flew from his hand and smashed against the ground. The clinking of shattering glass rang in the air. Aaaaaarghhh! That's my father's drink, you fool! David yelled, his eyes dark slits of furry. He leapt up and swung his leg in a side kick which struck Leo full in the chest. Winded and choking, Leo went down. His mouth filled with saliva as a wave of nausea washed through him. David rushed down on him and Leo kicked out, catching David on his knee. David stumbled and fell forward. Leo rolled onto him, grabbed a handful of his soft, curly hair and smashed his face into the crumbling tarmac. David flung his arms backwards and grabbed Leo's head, pressing his thumb hard into his eyes. Leo screamed and tore himself away, giving David a chance to flip around squinting through the burning pain from his eyeballs, Leo could see blood trickling from David's forehead and lip. A rush of wicked pleasure swept through him as he lowered his head and charged at him, butting him under the chin. David kicked out and they went down together on the road, rolling in the dust and punching each other (Baitie, 2018: 152-153).

These examples show that bullying is not exclusive to one gender but occurs in both genders. They also show that while boys can bully their male colleagues and girls, girls can also bully their female colleagues and boys. In other examples of physical violence among children, Tambudzai, a girl, is pictured attacking her brother in *Nervous Conditions*. Two boys are also depicted in a fight in *The River Between*.

Several examples of adults being physically violent towards children ran through African young adult fiction. In *The African Child*, Laye is given a slap by his mother for endangering himself by going to play with a snake; parents give their children lashes for ignoring their role of protecting the farms from pests; Camara Laye's father's apprentices beat up a boy who persistently bullies Camara Laye at school; and Kouyate's father lashes Himourana with his cattle whip for bullying his son. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo beat his son, Nwoye, for going to church. In *Nervous Conditions,* Bakambu, in anger, engages his daughter in physical combat. In *The Lion's Whisper,*

> Leo remembered Mr Zhang's furious face as he hauled him out by his ear, slapped him very hard across his back and face, and dragged him over to his house. Only then had the man released him, shouting curses at his mother and telling her to keep him in check" (Baitie, 2018: 82).

In *Finding Colombia*, Alex is almost killed by Angela, the kingpin of narcotic drug distribution in the country.

> Without warning, Angela jumped up and grasped his free hand, and in a move that took a fraction of a second, flipped him over. He slammed into the wall, face first. 'What are you doing?' he gasped. The pain shot up his hand as she twisted it behind his back. She did not answer. Roughly, she pulled him up and pushed him towards the veranda. 'Shut up and do what I say, and you will live to…' 'You are hurting me' he groaned. 'What are you doing?" then he felt a cold blade on his neck. "Do not even try to move. If you do, I will kill you! Who are you exactly, and what is your mission here? Her voice was menacing. It was hard to believe what was happening. "I need help…my head is spinning…" He looked up and suddenly saw the dartboard. Without thinking, he reached out with his free hand and unhooked it in one swift move. Helped along by gravity, the dartboard hit Angela on the head. She grunted and loosened her grip on his hand.

> He wriggled free and stumbled into the shadows. Angela recovered quicker than he expected and ran after him. There was a shuffle of feet. Suddenly, the veranda was flooded by the light from tens of torches. "Freeze! Don't make a move!" Someone shouted (Kombani, 2018: 119).

It is not only adults who are portrayed as capable of being physically violent on children as the world bank classifications of interpersonal violence includes youth violence. Youth violence has also been termed child-to-parent-violence. This is defined by Cottrell (2001: 3) as "a harmful act by a teenage child intended to gain power and control over a parent... where the abuse is physical, psychological or financial". Children, especially young adults, are portrayed as capable of inflicting bodily harm on adults. In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha fights her father in a fit of anger. The fight is described thus: "Nyasha was doing whatever damage she could" to her father's body (Dangaremba, 1988: 115).

The most outstanding depiction of violence perpetrated by a child on an adult in the selected novels, can be found in *The Step-monster.* In the story, Buerki fights her heavily pregnant step-mother for changing the worn-out chairs in the house because she does not agree with her father's decision to marry another woman after the loss of her mother. The fight is described thus:

> 'You don't have the right.' I grabbed two Woodin thrown pillows and threw them out of the door and onto the sand. I grabbed the third one at the same time as Naadu. I tried to pull it away from her. She wouldn't let it go. Mantse grabbed me and tried to pull me away from Naadu. I let go of the pillow and Naadu went tumbling down. She hit her abdomen on one of arm rest of one of the chairs. She doubled over in pain. Mantse helped her gently into the new sofa. Then he turned to me, 'what's wrong with you?' 'what's wrong with me? What's wrong with you? With all of you? You all act like she's the best thing that happened to you. I hate her! And the baby! I hate her and the baby! (Goka, 2016: 94).

Odoi, Rafapa and Klu (2014) interpret Nyasha's fight with her father and her ensuing suicide as a way to fight for her freedom and to get back at her parents for their real or imagined wrongs. The examples in young adult fiction therefore support Cottrell (2001)'s argument that young adults'

attempts to harm adults are ways of gaining power and control over these adults. In the circumstances Nyasha found herself in, she was fighting her father in order to free herself from what she saw as her father's patriarchy endorsing instructions to her. She wanted her freedom, like the males in her society. In Buerki's case, she was fighting for power over her step-mother, whom she saw as an intruder in the family, with intentions of tearing the family apart. In both cases, Nyasha and Buerki were rebelling against what they felt were impositions by the adults in their lives. As Richmond (2004) notes, rebelliousness against parental authority is one of the most prominent adolescent traits. Nyasha's rebelliousness against her father, leading to the fight between them was therefore to be expected. Buerki's "war" against her step-mother, could also be looked at as a rebellion against her father's decision to take a new wife and his choice of wife.

Many examples of adults being on the receiving end of physical violence from other adults pervade African young adult fiction. In *The African Child*, Camara Laye's father beats up his son's headmaster for not doing anything about bullying in the school. Camara Laye describes the fight thus:

> 'You should not have said that,' said my father. And he went right up to the headmaster. 'do you think you'll beat me up as apprentices beat up one of my pupils this morning?' cried the headmaster. And he hit out with his fists; but although he was stronger, he was fat and his fat impeded rather than helped him; and my father, who was thin, but active and supple, had no difficulty in dodging his blows and setting about him in no uncertain fashion. My father got him down on the ground and was punching him for all he was worth: I don't know what might have happened if the teachers had not dragged him off (Laye, 1954: 76).

In an example from *Mine Boy*, two women are depicted fighting each other.

> The fat one was on top, sitting on the chest of the little one. But the little one had her by the hair and was pulling. And tears were flowing from the fat one's eyes and her neck was pulled backward by the straining tug at her long brown hair. Pull! Pull them out, Lena! Daddy shouted, and rolled into the gutter with excitement. The little one pulled. The fat one loosened her grip on the little one's throat and fell back. As she tumbled over, her dress went up and her pale flesh

showed...when Xuma looked again, the little one was on top. And her left hand was on the throat of the fat one and her right hand was behind her back, searching for her shoe. She found it, raised it right above her head, and brought it down on the fat one's head. When she lifted it again, blood was flowing from the fat one's head (Abrahams, 1946: 8).

In another depiction of physical violence in *Mine Boy*, a woman and a man are pictured in a fight.

Leah took another step. Dladla slashed out. He missed her. She grabbed his arm and pushed it away. He strained to bring the knife down on her shoulder. But Leah held him like a vice. 'Try harder,' she whispered and hit him in the face with her forehead. A trickle of blood flowed from his own. Veins stood out on his forehead and neck as he strained to bring the knife down. Locked in the dreadful tug, they strained from side to side. Desperately, Dladla tried to trip her up. She snorted. Then slowly, she pushed his arm back. Back. Back. Back. Beads of sweat showed on his forehead. His face twisted with pain. There was a harsh crack and Dladla went limp. The knife slipped from his fingers. Leah left him and he collapsed in a heap (Abrahams, 1946:29).

In a final example of physical violence, Okonkwo is pictured beating his wife and then shooting at her.

'Who killed this banana tree?' he asked. A hush fell on the compound immediately. 'Who killed this tree? Or are you all deaf and dumb?' As a matter of fact, the tree was very much alive. Okonkwo's second wife had merely cut a few leaves off it to wrap some food, and she said so. Without further argument, Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping. Neither of the other wives dared to interfere beyond the occasional and tentative, 'it is enough, Okonkwo,' pleaded from a reasonable distance…. In fact, he had not killed a rat with his gun. And so, when he called Ikemefuna to fetch his gun, the wife who had been beaten murmured something about guns that never shot. Unfortunately for her, Okonkwo heard it and ran madly into his room for the loaded gun, ran out again and aimed at her as she clambered over the dwarf wall of the barn. He pressed the trigger and there was a loud report accompanied by the wail of his wives and children. He threw down the gun and jumped into the barn, and there lay the woman, very much shaken and frightened but quite unhurt. He heaved a heavy sigh and went away with the gun (Achebe, 1958: 27).

Other examples of adults physically assaulting others in African young adult fiction exist. In *Things Fall Apart*, Enoch murders an Egwugwu and Okonkwo murders the white man's messenger. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, some of these examples are: Naife banging his guitar on his wife's head in anger; and attacking a butcher's household with a machete and wounding some

people. In all of this, men are depicted as being in the majority in terms of expressing physical violence. During my interviews with research participants, I asked them about their perception of men and women and violence and all of them said men were more likely to be physically violent. Some reasons given were:

> In the Ghanaian society, if you are a man and you tend to be feeble, people look down on you. People laugh at you, they call you all sorts of names "*jon*", *obaabarima* et cetera so most men who are down to earth, they can't even be themselves. They can act as cool when they are at home or when they are with you but when they see their friends or are outside the house, they have to meet the status quo that I'm a man so I think aggressiveness has to do with men. Even though some women are aggressive, it's not like the men (AC003C).

> Men tend to be more aggressive by nature because they believe they have to show that they are above women. They are superior so they have to show that I'm a man (AC013C).

> Males are more violent. Because they feel they have so much energy. I think the males they are too violent. I think it's in their blood (SH009C).

> Sometimes it is very painful. More like you investing money into a savings and loans company and they try to run away with your money. It's not good for a man to beat a wife but sometimes, the woman can go to the extreme for the man to beat them. Assuming I am a mason and you are a house wife. Anytime I get my salary I give you half of the money and all this while I do this, you give it to your boyfriend and I find out, I will by all means beat you. With situations containing violence, I don't think we should jump to conclusions when we see these things happening. We should investigate to find out why the person resorted to a particular form of violence (UG019C).

These views on physical violence align with the dominant form of description of physical violence in the selected books. The views also point to the ways boys are socialized in relation to the use of physical violence as from the selected texts and the responses of the research participants, physical violence is a weapon a man is expected to wield to express his masculinity and his ability to dominate others. It is also reflective of reportage on violence where according to Mantey (2019:1) "literature reveals that women in violent relationships are more likely than men to report

forms of violence among almost all cultures of the world. In other words, male victims compared to female are less likely to tell anyone about partner abuse. The reasons for the lower tendency to report domestic violence among men seem to partly find an explanation in the patriarchal relationship that entrusts power, might, and physical strength to men".

5.3 Construction of Sexual Violence

The World Health Organization sees sexual violence as sexual assault, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and sexual trafficking. Sexual violence therefore occurs in many ways, with rape being the most known since there is evidence of it having occurred. In young adult fiction, sexual violence is portrayed as being performed by males on females. Sexual violence was also mostly portrayed as a form of intimate partner violence since it occurred between lovers, with the victim often blamed for teasing the perpetrator.

In *The Step-monster*, by Ruby Yayra Goka, Buerki is almost raped by Ekow on a date. Buerki has a crush on Ekow, which she makes known to her best friend, Aseye. Aseye notifies Ekow of Buerki's interest in him since Ekow is Aseye's boyfriend, Sackey's elder bother's friend. Aseye and Buerki lied to their parents in order to attend a party, at which Aseye had planned to hitch Ekow and Buerki together. As soon as Aseye had done her part in introducing Ekow and Buerki to each other, she leaves them alone to get to know each other. As soon as they are alone, Ekow tries to get Buerki tipsy by giving her alcohol. After this, he dances a bit with her in a night club and leads her to his car in a secluded car park late in the night. With explicit language, Ruby Yayra Goka describes what happened:

> He opened the back seat and I got in. In seconds, he was on top of me. His tongue forcing its way into my mouth. One hand snaking its way through the V in my blouse and squeezing one of my breasts, the second pulling me towards him. I pushed him away from me but he just got more excited and pulled me closer. He

was strong. I clawed at his face and back with my fake nails. He got the message and stopped. 'What is it?' he panted. 'Stop. I want to get out.' 'Huh? Aseye said you liked me.'…. 'I did. I do. But not like this. This is not what I wanted.' A look of pure hatred entered his eyes. 'You are just a tease. Get out of my car. Right now.' I scrambled out of the car (Goka, 2016: 86).

This scenario is best explained by Fiaveh and Okyerefo (2017: 8) who in their research on women and men's sexual preferences say "Men (younger men in particular) perceived a relationship as necessarily involving sexual intercourse, while women stressed that sex is about love and should ideally occur in marriage". They also say that

> Whereas, for women, being pressured to have sex and engage in unwanted sexual practices and positions was forced sex, younger men perceived pressuring women for sex as an expression of 'proper' masculinity because women only express love 'openly' to 'real' men – meaning men who do not give up easily on women's refusal of sexual advances. The men claimed that it is the nature of women to say no to sex when they actually mean yes because they do not want to appear cheap to men, and that a 'proper' man should not be worried when a woman refuses his sexual overtures (Fiaveh & Okyerefo, 2017: p9).

One could therefore interpret Ekow's behaviour as that of a young man who thinks relationships should automatically include sex, even though he and Buerki are not yet in a relationship. Ekow's behaviour could also be explained as that of a young man who thinks pressuring a woman into having sex is an expression of his masculinity. In relation to the expression of masculinity, Ekow's attempt to have sex with Buerki in his car could be interpreted as a way to prove his manliness through conquest. This is because as noted by Amin, Kagesten, Adebayo and Chandra-Mouli (2018), one of the ways adolescent males prove their masculinity to their peers is through sexual conquest and unsafe sex.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Ona gets raped by Agbadi, who also accuses her of teasing him and emasculating him several times. Buchi Emecheta describes the incident thus:

> Then the anger came to him again as he remembered how many times this young woman had teased and demeaned him sexually. He felt like jumping on her,

clawing at her, hurting her……… Ona gasped and opened her eyes. She wanted to scream. But Agbadi was faster, more experienced. He slid on his belly, like a big black snake, and covered her mouth with his. He did not let her mouth free for a very long time. She struggled fiercely like a trapped animal, but Agbadi was becoming himself again. He was still weak, but not weak enough to ignore his desire. He worked on her, breaking down all her resistance. He stroked and explored with his perfect hand, banking heavily on the fact that Ona was a woman, a mature woman, who had had him many a time. And he was right. Her struggling and kicking lessened. She started to moan and groan instead, like a woman in labour. He kept on, and would not let go, so masterful was he in this art. He knew he had reduced her to longing and craving for him. He knew he had won. He wanted her completely humiliated in her burning desire (Emecheta, 1979:16-17).

