



**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PROFILING THE LIFE  
EXPERIENCES OF THE KAYAYOO IN GHANA**

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## ABSTRACT

The Kayayei of Ghana have been studied over several decades though there still exists a gap in the literature based on their profiles. A contributing factor to that gap is the limited information around how many Kayayoo are across the country. Another is the varied demographic and biographic profiles of Kayayoo that provide a good extent of diversity but not depth. Current policy and program interventions are driven by the profiles of Kayayoo, as is presented in existing research. However, the existing profiles miss out on the richness and texture of the Kayayoo's life, which means that programs and policy interventions that use them are not as effective as they could be in reaching the Kayayoo's needs. This phenomenological study revealed that there is likely no need to continue trying to conduct a census of Kayayoo in order to understand their lives. Especially since the nature of their movements in migration remain nomadic. Instead, what is needed are interventions on their external environment that will strengthen their sense of choice and agency. This study's insights show that the meaning and connections the Kayayoo constructs of family, social network, and work are driven by their construction of self. It showed that the Kayayoo exercises more of their agency than may be evident. Their actions are engendered by what they perceive allows them to exercise this agency and choice. With this insight, what is needed is a mapping of the Kayayoo's external environment to identify their intersections with public policy and other services, and then design interventions on that environment to maximize the benefits of their actions when they make a choice to access it. The outcomes of policy and programs will undoubtedly be better and more impactful if designed based on this more in-depth understanding of the Kayayei from their point of view.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Kayayoo, Kayayei, migration, policy design, integral theory, self-concept,  
phenomenology, agency, women

## DECLARATION

I, Rose Aba Dodd, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorize the University to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

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Signed by candidate

Tuesday, 9 March 2021

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## **DEDICATION**

To my colleagues in the 2021 class of the Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, I dedicate this work. For the camaraderie and motivation, we shared to complete this program with success even through a pandemic and remote learning.

I'm honored to be a part of this class.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

GOG	-	Government of Ghana
ILO	-	International Labor Organization
LEAP	-	The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program
NDPC	-	The National Development Planning Commission
NEIP	-	National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program
PDGFUP	-	People's Dialogue and Ghana Federation of Urban Poor
SONA	-	State of the Nation Address
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	-	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
YEA	-	Youth Employment Agency

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction

The Kayayoo (Plural: Kayayei) are a marginalized group of migrant women and girls mostly from the North of Ghana who travels to the south to work as head porters in large markets in the cities. Their profiles have evolved over the past decade, evident in the age brackets of Kayayei shifting, the lengths of stay in the cities changing, and changes in their reasoning and planning for migration (Awumbila et al., 2008; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013).

A variety of demographic and biographic profiles of Kayayoo women in Ghana can be drawn from existing research. Work on their lifestyle and livelihoods (Baah-Enumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Makorni, 2017; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018) have highlighted their age ranges, place of origin, and destination, and family background. Work focusing on their struggles in urban areas (Makorni, 2017; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018; Shamsu-Deen, 2015) has highlighted their living conditions, livelihood choices, income-generating activities they engage in, and their lived experiences in migration. These extensive works have been relatively limited with their use of linear characteristics like age, gender, marital status, etc. Thus, they provide a good extent of diversity of description but not the depth of explanation. Even though these demographic or biographic profiles define them, it leaves out a certain depth of meaning of their lives that is necessary to fully understand them.

This gap in the literature means that policies, programs, and interventions designed and intended for Kayayei have relied on a categorical description of their profiles that are more demographic and biographic. For instance, the profile of the Kayayoo suggesting that the sole aim of engaging in the profession is to make money (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Suleiman & Mahama, 2015) is one of the bases for government and other organizations trying to teach the Kayayei an occupation (Jawula, 2010; UNFPA Ghana, 2011). A deeper understanding of that profile definition would provide better meaning into how the Kayayoo defines success or a better life. It will reveal

nuances about the meaning they ascribe to life and money that can refine policy and program designs in a way as to produce maximum impact for the Kayayoo. The current literature therefore leaves out that meaning that, if applied, would bring a further depth of classification even within specific demographic and biographic profiles.

That depth is necessary because it gets to the heart of the Kayayoo as an individual, which is also the purpose of phenomenology (Green, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Smith, 2018). Living and experience are driven by an intentionality of meaning that is determined only by the person living the experience (Smith, 2018). The meaning that an individual Kayayoo gives to things in their experience has a unique definition that only they can provide. Therefore, Kayayoo of a similar age, from the same town and who work in the same market in Accra, may, in fact, experience the phenomena of their lives differently because of differing values, aspirations, or even motivations, and therefore belong in different profile groupings. Though policies and programs are well intended, their overall outcome would undoubtedly be better and more impactful if they are designed based on a deeper understanding of the intentionality of the meaning that the Kayayeei in Ghana gives to their experience.

The investigation of this additional depth in the profile of the Kayayoo in Ghana is what this study set out to do and use to recommend ways to potentially refine and possibly even wholly redefine the current profiles of Kayayoo. In seeking to understand the other ways in which the Kayayoo construct meaning to their lives, this study will reveal the aspects of their profiles that do not conform to the existing general demographic and biographic definitions. It will extend and deepen the knowledge of them beyond these current definitions. In this regard, this study seeks to be both incremental and disruptive to current understandings of the Kayayoo.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The profile of Kayayeei in Ghana has been defined around demographic and biographic dimensions that are superficially grounded in singular definitions such as age, origin, gender, work and livelihood, and family structure. This existing knowledge has led to the

treatment of Kayayei as homogenous groups within these demographic or biographic classifications. As such, programs and policies driven by this limited knowledge miss out on the richness and depth of the Kayayoo's profile. Therefore, programs end up limited in the depth of impact they can have on the lives of these women and often fail to make any impact at all.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to understand the depth and richness of the Kayayoo's profile from the Kayayoo's own interpretation. It gathered data on how they construct meanings of their lives, and from those, examined how these meanings conform or not to existing profiles. It also examined the possible implications of the findings to policy and program design.

### **1.4 Research question**

The study derives from the primary research questions as follows: How do the Kayayoo construct meaning of their own lives, and how do these constructions correspond to the existing profiles applied in policy, programs, and other work?

More specifically, the following questions were raised for inquiry and investigation:

1. How do Kayayoo in Accra, Ghana construct meaning to their lives?
2. In what ways do their construction of meaning correlate or diverge from existing profiles in prior research
3. Do these constructed meanings indicate the need to build several differentiated profiles of Kayayoo that are not just bound by the existing demographic factors, but are bound by the different meanings of their lives?
4. What are the (possible) policy and program implications of having such profiles based on the insights from this research?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Current policy and program interventions are driven by the profiles of Kayayoo as is presented in existing research. The existing profiles however miss out on the richness and

texture of the Kayayoo's life because it takes an external perspective to defining their profiles. Meaning that programs and policy interventions that use these definitions are not as effective in reaching the Kayayoo's needs because there are missing an aspect of their lives which is not being captured adequately in the current research. This research fills that gap in the knowledge of Kayayoo profiles and adds to the understanding of who Kayayoo are. It brings to the fore the richness and texture of their lives as a basis to be considered in the definition of their profiles. It aims to provide a deeper basis for profile definition that incorporates the Kayayoo's own definition of the meaning they have of their experiences in life. It takes a phenomenological angle that has not been fully explored with the Kayayoo population. Such knowledge will contribute to the (re)definition of their profiles and help policy and program interventions know how to impactfully reach the Kayayoo and align program goals.

## **1.6 Background**

The Kayayoo profession has been around since the 1960's (Kwankye, 2012; Kwankye et al., 2009). The actual number of Kayayeei or head porters in Ghana is unknown because there has been no national survey to provide this data (Adaawen & Owusu, 2013; Baah, 2007). Though estimates have noted 23,000 Kayayeei in Kumasi, a city in Ghana (Baah, 2007), and 15,000 in Accra (People's Dialogue and Ghana Federation of Urban Poor PDGFUP, 2011), this is likely to be much higher. A diversity of demographic and biographic profiles of Kayayoo women in Ghana can be drawn from existing research including their livelihoods (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Ghana News Agency, 2014; Suleiman & Mahama, 2015), migration regions of origin (Apt, 2006; Asamoah, 2011; Awumbila et.al, 2008; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), age ranges and child labor (Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Suleman & Mahama, 2015), safety, and access to social services (Ahlvin, 2012; Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Lattof, Coast & Leone, 2018; Makorni, 2017; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018).

The name Kayayoo, is created from the merging of two words from two different languages: Kaya, a Hausa word meaning "load" and Yoo an Accra Ga language word

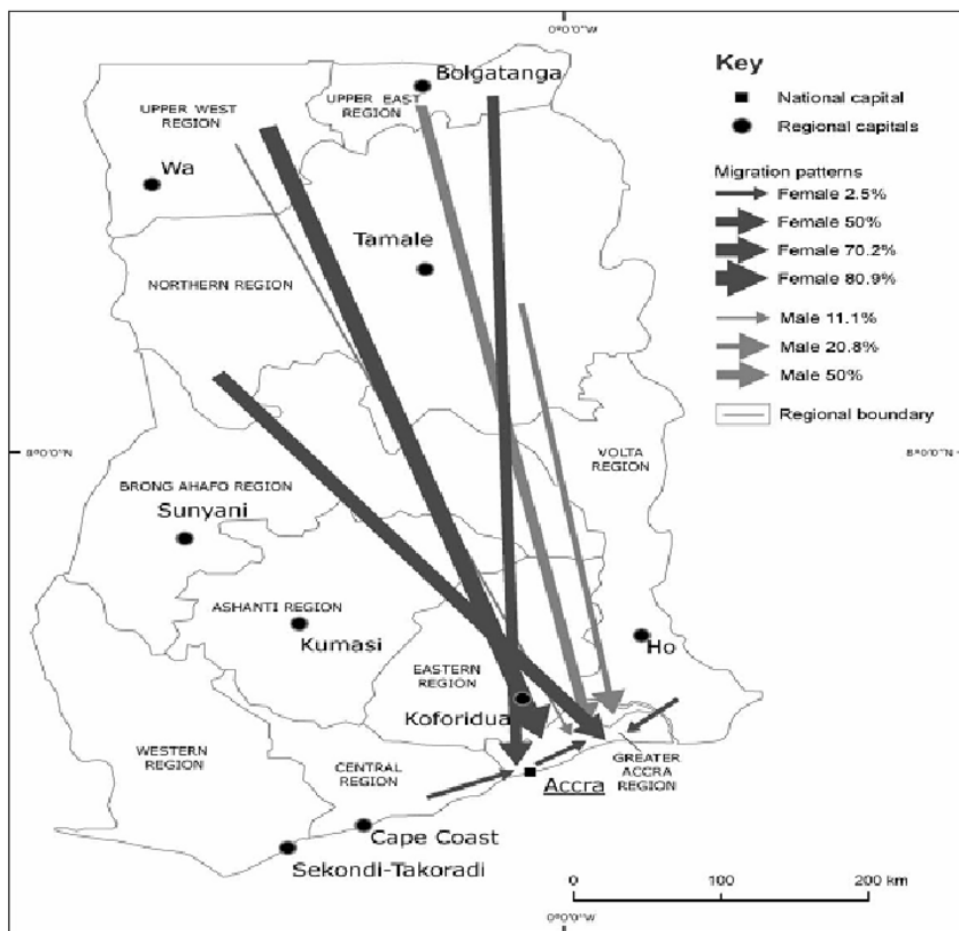
meaning “female”. Kayayoo therefore means a female who carries load. Load carrying on the head almost runs parallel to migration as this practice came out of a history of portage in the city center, first by men and then later in the 1960s by women, all of whom researchers note were migrant; the former, migrants from neighboring Mali, and the later, internal migrants (Asamoah, 2011; Korang-Okrah, 2013). There is a general agreement among scholars about the migratory pattern of Kayayoo being from the poorer Northern regions to the southern regions (Apt. 2006; Asamoah, 2011; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Awumbila et.al, 2008). Kayayoo profession is synonymous with women and migration, and involves women predominantly from the Northern regions; 90% of 15,000 Kayayoo respondents studied in 2011 were from the Northern regions of Ghana (PDGFUP, 2011).

