IV PARENTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

When I was probing the topic of temptations in a class discussion with the 80 pupils of Standard 7 of Nyahali primary school, the children asked me if they could ‘show’ it to me instead of trying to explain it to me. The next fragment is a summary of the play that lasted an hour and a half and was performed in the classroom by 60 of the pupils the week after the class discussion and without any guidance from us. School benches were used to represent houses, the school, the marketplace, the disco and the hospital. About a third of the children had lines. The other children were watching the play from the sideline and sometimes jumped in to play market salesmen, school students, disco-goers and funeral audience.

Nyahali Play

At dawn a cock crows in a village between the shores of Lake Victoria and the main road from Mwanza to Shinyanga. In one of the houses Penny wakes up and prepares tea for her family. After respectfully greeting her father when he gets in, she politely asks him for some money to buy a pen for school. He replies: “Tell your mother, I don’t have money!” Penny is disappointed and leaves the house. She walks to a nearby house to pick up her friend Asha and they walk to school together. The girls complain to each other about the lack of money they receive from their parents to buy things they need for school.

At school the girls are ordered to clean the classroom. They don’t find this fair since it’s the boys’ turn to clean and start quarrelling with the boys. The teacher interferes: “Asha clean the classroom!” The boys laugh. In class the teacher teaches them about HIV and AIDS. The teacher tells them to bring the information home and tell others about it as well, including their parents. “Are there any questions?” One of the boys asks the teacher who brought HIV to Tanzania. The teacher doesn’t know the answer and feels a bit embarrassed about it. “Truly, me, I don’t know him. Those things, you are supposed to go and ask your parents at home, okay?” The students start giggling and the teacher becomes upset: “Don’t you be asking questions without thinking!” Then the boy replies: “Why are you saying that we ask our parents while you just said that we should educate them?” The kids start laughing again and the teacher becomes furious at the boy for being so disrespectful: “Nowadays, you have grown, haven’t you? Report to the head teacher’s office, he will teach you a lesson!” Some of the students receive corporal punishment and the teacher threatens the class that he will inform their parents about their misbehavior. In the back you can hear one of the kids whispering: “My parents are already dead.” The pupils challenge the teacher some more and when he completely loses control, he dismisses the complete classroom, sending all boys and girls home.
The students leave the classroom. Penny and Asha meet up with another friend, Doto. They wander around in the streets, complaining about the stupidity of the teachers and the unfair corporal punishment they received. Penny says to her friends: “I don’t want to go home yet, let’s do something else”. Doto doesn’t want to go home either, but is afraid that her father will become very angry with her if she gets home late. “Dad will beat me if I don’t come home straight”. Penny tells her not to worry: “Your dad is already old, he won’t do anything”. But she’s unable to convince Doto and Doto goes home. Shortly after Doto left, two boys pass by. They spot Penny and Asha, elbow each other, walk over and greet the girls.

Boys: What’s up?
Girls: Cool man.
Boys: How are things?
Girls: Just cool
Boys: Where are you coming from?
Girls: We are coming from school.

First boy to Penny: For me, I have liked you.
Penny: You have liked what? Do you have money?
Boy: I have truly liked you.
Penny: Now you have liked me without money, bring that money and let me see it then.
Boy: How much do you want? (He gives her a little bit of money)
Penny: Just add. If you don’t want, then that’s it.
The boy adds some more money and asks when he will see her again. They agree to meet again the next day, at the same spot, after school. In the mean time the other boy started talking to Asha, but Asha’s not interested in his smooth talk and tells him she wants to focus on her studies first. When the boys leave, Penny shows Asha the money that she got from the boy. “Tonight me and my family are going to eat meat, not just veggies, we are not goats!” Asha is seemingly impressed and asks Penny if she could have some of the shillings. Penny refuses “Why can’t you find your own?” But then she agrees to lend Asha 500 shillings, saying she can pay back the money later.
The girls split up and both go home.

When Asha comes home, her mother is very upset with her for being home late. Asha makes up a story why she was delayed, but her mother warns her that her father will be very angry with her. In the mean time, Asha’s sister has discovered the money Asha is holding in her hand and exposes Asha to the mother. The mother demands to know where she got the money from, but Asha refuses to tell. Suddenly the door bashes open. Her father walks in, he is drunk. He threatens to beat Asha if she doesn’t tell him where she got the money from. Asha tells him she found it on the way home. “You, since you got taller than me, you have started to disrespect me?” He raises his arm to give Asha a beating, but then her mother steps in between. “My husband, how come you are late, you expect the children will eat what? You are leaving the children for me [to take care of], just like that. You expect the children to eat what?” The father gets angry with his wife: “You are the one who should take care of them, you find the money for food yourself!”