For Agbadi, raping Ona, humiliating her in the process and leaving her unsatisfied, especially at a time when she is vulnerable, was his way of paying her back for refusing his advances many times. This example is one of the clearest illustrations of the intersections between the types of violence. Agbadi uses physical violence to sexually exploit Ona, but with the goal of psychological violence. This example is also discussed under psychological violence as Agbadi clearly indicates psychological violence is the ultimate goal of his action.

In *Faceless,* Poison attempts to rape Fofo as a way to warn her not to open up to the police or anyone about the death of his younger sister if she did not want to experience more rape and bodily harm. This happens after a radio station has discussions on a mutilated dead girl disposed of by a kiosk at the market. This dead girl happens to be the younger sister of Fofo who was accidentally murdered by her uncle. The uncle had tried to have sex with her as part of a ritual prescribed by a traditional priest but he accidentally killed her while trying to force her into the act. Amma Darko describes the attempted rape of Fofo thus:

The hands began to play around her bosom. Slowly she began her descent from dream to reality. She felt a squeeze, which jolted her very rudely into full awakening. She opened her eyes slightly. Someone was kneeling over her. She opened the eyes a little. It was a man. She stiffened, closed the eyes again and remained still. Instincts guided. The hand travelled gradually and purposefully

down to her stomach. Her heart pounded violently, threatening to explode inside her chest. The hand moved further down. Instinct continued to guide. She opened her eyes again. Wider. Two vicious eyes glared back at her under the illumination of the storefront bulb. She stared into the face above her. Was her mind playing games with her? She looked again. It was the no-nonsense street lord Poison of the streets all right. A man who used to be the leader of the bullies like Macho now was. Who used to be content with just 'spot fines', but whose eyes, like they say, opened, somewhere along the line and caused him to fight his way to his present position of 'street lord'. Fofo let out a cry and began to kick her hands and legs wildly in the air. One huge muscular hand came down hard upon her mouth and suppressed the sounds from her throat. The other restrained her flailing hands and legs. The angel still looking on shed a tear. Poison successfully captured her legs between his kneeling thighs. "You want to live?" He hissed. Fofo moaned and nodded under the gravity of his hands. "Then no noise!" He warned. Fofo thought fast and wild. Her guts led her on. Then fate preached her the gospel according to street wisdom. She ceased her weak grappling, sighed heavily and went limp. Poison grinned like the devil self. The confidence of a fool. The folly of evil. Fofo lay there like a defeated soul. Poison pushed up her dress and scowled at the sight of her underpants. He muttered an obscenity and yanked it off. Fofo surrendered to her instincts. Poison unbuckled his belt. Then the angel descended. And it was so swift and so sudden that even Fofo herself didn't see it coming. It was an instant reaction of reflexes that in the split of that second responded to a stimulus without soliciting the involvement of the brain. Her right leg struck at flesh. Her left leg kicked into muscle. Her fists bashed and banged into facial organs, hitting into both softness and bones. By the time sanity returned, the big muscular frame of Poison was swaying above her, one hand clutching the groin, the other shielding an obviously wounded eye. His face was contorted and oozing pure pain. Fofo shot up and grabbed the black plastic bag beside her. She cast one last look at the groaning mass on the ground; gave up on her underpants and bolted like the devil was at her heels (Darko, 2003: 3-4).

As the examples reveal, sexual violence occurs for many reasons: as 'punishment', as warning, to prove dominance and as a form of revenge. As with the other examples of sexual violence, Poison's attempt to rape Fofo has physical, sexual and psychological violence intersecting.

There is no record of a female attempting to rape a man in any of the selected novels. Neither is there any example of a female sexually assaulting a man. Eze (2013) attributes the low reportage of male rape or sexual assault to disbelief in African societies that a man can be raped by a woman. Laws that do not recognize that a man can be raped by a woman have also been cited as one of the

reasons for low reportage of male rape. These laws can be found in Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Nigeria (Folayan, Odetoyinbo, Harrison & Brown, 2014; Stefiszyn, 2008). The lack of reports of male rape or sexual assault is therefore reflective of society where there are rarely reports of women raping or sexually assaulting a man. It could also be as a result of socialization, which prevents men from reporting rape. For example, during my research, when I asked some young adults if a man was justified in killing a woman attempting to rape him, the response was exemplified by "it can never be possible for a woman to rape a man". These research participants had been socialized into thinking rape could only be perpetrated by a male on a female. Therefore, the absence of scenarios of men being sexually abused or harassed by women is likely due to the absence of reports in society of men being raped or assaulted by women and the belief by some members of society that such an act is not possible.

Addo (1992) notes that rapists or would-be rapists often justify their actions with the excuse that their victims are to be blamed for their actions as they were provocatively dressed. He argues that this alibi has played a part in the number of reports of rape or sexual assault not being equivalent to the number of convictions. As Adomako Ampofo (1993) puts it, making the argument that the victim is partly to blame for the perpetrator's actions makes it appear that "the woman was asking for it", which often coerces judges into not giving very harsh sentences. Ekow and Agbadi's claim to being teased therefore feeds into the argument that male sexuality is uncontrollable and so once teased men must find a way of punishing the victim sexually. While the language of sexual violence is explicit, there is no mention of the sexual organs in any of the selected novels, even though other parts of the body, including breasts and buttocks are not censored in any way.

5.4 Construction of Deprivation or Neglect

The World Health Organization, in its breakdown on interpersonal violence, refers to economic violence as deprivation or neglect. This includes denial of money for expenses, damage or destruction of someone's property and denial of food and other basic needs. As with sexual violence, the picture of economic violence in young adult fiction was painted with males being the perpetrators while females were the victims.

In *So Long a Letter*, Ramatoulaye decries the financial loss Senegalese women endure during funerals. This heart-rending experience takes place during the funeral of her husband. She pours her heart out thus:

> This is the moment dreaded by every Senegalese woman, the moment when she sacrifices her possessions as gifts to her family-in-law; and worse still, beyond her possessions she gives up her personality, her dignity, becoming a thing in the service of the man who has married her, his grandfather, his grandmother, his father, his mother, his brother, his sister, his uncle, his aunt, his male and female cousins, his friends (Ba, 1981: 4).

This is due to cultural influences on funerals which demand that widows, aside having to ensure that their in-laws are well catered for even in the death of their spouse, have to also see to it that funeral sympathizers are also fed. Due to the large number of mourners at Modou Fall's funeral, these widows would have spent a lot on the funeral. In addition to this, the widows had to go through some customary rituals to mark their separation from their spouse. All these would have caused a dent in the widows' finances.

On the third day of the funeral, when donations are being made, Ramatoulaye, commenting on the unfair nature of the distribution of donations says, "Thus, our family-in-law take away with them a wad of notes, painstakingly topped, and leave us utterly destitute, we who will need material support" (Ba, 1981: 7).

This further explains how culture enables the widows' in-laws to enrich themselves at the expense of the widows, due to the unfair nature of distribution of funeral donations. She also notes that her house had been "stripped of all that could be stolen, all that could be spoilt". Such actions would leave these widows impoverished and most likely needing financial support for the rest of their lives. The experiences of Ramatoulaye throughout the novel reveal the aftermath of undergoing such practices in the name of fulfilling customary demands of funerals.

Ramatoulaye also notes with concern, the implication of her husband, Modou, relinquishing his contribution to their joint account as he invested all his earnings and loans to satisfy the demands of his new bride, Binetou, and her mother. Modou takes advantage of Islam's permission for a man to have more than one wife to secretly marry Binetou without informing his first wife as required by Islam. In addition to this, he does not fulfil his financial obligations to her, which is also obligatory for a man who takes more than one wife. In my opinion, the biggest form of economic violence in *So Long a Letter* is the denial of Binetou, a teenager the chance to write her final exams or any chance of furthering her education, through the machinations of her mother, who gives her off in marriage to a man old enough to be her father, against her wishes. Ramatoulaye sums up the situation of Binetou by remarking that "Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence (Ba, 1981: 39). While Binetou also enjoyed the pomp that came with having access to wealth that her age mates did not have, she had to sacrifice her future in exchange for it.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Tambudzai, who had been denied education by her father due to poverty, cultivated a farm with the hope of using sales from the proceeds to sponsor her education. Unfortunately, her brother, Nhamo, stole a lot of the maize from the farm as gifts for a girl he was interested in, in his school. This results in a fight between the two of them when Tambudzai finds

out, as she realizes her brother is part of the plot to deny her education. As if this is not enough, after selling the maize left on her farm and using the sales to pay her school fees, Tambudzai's father went to the head teacher to demand the money with the reason that Tambudzai is his daughter and therefore he owns her. He extends this argument to say that if he owned Tambudzai, then any money she made was his. Fortunately for Tambudzai, the headmaster of her school refused to give her father the money paid as fees.

Elizabeth-Irene Baitie's *The Twelfth Heart*, presents another form of economic violence which is perpetrated by roommates in a senior high school. These roommates connived to steal all the savings of one of their roommates, (which she kept in her suit case) in order to cripple her financially. This was to punish her for not contributing to a party they organized to celebrate the birthday of one of the dorm mates. The scenario is depicted thus:

> I slipped past them into the dorm and gave the key to Juliet. She opened Lucy's locker deftly, and felt through the neat single pile of folded clothes. Nothing. There was nothing under the paper shelf-liner either and nothing in the bag containing the underwear. My heart was pounding. "Hurry!" I urged her, standing watch by the door. By now, Elinam's shrieks were beginning to sound contrived. And Lucy never lingered in the shower. Suddenly, Juliet shot a triumphant glance at me and pulled out a slim brown envelope. She slipped it into her pocket, and we then dashed back to the bathroom and slid the key into Lucy's housecoat. Akosua was waiting for us outside the box-room in the corridor-our agreed hiding place for the money. Inside the dim little box room, the four of us together lifted up one side of the heavy toolbox that contained the shears, hoes, spades and other gardening tools, and slipped the envelope underneath it. then we hurried upstairs to join the circle of girls around Elinam (Baitie, 2010: 78).

In a heart-breaking example of neglect, readers of Amma Darko's *Faceless* are told that Fofo's destitute mother continues to have unprotected sex with men she knows are irresponsible and then abandons these children to their fate on the streets at a young age. Readers are told Fofo's mother already has four children on the streets and has two children growing who will have the same fate.

In the examples given, economic violence is revealed as mostly occurring in the domestic space. It is also depicted as being perpetrated mostly by kin such as marriage partners, siblings and parents, especially men. This is to be anticipated as Gyekye (1996) considers providing for the sustenance of a man's wife (or wives) and children as one of the key responsibilities of married men. Adomako Ampofo (2001: 200) also notes that "even where women are economic providers in their own rights they learn to concede the nominal role of 'provider' or 'head' to a male". As a result of social expectation as expressed by Gyekye (1996) and socialization as articulated by Adomako Ampofo (2001), one would understand why men are best placed to perpetrate acts of economic violence, as they are most often the ones in control of the family's resources.

The language of economic violence in the selected texts is not as plain as that of sexual violence. To borrow the words of Ramatoulaye, in relation to young Nabou who is also given into marriage to an elderly man, Mawdo, to satisfy the desires of her aunt, "he reduced Nabou to a plate of food" (p34). One can do whatever one pleases with a plate of food one has paid for, and the food cannot speak or retaliate in any way. Victims of economic violence, due to their position as financially incapacitated and therefore dependent on the benevolence of those with the means, are speechless in the face of economic violence. Even though some, like Tambudzai, Fofo and Ramatoulaye, through their agency, are able to break the restraints imposed on them through economic violence, others like Binetou, get imprisoned by the perpetrators of economic violence all their lives.

5.5 Construction of Psychological Violence

Psychological violence is expressed in multiple ways in African young adult fiction. In most depictions of psychological violence in young adult fiction, it is linked with physical, economic or sexual violence. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, readers are told that:

> Grunting like an excited animal with a helpless prey, he left her abruptly, still unsatiated, and rolled painfully to the other side of the goatskin. Having hurt her on purpose for the benefit of his people sleeping in the courtyard, he had had his satisfaction. She hated him at that moment. "All this show just for your people, Agbadi?" she whispered. Unable to help herself, she began to cry quietly (Emecheta, 1979: 17).

This example, as discussed under sexual violence portrays the interconnectedness between the various types of violence as physical, sexual and psychological violence all take place within the same context. Looking at it from the perspective of psychological violence, Agbadi rapes Ona in a tent in the middle of his court yard, and ensures she makes noise to draw attention to them, with his wives and friends sleeping around the tent, to humiliate her for rejecting him on multiple occasions. He does this because Ona's father, who had no son, had dedicated her to the gods. Therefore, Ona could not marry Agbadi since any children she had, would belong to her father, and not to her husband. As a result, even though Ona loved Agbadi, she was torn between loyalty to her father and her lover. It is this confusion in Ona's mind that Agbadi takes advantage of, which results in Ona finding herself in tears.

In *The Concubine*, Wigwe humiliated his son by taking him to Ihuoma's house to propose marriage to her. Wigwe does this knowing that Ihuoma is a widow and no one would allow their first child to marry a widow. As a result, Wigwe expected Ihuoma to refuse the proposal of marriage, thereby humiliating his son.

> 'Ihouma, my child,' Wigwe began at last, 'really I ought to have come here with more people, but I have avoided formalities because I want to spare myself any embarrassments. Formalities will come later if all goes well. Please don't blame me.' Ihuoma, not knowing exactly what was coming this time, had no comments to make. She sat upright and directed her gaze meekly into the floor. That was the correct posture to adopt when being spoken to by an elder. She was desperately trying to be as blameless as possible in what was threatening to be complicated state of affairs. 'Ihuoma', Wigwe resumed, 'I have come to ask you to marry my son Ekwueme. What do you say?' Ekwueme looked up, his face lined with surprise. A moment later he realized his father was being supremely

tactful. The irony of it all embittered him. Ihuoma saw the ruse immediately and was saddened at this play-acting at her own expense. Eve a fool would not let his son take on a widow as a first wife. Did Wigwe think she was too naïve to see through that? (Amadi, 1966:113).

