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| **EXAMPLE: Analysis of qualitative data collected from two focus groups (FGs)**  Title of dissertation  **8 going on 18: A Qualitative Study of Parent’s Perceptions of Children Growing Up Too Fast**  **Study’s aim**  The present study sought to discover parent’s perceptions about contemporary childhood and if they had a perception that children were growing up too fast and why this perception existed  **CONTENTS PAGE:**  **Introduction**  **Chapter 1: Literature Review**  The Social Construction of Childhood  The Disappearance of Childhood  Children in Consumer Culture  Children and the New Media  Sexualisation  Educational Pressures  Risk Society  Parental Anxiety  Professionalization of Parenthood  Theoretical Framework  **Chapter 2: Methodology**  Research Method  Sampling  Procedure  Data Analysis  Ethical Considerations  Challenges and Limitations  **Chapter 3: Results and Discussion**  Overview of the chapter  The Disappearance of Childhood  Consumer Culture  Children and the New Media  Sexualisation  Educational Pressures  Parental Anxiety  Professionalization of Parenthood  **Chapter 4: Conclusions**  Overview  Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research  Concluding Remarks  **References**  **Appendices**  **Extracts from analysis chapter**  **Chapter 3: Results and discussion**  **Overview of the chapter**  This chapter **will present the qualitative findings gathered from two focus groups using a thematic analysis drawing on key themes from postmodern theory and the literature previously discussed**. ***This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will discuss whether there is a view that children grow up too fast and the second section will discuss parental views and anxieties in relation to the broader issues of consumer culture, children and the new media, sexualisation, educational pressures, parental anxieties and the professionalization of childhood.***  **The Disappearance of Childhood**  **Previous literature has suggested the childhood is imagined as a time of innocence and freedom from the responsibilities of adulthood but there is much debate about when this ends in contemporary society** (Valentine, 2003). This view is supported by the findings from both focus groups as when the participants were asked to describe childhood P2 in FG1 said:  *“Freedom, no responsibilities.”*  P7 in FG2 said:  *“School days, happy times.”*  Other words participants associated with childhood were *“fun”, “playing”, “happy” and “innocence”*. **This suggests** **there is a view that childhood is a separate element of life from adulthood as children do not have the burden of adult responsibilities**. Mayall (2002) claims that this is due to the fact that children are increasingly protected from various ‘dangers’ in society and adult concerns. These feelings highlight the **theory of ‘risk society’** (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992) as parents feel the need to protect children in a society filled with new ‘risks’ and ‘dangers’ that were unknown to parents in the past (Jackson and Scott, 1999).  Childhood is a social construction and therefore there is not a specific age for when childhood ends but some participants from this study and some literature claim that children are growing up too fast (Buckingham, 2000; Coughlan, 2013; Postman, 1994). Participants in the focus groups were asked at what age they thought childhood ended and the responses were varied. In FG1:  *P1: “I think it used to be 10 or 11 but I think now it’s…”*  *P4: “Do you think its younger now?”*  *P1: “Yes.”*  *P3: “I think when we were younger, you were younger longer, so I would have said maybe 12.”*  *P7: I would say even under 16, you’re still a child.”*  In FG2:  *P6: “When it was me, I was in my teens.”*  *P7: “When you start doing your exams in school.”*  *P10: “15 or 16.”*  These responses suggest that there has been a change in parental perspectives surrounding the age when childhood ‘ends’ as the parents relate their opinions to their own childhood and some believe childhood now ends at a younger age than previously. In Brannen’s (2004) study, adults across three generations were also basing perceptions about childhood, similar to this sample, on their own childhood. Brannen (2004) claims that the way adults understand children and childhood changes over time and thus childhood experiences for one generation is seldom the same in another generation.  Mook (2007) also believes that childhood in contemporary society has a shorter duration, blurred boundaries and a closer link with the adult world. The changes to childhood are an indicator of post modernity as the blurring of distinctions is a concept that commonly occurs in the notion of postmodernism (Buckingham, 2000). It is argued that as distinctions between childhood and adulthood have been disassembled, the postmodern child is exposed to a number of damaging influences and must manage the adult world (Mook, 2007; Briggs, 2008). Briggs (2008) claims that with a loss of foundations between childhood and adulthood there are increased feelings of anxiety and loss of control amongst parents. This suggests that **the FG parents** believe that children are growing up faster as the suggested age that childhood ends is younger than previously. The perception occurs due to the fact that **these parents** are comparing their childhood with childhood today and feel that childhood ends earlier.  **Consumer Culture**  **It is claimed that children’s increased exposure and involvement in consumer culture has resulted in a perception that they are growing up too fast** (Piachuad, 2008; Hill, 2011; Levin, 2010). Parents in both focus groups compared their own childhoods to current childhood and noticed that children’s exposure to advertising and access to information had increased in recent years. Bottomley et al (2010) highlighted that understanding the impact of consumer culture on children has become important in recent years as anxieties are increasing over the rising levels of materialism in children. A number of the parents noted this effect on their children. For example, P10 in FG2 stated:  *“It’s very materialistic now, I was happy to have a ball and a bike but now its like, you need to have everything because kids are aware of what’s available much more than they were.”*  P8 in FG1 also noticed the materialistic manner of children as she noted:  *“They [children] want to be the same as everyone else, everyone has got everything and they’ve all got to have the same thing.”*  Buckingham (2011) claims that marketing and advertising to children are blamed for promoting materialistic values and destroying fundamental values of childhood. The results from both focus groups suggest that some parents hold this view as they referred to materialism as an effect of engagement in consumer culture on their children. Cook (2004, p.149) also noted that some research reflects the way in which children are viewed as “sacred beings who are in danger of being polluted.” From the focus groups, it could be argued that some participants felt their children’s minds have been ‘polluted’ due to the materialistic values that they hold as a result of consumer culture. Levin and Linn (2004) also claim that advertising is responsible for rising materialism in children, observing that the message in almost all advertising campaigns is that a product can buy happiness. Schor (2004, p.13) claims that social scientists have concluded that as a result of engagement in consumer culture, children today are “the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history.” Furthermore, P8 in FG2, expressed his concerns about the consequences of marketing and advertising on his children:  *“As a consequence of all the marketing, my kids don’t have any concept of money. That’s kind of worrying for them at their stage of life as they grow up to be teens and then into adults and they just want everything now.”