

Transitions and Transactions: Adult Identity  
Development Among Adolescent Girls of the Krobo  
Ethnic Group

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my granny, **Eve R. Gadagoe** who has been my lifelong teacher and to the memory of my kid sister, **Mawuena**.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction;** Transition to adulthood in the Krobo ethnic group has been through the *dipo* rites of passage. Over the years, social transformation has influenced the rite and the outcome adult identity of *dipo* girls. A considerable amount of literature has been published on *dipo* and its suggestive potentials in preventing sexual and reproductive vulnerabilities. Studies, however, have not explored self-definitions of adolescent girls. More recent studies focusing on adult identity development have been carried out on role transitions and personal qualities. Such approaches, however, have failed to capture the understanding of culturally prescribed pathways to adult identity development. Using the Salutogenic theory, this qualitative study explored adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls through the *dipo* rites of passage by exploring; adult perspective on cultural markers to adulthood, adolescents' perception of adulthood and whether going through the rites, adolescent *dipo* girls exert control over their sexual and reproductive health.

**Methodology;** An ethnographic method of enquiry was used in the conduct of the study in Krobo Odumase. A total of 23 participants were purposively recruited for the study through a gatekeeper. Participants include ten adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 18, ten parents, and three traditional leaders. Data were generated through Photovoice, semi structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. All interactions were held in the *Damgbe* language and interpreted into the English language, transcribed and analysed using Attride-Stirling (2001) thematic network analysis and Open code.

**Findings and discussion;** Key findings from the study showed that the *dipo* puberty rite is a cultural means through which adolescent girls are socialized into womanhood and assume the ethnic identity of a "Krobo woman" to which adult identity is linked. However, the transition of the culture through contact with Christianity and formal education has extended liminality of initiates since girls are no more recognised officially as adults after the *dipo* rite. Also, most adolescent girls' subjective sense of adult identity is diffused. Most girls consider themselves as neither adults nor children but felt in-between given parental limitation on autonomy. Given the shorter duration of the rite and early onset of puberty, traditional sanctions on sexual behavior are broken and do not facilitate control after the rites. Most parents expressed worry as *dipo* girls are sexually active in the community. Markers to adulthood identified were mostly role transitions; becoming a parent, getting married and giving birth. Although individual markers, taking responsibility and maturity were identified, their influence was associated with role transition markers. Further, contextual transactions showed that peer and family were most



influential in adolescent identity development and behavior regulation. The quality of parent-child relationship influenced adolescent behavior regulation through reflected appraisal and negative peer association control by parents. However, most parents are overwhelmed by adolescent misbehavior which may stem from autonomy needs. Also, the *dipo* rite and parental agency provided means through which the female gender identity is intensified through continuous gender role socialization at home after the rite, and control of negative peer affiliation of their children. Sexual communication was found to be silent in the culture, limited and unidirectional without the active engagement of adolescent girls. Although some parents are able to engage their children, most parents find it difficult discussing sexual topics. Sexual education during the *dipo* rites is not explicit and seemingly not existent.

Implications of the findings indicate that lack of recognition of *dipo* girls and parental misunderstanding of the developmental stage of their children may lead to behavior problems and detachment from parents. Also, the near silence of sexual communication in the community may influence negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases in the community.

**Conclusion;** The *dipo* in current times does not facilitate control over adolescent sexual attitudes after the rite. The cultural failure resulting from associated influence of early onset of puberty and reduction of the age of initiation does not promote gains in adolescent sexual and reproductive health as *dipo*. Also, though the rite has transitioned to provide alternative means of recognition as an adult, it is practically valued as fundamental towards transitioning to adulthood in the Krobo culture. However, culture influenced *dipo* girls' perceptions about adulthood to be informed by demographic markers or role transitions mostly. Although personal qualities were observed, their influence complement role transitions and these have greatly influenced the subjective sense of adult identity achievement among *dipo* girls.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Transitions in life are observed via human development. Spaced between birth and death are developmental milestones that reflect status and role transition through transactions (communicative interactions; verbal and nonverbal) in a given social milieu. Central to growth and maturation within context is the psychosocial task of identity formation (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). According to Janel E. Benson and Johnson (2009, p. 1267), “social identities are constructed through interaction with significant others and are influenced by the social structures or contexts within which people are embedded”. Framed within each social environment are structured pathways through which social identities are conferred and recognized (van Gennep, 1960). Rites of passages are a means through which social identities are achieved in most traditional African cultures (Sackey, 2001; Setlhabi, 2014; Sackey, 2001). Barnard and Spencer (2006, p. 489) defined rite of passage as “rituals which mark the passing of one stage of life and entry into another, e.g. birth, puberty, marriage, initiation to the priesthood, or death”. van Gennep (1960) describes rites of passages to be a three stage process involving: separation from the previous status, a state of liminality (transition phase) and reincorporation into a new status. At each stage of rites of passage, rites of affirmations, symbolic ritual processes, verbal and non-verbal that seek to assert to initiates a new status and forms part of the rite of passages. These rites are institutionalized to teach adolescents gender roles, reproductive health essential and varying social skills (Adjaye, 1999; Sackey, 2001) to effectuate status and role change.

Social markers of adult identity development are reflected through puberty rites by most tribes in southern Ghana: Ewe, Krobo, Ga, and Akan (Adjaye, 1999; Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Nukunya, 2003). These rites of passage signify the transition from a developmental phase of immaturity to maturity (van Gennep, 1960) and a means by which society ushers into and confers adult status or identity on adolescent girls. Though most rites of passages in southern Ghana are extinct, the *dipo* rite of the Krobo tribe has survived the times and is still in practice in modern times (Sackey, 2001). The *dipo* is practiced annually where girls of pubertal age are prepared and taken through series of affirmative rituals. These rites of affirmation carry meaningful contents and seek to introduce to initiates the cultural mores (chastity, responsible adulthood, respect and role of a woman) that affirm the status identity, ‘Krobo woman,’ to which they are socialized (Adjaye, 1999).

The *dipo* has undergone major transitions given influences from changing social systems, religion, western education and human right concerns (Adjaye, 1999). Girls now sit on the sacred stone instead of climbing and individuals even pay money to exempt girls from certain rituals. Also, the rites are performed within five days in modern times. The shortened duration of the rite hinders effective training of girls in skill sets akin to womanhood. Also, girls below puberty are initiated. These developments have influenced the way modern day *dipo* girls are recognized as adults, how they perceive themselves as adults and the behavior they show about their perceived adult identities.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The changing perception of puberty and the accompanying continuous fall of the age of puberty onset has extended adolescence and adult identity formation (Venable, 1997), and has influenced initiation rites across cultures (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). This extended years of adolescence is corroborated by the vast differentiation in timing and sequence in which adolescents acquire traditional adult roles (Shanahan, 2000). The *dipo* rites of passage practiced by the Krobo people as indicated have undergone major transitions over time. Although contemporary *dipo* rites juxtaposed with classical prototypes (rites) show disparities regarding age of initiation, duration of rites and the status identity formed after the rites. However, the girls are ceremonially reincorporated, therefore there exists incongruence about the official and personal reality of the *dipo* rites and its significance (Adjaye, 1999). Although achievement of this milestone qualifies for adult status, the majority of these girls still may not have assumed traditional adult roles nor are they competent in skill sets that define adulthood or reflect maturity. Also, they may not be recognized as adults by family and community because of continuous dependence on parents which prolongs the liminality of adolescent Krobo girls (Daniel, 2005; Scott, 1998). Thus with these girls still in a psychological limbo, a period of self-exploration and discovery, the socialization, and development of adult identity by *dipo* girls within the context of their nurturing environment (family and significant others) without adequate support may have implied outcomes on their self-concept, sexual and reproductive health. The study is purposed to understand the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls through rites of passage by exploring the role of context (family and larger society) in identity development and how they influence sexual and health of *dipo* girls.

### **1.3 Context**

Adult identity development of *dipo* girls of the Krobo culture is effectuated through rites of passage, *dipo*. As a means of transitioning adolescent girls among most ethnic groups in Ghana, *dipo* represents a unique traditional means through which adult identities are developed. The *dipo* rite is performed annually by towns in the Manya Krobo Traditional area. Although adult identities are not apparently conferred, they are implied from the ethnic identity given to women in the tribe. The *dipo* rite teaches adolescent girls the mores of the Krobo people as a way of ushering them into responsible adulthood. Also, gender roles and chastity are highly stressed during the rites. These form the primary virtues of the status identity ascribed after the rite, 'Krobo woman'. However, human right concerns, formal education, and Christianity have significantly influenced the conduct, understanding, and participation in the rites. The girls go through the rites at younger ages compared to hitherto times. The decrease in the duration of the rites has forced parents to continue training of *dipo* girls after the rites. These situations posit that adolescent girls are caught between childhood and adulthood. The lack of a definite identity has led adolescent girls into misbehavior, early sexual experiences, and motherhood. Given the high HIV/AIDS and adolescent motherhood prevalence in the district, *dipo* girls are at risk of sexually transmitted diseases and early pregnancy which may impact their health negatively.

### **1.4 Literature on adult identity development**

Broader literature on adult identity development is muchly captured in studies exploring emergent adulthood (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Janel E. Benson & Furstenberg Jr, 2006; Raiu, Roth, & Hărăguș, 2014). Most of these studies are westernized. Although a few has sought to show cultural differences in how adult identity is achieved (Janel E. Benson & Johnson, 2009; Seiter & Nelson, 2011; Zhong & Arnett, 2014), much is yet to be known about African and Sub-Sahara African contexts. Studies that have sought to explore adult identity development in Africa and sub-Saharan Africa are sparse (Setlhabi, 2014; Adjaye, 1999). These studies investigated the construct about the ethnic identity of tribal groups. Although these studies have explored the construct through cultural identities ascribed after rites of passage, they could not show how these rites facilitate adult identity development of initiates. In Ghana, studies have shown how initiates come to attain cultural identities with implied associations to adult identity (Adjaye, 1999; Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Sackey, 2001). Thus, tribal societies that practice rite of passage have not been studied to understand how adolescents come to attain their adult identities through role acquisition and responsibility uptake. Although

western studies have shown how these factors influence adult identity development together with contextual factors, the applicability of these studies may not be coherent with the cultural realities of the Krobo people in Ghana. Thus, the gap in the literature on identity development from Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana, necessitates exploration of adult identity development in this context towards gaining a holistic understanding of how the youth come to attain adult identity.

### **1.5 Aim and objectives of the study**

To explore adult identity development of adolescent girls of the Krobo ethnic group.

#### **Objectives of the study**

- To understand adult perspectives on cultural markers to adulthood
- To explore adolescent girls' perceptions about adulthood
- To explore whether going through *dipo* gives girls greater control over their sexual and reproductive health

#### **Research questions**

- In Krobo culture, how does a child become an adult?
- How do adolescent *dipo* girls (girls who have completed the *dipo* rites) perceive themselves as adults?
- What are some of the stressors and resources in the social context that influence adult identity development of *dipo* girls?
- What is the role of context (family) in the development of adult identity of Krobo girls?

### **1.6 Terminologies**

*Transactions* -refer to verbal and non-verbal communicative interactions between parents and adolescent girls in their environments. Although the word in its original sense refers to monetary exchange, the term is used in line with Dr Eric Berne's transactional analysis, a concept used in therapy; Psychiatry and Psychology to mean outcomes of communicative interactions, verbal and non-verbal.

*Liminality* - refers to a state of ambiguity that characterized the middle phase of rites of passages where initiates neither hold the previous status or have graduated into the new status after the rite.

*Reincorporation* – relates the socialization of adolescent girls after rites of passages into adult networks.

### **1.7 Structure of thesis**

Chapter two of the study follows this section and deals with the review of empirical literature in relation to the construct explored and the identification of shortfalls in adult identity development literature. The chapter also shows how the Salutogenic theory explains how *dipo* girls thrive during the transition to adulthood. In chapter three, the methodology for data generation and analysis of data are presented. Empirical findings of the study are presented in chapter four from the observations made on data during analysis. In chapter five, findings are discussed in the context of literature and theory. The final chapter, six, draws conclusions from the results of the study with recommendations or directions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical and empirical literature on adult identity development among adolescent Krobo girls. The section is divided into two parts: literature review and theoretical framework. Under literature review, the section follows on the research questions and objectives. It also examines empirical research on adolescent perception of adulthood, followed by literature that discusses adolescent self-perception as an adult. It then focuses on how individuals in traditional cultures transition to adulthood by examining cultural markers to adulthood. Literature is also reviewed on contextual influences (family and peer interactions) on adult identity development and the link between rites of passages and sexual and reproductive health. The second section of the chapter, explains the underlying theoretical assumptions of the study through the Salutogenic model by Antonovsky (1979). The theory has a profound focus on psychosocial resources for health and well-being and thus is used to explain how *dipo* girls thrive during the transition to adulthood.

##### *2.1.1 Literature review on perception of adulthood by adolescents*

Perception of adulthood by adolescents shows two broad indicators: demographic or role transitions and individual qualities or subjective qualities. These indicators seem to show differences in collectivist and individualistic cultural markers of adult identity development (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Côté, 2000; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). Subjective qualities; feeling responsible and independent is associated more with adolescents' self-perceived adulthood than role transitions; marriage, leaving home and becoming a parent (Arnett, 2003; Côté, 2000). Oleszkowicz and Misztela (2015) exploring how young Poles perceive their adulthood stated that Polish youth: late adolescents, emerging adults and young adults reported that taking responsibility and employment are indicative of adulthood. Similarly, Raiu et al. (2014) in exploring perceptions of adulthood in a female dominated sample of 1,240 respondents also found that most of the participants (94,03%) identified with subjective qualities of taking responsibility for one's actions as a qualifying factor to becoming an adult. They stressed the importance of individual qualities as core to adult identity development. However, role transitions or demographic factors were not related. Although the salience of subjective qualities provides a lead to the achievement of adult identity, several other studies acknowledge the relative importance of role transitions or demographic factors (Arnett, 2007; Seiter & Nelson, 2010; Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer, & Erickson, 2005). Arnett and Padilla-Walker (2015) explored perception of adulthood among Danish youth between the ages of 17

and 29. Findings showed that accepting responsibility for one's actions, making independent decisions, and becoming financially dependent were associated with adult identity. Demographic markers to adulthood, marriage and parenthood were least reported to be associated with adult identity development. The findings stressed the importance of subjective qualities in perceptions about adulthood. The study highlights peculiar similarities in transition among Nordic youth. However, countries outside the Nordic borders and Europe, Ghana, the Krobo ethnic group, may as well show similar yet differentiated adult defining variables given the cultural and social orientation of the Krobo people.

Markers of adulthood and its conception are limited to biopsychosocial perspectives (Horowitz & Bromnick, 2007). Exploring contested adulthood through variability and disparity in markers for negotiating the transition to adulthood among 156 British adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17. Respondents ranked high autonomy, responsibility and independent decision making. Horowitz and Bromnick (2007) further argued that adult qualities (acting like an adult): chronological age, respect for others, maturity and competence to them indicates that adult defining variables are not only indicative of biological, social and psychological processes but are also explicable within frames of environmental interactions. The findings though did not overtly highlight perceptions about adulthood by adolescents, provided a mutual understanding of the competencies that characterize adulthood and the influence of contextual interactions on adulthood.

Conversely, demographic indicators of adulthood have also received much recognition in current studies (Shanahan et al., 2005). In their study, they put forward that demographic markers are important markers of adult identity development, and that the influence of individualistic criteria diminish. Molgat (2007) also puts forward that traditional markers of adulthood were applicable to Canadian youth in perceiving adulthood. Arnett and Padilla-Walker (2015) observes that subjective qualities hold limitations in explaining how individuals in other cultures transition to adulthood or develop an adult identity. According to them, this exception to individual qualities in cultures that focus on individualistic tendencies exists in remote areas of developing countries. In line with this, Seiter and Nelson (2011) observes that norm compliance, self-regulation, and performance of traditional gender roles were dominant criteria for adulthood in India. Findings though in a collective culture overt a blend of both subjective and demographic factors as means to adult identity development. Also, tendencies of responsibility for others (parents) was found among Chinese populations (Zhong & Arnett, 2014). These studies point to role transitions or demographic factors as core to the development of adult identity in cultures that are bound by collective values.



The above debates give an indication that research on adult identity development about demographic transitions and individualistic criteria is mixed (J. Benson & Furstenberg, 2003) and inconclusive. There appears to be a confluence of individual and demographic measures in perceptual acceptance of adulthood by adolescents. These, coupled with a limitation on accounts from collective cultures, are likely to shape perceptions of *dipo* girls in the Krobo ethnic group. These existing studies on both subjective qualities and demographic or role transitions have provided a discursive understanding of how adulthood is conceived by youth populations in both individualistic and collectivist cultures. Although collectivist cultures show differentiated patterns, they are limited and not expansive enough to sample perspectives from traditional cultures in Africa. The gap in the knowledge warrants exploration into these contexts toward a holistic integration of cultural perspectives in understanding adult identity development.

### *2.1.2 Literature on Adolescents' self-perception as an adult*

Adolescent in their self-perception as adult identify with certain indicators of demographic factors and individual qualities (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). Several studies have mostly explored demographic and personal qualities to show how young people come to assert their adult identity (Benson & Johnson, 2009; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). In a study among Danish youth, Anette and Padilla-Walker found that in self-perception as an adult, Danish youth reported accepting responsibility, making independent decisions and financial independence as defining factors to achieving adult identity while marriage and parenthood were least identified with. Also, Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) in exploring the adult identity of Italian youth living with parents found that they felt in-between, feeling neither as adults nor children. However, studies have sought to explain differential feeling as an adult based on socioeconomic and adverse life events (Benson & Furstenberg, 2006). Although these factors do have an influence on how individuals define themselves as adults, emerging explanations to self-perception as an adult is changing among adolescents. Although current studies are beginning to seek contextual differences (Seiter & Nelson, 2011; Zhong & Arnett, 2014), and lending support to both demographic and personal qualities, the salience of both criteria are desired and offer variability in context to self-definitive tendencies as an adult. However, current evidence shows that young people report feelings of not being fully adults (Sirsch et al., 2009; Luyckx et al., 2008; Arnette & Padilla-walker, 2015; Smits et al., 2008). This situation explains the extended duration in transitioning to adulthood. This feeling of in-between, neither adult nor a child, has extended years of adolescence and influenced the variability in self-definition as an adult in same age group given differential influence of

context. This tendency is captured by Arnett (2007) as emerging adulthood; explaining a new developmental phase between childhood and adulthood. Sirsch et al. (2009) in their study found that participants reported feeling in-between with no absolute sense of adult identity. This finding is consistent with other studies (Arnett, 2001; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, & Berzonsky, 2007). These conclusions provide proof to the longer duration in transitioning into adulthood. Although these findings reflect are mostly western accounts, their extension to contexts of traditional societies where there exist culturally demarcated routes to adulthood is yet to be established.

### *2.1.3 Literature on cultural markers to adulthood*

Culture plays an integral role in constructing and shaping adult identity development (Zhong & Arnett, 2014; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Seiter & Nelson, 2011). In identity literature, influences of culture on identity have been explored mostly through ethnic identity within ethnic minority groups (Adjaye, 1999; Hevi-Yiboe, 2003). However, in traditional societies where there exist structured pathways to adulthood, adult ethnic identity is closely linked to adult identity (Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Adjaye, 1999). Adult identity development can be observed as an outcome of interactions among person, context and culture (Arnett, 2007). Although studies exploring the concept of adult identity development within frames of culturally prescribed pathways, rite of passages, are scarce, some of these studies though carried out in the United States (Keith, 1964; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003) may not apply to the Ghanaian context. With most cultures in Africa collective, and having a shared culture of transitioning young ones into adulthood through the rites of passages which are differentiated structurally, most of the studies done focuses on ethnic identity and the transformative gains of the rites (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Adjaye, 1999; Sackey, 2001). In most of these cultures, going through these rites form the basis for adult identity development. Majority of the rites practiced are a means through which adult identity is ascribed to adolescent girls. The validation of this adult identity is rooted in the successful completion of the rites (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Adjaye, 1999, Sackey, 2001).

For example, among the Krobo in Ghana, the series of rituals and training during the *dipo* rite affirm the status of a ‘Krobo woman.’ A status identity that is fitted within value systems, mores, traditions, and customs of the Krobo people to which adult identity is linked. This idealized cultural construction of womanhood signifies the transformative outcome the rites seek to achieve. However, the quality of this identity is shaped by community recognition of *dipo* girls in modern times. Similarly, women’s initiation rites among the Bakgatla tribe in Botswana, Setlhabi (2014) observed that the rite reinforce ethnic identity and a sense of

belonging among initiates. Thus, the transition to adulthood is geared towards inculcating into initiates values and developing initiates into idealized 'Bakgatla woman'. Among the Navajos as observed by Markstrom and Iborra (2003), Kinaalda rites celebrate the sexual and reproductive maturity of adolescent girls on their first or second menstrual cycle; the rites which last in four-day duration teach adolescent girls to embody the ideals of Navajo womanhood. These rites serve as a means by which *dipo* girls develop personal skills and are empowered to manage their life situations (Adjaye, 1999; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). The dominant theme in initiation rites akin to these cultures relate to the social identity of a woman constructed within the frames of cultural traditions, value systems, beliefs, and ideals. However, culturally prescribed values embedded in the rites create meanings that emerge from the appraisal of context and the rituals. The outcome identity is thus reflective of consistency between knowledge of ritual significance and community acceptance (recognition). Awareness of new role expectation, responsibility and commitment affirm the social identity ascribed (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). However, confidence in the execution of new roles by adolescent girls is incumbent on role mastery and the availability of support avenues through which adolescent girls can depend on for role mastery and identity reinforcement (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003).

Social transition and its accompanied modification in cultural practices have influenced most initiation rites across cultures (Glozah & Lawani, 2014). Sackey (2001), Markstrom and Iborra (2003) observes that the relatively short duration of rites does not equip girls the skill sets that define the status role to which they are socialized. By this, optimal identity development may require extended years of instruction after the rites. Hence the competence associated with initiates are likely to be non-prevalent after the rites. This might lead to identity recognition difficulties in the culture. This, as can be observed in the *dipo* rites, shifts the burden of identity development to the family context of adolescent girls. The realization herein gives indication that the Krobo culture is in transition. Thus it is pragmatic to understand how cultural construction of adult identity holds in modern day Krobo tribe and to assert whether the rite hold hitherto significance or now portrayed as symbolic of cultural continuity rather than an avenue for skill and adult identity development. Keith (1964) in a study on Kinaalda initiates observes that initiates are not treated as adults and are accorded auxiliary roles of playing with kids. The lack of recognition and accompanied anxiety may lead initiates into a state of 'amorphous adult identity', identity confusion.

