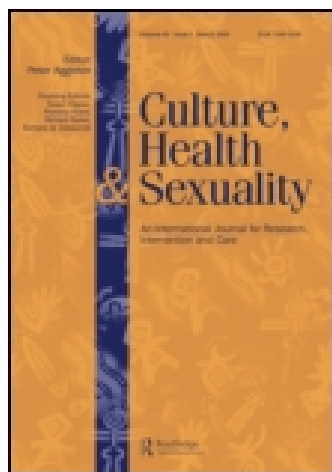


This article was downloaded by: [The UC Irvine Libraries]

On: 12 December 2014, At: 12:30

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tchs20>

Mobility, sexual networks and exchange among bodabodamen in southwest Uganda

Stella Nyanzi , Barbara Nyanzi , Bessie Kalina & Robert Pool
Published online: 06 Oct 2011.

To cite this article: Stella Nyanzi , Barbara Nyanzi , Bessie Kalina & Robert Pool (2004) Mobility, sexual networks and exchange among bodabodamen in southwest Uganda , Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care, 6:3, 239-254, DOI: [10.1080/13691050310001658208](https://doi.org/10.1080/13691050310001658208)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691050310001658208>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Mobility, sexual networks and exchange among *bodabodamen* in southwest Uganda

STELLA NYANZI, BARBARA NYANZI, BESSIE KALINA
and ROBERT POOL

In order to examine the sexual behaviour of a highly mobile social group, qualitative data and quantitative data were elicited from 212 private motorbike taxi-men, locally called *bodabodamen*, from two study sites in Masaka, Uganda. Selection criteria were availability and willingness to participate in the study. Research techniques employed were a questionnaire, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and case studies. Findings indicate that *bodabodamen* are a highly mobile group who engage in frequent seasonal rural-urban migration. Consequent to this, *bodabodamen* have a wide network of both occasional and regular sexual partnerships. Both serial and concurrent multiple partnerships are with adults, youths, widows, students, sugar-mummies, barmaids, commercial sex workers, tailors. Exchange plays a significant role in sexual negotiations but the act of giving to a sexual partner is ambivalent in its social interpretation. Since *bodabodamen* have regular access to cash, they have higher bargaining power for sex. Implications for HIV/AIDS prevention are discussed.

Introduction

Studies reveal that physical mobility is a key factor which influences the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Hunt 1989, Paul 2000). Research demonstrates that in parts of Africa areas with high migration are more likely to record higher HIV infection rates than areas where migration is less extensive (Kane *et al.* 1993, Kintu *et al.* 2000). To date, however, research on the link between mobility and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa tends to have focused on specific high-risk mobile or migrant groups (Cohen and Trussell 1996). Studies carried out in East and Southern Africa to investigate this relationship focus on truck drivers, soldiers, refugees, miners and sex workers (SWs). Most are epidemiological in character and only a few have tackled the social dimensions of risk and vulnerability (Gysels 2001). Migration studies also tend to emphasize cross-boundary migration (UNAIDS 2000) as opposed to internal migration. We therefore chose to study commercial motorbike-taxi riders, locally known as *bodabodamen*, because they are an indigenous employment group that is

Stella Nyanzi works at the Medical Research Council Laboratories, Banjul, The Gambia, *Barbara Nyanzi* and *Bessie Kalina* are with the Medical Research Council (UK) Programme on AIDS in Uganda/Uganda Virus Research Institute, Uganda. *Robert Pool* works at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK. All correspondence should be addressed to: Stella Nyanzi, MRC Laboratories, Fajara, PO Box 273, Banjul, The Gambia; e-mail: snyanzi@yahoo.com

highly mobile but have not been studied before. This paper discusses the mobility and migration patterns, and describes the sexual networks and exchange dynamics in sexual relationships among *bodabodamen* in south-western Uganda.

Methods

A socio-environmental approach was adopted centring on intra- and inter rural-urban mobility and migration; mobile employment and populations in social interaction with *bodabodamen*; sexuality, sex work and sexually transmitted diseases—with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS. Triangulation between qualitative and quantitative methods provided a check on validity and reliability of data.

Study design

The study was organized in three phases. First, a pilot study was conducted to explore the feasibility of a full study, to pre-test research instruments and to assess the study population's specific needs. Next, we undertook exploratory research. Finally, we held interactive workshops to address participants' felt and expressed needs identified in the above two phases of work.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Science and Ethics Committee of the Uganda Virus Research Institute. After an explanation about the study, *bodabodamen* were free to either refuse or participate in the study. Participants also had the choice of withdrawing their participation at any time, with or without explaining their reasons.

Study sites

The study was located in two sites: Nyendo and the urban core of Masaka Municipality, in Masaka district, south-western Uganda. Work took place over a 2-year period between 2000 and 2001. Nyendo is a peripheral peri-urban area located along the East and Central African coastal, highway hinterland, with several over-crowded slum dwellings, shanty structures, a relatively flourishing economic centre and a buoyant night-life. Four main roads and several feeder roads from rural centres meet in Nyendo. Masaka Municipality is a peri-urban setting containing the administrative organs of the district. With a relatively good infrastructure, Masaka Municipality shelters the social elite, several government offices and non-governmental organizations.