I read what was written in the dust on the rear windscreen of Chidi's car before he did. Someone had written 'Naija man, better be careful. Your girlfriend had gonorea (sic: gonorrhoea) last year (Goka, 2018:140).

In *The River Between*, Joshua attempts to physically assault his daughter, and then disowns her as his child, all in a bid to stop her from leaving his house. He also tried to use biblical scripture to blackmail his daughter into not moving in with a man he did not approve of since in Joshua's view, Waiyaki's support of his people's traditions was an indication that he was not a true worshipper of 'God'. The scene is described thus:

Joshua woke up from his stupor. He would never have thought that this meek, quiet and obedient daughter could be capable of such an action. He rushed toward her and was about to lay his hands on her when he realized that this was another temptation brought to him by Satan. Christ in him must triumph at this hour of trial. Waiyaki and Nyambura were standing near the door. "For me and my house we will serve the Lord," Joshua declared, pointing at Nyambura with the forefinger of his right hand. "You are not my daughter. Yet let me warn you," he continued, his voice changing from one of fiery anger to one of calm sorrow, "you will come to an untimely end. Go!" (wa Thiongo, 1965:104).

One of the most disconcerting forms of psychological violence is found in Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*. The scenario is depicted thus:

A certain old woman of the village, named Mma-Baloi, was charged with allegedly practicing witchcraft, and so certain were the villagers of her guilt that they frequently forgot themselves and burst out into loud chatter and had to be brought to order by the president of the court with threats of fines. Evidence was that Mma-Baloi had always lived a secret and mysterious life apart from the other villagers. She was also in the habit of receiving strangers from far-off places into her home who would not state what dealings they had with Mma-Baloi. Now, over a certain period, a number of the children of the village had died sudden deaths, and each time a mother stood up to describe these sudden deaths, the crowd roared in fury because the deaths of the children and the evil practices of Mma-Baloi were one and the same thing in their minds. The accused, Mma-Baloi, sat a little apart from the villagers in a quaking, ashen, crumpled heap; and each time the villagers roared, she seemed about to sink into the earth.

Noting this, Chief Sekoto's kindly heart was struck with pity…At last he turned to the accused and said gently, 'well mother, what do you have to say in defense of yourself?' 'Sir, I am no witch,' said the quavering old voice. 'Even though I am called the mother of witches, I am no witch. Long ago I was taught by the people who live in the bush how to cure ailments with herbs and that is my business' (Head, 1968: 51-52).

Other forms of psychological violence are in the form of threats to others. In *Things Fall Apart*, when Okonkwo heard that Ikemefuna would not eat, he came to stand over Ikemefuna with a big stick in hand. This forced Ikemefuna to swallow all his yams, which he later vomited. Even though Okonkwo, being the man he was described to be, would have carried through his threat to hit Ikemefuna with the big stick if he had not eaten, it is the fear of being hit that makes Ikemefuna swallow the food and not because he was hit. In *So Long a Letter*, readers are told in relation to Binetou's marriage that, "her mother cried so much. She begged her daughter to give her a happy end, in a proper house, as the man has promised them. So, she accepted" (Bâ, 1981: 36). Because of the turmoil caused in Binetou's head by her mother's tears and pleading, Binetou sacrifices her final exams and education to marry a man old enough to be her father, so her mother could enjoy the financial benefit. By the customs of her society, Binetou is old enough to marry. Binetou herself enjoyed the gifts and benefits of being in a relationship with an older man but is coerced into sacrificing her future by her mother's tears. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnaife threatens Nnu Ego that she would receive the greatest beating of her life if she ever mentioned the name of Amotokwu, her former husband again. In *Nervous Conditions*, Mr Matimba threatens to whip Nhamo and Tambudzai if they ever fought in school again. Mr Bakambu also threatens Tambudzai with expulsion from his house, to stop buying her clothes and to stop paying her fees if she did not attend her mother's wedding. No young adult was portrayed threatening an adult or another young adult or child.

5.6 Conclusion

As expressed in African young adult fiction, violence is multifaceted and involves kinfolk harming each other, children harming adults, and intimate partner violence. These forms of interpersonal violence are interrelated and often occur with other forms of violence. For example, sexual violence is accompanied by psychological and physical violence while physical violence is accompanied by psychological violence. In the novels, the writers reveal the causes of violence as alcohol, anger, defense of honour and inequalities in society. Issahaku (2017: 2) is of the opinion that "literature examining the association between alcohol use and male perpetrated IPV is growing". McCloskey, Boonzaier, Steinbrenner and Hunter (2016: 277) conclude that "based on our review of the empirical literature, some risk factors for violence documented in Western societies are the same in Africa, including poverty, drinking, a past history of child abuse or posttraumatic stress disorder, and highly traditional gender role beliefs". In some stories, the authors make the perpetrators of the violence justified due to diverse forms of provocation from the victim. The next chapter looks at how young adults, to whom young adult fiction is directed, make meaning of the depiction of the various types of violence in the texts they read.

CHAPTER SIX
Young Adults' Understanding of Violence in African Young Adult Fiction

6.1 Introduction

My final research question was "What are Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of interpersonal violence?" To answer this question, I introduced young adults in Ghana to a young adult novel to find out their views on it. I sampled five hundred senior high school students to freely list books that were of interest to them and which they self-selected to read, out of which I selected *The Lemon Suitcase*, which was the novel most read by my sample. The *Lemon Suitcase* tells the story of Mabena, a young, hard-working woman with integrity. She is targeted for character assassination and murder by her bosses at work due to her unyielding stance in relation to corruption. She survives the attempts on her life and character assassination and is rewarded by the president. She is soon thrust into politics when she is selected by a political party to be the running mate of their presidential candidate. After the presidential candidate gets poisoned, she is made the flag bearer of her party and she overwhelmingly wins the election to become the president of Ghana. This chapter explores young adults' understanding of interpersonal violence and how they make meaning of interpersonal violence in young adult fiction based on interviews of 55 young adults. Young adults' perceptions of interpersonal violence, how they make meaning of it and differences in how males and females appreciate interpersonal violence in young adult fiction are discussed. The age spread of the sample enabled conclusions to be generalized for all Ghanaian young adults as it did not give a lopsided view of young adults' perceptions of violence.

Table 5: Age Demographics of Study Participants

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
15	6	10.9
16	10	18.2
17	14	25.4
18	9	16.4
19	16	29.1
Total	**55**	**100**

After transcription, the data was analysed to gain a better understanding of Ghanaian young adults' perceptions of interpersonal violence and how they made meaning of them. Themes that were established through this investigation were: young adults' perceptions of interpersonal violence, how young adults make meaning of interpersonal violence, and male and female perceptions of interpersonal violence.

6.2 Young Adults and Young Adult Fiction

Enquiries about the books Ghanaian young adults read revealed that while they read young adult fiction by African authors, most of the novels they self-select to read are written by authors from the Global North. Appendix E is a tabular representation of books Ghanaian young adults self-select to read. A probe into their consumption of young adult fiction, as part of interviews for this thesis, revealed that more girls read young adult fiction than boys. Most of the students read African young adult fiction between the ages of 8 and 12. In junior high school and senior high school, the students mostly read young adult fiction from the Global North. Two students summed up students' current African young adult fiction reading habits when they declared that:

"The school I'm in, when people notice you are reading such books, they will laugh at you. They will say it's for children. Somebody like Peggy Oppong, in JHS, it was more like a competition. The person who has read most of her books. So, no one will tell you that you too go and read some. Eventually, when I grew, I realized that although her books are nice, they are not realistic so I stopped reading them" (AC001).

"I find those books very unrealistic. I used to enjoy them but for my level, I wouldn't say it's okay" (AC 003).

Having had similar experiences reading Peggy Oppong's books, I could relate to the research participants' comments. Peggy Oppong's books were my parents' recommended complementary reading texts for my siblings and I at home. I was able to read other books for myself at the school library and I never read any of Peggy Oppong's books outside home because I found other books more interesting. I never read a book by Peggy Oppong after junior high school despite my mother buying them for my younger siblings. Meanwhile, I was reading novels by J. K. Rowling, John Grisham and Francine Pascal, which were banned at home. One could attribute this to Peggy Oppong's books being imposed on children as a tool for socialization. This compulsion made them unappealing to young adults who wanted more thrill in what they read and could not relate to characters in the novels.

Most students stated that, apart from their required reading texts at the senior high school or university levels, they had not read any fictional text on their own for many years. It was therefore not surprising that when asked about the books they enjoy reading, most of them mentioned their required texts for senior high school and the recommended complimentary novels. In response to whether they enjoyed reading *The Lemon Suitcase*, most of them indicated that even though they enjoyed it, it was unrealistic. They indicated that young adult fiction by most Ghanaian authors, just like Peggy Oppong's *The Lemon Suitcase* was didactic. As a result, the storyline often strained

to achieve the moralistic goals of the author, thereby making it unrealistic. They gave comments such as:

> "The book is too fictitious. Everything about it is too fake" (AC011).

> I didn't like the ending because it was exaggerated too much. The circumstances around Mabena becoming president were unrealistic" (AC001).

> "I enjoyed it but it was kind of exaggerated. The way she rose to be president and the problems she faced was kind of exaggerated" (AC021).

> "I don't like the fact that the protagonist is too fake. Everything about her is perfect. The storyline is too fake" (SH 005).

> "I liked the book but some parts were unrealistic because it seemed the ending was fixed so the storyline was forced to conclude that way" (UG001).

> "It's Mabena's storyline that is unrealistic because she just rose from a nobody to president" (SH 002).

> "Some parts were unrealistic because it seemed the ending was fixed so storyline was forced to conclude that way" (UG 013).

For these children, despite the violence in the novel reflecting real life and hence, being deemed realistic, the plot of the story was not realistic because of the perceived didactic goal of the author in the story. Mabena was depicted as a human without flaws since childhood in *The Lemon Suitcase.* Her perfection had made her many enemies from childhood through to adulthood. As a result of being perfect, she is described as being as "straight as an arrow" by a character in the novel. Her perfection leads her to become managing director of one of the top ten most successful companies and soon after, the president of Ghana while still in her thirties. The Peggy Oppong books website says, "Peggy Oppong Books has a reputation for publishing high quality, well edited, morally sound, educative and highly entertaining stories which all category of readers especially young adults and children can readily identify with" (http://www.peggyoppongbooks.com). The age group of young adults who are the targeted readers

of her books is not stated but as her website says, her books are targeted at young adults and children. This presents a challenge as an attempt to write a book that would appeal to both children and young adults is likely to fail due to educational, socioeconomic and cultural differences that might be at play. As a result, while the research participants found the novel to be morally sound and entertaining, they also found the storyline to be unrealistic as it would be almost impossible for a person in her thirties to achieve all that Mabena accomplished in two years. The research participants therefore saw the novel as a didactic novel for children and not a novel meant for them.

The views of the research participants are valid from their point of view, but the concept of people rising from "nobodies to somebodies" is not a new phenomenon. The story of Oprah Winfrey, who was raised in poverty, endured sexual abuse as a teenager and became a single mother at the age of 14 but has risen to become a billionaire is an example of how the lives of people can change within a period of time. President Donald Trump, an unknown and a nobody in terms of American politics, became president of the United States of America against all odds and despite almost all opinion polls saying he would lose against a seasoned politician such as Hillary Clinton. These examples show that people can become somebodies within a short period, even if that is not the everyday norm. The perception of the storyline or aspects of it being unrealistic could also be attributed to Peggy Oppong's use of a linear plot and not a complex plot. The use of the linear plot, which in the opinion of the research participants makes it unrealistic, could also be a reflection of the kind of novels they read as people who are exposed to complex plots are likely to find less complex plots unappealing.

For Aronson (2001) the perception of the research participants that the storyline was unrealistic, is down to young adults understanding of what is 'realistic' in a novel being different from that of parents and critics in ways that have more to do with emotions and psychology, than the material content of the novel. As stated earlier, the reader-response theory gives room for a variety of interpretations of the same text. Hence, the difference in perceptions of what is 'realistic' reveals the different viewpoints from which parents, critics and young adults approach young adult novels, based on their expertise and experiences. Aronson (2001: 82) further notes that young adults' perceptions of 'real' "tells a truth people don't want to see, because it doesn't settle, it provokes". One could therefore say, in addition to arguments already made, that the research participants perceptions of what is realistic in a novel could have contributed to their responses on the storyline or aspects of it not being realistic.

6.3 Young Adults' Perceptions of Violence

There was no significant difference in terms of responses given by the young adults no matter their age or academic standing. When asked for their understanding of the concept of violence. The young adults gave responses such as:

> "Violence is part of everyday activity. You just hurting somebody, not even physically but emotionally, psychologically, mentally and all that is violence" (SH010).

> "Violence to me is anything that poses danger or infringes on the rights of others" (AC018).

> "Violence is doing something to someone in a way that will harm the person emotionally, physically or mentally" (UG005).

The responses are in line with the WHO definitions of violence and interpersonal violence thereby confirming the research participants' responses are not just guesses but from a profound

understanding of violence in all its forms based on personal life experiences and exposure to various media.

All the participants were able to identify the types of violence in the vignettes presented to them. On the justification of a violent act, almost all the students responded that none of the violent acts was justified. Only five people responded that some violent acts are justified. Three young adults, two females and a male, thought that a parent who resorted to some form of violence in relation to their academically underperforming child was justified:

> "She is justified because your mother expects that when you are in school, you learn hard, put up your best so she is annoyed. She has wasted a lot of resources" (SH009).

> "If the parents are poor and you the child too you are not forcing in school" (SH002).

> "Because there are some children, no matter how much you beat them, they won't learn" (AC023).

For these students, a parent who resorted to violence as a means to motivate their academically underperforming child was right. The violent action taken was in the child's best interests. This is despite research by scholars showing a direct correlation between all forms of domestic violence and poor academic performance in Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana (Kanuri, 2009; Gyaban-Mensah, 2015; Alabi & Oni, 2017).

In response to whether a man was justified in using violence against someone who took his lover from him, a 19-year-old male responded thus,

> "Assuming you are male and your phone is lying there and you see someone trying to take your phone and you think you are strong enough to beat the person, do you think you will let the person take the phone? What if I've spent my whole life savings on the girl and you just come and snatch her. Life is not free like that" (UG002C).

