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Author(s): Stark, Laura

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TRANSACTIONAL SEX AND MOBILE PHONES IN A TANZANIAN SLUM

• LAURA STARK •

ABSTRACT

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On the basis of semi-structured interviews conducted in 2010 and 2012, this article examines some of the social and economic impacts of transactional sex within a low-income area of Dar es Salaam, and how opportunities for transactional sex, in turn, have been expanded by mobile telephony. On the basis of my interviews, I posit that in areas of chronic poverty, familial strategies born of poverty depend on cooperation among family members, and it is therefore important to study those factors which most heavily influence an individual's willingness to cooperate. I conclude that transactional sex, and the new possibilities afforded by mobile phones for minors to conceal their sexual behavior from caretakers, are key elements in the intergenerational transmission of female poverty through early pregnancy and early marriage.

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Keywords: Africa, Tanzania, sexuality, mobile phones, social trust, poverty, gender

Introduction

This article examines the role of mobile communication in sexual practices in a low-income area of Dar es Salaam and asks: how is transactional sex, paired with new opportunities provided through mobile telephony, affecting social relations and the perception of social trust in chronically poor African communities? What consequences does transactional sex have for familial strategies out of poverty? In transactional sex (henceforth TS), girls and women engage in sexual relationships with men who give money¹ or material gifts in return. TS not only appears to be a pan-African phenomenon, it is also found among all social classes in Sub-Saharan Africa. TS is different from prostitution in that exchanges of material gifts for sex exist on a continuum from casual encounters to long-term relationships between boyfriends and girlfriends and husbands and wives. In my data, interviewees made it clear that reciprocity is the foundation of all sexual relations; in other words, neither sex nor money is ever given for free outside a person's circle of close kin relations.² On the other hand, casual, short-term sexual exchanges were less socially sanctioned than long-term relationships, and interviewees sometimes referred to the former using the negative term 'dissipation' (*uasharati* in Swahili), and to the girls and women who engaged in it as 'prostitutes' (*malaya*), even though they were not professional sex workers. It should be pointed out that not only girls and women engage in sex for material rewards in Dar es Salaam. Interviewees explained that young men, too, can

receive money and gifts from ‘sugar mamas’ (*mama watuwazima, mama wakubwa*) with whom they are in a sexual relationship.

In the social science and medical research literature, TS has been portrayed as a major factor in understanding the continued persistence of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hunter 2002; Luke 2005; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Maganja et al. 2007; Leclerc-Madlala 2008). Nearly all studies of TS, therefore, have focused on its importance for HIV/AIDS prevention, whereas the relationship between TS and poverty has been largely overlooked. Given the fact that approximately one in four Africans is between ten and nineteen years old and that TS impacts the youth more than any other age group, it is vital for poverty-reduction efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa that researchers examine the links between TS and poverty more closely. In this article, I explore the ways in which transactional sex is perceived to impact not only heterosexual relationships, but also relationships between parents/grandparents and children. I also examine the perception in the settlements I studied that mobile phones have increased opportunities for making sexual contacts which result in TS. In some families TS, and the new possibilities afforded by mobile phones to engage in TS at a young age, appear to contribute to the perpetuation of especially female poverty through early pregnancy and early marriage. This appears to lend support to the observations made by Ling and Horst (2011) and Archambault (2011) that the effects of mobile telephony in the global south are not unilaterally positive: increased communication not only creates and intensifies social relations but can also give rise to conflicting priorities and strategies.

Background and methods of the study

With nearly ninety per cent of its population subsisting on less than 1.25 USD per day, Tanzania is currently one of the poorest countries in the world. Tanzania’s most populous city, Dar es Salaam, is the third fastest growing city in sub-Saharan Africa, with a population expected to exceed five million by 2020 (City Mayors Statistics). Currently, over seventy per cent of the city’s inhabitants live in more than fifty-four large informal settlements, most of which lack adequate infrastructure and social services. In a low-lying river valley some five kilometres from the centre of Dar es Salaam, the ward of Tandale is home to some of the worst conditions in the city. Tandale consists of six unplanned settlements, or subwards, home to approximately 70,000 people living within a little over one square kilometre. In this paper, I focus on the two easternmost settlements of Tandale, Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge.³ Since the reliability of quantitative data on sexual behaviour is highly problematic (see Luke 2003; Plummer et al. 2004), I chose instead to obtain information through semi-structured ethnographic interviews with 145 persons living in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge. The interviews were conducted in August and September of 2010, in March of 2012 and in February of 2013.

Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge were not settled primarily through direct rural-urban migration. Of the 145 persons interviewed between 2010 and 2013 only fourteen per cent had moved within the past ten years from the Tanzanian countryside to Kwa Tumbo or Mkunduge. Yet many of those who were born in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge or moved there from other parts of Dar es Salaam still retain strong kinship ties to the

countryside and have parents, grandparents, cousins, siblings and even children living in rural areas. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, Tandale was one of the last undeveloped areas of cheap farm land near the centre of the city which offered the possibility of land ownership to upwardly mobile migrants from the countryside who had already improved their economic situation through successful informal trade within Dar es Salaam. Roughly two-thirds of those interviewed in 2010 had previously been tenants in the city's market centres to which they had migrated from rural areas. They had made enough money in these market centres to buy farmland in Tandale and build their own homes. During the 1990s, however, lack of planning and overcrowding led to deteriorating conditions within Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge, and structure owners and their co-habiting relatives currently represent a downwardly mobile class living in crumbling homes which are too expensive to repair. According to interviewees, they often remain in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge only because they cannot afford to live in other parts of the city, where rents and land values are much higher.

Of the 145 persons I interviewed between 2010 and 2013, 105 were women, and forty were men. Fifteen persons were interviewed twice or more. Eighty per cent of those interviewed were Muslim, while twenty per cent were Christian, a distribution which reflects the demographics of Tandale in general. Interviewees ranged in age from 13 to 86.⁴ In terms of educational level achieved, seventy-three per cent had only a primary education (age 7–14) or less.⁵ Nearly half were tenants renting rooms, others lived rent-free in Swahili-style family houses owned by themselves or a relative. Of the 84 persons from whom I enquired about their mobile phone usage, only five had never owned a mobile phone, all of them women. Interviewees were selected in advance by four local residents, three women and one man, whom I met through two community development organizations: Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI) and Social, Economic and Governance Promotion Centre (SEGP), both of which work in or near the studied settlements. These four residents not only became key informants in my study, but asked their neighbours and friends to agree to be interviewed by me each morning at a pre-arranged meeting place, usually in a shaded courtyard or inside someone's home.⁶ The interviews were conducted primarily in Swahili with the assistance of two female translators working for CCI and SEGP. These interpreters turned out to be an enormous asset in my work: both were interested in the topics of my research, were familiar with low-income areas of Dar es Salaam, and used their own cultural insights to elicit vital pieces of knowledge from interviewees that I, even if I had been proficient in Swahili, would not have known existed.

In order to gain a broad overview of life in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge as a whole, in 2010 I asked general questions about housing and tenure, livelihoods and consumption, household and family, environmental problems and their causes, the history of settlement, and women's savings groups. I also asked questions regarding the uses of mobile phones in everyday life. When I returned in 2012, I focused more specifically on sexuality and early marriage among the youth, topics which had come up spontaneously during my 2010 fieldwork. Whereas in my 2010 fieldwork I had asked interviewees directly about their own experiences, in 2012 my method was to conduct interviews in the third person so that in a culture of profound sexual silence and shame, interviewees would be as forthcoming as possible regarding sexual practices and their consequences. Interviewees were encouraged

to speak generally about ‘what others say’ or ‘what others think’. Some interviewees, however, chose to talk about their own personal experiences. When, in 2013, I returned to Mkunduge to conduct more interviews, I focused on women’s livelihood strategies and on traditional puberty rites for girls known as *unyago*, which are still practiced by many families living in the subward.