After the father disappears from the scene, Asha’s mother gives the money to Asha’s sister and tells her to go to the market. On her way back Penny’s father crosses the road and greets her:
Penny’s father: How have you been, I haven’t seen you for days.
Sister: I am fine. I have not come to the market for a month.
Penny’s father: You know, me… I like you.
Sister: You like me in what way?

Penny’s father: You, you know, you are a grown up person now.

Sister: Grown up person?

Penny’s father: Come and we talk.

Sister: We talk what?

Penny’s father: Come then.

Sister (upset): and do what hum?

Penny’s father: We meet tomorrow then?

Sister: Tomorrow? I can’t come tomorrow!

She hastens to get away from him and hurries back home. Penny’s father continues his walk back to his house.

In the mean time, at Penny’s house, Penny lies to her mother that she is late, saying they had extra classes. Her mother suspects Penny is lying and tells her she should not have such a big mouth, that she will check with Penny’s teacher in the morning. Penny says: “Fine, I don’t care. Look mother, I found some money. Let me go to the market and buy meat”. They discuss where Penny got the money from, but in the end the mother is relieved with Penny’s contribution and sends her to the market. Penny buys the best meat she can find while the market salesmen look at her with suspicion. Back at home, Penny’s mother tells Penny she is not feeling very well and asks Penny to cook dinner. Penny gets upset: “I bought the money and now I have to cook? Tell father he should cook! Tell him he is too much nowadays”. The father overhears this and enters the room. Penny’s mother asks her husband where he has been and he mumbles something back. Penny turns to her mother saying: “Mother, I have forgotten to tell you, I saw him with the sister of …” Penny’s father quickly interrupts: You child! You don’t have respect!

Penny: I saw you hunting for her coming back from the market!

Father: Shall we go to her and ask her if this is true?

Penny’s father no longer tolerates Penny’s disrespect. He takes the meat and sends her to bed without a meal as punishment.

The next day, after school, the girls meet up again in the street. Asha tells Penny that her father took her money. Penny tells her to hide the money in her bra the next time. But she also demands that Asha pays back her debt. While they are walking, the two boys are waiting for them at a corner.

Boy: Hello Sista, how are you doing?

Penny: Cool. How is your condition?

Boy: What’s up? Today, you didn’t show up, you ditched me.

Penny: My dad has become stricter on me, he didn’t let me go.

Boy: So now then?...

Penny: Today they got me tight, maybe tomorrow.

When Penny wants to leave, the boy follows her and grabs her by her shoulder.

Penny: You are hurting me, why are you hurting me like that?

The boy and his friend start arguing with each other and Penny and Asha take advantage and leave them to hurry back home. While they are walking back, there is an announcement heard in the streets: “Today we are going to have a disco from six o’clock until twelve at midnight!! We are inviting all of you, boys, girls, men and women. My name is Kwiza MC, you will find me at my place, Kwiza MC. You are welcome!!!”

Asha’s mother decides she needs to talk to someone about the bad behavior of her daughter and the problems she has with her husband. She visits Penny’s mother and
they discuss the trouble they have with their daughters, how they lie to their mothers and how they don’t receive any help from their husbands, quite the opposite.

In the mean time, Asha, Penny and a few of their classmates are making a plan to escape their houses that evening and to go to the disco. When the time is right, they sneak out their bedrooms, meet up at a corner and all go to the disco where they start dancing. The boys who Asha and Penny met earlier are also there. Some of their classmates are smoking marijuana. The boys and girls are giggling and having fun, dancing body to body.

A few weeks later, we find Asha at home. She is feeling nauseous. Her parents are concerned and collect some money to bring her to the doctor. The doctor has bad news for Asha and her parents: Asha is pregnant. Her mother is upset and her father is furious. Asha will have to quit school. But at Penny’s place the moods are even dimmer. Penny’s not been able to eat and has been sick for some time now. She has been diagnosed with HIV and she is dying. A few days later we see the village carrying a coffin through the streets and people weeping. Penny has died. In a corner of the street a silent boy is sitting. He knows it’s his former girlfriend who they are carrying to the burial site. He knows this will be his fate as well, sometime in the near future.