*  This participant’s children are not even in their teenage years and he has noticed the effect consumer culture is having on them. This is interesting as he believes that his children will grow up thinking it is acceptable to act in a certain way as a result of involvement in consumer culture at too young an age. This view is supported by Levin and Linn (2004), as they believe that advertising to young children is exploitative and may hinder cognitive development as young children do not understand the world in the same way as adults which causes them to be more vulnerable to advertising and marketing. Quart (2003) also supports this claim as she states that as a result of marketing to children, younger children are being encouraged to act older than their developmental age. Additionally, Schor (2004, p.190) argues that as a result of exposure to consumer culture, “Just as modern childhood has disappeared, so too will its postmodern variant be transformed.”  The debate on childhood and consumerism has become divided as some campaigners argue that the commercial world has resulted in the disappearance of childhood, while others claim that it offers learning and experiences children benefit from that they did not in the past (Hill, 2011). The research from the focus groups found that the parents had varied views as to whether the impacts of the consumer culture on their children were positive or negative. P4 in FG2 stated:  *“There are positives and negatives about it. I think children are growing up far too fast in a lot of elements but on the other hand I think they learn so much more quicker.”*  It is clear from the statement above that this participant is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of children’s exposure to the consumer society. The literature suggests that there are concerns about consumerism eroding childhood as there are few distinctions made between adults and children by marketers and advertisers (Hill, 2011). Furthermore, Best and Kellner (2001) state that as a consequence of children’s increased access to consumer culture, children today are living the themes of postmodern theory. Best and Kellner (2001) believe that the postmodern childhood is dangerous as children are overly exposed to media and information which is harmful. Some parents feel that although this exposure to consumer culture may be resulting in children growing up faster; children are learning more at a younger age which is beneficial for them. This suggests that a number of parents are aware of both sides of the debate and accept the changes that have occurred. The findings from the focus groups concerning the impact of consumer culture on childhood are interesting as the parents believe children are growing up too fast but also believe engagement in consumer culture is beneficial.  **Children and the New Media**  **As previously discussed, there is a debate surrounding the effects that advancements in technology have on children in society. The debate is similar to the debate surrounding children and consumer culture as some claim advancements in technology has resulted in childhood fading as children are able to access a wider range of information their parents may not want them to view (Levin, 2010). However others, such as Buckingham (2000) believes new media technologies provide children with opportunities for learning and creativity. Furthermore, Baudrillard (cited in Best and Kellner, 1991) claims that advancements in technologies and the increasing use of technologies are generating a postmodern society as the media blurs distinctions between reality in everyday life and media reality. As children are exposed to more images and programs at a younger age, it is argued that this may blur distinctions between their fantasy and reality which may hinder their development or encourage them to behave in a way that is not suitable (Ray and Jat, 2010).**  The focus groups uncovered some interesting views surrounding children and the use of technology and found that anxiety about childhood disappearing was not at the forefront of their concerns. In FG1, when participants were asked what effect they thought technologies such as smart phones, laptops and Ipads have on their children the response was:  *P3: “They can’t spell.”*  *P1: “Sentence structure.”*  *P3: “They can’t tell the time.”*  *P5: “Grammar is wrong.”*  This shows that parents believe advancements in technology are hindering education as some children now lack fundamental basic English language skills such as spelling and telling the time. This view is supported in the literature as Palmer (2006) claims that technological change in recent years has had a vast impact on modern life that may be damaging the cognitive development of children. Responses from FG1 show that there is an anxiety amongst parents that this is occurring.  However, there is an argument that new technologies benefit the intellectual development of children as they are able to use technology for learning and education. In a survey conducted by Parent Port (2011) of 1,800 respondents from Mumsnet and Netmums, 48% believed that the Internet “made a good contribution to their children’s lives.” Furthermore, from the focus groups, P9 in FG2 stated that he felt the effect of technologies depended on the age group as when children go to secondary school it is important for them to be able to use technology for education:  *“I think it depends on the age group. They get to a stage when they’re in secondary school and they start to need that stuff rather than just because it’s a play thing, like the whole way of teaching is changing, everything is online in secondary schools.”* | **NOTES:**  For this dissertation, the writer has one single chapter that analyses her results from two focus groups by drawing on the previous literature. The discussion is organised in relation to key **themes.** Aswith many discussion chapters, the writer organises the structure in relation to the **themes** explored earlier, through the literature review chapter. This allows her to develop analysis around the key question of:  ***“The review of literature on this theme tells me X… how does this compare with my data?”***  **NOTES:**  As with every chapter in a dissertation, the writer provides a brief overview that **clearly explains/signposts the focus** and ***structure*** of the chapter  To analyse the each theme the writer follows this structure:   * ***Introduction to the theme - refer back to literature review, draw on authors to outline the significance of this theme*** * ***Present/report data****: compare and contrast your data in relation to this theme, comment on possible significance: comparing words used and longer statements* * Provide **analysis** of this theme and specific data through comparison with previous debates, definitions, theories, models and/or research as reviewed in your literature review chapter. |