This young man is like Nnaife in *The Joys of Motherhood* who asks his wife Nnu Ego, "Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner?" (Emecheta, 1979: 98). For Nnaife, paying Nnu Ego's bride price meant she was a possession that he owned. For this young man, spending on a lover made her comparable to a personal possession like a phone, hence anyone attempting to take "his possession" was the offender and not him if he was capable of beating the person. Three females also agreed that their lover was justified in using violence against a man who tried to take them away from him. Their responses were:

> "It is justified because I'm his girlfriend so he has to fight for me" (UG 019).

> "He has to fight the guy to show that he loves me" (SH012).

> "He has to show the guy "something" so I know if someone attacks me, he can defend me" (SH003).

When asked how they would feel if their lover got beaten up in his attempt to fend off this "threat", each of them laughed and said they knew that would not happen. They were reluctant to talk further about it, which gave me the impression that their responses were based on their personal life situations and experiences. I was therefore unable to get further insight on their responses. However, their responses were in line with findings by Puts, Bailey and Reno (2015) that some females are attracted to men who are domineering. Findings by Kordsmeyer, Hunt, Puts, Ostner and Penke (2018) made similar assertions that being attracted to men who physically dominated and had the respect of other men, was not attractive to females only in historic times past but remains attractive in contemporary times too. The female respondents who felt their lover had to fight other men who showed interest in them as a sign of their physical prowess and ability to protect them would fall into the category of females attracted to men who were physically dominant over other men.

Two males, felt that a woman who killed a man trying to rape her was not justified. They responded thus:

> "because the woman should have maybe found another way of protecting or defending herself, rather than killing the man" (SH020).

> "It depends. I get it that he is trying to rape you but then death is not always the solution. Maybe there were other ways she could have defended herself" (UG011).

When asked if it would be justified if their sister killed someone trying to rape her, they both responded without hesitation that it would be justified. This could be attributed to them experiencing "conflict of interest". As Moore, Tanlu and Bazerman (2010) note in their research on conflict and interest and its relation to bias, a person's judgement on an issue is easily influenced by their relationship with a party to whatever issue they are to decide on, despite incentives to be objective. One could therefore attribute their response to a woman killing a man trying to rape her as an attempt to be consistent in their responses and show objectivity, with their bias when asked in relation to their family member likely to be their true response.

The research participants, in addition to giving their views on violence gave opinions on the involvement of males and females in acts of violence. The responses, while agreeing that men were more likely to resort to physical violence, gave varied responses for the cause of this. While some respondents attributed men's aggressive tendencies to biology, others attributed it to socialization.

Some of the responses they gave were:

> "Males are more violent. Because they feel they have so much energy. I think the males they are too violent. I think it's in their blood" (AC 011).

"Men are more violent because they are found in more compromising situations because they are stronger. But when it comes to insults, the women are more violent" (SH 003).

"Even in the Ghanaian society, if you are a man and you tend to be feeble, people look down on you. People laugh at you, they call you all sorts of names "*jon*", *obaa barima (*woman-man) et cetera so most men who are down to earth, they can't even be themselves. They can act as cool when they are at home or when they are with you but when they see their friends or are outside the house, they have to meet the status quo that I'm a man so I think aggressiveness has to do with men. Even though some women are aggressive, it's not like the men" (UG 009).

"Men tend to be more aggressive by nature because they believe they have to show that they are above women. They are superior so they have to show that I'm a man" (AC 002).

The responses gave further clarification on the young adults' perceptions of violence. Males being violent because of their biological make-up would be akin to saying that a person was likely to be an armed robber or a murderer because of their biological makeup. This would rule out cultural factors and other influences on people's socialization on violence by portraying people's tendency to resort to interpersonal violence as something they are born with. The responses given could also be looked at from the perspective of males attempting to meet the tenets of hegemonic masculinity. As Adomako Ampofo and Boateng (2011) note, boys and men who fail to live up to the widely held views of hegemonic masculinity in Ghana are mocked and given names such as *kojo basia* or *beema basia* (female man). The responses therefore reflect Ghanaian young adults' knowledge of the unwritten code of hegemonic masculinity among males in Ghana and the desire of males to meet these "standards" in order not to be ridiculed in their societies.

6.4 Young Adults' Perceptions of Violence in Young Adult Fiction

Part of the interview sought to find out Ghanaian young adults' opinions of violence in young adult fiction and their capacity to identify violence in fiction. It was noted that the young adults could

identify all the examples of violence in *The Lemon Suitcase* when asked. They were also able to identify violence in vignettes placed before them. On the justification of violence in the book, almost all the young adults responded that the violence was not justified with the exception of one university student (UG002C).

He felt it was justified that Mabena was shot "because she got the corrupt people sacked and they were unemployed. So, she did something to them". He also felt that it was justified that Aaron and Emily worked to make Mabena unpopular:

> "because you can't just come into my home and then all of a sudden, my parents start losing attention for me and then you become the most popular girl. Let me say their favourite daughter. So, it's actually justified. And children are jealous naturally so it's justified". (UG002C)

Finally, he felt the poisoning in the book was justified

> "because for politicians to win, they can do anything so it's justified" (UG002C).

While he alone held such views, it also revealed the mindset behind the use of interpersonal violence by some young adults. For such people, interpersonal violence is justified for as long as they perceive it as provoked. He therefore uses arguments of "cultural violence" to justify the actions of violent people in the novel. Cultural violence is "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence-exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence." According to Aran-Ramspott and Rodrigo-Alsina (2013: 160),

> The concept of motivation for violence includes the arguments relating to the aggressor's objectives, which the subjects attribute to them based on the use of the violence and on their need to make sense of that violence. It is shown here that they distinguish between the use of instrumental violence (violence as a means), when they consider that there are reasons for carrying out the violence, and an expressive use (violence as an end), when it is perceived that lasting damage to the victim is sought. Lastly, it was established that the subjects in the

study look for a meaning to the violence. Along these lines, they recognise reactive violence when the violent actions are committed in self-defence, or for other characters, as a response to a previous attack.

Therefore, based on the argument that Mabena did certain things that made people react to her in various violent ways, the actions of those who responded to Mabena using violence was justified as they were only reacting to what she had done to them. This argument, while seeming valid, would be difficult to apply to *The Lemon Suitcase* as Mabena's offense, to which people reacted in violent ways, was to aim for perfection and to do her best throughout the novel. The argument of "reactive violence" would therefore not adequately explain the various forms of violence aimed at her due to her perfectionist and incorruptible nature. Her incorruptible nature seemed to bring these violent attacks her way as they were a threat to the continued entrenchment of greed and corruption in the state institutions she found herself working in, and to the people who benefitted most from these corrupt practices.

All the students thought the portrayal of violence in the book was realistic. Their response is perfectly summed up by AC023 who said, "the authors portrayal of violence was very realistic. That's what is happening in our world today. It's the order of the day". Their definition of realistic was therefore in relation to their daily reality where they encountered scenarios of interpersonal violence regularly.

When asked about the place of violence in young adult fiction, there was unanimity that books without violence were not interesting to read since violence adds suspense to a book. The young adults gave responses such as:

> "When you read a book and there is no violence, no, I just don't enjoy it *koraa* (at all*).* You see sometimes the violence makes the book interesting. I have to see some violence in the book. The book will be boring *saaaaa (*very boring*).*

It's same for movies. Those are some of the reasons I don't enjoy storybooks. I prefer the movies" (SH010).

"When I read books which include violence, I feel like I'm reading a book" (SH014).

"It makes it more entertaining and it brings mostly suspense and it catches the readers' attention" (UG 011).

"It adds to the drama of it. For instance, it makes the story more interesting. Like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* for example, the violence in it made it more interesting" (UG019).

"It adds excitement. Violence actually arouses the feelings or emotions of the reader" (UG001).

"Violence adds suspense" (AC023).

"Books without violence seem boring. Violence adds suspense" (AC001).

"Violence adds to how unpredictable life is in a book" (AC005).

"Violence adds suspense. I feel that without any kind of action, sometimes the book is dull" (SH001).

The arguments put up by the students show that for most of these students, violence is a critical aesthetic ingredient if a story is to appeal to them. Some of their preferred movies included *Black Panther*, *The Fast and Furious* franchise, *The Avengers, Iron Man, The Hulk, Spiderman, Lord of the Rings, X-men* and *John Wick*, all of which have a lot of violence in them because the conflict in the plot often revolves around violence and is resolved by violence. The watered-down version of violence in *The Lemon Suitcase* which was the selected novel, therefore made it unappealing to them, as the goal of the author of the novel was to educate young adults. The research participants felt the book was not age appropriate as a book whose sole purpose was to teach morals was meant for younger people. Comparing the classics they were required to read as part of their education, which do not have the goal of teaching morals and depict a lot of violence, to the selected young adult novel, one could say that having been exposed to such violence in movies and the classics,

it was to be expected that most of them would find a book written solely for didactic purposes less appealing.

6.5 Educational Level and Gender as Factors in Perceptions of Violence

I did not observe much difference in the responses of young adults based on their level of education since the response to questions in all selected schools was almost unanimous. In addition, there was not much difference between the answers given by male participants and female participants. In their concluding remarks after the interview, most of the respondents acknowledged that interpersonal violence was not always bad, using the example of parents spanking their children. One respondent, whose concluding remarks sum up their words said:

> "My parents spank me, they scold me when I do something bad. They are to shape me to be a better adult in future so some types of violence are good" (AC015).

These young adults therefore separate correction from violence as they all pointed out that a parent abusing them verbally was a form of violence but a parent punishing them after they have made a mistake in order to teach them what is right is not a form of violence but correction. This can be attributed to their socialization in relation to the use of some forms of interpersonal violence as corrective measures.

6.6 Influences on Young Adults' Perceptions of Violence.

None of the young adults interviewed had read a book similar to *The Lemon Suitcase*. The two biggest influencers on young adults' perceptions of violence were movies and real-life experiences of violence. A few of them responded that watching the news had influenced their perceptions of violence while one person mentioned the influence of religion on his views on violence. One

response sums up the views of most of the young adults on what influences their perceptions of violence.

> "The books my parents and teachers force me to read have no violence in them. They are like Peggy Oppong's books. Those are some of the reasons I don't enjoy reading story books. I prefer movies" (SH010C).

Some examples from their personal experiences that were used to interpret violence included:

> "Some years ago, there was a girl who was attending the same church as me. She stopped coming to church and some years later, I found out she stopped coming to church because her mother poured hot water on her face. Since that time, I've never seen the girl. It made me realise that you acting out of anger or any negative emotion toward someone can end up harming the person for life" (AC009C).

> "I was held hostage in a bus by people who wanted to take what we had. They held guns on us and they were threatening us that if we don't give them what we have, they will kill us. Also, in the community I live in, I've seen a lot. I've seen thieves beaten to death and all that" (UG011C).

> "I'm 16 years so I've experienced some of these things" (SH015C).

> "I've seen a lot. Where thieves are beaten and all that but they are not the best" (AC011C).

> "I've seen men beating their wives and teachers insulting students. I have also experienced bullying and insults just because people don't like me" (AC022C).

> "I witnessed an interschool's fight with teachers and students involved" (SH011).

Based on these experiences, it is easy to tell why young adults would interpret violence based on their personal experiences and from movies, which they indulge in.

As mentioned earlier, violence can be used to develop conflict in a story or resolve it. The appeal of these movies to the young adults lay in the way violence was used to build conflict in the storylines of these films and the way violence was used to resolve the conflict at the end of the plot. This is something they do not find in African young adult novels which are mostly didactic.

One could therefore say that young adult novels despite not being major influencers in the lives of these adolescents, serve as a form of reinforcement to their ideas of violence. Those novels that do not meet the young adults' "standards" and expectations are then rejected. My experiences at the *Pa Gya* workshop opened my eyes to the challenges African authors face in order to meet "the standards" required of them by African young adults.

The responses given by the respondents were mostly uniform. However, as can be seen, some respondents gave some dissenting views when asked some questions. By disagreeing, these respondents seemed to support Imtiaz's critique of the reader response theory as being subjective. However, the general consensus of respondents that their understanding of violence in the texts they read is based on their backgrounds and experiences support Rosenblatt's (1960) assertion that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text. The dissenting views therefore showed how people's backgrounds and experiences influence their understanding of the novels they read.

6.7 Conclusion

In this study, participants read one young adult novel and answered questions on it based on their appreciation of the novel. As stated, earlier, one of my goals for the study was to find out if there were differences between how male and female young adults appreciated violence in the texts they read. I found out that there was no difference in how they interpreted violence in the texts they read as they were exposed to the same movies, which were the main influence behind their understandings of violence. Young adults' interpretations of violence in young adult fiction showed that while socialization through young adult fiction played a role in their socialization on violence, their personal experiences, exposure to movies and social media were a bigger influence on their perceptions of violence.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Discussion of the Main Findings and Suggestions for Further Research

7.1 Introduction

In this study, I set out to unearth the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction and how young adults made meaning of violence in the texts they read. The analysis of African young adult fiction revealed that (1) more women are victims of violence than men. (2) Also, girls were more likely to be victims of violence than boys. (3) Additionally, it was discovered that several reasons were given for violence in African young adult fiction, with the perpetrators of violence rarely punished due to their positions in the society or family, while others were punished for other reasons and not specifically for perpetrating violence. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, when Okonkwo beats his second wife during the week of peace, he is punished for violating the week of peace and not for beating his wife. In punishing him, Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, Ani, said:

> "Listen to me," he said when Okonkwo had spoken. "You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil… Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her… The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish". His tone now changed from anger to command. 'You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries' (Achebe, 1958: 21).

While Ezeani acknowledged that Okonkwo's wife was at fault for her actions, which made Okonkwo beat her, he did not reprimand Okonkwo for beating his wife. He rather reprimanded Okonkwo for beating his wife during a sacred week. Okonkwo's neighbours who heard his wife scream reacted in a similar manner. "Some of them came over to see for themselves. It was unheard

of to beat somebody during the sacred week" (Achebe, 1958: 22). The neighbours did not show concern for somebody being beaten but for somebody being beaten because it was a sacred week. Their concern was not so much the welfare of the person but the implications of Okonkwo's actions which would affect the harvest of the entire clan. In a similar manner, Okonkwo shoots at his wife in a fit of anger but is never reprimanded or punished. What is perhaps symptomatic of the society's views on a man beating his wife can be found in the words of Okonkwo's wives during the beating of his wife, which preceded shooting at her.