Transactional sex in the context of chronic poverty

Starting in the late 1990s, three shifts have been discernible in the literature regarding TS in Sub-Saharan Africa. First, there has been a shift in focus from seeing TS as occurring primarily between young girls/women and older male ‘sugar daddies’ to acknowledging that TS is a feature of sexual relations in general: those between boyfriends and girlfriends as well as husbands and wives (Swidler and Watkins 2007; Maganja et al. 2007; Luke 2005; Hunter 2002, 2010). Through transactional sex, persons seek to enter into sexual networks—often involving multiple partners—in which they ideally increase their social, emotional and economic capital. This is especially true of persons from the poorest communities who have no other means of accessing this capital (Swidler and Watson 2007; Thornton 2009).

Second, whereas earlier studies concentrated on poor women who were compelled to have sex with men to meet their basic needs, it is increasingly understood that in TS there is a continuum between ‘survival sex’ on the one hand and sexual transactions in which women strive to obtain desired Western consumer goods in order to enhance their social status (Nyanzi et al. 2001; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Luke 2003; Kuato-Defo 2003; Leclerc-Madlala 2004). Many interviewees made it clear that while some girls engage in TS because there is ‘no food at home’ or ‘they have nothing to eat from morning to evening’, other girls enter into TS because they desire fashionable clothes and shoes, jewellery, skin-whitening lotions, and visits to the hairdresser.⁷ As 42-year-old Tumaini,⁸ mother of six children (three of them teenage girls), pointed out to me, ‘the youth life [i.e. consumer culture] can be expensive here, so girls need a lot of boyfriends, there is no other place to get so much money so easily’.

As a consequence of this, recent literature has moved from viewing women who participate in TS as passive victims to acknowledging that some women whose basic needs have already been met are active agents who use their sexuality to exploit men’s economic advantages to their own ends (Nyanzi et al. 2000; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Luke 2003; Leclerc-Madlala 2004). Common sayings in Tandale among women and girls which express female agency in the context of transactional sex include: ‘*Kama anapesa mchune mchune higo pesa*’ (If he has money, just take it from him); ‘*Nimempata buzi nimemchuna!*’ (‘I got a big goat and I skinned him!’) (see also Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001; Majanga et al. 2007).

In Tandale, however, neither characterization—that of women as passive victims or as active agents—fully captures the reality of TS, since in the context of severe chronic poverty and unemployment, participants’ aspirations to increase their personal capital through TS networks often remain unfulfilled. Although some studies focusing on southern Africa have emphasized men’s role in TS as that of patron-provider (e.g. Swider

and Watkins 2007), such an ideal cannot be achieved in Tandale. Men in Tandale, it is true, have internalized the cultural expectation that they should be breadwinners and provide for their female partner (see also Silberschmidt 2004). As two men explained in a group interview:

To give a woman money is to solve her small problems. Because as you know, the woman is usually dependent on the man, so it is the responsibility of the man to give... (25-year-old Selemani, unemployed)

In this place, many girls don't have jobs, or any profession. If I tell some girl in this area that I love her and I want her to be my partner, she will be dependent on me for shelter, food, clothing. So if you are a man here and you make money, that money is not just for yourself but also for your lover. (27-year-old Samuel, truck driver)

In practice, however, both male and female informants made it clear that men in Tandale are often unable to provide for even one woman, as Joseph, a 23-year old unemployed single man with a secondary school education, pointed out in English:

Maybe you are working or getting income, and your earnings for a day or a week are very small. Only sufficient for yourself, but you have to take care of another person, you love her and you want to buy the clothes, shoes, cosmetics she wants but you cannot. Some young men leave the girl because they feel bad and stressed about this. It can also be the same in marriage if you have a demanding wife. It may cause separations. Sometimes you tell her that you don't have the money, but she doesn't believe you, thinking you have it but you don't want to give it to her.

In Tandale, men have so little to give in return for sex that both men and women tend to see themselves as suffering victims whose needs remain unfulfilled: women reported that they cannot depend on men to provide for their material needs, and men explained that they are unable to count on women's physical and emotional care. As Joseph's cousin, 24-year-old Robert, explained in English: 'If you have money, girls will love you. If you have nothing, no one loves you.' Twenty-year old Neema, an unemployed woman with a secondary education, similarly explained:

Nowadays, love without money is not possible because money is everything and the girl has many needs: perfumes, ornaments, clothes. So if the boy has no money, the girl will go to another man. No money, no love.

Interviewees reported that girls living in Tandale have little hope of having their material needs satisfied by men living in their area, since most of the younger men are either unemployed or only sporadically employed. However, in a context where alternatives are few, women nevertheless continue to participate in TS both in order to survive and in the hope that they might eventually find a wealthy male provider from outside their own settlement. Twenty-nine-year-old Lidya, marketplace vendor of cooked food and mother of two children, put it this way:

Here in Mkunduge, there are few men who have enough money, so they use their money to cheat the girls. They try to engage in sexual relations with them, but they don't have enough money to provide for them. To get the men who have the money, it is up to God. Otherwise, you cannot find them. You might meet a man with money in a bar, while travelling somewhere, if God wills it.

In Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge, girls usually start to engage in TS between the ages of 9 and 15. Transactional sex among the youth was already a focus of concern among Tanzanian researchers in the late 1980s (Rwebangira 1998), but among my interviewees there is a perception that the problem began to increase in the mid-1990s. Female interviewees in their 30s and 40s recalled that they were expected to prove their virginity when they married, but state that today many girls in Tandale have children without ever marrying. Traditional female puberty rituals and initiation rites (*unyago*),⁹ in which cultural expectations regarding female sexuality are taught to the younger generation, appear no longer to play much of a role in the sexual behaviour of the youth. The teachings of *unyago* seem unable to compete with changing social, demographic and economic realities. Parents complain now that their children are learning about sexuality from videos, television, and their peers, and that this learning, unlike learning in the traditional context, is taking place long before children reach fourteen years of age. In former times, most Tanzanian girls tended to marry soon after puberty, so that opportunities for premarital sexual relations were limited. Now girls enter secondary school at approximately the same age as they had earlier married, so that secondary education has lengthened the period of premarital adolescence for girls.

Parents in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge have responded to the challenge of this new adolescent phase in various ways. Especially in families which cannot afford to send their daughters to secondary school, some parents pressure their daughters to marry immediately after primary school, at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Other families, in keeping with older notions of puberty as marking the beginning of adulthood, treat children who have reached roughly fifteen years of age as adults and expect them to support themselves. According to interviewees, sons in such families are expected to find work after primary school, and a daughter who has completed primary school is expected to obtain her own clothes and beauty products by finding a man to provide for her:

A few families think that after [primary school] the children have grown up. If a daughter then comes to her parents to ask for something, they say, 'you have grown up, you need to find your partner and ask *him*, it is not my business'. People from the Gogo and Makonde groups feel this way, and don't put their children back in school after [primary school]. (18-year-old Rashid, student in secondary school)

Some [parents], after the children finish [primary school] or [secondary school], think that the child is grown, and even if they hear that a daughter has four boyfriends, they don't care, because they think that if they take back responsibility for that girl, it will be heavy for them. (Amira, 26-year-old mother of three children)

According to interviewees, variation at age of first sexual activity reflects differences in families' economic positions as well as girls' exposure to the sexual activities of an older sister or mother. As 18-year-old Imara and 25-year-old Saida, both of whom are unemployed and living with their parents, explained in a joint interview:¹⁰

[m]ost [girls] are starting [to have sex] about 12 years old, when they see other girls with attractive clothes and shoes, pocket money, and they want the same. And there are some men who like very young girls. The men think that the youngest girls don't have HIV.

