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**A QUALITATIVE STUDY ABOUT “SEX FOR GRADES” AS SOCIAL
NAVIGATION IN LIBERIAN UNIVERSITIES**

Authors: Charlotte Dorph
Anna Sjögren

Supervisor: Martin Andersson

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight the phenomenon of “Sex for Grades” in Liberian universities as an intrinsically relevant category of study by illuminating the relationships between agency and structures; structures that may be enabling or constraining. We do this by analysing how female students use their tactical agency and apply this to the theory of social navigation, a theory that has not been applied to education before. The data upon which this thesis is based was gathered in Monrovia, Liberia in January and February 2014. Its focus was to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of university students, university personnel and ministry representatives. Sex for grades was found to mainly be a heterosexual phenomenon between female students and male teachers. The findings point to a duality between how structures steer the female students toward engaging into sex for grades, and at the same time that it is used as a tactic by the females themselves. The findings also show that sex for grades may be an obstacle to the full participation of women, therefore inhibiting their potential to influence the future path of Liberia.

Key words: Sex for grades; Social navigation; Agency; Liberia; Universities; Gender Structures; Transactional sex; Sexual harassment; Sextortion

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Acronyms

AAL	Action Aid Liberia
ACS	American Colonisation Society
AfT	Agenda for Transformation
AMEU	African Methodist Episcopal University
AMEZU	African Methodist Episcopal Zionist University
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GNI	Gross National Income
GoL	Government of Liberia
GPA	Grade Point Average
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
SfG	Sex for Grades
UL	University of Liberia
UMU	United Methodist University
UN	United Nations
UNMIL	The United Nations Mission to Liberia
VAW	Violence Against Women

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1. Introduction

“[Sex for grades] it is rampant. So for us in Liberia some people have adapted to the situation, one thing you should know is that us Liberians we are quick to adapt to the situation, honestly”- Male student from the United Methodist University.

The right to education is a universal human right and all forms of violence is a violation of human rights. Still violence in schools occurs all around the world inhibiting access to education and risking development, as education is seen as a precondition for development (Taylor, 2010:6). The international community has announced that specifically access to higher education is a “global good” (Morley & Lussier, n.d.:1). However widening participation in the meritocratic system, meaning a society driven by educational performance and merits, may risk leaving people who do not enjoy full and fair participation, out from the benefit of acquiring knowledge, and of demanding their own rights. Widening educational participation may also require different tactics depending on the context and your gender.

The focus of this thesis is the phenomenon “Sex for Grades” (SfG¹). It can be seen as sexual violence; sexual harassment; transactional sex; or corruption. It is a practice that has consequences both for students, and for society at large (Baba-Djara et al., 2013:14). The phenomenon most often involves female students and male teachers; students are threatened or demanded to have sex with the teacher in order to receive a grade or pass a test, or the females themselves approach the teacher with this goal. The perspective of females as agents is often missing in studies about SfG. Therefore we want to highlight this by using the concept of **social navigation**, a theory used to understand people’s coping mechanisms within changing or tough social terrains or structures. The concept was developed by Henrik Vigh (2009), based on work of renowned scholars such as Max Weber and Ralf Dahrendorf. Social navigation was later applied by Mats Utas (2005) in his study about a young woman's tactics and navigation during the Liberian civil war. Social navigation has thus not been applied to the educational sector before, something that we are attempting in this thesis. Thus with a departure in social

¹ We use the term “SfG” because this is the terminology we used during the FGDs and interviews. SfG are also the words used in AAL’s study, therefore a familiar concept to the participants. We are aware that other terminology is also existent.

navigation, this thesis will also contribute to the understanding of how it can be used as we believe that social navigation is applicable to situations other than war zones. We will use this concept as a way to understand how SfG is used as a navigational tactic within structures identified from our data. Adding agency is furthermore a way to understand people's individual behaviour and how such behaviour may enforce and be reinforced by the structures that may constrain it in the first place.

We came into contact with this topic during our internship with Action Aid Liberia (AAL), who had previously conducted a study where it was found that 85% of female students at three universities in Liberia have experienced sexual harassment and/or been involved in transactional sex, specifically for grades (Ford, 2013). Across the universities the participating students highlighted SfG as a particularly common issue (Taylor, 2010). There is little research about SfG in general, particularly in Western Africa (Jones & Espey, 2008), and even less in Liberia adding to the relevance of this thesis. Previous literature does not focus on SfG as a category but rather places the phenomenon within various types of concepts that, as we will show, are used interchangeably. By drawing from previous literature, this thesis aims to show that SfG deserves to be further researched as a concept in itself. At the same time this study has no aspirations of making claims about exactly how common SfG is in Liberia or in the visited universities as we are using the participants' own accounts of prevalence.

1.1 Background to the Problematique

Access to education has improved in many countries labelled as “developing”². In recent years the number of people attending university globally has increased rapidly, and in Sub-Saharan Africa by 8.7% annually for the past three decades (Morley, 2011:104). Also women's access to higher education has grown. In 1990 one in six students were female, while today it is approximately one in three (Morley, 2011:104). This has led to an increased competition over resources in the form of employment after graduation and increased pressure on graduating with high marks, but it has also led females into an area that for so long has exclusively belonged to

² “Developing countries” is a contested term and we are aware of that there are other labels such as the “global south”, “third world countries” and “periphery”, indicating that these concepts constantly change mirroring socio-political aspects globally as well as locally. The same goes for the concept of “developed” countries.

men, and where men still have much power and influence, based on deeply rooted structures of gender roles and inequality.

As more females enter the educational arena, both in primary, secondary and tertiary levels the issues of gender-based violence (GBV), sexual harassment and sexual violence in education becomes increasingly important to discuss. These types of violence are often used parallel with violence against women (VAW), and often label women as victims. While it is not the intention of this thesis to reaffirm such a victimacy perspective, rather the opposite, we cannot disregard the fact that women are exposed to these violations more often than men, just because they are women. However men are also impacted in more indirect ways.

There is no study mapping the prevalence of SfG explicitly, but some studies across Africa have touched upon it (see Taylor & Conrad, 2008; Jones & Espey, 2008; Leach in TI, 2013; Morley, 2011; Baba-Djara et. al, 2013; Masvawure 2010; Nwadigwe 2007; Shumba & Matinas, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Morley & Lussier, no year; Morley & Lussier, 2009; Dahn in Snelgrove, 2008; Action Aid, 2011; Akaab, 2011), which is not the same as saying that this is an African phenomenon, or a “developing world” issue (Morley & Lussier, 2009). However one reason for the scholarly interest in Africa is the fast spread of HIV/AIDS, something that has made researchers identified teacher-student “relationships” as a major cause of concern (Leach in TI, 2013; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; LoPiccalo et al., 2012). Studies from Canada and the United Kingdom by Eyre (2000) and Bagilhole & Woodward (1995, in Morley, 2011) however illustrate that SfG does indeed happen in “developed countries” as well. Nonetheless the issue seems to be more common in post-conflict countries, or countries with weak institutions and policies (Leach: in TI, 2013:90).

In addition to there being little knowledge about SfG in general there are even less studies concerned with the issue in higher education. Previous studies about the phenomenon mostly concentrate on primary and secondary schools (see i.e. Taylor & Conrad, 2008; Jones & Espey, 2008; Atwood, 2011), and thus not tertiary levels of education, where the practise may be even more prevalent according to Leach (in TI, 2013). This, as we will show is often linked with the idea of sexual relationships always being “mutual agreements” between people over 18, whereas

sexual relations with females under 18 is a crime in Liberia (AGALI, 2012). Thus making it problematic to see SfG as a violation or a crime in tertiary education, however the consequences of this practice in primary and secondary schools should not be diminished.

Dahn says: “*male teachers’ threats and the demand for sex with female students in the school system in Liberia is a norm*” (in Snelgrove et al. 2008::48). SfG often occurs within a societal “*culture of silence*”, where teachers act with impunity (Taylor & Conrad, 2008:5). Other factors such as poverty, gender roles, traditions and “new” influences relating to modernisation or “Western” influences impacts possibilities, choices and strategies for navigating in society. In particular the issue of SfG can be traced and related to corruption, which is widespread in Liberia. “Money for grades” usually compels SfG according to students we spoke to.

Since the end of the Liberian war in 2003 a peacebuilding and development sector, coupled with access to education as a cornerstone, have contributed to creating a job market where educated women have the chance to find employment, based on the increased focus on gender mainstreaming and women's rights (Fuest, 2008:2017). Education is a major concern also for the national government where the slogan “*if you educate a girl, you educate a nation*” has become widespread. Although these efforts have created opportunities for women to acquire education, the “new” situation has also contributed to female students engaging into SfG as with the will of “moving ahead” in life - a will that, we will show is exploited by teachers but also utilised by female students.

1.2 Defining the Problem

Previous research does not regard SfG is as a category of study in itself, partly because of the overlapping and confusing terminology (Leach in TI, 2013:88). In addition to being very broad, these perspectives often disregard the choices and agency that is also involved when engaging in SfG (Dunne et al., 2006:88). By not focusing on, and nuancing SfG it will be difficult to understand how and why it persists, and how to address it as it ultimately inhibits successful educational attainment, gender equality, and in turn the “development” of Liberia. In this sense much remains to be understood about how society constructs and constrains agency for all genders, and “*the ways in which these ‘choices’ are negotiated in contexts of poverty, conflict or*

disease and of differentiated gender opportunities” (ibid)

1.3 Research Purpose

In the light of this research problem our purpose with this thesis is to analyse sex for grades as an intrinsically relevant category of study by taking the example of Liberian universities and illuminating the aspect of agency within the phenomenon of sex for grades. We believe that this thesis will provide new insight into existing research about sex for grades and social navigation.