Readers are told that "Neither of the other wives dared to interfere beyond an occasional and tentative, 'It is enough, Okonkwo,' pleaded from a reasonable distance". The plea reveals that they saw a justification in Okonkwo beating his wife, but had issues with how much beating was being meted out to the wife. Readers of the novel are told that "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children" (Achebe, 1958: 9). Okonkwo is therefore a man prone to use domestic violence as a way of enforcing his masculinity and "keeping his family in line" with his expectations and rules. Therefore, with no mention of his resort to violence at the least offence or his punishment for that, but his punishment for violating a sacred week, tells a lot about societal views of domestic violence. He is rather punished for manslaughter when his gun explodes and accidentally kills another person but his intentional use of violence on his family is overlooked. Okonkwo's actions and his society's response to his actions also portray structural violence in his society. While Okonkwo worked hard to take care of his family, his resort to violence at the least provocation and his society's obvious blindness to it, reveals the acceptance of spousal abuse perpetrated by men on women in the society. As a reflection of the society, African young adult

fiction laid bare some of the reasons for the continued occurrences of various forms of violence in African societies.

Okonkwo's eventual demise in *Things Fall Apart* can also be seen as Chinua Achebe's use of self-inflicted violence as symbolic of African societies committing suicide because of the direction in which their societies were headed. This could be the loss of aspects of culture, language and other elements of their societies that held them together. Okonkwo's death could also be seen as the use of symbolism by Chinua Achebe to send a message to those who hold on too tightly to the things of the past. Hence, Achebe could be saying that looking at the direction in which the society was moving, those who held on to the past, like Okonkwo would not be able to survive as their time would be past. As a result, Okonkwo represents those who try to hold on to the past like people clutching at straws because society is headed in a particular direction and no matter what they do, they cannot bring the society back. Okonkwo's physical and psychological abuse of his son, Nwoye, can be seen in a similar light. While Okonkwo is known to be easily provoked, his treatment of his son reveals his disdain for anything and anyone that from his perspective, shows some physical or mental weakness. Out of disdain for his father, who symbolizes weakness and failure to him, Okonkwo abuses his son, who to him represents the weak in the society. In *Faceless*, one could see Maa Tsuru as symbolic of a society that does not take care of its young. While others in the slums were using their agency and fighting to make it, Maa Tsuru refused to make any effort to improve her life or that of her children. One could see her as symbolic of women who have lost hope in life, accepted violence, poverty and learned to be helpless. Through the symbolic portrayal of these characters, the authors do not only reflect their societies, but also communicate with their readers.

7.2 Discussion of Findings

In my personal analysis of the selected texts, I realized that most violence in the selected novels was perpetrated by men. With young adult fiction being a mirror of the society, it is not surprising that dominant discourses on violence found themselves being reproduced in them. Men were portrayed as the worst perpetrators of all forms of violence. Most of the violence committed by men was against women and children, with only a small number being against other men. Women were depicted in a manner that showed that they were also capable of being violent. Violent acts committed by women were mostly against children, with a little of it being in retaliation to the actions of men. Boys and girls were also portrayed in violent scenarios with bullying being the most significant form of violence they exhibited. A few cases of young adults perpetrating violence against adults were depicted. Violence in the domestic space is the picture most painted in African young adult fiction. This is not surprising as domestic violence is the most endemic form of violence in Africa (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016; Ishola, 2016; Oyelade, 2012). Research has shown that violence in the domestic space is mostly unreported due to stigmatization, a widespread culture of silence around it and the notion that it is a "private affair" (Curran and Bonthuys, 2005; Ishola, 2016; Nwankwo, 2003).

When Ghanaian young adults were asked for their views on gender and violence, most of them felt that men being depicted in books and movies as using more interpersonal violence was realistic and a reflection of what happens in society. For Manful, Appiah and Gyasi-Boadu (2016: 64), "violence is used as an instrument for reinforcing social control in a context where women are socialized to be passive and dependent on men for decisions affecting their lives". Tsikata (2000) contends that the subordination of women is entrenched by socio-cultural practices and methods of socialization which perpetuate male domination and female subordination. Such an environment

is created through socialization processes that project men as bread winners and house hold heads and therefore responsible for the welfare of all members of the household. Men are therefore in control of most of the family's resources and are by extension in a position to perpetuate most forms of violence as they can use various forms of violence as a means of controlling household members and implementing their ideologies in line with social expectations, despite the disapproval of members of the household.

As Tsikata (2000) further notes, domestic violence is socially accepted with research showing that 44 percent of women agreed with at least one out of five reasons presented during the Ghana Demographic Health Survey (GDHS) for which a man could beat his wife. She therefore postulates that no matter what form male violence takes, it is an exhibition of expected behaviour patterns that allow men to dominate women. In this research, young adults indicated that violence in the novels they read and movies they watch in which men exhibit more violence than women were realistic illustrations of what happens in society. One could say that these young adults from an early age have been socialized into society's conceptions of interpersonal violence. The novels and movies they watch only serve to reinforce their notions of interpersonal violence.

One of the objectives of the study was to find out Ghanaian young adult's conceptions of violence. Interviews with Ghanaian young adults showed that they are familiar with violence and are knowledgeable about it. This outcome is similar to findings by Manful, Appiah and Gyasi-Boadu (2016) who researched on domestic violence in Africa through an exploration of the perceptions of adolescents in Ghana. In their conclusion, they noted that:

> Adolescents who participated in this study did not express any different opinions irrespective of the fact that they were from different communities with different socio-economic backgrounds. This suggests that as Ghanaians, irrespective of the socio-economic backgrounds of their parents, the adolescents who

participated in the study have been socialised with the same gender role expectations (Manful, Appiah & Gyasi-Boadu, 2016: 68).

For them, this was a confirmation that adolescents in Ghana had normalised domestic violence. Based on the findings of my research, I agree with them. This is because despite interviewing students from different socio-economic, religious and educational backgrounds, the responses were similar. Manful, Appiah and Gyasi-Boadu (2016)'s suggestion that adolescents had been socialized with similar gender role expectations is also supported by this research. Students' responses showed that male students were less sensitive to scenarios of interpersonal violence and were more likely to condone acts of violence, especially psychological violence. Females students were very sensitive to psychological violence. To the students, sensitivity to psychological violence could explain why women, when depicted as mostly employing psychological violence as a weapon of attack or defence, was realistic. For the female students, the pain of psychological violence outweighed the pain of being on the receiving end of the other forms of violence. As a result, they thought it was a most potent weapon. The male students especially at the tertiary level were more dismissive of psychological violence as they assumed it was not violent. For them, women resorting to psychological violence was evidence of the physical limitations of women's strength as they used psychological violence because they could not afford to employ other forms of violence which demanded brute force. One could postulate therefore that males were therefore likely to resort to psychological violence without knowing that they were being violent, while using physical, economic and sexual violence to enforce their masculinity. The reader response theory helped unearth young adults' perceptions of violence, which although varied, were profound.

As mentioned already, conflict is a key part of fiction writing and is used to build tension in a novel, with the use of interpersonal violence being one of the ways conflict is used to build tension or resolve the conflict in a novel. While the use of interpersonal violence as one of the tools for developing conflict in African young adult fiction is to be expected, it was noticed that the disconnect between what young adults want to read and what parents and teachers think they should read, coupled with a lack of accepted criteria by writers and publishers on what makes up African young adult fiction has placed African authors in a difficult position. Unfortunately, those who have lost out most in this lack of agreed scope on African young adult fiction are the target readers of the novel. This is because the writers who write for competitions have opted to meet the criteria of judges for the competitions they intend to submit their books.

While seeking for permission from heads of schools for their students to participate in my research, I gathered from the heads of the category A schools that they encouraged the reading of at least two supplementary readers, mostly novels by Peggy Oppong, by their students. Head teachers in category B and C schools responded that their schools did not prescribe any supplementary reading materials for their students due to the financial status of the schools and the fact that these books were not provided for free by GES. The WAEC required readings are however supplied to the schools for free by GES and paid for by the government. This, in my opinion, showed that GES placed more emphasis on students reading the WAEC required readings, than supplementary readings for students. This is because the supplementary readers seemed to be patronised by the few category A schools with the resources to acquire them. The senior high school students are required to read their required readings for the duration of senior high school but the authors of these books did not set out to teach morals or to write for young adults.

The complementary readings are tagged young adult novels but students are to read for pleasure and are not examined on them in any way. This further complicated arguments on what African young adult fiction is. Would one consider supplementary readers which are tagged young adult fiction but read by only a small percentage of literate young adults as young adult fiction while ignoring the required readings which are not tagged young adult fiction but read by almost all literate young adults as not young adult fiction? For Nnolim (2009) what separates writers of today from writers of previous generations is the lack of focus on didacticism in novels written by writers of the current generation which shows a lack of thematic focus. While this contributes to an aspect of the debate on whether African young adult fiction has the sole focus of being didactic, it makes the debate on African young adult fiction murkier as it ignores author's intentions for writing a book and ignores the variety of approaches writers use in writing novels.

Looking at some of the writings of Elizabeth-Irene Baitie and Ruby Yayra Goka, two award winning authors of young adult fiction, one cannot fail to observe the didacticism in their novels despite their novels not being written in a manner that would make a person conclude that they are didactic. *The Step-monster* by Ruby Goka tells the story of Buerki, a senior high school student who loses her mother. Buerki is traumatized as a result of the loss and this impacts her life, her relationship with her father and friends. Her difficulty in recovering from the loss of her mother results in a huge conflict between her and her father's new wife, whom she believes is taking her father away from her and also attempting to replace her mother. While the story revolves around the loss of Buerki's mother and her inability to deal with the loss, it also deals with issues young adults face, such as relationships with the opposite sex, friendship, betrayal, family, teenage pregnancy and its consequences, and the consequences of not focusing on one's studies while in school.

Elizabeth-Irene Baitie's *The Twelfth Heart* follows a similar pattern as Ruby Goka's *The Step-monster.* The *Twelfth Heart* tells the story of roommates in a senior high school dormitory, the challenges they go through in adapting to each other, friendships, betrayals, escapades and the loss of the life of a dorm member and how they learn to cope with it. These two books are more of a reflection of society, adolescent life and the challenges that adolescents face than didactic books. *The Twelfth Heart,* for example, features several escapades and experiences which most senior high school students can relate to. *The Step-monster* reveals the challenges adolescents face in their relationships in a manner that most adolescents would easily relate to in addition to circumstances under which violations take place in the lives of young adults. These books, however, teach certain values but do not make the teaching of these goals their aim. They have been accepted as young adult novels and won awards without them being focused on being didactic. Other authors of young adult fiction such as Peggy Oppong, whose books have been approved as supplementary readings for senior high schools, have authored books that are mostly didactic. Narrowing the focus of African young adult fiction to didacticism alone therefore promotes an idea that in order to be an author of young adult fiction, one must focus on teaching values and use a particular style of writing.

Aronson (2001) sees parents as contributing to the notion of African young adult fiction being didactic. This is because in his opinion, parents want young adult novels to be like adult role models who teach their wards values they could not or have not taught their wards, but want them to learn. For Aronson (2001:115), the notion of African young adult fiction being didactic has been promoted by "a moral instruction gang" whose sole criteria for judging a book as young adult fiction is its ability to teach moral lessons or provide excellent role models for young adults. While some young adult novels are didactic, arguing that the sole criterion for judging a book as African

young adult fiction is the place of didacticism in it, excludes novels such as fantasy novels from qualifying as young adult novels. Enciso, Wolf and Jenkins (2010:254), writing about what seems a similar mindset on young adult fiction in the US note that "as more and more adult authors began to write for children, the moral centre of this literature changed fairly rapidly. There was a subtle but growing shift from telling the moral or religious truth to telling a story—a shift from instruction to imagination and enjoyment". In Africa, this shift might have occurred but due to the lack of research on young adult fiction, scholars might still be holding on to outdated notions that African young adult fiction is necessarily didactic.

Furthermore, it seems as if the writers who do not write for competitions, mostly write to satisfy the criteria of parents and guardians, who are mainly the ones who purchase novels for their children. The situation young adults find themselves in is therefore comparable to Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart*. As the book says, "Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land —masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow, he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell" (Achebe, 1958: 17). Just like Nwoye, Ghanaian young adults are encouraged to read a lot of didactic novels which are supposedly written for them. These young adults know that reading such works is good but they do not to read or enjoy the books provided for them because they prefer movies and young adult novels from the global north which meet their expectations. The original goal for the creation of the genre of young adult fiction in Africa, to educate African young adults on morality and African cultures, could therefore be the reason for its failure to succeed on the continent.

As Osa (2003:145) notes, "African writers for children, who derive inspiration from traditional African values in their desire to educate children and young people along an acceptable African way of life, produce works that are subtly or overtly didactic". In giving an example, Osa (2003: 144) says, "In the 1970s, for example, Macmillan Publishers established the Pacesetters Series with a young adult readership in mind. According to Macmillan, all the novels in the Pacesetters Series deal with contemporary issues and problems "in a way that is particularly designed to interest young adults, although the stories are such that they will appeal to all ages". Would a book that appeals to an audience aged 10-14 years appeal in the same way to an audience of 15-19-year olds? As I found out in my research, this is not likely. Therefore, some students thought reading novels like those authored by Peggy Oppong whose aim is to be didactic, was acceptable at junior high school level where students are between the ages of 12 and 15, but not suitable to be read in senior high schools where they are between 15 and 19 years. This makes it clear that it is not likely to have a book that appeals to young adults of all ages if the goal of the novel is didactic.

It is therefore not surprising that Ruby Yayra Goka, an award-winning author of African young adult fiction, when asked in an interview about books she read when growing up, responded that, "I read everything when I was growing up. My favourites were anything Enid Blyton, Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Sweet Valley, The Babysitters Club, Paula Danziger, Judy Blume, Tom Sawyerr and Huckleberry Finn, Hans Christian Andersen, Goosebumps, Flowers in the Attic, African Writers Series, The Pacesetters" (https://medium.com/@mybooksiebox/author-spotlight-ruby-yayra-goka-f1fc1f4eb22c). As can be noticed in her list of books, only African Writers Series and The Pacesetters are by African authors. I grew up reading similar books as Ruby Yayra Goka but African Writers Series and The Pacesetters were impositions by my parents. Even though I enjoyed them, I spent more of my free time reading novels by authors from the global north as their style

of writing was more appealing to me just as novels by writers from the global north are more appealing to young adults of today. With African writers torn between pleasing their target audience (young adults) and those who have the purchasing power (parents and guardians), writers have chosen purchasing power over the target audience, hence the lack of appeal of young adult fiction to the target audience.

