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Views of Deaf Teachers on Sexual Awareness and Prevention of Sexual Abuse among Deaf Children and Youth.

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<p>In this thesis, I collected information on sexual abuse and prevention of sexual abuse among deaf and reviewed best practices found on preventing sexual abuse. I then conducted a qualitative study on the views of deaf teachers at House of Grace School for Deaf (HoG) and assessed and analyzed the information found in order for it to be useful in developing a sex education and prevention program at HoG.</p> <p>It has been found that deaf may be more vulnerable to sexual abuse and at HoG, several abuse cases have been reported in recent years. The main responsibility of the school is to keep the students safe and ensure their wellbeing, which is why the school must take action in finding ways to prevent sexual abuse from happening to the students.</p> <p>The theoretical framework in this thesis was based on Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological theory.</p> <p>This theoretical perspective presents how the wider environment of the young person can be conceptualised, understood and practically used in an ecosystemic manner. David Finkelhor's (1984) four preconditions model was also used to understand why and how sexual abuse occurs.</p> <p>Educational initiatives have been found to be most successful in preventing abuse among children and youth. However, a holistic approach in prevention strategies is needed in order to reach all of the different systems the child is living in, as the ecological model suggests. HoG is in need of an educational program that would reach all systems of the child and involve the parents and communities the child lives in as well.</p>	
<p>Keywords: Deaf, Deaf Culture, Deaf Community, Sexual Abuse, Prevention, Sex Education.</p>	

Tekijä	Ona Needelman
Otsikko	Kuurojen opettajien näkemyksiä seksuaalisen hyväksikäytön ehkäisemisestä ja seksuaalisesta tietoisuudesta kuurojen lasten ja nuorten parissa.
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<p>Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kerätä tietoa seksuaalisesta hyväksikäytöstä ja seksuaalisen hyväksikäytön ehkäisemisestä kuurojen parissa ja arvioida hyväksi todettuja käytäntöjä seksuaalisen hyväksikäytön ehkäisemisessä. Toteutin kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen, jossa haastattelin Armon päiväkodin ja koulun kuuroja opettajia ja analysoin tutkimuksesta kerättyä tietoa. Tarkoituksena oli hyödyntää tutkimustietoa oman seksuaaliterveyden opetuksen sekä hyväksikäytön ehkäisy ohjelman kehittämisessä Armon päiväkodille ja koululle Ghanassa.</p> <p>Maailmanlaajuisissa tutkimuksissa on todettu, että kuurot ovat haavoittuvaisempia seksuaaliselle hyväksikäytölle ja Armon päiväkodissa ja koulussa useita oppilaisiin kohdistuneita hyväksikäyttöjä on raportoitu viimeisiltä vuosilta. Koulun velvollisuus on takaa oppilaiden turvallisuus ja hyvinvointi, minkä vuoksi koulun on otettava isoja askeleita ja toimia taistellakseen oppilaisiin kohdistuvaa seksuaalista hyväksikäyttöä vastaan.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen tausta perustuu Bronfenbrennerin(1994) sosio-ekologiselle mallille. Tämä näkökulma esittää, miten ihmisen koko ympäristö voidaan käsitteellistää, ymmärtää ja hyödyntää käytännössä ekologisen mallin mukaan. Käytin myös David Finkelhorin (1984) teoriaa hyväksikäytön aiheuttajista, jotta ilmiön juuria voisi ymmärtää syvällisemmin.</p> <p>Koulussa toteutettavat ohjelmat ollaan todettu tehokkaimmiksi hyväksikäytön ehkäisyssä. Kokonaisvaltaista näkökulmaa ilmiöön kuitenkin tarvitaan, jotta lapsen ehkäisykeinot tavoittavat lapsen kaikki eri ympäristön tasot. Armon päiväkotia ja koulua tarvitsee koulussa toteutettavan ehkäisyohjelman, joka osallistaa myös lasten perheet ja yhteisöt ja joka tavoittaa kaikki lasta ympäröivät ympäristön tasot.</p>	
<p>Avainsanat: Kuuro, kuurojen kulttuuri, kuurojen yhteisö, seksuaalinen hyväksikäyttö, ehkäiseminen, seksuaalikasvatus.</p>	

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Table 1

1 Introduction

Promoting healthy sexual behavior and fighting against sexual abuse are important areas of development among the deaf worldwide and especially in Ghana, where inequality for children in even receiving basic education continues to remain as a big problem. Especially deaf in Ghana face a significant disadvantage of receiving any education and due to lack of resources the few deaf schools available are congested and lacking quality teaching. As basic education for deaf in Ghana is already facing enormous challenges it can be stated that sex education for deaf in Ghana is practically non-existent.

The remarkably uninformed attitude towards sex and sexual health among the deaf is a heated discussion among researchers in developed countries such as the US and UK, where it has been revealed that the deaf are at higher risk of sexual abuse than the hearing community. In developing countries, where the deaf are even more isolated from the hearing community due to negative attitudes of society, the risk of sexual abuse among deaf is even higher, according to researchers.

The isolation of the deaf population in Ghana from health and social services, educational initiatives and services, public services and even from the justice department place deaf children and youth in a vulnerable position when it comes to violence and abuse. Lack of awareness on personal safety, the poor role of a deaf person in a hearing community or family and help-seeking barriers in the society present great challenges for preventative work among the deaf population. Most workshops organized by foreign NGO's focusing on preventing sexual abuse are for hearing people and there are no programs shown on television for deaf, except the news on one tv station. An-

other great challenge are societal and cultural norms within the deaf community itself, where, for example, being raped would be considered more of being the victim's responsibility and as the deaf community is very tight and isolated from the hearing, reporting a deaf abuser would bring great shame and embarrassment for the victim since everybody knows each other. Also, deaf rarely end up behind bars, due to lack of resources of interpreters and officials to handle deaf cases in the police quarters.

The main purpose of this thesis is to provide valuable and useful information for House of Grace School for Deaf in order for the school to develop strategies and means to provide the students with quality sex education, promote healthy sexual behavior and prevent abuse from happening to the students. In recent years, some students have displayed concerning behavior, for example seeking attention from strangers, which adds to their vulnerability to abuse. There have also been three abuse cases in the past three years.

I conducted a qualitative study, where seven permanent teachers of House of Grace School for Deaf were interviewed on their personal views on deaf education, sexual abuse among deaf, the deaf community and how the school could prevent abuse from happening. This information, after assessed and analyzed carefully, is valuable in order to start developing sex education and preventative measures in the school. Especially as staff consist of personnel from many cultures and countries, considering the deaf teacher's views is essential in developing a sustainable and culturally fitting educational program for the students. In this thesis, I will also introduce and discuss factors contributing to deaf person's vulnerability to abuse and reasons behind challenging behavior in general and shortly present background information and studies done on the phenomenon of abuse among deaf around the world.

2 Deaf Children in Ghana

According to Ghana National Association of the Deaf, there are currently approximately over 400,000 deaf people in Ghana due to heredity or illness. It is even impossible to estimate the accurate figure, since most are found in more remote villages around the country.

In Ghana, negative attitudes of parents and family members towards deaf and old superstitious beliefs, for example deafness being a curse or a punishment from God, are preventing most deaf children from receiving any education or being able to participate or even communicate in their own community. Some perceptions of parents of deaf in Ghana include a deaf child being unable to learn or acquire any skills, deafness being just a phase and sign language ruining the child's ability to gain their hearing back or learning to talk.

According to Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD), most deaf children in Ghana are born to hearing parents. The parents/guardians are the major stakeholders when it comes to their children's holistic wellbeing and education and especially in lower income families or families who are facing economic, social or health challenges, true motivation and willingness to fight for one's child's right to education are the key factors that can safeguard the child. When it comes to deaf children in Ghana, it is even more so up to the parents/guardians to be active and fight on issues regarding deafness and deaf people in Ghana.

2.1 Deaf Children and Education

All children and families in Ghana from lower-income families are having to deal with financial, social and physical impediments to go to school. Therefore it is clear that deaf children in Ghana are in an especially disadvantaged position when it comes to education. Especially in small villages around the country, where it is challenging to find basic education for hearing children, deaf children are left with no hope to receive education (GNAD 2001). Also, a family with many children usually put the hearing child's education first and if having to choose between school fees for a deaf child and other expenses, the deaf child's education usually comes last (Personal interview, Appiah 17.1.2015).

For many deaf children who start school, their education stops at the basic level (Kwadade 2000). Currently there are fifteen schools for the deaf in Ghana; twelve are primary and junior level basic schools and two of them senior secondary, technical and vocational education. According to report published by the Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service, Out of the 13 schools only 3 schools use sign language effectively.

A major challenge in the education of deaf children is the language. Like many other African countries, Ghana has over forty languages and even more different dialects. This multi-language system presents a bigger challenge for deaf education. At school children learn whichever language is used in that area, which might be totally different from the language used by their parents and later English is also added to the taught languages. Some deaf schools unfortunately follow the same pattern as hearing schools having to change from a second Ghanaian language to English. (Addo, Okyere 1996).

In addition, the use sign language in deaf schools varies immensely as mentioned before. In some deaf schools, there are more hearing teachers than deaf teachers and not all teachers can even do basic signing (Appiah 2015). For the students who struggle to learn how to read, it becomes close to impossible learning the other subjects and writing any exams. Without using sign language effectively in teaching, teaching how to read and write is very challenging without communicating well in the child's first language, which is should be sign language (Personal interview, Engelbrecht 20.04.2015).

2.2 Growing up as a deaf child

Raising a child with hearing loss is challenging, and there is no such thing as one correct answer or a perfect way to behave. But the more a parent can learn about the challenges the child faces, the better equipped they will be to support them. By accepting your deaf child's abilities and taking the time to access their world from a young age, you also give them access to yours. When deaf individuals are not struggling to live a hearing lifestyle in their own home, they can focus on growing in other areas. (Callis L. Lydia 05.06.2014.)

Currently in Ghana, a major part of society is still lacking understanding of deafness and deaf culture, so for many deaf children growing up in a hearing family can be a very lonely and isolating experience. A major factor in a deaf child's childhood is whether the family members will choose to learn sign language or not. It is more intuitive for deaf babies to learn a physical language than one which relies on sound (Callis M. Lydia 05.06.2014). Sign language is the most natural form of communication for deaf people around the world and research has shown that anywhere where there is concentration of deafness, sign language has developed. In Ghana, for example, in the

village of Adomorobe in the Eastern Region 15 percent of its inhabitants are deaf, which has led to the area having their own sign language that is totally different from GSL (Ghanaian Sign Language). It is important that deaf children have early exposure to sign language and have the right to be educated as bilinguals or multilinguals regarding reading and writing because sign language is the only language that a deaf child can acquire without someone specifically teaching it (Sign Language 2015).

A home environment where a deaf child has to struggle to manage living a hearing lifestyle will make it more difficult to equally participate and be an active member of the family. Rather than focusing on the disability, it is important to concentrate on the child's abilities which can grow and develop by learning a physical language in the family and later learning sign language together. Confusion hearing parents might experience when having a deaf baby is a common response given our society's unfortunate lack of understanding about deaf culture. (Callis, M Lydia 05.06.2014.) Feeling like an outsider in your own home is an experience many deaf children unfortunately have. Being surrounded every day by people who do not talk to you, tell you stories or answer your millions of questions and not having family members to try to teach you, guide you or provide comforting words when you need them is an isolating experience.

According to Mr. Opong, lecturer at the Special Education department at Winneba University, deaf children in hearing families develop their own physical language to communicate within the family, since parents don't know the official sign language and children usually don't start learning the official sign language until starting school. When the child starts learning sign language at school, it is important for the parents and other family members to learn the official sign language, because as the child will learn the language more effectively, it will become their prominent language to communicate with. Unfortunately in Ghana, many parents don't have the time, resources or interest to learn Ghanaian sign language (Interview Anson 05.02.2015). It can be generalized, that mostly parents not learning sign language is due to lack of interest or effort.

