Because of temptations: children, sex and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania

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VI COURTSHIP: DECEIT AND SKINNING

From the drawings, discussions, dramas and interviews the boys and girls drew a consistent picture about courtship. Boys who want to pursue a girl approach her either directly or indirectly through letters or messengers. The letter or messenger will tell the girl that ‘so and so’ is interested in her and asks to meet her at a certain time and place. If the girl agrees to meet up with the boy, or if she is approached directly, the boy will typically tell her ‘nakumindi’ or ‘nakupenda’, “I like you” or “I love you” and offer her money or a gift. Most girls say that this signals that the boy wants to have sex. The girl now has to decide to say ‘no’ and refuse the money/gift or to start negotiations. When the boys and girls ‘showed’ courtship to us, the boy would often take the girl’s arm or wrist and hold on to it to prevent her from walking away. This was something that could be observed in the streets and bars among adults as well. If the girl says no, most boys will try to make her change her mind, by

50 Slang word or ‘street talk’, derived from the English verb “to mind”.

“Drawing from a primary school student in Magu town

“I have loved you for a long time. Today is the day I want you to be my lover. What do you say?”

“I also love you. Because you are handsome. Also your father has a car, at my home we only have a bicycle.”

Seduction
persisting and ‘following her’, while trying to persuade her by sending her letters and continuing to offer her money or gifts.

Girl: Why don’t you give up when a girl refuses you? Even after I don’t know how many times, but you are still following me. But you don’t get fed up. Now what am I to do?

Boy: Now to be annoyed that’s when you agree.

Girl: Why are you following me, I have already refused, you are following me still?

Boy: Because your answer does not stand [is not fixed, you might change your mind]

Girl: I answer you that I don’t want you, not so? After I have answered you, why follow me tomorrow?

[Debate between a representative of girls and a representative of boys in Standard 7 Nyahali primary school]

Boys admit they are persistent and say it is part of their strategy. According to 16-year-old Kosmos from Nyahali, the best way to do pursue a girl is:

You call or approach a girl. But she refuses you or she will curse at you. The trick is not to give up. You will go talk to her and follow her over and over again, so that she will think that you find her special.

A boy will try to convince the girl about his dedication and that his feelings for her are real. He will tell her about his ability to support her and his willingness to invest in her. The amount of money or the value of the gifts that he offers is a symbol of this. Boys normally offer between 100 to 1000 Tanzanian Shillings\(^5\), depending on the geographic area. A larger amount of money is offered in urban areas compared to rural areas. The amount of money also depends on how much a boy can get his hands on, the reputation of the girl and how much he ‘loves’ her. However, money is not easy to come by and many boys try to convince girls to sleep with them for as little money as possible. They often promise the girl that money, more money, or gifts will follow later. Boys generally promise girls that they will support them with money if they become their girlfriend or that they will buy them prestigious items like soap, body lotion or even a mobile phone. In order to convince a girl to accept their offer, they might tell her that they are from a rich family. Some boys tell girls they are so much in love with them that they will marry the girl after they are done with their education.

They will say that they have a lot of money or that they are from a rich family. Or that they want to marry you.

[Mayega, 12, rural Magu]

\(^5\) At the time of research 1000 TSh was about 0,70 Euro or 0,80 Dollar and could buy you a simple meal or 2-3 sodas.
Deception

A girl will be more susceptible to these promises or to “agree” with a boy if she believes his feelings or promises are genuine and if she likes the boy back. However, most girls warn each other that many boys do not actually mean what they are saying, that they tell lies, do not live up to their promises and will leave a girl the moment they have achieved their goal to have sex with her. Other reasons for a girl to be abandoned following sex is when a boy sees a better looking girl or when the girl gets pregnant: “Some boys intend to make love to you but after they make love to you they deny you, it’s like they only want to hurt you”. This is what girls (and boys) refer to when they mention ‘deceptions’ (danganyo) as a reason for girls to engage in. When Shilling was interviewing his female classmate Blessed (13) about boys and courtship, Blessed told him:

Maybe he will even buy her, if she doesn't have school shoes, maybe she is a student, he will buy her shoes. If she doesn't have a school skirt, he will buy her, you see? If she doesn't have a shirt, she will be bought a shirt or other small things, like a soda, sweets, watch, take those. And you, now, those small gifts, they make like that girl, hah! For what I shouldn't like that boy? He gives me small presents, things, aren't they nice? Let me also agree, to have sex with him. She enters into deceptions. [...] Normally a boy would dump the girl because he got what he wanted.