#### *2.1.4 Literature on role of contextual in adult identity development*

Contextual transactions, verbal and non-verbal communicative interactions of adolescents with significant others facilitate adult identity development (Galliher, Jones, & Dahl, 2011). Studies focusing on the role of context on adult identity development have explored parent-child relationships, communication, conflicts and peer interactions. The quality of parent-child relationships are predictable outcomes of attachment with parental figures (Beyers & Goossens, 2008). With parental-child relationships, a dimension of parenting variables (Sandhu, Singh, Tung, & Kundra, 2012), Roskam and Meunier (2009) identifies supportive parenting to encompass warmth responsiveness and involvement. Studies have shown that supportive parenting augments adult identity development when parents are responsive to needs, show warmth through secured attachment with adolescents and are moderately involved in explorative and commitment identification of adolescents (Aleni Sestito & Sica, 2014; Crocetti & Meeus, 2014; Oliveira, Mendonça, Coimbra, & Fontaine, 2014). However, other dimensions of parenting, psychological and behavioral control also have shown to be influential on commitment and explorative behaviors during adult identity development (Smits et al., 2008; Di Maggio & Zappula, 2013).

From these studies, the functional role of parents and adolescents together determine ultimate adult identity development. However, dominant themes of support and control show the mediating role of parental agency in mediating both proximal and extended contexts of socialization (Schachter & Ventura, 2008) in adult identity development of adolescents. Although these may be universal, the subtleties of interactions within context, moderate observed and implied influences of control and support in parenting. A key determinant holds in the perceived adequacy of support and monitoring, and the appraisal thereof by adolescents. Thus meaningful parenting is dependent on adolescent perception of the treatment they receive from parents and not what parents intend for children. However, these studies are limited in explaining the reciprocal determinism that characterize relationships during adolescence. Further, these studies though insightful, could not overt contextual differences that are expressively inherent in cultures.

Family communication patterns hold predictive value for identity commitment and exploration (Soltani, Hosseini, & Mahmoodi, 2013). As such, family communication patterns predict stable interpersonal relationships that are relevant towards identity development through feedback avenues it proffers. Weeks and Pasupathi (2010) show that supportive communicative patterns between adolescent, parents and peers enhance identity explorations. Thus indicates that open communications between parents and adolescents as found in peer groups may enhance

positive adult identity development. Current research has associated family communications with identity styles in optimal identity development (Berzonsky, 2008; Beyers & Goossens, 2008). Berzonsky (1989) identifies three styles of identity that are diametrically linked to communication and parenting within family: normative styles (lack of expressiveness, authoritative parenting), informational style (open communication, authoritarian parenting) and diffused identity styles (diffusion, authoritarian and permissive parenting). Normative and information styles correspond to Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) conformity and communicative orientation within family. Berzonsky, Branje, and Meeus (2007) found that young adults with high diffused –avoidant style had relatively general open communication with their parents. Zarrinabadi and Haidary (2014) also shows that diffused-avoidant style is negatively correlated with normative and information style, while willingness to communicate and self-perceived communicative competence is positively correlated with normative styles, and informative styles and negatively with diffused avoidant style.

Communication orientations as aligned on identity styles tend to show cultural socialization towards identity development. Although these studies with collective and individualistic cultures, normative and conformity communication orientations seem to be linked to socialization patterns associated with collective cultures. Informative and conversation communication orientations also explicate socialization in individualistic societies. However, these studies do not appeal to cultural differences in socialization in adult identity development of adolescents along communication and identity orientations. Thus the current study relates socialization contexts to adult identity development to explore possible mediating factors present in the era of social change as failure in communication patterns within and between relational contexts may overt conflictual tendencies within context.

Conflicts represent a facet of parent-child interactions that is influential in altering relationships. Although some studies have sought to explain that conflicts retard the adaptive capacities and relational fluency (Aleni Sestito & Sica, 2014; Janel E. Benson & Johnson, 2009; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, & Collins, 2001), others also hold contrary views (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Adolescent-adult identity development as can be deduced from the above is influenced by normative traits of adolescence: strive for independence, autonomy concerns and self-defining attributes that seek recognition and mutuality in relationships. According to Janel E. Benson and Johnson (2009), although conflicts are diametrically deleterious towards adolescent adjustment at home and society, Adams and Laursen (2001) also hold that conflicts are normative during adolescence and are implicative of better adjustment when they are less frequent than when conflicts are high and not present. Zimmer-Gembeck (2001) puts forward that

although responsibility and conflict produce a level of detachment and increased autonomy for adolescents in transition, early detachment may come with susceptibility to peer pressure and delinquent behavior that may not enhance reproductive health gains. Matejevic, Jovanovic, and Lazarevic (2014) aligns to this that detachment from parents by adolescents are outcomes of rejections and overprotectiveness which hold likelihoods on conflict.

Low maternal support and high parental control are associated with high deviant peer affiliation and delinquency among adolescents (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). Also, neighborhood characteristics have been linked to the fluidity of parenting efficacy (Cantillon, 2006; Byrnes & Miller, 2012; Simons, 2005). These studies have shown that poor contexts facilitate mediocre parenting (poor monitoring, low-nurturance) and delinquent behavior of adolescents, given the stress they pose to parents. According to these studies, strict parenting serves as a protective factor to positive adolescent identity development. Other studies contradictorily assert that high or strict control of adolescents hinders adult identity development through constraining explorative tendencies among adolescents (Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). These contradictory arguments show the strength of contextual influence on adolescent problem behavior during adult identity development. However, it is unclear how parenting behavior control, and support influence adolescent adaptive behavior during adult identity development and whether cultural socialization patterns influence the observed tendencies associated with conflict and delinquency or stem from peer influences.

Peer interactions have received considerable attention regarding their influence on adolescent development over decades. However, the role of peers in the identity development is murky and inadequate (Panagakis, 2015). Associations between parenting and deviant peer association have been correlated with delinquency and adverse outcomes of adult identity development (Deutsch, Crockett, Wolff, & Russell, 2012). Doumen et al. (2012) also show that peer interactions provide a social platform for interactions where the exchange of information builds character. However, not only do friends or peers serve as a safety net, they enhance the mastery of normative gender roles and socialization. Billari and Liefbroer (2007) found that opinions of peers were salient about the timing of transition than societal expectations. According to Kroger (2007) studies on peer relationships have moved away from peer influence in family disengagement to the transformation of attachment bonds in context. Given the extended duration of transition to adulthood, friends become avenues to assess transitory progress (Panagakis, 2015). Friends from the same ethnic group and neighborhood have shown to be influential in adolescents adult identity development through positive in their identification with their ethnic group and resultant greater resistance to negative peer influence (Derlan &

Umaña-Taylor, 2015). These studies have shown how friends influence the adult identity development of adolescents. Although adolescents need for autonomy increases at this stage, the role of parental guidance cannot be neglected. Thus, the role of peers does not adequately explain adult identity development but makes associations about how peer interactions disturb the transformation outcomes of youth during the transition to adulthood. However, from the above discussions, there exist a myriad of factors that influence active adult identity development among adolescent. Most of these are embedded in parenting. However, communication seems to emerge as the regulative instrument between factors.

#### *2.1.5 Literature on influence of rites of passage and reproductive health of adolescent girls*

The comprehension of adolescent sexual behavior and reproductive outcomes is a function of the interaction between gender, social control, cultural norms and mores and meaning (Tolman & Diamond, 2001). While many studies have examined puberty rites and their implications for sexual and reproductive health (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003), there is scanty evidence demonstrating how adolescents' experience of traditional rites of passage engender reproductive health gains. However, most of the studies have been suggestive of rites of passages holding possibilities for general and reproductive health gains (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). In a national study in Malawi, Munthali and Zulu (2007a) demonstrated that reproductive health communications are implied rather than made explicit for adolescents to understand the negative consequences associated with sex. This silence on clear communication about sex discloses the element of taboo associated with sex. Costos, Ackerman, and Paradis (2002) points out that the validation of sex as taboo is the observed ambiguous and commonplace associations between menarche and sex. According to Bastien, Kajula, and Muhwezi (2011), communication about sex protective adolescents against adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes including HIV infections.

However, Malisha, Maharaj, and Rogan (2008) maintain that although traditional rites of passages do not provide information relevant to health seeking behavior in the era of sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/AIDS, they still provide an avenue for sexual information. Similarly, Bastien et al. (2011) find that sexual communications turn to be authoritarian and unidirectional, filled with vague warnings rather than direct open discussion. As such, parents and adolescents report barriers to open dialogue on sex owing to lack of knowledge, cultural norms and taboos. However, in spite of this limitation to harnessing wholly, the opportunities for reproductive health gains due to conflictual abstractions between ideals and realities, they may shape adolescents' sexual attitudes and behavior positively or negatively. Contextual

relevance to mediating this has implied associations to increased sexual activity and attractiveness which enhances the risk of reproductive health vulnerabilities, teenage motherhood and sexually transmitted diseases. Put together; this literature suggests that there is the need to understand how sexual and reproductive outcomes are feasible to traditional rites of passages. Also, the influence of parents and friends need to be examined to understand how they influence the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent *dipo* girls.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

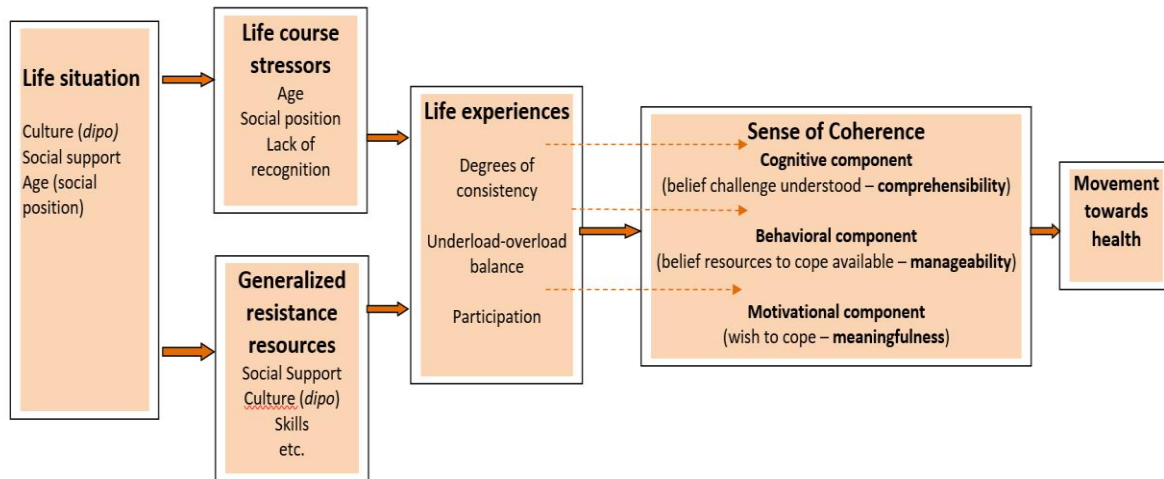
This study explores adult identity development of adolescent *dipo* girls through the Salutogenic framework, to offer explanations to the coping strategies adolescent *dipo* girls utilize in adult identity development. Salutogenesis, the study of health origins (Antonovsky, 1979), aims to “promote health by increasing people’s resources for coping with daily living” (Wilson & Mittelmark, 2013). This framework introduced a new perspective which replaced the traditional pathogenic outlook on health through questions of ‘what causes health?’ as against ‘what causes disease’. Health Promotion Movement focused on enabling individuals to live healthy lives through mobilization and development of populations health resources (Lindström & Eriksson, 2006, p. 241). This preoccupation presented a definitive principle for health promotion in the Ottawa Charter that stressed on enabling individuals to increase their control over health determinants (WHO, 1986). As such, Salutogenesis, as an asset model, situates itself within social determinants of health to explain how despite exposure to life stressors, individuals can thrive using internal and external resources. The theory thus focuses on salutary factors, factors that promote health rather than risk factors of diseases (García-Moya, Rivera, Moreno, Lindström, & Jiménez-Iglesias, 2012), Generalized Resistant Resources (GRRs) and Sense of Coherence (SoC).

GRRs are resources which help individuals to cope with stressful situations (Daniel & Mathias, 2012). The sense of coherence relates “a generalized orientation toward the world which individuals perceive as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful” (Lindstrom & Eriksson, 2010 cited in Daniel & Mathias, 2012, p. 193). Comprehensibility as the cognitive component of SoC relates the ability to understand stressors that a sense of order can be maintained (Daniel & Mathias, 2012). This understanding influences the sense of manageability which expresses the ability to overcome prevailing stressors using available resources within and outside an individual’s domain. Together, comprehensibility and manageability inform meaningfulness, the motivation that life course demands as worthy of investment and engagement with resources (Hintermair, 2004). Also, Antonovsky (1979), cited in Wilson & Mittelmark, 2013)



identify Specific Resistant Resources (SRRs) as meaningfully relevant resources which are acquired in response to particular stressors.

Fig 1. The Salutogenic model, adaptation of Mittelmark (2010)



While Salutogenesis explains health, it contextualizes culture as an essential determinant of health (life situation) that influences health through multiple means Benz, Bull, Mittelmark, and Vaandrager (2014). As illustrated in figure 1 above, *dipo* girls' life situation is shaped by culture, gender, and age (social position). Life situation may pose as chronic and acute stressors to *dipo* girls. This life situation can influence the lives of *dipo* girls negatively. Also, life situation can also serve as resources in their adult identity development. Going through the *dipo* represents a form of social participation which promotes integration in the culture. The inclusion reflects the ability to adapt to cultural norms that affirm the feminine gender in the culture (Adjaye, 1999) and offers stability in adult identity development. However, the transition of the culture, *dipo*, over the years has influenced adult identity development of *dipo* girls (Adjaye, 1999). Inconsistencies in the culture, lack of recognition, age, and social position pose as stressors to *dipo* girls. However, social support, culture, and skill serve as resources for *dipo* girls. Benz et al. (2014) point out that culture in could be a stressor and a resource. However, the exposure and reaction to culture may yield variance in life experiences. Differential life experiences are may be influenced by the consistency between outcomes and life situation. This level of consistency provides the basis for predictability. Thus, when stressors over tax the adaptive resources of *dipo* girls, there is the likelihood for imbalance, creating an overload. The contrary underload occurs when resources exist in greater proportion to stressors.

This outcome of overload has the possibility to weaken or strengthen SoC of *dipo* girls depending on how active *dipo* girls engage with stressors through the effective use of resources available to them. A weak SoC may result when resources are not utilized. However, the contrary, a strong SoC results when resources are actively used. This strong SoC facilitates movement towards healthy adult identity development and positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes. As such a reciprocal relationship between GRRs and SoC exists to enhance coping. As such, when *dipo* girls perceive life situation as comprehensible by assessing conditions they are faced with and developing means of coping that are congruent to overcoming the stressors when they perceive them to be a temporary. Similarly, they may develop healthful attitudes and could use resources available to them (manageability) with the understanding that outcomes are beneficial (meaningfulness). Meaningfulness as the motivation component is critical in moving towards health as it greatly influences the development of a strong SoC. A high SoC creates a recurring life experience which enables resistance against stressors (Wilson & Mittelmark, 2013). Put together; the theory holds implications for a healthy adult identity development and better reproductive health gains among *dipo* girls in the Krobo ethnic group.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The current study was conducted using the qualitative method of inquiry. Qualitative research aims at “understanding the phenomena and processes by considering why and how they occur” (Shelton, Smith, & Mort, 2014). Qualitative studies seek to understand the social world from the perspective of participants, as such they are characterised by the situation of the study in the natural environment and using multiple data sources such as interviews, focus group discussion and observation (Green & Thorogood, 2014). Qualitative studies are criticized based subjectivity and non-generalisability of research outcomes. However, they are able to sample behavioral settings and outcomes as applied to similar situations and context (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

Guided by the objectives of the study (see chapter two), an ethnographic design was used in this inquiry to explore cultural perceptions and lived experiences of participants (Kvale, 2006; Maypole & Davies, 2001). Ethnography “provides rich and holistic insight into people’s views, actions and the location they inhabit through observations and interviews” (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, p. 512). As a widely utilized design in contemporary research, it focuses on “the documentation of the culture, perspectives and practice of a people in a setting” (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995, cited in Reeves et al., 2008, p. 512). However, ethnography can be time-consuming and challenging given repeated access to participants. Especially when participants are concerned that the research may cast their community in a poor light.

#### **3.2 Study location**

The study was conducted in Krobo Odumase, the administrative capital of the Lower Manya Krobo district. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2010), the population of the District is estimated at 72, 092. Out of the 216 districts nationwide, Lower Manya District has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the country with 11.6% compared to both regional (made up of 26 districts) and national statistic of 3.7% and 1.3% respectively (Ghana Aids Commission Sentinel survey report, 2013). The site was selected for this study in that it represents a predominantly Krobo land where the *dipo* rite is practised and has indigenous Krobos who have a deeper understanding of the culture and its practices. The availability of adolescent girls who have undergone the *dipo* rite and the socio-economic problems of the location, HIV, poverty, school dropout, teenage pregnancy and delinquency, informed the selection of this place. This representation of the location implies vulnerability of adolescent girls in the district

to sexually transmitted diseases given teenage pregnancies as the outcome of sexual activity among adolescent populations.

### **3.3 Participants**

Twenty-three participants of varying socioeconomic status took part in this study (See Table 1 below). The participants were categorized into three groups: ten adolescent girls, ten parents (mothers and fathers) and three traditional leaders (a male and two females) were recruited for this study.

#### *3.3.1. Inclusion criteria,*

Participants included in this study are adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 18 who have undergone the *dipo* rite. This group of adolescents represents a population of *dipo* girls who can better appreciate the Krobo culture and represent information from their personal experiences better than girls below this age group. Also, parents, constituting men and women whose children had undergone the *dipo* rite and are still providing care to their children who are between the adolescent age took part in the study. This group of parents can better account for their experiences in providing care to adolescent girls in transition than those who are not caring for adolescents. Further, three traditional leaders who serve as custodians of the Krobo traditions, culture and customs, participated in the study, in that they represent a section of the population who can provide information rich cases in presenting the cultural relevance of the customs and traditions of the Krobo people.

#### *3.3.2 Exclusion criteria*

Excluded from the study were girls below the ages of 12 and above 18, and girls who did not undergo the *dipo*. Also, girls who went through *dipo* and are between 12 and 18 years but have given birth were not included in the study. In addition, parents whose daughters did not go through the *dipo* rite, and those currently not providing care to adolescent girls did not participate in the study.

#### *3.3.3 Gatekeepers*

Two gatekeepers, persons through whom I gained entry to the location with formal or informal authority access helped in the identification, selection and gaining access to primary participants. The gatekeepers, a male elder of the community and a female pupil teacher from the Odumase community were very resourceful in their role. Both facilitated the recruitment of participants for the two focus group discussion involving parents (mothers and fathers) of adolescent girls.

### 3.3.4 Interpreters

Use of interpreters facilitated communication between researcher and participants. With most participants lacking command over the English language, all interactions during the conduct of the study were held entirely in the *Damgbe* language, the local language of participants. With no understanding of the *Damgbe* language on my part, two translators, a female gatekeeper and an administrative assistant at the Krobo Odumase District Assembly, interpreted questions to and responses from participants during data collection. Both interpreters are Krobo from the Odumase community and have competence in both English and *Damgbe* languages.

### 3.4 Participant selection

Purposive sampling was used in participant selection for the study. Welman and Kruger (1999) identifies purposive sampling as useful in the identification of primary participants and in selecting information-rich cases which are of relevance to the in-depth study of the problem (Patton, 2002), as well as availability and accessibility of participants for the study (Yin, 2010). Also, I used snowball sampling to expand the sampling through asking participants to recommend others for the study. Participants sampled represented a population from which relevant information that reflects the lived experiences of participants could be obtained. Table one below shows some of participants and their involvement in data methods.

Table 1; Overview of Participants and methods

Participant Group	Number engaged in a data method		
	Focus Group Discussion	In-depth Interview	Photo-voice Interviews
Traditional leaders	--	3	--
Parents Mothers	5	2	--
Fathers	5	2	--
Adolescent girls	--	--	10
Participant total for data methods	10	7	10

Table 2. Demographics of adolescent participants

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age of initiation</b>
1	16	Padiki	12
2	17	Akorkor	10
3	16	Aki	13
4	18	Lamtwe	12
5	15	Sika	12
6	15	Naki	12
7	16	Lamely	10
8	13	Kaaki	12
9	15	Naa	12
10	17	Dede	13

#### *3.4.1 Participant selection for photo voice*

Ten adolescent girls were recruited for the study with the help of my female gatekeeper. Adolescent girls identified for the study were visited at home to inform their parents about the study and to seek consent for their daughters' participation. By custom, this is required, as it is a sign of respect to the parents of adolescent girls. Recruiting adolescent girls was a great challenge. Although parents agreed for their children's participation in the study, household responsibilities such as selling and going to fetch food from the farm after school was of primary importance to their families. The unavailability of participants provided a very limited window through which adolescent girls could be accessed for the study. Those recruited were difficult to meet with, to train in photo-voice, photography, and orient them on the practical issues of concern in taking of photographs for research. Due to this drawback, and evident across all forms of recruitment, appointments were rescheduled several times, and new recruitments are repeatedly done to make up for participants who could not be available for the study.

#### *3.4.2. Participant selection for focus group discussion*

After several home visits to potential participants with my gatekeepers, five mothers and five fathers for the female and male groups were recruited for focus group discussion. Recruitment of the participants became a challenge due to preoccupation with their daily schedules.

#### *3.4.3 Participant selection in in-depth interviews*

Three traditional leaders, a sub-queen mother, and two elders got recruited for the study. In addition, I recruited four parents (2 females and two males) from the focus group discussions.