3 Context of the Study

3.1 The Deaf Community and Culture in Ghana

Understanding deaf culture has many benefits for teachers, health professionals, family members and the general public. It is important for teachers, educators, sign language interpreters, health professionals, and other people who work with deaf people to understand the role of deaf culture in the lives of deaf people. Familiarity with the cultural values of the Deaf community is essential to reducing negative perceptions of deaf people as well as increase sensitivity and supportiveness by people who work and live with them. (Sign Language 2015.)

A deaf community is where many Deaf people are in one community sharing their common experiences and values, and are able to communicate with each other (GNAD 2010). Deaf culture is part of the deaf community and like other cultures in other communities deaf culture entails language, customs, common beliefs and traditions. It has been observed for nearly over a century and a half that deafness creates unique social groupings and communities (The Deaf Way 2994 100-101). These communities are created based on the fact of deafness, modes of communication, and on the necessity of achieving equal rights in the society.

It might seem strange at first to define deafness as a cultural phenomenon. It might also seem strange to define deafness as a cultural group. According to Wisdom. K. Mprah, GNAD communications officer, to say that we all have the same system of knowledge, beliefs, moral values, and customs is to disregard the complexity and diversity of humanness. There are clear differences between the hearing and deaf populations. Certain distinct characteristics such as a communication system that is different from the spoken language, history, art, knowledge, beliefs, moral values, and customs differ from the hearing community. For example, collectivism is generally the dominant cultural feature among deaf people; members of the Deaf community consider themselves closely-knitted and interconnected (Mprah 2011).

Even though many members of the deaf community are from hearing families, they grow up to have distinct beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences that are different from those in their hearing natal families, making them more likely to relate better with other deaf people than their biological families (Learning about Deaf Culture and Community n.d).Some of the students at House of Grace School for Deaf attend the

church held at school by a deaf pastor while their other family members go to their family church. Some of the older students start attending deaf churches where people may travel from the other end of the city only to engage with other deaf people. According to one teacher at House of Grace school, this is mostly due to communication barriers with the hearing, which make forming relationships with the hearing nearly impossible. Another important cultural feature is that deaf people tend to intermarry among themselves. In the US, as many as 90 percent of deaf adults are married to other deaf people, and in many cases, deaf couples desire to have children who are also deaf in order to facilitate parental care and to able parents transmit their culture to their children. (Mprah 2011.)

Before the introduction of formal education to deaf children in Ghana, deaf people didn't have possibilities of meeting with each other and forming groups and thus developing their own culture. In Ghana especially among those who cannot read or write, culture is transmitted orally from elders to younger ones. Therefore especially in villages, it is more difficult for deaf people to learn about the Ghanaian culture in general and by becoming passive observers might also misinterpret the things happening around them to being customs in their culture (Okyere ,Addo 1996). This has resulted in Ghanaian deaf culture slightly deviating from the general Ghanaian culture.

Especially in Ghana, mainstream attitudes tend to associate deafness with negative values such as deafness only being a lack of something, rather than just another present feature in a person (Slikker 2009 14-16). In Ghana the Persons with a Disability Act was passed in 2006, and since the passing of the bill commenced. Historically deaf people in general have always experienced difficulties in gaining rights. It is a whole new fight for the Disability Rights Bill to actually be applied and supervised to have the same economic, social and physical benefits as the mainstream society (Johnson 1994 200). This may result in deaf people forming groups and organizations on the basis of deafness to fight for access to equal rights in society, making the deaf community closer in a way, excluded from the hearing community. The inequality in society with disabled people especially in Ghana may result in the growth of solidarity in, for example, the deaf communities. (GNAD 2004.)

3.2 House of Grace School for Deaf

House of Grace School for Deaf is a private educational institute for deaf children and opened exactly on the 15th of September, 2008. The vision of the school is to provide an opportunity for a deaf child to learn a language - Sign language and written English. The aim of the school is also to create a better future for the deaf children through education so that they have an opportunity to be employed as adults and become equal members of society with hearing people. Currently the school has classes from nursery to primary six and has 67 pupils aged from six to twenty two.

In previous chapters I have discussed the challenges in growing up as a deaf child in Ghana, lack of quality education for the deaf in Ghana, the deaf community in Ghana and the vulnerabilities of deaf children and youth regarding personal safety. Our students at HOG represent deaf children from different family backgrounds, personal situations and personal histories. Many of the challenges mentioned previously are ones that our students are facing. I will introduce some of the developmental needs of hog that are related to the topic of this thesis

At HOG (House of Grace School for Deaf), preventing sexual abuse among deaf children is a very current issue. In the school we have had cases of sexual abuse of students. The school is obligated to protect the students and strive to give them all the tools and education they need to protect themselves, form healthy relationships, know what healthy sexual behavior is and know exactly what to do if any sexual abuse, harassment or defilement occurs.

Some of our students live in restless and dangerous neighborhoods and already we have had three cases of abuse reported to the school by our female students. The school and its staff have to take an active role against any act of abuse on deaf children and youth. Before making a plan for preventative work done at our school and possibly adding sex education to our syllabus, it is important to gather background information on the situation of other deaf schools regarding this issue, personal opinions

and knowledge of our deaf teachers regarding sexual abuse and take into account the special characteristics of the deaf communities which our students are a part or will be a part of.

Secondly, many of the parents of our students don't know any sign language and only use a simple sign language developed in their family, which cannot carry any complicated conversations with their children. Some children have said their parents don't communicate with them at all. Parents continuously complain how many of their children come home very late and don't tell them where they are going, and this is largely due to the fact children feel and many times are isolated and neglected in the family house due to communication. A goal of the school has been involving the parents in school activity and encouraging them to learn sign language. However, only a very small portion of parents have shown up at organized parent teacher gatherings at the school and some parents have never visited the school since they registered their child at HOG. If we want to start teaching the students about sex, sexuality and personal safety and find new ways of guiding and advising them so that they would not be in such a vulnerable position to abusers, parents must also be involved so that the same message is carried out at students' homes as well. The school has to find new ways of motivating the parents to participate.

The teachers and staff are also facing big challenges in trying to help some of the parents control the behavior of their children at home after school and communicate with them about sex and health issues. Some of the students show very difficult behavior at school and at home and parents feel unequipped to handle them. Those children who are having problems in their home environment, might project those issues by seeking for negative attention.

For example, one of the students who doesn't have a good relationship with her mother at home, continuously runs away from home to spend time at strangers' houses who later the school learnt, was an older deaf man in the neighborhood. According to the girl, the man buys her food and they watch movies at his house. This is an example of a dangerous situation where it is very easy for someone to lure a younger girl into having sex later by forming a friendship first and giving them everything they are not getting at home. In this case, the girl is having problems with her mother who also doesn't communicate with her effectively, making it easy for a stranger who knows sign language to manipulate her thinking and mind about family and school. This is not the only

case of a student continuously running away from home and especially for deaf children, strangers can become dangerous acquaintances to them. In these cases the school has a very important role in working together with the families to help raise their children and change their behavior.

4 Sexual Abuse in the Deaf Community

Sexual assault and abuse for deaf men and women is a serious problem that unfortunately has been given very little attention until recently. Current research has only begun to explore the subject of sexual abuse among disabled people and specifically among people who are deaf. Similarly, research has just begun to explore the prevalence and consequences of sexual assault among Deaf individuals. Information available from sexual assault service providers (both Deaf and hearing) suggests that sexual assault is a significant problem in the Deaf community, although many providers do not see Deaf clients presenting with sexual assault issues ([Obinna; Krueger; Osterbaan, Sadusky & DeVore, 2006](#)). This is because Deaf survivors appear to experience profound isolation and lack of options in seeking help (Violence in the Lives of Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing 2009). Services are generally unavailable to this group in hearing agencies. Moreover, disclosure to formal support services about abuse may be hindered by the intimacy that exists in the Deaf community ([Obinna 2006](#)).

One problem about gathering statistics on sexual abuse is that most studies tend to be based on reported cases, but much of abuse occurs in closed systems where boundaries are enforced and rigid, such as in families, residential homes, church groups and sporting clubs (Brown 1997:105). For disabled people it can be even easier to coerce a child into keeping any abuse a secret especially in a developing country like Ghana, where the fight for the rights of disabled people has only begun and where deaf people especially are in a very challenging place in society, as mentioned in the first chapter.

Though cultural and continental differences may arise between between Deaf in Ghana and Deaf in the US or Europe for example, results research among the Deaf regarding

sexual abuse, knowledge on sexual health, help-seeking patterns, barriers to seeking help when abused and preventing sexual abuse have similar challenges and common patterns as the Deaf in Ghana. Previous research may also give direction to what research would be needed to conduct in Ghana in order to take action and start actively fighting against sexual abuse of Deaf in Ghana.

4.1 Studies on Sexual Abuse among Deaf

To gain the necessary knowledge of sexual abuse among disabled people in order to help develop suitable initiatives to assist abused children and prevent the abuse from recurring, it is crucial to provide new information on the prevalence of the abuse and the circumstances around it. If initiatives for improving the situation disabled children face are to be effective and appropriate, it is important to have substantial knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the abuse and the need for good preventive initiatives and policies. (Violence in the Life of Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing 2009.) Most of the research of sex abuse among disabled that can be found has been done in Western countries. In this thesis, I will mostly be using resources and research from Western countries, since not much research from African countries is available.

However, The African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) is a Pan-African network that promotes child rights and child protection in Africa and they have started conducting some research on sex abuse among the disabled. The Child Protection Programs at ANPPCAN Head Office aim to create an avenue for a long-term joint action program of government departments and non-governmental organizations to deal with the issue of child abuse and neglect in its various forms. Currently they have a project for Deaf Children which is working with the district Education Assessment Resource Centres (EARCs) coordinators from the Ministry of Education, teachers and existing NGOs in Butere-Mumias, Embu, Kajiado and Kitui to build their capacity to identify and support deaf children.

Deaf Child Worldwide is another International non-governmental organization that works with deaf children and young deaf people in East-Africa, Asia and Latin America. All in all, in West-African countries for example, not much research or work with the Deaf community is or has been done. Unfortunately most West-African countries like Ghana only rely on foreign help on issues concerning the deaf.

In North America first researches on sexual abuse among deaf were conducted. An older research conducted in the US showed that between 50 and 70 % of deaf children at some residential schools have been sexually abused (Patricia, M. Sullivan, 1987, *Sexual Abuse of Deaf Youth*). Sullivan (1987) also concluded that boys were equally likely to be abused as girls.

A very recent study at Rochester Institute of Technology that collected data for eight years from college students indicates that the incidence of maltreatment, including neglect and physical and sexual abuse, is more than 25 percent higher among deaf and hard-of-hearing children than among hearing youths. Findings from a computerized American Sign Language survey administered by Pollard and colleagues suggest that deaf adults who use sign language experience notably higher rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) than does the general population, at least in some IPV categories. Key findings include that sexual violence is much more frequently experienced by deaf persons, consistent with previous research (Pollard, Sutter & Cerulli, 2013) and that data regarding emotional abuse identify abuse as the form of IPV most frequently reported by deaf persons, with lifetime rates exceeding 25% (Pollard, Sutter & Cerulli, 2013).

According to another study conducted in 2006 and funded by the National Institute of Justice, Deaf Victims of Sexual Assault face unique issues that differ from hearing people that entail problems in help-seeking, actual available services for Deaf, stigmatization and feelings of shame and guilt. The former Philippine Deaf Resource Center (PDRC) reported that, one out of every three Deaf women in the Philippines is sexually harassed or raped.

A Norwegian researcher Marit Hoem Kvam has carried out four studies commissioned by Save the Children concerning sexual abuse of disabled children. The studies show that disabled children are more often subjected to sexual abuse and that they are more vulnerable than other children. Other children. The first study was of of international literature giving an indication of the prevalence of sexual abuse of disabled children. The second one was a study of what happens in Norwegian hospitals in connection with the medical examination of children one suspects have been abused sexually. Thirdly she did a mapping of deaf children's situation relating to possible abuse during their childhood and finally did a study of blind children's situation relating to abuse. There has been a great deal of hushing up in this area, and the uncovering of the truth as well as assistance and follow up after the abuse have been and still are difficult and insufficient (Braekken 2003).