[From a child-to-child interview, Blessed and Shilling].

Sarah, a 14 year old out-of-school girl who lived in my neighborhood in Mwanza city mentioned that she regretted her sexual debut because she was promised money and never received it: “I felt really bad, because I was a virgin and... and the man was cheating, he promised me 500 and he didn't give me the money....”

While girls mentioned that boys deceived girls with false promises, boys actually admitted to what the girls said. The boys acknowledged that they have to be smart and use ‘tactics’ like telling lies to girls in order to convince them to have sex. Fifteen year old Charlie from Kijiji rural school elaborates:

The boys lie. They would be saying to the girl that their parents have a really good job and give the girl the little money they have at that time. The girl believes that more will follow, but the boy only wants sex. It's not that these girls want these boys, they are being deceived.
‘Skinning’

But boys are not the only ones who are deceptive. Many boys are frustrated by girls who make false promises and ‘steal’ the boy’s money without living up to their part of the agreement. The children commonly referred to this as ‘skinning’ (*kuchuna*). Skinning was one of the reasons why boys told us they had to be smart and lie to girls in order to prevent losing their money without getting anything in return.

Some boys didn't manage [to have sex] because the girl is saying 'kesho kesho kesho' [*tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow*] and in the mean time they are taking your money! So that's when you break up. Because you are being skinned. So you've got to be smart, you will have to make her offer first and then you offer next. First you would give some money and she promises, but then you don't give money next time. She knows you have money because you gave to her the first time, so the next time you wait for sex first, before giving money again. Because she knows you have money, she will have sex with you.

*FGD with Nyahali boys*

[...] the girl is smart; she takes the money, but won't give anything back. The boys sometimes gossip that they had sex, while that didn't happen, because the girl was so smart (*mjanja*). He just wants to cover up that his money was taken. To show he's a man.

*Seba, 14, Magu city*

Girls will often try to postpone sex in order to find out how truthful and dedicated the boy is (as expressed in gifts and money). This is also a strategy to gain as much as possible from the encounter before or without having sex and to prevent getting a reputation as cheap. Boys respond to the girls’ strategy by being persistent and making promises. During courtship both boys and girls are trying to find out how truthful the other one is about his or her feelings and promises. They are also trying to determine if the other is committed to a relationship or if they are only after money or sex. A boy often insists that the girl agrees to a place and time for sex while many girls will tell the boy to wait for her answer or invent an excuse as to why they did not show up at the agreed time and place. In the *Nyahali* play Penny used this approach with the boy she met in the street and from whom she had accepted money:

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.

From a videoed interview between two friends, Omari (15) and Issa (14) from *Nyahali*, we hear about Omari’s personal experience and frustration with being kept on a string:
She told me: “I have already died for you, I like you a lot now wait for an answer, I will send you an answer, wait and get an answer”. Now I waited, waited, like how many days, a week like this, I saw no answers. She told me a period like two days, but two days passed, it reached like two weeks, two weeks...!

**Expectations and force**

For the majority of boys and girls who we interviewed it was clear that accepting money or gifts resulted in the expectation of having sex. If a girl refused to have sex after she accepted money or a gift from a boy, the boy was ‘entitled’ to ask her to return the money to him. Yet if he does make such a request, it is clear that he was only after sex. Sometimes boys use this strategy to convince a girl to have sex:

> When a boy, when he goes after the girl, he brings, he gives her a gift as well. So when you have given her the gift, you tell her 'I love you' and I want you to do this and that with me. Now if she refuses you tell her that she should give back what you have given her. And she can decided now to agree with you, because when she thinks of what she has to refund. Normally you do not tell what amount of money you have spent on her; you will give her a higher amount.
> [FGD boys Magu town]

If the girl is unable or unwilling to return the money or gift, boys can put pressure on her to live up to the agreement. This pressure can range from emotional blackmail to insults, threats or even physical force. If a girl postpones too long or accepts too much money or too many gifts without having sex, there was a consensus among the majority of boys and many girls that the boy has the right to have sex with her. To this end he could beat her to make her change her mind or even force her to have sex.