The Northern regions of Ghana cover a landmass close to a third of the country but have the poorest populations in Ghana (UNDP, 2018; Yaro & Hesselberg, 2010). The area is the poorest even after several decades of post-independence development efforts; the poverty rate remains at about two to three times higher than the national average (Atuluk, 2013). The history of the area is one of marginalization and subjugation before and after the arrival of the colonial powers. The colonial state saw northern Ghana from the viewpoint of the needs and interests of the capital city which was located in the mining and cocoa production areas in the south of the country (Yaro & Hesselberg, 2010). The policies pursued by the colonial state subordinated the interests of the northern periphery to those of the center. The policies ranged from forced labor migration, obstruction of educational advancement and neglecting the development of infrastructure and the area’s agricultural resources (Yaro & Hesselberg, 2010). This lack of infrastructure and development in the northern parts of Ghana is the main reason for increased migration from the regions to the southern parts of young people looking for work and a livelihood.

This marginalization of the northern regions which was initiated before the colonial era, and then was deepened during the era, still persists. The continued inequalities and rural-urban socio-economic disparities in Ghana have spurred an increased in internal migration (Awumbila et al, 2008; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Central, Eastern, Volta, Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions are noted net out-migration regions, with the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West northern regions having the highest out-migration rates overall. The Greater Accra, Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Western regions are the main net in-migration areas. See figure 1 below. The main purpose for the north-south / rural-urban migration is to find better livelihoods and remit to support households and communities. That purpose though is not always reached for several reasons related to factors of institutional, market, and financial resources. Serbeh, Adjei & Yeboah (2015) in discussing this, agree that rural-urban migration may have its positives for poverty reduction. They however argue that this linkage is not always certain or strong enough to consider rural-urban migration as a form of poverty reduction.

Figure 1



Map of Ghana showing the North-South movement of internal migrants (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008)

North-south migration in itself is not new, however the increased involvement of vulnerable women and girls brings the phenomenon to light as an area for urgent policy focus. Over the last three decades, migration in general has evolved to become younger and has included more females (Awumbila et al., 2008), and a lot of this shift has been due to the migration of women and girls to become Kayayoo. Researchers agree that as long as economic disparities remain, the Kayayoo profession will also remain as the young women and girls who engage in the profession look for better economic opportunities (Adoma, 2012; Agarwal et al., 1997; Awumbila et al., 2008; Baah-Ennumh & Owusu, 2013; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Suleman & Mahama, 2015).

Migrating provides the opportunity to find a source of revenue and relatively better standard of living for the female migrants. They have closer proximity to better healthcare, and other social goods (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016; Yeboah, Owusu, Arhin, & Kumi 2014). Additionally, income generated from head portorage serve as remittances to extended families (Agyei et al., 2016). Though the profession has these benefits, it is also characterized by several negative challenges. Serbeh, Adjei & Yeboah (2015) note that the related uncertainties and dangers in migration cause them to lose a lot of this incomes and prevent them from accessing the social goods which they are now closer to like healthcare and accommodation. The Kayayoo who are unable to rent rooms or kiosks for instance sleep outside in open spaces and are exposed to sickness, bad weather and thieves at night (Yeboah, 2008).

Life in migration as a Kayayoo is documented as being risky and dangerous (Agarwal, et al, 1997; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Kwankye, et al 2009; Opare, 2003). Kayayeei carry 88% to 115% of their body weight in load on their heads; A clear health risk if done over long periods of time (Lattof, Coast, & Leone, 2018). The Ghanaian government has implemented several policies and developmental agendas to support in general the poor in society. The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program (GoG, 2007) and the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program (NEIP, 2019) aim to support vulnerable groups and the youth to find jobs and create employment. These policies are

designed for the broader populace and though the Kayayei qualify under the category, they often do not patronize these programs as expected. Perhaps because such general targeting really means no targeting, and therefore messaging may not be received by all users equally. Whether the Kayayoo's struggles in migration and urban poverty be as a result of the continued depravity and poverty in the northern regions of Ghana, the low educational levels of the women, or government policy failure (Jawula, 2010), it still remains that the profession and its related issues still persist. Government policies target more broadly poverty reduction through actions in social protection.

One role of policy is to protect the vulnerable in society. However, where large populations are concerned, social protection policies cannot help but generalize. For instance, the LEAP in Ghana is set up to support the poorest out of poverty. LEAP is a cash transfer social protection program in Ghana that aim at extremely poor and vulnerable households with vulnerable children, severe disability, or elderly persons over 65years (Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection MoGCSP, 2020). In Ghana, 23.4% of the population live below the poverty line as at 2017, and 8.2% below the extreme poverty line (GLSS, 2018). The LEAP has inconsistencies in determining and reaching who qualifies and who does not because poor populations are so diverse. Poverty by definition is on a continuum and developing policy for low-income poor populations is challenging because of the diversity of situations. Social protection coverage in Ghana is low at 0.04 to 3.55% in the poorest 20% quintile (World Bank Aspire Database). In developing countries like Ghana, where data is limited and sometimes non-existence, identifying beneficiaries who would gain the most from social protection policies offers many challenges (Abebrese, 2011).

A few interventions by government and development agencies have been attempted to address the migration and human development issues related to the Kayayoo. These are mostly found in political promises which translate into policies and programs for implemented to support them. However, few have been successful. The NDPC have one documented direct intervention at Kayayoo; being the abolishment of levies imposed on them in the markets (Ghana Web, 2020). An earlier attempt at an intervention was in 2002

and 2003 when the Ministry partnered with UNICEF on the “Operation end child kayayei” program to train them in skills and return them to their homes in the north. The goal was to empower them with skills to generate income and wealth for themselves. Lithur (2014) in her address to parliament note the failure of this intervention as many of the Kayayoo returned back to Accra and the profession. And the parliament select committee in 2016 (Parliament of Ghana, 2016) noted one challenge to success was the lack of adequate data on the Kayayoo to aid in designing an intervention.

Other interventions in policy have been blanket interventions that impact the lives of Kayayoo as well. These have had mixed impact on the livelihoods of the Kayayoo. Being predominantly youthful, several political promises and government policies directed at the youth are applicable to Kayayoo. Some of which were implemented successfully, while others did not receive traction.

The informal sector in Ghana is 80% of the total labor force (Osei-Boateng & Ampratwum, 2011). This sector primarily includes trade in the thousands of local markets across the country. Economically, the Kayayoo profession fills a supply gap in the short distance transportation industry (Agarwal et al., 1997) in local markets. It provides a means of transporting goods more efficiently around the crowded ill-structured large markets in Ghana's city centers. A study by Awotwi, Janowski, & Ojo (2011) classifies the services of the Kayayoo under micro-logistics. This is significant because Ghana has over 1000 markets in the net-migration regions. These markets are characterized by congestions and narrow paths that make it difficult to use vehicles or wheeled transportation devices (Awotwi, Janowski, & Ojo, 2011). Walking is the best and quickest way to move efficiently in local markets. This economic benefit has grown along with the migration of Kayayoo over the past decades. Policy however has not evolved along with it to address its implications for the Kayayoo who supplies services for that short distance transportation gap.

This nature of the Kayayoo's life from origin to life in migration, and the profession, have over the years contributed to the characterizations given to them and their general demographic and biographic profiles.

### **1.7 Chapter outline**

**Chapter 1** provided an introduction and purpose of the study. It outlined the research questions and objectives and background to the study. **Chapter 2** will provide a literature review of key concepts. It will cover literature on profile and persona development, more on the Kayayoo's life and agency, the concept of self and its connection to phenomenology and integral theory, and a review of policy formulation and the Kayayoo. **Chapter 3** covers methodology, interview method and process, the challenges faced, and ethical considerations made. **Chapter 4** describes the process of data analysis and findings along the categories of self, work, social network, family, and policy and its relation to the Kayayoo. **Chapter 5** discusses the findings in response to the research questions set forth in the study. It also includes a discussion on how the study contributes to knowledge. **Chapter 6** contains a concluding overview, recommendations for policy, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Discussion and literature review of key concepts

The basis for this work is a contextual framework that explores an individuals' concept of self and its connection to their experience of intervention from policy and society. It draws from the theory of social psychology as relates to agency and self-concept; and the concept of human-centered design in their approach of developing solutions based on insights from the user or persona's own experience of the problem. It combines this with empirical research works on the population of study.

#### 2.1.1 Profile and persona development

Personas are a characterization of profiles, serving almost as a surrogate for the real persons. They represent characteristics, "distinct groups of behaviors, goals and motivations identified during research" (Tu et al., 2010, pg.1). Personas are superficial without the beneficiary's input in its description. From the concept of phenomenology, a phenomenon cannot be understood and accurately crafted outside of the person(s) who live the experience (Groenewald, 2004; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998). And design thinking, which is anchored in empathy, is developed on the premise that the way to create meaning for the user in program or product design is to have the user (him)herself in the center of determining that meaning (Allio, 2014). The beneficiary's profile as defined from their own perspective needs to be central to the design if it is to produce the maximum impact. Aga Szóstek (2018), a strategy and experience designer in human-centered design, notes that it takes a deeper definition and understanding of profiles to construct and frame what is relevant for strategic decisions. A key aspect of design, whether of strategy, product, or policy, is its fit-for-purpose (Lerouge et al., 2013; Szóstek, 2018) and having a deeper understanding of the beneficiary's profile brings more relevance to the program design. If programs and developments relevant to Kayayoo in Ghana are to produce impactful and relevant outcomes, they need to be directed at the triggers that matter to the Kayayei in their decision making. And for that to happen, the factors that drive their experience of

phenomena and actions need to be clear and defined. One way to get a better view of this is through phenomenology.

### **2.1.2 Phenomenology, the concept of self, and integral theory**

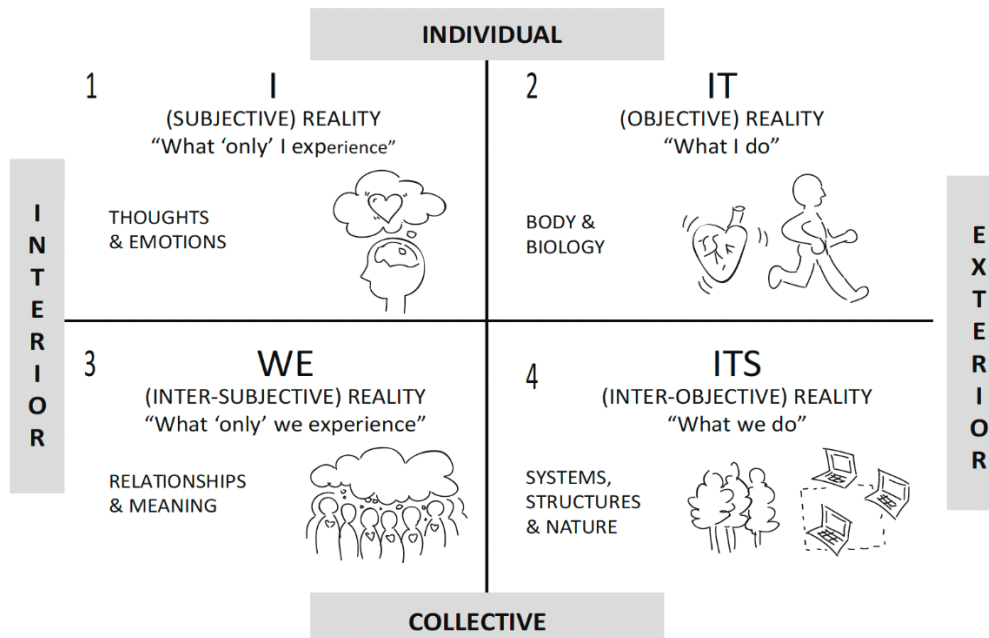
The experience of phenomena differs from person to person. It is subject to a range of consciousness from the first-person intended explicit conscious experience to the implicit awareness of things in their wider environment. Smith (2018) paper in the Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy defines phenomenology as the study of phenomena. It is the appearance of things and how we experience them, and the meanings those things have in our experience. In phenomenology, what makes an experience conscious is the awareness and intentionality one possesses while living through that experience. Therefore, the meanings of things in the first-person's conscious experience; whether it be explicitly conscious or implicit in their environment, can only truly be gained from the first person (Smith, 2018). This basis of phenomenology gives credence to the concept of agency.