All of her studies indicated the same fact revealed by other previously conducted studies, which is the fact that disabled children are subjected to sexual abuse twice to three times as often as other children. Though cultural and continental differences may arise between between Deaf in Ghana and Deaf in the US or Europe for example, results research among the Deaf regarding sexual abuse, knowledge on sexual health, help-seeking patterns, barriers to seeking help when abused and preventing sexual abuse have similar challenges and common patterns as the Deaf in Ghana. Previous research may also give direction to what research would be needed to conduct in Ghana in order to take action and start actively fighting against sexual abuse of Deaf in Ghana.

4.2 Why are Deaf People more Vulnerable to Sexual Abuse

All children are in a risk for sexual abuse, since children depend on adults to take care of them. The younger the child is, the less the child can know about what is acceptable adult behavior and how adults normally behave. As stated in the previous chapter, many studies all indicate the same fact that deaf are more at risk for abuse. Reasons for this are complex and there is a great need for more research and analysis of the risk factors involved. In this chapter I will discuss some risk factors that are linked to deafness.

According to the hesperian health guide on helping children who are deaf(), attitudes of the community, the disability itself and isolation can be major risk factors for possibly becoming a victim of abuse as a deaf child. First of all, the value society places on deaf people directly affects how abusers might treat deaf. Choosing a deaf person to be your victim can be easier if you think the worth of the deaf person is less than that of a hearing person.

Many deaf children struggle with loneliness in their family home in Ghana, as in Ghana most parents and family members do not bother to learn sign language and therefore can't communicate with their children effectively. Some deaf children only have their family or caregiver to communicate with and there are also those deaf children who do not have any trusted adult they are communicating with. This is no secret for many abusers, who might choose to abuse a deaf child because he/she knows the child can't or won't tell anyone. Especially if the abuser is a close person to the victim, it will be even harder for the child to tell anyone.

Secondly, deaf people use touch to communicate with one another and sign language itself might also involve touching yourself or the other person. Deaf children might also use touch to get attention from adults. Loneliness and isolation can lead deaf children to leave the home and wander off to seek attention. In House of Grace School for Deaf we have had several children exhibiting behavioral issues such as attention-seeking from strangers. This can confuse the child to think that an adult's touch is acceptable, even though the touch would cross boundaries. Limited communication for deaf children may also result in them learning to just do what they are told without asking why. It is hence also challenging to teach them about safety in a way that the deaf child will fully understand. (Niemann, Greenstein & Darlena 2004, 169.)

Thirdly, a major factor is the lack of proper sex education deaf pupils receive at school and outside of school. A survey for the charity's Education & Advice on Relationships & Sex (Ears) campaign found 35% of deaf people received no sex education at all while at school. One of the respondents recalled her experience of being raped and then having men always knock on her door for sex and her simply thinking that was something she was just supposed to do. Deaf children are also more vulnerable, because with the lack of proper education comes lack of knowledge in language to articulate sex and relationships. Some children won't learn the signs related to sex and sexuality until they leave school. The children are struggling to learn signs related to sex, and parents learning signs for sex is an even more rare occurrence as in Ghana, parents don't usually bother to even learn a beginner's level of the official sign language.

Everyone else surveyed – 65% of respondents – said that what information they did get in school on sex education was inaccessible.

The inaccessibility of information is a big problem especially in government deaf schools in Ghana. Three teachers at HOG told me that most of what they learned in school was all learnt independently at home. One of the teachers told that in his deaf school, 90 percent of teachers were hearing and most pupils never learned to read or write in even a simple manner. Low literacy levels among people with disabilities compound the issue of access. For example, many people with disabilities in developing countries have limited formal education and access to SRH education in schools, and thus lack adequate health literacy (Groce, 2004; WHO, 2009). In addition, social and cultural barriers limit their chances to interact with peers, which could be an important opportunity for informal learning about reproduction and sexuality (WHO, 2009).

SRH information is often not provided in accessible formats (Wilson & Monaghan, 2006) such as Braille, large print, simple language, pictures, and sign languages, thereby depriving access to those with visual, hearing, and intellectual disabilities (WHO, 2009). In particular, adolescents with disabilities face severe challenges because it is often difficult for parents, educators, and counsellors to discuss SRH issues with them, or else they are perceived to be sexually inactive (Job, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2004). Consequently, many of these young people are not familiar with basic vocabularies about their bodies, cannot describe what is happening to them and are therefore vulnerable to SRH problems and sexual exploitation (Groce et al, 2007; WHO, 2009). Barriers may not necessarily be directly related to impairment, but rather reflect the lack of legal and institutional support, and poor understanding of the SRH concerns of people with disabilities (WHO, 2009).

<http://dcidj.org/article/viewFile/234/154>

Finally, a research made in Ghana titled Perceptions about Barriers to Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Services among Deaf People in Ghana (Mprah Kwado year) has indicated that deaf people encounter several barriers when accessing sexual and reproductive health and services. Seven interrelated barriers – communication, ignorance about deafness, attitudes towards deaf people, illiteracy among deaf people, privacy and confidentiality at SRH centres, limited time for consultation, and interpretation skills of sign language interpreters – were identified by participants. According to the participants, the absence of sign language interpreters made it difficult for health workers to explain information to deaf people. The difficulties in communicating with health professionals sometimes caused them discomfort and were an impediment to effective consultation as health workers were unable to understand their health problems.

Participants also identified negative attitudes and ignorance towards them at SRH centres. Some of the participants said they don't visit the centres often due to the attitudes of the workers and their behavior, which makes deaf people uncomfortable. A barrier associated with ignorance was that the challenges deaf face stem from inadequate knowledge about deaf people and, in particular, their communication needs. These factors contribute to the distrust between deaf people and hearing people.

In conclusion, attitudes of society, education, the distrust between the deaf and the hearing, limited communication skills of the hearing with the deaf, and lack of skills in sexual terminology in sign language of caregivers and even deaf themselves act as barriers to help-seeking for a deaf victim of abuse and also make deaf people more vulnerable to abuse. In cases of a deaf abusing another deaf person and the deaf community being secluded from the hearing community, the embarrassment and shame of reporting inside the deaf community combined with the distrust with the hearing makes it really difficult for a deaf victim to seek help and report.

5 Theoretical framework

The social-ecological model is a model of behavior change that is widely used in the preventative work of sexual abuse. This model is also widely used in prevention work of other major health risks, diseases and social problems. Sexual violence is a complex action and behind a person's act of sexual violence usually lie a wide variety of reasons and different influences in the environment, culture and norms that have led to the act of assault. The social-ecological model is a framework for understanding all the different influences and systems behind the act of abuse.

By understanding why sexual abuse occurs in the first place, it is possible to design programmes, policies and different initiatives to prevent child abuse from occurring.

Smallbone (2008) has explained that theory is important in designing effective prevention strategies because theory allows us to understand the causes of child sexual abuse, the motivations behind it and how those motivations interact with situations. In this study I will also be utilizing Finkelhor's (1984) preconditions model, which focuses on how and why sexual abuse can occur. These preconditions can be placed in the ecological model as well, so that we can identify where and what action can be taken in order to remove these preconditions from existing. Finkelhor's preconditions from abuse cannot exist if the environment and different social networks and systems surrounding the individual are healthy and pro-social.

The ecological model is suitable for this study especially, because preventative work of sexual abuse among deaf requires understanding the special needs and characteristics of the deaf and deaf Community. the challenges Deaf people commonly face and finding the influences in life that may cause sexual violence in different contexts. In order to plan a model of prevention of abuse that reaches the targeted group, in this case stu-

dents of House of Grace School for Deaf, on all the multiple levels of the ecological model, extensive background research is essential.

This study will apply Bronfenbrenner's (1979,1986,1995) ecological model, because it is more focused on the systems influencing human development, rather than a particular event or challenge. As many researches have concluded that deaf are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, exploring all the factors in the different systems the individual is surrounded in can lead to understand how, for example, deafness in Ghana affects the different systems the individual grows in. In the last chapter, I will discuss strategies on primary prevention of abuse and prevention of the harm caused by abuse that using this model.

5.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), a person's development is affected by everything in their surrounding environment. He divided the person's environment into five different levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. All these different environmental levels directly or indirectly affect, for example, the emergence of different risk factors for child sexual abuse. Bronfenbrenner's first ecological paradigm was introduced in the 1970's as a reaction to the restricted scope of most research conducted by developmental psychologists. Bronfenbrenner then continued his work on the development of a theoretical paradigm, publishing several reports and continuing to develop the framework for moving the field forward, which lead to finally a synopsis of the general ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1989;1990, Bronfenbrenner&Ceco 1993).

The microsystem is the system closest to the person. This is the system the individual has direct contact with. Some microsystems include home,school and work. When studying the microsystem where a child lives in, one must look at interactions with the family and close community, teacher, friends and other caregivers surrounding the child. For most students of HOG, the microsystem they live in is their family house, community they live in and our school. Regular interactions in their microsystem might be less for some, who do not have members in their family to sign with them.

The next level, the mesosystem, consists of interactions between the different parts of the microsystem. The person's microsystems are interconnected and all influence each other, which in turn indirectly impacts the individual's development and growth. Ep-

stein(1983a,1983b) has researched the developmental impact of two-way communication and participation in decision making by parents and teachers. Those elementary school students who were from classes where joint involvement was high, exhibited independence and taking initiative when entering high school and also had higher grades. In the last chapter of this study I will discuss how the mesosystem has a big impact on deaf students and their development of sexual health and health awareness.

After the mesosystem follow the exosystem and the macrosystem. The exosystem is a setting that affects the person but doesn't involve the person as an active participant. This includes examples of decision-making processes where the participant can't affect the decision making but is still affected by the decisions. Since the early 1980's, research has focused on three exosystems that are especially likely to affect children and youth indirectly through their influence on the family, the school , and the peer group(Bronfenbrenner 1994,40).

The macrosystem is the level that encompasses the cultural environment of the individual and all other environments that affect it. These include belief systems, customs, life-styles,hazards, opportunity options and material resources. Identifying specific social and psychological features at the macrosystem level can lead to the connection with particular conditions happening in the person's microsystem. For example, examining customs in the deaf community specifically can lead to a process affecting an individual deaf child's microsystem. If, in the deaf community, friendships with hearing are rare and the community also intentionally isolates itself from the hearing community and, in addition, distrust the hearing, an individual deaf child might face difficulties when reaching an adolescent age, having to make choices between spending time with their hearing family members or the deaf community.

The final system, the Chronosystem, is the change or consistency over time in the environment and the characteristics of the person. Time is referred to not as only an attribute to a growing person, but as a property of the surrounding environment across historical time. One example of this could be the loss of income of a family over time and it affecting the child's development. Loss of income over time can affect the abilities of the parents supporting their child emotionally and physically, the home environment, the meeting of needs of the child including basic needs and the worldview of the child. For example, a child might get determination and motivation to reach a good career to be able to have things if deprived from material things that peers were able to get as a child.

5.2 Finkelhor's preconditions model

David Finkelhor's model of the preconditions necessary for sexual abuse to occur (1984) can be utilized in presenting different prevention models for abuse. Shortly after the publication of the first adaptation of the Relapse Prevention model for sex offenders (Pithers et al, 1983), David Finkelhor produced his "Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research" (1984). The acceptance of Finkelhor's model has been widespread and though it has also been a subject to criticism, it has achieved a professional level of recognition around the world.

According to Finkelhor, a theory of child sexual abuse has to be able to explain four basic issues, which are the following:

1. Why some adults are capable of being aroused by children
2. Why sexual desires and impulses are directed towards a child
3. Why individuals who are incapable of having their emotional needs met by adults turn to children for sex and not just for support or friendship
4. Why the individuals involved fail to be inhibited from acting on their impulses (Ward & Hudson, 2001:294).

