

**Investigating Exchange in Sexual Relationships in
Sub-Saharan Africa using Survey Data**

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There is increasing interest in the role of economic exchange between non-marital sexual partners in the context of the continuing HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Findings from a number of qualitative studies reveal that exchange, or the giving of money, gifts or other material assistance, is accompanied by pressure to engage in sexual intercourse and to accept unsafe sexual activity (see Luke 2003 for a review). The practice of exchange in sexual relationships is believed to be widespread, especially among adolescent girls, who are particularly vulnerable in non-marital partnerships. Available quantitative data on exchange are limited in concept and scope, however, which we argue stems from a lack of theoretical grounding in the meaning of exchange in sexual relationships.

This chapter examines the concept of exchange across various types of non-marital sexual partnerships.¹ We provide a theoretical framework for exchange and discuss methodological limitations of previous research in sub-Saharan Africa. We also describe our recent study in Kisumu, Kenya, which has several methodological advantages over available research on exchange. Finally, we review the findings of a number of studies and highlight the prevalence of exchange relationships in sub-Saharan Africa and the link to unsafe sexual behaviour and adverse reproductive health outcomes.

The theoretical framework of exchange in sexual relationships

Much of the recent literature on exchange relationships in the era of HIV/AIDS assumes that exchange has similar purposes in most non-marital relationships and that it is consistently associated with unsafe or unwanted sexual practices (Fuglesang 1997; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom 1994; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Ulin 1992). We recognize, however, that not all relationships involving exchange are homogeneous and exchange may have various meanings and connections with sexual behaviour in different types of partnerships (Kaufman and Stavrou 2004; Luke 2003). In order to take this variation into account, we follow a general definition of exchange as the offering of items or services by one partner in a relationship to the other. We use the term 'transfer' to refer to items or services given or received, including, but not limited to, money, gifts or other assistance. Our theoretical framework separates exchange relationships into two broad categories: gift and commodity exchange. We follow Carrier (1991),

who uses a Maussian perspective to differentiate between gift and commodity exchange in social relationships, and we apply the concepts to non-marital sexual relationships in particular.

Carrier (ibid.) describes gift exchange as the *obligatory* transfer of *inalienable* objects or services between *related* transactors.² Relationships that reflect gift exchange occur between people who are tied together in a social relationship, and in this sense they are related. Gifts between parties signify that the relationship is reaffirmed and extended, and are thus obligatory for the relationship to continue. Nevertheless, gifts are not given on a one-to-one basis or because the giver expects an equivalent return gift. Therefore, gifts do not operate coercively, and gift exchange does not involve bargaining between individuals over reciprocal expectations. Gifts are not merely presents, but encompass a range of objects and services, such as cooking, job advice or sexual intercourse. The gifts exchanged are inalienable; in other words, they have meaning for the two partners but may not have utility or meaning for individuals outside the relationship. Numerous types of non-marital sexual relationships embody gift exchange. For example, gifting may be represented in dating or longer-term serious relationships, where transfers serve as symbols of interest and the giver expects nothing sexual in return. It is important to note that in gift exchange relationships the receiver of any type of transfer is not compelled to provide sexual favours directly in return for accepting the gift.

Commodity exchange involves the *inobligatory* transfer of *alienable* objects or services between *unrelated* transactors (ibid.), and thus the three main elements of gift exchange are reversed. Commodity exchange is evident in non-marital relationships when sexual activity is traded for a monetary equivalent on the sexual market. Formal prostitution is often considered best to embody the concept of commodity exchange. In its strictest form, the two people in a commercial sexual relationship do not know one another, the sexual activity could similarly be provided by any number of sex workers, and the parties separate after the exchange is completed. More informal means of commodity exchange also exist, where exchange activity is not part of an individual's profession, the items exchanged are not restricted to money, and the transfer may not be pre-determined or explicitly stated (Hunter 2002; Wojcicki 2002). Examples of informal commodity exchange are a woman who has sexual relations with her landlord in exchange for rent or a schoolgirl who receives school fees from her partner in exchange for sex. Notably, there is a direct association between the transfers and sexual activities performed in all these relationships.

In commodity exchange relationships, outcomes are determined by the bargaining power of the individuals in the partnership; the one with more power or resources can expend this power to ensure that his or her sexual demands are met. It is generally believed that the more powerful individual (usually male) prefers unsafe sexual activities, such as dry or unprotected sex, and that more risky sexual

activities should be more highly compensated on the sexual market (see, for example, Campbell 2000; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Varga 2001; Wojcicki and Malala 2001). Thus, we find that men will pay higher sums of money to commercial sex workers for sex without a condom (Campbell 2000; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Varga 2001; Wojcicki and Malala 2001). In addition, larger transfers can be exchanged for unsafe sexual activities in informal exchange relationships as well. For example, a qualitative study in South Africa shows that adolescents associated certain sexual activities with higher-value transfers and reported that, while kissing was considered an appropriate response to small transfers like drinks, consenting to oral sex, full penetrative intercourse or unprotected sex was expected in return for more expensive items, such as gold jewellery (Kaufman and Stavrou 2004).