Kabeer (2001) defines agency as the ability to act on one's defined goals. To consciously and intentionally take an action is an exercise of agency, and the meaning we give to the experience of that action confirms and strengthens the agency. Kabeer (2001) argues further that agency also includes other elements that lead people to act in a particular way beyond the actions that are visible. These could be the external elements in one's environment. The meanings given to their experience of such elements could be subconscious or unconscious and would take a reflection or interrogation process (Smith, 2018) to draw out. To better understand the first-person's meanings of things in their experience, phenomenology also examines enabling conditions for intentionality (Smith, 2018). In other words, those factors, elements, or conditions that shape an individual's way of experiencing things and how they ascribe meaning to those things in their experience. These enabling conditions include habits, bodily or physical skills, cultural, language, social practices, social background, and context.

These same factors are what shapes one’s concept of self. The concept of self or “who I am” is an individual’s collection of beliefs about who they are (Gecas, 1982) and contributes to their subjective reality, which is what only they experience.

Integral theory gives a holistic, comprehensive overview as well as an in-depth detailed view of any phenomena (Stevens, nd.). It maps this out on a framework for understanding the different dimensions of an individual’s existence and represents the dimensions of reality on the AQAL model (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2012; McGregor, 2010). The perspectives represented in the dimensions are from internal to external and individual to collective and cover the subjective, intersubjective, objective, and inter-objective. These perspectives need to be looked at when attempting to understand any aspect of reality in totality. See figure 2 below. Though integral theory has further nuanced detail, the basic concept is that all aspects of reality are connected. The various factors need to be taken into account if real change is to be achieved in any area.

Figure 2



The four quadrants of the AQAL map or model (Stevens, nd. Figure 7, Pg. 240).

The interior quadrants to the left, the I and the WE, are described as the phenomenological dimension. This is because it reflects the experiences, the perceptions, meanings, and thoughts that only the first-person will have because they are the ones living the experience, confirming the place of phenomenology in determining the meaning experiences have in conscious action. The persons in the WE will share some similar experiences if they equally face it as a collective. The I and WE are driven by an individual's concept and awareness of self which is influenced by their background (Stevens, nd). The exterior quadrants to the right, the IT is the exterior behaviors that are visible to all, and the ITS are the systems, structures, tools, or policies in the environment in which experiences occur. The interconnectedness of all this is important to note because phenomena occur and is experienced across all four quadrants. Wilber advocates against reducing any of the quadrants into the other because it distorts their meaning, especially when you reduce the more subjective interiors into the exteriors (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012). It distorts what is most valuable about that dimension because it forces a different lens on it. In the same way, as Smith (2018) discusses the subjectivity of meaning in phenomenology, Wilbur's AQAL model shows there is a notable difference in meanings when viewed from the different perspectives.

The Kayayei are of various age ranges. Though predominantly from the northern regions of the country, existing research shows they have different cultures, language, and social backgrounds and varied ages. Asamoah (2011) and Apt (2006) talk about the Kayayoo as a girlchild and teenager in migration. In addition to this, Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma (2012) have discussed about the older Kayayei who work in migration to remit funds for family back in her home village. The reported age range of Kayayei is approximately between 10 and 31 years old (Baah-Ennumh & Owusu, 2012; Suleman & Mahama, 2015). Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, (2008) note that sometimes children as young as 8 years old are involved in the Kayayoo business. Boateng & Korang-Okrah (2013) identify some Kayayoo mothers who had to work with their young children under 3years old on their backs all day, curtailing the needed physical, cognitive, and other development required by the child.

As discussed earlier, a diversity of demographic and biographic profiles of Kayayoo women in Ghana can be drawn from existing research, including their livelihoods, migration regions of origin, age ranges and child labor, safety, and access to social services. Extending existing works on the Kayayoo's life and work to the four quadrants, it appears more has been investigated and documented in the IT, WE, and ITS second, third, and fourth quadrants. Agarwal et al. (1997), Boateng & Korang-Okrah (2013); Kwankye et al. (2009), and Opare (2003) write about their lives in migration, what they do, and the skills they have as individuals who engage in portering and migrate from a particular common region. Awumbila et al. (2008), and Baah-Ennumh & Owusu (2013), and Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah (2009) add to this knowledge about their social collectives, which gives us a glimpse into the WE quadrant. More about their biographies, parental and education status has also been explored. Fifty percent of Kayayoo have no formal education and those that do have only up to primary education. Forty one percent of Kayayoo have young children, 86% of them are not married, and 58% were engaged in some farming practice before coming to Accra (Parliament of Ghana, 2016). This contributes to giving us a preview into the IT quadrant. The environment in which they work and live which forms the ITS quadrant is shared in works that investigate the Kayayoo's patronage of systems in healthcare, education, and programs designed for them (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016; Ahlvin, 2012; Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Lattof, Coast & Leone, 2018; Makorni, 2017; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018; Yeboah, Owusu, Arhin, & Kumi, 2014). Even with all of this rich information, the I quadrant has not been explored as much.

### **2.1.3 The Kayayoo's life, profession and agency**

The daily work of the Kayayoo involves the carriage and transport of heavy loads. These girls and young women carry goods on their heads, sometimes making use of a pan. They transport these goods around major markets for a fee. On the streets and in the markets, the girls and young women work in ethnic enclaves with groups of girls from one ethnic group forming a street family. They would usually be sitting around the same place and working together. They look out for each other. During the day, they protect each other from physical and verbal assault from shoppers, city guards, and market women alike. At

night, they sleep together finding safety in numbers against attacks or theft. Huijsmans (2012) notes that these groups are not without faults, some girls complain of stealing and often older children abusing younger ones. Despite these hazards, there are several positive aspects and outcomes to the group cohesion. Creating such social networks protects the Kayayoo's individual agency, giving them a power to choose to work knowing she has the safety of the street family. It is through these closely knit social networks that Kayayoo decide which locations to work, or live, and how to conduct their profession (Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009). They stay in migration for varying periods determined by their reason for migrating; whether to save for education, business, or to escape abuse, or find better economic opportunities (Lithur, 2014).

Beyond these reasons, cultural norms have been well-documented to also contribute to this decision for migration. Hashim (2004) notes that culturally, in some parts of northern Ghana there are different expectations for women and men when it comes to aspects of marriage. Females are expected to not come to their matrimonial home empty handed. This implies that adolescent girls must find a way to earn an income to be able to afford items they need for marriage especially if their parents are poor. Amongst certain groups, adolescent boys on the other hand can depend on family relations for the cattle and dowry they would use in getting married. It is therefore unlikely for boys to migrate in search of money for marriage but more likely stay behind and help with household labor (Hashim, 2004).

Kabeer (2001) adds that agency is what motivates people, what she terms the power within. Kabeer further asserts that even though agency is associated more with taking decision, it can also refer to other relations like one's ability to negotiate, manipulate, and resist. And may also include cognitive abilities of being able to reflect and analyze. She notes that in relation to power, agency has both negative and positive sides. Positively, being the *power to* make choices and see them through and negatively being having the *power over* others' agency sometimes through violence. In the markets, Kayayei are sometimes faced with two bad choices so they must choose between the lesser evil. These decisions might not have been the one they would have exercised if they had other options.

But to Kabeer's (2001) point, having agency would have contributed to their ability to reflect and analyze their options before making a choice, even if both options are not good. For instance, Kayayoo are reported to trade sex for better and safe sleeping quarters in the markets so as not to get attacked at night (Makorni, 2017; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018).

Agency also plays a role in how the girls migrate and enter this profession. A study by the People's Dialogue and Ghana Federation of Urban Poor (PDGFUP) in 2011 (Lithur, 2014) noted that the reason for migration were mostly driven by the Kayayoo exercising their agency to raise capital to start a venture, escape abusive social-cultural practices, or raise money to pay for education for self or family. On the other hand, Abdul Korah (2006) argues the exposure to the world outside their village as a reason for making that decision and taking the action to migrate. He posits that unlike the colonial period when women migrated only because they were accompanying male relatives like husbands or fathers, recent developments have seen more girls leaving home on their own in search of wage labor in a better world. This he associated to the fact that girls are being exposed to the world outside their villages and naturally want more for their lives. Kayayoo are reported to say they chose to go to the city after learning about the opportunities from other girls who had worked in the city (Lithur, 2014; Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009).

#### **2.1.4 The Kayayoo and policy**

Public policy is defined as “a course of action adopted or created by the government in response to public problems” (MSF, 2019. pg. 20). Ayisi & Yeboah-Assiamah (2018) add that determining the action or inaction of policy is determined by the desired target outcomes. Many forces and factors influence how policy gets designed. Under constitutional rule, the populace has a level of input in determining the policies that affect them, but the poorer in society may not have access to avenues to contribute to policy.

Mohammed (2015) in his paper on Ghana's policy making observes the emergence of a consensual policy-making approach under constitutional rule which has made the policy making process in Ghana more participatory. Through a review of two cases of policy

formulation, one before constitutional rule, and one during, he concludes that the participatory nature of policy making smoothens implementation and legitimizes public decisions. On the other hand, though, he finds that “the situation is far from satisfactory because marginalized and unorganized groups still suffer alienation” in the policy making process (Pg. 60). This adversely affects quality and effectiveness of participation. The Minister for Gender in Ghana in an address in parliament in 2014 classified the Kayayoo as being “vulnerable, excluded, and isolated” (Lithur, 2014), a marginalized group.

Hazlewood (2015) and Baah-Ennumh, Amponsah and Adoma (2012) criticize the rampancy of underaged Kayayoo and the failure of government policy to prevent such child labor and endangerment in the profession. Asamoah (2011) in his study though found that the child Kayayoo had agency and maturity beyond their years as a result of the family responsibility and experience in urban migration as a Kayayoo. Rightly though, international child protection laws (ILO, 1999 cited in Hazlewood, 2015), and the government of Ghana child protection policies under the rights of the child classifies children under 18 as minor and vulnerable (Labour Act, 2003). Social protection programs such as the LEAP (GoG, 2007) for example directly pay benefits to low-income families with children with conditions that the children remain in school and do not engage in child labor (Leap.gov). In the same vein, a committee report by the Parliamentary committee on gender and children, in 2016 noted as a matter of urgency the need to ban children under 18 from practicing as Kayayoo (Parliament of Ghana, 2016).

Politics is one factor that affects the design and implementation of policy. Politics determines who gets what, how and when, and who pays (Lasswell 1936, as referenced in Ayisi & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2018). Where changing political powers or regimes equals change in ideologies, these parameters are also likely to change. Agyepong & Adjei (2008) in their study on the public policy implications of the health insurance scheme in Ghana, conclude that the role of politics in policy that impact society and human development is more complex than is realized. In Ghana and other developing nations, politics plays a relatively disproportionate role in questions entailing society. Where vulnerable groups are concerned, establishing non-political systems to champion policy design and

implementation helps to ensure their inclusion transcends political mood swings. For example, the institution of the National Social Protection Policy was to ensure that such groups that are unrepresented or marginalized due to poverty are still considered in development. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) develops and manages the implementation of the long-term policy and program implementation for Ghana. Implementation though is still affected by political actors as the leadership of the commission is appointed by the ruling government who have their new agendas.

For instance, the state of the nation address presented to parliament by the president in 2016 (SONA, 2016), noted an effort to provide “humanitarian support, counselling services, and psycho-social support” in gender-based response centers at key markets in Accra to pilot projects to provide support for Kayayoo. It also noted plans to launch a micro-finance credit program for alternative livelihoods to benefit Kayayoo. In 2016, and again in 2020, another political promise was made to provide a 600-bed housing for Kayayoo in Accra (Ghana Web, 2016), even though the population of Kayayoo in the capital is estimated to be around 15,000 (PDGFUP, 2011).

Imani Africa, a policy think-tank, notes that one of the key challenges of translating these political promises to policy is the difficulty in evaluating the impact of programs where there are no statistics provided as to how many women constitute Kayayeei. And no timelines to achieve program targets.” (Martei & Rajiv, 2016). Agyepong & Adjei (2008) also realize that where the complexities of politics and its inter-relation with weak civil society engagement and participation is not well studied and understood, public social policy usually fails. In 2007 the Ministry of Women and Children, to get a better understanding of the Kayayoo population in Accra for program development, conducted a registration exercise. They only succeeded in counting under 3000 Kayayoo in one area of Accra making the data incomplete (Lithur, 2014).