Finkelhor drew on contemporary literature to provide the four primary underlying factors that emerged as those commonly used to explain the occurrence of child sexual abuse: emotional congruence, deviant sexual arousal, blockage and disinhibition (Mathew 2005). Emotional congruence is the need to feel power and control due to arrested or delayed emotional development. Socio-cultural influences in society such as choosing to have sexual relations with significantly younger or smaller people can contribute to the presence of this factor. Deviant arousal patterns may occur, for example, if exposed to child pornography, sexualizing emotional needs or abnormal hormone levels. Deviant arousal is present through inappropriate conditioning experiences, traumatic experiences or modelling. Blockage briefly refers to the inability to meet sexual and emotional needs in pro-social ways and disinhibition refers to the absence of the normative aversion to sex with children.

These factors form the four preconditions in which the first two are related to motivational factors and the second two have to do with the practicalities of the offence itself. All factors are present when abuse would occur. The preconditions are the following:

1. A potential offender needed to have some motivation to abuse a child sexually.
2. The potential offender had to overcome internal inhibitions to act on that motivation.
3. The potential offender had to overcome external impediments to committing sexual abuse.
4. The potential offender or some other factor had to undermine or overcome a child's possible resistance to the sexual abuse.

These underlying factors are causal mechanisms that drive the motivation to offend, and so can act in varied combinations or entirely independently of each other (Mathew 2005). The preconditions model suggests that sexual abuse against children occurs in a sequence and that once the motivation to abuse a child is present, each precondition would causally depend on the previous one. If one precondition would be missing, sexual abuse would not occur.

Finkelhor's model clearly places the responsibility with the abuser, but does not view potential victims as necessarily passive, but possessing the power to resist. The model is considered to have more explanatory power than many other models because it incorporates both psychological and sociological factors. Though this theory is essentially a descriptive framework and to be called a theory should be tested empirically in its application to prevention, it does provide answers to why and how sexual abuse occurs using both psychological and sociological explanatory power. (South Eastern CASA 2009.) Understanding the phenomenon of abuse is necessary in order to develop strategies for evaluation and intervention on all levels that lead to abuse.

6 Prevention of sexual abuse among deaf

Finkelhor has proposed that all preconditions in his preconditions theory model are necessary for abuse to occur, which would lead an intervention at any of the preconditions to prevent abuse from happening. Thus many prevention programs have been launched that either focus mainly on the offender or on the victim. The question is, will focusing on the characteristics of the offender or the control of the children and parents yield the best results in preventing abuse from happening.

In this chapter, I will focus on the initiatives targeting the children, parents and the environment of the child rather than those of the offender, since this study is about gathering information in order to design a prevention program in House of Grace school for Deaf. I will introduce the concept of school-based prevention programs and at the end of this chapter give some examples of such programs that have yielded good results. I will also briefly introduce a primary prevention approach directed at the environment, because this can be included in the curricula of a possible school-based prevention program at House of Grace School for Deaf.

6.1 Primary Prevention

A primary prevention approach prevents abuse before it happens by addressing the environmental factors and societal norms that contribute to its occurrence in the first place. A primary prevention approach to child sexual abuse and exploitation promotes safe, healthy environments and behaviors. Early intervention services for victims and perpetrators is not primary prevention, for example. Interventions may help to alleviate trauma and potentially prevent future incidences; however, early identification is subsequent to actual or threatened violence and seldom alters the broader community and societal environment that gave rise to the violence (Brown,Cohen,Lyles 2009).

Quality prevention strategies counter environmental factors that support child sexual abuse and exploitation. Examples of these are marketing towards children and a pervasive media presence with drastically high levels of sexualized messages and rigid gender roles.

Tackling environmental factors that support child sexual abuse can also happen at the grassroot level. The principle in primary prevention is focusing on environments and systems, not individuals. Though work in educational institutes, for example, does not automatically change norms in the whole society or even community, addressing un-

healthy societal norms in school and encouraging children to think critically and question these norms can have a causal effect, where these students will then spread their thinking into their homes and community and carry awareness on negative societal norms along with them through their life affecting their own life choices. Educating girls in school on the prevalent gender roles that can contribute to abuse can help them fight against these roles and not be subjected to play their role set for them in their community, if it is not healthy and makes them vulnerable for abuse. An example of this could be condoms being only the man's choice and responsibility and a woman should go along with the man's choice. Next I will introduce the topic of educational initiatives and give examples of them.

6.2 Educational initiatives

David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center and professor of sociology at New Hampshire University, has examined two main strategies that have launched different initiatives to prevent child sexual abuse (Finkelhor 2009). These are offender management and school-based educational programs. In this chapter I am briefly describing how school-based educational programs can help prevent abuse through directly targeting the children at schools. In the future, educational initiatives targeted for deaf in Ghana will hopefully be started through the efforts of NGOs, such as House of Grace School for Deaf.

In the 1970's public awareness about child sexual abuse became heightened and thus school-based prevention programs were started being developed.(121). The 1980's in turn was a decade of intense development of the programs and assessing their effectiveness. Information we have today is therefore based on thirty years of research.

According to Finkelhor school-based educational programs teach children such skills as how to identify dangerous situations, refuse an abuser's approach, break off an interaction, and summon help.(Finkelhor2009,169.) The programs also aim to promote disclosure, reduce self-blame, and mobilize bystanders. In addition to these goals, initiatives have had secondary goals, which have included short-circuiting and reporting ongoing abuse and mitigating the negative consequences of abuse among children who may have been exposed by helping them not to feel guilty or at fault.(Finkelhor 2009,192.)

Most school-based prevention programs cover the same core concepts (Tutty 1991). These include the distinction between “good”, “bad” and “confusing” touches, the right to control what happens to one’s body, and the right to say “no” if a child is not comfortable with what is happening. Body parts are labeled in the hope that children can learn anatomically correct names, and would therefore have a vocabulary to describe abuse if it was occurring. This has especially been highlighted in prevention programs for the deaf, as deaf abuse victims may face additional challenges in communication (Interview Engelbrecht, 20.5.2015).

Many programs also discuss “secrets,” emphasizing that it is important to tell a grown-up you trust if someone wants you to keep a secret that feels uncomfortable. Disclosing abuse is one of the most important concepts taught in the programs and is underscored by mentioning that if a child discloses and is not believed, that she should keep on telling until someone believes her. (Tutty 1991.) Finally, children are taught that even grown-ups they know (including family members) might touch them in a way they do not like and that, even in those cases, it is important to tell (Conte, Rosen, Saperstein, & Shermack, 1985).

Burns and Barber (1987) have suggested several reasons why schools provide an appropriate setting for teaching about sexual abuse. Children spend a big portion of their time at school, allowing teachers to detect changes in behavior or observe behavioral problems, some of which may be related to abuse. Teachers are in constant contact with students and for the most part, schools try to cooperate and stay close with families the fullest extent possible. In many countries, school personnel are legally required to report any suspected case of abuse to officials.

In addition to implementing the initiatives at schools, youth organizations have also adopted this approach. The programs have also been increasingly used in larger safety and health education curricula.

Concerns about using school-based prevention programs have also arose from parents, school personnel and some researchers. Some question, why we place all the responsibility on the children instead of rather focusing on the offenders. Others feel uncomfortable with the sexual aspects of sexual abuse, fearing that providing children

with information about sexuality will destroy their innocence. Is providing information and skills for children to protect themselves equivalent to making children responsible for their own protection and taking responsibility away from caregivers and adults? In my opinion, no. On the contrary, empowering children whilst parents and professionals stay vigilant about tackling the sexual abuse problem addresses more of Finkelhor's preconditions for abuse to occur and therefore will decrease sexual abuse cases.

Some question whether it should not be the responsibility of the parents to teach these concepts to their own children, rather than the school system (Tutty1991). However, this would require the condition that all parents would be willing to, and have the necessary tools and knowledge to fully educate their child on sexual health and safety. Especially with disabled children, many parents lack skills in communicating with their child on even very basic daily routines and skills. Religious and cultural backgrounds, personal beliefs and personal values of the parents and the family also determine to what extent parents will discuss sex and health with their children.

Evaluation research about school-based programs in general has yielded promising results. Research shows, for example, that young people can and do acquire the concepts.(Finkelhor 2009,269.) Also, many of the feared negative side-effects, such as worry and nightmares, have not occurred in response to the programs (Tutty, 1990b), while parents have noted positive effects such as children introducing the subject of abuse in conversation (Nibert et al., 1989). However, studies are inconclusive about whether education programs reduce victimization.

6.3 Other examples of sex abuse prevention programs for deaf

Gualandi Volunteer Service Program, Inc (GVSP) is a non-stock, non-profit organization has been working with volunteers in projects for and with the deaf community.(tahan lois quote). GVSP started a five-year program Break the Silence Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Network Project under the guidance of Stairway Foundation, Inc. to raise awareness on putting a stop to the increasing number of cases of sexual abuse of deaf children and women.It focuses on abuse prevention, identification and response and advocacy both in the hearing and deaf community through different projects set in agencies, schools and communities.

GVSP, in partnership with participating deaf organizations, have reached out at least 1,100 deaf children and women and their families; monitored and assisted 30 cases of rape and other abuses by providing sign language interpreters; gathered around 45 disclosures from deaf students and adults in the community; and has trained at least 505 stakeholders including parents, community members, students, government employees and partner NGO's (Sun Star Cebu 2013). The initiative yielded positive results. More community members gaining better understanding of the behavior surrounding abuses in both victims and offenders. The local police force, court staff, teachers and social workers who have undergone deaf culture awareness and Filipino sign language trainings have expressed interest in improving the delivery of support and protection services for the deaf.

7 Methodology

Deaf culture and especially deaf culture in Ghana are subjects I have only recently started to familiarise myself with. For these reasons, some of the questions I might ask during the interview might turn out to be misunderstood or too difficult to understand. Some of the topics or questions might be well understood by only some of the teachers and the willingness to explore all the topics in the interview guide might also differ between interviewees. All of the interviewed teachers have very different educational and personal backgrounds. In this research, my aim is to in addition to gathering data also focus on the experience of the researcher and the growing awareness of the researcher in conducting interviews without any previous experience with the target group and special needs that might arise from working with deaf people in Ghana. In the results of the study, I will also analyze the challenges and positive outcomes on my own lived and participatory experience in conducting the interviews.

During the process of analyzing the acquired data, I am also interested in whether similar themes, discussions, opinions or personal views will arise from the interviewees, from which most of them are deaf and have attended a governmental deaf school in Ghana. However, I am not only looking for common themes, but rather would like to get to know the personal views of each teacher on the discussed topics regarding health awareness, sexual abuse and deaf education.

7.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to present ideas and good strategies for the school to develop methods for teaching about sex, sexual health and sexual abuse and for working together with parents and families of students to prevent sexual abuse. Another purpose of the study is to also find out how well equipped the staff is on knowing what to do in case of learning of a student being abused or being at risk of abuse and also collecting personal views and experiences of deaf teachers on sex education in deaf schools and growing up in hearing families. The main focus of the interview process is bringing out the voice of each interviewee.

I am mostly interested in finding out, what was it like growing up as a deaf child in a hearing family and what possible effects has it had on the relationship between the deaf teacher and his/her parents and family members. The level of communication between a child and a parent may be connected to how much the child learns about sex, sexual health and personal safety. I am interested in how much did the deaf teachers learn about sex and sexual abuse from their family homes.

Another subject of interest is the teachers' experience of deaf schools, sex education in deaf schools and the school environment regarding relationships. Do deaf government schools in Ghana share similar traits or does the quality of education differ significantly between different regions? Learning about the attitudes towards having sex and forming relationships shared by teachers, staff and students is also interesting, in order to analyze how attitudes may correlate to the level of understanding sex, health and abuse.

Finally, the aim of the study is to learn about the teacher's current views they hold on sexual abuse among deaf and its occurrence in the deaf community, characteristics of the deaf community that might increase or decrease the risk of abuse of a deaf person and opinions on how abuse can best be prevented in House of Grace School and what action the school should take. Learning about the teacher's personal history first may lead to understanding linkages between the impact of one's family and school envi-

ronment and current views and opinions on sex, sexual health and abuse.