Boy: Sometimes you give something to a girl and in the end she denies that she knows you. She refuses you despite of what you have given her.
Me: **how would you feel about that?**
Boy: it can happen that the boy gives something to the girl because he wants to do something with her, but then she ends up refusing him.
Me: **What would you do?**
Boy: you decide to just leave her
Me: **is there anything you could do to prevent this from happening?**
Boys: you can beat her
Boy: yeah, you can decide to beat her so that she can change her mind and you can tell her 'you think I'm a fool? I give you my gifts and then you say no!'

[From a Focus Group Discussion with boys in Magu town]
She will be beaten up. Because the man spends all his time earning money and then the woman spends it, after agreeing. That is not done. Maybe he is a fisherman, risking his life to earn that money!
[15 year old Bo, out-of-school boy in Jabali during discussion of drawings]

Many boys get skinned when they first start approaching girls especially when the girl they approach has some experience with courtship. The girl will take his money or gift but then refuses to have sex with the boy or denies that she ever got anything from him. Boys mentioned their frustration with skinning. Informants who were a bit older told us that they were not successful at convincing a girl to sleep with them when they were younger because at that age they were not ‘confident’ yet. We got the impression that confidence, in this respect, meant having skills and self-confidence as well as physical strength. If a boy is smaller, a girl could take his money and there would be nothing he could do about it. Only when a boy becomes stronger does skinning become more ‘risky’ for girls.

Some boys and girls said that it was forbidden to rape a girl or that a girl had the right to change her mind. But many children, including girls, shared the assumption that a boy could beat or force a girl to have sex if she took his money but did not have sex with him in return:

[Shilling interviewing Blessed]
Shilling: She changes the conditions, she says give me time to think, she is given time. Now that boy, he pushes to go to a place, maybe a bar or what, maybe there she has already drunk a soda [seen as gift or investment] and then she says: “For me, I have thought much to myself, I have seen it’s not possible [to have sex]”. And the boy, what is he going to do?
Blessed: That boy, he has loved a girl all those days and then this day, a girl, instead of satisfying him she refuses, dah! I see for the boy it’s a must, even to rape her, somewhere he will rape her.

This shared attitude among boys and girls corresponded with the attitude we found in Tanzanian adults. According to a group of young men in their early 20’s including some who had a schoolgirl as a partner:

If a girl would accept money from the man but refuse him later, he will beat her. It’s according to the amount of money, for little money you can leave her, but for big money you can beat her. When she takes the money it means she has already agreed. Why then refuse? You have to beat her. It depends on the girl, sometimes you can beat her and then later she comes back and apologizes and you can have sex with her. Sometimes you can beat and then force her to have sex with you.
[FGD Nyahali five young male adults]
In Tanzania there is wide acceptance that within a marriage a wife cannot refuse to have sex with her husband. Boys and girls refer to this as the ‘marriage rule’, or the ‘marriage obligation’. It is possible that this marital understanding influences the children’s belief that a boy has the right to beat a girl who takes money and then refuses to have sex with him in order to get the money back or to force her to fulfill her tacit agreement to have sex:

Based on what we learned from science class, I can tell that if a man has a wife and he wants to have sex and she refuses, then he can force her. He has the right because they are married. Me: But if she just doesn’t feel like sex? Can she refuse? It depends on the reason, if she has personal problems. It's a misunderstanding between them. In a marriage, if a woman doesn't want to have sex with her husband, she is breaking the rules of marriage. She has to explain well to him to make him understand why she refuses. [Neema in a personal interview]

The children said the reason that a man had the right to force his wife to have sex was related to the payment of bride price. According to the boys in Magu town: “The main reason to have a wife is to have children; it doesn't make sense if she doesn't want to have sex with him.” The boys and girls in Magu town had a debate about this assumed male right and they made a link between the male’s rights after paying a bride price to a male’s rights after giving a girl money during courtship:

Boy: She does not have the right [to refuse] because that man married her and he has given bride price and money, for that she is not allowed to refuse.
Girl: She might have the right because, in the afternoon she might have done a lot of work maybe in the night she is tired.
Second girl: Maybe the man when he would have given out bride price for her, the woman doesn't have the right to refuse, even if she is tired, that's her husband, she must ...ammm... [have sex]
Second boy: Us, we are the grown-ups with responsibilities, for that a girl can't refuse if this is what the boy wants.
Third boy: It's a must to agree, because she has eaten [spent] his money and then to come to have sex it's a must. He first gives her money, it's a must she agrees.