The response to an invitation to partake in the study was met with resistance from some of the traditional leaders. In that they were very concerned about the image I will cast about the Krobo people. Their concern was borne out of the misrepresentation of their culture to the world by researchers that have frequented the town in the past. I assured them the study sought not to portray the Krobo culture in a bad way through an extended explanation of the research aim.

### **3.5 Setting**

All interactions with participants took place at the Conference room of the Presbyterian Church. However, I exempted traditional leaders, and some participants interviewed who mentioned they could not make it to the location and cases where the venue was not available for use. Exception for traditional leaders was also in line with sensitivity to the culture and tradition of the Krobo people.

### **3.6 Data methods**

#### *3.6.1 Photo voice*

Photo voice is a process through which individuals represent and enhance their communities through photography (Wang, 1999). As a participatory approach, Thorogood and Green (2009) assert that visual elicitations are useful in assessing the knowledge and experiences that might be difficult for people to articulate, because they are not commonly talked about. Photo voice was used to explore the perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls. The method aids the expression of opinions, experiences and the representation of context by participants (Wang, 2006). I used this method by its ability to sample different behavioral and social settings that were inaccessible to the researcher (Wang, 1999). Through this approach, I was able to mediate cultural norms regarding eye contact in communication between adults and children.

The use of this method in this study modelled Wang (1999) three stage process of participatory analysis: photographing, selection of photos by participants and contextualizing the photographs (describing their subjective understanding of pictures). I trained participants in photography in groups of two due to difficulty in availability of adolescent girls for the study. I did this to save time used in the conduct of this research, facilitate participants' in-depth understanding of the process and for participants to serve as support to each other in undertaking the photography task. I handed them digital cameras in groups of two to undertake a photography task. The task revolved around role of women in the community and markers of adulthood (see Appendix) Photographs taken were brought to me. Adolescent girls selected photographs they desired to talk about and appointments scheduled for the discussion of

photographs as well as interview them individually. During the discussion of the photographs, participants sat beside the lady interpreter facing the computer screen where selected photographs were displayed to avoid eye contact. I sat near the lady interpreter and asked questions about the photographs for participants to discuss. Interviews followed the discussion of the photographs using a set of structured questions, interview guide (see Appendix).

### *3.6.2 Focus group Discussion*

Focus group discussions (FGD) are “structured group discussion where information emerges from both the individuals in the group, and their interactions with one another” (Shelton et al., 2014, p. 273). As a commonly utilized tool in qualitative research, focus group discussions provide “considerable information in a short space of time, maximize interaction between participants and facilitators and access to shared group culture” (Green & Thorogood, 2014, p. 131). However, focus groups are limited in eliciting personal and sensitive perspectives (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

Two focus group discussions (male and female groups) were conducted around themes of cultural understanding of the Krobo people, relational patterns of parents and adolescent girls, adolescent peer relations, sexuality and roles in the community. During the FGD, I used a semi structured interview guide (see Appendix), a set of questions covering researcher’s domain of focus, to elicit responses from the participants. The commencement of the discussions was preceded with an ice-breaking activity; an activity that seeks to introduce participants to each other (Green & Thorogood, 2014), by discussing life in the Krobo land. Discussions were done concerning norms of interaction developed with participants to protect against domination by others, regard for the propriety of language and turns taking. Also, I used verbal prompts and probes to access the tacit knowledge of participants. Silences were allowed, and interruptions to participant responses avoided to facilitate audience which encouraged disclosure of perceptions and experiences (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

### *3.6.3 Interviews*

Interviews are regulated interactions directed at the specific needs of the researcher (Green & Thorogood, 2014; Shelton et al., 2014). Though interviews are controlled interactions (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003), they raise the researcher above the interviewee in a limited reciprocal engagement or disclosure (Kvale, 2006). However, they are useful in eliciting response from participants given the flexibility of its engagement in asking questions and receiving responses (Green & Thorogood, 2014). In all, seven in-depth interviews of about 45-minute duration were



conducted. I used two separate semi-structured interview guides (see appendix) in the conduct of interviews with traditional leaders and parents. The interviews evolved around themes of *dipo* rite, parental communication with adolescent girls, parental relationship with adolescent girls and challenges in caring for adolescent girls regarding their sexuality.

#### *3.6.4 Observation*

Observations are a systematic investigation of communication and interaction patterns of participants in context (Shelton et al., 2014). Silverman (1998) cited in Green and Thorogood (2014, p. 106) intimates that the use of observations obviates the limitations posed by interviews. However, observations restrict the behaviors of participants due to researcher presence (Shelton et al., 2014). I observed both at day and at night trying to understand the context of the participants in about adolescent pattern of relations with parents and peers.

### **3.7 Data management**

All interaction with participants were held in *Damgbe*, the local language of participants. I recorded all interactions with a digital audio recorder after participants agreed to its use. The use of the audio recorder ensured that no information was lost. It enhanced my concentration on responses from participants and in taking note of salient points and make associations between responses and come up with follow-up questions. A translator who holds a bachelor in education in Ghanaian language, *Damgbe* compared the recorded audio data in English and *Damgbe* and transcribed them manually into text, English. I encrypted the transcribed data together with field notes and stored them in a Microsoft Word format on a personal computer protected with a password. I backed up the data on an external drive protected with a password. The transcribed data were marked with codes that correspond to each participant and stored separately until August 2016 where all data is deleted.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Open code and Thematic Network Analysis were used in analyzing the data generated from the study. Thematic network analysis, “a web-like network that organizes and provides a means of representing data while making explicit the procedures employed from text to interpretation” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387). Open code is a software that aids the reduction of raw data into single meaningful units, codes, with which further analysis is advanced. According to Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 387), the thematic network analysis involves a thematic organization of qualitative data by breaking up text and finding within it explicit rationalizations and their

implicit signification to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels. Also, the analysis procedure involves reduction of text and using coding frameworks to generating basic themes which are further grouped into abstract principles, organizing themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The final phase is the development of global themes which are deduced from the merger of organizing themes into a more sophisticated structure which reflects the principal metaphors contained in the text, from which interpretation of the text is made.

### *3.8.1 Coding data*

I read through transcripts and listening to the recorded audio files of transcripts and compared transcripts to ensure that they were consistent and accurate. By this, I became familiar with the data and able to identify recurring patterns of perspectives and insights brought forth by participants. Coding the data using open code, I iteratively evaluated and assigned a meaningful unit of analysis, code, to each segment of text (see Appendix). The coding was based on grounded theory to “allow for the generation of enough codes through which the researcher can verify emerging concepts and also open up to all avenues of inquiry” (Green & Thorogood, 2014, p. 235).

### *3.8.2 Theme identification*

Categorization of recurring units of meaning through evaluation of patterns that share common meaning and bear relevance to text followed by theme identification approaches (Green & Thorogood, 2014, p. 211). Through identifying of codes that share common patterns and meaning, themes emerged by merging complementary codes into basic, organizing and global themes. The development of themes was done alongside predefined categories of research questions and objectives. This allowed for the generation of themes that best answer the research questions. By cross referencing with transcripts, relevant texts were assigned to each basic theme which projected participant perspectives on the phenomena studied. Refining basic theme into a more complex unit of meaning enhanced the development of organizing themes. These themes reflected a more structured label that relates to each basic theme. I further categorized organizing themes into one broad frame of meaning, global theme (see appendix). This global theme provided a categorical and an analytical framework upon which networks were developed.

### 3.8.3 Constructing networks

Thematic networks are depicted through the web like structure that shows the sequential relatedness of concepts from basic meaning units to abstract representations (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Using the developed analysis framework, basic themes highlighted the phenomena investigated through relational patterns between codes. In addition, the relationships between concepts, similarities and differences between themes aided typologies through which meaningful connections between codes can better be appreciated from networks (see Appendix).

### 3.9 Trustworthiness (Validity, reliability and generalizability)

Qualitative studies are critiqued to be anecdotal and subjective in their accounts (Green & Thorogood, 2014). While quantitative inquiry seeks causal determination, prediction and generalization of findings, qualitative studies seek to explore, understand, and generalise results to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). Thus, the objectivity of qualitative studies has been challenged in the use of measurement concepts used in quantitative studies; validity, reliability and generalizability (Angen, 2000). The reformulation of these measurement concepts in qualitative studies is referred to as trustworthiness (Angen, 2000).

#### 3.9.1 Validity

Long and Johnson (2000) defined validity as the measurement of what a measurement instrument is supposed to measure. Validity or credibility as used in qualitative studies “ensures appropriateness of findings from the standpoint of the researcher, participants and readers account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 206). Creswell (2014) outlines criteria for validating qualitative research. This study followed methods of triangulation and transparency to ensure the validity of the study. As defined by Zitomer and Goodwin (2014), “triangulation is the use of two or more sources of data, methods of data collection, theories, observers, and data coders to assert whether they lead to the same conclusion” (p. 209). As indicated, the study utilized different but complementary methods of data collection, interviews, FGD, photo voice and observation to elicit data from different sources; parents, adolescent girls and traditional. Triangulation of accounts from these sources enhanced the credibility of themes that emerged. In addition, a detailed and rich account of the study context, research process, also gave room to ensure the validity of the study. The systematic descriptions of culture and context of the Krobo people highlighted the meaningful symbolisms of the Krobo *dipo* culture from themes that emerged due to data efficiency and sufficiency, and extended the stay on the research location (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014).

### 3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the accuracy and consistency in collecting, coding and reporting of research data as well as the thoroughness of analysis (Green & Thorogood, 2014). Although showing reliability may be challenging due to variation in participant accounts, I had two translators who translated data into English language and *Damgbe*, a separate translator who is a scholar transcribed all interactions into English text by comparing responses in English and *Damgbe* and transcribing the accurate meaning of participant responses. This was done to ensure that culturally relevant information rich in metaphors were not missed. I compared audio translations in English with the transcribed texts to ensure that the final data is credible after the transcriptions.

Suggested pathways to ensuring the reliability of this study according to Creswell (2014) includes inter-coder agreement which requires cross checking of codes by comparing derivations from data with independent sources (Green & Thorogood, 2014). I had two of my colleague code one of my transcripts and compared the codes to mine to reduce my influence on the data. Though worded differently, the semantics of the codes were the same. Also, peer reviewing of research process was done through series of presentation to and review from colleagues and supervisors. This was to allow room for the entire study process to be audited and critiqued by fellows to help me appraise my roles and how they did influence the study. In addition, an audit of decision trail which require a detailed account of the research process to help others validate the entire research process (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014) was done through peer debriefing with my colleagues and supervisors who appraised the research process. Considerations and situations that informed my decisions on the field were transparently presented to and discussed with my colleagues and supervisors as well. Further, using the audio recorder to capture responses of participants enhanced reliability through its ability to record all data without possible loss of information. By this, the primary data of the study (recorded local language) gives room to adequate transcription into text which ensured adequate coverage of information. The above practical approaches explained added to the reliability of the study.

### 3.9.3 Generalizability

Generalizability relates the margin of extension of an account of a particular problem to other domains and individuals other than those studied (Gasson, 2004). Although the degree of generalizability of qualitative studies has been challenged, thick description, detailed account of the research process, field data methods, analysis and discussion provide the basis for judgement by readers, the extent to which the study can be generalized (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). Further, although generalizability of the study is limited, situating the findings of the

study in existing similar empirical studies in Africa may enhance the understanding of how culturally prescribed pathways enhance adult identity development (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). In addition, the study may inform projects targeted at family life education using local customs as drivers for change in communities through understanding contextual influences that protect or predispose adolescent girls to sexually transmitted diseases and early pregnancy. Extension of the study may be applied to populations in other African countries which have cultural markers to adulthood as explored in this study

### **3.10 Reflexivity (Role of the researcher)**

The researcher's self-awareness of roles and genuineness of the research process and the readers as pointed out by Zitomer and Goodwin (2014) represents the roles and reflections I had during the conduct of the study. The research site for this study was not a familiar one. Entering into this community as a researcher, I worked closely with my gatekeepers to locate my participants and build rapport with them. I was conscious of the group I was going to work with. My choice of gatekeepers was not predetermined but occurred through my initial visit to the research location. However, the decision to maintain the two gatekeepers was influenced by considerations of accessibility to participant groups for the study.

With me, the researcher as a young man conducting the study with adolescent girls, it was extremely important to be assisted by a female to facilitate access to girls. I realized the presence of a female gatekeeper and interpreter earned the trust of parents to release their daughters to participate in the study. Although most of the girls were open, some were shy to talk about their experiences, especially issues related to sex presumably due to my presence. However, having a female interpreter and building rapport with the girls together ensured trust, an atmosphere of transparency in the conduct of the study. The facilitation of the study with female aides who are known gave confidence to all participants to offer their participation voluntarily and parents to consent to their wards' participation. This is because familiarity with gatekeeper and interpreter was a source of security assurance for their girls.

As a Ghanaian, I am aware of the cultural values regarding communication in traditional Ghanaian society. Knowing that a break in communication competence with older people and traditional authorities will constitute disrespect and thus affect the credibility of the data, a conscious effort was made to conduct myself before and during the interviews with my gatekeepers in a manner that protects against cultural incompetence to elicit good responses. Traditionally, women become less interactive in the presence of men. Thus female participants were separated to ensure greater participation.

### 3.11 Ethics

In accordance with ideals of research, ethical guidance and clearance are core to considerations on the impacts of this study on participants. According to Green and Thorogood (2014), ‘ethical practice’ varies with context, time and across disciplines and thus contingent on the context of the study. In light of this, a written letter of approval for the study from the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD) and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (see Appendix) was gained after research proposal was submitted. However, permission for the conduct of the study from Office of Research, Innovation and development (ORID) of the University of Ghana never came through upon several follow-ups. Faced with this dilemma, I proceeded to conduct the study based on the beneficence of contributing to knowledge on adult identity development in the Krobo ethnic group. I am aware that this view might not be shared by all. However, I strictly followed ethical guidelines throughout the conduct of the study. I sought community level approval from the *Konor*, paramount chief of Krobo Odumase and its environs due to the demise of the queen mother with whom I had wanted to contact.

Participants consented before they partook in the study. Consent for participation was at two levels, adults and adolescents. Younger participants below age 18 assented to participate after their parents or guardians had consented for their involvement in the study. Written informed consent and assent forms (see Appendix) in the English language detailing; the purpose of the study, and all information regarding the procedures for each stream of data collection, possible benefits and risks, rights of participants, anonymity and confidentiality, and no payments for participation was explained to participants by the help of the interpreters. The forms asserted anonymity, confidentiality, and their right to of participants renounce their involvement.

I informed the girls about ethics in the use of photographs in research such as gaining informed consent and about photos that have negative consequences for individuals (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). A separate consent form requesting permission from participants for the use of photographs they took during the photography task done under the photovoice was signed by participants to allow the researcher to present the study findings with the photographs(see Appendix). Also, the photos were edited (blurred) to make individuals unidentifiable to protect the anonymity of third parties in the pictures. With fatigue as a foreseeable risk to the study, break sessions were allowed to participants and snacks given to them. I made all arrangement for the conduct of the study at the convenience of participants to avoid intrusion. I assured my participants of anonymity and confidentiality so that their identities would not be revealed. In light of this, participants were identified using codes and general titles to avoid any personal

and identifying information. During interactions with adolescents, they were allowed to decide whether they wanted to give responses to questions or not to continue with themes they felt stressed with.

No payments were made to participants after the study. This was explained to them in the consent forms before their participation in the study. Payment was avoided because it limits voluntary involvement and it subtly coerces individuals to partake in the study. I, however, provided participants with snacks after the study and their transportation cost covered through arranged transport to and from interview venues. Selected photographs by adolescent girls were however printed and handed to them as a way of showing gratitude. I did this at the end of the study where it could not possibly influence their participation or responses.

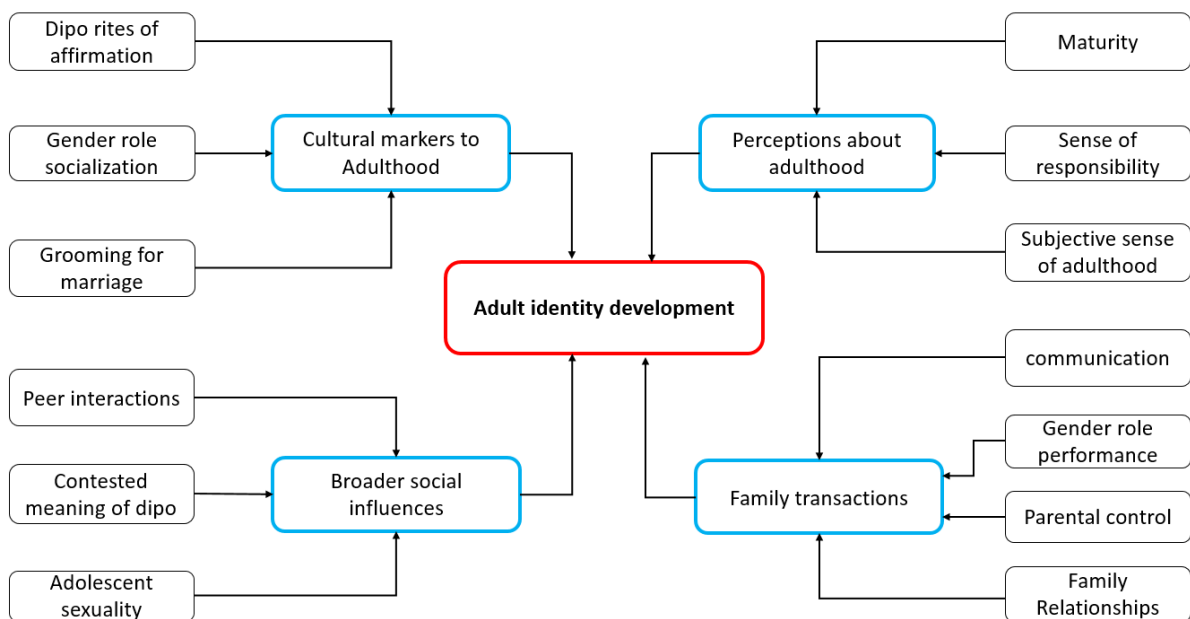
I also briefed participants on the potential benefits of the research. This, I explained to them that it may not directly benefit them but can inform policy and influence the lives of adolescent populations in the district and the country as a whole. This explanation enhanced volitional participation, stopped expectations of participants as well as controlled participant demands. Further, the explanations improved participant understanding that the study was an academic exercise of which outcomes hold potentials for policies that influence the greater population.

## CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

### 4.0 Introduction

This section presents findings realized after the analysis of data using Thematic Network Analysis. The section is organized under one broad global theme, adult identity development. The organizing themes and basic themes are presented to link to the global theme. From the analysis, four organizing themes emerged that explain how adult identity development occur in the Krobo culture. The organizing themes include cultural markers to adulthood, perception about adulthood, family transactions and broader social influence. Each of these organizing themes consists of basic themes that further explain adult identity development. Although linkages between themes exist, they are not illustrated in the network below but are shown through discussion of findings. Quotes and photographs used in this chapter show the differing views, perceptions, and experiences of participants on themes. The thematic network of the analysis presented below further explains the organization of findings.

**Fig. 2 A thematic network of findings**



### Key

Global theme
  Organizing theme
  Basic themes



## 4.1 Adult identity development

The study sought to investigate the adult identity development among adolescent *dipo* girls through the *dipo* rite. Cultural and social factors mostly influence adult identity development of *dipo* girls. Among these are the influence of family, culture and social interactions on adolescent adult identity development. The organizing themes: cultural markers to adulthood, perceptions about adulthood, family transactions, and broader social influences below, expand on participant accounts on how adolescent girls come to develop an adult identity.

### 4.1.1 Cultural markers to adulthood

The Krobo culture has a well-demarcated route to adulthood, *dipo* rite of passage. According to the participants, the *dipo* represents their culture and a means through which adolescent girls are socialized to become responsible adults and Krobo women. Participants also recognized that the Krobo culture, train girls through the *dipo* rite of passage. The rite, socializes adolescent girls through gender roles and norms and grooms them for marriage. It is believed that adolescents completing the rite become women and are matured to assume adult roles.

#### *Dipo rites of affirmation*

The practice of the rite, *dipo*, according to participants is to usher adolescent girls into responsible adulthood. Also, they mentioned that completion of the rites aid girls to become disciplined as they become respectful and relate well with parents and the elderly in the community. Participants' accounts of the rite are presented below.

*The dipo rite is our custom and it exists to discipline girls maturing into adults through teaching them ... related responsibilities of a wife as in receiving visitors and serving food for their husband. If one has not gone through the dipo rites, she is considered indiscipline. The values inculcated, seek to usher them into responsible adulthood. ... it is about doing things with parents, respect for elders and how to become good children until they grow up. (Sub-Queen mother)*

*Dipo rite is our custom and the reason why we do it is that it makes one a real Krobo woman and makes her feel important in the community. P5 women*

The rite is performed annually across the Many Krobo land. Participants noted that girls are initiated at family levels. The Sub-queen mother notes that in the wake of *dipo*, announcements are made for girls to be recruited and initiated throughout the Krobo land. This announcement takes form in traditional 'gon gong' beating (a traditional method of announcing to the public). The sub-queen mother relates that;

*Every house has a date for the commencement of the dipo rite. When the time is due, the announcer is ordered by the Konor to announce to families whose daughters are*

*qualified for the dipo rite. Each household identifies girls of the required age and above for the rites. The announcement starts at 12 noon. It starts from Asesewa through Sekesua, Akatei, Akuse, Kpong and Ahemansu. And our people who are not resident in the Krobo land also call to find out when the rites begin. The announcers go to markets and all villages in the Krobo land to inform the people to prepare their children... (sub-queen mother)*

Dipo girls are selected for the rite from the ages of 12 and above. The Sub-Queen mother explained that at this age, girls are matured and can retain lessons taught to them years after the rite. According to her, although menstruation was a necessary criterion in the past, currently, it is not so given much priority due to early onset of puberty. The sub queen mother explains that;

*Menstruation is a necessary indicator for the rites, in that immediately a girl starts to menstruate, it gives notice of transition to maturity. ... it is said that unless a girl experiences menarche before she is initiated but these days, girls at ages of 10 and 8 years are menstruating and are well developed beyond their age. Because of this, menstruation is no more a major criterion for the rites. Hence, the Konor (Paramount chief) has decreed that girls be taken through the rites at the age of 12 years. It is done at this age because, if the child is not matured, the training she is taken through becomes irrelevant since they cannot attain mastery of the roles taught and are likely to forget them when they become matured. (Sub-queen mother)*

The dipo rite consists of series of ritual affirmations that convey meaning through symbols to adolescent girls. Dominant affirmative rites mentioned include the tying of the 'sɔni' (a string of bead around the neck), ritual bath and sitting on the sacred stone. They are depicted in participant accounts below.