7.2 Research Methods

For this thesis study, a semi-structured qualitative interview approach was most appropriate for gathering reliable qualitative data depicting the interviewees' personal views, experiences and opinions on the themes the interviewer has outlined in advance in the interview guide.

The interview guide consists of general topics to be freely discussed with the interviewee, specific questions and open-ended questions. For some interviewees, I will only use the general themes of the interview guide and not use any of the questions, but rather conduct an unstructured interview and let the interviewee mainly speak. The aim is for the interview to lead to discussions on the topics addressed rather than just answering specific questions.

Deaf culture and especially deaf culture in Ghana are subjects I have only recently started to familiarize myself with. For these reasons, some of the questions I might ask during the interview might turn out to be misunderstood or too difficult to understand. Some of the topics or questions might be well understood by only some of the teachers and the willingness to explore all the topics in the interview guide might also differ between interviewees. All of the interviewed teachers have very different educational and personal backgrounds. These are all reasons behind the interview guide not being detailed and extensive but rather a listing of topics to sail through.

Kvale(1996) has described 9 different types of questions that may be used in interview situations. I used Kvale's descriptions of different question types to guide me in planning the structure of the interview guide. For a novice interviewer, thinking of specific question types is appropriate for practicing interviewing before actually going into the real interview situation. However I only used Kvale's descriptions of different question types in exploring the themes and open ended questions in the interview guide in advance, but not making any specific question types, for example specifying questions or follow up questions to be used in the actual interview situation.

7.3 Heuristic inquiry

I will also be applying the heuristic approach to qualitative research, which was originally pioneered by American humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas. My personal aim whilst conducting this study and writing this thesis is also to focus on self-inquiry. When I started planning this study, I had no previous experience in working with deaf people and communicating in sign language. Although the heuristic inquiry being an exploratory approach to research and very different to all conventional methods is a challenging method to understand and apply, its focus on the researcher and space to continuously edit and change questions and topics based on what the researcher constantly learns and observes, fits this study. I have never worked with or interviewed deaf people before starting my work at the school and I am interested in in addition to gathering data on wanted topics, practicing researching human experience.

Heuristic Inquiry is an approach to research that that very much focuses on the experience and transformation of the researcher (Hiles 2001). It is a very demanding process that involves self-searching, self-reflection, full passion to the research topic and, according to David Hiles, full surrender to the process. It does not suit a fixed time-frame for research and it is designed for the exploration and interpretation of experience, which uses the self of the researcher(Hiles 2001). In this study, I am gathering qualitative data that serves a purpose to the research question, which in this study is finding best practices in trying to prevent sex abuse among deaf children.

As heuristic inquiry is focused on the transformative effect of the inquiry on the researcher's own experiences and also requires the gathered data be placed in the context of the experienter's own internal frame of reference, this study is not a heuristic research, but rather a study where I am applying some elements of heuristic inquiry. As mentioned before, in addition to the aims of the research itself, behind the study are also my personal aims as a novice researcher, which include growing self-awareness and self-knowledge of the researcher throughout the process of the increased understanding of the researched phenomenon. The research question and methodology will grow and develop simultaneously as the research goes on, which is why the interviews conducted last may totally differ out of the first version of the interview guide's laid out topics.

For example, from reading the transcriptions of the interviews it is clear, that all seven interviews had different themes that turned out to be the main topic of the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The reason why the interview guide consists of only general guidelines is because I wanted to each interview to rather turn out as a conversation between me and the teacher, where we both explore the topics together and questions arise from the points that come up in the moment. In the interviews, I am hoping the dialogue between myself and the interviewee to reach a level where the interviewee can share their own personal experiences that are related to the topic.

In conclusion the methodology of conducting the interviews is a mix of using semi-structured qualitative interviews and unstructured interviews that also have some elements of heuristic inquiry. Using different techniques in a smaller study can turn out to be quite challenging especially when analyzing the gathered data, but for this study the individual differences in ways of communicating with the main interviewer and interpreter and the aim of bringing out personal opinions and experiences rather than finding similarities and differences between interviewees favored using different ways to interview each teacher. As I have already worked for the teachers for three months before starting the research process, I learnt that for some asking questions based on themes will be fruitful but for some teachers I will gain more data by letting them talk freely and preparing some questions to ask if the opportunity will naturally present itself to ask them.

7.4 Sampling of the Study

For this study I decided to interview all the teachers of the school. The reason for this sampling is that all of the teachers have attended deaf schools in Ghana around the country, the ages of teachers vary from 25 to 55 and half are male and half are female. Also, all of the teachers have different family backgrounds and come from different parts of Ghana, which can produce different insights on the state of the government deaf schools, for example.

7.5 Interviews

I have studied sign language intensely for three months before starting the research process and currently I can state that I understand sign language fairly well and sign fairly well if the pace of the conversation is calm. I wanted to take my time to spend time with teachers and gain some work experience in working with them at the school before starting this research, so that I could use my acquired observations to design the interviews. According to one of the teachers, deaf people sometimes have challenges in trusting hearing people, which also directed me to take time and know the teachers before starting the research process.

As I want to engage in discussions on a personal level with the teachers, an interpreter who has worked with the school for many years and knows all the teachers will help me conduct the interviews and translate. It is important that the teachers are familiar with the interpreter, so that they will feel more comfortable to share personal experiences and views with me. I will be typing the interviews on my laptop simultaneously as conducting the interview, since I did not have the resources to videotape the sessions. To keep the pace calm and the energy relaxed during the interview, I will maintain eye contact and be involved in the conversation always when the interviewee is speaking with me and the translator and pause the discussion to type after the translations. It has to be noted, that typing at the same time might affect the atmosphere of the interview and make the environment feel more restricted, so it is important to focus on keeping the atmosphere more relaxed and open and keep eye contact while typing.

An idea for a future research on the subject of sex abuse among deaf would be to conduct an ethnographic research to study deaf culture in Ghana and moreover, how is sexual abuse among deaf understood, faced and dealt with in the deaf community in Ghana.

7.6 Analysing the data

For analysing the data gathered from the interviews, I used thematic analysis to make labels for sections of data and form different categories. Thematic analysis is suitable for this study since it is a method that is flexible and intentions of the research and process of analysis will determine what the researcher will do with discovered themes. Especially in this study, where a heuristic approach guided the researcher through the interviewing process and transcriptions from the interviews have major differences due

to communicational differences between the interviewer and interviewee, thematic analysis is suitable. It is also appropriate for this study as it is a method simple to apply and isn't tied to any specific theoretical background. As a novice researcher, it is wiser to avoid complex types of qualitative analysis but choose a method that can go with any theoretical background the researcher has chosen for his/her study.

Braun and Clarke (2006) have published an article that described to novice researchers how to use thematic analysis in a step-by-step manner.

The six steps of thematic analysis are:

1. **Familiarizing yourself with your data**
2. **Generating initial codes**
3. **Searching for themes**
4. **Reviewing themes**
5. **Defining and naming themes**
6. **Producing the report**

In this study, the transcribing was done simultaneously with conducting the interviews. Ideally the interviews could have been videotaped and transcribed later for more accurate transcriptions. I will return to this matter in the chapter discussing the reliability and ethical discussion of the interview process. In this phase I had to return to organize the transcriptions neatly in the word file before printing, as during the interview I was typing fast and had different ways of recording non-verbal communication such as pauses speech etc. For example, I left a blank space when the interview paused to think and used different keys to mark taking back words, re-explaining a comment, misunderstanding the interviewer and other body language. After organizing the data and making it clear, such as writing "pause" instead of the blank space, I printed all interviews and reread all at one sitting with more thought.

I started this step by identifying the framework for coding the data. In this coding plan, coding is both explanatory and exploratory. It is explanatory only till the extent that I will try to find some related themes, notice possible patterns in the different dialogues and search data that I can use to back up my own discussion and suggestions of developmental areas to help prevent abuse. However I won't develop any hypothesis, test, build any sequences of events or search for causalities. Mostly coding is exploratory in

a sense that I will try to avoid having any premeditated ideas of findings or purposefully seek for wanted themes.

The initial codes I generated manually. I used post-it notes and highlight markers to mark the codes. I divided the interviews in small sections before coding. At first, I strived to form as many detailed descriptive codes as possible and later after finding the main themes, I also generalized some of the codes. I highlighted the codes in the text and in the right-side column, wrote a list of the codes. Different colors represented different topics/themes from the interview guide. For example, pink represented rape and yellow represented relationship with parents. On the post-it notes I then made further comments about the marked theme. By the color coded data I made word-codes in a separate column on the left-side of the text, with descriptive words. For example, under the color code yellow which was for relationship with parents, I had word codes for a paragraph marked yellow such as signing, lipreading, exclusion, bonding, talking about sex, talking about rape, communication barriers and avoiding topics on sex.

Some topics/themes that were part of the interview guide, I purposefully searched for from the coded data. Some were found and some were not so much present. A few new themes also arose from the coded data and yielded unexpected found themes that I had not initially searched for. This was my goal in using the some methods that are part of heuristic inquiry.

After finding the themes, I made a mind-map with themes and sub-themes in order to show the relation the themes have with each other. I included some of the generalized codes in the mind map as well. In making the mind map, I had to also name all the themes and assess, whether they relate to the topic of the research and aims of the interview. Some coded parts of the interviews weren't necessarily relevant to the research topic, but if a theme or subtheme which was not that relevant was found, I decided to still include it in the first version of the mind map in case connections would turn up later. The final thematic map consists of themes and their narratives that all relate the overall narrative of the report. I converted the mind map in the form of a table, in order to make it more clear and easy to read.

<https://sites.google.com/site/howtouse thematicanalysis/home/how-to-use-thematic-analysis/3-searching-for-themes>

8 Ethics, Reliability and Validity

8.1 Methodological Issues

A major methodological issue was transcribing the interviews. Firstly, it would have been advisable for the sake of validity to videotape the sessions and transcribe afterwards. Due to lack of resources and personnel conducting this study, I was unable to video tape the interviews, but had to type the interviews simultaneously with conducting the interview. Transcripts from video tapes may not represent the interviewees true message since the transcription will not be in sign language, but in written English. This can affect the original meaning of the statement, since attitudes, the tone of the interviewee and choice of words/signs may hold meanings to be found deeper in the actual stated fact. In this case, capturing the true meanings of the interviewee on paper was even more challenging, since a sign language interpreter who is hearing was also present and interpreting the interviewees answers for me to type. This means that the answers I type are translations from sign language to english made by the interpreter, which also may decrease the reliability of the gathered information.

Transcribing simultaneously with the interview may also affect the atmosphere of the interview situation, as the interviewee sees his answers being instantly typed and translated, which may affect my main goal of the interview which was rather having a relaxed conversation rather than a structured interview. However, all the teachers knew the interpreter as a friend and I had already built a friendly relationship with each teacher, so the teachers did tell about themselves and their own histories rather freely and without boundaries. After I asked a question or commented on the interviewees answers/statements, I also gave full attention to watching the teacher sign and keeping facial contact. By the time of conducting the interviews, I had also learnt some sign language, so that I was able to verify the interpreters translations to be reliable.

Another issue was the teacher's ability to understand the questions and the topics discussed. At times, the interpreter had to repeat himself up to five times for the teacher to understand what he was trying to ask or comment. All the unrelated answers and

comments teachers gave were also typed and transcribed, however. Most of the teachers were so enthusiastic and excited to share their views on the discussed issues, that they would give a long speech before the interpreter had a chance to repeat the question and try to explain what we wanted to discuss. My goal was the pace and content of the interviews to be mostly determined by the respondent and not us and at times, it was challenging to explain this to the interpreter. In many instances the views teachers brought up answering a question they understood wrong lead to new interesting topics to be discussed and to more interesting answers, but the interpreter at times was repeatedly interrupting the respondent and repeating the question whilst I tried to explain to the interpreter that it was actually a positive thing. For the future, it would be wise to have a briefing with the interpreter before starting the interview process and explaining in detail, what I am looking for and what are the methods I want to apply in interviewing.