How long a girl can postpone or how much money she can accept without being pushed or forced into sex depends on the context and is not always clear. Most boys and girls learn about the expectations, ‘rules’ and possible consequences and dangers of courtship through peers. Some girls learn through experience when they are forced to have sex with their pursuer without realizing beforehand that this is a potential consequence of accepting money and ultimately refusing sex. Boys stated clear assumptions such as: “Once a girl is in your bedroom, she can't back off, she's got to stick to it, so it's too late for demands then.” Or:
“Some [boys] can seduce without money. They persuade the girls to come to their house. And if she follows you to your house, you know she wants to [have sex].” On the other hand girls told us: “Some guys take you to their house without you knowing what is going to happen and before you can even scream it is done.” One girl told us she followed an older boy to his home because she thought they were going to play a game: “For me, it was a joke, I didn't know what was going to happen. The boy was older and he forced me and I was not willing and I was really hurt.” Afterwards girls can feel responsible for what happened or their peers or adults tell them that they ‘should have known’. According to a female teacher in Nyahali:

Children learn about sex because it is nature, they follow their bodies. With a young girl who really doesn't know anything about how the body works and what it [sex] is, if it happens to her, then you can call it rape. But a girl who knows a bit more knows what it is all about, you can't call it rape anymore.

This is often the reason why girls do not report such experiences; the idea exists among children and adults that she should have been aware of the possible consequences and that the boy interpreted her actions or words as consent. According to 13-year-old Daniel from Kijiji in rural Magu if a boy physically forces a girl to have sex with him after she has taken his money and she reports what happened, they will both get punished:

According to the law, they both will be punished. Because the girl has accepted money but has not fulfilled her promise. The boy will be punished for taking the law in his own hands. If the parents get involved, they will punish both of them. They will punish the girl, because the boy will say 'she took my money and promised sex'. She'll be beaten for accepting money and promising to the boy. The boy will be punished for destroying their daughter.

The following case of Nuru from Nyahali illustrates what can go wrong. Nuru is 15 years old girl and in Standard 7. She lives in Nyamalango, about five minutes away from the school. She lives with her father who used to be a driver, but who is now retired and unemployed. Her mother died in 1994. She has seven siblings living in her house; three girls, four boys. Only one sibling goes to school. The rest finished primary school. The family all depend on Nuru’s older sister for money and food. Her sister works in a fish factory. Nuru helps with household tasks like fetching and drying firewood. She then sells the firewood on the streets. She makes 500-700 Tsh per day and gives the money to her grandmother who gives her 200-300 Tsh back. Nuru uses this money to buy soap and small items she needs. Nuru was interviewed and recorded on camera by her friend Neema without anybody else present. The following story is a transcription of the videotape in which Nuru speaks about the first time she had sex.
This occurred three years earlier when she was 12 years old with a boy from her school who, at the time, was 14.

**The case of Nuru**

Can I be seen from the other side? [Referring to the camera]

*Neema: Yeah, you can be seen.*

Where should I start from?

*Neema: You start one day at school, when he came and snatched a pen from you, hurry up, we have 40 minutes left.*

One day at school, a man, we studied with him but in different classes, he came and took my pen. I told him “give me back my pen!” He said “I’m not giving you your pen until tomorrow!” I left him, that day I had borrowed a pen from people. On the second day he sent his friend to bring me that pen, inside there was a little message “Nuru and Amisi” [probably the name of the boy] and then I went to him to ask him! What did he tell me? “Tomorrow I will look for you”. When he said “look for me!” I told him “when you look for me where are you going to find me?” He asked me “tomorrow are you going to fetch firewood?” I answered him “yes I’m going”. He said “there I will look for you” and me, I went to the firewood.