1.4 Research Question

How can the practise of sex for grades in Liberian universities be understood as a social navigation tool within structural constraints?

2. Contextualizing Sex for Grades

SfG can be seen as a form of sexual harassment, transactional sex, often falling under the umbrella of sexual violence. SfG can also be a form of corruption, (Leach in TI, 2013, Morley, 2011, Baba-Djara et al, 2013; Davis, 2013:5, IAWJ, 2012). We use these terms as perspectives of SfG, rather than as definitions and thus see SfG as falling *between* these perspectives. Definitions differ depending on the setting and on who one asks (Ekore, 2012:4359). This is true for any concept, and therefore also SfG needs to be contextualised. We focus on SfG where female students and male university personnel are involved, which entails illuminating the agency aspect within these interactions. This means that we do not discuss other types of violations such as, rape, unwanted touching and name calling as has often been done with the other perspectives (Leach in TI, 2013:89).

2.1 Perspectives of “Sex for Grades”

Morley (2011) discusses SfG as a **sexual harassment** issue at length in her article “Sex, grades, and power in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania”, stating that “*sexual harassment, like other forms of gender violence, is an attack on the mind as well as the body*” (108). This article sheds light on sexual harassment in education generally as a global issue, and is thus not specific

to developing countries. Sexual harassment can be both direct and indirect (Morley, 2011) but most often it “*challenges the victim’s psychological well-being*” (Ekore, 2012:4359). In Morley’s study it was also found that sexual harassment was seen as a power manifestation rather than being about sexual desire. She also found that SfG creates negative images of females as students and learners. It makes their success become attributed to sexual engagements while their failure to perform academically is assigned to them not being “ready” for higher education (Morley, 2011; Morley & Lussier, 2009). Nwadike’s definition of SfG as a form of sexual harassment highlights multiple important perspectives: “*offensive expressions of a sexual nature, persistent amorous requests and other open or subtle forms of sexual advances by a teacher towards a student with the intention of using power and authority to impose unwanted sexual cooperation*” (2007:352). Shumba and Martina (2002:48) add to the definition by stating that SfG is “*an act that pleases only one of the two parties involved*”. Although male students may be subjected to sexual harassment, females represent the majority. A study made in Zimbabwe confirms this, stating that 66% of female students agreed with the statement: “*have been asked for sexual favours by some lecturer*” while 95% of the male students disagreed (Shumba & Matinas, 2002:55).

Seeing SfG as sexual harassment does however not reveal the agency of the female students, therefore other perspectives are required. Morley (2011) found that the participants in her study explained their relationships with the teachers as **transactional sex**, thereby implying consent. In many sub-Saharan African countries, the use of sex in exchange for something is considered a norm and a “possibility” for women to “buy” things, making sex into a “woman’s currency” (Baba-Djara et al., 2013:14,36), which also adds to the normalisation of sex as a commodity (GoL & UN, 2011:27). A definition by Baba-Djara et al. highlights how female students engage in transactional sex “*primarily for the purpose of obtaining material goods, financial support, or grades, not including commercial sex work*” (2013:11) This indicates some navigation and personal choice as: “*some female students also choose to use their sexuality as a commodity for economic or academic gain, or to gain status among their peers*” (Leach, 2013:89; Silberschmidt & Rasch, 2001:1815). This statement challenges the idea of transactional sex as a survival strategy for obtaining the necessary minimum, but can rather be seen as “*pursuit of modernity*” (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). The *hope* of getting a better life may be a strong drive if there is a

perception that this life comes with access to material things acquired through relationships where the idea of “something for something” is the base.

However the idea of transactional sex being consensual because of its “choice” aspect can be questioned. Studies that understand SfG as transactional sex often lack problematisation of the structures behind the phenomenon. Structural social and economic constraints, such as poverty, gender inequality and normalisation of sex can be reasons for females engaging in SfG, or that they feel obligated to. Engaging into transactional sex requires constant negotiation and wavering about whether something is worth sex or not (Masvawure, 2010:866). Another pressure to engage in transactional sex also comes from the parents, relatives or peers who push for these relationships as teachers are seen as a good “catch”, and can help the family economically (Leach in TI, 2013; Atwood, 2011).

To extend the discussion of consent, and raise awareness about the invisible forms of corruption and sexual abuse that occur within educational, judicial and governmental systems, the concept of **sextortion** offers an interesting aspect. Sextortion is a combination of ‘sex’ and ‘extortion’, thereby seeing SfG as a form of corruption. Sextortion focuses on the misuse of power by somebody in authority, where sexual favours rather than money is the bribe (IAWJ, 2012). In opposite to the previous mentioned perspectives, sexual harassment and transactional sex, sextortion makes SfG a legal matter, with the crime being a misuse of power to get a sexual favour. Sextortion also highlights that psychological harm may be more long-lasting than any physical coercion or harm. By seeing sexual coercion as a misuse of power by an authority, sextortion targets the issue as a form of corruption, and in doing so steps away from the debate between consensual and non-consensual sex. This gives an interesting perspective of “blame”, as sextortion takes on the perspective that it is the person in authority who abuses power who is responsible. However sextortion lacks discussions about the active role and power of female students.

Indeed common to previous studies about SfG is the focus on **unequal power relationships** and **misuse of power** (see i.e. Morley, 2011; Morley & Lussier, no year; Morley & Lussier, 2009;). Morley and Lussier (2009:1) say that due to unequal hierarchical power relationships that exist in

universities, some male teachers consider it their “right” to demand SfG. Females are then due to persistent harassment or pressure coerced to “agree”. At the same time we should not completely disregard the aspect of choice, the issue is rather what is causing these choices to be made.

2.2 Putting Sex for Grades in a Liberian Perspective

The issue of instructors requesting SfG, is mentioned in the 2008 report of the status for Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) written by the Liberian government (GoL, 2008) and in an article discussing transactional sex among Liberian high school students by Atwood et al. (2011). Katherine Davis (2013) has analysed the persistence of sexual violence in Liberian schools, including primary and secondary where she includes SfG as one aspect. Action Aid highlights SfG in Liberian universities in their report “Women and the City II” (Taylor, 2013), highlighted in The Guardian by Liz Ford (Ford, 2013). Dahn (in Snelgrove, 2008) writes about SfG, calling it a human rights violation, based on the patriarchal traditions deeply rooted in Liberian society. Doe-Andersson (2005) reminds us of the: *“reality that many girls in Liberian schools, colleges, and universities must succumb to the sexual advances of their male teachers in order to make the grades required to pass a course or receive a diploma or degree”* and calling SfG a *“necessary evil”* due to the power vested in males (Doe-Anderson, 2005)

Without getting into the research findings of this study, we would like to present two quotes from the FGDs highlighting the prevalence of SfG at Liberian universities:

“I think the issue of SfG it very common, though may not have evidence, but it is very common, it is not a strange thing. We all have once upon a time heard about the issue SfG” - Male student, United Methodist University

“It keep happening around, not only AMEU, all of the universities it’s still happening on a daily basis” - Female student, African Methodist Episcopal University

2.3 Gendered Aspects of Sex for Grades

In this section we want to highlight the construction of gender in relation to SfG. Gender is in this thesis seen as a non-static notion pointing to that meanings of being a man and a woman are socially constructed. This thesis also understands gender as “*an organising principle of social life that affects different levels of social reality, not only individual people.*” (GoL & UN, 2011:14). When speaking of gender we do thus not assume that gender or GBV is relevant only to women and girls. We agree with Shefer, Clowes and Vergnani (2012) that there is a need for more studies about men and transactional sex and subscribe to Leach and Humphreys (2007) call for widening the perception of sexual violence in school as only a heterosexual issue. We attempted to broaden our perspective by talking to students involved in a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) organisation, and by asking questions about homosexual teacher-student relationships, and posing questions about SfG between female teachers and male students. However, our data confirms previous perceptions about SfG as a phenomenon between male teachers and female students.

Indeed, themes of male domination and female subordination re-occur throughout various studies about SfG (Masvawure, 2010; Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Several respondents in a study by the United Nations and Liberian Government (2011) replied that the current issue of domestic violence and GBV in Liberia is based on men wanting to “take back” power from women. Such a will can be attributed to changing gender roles since the war, the increased access of women into areas that have been traditionally male, and the focus on women’s empowerment from international and national organisations as this caused a distress on men’s possibility to act as “men” (GoL & UN, 2011:45). Morley (2011:104) calls this **reverse discrimination** where males who, in her study, perceive that they do not maintain their edge, feel discriminated when female students receive higher grades due their “relationship” with the teacher. However male students may also become “victims” of a teacher’s power. For example male student’s educational achievements may be targeted by a teacher’s “*revenge*” if they share interest in the same female student (Dahn in Snelgrove, 2008:49; also see Shumba & Matinas, 2002). These issues are based in power differences, securing male power over female, and the teacher’s power over student’s educational performance and links SfG to the notion of gender inequality; here referring to the structures which may constrain students from reaching their potential, forcing and possibly

making them engage into SfG.

By using the term gender inequality we do not want to deprive individuals of agency something we will return to in the theory section and in the analysis. Furthermore narratives of transactional sex are surrounded by a “*dominant sexual drive discourse*” (Hollway, 1989 in Shefer et al, 2012l:444), something that Shefer et al argue reproduces “*a simplistic and deterministic picture of masculinity and sexuality*” (Shefer et al, 2012l:444). Such perspectives risk reinforcing stereotypical gender roles and affirming male power over female, and thus ignoring the agency and experiences of both females and males (see Stemple, 2011; MSF, 2009; Higgins, Hoffman, & Dworkin, 2010; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Stein et al, 2002; Guckenheimer & Schmidt, 2013; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011).

3. Liberian History

In order to understand in which terrain the students find themselves in and to put the practice of SfG into a context, it is important to give a background and contextual analysis of Liberian society. Starting off with a brief history about the country.