8.2 Ethics

The work environment at the school is very tight and over half of the teachers have served the school for over three years already. Two of the interviewed teachers had only been in the school for one year or less. One new teacher had also just started during the time I started the interview process, so I made the decision to interview this teacher but not include the interview in this thesis, since she did not know me or the interpreter beforehand and therefore, her answers could have been affected by this.

I addressed the confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation in the interview process. Before each interview, I explained in detail the purpose and content of the interview, where the interviews will be published and how, who will be reading their interviews and that no names or personal information will be shared of the interviewees. I also explained interviewees may also ask me questions throughout the interview and that there are no ready set questions, but topics that I wish to freely discuss with the teachers.

In the future, it would also be good to present the interviewees the opportunity to review the transcription after the interview, since I had to transcribe simultaneously and as discussed previously, translating from sign language to English may change the intended message of the given answer or statement. In the process of analyzing data, I changed all of the teacher's names to Teacher 1, Teacher 2 etc. in order to protect

their privacy and ensure anonymity. However, as there are only eight teachers in the school and seven of the interviews were used in the study, it might be easy for the participants to guess who is who. For this reason, I decided to limit the amount of quotations used in the Findings chapter and try to describe the results in an objective manner.

The interviews were conducted in the headmistress' office during lesson times, so that students or other staff would not interrupt the interviews. Remaining objective at times was challenging due to the nature of the interviews. I was more focused on the teachers' personal opinions and views on the topics and therefore, discarded ready-set questions but wanted the interviews to lean more on being conversations between me and the teacher. At the same time, it was important for me to avoid sharing my own opinions or views but merely objectively comment on the teachers' statements, so that nothing that I say would affect what the teacher might tell me or how they might answer a question.

9 Findings

Table 1. A Summary of Teachers' Own Experiences

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3

Deaf school's policy on sex	There was a law in school forbidding sex. If someone was caught having sex, they could have been expelled.	Sex was not much talked about.	The teacher always taught us that if you don't take care of yourself and have sex you will get pregnant.
Sex education in Deaf School	There was no sex education in any of the schools I attended	Teachers never talked about sex. They only showed pictures of a penis and a vagina. only programs for hearing children. deaf children don't know about sex because of lack of education and bad quality of schools.	There was no subject for sex education but there was a certain teacher who advised us on sex.
Learning about sex at home	My parents never spoke of or taught about sex. I learnt about sex from books by myself.	My mother always advised not to have any sex. It was difficult for them because they can't sign. They only used signs like woman man and simple sign for sex. simple family signs that are not sign language.	Yes my parents spoke about it but sometimes my mom calls me to sit down and tell me to be careful about men. They didn't sign but I read their lips.
How can rape be prevented?	We need to educate the students about rape.	it should be both the parents and the teacher who advise children. Teachers should not touch breast and buttocks of the children. More deaf people don't know about sex because of lack of education and bad quality.	There should be a law in school to forbid sex. We should get an expert who will come here and talk about this stuff and come with pictures and show how it goes.

	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	Teacher 7
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Deaf school's policy on sex	Teachers said get married before sex because if you get pregnant the boy will leave you and you will suffer.	Sex was forbidden in school. If you would be caught they would expel you.	Was not recommended .	They should prepare for the so move on slowly get married get prepared and not rush in life.
Sex education in Deaf School	All they said is get married before sex because if you get pregnant the boy will leave you and you will suffer. In SHS they advised the girls in groups.	Teachers advised us but no formal education.	Sex education was taught in JHS and SHS, but in JHS women only taught to stop sex it's bad without explaining it.	There was no sex education in JHS, in SHS every wednesday
Learning about sex at home	teachers always advised me, not parents. They couldn't learn to sign because they were always busy.	My father can't sign at all but my mother advised me to not have any sex. Parents do not really how to sign so they try to explain to kids like their daughters a little bit. So if	Both of my parents used to advise me on sex.	My parents advised me before I go to school that no girlfriend and no sex. so I knew that I shouldn't got any girlfriend.
Challenge for deaf rape victims	I haven't heard of deaf getting raped.	Sometimes there is a communication problem. It is difficult for deaf to tell hearing people.	If a deaf girl reports a deaf guy the issue won't go anywhere. If the issue becomes publicated, they will just pay the police some money for it to go away. Usually the girls will never report.	The girl will never report because she will want to marry the man. when a deaf man rapes a deaf girl they just marry without reporting to any police.

<p>How can rape be prevented</p>	<p>We need to advise the students at school. We should teach our students to wait until marriage.</p>	<p>We need to teach sex education and teachers need more materials to teach it. Teach that if you see a beautiful girl and force she can get pregnant and you will be reported. Advise for 18 to 35 years.</p>	<p>We can make new things for example all the students should be in one place and teachers should advise on groups.</p>	<p>Advise the kids and protect themselves and focus on their future.</p>
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The findings of this study revealed that knowledge on sexual health and personal safety among deaf depends on the person's family background and their involvement in communicating with their deaf child, quality of sex education in school and the individual's personal environment and social network. These findings are similar than found in previous studies. Therefore among the seven interviewees, answers and attitudes differed significantly. Family backgrounds, deaf schools and current lifestyles are also very different among the interviewees.

The interviews were all qualitative interviews following a simple interview guide with the following topics: views on rape, sex education in deaf schools, family relationships, the deaf community, needs of house of grace school for deaf and preventing rape at house of grace school for deaf. As the interviews weren't based on a set of questions, the interview was more of a conversation between the interview and interviewer and each interview had different content and emphasis on Different topics. Some teachers wanted to focus on discussing rape, for example, while others were more interested in discussing sex education in deaf schools or their relationship with their parents. This is why many of the views of teachers cannot be directly compared to each other, but rather assessed individually.

Some of the interviews entail a lot of personal views and experiences of teachers and not all can be addressed in this study due to their sensitive nature. I will discuss the

common themes found, significant individual remarks on certain areas of interest for the school, major factors contributing to vulnerability to abuse and teachers' views on preventative proceedings at House of Grace School.

9.1 Sex education in deaf schools

Six out of seven of the interviewees said that there was no formal sex education in the deaf school they attended. Only two of the interviewees attended the same deaf school. Therefore in total recollections of deaf education was recalled from six different deaf schools. Four out of seven of the interviewees said the only advice teachers kept repeating was never to have sex before married to prevent teenage pregnancy. Two of the teachers said sex was forbidden in their school by authority and if anyone would have been caught having sex, they would have been expelled.

One of the main findings about sex education in deaf schools is the simple rules taught on sex without any further explanations. All interviewees recalled that teachers did not discuss relationships, emotions and sexuality, but rather just taught sex is a bad thing and will only cause trouble at a young age. When asked of teaching of sexually transmitted diseases, four of the teachers mentioned they heard about HIV in school. One of the teachers asked me, how HIV is transmitted and can sex cause it during the interview. None of the teachers recalled being taught how to use condoms and birth control pills, but were merely taught that if they want to use sex condoms can prevent pregnancy.

One of the teachers said teachers didn't spoke of sex in her school nor forbid it. It was interesting how all of the teachers' answers seemed to vary from each other. From many of the teachers' answers on sex education in deaf schools, it can be concluded that sex education is not in the curriculum in deaf schools and education on sex mainly depends on the individuals teaching at the school and their interest in the subject. It can also be concluded that teachers share their personal views on sex with the students, making students' knowledge on sexual health be mainly reflections of their class teachers personal views on sex.

"The problem is that teachers think if they say to the kids you shouldn't have sex the kids will think you should never have sex and won't give birth so that's why they never said anything." - Teacher 3.

One of the teachers, whose school had a law against having sex, said that the absolute discretion and banning of sex actually encouraged students to have more sex in school in secrecy. Especially in the boarding schools where there is only one adult watching over many boarding houses, it is easy for students to sneak at night to meet boyfriends and girlfriends. Again, teenage pregnancy kept coming up in all of the interviews as part of an answer for almost all questions related on sex education in deaf schools.

Another finding was the poor level of the sex education that was offered by some teachers and the inaccessibility of materials for deaf. All three teachers who mentioned sex education on sexually transmitted diseases only knew HIV and as mentioned before, one of the teachers even asked me during the interview, is HIV transmitted through sex. Two teachers mentioned that they recall being taught about condoms, but weren't shown how to use them or where to get them. In Ghana, there are no deaf programs shown on television, only one channel shows news with a deaf interpreter. Programs on sexual health are always targeted to the hearing, according to one teacher. Most of the material available on sexual health is in English without pictures, and as many of the deaf are illiterate in Ghana or have poor reading and writing skills, it will be hard for them to understand the material

“There are only programs for hearing people about sex and sex education. Many deaf kids don't have televisions even at home to learn. More deaf schools in Accra kids are getting pregnant and stopping school because parents don't have money anymore for the kids to continue school. More deaf people don't know about sex because of lack of education and bad quality. So some deaf kid start having sex or money too when there is no money. There should be a program on it for abuse to inform all people because most deaf don't know about it.” - Teacher 2.

“My teacher never spoke about sex. He only showed us a picture of a penis and a vagina but never spoke anything about sex or intercourse or anything like that.”- Teacher 3.

“We can teach about sex education but I'm not sure if we should have exams on it because it doesn't happen in Ghana that we talk about sex that much. It only happens if there's a program about some visitor comes to discuss it, but not as a regular topic to talk about it in school.” Teacher 5.

9.2 Parents of deaf children and communication

Many studies have found that one of the challenges in the vulnerability of deaf to rape and abuse is the lack of involvement of parents in learning about sexual health and protection. The main reason for this is the lack of knowledge in sign language. When the children are young, parents have their way of signing in a simple way, but as the child reaches the age of adolescence, parents don't have the ability to communicate with the child on complicated issues nor can they have deep or meaningful discussions with them.

Five of the interviewees mentioned that their parents did not know how to sign. Three teachers said they used to lip read from their parents. One of the teachers said, that his parents were always too busy to learn any signing. Two of the interviewees said that one of their parents made more efforts to sign than the other.

One of the barriers for deaf in learning about sexual awareness and health is the poor material available for deaf, lack of common signs for sex and parents inability to sign. Three of the teachers mentioned, that the advice they got from their parents was not to have sex and that was the only discussion on sex they had. Only one had discussed rape with her parents. Two of the interviewees said their parents warned about never following strangers. Two of the interviewed said sex was never mentioned in their home, nor rape or harassment. One of the teachers said that he learned everything from books, not school or home.

For a child to learn about personal safety, it is essential to be able to discuss relationships, feelings, adolescence and puberty with your parents. Simple advice, or rather a rule set by parents and teachers for not have sex does not lead the child to understand their sexual growth. Especially those children who are neglected at home and who don't have family members who know sign language may start leaving the family house more to search for friends and seek for attention. One of the students in our school, a twelve year old girl, has been found by police wandering at the other side of town twice already and brought to the deaf association office. One of the teachers also mentioned seeing girls from his class late in the evening in town and against his advice, continue to leave the house in the evenings. Our attempts to cooperate with the parents of the child in question have been challenging to say the least.

One of the teachers especially highlighted the importance of the role of parents when it comes to teaching children about personal safety. It is of importance that all of the teachers would see working with parents of the students as one of the biggest goals for the future for the school. As the parents are hearing, this presents the challenge to overcome the barrier deaf people also have working with hearing people. However, not all responsibility for the students can be with the teachers and staff. When asked what teachers would do in case of an abuse case would come to their attention, four answered they would forward the case to the headmistress who would then call the parents. Teachers also have a responsibility to be active in the case and work together equally with parents, since parents can't sign with their children.

"It's not easy, but parents should advise their kids and not say that it is the teachers' responsibility. It should be both the parents and the teacher who should take care of the child and advise them. It is their responsibility to control their children."

9.3 Views on rape and abuse among the deaf community

As stated in previous chapters, many studies have shown that deaf can be more vulnerable to rape and abuse. The vulnerability of deaf is due to many factors, such as lack of understanding rape being a crime, lack of knowledge on personal safety, communication barriers at home and with the hearing community, isolation and loneliness. Findings from the interviews also suggest there are many obstacles for deaf in Ghana in reaching a healthy understanding of personal safety for deaf. These obstacles included the mistrust in hearing people, the shame in reporting rape, the fact everyone in the deaf community knows each other and lack of consequences for those deaf who have raped another deaf person.