Gift and commodity exchange are not mutually exclusive categories but represent poles at either end of a continuum of relationships (Carrier 1991). The meaning of transfers and their connection with sexual expectation vary across relationships, as well as within partnerships or as the relationship progresses (Campbell 2000; Meekers and Calves 1997a; Orubuloye et al. 1992). For example, in a study of sex workers in South Africa, Varga (2001: 359) describes how some commodity relationships may be 'gradually transformed into more intimate personal attachments' where sex is no longer traded for money. Thus, there is a 'grey area' along the continuum which precludes the clear-cut labelling of relationships as either gift or commodity exchange and therefore makes it difficult to estimate the prevalence of either type.

In a strict sense, sexual coercion – or non-consensual sex in the form of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by one individual or another – should not play a role within either gift or commodity exchange relationships. Gifts cannot force the recipient to engage in sexual activities, and commodities are exchanged willingly, otherwise the transaction will break down. Some research has shown, however, that coercion and violence can be associated with transfers in specific cases, for example when there are differences in the interpretation of transfers by both partners. Several qualitative studies find that adolescent girls sometimes interpret transfers as gifts that symbolize commitment or affection, while male givers view them as inducements and expect sexual activities in return. As a result, some girls may be forced to have sex if they have accepted a transfer (Bohmer and Kirumira 1997; Jejeebhoy and Bott 2003; Nnko and Pool 1997).

A broader definition of sexual coercion acknowledges that, owing to poverty and the lack of alternative options for income, young girls and women may be compelled to engage in commodity exchange relationships (Jejeebhoy and Bott 2003; Outwater et al. 2000; Wojcicki and Malala 2001). In this sense, the perpetrator is not the individual sexual partner; the responsibility for this type of coercion rests in structural factors that constrain individual opportunities to resist unwanted actions (Jackman 2002).³

The theoretical framework for gift and commodity exchange helps operation-

alize the concept of exchange in non-marital sexual relationships and provides a structure for further descriptive and explanatory research. Several hypotheses arise out of the framework regarding the association between transfers and sexual activity which may be empirically tested using survey data. For example, we expect to find larger transfers from male to female partners to be associated with higher probabilities of risky sexual behaviour in commodity exchange relationships. Relationships that are purely gift exchange would display no association between transfers and sexual activity. Finally, transfers may be associated with sexual coercion if one partner is forced to engage in commodity exchange owing to poverty or if the couple does not agree on the interpretation of the transfer.

Vulnerability of adolescent girls in commodity exchange relationships

It is generally believed that non-marital sexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa are highly commercialized, and formal prostitution has been studied for many years (Varga 2001; White 1990). With the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, attention has shifted to informal commodity exchange relationships, where money, gifts or other assistance is traded for sexual relations between casual or longer-term sexual partners (Barker and Rich 1992; Bohmer and Kirumira 1997; Caldwell et al. 1993; Dunkle et al. 2004; Haram 1995; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom 1994; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Meekers and Calves 1997b; Nzyuko et al. 1997; Webb 1997; Wojcicki 2002). These relationships have been referred to as ‘sex-for-money exchange’ or more generally as ‘transactional sex’ in the literature. Informal commodity exchange relationships have gained wide acceptance in many African settings and are not stigmatized to the degree that formal prostitution is (Gage 1998; Gørgen et al. 1993; Kaufman and Stavrou 2004; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom 1994; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Nyanzi et al. 2000; Rasch et al. 2000; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Webb 1997; Wojcicki 2002). Although a range of motivations for involvement in informal commodity exchange relationships have been documented, including seeking love or a marriage partner, many such relationships in Africa are believed to arise from financial need (Fuglesang 1997; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2003; Meekers and Calves 1997a; Wojcicki 2002).

Adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa are believed to be particularly vulnerable to unsafe sexual activities within commodity exchange relationships owing to their weaker bargaining position in relation to their male partners,⁴ which may be due to a number of factors. First, the economic value of sexuality is pronounced for adolescent girls, who have fewer market opportunities than older women, and informal commodity exchange may be the only opportunity they have to meet their needs (Bohmer and Kirumira 1997; Calves and Meekers 1997; Nyanzi et al. 2000; Orubuloye et al. 1992; Webb 1997).

Second, population growth and deteriorating economic conditions have

resulted in a partner squeeze in many African settings, where there is a shortage of economically secure men while poor young girls are in plentiful supply (Görge et al. 1998; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Vos 1994). Thus, girls may find it hard to negotiate the terms of sexual relationships with men because of the easy availability of substitute female partners.