3.1 Liberia Before the War

Liberia, a small country by the Atlantic ocean in West Africa, it is home to about four million people (World Bank, 2014 a), constituted of 15 counties and 16 ethnical tribes. In 1822 the American Colonisation Society (ACS), made up of freed slaves from the USA came to the country. During the coming years, other colonisation societies from various parts of the USA sent former slaves to Liberia, whom settled in the various counties and whom are referred to as Americo-Liberians (Sirleaf Johnson, 2009). The Republic of Liberia was established 1847, when it declared independence from the ACS. However the Americo-Liberians continued to rule for many years and discriminate against the indigenous population, particularly against African-Liberians and women. Women from all social groups were not allowed to vote until the 1950s, even though the constitution specifically acknowledged equal rights for all (GoL, 2008).

When former government member and future president Charles Taylor on the 24th December 1989 entered the country with his rebel forces the multiple factors of bad governance, discrimination, and exploitation of natural resources had set the stage for the civil war that came to shake the country to its core (Badmus, 2009: 812-815). A conflict that claimed between 150 000 and 200 000 lives displaced more than half of the population and destroyed most infrastructure, and left people with enormous trauma. In 2003 the 14 year long civil war officially ended, with the signing of a peace agreement in Accra, Ghana.

The United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) was established in 2003. It came to the country just after the war ended and is still there. They are downsizing and the prognosis is that they will leave in 2014. The impressive number of international development organisations in the country and in the capital Monrovia particularly, are not about to leave. About 70% of the gross national income (GNI) in 2011 was aid (Devint, 2014).

3.2 The Art of Navigating Through a War Zone

In Utas (2005) article “Victimacy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone” he describes how a young woman during the Liberian civil war, adjusts her tactics in order to survive the fast changing surroundings. She engaged in “*loving business*”, which can be described as transactional sex, with soldiers because she knew that they could bring her what she and her family needed. “*Loving business*” was common in Liberia also before the war (Fuest, 2008). Young girls would engage with older men in order to pay for school fees or material items (Utas, 2005:413). With this background, “paying” for something with sexual favours is not a new thing in Liberia today.

The civil war in Liberia is often described as extremely violent, grave crimes such as torture, mutilation, public humiliation, amputation, killings and use of child soldiers have been reported. Mostly the conflict is known for the high amount of sexual violence, including but not excluding rape. About 40 000 girls, young women and women were raped during the war (UN, 2014). Despite or because of what women went through, they are said to have played a crucial role in ending the war. The persistent effort of white-dressed women sitting outside the presidential palace in 2003, demonstratively preventing people in the peace talks to leave the building

without a solution, is a picture that spread all over the world and is said to have been a contributing factor to ending the war and the peace agreement that was signed (Ford, 2011; MG, 2003; Gbowee, 2011; Cosette, 2012; Tavaana, n d). Furthermore, the agreement included a section confirming gender equality in the transitional government. Something that also should be regarded as a victory for female lobbyists and international pressure, much more than the “willingness” of the peace negotiating warlords (Fuest 2008:214). However that Taylor ran out of military possibilities, and exiled to Nigeria is also an important factor to the end of the war (Moran & Pitcher, 2004).

3.3 Liberia Today

It is not possible to disregard the past when talking about the present as many people have fresh memories from the war. Many issues that Liberia faces today are attributed to the war, especially regarding GBV (Atwood et al., 2011). Challenges also remain in terms of infrastructure³ and widespread poverty. 83.6% of the population lived below the poverty line of 1.25 USD between 2007 and 2012 (UNICEF, 2013⁴). In relation, Liberians continues to experience high levels of food insecurity, where one in five household is food insecure (WFP, n.d; Food Security Portal, 2012).

In 2005 Africa's first democratically elected female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was voted into power in Liberia, a great victory in the quest for gender equality it was said. However there are few women in parliament; 8 out of 73 seats in the parliament are held by women (IDEA, 2013). The number of seats held by females does not necessarily say much about the situation for women in general or overall gender equality (Connell, 2011; Doe-Anderson, 2005). Notwithstanding this, “Ma Ellen” has a symbolic power especially among young Liberian women, which should not be diminished. Some females we spoke to in Liberia would indicate that if she can do it, then so can we: “*we are trying our best, you know to continue talking to our girl friends that education is the key, you know, to success. Tomorrow you can be like Ma Ellen*” (Female student African Methodist E Episcopal Zion University).

³ For example, Liberia is dependant on generators for its electricity supply. About 1% of the population have access to the public electricity grid, also run by generators (Energypedia, 2014)

⁴ When referring to statistical data, we wish to stress that statistical data from or about Liberia are uncertain in reliability, however they serve as indications.

Important political steps have been taken, particularly in increasing access to primary education for girls. Education is one of the components of the Human Development pillar, outlined in the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), which is the current strategic document guiding the development in Liberia (GoL, n.d.) and part of “Liberia Rising 2030” seeking to make Liberia a middle income country by 2030. Several laws have been passed to improve access to education; the Education Law (2001), the National Girls Education Policy (2006), the Free Compulsory Primary Education Policy (2006/2007) and the Education Reform Act (2011) (GoL, 2008; USAID, 2014). This focus is important as Liberia’s population is very young. More than half, 55.6% are under 20 years of age. 46.8% are under 15 years. Among the total child population 66.5% are between 0 and 9 years (GoL, 2008). About 70% of females between 15-24 years are literate in Liberia (World Bank, 2013) The ratio of girl to boy enrolment in primary education has gone up from 65% in 1998 to 92% in 2011 (World Bank, 2014 b). However moving up along the educational levels, the number of girls decreases. In Liberia the girl to boy ratio is 82% in secondary education, there is no data specific for tertiary education. An important factor for girls not reaching higher education is the high rate of teenage pregnancy; Liberia has one of the highest rates in the world, 38%⁵ (Loaiza & Liang, 2013). As indicated by the students we talked to, getting a job after graduation is a major issue. This is also reflected in an 85% unemployment rate (Atwood et al., 2011). The high number of unemployed also for youths is not just an issue for the well-being and prospects of individuals, it is also a potential risk for conflict according to president Sirleaf Johnson (Dunmore, 2013).

Women's rights have also been high on the agenda since Ellen Johnson Sirleaf came into power, with support from the international community. For example, the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) was established in 2001. Shortly after, in 2003 an inheritance bill was passed, ensuring women the right to inheritance within both customary and statutory law; In 2006 a law criminalising rape was adopted, and a special court for fast tracking rape cases was established. Liberia is one of six African countries introducing a national action plan for implementing the UN resolution of 1325 (GoL & UN, 2011:40). However, the enforcement of these laws are lagging behind and lacking in efficiency. Rape continues to be the most reported

⁵ The number refers to cases of pregnancies among girls up to the age of 19, as reported by women aged 20 to 24.

crime (GoL & UN, 2011) and the specialised court to fast-track rape cases, Criminal Court E, has according to Bacon (2011:12) only tried 16 out of 180 cases, where eight have resulted in convictions, between its establishment in 2009, until 2011. Out of the 2 383 rape cases reported by the MoGD in 2011, 22% had a perpetrator arrested but only 1% lead to conviction (MoGD, 2011). Although traditional gender roles were challenged during the war, and women have gained access to the public domain, Fuest's (2008:220) question whether these new roles made a difference in the post-war system or if the patriarchal system that was guiding Liberia in pre-war times is still present, is understandable

3.4 “The police have too many pockets”

Corruption is often linked to bribery in monetary terms, which is indeed happening at the universities as well. As one participant said: *“We pay money for lecture notes, we pay money for assignments, we pay money for tests, midterm. Everything, we pay money”* (Female, AMEU). There are many other examples of corruption in Liberia. A joke among our colleagues at Action Aid was that police uniforms have “too many pockets”. Traveling back to Monrovia after being in a rural village a few days to conduct a project evaluation, we found out that one of AAL's partner organisation's directors, in charge of implementing the project, had in fact taken the money for himself, or “eaten” it as it is called. A similar thing happened with another partner organisation who was given money to supply snacks at an event. Once there, there was no snacks as somebody had already “eaten” the money. On several occasions we also heard about how the government and ministries are selling land that is already sold, or giving concessions to the highest bidder instead of cheapest bidder.⁶

4. Research Design

Our strategy of inquiry for this thesis is inspired by phenomenology in the sense that we are interested in a phenomenon and varying perceptions of it. We thus used focus group discussions

⁶ A book called ‘Corruption 101 - Liberian Style’, just released brings up a five year long legal matter between the mining company Liberty International Mining and the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy, where the ministry wrongfully “gave” away the companies concessions. It was won by Liberty in 2011 in a court in Liberia, but so far the company has not seen any remedies.

with university students and interviews with university personnel and ministry representatives, in order to make sense (Bryman, 2012:30) of the phenomenon of SfG from the participants point of view (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975:13-14 in Bryman, 2012:30), and to ultimately be able to point to structures in which social navigation occurs. Being inspired by phenomenology we are aiming at placing our interpretations of the participants' perspectives into "*a social scientific frame*" (Bryman, 2012:31) i.e. the structures that the participants themselves point to.

4.1 Realities and Knowledge

As an ontological standpoint we subscribe to the notion of constructivism. This perspective believes that there are multiple perceptions of reality that are constantly constructed and revised through social interactions between people (Bryman 2008:19). Perceptions are thus interpreted differently depending on who you ask, and they are shaped by context and experience. This means that for a researcher it is important to understand perspectives of those under inquiry as they probably have another worldview from you as a researcher. Therefore the way we seek to "find" knowledge is through the epistemological standpoint of interpretivism.