Sampling methods

The sampling frame comprised all the busiest *bodaboda* stages: four stages in Nyendo and five in Masaka Municipality. Criteria for selecting

participants were based on availability and willingness to participate in the study. In all, 221 *bodabodamen* (87 Nyendo, 134 Masaka Municipality) responded to a questionnaire. For subsequent focus group discussions, the sample was stratified to represent the *bodaboda* categories of self-employed, employed and *kibaluwa* (men who rent a motorbike on hourly basis). Recruitment into in-depth individual interviews was based on random sampling from the initial 221 participants. Ten case studies were purposively selected because their life histories provided rich narratives illustrating the contextual variety embedded within this one employment group.

Data collection

All data were collected in the local language—Luganda—by highly trained and experienced interviewers, at a privately arranged venue to facilitate freedom of expression and confidentiality. Field notes covering all observations were recorded and discussed in debriefing sessions.

Fourteen focus group discussions were held with 148 participants, to explore topics arising from the questionnaire. As a data collection technique, focus group discussions are well-suited to the south-western Uganda context. While capable of generating extensive data in a group setting (Morgan 1993), they also maintain cultural sensitivity. Most participants were from the Baganda tribe, whose traditional culture is oral-based and community-focussed. Discussions stratified by sex are important avenues for reinforcing group identification and social cohesion (Roscoe 1965).

A select group of 40 men (20 from each location) were subsequently invited to attend in-depth interviews in which themes that emerged in the course of focus group discussions were further investigated on an individual basis. Ten of these men were selected as in-depth case study follow-up.

Workshops

We conducted two workshops based on the felt needs of participants, expressed during the previous data collection stages. Activities included dissemination of information, the distribution of condoms, and the provision of voluntary counselling and testing. Information provided covered a wide range of topics including condom use (with demonstrations), family planning, sexual health, common diseases in the area, fidelity in sexual relationships, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Data analysis

Qualitative data were recorded on audio-tape, transcribed verbatim, and translated from Luganda into English. Field notes and transcribed texts were analysed using Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development, Berlin) a

software program based on the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Quantitative data were analysed using EPI Info 6 (Epidemiology Program Office CDC, Atlanta).

Results

The mean age of the participants was 23 (range 17–40) years. Predominant ethnic groups were the Baganda (76%), Banyankore (8%), Nyarwanda (5%). Catholics were the major religious denomination (56%), followed by the Muslims (31%) and the Protestants (10%). Education levels were mostly low with 69% of men having attended only primary school, 28% attaining some 'O' level education, and only three participants with post-'O' level training. Most men (79%) had *bodaboda* employment as their only source of income, while 21% had other jobs including digging, animal husbandry, tailoring, bricklaying qualifications and petty trade.

Mobility, migration and sexual activity

Bodabodamen are a highly mobile employment group. The four major categories of people mentioned as their most frequent passengers were workers, traders, students and people commuting to and from hospital. The prevailing socio-economic climate in Masaka district contributes to the high demand for *bodaboda* services. Employment opportunities and viable commercial activities are clustered in the urban settings and trading centres. Therefore, people travel daily from the rural areas where they have their homes, into the towns to earn a living. Then they travel back into the villages in the evenings.

Similar to the workers, many students in the villages daily attend school in the towns. Patients and their care-takers are often ferried from the villages into the towns to attend missionary or government hospitals. *Bodabodas* are the most viable transport option for many of these people. Peaks in mobility correspond to increased financial, commercial or socio-economic activity in the area including seasonal agricultural fairs, weekly mobile markets, disco nights, seasonal sports events, start and end of academic terms, salary week, festive seasons including Christmas, Eid and some national public holidays. To meet the rise in the demand for *bodaboda* services, a category of *bodabodamen* known as *kibaluwa* (already mentioned above), rent motorbikes. These work in the hours when the motorbike would otherwise not be used, mostly overnight and/or at dawn.

The weak infrastructure, specifically the road network, is also contributory to the high mobility of *bodabodamen*. Masaka district contains 651 kilometres of tarmac road, and 1435 kilometres of murrum road. In individual interviews, *bodabodamen* complained about the bad conditions of the roads, particularly potholes, 'dust in the dry seasons', 'slippery mud in the rainy season', and 'no signs or marks showing you what is on the roads', 'no lights at night'. However, even with all these unfavourable conditions, *bodabodas* were deemed a better mode of transport because

‘unlike the taxis, big buses or motorcars, a *bodaboda* can manoeuvre its way around the potholes’ and also ‘ride along the narrow paths without any difficulty’.

The participants said that preference of *bodabodas* to taxis has grown dramatically over the years particularly because they are cheaper. Their fuel consumption is much less. They are also less taxing and faster than bicycles. Furthermore, although *bodabodamen* work from particular stages, they are not restricted to one travel-route like taxis and buses. They travel to any place at any time, including the night. *Bodaboda* charges are negotiable. Other vehicles (apart from special hire services) travel to only particular destinations at fixed times and for fixed fares. Motorbikes take passengers to the doorstep of their destination whether it is rural or urban, unlike taxis which drop them at either the taxi-park, particular taxi-stages or by the roadside. Furthermore, the waiting charges of a *bodaboda* are much less than those of taxis.