Another factor behind girls starting TS at an early age is peer pressure (see Moore et al. 2007; Maganja 2007; Wamoyi et al. 2010). Interviewees explained that when girls hang out in groups, some girls admire their friends' nice clothes and are urged by them to engage in TS in order to obtain the same for themselves. A recurrent phrase used by interviewees was 'bad groups' (*makundi mabaya*), whose members are believed to encourage each other to take drugs, steal, and engage in transactional sex:

Nowadays the young girls go out with men as old as their fathers, a poor girl might have girlfriends in a bad group who say, 'Do you see my blouse, it's like Oprah's!' Then the poor girl follows them to clubs to meet old men. And the girl sees that it is true, she can get what she wants. (19-year-old Faiza, a female singer renting a room with her aunt)

If a girl even borrows skin oil from her friends, and if there are three girls together, they might say, 'You are always borrowing from us, why don't you find your own boyfriend with money? You need to find a good boyfriend'. (Zena, 33-year-old mother of two, who sells cooked food in a marketplace)

In this area, young girls talk together in the evenings and might say, 'Do you see that man, he is rich, the one who gets him will be lucky.' And one might say, 'I will try'. And the other girls might say, 'Try to get all his money, finish him (*mmalize kabisa*).' (Miriam, a 16-year-old female student in secondary school)

An important underlying dynamic of TS is the economic inequality that prevails between women and men in Sub-Saharan Africa (Leclerc-Madlala 2004; Hunter 2002; Wamoyi 2010). Interviewees in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge made it clear that men have greater access to paid work than women.¹¹ The men I interviewed in 2010 held a fairly diverse variety of jobs in the informal sector,¹² whereas women's main source of income in these settlements was neighbourhood vending. The self-reported income generated by female occupations tended to be between 1000 and 5000 Tzs (approximately 0.5–2 €) per day. Men's income could be as high as 10,000 Tzs per day, although some men, such as one teacher at an Islamic school (*madrasah*), earned as little as 700 Tzs per day.¹³ Petty landlordism is another source of income for women living in slums, but rentable rooms are often occupied instead by homeless relatives whom homeowners are expected to house for free.

Cultural norms play an important role in livelihood opportunities for women. Some women I interviewed in 2010 showed a marked reluctance to enter into small-scale businesses as long as they could receive even small monetary gifts in exchange for sex. Among spouses and cohabiting partners it was usual for the woman to stay at home and remain dependent upon the income of the male partner. When in 2012 I asked interviewees, 'Why do men in Dar es Salaam seem to have more money than women do?' the nearly unanimous response from both men and women was that numerous jobs are available to men, most of which are physically demanding, and men are willing to do these jobs. Female interviewees, on the other hand, described women as 'ashamed' to try to perform physically arduous labour such as construction work, collecting garbage, or hauling heavy loads.¹⁴ According to 27-year-old Samuel who drives a truck for a living: 'Here in Tandale, the man thinks, "I have to work hard for a good life" while the woman thinks, "I have to wait for a good man".' His cousin Joseph added in English:

Men have more opportunities in school because they don't have as many domestic duties as girls and they don't get pregnant. Men want to work hard, and ladies feel they have to wait for men to bring home money. Women feel they cannot do the same hard work as men, and that they should stay home; men should go to work and come home in the evening and give money for the household's needs. One finds very few women who are capable of asking their men for capital to set up a business, saying 'I now want to do something', so the men must work hard to take care of the family.

William, a 21-year-old resident of Mkunduge working as a waiter in a hotel, explained in the same vein:

Most men are hard workers in order to fulfil the needs of the family because in our tradition, we believe that the man is the head of the family, and in our tradition in the whole of Africa, the family waits at home for him to bring stuff home. And here too, there are wives who stay at home and wait for the man/husband to bring her money. She is the *gori kipa* [goal keeper], the wife who stays at home. She is dependent. This is why women don't have enough money.

Women's willingness to depend economically on male sexual partners is at least partly explained by the risk, exhaustion and exploitation low-income women face in the small-scale vending sector. Women who sold food and clothing in their neighbourhoods repeatedly remarked on the low returns of their income generating activities, the fact that they must sell on credit to neighbours who often fail to repay, and the fact that nearly all their income goes to daily needs such as food and water (which in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge must be purchased from water vendors). Small-time thieves add to female vendors' worries. Interviewees made it clear that the intense competition within the small-scale vending sector has made selling on the street or to neighbours unattractive to women who can find alternative forms of subsistence.

Sex and social trust

From a macro-level perspective, it can be noted that while men in Tandale may have greater access to money through informal jobs, much of their disposable income is channelled through sexual exchanges to women—either to partners in long-standing relationships, or to women outside that relationship. Interviewees, however, understood this 'sexual economy' of wealth redistribution to be fraught with emotional peril for both women and men.¹⁵ With so much at stake in sexual exchanges, there is a strong incentive for both partners to attempt to engage in what is perceived as cheating the system. Interviewees mentioned numerous ways in which participants in TS might maximize their own benefit at the expense of others, either by denying paternity of a child they helped conceive, or by not disclosing their HIV infected status in advance. The most frequently mentioned form of cheating, however, was the secret acquisition of outside partners in a formerly monogamous relationship.

The ideal relationship was characterized by my interviewees as lacking *tamaa*, a term denoting lust, longing, greed and excessive desire for things that cannot be obtained by respectable means.¹⁶ Men without *tamaa* remain faithful to their wives and do not go looking for the sexual variety which would ultimately divert their resources away from

their long-term partner. Women without *tamaa* do not covet the fine clothes and other expensive goods which would put a strain on the man's pocketbook. *Tamaa* was in fact blamed as a major cause of failed relationships by those I interviewed, but interviewees also acknowledged that in the context of Tandale's extreme chronic poverty, monogamous relationships suffer first and foremost from men's lack of ability to provide for even one woman, which results in women having to acquire basic necessities through sex *outside* the relationship, either through casual sex or additional long-term lovers:

[Women might find men outside their relationship] because the man has given or left [the woman] only a little money, not enough, so she goes to the market and she wants meat today. So the butcher is a man. And the tomato seller is a man. And the husband asks nothing when he comes back and finds meat... (Mwanaisha, 26-year-old unemployed mother of three children, lives with children's father)

If you want to stay in a marriage in a good way, you need money. If you don't have it, one or both of the spouses can go out with other persons—the wife can find a 'big man' for money, and the husband can go out and find a 'big woman'. (George, a 21-year-old food vendor in a marketplace, married)

Poverty-driven infidelity does not necessarily mean the end of the relationship, however. Despite the high cultural value placed on female faithfulness to one partner, many men who are realistic about their own prospects to attract and provide for a woman are forced to tolerate their wife's or girlfriend's outside sexual activities. When my interpreter jokingly asked twenty-seven-year-old Jalil, a construction worker with one child, what would happen if he found his girlfriend with another man, he responded, laughing, 'Oh, that is a normal situation. There might be a fight, but the relationship continues.' Tumaini, referring to her female neighbour who had different sexual customers every night but nonetheless lived with her husband, told us, 'some people I know marry, and the husband does not provide food and other things, so the wife asks her husband if she can sell her body to get the needed income, and the husband agrees.' Twenty-seven-year-old Samuel explained that some girls have a lover for love, but another lover for money. Sixteen-year-old Hassan related how he was nearly duped by a girl and her 'real lover' into becoming the girl's lover for money:

Nowadays love without money is not possible, because even if [girls] try to approach you, she may say she loves you, but she does not. She then goes to her boyfriend that she really loves and tells him, 'I told Hassan that I loved him, but I really don't, I'm just using him for money.' (...) That has already happened to me. The boyfriend allowed his lover to come to me and get money from me. Boys of the same age warned me because they knew the boyfriend; the boyfriend had told the other boys: 'Hassan approached my girlfriend, and I let her go to him to get money from him.'