Though well-meaning, the outcomes of policy have not been as lasting because policy design has been driven by these linear profile characteristics and definitions of Kayayoo found in existing literature. For lasting impact and adoption, the Kayayoo for whom its

meant need to choose to accept and adopt it, thereby exercising their agency, and sense of choice and power (Kabeer, 2001). This is a deeper level of attention that would require policy and program designers to learn about what drives agency among the Kayayoo. Their complex life and work experiences reflect the multi-faceted nature of any individual's existence as presented in the AQAL model (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012), and require a deliberate study to understand. Applying the phenomenological approach allows the Kayayoo's unconscious and sub-conscious interpretation of experience into meaning to be unearthed and along with it what drives their agency. This would build a more robust understanding of agency in Kayayoo to inform policy makers on how to design, position and offer policy that is relevant to and will offer higher and longer lasting outcomes for the Kayayoo.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 Methodology

To obtain a self-reported understanding of the meaning that Kayayoo construct of their lives, the research used a biographical approach to phenomenology (Green, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998). So, the output is the respondent's interpretation of their own experiences and reality and the meanings they construct of their lives. This research involved a sample of the Kayayoo population in Ghana, focusing on Madina. Madina is the 12<sup>th</sup> most populous settlement in Accra with 137,000 people per the last census (Gaisie, Kim, & Han, 2019; Government of Ghana, 2015). It is a metropolitan city that reflects many large cities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana, and hosts the Madina Market, a prominent destination for Kayayoo in Accra.

A semi-structured depth interview was used which allowed the researcher to moderate the conversation to cover pre-determined areas relevant to the research questions. Ten Kayayei were interviewed over a period of two days. The sample size is considered sufficient for this phenomenological study (Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 1998). It prioritized depth of information over number of participants and used a nominally representative sample of Kayayoo. The sample participants were a mix of age, marital status, motherhood status, and length in migration which are a representation of the major components of existing profiles. It represented the reported age range of Kayayoo; approximately 10 to 31 years old (Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Suleman & Mahama, 2015). Kayayoo under 16 years old were not included because of the legal age of consent in Ghana (Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, 2018). Participant age groupings were 16-19, 20-25, 26-30 and above 30. See Table 1 for summary profile of participants interviewed.

Table 1: Summary of interview respondents' profile

Age range	Number of respondents in age range	Average time in Kayayoo profession	Average number of child(ren)
16-19 years	2	1 year	0
20-25	3	4 years	2
26-30	2	7 years	3
above 30	3	10 years	2

*Summary of interview respondents' profile*

### **3.1.1 Participant recruitment and selection**

Using the snowballing technique allowed for participants to self-select and recommend, which provided a bigger pool from which to select the participants for the different age categories. Also having the delimitations of age, and semi-structured interview format helped to ensure data quality. The location for the interview was neutral and away from the market in which the respondents work. One advantage of having a neutral location for this study was it removed the respondent from the bustle of their work environment. This created the space and chance to reflect and dig deeper when framing their responses, without the pressure that their busy work environment brings. The gender of the researcher, preparation, and consent formalities ensured a feeling of safety and comfort to allow respondents to freely express themselves even though they were in a different location. Additionally, knowing other Kayayoo were going to be interviewed as well added to their being comfortable with the process.

#### **3.1.1 Interview themes and focus**

The thematic areas covered in the interview drew out the motivations, meanings, and aspirations that drive the Kayayoo's choice of work and livelihood. The interview questions were framed based on social-economic definitions, family structure, and their experience of policy or public programs. Specifically, they were drawn from:

1. Motivations and drive: Aimed at getting an understanding of what the respondent considers as her driving factor and how she prioritizes this.

2. Aspirations, and dreams: Aimed at getting an understanding of what it means to the respondent to have chosen this work, and what she dreams for her future. Also, how she constructs the meaning of family, friends, and work.
3. Plans and goals: Aimed at getting an understanding of how and why she makes goals, what motivates those decisions, and how she prioritizes them.

The questions were designed to encourage more descriptions, reflections, and stories from the participant. It included scenarios to spur dreaming from the participants for responses to questions on the future, and role play in imaginary scenarios. There were four categories of questions used. These were, introduction, personal or self, socio-economic, policy, and conclusion.

The question design followed the set up for phenomenology which drives at unearthing how an individual makes meaning of their experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Maypole & Davies, 2001). It was driven in part by the need to gain a holistic picture of the Kayayoo's life and experiences following the dimensions of the AQAL model (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012). It therefore attempted to cover the 360-degrees of her person and context which included herself, family, community, and social context. To gain a better appreciation of the meaning her experiences give to her, the questions also spurred reflection into the past, and dreaming into the future. Semi-structured questions which is one of the most common form of interviews for phenomenology (Wimpenny and Gass 2000) was perfect to achieving this.

### **3.1.2 The interview method and process**

Kayayoo work hours are recorded as mostly being between 6am and about 6pm daily except on Sundays. Interviews were held over two Sundays to prevent from disrupting their workdays. The interviews were on average 50 minutes each and covered questions designed to get an understanding of the Kayayoo's own construction of the meanings of their lives including work, family, motivations, ambitions, and goals.

The introduction section of the interview helped establish a rapport with the participant and to ease them into the conversation. The conclusion allowed the participant an

opportunity to expand on their ambitions and share any additional thoughts to wrap up the conversation. The questions under personal and self, allowed the researcher to get an understanding of the respondent's view of herself, her family and background, and what fulfills her. It encouraged reflection on the meanings of things and experiences that relate to herself, her family, and her background. The socio-economic categories helped to get an understanding of how she views and crafts her life around her social circumstances (the community) and economic circumstances (her work, and economic conditions). Similarly, it encouraged a reflection on the meanings these have on her experiences. The category on policy was to get her experience of policy and regulations by the government, and with that determine the role that policy plays in how she crafts meaning of her life. It provided insight into the level of knowledge that the Kayayei have about interventions by government agencies that are designed to address their needs. Key questions that came up during the semi-structured interviews were to get an appreciation of the main public services accessed by the respondents. This came to explore further the impact of the policy environment on her life and actions. Find interview guide and consent form in Appendix 1 and 2, respectfully.

Measures to ensure external validity, applicability and transferability of the research findings were considered in designing the methodology (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2015). The respondent categories were carefully selected to reflect predominant age ranges and published profiles of Kayayoo. General profiles included were, age, length of time in profession, motherhood, origin hometown of the North of Ghana, and market location of practice of their profession. The Madina market locality is one of the largest markets and a common destination for Kayayoo. Additionally, some of the respondents had experienced working in more than one market in Accra. Having a small sample size for depth interviews allowed for increased opportunity during the discussion to ensure depth and get as much as possible varied aspects of the Kayayoo's life unearthed in the respondents' descriptions. The interviews were conducted over two days with six participants on day one, and four on day two a week later. Interviews held over two days allowed the researcher to assimilate and rephrase questions to provide a better understanding to respondents.

### **3.2 Approach to analysis**

Thematic analysis approach was used to analyze and make sense of the data to arrive at themes. Specifically, a contextualist method of thematic analysis was used to extract an understanding of the ways the individual Kayayoo make meaning of their experience. And furthermore, how their social contexts affect that meaning. This was a step further than the realist or essentialist method which simply report the experiences, meanings, and realities of the respondent (Braun and Clark, 2006). In doing so, the theoretical position used for the analysis beyond the realist reporting of responses was integral theory, and its presentation of the interconnectedness of an individual's reality and experience.

The process to identifying themes was inductive and data-drive, first organizing the data according to the interview questions, and then coding responses using key words and phrases (Braun and Clark, 2006). This allowed the Kayayoo's own voice through in the data. Though this bottom-up method is not driven within a theoretical framework and therefore not influenced by pre-conceived interests of the research, Braun and Clark, 2006 do note that it is not completely void of the researcher's reflexivity. This was noted and addressed in the interview and analysis process. The themes identified represented repeated patterns emerging from the data in clusters formed following the interview question categories.

### **3.3 Challenges in the fieldwork process**

The COVID-19 pandemic's implications on in-person physical meetings raised some limitations to the fieldwork and data collection process. At the time of data collection, restrictions had evolved and moved from strict lockdown to no lockdown but there was a continued ban on public gatherings of more than 25 people, with enforcement of social distancing and wearing of nose masks in public spaces. The Ghanaian government had announced changes and adjustments to restrictions bi-weekly or as needed. With those restrictions in mind, the researcher decided to select a location that was well-ventilated with enough room to social distance. Nose masks and face shields were purchased and provided to Kayayoo who showed up for the interview without one. Also, seating areas

had to be set up outdoors ahead of time to ensure social distancing, and handwashing stations provided for before and after the participant was engaged.

The interviews were conducted in Twi, which is the predominant Ghanaian language known to most, and very familiar to the researcher. However, in some instances, other local languages had to be used and a translator was used to translate to Twi. During transcription interviews were translated into English. This process may have caused some meanings to be lost in translation. An experienced translator was used to minimize this, and where it was Twi, the researcher has the benefit of in-person experience during the interviews to track expressions and body language, as well as a very good working-level understanding of the language to transcribe the interviews into English.

### **3.3 Ethical issues and considerations**

Being that this is a vulnerable group, ethical considerations were key (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). The Kayayoo are a vulnerable group because of their general low level of education, migrant, and poverty status (Lithur, 2014). The researcher worked with the leadership of the Kayayoo groups in the Madina area to ensure that the participants completely understood the process and were comfortable sharing information about their work and life. Respondents could also ask to be accompanied by someone to the interview if that would make them more comfortable. They could opt out and stop responding to questions at any time during the interview, hence having a right to withdrawal. Consent was sort and given verbally in a language of their choosing to be sure they adequately understood their voluntary participation. Informed consent covered agreement to voluntarily participate in the research, and the purpose of the research was explained to provide enough detail without priming respondents on the key issues. It also explained the procedures, any risk and benefits, and the procedures used to protect confidentiality. The expectations of participants of the outcome of the study on their lives was managed by explaining the purpose of the study and how results will be published and communicated.

### **3.4 Some researcher reflexive comments**

The researcher is female, and this would have helped respondents to be more comfortable in speaking about their lives. The researcher has worked with Kayayei mothers in her career and so had some background and knowledge of their experiences, and lives, especially where it is related to those with children. On the other hand, the researcher is of middleclass, and would likely have projected having a “comfortable” life to the respondents. However, this would have been partly counted by the gender commonality, and activities undertaken in preparation for research which included walking through the market to identify respondents. It would also have been counted by the procedures to welcome and engage in interview which included using the local Twi language which was familiar to the respondents in the welcome greetings.

The next chapter will discuss the protocol for analyzing the data from the research and discuss the key findings and emerging themes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 Data analysis

Interviews were on average 50 minutes in duration. Data from interviews was translated and transcribed into English for analysis. In presenting the findings, verbatim quotes from the respondents are added to illustrate and support researcher's interpretations of the data (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2015). Thematic analysis was used to make sense of and understand the data. Using Microsoft excel program, key words from the categories of interview questions were noted and groupings of data with similar key terms and words were done. The groupings of these key words, terms, and phrases brought up emerging themes. Responses were analyzed per respondent across the age groupings as the groupings themselves did not show a significant difference to warrant a separate theme. Within themes however, notable differences related to age groupings are identified. Researcher also notes the connection to the role of policy in these constructions, whether direct or indirect. The themes emerging were on the Kayayoo's construction of self, work, social network, family, and policy. The emerging themes are discussed below along the major thematic areas. Pseudonyms are used with quotations in place of the respondents' real names.

### 4.2 Key findings

#### 4.2.1 Constructing meaning about self

This theme describes how the Kayayoo defines herself and her image. It covers how she sees her image evolving over time before, during, and after working as a Kayayoo. It also captures the drivers and factors of this progression of view of self. Additionally, it captures how she deals with the tension between how she imagined her life would have turned out, and how it is shaping up.