The personal element and privacy fostered by the *bodaboda* also contribute to their popularity. Participants said that people travelling to secret places or on private missions prefer to travel with *bodabodas* than other motor-vehicles. In the questionnaire, 19 respondents said they mostly take women going to traditional healers. Seven in-depth interviews contained accounts of participants secretly transporting women to have or from having abortions. A few participants mentioned taking people to their secret lovers.

In focus group discussions, participants emphasized the necessity of moving from the villages into the peri-urban centres in order to be successful in the *bodaboda* business. Several young single men said they had left their parents’ homes, to rent one-room houses (*akazigo*—singular, *buzigo*—plural) in the slum or in surrounding suburbs. Married men, on the other hand, left their wives and children in the villages and rented *buzigo* during the week, returning to the village on Sunday to visit their families. Many had a dual residence: one rural and one urban.

Questionnaire data indicate that 84% of respondents had migrated from the villages to the towns. Out of these, 89 participants had shifted specifically in search of *bodaboda* employment or as a result of becoming *bodabodamen*. In focus group discussions participants discussed migration.

Facilitator: What is it that causes you to leave home?

Leo: Most of us left home because we needed to find employment.

Samson: We leave home because we need to look for money. You can sit at your father’s house and fail to get a job.

Facilitator: Isn’t there work to do in your home areas?

Leo: The work in the villages is farming and it does not pay as well as the easier jobs that are here in Nyendo. Like us who ride *bodabodas*, we do not sweat, we just sit on a bike and make money.

Sixty per cent of participants said that they still had financial responsibility for family members left in the villages. Furthermore 79% of participants reported that they frequently or regularly visited their village-homes to take provisions, check on the family, monitor their gardens or other small-scale businesses, spend public holidays there, or attend traditional socio-cultural ceremonies like funeral rites, burials and weddings.

However, the frequency and regularity of these urban-rural visits decrease as the men acquire new activities and acquaintances to occupy their weekends. *Bodabodamen* who have wives in the village do not encourage them to visit in town. It is the man who is supposed to visit the woman.

Some *bodabodamen* reported moving to other localities to avoid the repercussions of their sexual actions, such as making a girl pregnant, forced marriage, imprisonment, fines, fights with female partners who catch them with another woman, or fights with other men over a common lover:

Interviewer: Does that mean that you just came to Masaka to work?

Isaac: Yes. The other thing that made me leave Mbarara was to avoid the problems of the wrongs I had done.

Interviewer: What wrongs?

Isaac: The pregnancy I have just told you about. I feared that things might become hot for me. Her parents could try and have me imprisoned.

Interviewer: So, if she had not conceived, you would not have left Mbarara?

Isaac: Exactly. I would not have left Mbarara because I had work to do in Mbarara.

Interviewer: Were you a bodaboda man in Mbarara? *Isaac:* No. I was a mechanic.

Other reasons for shifting include the desire for independence from parents, the death of parents, dropping out of school, the need for sex, mistreatment by step-mothers, cultural expectations, housework chores at home, the desire to earn more money.

Ali: The other major reason that really leads to leaving home is the fact that if you have a girl that you love outside (*gwoyagala ebbali*), there is no way you can bring her into your father's house to sleep with you. So you decide to leave home and rent a house where you can take her. You rent a place so that you just take her to your place for the whole night without anyone getting bothered about your action.

High levels of mobility and migration impact on the sexual activity of the *bodabodamen*. Many of the participants agreed that when one shifts into a new locality, there is a need to acquire a new woman, whether or not he maintains contact with his partner in the previous location.

Sexual networks

Most *bodabodamen* are 'single' in town and 'married' in the village. In this regard there was an interesting disparity between the questionnaire and focus group discussion data. In the questionnaire 50% of the men said that they were married. However, in the group discussions participants claimed that most of them were 'single' (*babuwuulu*). Responses given in in-depth individual interviews illuminated the issue.

Interviewer: Okay. What about wife number two? Doesn't she mind that you already have wife number one?

Kato: She does not mind about the first one. In fact the first one does not mind about this second one.

Interviewer: Did you pay bride price for both these women? How come both of them are your wives?

Kato: I paid for one of them. I paid her parents. This other second one is also my wife. When I made her pregnant, I decided to rent a house for her. That way she also became my wife.

Interviewer: Does her family know you?

Kato: Her *ssenga* [paternal aunt] knows about me. I have never formally introduced myself to her, but then she knows about me.

Interviewer: Are you planning to go to her parents' home to introduce yourself, or will she just stay with you like that simply because she conceived your child?

Kato: I have not officially made her my wife. Actually speaking, my father would never allow me to introduce two women. He is the *SabaKristu* [a leader in the Catholic congregation] of our area.

Interviewer: You have told me that you have two wives. Did you marry them officially? How did they become your wives?

Bbosa: I did not marry any of them. I did not marry by giving a ring to any of them.

Interviewer: Did they introduce you to their homes? Do their parents know you?