The trust upon which monogamous relationships are founded tends to be so fragile in the settlements I studied that young persons avoid using condoms during sex because it would imply a lack of trust between partners (see also Dilger 2003; Poulin 2006). Many teenage boys and young men among my interviewees reported that while they used condoms with prostitutes (who charge clients less for sex with a condom than without), they stopped using them once they had established that their girlfriend did not have other boyfriends (by visiting her home at random times to see if she was alone, for instance). Once a monogamous relationship is established in the minds of the partners, often neither

partner is willing to be the one to suggest condom use, as expressed by twenty-two-year-old Daniel: 'If a man trusts his girlfriend, he should not use condoms'. Preserving the scarce resource of emotional trust is considered more important than guarding against reproductive health threats or unwanted pregnancies:

The girlfriend and boyfriend feel that they trust each other. You find a boy asking a girl, 'Don't you trust me? Do you think I am infected with HIV? So let's don't use condoms.' It is a way to show trust. (Joseph, 23 years, unemployed)

They don't use [condoms], because if a woman wants a boy or man to wear a condom, he can say, 'So you don't trust me. Why are we here?' (Fatima, 15-year-old student in secondary school).

Mobile phones and transactional sex

Until now, the ways in which mobile technologies are socially and culturally embedded in sexual relationships in Sub-Saharan Africa have been little explored.¹⁷ Mobile phones have been chiefly mentioned in connection with TS in Sub-Saharan Africa as an example of the material rewards given in exchange for sex, one of the '4 Cs' or '3 Cs' (along with clothes, cash, and cars) to which young girls aspire when engaging in TS (Kuat-Defo 2004; Leclerc-Madlala 2004). In Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge, where gifts given for sex are smaller and commonly take the form of a few thousand shillings (roughly 1 €) or a meal of chicken and chips, fewer men can afford to buy their sexual partner a mobile phone. But this does not mean that mobile phones do not play an important role in the formation and maintenance of transactional sex. Because second-hand and/or pirated copies of mobile phones can now be purchased in Dar es Salaam for as low as 10,000–15,000 Tzs (5–7 €), they are affordable even for its poorest residents. Those who owned mobile phones used them for a variety of purposes: to maintain contact with friends and family members residing elsewhere; to save money through mobile banking (Tigopesa, Mpesa, Airtel Money), to listen to music (via the phone radio or by downloading and exchanging music with friends through Bluetooth), and for business and work, if their suppliers and customers were not located nearby. Day-workers in factories, for instance, used their phones to ask their employer if there was work for them the next day, and small-scale vendors called suppliers to check on shipments or availability, received calls from customers asking what food they were cooking that day, reminded customers who bought on credit to pay their outstanding bills and received 'beeps' (the caller rings once and hangs up so the recipient knows to call back) from customers who were ready to pay.

However, it was in the area of sexual relations that interviewees expressed the greatest number of drawbacks to mobile telephony (see also Archambault 2011). For example, numerous interviewees mentioned the suspicions that can immediately arise if one's partner receives a call or text message from an unknown member of the opposite sex:

The mobile phone has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that it facilitates communication to strengthen your relationship. But in that case, the boy and girl have to be honest with each other and trust each other. If you are at work one day and come home late, you can inform her. But on the other hand, you might pick up your girlfriend's phone which is ringing and find that the caller is a man, or find bad messages sent to the girlfriend by another man, and she has no good explanation



Photo 1: Mobile phones have become important cultural objects in the daily lives of even the very poor in Tanzania. Here in an outdoor courtyard in Mkunduge, a traditional Tanzanian women's wrap-around skirt/head covering known as *kanga* displays a mobile phone motif.

for this. That is why men prefer their women to not use mobile phones. But if you trust each other, then you can use a mobile phone, you don't care even if another person calls. (Benjamin, 25-year-old business man and DJ, father of two children)

According to interviewees, both men and women can use their mobile phones to start and maintain outside relationships at the same time that they try to prevent their partners from learning of it by, for instance, forbidding their partner to touch their mobile phone or by blocking incoming calls:

A man can say to his wife or girlfriend 'don't touch my phone', 'don't ever pick it up'. But in particular situations, if the phone is ringing, and the wife thinks it is someone calling in an emergency and the husband is not there, she might pick it up and find the husband's other woman on the line, insulting her. (Faraji, 26-year-old male music student)

The phone builds the relationship and destroys the relationship. A man might live in Tandale and call his wife and say he is going on a trip, but stays with his lover. Sometimes [his wife] might find a message from an outside woman on his phone. Sometimes men and women change the name of a lover to a same-sex name, for example Laura becomes Laurence, so that when the man looks through his wife's phone, he sees only women's names, and vice versa. Sometimes a man gets many girls through Facebook and he starts relationships with them. Maybe his wife doesn't know how to use Facebook. The husband blocks incoming calls when he leaves his phone on the table because he has so many girlfriends on Facebook. (Juma, 23-year-old truck driver and father of one child)

Interviewees also reported a fairly common practice in which especially men call or text other people at random via their mobile phones. If the respondent is a woman, the man will try to start a relationship with her by phone, often by insisting that she has already met him somewhere. In 2013, one of my female interviewees received such a call during our interview. The male caller who said he lived seventy kilometres away in Bagamoyo insisted that the thirty-four-year-old woman who had answered his call knew him and had 'beeped' him, both of which she denied. She asked him to delete her number from his phone and the conversation ended. Two interviewees in Kwa Tumbo described how this practice can undermine trust in already established relationships:

The disadvantage of the phone is that if someone tries to call to my phone and I say, 'sorry wrong number', but my husband thinks that I know the man, my husband might beat me because of that (...). Somebody sent a text message of love when I was with my husband. I tried to read the message and said, 'who is this?' and my husband and I called him and I asked who he was, and he said, 'I am so-and-so, don't you know me?' [We asked him:] 'where are you living?' He said: 'at Mbeya'. I said, 'but I am living in Dar'. He said: 'I know you know me, but you just deny knowing me'. And I said, 'wrong number'. After a few minutes, the man called again and apologized, saying he had got the number wrong. My husband and I were just surprised about it. When he called to apologize, he asked first, 'Are you an old woman?' I said, 'yes'. He said, 'so you are with your husband there?' I said, 'yes'. He said, 'put him on the phone so I can apologize'. (Safiya, 45-year-old neighbourhood food vendor and mother of two children)