The Kayayoo's constructed meaning of herself stems from family. The basis being her agency and independence in directing her life. There was a strong sense of ownership for her decisions, and actions even through transitions in her expectations in life. She views

herself as capable with a lot of agency. There is a certain entrepreneurial savviness, confidence, and boldness about her that is even more profound in the older the respondent, or the longer they have been in the profession. This is seen mostly in the decision process to get into the profession. As a young girl, the Kayayoo's self-image is defined by the family's need. "There was no money for my parents to take care of my schooling, so I told my father that I will come to Accra to learn a trade" (Saadia, 17 years old). Respondents implied they needed to ensure their families back home are taken care of. But this view of self evolves as she exercises more the seemingly deep-seated entrepreneurial tendencies. "I wanted to start selling things. Like children's things. [...] so I even bought some and took along with me [to the north where I am from] but because people were depending on me, and there was no extra money coming from anywhere, the money got finished" (Kayayoo in her 20s). She also said, "I already have a goal; it only remains the means for reaching it".

She views herself as having the ability to change hers and her family's lives. Adjoa, in her mid-twenties said, I told my husband, "we are still having children, they can't also grow up to be mere farmers. So, I also have to do something, at least, so that when the children grow up, they'll know that their parents are not only farmers, but they do other things". Talking about her decision to move back to Accra to work as a Kayayoo even after she got married, she said, "I discussed with him [husband]. I told him that we both cannot work on the farm throughout. [...] So, he understood, and I left". The Kayayoo is anything but lazy or reliant on another external force for motivation or sustenance. The majority leave the north in pursuit of better livelihood in the south because they "needed to make a little money to go and start something [a trade or a business or learn a skill]" (Kayayoo in her 20s). For the Kayayoo, success happens in small proportions; she takes care of her siblings through school, she's able to send her mother money when requested, she saves enough to go home for the major holidays.

It is clear that by virtue of culture and tradition, the burden of caring for the home and children falls mainly on the woman or female. Respondents who reported having lost their mother reported being the one responsible for siblings even though they had older

brothers, or a father who was still alive. When reflecting one being a woman, the Kayayoo refers frequently to her mother. All respondents in the interview mentioned their mother as being the one they are supporting to support the home. Responses implied that the unmarried female automatically become responsible for the family in the absence of the mother, whether by ill health, or death.

The Kayayoo, who are mothers, view themselves as having the ability to change their children's chances for success in life. "I don't even want my children to know that I am a Kayayoo in Accra, or he/she will think that he/she will do the same thing. That's why I want to start something. So that if my child grows up and sees me coming to Accra, then I'll be coming to buy goods and go back [to trade] but not that their mother is a Kayayoo, or he/she won't go to school", said Adjoa. The younger Kayayeei who had to drop out of school don't see a path back to school. They see the way to success as being able to "raise some money to learn a trade or find a job".

It is interesting to also note that the respondent's image of themselves evolved to be not just independent, but also important or even "higher class" than those who remain in her hometown. This is seen in her ability to persuade others to move to Accra for work and a better life. As well as in the pride with which they discussed supporting new Kayayeei to settle in, and in remitting money back home.

### **Theme summary**

The Kayayoo sees herself as a medium that ensures the survival and prosperity of her family. She envisions a better world for herself and that of the immediate family and identifies the profession 'Kayayoo' as an opportunity to achieve this. Such life-providing instincts are culturally motivated as traditions placed on her the responsibility to care for the family. As a married woman, the Kayayoo wants to redefine the scope of life for her kids; to see a life not limited to the farming business of their father but that of hope to a brighter future. If she is a teenager, she views herself as capable of supporting her siblings financially. She derives agency to do this particularly from her entrepreneurial savviness and boldness which is more profound when she ages in the profession. Her successes in

generating money to provide for the family and other experiences gained through her work down south classifies her a 'superior' class. This class also feeds her agency to command respect and influence others to migrate down south. The Kayayoo, however, despises the experience of the profession. She sees it to be tough and thereby not worthy for her kids to do. She sometimes has to conceal her profession from her kids and that of her immediate family. Her goal is to save enough money to learn a different trade or move into a different profession that fits her new status of life. In all, life and experience as Kayayeei shape their image of self regardless of whether or not they continue on in the profession or move on to a different job. If one is to strip off every other aspect of a Kayayoo's life to view them as mere individuals, at the core of it, the Kayayoo see themselves as any person would see themselves. As being worthy of the opportunity for choice, and the opportunity to make decisions about one's life from information available.

#### **4.2.2 Constructing meaning about work**

Under this theme, the meaning the Kayayoo attaches to work is captured. It covered what dimensions of work she focuses on; the process, the outcomes, the level, or the need; and how this evolves over time. It also captures her outlook on work and what factors she finds important in shaping her future.

For the Kayayeei work is necessary, and so they cannot be idle. Though they did not engage in a business or profession in their hometown, they had a safe place to live, family support, and food to eat from their family farms. However, all respondents said, "there's nothing to do back home" so I came to Accra to look for "something to do". When asked why they chose to be Kayayoo, a common response was "I did not come here to be a Kayayoo but became one when I did not find a job". Though they choose to be Kayayeei, the Kayayeei did not think the profession to be suitable or good. Adjoa, in her mid-twenties said, "I don't even want my children to know that I am a Kayayoo in Accra, or he/she will think that he/she will do the same thing." Those who were encouraged to come to Accra by others were told it was to find work, and not to become a Kayayoo.

It is clear to the Kayayoo that earning some money is important and working harder and harder will bring more money. By their response, it seemed to them this was the natural way of things; that hard work will bring more money. Responses implied they are industrious, and hardworking and believe that “if you are not hardworking, you won’t get more money.” (Kayayoo, 24 years old). The mid-20s and over Kayayoo were more business-savvy than the younger ones. They described with better details how they strategize to gain customers in their market, and how they could make money through a trade. Gaps did exist though in their plans for venturing into business as they did not exactly have clear timelines or targets for funds, or resources. Their sense of time seemed “unending”. They would just keep working to make “enough money” because everything was contingent on that and yet “enough” money for most was unknown or turned out to not be enough once achieved. For instance, even Kayayoo who had been in the profession for 10 years said, “If I get another job, I’ll stop this one”.

All Kayayoo save, but few of the respondents had a concrete savings goal in mind. They knew and understood they wanted to, and had to save, and knew what they wanted to save for; to start a trade, be a hairdresser or seamstress. But beyond this they struggled to articulate how much they needed to save partly because they did not make enough. “There’s hardly anything to save”, said Ama who’s 31 years old with 3 children. “You don’t get the money. And the little you gather, they’ll (family) call you from the north and say things, and you’ll have to send them the money all the time”. One respondent said she was saving to enroll in an apprentice program but did not know yet how much she needed to save. That sheds light on the Kayayoo’s view of time and success in achieving goals. All respondents wanted to learn a vocational skill or trade as a way out of the Kayayoo lifestyle. The younger ones under 18 do not want to go back to school, they felt it was too late for them to and they would rather work to make money for their younger siblings to be able to go to school. The older Kayayoo felt they were past the age to learn a new skill for a vocation and so hoped to trade in consumables. Overall, the Kayayoo sees herself as always having to work to make money. They referenced work in the past, present, and future as the only way to make money, which to them is much needed. Being idle was not at all a desire.

### **Theme summary**

The Kayayoo's hometown in the northern parts of Ghana, has limited work opportunities for women. This motivates her to migrate down south to learn a trade or find a decent source of income to satisfy her needs. However, the absence of opportunities that match her skills in the south forces her to choose Kayayoo work as a means to still reach her goal for migration. The profession demands a lot of physical energy and unfavorable conditions which she wishes not for her siblings or kids. When she settles in the profession, she is only able to generate enough money if she constantly works hard and remains savvy. These attributes are also a function of age and experience in the profession. The older ones with much experience in the profession are able to generate more money than the younger ones. The money generated goes into satisfying her needs and the family and saving to learn a trade. The needs of the family, however, triumphs that of the others. This makes it difficult for the Kayayoo to learn the desired trade to switch professions and hence continues to remain in the profession for long. It is seen that the meanings the Kayayeei give to their profession vary with age, time in migration, and the reason behind their migration. Irrespective of the harsh conditions of the work, they have to work hard to generate enough money. They gain knowledge through their experience to devise a strategy to maximize outcomes given the limited resources they control.

#### **4.2.3 Constructing meaning about her social network**

The theme on social network emerged from the participants responses about their transition into and survival at work in migration. It is separate from the work theme because it focuses on how the Kayayoo attaches meaning to these external social structures.

The social network plays a key role in her transition to life in migration and living in Accra. Respondents in describing their first day and week in Accra described engaging with girls just like them at the bus station where their bus stopped. "When I arrived in Accra and I got down from the car [bus], I came across a few Kayayeei and I informed them that I was new and didn't have anywhere to stay. So they took me to the market

where they were working. At the end of the day when they were going back to their lodging, I followed them” (Ayisha, 25 years old). Amina, who is 29 years old shared, “When I got off [the bus], I was directed by some other girls to *Agbobloshie* [a busy market town]. So, I went and stayed there for one week. [...] I stayed in a kiosk. We (referring to other Kayayoo) shared the kiosk with others, up to 10 or 15 people to one kiosk. Then we share and pay 5 Cedis a week”. Saadia, 16 years old shared, “When I came to Accra, I did not find any work so the sister I came with told me to do Kayayoo work”. Some new Kayayoo even migrate without knowing the predominant language in Accra. They rely on the social network for translation and interpretation till they learn the language.

The place of this social network evolves over time as the Kayayoo settles in migration. The meaning and place of the network in the Kayayoo’s life transitions almost into a give-back or exploitative place. Kayayoo who have been in the business for years help the new ones settle in. Older Kayayoo become a part of the network bringing other girls, and assisting them to move and settle in. One respondent over 30 years old explained of some of her colleagues, “they sometimes use the children (new younger Kayayoo under their care) from morning till night and pay them very little money, like 5 Cedi. Most times, the children cannot complain, they only cry”. “The thing is, when anyone [another lady] is coming down [to Accra], they’ll tell you to prepare yourself to also come to Accra with them and you’ll also follow them as time goes on, you’ll know the way to Accra by yourself” (Ama, 31years old).

The socialization for Kayayoo is driven by the social environment and for some, extended family with loose ties. This core part of their transition and socialization is good in that it provides security and a network to teach the trade and survive. It could be bad in that it engenders a circle of ignorance. Sharing her knowledge of government programs, Rakiya said, “I heard it in the north, I heard that government employs the youth. [...] I heard it from someone, they said the government came to the north the other time, but they have not been there again’. (Rakiya, 19 years old). Information by word-of-mouth is paramount. For these interviews, for instance the researcher communicated its purpose and participant

recruitment by talking to only a few groups of Kayayoo. The network spread the word from there.

The social network is a cohesive and well managed network, where strangers begin to be referred to as “sister”, and “friend” to give an impression of oneness and organization. For the Kayayoo this social network is critical for information, success, and survival. The only familiar factor being that Kayayei you’re connecting with speak a similar language, indicating that they come from a similar area in the North. It was also clear that the sense of confidence and boldness from their construction of self was further strengthened by this social network.

### **Theme summary**

The Kayayoo’s social network is a platform for socialization and an anchor in her identity while in the profession. After migrating south, the new Kayayoo is drawn into this group of older ones who are experienced and understand the social, cultural and economic environment of the destination environment. Through the network the Kayayoo is coached on ways to navigate the town, learn the local language, strategies for work, and even where to sleep. As the network provides safety for the new Kayayei, the experienced ones utilize their agency and convert the network into an avenue for revenue-generation like providing accommodation for new Kayayei. Also, the old Kayayei will find jobs for new ones and take a commission. The network will later be a conduit for the exchange of information. For some, the network shares information that paints the south as prosperous and grounds for life-changing opportunities. This motivates many women to migrate to the south. To the new Kayayoo who settles in their new region, the association with the social network deepens, and they form loose families where common identity is shared. It is through this loose family that they share resources to help in their survival.

#### **4.2.4 Constructing meaning about family**

This thematic area describes how the Kayayoo constructs meaning of her engagement with family, and the role family plays in her life and decisions in past, present, and future. It

captures what the Kayayoo defines as family and what meaning she places on her relations to the categories of family she defines.

The study revealed three meanings from the experience of family amongst the Kayayoo. One is the obvious natural family defined by birth and blood. Of this, the mother was the most referenced. The second family comprises the friends known to the natural family, usually described as being from the same hometown. The third family is the social network of other Kayayeei in the market. This third family group changes with time, location, and circumstance. It was defined by proximity, security, and at the very basis, language. Two of the three sometimes were found in one person as blood relations also join the profession and join the same social network. Researcher consistently had to confirm whether reference to family was to blood relation, friend, or social family of Kayayoo. “My ‘sister’ brought me to Accra” (Kayayoo, 24 years old) referring to a friend from her hometown who is also known to her natural family.