Related to the lack of appeal of African young adult fiction is the goal of reading among Ghanaian students. Most Ghanaian young adults are introduced to reading at a young age for the sake of passing examinations and not reading for pleasure; but they watch movies for pleasure and enjoy movies, thus, making movies have more influence on them. Much has been said about the potential influence of young adult fiction on young adults and how it can be a tool for the eradication of many ills in society such as intimate partner violence, bullying and suicide (Henkin, 2012; Malo-Juvera, 2012; Trent & Chisholm, 2012; Mosha, 2013; Njeru, 2013; Hughes & Laffier, 2016). While I do not dispute the influence of young adult fiction on young adults, in my opinion, one would have to be cautious in making such a claim in relation to Ghana or Africa as young adults are not reading enough to be influenced much by young adult fiction. As noted by Aran-Ramspott and Rodrigo-Alsina (2013), reading consumption practices have an impact on the effect the consumption of books has on the reader.

The reading culture of young adults in Africa has been of much concern to scholars for years, with scholars attributing a poor reading culture on the continent to the cause of unemployment and poverty (Mahala, 2010; Festus, 2015; Kayuni, 2017; Stadler, 2017). While I was not surprised that a lot of the students said they only had time to read academically prescribed texts, I was surprised at the number that were not reading any novels beyond the school prescribed texts. I was also

surprised that many students at the university were reluctant to read any novels, including those taking courses in literature.

In addition, with most participants attributing their perceptions of violence to the influence of movies, it is possible to suggest that most books on the market are not appealing to young adults or that more focus should be on the movies young adults watch than what they read. A few young adults revealed that even though they did not read books, they read some fiction on websites such as Wattpad. These are websites on which authors post their writing, which can be accessed for free, and give room for authors to interact with their audience. In the future, it would be interesting to find out if such avenues for reading become the panacea to the poor reading culture in Africa.

7.3 Implications for Future Research

There has been similarity in research findings on reading habits among young adults in Africa. James (2007: 428) found out that "reading remains a chore, a necessity" because many adolescents "do not reach the stage of reading for pleasure", with boys not reading fiction after the age of 12. For Powell (2009) students rarely read because they are not asked to read or write about things that matter to them, which makes them feel their ideas or tastes in reading are unconnected to success in their education because the sole purpose of reading is to evaluate them. In relating this to the reader response-theory, because students in Ghana and Africa are introduced to efferent reading and efferent reading is reinforced throughout their education, they get better at reading for examinations than reading for "aesthetic" reasons which prevents them from enjoying the numerous benefits of reading. This is why Rosenblatt recommends that aesthetic reading should be the goal of the literacy curricula as it would promote learning beyond mechanical comprehension. It is therefore not surprising that Smith (2006), Kalu (2016) and Festus (2015)

note that authors and publishers are more focused on producing text books than fiction for children or young adults in Africa. This is because investing in books for children and young adults would profit them financially.

As the findings of this research reveal, reading habits are not much related to the school a person attends as socialization on reading often begins at home or becomes more entrenched due to reinforcement by parents and guardians during the formative years of people's lives. Finally, in the absence of an accepted canon, using young adult novels that young adults self-select and those that are "imposed" on them by their educational institutions gives room to better investigate issues of interest in African young adult fiction.

7.4 Possible Areas of Further Research

This research, while plugging some academic gaps, also opens up avenues for future research. Scholars such as Bright (2016) contend that the classical literary canon from which required texts for schools are selected does not answer the questions young adults are asking. In addition, these texts do not address the concerns of students. Bright (2016) therefore posits that introducing novels that pay attention to issues that are important to young adults, before introducing them to the classics, might help young adults make better meaning of the classics as the young adult novels would serve as a bridge to the classics. Bushman (1998) makes similar arguments by noting that making young adults read novels that do not address issues of concern to them, makes these books unappealing to young adults. In future, it would be interesting to find out if including African young adult novels that address issues of concern to young adults to the required texts for students in Africa would make reading more appealing to young adults in Africa.

Trites (2000: 7-8) argues that "YA novels are certainly a marketplace phenomenon of the twentieth century. Adults create these books as a cultural site in which adolescents can be depicted engaging with the fluid, market-driven forces that characterize the power relationships that define adolescence. After all, publishers rather than teenagers bestow the designation 'YA' on these books". African literary scholars have often argued about how definitions of some literary terms do not fit the African literary terrain. The term young adult fiction or young adult literature has been chosen by publishers and authors in Africa despite the differences in literature for young adults in Africa and the Global North. What exactly qualifies as YA fiction in Africa? Due to cultural definitions and differing lifestyles in Africa and the Global North, a young adult might be allowed to read some books and indulge in some activities in the global north that a same aged person would not be allowed to do in Africa. Books that qualify as young adult fiction in the Global North might not qualify as young adult fiction in Africa and vice-versa. Therefore, I propose that the criteria for African young adult fiction should be novels that are written by African authors and marketed to African young adults.

African literature has carried a stigmatized position in Western eyes for many years and as a result some negative assertions about it have been made by scholars, mostly from the global north. Some of the arguments that have been made and repudiated by African scholars have been on the existence of literature and epics in Africa (Finnegan, 1970; Johnson, 1980; Okpewho, 1992). These arguments arose mostly as a result of scholars' attempts to approach African epics and African literature using Western definitions and criteria for what exists in the global north. Currently, African writers and publishers are attempting to fashion young adult fiction for African young adults in a manner that attempts to mimic Western definitions and criteria for young adult fiction, while also making the effort to make their writing appeal to the African terrain, resulting in the

novels not being exactly like those from the global north nor having distinct features of their own that would make them stand out. Therefore, future debates on African definitions or cultural definitions of what African young adult literature is and what African young adult fiction is would help us identify the unique trends or style of African young adult fiction better since relying on definitions from the global north have not yet helped unravel what the concept of young adult fiction is in Africa.

The WHO divides young adults into two groups: young adolescents (10-14 years old) and older adolescents (15-19 years old). It would be interesting to find out if categorizing African young adult novels into those for "young adolescents" and those for "older adolescents" would make African young adult novels more appealing to older young adults as authors would not be stuck trying to write to appeal to all age groups. It would also be interesting to find out what senior high school and university young adults views would be on a book written specifically for 15 to 19 year olds.

The inclusion of parents and guardians in future research on reading habits and reading taste in relation to young adult fiction would shine more light on young adults reading culture as parents and guardians, through their reinforcement of certain reading habits or the books they buy or do not buy for their wards contribute to the reading habits of young adults. The inclusion of teachers and online sites such as Goodreads and Wattpad in future research would also contribute to a better understanding of African young adults' reading habits and preferences for young adult fiction. Finally, future research on whether young adults respond to the classics they are required to read in school the same way as the young adult novels they read on their own would build on the

findings of this thesis and to better understand how young adults make meaning of the novels they read.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations. The biggest limitation to this study was time. Due to limitations of time, caused by delays in getting ethical approval for my research and the refusal of several heads of schools to allow their students to participate in this study, I was unable to include students from category C and D senior high schools in my research.

Another limitation was financial. As this research is on African young adult fiction, selecting students from various countries on the African continent for interviews would have contributed to more variety in responses received. Due to financial limitations, this could not be done. Despite these limitations, based on the rich data that I collected from the participating schools, and the uniformity of responses received, one could still generalize the findings.

7.6 Summary and Conclusion

The seeds of the idea for this study germinated from my own experiences early in life and were watered by Karen Coats' (2011) experiences with reading young adult literature. They then germinated into a full-fledged research idea after my Master of Philosophy thesis research found out that there were similar portrayals of gender stereotypes in African children's oral and written literature. This motivated me to build on my MPhil thesis to find out how young adult fiction, as a tool for socialization, was portraying an issue such as interpersonal violence; and how the target reading population was interpreting the violence. This idea was initially premised on novels for young adults, being studied as children's literature, only for my initial readings on fiction for young adults to reveal to me a whole new and exciting world of young adult fiction and all the

controversies that come with the area of study. These controversies include what distinguishes young adult novels from children's and adult novels; who determines if a novel is for young adults; and the criteria that qualify a book as a young adult novel. While I initially thought that these controversies had mostly been ignored by African literary scholars, my experiences on the field revealed that they had been ignored by authors, editors and publishers on the continent as well. This has prevented the young adult novel genre from effectively achieving its goal of being a tool for socialization of young adults on the African continent.

This study focused on the depiction of violence in African young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of violence in the fiction they read. Through this, it has unearthed the various ways men, women, boys and girls are portrayed in scenarios depicting violence in African young adult fiction. It has also uncovered young adults' perceptions of violence and how they make meaning of violence in the texts they read. Based on my findings for this study, I recommend that while attention to what young adults read is very necessary, more attention should be paid to the movies they watch from childhood as a lot of young adults are building their notions of violence and the justification for whatever forms of violence they get exposed to, from the movies they watch. This study further recommends the inclusion of some African young adult novels specifically written for young adults as part of the curriculum for students, in the hope that this would be appealing to students and would help solve Africa's poor reading culture and the problems thereof.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide for In-Depth Interviews
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Thank you for your participation in this research. I am Edwin Adjei, a PhD candidate at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. This interview is part of my PhD thesis. The aim of this interview is to find out how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read. Young adult fiction is storybooks written for people between the ages of 12 and 19. For example: *The Hardy Boys, The Nancy Drew Case Files, The Famous Five.* Please be assured that any information you provide during the interview will be used solely for research. Your recorded interview session and notes on the book will be handled only by the principal researcher (me). You are not required to provide your name during the interview session and your name will not be used or mentioned in any part of the interview to avoid recognition. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right not to participate but your responses will help a lot in understanding how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read. You may also choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with. This interview will last approximately thirty minutes.

1. How old are you?

2. How often do you read a story book on your own?

3. What kind of stories do you like best? Satire, action, horror, romance, mystery, science fiction.

4. Who is your favourite author?

5. Were you reading books like *The Lemon Suitcase, The Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew Casefiles, Harry Potter, The Hunger Games and The Famous Five before* coming to senior high school?

6. Which of the following scenarios would you consider as violence?

   A. A friend tells you that her father threatened to kill her mother with a gun. He placed the gun on her mother's forehead without shooting.

   B. Your mother insults you and tells you that you are useless, and she never wanted to have you.

   C. Your mother punches you out of anger or an act of punishment.

   D. Your friends ridicule you because they feel your clothing is unacceptable in their circle.

   E. A young man who says he loves your sister follows her wherever she goes without her consent.

   F. Your father refuses to pay your school fees because he does not love your mother.

7. Did you enjoy reading *The Lemon Suitcase?*

   A. What did you like or not like about the book?

8. Was there violence in *The Lemon Suitcase*?

A. If yes, how was the violence portrayed?

B. Do you enjoy books without violence in them?

C. What do you think violence adds to a story?

9. A. when Mabena was held hostage and shot in *The Lemon Suitcase,* did you consider that violent?

B. When Aaron and Emily worked to make Mabena unpopular to their parents by putting salt in food she had cooked so she gets blamed, did you consider that violent?

C. "Tell her to withdraw it. If she does not, I'll change her sleeping place. I've warned you. If you don't act, don't blame me. But remember, the ear which refuses to listen, accompanies the head when it is decapitated" (p79). What are your views on this statement from the book?

D. Do you consider poisoning as it occurred in the book as violent?

E. Do you think Mabena's house being robbed in her absence to cripple her financially was violent?

10. Are there any other types of violence in the book that you noticed?

11. Was the author's portrayal of violence in the book realistic?

12. Do you think the violence in the book was justified? Why or why not? (Examples from question 9 will be used)

13. Under what circumstances will you say a violent act is justified?

    A. A woman kills a man trying to rape her.

    B. Parents refuse to give their child food to eat because she stole from them.

    C. A driver crashes his car into another car because the other driver insulted him.

    D. A boyfriend beats up another boy who tried to take his girlfriend.

    E. A parent verbally abuses a child who comes last in class.

14. Have you read any other stories that are similar to this one? How have they informed the way you look at issues like armed robbery, bullying, etc?

15. Are there things you have experienced, seen, or has happened to someone that have helped you understand violence or made you think about violence?

16. Did the way you look at particular forms of violence change in any way after reading *The Lemon Suitcase*?

Appendix B: Ethical Approval

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No...................

10th December 2018

Mr. Edwin Asa Adjei
African Studies,
P.O.Box LG 73,
Institute of African Studies,
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Mr. Adjei,

ECH 119/17-18: Violence in African Young Adult Fiction

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date: 09/12/19

On Agenda for: Initial Submission

Date of Submission: 27/07/18

ECH Action: Approved

Reporting: Bi-Annually

Please accept my congratulations.

UG./ISSER/ECH
VALID UNTIL
09 DEC 2019
APPROVED DOCUMENT

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Vice Chair

Cc: Professor Esi Sutherland-Addy, African Studies, UG
        Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo, African Studies, UG

Tel: +233-303933866

Email: ech@ug.edu.gh

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Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PARENT/GUARDIAN PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study:	Violence in African Young Adult Fiction
Principal Investigator:	Edwin Asa Adjei
Certified Protocol Number	

Section B– CONSENT FOR WARD/CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

The aim of this research is to explore the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read. Your permission is being sought to enable your child participate in this study. Your child will be required to read one African young adult fiction. After this, he/she will be interviewed concerning the portrayal of violence in the storybook and their views on the book. Reading the storybook will take approximately a week. Interviews on the book will last for approximately thirty minutes.

Possible Risk of the study

The study will not involve any adverse risks. Your child might not enjoy parts of the narrative of the story assigned but the entire novel is very interesting and worth reading.

Possible Benefits

Giving your consent to allow your child/ward participate in the study will help provide insight into the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction and how your child makes meaning of violence in the storybooks he/she reads. The responses obtained will help in understanding how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read.

Confidentiality

Please be assured that any information provided will be solely and purposely used for research. This information will be handled only by the principal investigator and any information provided will be protected as much as possible.

Compensation

Your child will keep the story book they read for this research. In addition, your assent and your child's participation will be greatly appreciated.

Withdrawal from Study

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right not to allow your child participate in this study. Your child also has the right to also withdraw from participating at any point in time during the study. Doing so will not attract any penalty whatsoever form the researcher.