"If a deaf girl reports a deaf guy the issue won't go anywhere. The police won't come for him because its two deaf people who have their issues so they should solve it their own way. I have never seen a deaf person behind bars before. If the issue becomes publicated, they will just pay the police some money for it to go away."

One surprising finding whilst asking the teachers on their views on abuse on rape, was that each teacher seemed to understand the terms of abuse differently. Only two teachers understood abuse as being an act of harassment towards somebody, while

the rest of the interviewees understood abuse being the same thing as abortion. Here I realized how the vocabulary in sign language affects learning and communication on topics on sex, as one sign may mean many different things making it difficult to explain certain topics. For example in Ghanaian sign language, abuse and abortion have the same sign.

Studies have found that deaf are more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Three of the teachers spoke of this and were of the same opinion that rape can occur a lot among deaf. Surprisingly one teacher said, that she believes rape does not occur at all among deaf and that on television and the news only rape cases of hearing are shown and therefore she does not believe deaf people are raped. The same teacher also said, that “it is easy for a man to rape a girl who can hear but with the deaf the deaf cannot hear”. A conclusion can be drawn from this interview that lack of knowledge and discussions on rape may lead some to believe it does not occur at all, which can prevent a teacher, for example, in noticing signs of possible abuse in students at school and also lead to not discussing rape and personal safety with friends and students. It may also be, that because so many of deaf rape cases are not reported, it may lead deaf people to believe it does not occur among them though the truth might be the exact opposite.

Three of the teachers discussed their concerns of high students. One said, that often he may see some of our students late at night in town and when he advises them, they won't listen. This particular teacher has one student in his class, who was raped before and had a baby at twelve years old. For many deaf girls, it might be easy to convince them into having sex in exchange for small money or materials in return. One teacher said, that he has even known a girl to have sex with a man for two cedis only. Advising students on predators is important, because the emotional and physical effect of having sex with a stranger at a young age, being abused or being raped may take time to occur and not be evident at first.

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“The problem is that teachers think if they say to the kids you shouldn't have sex the kids will think you should never have sex and won't give birth so that's why they never said anything

9.4 The Deaf Community

Research has shown before, that one characteristic of deaf communities is that deaf usually mingle more with only other deaf and that deaf people often distrust hearing people. Another fact contributing to the vulnerability of deaf to abuse is the shame preventing the victim of reporting cases of abuse, especially when the abuser and abused are both deaf.

In Ghana, there is a lack of interpreters working in all government services and institutions, including the Ghana Police Department. During this study in addition to the official interviews, I also met a lot of deaf people around Accra and discussed this research and the position deaf are in when it comes to being a victim of abuse and reporting the crime. Most of the deaf people I spoke to said the case never goes forward, because in deaf cases it is easier to use bribe to forget the case. Another impediment for a deaf victim reporting a deaf abuser is the mistrust for hearing people. In the deaf community, everyone knows each other, making the reporting of a fellow member of the deaf community embarrassing, difficult and shameful. Therefore the victim will be hesitant to report to a fellow deaf person and equally hesitant to report to a hearing person outside of the deaf community because of communication barriers and distrust.

During the official interviews used in this study and unofficial discussions with deaf people, a deaf person admitted to have committed to have raped before and said, he believes the woman never reported because everyone knows him in the community, so it would have been bad for both of their reputations. The same person also said, after raping her they continued to be in a relationship. I did not analyze this part of the interview further for protection of privacy, though the person in question gave full permission the use of the interview.

One of the interviewees in this study also said, that it is “the deaf way”, that if a deaf rapes a deaf woman and she gets pregnant, the man has to marry her without any questions asked. Some customs and norms inside the deaf community also seem to contribute to the vulnerability of abuse victims. A factor behind these norms is common both to the deaf community and hearing communities suffering from social problems, low social-economic status and lack of education. This factor is that rape is not understood as a crime against the victim, but rape is taken more lightly and victims are even considered the guilty ones for putting themselves in the position of being raped.

“When I have a girlfriend and I go with my girlfriend to my friend’s house and I go out to get some stuff and my friend realizes that she’s beautiful and forces her to have sex with him. Later my friend will have to marry my girlfriend because they had sex. Or when a deaf man rapes a deaf girl they just marry without reporting to any police.”-
Teacher 3

10 Discussion and Suggestions

The main purpose of this study was to provide information to help design a prevention program for abuse specifically addressing the needs of House of Grace School. All of the teachers were of the opinion, that the students’ vulnerability to abuse is a challenge at the school. Some of the students have already exhibited alarming behavior when it comes to personal safety and exposure to possible abuse, and two abuse cases with one attempted case of sexual abuse have been already reported within the last year at the school. Teachers were also all of the same opinion that the school needs to start addressing the challenges and six out of seven of the teachers felt all school staff need extra training in the field of educating pupils on sexual health and safety.

10.1 Challenges of the Study

A major methodological issue was transcribing the interviews. Firstly, it would have been advisable for the sake of validity to videotape the sessions and transcribe afterwards. Due to lack of resources and personnel conducting this study, I was unable to video tape the interviews, but had to type the interviews simultaneously with conducting the interview. Transcripts from video tapes may not represent the interviewees true message since the transcription will not be in sign language, but in written English. This can affect the original meaning of the statement, since attitudes, the tone of the interviewee and choice of words/signs may hold meanings to be found deeper in the actual stated fact. In this case, capturing the true meanings of the interviewee on paper was even more challenging, since a sign language interpreter who is hearing was also present and interpreting the interviewees answers for me to type. This means that the answers I type are translations from sign language to English made by the interpreter, which also may decrease the reliability of the gathered information.

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Another issue was the teacher's ability to understand the questions and the topics discussed. At times, the interpreter had to repeat himself up to five times for the teacher to understand what he was trying to ask or comment. All the unrelated answers and comments teachers gave were also typed and transcribed, however. Most of the teachers were so enthusiastic and excited to share their views on the discussed issues, that they would give a long speech before the interpreter had a chance to repeat the question and try to explain what we wanted to discuss. My goal was the pace and content of the interviews to be mostly determined by the respondent and not us and at times, it was challenging to explain this to the interpreter. In many instances the views teachers brought up answering a question they understood wrong lead to new interesting topics to be discussed and to more interesting answers, but the interpreter at times was repeatedly interrupting the respondent and repeating the question whilst I tried to explain to the interpreter that it was actually a positive thing. For the future, it would be wise to have a briefing with the interpreter before starting the interview process and explaining in detail, what I am looking for and what are the methods I want to apply in interviewing.

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In the future, it would also be good to present the interviewees the opportunity to review the transcription after the interview, since I had to transcribe simultaneously and as discussed previously, translating from sign language to English may change the intended message of the given answer or statement. In the process of analyzing data, I changed all of the teacher's names to Teacher 1, Teacher 2 etc. in order to protect their privacy and ensure anonymity. However, as there are only eight teachers in the school and seven of the interviews were used in the study, it might be easy for the participants to guess who is who. For this reason, I decided to limit the amount of quotations used in the Findings chapter and try to describe the results in an objective manner.

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10.2 .Working with the parents

A big challenge, which only one teacher highlighted in her interview but which other school personnel such as the driver, the cook, the cultural interpreter and founder have brought up is the involvement of the parents. A lot of the responsibility of the children in their personal lives has fallen upon the school due to lack of interest, lack of communication skills, financial struggles or the families' attitudes towards the child's deafness. Most studies and examples presented in this paper show that parents and caregivers hold a huge role in the child's development and a big factor contributing to the vulnerability to abuse of deaf children is their parents' lack of involvement in discussing sexual health, safety and adolescence. This is mostly due to lack of knowledge of sign language.

A first step would be to get an official Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) formed at House of Grace School, which would meet regularly to discuss current issues at the school, discuss their children and share experiences, work on fundraisers and events together for the children and in general help the school move forward and develop in all ways. HoG can activate and motivate the parents in fighting for current issues deaf face in Ghana and start working with other deaf schools' parents and parent associations as well. This could even lead to a national association of parents of deaf children in Ghana, which could bring out the voice of the parents all the way to the governmental level. An association like this could work with GNAD to help in fighting for rights of parents to have services to help support and empower parents to raise and communicate with their deaf child. If parents were to have true support in the form of organized services executed by professionals, they could play a big part in preventing their children from facing abuse in their life as they would learn to understand them, communicate with their child effectively, understand and interpret special or alarming behavior their child might show regardless of communication barriers and most importantly, learn to discuss sexual health and safety with their own child.

A second step for involving the parents more at HoG could be offering teaching sign language to parents. When looking at Bronfenbrenners (1994) ecological theory in which the person's environment is divided in five different levels, teaching parents sign language would impact the child's mesosystem in a positive way. When different elements in the child's microsystem are working together, it affects the child's develop-

ment positively. Parents working together with the teachers allows them to address, for example, some of the child's behavioral problems, learning difficulties or sexual awareness and identity of the child. Already the process of learning the sign language together offers an opportunity to bond for the teacher and parent and also the parent and the child.

Adolescents with disabilities face severe challenges because it is often difficult for parents, educators, and counsellors to discuss SRH issues with them, or else they are perceived to be sexually inactive (Job, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2004). Teaching parents sexual terms in sign language allows them to communicate about the topic of sex with their own child and would give the child confidence to confide in his/her parent of any concerns, thoughts or incidents having to do with sex and sexuality. Also, in case of abuse, having a parent know sign language and sex signs makes it easier for the child to disclose the issue. If the teacher notices behavioral changes in the child and suspects abuse, good relations with the teacher and the parents makes it easier for the teacher and parent solve the issue together. Forming an association among the parents to learn sign language at the school could also act as a support group and a group, where the school could work together with the parents in giving them tools on, for example, discussing sexual health and safety at home with their child.

After the study was conducted, I myself started a group for parents to learn sign language and form a parent association together. A sign language group was established and for the first meeting, three mothers came to the school to learn. The feedback from the mother's was extremely positive. The next day one child of one of the mothers attending came to his teacher to tell him, how happy he was when his mother greeted him in the morning in sign language. In the future, activating more parents to learn sign language and possibly extending it to other family members and even members of the community could prove as a great step for family relationships, trust and when it comes to preventing abuse, a safer and trust-filled environment for the child to learn and discuss sexual awareness, personal safety and abuse.

Another possibility for the school to consider would be developing a parent education program, that would increase parental knowledge of child development, assist parents in developing parental skills and offer parents tools in communicating and bonding with their deaf child. Parent education programs have shown positive results in the United

States and Australia, for example, but compared to the clear positive outcomes of school-based initiatives, these results still have a larger variety in results. Successful parent education programs usually target families identified as 'at risk' for child maltreatment. In the context of House of Grace School and the topic of this thesis, child maltreatment including neglect and isolation are risk factors for the student to wandering more outside of the house on their own seeking for attention and therefore, being more vulnerable targets for abuse.

Kelly (2000) has explained, targeted recruitment is important to ensure that programs designed to treat 'at risk' families actually identify and service these families. The question is, would this work at House of Grace School and how would the school clearly identify the at risk families and more importantly, manage to reach out to them and motivate them to participate. Another issue would be the possible stigmatisation parents could feel in being selected for this group.

One possibility might be combining a parent training program with complementary initiatives, such as employment programs or therapeutic interventions. At HoG, it can be stated that those families where the children are neglected, are also experiencing financial struggles, family feuds, substance abuse or growing frustration due to the communicational barriers between the parent and the deaf child. One example of the latter was a student in the school who kept being absent and was running away from her home frequently to mingle with strangers. When I visited the family home, I saw a very tired and frustrated mother in front of me who was yelling and beating the child in front of me. As I asked why, she merely said she does not know what else to do and beating is the only way to get the child's attention. Watching them interact, I saw the child had difficulty in understanding what the mother was saying, but the mother was under the impression the child always understands her own way of signing but just chooses to ignore her.