Bbosa: No, none of them know me.

Interviewer: How come you say that they are your wives?

Bbosa: I rent a house for each of them. I buy them whatever they need to use in their homes. When I am tired I go and rest at either one of their homes. I am the one who pays rent for their houses.

Interviewer: Does the fact that you pay their rent make them your wives?

Bbosa: Totally! The fact that I got her a place she can call her own makes her my wife. For the other one I even gave her capital to begin a shop. Why shouldn't she be my wife? I regard both as my wives. I never went to their parental homes to introduce myself, but I am their husband.

In agreement with earlier findings of Nabaitu *et al.* (1994), the concept of 'marriage' is ambivalent in contemporary Kiganda society. Among this particular social group, there are several categories of marital status: 'married', 'polygamous', 'cohabiting', 'separated', 'divorced', 'widowed' and 'single'. The boundaries of these categories are very fluid. Connotations overlap. Among the 110 respondents who indicated they were married in questionnaire responses, for example, 34 divided into sub-categories their marital status as married, 69 as cohabiting, 4 as polygamous and 3 as separated. 61 of these participants reported having one or more casual partners in addition to the marital partner. Out of the 110 participants who said they were not married, 104 categorized their marital status as single, 3 as separated and 3 as widowed. 77 of these unmarried men reported that they have one or more casual sexual partnerships.

Bodabodamen were vibrant in their discussions about the various kinds of women that they have partnerships. Focus group discussions became very loud and boisterous when they got to this topic. A *bodabodaman* may have a socially-recognized and accepted 'wife' whom he keeps in his village home. This kind of sexual partner is referred to as *omukyala oweka* (the wife for the home). Marriage in Buganda can be either civil, when processed through the administrative organs; religious, when it is formalized in church/mosque; or customary, where a man pays bride-price and is introduced to a woman's family. Depending on how he married her or her position in his sequence of partners (see also Blanc *et al.* 1996), she may also be called *mukyala mukulu* (elder wife), *mukyala owempetta* (wife who bears my ring), *mukyala siniya* (senior wife), *mukyala namba emu* (wife number one) or *maama wa baana* (mother of my children). *Bodabodamen* said it is easier to leave this first (and often senior) wife and her progeny in the village because it is cheaper to raise and maintain a family in the rural area, than in the towns. This partner is presented as relatively permanent.

There were also a few *bodabodamen* who said that they lived with their

mukyala weka in the *kazigo* or other town dwellings. Some of these argued that they were not originally from the villages, but from the towns. Hence they have no village-home in which to leave their wives. Others left the villages when they were still single and later married girls in the towns.

In addition, to a 'wife for the home', *bodabodamen* said that it was possible to have another semi-permanent sexual partner known as *omukyala owebbali* (an outside wife). Other labels for this kind of partner were 'spare-tyre' and 'my second hand'.¹ Participants were ambiguous in their use of the label *omukyala owebbali*. Some used this term to refer to a second wife whose family has given the man consent to marry her. In this case, the relationship was well-known to and approved by the girl's relations, and the relationship was polygynous. The term *omukyala owebbali* was also used to refer to a regular sexual partner. This kind of relationship might either be concealed from public and from the families of the parties concerned, or it may be known but not approved of, or it may be known and accepted. The outside wife is maintained concurrently with the wife for the home, although they may or may not be known to each other. She may either live in the village or live with some level of regularity with the *bodabodaman* in his *kazigo*. This outside wife may also live in the urban area in a house rented for her by her male sexual partner. It is possible for a man to have more than one outside wife.

In addition to these two types of partners, a *bodabodaman* can also have a regular partner called *muganzi wange* (my lover). *Bodabodamen* claimed to have sexual access to these lovers whenever they wanted, without having any moral or social obligation toward them. They said that these women were aware that the relationship was not 'serious' and that they knew of the man's other sexual partners and were not expected to get jealous. Such women have no formal claim on the man, although he often gives her small gifts, cash and food. Interestingly, the term *omuganzi* was used interchangeably when describing both casual and regular sexual relationships.

Bodabodamen said that this category of sexual partners consisted mostly of schoolgirls, even though they knew about the legal and social implications of such relationships. This confirms findings from an earlier study conducted among school pupils in the same district (Nyanzi *et al.* 2001). Other types of partners mentioned include bar maids, salon workers, waitresses, house-girls (servants), shop-attendants, tailors, nurses from a nearby hospital and even some teachers.

Another type of sexual partner mentioned by the *bodabodamen* was the one-night-stand woman called an *ekkubo* (*makubo*—pl.), literally 'the road'. This label comes from an expression *okulonda ekkubo* which means 'picked off the road'. *Ekkubo* are often stranded women who come into the town from the villages in search of employment, but fail to acquire lodging for the night. *Ekkubo* are also poor women who have no money for their transport fares and thus have to pay with sexual services after the *bodabodaman* has dropped them at their destination. Another category of *ekkubo* consists of girls who leave discotheques or bars late in the night and are too drunk to find their way home. *Bodabodamen* said that they take advantage of this condition and have sex with them.