Okay, he looked for me and I saw him, what did he tell me? “Me I’ve liked you”. Okay, now me, I did not tell him anything, I told him to wait for his answer. I had gone home. The second day also he sent a letter, that letter it said: “To you sister Nuru, I love you so much. I want to taste your fruit, what about it? Will you agree? Or disagree?” Me, that letter, I read it. I saw I needed advice. My friend, she gave me advice to write a letter [back]. But who wrote was my friend; she wrote that letter - even I did not read it. She gave it to a friend of that man (Neema: “use the word boy, not man”) she had gone to give him.

Now at school we have a garden, that garden we were watering it. He [the boy] came with his friends telling me “I want to make love to you”. Me, I had told him like “tomorrow”. Now we were closed for the holiday of month 6 [June]. But what did he tell me? “Me until I make love with you…” When I went home in the evening he came and told me: “Me, I want to do it”. Then he send his friend, when he [the friend] came, he told me I was called by his friend, and me, without hesitating, I went. When I went, the guy told me “I want to make love with you, huum!” I told him “Me, I don’t want.” He told me “I’m going first, I’m going ahead, when I go first, you follow me.” When he left I thought to myself and went.

*Neema: tell me what happened!*

When I went I found him sitting. Me, I had been standing. What did he tell me? “Sit down!” and me, I sat, what did he tell me? “Take of your clothes!” Me, I did not undress…

*Neema: say, don’t be shy, we are running out of time!*

Okay I didn’t undress and him, he didn’t undress. He had done what? Suddenly he came to me, uuum…[hesitates] me, because it was my first time, I just stood there [implying passivity]. Then we did it. Later we had separated, he told me you go this way I go this way. Then that man, he went travelling…

*Neema: that boy, not man…*
Yes, that boy was travelling until the time we opened school, okay when he went, that’s it, we did not see each other until school opened. What did he say that man? He called me and told me: “Me, my love with you is finished”. I asked him why? “It’s finished, I have another one, not you, I just have another one.” I said who is it? “It is my secret only.”

Me, I had begged him, begged, he refused, okay, [then] I had left him. I decided to leave him alone. He also went and me I went on, that’s it, I’ve learned from my mistakes I am not going to do an act like that [again], I regret sincerely, why did I do it? Something like that I won’t ever do again.

Neema: And me I want to talk [handing over the camera to Nuru] bring it near [closer to me].

Neema to Nuru who holds the camera: That calamity that has befallen my friend is big, I’m begging you a lot my friend, to avoid those things.

Nuru: Thanks my friend, I’ve heard your call.

But despite the fact that the boy made quite clear what he wanted from her, she gave him positive feedback by saying where he could find her or by complying with his request to meet. Perhaps she did not understand what the boy was after, but when we asked her, Nuru told us: “If a man tells you he loves you and you accept him, you have to allow him sex”. When we asked her why she told him where he could find her, she said “If somebody asks you something like that, of course you tell him”. Perhaps an explanation for this reaction can be found in the way girls are raised in northwest Tanzania. They are taught to have good manners and to show respect to men and to people who are older. To say “no” or to lie is very disrespectful and sometimes girls prefer to respond with answers of avoidance such as, “I told him to wait for his answer”. When Nuru told the boy “tomorrow”, she added that they were closed for the holiday of June and perhaps she was hoping this would help her to avoid him. Nuru’s use of the word ‘man’, despite her friends’ disagreement and repeated suggestions to call him boy, might indicate this respect and the physical maturity of the boy. But it could also be that the boy’s sexual activity and ability to use force (strength) caused Nuru to place the boy in the category of an adult. Despite the fact that Nuru did not want to have sex and her
regret that she did, she expected the boy to be her ‘boyfriend’. She expressed disappointment when he told her that his love for her was over and that he was with someone else. We were surprised to hear she ‘begged’ him to stay with her. When we asked Nuru why his staying with her was so important she said: “The only reason I did that was because I thought I might be pregnant”. If she had been pregnant, she would have needed his support.

