

Peers, Sexual Relationships, and Agency in Tanzania

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Introduction

Recent efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, address the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis, and confront uncertain youth livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa have garnered increasing attention at the intersection of schooling, gender, and sexuality. Epidemiological perspectives that seek to promote safer sexual practices, educational perspectives that seek to improve schools' processes and outcomes, economic perspectives that seek to address youth unemployment, and feminist perspectives that seek to understand and critique systems of gender so as to promote female empowerment have all been brought to bear on young people's sexual relationships. We seek to add to these conversations by focusing on young people's voices and experiences with sexuality and agency, and by examining how young people in Tanzania simultaneously shape and are shaped by their peer and sexual relationships. More specifically, we seek to understand the ways in which students see their peer relationships as shaping their sexual relationships, as well as the choices they make around them. Our work, which is situated in critical and feminist perspectives, is premised on the assertion that foregrounding youths' own perspectives and experiences can lead to deeper, more illustrative understandings of complex social, cultural, material, and economic contexts and processes in which young people develop their agency with regard to sexual relationships.

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While many studies (Harper, Gannon, Watson, Catania, & Dolcini, 2004; Springer, Parcel, Baumler, & Ross, 2006) have examined how peers influence the identity formation, attitudes, behavior, and goals of young people worldwide, research that specifically examines how peer relationships shape youth sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa has been less prevalent (Muhanguzi, Bennett, & Muhanguzi, 2011). Much of the research has been aimed at understanding sexuality and peer relationships vis-à-vis the transmission and prevention of HIV infection in the context of the AIDS crisis (Mojola, 2014; Thorpe, 2005). While our work does in fact occur in contexts of relatively high prevalence of HIV, ours is not an epidemiologically focused study. Rather, this is an interpretive and critical study that draws on qualitative interview data to examine how students understand sexual relationships as they are intertwined with secondary schooling, peer relationships and notions of modernity in contexts of economic insecurity. We utilize Kabeer's (1999) empowerment framework of resources, agency and achievements alongside relevant literature to analyze how young people view sexual relationships and recognize their peers as influencing their decision-making in both desired and undesired ways. Our findings show how some youth use peers as resources to expand their abilities to act agentically in order to enter desired relationships or resist unwanted relationships, while other youth view their peer relationships as involving unwanted pressure to enter sexual relationships.

Our work here is a new analysis of qualitative interview data from two distinct studies of secondary schooling and sexual relationships in Tanzania. How young people view their peers as influencing their perceptions of and choices involving sexual relationships was not the initial foci of either of the two studies from which the data originates. However, the open-ended interviews with young people around sexuality and schooling repeatedly returned to this topic as interviewees described how their social contexts and perspectives of sexual relationships influenced each other. As such, we became increasingly attuned to young people's descriptions of their choices around their sexuality as being embedded in, and shaped by, their peer relationships and social structures. The question we began to ask, and the research question structuring this chapter, is: How do peers influence young people's choices around sexual relationships in rural Tanzanian secondary school contexts characterized by economic insecurity and a high prevalence of HIV?

Empowerment, Schooling and Sexuality: Theoretical Framework and Study Context

Framing Agency, Choice, and Empowerment

Emergent research paints pictures of both vulnerability and agency, at times simultaneously, of youth sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa. This recurring tension is most evident over differing viewpoints on the extent of female sexual agency such that a

binary has begun to emerge; one view regards females as strategic and agentic around engaging in sexual relationships (Hawkins, Price, & Mussá, 2009; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). The other view highlights vulnerability and situates female sexuality as constrained by prescriptive norms of male dominance or predation and female victimization, particularly within patriarchal and capitalist systems (Grant, 2012; Muhanguzi, 2011). Even as much research exists, and is explored more thoroughly in the subsequent section that questions, nuances, complicates or disrupts this binary, the extent to which these perspectives are contradictory or, perhaps, complementary continues to be debated around multiple issues including marriage norms, sexual desire, romance, sexual relationships between older and younger people, transactional sex, the use of contraception and other protective measures (Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015). So, too, does this tension exist around questions of the influence of peers on young people's sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our work, like the work of many others in this and related fields, is not premised neatly on either end of this agent-victim binary. Rather, we are interested in what has been succinctly termed "the dynamic interplay of agency and structure" (Monkman, Miles, & Easton, 2008, p. 108) for individuals and groups of young people in educational contexts. Further, we acknowledge the existence of multiple, concurrent experiences with sexualities among the young people in this study, from similar backgrounds in similar contexts. As Tamale states, "Researchers need to recognize that there is no uniform or monolithic way of experiencing sexualities within one culture or community, or even among individuals" (2011, p. 12). A nuanced examination of youth agency seeking to eschew binary thinking, therefore, requires lithe conceptual tools able to accommodate a range of experiences and perceptions.