*The child is taken to the priest (djemeli) of dipo where the ritual process starts with a string of bead tied to the neck called 'sɔni' on Friday. On Saturday, they are taken through a ritual bath and taught how to wash with water. On Sunday, girls are taken to the shrine where they are asked to sit on the sacred stone as a final process of the rites for the test of virginity (Sub-Queen mother)*

Similarly, many adults and adolescents explained the rites of affirmation as did the Sub-Queen mother. For example, Padiki explained that

*On Friday, they tie 'sɔni' around our neck and on Saturday, they go to wash our things in the river and in the afternoon, they use goat to touch our forehead three times then they slaughter it and the blood is poured on our feet and they use the mutton to prepare*

*food for us to eat. Then on Sunday, they dress us with beads and they send us to sit on the sacred stone and that is the actual rite. On Monday morning, they bring us to the priestess's house again and a ritual is performed for us that makes us free to eat any kind of food (that means you can buy from the roadside). They dress us up and parade us through the town and perform the klama dance (traditional dance to songs. People give out money and other kinds of gift to us whilst we are dancing. (Padiki, 16)*

Further, participants also shared the meaningfulness of the ritual symbols used in the rite. Generally, among participants, the sitting on the sacred stone is to prove the chastity of *dipo* girls. According to the Sub-Queen mother,

*... girls are taken to the shrine where they are asked to sit on the sacred stone as a final process of the rites for the test of virginity (Sub-Queen mother)*

Also, the tying of the 'sɔni', according to participant 5 (male) in an interview related that it signifies that a girl is undergoing *dipo* and she is not allowed to go anywhere. In addition, the ritual bath is believed to cleanse initiates from all bad luck and make them pure,

*... bathing in the stream is a way of cleansing the girls off every bad luck to make them pure. (P5, a father).*

Further, most of the participants related that the passing of the test of virginity, sitting on the sacred stone represents chastity of adolescent girls. According to a male participant 5, this signifies that the child is disciplined, worthy of marriage and a pure Krobo woman.

### ***Gender role socialization***

The Krobo culture recognizes the role of women in society and is well mentioned by participants, as such the *dipo* rite is a means through which maturing adolescent girls are socialized in to the gender roles of a woman. *Dipo* girls are taught skills of home management, roles of a wife and gender norms in the culture. According to participants, the age of initiation facilitates the retention of these roles and gender socialization.

*When the child is 12 years, there are a lot of things that ought to be taught to the child. Some are said or mentioned and some are taught practically to the child. During the *dipo* rites, girls are told they are becoming adults. They are taught how to talk to people, respond to questions, react to insults and avoid quarrels. (Sub-queen mother)*

*When you go through the *dipo*, you are taught how to sweep, how to use a ladle to fetch from the pot and also taught how to grind pepper. Your grandmother teaches you how to do house chores, receive visitors etc. (P2 fgd female group)*

In addition, the Sub-queen mother stated that the rite stresses on submission and conformity to social order and authority.

*They are taught to be respectful, submissive to their husbands and family, do house hold chores, relate to husband's family members and receive visitors to your home and how to win back their husbands when they are trying to have extra marital affairs. (Sub-Queen mother)*

Adolescent girls going through the rite confirmed how they were socialized into female roles and taught to be responsible adults.

*I learnt how to cook, sweep and when you get married how you should take care of your husband or treat your husband in future. (Padiki, 16)*

*I have learnt that as a lady or woman when you wake up in the morning you must sweep, fetch water into the pots and make sure you clean up your environments. (Aki, 16)*

These roles were representative of participants understanding of the role of a woman in the Krobo community. Photographs taken by participants equally reflected the gender roles girls are socialized into.

**Fig. 2** A photo depicting the role of women in the Krobo tribe



*Sweeping the house shows neatness. When people come to the house and see how neat the house is, it gives respect to you that you are not lazy but hardworking. (Naki, 15)*

### ***Grooming for marriage***

From participant accounts, marriage is regarded an important aspect of the transition to adulthood in the Krobo culture. Although maturity of girls is important in marriages, acceptance into families is incumbent upon completion of the *dipo* rite. However, girls who are not able to go through the rites are deemed cursed and unclean. These views are shown below in the quotes.

*Dipo is our custom and requires all girls of the Krobo land to undergo the rite before marriage. (P1, a father)*

*The dipo rite is a means of being accepted into any family in the Krobo land. A lady who has not gone through dipo is limited in her marriage to certain families such as the royal family or even visit the homes of the priest, Queen and the King. She is considered unclean from those who have undergone the dipo rite. (P4, fgd, female group)*

Some of the participants stressed on the education girls receive during the rites that;

*The rite is meant to educate them for marriage and that they are not supposed to have sex with any man before they are given out in marriage. (P4, fgd male group)*

Contrary views also emerged in relation to girls who do not undergo the dipo that;

*A lady who has not undergone dipo can marry but her marriage is most likely to be unsuccessful by reason that she has not gone through dipo. (P3, fgd, female group)*

Further, participants related that girls are not rushed into marriages but are allowed to mature, acquire skills under apprenticeship, complete education and earn a livelihood before they marry. As such, Adolescents are not allowed to accept marriage proposals nor engage in sexual relationships until they are adults. The Sub-queen mother mentioned that

*Girls are advised not to accept marriage proposals outside the home but are encouraged to lead the men home to meet their parents and consent given before marriage proposals are accepted when they are of age. The fact that one has undergone the rites does not mean she is in the position to marry or accept any proposal from a man. Dipo girls do not go into marriage immediately after going through the rites. They are encouraged to wait until matured before they are allowed. They are also encouraged to complete their education and finish learning a trade or apprenticeship in a trade to be able to fend for themselves and support their prospective husbands and vice versa before they are allowed to marry. They are being regulated to be of good conduct. It is being said that we allow our girls to marry immediately after the rites, but it is not the reality. (Sub-queen mother)*

Although parents decide the readiness of adolescent girls for marriage, marriages are not forced on adolescent girls but are based on their consent to marry a suitor. A participant stated that;

*Marriages are accepted on the consent of the woman to marry the suitor. They are not considered adults for marriage or any sexual relationship. After the rite, girls grow to become adults before marriage because at that age they are premature for marriage. (P3, fgd, female group)*

*We teach our children good manners and advise them about marriage and how to respect and talk politely to their prospective husbands to avoid divorce. This enhances good relationship in the home and unites families. (P2, fgd, male group)*

Adolescent girls also indicated that the rite is a means through which they can be successfully married in the future.

*As a Krobo girl, you have to go through the rite and when somebody wants to marry you he first finds out whether you went through the rite. (Akorkor, 17)*

*I went through the rite because I want to get married in the future. (Aki, 16)*

Participants acknowledge that the strict restrictions on early sexual experiences play a central role in marriages to ensure girls are chaste before marriage. From these accounts, the *dipo* and its role in marriage serve as a form of social control on maturing girls from early sexual debut and early pregnancy. This is illustrated by a father that;

*It helps the adolescent girl abstain from sex since she has not gone through the rite and she is afraid of becoming pregnant and banished from the community. This will go a long way to help them get somebody responsible to marry in the future. (P4, fgd, male group)*

#### **4.1.2 Perceptions about adulthood**

The perceived understanding of adulthood by adolescent girls from their nurturing contexts showed varied appraisals of who an adult is. Although no clear cut demarcation to adulthood was realized, social value systems and normative cultural standards informed adolescent girls' perceptual definition of adulthood. Perceptions of adulthood by *dipo* girls evolved around themes of maturity (sexual and social), sense of responsibility and subjective sense of adulthood.

**Maturity:** Adolescent girls perceive adulthood to be informed by sexual and social maturity. They related that ability to give birth and pubertal changes (sexual maturity), marriage, dressing, autonomy and going through the *dipo* rite (social maturity) inform adolescent evaluation of an individual as an adult. One participant accounts that

*One becomes an adult when the breast begins to develop, hairs growing at the armpit and when she begins to menstruate. The moment she begins to menstruate and develop breast means that when a man has sex with her she is likely to become pregnant and when she gives birth she can breastfeed the child. (Dede, 17)*

Although giving birth is perceived to transition individuals, adolescent girls reckon with the attached responsibility, ability to care for the child, as the differentiating factor to adulthood. The statements and photographs below illustrate the perceptions of adolescent girls.

*...one becomes an adult when she has given birth and can adequately take care of the baby and discipline him or her when s/he goes wrong. (Dede, 17)*

*...as a woman, you have to give birth and care for him/her so that s/he will, in turn, look after you in future when you are aged... (Lamley, 16)*

**Fig. 3** A photo depicting becoming a parent as a marker to adulthood



*I see a woman sitting down with her baby on her lap and taking care of the child (Akorkor, 17)*

To *dipo* girls, marriage transforms the moral and social values of an individual and confers the respect and recognition as a woman. The quote and photo illustrate this below.

*When you get married, the way you live your life changes in respect to your dressing, going out and how you talk to your husband also changes. (Sika, 15)*

**Fig. 4.** A photo depicting marriage as a means to adulthood



Lamley, (16 years), in her photo description of an adult, mentioned *that I see a married woman putting on her wedding ring. It shows that she is a fully grown woman.*

Of all participants, an exception was Aki who identified *dipo* custom as a means to adulthood. According to her, going through the *dipo* rite represents a means by which girls become matured and adult status accorded. According to her,

*When a girl goes through the dipo initiation rite she becomes an adult but if they don't perform the rite for her, she is not an adult. Because, if you are a girl and have not gone through the dipo rite you are not a woman. (Aki, 16)*

Her account is supported by an elder of the community who put forward that;

*For the girl to become adult, she must go through the dipo which is done at the age of between 13 to 15 years (Elder, male)*

Further, participants also identified that the mode of dressing of an individual determines her adult status. According to them, dressing signifies maturity and differentiates a child from an adult.

*When you an old (adult) you dress well. You have your hair scarfed. A child dresses anyhow and can even go out in only pants (under pants), but an adult cannot go out in pants (underpants) only. (Akorkor, 17)*

Fig. 5 A photo depicting qualities of an adult



This photograph portrays Padiki's perception of adulthood. *She is a grown up woman with breast taking care of the house. I am informed about her mode of dressing in the scarf on her head.*

### ***Sense of responsibility***

Assuming responsibility for self and others was evident in participant responses. Although not all, some perceive adulthood to be informed by the sense of responsibility individuals have towards self and others. To adolescent girls, being responsible is through respect for the elderly



in society, both at home and outside the home. These expressions take form in the ability to provide for oneself, working to support others and norm compliance. Participants mentioned in relation to sense of responsibility that;

*As a lady, you have to work to help not only yourself but also your child, your family, and the entire community. (Dede, 17).*

*As an adult, you have to respect yourself and obey all rules and regulations. (Lamley, 16)*

Similarly, Naki, 15 years, also illustrates through the photo below that *I see a woman selling. The money from her sales can be used to take care of herself, her family and also help in the development of the community as a whole. (Naki, 15 years).*

**Fig. 6** A photo depicting sense of responsibility as a means to adulthood



In addition to the above, *dipo* girls perceive adulthood to be associated with autonomy. According to them, the ability of an individual to make independent decisions devoid of involvement of others qualifies one to be an adult.

*One becomes an adult when she begins to do things on her own ... (Sika, 15)*

**Self-perception as an adult;** *Dipo* girls' subjective sense of adulthood were shaped by the general perceptions they hold about adulthood above. Some of the girls perceive themselves as not adults. However, they seem not to share the idea of being teenagers or children either. The quotes below illustrate adolescent perception of themselves.

*I consider myself a young lady because I am depending on my parents. I cannot care for myself and I am not matured for marriage. (Naki,15)*

*I see myself as a young lady because I am not grown (matured) to call myself an adult. (Padiki, 16)*

Most adolescent girls perceive themselves as not adults based on maturity for marriage. Since most adolescents have not attained marital status nor matured to be married, their sense of adult identity achievement is incomplete, in that they do not see themselves as children nor adults but young ladies.

*I consider myself a young lady ... I have not attained the age for marriage. (Naki, 15)*

*I see myself as a young woman but not fully grown woman because I am not ready to marry". (Sika, 15)*

Contrary to the above, other participants conversely tend to regard themselves as adults. considering their ability to give birth. They do consider themselves as adults amidst their inability to care for themselves. These adolescent girls do not bring to bear the responsibilities that come with childbirth they identified in section 4.1.2 under maturity.

*Since I can now give birth, I see myself as a woman (Dede, 17))*

Also, the girls indicated that completion of the *dipo* rite affirms their sense of adult identity as Krobo women.

*Since I have gone through the dipo rite, I ... considered myself a woman (Aki,16)*

*I see myself as a woman because they taught me what ... is entailed during the rite so that it will guide me to take care of myself. (Lamley, 16)*

A stunning observation was an account by a Kaaki who attributed a sense of adulthood to gender role mastery. According to her, mastery of the female gender role taught to her affirm her status as an adult.

*I see myself as a woman because I know how to do household chores. (Kaaki, 13)*

Aside feeling in between (somewhat like a child and feeling like an adult), some participants do not regard themselves as adults but children based on the mode of dressing and childbirth.

*I consider myself as an adolescent but not a woman. I have not given birth (Lamtwe, 18)*

Although perceptions of *dipo* girls are varied based on their subjective adult identity, likewise, adult perceptions of these girls in the Odumase community is mixed. Some perceive *dipo* girls as adults based on their chronological age and the completion of the *dipo*. However, the transition through the *dipo* is appraised by the Sub-Queen mother as a process of becoming an adult but not a means to attain adult identity. Participants accounts are illustrated below.

*I see her as an adult. Since our custom usher adolescent girls into womanhood, when she is 18 years and above after the rites then she becomes an adult but if she had not gone through the rite I will consider her not matured. (P1, father)*

*We consider them to be adults from the ages of 15 and 16. (P4, fgd, female group)*

*I do not consider her as an adult but a growing adult because she can't do things on her own now. (P5, father)*

From the illustrations, there appears to be a conflicting recognition of *dipo* girls after the rite. Whereas *dipo* girls have a varied sense of adulthood, community perception is mixed between age and maturity.

#### **4.1.3 Broader social influences**

Adult identity development of *dipo* girls is reported to be influenced by the various transactions that occur in the social environment. From participant accounts, themes of peer interaction, adolescent sexuality and contested understanding of the *dipo* rite emerged to explain the varying influence that the social environment offers adolescent girls in their adult identity development.

**Contested understanding of *dipo* rite:** participants related that the social change has greatly influenced their culture. They mentioned that the contact of the Krobo culture with Christianity and modernity has greatly influenced levels of acceptance of the rite and the behaviors of *dipo* girls in the community. Participants views are presented below

*In the olden days, they all understood it well but with the advent of Christianity these days, there is divergent mind or notion about it especially the Christians. Majority of the Krobos understand it and they perform it. (P1, fgd, male group)*

*... people criticize us that our rite is idol worshipping but it is not. We use the medium to educate them (*dipo* girls) and we shall preserve this custom for generations unborn because it is a good thing. (Sub-Queen mother)*

Although the rite is considered idol worshipping by Christians, reported accounts show that there exist secret initiation of children and wives of religious leaders. A participant relates that;

*They say we should all become Christians but we are doing it with their wives. They are doing secretly for their children. They see it as idol worshipping that is why they want us to stop and become Christians. (P4, fgd, female group)*

*Now due to modernity, a lot have changed in the way our children behave themselves. As it is expected, adolescents should be submissive but adolescent girls these days are not*

*respectful and heeding advice as it was in the olden days. This has increased their involvement in sexual relationships and pregnancy. (P4, fgd, male group)*

**Adolescent sexuality:** Participants also expressed worry about *dipo* girls' sexual activity. According to them, the current crop of *dipo* girls is sexually active, not submissive and respectful as they used to be in the past.

*In the past, girls rarely engage in sexual relationships but these days, at ages of 12, some of them engage in these sexual relationships, and it is troubling as girls become pregnant before their prime. (P3, fgd, male group)*

*In the olden days, children had to be about 18 and 19, before they go through the rites. Now, it is difficult for adolescent girls to abstain from sex and early sexual relationships .... (P4, fgd, male group)*

*After the rite, the family of *dipo* girls advises them that they are not yet an adult, thus they should behave well and abstain from premarital sex. (Sub-Queen mother)*

The majority of *dipo* girls also confirm these accounts by acknowledging that their peers are sexually active. An example is Padiki who related that

*Some of my colleagues do have sex with their fiancées but some too do not. (Padiki, 16)*

Community concerns about adolescent girls centre on adolescent motherhood. As such, adolescent girls are encouraged to go through the rite early to help them escape the humiliation that come to family when a child gets pregnant before the rite. This is illustrated in a comment by participants that;

*In the olden days because we were matured before they go through the rites they were considered adults but this days because of curiosity and stubbornness, and early maturation we don't allow them to grow old before they go through the rites. Because we fear they may become pregnant, hence they go through the rites much earlier to avoid the associated difficulties that come with pregnancy before the rite. (P 4, fgd, female group)*

Also a father comments that

*Due to modernity, a lot of social norms have changed and this has affected our culture, *dipo*. In the olden days, girls are much older before they go through the rites, however, current social situations and early development of girls have led to the reduction of the age of initiation to twelve. (P4, fgd, male group)*

**Peer interactions:** Social interactions of *dipo* girls in the Odumase community are mostly with peers, parents and significant others. However, some social interactions of adolescents are

dreaded by parents. According to them, *dipo* girls become delinquent through deviant peer affiliation.

*In the past, when girls go through the dipo rites, they become submissive and respectful but in modern times, girls want to do what they feel is right with disregard to what they are being taught at home and the community. When a child starts going out and relating with several friends, she takes on behavior that are observed from movies and begins to model them. This presents a lot of challenges in trying to realign adolescent girls to morally accepted ways. (P4, fgd, male group)*

Another participant mentioned that;

*... they (adolescent dipo girls) are not allowed to interact much with their peers or outsiders so that they are influenced negatively. (Pm 5, male)*

Although parents fear corruption of *dipo* girls, they acknowledged that some friendships result in mutually beneficial outcomes. According to them,

*Adolescent girls have friends they relate with. Some relate well with their peers for progress in life, being respectful and doing all that is required of them as roles. But some also find their relations with peers who have sexual relations with boys which often destroy their future. (P 3, fdg female group)*

Also, a father related that;

*Some of her friends are good and they discuss their education or learning a trade. Mostly they discuss positive things but there are some of her friends who influence her negatively which I call town friends (P3, female)*

However, *dipo* girls also expressed discomfort in how fear of deviant peer affiliation by parents develop mistrust between them and their parents. Some of the girls related that

*Sometimes, my parents don't understand me because at times when I ask to go out, they think that I am going to do something bad and also I may not go the actual place I informed them about. (Akorkor, 17)*

#### **4.1.4 Family transactions**

Out of the many interactions that occur during the transition to adulthood by *dipo* girls, familial interactions are observed to be influential. Participants depicted the role of extended relations in the development of girls in the Krobo culture. Adult identity development of *dipo* girls from the home environment emerges basically from the attachment patterns that exist between adolescent *dipo* girls and parental figures in the family. Themes of family relationships,

communication, parental control and gender role mastery below further explain these transactions

**Family relationships:** Parent-child relationships were shown to be influential towards positive adult identity development. Some of the participants reported cordial relationships with parents. Also, parents indicated that submissiveness and respect of *dipo* girls facilitated good relationships. The following quotes illustrate this below.

*I relate very well with my parents, just as my friends. I easily approach them for any help I need and they provide it. (Naki, 15)*

*Those who are obedient and submissive to their parents are able to interact and relate with their parents easily. They are mostly close to their parents and it encourages their development and communal living both at home and outside the home. (P1, fgd, male group)*

Although a cordial relationship does exist generally, some adolescent girls reported having problems relating with their caregivers. They expressed concerns of neglect from their caregivers. Adolescent *dipo* girls raised by step parents and extended relations feel limited and rejected by these caregivers. Aki (16), relates that:

*My step mother does not allow me to tamper with her things as I do with my own parents and she does not relate cordially with me too. She does not want to see me because I am not her biological daughter (Aki, 16)*

Sika who is under the care of relative accounted that:

*... I feel shy to approach them if I have any problem because they are not my biological parents. I do everything freely with my biological parents. (Sika, 15)*

**Parental control:** *Dipo* girls are regulated through parental instructions. Parental control of *dipo* girls is aligned to curb sexual behavior and deviant peer affiliation identified in the section 4.1.3.

*There are some friends that when I bring home, my parents study them very well and ask me never to bring them home again. However, there are others too that when I bring them home, they do not say anything about them. (Padiki, 16)*

Disciplinary measures for wayward adolescent behavior are dependent on the maturity levels of adolescent girls. Girls considered matured are not whipped with canes but are advised mostly by mothers. In addition, fathers lock girls outside for going out at night. According to a participant,

*When I ask her to sleep at night and she does not but rather goes out to play or relate to friends without my knowledge, by the time she comes back to the house, the door is locked and she has to sleep outside. (P1, male).*

Control by parents is targeted at protecting adolescent girls from becoming irresponsible. As such, adolescent peer relationships are under parental scrutiny. Approval of friends by parents confirm positive peer relationships.