I interpret Nuru’s story as a misunderstanding of the ‘rules’ in courtship and communication leading to the use of force. Her statement, ‘I don’t want’ and the boys’ threat to harm her could be interpreted as rape. But in the context of northwest Tanzania, Nuru and probably her peers and others would consider her as responsible for the sexual act despite the fact that she did not accept any money or gifts. Her words at the end of the story: “I am not going to do an act like that [again], I regret sincerely, why did I do it?” appear to indicate that she’s blaming herself. Indeed Nuru told only a few of her best friends about this experience. She was afraid that she might be expelled from school and afraid of punishment from her father: “I would have been punished because I did something wrong”. When we asked her what it was that she had done wrong, she said: “It was wrong having sex. The fact that I told the man that I am going to the firewood, it’s like I gave him permission”.

Agreement

If a girl accepts 1000 shilling from a boy, she…
“Loves him”
“Is deceived”
“Is tempted”
“Makes herself available”
“Agrees to make love”
[Responses to unfinished sentences: FGD with boys and girls in Magu town]

Courtship and negotiations normally result in what the boys and girls call an “agreement” (-kubali: to agree/accept/consent). Often a negotiation and a courtship dialogue conclude by the boy asking: ‘what do you say’ or ‘have you agreed’ (see for example the boy’s letter to Nuru in the previous paragraph or the drawing below). The girl then normally responds with ‘no’ (or perhaps “I’m still a student”) or with “I have agreed”. Clarity about the meaning of the agreement is important to avoid situations like the one that Nuru experienced. Generally, if a girl says she agrees, this means she has ‘accepted’ the boy and agreed to have sex with him.
But it can also mean that she has agreed to see him (in case of messengers and letters) or to meet up with him again for further negotiations. There can be an unspoken agreement, as illustrated by the reactions from the boys and girls to the unfinished sentence quoted above. So how do boys and girls know they have an agreement? According to 13-year-old Daniel in *Kijiji* rural *Magu*:

They know through body language, the body language tells them. The girl immediately estimates the boy, if he’s good for money. And then the boy might say ‘There is no need to pay back’ and then she’ll understand that she has got to pay back in a different way. […] There is also the way that a boy will be straightforward about what he awaits from her and then she will say okay.

Me: Which one of the two happens more? The direct or the indirect way?
Some use body language to show they have an agreement, like holding hands and touching. But it's not a direct agreement, many girls say ‘I'll think about it’, ‘I'll let you know tomorrow’. But he will tell the girl that he is too busy for this and will push to come up with a date and normally the girl gives a date.

Most boys will insist on making an appointment for a certain time and place. This is customary, to meet up for sex or as a way to signal to the girl what he is after. This date may be in the distant future, for instance ‘after finishing school’. As mentioned in the previous paragraph on peer pressure, to say you want to wait with sex until after finishing education is a strategy to postpone sexual activity without having to break friendships. This strategy is
helpful since the girl does not have to turn the boy down in case she is too polite to say ‘no’ outright or if she is not sure about her feelings and wants more time to think about her decision. Depending on her negotiation skills she might get some money from the boy while he waits for her decision. But according to most informants little time is spent between the initiation of a courtship and sexual activity (provided that the girl ‘agrees’), “it can happen the same day”. Boys confess that they do not have much patience, “unless it is a question of marriage”. Otherwise “you can decide ‘no, let me move faster so that I can get her’.”

According to one of the girls in Magu town:

If a girl and a boy consider becoming boy-girlfriend, the first thing they discuss is when they will have sex. The boy would ask that on the first day of the relationship.

Kissing

Boys and girls did not indicate signs of a gradual process towards developing intimacy, e.g., kissing or non-penetrative forms of sexual conduct in their stories about courtship and agreement. When we probed the boys and girls said it was “just about sex”:

It's like they only like things of sex, I don't know things like kissing. These, him, he likes only to... like....do sex... that’s it.
[FGD Girls Magu town]

Kissing or ‘snogging’ (‘French’ kissing or ‘deep’ kissing) was frequently regarded as ‘wrong’, ‘dirty’ or as a sign of ‘real love’ and therefore said to take place only in long term relationships, “Only those who are married can do it.” Boys and girls as well as young adults related kissing to the exchange of saliva and through that, “some airborne diseases that can spread, like polio” or HIV. Although a few boys stated that they were willing to kiss a girl in order to show love, others, like Charlie, would not kiss: “I just can’t get myself to do it.”