Kabeer (1999) proposed a framework for conceptualizing and measuring empowerment, which she defined as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability... the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (p. 437). Although we are not chiefly interested in measuring empowerment per se, and we examine the agency of both females and males, whereas her work has been concerned primarily with female empowerment, her conceptualization of the process of female empowerment offers several analytical tools that we find valuable for this work. Namely, her conceptualizations of resources, agency, and achievements can be fluidly applied to illuminate the ways in which peers influence youth sexuality. Furthermore, we hold that, given the precarious economic, material, and educational contexts of these young people, contexts which will be examined in subsequent sections, it is useful to apply Kabeer's framework as a means of analyzing their experiences and perceptions.

For the purposes of this chapter, we employ Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment as a process due to its attention to agency and ease of applicability. This conceptualization has been used in analyzing agency and empowerment in educational settings in diverse contexts (e.g., DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011; Murphy-Graham, 2008). For example, Murphy-Graham (2008) drew on Kabeer to analyze the impacts and limitations of an empowerment-focused educational program for women in Honduras. She found that while the program cultivated advancements in

women's inner-resources such self-confidence, knowledge and awareness of gender equity, there remained ways in which their agency was still constrained by social contexts. Unterhalter, Boler, and Aikman (2008) drew on Kabeer's concepts to analyze an ActionAid project in Tanzania devoted to girls' education and protection against HIV transmission. Quoting a 2007 Action Aid white paper, they describe Tanzanian girls as having both agency and constraints placed upon them:

We understand girls as active agents, who think about their lives, articulate their views and act... We see the girls' lives as being constrained by a range of forces ... but girls have some spaces and opportunities and act back in a range of ways, with different outcomes. (pp. 22–23, italics in the original)

Likewise, we find applying Kabeer's theoretical framework to analyze questions of youth agency in Tanzania proves simultaneously simple and comprehensive insofar as it allows us to consider young people's agency around sexual relationships while also attending to structures, and here we emphasize the social and educational contexts, which may influence the choices that young people make. As it has with programs aimed at women's empowerment, Kabeer's conceptualization, with its emphasis on decision making ability (agency) toward desired outcomes (achievements) with the use of resources (of several kinds), offers the appealing conceptual clarity for examining the interplay between peers and students' choices and values around sexual relationships. In the chapter that follows, we explore various meanings of Kabeer's dimensions alongside interview data while examining relevant literature. We find that peers serve as social resources to either enter or resist relationships. We find peers influence young people's desired outcomes insofar as peers may either valorize or eschew various types of relationships. And we find young people acknowledge ways in which peers both support and thwart the development of their own agency.

Context: Secondary Schooling in Tanzania

Young people's sexuality is but one of many areas in which the expansion of formal schooling in sub-Saharan Africa has ushered in social change. Where sexuality and marriage were once solidly within the domain of family control (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005), more extended transitions to adulthood occurring within educational spaces bring different balances of influences, including increased peer influence, to bear on young people's sexuality. "Today, prolonged education and economic changes has (*sic*) led to postponing marriage and the creation of adolescence. Schools place girls and boys in close proximity and ... created a situation where non-marital, sexual liaisons are likely" (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005). Although two of the schools in this study are female-only boarding schools, interviewees described their adolescence as involving the negotiation of both peer and sexual relationships within and around schools, including within single-sex schooling sites. We therefore begin our analysis with a deeper examination of the educational, and, by extension, social contexts of the lives of the young people in this study.

Expanded access to secondary schooling is a recent development in Tanzania. In 1991, when many of the participants' parents were of an age to attend secondary school, the gross secondary enrollment rate was a mere 6% for male students and 5% for female students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). More recently, the Tanzanian government has passed several educational reforms in an attempt to expand the provision and improve the quality of secondary schooling. Nevertheless, inequalities according to sex remain. In 2012, for example, only 33% of young women were enrolled in secondary school, compared to 37% of young men (World Bank, 2014). Beyond overall enrollment rates, which often mask other gender inequalities (see for example, Chisamya, DeJaeghere, Kendall, & Khan, 2012), there are other social, material and economic forces that likely differentially affect young women and men in Tanzania. For example, while corporal punishment is a routine form of discipline in Tanzanian schools (Feinstein & Mwahombela, 2010), sexual abuse of female students is also known to be prevalent such that one out of ten girls in recently reported having been sexually victimized by a teacher (United Republic of Tanzania, 2011).

Tamale notes that "sexuality is deeply embedded in the meanings and interpretations of gender systems" (2011, p. 11). Which normative notions of gender and sexuality are taught and reproduced in the classrooms of Tanzanian secondary schools, and how? Secondary schools, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are highly heteronormative contexts (Muhanguzi et al., 2011). Thomas and Rugambwa's (2011) multi-sited ethnographic study revealed how hierarchical, heteronormative conceptualizations of gender were at work in teaching and learning practices in northern Tanzania. Their findings suggest that even when some teachers felt they had a responsibility to promote gender equality in their classrooms, this responsibility was taken up in ways that were counter-productive. The authors argue that these conceptualizations reveal, and leave untouched, underlying beliefs that girls are less confident or less academically capable. In one example, a teacher's lesson portrays an "empowered Tanzanian woman" in conflict surrounding her vocational choice, the eventual resolution of which involves her securing her husband's permission to continue with her job (Thomas & Rugambwa, 2011). This example highlights the ways in which scripts of masculinity and femininity can be reinscribed in Tanzanian classrooms even when some teachers' lessons attempt to question them. With regard to what students may be directly taught about sexual relationships in Tanzanian secondary schools, Vavrus (2003) describes the tendency for teachers and students to replicate parent-child relationships that may involve moral instruction but often preclude as taboo the open discussion of sex. Sexual education is further complicated by other material and social constraints in Tanzanian schools, as Plummer et al. (2007) notes a severe shortage of educational materials, the use of didactic pedagogy, authoritarian teacher-student relationships, corporal punishment and sexual abuse of students.