Tendo: Some girls are very easy to *kulonda makubo*. Such girls come into town and have nowhere to sleep for the night. She has just come into town and knows no one. She may have come to look for a job and night falls before she has arranged where to spend the night. Those ones are easy to *kulonda makubo*. You solve her problem for her when you take her into your place.

Kintu: That one will move out of the area the next day. The other type is one who works in the area but is taken by different men each day. The chances of getting her again are very small because another man will have taken her already.

Andrew: *Makubo* are also girls we meet in *Ambiance* [popular discotheque]. These girls go to the disco without male partners because they know that they will find willing partners there. While you are dancing with her, you ask her for sex. If she allows, you take her to your house.

Interviewer: What kind of women do you find in *Ambiance*?

Joe: Many *makubo* are found in *Ambiance*. Such a woman is just waiting for a man to pick her and pay her.

Dan: A woman in *Ambiance* never refuses to give sex. That is what takes her to the disco alone.

Steven: Those *Ambiance* women have no traffic jam at all. They always give in without hesitating.

Joe: Picking *ekku* is like eating some roast meat, yet you are also going to have a meal of boiled meat stew. The snack cannot stop you from having a proper meal. It is all just about having a good time, for a while.

Lastly, there are the *makubo* who cunningly lure *bodabodamen* into suggesting sex to them, as they ride on the bikes. Participants said that these girls send out signals (both direct and implied) to the men, including sitting a-straddle the bike, holding the man in erogenous areas, dressing in luring clothes, smiling and gesturing coyly.

Toph: She can say, 'Take me to Saza'. On the way, she begins putting you in the mood for those things. You may tell her to hold onto the seat of the bike, but instead she holds onto your body. I think you see what I mean. As you know what nature is, the man's whole system gets disrupted. Instead of holding onto the bike she holds onto your body. Then she suddenly begins tickling you all over your body. Once you ask her for sex, she allows and you can either go into the bushes or to a lodge.

Zziwa: She says, 'Anyway, let us go'. So we put her onto the motorbike. By the way, many times we put them on our motorbikes when they are dressed in these very short dresses. You know the minis I am talking about. Then I may tell her to sit the female way and she refuses. She sits a-straddle—like a man on the motorbike. Now as we are on our way, she moves off her seat and sits onto the driver's seat. Remember that the dress she is wearing is very short, and has rolled up. In fact, each time the person seated on the back seat gets closer to the front seat, there is need to further spread the legs. And as the legs spread wider apart, the dress rolls higher up. So her parts, with all their warmth, are right onto the man. Most of us men get tempted by such girls.

Sex workers (SWs) known as *malaya* or *abakazi abeetunda* (women who sell themselves) are also part of the *bodabodamen*'s sexual network. The term *malaya* is employed ambiguously to mean 'women who willingly provide sexual services to men, for money', or 'a woman who has casual sex with multiple partners'. Participants said such a relationship were characterized by 'loads of pleasure', 'secrecy', 'no free sex', 'no commitment'. *Malayas* are mostly in the slum trading centres, but also in the urban centre clubs and bars.

Paulo: Those women are deadly!

Vincent: Such women who are looking for your money. They are the kind you tell, 'I have got 1000 shillings. Will you come with me?'

Atim: Some ask, 'Do you have 500 shillings? If you give me some money I will allow to do it'.
Kamali: To those women, sex is a job, an occupation. That is the work they do to earn money.
Jimmy: They come to the streets and bars to make money from men.
Kizza: You do not even have to look hard to see them. They paint their faces with lipstick and powder. Then they wear revealing short dresses. That is how you know what they are after.
Chris: They come out in the evenings because that is when men are retiring and going home or to the bars. They work at night and sleep during the day. It is just like you leave your home in the morning, with the intention to make money that day.

Frequency and regularity of sex with a *malaya* is dependent on income. Reasons for having sex with a *malaya* range from 'they are sexually experienced', 'know many sex styles' and 'are available any time anywhere'. Some participants also argued that a *malaya* is cheaper to have, maintain and relate with, than a wife or regular partner. There was no need to pay her rent, buy her food or make a commitment. Attitudes towards having sex with a *malaya* were highly ambivalent. Some *bodabodamen* fervently discouraged having sex with a *malaya* because it could expose them to STIs including HIV/AIDS. Moreover, if it became known that a man was having sex with a *malaya*, it could disrupt his steady relationships. Others defended their preference for *malayas* over steady partnerships. However, there was consensus about the necessity of secrecy and discretion when having a sexual relationship with a *malaya*. This offers evidence of the tension between what was socially acceptable and what actually occurs.

Amidst ribaldry and great laughter, sexual partners known as 'sugar-mummies' 'off-layers' or '*namukadde*' (old ladies) were also discussed.² These are women who were much older and often relatively wealthy. Many were married, widowed or divorced. Such women initiated the sexual relationship, which was a reversal of traditional roles (see Nyanzi *et al.* 2001). *Bodabodamen* give several reasons for having sexual relationships with 'sugar-mummies'. These ranged from maximizing material benefits, locally known as *detoothing*, the attraction of sexual experience, better sexual performance and experimentation, to the prestige of knowing that an older woman craves you, suggesting that you know how to satisfy her.