Defiance and disrespect

In the play we are presented with a combination of circumstances that lead the two main characters (Penny and Asha) to engage in sex. The children show us how poverty, or a lack of food, or having to eat the same food every day and a lack of school equipment are the basic components of a process that leads to tensions and disputes between parents and children and between fathers and mothers. Deprivation and arguments increase girls’ vulnerability for the attraction of money boys offer for sex. The strain of poverty is exacerbated by the antagonism present in poor relationships between parents and their children. The actors in the play drew specific attention to the children’s disagreements with fathers, their fathers’ unwillingness to provide food or school equipment and the unfair and harsh punishments fathers mete out. Children show how their disrespect for their fathers increases when they see them drunk or ‘chasing’ other women and girls.

The actors showed the desperation of the mothers and their inability to change the situation or do anything about the behavior of their children or husbands. In Penny’s family this leads the mother to ‘give up’ and accept the situation (remember the quote of the parent in the previous chapter: “If they do not listen, you leave them; there is nothing you can do”). She implicitly
allows Penny to have boyfriends by accepting the money that her daughter brings home. Through the play the children also showed us their disagreements with teachers and how this leads to conflict. The children illustrated the unfair treatment and punishments they receive from teachers and parents. The children’s reaction to this unfair action is recalcitrance, defiance and disrespect. The children start coming home late, lying to their parents and escaping the house at night to go to the disco. Some of the boys in the play showed how they provoked teachers and parents and willingly undergo punishment as a way to show their parents, teacher and peers that even harsh punishment would not make them obedient. Shilling, the boy quoted in Chapter 2 confirmed this, “It’s like a game; we have a champion in class who holds the record of being whipped most”. This behavior may give the insubordinate children the respect of their peers. In some cases, it may even strengthen the child’s defiance or lead to group defiance. In Penny’s case she is no longer trying to hide her ‘bad’ behavior, she is openly disrespectful and disobedient to her parents, now that she is taking care of herself and providing for her family. Although the play (and summary) focused on the two girls Penny and Asha and their families, families of the girls’ classmates were also present in the play. Parallel to the main storyline was a story about Penny’s brother Funguji and his mates and their families. For reasons of brevity this was left out of the excerpt. In the play while Penny’s disrespect and defiance grew, Funguji, a member of the same household, expressed his disrespect and defiance by secretly starting to smoke marijuana with his friends and within this group pushing each other into chasing girls. Unlike Penny, Asha was not as openly disrespectful to her parents. Although we assume Asha is having problems with her father spending his money on alcohol instead of food for his family and treating her, her mother and sisters in a bad way, we did not hear Asha talking back to her father. When approached by the boys, Asha’s first reaction was to refuse them because she wanted to focus on her studies. It is Penny who encourages her and lends her money that she has to pay back. Asha’s story illustrates the role that peers can play in combination with problems at home and at school.

‘Lack of guidance’ and parental encouragement

Extrapolating information from children’s dramas as representative of real situations should be done with caution. However, the storylines from the Nyahali drama correspond with reports from children in discussions, interviews and storylines in dramas performed by
children in other areas. The Jabali group of children who were out of school created a play that also included a drunken father. We showed the Jabali group a videotape of the Nyahali play and asked them to give us feedback on what they saw. They spoke about Asha’s father. One child stated:

There are a lot of fathers like that [in Jabali]. They just smoke weed, get drunk and only come home for food. Children feel bad. They can’t do anything about it. To fix him is to beat him up, but you can’t hit your dad, you just leave him and one day he will see it, one day he will wake up. Mothers can try to do something about it, but men don’t like to be advised by women. [Sammy, age 13]

When we reviewed the play with the Nyahali children who originally performed it, they engaged in a fierce discussion about who should be ‘blamed’ for the so-called ‘bad behavior’ (tabia mbaya) of children; the parents, the children themselves, those who seduce children or poverty:

1st girl: A parent is not to be blamed because a child is the one that likes to do the act of sex
2nd girl: It’s not the child who should be blamed, but the parent because s/he allows that behavior, so it’s the parent who should be blamed.
3rd girl: It can’t be the parent, because a parent won’t know the acts done by his/her child in the streets.
1st girl: When a girl is at school, s/he can be going in the toilet and acting bad acts, while the mother doesn’t know, s/he can’t look after the child.
2nd girl: It is the parent who should be blamed, because it is due to the upbringing, truly those complaints fall [are the responsibility of] a parent only.
4th girl: The parent should be blamed because s/he knows the child’s behavior because s/he is raising the child.
Boy: The parent should be blamed, because s/he is the one raising the child, s/he is supposed to follow a child and at least teach him/her [about sex and the risks]

There was consensus among the children of this research that parents could influence their children’s behavior by being bad role models:

For example you find a parent is an alcoholic, he/she doesn’t sit down with her/his children [to discuss] even things of HIV, now for example if this parent gets told by people about his/her child, s/he cannot warn this child. And some kids, a lot of times they copy [the bad behavior] from their parents.