My parents allow each other to answer each other's phones. One day my mother's phone rang and my father answered, saying, 'who are you?' and a man's voice answered, 'ask your wife, she knows who I am'. My father said, 'even if my wife knows you, you must tell me'. The man said again, 'ask your wife'. So my father gave the phone to my mother and she asked, 'who is this?' And the man's voice said, 'don't you know me? Have you forgotten me?' Then my mother said, 'I don't know you'. The man said, 'I know you know me, you just don't want to say'. They tried to search the man's number [to find out who he was], but they did not know him. It caused some conflicts in my parents' marriage, but in the end my father believed my mother. (Hassan, 16 years, student in secondary school)

For some young men, mobile phone-related distrust runs so deep that they do not want their girlfriends to possess mobile phones:

Among my friends we don't want our girlfriends to have mobile phones. Because of jealousy (*wivu*). We think, 'if I give her a mobile phone, she can use it to contact other men'. We gave our girlfriends mobile phones, but when the girls called other men, we took the phones back. The mobile phone can be used to cheat boys. [Girls] can say on the phone, 'I am at home', but they are not there, or they say that they are somewhere they are not. Boys, since they are unemployed or only employed occasionally in day jobs, have a lot of time to check on girls' whereabouts. (Benjamin, 25-year-old business man and DJ, and father of two children)

You can't give a girl a phone the first time you meet her. You have to watch her behaviour and see how she is. (...) If you don't know her very well in the first few days [of the relationship], maybe she can use the phone to communicate with other men. (Mahmud, 19-year old car mechanic)

In Tanzania, people tend to trust face-to-face communication, which is context-rich and socially embedded, more than they trust mobile telephony (Molony 2006). Interviewees in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge experienced as problematic the fact that mobile communication decontextualizes verbal exchanges and thus eliminates many of the informational cues cell phone users need to assess the motives and truthfulness of their conversational partners. For instance, several interviewees in 2010 told me that if they could add one feature to their mobile phones, it would be information (either in visual or textual form) regarding the whereabouts of the caller at the moment of calling. This was because people were seen to use their phones to lie to other people: for instance a neighbour or customer who was at home might say on the phone they were elsewhere in order to avoid fulfilling an obligation to the caller. As Tumaini, who in 2010 sold clothing on credit to her neighbours explained, 'when somebody calls, it would be good to know where they are calling from. That would stop the cheating and the lies. For instance, when I call a customer who owes me money, she might say, "I'm in Arusha" when she is actually in Mkunduge at home.' In the context of sexual relationships as well, some persons attempt to exploit the cell phone's lack of information regarding caller location in order to deceive their partners, as Zawadi, a 33-year-old neighbourhood clothing vendor and mother of three, illustrated with a story from her own family:

There is a story about my sister-in-law [who was in her early 30s]. One day, her husband called her and asked, 'where are you?' and she said, 'I'm at home preparing lunch'. The husband was quiet. Then he said, 'I'm here at home and my mother and my young sister are here too. So you tell me, where are you?' Then he divorced her. Before that, he tried to get her to tell the truth, but she just tried to deny everything. She then married [the extramarital lover] she had been with.

By expanding sexual networks, TS—facilitated by mobile telephony—has in the short term helped some girls and women in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge survive in a highly difficult economic climate. Based on statements by both male and female interviewees it would appear that in the long run, however, TS has made it difficult for sexual partners to establish long-term relations of trust that would form the basis of family networks of support. As interviewees explained, TS in the context of poverty has led to such an acute lack of trust among sexual partners that monogamous relationships have become inherently insecure. Comments like the one coming from thirty-one-year-old Abdul ('for the young married man like me (...) the marriages don't last long and end in divorce') often came up whenever I asked interviewees whether there was something else regarding sexual relationships that they still wanted to say.¹⁸ Thirty-three-year-old Zena, for instance, added at the end of her interview that 'the difficulty is understanding each other and to settle down together. Many relationships just end quickly. It is difficult to understand what the partner wants, and the process is complicated when one or both partners have other women or men.' At the end of Joseph's interview, he explained that

the biggest problem is the economic problem. Many relationships which would have otherwise existed here in Kwa Tumbo don't because of lack of money. [There is a] constant changing of lovers, [since] a girl has another lover for money. Because of [this] feeling of insecurity, nothing is certain, relationships are always changing. So this is why young men have several girlfriends—in case tomorrow he doesn't have her...

Although male interviewees emphasized that men suffer emotionally from inherently unstable monogamous relationships, it is clear from my overall data that it is women who are the most vulnerable in physical and economic terms. When long-term pair relations dissolve, it is women who are usually left to care for the children alone, and distrust within relationships in Dar es Salaam has already been recognized to lead to domestic violence aimed at women (Lary et al. 2004: 203). The evidence of betrayal and deceit provided by mobile phones may in fact be increasing conflict levels within relationships. Twenty-seven-year-old Rehema, who mentioned that she had been physically abused twice by her husband, explained that the beatings had *not* been motivated by her own unfaithfulness, but that rather, 'I'm the one who sees the love message on my husband's phone and when I try to ask about it, he beats me.' Earlier, married men could conduct extramarital relationships with fewer concerns that their wives would discover the relationship accidentally (see also Archambault 2011).

Transactional sex as an obstacle to intergenerational strategies out of poverty

Transactional sex does not only have consequences for the participants themselves. Because young men in Tandale are often unable to provide for the children resulting from TS, it is the young mother's birth family who must usually shoulder financial responsibility for the child if she is unable to do so, a circumstance which makes it more difficult for especially female-headed households to climb out of poverty. Although I was told stories of parents in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge who are content to share the money earned by their daughters through TS,¹⁹ many parents are clearly dismayed by their children's early sexual activity. They fear their children will contract HIV and, above all,²⁰ they fear that their daughters will become pregnant out of wedlock. If the father of a child refuses to acknowledge paternity, as is often the case,²¹ this is seen to bring shame upon the family (see also Dilger 2003: 42–43). The limited resources which could have been invested in a business or in a family member's education must now go to medicines and other forms of maintenance for the pregnant young woman and her baby, which can be expensive for the residents of Tandale. As twenty-nine-year-old Lidya, mother of two, recounted:

My neighbour used to sell traditional beer; she is staying with daughters and granddaughters and so on. This year, one young daughter in [the last year of primary school] just became pregnant. The older woman said, 'This is terrible. I raised your mother and I raised you, and now you are putting me in more poverty.'

Hanifa, a 52-year-old seamstress and mother of six adult children, provided a similar account:

The father of the child might not be able to take care of the child, so he might say: it is not my child, you might have another boyfriend. So the poverty of the parents increases—if they have three daughters who each have one child, so six people to take care of. This is bad for parents who have many girls (...) The parents must take care of them and it is a real burden for the parents.

Due to their childcare responsibilities, young unmarried mothers often have difficulties in continuing their education or finding a job outside their own neighbourhood. Because of the already fierce competition among small-scale vendors within neighbourhoods, those who have been abandoned by their boyfriend or husband often engage in TS with different men simply to feed themselves and their children. For instance twenty-five-year-old Jalila, who in 2010 was unemployed and living in her grandmother's house, described her situation as follows:

I married ten years ago, at age 15. My husband then ran away, leaving me pregnant. He never came back, never cared for his family, never sent money. I just get money from other men. I am scared of diseases but I do it anyway. I would like to have a business.

Many of the persons I interviewed stressed the importance of education as a strategy out of poverty, and some families are willing to make great sacrifices in order to put their children through secondary school, as one forty-one-year-old female interviewee explained:

The most important thing is education; with it [girls] can run away from poverty. For one year, it costs 600,000 Tzs [roughly 290 €] for secondary school. Sometimes we spend the whole day without eating to pay for school fees, only eating in the evening. All three of my [teenage] daughters are in secondary school.