In summary, though the provision of schooling may be expanding in Tanzania, the quality and relevance remains severely lacking, thus aggravating tensions between schooling and youth's economic and social needs during adolescence. Literature suggests that students are frequently taught in environments in which heteronormative, hierarchical, gender structures prevail, and in some cases are unsafe

for female students. And while the state of sex education in Tanzanian secondary schools is less thoroughly researched, there are indications it is inadequate, particularly given the current AIDS epidemic. We conclude this section with a caveat in that we do not claim that all the educational conditions described above were being experienced by the interviewees in this study. We note, for example, that the schools in this study offer a life skills program, either embedded within the curriculum or as an extracurricular option. While we did not examine each of these programs, their presence suggests an institutional acknowledgement of young people's needs beyond learning the national secondary curriculum, if not some commitment toward providing some sexual, reproductive or social-emotional education. Further, at one of these schools, students described how their participation in the life skills program, which we did examine and found to be particularly robust, has enhanced their ability to make strategic choices in their sexual relationships and that at least some of the students are receiving relatively higher quality teaching in a more supportive atmosphere than is typical in many Tanzanian secondary schools (see Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015, for a more thorough description). Yet interview and observational data alike confirm that many of the pedagogical, curricular and social constraints described above have been experienced by the interviewees in this study, if not presently in these schools, then in their previous school experiences. In the following section, we look more closely at the educational and economic contexts of the young people in this study following an introduction to our own collaboration.

Methodology and Study Background

In order to situate this chapter and collaboration, we offer a brief introduction to our shared history of interest in issues of gender and schooling in Tanzania. We have been examining these and related issues since 1998, when Anna was one of Laura's English students at a secondary school in Tanzania. In the ensuing years—together with other colleagues, friends and students—we have had numerous conversations about education, development, globalization, sexuality, and female empowerment. Because we were both students at the same tertiary institution in Tanzania, albeit at different times, we compared experiences to examine the norms, structures and nuances of gender and relationships in this context. We observed the dissonances between the relationships around us and the notion of rational, dispassionate individuals armed with the knowledge, abilities and preferences to practice abstinence, monogamy and safe sex as promoted by ubiquitous anti-HIV transmission efforts. In time, both of us went on to study gender in graduate school, and each of us embarked on our own studies examining issues of gender in the context of Tanzanian secondary schools. Later we worked together with Joan DeJaeghere on one of the studies from which these data are drawn. During Laura's frequent trips to Tanzania while pursuing her doctoral work, we have spent weeks reading, critiquing, discussing, assisting with and shaping each other's work. It was during one such visit, when our discussions turned to how critical peers are in shaping young people's sexual relationships, that we envisaged bringing together data from different studies with a new framework.

What follows, then, is a secondary analysis of previously collected qualitative interview data from two different studies of schooling and relationships in Tanzania, collected at four secondary schools in 2013 and 2014. In one study, conducted in 2014, Anna Ndesamburo Kwayu investigated how school peer groups might be used to help adolescents avoid risky sexual behavior at three schools in northern Tanzania (Ndesamburo Kwayu, 2014). The other study, conducted in 2013, examined how life skills training impacted young women's relationships at an all-girls' school in central Tanzania.¹ Both studies relied extensively on qualitative interviews. The 2013 life skills study also made use of ethnographically informed participant-observation, and Anna made use of quantitative surveys in her study as well. The two studies allowed for interviews with 82 secondary students as well as nine parents and several teachers, and we examined any resulting data that was pertinent to our research question.

Each of the in-depth interviews we consider in this chapter was semi-structured and conducted in Kiswahili by Anna. The resulting dialogue was then translated and transcribed into English by Anna or, in the case of life skills study, with assistance from Laura. Laura and Anna then coded these interviews for themes related to their original studies (see Ndesamburo Kwayu, 2014; Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015), and then re-coded the interviews according to themes pertinent to this chapter's analysis. The intimate nature of our relationships with the sites and participants in the study makes the citation of participant interviews and dates problematic for ensuring participant confidentiality. Additionally, citing which specific study the data comes from has the potential to breach the anonymity for the participants. For these reasons, we have chosen not to attribute interview citations to individual participants at specific schools.