Third, adolescent girls' lack of knowledge and experience in sexual negotiations weakens their bargaining power (Bohmer and Kirumira 1997; Nyanzi et al. 2000; Webb 1997). Finally, adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa are generally uninformed about their sexuality and safe sexual practices (Gage 1998; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001). As a result, they are unaware of the risks associated with unsafe sex and are therefore likely to use their limited bargaining power to negotiate for higher economic gains rather than safe sexual practices.

Despite this common view that adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa have less bargaining power in sexual relationships than older women, several researchers support the opposing view. Adolescent girls could command more than adult women because they are men's preferred partners, as they are perceived to be free of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, or because younger partners boost male prestige among their peers (Haram 1995; Longfield et al. 2002; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001). Furthermore, several studies reveal girls' understanding of the negotiating process with respect to commodity exchange. They indicate that most girls and young women understand that acceptance of a transfer must be reciprocated with sexual activity (Barker and Rich 1992; Bohmer and Kirumira 1997; Görge et al. 1998; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Wojcicki 2002) or that insistence on safe sex practices will jeopardize a lucrative relationship and ongoing financial reward (Preston-Whyte 1994; Rasch et al. 2000; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001).

This contextual background on adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa leads to additional hypotheses regarding exchange that can be tested using survey data. We would expect to find a higher prevalence of commodity exchange relationships among adolescent girls, while adolescents would receive less in value of transfers compared to adult women. Taking the view that adolescent girls are more vulnerable in exchange relationships than adult women, the relationship between transfers and unsafe sexual activity should be *stronger* for adolescent girls than for older women.

Measuring exchange in sexual relationships using survey data

A number of Demographic and Health Surveys in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as smaller population-based surveys, have gathered data on the prevalence of exchange in women's and men's relationships, and have focused on money and gifts as the primary items of transfer (see Luke 2003 for a review). We argue, however, that the standard survey questions on exchange are problematic in terms of their validity and are limited scope, and these issues are discussed below.

Validity of questions on exchange Survey questions on exchange typically tend to focus on the end of the continuum where an overt connection between transfers and sexual activity is recognized. For example, the standard Demographic and Health Survey question reads, ‘Have you ever given or received money, gifts, or favours for sexual relations in the past 12 months?’ and is usually asked of both men and women who have ever been sexually active or sexually active in the past twelve months. Similarly, a survey in Soweto, South Africa, asks women if they have ‘ever become involved with a [non-primary partner]⁵ because he provided you with or you expected that he would provide you with ... ’ any of a list of commodities (Dunkle et al. 2004) (see Table 7.1 for a listing of survey questions on exchange).

This line of questioning fails to capture gift exchange on the whole. Furthermore, such survey questions can lead to under-reporting of commodity exchange relationships for several reasons. First, questions that enquire about money or gifts that have explicitly been ‘exchanged for sex’ or are motivated by material gain may imply formal prostitution, which is considered stigmatized behaviour, particularly for women. Interestingly, most Demographic and Health Survey reports refer to the questions on commodity exchange as ‘payment for sexual activity’, which suggests that these questions are meant to measure behaviours akin to prostitution.

Second, the ‘grey area’ between gift and commodity exchange relationships makes it difficult for respondents to define their relationships as either category. Individuals may not recognize the direct connection between transfers and the sexual outcomes of their relationships. This is especially problematic when there is a temporal lag between the transfer and sexual activity, although the transfer did indeed play a role in subsequent sexual behaviour.

Third, most past surveys have relied on standard question phrasing with respect to exchange, including the Demographic and Health Surveys, which allows for useful cross-setting comparisons. Nevertheless, such questions may be understood differently across settings depending on how they are translated into the local language. For example, a study of commodity exchange in South Africa reveals that some terms for exchange are associated with prostitution while others refer to more acceptable forms of informal commodity exchange (Wojcicki 2002; see also Hunter 2002). Thus, the translation of standard questions may not capture commodity exchange behaviour if translations are not sensitive to local nuances of stigmatized behaviour.