Contact for Additional Information

In case of any doubt or/and for additional information concerning the study, you may contact the Principal Investigator; Edwin Asa Adjei. University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, Legon. Telephone: 0242-845-786 or email address: edwinadjei14@gmail.com

Professor Esi Sutherland-Addy

University of Ghana,

Institute of African Studies, Legon

Email: esisutherland@gmail.com

Tel: 0244375984

OR

Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo

University of Ghana,

Institute of African Studies, Legon

Email:adomako@gmail.com

Tel: 0264634923

OR

Dr. David Odoi

University of Ghana

Language Center

Email: odoiski@yahoo.com

Tel: 0244660230

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Administrator of the Ethics Committee for Humanities, ISSER, University of Ghana at ech@isser.edu.gh / ech@ug.edu.gh or 00233- 303-933-866.

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

_____

Name of Volunteer

_____   _____

Signature or mark of volunteer   Date

If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_____

Name of witness

_____   _____

Signature of witness   Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

_____

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

_____   _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent   Date

Appendix D: Young Adult Assent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study:	Violence in African Young Adult Fiction
Principal Investigator:	Edwin Asa Adjei
Certified Protocol Number	

Section B– YOUNG ADULT ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

The aim of this research is to explore the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read. Your permission is being sought to participate in this study. You will be required to read one African young adult fiction. After this, you will be interviewed concerning the portrayal of forms of violence in the storybook and your views on the book. Reading the storybook will take approximately a week. Interviews on the book will last for approximately thirty minutes.

Possible Risk of the study

The study will not involve any adverse risks. You might not enjoy parts of the narrative of the story assigned but the entire novel will be very interesting and worth reading.

Possible Benefits

Giving your consent to participate in the study will help provide insight into the portrayal of violence in African young adult fiction and how young adults make meaning of violence in the storybooks they read. The responses obtained will help in understanding how young adults make meaning of the fiction they read.

Confidentiality

Please be assured that any information you provide during the research will be used solely and purposely for research. Your recorded interview session and notes on the book will be handled only by the principal researcher. The recorded information will be transcribed and written down after which the recorded data will be deleted. Only the transcribed data will be used in the research analysis. You are not required to provide your name during the interview session and your name will not be used or mentioned in any part of the interview to avoid recognition. Any information you provide will be protected as much as possible.

Compensation

You will keep the story book you read for this research. In addition, your consent and participation will be greatly appreciated.

Withdrawal from Study

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right not to participate. You also have the right to withdraw from participating at any point in time during the study. Doing so will not attract any penalty whatsoever from the researcher. You may also choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

Contact for Additional Information

In case of any doubt or/and for additional information concerning the study, you may contact the

Principal Investigator; Edwin Asa Adjei. University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, Legon.

Telephone: 0242-845-786 or email address: edwinadjei14@gmail.com

Professor Esi Sutherland-Addy

University of Ghana,

Institute of African Studies, Legon

Email: esisutherland@gmail.com

Tel: 0244375984

OR

Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo

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Dr. David Odoi

University of Ghana

Language Center

Email: odoiski@yahoo.com

Tel: 0244660230

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Administrator of the Ethics Committee for Humanities, ISSER, University of Ghana at ech@isser.edu.gh / ech@ug.edu.gh or 00233- 303-933-866.

Section C- VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

_____

Name of Volunteer

_____   _____

Signature or mark of volunteer   Date

If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_____

Name of witness

_____   _____

Signature of witness   Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

_____

Name of Person Who Obtained Consent

_____   _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent   Date

Appendix E: African Novels Ghanaian Young Adults Self-Select to Read

Title of novel	Author	Number of young adults who self-select it to read
Adventures of Elizabeth Sam	C.N.N Lokko	1
No sweetness here and other stories	Ama Ata Aidoo	9
Grief child	Lawrence Darmani	4
The black heel	Peggy Oppong	
The forest village	Alice Mina	4
The green sunset	Peggy Oppng	25
The lemon suitcase	Peggy Oppong	53
The dilemma of a ghost	Ama Ata Aidoo	5
The ancestral sacrifice	Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantak	5
Where have all our rivers gone?	A. Ofori-Mensah and E.O.A.Asibey	2
The shark	Peggy Oppong	12
Beneath the cover	Peggy Oppong	16
Journey of an African father	Lawrence Darmani	2
Harvest of corruption	Frank Ogodo Ogbeche	2
The girl who can and other stories	Ama Ata Aidoo	4
The red heifer	Peggy Oppong	8
Changes	Ama Ata Aidoo	4
The silver spoon	Peggy Oppong	10
End of the tunnel	Peggy Oppong	13
No roses for Sharon	Peggy Oppong	12
The bloody ingrate	Sylvanus Bedzrah	2
Ananse in the land of idiots	Yaw Asare	3
Amina	Muhammed Umar	1
Justify your inclusion	Samelia Bawuah	1
Long vacation encounters	Lawrence Darmani	1
The lady who refused to bow	Peggy Oppong	10
Ossie's dream	Elizabeth Amankah	2
The twelfth heart	Elizabeth-Irene Baitie	15
Death at the voyager hotel	Kwei Quartey	1
Things fall apart	Chinua Achebe	2
Adventures of Cleopas	Peggy Oppong	8
Oko and the dancing baboon	George Lutterodt	1
The heritage	Lawrence Darmani	1
The fisher boy	Darren Sapp	1
Witches of honour	Asare Adei	1
Blood invasion	Lawrence Darmani	1

Appendix F: Non-African Authored Novel's Ghanaian Young Adults Self-Select to Read

Title of novel	Author	Number of young adults who self-select it to read
Horrid Henry's Nit	Francesca Simon	1 (Goodreads)
Horrid Henry Meets the Queen	Francesca Simon	1(Goodreads)
Choices	Skyy	1
Precious Bane	Mary Webb	1
A Tough Call	Bob dixon	1 (Goodreads)
Native Son	Richard Wright	1
Oliver Twist	Charles Dickens	10
The Prince and the Pauper	Mark Twain	3
Amelia Jane is Naughty Again	Enid Blyton	1
The spell sisters	Amber Castle	1
A beautiful daughter	Nicole Baart	1
Close enemies	Nick Curtis	1
Diary of a wimpy kid	Jeff Kinney	3
Dear dumb diary	Jim Benton	1
The cat with the feathery tail and other stories	Enid Blyton	1
She stoops to conquer	Oliver Goldsmith	1
Gamer girl	Mari Mancusi	1 (Goodreads)
Othello	William Shakespeare	16
The secret seven	Enid Blyton	16
The secret valley	Enid Blyton	15
Treasure island	Robert Louis Stevenson	8
Marley and me: life and love with the world	John Grogan	1
Pirates of the Caribbean	Rob Kidd	3
Dracula	Bram Stoker	3
Harry Potter series	J. K. Rowling	35
Heidi	Johanna Spyri	2
The invisible man	H.G. Wells	3
Olivia	Judith Rossner	1
Black beauty	Anna Sewell	2
Tuesday's child	Louise Bagshawe	1
Raven queen	Jules Watson	1
Queenie	Candice Carty-Williams	1
Before I fall	Lauren Oliver	1
The girl who couldn't say no	Tracy Engelbrecht	2 (Goodreads)
The Samurai	Shusaku Endo	1

Twilight saga	Stephenie Meyer	4
Gulliver's travels	Jonathan Swift	5
The eclipse	Stephenie Meyer	1
Journey to the East	Hermann Hesse	4
Macbeth	William Shakespeare	19
The angel of death	Jack Higgins	1
Beyond the sun	Matt Jones	1
Force of nature	Jane Harper	6
Almost dead	Lisa Jackson	1
Solace	Belinda McKeon	1
Because of Winnie Dexie	Kate DiCamillo	1
The fisher boy	Stephen Anable	1
A victim of circumstances	Phyllis Martin	1
Dark diary	P. Anastasia	1
The third target	Joel C. Rosenberg	1
A disobedient girl	Ru Freeman	1
A dangerous inheritance	Alison weir	1
A fresh start	rlfj	1
Triangle: A novel	Katharine Webber	2
Let's roll	Lisa Beamer with Ken Abraham	1
The Day my mother left	James Prosek	1
Fall of the dream machine	Dean Koontz	1
Lightning	Dean Koontz	1
The girl he never noticed	Lindsay Armstrong	Wattpadd 1
The boy I admire from afar	Neilani Alejandrino	Wattpadd 1
Romeo and Juliet	William Shakespeare	45
The tempest	William Shakespeare	40
Hamlet	William Shakespeare	60

Appendix G: Synopsis of Selected Novels for Analysis

Mine Boy-Peter Abrahams

Mine Boy tells the story of Xuma as he faces the turmoil of apartheid in South Africa. This turbulence is caused by unemployment for blacks, attempts to wipe out the black population of South Africa with diseases introduced by the Europeans and racism, which have resulted in political and social trauma. Xuma travels from the northern part of South Africa to the southern part in search of a job in the mines. After a long journey, he arrived at Malay Camp in the south with empty pockets, tired and hungry. He was fortunate to encounter Leah, an illegal beer brewer, who gave him accommodation and gave him his first lessons on survival in the south. Through Leah, he encountered Johannes, who took him to the mines. Within a short time, Xuma became a successful miner under the leadership of Paddy, a white man, who enlightens Xuma on issues of humanity and race. After a mine accident in which several miners die, Xuma and Paddy lead a strike by the miners as they call for better working conditions for black miners. The police acre called in to arrest all the striking workers as their strike is deemed illegal. During the chaos that ensues after the arrival of the police, Xuma manages to escape due to his size and brute strength but the other miners are arrested and sent to jail. Xuma, after his arrest goes to Malay camp to inform those there of the accident, the workers strike and the police arrest. The story ends with Xuma saying his good byes to the people he knows at Malay camp, amid their tears as he set off on his own to join his colleague miners in jail.

Things Fall Apart- Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart tells the story of the collision that takes place in the lives of individuals and their societies when British colonial culture clashes with Ibo culture. The story revolves around Okonkwo, a great man known for his wrestling prowess and achievements in the Ibo traditional

society of Umuofia and his struggle to adapt to the changes being instigated in his society by European missionaries and British colonialism. Okwonkwo is depicted as a resourceful and hardworking man who despite not receiving an inheritance or support from his father, is able to climb the social ladder to the admiration of many. His ambition coupled with his desire not to be like his father, who died a failure in the eyes of Okokwo and the Ibo community, pushes Okonkwo to great heights while also making him uncompromisingly steeped in the masculine and patriarchal ideals of his society. During a funeral for one of Umoufia's great men, Okonkwo's gun accidentally explodes and kills Ezeudu's son. He is therefore sent into exile along with his family for manslaughter. In his absence, white missionaries arrive in Umuofia with the intent to introduce Christianity in Umuofia and its surrounding villages. This incenses Okonkwo as it is an affront to his beliefs. On his return to Umuofia, the unmasking of an elder embodying an ancestral spirit by a Christian and the retaliation of the village lands Okonkwo and his fellow elders in jail where they are maltreated the native messengers, despite the instructions of the district commissioner for them to be treated with respect. After this incidence, the village of Umuofia meet to plan a rebellion against colonial rule. When messengers from the colonial authorities arrives to instruct the people to disperse, Okonkwo beheads one of them, hoping that his people would follow his lead but the people allow the remaining messengers to escape. Okonkwo realizes that his people would not fight colonialists as he had hoped and commits suicide.

The River Between- **Ngugi wa Thiongo**

Th focal point of *The River Between* is Waiyaki. Waiyaki, at a young age, was told of a prophecy believed in by many in his village. The prophecy was of a saviour who would be born in the village and would grow to accomplish great things for his people. Waiyaki's father was of the belief that Waiyaki was that expected saviour since Waiyaki was believed to be gifted. Waiyaki did not

believe he was gifted or the prophesied saviour of his people. Waiyaki's father, Chege, as a result of his belief in the prophesy of a coming saviour, enrols Waiyaki in a missionary school. He does this with the belief that Waiyaki would learn the ways of the colonists and be well equipped to lead the fight against colonialism later in his life. Chege, therefore charged Waiyaki to learn all he could about the ways of the colonialists, without assimilating it so that despite his education, he would not forget his roots. Waiyaki excels in school and this gives him and his father great hope about his future role in the development of their society. While still in school, the unfortunate death of a girl, as a result of female circumcision, incites the missionaries to expel the children of all parents who continue to support the age-old custom of circumcision. Unfortunately for Waiyaki, he is one of those expelled as his father continues to hold on to the traditions of his people. This pushes Waiyaki to establish a school for all the dismissed school children. He is so consumed with this goal and its benefits to his village that he does not fight against other equally unjust policies of the colonialists such as the appropriation of his people's lands by the colonialists. This creates enemies for him in his village. Among these enemies are Kabonyi, a man who was educated in the same missionary school as Waiyaki. Kabonyi incites people against Waiyaki to destroy him. The story ends with Waiyaki and his lover, Nyambura, in the hands of a group named Kiama, whose goal is to ensure purity in the tribe against the adoption of the ways of the white man, as they accuse Waiyaki of betraying his tribe.

The African Child- Camara Laye

The African Child is an autobiographical novel by Camara Laye which was originally published in French as *L'enfant noir*. It was translated into English by James Kirkup and published as *The African Child*. The novel is a rendition of Camara Laye's childhood in Guinea. Like most African children, Laye's childhood is portrayed as one in which he is socialized in the religion of his

parents, Islam, and also in the African world view in which the fate and destinies of people hinge on supernatural. Laye's parents are therefore portrayed as people whose supernatural beliefs have infused them with the ability to perform extraordinary feats. His father is a blacksmith who is almost without equal due to his totem, a snake, which visits him in his dreams to give directions and warnings and also visits him in his work shop to give protection from harm. Laye's mother is also a woman with supernatural abilities, hence her ability to fetch water from crocodile infested rivers without fear or any harm befalling her because her totem is a crocodile. She is also able to get a stubborn horse which had refused to move with only a few words. Laye follows a different path from his parents as he attends school. he begins his education in a Muslim school and furthers his education in a French school. at school, he and his friends experience bullying for a while till his father takes matters into his own hands and beats up the headmaster of his school. growing up in a traditional setting, Laye undergoes circumcision as a sign of his evolution from childhood to adulthood. The circumcision ceremony and its aftermath are colourfully and masterfully interwoven into the story. As an "adult", Laye furthers his education by taking a course in technical education in Conakry. In his third year of his technical education, Laye wins a scholarship to further his education in France. The story ends with Laye's sad separation from his parents, girlfriend, family and country as he looks ahead to the unknown future that his journey to France holds for him.