When referring to the future in relation to where she would commit her personal resources, the Kayayoo only referred to her natural family. When discussing the future in relation to the profession, she referred both to her social family and hometown-friend family. She feels not just her natural family, but no girl from her hometown or region should become a Kayayoo. She referenced her “sister” (social family) when discussing living life as a Kayayoo, but it was clear that those ties were temporary for survival. They share only enough personal resources as needed to keep the community commitment with the social family. And where even slightly possible, they expect same in return. On the other hand, it seemed strange and “wrong” to them when questioned on why they remit money back home to their mothers when they have so little and cannot save. To the Kayayoo it is “normal” and the way it should be to take care of mother and family when they call. It didn’t matter what the money was going to be used for, as many of them did not even ask the caller what the money was needed for.

The natural family is a key driver of the Kayayoo’s need to work even if that means continuing on as a Kayayoo. Those with children back in their hometown were working

to remit money for their education and feeding. They remit money for mother and family. Those married remit money to support husband, and those unmarried were saving to get married.

### **Theme summary**

The Kayayoo uses family both figuratively and literally. In her world, three broad categories of families exist. She defines family by blood, place of origin and her newly-found social network. Her natural family is close-knit and in there her mother and herself, in the absence of her mother assume the role of provider. They place much responsibility on her to serve their needs through her profession. This drives a seep internal motivation for the Kayayoo. Her social family (social network) means safety and adds to her definition of her identity when she's working as a Kayayoo. Within that social family is a subset of people she identifies with as family because of their place of origin and closeness to her natural family; usually determined by proximity. That group lays somewhere between the natural and the social families in terms of the meaning they bring to her identity. She would stay in the profession for a long time to support her natural family to find different ways to succeed so that they do not join her as Kayayoo. While the first family is permanent, the family she finds in her social network group changes over time. I was clear that the Kayayoo's association to the social network family is driven by the agency she derives from the relationship to serve her goals. The meaning she gives to her experience of family is the foundation to her life and choices. As such, even those she considers her social family hold a place in her decisions and agency.

#### **4.2.5 Policy and the relationship to the Kayayoo's construction of meaning**

This theme draws out how policy is affecting their constructions and actions, whether by deliberate action by the Kayayoo in response to a policy or program, or indirectly by virtue of her existing in an environment of policy. It captures areas in her constructions where policy engenders an action or meaning consciously or unconsciously.

Policy, regulations, and social interventions by government was explored in two ways; one, as a direct question, and the other in a role play exercise where the Kayayoo

respondent assumed the role of president with the ability to do something to impact the life of Kayayoo everywhere. The general response on their construction of how policy affects their lives was the government does “nothing, even if they do something, it does not get to us Kayayoo” (Ama, 31 years old). The impression was that policy or regulatory interventions which seemingly should have impacted their lives were not known to the respondents. By “get to us” the respondents implied that they did not hear about it. It was clear that whether policies or interventions meant something to their lives, it would have been passed around through the social connections or network. They would have first “heard about it”, and then perhaps found meaning in it and how it applied to their lives. Even given examples of policy and social interventions that should have impacted them somehow, 8 out of the 10 respondents either had no idea, or no knowledge of how they would access them. Some were even surprised. The outlier policy though was one on education.

It was interesting to note that as a direct question, the government policy most mentioned by the respondents was the policy on free secondary education. Four out of the 10 respondents noted it as being helpful because their younger siblings are able to attend secondary school. “Children are getting free education now. But if there was free education during the time when I was schooling, I might have been educated by now” (Rakiya, 19 years old). It gave insight into the Kayayoo’s appreciation of continued education and confirmed the notion that they did not necessarily choose to be out of school. Supporting their younger siblings through school was one of the reasons for doing the Kayayoo profession, and knowing free secondary education meant their siblings would not have to drop out due to cost, was a motivator. This is a point of note because in their construction of work, and social network, the Kayayoo encourages and offers support to other girls in their hometown to move to the city to “find work” instead of being idle. However, where free secondary school applies, they supported their younger siblings to stay in school, even if only to pass time.

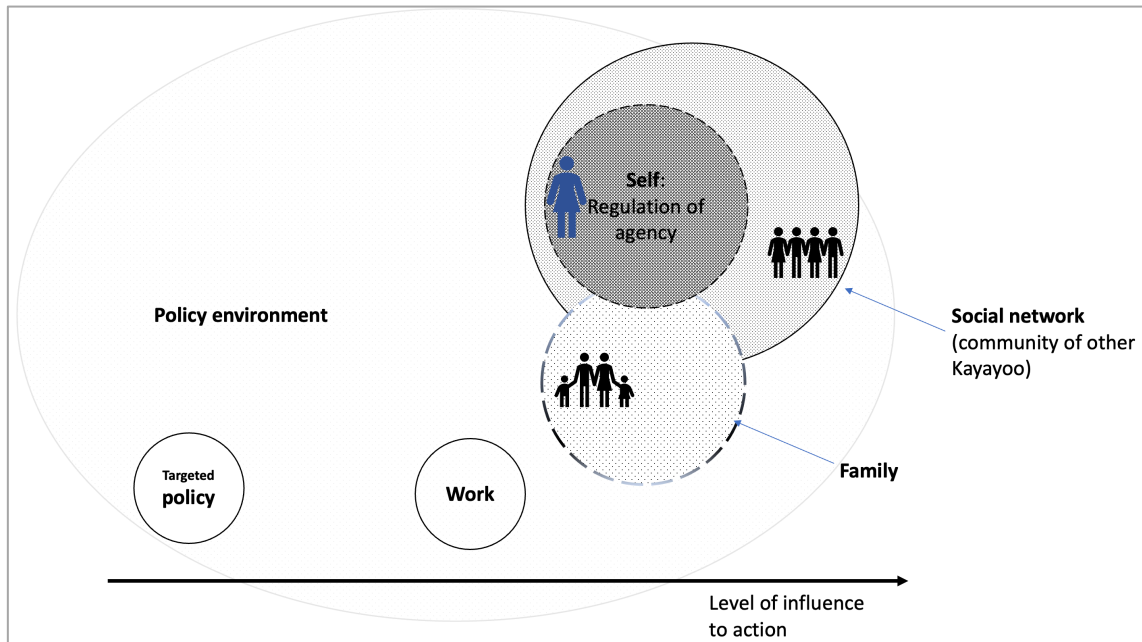
When assuming the imaginary role of president, the older Kayayoo presented various well considered responses. They applied a different set of interventions to the older Kayayoo

like themselves who could not learn a new skills anymore, and to the younger Kayayoo who could learn a new skill and make a living out of it. Samira, a respondent over 30 years old said, “[If I were president] I’ll ask them [Kayayoo] what they want to do, maybe tailoring, or hairdressing or others. I can allow them to go and learn the trade and then I’ll pay the cost and I’ll support them not to go back to the Kayayoo business after their studies. I didn’t get it like that [as a young Kayayoo]. Since I started the Kayayoo business, nobody ever offered me that opportunity to learn a trade. I never heard anything like that. At the time, I would have accepted to learn a trade but by this time, I’ll say truthfully, I will not do it. Because of my children. If I learn a trade, who will take care of my children?” They explained, they would support the older Kayayoo to “start another business, or buy and sell things, or even a refrigerator to sell cold drinks and water from”. The respondents under 25 years old wanted to provide seed money for all Kayayoo to start a business or learn a trade they like either in Accra or back home.

### **Theme summary**

Figure 3 below shows a visual representation of how the themes are connected by showing which factors among the themes have the most influence to engender the Kayayoo to act. It also shows a layer of who information flow to the Kayayoo is the strongest, therefore highlighting that overlap with the most influential factors in their crafting of meaning and action.

Figure 3:



A representation of how the themes are connected.

*Size of circle indicates level of influence on experience for construction of meaning by the Kayayoo. E.g., The social network plays a large role in impacting the Kayayoo's experience and construction of meaning, as it shapes self and strength of agency. Shading intensity indicates depth of influence. E.g., Self, being a darker shading has a deeper impact in how the Kayayoo constructs meaning since it represents their agency which is strengthened from their social network and family.*

The Kayayoo recognizes the existence of some policy environment even though she does not understand fully what it means. She hopes the policy environment would deliver interventions that will better the conditions of her life. The Kayayoo looks at policy from two angles; interventions that will impact her present situation, and interventions that will provide better options for her dependents. For the interventions that have bearing on her life, the Kayayoo believes that the government has not done much. But at the same time they recognize the existence of certain intervention(s) tried which fail to get to them. She attributes that to lack of flow of information. Meanwhile, she looks forward to interventions that will offer avenues for skills development and jobs. She is however mindful of the gap it will take for this retraining and her ability to support her family and

so would prefer to be given the choice where such opportunities exist. For interventions that impact her dependents, the Kayayoo identifies the ones that decrease her financial burden. She noted the role of the free secondary education policy which has reduced her financial investment for the siblings and kids at the school-going age. In the future, she proffers the setup of entrepreneurial ventures for women in her home region to work. It is important to note Kayayoo's interaction with policy versus her existence within a policy environment, as the difference highlights the indirect and direct impact that policy has on her life. It emphasizes that intentionality in policy design can positively contribute to the Kayayoo's profile even if she does not seek it out directly. See figure 4 below.

### **4.3 Description and connection of emerging themes**

The emerging themes could all be summarized as the Kayayeei find work is a means to an end, but also essential to life, their social network is a familiar and critical tool, and family is inevitable and provides purpose. The Kayayoo sees themselves as a forward looking and savvy provider for their family. Their self- image emanates from that connection and sense of purpose to family but is shaped by their experience and work. Their independence and skill are developed further as they live and work as a Kayayoo, and their understanding of their agency and the will to exercise it grows along with their independence and skill. Life and experience as Kayayeei shape their image of self regardless of whether or not they continue on in the profession or move on to a different job. If one is to strip off every other aspect of a Kayayoo's life to view them as merely individuals, at the core of it, the Kayayoo see themselves as any person would see themselves. As being worthy of the opportunity for choice, and the opportunity to make decisions about one's life from information available.

The Kayayoo value hard work and its rewards. They recognize that transition in their lives should occur as a result of progress in their work. The meanings they give to their experience of time and achievements vary with age, time in migration, and the reason behind their migration. Also, it's important to note that they understand strategy, though they may not have all the information and resources needed to maximize outcomes from strategizing, they do strategy with the limited resources they can control. The Kayayoo's

socialization is driven by their social network, making it a good platform or channel to reach them and drive change in a sustainable way. The network represents safety and a source of power for the individual's agency. The Kayayei use family both figuratively and literally. The meaning they give to their experience of family is the foundation to their life and choices. As such, even those they consider as their social family hold a place in their decisions and agency. It is important to note the Kayayoo's interaction with policy versus her existence within a policy environment, as the difference highlights the indirect and direct impact that policy has on her life. It emphasizes that intentionality in policy design can positively contribute to the Kayayoo's profile even if she does not seek it out directly.

### **Chapter conclusion**

Findings from the data show the Kayayoo's engagement with, and construction of meaning of her life as reflected in self, family, work, and environment. It shows the complexity of her life and highlights the areas where her constructions impact her actions. The next chapter will discuss these findings further in relation to the literature on self-concept, the Kayayoo's life and profile, policy, and program design.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 Discussion of findings

This chapter will make the connections between the results of the thematic analysis and the existing theory and research. The findings and connections will be used to answer the research questions guiding the study.

1. How do Kayayoo in Accra, Ghana construct meaning to their lives?
2. In what ways do their construction of meaning correlate or diverge from existing profiles in prior research
3. Do these constructed meanings indicate the need to build several differentiated profiles of Kayayoo, that are not just bound by the existing demographic factors, but are bound by the different meanings of their lives?
4. What are the policy and program implications of having such profiles based on the insights from this research?