While we do include some adult interviewee data for additional perspectives, we focus primarily on relevant student interview data because our foremost aim is to examine youth experiences and perceptions with peers and sexual relationships. Student interviewees were in secondary school, from Forms One to Six (roughly equivalent to eighth through twelfth grade in a United States-based system), aged 15–22 years. Because two of the schools in these studies are all-girls' schools, there were 57 female and 25 male student interviewees. In most cases, teachers assisted in selecting students who they thought would be willing and informative participants, as well as those with whom it was convenient to talk. We found enlisting teachers' help in locating subjects (both youth and adult) was the least disruptive, most efficient and most courteous way of approaching this work at bustling school sites where national exams were looming. While this is a purposive and convenience sample from four schools and is not necessarily representative of their schools' student bodies, nor of Tanzanian young people in general, we contend that these young people's voices, contextualized as they are, provide valuable insights that contribute to the growing research and theoretical work on sexuality in educational spaces, peer relationships and youth agency in Tanzania.

¹For this study, Anna Ndesamburo Kwayu served as the research assistant, Joan DeJaeghere was the principal investigator, and Laura Wangsness Willemsen was the coinvestigator (Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015).

As with schooling, youth's economic and material contexts shape their notions of sexual relationships. The young women and men who attended the four schools tend to be from less affluent families in rural or semi-rural areas of Tanzania. Two of these schools were, in fact, created to serve marginalized, underprivileged young women who would otherwise not attend secondary school. The other two offer relatively low cost secondary schooling for local families. Furthermore, the three schools in northern Tanzania draw significantly from the local population of nomadic and semi-nomadic families who historically had limited access to formal schooling. In each of these schools, the majority of students' parents attended little or no formal schooling themselves, usually limited to a few years of primary school, if any. Parents and guardians of students at all schools are primarily subsistence farmers or livestock keepers. Climate change, however, has caused weather patterns to be increasingly unreliable, making these livelihoods more and more tenuous. Accordingly, many families augment their agriculture-based incomes via engaging in small business ventures such as making charcoal, selling snacks or crushing rock to produce gravel. In summary, most youth interviewees at these schools come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and, as part of Tanzania's recent expansion of secondary schooling, are among the first in their families to attend secondary school. With unemployment rampant, the likelihood of finding secure employment or self-employment post-graduation is low. Their broader economic and social challenges, therefore, are succinctly described by Honwana (2014), "African societies are struggling with economic decline, strained educational systems, high unemployment rates, and insecure livelihoods, all of which seriously weaken the social fabric" (p. 33). It is within such contexts that youth develop their notions of, and aspirations for, sexual, romantic, and peer relationships, as well as closely linked notions of modernity.

Social and Sexual Relationships in School: Resources, Risk, Resistance, and Agency

Relationships, Schooling and Modernity

We begin with an examination of these students' perceptions and experiences of sexual and peer relationships so as to better comprehend both individuals' choices and a variety of peer influences. Some of the young people we interviewed described an awareness of how their conceptualizations of sexual relationships were influenced from a variety of sources. At one site, young women described their life skills classes as having taught them about mutuality in relationships (Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015). Many interviewees made the overt distinction between what their families said or expected of them, and what they learned from other sources. For these interviewees, the concept of romantic sexual relationships was frequently attached to notions originating beyond the spheres of influence of their families and

invoked the idea of more global youth cultures. This stands in contrast to the findings of a study nearly 10 years earlier on young people's sexuality in an adjacent area of rural northern Tanzania in which romantic love was not a primary consideration (Wight et al., 2006). The following is a quote from a Form Three student in which she described how information and notions of sexual relationships were shared in her school, "I am sure we (teens) know a lot about love, more than our parents can tell us. We learn through television, books and internet, and when we meet with our friends we share our experiences. It is very important." This quote highlights how conceptualizations gleaned from sources beyond the family are valorized and, in turn, disseminated by peers in educational spaces.

Although it is not the main focus of our analysis, we noted that parents similarly associated schooling with the introduction of notions of sexuality of which they disapproved. Here the mother of a Form Two student described her anger at her daughter's clothing choice, an area in which other researchers have noted sexuality is performed by secondary school students (Stambach, 2000; Muhanguzi et al., 2011). The mother stated:

Many of our daughters today when they come back from school for holiday, we are expecting to see that they have changed in a constructive way, but ... my daughter came back home dressed in very tight jeans. She had never done that in front of my eyes, it was quite shocking ... I had to punish and warn her not to do it again because that is not our culture, it's very dangerous, she can be raped because of the way she is dressed.

This quote highlights two recurring tensions. The first tension involved families' expectations of what young people will learn in school and what young people actually experienced and learned around schooling. The second tension was between more "traditional" norms of sexuality and what may be considered more cosmopolitan notions and performances of sexuality. Stambach's (2000) ethnographic work in the context of secondary schools in the rapidly changing region of Kilimanjaro closely examines these and other tensions. She found a subset of adults in that community held a negative view of schooling. These adults made a distinction between young women's "traditional" transitions to marriage and motherhood, which they valorized, and "city sisters," whose schooling brings about a new set of aspirations, relationships, sexuality, and livelihoods.