In short, past survey questions on exchange have limited validity as they tend to under-report relationships in the ‘grey area’ that do not represent overt commodity exchange but nevertheless display a direct connection between transfers and sexual activity. Such data can also bias the estimated statistical relationship between transfers and sexual activity, as data that are concentrated at the end of the spectrum where sexual activity is overtly related to transfers would

TABLE 7.1 Survey questions on exchange

Demographic and Health Surveys, various sub-Saharan African countries

1. Have you ever given or received money, gifts, or favours for sexual relations in the past 12 months?

Soweto, South Africa study

1. Have you ever become involved with a [non-primary partner] because he provided you with or you expected that he would provide you with ... ?:

- Food Cosmetics Clothes
- Transportation Tickets or money for transport
- Items for children or family such as clothes, food or school fees
- Own school or residence fees Somewhere to sleep
- Cash

Ondo Town, Nigeria study

1. What kind of help or assistance do you give her/them [each non-marital partner]?

- Money and other assistance
- No money, but general material assistance (food, etc.)
- Only help with studies Only advice, moral support
- None

2. Do you give her/them payment? [If YES] What is this for?

- No Yes For assistance For sexual service

3. Do your partners know that they are practising commercial sex? [If YES] What do they feel about it?

- No Yes Enjoy the life
- Feel fairly positive, no problems Feel it is a necessity
- Feel ashamed

Kisumu, Kenya study

1. It is common for men to give women gifts or other assistance when they are in a relationship. What have you given your [non-marital] partner(s) in the last month? [If YES, record value in Kenyan shillings for each category]

- Money Gifts Rent
 - Meals/drinks Other (specify)
-

Sources: Demographic and Health Surveys: <www.measuredhs.com/>; Soweto, South Africa: Dunkle et al. 2004; Ondo Town, Nigeria: Orubuloye et al. 1992; Kisumu, Kenya: Luke 2005

overestimate the average effect of transfers on sexual activity in the population of interest.

Scope of questions on exchange As mentioned earlier, there are many aspects of exchange relationships that can vary across partnerships, and questions on exchange behaviour in earlier surveys are limited in scope in two important

respects. For one, past survey figures pertain only to the prevalence or incidence of commodity exchange behaviour, i.e. they report on *individuals* who have ever or recently been involved in exchange in any of their relationships, and there is limited information on specific *partnerships* that involve transfers (for exceptions see Konde-Lule et al. 1997; Orubuloye et al. 1992). Without data on multiple sexual partnerships for each respondent, including transfers given to/received from each partner and the sexual activities with each partner, we are unable to test for the association between the transfer from a particular man and risky behaviour within that partnership (Luke 2003).

Second, surveys generally have not collected information on the specific types of transfers or the value of items exchanged (exceptions are Dunkle et al. 2004; Orubuloye et al. 1992, discussed below). More detailed information on the nature of transfers could help determine whether the value or type of transfer has implications for the perpetration of unsafe sexual behaviour in different settings.

Given the limitations of past studies and the lack of a theoretical framework, it is suggested that survey questions be framed to elicit information on a broad range of exchange relationships. Questions should use wording that is context specific, that is not associated with stigmatized behaviour and which does not tie transfers temporally to specific sexual activities. In addition, more detailed information is needed on transfers across an individual's multiple partnerships.

The Kisumu study

Our interest in the study of exchange in non-marital sexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa led to the inclusion of questions in a survey we conducted in Kisumu, Kenya, in 2001. We attempted to improve on some of the drawbacks of past survey work on exchange and gather data that would allow us to test some of the hypotheses that stem from our theoretical framework.

The Kisumu study examined the non-marital sexual behaviour of urban males of the Luo ethnic group. The survey covered 2,700 males aged twenty-one to forty-five (see Luke 2005; Luke and Munshi forthcoming for details). In addition to gathering demographic and socio-economic information on the respondents, specific questions were asked on their sexual behaviour, including the number of non-marital sexual partners in the past year and details of the five most recent partners.⁶ Partner information included the ages and marital status of female partners, the duration of each relationship, when sexual intercourse had last occurred, whether a condom was used at last sexual intercourse, and transfers given to the partner in the month preceding the study.

The questions on material transfers were particularly framed to capture both gift and commodity exchange. The survey question read: 'It is common for men to give women gifts or other assistance when they are in a relationship. What have you given your partner(s) in the last month?' This wording ensured that the reported transfers were not stigmatized and occurred regardless of

accompanying sexual activity. Respondents were asked whether they had given the major types of material assistance that were uncovered in the pre-testing phase of the project, including money, gifts, rent and meals or drinks. An open category was also included, where respondents could list other types of assistance provided. For each category of transfer, the amount of money or the value of the items given was recorded. In order to ensure accurate recall on the specific type of assistance given and its value, the question was limited to transfers that occurred in the last month.

The advantage of this method of questioning on exchange is that detailed data could be gathered on a range of transfers within all non-marital partnerships, thus overcoming many of the limitations of earlier surveys. This line of questioning does have several drawbacks, however. First, while the Kisumu study focused on material or tangible items whose value could be quantified, information was not collected on other kinds of transfers that could be associated with unsafe sexual activity, for example offering a lift to school or providing moral support.