In Magu town this topic came up as well during a group discussion with girls:

Sometimes we can observe our own fathers when they go to the bar and then they start showing that kind of behavior [flirting, courtship]. Or when you attend a wedding there must be music and that is when you can observe that style [dancing and other body language that
Even if parents oppose their children’s sexual activity, like the parents of Asha, children believe the parents are still to blame for not giving sufficient guidance to their children:

The parents should have discussed with the children about the dangers and consequences of their behavior. They should have done that even before the children were showing that kind of bad behavior. [Nyahali boy commenting while watching the video of the play]

They [children] have less guidance nowadays. They are free to walk into bars, to see videos [porn], discos. They see a lot of people and learn. [Other Nyahali boy during playback]

The lack of parental or caretaker guidance, indifference or encouragement of children’s sexual behavior were all acknowledged as major influences on children’s sexual decision making by children in this research and during interviews with parents, caretakers and teachers. It was said by children and adults that some parents or caretakers do not to see the bad behavior of their children, because they do not practice proper vigilance and they do not know what other children are hanging out with their children. These parents or caretakers are seen as not strict enough with their children and therefore easily manipulated by their children who lie to them about their activities and whereabouts. This was said to be the case particularly with parents or caretakers who are frequently away from home (e.g., to do business), or when there is significant conflict between the parents or caretakers. Some of these parents or caretakers are blamed for not attending to their child’s school performance and therefore, their children do not focus on their studies but on sexual relationships instead. Some children and adults thought that parental or caretaker indifference was a result of poverty and hardship:

The parents take more time to think about “what shall we eat, what shall we wear”, than to think about raising their children with good behavior. Because all their time goes to worrying about poverty. [Grace, Nyahali, 22 years]

However, others disagreed and stated that some parents or caretakers simply are bad role models and actively encourage their children to have sex. According to Blessed, a 13 year old girl from Magu town:

It has nothing to do with poverty, if the mother is involved with men or the father with women, the child is more easily tempted to follow in their footsteps. And some fathers actually send out their sons to bring home girls!
We found boys whose stories endorsed this opinion or observation. For example, Kosmos from Nyahali had moved in with his grandmother and uncle after his parents died. When Kosmos was 15 years old, his uncle encouraged him to look for a girlfriend:

At first I tried to approach girls myself, but they always refused and I got pissed off with them. Then my uncle told me not to get pissed off and that he would show me how to do it. [...] My uncle spoke to me about girls. He said: “now you have grown up, it’s time to get a girl”. We went out and I had to show him a girl that I liked. I approached one that I had pointed out, that I liked and I tried to seduce her. But she was aware that I was under some sort of supervision, so I didn’t succeed. The next time I went alone and then she agreed. [...] For the first time I did use a condom, but the second time my uncle advised me not to use. He said: “No need to use with this one. But with others you have to be careful”.

When girls are directly encouraged to have sex by their parents or caretakers it appears to be related to the parents’ or caretakers’ opinion that the girl should use her sexuality as a resource to contribute to the household or to look after herself, or to get a man to look after her:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl:</th>
<th>Some parents, it's the parents' fault. They give the girl a basket to go to the market, but no money... “You know what to do”. So if you go out there and meet a guy and he shows interest in you....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other girl:</td>
<td>Some parents send their daughter to have sex with a rich guy and then trick him and tell him that because he had sex with their daughter, he should take care of her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third girl:</td>
<td>Some parents will go out to look for someone who wants to be with their daughter. And they accept the cash and send the daughter to the man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>In some cases a girl would go home and report that someone is bothering her, and her mother would say 'what is wrong? Just go get more of it'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other girl:</td>
<td>And then the parents will say, you know, we're broke; we don't have food in the house...</td>
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</tbody>
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[FGD girls Magu town]

**Parents, peers or personality?**

Some children clearly considered parents and caretakers as responsible for the control and guidance of their children and to be strict in their upbringing. However, there were children who said that no matter how strict the parents or caretakers were some children would still engage in sex: “It will not keep girls from finding boyfriends!” We asked one of our key informants in urban Magu, a 13-year-old boy nicknamed “Shilling”\(^{43}\) if he thought parents ought to be stricter with their children in order to prevent them from engaging in sex:

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\(^{43}\) For more information on Shilling, see next paragraph
No! Children will play the hero. The more the parents become strict, the more they want to prove themselves. If they are calm and less strict, children are more likely to listen and to consider what the parents have been telling.