According to interviewees, orchestrating a successful family strategy out of poverty through children's education depends heavily on cooperation and communication between parents and children. Young persons argued that they need parents to provide for their needs, encourage them in school, and communicate with them about the dangers of TS. Parents, for their part, explained that they need their children to concentrate on their studies and not engage in early sexual relations which could lead to pregnancy and HIV infection. But in many cases this intergenerational cooperation is never achieved, due in large part to differing perceptions held by children or parents regarding TS. For instance, not all children whose parents who can afford school fees are willing to study hard. Particularly *girls'* unwillingness to continue to secondary school—or even finish primary school—is not uncommon, according to interviewees:

In some families, the children don't want to go to school, and their parents never ensure that the children attend. In other families, the parents are checking up on their children, but the children join bad groups, and when they see other children not going to school, they don't want to, there is no motivation (...) For example, Tumaini's neighbor's daughter over there: this girl and I were at the same level in primary school, but after she completed [primary school], she didn't continue because her older sister got pregnant after [primary school] and the younger sister said, 'Why can't I stay at home, too?' (Mwajuma, 13-year-old female student in secondary school)

In the opinions of many interviewees, the possibility of receiving material rewards through TS or even early marriage has diminished girls' interest in obtaining an education. A related reason for this is that secondary education (duration four years, from age fourteen to eighteen) is no guarantee of finding regular or better-paying employment in Tandale. Many girls consider TS to offer more substantial financial rewards than expensive study in secondary school, and opt not to continue their education:

In school, there are different kinds of groups, also bad groups; a girl sees that some have a lot of money, and they see another who has dropped out because of pregnancy. So she thinks that money is more important than education—she may be selling herself even while her parents think she is attending school. Because she is already making money in this way, school seems like a waste of time. (Maisha, age 23, secondary school education, one child)

Transactional sex among girls who do not continue to secondary education generally takes one of three forms: a steady boyfriend or series of boyfriends, regular visits to bars and nightclubs outside of Tandale in the hopes of finding a wealthy male provider, or the most respectable route, early marriage to a man who is usually older by at least eight to ten years. Interviewees reported that until recently, especially Muslim parents from coastal ethnic groups often wanted their daughters to marry immediately after completing primary school at around fourteen or fifteen, but in the past few years, local government intervention in Mkunduge, at least, has nearly put an end to the forced marriage of girls.²²

Young girls, however, do not necessarily have to be persuaded to leave school and marry at a young age.²³ Girls whose parents cannot provide what they need or want were said by interviewees of both genders to have unrealistic expectations of marriage: such girls assume that if only they could marry a man who would provide for them and care for them, their troubles would be over. In fact, according to interviewees, the majority of these marriages fail within a short time, leaving the wife to support herself and any children from the marriage.

Yet according to interviewees, many parents still try to persuade their daughters to marry early despite these dangers, either because they cannot afford to continue their daughter's education and fear that she will be unable to support herself, or because they want to see her married before she becomes pregnant and brings shame upon the family. In fact, girls who wish to pursue their education are often prevented from doing so by parents who suspect that their daughter may already be sexually active. According to several interviewees, such parents refuse to 'waste' further money on their daughters' education and invest instead in the secondary education of sons, who cannot become pregnant:

Many girls are starting sexual relations at nine, ten, eleven years old, with older men. The parents say it would be better for them to get married; school is a waste of money according to the parents... (Abdul, 24-year-old carpenter)

Some parents say it is a waste of money to send this kind of girl to school, who already has a boyfriend and will probably just get her money from men. (Tumaini, 42 years, mother of six children)

Parents' reluctance to invest in a daughters' education is fuelled by a perception of children as 'secretive' about their sexual activities. Parents complained that they cannot always be aware of their children's participation in TS or their lack of school attendance because children deliberately seek to deceive their parents (see also Maganja et al. 2007). According to thirteen-year-old Mwajuma, for instance, children may tell their parents that they are going to attend extra lessons at school when they are really going to see boyfriends or girlfriends. Parents explained that they are not always aware of the possibility of TS among their children because sexual norms were very different in the days of their youth:

In the old days, if a girl was with a man, it was a scandal. If someone tried to approach a girl, she went home and told her parents. But nowadays children keep it a secret and talk about sex and love among themselves. These children nowadays, they are big liars; they say that gifts come from friends, even when it comes from a man. In the old days, daughters got married when they were still virgins. But even if they marry now straight after [primary school], they are no longer virgins and they know a lot about sex (...) Nowadays these children, even if they get sex diseases or get pregnant, they don't tell their parents, they are secretive (...) So the parents are not aware that the girl is in a sexual relationship, they are just surprised to see that she suddenly has lots of new possessions. (Bahati, 35-year-old mother of three children and Nadia, 49-year-old mother of four children)

Mobile phones have, within the short span of a decade and a half,²⁴ transformed the social landscape of TS in Tandale by offering users access to a wide range of new sexual contacts, as well as the possibility of maintaining relationships with persons outside one's immediate neighbourhood. Although both Tanzanian and Islamic law allow polygamous marriage, most of my interviewees considered monogamy to be the ideal form of long-term sexual relationship. In the opinions of those interviewed, the fact that mobile telephony facilitates new social contacts makes it more likely that partners might leave a monogamous relationship in pursuit of greater benefits through a new partner. Secret sexual relationships were, of course, possible prior to mobile phones. Interviewees explained that boys or girls might send handwritten notes to their object of desire through a child or friend of the intended recipient, or a boy or man might hang around the house of a girl or married woman, trying to remain unobtrusive until he caught her eye, at which point she would make an excuse to her parents or husband to leave home and fetch water or go the marketplace, and signal for her lover to follow her. However, these methods of subterfuge were time-consuming and risky: the love-smitten lurker could be noticed or the note could be read by its messenger, who might gossip about it to others, or take it directly to the girl's parents. Notes could also be accidentally found by parents or teachers. One female interviewee, speaking of a twenty-one-year-old woman in her settlement whose aunt had just evicted her because she had sexual relationships with several boys maintained through Facebook on her mobile phone, summed up the situation by saying: 'Before the mobile phone it would have been impossible for a girl to have relationships with many boys.' By enabling communication between men and women which is both immediate and private, interviewees perceived mobile phones to have increased both the possibilities for socially disapproved sexual relations and the number of potential sexual partners.

Mobile telephony and underage sexual relations

Because sexual relations are believed to be inevitable between a boy and girl who spend time together, many caretakers attempt to tightly control children's opportunities to engage in sexual relationships (e.g. Lary et al. 2004: 202). In Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge, interviewees reported that it is not allowed for a boy to show up at a girl's door and ask her to accompany him somewhere. Sixteen-year-old Henry, a student in secondary school, explained what would happen if a boy came knocking on a girl's front door:

That would be bad. Because if her parents realize that this boy is the boyfriend of the girl, they might go to the boy's parents and complain that 'your son is coming to knock on our door asking for our daughter', and [the boy's parents would] get angry at the boy. Because in the parents' minds, it is boys who ruin daughters' lives.

Children and youths, however, have found a means to circumvent the restrictions imposed by their families: mobile phones. Although there are other reasons why the youth use mobile phones in sexual relationships,²⁵ concealment of their sexual behaviour from their parents is an important motive. Many parents for this reason have forbidden their children to own a mobile phone, and may take it away from a daughter or destroy it if she has received it as a gift from a boy. As twenty-three-year-old Joseph explained,

It is forbidden to have a sexual relationship before marriage. The father or brothers can beat you, [saying:] 'You are destroying our daughter'. You might have to send a child as messenger to her if there is no phone. Parents have this view that a relationship will bring problems—she will become pregnant. If the father happens to see the boyfriend and girl go out together, [he asks:] 'what are you doing?' So a phone is very important for communication. (...) Sometimes the [girl's] family has realized that the relationship exists and so the couple cannot be seen together and the young people plan to meet somewhere far away—at the beach, for instance.