Interviewer: What reasons lead you to relate with sugar-mummies?

Peter: Some sugar-mummies are very good-looking. You see her and she looks much younger than she really is.

Kalisa: Older women were trained and counselled by their *ssengas*, in the ways to please a man. The young girls you see around today did not get their *ssenga's* counselling about sexual relationships, or how to behave when with their husbands. I do not know why this is the case. However, the older women were trained as young girls. It was the custom in Buganda in those days.

Tom: In fact when you have sex with an old woman, you may decide never to love a young girl again. The old women know how to make you feel like a real man.

Jamadhha: Immediately you get to her place, she comments, 'Eh, the dust on your shoes! I do not want my man to look like that'. So she takes your shoes off your feet and gives them a thorough cleaning. She cares about you. You feel loved.

Kamu: Also, their love is very genuine. She pampers and spoils you with whatever you wish for. She is not interested in your money because she has a lot of it. All that she wants is your love. When you have sex with her, she gives you so much pleasure because she knows many different things that you may not know.

Simon: I also feel that older women are bold in their love. They are not shy and embarrassed about undressing before you like young girls are.

Enoch: The other thing that happens is that the young men may see that the woman has a lot of

money. So they go for her money and not her. Because she has some money, you decide to get married to her. No one goes to buy a car and buys an old one. [laughter]

Even though there was the advantage of support from sugar-mummies, many participants felt that sexual relationships involving older women had negative qualities as well. The general feeling was that sexual relationships were short-lived and often kept hidden. A few participants felt it was demeaning to have a sexual relationship with a sugar-mummy, particularly because 'she is old enough to be your mother. It would be like making love to your very own mother!'

Others stressed the fact that many sugar-mummies were widowed, infected with HIV and intent on spreading it. However, many of participants said that they thought they were already infected with HIV and reasoned it was better to obtain wealth, affection and sex from the sugar-mummy and then die, than to suffer poverty, loneliness and misery when death is imminent anyway.

Exchange dynamics in sexual relationships

Bodabodamen tend to be relatively better-off financially than their peers. Also, unlike peers who have to wait for salaries, *bodabodamen* receive payment after each trip. In questionnaire responses, 60% participants said the best thing about their job was that they can easily earn quick money. With money comes higher bargaining power in sexual relationships. Many participants felt that 'once a man gets money, he will look for a woman,' 'one cannot have money and just buy food. No! He goes to look for a woman'.

Tom: It is this money that tempts us to get women. Once you get money, you know that you can have any woman you want. It is up to you to choose from the lot.

John: Money is the devil! When you get money, you begin seeing women in a different light.

They also believed that since they are known to have money, women (both casual and regular) interested in maximizing gains will find them sexually appealing. All 40 participants in the in-depth interviews had given a 'gift' (material, monetary or a service) to their sexual partners. Such gifts included cash, second-hand dresses, body lotion, perfume, roast meat, fried chicken, bottled beer, soap, paying for rent or transport, taking her out to a function, giving her a lift on his bike, underwear and paraffin.

Only six participants out of the above sample had received such a gift from a female partner. Two of these partners were 'sugar-mummies' and supposedly wealthier than the *bodabodamen*. In the focus group discussions, men said it was not the norm for women to give men gifts (other than sex) in reciprocation. It is the man who should give the gifts. He determines what to give, how much, when and where.

Participants explained that the significance of the gift given to their sexual partners depends on the stage of the relationship. When given before a relationship has begun, the gift (particularly money) indicated to the recipient that the man is interested in starting a sexual relationship. Participants said they could not give money to a girl they were not related

to, without implying sexual interest. If the woman played hard-to-get, the gift was intended to persuade her to start a relationship. Furthermore, participants said that they give gifts to a woman in reward for sexual services. Is this a payment? No, participants argued. It is just a sign of gratitude for her not having refused to have sex. Gifts are also given to maintain a sexual relationship. Local culture demands that the man provide for his regular sexual partner and in this case gifts are given out of duty.

Some *bodabodamen* claimed feeling more invulnerable with more money. They felt that money also gave them higher bargaining power when it came to negotiating condom use. Some participants said that with money they could afford condoms, pay more to convince a sexual partner to use condoms, and choose less risky girls who require higher payments. Others argued the opposite. They said paying a sexual partner more, entitled them to the pleasure of 'live' (unprotected) sex. Also, money gave them access to alcohol, which could impair their judgement, and to discs that expose them to high-risk groups including bar maids and sex workers.

While the men's dominant discourse portrays women as passive recipients of the gifts, a subordinate discourse describes some women (particularly those from the townships) as using ploys to maximize the benefits from their sexual relationships. The former presents a weak, silent woman who does not know her value. She does not set the price, determine when to get it, bargain for more, or refuse whatever trivia are thrown her way. She gratefully accepts the gift, and makes do with it. The latter described a worldly woman who knows how to make a profit, presents herself as appealing, rips off men, bargains hard for higher returns and can walk away from a raw deal.