*Most of her (daughter) friends she associates with that I observed closely do not think of any bad thing but are of good behavior and they discuss much their education and what will let them progress in life (P5, female)*

However, participants also noted that parental understanding informs the disciplining of adolescent girls. Participants recognized that control over adolescent girls could be effective through unity between parental figures. The comment below illustrates his perspective;

*The child listens when there is unity between the father and the mother so that when the child is misbehaving, both can have control, over her. If the parents are not united, the children become liable to bad habits as they learn and show no respect to their parents. (FGD, Pm 5, male group)*

Also, *dipo* girls and parents alike mentioned having conflicts due to relational outcomes regarding control. Parents in trying to regulate *dipo* girls' behavior are seemingly being overwhelmed by their attitudes. These comments by participants illustrate their views:

*She advises me not to enter into sexual relationship with any man and that I should concentrate on my education since that will be beneficial to me when I grow up. (Aki, 16)*

A parent also related that;

*If the child disregards advice and still keeps to her own ways, you will call her before any prominent person (family head or elderly woman in the family) to advise her. But if the child fails to heed to advice you leave her to be. When you tell the child you will disown her if she does not listen to you, she will be compelled to listen to you due to the fear it imposes. (P5.fgd, female group)*

Although not all, some *dipo* girls expressed confidence in the advice of parents. According to them, the advice of parents helps them to discern the relevance of parental concerns for them and to shape their lives positively.

*I think what she is saying is the truth because there are some who will mislead me while there are some who want my prosperity so it is nice we learn together. (Padiki, 16)*

*I realize they are protecting me because not all friends are good friends. I see some of my friends pregnant and if I should be following them I may also become like them that will not help me in future. (Naki, 15).*

**Communication:** Participants generally expressed a good parent child communication. However, *dipo* girls reported difficulty in communicating private concerns to parents. Participants under the care of family relations related that their concerns, when articulated cannot be given the needed attention. Also, those with biological parents feel threatened to open up to their parents due to fear of parental anger.

*On Saturdays and Sundays when we have finished doing everything in the evening, they sit me down and talk to me and I also tell them my needs. They have time for me so whatever I don't understand and I ask them they explain it for me. (Naa, 15).*

*I know that whenever I have any challenge and I discuss with them they will give me solutions to the challenges I put before them. (Dede, 17)*

Those living with family relations also related that:

*I don't really discuss such things with her, I wait till my mother or father comes before I share my concerns with her. One thing I believe is that my parents know me best. Telling my caregiver my concerns will not attract the needed response that I desire but my parents will. (Sika, 15)*

*Dipo* girls living with parents also mentioned that:

*There are other things that you can only share with your friends but not your mother. My friends are my age mates and can easily discuss certain things with them but my parents will be angry with me if I do. (Akorkor, 15)*

From participant accounts, it was observed that parental communication with adolescent girls varies between mothers and fathers. Fathers maintain an authoritative and instructive position in communicating with their daughters and expect high standards of behavior. Mothers, on the other hand, prefer a firm approach to communicating with adolescent girls. Participants mentioned in the quotes below that:

*I always sit her down and discuss issues. She always tells me what she likes and dislikes and moreover too we live happily as mother and daughter. (P5, female)*

*Our communication is mainly based on instructions, do and don't do, and go or don't go (P5, male).*

Communication about sex between parents and *dipo* girls from participants' accounts show irregular, silent and limited sex talk. *Dipo* girls expressed a lack of confidence in opening up



to parents on sexual issues because they are shy and unsure of parental response to sex talk. They related that;

*Nothing prevents me but I don't know how I am going to discuss with my parents about such a thing (Lamley, 16)*

*Maybe when I tell them they will be angry with me. To me, it is not necessary because if I am discussing those things with them they may think I don't have anything important to talk about. (Akorkor, 17)*

Although concern of parents rests on the sexuality of their daughters, most parents find it difficult to communicate about sex with their daughters. Some discuss it less frequently and others become silent on it. Parent comments that "... as a woman when you get into such things you will know it for yourself" (P3, female).

*I do not communicate with her frequently but I call her to advise her to abstain from sex and any immoral sexual behavior so that she can complete her education, become independent and get someone to marry in the future. (P 5, a mother)*

Others in trying to overcome the fear to discuss sex with daughters imply it through advice to girls.

*... It is really difficult, but I try as much as possible to avoid the fear of discussing it to prevent any form of misbehavior. I talk to her about the realities of life in general and about the good future I desire for her ... (P5, female)*

*It is polite to talk to her patiently not to keep friends who will lure her into bad habits and also desist from sexual relationships that will keep her chaste to avoid pregnancy and have a good future. (P5, male)*

### **Gender role performance**

*Dipo* girls master gender roles emphasized during the rite at home through responsibility uptake in roles of women. Participants indicated that mothers are responsible for the training of *dipo* girls in gender roles and norms. The assignment of these roles to *dipo* girls and their performance reinforces mastery of gender roles girls are socialized to during the rite. Participants related through the quotes below that:

*Mothers are encouraged to reinforce the training at homes after the rites to ensure role competence of their daughters. (Sub-Queen mother)*

*After the rite you (parent, mostly mother) will teach her how to do her house chores and relate with people in the community. The adolescent girl is talked to just as during the *dipo* to be responsible and morally upright to be able to have a successful marriage. (FGD, P5, female group)*

Adolescent girls found the performance of these roles as a preparation for life outside the home.

Padiki relates that:

*I cook so that my parents will also get some to eat and also when I grow and get married it will not be a problem to me. I also sweep so that I become used to it and in case I get married, I will not be found wanting. (Padiki, 16)*

Also, parents assign responsibilities to *dipo* girls to facilitate their mastery of female roles in the Krobo culture. They related that:

*Sometimes, I allow her to wash, cook, and sweep, clean the room and do virtually everything but when I realize that she is tired I help her do some of them. I am training her to know how to do it so that when she is on her own performing all these roles it would not be a burden for her even when she gets married. (P5 female)*

*She is usually involved in cooking, washing and other household chores to master them before she gets married so she will not have a problem doing them. (Pm 1 male).*

Adolescent girls are however happy about their competence because they feel empowered to manage their own environment.

*I feel happy because they taught me how to do all these things and I have been doing them which will go a long way one day in my life, (Lamtwe, 18).*

Contrary, some adolescent girls expressed incompetence in the performance of some responsibilities.

*... although I perform all these roles I don't feel I am competent in them. When it comes to washing, it is a bit challenging but I am forced to it. (Sika, 15).*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

The study explored adult identity development of adolescent girls through the *dipo* rite of passage by investigating the role of context in identity development and how it influences the reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group. In this section, I discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter and theory of Salutogenesis as applied to the study. This section begins with a descriptive overview of the *dipo* culture, its ideals, and expectations under the heading, '*dipo* as a cultural symbol'. Further, the chapter reflects on the transitions in the practice of *dipo* in current times, its changing relevance and acceptance in the culture under cultural transitions. Also, themes of gender intensification, diffused identity, reflected appraisal, social transactions, social markers to adulthood and sexual and reproductive health of *dipo* girls are discussed to reflect the major issues that emerged from the findings. With *dipo* as the overarching theme of the study, cross-references are made to sections to show how themes relate to each other. The second section of this chapter discusses findings within frames of the Salutogenic theory to overt how adolescent girls thrive during adult identity development in the Krobo ethnic group.

#### 5.1 *Dipo* as a cultural symbol

The *dipo* rite represents a symbolic cultural identity of the Krobo and constitutes a means by which adolescents are socialized in the culture. As one of the dominant traditional practice in the culture, participation is mandatory and is performed with the invocation of the Krobo deity, *Nana Kloweki* (Adjaye, 1999). As such, affirmative rituals such as the climbing of the sacred stone and ritual bath projects notions of spirituality in the performance of the rites. The rite exclusively prepares adolescent girls for responsible womanhood and marriage (Adjaye, 1999; Sackey, 2001). For example, girls are socialized into the roles of women and given reproductive health education regarding pregnancy. The *dipo* regulates the behavior of girls through traditional conventions and bylaws that sanction promiscuous behavior. These sanctions on sexual behavior include banishment of girls who get pregnant before their initiation into *dipo*. By this, girls are deterred from early sexual relationships and instills a sense of sexual purity, chastity among them. This holds positive sexual and reproductive health gains regarding delayed pregnancy and low sex-related infections and diseases. The successful completion of the rite confers ethnic identity, Krobo woman; that is closely linked to recognition as an adult, adult identity in the culture. Consequentially, *dipo* girls are recognized as matured and ready

for marriage. However, the institution of the *dipo* in the culture seeks to transition girls into adulthood through marriage (Adjaye, 1999). By this, the culture aims to ensure chastity before marriage by controlling multiple sexual relations of girls through limiting the window between graduation from the *dipo* and marriage. Given this, it is believed that the sexual purity of girls in marriage induces blessings from the gods and successful marriage (Adjaye, 1999). Put together, the significance of the *dipo* in the culture rests on sexual morality, chastity before marriage, responsible adulthood, and recognition as a pure Krobo woman worthy of marriage.

## **5.2 Cultural transition**

The Krobo culture, *dipo*, has undergone changes over time. The shifts in customs and traditions in response to modernity and Christianity contribute to the transition of the culture. The classical *dipo* compared to the contemporary times has differences that point to the the age of initiation, duration of the rite, recognition, marriages and the value that is attached to the rites. These transitions within the culture have influenced adolescent identity development in the Odumase community. This development has produced a varying understanding of the culture, its values and the projected identity of girls who go through the rite.

The contact of the Krobo culture with Christianity and dominant culture in the Ghanaian setting has greatly influenced levels of acceptance of the rite. The rite is condemned as idol worship by the Christian faith because of the affirmative rituals of sitting on the sacred stone, ritual bath and the invocation of deities of the Krobo land. This has led to mixed acceptance and understanding of the rite. Also, this situation has implications on cultural denial and breakdown of cultural values that define the Krobo as a people. For example, a female participant mentions that religious leaders preach against the *dipo* as demonic. Nukunya (2003) and Sackey (2001) supports this finding by asserting that Christianity has led to the alienation from traditional cultural practices by converts. Sackey (2001) in exploring cultural responses to management of HIV/AIDS through repackaging puberty rites observed that the *dipo* culture suffers limitations in its ideals due to the influence of Christianity and formal education. Although Christians overtly reproach participation in the rites, most participants noted that there exist secret initiation of wives and daughters of leaders of the Christian faith. This situation has brought a contrasted understanding of the *dipo* rite and has influenced social acceptance and participation in the rite. With *dipo* participation key to adolescent identity development, its diminishing influence may hold likelihood to differentiated pathways to adult identity development. Although the rite is criticized as idol worshipping, the divergence in belief is gradually breaking strong social structures that seek to promote moral ideals that are highly

placed by both culture and Christian religion. However, not only is detachment from the rites creating a social void, but also a collapse of traditional health promotion avenue for enhanced health and quality of life among the Krobo people. As such, the importance attached to the rite and how adolescent girls come to attain adult identity is challenged in modern times.

Early onset of puberty and age of initiation has prolonged years between the completion of *dipo* and marriage. As such, adolescent girls are not able to hold on to cultural ideals of sexual purity. For example, most participants expressed disappointment at the sexual behaviors evident among *dipo* girls. This situation puts adolescent girls at risk of sexual infections and diseases. Diminished social control of the rite has created anxiety among natives of Krobo Odumase, given high sexual activity among adolescent *dipo* girls. Although concerns of the community centres on adolescent early motherhood, response to sexual activity among *dipo* girls are rather defensive and unintentionally reinforce sexual activity in the culture. For example, a male participant indicated that, in response to fear of girls getting pregnant before the rite, parents initiate their children at relatively younger ages contrary to the traditional requirement of 12 years. Although society tries to adapt to the culture, these measures predispose adolescent girls to early sexual activity as they may be pressured by men after the rites. Also, adolescents may become pregnant and suffer psychological abuse from ridicule by peers, parents and members of the Odumase community. Adjaye (1999) supports this finding that the early initiation of *dipo* girls has contributed to early sexual debut among adolescent girls. Although Adjaye (1999) identify that these actions are driven by financial reasons, this finding points that these acts are undertaken to help girls escape banishment and to protect family honour in the event of early pregnancy before the rite. This situation in the culture might have informed findings that girls of relatively young ages of 2 are initiated (Adjaye, 1999; Sackey, 2001).

Adolescent girls' fear of cultural sanctions on early sexual experience is broken (sanctions are not regarded anymore) after the rite and thus, reinforce sexual exploration. Cultural sanctions that regulate behavior seem to be preconditioned to *dipo*. However, post *dipo* sanctions are non-existent and limit social control of *dipo* girls. Conceivably, girls by the understanding that even with the outcome of pregnancy after the rites, they stand no chance of being punished engage in sexual relationships which have great implications to early motherhood and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. As such, the ideal expectation of the culture, continuous moral uprightness and chastity until marriage seem to cease after initiates complete the rite. In that, girls are no more tied to any traditional obligation that require disciplinary measures when broken. The absence of traditional control could further influence negative

sexual behaviors, early motherhood and issues of abortions since these sanctions are the only precluding means of control. A possible explanation for this current trend may be due to past cultural understanding that girls are matured after the rites and assume adult identities and behaviors early in the culture. Also, the exposure to media influence due to modernization are likely factors that may have accounted for the observed sexual activity among girls (Adjaye, 1999). However, adolescent sense of sexual maturity as portrayed by *dipo* girls overt the influence of biology. Pubertal development coupled with environmental influences of dominant sexual activity among peers and failure of the culture to keep sexual activity in check after the rites are likely causal influences to sexual activity among *dipo* girls. The above suggests that the relevance of the *dipo* culture amidst modern trends of development is fast diminishing; in that, the ideal aim of purity before marriage is gradually becoming unachievable and breaking the confidence of locals and the public in the *dipo*.

Currently, the influence of Western education has simplified the rite between three to five days. The need for girls to be in school preclude the ceremony from being undertaken for a longer duration as done in the past. These have influenced the duration of the rites since, by law, girls are to be in school. This could promote continuous schooling of girls, delay early onset of sexual activity and increase literacy rates in the community. Also, the culture adapts to modern requirements of education and child rights, act 560 of Ghana. (Sackey, 2001) and Adjaye (1999) support this finding that the transition in the culture about education has reduced the extended duration of the rites to five days. Sackey (2001) and Markstrom and Iborra (2003) observes that the relatively short duration of rites of passages does not equip girls the skill sets that define the status role to which they are socialized since optimal identity development require extended years of instruction. Although this observation is evident, Markstrom and Iborra (2003) were imprecise about how role mastery is attained in years after the rites. This study shows the relative importance of familial context in ensuring girls are socialized into gender roles and norms. This is further discussed below under gender intensification.

Marriage arrangements in the Krobo culture have been influenced greatly by child rights of the country. In the past, *dipo* girls who were matured were given out for marriage after the rites. However, current early onset of puberty and initiation preclude such marital arrangements in the culture. Adolescent girls are allowed to exercise their rights in relation to choice of spouse. By this, *dipo* girls are not forced into arranged marriages as it used to be in the past. This development is likely to influence child protection in the community. With community recognition of legal frameworks aimed at protecting adolescents, the cultures' adaptation to these hold potentials for enhanced child protection in the community, high female enrolment

in schools as well as reduced dependency rates, given delayed parenthood and prevention of complications that are associated with adolescent pregnancies. Marriage in southern Ghana is considered a means to become adults. Although this union is between two individuals, families are united as well (Nukunya, 2003). As such, in the Krobo tribe, marriage is regarded an important aspect of transition. The recognition of the immature state in which adolescents are and the consideration of legal age for marriage, 18 years, evidence the development of the culture in adapting to modern perspectives nationally.

Recognition of adolescent *dipo* girls as adults in the Krobo culture after the rites has a conflicted acceptance. For example, the culture does not recognize girls as adults while some parents recognize them as such given their age and level of maturity. These non-traditional recognition frames from parents and significant others juxtaposed with the traditional status label present incongruence in the reality of status ascription after the rites. As such, girls may develop internal psychological conflict or anxiety and mistrust for culture arising from status expectation and its denial. As a consequence, this may produce varying acceptance of the rite, psychological tension and extend the liminality of *dipo* girls. The anxieties are likely to be channelled in self-directed paths which may be destructive to positive identity development when *dipo* girls seek acceptance and recognition with peers where they may feel curbs the conflict, especially with a peer. Also, this may produce conflictual tendencies between adolescent girls and their parents. Adjaye (1999) supports this finding by asserting that there exist traditional and non-traditional recognition of adolescent girls in the culture. Traditionally, the *dipo* transforms girls into womanhood and confers the ethnic identity of a Krobo woman. The affirmative ritual processes stress social identities to adolescent girls through verbal pronouncements that “I am performing our traditional ceremony for you so that you may become an adult Krobo woman” (Adjaye, 1999, p. 12). However, the ascription of the social identity, Krobo woman, to which adult identity is linked is denied adolescents after the rite (Adjaye, 1999). Status denial of adolescent girls has led to non-traditional recognitions for adult identity based on subjective age and psychosocial maturity of adolescent *dipo* girls (Adjaye, 1999). According to Adjaye (1999), post *dipo* situations of adolescent girls show that contradictions of youthhood had clearly not been resolved, as the graduates (*dipo* girls) are not fully recognized as adults (p. 23). This turn of events after the rites is what Adjaye (1999) describes as “dangerous crossroads” given the implications it brings to bear on *dipo* girls and society at large. Although limited literature exists in relation to status recognition and adult identity development, these findings are consistent with Adjaye (1999) and Law and Shek (2012). According to Adjaye (1999), the official recognition for initiates is the status of a true

‘Krobo woman’ worthy of marriage. Law and Shek (2012) also found out that positive behavior recognition provides a good basis for adolescent development and identity formation. Although Adjaye (1999) documented the dissonance in recognition of adolescent *dipo* girls, he was limited in how this influences the adult identity and self-concept of adolescent *dipo* girls. The findings thus suggest that the Krobo culture is in transition and there is a lack of a definitive recognition for adolescent *dipo* girls after the rite. Adjaye (1999) sums it up by asserting that “not only are initiates statusless, they are also homogenized into one uniform anonymous state” (p. 22).

### **5.3 Gender intensification**

Gender intensification refers to the increased pressure to conform to culturally sanctioned gender roles (Hill & Lynch, 1983). *Dipo* girls are traditionally sanctioned to conform to gender roles that prepare them for adult roles as women. The identification with roles of the female gender, norms and expressive behavior in the Krobo tribe are taught to and modelled by adolescent girls during the *dipo* rite and at familial environments. For example, adolescent girls take satisfaction in the performance of these roles. From photo descriptions, roles of women in community correspond to what parents do and what adolescent girls are socialized to. As such, mastery of gender roles reinforces feminine gender identity through social discrimination of roles of the masculine gender. Identification with and competence in female gender roles and norms in the community could enhance maturity of girls in becoming adults and carrying out culturally specific roles independently as Krobo women. Also, the differentiation in gender role in the culture at puberty is likely to control gender identity disorders and related mental health vulnerabilities that result from non-conformity to cultural expectations. According to Janel E. Benson and Johnson (2009), parents signal trust and confidence in adolescents when they assign them responsibilities at home. Further, Janel E Benson and Furstenberg (2007) in their observation found that uptake of responsibility at home is facilitative of adult identity development among adolescent populations. The performance of these responsibilities and the completion of the *dipo* are a means through which gender role intensification is effectuated in the culture.

The *dipo* rite serves a cultural function to pressure adolescent girls to conform to female gender roles that project a sense of identity as a Krobo woman, the ethnic identity of women in the tribe. As a result, the culture and maternal agency become resources to ensure adolescent girls are socialized to gender roles, attitudes, and behavior that evoke a reinforced gender differentiation during adolescence. Basow (2006) puts forward that gender roles are an integral



part of each culture. However, the universal significance of gender roles varies as a function of social class, culture and personal expectation (Basow, 2006). According to Basow (2006), social implication regarding the sex of a child at birth imbues gender socialization. Traditionally, girls in Ghanaian communities and seemingly other African countries assume training in responsibilities of the same sex parent at early stages. The assignment of these responsibilities by parents to adolescent girls strengthen relevant home management skills for marriage and independence in their performance. However, given the relatively short duration of the rite as observed under cultural transition, adolescent girls' mastery of gender roles may not possibly be achieved during the rite. Although the *dipo* is respected in the past to be effective in this regard, current findings show that the role of *dipo* in ensuring mastery of female gender roles is limited and has become a product of familial responsibility. Adjaye (1999), recognized that the rite trains girls in the female gender roles; his account is limited and does not give insight into the significant role parents play in this socialization process. This socialization of adolescent girls is aimed at developing their competence in social transactions in externally oriented relations in the community. As such, girls who have not undergone the *dipo* may not be different from *dipo* girls in the attainment of mastery in gender roles given the normative role of mothers in socializing girls. As such, the gender of *dipo* girls is intensified during adolescence and are geared towards a strengthened feminine gender identity in the Krobo ethnic group. Galambos, Almeida, and Petersen (1990) supports this finding by asserting that gender intensification occurs at puberty. However, the cultural orientation of gender such as the *dipo* further expands understanding and evidence to gender intensification in the Krobo culture and similarly other traditional societies in Africa.

#### **5.4 Diffused identity**

Diffused identity is a period of identity development where individuals are unable to attain a sense of identity resulting from lack of exploration and commitment in life defining areas (Marcia (1966). *Dipo* girls showed a differentiated sense of adult identity with the majority feeling in-between, neither adults nor Children. Adolescent girls feeling as neither adult or a child are caught between childhood and adulthood. This unresolved adult identity produces feelings of immaturity, a diffused sense of identity and the extension of adolescent years. Their lack of reincorporation and aggregation into adult networks may create a psychological tension and marginalisation which when not well managed may lead to the expression of deviant behaviors that could bring about conflictual tendencies as discussed under social transactions below. The observed outcome is mostly characterized by indecision and lack of commitment

and explorative outcomes that do not favour a subjective sense of adult identity (Marcia, 1966). This suggests a sense of immaturity resulting from high parental involvement that does not enhance identity exploration and commitment making among adolescent girls (Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). Social indicators of immaturity that reflect on needs provision, limited roles and age are bases for adolescents to perceive themselves as not matured or adult. As such, age, maturity and attainment of traditional markers to adulthood influence adolescent girls' sense of psychosocial maturity in self-perceived adulthood. Arnett and Padilla-Walker (2015) and Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) also found a similar pattern among Danish youth and Italian emerging adults feeling in-between, neither children or adults. Similarly, Sirsch et al. (2009) also confirm the fluidity in identity development among young adults. The study together with these supporting literature provides proof to the lack of a definite sense of adult identity among *dipo* girls living with their parents.