One of the girls we got to know in rural Magu, Zawadi, and 14 years old in Standard 6, was especially adverse to become involved with boys. She had a strong conviction to stay a virgin until marriage (she said she was ‘saved’, meaning religiously converted). She described her parents as very strict, hardworking farmers who managed to send most of her older sisters to secondary school. However, one of her older sisters, Shafira, had dropped out of school when she was 12 years old because she got involved with boys. “I think Shafira was 10 years old when she started getting out of hand”. Her sister is now 17 and according to Zawadi involved with different partners and most of the time she stays with a boyfriend. Zawadi believed that parents couldn’t do much about their children getting involved, “…look at my sister. They whipped her a lot in the past, but it didn’t help, so now they have decided to leave it.” According to Zawadi, the reason her sister got involved and dropped out of school was that, “Personally I think she was involved with friends who were involved with boys and they pushed her.”

The Nyahali drama, and plays performed in Magu and Jabali areas, show that parents and caretakers play an important role in the development of children’s sexuality. However, parent and caretaker influence cannot be seen as detached from the socio-economic context in which children live, with peers and with others, nor apart from the individual physical and mental development of the child. A recurring theme in all the dramas was the struggle children have with their parents or caretakers and the adults’ rules. This is particularly problematic if the children disagreed with adult behavior including alcoholism, refusal of necessary school equipment, or unfair corporal punishment. In the plays the children would perform how they coped with this struggle by using recalcitrant behavior or showing disrespect by eluding parents and caretakers or even using open resistance and disobedience. In addition, we observed the children’s defiance towards teachers, for example, Shilling’s resilience towards the threatening teachers described in Part 1, Chapter 1. We also observed some boys and girls wearing their uniform in a certain way:

There is a girl inside [the classroom] who likes to wear her clothes in the boy-style. The sleeves of the shirt are rolled up to show the shoulder. It is a way to express resistance that the teachers know that they cannot control her.

[Girl during FGD in Magu town]
In group discussions and personal interviews the children spoke about how they elude their parents and caretakers. Girls in a Nyahali group discussion were interviewed during the follow up research and thus were a year behind those who originally performed the play. They told us about the strategies girls use to escape parental or caretaker control to meet up with a boyfriend. The girls told stories about how sisters cover for each other and how they made up excuses to go out, for example to borrow a book, or to go to church or sleep at a relative’s place, but perform these actions after meeting up with a boyfriend. The girls appeared resourceful and ingenious in developing strategies to escape even strict parents.

[Girls] give a reason to escape from the house, for instance they say they go fetch water or go to a shop. But then they arrange to be with the boyfriend and do their thing. When she comes home late and her parents ask, she will lie and say there were many people at the shop or that the water was dirty and that she had to wait for it to settle.

Tumaini, the boy who started with sex because of the stories of his brother’s friends and watching his brother with his girlfriend, told us about how he met up with a girlfriend the weekend before we interviewed him and why he would disobey his parents:

I approached a girl in the disco. I took the girl to my room. I have a room away from my parent’s home [on the same compound, but not attached to the main house]. [My parents] didn’t know [that I went to the disco]. It was in the evening. I told my parents that I was going to sleep in my room. […] My parents tried to warn me [not to get involved with girls] but desire is what made me disobey them. Because of hormones I cannot be respectful. Everything changes; you have to do like a man, not like a child.