Neglect due to communication is an issue with several of the families of students and helping these parents by offering support, understanding and knowledge could help improve the atmosphere the child lives in at home. Alongside the parent training program, the school could offer parents individual support and counseling in their home or at school and offer help in interventions within families going through family feuds or divorce, in order to provide an easier platform for intervention than the common social welfare office, which parents usually associate with negative outcomes.

10.3 Lack of information on the deaf community

There is a lack of data pertaining to the Sexual and Reproductive Health experiences of deaf people in Ghana because national SRH studies, such as the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), do not collect data on people with disabilities. Though a few studies have been done among deaf people in Ghana (Tsiboe-Darko, 2008; Poku, 2009), they do not provide directly relevant and comprehensive SRH data about this community. For example, Tsiboe-Darko's study (2008) focused mainly on HIV/AIDS which is just one component of SRH, while Poku's study (2009) focused only on describing knowledge, attitudes, and sexual behaviour, without exploring the factors that hinder access to SRH information and services. More information of the SRH experiences of the deaf population in Ghana is needed in order to reach deaf adolescents in an effective way, especially when deaf may be more vulnerable to abuse and having unprotected sex.

In the US, several studies have been conducting on health care disparities in the deaf community. Deaf users of ASL, through cultural and language barriers, are at high risk for poor health knowledge and inequitable access to medical and behavioral care in our health system. Some Behavioral health disparities have been shown to manifest as increased numbers of unplanned pregnancies, higher rates of abuse (including intimate partner violence) and increased rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

One factor contributing to these disparities according to the American Psychological Association are that deaf ASL users often embody a unique culture that is unfamiliar to most medical and mental health care providers. This lack of cultural- and linguistic-competency on the part of the professional often results in higher rates of inaccurate evaluations, misdiagnoses and inappropriate treatments(Pick 2013). Behavioral health disparities have been shown to manifest as increased numbers of unplanned pregnancies, higher rates of abuse (including intimate partner violence) and increased rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections(Pick 2013).

Several programs in the US have been developed to address health knowledge and practices, sexual education and prevention, substance use and violence, as well as the

evaluation and treatment of mental health needs and there are also a handful of medical and mental health programs training their students to work with these populations. The continued efforts of these programs and trained professionals will hopefully provide the foundation on which health equity can be achieved for the deaf community.

Ghana's Deaf Association(GNAD) and other deaf organizations should give more attention to research and data gathering on different developmental areas for deaf in Ghana. Though studies have been conducted by GNAD for example, they are usually done with small samplings and small scales. In order to really pressure the government into taking action on the issues the disabled are facing, good data and research material should be provided as evidence of the needs the disabled have, so that programs and initiatives addressing the inequity in the deaf community can be planned and launched.

Deaf schools should also be active advocates in this matter and make sure they keep regular track on their students medical histories and records. In my opinion, since it is the schools' responsibility to also provide help and support for their students and families in seeking services and helping to find interpreters for them, since the parents don't usually know what to do due to communication barriers. HoG could also, for example, work more with the deaf churches in Accra as well to form support networks for the students in case of medical and health emergencies or issues, so that we would have more people ready to help us seek services, translate and possibly fundraise for medical cases or abuse cases.

10.4 School-based initiatives

The Social Ecological Model developed by Bronfenbrenner in the late 1970s explains the complex relationship between the individual and cultural norms, socio-economic status and inequality, legal and institutional factors, and the media. Among the first steps in piloting either an existing educational initiative on sexual health that has been successful elsewhere and modify it to suit HoG or planning an entirely new educational initiative specifically for HoG is using this model to interpersonal relations, interactions with others, social networks and support systems influence sexual behavior. The model aids in organizing, clarifying and analyzing one's own values, feelings, attitudes and

beliefs existing in a social context. This can also be helpful in questioning the assumptions in the cultural environment, which might be false.

For example, one of the teachers stated in the interviews, that his/her belief is that rape does not occur among deaf and occurs only among the hearing. The same teacher in question had lived in a very guarded environment growing up and as a daughter of a police officer, the family moved constantly. This shows how one's own background combined with the cultural environment can result in false beliefs that can be dangerous. In this example, the cultural environment is that deaf rape cases are not shown and discussed in the news and media as much as the cases of hearing, as deaf rarely end up behind bars or report cases of rape.

Prevention efforts are stronger when community needs are assessed and programs are tailored to the needs and values of the community. A prevention program curricula that would be developed for House of Grace School specifically should take into account the needs and values of the deaf community and also consider which different communities the children and teachers are part of. For example, religion is very important in Ghana and almost every family in Ghana has their own church they attend every Sunday. HoG has staff and students from different churches and churches also differ in their customs, values and rules here in Ghana. Churches might preach about sex and sexuality in a different manner, for example. In the interviews, I found teachers opinions to vary on at what age sex would be discussed with students, is it good to teach students about birth control pills and condoms and is premarital sex a sin or is it acceptable.

Looking at the current situation of House of Grace School for Deaf, it would be wise to look into existing school-based initiatives on sexual health, research and material on sex education for deaf and existing learning materials designed for deaf for guidance and help in slowly making sex education a part of House of Grace Syllabus. Currently the school is facing challenges having to do with fundraising, networking and expanding its activity. Taking into account the resources currently at hand at the school, volunteers could start by putting together and gathering material to the school on lessons, activities and successful programs on sex education to be kept in the school and start holding training days for teachers to introduce the field. Alongside the training days, workshops on sexual health could be made a permanent part of the term schedule.

Through practical training, the teachers can learn how to more freely and thoroughly discuss the topics as they could be provided with detailed lesson plans at first and gradually be given more responsibilities in personalizing the lessons and making their own lessons with the available material.

The Kenyan Peer Education Network has developed an extensive training manual for deaf with interactive-based activities for basic understanding of sexual health, hiv and aids. The purpose of this manual is to provide Deaf youth and adults, teachers, parents and guardians with a tool for addressing basic health awareness within an independent framework utilizing optimal communication(The Deaf Peers' Education Manual 2013). The information has its origins in mainstream literature and/or activities within the target Deaf community tabulated from the beginning of the PEN program and can serve other Deaf communities. There is no copyright if not used to make financial profit. A training manual such as this one would be ideal for House of Grace School for Deaf, as teachers are in the process of also learning about teaching these topics, some of the staff and volunteers change frequently, interactive and participatory methods have been shown to be very effective for deaf to learn and an actual clear manual with detailed instructions on lessons and activities help teachers to execute the lessons well. As mentioned before, one of the challenges at HoG is the level of education teachers have which vary, the ability of teachers to take initiative and plan lessons independently without the guidance of the headmistress and the lack of experience in teaching of some of the teachers.

HoG could apply for grants from various companies of associations overseas or in Ghana for financial aid and work with experts, teachers, health professionals and students to make a training manual for either HoG only or all the deaf schools in Ghana. Each school might have special needs that have to be considered in the manual. Also, HoG on it's own might not get the resources to start a national project as such. The school could use existing manuals such as the one of Sahayya International as guidance and both edit existing good activities to suit HoG and plan new activities and games with instructions that fit the needs of our students and our school. All activities and lessons would have clear steps and instructions for anyone having to execute it for the first time to understand. Games and activities could also use familiar places for our students to make them more relatable. For example, an activity on learning about personal safety through drama could use scenes as the beach, the mall or the market, which are all places our students are close to, can imagine well and are dangerous to

wander alone. The manual should also entail a dictionary of signs of different sexual topics. Pictures could be taken of students and teachers signing them and be made up into a small dictionary for HoG only.

The challenges and positive changes and outcomes should be documented in detail. This is important for assessing the needs the school has and to analyze clearly the developmental areas of the school in this field. After gathering enough information on the school, staff, students and the families involved, HoG could start developing and planning a program that would reach the specific needs of deaf youth in Ghana. Based on the interviews, it can be said that gender awareness, awareness on the attitudes of society towards deaf and special needs of the deaf community, strengths of the deaf community and cultural context of sexuality are important themes to include in sex education at HoG. Staff and volunteers at HoG also come from different countries and cultures and the headmistress and administration are all foreigners. Cultural context and cultural differences are an important factor to consider when planning the content of sex education in Ghana. In Western countries, the content of sex education is focused more on promoting healthy sexual relations and positive sexual behavior, whereas in Ghana the focus is more on preventing premarital sex and avoiding sexual acts as late as possible. When teaching about sexuality, in Finland it is taught that masturbation is healthy and part of self-exploration when you are an adolescent, but in Ghana I discovered most men and women do not ever masturbate and it is considered very shameful. If foreigners are the main parties planning a sex education program at first, getting to know the culture and values here is essential so that our western values and teachings won't be brought to the school by force and cause conflict with the parents or teachers, for example. The content has to be carefully planned and considered so that it will be most beneficial for the student's and their future safety.

The existing friends and volunteers the school have in Finland could form a group to start searching for grants and aid for starting the development and planning process and finding partners in Ghana to start this project. Deaf associations overseas could be interested in funding and being part of a project like this and after finding reliable partners, the Ministry of Education in Ghana might also be interesting in the development of a school-based initiative for deaf. HoG has also formed relationships with some universities and institutions in Finland. HoG could also reach out to universities to see if students studying the field would be interested in incorporating participating in a project like this with their studies.

In the future, when HoG is a larger institution with more partners, Hog together with other deaf associations and deaf schools in Ghana, could work together in launching an curricula for deaf in sex education to be executed in all deaf schools. This is not part of the official national curriculum of the Ministry of Education. However, in the meantime while fighting for this to be part of the national curriculum, each school has their own liberty in planning their own syllabus based on the national curriculum. Making the deaf schools aware of how important sex education in schools is especially to deaf, who are easily left outside of services, materials and programs offered to hearing on sex education, could lead to deaf schools uniting in piloting school-based initiatives in their school leading to sex education becoming a permanent part of the school syllabus.

As mentioned before, school-based educational programs have yielded positive and promising results. Though they have not been tried in Ghana among deaf, reaching out to the deaf through schooling could prove to be a fruitful environment to make sure everyone can get access the information. School-based educational programs c

10.5 Environmental, cultural and societal context of sex and abuse

Often cases of sexual abuse are not reported in Ghana, for a variety of reasons. The abuser is usually known to the victim and is often in a position of authority in the child's family or community. Sentences for convicted child sexual abusers are very harsh, and the stigma attached to the victim can be severe. So many cases are settled with a bribe outside of court. These settlements do nothing to help the abused children deal with the physical and psychological damage caused by the assault. I recall a case I witnessed whilst working for Street Children Empowerment Foundation(SCEF) in Jamestown, where a teenage girl was abandoned by her whole family because she was brave enough to report her uncle, who had been abusing her since she was eight years old. The abuser's family arrived to the SCEF office together with the victim's parents to beg for the abuser to be pardoned and for us to leave the case. In one of the interviews, one teacher said it is the duty of a rape victim to marry the rapist if she becomes pregnant and it is up to her to take better care of her safety in the future.

At House of Grace School we have the opportunity to educate students on the laws regarding abuse, their rights and provide them with a support network and trustworthy staff, so that they know they will always have people supporting them and never abandoning them in case they want to report any cases or attempts of abuse. The school has to have a strict and very public and open view on its stand on any abuse and proceedings if any of our students are involved in any of these types of cases. The school should also commit to standing behind the families of the abused and try to educate parents on the importance of taking these cases to court. A challenge in HoG is the two communities the older children especially are a part of, which are the deaf community and their hearing community where their families are. Especially if a deaf person abuses them in the deaf community, they might be too afraid to lose their position and respect in the community and not report. Similarly if hearing people abuse them, it might be difficult to tell their families if it is someone close to the community.

Making the children and young people aware of their own right is the most important first step in making sure abuse cases are brought to light. Especially the girls, who haven't had any sex education, might consider sex not to be such a big deal and even think it is a man's right to have sex with them if they approach them. Sex might also be the easiest means to get money or other materials. It is later when the psychological effects of rape or undesired sexual acts will start appearing. Though some girls might think getting raped was their own fault, they will quietly suffer on their own and not understanding why they feel so emotionally shredded by the deed.

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