The continuous dependence on parental figures for needs provision and non-attainment of psychosocial maturity limit adolescent autonomy. This life situation may limit adolescents' actions and decisions to express feelings of autonomy that reflect a sense of adulthood (Sirsch et al., 2009; Luyckx et al., 2008). According to Koepke and Denissen (2012) "parents often find latter ages appropriate for their children's transition to adult-like behavior than children do. The differences in opinion are influenced by continuous legal and financial dependence on parents given their co-residence" (p. 79). However, the juxtaposition of parental perception of girls' psychosocial competences, as not matured and undeserving of adult status recognition may lead girls to evaluate their competencies in relation to roles they have transitioned. This cognitive evaluation of self in relation to identity recognition and autonomy needs emerge to influence the sense of adult identity held by *dipo* girls. As such, the diffused sense of adult identity and life situation, social position as children give an indication of extended liminality. Congruent to the influence of parents is the observation by Koepke and Denissen (2012) that "adolescents in transition experience difficulty in asserting their autonomy while they are emotionally attached to parents" (p. 78).

The non-attainment of a definite sense of identity by *dipo* girls further extends their liminality. For example, participants noted that *dipo* girls are not recognised and treated as adults. The lack of recognition, reincorporation and clearly defined roles also extend the years of adolescence. With liminality being a state of ambiguity in transition (Daniel, 2005), its extension may hinder the effective development of secured attachment bonds and deny *dipo* girls their personhood, a sense of self in the community. Also, this may lead to the marginalization of *dipo* girls in the community. Turner (1987) relates extended liminality to

marginalisation and lack of *communitas*, “the sense of equality and comradeship between those who jointly undergo ritual transitions” (Daniel, 2005, p. 198). However, the absence of a sense of belonging associated with *communitas* during extended liminality deprives *dipo* girls’ psychosocial needs of security, affection and a sense of continuity (Daniel, 2005) in adult identity development which hold great implications for mental health, psycho-emotional vulnerabilities such as anxiety and depression. Extended liminality of adolescents partially corroborates Arnett (2001) concept of emerging adulthood which elaborates a gap in adult identity development among populations globally due to extended years of adolescence. Arnett (2000) argues that extended years of adolescence, emergent adulthood occur in societies with spaced duration between adolescence and marriage. He further argued that these trends are influenced by a strong sense of individualism, rendering traditional and familial influences less relevant in optimizing personal freedom in life decisions (Arnett, 2007). Though a gap exists in transition to adulthood after *dipo* as observed under cultural transitions which concur with Arnett’s observation, a regulated sense of autonomy expression among *dipo* girls do not evidence the individualism expressed by Arnett. Szabo and Ward (2015) observes that adult identity is strongly intertwined with socio-cultural factors such as customs, norms and belief system. By this observation, assertions by Arnett run contrary to the Krobo cultural norms of coexistence and in similar other collective cultures in Africa. Although autonomy may be a distinctive attribute of adulthood in western societies, in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana, the notions of interdependence and communal values are key towards adult identity development in the Krobo culture. This finding is consistent with other findings to show differential cultural outlook on adult identity development (Zhong & Arnett, 2014; Seiter & Nelson, 2011). However, gradual break of collective values may gravitate the Krobo culture towards individual life-orienting decisions where functional adult identity connotes autonomous self.

### **5.5 Reflected appraisal**

Relational and communication patterns between adolescent girls and the larger community facilitated feedback mechanisms by which adolescent girls evaluate their behaviors, sense of identity and self. For example, adolescent girls reported that parental advice against deviant peers were genuine and are directed at protecting them for a better future. The supportive relationship with parents, nurture adolescent girls’ understanding about the normative culture and provide opportunities for maturity. By this, *dipo* girls could use parental guidance as a resource in regulating themselves and making good decisions that promote healthy development. Family and peer relations are recognized as an effective resource in influencing

individual behavior of adolescent (Soltani et al., 2013). The quality of *dipo* girls' social interactions and relationships with family and members of the community hold likelihood for behavior modification by *dipo* girls. Aleni Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) reported that agency of parents is very important in the identity development of young adults. However, the bonds created through these transactions, how parents see their daughters and vice versa facilitate influence over adolescent girls. The relative strength of relational bonds (warmth and responsiveness) hold relevance for adolescents' reflection on parental appraisals of themselves and how they come to understand criticisms in relation to their behavior and self-definitive tendencies (Oliviera et, al., 2014). Adolescent girls are able to adopt corrections in shaping their lives. Thus, good relations between parents and adolescent girls facilitate fairly good parent child communication which give room to interactions that provide meaningful feedback for positive adult identity development (Beyers & Goosens, 2008; Berzonsky, 2007).

*Dipo* girls appraise feedback on their behavior from socialization agents to form self-regulative patterns with which they adapt to their social environment. For example, adolescent girls expressed confidence in parental advice and positive peer associations in their self-regulation and development. The outcome of these is a mutual determination of a sense of identity and self, carved in the expressive behavior of adolescents. By this, through the eyes of proximal social agents (parents and significant others), adolescent girls are able to assess their behavior, motivations, discern or reflect on the appraisals others hold of them and reconstruct identities and behavior that expressively communicate their sense of self and adult identity. According to Koepke and Denissen (2012, p. 81), children depend on their parents' feedback to assess appropriateness or inappropriateness of their behaviors. Lowe et, al., (2013), further stressed that the meaningfulness of these events bring awareness of status identity and alignment to proper forms of behavior through adolescent self-regulation stemming from appraisals of others. From this perspective, a regulated sense of self and behavior by *dipo* girls overt the classical 'looking glass self' concept by Cooley (1902) from which the idea of reflected appraisal emerged. Looking glass self, relates a self-reflective process that is informed by an individual's interpretation of the reactions of others. Cooley (1902), relates that the concept is, "a self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements, imagination of our appearance to the others; the imagination of others' judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification" (p, 152). With these processes at thought level, the individual experiences of *dipo* girls from their relationships in nurturing environments influence how they identify with parental perspectives of themselves, develop a self-regulated

capacity and construct a sense of self and adult identity which collectively zooms in on the demeanour of *dipo* girls in the community.

Peer appraisal identification in the community is influenced by the quality of parent child relationships. Although, peer relations are dreaded, adolescent girls did not express direct influence of friends in their engagement in sexual relationships and delinquent behaviors. This may be due to the juxtaposition of parental advice with those of friends and making informed decisions. For example, a *dipo* girl expressed confidence in parental advice as a good means to self-regulation. However, negative peer appraisal identification occurs in circumstances where adolescent do not have good relations or communication with parents. This may influence peer attachment and dependence which may foster detachment from parental advice. The consequence of this may find expression in deviant behaviors of adolescent girls with negative peer associations which foster conflict. This outcome may be due to parental regulative mechanisms that are deemed intrusive by adolescent girls as discussed under cultural transition. Adolescent girls' interactions are mostly with peers thus peers hold considerable influence on adolescent girls (Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). Thus the quality of adolescent girls' interaction with peers and attachment with parents explain how adolescent appraise information to make informed decisions that have implication on their quality of life. As such, effective communication becomes a dominant attribute by which adolescent girls reflect perceived evaluations of their behavior (Soltani et al., 2013). Thus, the evaluation of their experiences and the outcome beliefs they hold of themselves in addition to their socialization agents and avenues construct behavior structures upon which their sense of self and adult identity is formed (Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

These structures are likely to mediate maladaptive behavior. This study builds on findings of Karimi, (2010) and Soltani et al. (2013) to assert that that adult identity development depends on family cohesion and openness. However, problems in communication limit adult identity development and avenue for a regulated sense of self by adolescent girls. The study suggests that both parents and adolescents are co-authors of identity and behavior (Aleni Sestito & Sica, 2014; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). The study findings thus hold implications for parenting in the changing context of Krobo Odumase. The warmth adolescents enjoy, the responsiveness and agency of parents to adolescent girls overt a new perspective in how children and parents coexist in the Krobo culture. Although the conformist cultural socializations do exist, the findings from this study points to a gradually evolving parenting practice where children and parents alike through good communication are assuming roles in ensuring optimal outcomes in transitioning to adulthood. Also, the study further implies that when adolescents do not have

mutually unifying relationships with parents, for example, when they are distant and lack feedback to their actions, they may become deviant and exhibit socially inappropriate behaviors which further has implications for alienation when they are labelled as disrespectful in the community.

## **5.6 Social transactions**

Social transactions, verbal and non-verbal communicative interactions of adolescent girls with parents and peers during the transition to adulthood. Parental reactions to adolescent girls' autonomy needs yielded outcomes related to conflicts and detachment. For example, while parents attribute adolescent misbehavior to observed conflicts at home, adolescents also feel restricted in exercising autonomy, for example, choosing and hanging out with friends. These transactional outcomes may mar relationships between *dipo* girls and their parents and further predispose them to vulnerabilities of negative peer pressure through detachment from parents. Contextual interactions during identity development provide windows through which reciprocated influence of self and context influence the identity formation process (Shanahan et al., 2005). The transactional outcome between adolescent girls, peers, and community members provide normative means through which adolescent girls develop a sense of adult identity. However, these transactions or interactions do not only facilitate good relations but also, conflict. According to Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) conflicts are interactive outcomes between adolescent girls and their parents that are influential in altering relationships. The perceived misbehavior of adolescent girls is likely to be a reactive and an immature means by which they show dissatisfaction with the evasive nature of parental control. With adolescence being a storming stage of development characterized by conflicts borne out of effort for autonomy, girls may break regulative boundaries set by parents to attain a sense of autonomy. This defensive attempt for autonomy comes with maladaptive behavior that may be considered inappropriate within the culture. However, misunderstanding of autonomy needs of adolescents by parents led to the use of harsh measures that do not enhance good transactional outcomes but conflict. For example, parents lock girls out when they go out at night. Although this measure has implications for exposure to the risk of early sexual involvement and pregnancy, they as well form the basis for parental actions at protecting adolescents. Thus, there seems to be a conflict in relational understanding between adolescent girls, and parental figures and this is likely to be informed by the increased need for autonomy by adolescents.

Although these conflicts may exist, the nurturing environment of adolescents may serve as a moderating avenue, given the feedback adolescent girls receive from parents through transactions with them (Soltani et al., 2013). The levels of autonomy in carrying out responsibilities at home provide feedbacks that adolescent girls may dwell on to offset the recognition limitations set by the culture. As such, adolescents are likely to engage in self-selected identities and this has implications on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls. Their welfare and general wellbeing in society may be threatened by negative peer influences as already observed. Glozah and Lawani (2014) also observes that though rites of passages usher young adolescents into adulthood, changes in culture with respect to participation and sanctions suggest that social change and modernization have projected values of individualism. Also, the gradual breakdown of cultural values that regulate the behavior of girls further compounds the responsibility of parenting. Thus, parenting concerns need be looked at within the Krobo tribe to facilitate the control of adolescent girls in the future.

Parents exert behavioral control over adolescent girls to protect them from negative peer influence. Parents feel the attitudes and behavior of their children are learnt from deviant peers. Thus, adolescent peer transactions are not trusted and given negative undertones related to early pregnancy, sexual and delinquent behavior. Although misbehavior among adolescents, especially sexual activity is disturbing, parental actions mentioned above to mediating this problem is intrusive. As such, peer selection and interactions of adolescents are subjected to parental approval. These control measures may not be facilitative of autonomy support and could lead to conflictual tendencies pointed out under diffused identity. A similar finding is reported by Benson and Johnson (2009) and Matejevic et al. (2014) that high levels of parental control and monitoring inhibits adult identity development. By this, strict parental control limits adolescents' autonomy and gives an indication of incompetence through exploring adolescent family context and adult identity development. Although parents are aware of positive outcomes through peer interactions, their concern to protect their daughters from deviant peer influence preclude them from being supportive of autonomy. However, adolescent dissatisfaction with parental mistrust and overprotectiveness may lead to tendencies of conflict and enhance detachment from parental norms regarding conduct. In the same vein, Crocetti and Meeus (2014) exploring relationships with family and friends among Italian young adults came forth that increasing parental control is associated with negative parental relationship outcome. However, although conflict promote self-identification as an adult among youngsters (Janel E. Benson & Johnson, 2009), protracted conflicts lead to detachment from parents, increases autonomy for adolescents and their exposure to peer pressure (Zimmer-Gembeck et

al., 2001) and age-inappropriate behavior. All these outcomes may negatively influence the adaptive capacities of adolescent *dipo* girls and their general wellbeing. The study suggests that over-involvement and mistrust of parents could produce conflicts, and hinder the exploration of adolescent girls to develop capacities in the broader social context that promote positive adult identity development.

Contrary findings indicate that low parental control influence misbehavior indirectly through deviant peer affiliation (Deutsch et al. (2012). Participant responses, however, indicated that high parental supervision controls deviant behaviors. This may be a function of culture and neighborhood characteristics (Cantillon, 2006). Byrnes and Miller (2012) argues that neighborhood characteristics influence parenting efficacy although poor contexts are observed to be less facilitative of effective parenting given low monitoring and nurturance. However, in such environments, high parental control serves as a protective factor in positive adult identity development (Byrnes & Miller, 2012). From the literature, there appear to be extremes that define family processes in adult identity development. However, parenting style, relationship and communication patterns may hold explications to positive adult identity development. In that, with communication as one basic factor that influence relationship between parents and adolescent girls, relational outcomes are dependent on mutual understanding. The balance in relational and control capacities of parents backed by effective communication are likely to yield positive outcomes for adult identity development.

Resolution of conflict are mostly through threats, abdication of control over adolescent girls and interventions from family members. These measures are suggestive of the overbearing nature of adolescent delinquency in the Odumase community. The situation reflects detachment of adolescent girls from their parental figures. By implication, adolescent girls are likely to show maladaptive behavior and fail to develop social competencies that appropriate female gender behavior and identity. Further, detachment from parental figures may not enhance self-disclosure and openness by adolescents in communicating with their parents. This, however, may create anxiety and boundaries in help-seeking on issues that affect adolescent wellbeing especially sexual relationships.

The study suggests that parents, mothers especially are overwhelmed by adolescent delinquent behavior and find their control over their children diminishing and this has led to detachment with observed misbehavior among *dipo* girls. Thus, given parental control and adolescent need for autonomy, parenting options are needed for mothers to be able to manage their daughters to ensure greater outcome in health and positive adult identity development (Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). The findings also suggest that parents in the culture are oblivious to autonomy needs of



girls and that the perceived misbehavior of girls are possibly in defence to high parental control. More also, the defensive behaviors of girls contravene cultural expectation of conformity to social order where girls are expected to accede to parental control. Put together, although parental intention in controlling behaviors of adolescents are aligned towards socializing adolescents to culturally appropriate norms of behavior, adolescents perceive it to be intrusive and limiting. The incongruence between parental intentions and adolescents appraisal of such intentions project Horney (1950) concept of 'parental indifference'; the perceived understanding of parental intentions by children and how congruent these intentions are with a child's understanding. The concept relates that reactive behavior towards parental intentions are bases to assess behavior but not the intention of parents. Thus, a counter reaction to parental intentions communicates a disjoint in relational understanding from which counter behavior emerges to affirm underlying needs of autonomy. Although these behaviors are undesirable, their observed exhibition underscore recognition needs of adolescent girls in transition.

### **5.7 Social markers of adulthood**

Social markers to adulthood refers to shared or non-shared (universal and context specific) indicators that signify adult status of an individual. Broader social indicators of adulthood in the Krobo culture centre on maturity. Although maturity represents a broader frame that define adulthood, role transitions or demographic markers and individual or subjective qualities have emerged as complementary transition markers. This outcome may function in explaining how cultural and contextual factors influence adult identity development. Current evidence seems to overt culturally exclusive, partially shared, differentiated or idiosyncratic means by which individuals transition to adulthood in cultures (Arnnet & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Seiter & Nelson, 2011). In the Krobo culture, role transitions were highly rated in becoming an adult. For example, marriage, becoming a parent and age were highly placed over the *dipo* rite of passage. Also, subjective qualities of responsibility for self and extension towards others was relatively emphasized by participants. The salience of demographic factors to the Krobo culture hold in the traditions that define them as a people. The mutual embeddedness of relations as characterized by the collective nature of the culture show that marriage, becoming a parent and going through the *dipo* rite are traditional and place value on connectedness. Although individual factors, responsibility and maturity are recognized, their salience hold in the traditional markers. In that, per responsibility for self and others, maturity is taught through social systems of family and are normative outcomes that are characterized by readiness for role transition.

The relative strength of demographic markers to adulthood expressed by adolescents attests to findings by Benson and Furstenberg (2007) that role transitions are meaningful markers to adulthood since they overt a sense of adult identity than subjective qualities which are difficult to differentiate. Although studies have explored to ascertain possible cultural differences (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Seiter & Nelson, 2011) however, those on rite of passages are limited. This study adds to existing markers to adulthood in adult identity development literature to show that rites of passage hold relevance to becoming adult in traditional cultures such as the Krobo. However, though adolescents, as discussed, are not officially recognized as adults after the rites, the rite forms an essential cultural benchmark to becoming an adult.

The emergence of age as adult defining criteria in the culture emerged in response to extended years of adolescence which inform non recognition of girls as adults after the rites. According to Panagakis (2015), social roles influence age identity such that when adolescent girls complete salient transitions, they will be treated more as adults and therefore begin to feel more like adults (p. 2). This suggests that becoming adult in the Krobo culture is incumbent on the age of adolescent girls and role transitions that are completed. The findings suggest that in the Krobo tribe, adult identity achievement is mostly labelled on role transitions or demographic factors. It further demonstrates the cultural relativity in subjective sense of adult identity in collective cultures as per individualistic cultures. The observed variability could provide frames for a cultural approach towards adult identity development. The study corroborates similar findings that markers to adult identity development are culturally defined and context specific (Molgat , 2007; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). However, a key observation suggests that markers of adulthood are not demographically driven but are a blend of both subjective qualities and demographic factors. As such, the cultural variations in these makers are likely to be informed by their salience to specific contexts.

### **5.8 Sexual and reproductive health of *dipo* girls**

The Krobo culture as discussed earlier showed that chastity is muchly sought after in the tribe and a means through which reproductive health vulnerabilities such as early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are controlled. Studies suggest rites of passages to be a means to ensure greater outcomes in sexual and reproductive health (Hevi-Yiboe, 2002; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). However, the potency of *dipo* in providing relevant reproductive health information to maturing girls in current times is limited and not evident in the behavior of current *dipo* girls in Odumase. As a consequence, current transitions in the culture have produced contrasting outcomes that do not concur wholly with the views of the authors above.

These contrasts take form in the quality of sex education girls receive during the rite, communication about sex in the community and the social control over *dipo* girls by the culture after the rite (see cultural transitions) on sexual expression.

Sex education represents a means through which adolescent girls receive relevant reproductive health information to ensure positive outcomes in adolescent sexuality (Malisha et al., 2008). In the Ghanaian culture, and as evident in the findings, adolescents are expected not to enter into premarital sex until they are married (Nukunya, 2003). The cultural and social attachment to issues of sex and appropriateness thereof for girls are postponed to stages adolescents are deemed matured. Thus, sexual education is done during rites of passages to educate maturing girls (Romo, Lefkowitz, Sigman, & Au, 2002). Although, in the *dipo* rite, the actual contents of this education is not known, there are implied accounts of pregnancy prevention through chastity. For example, adolescent girls were not able state precisely the sexual education they were given but vague messages about avoiding boys. The limitation of the rite in explicitly educating girls about sex and its related negative outcomes and positive ways of control by the culture preclude adolescent girls from gaining much understanding on sex related subjects. Rondini and Krugu (2009) also confirms that traditional responsibility of communicating sexual issues to generations has broken down due to lifestyle changes. However, Malisha et al. (2008) argues that traditional rites of passage do provide information on sex. But the relevance and clarity of the education to girls about sexual and reproductive health is not accounted for in the Krobo culture. The gap in education of *dipo* girls in the culture may influence adolescents' sexual attitudes. In that with the *dipo* as a means to adulthood, *dipo* girls after the rite may assume adult sexual attitudes when the dangers to it are not well communicated.

Communication about sex between adolescent and their parents are limited, not regular, silent and even when talked about, parents are not explicit in its communication. For example, a female participant in an interview mentioned that she does not talk about sex with the daughter in that a child grows to know about sex as a woman. The difficulty in communicating about sex could lead to inhibition of adolescents' disclosure on sexual issues in the community which further may limit help seeking when they are pregnant hence may engage in abortion which has fatal consequences such as death. Munthali and Zulu (2007b) in their study among adolescents in Malawi corroborates this finding that reproductive health communications are implied rather than made explicit for adolescents to understand the dangers that come with sex. Although Bastien et al. (2011) argues that sexual communication holds relevance to controlling HIV infections, the situation in Krobo Odumase reflects a cultural limitation in ensuring adolescent sexual education. In addition, adolescents feel parents are dismissive of sexual issues

thus are unsure of parental responses to such discussions. Most adolescents are not engaged in the process for parents to understand their concerns about sex. Similarly, Bastien et al. (2011) reported that sexual communications turn to be authoritarian and unidirectional, laced with inexplicit admonitions rather than open confrontation on sexual topics. Anarfi (2006) explains that sexuality is generally regarded as a sensitive and private issue and it is avoided as much as possible in open conversation in most African contexts especially with adolescent girls. However, the near-silence on sex talk and openness to discuss sexual topics between parents and *dipo* girls may be due to gap in knowledge that the *dipo rite* does not provide relevant education to girls on sexual and reproductive health.

Parents, especially mothers, expressed difficulty in communicating about sex; some were however able to discuss sexual matters with their daughters. Fathers seem to be distant and maintain a strict approach to sex rooted in instruction. The gender difference herein observed might be due to low contact or involvement of fathers in the care of daughters. As discussed under reflected appraisal, the quality of parent-child interaction though varies based on family context may be key towards the development of positive sexual behavior. This however aligns to findings that adolescents who have satisfying relationships are less likely to engage in sex than those who have less satisfying relationships (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000). Generally, parent-child sex talk is not highly prevalent within families. However, parental control and monitoring seeking to counter sexual activity among *dipo* girls as observed under social transactions is likely to be aligned to cultural expectations for girls to be chaste before marriage (Kumi-Kyereme, Awusabo-Asare, & Biddlecom, 2007) and parental expectation to prevent early pregnancy and encourage formal education of girls. For example, parents are mostly concerned about their daughters' sexual expressions and outcomes such as pregnancy. However, though sexual expression among adolescents is a community problem, the vague emphasis on sexual morality without adequate comprehensibility of the child in transition may bring to life curiosity when consistency between adolescent life defining events, monitoring and sex is not achieved. Relating reproductive health outcomes to sexual communication shows that a conversation orientation in family communication were associated with higher reproductive health gains than families who show a conformity orientation in their family communication (Soltani et al., 2013).