Second, it is difficult for any study to accurately estimate the prevalence of either commodity or gift exchange owing to the 'grey area' along the exchange continuum. For example, if our questions on material transfers are used to estimate commodity exchange, they would tend to provide an overestimate, as responses would also include gift exchange. In addition, our analysis of the association between transfers and sexual activity would tend to provide a conservative estimate of the average effect, as our measure of transfers would also include gift exchange, or relationships that should not display an association between the transfer and risky sexual activity.

Third, an aspect we did not include in our study, which has also not been included in earlier surveys, is the measurement of sexual coercion within exchange relationships. As noted, coercion that is associated with exchange may occur owing to motivations of poverty or divergent interpretations of the meaning of the transfer between partners. To measure connections to poverty, surveys should enquire about the motivations of individuals to engage in exchange in each partnership, as well as assess the economic status of both partners. With respect to divergent interpretations of transfers, respondents could be asked about their understanding of the influence of the transfer on sexual activity, as well as their perceptions of coercion within the partnership more generally.

Prevalence of exchange relationships

A recent review of studies of commodity exchange relationships among adolescent girls finds that between 5 and 80 per cent of adolescent girls have engaged in sexual relations at some time in exchange for money or gifts in various settings in Africa (Luke 2003). This section reviews two additional sets of studies that measure the prevalence of exchange: the Demographic and Health Surveys

conducted in sub-Saharan Africa which use standard questions on exchange, and three studies in Soweto, South Africa, Ondo Town, Nigeria, and Kisumu, Kenya, which use context-specific definitions of exchange (Table 7.1 lists the questions on exchange behaviour in these studies).

Table 7.2 shows the percentage of women who gave or received money, gifts or favours for sexual relations in the twelve months preceding the survey (the last four weeks in Zimbabwe and at last sexual encounter in Uganda) by marital status and age as reported in the Demographic and Health Surveys <www.measuredhs.com>. Although the question in the Demographic and Health Survey includes involvement as either giver or receiver, it is assumed that in most cases young women are the recipients of transfers. As can be seen from Table 7.2, the percentage of unmarried adolescent girls aged fifteen to nineteen who have engaged in commodity exchange in the twelve months preceding the survey ranges from 7.2 per cent in Côte d'Ivoire to 38.4 per cent in Zambia. The figures for married adolescents are much lower, which may reflect the support they receive from their husbands or their tendency to under-report exchange. Irrespective of marital status, adolescent girls are generally more likely to have given or received money or gifts for sex than older women.

The percentage of men who gave or received money, gifts or favours for sexual relations in the twelve months preceding the survey (the last four weeks in Zimbabwe 1994) is shown in Table 7.3. Among unmarried adolescents aged fifteen to nineteen, figures range from 2.1 per cent in Zimbabwe to 49.6 per cent in Chad. Most figures for married adolescent boys are suppressed owing to the limited number of cases. There is no consistent association between age and commodity exchange relationships. Among young men (younger than twenty-five years), however, the unmarried appear to have been more likely than the married to have engaged in recent commodity exchange relationships, perhaps because the latter have greater access to sexual relations through marriage.

We now compare the findings from the three studies that examine exchange behaviour in greater detail. The studies use different definitions and measurements of exchange, and we briefly describe the methodology of each. The Soweto study was conducted in 2001/02, and sampled 1,395 women aged sixteen to forty-four seeking antenatal care (Dunkle et al. 2004). Respondents were asked about their involvement with a non-primary sexual partner specifically for material gain, which the authors refer to as 'transactional sex'. The study in Ondo Town, Ekiti District, Nigeria, was undertaken in the early 1990s, and sampled 488 men aged fifteen to fifty (Orubuloye et al. 1992). Respondents were asked about their non-marital sexual relationships in the past year and the nature of assistance they had rendered each partner. The assistance was not limited to material transfers but included help with studies, advice or moral support. The Kisumu survey, as mentioned earlier, sampled 2,770 men aged twenty-one to forty-five in 2001, and asked respondents about their non-marital sexual relationships in

TABLE 7.2 Percentage of women who gave or received money, gifts or favours for sexual relations in the last twelve months, by age, marital status and country and date of the Demographic and Health Survey