Similarly, the young people in our study described schools as places in which aspirations for a consumptive modernity are cultivated among peers. They acknowledged that such aspirations, like more cosmopolitan notions of sexuality and romance, were in tension with families' economic abilities. In the following quote, a young male student suggested his generation was distinct in their awareness of, and desire for, global material goods that, in turn, fostered competition between peers for the status they bestowed on their owners:

Teenagers of today know each and every thing. We want nice things such as expensive telephones, i-pods and laptops ... We are competing with our friends in school without knowing their parents' status at home. For example, my mama sells *maandazi* (donuts) and through this business she gets money to send me to school expecting me to study so that I will come back and help her and my young sister later. She cannot afford those luxurious things. So I have to understand her situation.

Mojola's (2014) study in Kenyan secondary schools has similarly revealed this coupling of schooling and consumption. She described the dilemma of young secondary school women who needed goods, such as face creams, to enact notions of educated, modern, cultivated women: "The project of modernity, the implicit work of school, then, was arguably bound up with consumption—consumption that many could not afford" (p. 132). Likewise, the story of this secondary school student, the son of a *maandazi* seller who is charged with ensuring his family's well-being upon graduation yet who desires a laptop despite his family's financial constraints, well-represented our interviewees' struggles to cope with multiple tensions including between peers and families, and their desires and school's demands.

In short, interviewees described schooling as connected to romantic and globalized notions of sexual relationships, consumption, and recurring tensions between families and peers playing out in realms such as clothing choices and a desire for status associated with what young people term "luxurious" goods, which are indicative of modernity. Yet for the participants in this study, most goods associated with this modernity were still largely elusive and aspirational given their precarious economic status, relatively rural geography, student status and the fact that the majority of their parents were less-educated subsistence farmers engaged in small business ventures. It is within these consumptive educational contexts that both peer and sexual relationships became resources and risks, and that young people's agency was cultivated as well as thwarted.

Relationships as Resources

These young women and men described engaging in sexual and romantic relationships as a means of procuring a variety of resources of varying importance. Kabeer (1999) makes a distinction between first and second-order life choices, whereby first-order choices are "those strategic life choices which are critical for people to live the lives they want" and second-order choices are "less consequential choices, which may be important for the quality of one's life but do not constitute its defining parameters" (p. 437). Our analysis suggested that these young women and men held a range of viewpoints on sexual and romantic relationships. For some, the decision to enter a sexual relationship at times constituted a first-order life choice. For many others, such a decision may be considered more second-order insofar as an individual described being interested in prestige, romantic love, increased status or a measure of material or economic comfort. Nevertheless, neatly categorizing choices around sexual relationships was nearly impossible in part due to their inherent hazards, and young people described how they understood engaging in sexual relationships, for whatever reason, may involve incurring unwanted, harmful and potentially life-altering repercussions.

One young woman interviewee was a single mother who had reluctantly left secondary school shortly before we interviewed her. When her aunt who had been caring for her child became ill and could not work, her household descended into a

state of severe need with insufficient food and clothing. Despite seeking help from multiple sources, sources of assistance were neither forthcoming nor sufficient to meet this family's needs. Eventually her boyfriend convinced her to leave school with the promise that he would then help support her family:

[M]y boyfriend, I went to him and said that I had a problem ... He said, 'How can I help?' And I told him that for me it's very difficult to support my family because I don't have money, I was going to school and couldn't work and they don't have money. So what he said was, 'When you decide what you're going to do with your life, you can tell me. For me, I can't advise you anything, it's for you to decide. So when you decide to leave the school, you tell me.'

In this young woman's retelling, her boyfriend predicated the possibility of securing his further help for her family with the advancement of their relationship, which he positioned as incompatible with her schooling. Therefore, for this young woman, her relationship was the key resource that enabled her to care for her child, even though the pursuing this relationship entailed leaving school. This was a decision she made out of urgent necessity and with a measure of regret. While such a choice was likely a first-order choice, and may have constituted an act of what Kabeer (1999) terms "effective agency", it was not an act of "transformative agency" (pp. 452, 461) which would more fundamentally challenge the inequalities within which this young woman was forced to act.

She goes on to recount how, once she left school, her boyfriend arranged for her to work in a low-paying business venture with one of his relatives. While this was far from this young woman's vocational aspirations, it afforded her the opportunity to care for her family in a time of crisis. She expressed ambivalence about this relationship, yet she recognized that it provided some security. In the excerpt below, Anna had asked, "So, when you look at him, do you think there's a future between the two of you?"

Hmmm ... I don't know ... he supports me a lot. For example, at the time when I was in school and when I was coming back home, he knew what to give me, he was buying me things to take back to school and he was supporting me. To be honest, he was supporting me to a great extent. So I don't know. Maybe he will change later, but for the time being he is the one ... I will be with him because he's a person who helps me.