In order to maximize gains from men interested in having sex, participants reported that some women (particularly urban ones and schoolgirls) indulge in a practice known as *okukuula ebimnyo* locally translated as 'detoothing'—an analogy to the dentists' act of pulling teeth. Participants explained that as long as a man hopes to get sex from a girl, he continues to give her gifts and money. Hence, the ploy that cunning females use is to keep a man interested for as long as is safely possible, maximize their gains and then avoiding him when the pressure and demand for sex become intolerable. Since gift-giving is the domain of men, detoothing is generally presented as a women's monopoly. However, two participants stimulated debate when they claimed that they had detoothed women—a sugar-mummy and a student from a wealthy family.

Discussion

Unlike other traditional sectors of the transport industry, the *bodaboda* sector is an indigenous group that has evolved as a consequence of the socio-economic changes in Uganda. Semi-permanent rural-urban migration causes a situation whereby *bodabodamen* become 'single' and away from their partners for a period. With money, peer-pressure, pleasure-seeking

and the call of Masaka night-life in the slums and suburbs, they engage in both serial and concurrent multiple casual and/or regular sexual partnerships. Many of these partners belong to population groups such as sex workers, barmaids, sugar-mummies, widows and students. Simultaneously, *bodabodamen* maintain their sexual relationships with wives or stable partners in the villages. In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, *bodabodamen* are therefore a potential bridging group between the rural-urban, high-low risk, adult-youth, monogamous-multi-partnered divides of society.

Similar to other Ugandan studies (Nabaitu *et al.* 1994, Blanc *et al.* 1996), in this work we found ambiguity in the meaning of 'marriage'. Findings indicate the label embraces a wide range of partnerships including private consensual or forced/arranged unions, conception-related unions, cohabiting, non-ceremonial arrangements, contractual marriages and regular sexual relationships. In addition, polygyny is widespread, hence the phenomenon of second, third, or more wives (Karanja 1994).

Exchange featured significantly in bargaining for sex. As noted elsewhere, however, this transactional sex does not necessarily equate to prostitution. In fact, participants clearly distinguish between payment for sexual activity and the exchange of gifts in other relationships. The significance of the act of giving in return of sex is socially constructed to mean different things depending on *when* it is given. The same act could mean indicating sexual interest, pursuing a potential partner, appreciating a sexual service, valuing a woman's sexual performance, detoothering, perfunctory duty and maintaining a stable relationship. Transaction is however, an integral part of sexual relationships (Nyanzi *et al.* 2001). A continuity from traditional society lies in the man's role of giving the gift, and the woman's role of receiving these and in turn offering sexual services to the man.

Bodabodamen repeatedly move between rural and urban centres without patterned regularity or determinable structure. They haphazardly criss-cross local administrative boundaries, transporting passengers and goods, with more frequency than other commercial transport service-providers. Peaks in their mobility correspond to economic peaks in society. Access to cash avails them of the ability to pay for sex, and acquire partners whenever and wherever they travel. Thus they have a wide sexual network. Thereby, *bodabodamen* are both potential vectors of transmission but also ambassadors of behavioural change, when equipped with appropriate information about sexual health, safer sex and behaviour.

Unlike other employment-groups, *bodabodamen* lack an association that unites them. In Uganda, the association of public transport operators excludes motor-bicycles and bicycles. This, plus their characteristic mobility, heterogeneity and the transitional nature of their estate, makes *bodabodamen* difficult to reach. A useful intervention in reaching and impacting this group must be accessible from both urban and remote rural areas. The starting point would be the organization of a collective but decentralized association of all *bodabodamen*; making them more visible to policy makers and accessible to programme implementers. Beyond this, dissemination of accurate health education could utilize the popular

FM radio stations to broadcast reproductive health programmes specifically addressing *bodabodamen* in local vernacular at appropriate times. Participatory journalism, in which *bodabodamen* participate in radio-shows, a needs' assessment informs the design of programmes, and ongoing feedback sessions facilitate evaluation, would be effective. Training of local male role-models (including *bodabodamen*) as peer-educators, and facilitating them with, condoms, contraceptives and referral slips for STI treatment, would provide points of positive influence for other *bodabodamen* to change their risky sexual behaviour.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the men who participated in the study and to James Whitworth for timely and constructive comments on this paper.

Notes

1. As discussed in Nyanzi *et al.* 2001, contemporary Luganda speakers often combine a mixture of words from the multiple local languages, as well as foreign ones particularly English, (but also French) in one sentence. In this case 'spare-tyre' and 'second-hand' are spoken with heavy Luganda accents as '*sippeya-taya*' and '*sekendi-andi*' respectively.
2. Similarly, 'sugar-mummy' and 'off-layer' are spoken in a localized English version as '*shuga-mami*' and '*woofu-leeya*' respectively, the latter having become a predominant aspect of sexual relationship public discourse in the context.