| | Age group (years) | Not currently married (%) | Currently married (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mali, 1995-96 [†] | 15-19 | 25.6 | 9.1 |
| | 20-24 | 21.5 | 6.2 |
| | 15-49 | 21.8 | 4.9 |
| Côte d'Ivoire, 1998-99 [†] | 15-19 | 7.2 | 2.9 |
| | 20-24 | 7.8 | 0.9 |
| | 15-49 | 6.4 | 1.2 |
| Chad, 1996-97 [†] | 15-19 | 28.7 | 0.8 |
| | 20-24 | 10.3 | 1.0 |
| | 15-49 | 13.2 | 0.7 |
| Burkina Faso, 1998-99 [†] | 15-19 | 19.8 | 4.0 |
| | 20-24 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| | 15-49 | 10.1 | 1.2 |
| Kenya, 1998* | 15-19 | 20.9 | 4.2 |
| | 20-24 | 18.1 | 4.1 |
| | 15-54 | 17.3 | 3.0 |
| Guinea, 1999* | 15-19 | 16.3 | 2.9 |
| | 20-24 | 17.6 | 2.4 |
| | 15-49 | 14.8 | 2.4 |
| Nigeria, 1999* | 15-19 | 32.0 | 1.1 |
| | 20-24 | 25.8 | 2.1 |
| | 15-49 | 24.4 | 1.8 |
| Zambia, 1996* | 15-19 | 38.4 | 8.2 |
| | 20-24 | 28.4 | 4.9 |
| | 15-49 | 25.6 | 3.8 |
| Zimbabwe, 1994 (last 4 weeks)* | 15-19 | 12.8 | 1.8 |
| | 20-24 | 9.4 | 1.8 |
| | 15-49 | 10.3 | 1.2 |
| Uganda, 1995 (last sexual encounter) | 15-19 | 31.0 | - |

Source: Demographic and Health Survey website: <http://www.measuredhs.com/>
Zimbabwe and Uganda (PRB 2001)

Notes: * Those who ever had sexual intercourse † Those who had sexual intercourse
in the last twelve months - Not reported

TABLE 7.3 Percentage of men who gave or received money, gifts or favours for sexual relations in the last twelve months, by age, marital status and country and date of the Demographic and Health Survey

| | Age group (years) | Not currently married (%) | Currently married (%) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mali, 1995-96 [†] | 15-19 | 19.2 | 41.5 |
| | 20-24 | 31.7 | 14.6 |
| | 15-59 | 30.6 | 4.8 |
| Cote d'Ivoire, 1998-99 [†] | 15-19 | 3.9 | - |
| | 20-24 | 3.9 | 1.9 |
| | 15-59 | 7.9 | 4.1 |
| Chad, 1996-97 [†] | 15-19 | 49.6 | 21.2 |
| | 20-24 | 41.4 | 14.3 |
| | 15-59 | 42.8 | 7.8 |
| Burkina Faso, 1998-99 [†] | 15-19 | 28.1 | - |
| | 20-24 | 29.7 | 10.4 |
| | 15-59 | 27.6 | 4.3 |
| Cameroon, 1998 [†] | 15-19 | 20.9 | - |
| | 20-24 | 35.2 | 17.7 |
| | 15-59 | 30.5 | 18.3 |
| Guinea, 1999* | 15-19 | 10.4 | - |
| | 20-24 | 5.4 | 5.8 |
| | 15-59 | 7.4 | 3.4 |
| Nigeria, 1999* | 15-19 | 28.4 | - |
| | 20-24 | 20.1 | 4.6 |
| | 15-54 | 24.0 | 7.2 |
| Zambia, 1996* | 15-19 | 39.3 | - |
| | 20-24 | 36.1 | 25.3 |
| | 15-64 | 38.7 | 13.6 |
| Zimbabwe, 1999* | 15-19 | 2.1 | - |
| | 20-24 | 11.1 | 6.1 |
| | 15-54 | 9.6 | 5.4 |
| Zimbabwe, 1994 (last 4 weeks)* | 15-19 | 8.0 | - |
| | 20-24 | 10.5 | 2.5 |
| | 15-54 | 11.2 | 4.3 |

Source: Demographic and Health Survey website: <www.measuredhs.com/>

Notes: * Those who ever had sexual intercourse † Those who had sexual intercourse in last 12 months - Few cases and figures suppressed

the year preceding the study as well as the type and value of material assistance given to each in the last month. As the Ondo Town and Kisumu studies did not tie the transfers to sexual activity, the assistance given could encompass either gift or commodity exchange.

Although it is difficult to compare the findings of these three studies as they cover different study populations and reference periods and the survey questions were framed differently, some crude comparisons can nevertheless be made. The main findings regarding the prevalence of exchange are reported in Table 7.4. The Soweto study, which is limited to commodity exchange relationships that are specifically motivated by financial gain, shows that 21.1 per cent of women were ever involved in such a partnership. The Soweto study also finds that 19.9 per cent of women had at some time a non-primary partnership in which they received cash, which is the category of items most exchanged. Looking across age groups of females, the prevalence of transactional sex among adolescents aged sixteen to twenty is lower than among women aged twenty-one and above.