In the quote above, the young woman stated a clear linkage between the continuation of a sexual relationship and its material, financial, and emotional support. There is extensive literature around aspects of exchange in sexual relationships in and beyond sub-Saharan Africa (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005; Nyanzi, Pool, & Kinsman, 2001; Wight et al., 2006), and the term "transactional" is commonly employed to signify this interchange. Leclerc-Madlala's (2003) work in South Africa reveals how, underlying these relationships is "the idea that sex was something valuable and therefore a man should not expect a woman to give it away for free. The exchange aspect of sex was implicit, whether it was an exchange of sexual favors for basic subsistence or for conspicuous consumption" (p. 220). The Tanzanian secondary students with whom we spoke also had conceptualizations of relationships in which gifting and love were intertwined.

While the previous story illustrated engaging in a sexual relationship out of necessity for purposes related to subsistence, young men and women frequently described pursuing relationships as a means of meeting desires. In terms of Kabeer's framework, these would be second order choices insofar as they are perceived to lead to romance as well as a desired augmentation of status or well-being, but do not, from the perspectives of young people, entail critical life choices. Many examinations of the "sugar-daddy" phenomenon, engaging in sexual relationships with older partners to access desired goods, have occurred via diverse lenses (Hawkins et al., 2009; Luke, 2005; Silberschmidt & Rasch, 2001) but this is not the main focus of this chapter. Some interviewees, however, specifically described relationships with older partners as more materially promising than entering into relationships with peers, as was the case for this young woman:

I don't want to have an intimate relationship with my fellow student, because I know he doesn't have money to give me, he depends on his parents, and I want things which he cannot afford to give me—that's why I prefer going out with an old man, they know how to treat girls.

This quote echoes Silberschmidt and Rasch's (2001) research with sexually active young women in Dar es Salaam who chose partnerships with older men in what they described as "entrepreneurial and risk-taking" (p. 1822) behavior. Furthermore, this phenomenon was not confined to young woman, as in the case of this Form Five male student who described both the benefit and risk of taking on a "sugar-mommy":

My friend has a very fancy phone and it was given to him by his girlfriend, an older woman. But this woman expects something in return, at the end of the day if we continue wishing for things we cannot afford will end up dying from HIV/AIDS.

Relationships as Risks

Echoing discourses of danger common in campaigns against the spread of HIV, many youth interviewees described sexual relationships in terms of the risks they posed. In this way, some youth were cognizant of the ways in which what Kabeer would term second order life choices, choices to enter sexual relationships that were unlikely to be long-term commitments, held the latent potential to bring with them life-altering misfortune and thus could become, retrospectively, first-order life choices. While contracting HIV was frequently mentioned as a possible risk, young women in particular described the immediate risk of an unwanted pregnancy as more pressing because it required dropping out of school. This Form One female student described her fear of entering a relationship:

To me unplanned pregnancy is very risky, it cannot be compared to HIV/AIDS or VDs, if I get pregnant today and I don't have money to abort it, that means I will drop out of school and my family won't accept me because I will have brought shame in the family.

This viewpoint echoes previous research (see Wight et al., 2006; Willemsen & DeJaeghere, 2015; Grant, 2012) on the perceived incompatibility of schooling and pregnancy in Tanzania as well as reinforces research on youth sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa describing how females are expected to remain pure for the sake of their own and their families' honor (Nyanzi et al., 2001).

Male students also described relationships as jeopardizing their schooling. Here, a Form Three male offers his rationale for avoiding young women: "I haven't started yet to involve myself in love affairs because I know it will consume my time of studying." The sentiment in this quote was shared by young women as well, and was indicative of the widespread anxiety concerning academic achievement in a context where a form four certificate is required to secure most jobs that do not involve manual labor. In these contexts, students coupled their future livelihoods with their current academic effort, and many students—female and male—regarded sexual relationships as threatening to their future plans.

Peers Influencing Desired Outcomes

One area that has garnered widespread attention are the ways in which young people may exert influence on each other in ways that some adults consider to be negative, sometimes termed "peer pressure." This phenomenon was strongly evident in our data. Some parents blamed peers for their children's engagement in sexual relationships, as in this example of a secondary school girl's mother lamenting her daughter's relationship with an older man:

Friends provide information of how sex is in stories. They go far on introducing their friends to partners. My daughter was having an affair with a military police man ... When I came to find out, I was very angry with her. When I inquired how she happened to know that man, she said a friend of hers in school had connected her to him. It is very painful.

This story aligns with other research showing peers serve as intermediaries between would-be sexual partners in educational spaces in sub-Saharan Africa (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005; Mojola, 2014; Nyanzi et al., 2001).

Some youth acknowledged that their peers could valorize sexual relationships to the extent that they may begin to view such relationships as desired outcomes, overcoming their initial reluctance and enter them. For example, this young woman, a Form Two student, had not intended to have a boyfriend in school, yet she changed her mind:

I didn't want to have any intimate relationship till I finish my O-level education. That was my plan. However, I found it changing after I met friends who hooked me up with a boy who is my school mate, I didn't want to disappoint my friends so I accepted him.