#### 5.1.1 The basis for construction: self and “family”

The findings confirmed that the complexities of the Kayayoo’s life is consistent with any individual’s existence. This is consistent with integral theory (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012), and design thinking (Allio, 2014) which both purport that an individual’s existence is multidimensional and complex. The constructions showed how dimensions of their life can be presented along Wilber’s AQAL model (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012). It highlighted the emphasis on their self-concept strongly, as having much weight on the other dimensions; showing how their view of family and social network connected to self and work, and how unconsciously they are impacted by the regulatory and policy environment. Their sense of confidence and boldness from their construction of self is seen as being further strengthened by this social network. These overlaps which will be discussed later, are interesting to note because of the edicts of integral theory that one “cannot understand one of these realities [dimensions] through the lens of any of the others” (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2012, Pg. 3). This study also showed that the meaning she constructs about self has more

depth as compared to the definitions attributed to her profile in existing works. Likely suggesting that the Kayayoo alone can determine what is most meaningful and therefore useful to her.

Though there is a seeming overlap of family and social network to the outside observer, this study found that the Kayayei viewed these as having two different meanings to her life. The differentiation on the meaning given to family and social network was clear from the Kayayoo's construction. The natural family is unique and exclusive with preferential treatment which stemmed from culture and personal beliefs. The social family is essential to survival with a mutual understanding to uphold for safety and progress. Similar research confirms this importance of the social family (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016; Dei, 2012). The natural and social though overlap where natural family members join the Kayayoo society. The middle group is the family-friend; those from the same hometown. That relationship is viewed from a cultural lens by the Kayayoo and receives somewhere between natural and social family treatment. Connecting this to Wilber's integral theory AQAL quadrants, both the social network and family would fit in the WE quadrant but will not overlap. Also, the family would have a strong influence on the I quadrant in defining "who I am" for the Kayayoo, more so than the social network would. In fact, it would even add to defining "who we are" in the WE quadrant as family contributes to developing the self-concept of the individual.

Another set of connections with self, social network, and family is evident in the meaning she constructs of work. This study found that work for the Kayayoo was a means to gain autonomy to take charge of her life. This confirms a finding by Shamsu-Deen (2015) on the Kayayoo's livelihood and migration. The findings showed that for the Kayayoo being idle was not at all a desire, they did not equate the good life to idleness. For all the respondents, in their "best life", they were running a good business, and were taking care of their family. They see hard work in the past, present, and future as the only way to make money and have a good life. It was not marriage, contrary to some existing research that the goal for most is to work to earn enough for a dowry and then stop working (Hashim, 2004).

### **5.1.2 The Kayayoo's agency and self-concept**

The meaning she constructs of herself underpins the meaning she constructs of work, her social network, and her family. She recognizes the various dimensions of her life as important and under control as a result of her actions. This suggests that she has stronger agency than is attributed to her; one that is fueled by her self-concept. The concept of self or “who I am” is an individual's collection of beliefs about who they are (Gecas, 1982). It is a very critical determinant of an individual's behaviors and actions. The individual Kayayoo's self-concept provides the glue within the Kayayoo social network.

The oneness that drives the Kayayoo's social network is what the researchers Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, (2012) call identity fusion. Extended fusion in identity fusion is when people project relational ties to large groups of individuals with whom they have no family or personal ties. This kind of projection is caused by cultural, proximal, or contextual influences, and amplified by augmenting individual agency. Therefore, the more empowered the individual feels in their ability to make decisions for and manage themselves, the stronger the external fusion with the larger group (Swann et.al., 2012). This suggests that the Kayayoo's social network is as strong as the individual Kayayoo's agency and self-concept. By Kabeer's (2001) definition of agency, this ability to make a decision and act on one's goals is driven by elements that are intrinsic, emanating from a power within the person.

The findings show she sees herself as a worthy and viable possessor of her family's survival. Her ability to make remittances and investments back home is largely noted in previous works by Agyei, Kumi & Yeboah (2016), Dei (2012), and Opare (2003). This strong sense of agency could explain the failure of some government interventions for Kayayoo which were not as patronized as hoped. For instance, ‘Operation end child Kayayei’ program aimed at empowering them with skills to generate income and wealth for themselves did not succeed. Lithur (2014) in her address to parliament noted the failure of this intervention as many of the young girls returned back to being Kayayoo when they

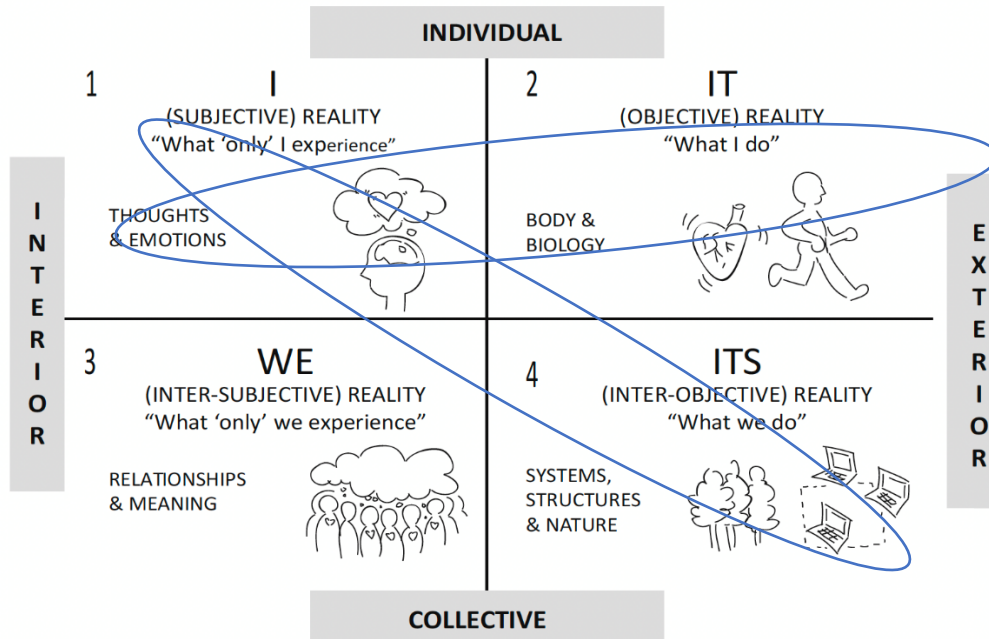
were sent back to the North after the training. The findings showed that the Kayayoo see themselves as savvy and smart, and a provider for their family. They want to be presented with the opportunity to understand and exercise their choice and agency when it comes to deciding what to do for work or money.

This study confirmed the stance of phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004; Maypole & Davies, 2001) that the Kayayoo's experience of herself and her environment can be most accurately described by herself only. Self-constructed image and belief adds to the construction of this meaning and cannot be left out in the formulation of intervention, or support for them. From the findings, the policy that was known best to the Kayayoo was one that directly augmented her agency and self-concept. This brings new knowledge of the I quadrant of the AQAL model.

### **5.1.3 New profile dimensions and correlation with existing definitions**

This added understanding of the meanings the Kayayoo constructs of herself, and her life, indicate the need to redefine the way their profile is constructed. Profiles need to be viewed in the deeper light of their sense of worth and independence in carrying out their agency and not only be limited to biographical and demographic factors. Current literature has extensively and quite accurately studied the conditions of their lives, habits, language, social practice and make-up. There however remains a gap in what meanings these conditions are enabling or creating during the Kayayoo's experience of her environment, work, and policy. This research shows that a lot of this meaning can be found in the two left quadrants of the AQAL model which are I and WE. These represent the "who I am" concept of self, and the "who we are" social network of the Kayayoo. It bridges that gap between the ITS (systems and environment) and the I (thoughts, emotions, and experience), and the IT (physical skill, body and biology) and the I, and vice versa. See figure 4 below:

Figure 4:



By providing more insight about the I, this research bridges the gap across the I and ITS, and the I and IT.

*Modified - The four quadrants of the AQAL map or model (Stevens, nd. Figure 7, Pg. 240).*

These connections are necessary for sustainable program and policy design. Similar to how interconnectedness and integration in integral theory can bring sustainable change in systems and leadership outcomes (Stevens, nd), so can bridging those gaps allow for more positive response to programs. It would provide an in-depth view of their interior experiences and actions that would bring meaning when added to the already known partial overview from the current studies which is more representative of their exterior lives.

The multidimensional nature of the Kayayei life is not lost on them as this multidimensional experience is what matures them to be worthy to stand in for themselves and their family. It has given them the experiences to build the evidence to prove that they are responsible and can be trusted by their family and social network. And all of this reality and meaning given to the things they experience is driven first by the meaning derived they derive from self.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.1 Overview of the study

The purpose of this research was to discover the depth and richness of the Kayayoo's profile from the Kayayoo's own interpretation of the meaning behind their experience of things in their life and environment. Through semi-structured depth interviews, it gathered data on how they construct meanings of their lives to draw out the intentionality of their experiences that is unique to them. From the findings, the study examined how these meanings conformed or not to existing profiles, and the possible implications of the findings to policy and program design. The research answered the proposed questions, how do the Kayayoo construct meaning of their own lives, and how do these constructions correspond to the existing profiles applied in policy and program design.

### 6.2 Conclusion

The Kayayeei of Ghana have been studied over several decades though there still existed a gap in the literature on the basis of their profiles. A contributing factor of that gap is the limited information around how many Kayayoo there are across the country. This phenomenological study revealed that there is likely no need to continue trying to conduct a census of Kayayoo in order to understand their lives. Especially since the nature of their movements remain nomadic. Instead, what is needed are interventions on her external environment that will strengthen her sense of choice, and agency. The insights of this study showed the meaning and connections the Kayayoo constructs of self, family, social network, and work. It showed that the Kayayoo exercises more of their agency than may be obvious. Their actions are engendered by what they perceive allows them to exercise this agency and choice. And the meaning they construct of family, work, and social network are closely related to this agency. With this insight, what is needed is a mapping of the Kayayoo's external environment to identify the intersections with public policy, and other services, and then design interventions at those intersections to maximize the impact of the program on their lives when they make a choice to access it.

### 6.3 Implications for policy and program design

It is important to note the Kayayoo's interaction with policy versus her existence within a policy environment, as the difference highlights the indirect and direct impact that policy has on her life. It shows that intentionality in policy design can positively contribute to the Kayayoo's profile even if she does not seek it out directly. The Kayayoo's socialization is driven by their social network, and not the policy environment. This could be good because it presents a good platform or channel to reach the Kayayoo. On the other hand, it could be a challenge because as is evident from this study, it is their main source of information, and could easily engender a circle of ignorance if wrong or limited information is spread in the network. The centrality of the social network on the Kayayoo's engagement with policy is important to note because of its close relation to the exercise of her agency. Berner (1998) argues that one cannot focus on agency without taking into consideration social structure. He however also notes that although social structure can influence an individual's decisions (agency), it does not determine how one should act. This study confirms that for the Kayayoo, her social structure is strongly connected to her agency, and both derive power from the other. The Kayayoo's agency drives the connection between the Kayayoo's meaning for their social network and its connection to the natural family. The social structure drives their actions within boundaries that the individual Kayayoo sets, in exercising agency, to advance set goals

The findings showed that largely policy does not directly impact their constructions and actions. That however, that does not mean they are completely unaffected by it as they live and operate in an environment that is driven by policy, from migration to education, and health. This and previous studies on the Kayayeei population confirm their frequency of migration across the country (Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Suleman & Mahama, 2015). Respondents in the study confirmed that travel back and forth to their home locations made it possible strengthen their agency as some had husbands and children back home. The policy environment makes movement by these women possible. Internal migration in Ghana has seen an increase partly because of regulations on fuel prices, and in effect transport prices. Public transportation is widespread and accessible across the country making it easier to travel. This is coupled with the poverty in the northern regions where the Kayayoo emigrate. Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Tagoe, &

Bosiakoh (2008) in their migration country paper noted that policies to develop the poorer regions will positively reduce the out-migration of young people like the Kayayoo in search for jobs.

Similarly, the ease of money transfer across platforms other than formal banks facilitate their remittances to family. This and other studies (Agyei, Kumi & Yeboah, 2016; Opare, 2003) found being able to send remittances to be very critical to their stay in their destination city. Broadly enhancing mobile money usage as part of financial development policy (Manfred, 2017) has allowed access to the poorer unbanked populations like the Kayayoo (Della Petruta, 2018). All respondents in this study had a cell phone, or very easy access to one, and therefore access to mobile money services. Besides that, the services provide multiple vendors and agents throughout the markets, hence increasing access. From this study respondents who had mobile money registered using their national health insurance ID card. The national health insurance scheme (NHIS) is a national policy intervention accessible to all. To the Kayayoo, it has the added benefit of strengthening her agency by giving her access to register to mobile money.