As Tumaini argues, disobedience and resistance against parents’ wishes and control is also related to puberty and children’s wish to be grown up and make decisions independent from parents. This wish for independence increases if children disagree with their parents’ ideas or behavior and might lead to a search for money. Having money provides the children with the freedom to make their own choices and as a consequence with the ability to disobey parental or caretaker rules and regulations. In the play, Penny’s access to money, from the boy, enabled her to take control and change a situation that she experienced as bad. Remarks that girls say they are told by friends or older sisters include, “If you want to succeed in getting what you need, then you should get yourself a boyfriend”. Remarks like this suggest that money gives girls an opportunity to take control over their lives and that boyfriends provide girls with their needs that parents or caretakers cannot or will not provide. These ‘needs’ do
not necessarily have to relate to subsistence\textsuperscript{44}. Deusi, a slightly older girl, 17 years, in the Standard 7 group that performed the play and who lived with her grandparents, mentioned that her boyfriend supported her with money:

\textit{Does that mean that the money you get from your grandparents is not sufficient?}
\textit{It is sufficient, but sometimes you want items like body lotion…}

As one of the parents remarked in the previous chapter: \textit{“Boys give girls a sense of being mature, being grown up. A sense of maturity is important for girls.”} Perhaps beauty products give girls a sense of maturity, of femininity. This wish of being grown up or being regarded grown up seems to be important to Tanzanian children entering puberty and even younger children and can lead to competition between peers.

\textit{Why is it so important to be considered big?}
\textit{When a person grows up, they have self-control, they can make their own decisions, they can move wherever they want, so that’s why a lot of girls want to act grown up, to have the respect. [Nyahali girls, FGD]}

The children consider being less economically dependent on one’s parents or caretakers as a sign of maturity and therefore both money and disobedience might symbolize a certain level of development. Remarks made in the plays supported this. Children who played adults responded to disrespect by referring to the child’s assumption that he/she has grown up enough to think he or she is in a position to do that:

\textit{So you think you are really grown up now, don’t you! [rural Magu play]}
\textit{Nowadays, you have grown, haven’t you? [Nyahali play]}
\textit{You, since you got taller than me, you have started to disrespect me? [Nyahali play]}

I think sexual activity is seen as a sign of maturity because it represents grown up behavior and because it implies access to one’s own money. This holds true also for boys since it is difficult to get a girlfriend without money. The pick up line of the boy who was playing Penny’s father who tried to seduce Asha’s sister illustrates this, \textit{“You, you know, you are a grown up person now”}. And in Kosmos’ story his uncle encouraged him to get sexual experience, saying: \textit{“Now you have grown up, it’s time to get a girl”}. In general, an expression

\textsuperscript{44} It is difficult to distinguish between the motivation to be given money or gifts for subsistence or for non-essential consumption. See forward Wamoyi et al. who illustrate that in practice these two motives are sometimes inseparable because beauty products might be needed to attract sexual partners to meet subsistence needs.
I often heard from parents and caretakers as an answer for my question why a boy or a girl would engage in sex was: “S/he has already grown up”.

Concluding remarks

Parents and caretakers play an important role in the development of children’s sexuality and sexual behavior. They are frequently blamed for children’s sexual activity. Parents and caretakers are said to encourage children to have sex by being bad role models. They are sometimes accused of promoting their children to engage in sex because they believe they should take care of themselves since the family faces economic hardship or because they perceive that the child is grown up. Parents and caretakers are also blamed when the children perceive them as indifferent or providing insufficient guidance to their children. But based on what the children told us, parental or caretaker influence on their sexual activity cannot be separated from the family’s socio-economic context and the personal relationship between the child and the parent(s). Peers and the children’s community also have an influence. Sexual decisions are also dependent on the child’s physical and mental development. Disobedience and resistance against parents’ wishes and control are related to puberty and children’s wish to be grown up and make decisions independently from their parents or caretakers. Money provides girls with a means to take control over their own lives and become more independent. Since girls have limited options for obtaining money, boyfriends often provide girls with needs that parents cannot or will not provide. The wish to be grown up and independent increases if the children disagree with their parents or caretakers. Sex can be used as a form of resistance against parental misbehavior and control.

Being regarded as grown up is important in the peer context of boys and girls. They compete with their peers in the domain of maturity and sometimes encourage each other to disobey adults or to become sexually active. As the examples of Tumaini (encouraged by his older brother and friends) and Asha (encouraged by Penny) show, peer influence can be a significant factor or co-factor in children’s decision to engage in or to refrain from sex. Temptations, desire, parental influence, money and poverty are often mentioned in combination with a reference to the influence of peers; friends, siblings and classmates who directly or indirectly encourage or discourage boys and girls to get involved or to abstain from sexual relationships. Yet not all children who have disputes with their parents or caretakers or
who are encouraged by parents or peers engage in sex. This remains true even if these
children share the temptations of desire and curiosity as described by so many boys and girls.
The next section will investigate the children’s opinions and experiences in regard to the
influence of peers and consider children who refuse to engage in sex despite encouragement
of their peers and others.