When a baby is born, the saliva that comes out its mouth, it’s called udenda. So kissing is called denda, meaning someone is leaking that saliva [saliva dribbling from the mouth]
[Same FGD Girls Magu town]

Furthermore, kissing was regarded as disgusting because the mouth is used for eating and food particles can be left in the mouth. According to the young men in Nyahali village this is
also a reason why oral sex is ‘not done’. These young men watch pornographic videos to learn ‘new styles’. I asked them if that included learning to do oral sex:

Hamna kabisa! (absolutely not!). According to culture, tradition, it is impossible to do that! It is dirty. There can be some food left in the mouth.

[FGD with young men in Nyahali]

According to the group of girls in Magu town, normally people do not like to kiss or have oral or anal sex: “They get very disgusted. Those who do copy from the video” (pornographic video). In addition to being disgusted, girls said that they were too shy to do any of this, reflecting a norm of female sexual inhibition. If a girl shows too much assertiveness, sexual knowledge or pleasure she can damage her reputation and negotiation power.

**Flirting**

From the examples of courtship that boys and girls gave, it became clear that boys initiated most courtship. The boys were actively trying to convince girls to have sex while the girls seemed to have a more passive role as recipients of the boys’ courtships. The main reason for this clear division of roles is that girls have to show sexual reticence in order to guard their reputation. Another reason for the girls’ behavior is that in order to increase the amount of money that is offered to them by the boy they need to play ‘hard to get’. Furthermore, if a girl approached a boy and showed interest it would be difficult for her to bail out if she changed her mind. According to various boys during several FGD’s:

You don't have to give anything, because she came to you. The only thing you can give her, is to have sex with her.

If the girl approaches the boy because she wants to have sex, then you would give it to her, but you wouldn't feel sorry if there were consequences, she should have been wiser.

If a girl initiates [the courtship] it is easier to have sex with her, because she is attracted to the boy and she has sex on her mind. She is less likely to be interested in building a house with you or living together.

This does not mean that girls are completely passive recipients however. After being approached by a boy, a girl can initiate the negotiation of money. Although girls will not readily approach boys themselves, there are ways by which a girl can try to make a boy approach her, without losing negotiation power. She can flirt:
A girl can show interest in a guy, by for instance taking his belongings and running away with it, so that he would follow her. Or by doing things for him, like bringing him his books.  
[According to boys in Magu city]

She starts giggling and touching you, that indicates that she is interested.  
[According to Charlie in Kijiji rural Magu]

...every morning, those signs, I started noticing them, in the morning she would walk by, like parading. She would come to pick me up you see; she would wait for me to go to school.  
[Iddy (16) to Mathias (16) while interviewing each other in Nyahali]

In Africa it is very hard for a girl to approach a boy, so I try to impress the boy in the hope that he will make a move. I will be passing in front of the boy, pulling up my skirt a little.  
[Shani, Nyahali, 15 years]

The boys in Magu town refer to these signs and signals with the slang word “beeping” (kwanza bepa, to begin beeping): “She will 'beep' you, like a phone. And then, depending on who beeps, you pick up. This is the way a girl can show interest in a guy.”