The Concubine- **Elechi Amadi**

The Concubine revolves around Ihuoma, a beautiful young widow, who loses her husband, Emenike, at a young age. Ihuoma is portrayed as the ideal woman in her community and her husband in praising her notes that in their six years of marriage, she had ever had a serious quarrel with another woman. Unfortunately, she loses her husband after he gets seriously injured at the

left side of his chest by a tree stump during a fight over a piece of land with Madume, a greedy man who is never satisfied with his lot. Madume himself commits suicide later in the story. He physically assaults Ihuoma and attempts to harvest plantain on the piece of land he had attempted to forcefully seize from Emenike, which had led to Emenike's death. In the process of harvesting the plantain, a spitting cobra hiding in the plantain leaves spit in his eyes while he was entangled in the plantain leaves. This results in him becoming blind. His blindness results in hardships for himself and his family, which pushes him to commit suicide. After this, Ekwueme, a young man whose parent had betrothed him to another woman, Ahurole, since childhood falls in love with Ihuoma. His parents refuse to let him marry Ihuoma and force him to marry his betrothed bride, whom he never loved. Ahurole goes for a love potion to force Ekwueme to love her. When this is discovered, Ekwueme is allowed to divorce her, freeing him to pursue a relationship with Ihuoma. His parents agree for him to marry Ihuoma but are persuaded to seek the help of a diviner in order to know the fate of the marriage in advance. During divination, they find out that Ihuoma was the favourite wife of the sea king in spirit world before she was incarnated as a human. Because of the jealousy of the sea king, he doomed her remain unmarried or only a concubine to a man if the right rituals could be performed. As a result, any man who entered into a relationship with her, especially if he married her, was doomed to die. Despite warnings from the diviner not to go ahead with the marriage, Ekwueme's parents seek another diviner to perform rituals to allow their son to marry Ihuoma. One of the items the diviner requests for the ritual is a lizard. on the day of the rituals, Ihuoma's son and his friends are asked to catch a lizard to complete the items for the ritual, which is supposed to be performed at midnight. Unfortunately, while attempting to shoot a lizard, Ihuoma's son's arrow misses a lizard and plants itself deep into the upper belly of Ekwueme, who was having. Conversation with Ihuoma. The story ends with Ekwueme's death shortly around

midnight, the same time at which the rituals to pacify the sea king in order to be able to marry Ihuoma, should have taken place.

***The Joys of Motherhood*- Buchi Emecheta**

The Joys of Motherhood revolves around Nnu-Ego, a woman whose mother died in the process of having a son after her. Nnu-Ego is born with a mark resembling a cutlass wound which was inflicted on a slave's head to weaken her so she could be buried with her mistress (Ona's mother). When Nnu-Ego matures into a woman, she is married off to Amotokwu. After months of being married and several visits to herbalists, she is told that she is barren, because her *chi*, the slave that was forcefully buried with Nnu-Ego's mother has refused to give her children. Amotokwu therefore takes a second wife who gets pregnant soon after marriage. After this, Nnu-Ego is married off to Nnaife, a man she had never met. Nnaife lived in Lagos and was a laundary man to a white man. Despite Nnu-Ego's dislike for Nnaife and his job, he is able to get her pregnant and she has a son. Nnu-Ego almost commits suicide when she finds out her son is dead one morning. She is saved from throwing herself into a river by someone from her village who recognizes her. After this incident, Nnu-Ego has nine children but does not find the joy she had hoped to find in motherhood. Nnaife inherited his brother's wives after his brother died and brought the youngest of his brother's wives to live with him as his wife. This led to bitter rivalry between Nnu-Ego and her rival. During a war, Nnaife is drafted into the army. Nnu-Ego does all she can to support her sons to have some education, hoping they will I turn be able to support their siblings and her. Unfortunately for her, her sons keep asking for more support to further their education till she relocates back to her village. She relocates back to her village after her husband injures a man in his attempt to take back her daughter who elopes with a Yoruba butcher's son. Nnaife blames Nnu-Ego for his imprisonment, which makes her realize she has lost the love of her children, especially

her sons whom she so cherished in her youth, and her husband. While Nnu-Ego grieves the loss of her children, in the village, she is famous for having two married daughters and two sons abroad because a mother is supposed to glory in the achievements of her children. Nnu-Ego dies alone by a deserted road and is given a grand funeral by her children. The story ends with a shrine dedicated to Nnu-Ego and a warning that Nnu-Ego does not answer the prayers of those who pray to her for children.

So Long a Letter- **Mariama Ba**

As its title says, *So Long a Letter* is a letter from Ramatoulaye to Aissatou, her childhood friend. This letter is written not long after the death of Ramatoulaye's husband, Modou, from a heart attack. The letter is written during the ceremonial mourning period that Ramatoulaye has to undergo as a woman who has lost her husband. The book shares Ramatoulaye and Aissatou's experiences while going up, the challenges they face in marriage and their current experiences. The betrayal of Ramatoulaye by Modou after thirty years of marriage and twelve children, takes centre stage in the novel. Aissatou herself divorces her husband of many years and travels to the US to start life anew after her husband takes a second wife. Through these betrayals, Ramatoulaye's and Senegalese women's psychological turmoil and economic struggles are revealed. Ramatoulaye survives all of this with the support of Aissatou and is able to reject two marriage proposals as a result. Though she faces challenges as a single parent, the story ends with hope as she finds consolation and support in her grown-up children as well as the unflinching support of her childhood friend, Aissatou.

***Nervous Conditions*- Tsitsi Dangaremba**

Nervous Conditions is narrated by Tambu, the main character of the story. Tambu had the desire to attend school but could not do so due to the poverty inherent in her family. Her elder brother, Nhamo, is given the opportunity to attend a missionary school far away from home but close to her uncle, Babamukuru's, house. Unfortunately, Nhamo died and Babamukuru chose Tambu to take his place and attend the same missionary school that Nhamo attended close to his house. When Tambu arrives at her uncle's house, she becomes close to her cousin Nyasha, partly due to Nyasha's ideologies which were not the same as those she had grown up with. Tambu completely focuses on her studies and as a result, excels in her education. She performs so well in an examination to select students for a famous missionary school that she is selected to further her education in that well-known school. in the new school, she encounters many western ideologies which clash with the cultural beliefs she had been brought up with. Tambu continues to hold on to her cultural beliefs and as a result, becomes very vigilant and full of anxiety as a result of everything that takes place around her. Her single-minded focus on her academics however enables her to continue to excel in her academics despite the seeming chaos in her mind and around her.

***When Rain Clouds Gather*- Bessie Head**

When Rain Clouds Gather revolves around Makhaya,a a man who flees from South Africa and settles in Golema Mmidi in Botswana as a refugee. In Botswana, he encounters a British agriculturalist named Gilbert who employs him to work on his millet plantation. Makhaya's role is to supervise the women who work on the plantation. On the plantation, Makhaya witnesses the interferences and undermining of Gilbert's efforts by Chief Matenge, who opposes Gilbert's agricultural ideology. Despite this opposition, Gilbert thrives and accomplishes the feat of convincing the people of Golema Mmidi to fence their farmlands so that their animals would not

engage in free grazing. This was to ensure the animals were protected from predators and well fed without the risks involved in the free-range form of agriculture. At the end of the story, Makhaya is promoted by Gilbert to oversee his new millet plantation. This coincides with Makhaya falling in love with Paulina, whose son had died in the bush while herding cattle.

Faceless – Amma Darko

Faceless revolves around Fofo, a fourteen-year-old girl who has found herself on the streets of Agbogbloshie due to the negligence and poverty of her mother. Fofo learns to steal, disguised as a boy in order to survive on the streets. She is also introduced to the intake of alcohol, unplanned and unprotected sex, pornography and narcotic drugs as ways of psychologically escaping the horrors of the streets. The murder of Fofo's sister, Baby T gets the media interested in streetism. Through media investigations, Fofo comes into contact with Kabria, whose concern for her takes Fofo off the streets to a children's home. Kabria, with the support of her work colleagues, also unravels the mystery of Baby T's death.

The Lions' Whisper- **Elizabeth-Irene Baitie**

The central characters in *The Lion's Whisper* are David and Leo. They are neighbours whose parents are sworn enemies due to an incident in the past where Leo's dog almost bit David's sister. The incident leaves both David and his sister traumatized. Leo however reaches out to David, who accepts a to have a secret relationship with him despite knowing the negative reaction his parents and sister would have of this relationship. The relationship survives despite the many challenges they go through. David is able to help Leo locate his mother, whom he had been brought up since childhood to believe was dead. During that same time, a military coup in Ghana results in the death of David's uncle. The soldiers decide to kill Dad's father as well but with Leo's help, David and

his family are able to escape from the soldiers. David's family manage to secretly leave the family and escape to the United Kingdom to start life afresh. The relationship between Leo and David continues to bloom despite the distance between them as the story ends with them exchanging letters.

Ebony Girl- **Vera Akumiah**

Asabea's parents send her to Ghana to live and continue her education in Ghana, under the guardianship of her grandmother. This is because Asabea is encountering racism in her school along with bullying due to her hair texture and body build. Asabea is angry with her parents when she finds out she is being sent to Ghana and throws tantrums but to no avail. Her plan is to trouble her grandmother so much that she would send her back to her parents in the UK. Asabea however falls in love with Ghana, her grandmother and her new school, which is owned by her grandmother. Asabea excels in her academics and in sports and becomes a hero in the school. the story ends with Asabea's parents and siblings visiting Ghana for the first time in many years, with her parents planning to resettle in Ghana.

Somebody's Daughter- **Hiwot Walelign**

Somebody's Daughter tells the story of Kassina, a young girl who out of poverty has become a house maid. She is abandoned by her relatives because of her poor background. In addition to this, she is an illiterate and does not have any academic training. With nowhere to turn, Kassina continues to serve her abusive employer until fate turns her situation around.

To Kiss a Girl- **Ruby Yayra Goka**

Gyikua Ampofo loses her sister to death. Her mother, who does not believe her daughter is dead goes on a search to find the dead sister. This leaves Gyikua alone with her father and sister. As a

result of the pain of losing her sister and mother, Gyikua loses faith in people and God. She encounters Chidi Anukwe one afternoon at the market and is rude to him. Unfortunately for her, Chidi is the son of one of her father's friends. With time, Chidi and Gyikua fall in love and share some wonderful experiences. Soon after that, Chidi relapses in his Leukaemia treatment and has to be sent to Nigeria for further tests and treatment. Sadly, for Gyikua, Chidi does not recover from his leukaemia and dies in Nigeria. Not long after Chidi's death, Gyikua's mother returns home after years of searching for her dead daughter. This brings joy to Gyikua's home once again.

Finding Colombia- **Kinyanjui Kombani**

The main character in *Finding Colombia* is Alex. He is a boy who has learnt to survive on the street as a thief. He escapes from the psychological pain of living on the streets by sniffing jet lee, a narcotic drug. He is enlisted by Anti-Drug Agency (ADA) officers to help them find Colombia, who is feared in the drug world but is not known. The ADA agents suspect Colombia is hiding in a rehabilitation centre so they enrol Alex in the same rehabilitation centre to unmask Colombia, whose identity they do not know. While at the rehabilitation centre, Alex suspects many people but is unable to prove any of them is Colombia. While following up on a hunch one night, he is ambushed by some of the rehabilitation centres members who are planning to escape from the centre. He is saved by a girl with great martial arts skills, whom he is able to identify as Colombia. Colombia almost kills him but fortunately, ADA agents who have picked up his distress signals rush in to rescue him and arrest Colombia.

Waiting For The Sun- **Elshadai Tesfaye**

Adonai is a high school student who loses her sight in an accident. This makes her sad, bitter and apathetic to life. A psychiatrist, Dr Yasin tries to help her to regain hope in herself and in life when

she is sent to stay with him. Unfortunately, Adonai's outlook on life does not improve. She encounters Dr Yasin's nephew who falls in love with her. This compels her to see life in a different way and pushes her to find happiness in life once again even though her sight is never regained.

The Step-monster- **Ruby Yayra Goka**

Buerki loses her mother to death and is heartbroken. Her heart break is made more painful when after some years, her father decides to take a new wife. In Buerki's mind, step mothers are wicked people and she believes her step mother is out to take her father from her and her brother and destroy their lives. She therefore does all in her power to destroy her father's relationship with Naadu, her step mother. When Naadu finally gets tired of fighting Buerki and decides to move to her own home, Buerki is happy. Her joy is however short-lived as her grandmother tells her she was adopted. She goes on a journey to find her real mother and succeeds in finding her only to realize that her mother is a poor woman who got pregnant as a teenager and gave her out for adoption. What breaks her heart most is that her mother who had given her out still did not want her back. Buerki goes back home and reconciles with Naadu just around the time that Naadu has a child.

Living in the Shade: Aiming for the Summit- **Nahida Esmail**

Ivory Stars is a member of Tanzania's first all-girls football team. This girls team is made up of girls who are enduring the psychological challenges that come with being born an albino. These girls are marginalized in their society and this pushes them to fight for recognition. They decide to prove their worth and abilities to their society by climbing mountain Kilimanjaro on international albinism awareness day. Aside football, Ivory Stars and her team leader Tatu start preparation to climb the mountain to make a case to their societies that albinos are not second-rate citizens. They

encounter a lot of challenges in their preparations but this does not deter them. Climbing the mountain also comes with its own challenges but they persevere till they are able to get to the top of mountain Kilimanjaro.

Face Under the Sea- **William Mkufya**

Naima and Rahima are twins. One day, they discover a talking fish in a fond. The talking fish asks them to take it to the sea. Their quest to get the talking fish to the sea begins an adventure in which they have supernatural encounters. They encounter talking animals and a mermaid on their journey. Through this journey, they learn about how they and humans can find happiness on earth. They also learn about how all living things can find happiness on earth and the best way this goal of all living things can be accomplished.

The Twelfth Heart- **Elizabeth-Irene Baitie**

The Twelfth Heart tells the story of Mercy, a girl from a village who is fortunate to further her education in Accra. She goes to the school determined to banish all traces of her roots from a village. She therefore tells lies to her dorm mates and presents herself as someone from an aristocratic family. She makes friends with people she deems are from top-class families and is involved in some escapades in school. Through these escapades, she realises that she has chosen the wrong friends and sets about putting her life and academics back on track. She finds true friendship in the people she had once shunned due to her ideas of their background. These friends help her find her footing in her academics and the right values to live her life on. Unfortunately, one of her dorm mates dies, leaving her heartbroken. The story ends with Mercy and her dorm mates supporting each other as they recover from the heart break of losing a friend and dorm mate.