Believing in constructivism and interpretivism does not mean that we evaluate the amount of truth in people's accounts or stories. We therefore do not subscribe to a relativist perspective of questioning whether SfG exists or not. Rather our firm belief is that it in fact does happen. Constructivism and interpretivism are ways for us to approach social research. We wish to get an insight into university students' perspectives of SfG. By applying qualitative research from this perspective, we can begin to understand some of the problems associated with the phenomenon, something that can be turned into solutions. As elaborated on in the theory section, we believe that actors have the possibility to influence their surroundings via agency. Society and structures are thus "man made" and can be altered.

4.2 Bracketing Preconceptions?

The notion of "bracketing" out preconceptions and prejudices when doing research is debatable along the lines of if it can be done, and if so, how? We would argue that the researcher's prior perceptions of the phenomenon are relevant. They can be translated into literature reviews

relevant to the phenomenon, help to identify where there is more research needed, and be useful knowledge in how best to inquire about the phenomenon (Lopez & Willis, 2004:729). Furthermore, paralleling reading about the phenomenon and Liberia with the data collection process, helped guide us in how to ask questions and to better grasp the relevant categories during coding. We also spoke to many different people about SfG, making it impossible to refrain from taking lessons from one discussion with us to the other as the discussions generated curiosity. We had a willingness to learn, and viewed those we were to learn from as the professionals about the phenomenon.

4.3 Data Practicalities

Data is based on qualitative methods and was gathered during fieldwork in Monrovia between January 7 and February 15, 2014. Given that we arrived in the country September 1, 2013 observations, familiarisation and preparations began four months before the data collection. We thus had good opportunity to scratch the surface of how it is to live in Liberia and of the socio-cultural specificities to Monrovia and Liberia. In order to dig deeper, we have also made use of secondary data via statistics about Liberia, and other studies about the phenomenon in Liberia and the region (Creswell, 2009:149). These studies are few in number but still aid in painting a picture of the situation and in discussing findings critically (Mikkelsen, 2005:160).

In total 76 people participated in this study, 32 female students⁷; 29 male students; 9 university personnel; 4 ministry representatives and 1 consultant. Interviews were held with The Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Gender and Development; and 1⁸ interview with a Representative from AAL (see appendix 1). We had FGDs and interviews with representatives from five different universities⁹, here in descending order in terms of number of students: University of Liberia (UL), African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU), United Methodist University (UMU), African Methodist Episcopal Zion University (AMEZU), Stella

⁷ Students include participants who have recently graduated, who had drop-out of university, along with currently enrolled, age 20-39.

⁸ We talked with the AAL representative to gain background information about the previous study, and their perspective of the issue, being an organisation at the forefront of women's rights.

⁹ Nr of students (year of data): UL 17620 (2009), AMEU 3432 (2009), UMU 3118 (2009), AMEZU 2325 (2009), Stella Maris Polytechnic 2090 (2009).

Maris Polytechnic (MoE, n.d.). We did not include Cuttington University in this study, which is one of the larger universities because it is situated far outside of Monrovia, and because it was difficult to access due to the rainy season. In addition to the FGDs with students from the separate universities, we also held two FGDs, one female and one male with students attending different universities but involved in a LGBT-rights organisation. We wanted to avoid limiting our understanding of SfG as a heterosexual practice. However we found that these students' discussions did not differ much from discussions in the other groups. They did however more directly express that SfG in fact could be unfair against male students, or act in their disadvantage.

A focus group and interview guide (see appendix 2) with a number of open-ended questions was created as a way to keep track of the discussion. This was also a way for us to organise the sessions and keep them as similar as possible as we divided some sessions between us (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). We were both present in four FGD sessions, while the rest were separate. On this note we also recognise that what this thesis could have won by being conducted by one person, could also have been a loss, as fruitful analysis and understandings derives from dialogue.

4.3.1 Access to the Field

Action Aid Liberia as our gatekeepers provided us with initial contact information to students who in turn helped us with the **FGDs**. AAL has also driven a project working towards "Safe Cities" where SfG was one component. Within the frame of this, AAL helped in organising women's groups within the five largest universities in Liberia. These were some of the female students that we were put in contact with, who in turn snowballed (Creswell, 2009:178) us to other female and male students. This means that some of the students in the FGDs had received gender training from AAL. We think that this may have been helpful as these students are perhaps more open to talk about SfG. It may also have led them to voice concerns, perhaps stimulating discussion with others in the FGDs who otherwise would not have spoken.

Sampling for the **interviews** was done in a similar manner. It started off with AAL providing us with contact information to multiple ministry representatives and university administration who

we then contacted and scheduled interviews with. This was generally a bit difficult as they were busy and tended to diminish the occurrence and importance of SfG in Liberia. One interview resulted in us being forwarded to another person that was deemed more knowledgeable within the topic. Upon arrival to another interview, the interviewee had a consultant present that was requested to be part of the interview.

4.3.2 Finding Participants

We wanted to speak to those who have direct or indirect experience of SfG, and to both males and females. Our sampling strategy was purposefully done with such criteria for four reasons. Firstly, our assumption is that Liberian students, male and female, have direct or indirect experiences of SfG as they are surrounded by it throughout their whole educational life. University students were those who we could turn to in helping us to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009:178). Second, having sex with anyone under the age of 18 is since 2009 a crime in Liberia (Liebling & Baker, 2010) and since high school students are often under 18 we did not want to possibly get entangled in a legal matter. We thus purposefully selected university students. Third, it would have been ethically questionable to perform a criterion sampling by selecting students upon the basis of having engaged in SfG. Our phenomenon is a sensible issue to speak of in direct terms, however speaking in general terms brought forth many fruitful discussions and often even opened up for own self-experienced stories. Fourth, we believe that our aim of nuancing the phenomenon would not have been fulfilled by only speaking to those that have direct experience of SfG. Rather we wanted to speak to a broader array of people and include those who have indirect experience or knowledge of it as well.

4.3.3 Why Focus Groups?

FGDs were our preferred mode of data collection. These are according to Bryman (2012:501; Mikkelsen, 2005:173) good when discussing specific themes. They also elicit discussions that perhaps would be unheard of in single interview situations. FGDs give us as researchers the opportunity to study how participants make sense of phenomenon collectively (Bryman, 2012:504). FGDs as a method fits the topic because of the sensitive nature. When one person starts speaking and perhaps confides a story in the group, others can follow by sharing experiences, gradually opening up the discussion.

The FGDs were generally between 50 minutes and 1 hour in length. Female and male FGDs were held separately. We had this division to ensure the “*do no harm*” approach (Diener and Crandall, in Bryman, 2012:135) as female students sometimes experience harassment from male students. The aim was for each group to consist of five participants. It was however not possible to hold this number consistent as additional people sometimes wanted to join, and other times it was not possible to find five participants for a session. In the end, the FGDs consisted of between four and seven students. Seven of the FGDs were held at the various university campuses, while three FGDs were held at the Action Aid office since one university was not running at that time. After each FGD we provided soft drinks and something to snack on, also giving time to “speak off-the-record”, ending the discussion in a relaxed manner. Where applicable, we also reimbursed the students’ transportation costs of getting to and from the session.

4.3.4 Why Interviews?

The interviews were held to acquire a different perspective of SfG. They were seen as complementary to the FGDs and gave a perspective of SfG that represents those who have some power to make institutional changes in challenging it. Interesting to note was that these would often give contrasting accounts in the prevalence of SfG. Interviews with ministry representatives was held in their respective workplaces. Our aim was for each interview to be 30 minutes long but some interviews lasted up to an hour.

4.3.5 Organising the Data

All sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. We created and shared a coding frame and coding manual along Saldaña’s (2009) principles of “codebook” and “coding scheme” respectively. These were shared via Google docs and were thus accessible to both of us simultaneously. When having a common frame to code the data from, we could develop the same categories and themes, and thereof derive each to their original quote.

The coded data resulted in statements and clusters of meaning that illustrate the perceptions of the participants, painting a picture of how for example SfG is connected to **Normalisation**;

Power and Gender; Lack of Support System; and “A Culture of Silence” around SfG. These also paint a picture of the context in which students are forced, or make tactical choices or not, to engage in SfG and the meaning behind engaging in this practice.

4.4 Reliability

External reliability as defined by LeCompte and Goetz (in Bryman, 2012:390) says something about whether or not our study can be replicated by other researchers. We believe that the external reliability of our study is satisfactory to the extent that if someone else was to go to Liberia to conduct the same study, they would come across similar discussions. The reason for this is that we reached a level of saturation where there was not much new that came up during the discussions.

Internal reliability, reflecting an agreement between multiple researchers' perceptions of the data, or “dependability” as defined by Guba and Lincoln (in Bryman, 2012: 390), is something we believe to be satisfactory as well. This is indicated by the above-discussed creation and sharing of a coding frame and manual so that there was coherence between the two of us as researchers in terms of data interpretation. In addition, and as with any context, situations can change that can impact consistency (Bryman, 2012:169).

4.5 Validity

Our internal validity, or credibility, referring to a match between observations and theoretical ideas (Bryman, 2012:390), is an especially important issue as it has to do with if we have interpreted the data “correctly” relative to what the participants would think. Bryman (2012) suggest this can be mitigated by doing a respondent validation, something we did not do. As we spoke to many participants within small time spans, there was no time to first transcribe, interpret and code, and then turn to the participants again for validation. By then we had left Liberia. We would like to argue that the fact that we had reached saturation and identified topics and issues that were similar across different isolated discussions, improved our internal validity. This relates to our *external validity* because the transferability, as described by Guba and Lincoln (in Bryman 2012) between discussions in the various FGDs was good. Qualitative research,

being more depth-oriented (Bryman, 2012:392), is more interested in distinctiveness of contexts and significance of phenomena in social worlds than quantitative research. We learnt from every discussion and brought with us thoughts and questions from one to the other until we noticed that the same topics were brought up, which shows that we reached depth within our topic.