Twenty-year-old Ezekiel, a student, provided a similar account:

Some men give their girlfriends a phone. For those who do, they say, 'I give you this phone, but keep it secret from your parents because if they see it and ask who it is from and you mention my name, I fear the trouble it will cause'.

Parents also complain that because children are so much more adept at using mobile phones, parents are not always even aware that their child owns or uses one:

Parents don't buy phones for children in primary school. My niece who was living with my family got a phone from a man when she was in Year Two of secondary school and she had it turned on silent because she knew that I would disapprove, and she kept it secret from me for more than a year. These are the things that are new for parents; children know how to use new technologies but parents do not. (Efraim, 61-year-old pensioner and father of four adult children)

We know that our children have relationships through phones. The phone is the primary means (*chanzo*, lit. 'source') for boys and girls to be in relationships. Children know how to use technology that their parents do not, for example a phone with internet, camera, radio, their children are chatting on Facebook even with foreigners; children use their mothers' phones when the mother goes to the market and leaves it behind. Then the children buy [airtime] vouchers, use the phone, talk to their

lovers. Children memorize their boyfriend's/girlfriend's number and then erase the number from the mother's phone when they are done. (Bahati, 35-year-old mother of three children and Nadia, 49-year-old mother of four children)

Even if parents do not give mobile phones to their school-age children, children in the settlements I studied have their own means of obtaining phones for themselves. As interviewees explained, some children steal mobile phones from neighbours, while others obtain them through gambling or by asking their relatives to give them money for something else:

Here in Kwa Tumbo it is easy to get a phone, even a daughter or son in grades two to four of primary school [aged 8–10] can get a mobile phone. Children here in Kwa Tumbo can be thieves, then go on to gambling. [They can] even use money given for school [expenses] to gamble, with a mobile phone on the table as the stakes. Five or six people [gamble] in a corner. It is illegal, [so] when they see the police, they run. They gamble with cards, sometime dice. (...) Lots of young boys and children steal phones. For example, a child might come to a house and beg for water and you have left the phone on a table and when you come back from fetching water, the phone and the child are gone. (Juma, 23-year-old truck driver and father of one child)

Some of these children lie to their relatives or family members. If children visit relatives, they may ask for money for schoolbooks. And the aunt gives some money, and then the child goes to his uncle's place, and asks for a school uniform, [saying:] 'My old uniform is not good, the teachers won't let me attend if I don't wear a uniform'. The child takes money from different relatives and buys the phone. (Yusuf, 19-year-old unemployed man with secondary education)

Another common means by which children obtain mobile phones is by playing *upatu* (lit. 'pyramid'), a children's version of the traditional rotating savings and credit association groups which are widespread in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. In it, children from the same school or neighbourhood come together to contribute a fixed amount of money on a regular basis and after a predetermined interval, the accumulated savings go to one member at a time, in a predetermined order. According to interviewees in Tandale, schoolchildren aged twelve and up typically put 100–200 Tzs daily into the common fund. This contribution is taken from their lunch money or bus fare, and a single *upatu* group might consist of fifteen to twenty members, making the amount awarded at the end of the week between 7000 Tzs and 20 000 Tzs. Given the low cost of second-hand, pirated versions of mobile phones available in Tandale, cell phones are well within the purchasing power of school children who participate in these rotating savings schemes.

Although sexual relations with schoolteachers were a possibility acknowledged by interviewees, interviewees reported that most children at school typically form sexual relationships with other students of the same age. In order to find potential sexual partners, some children call phone numbers at random. After hearing about this practice among adults, I asked several teenage boys and young men in a group interview whether girls and boys ring random numbers in order to approach members of the opposite sex. The interviewees affirmed that they did, explaining that if the respondent is male, the boy who is calling will say, 'wrong number'. If it is a girl, however, the call might be the start of a relationship. However, the interviewees' own personal experiences in this regard were not very encouraging:

I tried that myself, but it did not work. The girl who answered insulted me. (Yusuf, 19 years)

I tried once, and the girl who answered said, 'Whose phone are you using? Return that phone to its owner!' (Ahmed, 16 years, secondary school student)

Some parents are aware of this practice among underage children, as two women in a group interview pointed out:

A lot of these men try to ask for your phone number, so if you give your phone number, that is the beginning. Even these young girls just ring up any random number, and if a man answers, they try to start a relationship. A mother may try to look inside her daughter's handbag; she finds numbers on a piece of paper, even though her daughter does not have a mobile phone. The daughter is using friends' phones. (Rashida, 35-year-old seamstress with two children)

Yes, these are boys' numbers. And if you search the boy's schoolbag, you can find numbers for girls. And some men try to dial any number and if a girl answers, he tries to approach her by saying, 'Don't you know me, don't you remember me?' And start a relationship. The boys and girls use the phones of friends. The daughter or son may seem to have good behaviour, but they are doing all this stuff outside the home. (Safiya, 45-year-old neighborhood food vendor and mother of two children)

Conclusion

Individual and group priorities are shaped by socio-cultural and historical contexts, but such contexts can also produce conflicting priorities within family units. In a context of commoditized social relations in which participants are motivated to expand their sexual networks to seek more economic and emotional capital for themselves, interviewees felt that individuals are faced with strong incentives toward pursuing these networks even at the cost of undermining trust within the family unit. Such incentives can lead girls to choose to leave school to marry early or engage in TS, and some parents, seeing this, refuse to invest in a daughter's education if they suspect her of being sexually active.²⁶ The lack of trust experienced in the context of TS thus contributes to the continuation of poverty across generations.

Mobile communication, despite its many advantages conceded by interviewees, is also perceived to deepen a lack of social trust in Tandale due to its role in facilitating clandestine sexual relationships. Mobile communication allows individuals to easily expand the number of potential network partners outside the bonds of familial cooperation, while at the same time enabling them to conceal evidence of short-term benefit-seeking behaviours from their long-term cooperation partners within the family. This happens not only because mobile telephony enables private communication that would otherwise be difficult to arrange, but because it reduces the contextual cues provided by interlocutors and thus allows people to 'lie', particularly regarding their whereabouts at the moment of the call.

Although the major causes of TS among underage youth in Tandale are lack of employment, gendered income inequalities and the ineffectuality of education as a road out of poverty, the role of mobile phones cannot be ignored, since they provide a means for children as young as ten years of age to maintain sexual relationships without their parents' knowledge. The persons I interviewed in Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge expressed

the view that coordinating intergenerational strategies out of poverty has become increasingly difficult as transactional sex becomes a primary means of subsistence for many girls and young women, and as young people have more time and energy than do their parents and grandparents to invest in learning new communication technologies.

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NOTES

¹ The money given in transactional sex should not be viewed from a Western perspective as an impersonal medium of rational exchange since, in the context of some Sub-Saharan African cultures, money has a strong emotive component. In my interview data, 'real love' cannot necessarily be separated from monetary exchange, and love is expressed through the giving of money (see also Hunter 2010; Poulin 2006; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Oxlund 2011).

² The exception is charity given to the poor in fulfillment of religious obligations.