Other ways of beeping that are used by girls to communicate interest are through clothing, walking and dancing if the opportunity exists. Clothing in general seemed to be an important way to express ones identity and status. A person’s background and social economic status is determined by whether their clothes are clean or dirty, shabby or new. Certain ‘styles’ of dressing, like wearing jeans or baggy trousers indicate modernity: “that one is from the city”. Wearing a kanga (wrap) is a traditional way of dressing. The boys in Nyahali call this a ‘dress-code’: “it can tell you what kind of girl she is”. A girl who wore pants and especially jeans was often interpreted as shocking, although this style was associated with a western style of clothing and therefore with modernity and status. The girl wearing pants or jeans was often viewed as a mhuni. The term, mhuni used in this context refers to promiscuous behavior and was often translated by my interpreters as ‘slut’ or ‘prostitute’. Clothes that show skin, especially knees, thighs and shoulders, were also associated with prostitution or ‘looking for men’. Men who dressed in a certain way (“like rappers”) could be indicating that they are trying to seduce women or that he is a ‘thug’, smoking marijuana and chasing after girls in the street. Children were asked to comment on the next two drawings and their answers are next to the drawings.
Clothing and physical appearance in general can make one more attractive but clothing can also communicate a more specific interest. The girls from the primary school in Magu town performed for us in front of the video camera and demonstrated how they communicated interest in boys by wearing their uniforms in a specific way and by standing, moving and walking in a certain manner (‘like a model’). One of the girls pulled her blouse out of her skirt, put it over her bottom and made a knot in the front and showed how the shirt accentuated the movements of the buttocks. She walked in a sensual way. When I asked the girls if the teachers allow them to wear their shirt like that in class, they said: “No, it is absolutely forbidden to wear it like this, because the teachers are aware of what it means. [Siti, 14 years, out-of-school girl in Jabali]

They are showing their ‘nakedness’ so that men can like them. [Mixed FGD in Jabali]

The one wearing trousers is inappropriately dressed. The two in the middle are not appropriate. They are bad girls. They are dressed like that to attract boys. [Siti, 14 years, out-of-school girl in Jabali]

The two boys on the outside are thug. They smoke bangi [marihuana]. They hang out in the streets and they call at girls, trying to have a talk with them. The two girls in the middle of the other picture, they will feel attracted to these kind of guys. [Siti, 14 years, out-of-school girl in Jabali]

They are thugs [the two men on the outside], because they smoke weed. The Rasta man is a weed smoker. The left one is arrogant and evil. Because of the way he is dressed, he is showing his muscles. ‘I’m the man’. The two men in the middle are dressed nicely, neat. They have good manners, friendly faces. [Mixed FGD in Jabali]
Because that is a style which is used in the streets.” Another girl added: “This is a way to indicate to the boy that you are available. That is why she [the girl who is performing in front of us] is showing her buttocks, to tell him she's got something to offer.”

Aside from covert and overt flirting, assertive girls sometimes write letters or send a female friend over to a boy they like so she can pass on a message. Girls might even ask a boy for a soda, a favor or directly for money. However, if a girl made these requests the children considered that she was ‘looking for a boyfriend’ and they understood that these girls were prepared to have sex. The children also identified a group of girls who approach men directly in order to seduce them, but they said that these girls had experience:

Some girls go to the extent of actively seducing men. They can do that because they are so free [lack of parental guidance]. These girls are used to having sex and getting money in return. So when they are broke, they know the only way for them to get money, is through men. So that is why they need to know how to seduce.

[Blessed, personal interview]

**Concluding remarks**

Courtship is a complex interaction between boys and girls in Tanzania. Overall, it can be said that boys are usually the ones who take the initiative to engage in courtship, although girls too have strategies to show their interest in a boy. Although some boys attempt courtship to impress their peers, the main aim of courtship for boys appears to be an effort to convince a girl to come to an agreement and to settle on a place and date to have sex. Boys try to convince a girl by being persistent, offering money and gifts and sometimes by deceiving her with promises and lies. If a girl does not reject the boy outright, she may try to gain as much as possible from the boy before or without having sex (skinning). Playing hard to get increases her negotiation power. The expectation of sex when a girl accepts a boy’s money or gifts can lead to situations of harassment or coercion depending on the amount received, the power differentials between the boy and the girl and the setting of secrecy. In the process of courtship boys and girls try to figure out the intentions of the other person and they negotiate the meaning of the courtship and the relationship that might follow.

Remarkable about courtship of the children in Mwanza and Magu districts is the ‘deal-like’ character of the courtship. The children rarely speak about ‘just hanging out with each other’
or ‘doing things together’ to get to know each other as a strategy to determine if the other might be suitable as a partner. The reasons for the form of this courtship will be discussed in the next chapter. The preference for partners and how they are selected are central topics. The roles of secrecy and love and how this influences the characteristics of relationships between boys and girls in Mwanza and Magu districts will be addressed. The section that follows will consider how these relationship characteristics influence children’s ideas about responsibility and the use of contraceptives.