4.6 Generalisability

One of the critiques against qualitative research is that it is difficult to replicate and validate and even more difficult to generalise data to the broader scale. For our study however, the aim is not to be able to generalise freely across country and continental borders. Rather we aim at what M Williams (2000:215 in Bryman, 2012:406) calls “*moderatum generalisations*”. We do not see the perspectives voiced by students that we have spoken to as representative for all university students in Monrovia, Liberia or elsewhere. Additional quantitative and qualitative analyses would have to be done to say something about this. Rather the themes that we have identified, and the interpretations that we have, are by us understood as examples. Yet, what we have found may give indications of things that may be typical for SfG also elsewhere. In addition, the focus on a broad literature review in this thesis shows that, what we have picked up on has been brought up before, but applied and interpreted in different ways.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

At the end of the FGDs, participants would indicate that they wanted something in exchange for the knowledge they gave us. They wanted us to help them in organising for example student exchange programs, or come with tips about scholarship possibilities. Some also brought up a need of funding, indirectly aiming that request at us. We of course wanted to help, especially since we are university students ourselves (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003:9). We can also draw a parallel from this situation relating to the FGDs, to that of our general experience as expats in Liberia. We were often approached for money and seen as a possible opportunity out from Liberia. In this way we felt that our capacity to “change lives” was overestimated. It also made the vast poverty in Liberia very directly present, making us feel even more disheartened in the face of it. We believe that by raising the issue of SfG in the Liberian context, even though “just” in a master’s thesis, light will be shed on some of the problems and perhaps in a long-term

perspective lead to progress in alleviating SfG.

England (1994 in Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000:81) points out a very important issue about whether or not we “*can incorporate the voices of ‘others’ without colonising them in a manner that reinforces patterns of domination*”. The ways in which we tried to circumvent such aspects, however impossible it may be, was for example to inform all participants about confidentiality and anonymity before the FGDs and interviews began as part of the consent forms (see appendix 3). We made it clear to the participants they were in no way obliged to stay. During the discussions we sat in circles and were engaged into the discussions. However we made sure to not take much verbal space by allowing for silences and reflection, thereby opening up for someone else in the group to continue a line of thought. As the data collection process progressed we began signing the consent forms as well, so as to show that we were part of the agreement. This is something that we learned along the way and can be seen as part of our reflexive process.

5. Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework is centred around understanding how sex for grades in Liberian universities can be understood as a social navigation tool. In our pursuit of doing so we must establish what social navigation and the related concept of agency is. This thesis is also inspired by the theory of structural violence as a way to understand how structures set limitations to people’s potential but also how agency can be used to navigate within such structures.

5.1 Structures as Constraining or Enabling

Structural violence is a theory that was first defined in 1969 by Johan Galtung, professor in Peace and Conflict studies (Galtung, 1969). The concept is useful for this thesis because it points to that violence is not necessarily possible to derive to any individual, but rather “*shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances*” (Galtung, 1969:171).

Applied to this thesis, it introduces thoughts about how a structure can limit the agency of female

university students, to the extent that it “*lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs, below that which would otherwise be possible.*” (Galtung, 1993 in Ho, 2007:3). This thesis is thus interested in the perspectives of structures that the concept introduces. We choose to not use the word violence in an attempt to untangle from the debate of physical versus non-physical violence. At the same time we do not disregard the psychological harm SfG may cause. Rather we are interested in the structures in which SfG occurs, structures that are inhabited by agents in various arenas, the unequal power relationships between these agents and between the arenas (Bargu, in Kaufman, 2014). Structures are important for this thesis because they are linked to an **uneven distribution of power** and **inequality**, that in turn “*establishes a certain level of what constitutes the potential by comparing it to what others can achieve*” (Ho, 2007:4) reflecting Galtung’s words: “*what could have been and what is*” (Galtung, 1969:168). This makes us aware of that those who are on the downside of the power relationship have something to achieve, and that they are in fact not bound to such a static position. The prevalence of inequality and power also makes us aware of that those who hold the upper hand in the power relationship are enabled by the relationship. The theory also introduces the concept of **avoidability** and **potential**, meaning that if there is a gap between *actual* and *potential* abilities, then “structural violence” is prevalent, hence “structural violence” and actual abilities are avoidable (Ho, 2007:15). Nixon’s “slow violence” (2011 in Dilts, 2012) and Winter (2012) provide temporal critique of structural violence as assuming that structures are static. Winter notes Galtung’s assumption that violence is invisible, and argues that violence rather becomes invisible *because* of its repetition in visible space, through time, “*across generations*” (Winter, 2012:201). As noted by Dilts (2012:193) Winter’s argument reverses “*Galtung’s assumption that the invisibility of violence allows for repetition, instead arguing that it is through repetition that violence becomes invisible*”.

The university students in this thesis, and specifically female students, are assumed to reside in a structure of inequality because there is indeed a gap between the female student’s actual and potential. Nonetheless they are seen to have agency; the ability to navigate within these structures that we have identified via our data, to strive for their potential. Their potential is an ultimate goal of what they could have achieved without the structures that make them navigate into SfG. The university personnel in turn, also reside in similar structures, but within the

educational arena they are the ones holding the direct power, thus students must utilise their power in relation to this power. Something that becomes manifested in phenomena such as SfG.

5.2 Social Navigation

Social navigation says something about how people use their agency to navigate their way through circumstances that are tough or wavering. It also opens up for viewing people not as victims of difficult social or political environments, or as free actors, but as active agents who are steering their way forward, constantly taking a tough environment with many different actors, individuals and institutions into account (Utas, 2005; Vigh, 2009). Such tough and wavering contexts cannot be anticipated due their nonlinear nature. Agency is a term that is integral to understanding social navigation as we will use it to describe how SfG is sometimes used among female university students to get what they want.

Leonard (1999 in Lopez & Willis, 2004) used the notion of situated freedom as a way to view people's navigation as free, but within limitations as people cannot separate from their context, a context that in turn conditions people. Related to this notion is **agency within structures** (Settersten & Gannon, 2005) similarly understanding such navigation as a way for people to *“actively create their own lives and maximize their own development within parameters set by their social worlds, some of which may constrain them, and some of which may enable them”* (2005:42). Pre-existing theories that claim people's actions to be defined through *“structures without agency”*, or *“agency without structure”* lack the aspect of people being able to influence their life own courses. The agency within structure concept thus acknowledges interaction between structures and agency, how it affects the life course, but also how agents can influence the social structures in which they live. Settersten and Gannon (2005:43) say that agency within structure models must regard agency not only as an individual act but also a *“collective one”*, where collective have the combined opportunity to change the structures they are in. This relates also to the notion of **motion within motion** where Vigh shows how social contexts change over time on the one hand, and how agents move in social contexts, on the other (Vigh, 2009:420, 425).

Alcinda Honwana's discussion about **strategic agency** and **tactical agency** helps to illuminate

agents and their navigation. Her division between these two types of agency takes inspiration from Michel de Certeau (1984 in Honwana, 2005:32-33). Tactical agency involves action taken by those who *lack* autonomy and whose sphere of action is *not* their own. It involves planning to cope with and maximising concrete, immediate returns in structures. It also involves acting within such structures, to seize opportunities as they come along. Tactical agency becomes manifested in different ways between the sexes, where female students may engage into SfG, while money for grades is common among both sexes. Stating that SfG is form of tactical agency is not the same as blaming the girls for this practice or in any way defending the behaviour of the teachers. Rather it is a way to broaden the debate about how SfG is used.

By viewing agency as tactical, it becomes understood as something that involves the exercise of **power** (Honwana, 2009:65). In this way Honwana draws upon Anthony Giddens who in turn argued that agency and power are intrinsically connected, something that is manifested in dependence between actors. For Giddens this dependence implies that those who are subordinated have some power to impact the actions of those who subordinate them. However such power can be structurally constrained. Honwana draws upon this by referring to child soldiers who claim that they “*had no choice*” (Honwana, 2009:65) and pointing to that even though they recognised the constraint of not having any choice, this does not mean that they did not have any agency (Honwana, 2009). The child soldiers can pretend to be ill, they can plan to escape or deceive their commanders and chiefs and so “*beat the system as they grew to know it better*” (Honwana, 2009:65; Honwana, 2005:46).

Agency and the action it brings can thus be seen both as a means to an immediate end, and a tactic in order to fulfil an imaginary other existence, a potential, and is in this sense a form of “double tactic” (Bøås, 2013: 613; Vigh, 2009:430; Utas, 2005: 408; Honwana, 2009:64). In this thesis the immediate means are also referred to as **imagined benefits**. Imagined benefits are in this thesis attributed to the associated direct benefits of engaging into SfG, for example grades or maintaining a scholarship. When talking about imagined benefits, we do not mean that they are imagined in terms of them being “fake”. We are not underestimating the reality of the benefits, but only wanting to show that they are the immediate goals that female students see for themselves.

5.3 “The Art of the Weak”

Using structural violence, social navigation and tactical agency as our theoretical framework takes focus away from viewing agents solely as victims. Not only does the word “victim” imply a sense of helplessness that is difficult to evade (Utas, 2005), but it may also “*strip away the societal context of oppression*” (Connell, 1997). Speaking of people as victims denies them of agency and risks disregarding the context. It may also fail to include those that are challenging oppression (Wilson, 2007) or denounce a person’s conscious choices of acting in a way that for some may seem unreasonable or arbitrary. Utas (2005:408) gives the example of how participants in his study at times even choose to call themselves victims as a strategy as this is deemed the best way of acquiring what is needed at a specific time. In Utas case, being a “victim” is a chosen role rather than a given one. This points to that tactical agency is practiced also within the victim concept, although victimacy was not found to be a tactic in this study it sheds light on the complex relationships between victim and agency.