While it is unclear whether the friends she referred to were male or female, or the extent or type of pressure she received, her choice to enter a relationship with a classmate suggests she was not primarily motivated by obtaining "luxurious" material goods that are often associated with older men (Wight et al., 2006).

There is research suggesting peers differentially influence individuals' motivations to enter relationships (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005; Muhanguzi, 2011). We hypothesize that this young woman may have viewed her decision to enter a sexual relationship as potentially conferring her with higher social status in her school setting. The extent to which she viewed herself as agentic, however, in her eventual decision to enter this relationship, as well as her views on this relationship, are unclear.

Researchers also frequently describe negative motivation at the root of the decision to enter relationships, as in Muhanguzi's (2011) analysis of female sexuality in Ugandan secondary schools, where young women "risk harassment by boys for rejecting their sexual invitations and advances" (p. 717). We noted that while our interviews did not reveal any instances of rape or obviously coerced sexual relationships, we make no claims that these have not occurred at these schools or to these same young people in other settings. In the case of the interviewee's decision above, there may likely have been an element of avoidance of stigmatization involved in her eventual decision to enter an intimate relationship with her classmate. Underscoring others' findings on the pressure that male students feel to perform a notion of masculinity that involves sexual conquest (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005; Nyanzi et al., 2001; Nzioka, 2001), some male interviewees described obscuring their actual sexual experiences in discussion with their peers, as in the case of this form three student who wanted to avoid sex while in school: "But when I am with my friends, I tell them that I have tried it so that they won't tease me."

In an attempt to understand how young people's peer contexts create circumstances in which sexual relationships become achievements they may not otherwise value, we return to Kabeer. She describes how it is "difficult to judge the validity of an 'achievement' measure unless we have evidence, or can make a reasonable guess, as to whose agency was involved and the extent to which the achievement in question transformed prevailing inequalities in resources and agency rather than reinforcing them or leaving them unchallenged" (1999, p. 452). By this definition, the agency exercised by students in this section is not transformative. Some interviewees reluctantly acted within the confines of social structures they would have preferred to eschew.

Peers as Social Resources and Fostering Agency

Having examined how sexual relationships can serve as resources and risks for young people in Tanzania, as well as the ways in which peers may shape each other's desires for relationships, we now examine how these secondary school students use their peer relationships as valued resources that may, in turn, foster the development of their agency. In Kabeer's (1999) conceptualization of the process of empowerment, she describes resources as needing to be defined "in ways which spell out the potential for human agency and valued achievements" (p. 444). Some

interviewees described how they intentionally organized themselves in peer social groups according to shared values, or achievements to which they aspired, including organizing themselves according their experiences and aspirations with sexual relationships. One young woman detailed the existence of distinct social groups delineated along lines of those who had boyfriends or children and those who did not:

- Anna: What about the friends you have in school ... do they have boyfriends?
 Female Form: Yes, they have boyfriends, the majority of them have boyfriends.
 Two interviewee: For example, many of the girls who study here have babies ... these girls talk about elder things ... So when you hear these girls' stories and their stories of their boyfriends, their stories are different than mine, especially when they have babies ... [T]hey just share experiences about their boyfriends and the relationships they have with them, and you can come across a group of girls who have boyfriends and who have babies sitting in a group by themselves.

Even as this young woman described this group of girls as her friends, she distinguished herself from them as having different stories, and sitting in a different space, separated from those with different life experiences around sexuality and reproduction. With our understanding of this school context, we suggest that the group of mothers sitting together may be offering each other companionship and encouragement toward sustaining their studies, particularly given the improbability and difficulty of their returning to school after bearing children.

Our data revealed instances in which young people purposively attended to their peer relationships in order to subtly resist inequalities or cultivate viable alternatives. In an interview excerpt that underscores both how young people are cognizant of how their peers shape which outcomes are considered desirable and how youth are accordingly agentic in how they engage with their peers, this student described her wariness at engaging in discussion of sexual relationships with young women from her home context:

- Anna: What do your friends discuss regarding relationships—do they have boyfriends?
 Female Form: My school friends don't have boyfriends, but my friends at home do have boyfriends.
 Anna: How do these friends at home define relationships?
 Female Form: Well, for me, when I'm sitting with her and she begins to talk about her boyfriend, I change the topic. Because, in short, nobody knows me that well, and I don't want to talk about relationships with boys. And if I tell them I don't want to hear about it, they may feel bad and so I just change the topic.

In the context of this particular school, which serves marginalized young women with high academic potential from backgrounds of extreme poverty, we understand this young woman's assertion that "nobody knows me that well" at home to mean that she recognizes how her relational aspirations are divergent from those of the

young women in her home neighborhood. Her aspirations, the outcomes she has come to value for herself in the context of an all-girls' boarding school and among peers she has chosen who do not have boyfriends, and her subsequent sheltering of them, strongly suggested she has grasped what Kabeer termed "the possibility of alternatives" for herself (1999, p. 437). Furthermore, she viewed her home friend's potential influence on the topic of sexual relationships as possibly challenging her own well-being, and her response was to avoid the topic as a form of self-protection.