The fears adolescent girls attach to sex talk prevent disclosure to parents about sexual concerns and experiences. As such, they confide and seek peer counselling on sexual issues rather than parents due to the uncertainty of parental reaction on sexual issues raised by girls. This situation

is gradually shifting parental role in sexual communication to peers and others outside the family (Kumi-Kyereme, Awusabo-Asare, Biddlecom, & Tanle, 2008). Although Kumi-Kyereme et al. (2008) showed that peer involvement in sex talk may be linked to empathy and willingness to listen, this study though shares in this observation, it also points out that these inhibition to discuss with parents are due to fear of being misjudged and labeled as spoilt by parents or engaging in sexual activity. As such, friends serve as a safe haven for such discussions (Kumi-Kyereme et al., 2007) The balanced power relation between peers may serve as ‘anxiety broker’ in facilitating open discussion about sex thus this hierarchical family relation characterized by instruction may obviate openness to sex talk between parents and daughters. This could lead to a form of detachment from parents as girls gradually become dependent on peers. Although peer affiliation may yield good outcomes, over-involvement with peers who hold negative sexual behaviors may lead to early sexual relationships.

The foundations of morality in the culture, *dipo*, is gradually losing its relevance in influencing sexual behaviors of adolescent girls in the community, given the extended duration between the completion of *dipo* and marriage. The short duration between the *dipo* and marriage facilitated the control of sexual expression among initiates as they are signaled via marriage in the past. However, extended years after *dipo* as may be influenced by early onset of puberty and age of initiation overt a lack of a definite age for sexual expression. Although statutory or legal provisions for consensual sex is clearly defined at age 16 and adulthood at 18, control of sexual expression among adolescents are not evident (Kumi-Kyereme et al., 2007). These contradictions between culture and the legal framework distort the understanding of sexual expression among adolescent girls. As such, the agency of parents in controlling *dipo* girls’ sexual expression becomes a necessary means of ensuring better sexual and reproductive health outcomes in the culture. Given the above, the study fills the gap to assert that in modern times, the *dipo* does not facilitate positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Also, the findings suggest that greater outcome of sexual and reproductive health gains are dependent on information through good communicative patterns that recognize the transition of maturing adults. These, however, hold great implications for sexually transmitted diseases and adolescent pregnancies. With the community high in HIV/AIDS prevalence, the vulnerability of girls to HIV/AIDS is high given sexual activity among adolescent girls. Further, findings hold implications for adolescent HIV/AIDS educations programs in Ghana. A holistic sex education that incorporates partnership with tribal groups to broadly harness better sexual and reproductive gains in communities and among adolescents. Further, puberty rites in tribal groups could include health professionals to structure communications about sex and adapt them into the rites.

## 5.9 Theory application to findings

This section discusses findings in line with the Salutogenic theory identified in chapter two. It reflects on how adolescent *dipo* girls in the Odumase community manage their life situation during the transition to adulthood. The section discusses components of the theory and how *dipo* girls use resources to cope with stressful situations to enhance positive adult identity development and reproductive health outcomes.

### *Life situation*

Salutogenesis recognizes that life situation is key in the determination of the quality of health of individuals. This life situation, culture (*dipo*), age, gender, lack of recognition, social forces (peers and family) of adolescent girls influence the outcome of adult identity through interactions in their nurturing context. These life situations pose as generalised resource deficits (GRDs), stressors and generalised resistance resources (GRRs), resources which adolescent girls engage with in the development of a sense of coherence (SoC) which influence healthy adult identity development.

Culture from participant accounts served as a resource and a stressor. Participants recognized that the *dipo* exert influence on adolescent girls transitioning into adulthood. The culturally sanctioned behavior regarding early sexual activity among adolescent girls and misbehavior stresses on filial piety, respect, and responsible adulthood. Participants stated that going through the rite was a way of being groomed for marriage in the future and to attain a sense of ethnic identity to which adult identity is linked. The rite socializes girls into adulthood and as such, girls are able to learn how to relate and exert competencies acquired in their daily life. Although the shorter duration of the *dipo* in modern times obviate the acquisition of gender role competencies after the rites, the culturally sanctioned responsibility of parents towards the continuous teaching of girls reinforces the *dipo* training. Similarly, culture fails to protect adolescent girls after the rites. As such there is a limited control on adolescent girls in keeping to culturally sanctioned behavior because they have completed *dipo*. This has led to perceived promiscuity among adolescent girls given their sexual activeness.

Age defined the social position of adolescent girls in the Krobo culture. Although these girls have undergone the *dipo*, they are still dependent on their parents. Their continued dependence on parents and their inability to be responsible for themselves makes them immature to assume adult like behaviors. As such they lack recognition as adults and the autonomy support from parents to explore and make a commitment toward a definite sense of adult identity. Although adolescent girls feel sexually matured to transition role of a mother given early pubertal

development, they lack adult defining psychosocial maturity needed to assume such roles. By these, adolescent girls are culturally not recognized as adults after the rites. Hence, there exists a varied recognition of girls after the rite based on age. Parents thus treat adolescent girls as children through control and monitoring. Although adolescents are recognized as adults from the ages of 15 while others at 18, subjective age and psychosocial maturity of adolescent *dipo* girls become the basis for adolescent recognition as an adult. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with parental distrust and confidence in their abilities to be autonomous. As such most of the girls reported that they do not feel like adults.

Adolescent supportive relationships with friends and family showed to be a key resource in transitioning into adulthood. Social relationships of *dipo* girls in the Odumase community are mostly with peers, parents, and significant others. Participants related that there exist good relations between parents and girls but the quality of these relationships are greatly influenced by adolescent girls' demeanour. Influenced by culture, girls are expected to be submissive and respectful. Although good relations do exist between girls and their parents, some adolescent girls are not able to communicate effectively with their parents on sexual issues. Parents find it difficult while adolescents are also scared to approach parents on the issue of sex. Although a few participants indicated discussing issues of sex, these discussions are mostly instructional. Girls are not engaged nor allowed to explore the myths around sex. Adolescents in their attempt to know more about sex resort to a network of friends. This situation is likely to stress *dipo* girls as they may find it difficult to openly relate their sexual concerns to parents.

Socially, peer affiliation is less favoured by parents. They believe that negative peer associations are the cause of sexual activeness of girls and the observed early pregnancy in the community. Thus, parents are highly involved in the company kept by their children. Although positive peer affiliations are endorsed by parents, the trust of leaving adolescent girls to go out at night is not evident. Adolescent girls are limited in the exploration of their identities to develop socially competent skills to show maturity. Disobedience to parental directives regarding conduct is met with discipline. According to parents, matured girls are not beaten but are advised to avoid such behavior. This is done especially by mothers, in that, in the Krobo communities, they are responsible for training adolescent girls. Although mothers maintain an accommodative environment, they are firm in their interactions with girls through advice and training them in the roles of the female gender. However, the authority of fathers aids the regulation of adolescent girls. These life situations faced by adolescent girls as discussed above pose as stressors and resources in their movement towards a healthy adult identity development.

### ***General resource deficits (stressors)***

Parental control and recognition accounted for life situations that that greatly stress *dipo* girls in their adult identity development. Adolescent control and monitoring by parents influenced the outcome relationship with parents. Adolescent girls feel their parents do not trust them and parents conversely feel the need to protect *dipo* girls. By this, adolescent girls lose autonomy. Also, the lack of autonomy support from parents frustrates adolescent exploration and commitment to assuming a definite sense of adult identity. This situation has influenced variability in self-perception as adults by *dipo* girls. Matejevic et al. (2014) related that high parental control and monitoring do not facilitate adult identity development. Benson and Johnson (2009) also supports that limited autonomy signals a sense of incompetence and immaturity. These autonomy concerns of adolescent girls generate conflicts and detachment from parental figures. As such, adolescent girls find it difficult to discuss personal concerns with parents for fear of being perceived as spoilt, especially on sexual issues.

Adolescents girls are not recognised as an adult after the rites because of transition in culture and society. This life situation has denied *dipo* girls a sense of personhood as they are not their reincorporated into a new status. Also, this has consequentially produced conflict among them as to the true identity they hold. However, with most adolescent girls lacking autonomy support from parents, the extended liminality keeps adolescents in a developmental phase lead them to feel marginalised in the society and lose a sense of togetherness with colleague initiates (Daniel, 2005) in asserting a sense of comradeship. However, most *dipo* girls lack the pace to be treated as adults. The lack of recognition by culture and family produces psychological tensions and are reflected in conflictual and detachment tendencies in family transactions. Adjaye (1999) identifies lack of recognition as a stressor to adult identity development by describing it as a “dangerous crossroad”, implying the sexual and reproductive health vulnerabilities that may come with it. Prolonged liminality of adolescent girls after the rites due to lack of recognition, value and clearly defined roles, may not facilitate healthy adult identity development of *dipo* girls.

### ***General resistant resources (GRR's)***

Family and friends according to participants posed as a great resource for adolescents in their transition. Parental advice and positive peer association helped to usher adolescent girls into positive identity development. According to participants, the wealth of guidance from the parental agency in protecting girls from deviant peer affiliations according to girls proved to be salient in their life orientation, general wellbeing and quality of life. Participants reported



that parental counsel helped them realize the good intentions of parents and that it had a direct bearing on their general life outcomes. Oliveira et. al., (2014) confirms this through showing that adolescents depend on the financial support of family to survive. However, autonomy support was predictive of psychological wellbeing and uncertainty management.

The continuous support in the form of financial support, general care and the socializing of adolescent girls by parents to the roles of the female gender by mothers facilitated mastery of roles. Some adolescents expressed confidence in their role mastery of home management. This, however to adolescent girls allowed a level of autonomy through role uptake at home and the opportunity for adolescent maturity for future recognition as an adult. Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) in exploring links between family processes in identity development showed that parents are active agents in identity development through their responsiveness and autonomy support, they encourage active involvement of youngsters in adult identity development.

Similarly, culture served a dual function as a resource and a stressor. As a life situation in determining a healthy transition to adulthood, the stability and instability of culture produce differentiated outcomes on adult identity development (Benz et al., 2014). As a resource, the *dipo* rite served as a protective factor for girls against sexual activeness. Some of the participants mentioned that the *dipo* groom girls for marriage and prepares them to be responsible adults who are morally upright. Also, the cultural role of mothers in care and guidance of adolescent girls greatly served as a source of support to *dipo* girls in learning gender roles and behavior regulation. Some of the girls mentioned that parents advise them to avoid sexual relationships as well as during the *dipo* to avoid pregnancy. Put together, the culture, *dipo*, as a resource empower adolescent girls through preparing them to acquire prerequisite skills that define adulthood (Adjaye, 1999; Sackey, 2001).

The transition of the culture has brought several changes that have culminated into stressors for adolescent girls in current times; lack of recognition and control over sexual attitudes after the *dipo* rite. Although sanctions placed by the culture on early sexual experiences deter adolescent girls from such acts. However, the lack of control over girls after the *dipo* do not favour positive sexual attitudes and reproductive outcomes. Also, reduction of the age of initiation and the extended time between completion of *dipo* and marriage has negatively influenced adolescent sexual attitudes in the community. The instability of the culture does not promote child protection from sexual exploitation in the community. This situation contradicts findings by Sackey (2001) and Hevi-Yiboe (2003) that the Krobo culture hold as a great resource to sexual and reproductive health gains. However, the current observation aligns with (Rondini & Krugu, 2009) that traditional controls on sexual expression through rites of

passages are no more effective and are outcomes of transitions in culture and society. These stressors and resources from life situations influenced the movement towards health, coping with life situations through engaging stressors with resources to develop a sense of coherence that influence health.

### ***Sense of Coherence***

Defined as the orientation through which stressors from ones internal or external environment are deemed as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful Antonovsky (1987). This component of the theory informed how *dipo* girls are able to cope with the stressors within and outside their environments during transition adulthood. From the definition, SoC has three interrelated components that determine the strength of an individual to cope with stress, comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. However, these components are also influenced by the stressors and resources inherent in life situations faced by *dipo* girls.

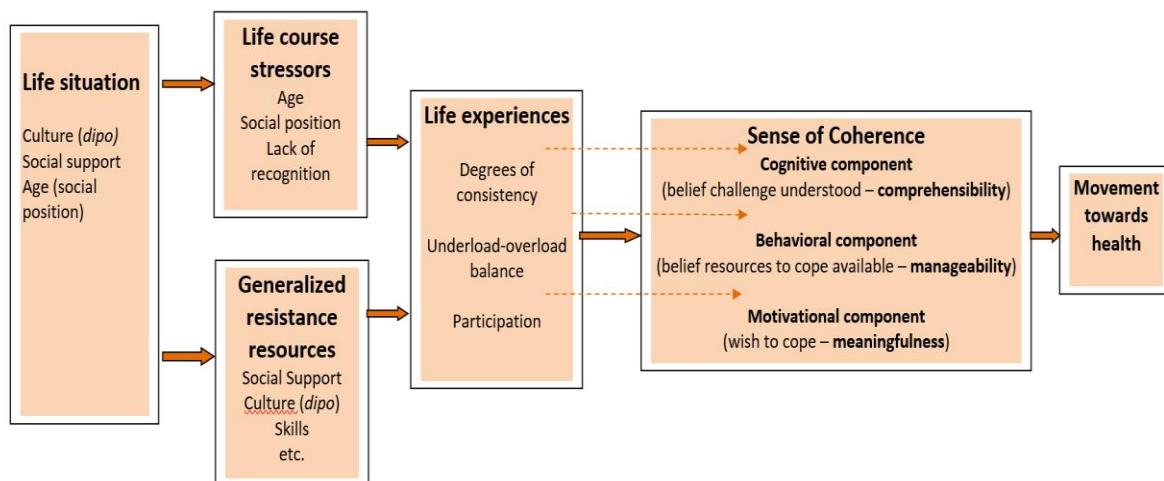
Comprehensibility relates the ability of an individual to take on all forms of challenges with a good understanding that a sense of order can be maintained through engagement with stressors (Hintermair, 2004). Adolescent girls go through the rites cognitively making sense of the ritual process. However, the expectation of adolescents, coupled with the cultural promise of status change are not realized. The findings revealed that the interpretative meaning of the stressors holds considerable influence on adolescent adjustment to culturally appropriate behaviors and ultimate adult identity development. Most adolescent girls have shown considerable understanding of their life situation by acknowledging the influence of parents. Their continuous dependence on parents and ages signal to them immaturity. Although they are not recognized nor given much autonomy, they recognize the social position they occupy in the life of parents and society. Thus, adolescent girls appraise stressors resulting from the inconsistencies of life events as stable yet transient and thus are able to draw on the resources in their contexts to manage the stressors they face. However, others who perceived stressors as incomprehensible from the inconsistencies that exist in the society regarding *dipo* completion, status identity, social status denial, lack of recognition, social change and clearly defined roles, adolescent girls' adaptive resources are minimized and are unable to manage stressors they are faced with.

Manageability refers to the ability to overcome prevailing stressors using available resources within and outside an individual's domain. Thus, adolescent girls appraise stressors resulting from the inconsistencies of life events as stable yet transient and thus are able to draw on the resources in their contexts manage the stressors they face. By these, adolescent girls rely on supportive relationships from parents, peers and significant others. Thus are able to exert

resilience in managing stressors in the social environment and resolve anxieties they come with to develop positive identities. Further, adolescent girls actively engage parents in sexual communication through effective relationships that promote open communication in their transactions. According to a participant, an open communication with her mother facilitates help seeking in overcoming stressors related to the sexual and everyday transaction. The utility of resource enhances the development of positive attitudes of obedience and submissiveness as they avail themselves to parental control and guidance. However, those who were not able to understand their life perceive stressors as stable and global thus they are not able to utilize resources in to their advantage. Thus, their perception of stressors as stable and global (chronic): status denial, lack of recognition, and clearly defined roles, adolescent girls' adaptive resources are minimized and stressors maximized creating overload which overwhelms their coping resources.

Meaningfulness also relates the comprehension of life course demands as worthy of investment and engagement with resources (Hintermair, 2004). However, adolescent girls who dwell on and actively utilize the adaptive resources in their environment (supportive relationships), conversely show positive social adjustment and adult identity development through the behavior they express. The juxtaposition of their status in line with future orientations provides a sense of comprehensibility of their status in society which further enhances meaningfulness of their life course events. These adolescent girls tend to perceive social resources as adequate and meaningful. Their use of psychosocial resources in their environment facilitates a positive movement towards health. Thus, the comprehensibility, appraisals of life situation inherent in their nurturing contexts as stable and manageable through the agency of self in concert with parental advice produce relative enduring dispositions in overcoming stressors, creating underload hence facilitating a meaningful life orientation where positive health becomes that dominant expressive trait of adolescent girls as they thrive.

**Fig.1** the Salutogenic model adapted from Mittelmark, (2010)



### 5.10 Limitations of the study

Although the study sought to understand adult identity development among *dipo* girls by exploring the role of context (culture and family) and how outcome identity influences sexual and reproductive health of *dipo* girls, it is worth noting that a comparative analysis was not evident in relation to *dipo* and non *dipo* girls, and also girls above the age group of 12 to 18. Although the sample used in the study was useful, these participant categories could have helped to further expand understanding on how adult identity is achieved and how girls who have gone through the *dipo* differ in social status, skill and behavior from those who have not gone through the rite. Further, the quality of the data used in the study may be influenced by the sex of the researcher. With the researcher being a man and asking questions about sexual and reproductive health of girls, there is the likelihood of adolescent girls becoming reticent in their responses. The insufficiency of participant details on the issues of sex though overt somewhat cultural silence on sex as discussed, the content of these messages could have enriched the findings of the study and better help appreciate the relevance of the sexual and reproductive health information adolescent girls receive during the rite.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 6.1 Conclusions

The study explored adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls. Given the objectives and questions that informed this study, the study aimed at understanding how adolescent girls develop an adult identity in the Krobo culture and how the outcome adult identity influences their sexual and reproductive health. Through data sources such as photovoice, interviews and focus group discussions, findings showed that perspectives on cultural markers to adulthood pointed to *dipo* rite of passage. Most participants identified with the rite as a means to adulthood. Participants were of the view that the *dipo* though literally transitions an individual into adulthood, a sense of maturity gained from the training during the rite is the definitive marker of adulthood. While most participants shared in maturity from the rites, others also emphasized mastery of gender roles taught to girls during the rite. Though training of *dipo* girls is acknowledged to be limited in current times, the society adapts to transitions in the culture to ensure continuous tutelage of *dipo* girls to ensure their mastery over traditional female gender roles. From participant accounts, the transition to adulthood is effectuated through marriage after graduation from the rite. However, the transitions in the culture; reduced age and duration of the rite, in current times preclude early marriages. As such, the transition to adulthood and recognition as an adult in the culture is extended and alternatively informed by chronological age. From these accounts, the *dipo* is still viewed as a fundamental cultural means through which adult status is achieved in the Krobo ethnic group.

Biological and social indicators greatly influenced adolescent perception about adulthood. *Dipo* girls appraise adulthood to be informed by sexual maturity, ability to give birth. This conception is influenced by menarche and physical features that characterize puberty in girls. Also, the social indicators hold in demographic markers; becoming a parent, marriage, and individual markers, responsibility for self and others. Participants identified highly with demographic indicators or role transitions than individual markers. However, participants related that these markers complement each other to assert maturity and optimal adult identity achievement in the Krobo culture. Perception of adolescents of markers to adulthood has greatly influenced their subjective or self-perception as an adult. Although varied self-perception as an adult were reported based on the markers above, most adolescent girls perceived themselves as

not adults along demographic markers of becoming a parent and marriage. Put together, although demographic factors dominate, demographic and individual markers to adulthood both inform adulthood in the Krobo culture.

Sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group showed to be negatively influenced by the *dipo* rite. Although some participants stressed that the *dipo* prevents sexual promiscuity, these accounts reflected pre-*dipo* outcomes. However, most participants recognized that after the *dipo* the sexual attitudes of *dipo* girls are negatively informed by the new status they have transitioned. Though findings showed that adolescents are not recognized as adults after the rites, they take on adult-like sexual attitudes through active involvement in sexual relations. These findings point to the observation that the *dipo* in current times does not facilitate protection from sexual promiscuity. This outcome is influenced by participant accounts that sexual education is less prevalent during *dipo* and participants are not able to identify sexual and reproductive health education taught to them. However, parental agency in control and monitoring of *dipo* girls though were intrusive and did not support the autonomy of girls in achieving adult identity were useful in control against sexual and reproductive health vulnerabilities in the community. Also, communication and interactions between *dipo* girls and parents were generally good. However, sexual communication is limited since most parents avoid discussions of such topics. *Dipo* girls on the other depend on peers for sexual information and counsel. Negative peer affiliations according to participants underlie sexual activeness of girls in the community. In line with community concern for early pregnancy before the rite, early initiations are carried out to protect family honor and avoid humiliation.