Should we consider actors who act in a constraining environment as passive victims of it, or should we consider them as active agents who are to blame for their actions? (Leach et al. 2003:viii). There is indeed no straight answer to this. It illuminates the ambiguous connection between innocence and guilt where actors on the one hand cannot be seen as “*fully responsible for their actions*” (Honwana, 2005:48) but on the other hand they cannot “*be completely deprived of agency*” (ibid) either. When acting from a position of subordination, there is little power base to claim within that larger arena of power, thus those who are subordinated must sometimes manipulate situations to make them into opportunities, something that de Certeau calls “**The Art of the Weak**” (1984 in Honwana, 2009) and that is described by Honwana’s tactical agency above. Another concept describing a similar point is **patriarchal bargaining** (Kandiyoti, 1988). It describes how women in patriarchal households may make intentional compromises to protect their own present and future. However as pointed out by Kandiyoti (1988:142 in Wilson, 2007) such agency can be done in a way that is conforming rather than opposing, and may risk that hierarchical impacts are maintained with just a different name. Agency is thus not necessarily synonymous with resistance (Wilson, 2007) as agents socially navigating a terrain, may do so in a way that does not challenge but that reinforces hierarchical

power.

By combining the perspectives of agency within structure and tactical agency into social navigation, we can relate to agency and structural changes in a more productive manner as it means that structures can change if actors become aware of their part in reproducing them (Apter & Garnsey, 1994:26). In turn by applying social navigation we can shed light on how Liberian students may “**act, adjust and attune**” (Vigh, 2009: 420) their strategies according to how they expect the influence of contextual social forces to develop. This concept thus also says something about ambitions that agents have for the future; of planning, hoping and struggling towards goals, articulated by dreams and hopes. Even though we in this study focus on the immediate returns (Guyer, 2007 in Vigh, 2009).

6. Analysis

In this section we will present the major themes that came up during the FGDs and interviews and connect them to the theories of tactical agency and structural violence, and ultimately applying social navigation. In doing so we point to how SfG in Liberian universities can be understood as a tactic to socially navigate within structures. The major themes are essentially structures that we have identified as constraining or enabling students and university personnel in Liberia. The themes are: **Normalisation, Gender and the Misuse of Power, Lack of Support Systems**, and “**A Culture of Silence**”. Following the analysis of these themes, incorporating the mentioned theories and previous literature, we move on to the conclusion in section 7 where the purpose and research question will be elaborated upon with personal reflections.

6.1 The Normalisation of Sex for Grades

The data findings indicate that SfG has become a “normal” occurrence in Liberia. Not in the sense that it is accepted, but that it is part of the system: “*but we the students accept it because if we carry the complaint to admin like even the admin will be against you so that is why, sometimes in some schools that’s why, we just accept it as it is or do the course over*” (Female, AMEU). SfG has become something accepted; something that just happens and that some need

to act in relation to *because* it has become so “normal”. In this sense we agree with Dahn’s (in Snelgrove, 2008) perception that SFG has become a norm in Liberia. Something which may also be attributed to a lack in knowledge about rights “*in terms of sexual autonomy, [and] body integrity*” (AAL) lessening the odds that these will be claimed. Female students may additionally “*not see it as violence against them*” (Representative, MoGD).

The normalisation of SFG is and has been a process. The war offers an interesting aspect in this regard. Asking students about when they thought that SFG started and why it happens, the war was often mentioned as a breaking point. As one participant stated: “*it [SFG] is more now than before the war. Because it is now that we are going to school. We have dreams and want to achieve our goals.*” (Male, LGBT organisation). However already prior to the war, “*up to independence women were already marginalised and regarded as ‘materials’*” (Female, AMEU). This has also been underpinned by notions of how: “*Women has been viewed as sexual material*” (Representative, AAL). The Ministry of Justice representative furthermore argued that SFG happened before the war and that “*The war is just a foundation for excuse.*” (Representative, MoJ). However he pointed to that the war made GBV “*normal to a wider population*” (ibid) contributing to the high rates of sexual violence in the country today, something that the AAL representative as well as the female LGBT group also said.

The war thus offers an interesting point relating to change in how agents navigate within contexts that are changing and insecure (Utas, 2005). Relating to what we heard in the FGDs the practice of women using their bodies as a currency is not a “new” thing in Liberia as the social context in which it is done has changed. This refers to that they have had to “adjust and attune” their tactics to better fit in with the social environment that came about after the war, as well as the influx of aid and increased focus on education from international and national agendas.

Motion within motion as well as **agency within structures** also refers to peer pressure as was commonly spoken of during the FGDs as a way for peers to display achievements in their “pursuit of modernity”. This could in the FGDs be expressed as a will to attain money, cars and clothes via older boyfriends (Female, Stella Maris; Female, AMEZU; Personnel, AMEZU), as well as a pursuit of going to university for “*credentials*” rather than for “*academia*” (Male,

AMEU). If such behaviour of pursuing modernity in the materialistic sense is normalised, then it is not very far-fetched to assume that this could translate into utilising one's body for "credentials". However peer pressure may also be a force to count with as collective opposition to, and sensitisation of SfG are strong potentials that can themselves work to counteract SfG.

SfG is seen as normalised also because it is practiced from primary school and up through the Liberian educational system (Female, AMEU; Representative, MoJ). This points to that: "*if you get used to it from the high school level [...] you already adapt that system so you continue it until you reach outside*" (Female, AMEZU). Narratives shared with us during FGDs gave examples of this. One story was that a female student had graduated with what in the Liberian System is called "Natcum Laude" meaning that she had a high grade point average (GPA). She came out as a "*shining star*" (Female, AMEZU) that many wanted to employ. Finally, one of the large banking branches in Liberia, Ecobank, hired her but at the end of the day "*she couldn't perform at her job*" (Female, AMEZU). This points to the argument reiterated in this quote: "*if you come out with buying grades, and you get to the university level - that's how you continue, and when you reach to the society at large you will not be able to show up yourself. That would be a waste because you can't prove what you've learned [...] it's not good for the society, it never good for the society!*" (Female, AMEZU). This adaptation of sex as a commodity thus not surprisingly also impact the employment area (Male, UL) but it may also raise suspicions about the trustworthiness of grades and scholarly achievements among females (Personnel, AMEZU). Obtaining the immediate **imagined benefits** of a grade, or a scholarship are in this light linked to the hopes and dreams among Liberian university students in their pursuit of a better life and a qualified job. In this way female students seek opportunities in order to not be forced to stay in university longer than necessary (Male, UL). Making the best out these opportunities implies a corruption-like exchange such as SfG: "*it's all about give and take. You know I give my body or I give my money*" (Female, AMEU) and makes females resort to a "*necessary evil*" (Doc-Anderson, 2005).

6.2 Gender and the Misuse of Power

“Power, it all goes back to power. Who is in control” - Representative, MoE

University teachers, administration or others working with university students may via sexual means exercise their power, taking advantage of students who are dependent on them in the educational sphere. As one student exemplified: *“I’m doing well in my lesson and maybe this particular test I pass, but the instructor trying to play around, maybe telling me that my paper gone missing [...] most of the time they do to get at you”* (Female, AMEU). Even though the student would bring evidence of doing the test and passing, the teacher could very well argue that the failing mark or the loss of the paper, was an *“oversight”* rather than something done out of purpose (Male, UL). Teacher could thus for example abuse their power as teachers, and men in the classroom to establish and maintain the inequality not only between teacher and student, but also between genders.

Other power and gender means would be speaking to and of female students in derogatory ways: *“Some of the instructors would tell you ‘This is not where you belong’”* (Female, Stella Maris). This is underpinned by the point that *“close to 90% of the professors”* (Representative, MoJ; Personnel, UMU a) are male, something that tends to *“undermine female education”* (ibid). Speaking derogatively is true not only for teachers, also male students speak in these ways, as reflected upon by this female student: *“we never used to be given chance to talk. For every time we would want to talk, they [the male students] would say ‘shut up’, ‘sit’, ‘you don’t have a part to play’, ‘you not a male so you should not be talking’.”* (Female, Stella Maris). Female students would be described as “lazy” “dumb” or “weak minded” during many FGDs and interviews (Male, AMEZU; Male, LGBT; Female, UL). Such words would also be related to that subjects such as mathematics, engineering and accounting are considered difficult for female students (Personnel, Stella Maris a; Male, Stella Maris; Female, Stella Maris; Representative, MoJ) and thus SfG was explained as being more common in these subjects. From an economic perspective this could be explained by the price of sex being higher (Representative, MoE) in subjects that are male dominated. Power would be also be manifested in opinions of dress code, which came up in many FGDs, constantly pointing to the female’s choice of dress code as being

an instigator to SfG (Female, AMEZU; Female, AMEU; Personnel, AMEZU; Male, Stella Maris). One female said: *“you can’t say for example you are a decent female and then you wear your clothes, your blouse, all your breasts showing outside. Then you go to classroom, the teacher he’s a human, more besides he’s a man”* (Female, AMEU).

The negative images that are constructed by these factors reinforce poor academic confidence among female students and ultimately the occurrence of SfG (Personnel, UMU b; Personnel, AMEZU; male, AMEU; Male, LGBT organisation). As noted by Morley (2011) and Morley and Lussier (2009), female student’s academic success becomes attributed to sexual exchange rather than to their actual achievements. Any academic failure in turn becomes based on a perceived “laziness” or weak-mindedness of them. This in turn reinforces the image of females as “bad learners”. However this weakness does not strip the female students of agency and power. They can of course defy such assertions: *“I know how to speak for myself. If an instructor tell me to ‘shut up’, ‘do not talk in the class’ [I will argue that] ‘I’m here to learn as well as the boys’. I have the right to speak just like the boys.”* (Female, Stella Maris). The same student however added that: *“many are still facing the same problem”*. This particular student is actively involved in one of the women’s groups at her university and has therefore received training in human rights by AAL. Her awareness may therefore be higher than the majority of female students who have not received such training. However within the subject of sociology it was said that SfG is less common than in more technical subjects due to the nature of sociology studying social processes (Male, UL).