Both the Ondo Town and Kisumu studies examine exchange across gift and commodity relationships among men. As seen in Table 7.4, the Ondo Town study found that in 94 per cent of men's non-marital sexual partnerships, men gave some form of help or assistance to their partners, and in 70 per cent of such partnerships men specifically gave material transfers. In Kisumu, similarly, men gave material transfers in 72.6 per cent of non-marital partnerships. As in Soweto, the category of items most exchanged in Ondo Town and Kisumu is cash. In Ondo Town, men gave money and other assistance⁷ in 66.0 per cent of partnerships, and in Kisumu 51.2 per cent of the value of all transfers was monetary. The value of individual transfers in the last month is similar in both settings (approximately US\$6–7). This is equivalent to approximately one-third of the per capita monthly income in Nigeria and approximately 9 per cent of men's monthly income in Kisumu. Finally, the Kisumu study finds that the prevalence and value of material transfers are lower in partnerships with adolescent girls aged less than twenty than in partnerships with women aged twenty and above.

In sum, the three studies reveal varying percentages of respondents reporting the experience of exchange relationships. One reason for these wide differences is the fact that settings vary in terms of the extent to which exchange behaviour occurs in the population, as well as across age groups and gender. Differences in survey design or instrument construction could also account for the variation. Moreover, the percentages reporting the experience of exchange may be lower among women than among men because women are less likely to engage in exchange behaviour or report it in surveys (see Gersovitz et al. 1998 for a study of males' and females' reporting of sexual behaviour). Unlike the Soweto study, the Ondo Town and Kisumu studies focused on both primary and non-primary partnerships, and this may account for the higher reporting in these two studies.⁸

TABLE 7.4 Prevalence rates for various measures of exchange

| | Soweto, South Africa | Ondo Town, Nigeria | Kisumu, Kenya |
|---|--|---|---|
| Study population | Women aged 16-44 at antenatal clinics | Men aged 15-50 | Men aged 21-45 |
| Unit of analysis | Women with and without non-primary sexual partners in lifetime | Men's non-marital sexual partnerships in last 12 months | Men's non-marital sexual partnerships in last month |
| Prevalence of material transfers | 21.1% of women ever had non-primary partnership motivated by financial gain | In 94% of non-marital partnerships, men gave help or assistance; in 70%, men gave material transfer | In 72.6% of non-marital partnerships, men gave material transfer |
| Prevalence with cash | 19.9% of women ever had non-primary partnership where they received cash | In 66% of non-marital partnerships, men gave money and other assistance | 51.2% of the value of all transfers was monetary |
| Value of transfers | - | Average Naira 70 (US\$7) per non-marital partnership in last month | Average Ksh 445.7 (US\$6.40) per non-marital partnership in last month |
| Prevalence among women by age group | 20.9% women aged 16-20 and 24.4% women aged 21+ ever had a non-primary partnership motivated by financial gain | - | 69.3% of non-marital partnerships with women aged <20 and 75.7% of non-marital partnerships with women aged 20+ had material transfer |
| Value of transfers among women by age group | - | - | Average Ksh 351.8 (US\$5) to female partners aged <20 and Ksh 534.9 (US\$7.65) to female partners aged 20+ |

Sources: Soweto, South Africa: Dunkle et al. 2004; Ondo Town, Nigeria: Orubuloye et al. 1992; Kisumu, Kenya: Luke 2005

Exchange relationships and reproductive health outcomes

In this final section we briefly review the hypotheses from our theoretical framework that have been tested with data from existing studies of exchange. Findings of two studies lend support to the hypothesis that larger transfers from male to female partners are associated with higher probabilities of risky sexual behaviour. Multi-variate regression analysis of the Kisumu data reveals a negative and significant association between both the presence and the value of a transfer that the male partner gave to his female partner in the month preceding the study and the likelihood of condom use at last sexual intercourse with this partner (Luke, 2005).⁹ The Soweto study finds a significant bi-variate association between a woman ever having a transactional sexual partnership and testing positive for HIV infection at the time of the survey (Dunkle et al. 2004). As we cannot determine that the HIV infection, and thus unsafe sexual activity, came from the same man who gave the women a transfer, this finding only tentatively supports the hypothesis.

The Kisumu study tested the assumption that monetary transfers solely reflect commodity exchange (and therefore monetary transfers would have a significant effect on condom use) while non-monetary transfers reflect gift exchange (and therefore would have no effect on condom use). A multi-variate regression analysis, however, reveals no significant difference in the relationship between transfers and condom use by the type of transfer (Luke forthcoming). In other words, both monetary and non-monetary transfers are significantly related to unsafe sexual activity, which indicates that monetary and non-monetary transfers are substitutable in this context.

Commodity exchange is hypothesized to be associated with sexual coercion if one partner is forced to have sex owing to poverty or if the couple does not agree on the interpretation of the transfer. The Soweto study provides evidence to support this hypothesis. In a bi-variate analysis, Dunkle et al. (2004) find greater odds of transactional sex for women who live in substandard housing, which suggests that commodity exchange may be motivated by poverty in this setting. In addition, the study finds significant bi-variate associations between several measures of intimate partner violence, including physical and sexual abuse, and ever engaging in transactional sex. Again, a word of caution: we are not able to discern whether abuse occurred within a transactional sexual partnership, or whether women who are involved in transactional sex are also more likely to be abused in any of their relationships.