Policies that blanket address the youth have had mixed-success in engendering action by the Kayayoo. An example of a successful one is the free Senior High School (SHS) policy which keep girls from dropping out of school to become Kayayoo due to high fees and poverty. From the findings, this was one of the very few policies that the Kayayoo knew about and patronized because it allowed their younger family and friends to stay in school. On the other hand, there are other interventions by the Youth Employment Agency, and the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan with their agenda to provide youth with skills to create wealth (Ghanaweb, 2020; YEA, 2020; NEIP, 2020) are not known to Kayayoo. From the understanding of the social network's construction, it is clear that these interventions have not been well communicated within the social network. The difference could also be because of the Kayayoo's prioritization of family to self, and her belief in her ability to provide for them. That belief likely contributes to the popularity of the free SHS within the social circle. It is an intervention that allows them to see immediate results in their wards remaining in school.

It is apparent that blanket policies aimed at improving the basis for living, and livelihood across the country impact the Kayayoo's constructions and actions in more successful ways than do policies designed specifically for them. The more successful are the ones that the Kayayoo perceives as strengthening her agency even further, thus allowing her to decide and make choices. Policy recommendations are made with this foundation in mind.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for policy**

Policy affects the external environment of the Kayayoo more than it does her internal because her internal self is closely held with her social network and family. However, given the connections between the meanings given of her life's different aspects, policy can impact this internal self and engender action if the right elements of her external environment are affected. It is clear from this study that seeking and strengthening her meaning of self, and agency is critical to engendering action by the Kayayoo. Program design that capitalizes on the Kayayoo's independence and allows them the opportunity for choice in deciding what and how to access interventions. Policies that seek to impact the Kayayoo's life should shape the environment so that when she carries out her usual action, the regulatory and policy environment within which she operates will support her success. Doing this would require that policy and regulatory actions get a better appreciation for the complexities and literal connections of the Kayayoo's life to the system in which she operates. This will help to identify her intersections with public policy environments or functions and highlight where interventions would make the most impact in improving her success.

The Kayayoo's existence within a policy environment offers a good opportunity for impacting her life with positive interventions. Recommendations for policy based on this study would be as follows: One, Maximize the outcomes of her actions at the intersections with the policy environment in which she operates. And two, Capitalize on the influence and power of the Kayayoo's social network family.

#### **6.4.1 Maximize the outcomes of her actions at the intersections with the policy environment**

The Kayayoo are considered a low income poor population predominantly from the poorest regions of the country (UNDP, 2018; Yaro & Hesselberg, 2010). As noted earlier, fifty percent of Kayayoo have no formal education and those that do have only up to primary education (Parliament of Ghana, 2016). Additionally, they face many health challenges, and do not access health care due to their low education and income constraints (Shamsu-Deen 2015). The nature of their work and living conditions exposes them to physical stress, bodily pain, and accidents, and diseases like malaria, typhoid, and cholera (Shamsu-Deen 2015). These areas of healthcare, education, and general dignified living conditions are areas of public policy. One key insight from this research is that the Kayayoo, as they grow in their profession, develop an independence and sense of agency to weigh factors and determine priorities to make their own decisions on how to achieve their goals. Therefore, contrary to the usual approach of determining what they need and then designing it for them, the approach of program and policy interventions should be to provide the resources at the right place and significantly share the information on how to access such resources. With this insight, what is needed is a mapping of the Kayayoo's external environment to identify their intersections with public policy and other services, and then design interventions on that environment to maximize the benefits of their actions when they make the choice to access it.

The problems faced by the Kayayoo are the usual overarching social problems in education (Asamoah, 2011), health care (Nyarko and Tahiru, 2018), child protection (Baah-Ennumh & Owusu Adoma, 2012; Hazlewood, 2015; Suleman & Mahama, 2015), and women empowerment. Identifying and meeting them at their points of intersection with policy would broaden benefits such as the health insurance policy which allows Kayayoos to get a health insurance card at no cost (Bulmuo, 2016; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2016). At those intersection, the outcomes of their actions can be maximized when the intersectionality of the dimensions of their lives are considered, and they are engaged in dialogues to highlight the meanings they find in accessing those interventions. As is evident from this research, the Kayayoo's actions are driven by meaning and by their goals. A deliberate understanding of those meanings and

goals at their point of intersection with specific social policy areas would provide insights to help maximize the outcomes of their actions at the access points. The options for choice need to be designed into interventions and programs and highlighted in the information provided to the Kayayoo. This will play to their life of independence and exercise of agency. This study showed that, fundamentally, the Kayayoo individually (drawing on the meanings of experience of self, family, and social network) makes her own decisions and choices for the future. Therefore, interventions that provide access to resources and highlight this choice and agency will be more attractive as it is empowering.

#### **6.4.2 Capitalize on the influence of the Kayayoo's social network family**

Appreciating and understanding the centrality of the Kayayoo's social network on the Kayayoo's engagement with policy is key to success in making impact through policy. This study revealed that the Kayayoo's social network is not just a grouping but a source of power and agency for the Kayayoo. It shapes the Kayayoo's socialization from even before they become Kayayoo. The Kayayoo's relationship with the network goes both ways, she gives to its credibility and power and gains from its identity and power. This network, as found is not about the formal political constructs that are designated as Kayayoo associations with officers and spokespeople. It is the core and very foundational connections that are as old as the Kayayoo profession itself and has, over the years, carried and shaped the real definition of the Kayayoo's identity. Esbjörn-Hargens (2012) notes that taken from the quadratic approach, the more channels of information the individual has access to, the more empowered they will be in interacting effectively with their world. And the better they are at connecting all four dimensions of their reality. On the integral theory four quadrant model, the Kayayoo's dimensions of awareness show that the policy environment, which forms part of the lower left quadrant, provides the least information to her awareness. The Kayayoo's ability to interact more effectively in their world is unconsciously limited because of this lack. And the view of this dimension of life is driven by her social network's access to information. From integral theory, this acknowledgment of the multifaceted nature of the Kayayoo's complex life would allow multiple perspectives to find a solution that capitalizes on the intersections in reality (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., 2012).

Therefore, as a foundation, policymakers and regulators need to develop a deeper appreciation for the meaning of the Kayayoo's social network to her actions and self. The study showed that the interpretation and meaning the Kayayei give to their experience of phenomena is filtered through her social network. An appreciation of this would further reveal the social network's depth and structure and how it fuels the Kayayoo's agency. Policymakers in designing implementation need to be deliberate about making information on access and benefits practically available in the Kayayoo's social network. Doing this would require an immersive ambassadorial approach where program implementers deliberately immerse themselves and identify early adopter Kayayoo who will choose to try out social policy programs they qualify for. Information would have to highlight that there is choice in the opportunities offered, and where applicable, highlight the benefits for the Kayayoo's wards and family.

The system used to engage the social network would need to evolve and change with the changes in their lives and experience. In essence, its relevance and usefulness should be driven by them. The only constant should be the clarity of information on how to access resources and interventions from social policy and how to maximize their benefits when they access it.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

The analysis of the findings revealed strong connections to the area of self-concept that were not anticipated and thoroughly explored in the literature review. This concept should be investigated in further studies on attempting to fully understand the Kayayoo's construction of the meaning of her life and her agency. Additionally, the findings drew out a subtle but present sense of power and importance that life in migration accords to the migrant. It suggested that this new "higher class" position in the home society was accorded to the migrant regardless of the status of their livelihood at their destination. That perception of better opportunities translates to a better life even if it has not yet been realized. Further research could dive into the nuances of this linkage and explore how that might be a tool for improving the poverty reduction effects of rural-urban migration. A

recommended follow up study to this study would be to conduct a quantitative study to further validate the concluding dimensions from this research that should form the basis for profile definition within the different groupings of Kayayoo. Another would be to conduct a mapping and rate of contact of the intersections the Kayayoo has with the existing public and other consumer services environment.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TITLE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PROFILE DEFINITION OF  
KAYAYOO IN GHANA

RESEARCHER: ROSE ABA DODD

1. Introduction

- Can you tell me about where you come from?
- Can you tell me about your family?
- How long have you been in Accra working as a Kayayoo?
- Where in Accra have you worked as a Kayayoo?

2. Personal/ Self

- Tell me about your first week in Accra
- Describe your life as a Kayayoo (with a young child – for women who indicate they have a child with them)
- Describe your life when you are in your home-town with your family
- What would you describe as your best life (family life, work, personal fulfillment)?
- What is your plan for next year?
- What role does your family play in your plans?

3. Social economic

- Describe your typical day as a Kayayoo
- What is the highest amount of money you have earned in a day as a Kayayoo?
  - o How did you feel that day? And what did you do?
- Where do you live? Who do you live with?
- How did you find a place to live?
- Who are your best customers? Why?
- How can you live a better life?
- How can you earn more money?
- Why did you choose this job?
- Why do you save money? How much of your earnings do you save? Why that amount?

4. Policy

- What is the best thing anyone (group or individual) has done for you since you've been working as a Kayayoo? Why was it the best?
    - o What is the best thing the government has done for you? And why was it the best?
  - What do you know about the government's employment programs for the youth?
  - Role play: If you were the government, what will you do for all Kayayoo next year?
5. Conclusion
- If you have 5,000ghc today what would you do with it? Why that?
  - What else would you like to add to what you have shared with me
  - What question do you wish I had asked you?
  - Do you have any question(s) for me?

**Appendix 2: Consent Forms**

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE BY INTERVIEW IN A RESEARCH STUDY  
TITLE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PROFILE DEFINITION OF  
KAYAYOO IN GHANA

RESEARCHER: ROSE ABA DODD

Consent for this study will be taken verbally. This form will be read out to participants in the local language of their choosing by the researcher, and their consent taken in same language and recorded.

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The interview will take 1 hour and will be conducted in your chosen local language. To the extent that the below Covid-19 protocols have been correctly followed by yourself and the researcher, no risks are anticipated to be associated with your participation. You however have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Covid-19 Protocols Followed:

1. Wash hands with soap and running water, and dispose of the paper towel in a bin
2. Use hand sanitizer and let dry on hands before touching anything
3. Get a new set of nose mask and face shield provided to you by the researcher, and wear it
4. Sit in the outdoor waiting area provided (seats in waiting area are spaced out by 2 meters according to Covid-19 guidelines)

5. Interview is held outdoors in a shaded area away from the sun
6. During interview seating is at 2 meters from the interviewer

The purpose of the interview is to hear your own description of your life and work as a Kayayoo, and how you see external factors and players (like the government and other organizations) affect the life you have chosen or are planning for yourself. I would like to understand everything about your work, family life, and social life. and You may share as little and as much as you feel is needed to help me (the researcher) understand your experiences from your point of view, almost like I am in your shoes.

Learning from you in this way will help me in the work I am doing to get a better understanding of you as a woman who is a Kayayoo.

Please indicate your consent to be interviewed by responding Yes or No to the questions below. Do stop and ask any clarifying questions you may have regarding the questions below.

The question will be read out to you, and your responses will be recorded:

	Yes	No
I understand that my participation is voluntary. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation		
I understand the purpose of the interview		
I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving any reason		
I understand that the interview will be recorded so that the interviewer may accurately portray my responses to the questions		
I understand that access to the interview transcript will be limited to the researcher, and academic colleagues and researchers with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process. The audio recording will not be kept beyond the production of the results of this study		
I understand that my identity will remain confidential and, where summary interview content or direct quotations are used, a pseudonym will be used in referring to information gathered during the interview. Also that care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify me is not revealed		
Where quotations are used, I agree to be quoted if my name is not used. A pseudonym is used instead		
I understand that the outcome of the findings from this research will be published and may be used for further study which may or may not involve me		
I understand that any variation of the conditions above will only occur with my further explicit approval		
I can request to be briefed on the findings from the study when it is completed		

I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future on 0271217344		
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If you responded YES to all the questions above, please indicate by saying (on record), I give my consent to be interviewed for this study.

To be completed by interviewer:

	No	Yes
Was consent given on record?		

Date: \_\_\_\_\_