There are students who challenge power and gender structures as illustrated above, and there are students who utilise their power vested in tactical agency to socially navigate in the face of such structures. With an imagined benefit in sight, they can for example use SfG as a patriarchal bargaining as reflected upon by a male student: *“I [female student] can’t come for years through the university and just because of this I can’t graduate. Let me do it [SfG] for a day and get this thing clear out of my mind so that I can graduate”* (Male, AMEZU). Female students may thus make the compromise of SfG to secure their present and future. This also relates to the theory of **structural violence** because it indicates the prevalence of a structure via pointing to, on the one hand the female student’s potential to graduate, and on the other hand her

actual, tactic agency to “avoid” the structure. There is thus, as Ho (2007) wrote, a gap between the female student’s actual and potential abilities. However, as patriarchal bargaining theory reminds us this also risks reinforcing SfG and ultimately gender inequality itself.

Other ways that female students can use their tactical agency and power is via getting back at the teacher for not giving a passing grade. For example one university personnel gave the example of how female students may lie in order “*to bring down the instructor*” (Personnel, Stella Maris b). He argued that female students resort to such tactics as a result of “*toughness in the class, strictness when it come to the rules and regulation*” (Personnel, Stella Maris b). Another story was about a female student retaliating against a male teacher. She had recorded a sexual request from him and then used that recording, threatening to spread it if he did not give a passing grade to her and her friends: “*I will not spread it around if you pass all my friends, my three friends’. And he did it.*” (Female, LGBT organisation). This highlights how SfG is a form of two-way street. Female students may use SfG as a way to get what they want, just as teachers may use it in a similar manner. One university personnel said that certain female student’s attempts may go too far sometimes when they insist on calling and text messaging inappropriately: “*Sometimes they take your phone number and call you at night. Sometimes they send you messages.*” (Personnel, UMU b).

Male students could, suspecting SfG happening, feel disadvantaged because they can indeed not engage into SfG in the same way as the females. “*If I go for a job and this girl goes there, they would prefer sleeping with that girl and give her the job*” (Male, UL). Exemplifying what Morley’s (2011) reverse discrimination. At times males could also be subject to teacher’s jealousy: “*If the instructor wants this girl and the male student is coming out with that girl, at times they [the males] fail because he [the teacher] wants this student*” (Female, LGBT organisation). This aspect of SfG was also brought up in Shumba’s and Matina’s (2002) study from Zimbabwe, where 86% of males and 74% of females agreed to the statement “*a rival male student is often failed in the examination by the rival male lecturer*”, and in Dahn (in Snelgrove, 2008), whom had found this to be true also in Liberia. Male students could also feel challenged by the females as reflected upon hypothetically by one university personnel: “*African men, we just feel threatened. We feel that there is something that is going to reduce us if we find that*

the women rise up and even go higher than us. We think that it limits our manhood, and it places us in a position to be subjected to them and so we develop attitudes and measures that can keep them at bay" (Personnel, AMEU). This perspective relates to the finding of the GoL & UN (2011) study, where men were said to wanting to "take back" the power from women, as the new opportunities for women might threaten their position.

6.3 Lack of Support Systems

Some Liberian university students fund their education via their parents, others via scholarship, and others fund their education themselves (Male, AMEZU). Female students caring for their own tuition are sometimes sponsored by men or boyfriends rather than by jobs or parents (Male, Stella Maris; Personnel, UMU b). Other times female students have their own jobs. But due to high teenage pregnancy and single parenthoods, young university student mothers in Liberia have to care for their children, their children's school fees, the household, the job and their own education fees without support from the father of their child or the grandparents (Personnel, AMEZU; Male, Stella Maris; Personnel, UMU b; Female, AMEZU). The war also plays a part as it left many of today's young parents without parents (Representative, MoJ). These things combined make attending university more burdensome for female than male students that are in such positions.

The normative view of the "role" of females as belonging in the household reduces encouragement and support for them to attend school and university: "*my mother she always used to tell me that, a woman's education ends in the kitchen*" (Female, AMEZU). This is also underpinned by the "*African setting*" (Personnel, AMEZU) where: "*if a girl child comes out from a home and she's not able to take care of that home and take care of her husband and the children, then she's not competent as a woman*" (ibid). These normative views are manifestations of "slow" structures, along Nixon's temporal critique of "structural violence", that inhibit female's potential from being realised and imply a lack of support systems for them. These also remind of Dilts's (2012) and Winter's (2012) argument of structures that have been repeated to the extent that they have become "invisible". This invisibility points, not only to the repetitiveness of SfG itself but also to arguments such as females occupying "*themselves with things before time*" (Personnel, AMEZU) in this case referring to that females get pregnant at

early ages. The AMEZU personnel argued that a family with two pregnant daughters and one son will “*concentrate on his boy, [because] he [the father] says those [the daughters] are somebody’s wife*” (Personnel, AMEZU).

Social safety nets in Liberia are weak very much due to the war (Representative, MoJ). This impacts everyone but perhaps especially young people, which is mirrored by the many difficulties getting a job, mentioned during the FGDs. It is therefore puzzling that some teachers approach students requesting SfG, knowing that they risk losing their job if they are caught. One reason could be that the universities do not want “*lose their instructors*” (Female, Stella Maris) as finding new “*competent*” (Representative, MoJ) replacements is difficult. Another reason may be a confidence in that females will not report. Or that nothing will happen to them as perpetrators regardless, perhaps due to the lack of support systems to handle SfG both within the university and in society, but also linked to fear: “*If I know that going to the authorities and reporting this person will harm me, I will not do it. Yes so it is fear*” (Male, LGBT organisation). Doing harm here refers to what was spoken of as “teachers networks” by the student, where a teacher who is sanctioned due to SfG, will be supported by his co-workers who in turn will continue to fail the student (Representative, MoJ). Such a conduct may be spread because teachers may not have the “*moral rectitude*” (Representative, MoJ) to not engage into SfG. It may also be because of so-called “moonlighting”, meaning that teachers work at multiple universities simultaneously (Representative, MoJ) perhaps because most of them are underpaid (ibid). Thus it may be argued that if the “moonlighting” university personnel lose one job, they will still have the rest left.

One student shared a story that she had been in an accident limiting her from studying for one semester, and therefore limiting her from maintaining her GPA needed to keep the scholarship she was on. But once she was better she requested getting back onto her scholarship but the personnel administering it “*wanted to sleep with me before he can get me back on my scholarship*” (Female, Stella Maris). The student went to the guidance counsellor who in turn spoke to the administrator, finally forcing him to put the student back on the scholarship. All the university administrator got, was a warning.

Thus reporting SfG may be futile, mirroring the lack of support systems to lean back on, how power can be misused by the authorities, and mirroring a hesitation to dismiss teachers from the university's perspective. These become manifestations of gender and the misuse power and are factors that serve to enable the perpetrator. These also serve to make the student resort to tactically navigating along a route that she perhaps otherwise would not have chosen, navigating through "*the only window that is open*" (Representative, MoJ). The tactic of using SfG in this sense is also related to the Art of the Weak", where the girls act in order to "beat the system" (De Certeau 1984 in Honwana, 2009) as the option of prolonging their education will imply more financial costs and a longer education. "*She is not really willing to sleep with the instructor, but because she does not have the money to enable her to go and relax herself and after some time pick up her lesson and study. After school she goes straight to the market to sell, so those are factors that's responsible for that*" (Female, AMEZU).

6.4 "A Culture of Silence"

The fear spoken of above as impacting the social navigation of female students within the structural lack of support systems creates a silence around SfG, where teachers act with impunity. This silence is connected to victimisation, and feelings of shame (Personnel, Stella Maris a) but also to the risk of being ostracised. One female student from UL talked about consequences as tough for the teachers, as they can lose their job and as this can also harm you as a student: "*When they dismiss the person, [...] you have suffered that person's family, that person can harm you or do anything to you when you graduate*". Other students said that teachers' way of seeking retaliation could be through "juju", witchcraft, by going to herbalists who would use the juju to "*track you down and destroy your life. Destroy your life through medicine*" (Female, UL). One personnel at AMEU, speaking about a case where a teacher had failed a student after she denied him: "*when that happens and the person [the teacher] lost their job or get in prison, it will be a lifelong stain on her [the student's] family, that she was the cause for such person to go through what he or she is going through*" (Personnel, AMEU). Your family background and what connections you have is very important in Liberia, as in many part of the world. Depending on which family you come from may enable you to stand up against the teacher as he might be conscious about losing his own reputation and job (Male, LGBT organisation). But if this is not the case students may abstain from reporting violations as

this can upset such relations and together with the risk of teacher retaliation and of creating a bad reputation as described above, this spurs a silence around SfG: “*Students are frightened because they are not too confident in themselves. So if I fight against, if I challenge the instructor and I should be able to challenge my grades; if I don’t have confidence in myself then I abide by the instructor will, that’s what happening*” (Female, AMEU).

Coupled with the many assertions of male power over female, trying to diminish female self-esteem in the educational arena, in particular female students may feel that they are not supported. Their motivation for studying may diminish and their grades with it. Some female students may thus also be silenced and engage into SfG without the confidence to argue otherwise.