³ Based on information and statistics obtained from the local government office of each subward, the population of Kwa Tumbo is approximately 12,000 while that of Mkunduge is near 16,000. Kwa Tumbo and Mkunduge fulfill all of the UN-Habitat's criteria for a slum (lack of clean water, sanitation, tenure, durable housing, and sufficient space) except for one: structure owners have relatively secure tenure, due to Tanzania's land laws. Each settlement, or subward, is administered from the local subward government office (*serekali za mitaa*), which is physically located within the settlement. Women comprise slightly over half of the population in both settlements. Both settlements are highly diverse in ethnic terms: for example the 107 persons interviewed in 2012 and 2013 self-identified as belonging to 33 different ethnic groups.

⁴ The thirteen-year-old informant requested to be interviewed and permission was obtained from her mother.

⁵ Due to the shameful stigma attached to a lack of primary-level education, some of the persons who reported having completed primary level education may not have actually done so.

⁶ A certain amount of pre-selection of interviewees therefore went on behind the scenes before I arrived in the mornings to interview. Presumably only interviewees who would have been 'safe' to interview (i.e. no drug addicts, alcoholics or known thieves) were selected. Conversely, potential interviewees were probably told in advance the general topics (i.e. sexual relationships, early marriage) I wanted to ask about, and therefore some persons might have declined to be interviewed without my being aware of it.

⁷ While these desires are on the one hand fuelled by a global consumer culture, on the other they can be seen as 'needs' in a cultural context where personal appearance is perceived to be important for attracting male partners with money. Men I interviewed admitted that they prefer—and are more likely to offer gifts to—women who look sophisticated and well-groomed (see also Maganja et al. 2007).

⁸ All names of interviewees have been changed to protect their anonymity.

⁹ Despite claims in the research literature that traditional rituals linked to adolescence have all but died out in most parts of Tanzania (Mbunda, 1991; Mzinga 2002), some girls in the settlements I studied are sent back to rural villages when they reach puberty in order to be sequestered in a room of a relative's house, there to receive moral and practical guidance from an older woman, including advice not to engage in sexual relations before marriage. According to my interviewees, the period during which girls remain secluded in *unyago* ranges from one day to three months, depending on the customs of her ethnic

group, the wishes of relatives, and whether or not the girl is attending school. Typically, the end of the *unyago* rite is marked by a celebration featuring traditional food, drink and dancing, in which the girl is given gifts and her family is congratulated on raising the girl properly.

¹⁰ In group interviews, participants tended to speak at the same time and add to each other's statements in a way which made it impossible to accurately attribute statements to individual speakers separately. Therefore some interview quotes are presented here as joint statements.

¹¹ Employment of any kind—formal or informal—has been increasingly difficult to access in Sub-Saharan Africa for over a decade. This situation has resulted from economic restructuring in the hope of market-led growth, the withdrawal of the state from social and economic intervention, and in particular the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) promoted by the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s and 1990s (Robertson 1994; Amis 1995; ILO 1998). The effects of the SAPs were particularly intense in Tanzania, starting in the mid-1980s, following the failure of the state's earlier socialist economic policies. Intense competition due to migration and population growth has led to increasing self-exploitation by individuals compelled to invest more labor for less profit. The growth of an informal economy of survival in Sub-Saharan Africa has placed considerable strain on family support systems as well as on communities (e.g. Hansen and Vaa 2004).

¹² Such jobs included truck driver, tailor, carpenter, security guard, construction worker, owner of television kiosk, butcher's assistant, day-worker at a factory, driver or conductor of privately owned '*dala dala*' buses, vendor of second-hand Western clothing in a marketplace, or seller of wood from rural areas to furniture-makers in the city.

¹³ It must be noted that obtaining reliable self-reported income figures is difficult for incomes which are highly unstable.

¹⁴ A few interviewees pointed out that in some households, husbands do not allow their wives to work, and women seeking jobs in physically demanding sectors such as construction might be refused a job due to their gender.

¹⁵ The term 'sexual economy' has been employed by geographer Mark Hunter (2002: 105, 110), who carried out an ethnographic study on the economic and emotional components of transactional sex and HIV/AIDS among migrant workers in South Africa.

¹⁶ Interviewees from several different ethnic groups explained that girls are already warned about *tamaa* when undergoing puberty rites (*unyago*). According to one 58-year-old widow with six children: '[in *unyago*] they teach you to stay away from *tamaa*, to not be tempted by it. If you see another girl wearing a new dress, then you should not want that same dress; if you see a man, you should not want him when you already have a husband; or if you are in school, you should concentrate on your studies and not enter into a relationship [with a boy].'

¹⁷ Two exceptions are Mark Hunter's *Love in the Time of Aids* (2010), in which text messages were used as source data, and Julie Archambault's (2011) article 'Breaking up because of the phone'.

¹⁸ Due to my interview method, which avoided direct personal questions, I do not have empirical data which could refute or support interviewees' suggestions that a significant proportion of monogamous relationships in Tandale are of short duration.

¹⁹ Amira, a 26-year-old mother of three children, explained: 'These parents are poor, so when the daughters go out and come back and bring 10,000 or 20,000 Tzs to the parents, the parents are happy. So the mother might say to her daughter, "Be careful not to lose him".'

²⁰ According to a government study, the national HIV prevalence rate for Dar es Salaam is 8.9 per cent overall and 10.2 per cent for women (Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS) et al. 2008). Rates in Tandale are certainly higher than this average; a recent Dar es Salaam newspaper article named Tandale as one of three wards with the highest prevalence rates for HIV infection in the city (Ippmedia 2010). Transactional sex is a major factor behind HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy among underage youth in Tandale, especially since boyfriends and girlfriends often avoid condom use in order to prove their trust in each other.

²¹ Both men and women explained to me that in many cases the father of the baby knows the baby is his and wants to help the child, but has no source of income with which to do so. Sometimes the father of

the child is a student dependent on his parents, and fears that his parents will stop paying his school fees if they discover he has made a girl pregnant. If the girl is under sixteen years of age, the man may be afraid to admit to having had sexual relations with her which would be punishable under Tanzanian law.

²² The local government in Mkunduge has intervened in two ways. First, girls bring formal complaints to the government office against their parents, at which point the government officials remind the parents that the marriage of minors without their consent is against the law and threaten them with police intervention. Second, police acting on tip-offs have gone to the weddings of minors to prevent them from taking place.

²³ For instance in one case which came before the local government office in Mkunduge in 2011, a girl's parents had wanted to educate their underage daughter further, but she wanted to quit school and marry a boy of the same age. In a letter written to the subward office, the girl wrote that she was too tired to go back to school, and that, 'I won't go back even if you beat me or take me to the police' (Interview with official of the Mkunduge subward government, March 3, 2012).

²⁴ Among my interviewees, the first mobile phone users in Mkunduge and Kwa Tumbo purchased their phones in the mid-1990s.

²⁵ One reason is the immediacy of communication facilitated by with mobile phones: there is no need for someone to carry messages between the girl and boy. Twenty-one-year-old William explained that without a mobile phone, 'when you want to contact a girl, then you must use a messenger or someone else's phone. You must use an agent between you and the girl. If this agent is a man, he might be attracted to the girl and use that opportunity to try with the girlfriend and steal her. And if it is a girl, she might do the same with the guy. That is the danger.'

²⁶ Although completing secondary school does not automatically lead to better opportunities for students of either gender, *lack* of secondary schooling condemns young persons in Dar es Salaam to the lowest-paying unskilled work, or in the case of women, to not having the skills sufficient to even run a small-scale business effectively.

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LAURA STARK, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF ETHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
laura.stark@ju.fi