Occasionally young women and men described how their peers provided emotional support in the context of sexual relationships. Further, they distinguished this support from the support they may have received from adults, particularly parents: "I have a boyfriend, if he dumps me today I can't go to my mother and tell her that something like this has happened to me, she will be very mad at me, but if I go to my friends who are my peers, I will get help. They will be my crying shoulder and they won't judge me." In-depth examinations of the ways in which peers provided such emotional support were scant in the literature on youth sexuality in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa. We feel this is an area that deserves more attention, and were we to able to interview these young people again, we would probe for deeper understandings of this phenomenon.

We conclude this section with an examination of a final interview excerpt in which a young woman described how her group of friends provided each other with a different kind of pressure. While the previous section focused on how secondary school peers in Tanzania may exert pressure toward entering sexual relationships, here is a compelling opposite case:

- Anna: And how about these friends, do you talk about boyfriends?
 Female Form: In my group we have made a promise not to have any boyfriends,
 Two student: so we have this agreement that until we finish school and we're ready we won't have boyfriends.
- Anna: Oh—what happens if one of this group decides to have a boyfriend?
 Female Form: She will never be our friend again. We will call her and tell her
 Two student: the reason why we are taking her out of the group, because she will have made a fake promise. So we will leave her. But first before that, we should call and say that she has gone against the promise, but, however, I don't think any one of these girls will go against her promise. But if it happens, we will tell her and then we won't be her friend again.

When discussing how to consider agency, Kabeer (1999) writes, "We have to know about its consequential significance in terms of women's strategic life choices and the extent to which it had transformatory potential" (p. 452). For these young women, students at a school for marginalized girls, their understanding of the way in which sexual relationships may impact their lives (possibly thwarting their academic advancement) has caused them to intentionally structure their peer relationships in ways that makes it more likely for them to be able to withstand prevailing pressure to enter relationships. This is the strongest example in our data of young people's

notions of sexual relationships influencing their choices and expression of peer relationships. We suggest it is an example of youth intentionally cultivating their agency through their peer relationships. Yet the extent to which this calculated structuring of peer relationships will ultimately foster desired life changes for these young women, whether this has or will result in effective or transformatory agency, remain unknown to us.

Conclusion

In reviewing literature in preparation for writing this chapter, we noted that much of the research on gender, sexuality, and schooling in sub-Saharan Africa does not explicitly focus on influences of peer relationships. It is not unusual for authors to employ the passive voice when describing youth sexuality and gender such that, for example, gendered identities “are constructed” but it’s not completely clear by whom or how, or sexual roles “are learned,” yet we’re left uncertain who is actively teaching and in what ways. Thus peer influences, while alluded to, are not always clearly examined or defined. In contrast, the focus of this chapter has been to analyze previously collected interview data in an attempt to elucidate how youth see their peers as influencing their notions of and experiences with sexuality within the contexts of four secondary schools in Tanzania. Drawing on Kabeer’s (1999) notions of resources, agency and achievements, we examined youth conceptualizations of sexual and peer relationships and revealed instances in which youth see their agency around such relationships as either supported or thwarted by their peers.

In her examination of sexuality in Kenyan secondary schools, Mojola (2014) references Pugh’s work discussing “how young people’s consumption desires are not just about wanting to possess material things; they are also about participating in their school culture and attaining social visibility among their peers” (p. 129). Our findings suggest that, for these Tanzanian secondary school students in precarious economic and educational contexts, schooling is similarly linked to notions of consumptive modernity, which are cultivated and valorized by peers and that, furthermore, youth frequently regard romantic, sexual relationships as a component of this modernity. Young women and men acknowledged that peers actively shape notions of and experiences with sexual relationships, which, like schooling, are viewed as potentially offering expanded access to social and material resources.

These young women and men described a diverse range in their experiences with the interplay between their peer and sexual relationships, and they recognized both welcome and unwelcome ways that peers influence their values and experiences with sexual and romantic relationships. Youth noted dissonance between their peers’ and families understandings and values of sexual relationships. Young women and men alike described feeling pressure to enter sexual relationships for increased status and/or consumption. Finally, some youth used their peers as resources to cultivate their agency to eschew sexual relationships in the hopes of finishing school.

We conclude by considering Kabeer's (1999) distinction between effective and transformatory agency, which is agency that may be used to challenge inequalities. While some youth suggested their agency has been impeded by their peers' values and actions, others described instances in which their effective agency has been supported by peers, sexual relationships, or some combination of the two, particularly in order to procure resources, social status or well-being. Our analysis also reveals ways in which Tanzanian secondary school students from economically insecure families used peer relationships as resources in the pursuit of what may become transformatory agency toward their valued achievements. This is particularly true for young women from marginalized backgrounds who regarded schooling as essential for their current and future well-being. As these students navigated the tensions, contradictions, and possibilities with relationships, risks, and resources, they purposefully drew on their peers to cultivate and grow their agency.

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