References

- Blanc, A. K., Wolff, B., Gage, A. J., Ezeh, A. C., Neema, S. and Sekamatte-Sebuliba, J. (1996) *Negotiating Reproductive Outcomes in Uganda* (Calverton, MA: Macro-International Inc. and Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Uganda).
- Cohen, B. and Trussell, J. (eds) (1996) *Preventing and Mitigating AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa: research and data priorities for the social and behavioural sciences* (Washington, DC: National Research Council Panel on Data and Research Priorities).
- Gysels, M. (2001) Truck drivers, middlemen and commercial sex workers: AIDS and the mediation of sex in southwest Uganda. *AIDS Care*, **13**, 373–386.
- Hunt, C. (1989) Migrant labor and sexually transmitted diseases: AIDS in Africa. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, **4**, 353–373.
- Kane, F., Alary, M., Ndoye, I., Coll, A. M., Mboup, S., Gueje, A., Kanki, P. J. and Jolly, J. R. (1993) Temporary expatriation is related to HIV-1 infection in rural Senegal. *AIDS*, **7**, 1261–1265.
- Karanja, W. W. (1994) The phenomenon of 'outside wives': some reflections on its possible influence on fertility. In C. Bledsoe and G. Pison (eds) *Nuptiality in sub-Saharan Africa: contemporary anthropological and demographic perspectives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Kintu, P. M., Whitworth, J., Kamali, A. and Nabaitu, J. (2000) Community migration, mobility and HIV-1 infection in an adult Ugandan population, MoPpC1025 The XIII International Conference, Durban, South Africa.
- Morgan, D. L. (ed.) (1993) *Successful Focus Groups* (London: Sage).
- Morris, M., Wawer, M. J., Makumbi, F., Zavisca, J. R. and Sewankambo, N. (2000) Condom acceptance is higher among travellers in Uganda. *AIDS*, **14**, 733–741.
- Nabaitu, J., Bachengana, C. and Seeley, J. (1994) Marital instability in a rural population in south-west Uganda: implications for the spread of HIV-1 infection. *Africa*, **64**, 2, 243–250.

- Nyanzi, S., Pool, R. and Kinsman, J. (2001) The negotiation of sexual relationships among school pupils in south-western Uganda. *AIDS Care*, **13**, 83–98.
- Paul, S. (2000) Trans-national population movement and HIV/AIDS in the mainland south-east Asia, MoPeD2654 The XIII International Conference, Durban, South Africa.
- Roscoe, J. (1965) *The Baganda: an account of their native customs and beliefs* (London: Frank Cass).
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).
- UNAIDS Inter-country Team for West and Central Africa. (2000) *Findings from the research-action 'Migration and AIDS' Project: Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal*, Abidjan – UNAIDS. Available at: <http://www.onusida-aoc.org/Eng/Publications/Migration>

Résumé

Afin d'examiner les comportements sexuels au sein d'un groupe social extrêmement mobile, des données qualitatives et quantitatives ont été obtenues à partir d'une population de 212 chauffeurs de motos-taxis, localement appelés *bodabodamen*, sur deux sites d'études à Masaka, Ouganda. Les critères de sélection étaient la disponibilité et la volonté de participer à l'étude. Les méthodes employées ont été un questionnaire, des focus-groupes, des entretiens en profondeur et des études de cas.

Les résultats indiquent que les *bodabodamen* sont un groupe très mobile dont les migrations saisonnières des zones rurales vers les zones urbaines sont fréquentes. Cette situation fait qu'ils ont un vaste réseau de partenaires sexuelles aussi bien occasionnelles que régulières. Ce multi-partenariat est à la fois sériel et simultané. Les femmes concernées peuvent être des adultes, des jeunes, des veuves, des étudiantes, des «sugar-mummies» (des femmes âgées, relativement aisées), des hôtesse de bar, des travailleuses sexuelles, des couturières...

L'échange joue un rôle significatif dans les négociations sexuelles mais l'acte de donner à une partenaire sexuelle est ambivalent quant à son interprétation sociale. Les *bodabodamen* bénéficiant d'un accès régulier à l'argent liquide, ils ont un pouvoir plus fort dans la négociation sexuelle.

Les implications de ces résultats pour la prévention du VIH/sida sont discutées.

Resumen

Con el objetivo de estudiar el comportamiento sexual de un grupo social altamente móvil, se obtuvieron datos cualitativos y cuantitativos de 212 taxistas privados en moto, que localmente se llaman *bodabodamen*, a partir de dos lugares de estudio en Masaka, Uganda. Los criterios de selección fueron la disponibilidad y disposición a participar en el estudio. Como técnicas de investigación se utilizaron un cuestionario, grupos de discusión, entrevistas exhaustivas y casos prácticos. Los resultados indican que los *bodabodamen* son un grupo muy móvil que participa en frecuentes migraciones rurales-urbanas en determinados periodos del año. En consecuencia, los *bodabodamen* poseen una amplia red de relaciones sexuales ocasionales y regulares. Estas relaciones múltiples en serie y coincidentes ocurren con mujeres adultas, jóvenes, viudas, estudiantes, amantes viejas y

ricas, camareras, trabajadoras sexuales y sastres. El intercambio desempeña un papel importante en las negociaciones sexuales pero el acto de dar algo a un compañero sexual es ambivalente en su interpretación social. Dado que los *bodabodamen* cuentan regularmente con dinero en metálico, poseen un alto poder adquisitivo para pactar las relaciones sexuales. Se discuten las implicaciones de la prevención de VIH/sida.