The findings of the study contribute to scientific knowledge to show that in the Krobo culture, the *dipo* is a means to becoming an adult. Also, markers of adulthood are informed mostly by both role transitions or demographic factors. Further, the study contributes to knowledge that the *dipo* in current times does not serve as a means by which sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls can be controlled given the extended duration between the rite and marriage.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Parental influence on adolescent behavior is very important towards adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health in the Odumase Krobo community. But the transition in culture and society brings in alternative ways of defining the transition to adulthood and the outcome adult identity. This has greatly influenced the timing of sexual initiation among adolescent girls in the community. The situation in the culture is undermining cultural values that regulate sexual

expression. However, positive support for parents in facilitating adaptive capacity of children in the culture could ease the situation and enhance the health of adolescent girls. For example, the ICDP, International Child Development Program in Ghana, could aid parents to develop novel and culturally informed approaches to parenting for greater outcomes. Also, using non-directive approaches, parental support groups can be formed to enhance supportive parenting through shared discussions on problems parents do face with maturing girls. Further, traditional authorities in the community could consider partnering with health institutions and NGOs offer relevant sexual and reproductive health education to girls during and after the *dipo* rites. This could enhance adolescent girls' knowledge about sex and the vulnerabilities it poses. Also, future research could explore adult identity development by comparing adolescent and young adult populations to understand the relevance of the *dipo* in adult identity development in current times.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Ethical clearance

## Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS

NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Marguerite Daniel  
HEMIL-senteret Universitetet i Bergen  
Christiesgt. 13  
5015 BERGEN

Vår dato: 25.06.2015  
Deres ref:

Vår ref: 43513 / 3 / MHM

Deres dato:



Harald Hårfagres gate 29  
N-5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17  
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50  
nsd@nsd.uib.no  
www.nsd.uib.no  
Org nr. 985 321 884

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 20.05.2015. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 24.06.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

43513 *Transitions and Transactions: Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo Girls.*

*Behandlingsansvarlig* *Universitetet i Bergen, ved institusjonens øverste leder*

*Daglig ansvarlig* *Marguerite Daniel*

*Student* *Elvis Nanegbe*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering.

Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema,

<http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.08.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Kontaktperson: Marianne Høgetveit Myhren tlf: 55 58 25 29

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

*Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:*

*OSLO:* NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

*TRONDHEIM:* NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

*TROMSØ:* NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Elvis Nanegbe ebmawuli@gmail.com



Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

---

Prosjektnr: 43513

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 43513

The purpose of the project is to understand the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls through *dipo* rites of passage by exploring the role of family context in identity development and how it influences the reproductive health of girls.

The student will also apply for ethical approval to the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID) at the University of Ghana, Legon, Ethics committee for Humanities.

The sample consists of girls between the ages of 12-18, parents and traditional leaders.

Data will be collected through interviews, observation and photo voice. During the photo voice workshop, the girls will be asked to photograph objects that they associate with womanhood. The photographs can possibly contain personal data ref. email 24.6.15. If so consent will be sought before any personal data will be recorded.

There will be registered sensitive information relating to sex life.

We kindly advise you to read NESH's ethical guidelines regarding research on children:  
<https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/documents/english-publications/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-law-and-the-humanities-2006.pdf>

The sample will receive written and oral information about the project, and give their consent to participate. The girls will be asked to give their consent and parents will also consent on behalf of their daughters. We have received three letters of information by email (23.6.15). The letters are well formulated, but we kindly ask you to inform the participants that the collected data will be made anonymous by 31.8.2016 as stated in the notification form.

The Data Protection Official presupposes that the student and supervisor follows internal routines of Universitetet i Bergen regarding data security. If personal data is to be stored on portable storage devices, the information should be adequately encrypted.



Two separate translators will transcribe the recorded audio data from data instruments manually in Damgbe and English for analysis. Universitetet i Bergen should make a data processing agreement with the translators regarding the processing of personal data, cf. Personal Data Act § 15. For advice on what the data processor agreement should contain, please see: <http://www.datatilsynet.no/English/Publications/Data-processoragreements/>.

Estimated end date of the project is 31.8.2016. According to the notification form all collected data will be made anonymous by this date. Making the data anonymous entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be recognised. This is done by:

- deleting all direct personal data (such as names/lists of reference numbers)
- deleting/rewriting indirectly identifiable data (i.e. an identifying combination of background variables, such as residence/work place, age and gender)
- deleting digital audio and video files

Please note the data processor must delete all personal information connected to the project, including any logs and links between IP/email addresses and answers.

# DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN

## MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In case of  
reply the  
number and date  
of this  
letter should be  
quoted



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

C/o Of the Regional Co-ordinating Council  
P.O. Box 303  
Koforidua Eastern Region

My Ref No: DOC/ER/SP.8

Tel: 03420-21968.

Your Ref No .....

15<sup>th</sup> July, 2015

Dear sir /Madam,

### INTRODUCTION LETTER

MR. E LVIS NIEUMAN KOJO NANEGBE – STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN,  
NORWAY

This is to introduce the above mentioned student who is conducting a qualitative research in Krobo Odumase community on “Transition and transactions; Adult identity development of Adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group.

I have reviewed the research proposal and have seen the ethical clearance from the Norwegian Social Sciences Data services (NSD) for the conduct of the study.

I would be grateful if you would give him the needed assistance to enable him conducts this research successfully since the study has implication for child protection of which the ministry for children gender and social protection has interests.

Counting on your usual cooperation.

Thank You

ANTHONY DONTOH  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

CC: Elvis Nieuman Kojo Nanegbe

## Appendix 2

Table of analysis

Codes	Basic theme	Organizing theme	Global theme
<p><i>Dipo</i> rite qualify for adult status learning of cultural norms <i>Dipo</i> is about respect and submission <i>Dipo</i> gives girls a sense of maturity Age of initiation menstruation <i>Dipo</i> confers adult identity</p>	<i>Dipo</i> rites of affirmation		
<p>Evaluation of gender roles taught Learning of gender roles Reinforcement of gender roles at home</p>	Gender role socialization	Cultural markers to Adulthood	
<p><i>Dipo</i> is a form of social control Non initiation brings bad luck Pregnant girls are perceived cursed Rite delays early pregnancy Test of virginity Pregnant girls do not go through the rite Marriage counselling Grooming of girls for marriage <i>Dipo</i> is prerequisite to marriage</p>	Grooming for marriage		
<p>Ability to give birth Giving birth Biological growth and spurt Caring and disciplining children Marriage Chronological age Mode of dressing Plaiting of hair Sexual maturity Dependence on parents Limited autonomy <i>Dipo</i> is prerequisite to adult identity</p>	Maturity		Adult identity development
<p>Independence Ability to care for self Being responsible Working to support others</p>	Sense of responsibility		
<p>Girls become Krobo women after the rite <i>Dipo</i> usher girls into adulthood Girls are accorded respect</p>		Perception about adulthood	

<p>Girls are considered adults at age 15  Girls are given out for marriage from age 18  Girls are perceived respectful  Sense of adult identity linked to rite  Mixed sense of identity  Sense of identity achievement</p>	<p>Subjective sense of adulthood</p>		
<p>Girls taught to be responsible  Inclusion of girls in decision making  Advised to be responsible  Mutual understanding  Ease in communication  Permissive environment for interaction  Quality interaction via obedience  Avenue for sexual communication  Advice on sex is on marriage  Advised against sex  Limited sex communication  Parents do not want to talk about sex</p>	<p>communication</p>	<p>Family transactions</p>	
<p>Regular role performance role competency indicative of parental training  Learning of role of women  Reinforcement of roles at home  Ability to manage home  Ability to care for self  Limited role assignment  Teaching of vocation to girls  Mastery of roles prepares girls for marriage  Competency in role performance  Regular task performance  Sense of role mastery  Adult identity linked to role mastery  Lack of competence in role performance</p>	<p>Gender role performance</p>		
<p>Girls are disciplined for misbehavior  Patience is used in advising girls  Matured girls are not whipped with cane  Restriction on going out  Girls are locked outside for going out  Limited interaction with peers  Advice mediates conflicts</p>			

<p>Discipline contingent upon misbehavior  Disregard to advice  Girls are left to face life  Threats are used to realign girls to good behavior  Non readiness to take up roles  Girls are disrespectful  Resentment to task  Girls are counselled by elders  Girls are left to face life for being disobedient  Girls are threatened to realign to good behavior  Girls are called before elders for counsel  Girls are disrespectful  Child communication pattern inform parental relationship</p>	<p>Parental control</p>		
<p>Social cohesion through norms taught  Strengthens parent-child bond  Mothers are responsible for the development of girls  Child communication pattern inform parental relationship  Training reinforced at home  Girls are trained to be responsible  Encouragement to continue school or trade  Girls learn roles of women  Parental understanding informs advice  Parents take lead in child concerns  Cordial parent-child relationship  Submission to parents inform relationships  Parental advice</p>	<p>Family relationships</p>		
<p><i>Dipo</i> girls encourage others to get initiated  Peer influence corrupt morals of girls  Negative peer influence  Positive peer relation outcomes  Mutually beneficial friendships</p>	<p>Peer relations</p>	<p>Broader social influences</p>	
<p>Girls are sexually active  Girls are anxious to marry  Mothers care for adolescent girls' babies  Community is concerned about early pregnancy  Escape from humiliation for self and family</p>	<p>Adolescent sexuality</p>		

<p>Contested understanding of <i>dipo</i>  between culture and religion  Limited understanding of <i>dipo</i>  Girls are not considered adults  after the rite</p>	<p>Contested  meaning of  <i>dipo</i></p>		
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## Appendix 3

### Consent and assent forms

#### **Assent Form** **(For adolescents participating in Photovoice)**

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*You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to read this consent/assent form and discuss any questions you may have with the researcher. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision.*

#### **Title of the study:**

Transitions and transactions; Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo Girls.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls in Krobo Odumasi. The researcher is also interested in understanding contextual and cultural influences on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

#### **Study Procedures**

This study involves three ways of interviewing participants, one-on-one interview, focus group discussion and Photovoice. You will be requested to participate in a Photovoice workshop. The Photovoice workshop requires you to be trained in photography, the ethics related to the use of photographs and discussing the photographs in line with the research aims and objectives. You will be required to give your response to a set of questions related to the photographs selected by you. All interactions will be held in the language you understand. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to create a general picture of how girls develop adult identity in the Krobo culture.

#### **Benefits and risks.**

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. When the research is completed, it will help the researcher to understand experiences and the cultural and environmental factors that influence the adult identity development and sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group. This knowledge will help the researcher finish his Master's thesis. The research report when disseminated can influence interventions that can be delivered in the community to improve life and wellness and to decrease sexually transmitted infections, diseases and unwanted pregnancies. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; however, fatigue from participating is anticipated.

#### **Payments for Participation**

The research team will cover participants' travel costs. However, participants will not be paid for their participation in the study.

#### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed but kept confidential.

#### **Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study**

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer some questions, not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to answer some questions and not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not be challenged.

**Questions**

You are free to ask any questions that you may have about your rights as a research participant. If any questions come up during or after the study, contact the researcher.

Elvis Nieuman Nanegbe (researcher);+4797391947  
+233245993662

Email- [ebmawuli@gmail.com](mailto:ebmawuli@gmail.com)

Prof. Marguerite Daniel (supervisor)

Department of Health Promotion and Development  
Faculty of Psychology  
University of Bergen, Norway

**STATEMENT OF ASSENT BY PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information about the study/it has been read and explained to me. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research study with the researcher. I have had my questions answered by him in the language I understand. The risk and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after verbally consenting or signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study. I understand that information regarding my personal identity and disclosure will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Participant’s Signature:..... Date: ..... /...../.....

Participant’s Name:.....

Participant’s Address;.....

.....

---

I, the researcher, have fully explained the relevant details of this study to the participant/guardian named above and believed that the participant has understood and has voluntarily given his/her consent/assent.

Name:.....

Date: ...../...../..... Signature:.....

**Consent Form**  
**(For parents of adolescent participants in the study)**

---

*Your consent is being sought for your child to participate in a research study. Please take your time to read this consent form and discuss any questions you may have with the researcher. You may take your time to make your decision about your child’s participation in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision.*

**Title of the study:**

Transitions and transactions; Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo Girls.



**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls in Krobo Odumasi. The researcher is also interested in understanding contextual and cultural influences on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

**Study Procedures**

This study involves a participatory approach of seeking information from your child. Your child will be requested to participate in a Photovoice workshop. The Photovoice workshop requires her to be trained in photography, the ethics related to the use of photographs and discussing the photographs in line with the research aims and objectives. Your child will be required to give your response to a set of questions related to the photographs selected by her. All interactions will be held in the language she understands. All information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to create a general picture of how girls develop adult identity in the Krobo culture.

**Benefits and risks.**

There is no direct benefit to your child from participating in this study. When the research is completed, it will help the researcher to understand experiences and the cultural and environmental factors that influence the adult identity development and sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group. This knowledge will help the researcher finish his Masters thesis. The research report when disseminated can influence interventions that can be delivered in the community to improve life and wellness and to decrease sexually transmitted infections, diseases and unwanted pregnancies. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; however, fatigue from participating is anticipated.

**Payments for Participation**

The research team will cover your child's travel costs. However, she will not be paid for her participation in the study.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your child's name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed but kept confidential.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study**

Your decision for your child to take part in this study is voluntary. She may refuse to answer some questions, not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Her decision not to answer some questions and not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not be challenged.

**Questions**

You are free to ask any questions that you may have about your rights as a research participant. If any questions come up during or after the study, contact the researcher.

Elvis Nieuman Nanegbe

Phone; +233245993662

+4797391947

Email; ebmawuli@gmail.com

Prof. Marguerite Daniel (supervisor)

Department of Health Promotion and Development  
Faculty of Psychology  
University of Bergen, Norway

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT BY PARENT**

I have read the information about the study/it has been read and explained to me. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research study with the researcher. I have had my questions answered by him in the language I understand. The risk and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after verbally consenting or signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study. I understand that information regarding my personal identity and disclosure will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Parent/guardian's, Signature:.....Date: ...../...../.....

Parent/guardian's Name:.....

Parent/guardian's Address;.....

.....

.....

Participant to whom consent is given.

.....

---

I, the researcher, have fully explained the relevant details of this study to the participant/guardian named above and believed that the participant has understood and has voluntarily given his/her consent/assent.

Name:.....

Date: ...../...../..... Signature:.....

**Informed Consent Form  
(For adults participating in Interview)**

---

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to read this consent/assent form and discuss any questions you may have with the researcher. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision.*

**Title of the study:**

Transitions and transactions; Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo Girls.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls in Krobo Odumasi. The researcher is also interested in understanding contextual and cultural influences on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

**Study Procedures**

This study involves two ways of interviewing participants, one-on-one interview and focus group discussion. You will be requested to participate in one-on-one interview session. The interview process requires your response to a set of questions related to the purpose of the study. All interactions will be held in the language you understand. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to create a general picture of how girls develop adult identity in the Krobo culture.

### **Benefits and risks.**

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. When the research is completed, it will help the researcher to understand experiences and the cultural and environmental factors that influence the adult identity development and sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group. This knowledge will help the researcher finish his Masters thesis. The research report when disseminated can influence interventions that can be delivered in the community to improve life and wellness and to decrease sexually transmitted infections, diseases and unwanted pregnancies. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; However, fatigue from participating is anticipated.

### **Payments for Participation**

The research team will cover participants' travel costs. However, participants will not be paid for their participation in the study.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed but kept confidential.

### **Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study**

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer some questions, not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to answer some questions and not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not be challenged.

### **Questions**

You are free to ask any questions that you may have about your rights as a research participant. If any questions come up during or after the study, contact the researcher or supervisor; Elvis Nieuman Nanegbe (researcher);+4797391947  
+233245993662

Email- [ebmawuli@gmail.com](mailto:ebmawuli@gmail.com)

Prof. Marguerite Daniel (supervisor)

Department of Health Promotion and Development  
Faculty of Psychology  
University of Bergen, Norway

### **STATEMENT OF CONSENT BY PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information about the study/it has been read and explained to me. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research study with the researcher. I have had my questions answered by him in the language I understand. The risk and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after verbally consenting or

signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study. I understand that information regarding my personal identity and disclosure will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Participant's Signature:..... Date: ...../...../.....

Participant's Name:.....

Participant's Address;.....

.....

...

---

I, the researcher, have fully explained the relevant details of this study to the participant/guardian named above and believed that the participant has understood and has voluntarily given his/her consent/assent.

Name:.....

Date: ...../...../..... Signature:.....

### **Informed Consent Form**

(For Adult Participants in Focus Group Discussion)

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*You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to read this consent/assent form and discuss any questions you may have with the researcher. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision.*

#### **Title of the study:**

Transitions and transactions; Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo Girls.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the adult identity development of adolescent Krobo girls in Krobo Odumasi. The researcher is also interested in understanding contextual and cultural influences on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

#### **Study Procedures**

This study involves three ways of interviewing participants, one-on-one interview and focus group discussion. You will be requested to participate in a focus group discussion. The focused group discussion involves asking a group of participants to come together to discuss questions and sharing opinions related to the purpose of the study. All interactions will be held in the language you understand. You may be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview after the focus group discussion. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to create a general picture of how girls develop adult identity in the Krobo culture.

#### **Benefits and risks.**

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. When the research is completed, it will help the researcher to understand experiences and the cultural and environmental factors that influence the adult identity development and sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in the Krobo ethnic group. This knowledge will help the researcher finish his Master's thesis. The research report when disseminated can influence interventions that can be delivered in the community to improve life and wellness and to decrease sexually transmitted infections, diseases and unwanted pregnancies. There are no

foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; However, fatigue from participating is anticipated.

**Payments for Participation**

Participants’ travel costs will be covered by the research team. However, participants will not be paid for their participation in the study.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed. Despite all efforts to keep information shared, confidential, there is a chance that a focus group participant may share the information they have heard. I therefore cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality in this regard.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study**

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer some questions, not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to answer some questions and not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not be challenged.

**Questions**

You are free to ask any questions that you may have about your rights as a research participant. If any questions come up during or after the study, contact the researcher or supervisor; Elvis Nieuman Nanegbe (researcher);+4797391947  
+233245993662

[Email-ebmawuli@gmail.com](mailto:Email-ebmawuli@gmail.com)

Prof. Marguerite Daniel (supervisor)

Department of Health Promotion and Development  
Faculty of Psychology  
University of Bergen, Norway

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT BY PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information about the study/it has been read and explained to me. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research study with the researcher. I have had my questions answered by him in the language I understand. The risk and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after verbally consenting or signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study. I understand that information regarding my personal identity and disclosure will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Participant’s Signature:..... Date: ...../...../.....

Participant’s Name:.....

Participant’s Address;.....

.....  
...

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I, the researcher, have fully explained the relevant details of this study to the participant/guardian named above and believed that the participant has understood and has voluntarily given his/her consent/assent.

Name:.....

Date: ...../...../..... Signature:.....

### Consent for use of photographs

Following your participation in the study titled Transitions and Transactions; Adult Identity Development among Adolescent Krobo girls, your role as a participant in the study is complemented by the photographs you took during the study. I hereby seek your consent for the use of your photographs in reporting the study.

Date ..... / ..... / .....

Sign .....

(Participant)

Sign.....

(Researcher)

## Appendix 4

Interview guides

### Interview Guide Questions Traditional leaders

**Participant** .....  
**Sex** .....  
**Position**.....

1. Can you please tell me something about the Krobo Culture?
2. How does a child become an adult in the Krobo culture?
3. How are girls selected for the rites? What criteria is used?
4. Why do girls go through *dipo* rites?
5. What kind of training is given to girls during the rites?
6. How were the rites performed in past times?
7. What has changed with the rites in recent times?
8. Is the relevance of *dipo* still unique to its ideals in modern times?
9. What is expected after *dipo* girls go through the rites?
10. How are Krobo girls treated by the community after they go through the rites?

Would you like to share any anything else with me?

Thank you.

### Interview Guide Questions Parents

**Participant**.....  
**Sex** .....  
**Position**.....  
**Age**.....

1. Tell me what you know about the *dipo* rites.
2. Why did you allow your daughter to go through the rites?
3. What do you think of your daughter who has gone through the rite?
4. Do you consider your daughter an adult? Why?
  
5. How is your relationship with your daughter like?
6. How is communication between you and your daughter?
7. How do you communicate with your daughter on sexual issues? Is it a taboo or difficult?

8. What responsibilities do you assign your daughter? Why?
9. What are some of the challenges you have with your daughter as a growing young adult?
10. How do you handle conflict with your daughter? Does it work?
11. How does your daughter interact with her peers? How do you feel about that?
12. What is your greatest concern for your daughter as a growing woman? Why?  
(sexual and reproductive concerns)

Would you like to share any anything else with me?

Thank you.

### **Interview Guide Questions Adolescent *dipo* girls**

**Participant** .....

**Age** .....

**Education** .....

**Family type**.....

#### **Task for photography**

Take a photographs in relation to the following;

1. What you think can make a girl a woman
2. The roles of a woman in your community
3. The roles you perform at home
4. The roles you would have loved to be asked to do at home
5. Things that can prevent pregnancy

#### **Interview questions**

1. Can you tell me about the photographs you selected?
2. What do you think makes a person an adult? why?
3. How was your experience going through *dipo*? Why did you go through the rites? What have you learnt going through the rites?
4. Will you consider yourself an adult/woman? Why?
5. How do you relate with your parents? What are some of the difficulties you face? Do you feel your parents understand you? Why?
6. How often do you share your concerns with your parents? Why?
7. What do your parents think about your close colleagues/ friends?
8. What is your role at home? Why? Do you feel you enough roles at home? How does it make you feel?
9. Are you in a relationship? (Why are you and how did you get in one?)
10. What do your friends think about it? How does it make you feel?
11. Do girls of your age in this community have sex?  
What do you know about sex? Where did you learn it? (Knowledge of STDs and pregnancy as outcomes) Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (Were you forced? How old were you?). How often do you have sex? Do you use contraceptives?



12. Do you communicate with your parents on sexual issues? What are some of the difficulties?

Would you like to share anything else with me?

Thank you.

### **Interview guide for focus group discussion**

1. How does the community (elders, parents...) view the traditional *dipo* culture?
2. How does *dipo* influence adolescent girls in the Krobo land?  
(seeking to find out transformation in girls, behavior wise and role mastery)
3. What is the community understanding of *dipo*? How do adolescent girls understand *dipo*? Was it the same during your days? What have changed?
4. How do parents whose children have undergone *dipo* interact with their daughters?  
How is your relationship with adolescent *dipo* girls? Do you enjoy them? Why? How do you communicate with them?
5. How do parents whose daughters who have undergone the *dipo* rite regard their girls?  
Are they adults? Why?
6. What are community concerns about adolescent girls who have undergone *dipo* rite?
7. How do the community view *dipo* girls of today from those of times before? Why is it so?
8. How can *dipo* girls be described generally in the community? Are they well behaved; sexual life wise, what do you think makes them so? How do you handle them?
9. How do girls who have undergone *dipo* relate with peers in the community? How do you feel about your daughter? Why?