There was throughout our data a prevailing perspective that if you are above 18 you are an adult and thus responsible for your own actions. This is perhaps not strange because of the rape law that increased the age of consent to 18 but it means that SfG then becomes interpreted as a mutual agreement between the teacher and the student. Holding such perceptions also implies an opinion that when engaging into SfG you ultimately have yourself to blame, and thus if you report it, you may not be taken seriously, risking that you become lonely as “*Your friends on campus will abandon you*” (Female, UMU) since they “*don’t wanna be involved*” (Female, UL). Along with the normalisation of bribing with sexual services, these factors contribute to that the probability of reporting an account of SfG becomes less likely, therefore increasing the silence around SfG. The mentor from Stella Maris also explained: “*You see the whole issue is, once you cannot point out the person who is asking you for this kind of thing, [sex] you are not able to pursue the case.*” The mentor also said that female students come to her throughout the year, she guessed between 10 and 15 the past year: “*If I ask: [to the female student] ‘Do you want me to talk, do you want us to approach the issue, then get the teacher?’ ‘No Mrs [...] I just want to talk’. I said: ‘For me I would like to approach it’. They say ‘No’. ‘So what can I do?’*” (Personnel, Stella Maris a).

This “a culture of silence” has implications for the efforts of fighting the occurrence of SfG as it not only stops the societal debate about the causes and potential solutions, but also hinders the

mapping of the problem, which could help raise a public debate. Indeed, the MoGD representative acknowledged that SfG is an issue in Liberia and recollected that three cases had been reported to them last year. However, she did not feel comfortable to speak about the issue, due to the lack of data, and therefore suggested that we talk with the MoE, the ministry that she implied has the responsibility for tackling this. Upon informing the MoE representative about our topic of SfG over the phone when scheduling time for interview, he responded with a laugh asking: *“Of course we can talk about SfG, but I don’t understand why because it doesn’t happen in Liberia”* (Representative, MoE). Similar quotes could be found from university administrations who would use words such as “not to my knowledge” when asked about the SfG. One reasoning around this is that the official representatives have an image to protect, also in front of us. One male student told us that *“if there is something wrong going on and there is a foreign guest come and ask questions, I [the admin] will not be bold enough to say”* (Male, LGBT organisation). While another student added that *“But it [SfG] happens, they [the administration] are aware”* (Male, LGBT organisation). The unwillingness to talk about and report SfG spurs the “culture of silence” around SFG. This repetition itself, makes SfG normalised and “invisible” in the sense of how Winter (2012) and Dilts (2012) explain it. These are also factors that decrease the tendency to report violations on a broader scale causing concern about solutions. If there is no public or institutional recognition about, or enforcement to stop SfG then what can be done to combat SfG on a broader structural scale? The AAL representative had similar thoughts and emphasised the importance of *“making people to talk about it and changing the mindset, de-normalise it”* (Representative, AAL).

7. Conclusion

In this thesis we have discussed that previous concepts that touch upon SfG; transactional sex, sexual harassment and sextortion are not complete. While they are important and necessary they sometimes disregard the tactical agency and structures in which they occur. They also commonly refer to female students as victims rather than agents with power in their own right. Therefore this thesis has applied the theory of social navigation to analyse tactical agency in relation to SfG and four identified structures. Underpinning our research aim of analysing SfG as an intrinsically relevant category of study, is a belief that if we do not also take agency into consideration in

relation to SfG then we cannot approach the phenomenon productively. Raising awareness about SfG, not only in the “developing” world but globally is becoming increasingly important as more females enter tertiary education due to the national and international recognition of education as a “global good”.

Holding these things in mind, we asked the question: *How can the practice of sex for grades in Liberian universities be understood as a social navigation tool within structural constraints?* Our analysis provides perspectives to this question by connecting agency and structures with a focus on female students, and pointing to the complexity between these entities.

We have seen a duality where SfG is something utilised by the female students, but at the same time it is something that structures steer them towards. SfG is about negotiating the value of engaging into it or not, sometimes it is chosen other times it is not. We understand the females who engage in SfG as utilising their tactical agency to socially navigate, meaning that they “adjust and attune” their actions in relation to the prevailing circumstances. Not only to realise their immediate imagined benefits of getting a passing grade or maintaining a scholarship, but also as a means to fulfil their potential.

In this thesis we have found that SfG is related to and enforced by: low levels of academic confidence among females; the perception of them as weak-minded, negatively impacting their self-esteem; reliance upon male students to do their work for them; a dependence on teachers inclination of engaging into SfG; lack of financial and other forms of support systems; lack of qualified teachers; widespread corruption and exploitation of power; lacking awareness of rights; normalisation of sex as a commodity, manifested in normative gender roles. At the same time these factors also reinforce the practice of SfG showing that it does not exist in a vacuum, nor that the connections between agency and structure are linear.

In the long run SfG may contribute to that the trustworthiness and value of grades decreases the higher they are among female students. This is because their grades may be attributed to sexual engagement rather than to their academic achievements. This reinforces the negative picture of women as “bad learners”, not suited to attend university or to hold higher employment positions.

Indeed it also questions the benefits of having a meritocratic system. Therefore SfG risks undermining female representation within the institutions that steer Liberia towards "development" articulated by "Liberia rising 2030", and diminishing their potential to impact the route that Liberia will take. Until it gains wider societal recognition as a potential development issue, SfG remains an "option", tactic and payment method. Much can however be done in terms of advocacy and speaking out about SfG on a local level; within universities and schools among students; as well as on a national level. This will raise awareness about the situation for many female students in Liberia, but also the larger structures that SfG mirrors. In order to raise awareness also globally, more research about SfG is needed. We hope that this phenomenon will be further researched upon. This thesis is one step in that direction.

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1

Focus Group information

Institution	Sex	Age span	Nr
AMEU	F	20-32	6
AMEU	M	22-39	7
AMEZU	F	21-30	5
AMEZU	M	21-32	5
Stella Maris Polytechnic	F	21-30	5
Stella Maris Polytechnic	M	24-33	4
LGBT organisation	F	22-30	6
LGBT organisation	M	25-29	5
UL	F	28-39	4
UL	M	27-33	5
UMU	F	23-30	5
UMU	M (1 female)	21-35	4

Interview information

Institution	Sex
AMEU	F
AMEU	M
AMEZU	M
Stella Maris Polytechnic	F
Stella Maris Polytechnic	M
UL	M, M
UMU	F
UMU	M
MoE	M, M
MoE	M
MoJ	M
MoGD	F
AAL	F

Appendix 2

Focus Group and Interview Guide

1. Why are we here: purpose

Introduction of us.

LUMID and internship

Our thesis topic.

Aim of thesis.

We need your help.

Time.

2. Consent form: Questions (suggestions) and prompts (guiding words that makes you know you get the information you want)

Anonymity

Confidentiality

Tape recording

Respect

Not compulsory.

3. Questions

Main questions to ask:

- Can you tell me about how female and male students are treated differently at this university?
- Do you think that gender-based violence is happening here? And in that case in what form?
- How does GBV impact females and males?
- Can you tell me more about the reasons for why teachers sometimes ask for sex or money for grades?
- What causes sex for grades?
- Are there any risks associated with sex for grades? Which ones?
- How is it initiated? Tell me about how it can start?
- Are there any benefits to sex for grades? Why/Why not? For whom?

Probing questions:

- What would be reasons for teachers sometimes asking for sex or money for grades?
- What role does the girls play in this?
- What causes sex for grades?
- What are the impacts of sex for grades - for society, for women, for men, for the university, etc?
- Why in Liberia?
- Who can one report to?
- Who are the perpetrators?
- How should sex for grades be addressed?
- Where does sex for grades take place?

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May, 2014

Anna Sjögren
Charlotte Dorph

- Where does sexual harassment take place?
- Why does one agree to sex for grades?
- When did sex for grades begin and why?
- How do people use their power?
- What gives people power?
- Why do they use their power?

4. Ending remarks

Thank you!

What we will do now; transcribe, identify common themes.

Go back to Sweden Feb 16 to write thesis.

Hope to see you again.

Appendix 3

1. Letter of consent: Focus Group Discussion

We promise that:

- Any information provided to us will not be shared with anyone.
- The information you fill in will only be for the purpose of us completing our master's thesis.
- Your name, phone number and email provided by you will only be used to contact you for any follow up questions.
- If you do *not* want to be contacted for any follow-up questions you do *not* have to write your name or contact information.
- We do however wish to know your **gender, which university you attend, your age, and your level** (undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate or recently completed university).

If you agree to participate in this focus group you agree to:

- Be tape recorded
- To respect each other
- Not share anything said during the focus group with anyone who did not take part in the focus group, at any time, at any place.

Please note that you are free to leave the session at any time if you want to, but please inform Charlotte or Anna about this first.

2. Letter of consent: Interview with University Personnel

We promise that:

- Any information provided to us will not be shared with anyone.
- The information you fill in will only be for the purpose of us completing our master's thesis.
- Your name, phone number and email provided by you will only be used to contact you for any follow up questions.
- If you do *not* want to be contacted for any follow-up questions you do *not* have to provide any information
- We do however wish to know your **gender, and your position with the university.**

If you agree to participate in this focus group/interview you agree to:

- Be tape recorded
- To respect each other
- Not share anything said during the focus group/interview, with anyone who did not take part in the focus group/interview, at any time at any place.

Please note that you are free to leave the session at any time if you want to.

3. Letter of consent: Interview with Ministry/NGO Representative

We promise that:

- Any information provided to us will not be shared with anyone.
- The information you fill in will only be for the purpose of us completing our master's thesis.
- Your name, phone number and email provided by you will only be used to contact you for any follow up questions.
- If you do *not* want to be contacted for any follow-up questions you do *not* have to.
- We do however wish to know your **gender**, and **your position**.

If you agree to participate in this focus group/interview you agree to:

- Be tape recorded
- To respect each other
- Not share anything said during the focus group/interview, with anyone who did not take part in the focus group/interview, at any time at any place.

Please note that you are free to leave the session at any time if you want to.