Study findings show mixed results regarding the hypothesis that there will be a higher prevalence of commodity exchange relationships among adolescent girls than among adult women. The hypothesis appears to be supported by the Demographic and Health Survey figures reviewed in Table 7.2 and not supported by the Soweto and Kisumu studies. The Kisumu results support the assumption that adolescent girls receive less in value of transfers than adult women. Finally,

while it may be hypothesized that the effect of transfers on sexual activities for adolescent girls is greater than for older women, the Kisumu study finds no difference in the effect by the age group of the female partner (Luke forthcoming). These results suggest that all women, and not just adolescent girls, are at risk of unsafe sexual behaviour in exchange relationships.

Conclusion

In order to design programmes to modify risky sexual behaviour in exchange relationships, a greater understanding of the linkages between transfers and sexual activity is needed. This chapter outlines a theoretical framework of exchange in non-marital sexual relationships which can be used to operationalize exchange relationships and construct appropriate survey questions to test the association between transfers and sexual risk behaviour.

We argue that earlier studies have been limited in their conceptualization of exchange and their scope of enquiry, which has led to an under-reporting of commodity exchange relationships and an overestimation of the effect of transfers on sexual activity. To address these limitations, information needs to be collected on a range of exchange relationships, including gift and commodity exchange. Extensive data are also needed on the value and type of transfers across an individual's multiple sexual partnerships. Data that include gift exchange relationships provide conservative estimates of the effect of transfers on sexual activity and are perhaps appropriate for policy and programme planning. The methods used in the Kisumu study may be useful in addressing the limitations of earlier studies of exchange.

A review of the findings from existing studies of exchange relationships suggests that prevalence rates vary greatly across settings, gender and age groups. Several factors could account for these differences, including variation in the design of surveys and questions on exchange relationships. Limited data are available to test the linkages between exchange relationships, sexual activity and poor reproductive health outcomes. Nevertheless, available study findings show that transfers have a negative effect on safe sexual behaviour and reproductive health, and that the negative effect of exchange does not appear to be greater for adolescent girls than for adult women. Finally, there is some evidence that exchange is associated with sexual coercion. Future research should take into account lessons learned from these studies when designing surveys on exchange.

Our theoretical framework of gift and commodity exchange provides a two-pronged approach for policies and programmes aimed at increasing safe sexual behaviour within exchange relationships. On the one hand, our framework and the findings of studies reviewed underscore the fact that bargaining occurs in commodity exchange relationships – whether in formal prostitution or more informal exchange relationships. Thus, women are not simply passive pawns

in commodity exchange relationships but they do have limited power to negotiate safe sexual practices. Programmes should be designed to help women and girls recognize the connection between transfers and sexual activity, increase their bargaining power to insist on safe sexual practices, or to empower them to forgo these relationships altogether. Recommendations include improving negotiating skills, increasing knowledge of the costs of risky sexual activities and facilitating opportunities for alternative sources of income. On the other hand, we hypothesize that transfers have no association with sexual activity in gift exchange relationships, where unsafe practices, such as low condom use, occur because partners love and trust one another, and not as a result of the gifts given. Aiming to reduce gift-giving within these relationships would prove ineffective in combating unsafe sexual practices; instead, programmes should seek to promote condom use and faithfulness to one sexual partner regardless of exchange behaviour.

Notes

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1 Exchange also takes place in marital relationships but this topic is beyond the scope of this article.

2 Much of this general description of gift and commodity exchange relies on Carrier (1991), who offers a view of exchange from a sociological perspective.

3 Hunter nevertheless recognizes women's agency to gain control over their lives in 'economically coercive relationships' (Hunter 2002: 112).

4 One explanation for the greater vulnerability of adolescent girls to HIV is their biological susceptibility to infection (Glynn et al. 2001).

5 Non-primary sexual partners are non-marital sexual partners who are not serious dating partners, including 'roll-ons' (secret partnerships hidden from the primary partner) and 'one-off' partners (those with whom a woman has sex only once).

6 Of the men reporting non-marital sexual partners in the last year, 95 per cent had five or fewer partners.

7 Cash was not regarded as a separate category.

8 It should also be noted that the figures for women in Soweto are calculated using women as the denominator, and the figures for men in Ondo Town and Kisumu are calculated using men's non-marital partnerships as the denominator, although this difference does not necessarily lead to smaller estimates for women than for men.

9 Condom use at last sexual intercourse was limited to intercourse that took place in the last month.

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