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LOVE AND THE RISK OF HIV

COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, & INFIDELITY IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

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Marriage has been a staple of anthropological study in sub-Saharan Africa since the colonial period (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950; Colson 1958; Schapera 1966). More recent reexaminations of nuptuality in Africa have been important catalysts for rethinking anthropological theory (Comaroff 1980). The study of marriage has been central for understanding kinship and social organization (Fox 1967; Mair 1969), the developmental cycle of the household (Goody 1962; Guyer 1981), the social and cultural underpinnings of demographic processes (Bledsoe and Pison 1994; Feldman-Savelsberg 1999), and the significance of gender as an organizing social force and category of analysis (Potash 1986; Goheen 1996). Part of the impetus for a shift toward analytical perspectives that pay greater attention to women's agency (Bozzoli 1991) and to the strategic and performative aspects of marriage processes (Murray 1976; Karp 1987) has come from the changing nature of marriage itself (Caldwell 1968; Harrell-Bond 1975; Parkin and Nyamwaya 1987). As the introduction to this volume demonstrates, changes in courtship practices, in rituals establishing marriage, in marital ideologies, in household gender dynamics, and in

the importance of conjugality vis-à-vis other kinship relationships must be understood in the context of broader social transformations.

In this chapter, I examine how changing patterns of courtship and marriage are affecting HIV risk among Igbo-speaking people in southeastern Nigeria. In particular, I aim to explain how a complex intersection of changing marital ideals and practices combine with continuing gender inequality to shape patterns of sexual behavior and condom use across a spectrum of premarital, marital, and extramarital relationships. Similar to trends in many other parts of the world (e.g., Hollos and Larsen 1997; Hirsch 2003), men and women in Nigeria increasingly privilege the conjugal bond relative to other social relationships. The idea that marriage should be a partnership sustained by the private personal and emotional attachment of two people has grown significantly over the past several decades (Obiechina 1973; Smith 2000, 2001). The rise of forms of marriage that have been described in this volume as companionate is sometimes interpreted as part of a larger movement toward individualism and gender equality. Indeed, among the population that I studied in Nigeria, most young women and many young men explicitly desired and promoted marital ideals that privilege conjugality, romance, and individual relationships as the bedrock of marriage, deploying these ideals in their negotiations with suitors and spouses as well as with their extended families. But these emerging ideals and patterns of marriage unfold in a context of continuing gender inequality, such that expectations about fidelity, romantic love, and intimacy are placing women at risk of contracting HIV from their partners. The combination of changing relationship ideals and behaviors and continuing gender inequality is making it difficult for women, married or not, to negotiate safe sex.

In sub-Saharan Africa, where 25 million people are estimated to be HIV positive (UNAIDS 2004), 55% of adult infections are in women (WHO 2000). For most women in Nigeria, as in much of the world, the behavior that puts them at greatest risk of infection from HIV is having sex with their husbands (Federal Ministry of Health 1999). In Nigeria, the most recent sentinel sero-prevalence survey of pregnant women (Federal Ministry of Health 2004) indicated that approximately 5% were HIV positive. Extrapolations from this data suggest that more than three million Nigerians are currently infected with HIV. Projections predict that in the next two to three years nearly five million Nigerians will be infected. The ethnographic study of sexual relationships, marriage, and gender dynamics elucidates how the rise of love as a relationship ideal combines with the social construction of male gender and its manifestation in multiple extramarital sexual relationships to shape patterns of HIV risk in Africa's most populous country.

SETTING AND METHODS

The setting for the research that forms the basis for the analysis presented here is Igbo-speaking southeastern Nigeria. Igbos are the third largest of Nigeria's nearly 250 ethnic groups, numbering approximately 20 million. I have lived and worked periodically in Nigeria since 1989. During that time, I conducted more than three years of field research in southeastern Nigeria in a semirural community located just eight miles from Umuahia, the capital of Abia State. Data for this chapter have been accumulated while undertaking a variety of research projects carried out over the past ten years. Research methods included participant observation, semistructured interviewing, extended case studies, village household surveys of women of reproductive age and their husbands, large sample surveys of secondary school and university students, and multiple interviews with adolescent and young adult rural-urban migrants. Over the years, I have spent most of my time doing participant observation, and it is, I think, the source of the most interesting and valuable data. Participant observation has meant attending all manner of local social events and ceremonies—marriage rites, burials, chieftancy installation ceremonies, family meetings, gatherings to resolve local disputes, child-naming ceremonies, and so on. But perhaps more important, it has entailed accompanying and spending time with people as they went about their everyday lives—farming, fetching water, cooking, trading in the market, drinking palm wine or beer, going to church, and traveling to town. It has also meant listening to, and often participating in, the conversations, negotiations, and gossip that unfolded in all of these different settings and contexts. Much of what I know about Igbo marriages and about Igbo sexual relationships, marital infidelity, and the negotiation of condom use comes from observation and participation in the kinds of informal conversations and exchanges of gossip that can best be achieved through extended fieldwork.

ROMANTIC LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN WEST AFRICA

The question of whether or not romantic love is universal has intrigued researchers for a long time (Murstein 1974; Kurian 1979; Endleman 1989;

Jankowiak 1995). In one of the few anthropological studies of romantic love, Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) set out to test the question by examining Murdock and White's (1969) Standard Cross-Cultural Sample looking for the existence (or not) of romantic love in ethnographic data collected from nearly two hundred cultures. They preface their study with this assertion.

> The anthropological study of romantic (or passionate) love is virtually nonexistent due to the widespread belief that romantic love is unique to Euro-American culture. . . . Underlying these Eurocentric views is the assumption that modernization and the rise of individualism are directly linked to the appearance of romantic notions of love. (Jankowiak and Fischer 1992:149)

Defining romantic love as "any intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for sometime in the future" (1992:150), Jankowiak and Fischer conclude from their analysis that romantic love *is* a cross-cultural universal, or at least that it is *nearly* universal. They stress, however, that even if some form of romantic love is nearly universal across cultures, there is a need to understand "its emic manifestations within a variety of cultural settings" (154).

Like a number of scholars (e.g., Hatfield and Rapson 1996), Jankowiak and Fischer distinguish between romantic love, which is defined as passionate and erotic, and what they call "companionship" love (1992:150), which emerges over the long evolution of a relationship. As indicated in the introduction to this volume, terms such as *companionate marriage* are sometimes defined in different ways by different scholars. Falling in love, marrying for love, and staying married because of love are not the same thing. Regardless of terminology, it is important to recognize and explain the ways in which ideas and expectations about love are implicated in the social construction of marriage in contemporary Igbo-speaking Nigeria. My findings support the argument in this volume's introduction that changes in marriage in Nigeria, as in many settings, are intertwined with larger trends such as the rise of more explicit notions of an individualized self, the growing importance of commodity consumption as a means of self-fashioning, and the emergence of discourses about gender relations as a way to claim (or contest) modern identities. Further, I show how these same dynamics contribute to the configuration of premarital and extramarital sexual relationships. Specifically, I explore how the contemporary construction of marriage articulates continuities and changes in gender dynamics, and particularly how male gender and the structure of gender inequality continue to be expressed in patterns of extramarital sexual behavior.

Evidence from Nigeria (Obiechina 1973; Okonjo 1992) and across Africa (Mair 1969; Little 1979; van der Vliet 1991) indicates that Africans are increasingly likely to select marriage partners based, at least in part, on whether they are "in love." The emergence of romantic love as a criterion in mate selection and the increasing importance of conjugality in marriage relationships should not be interpreted to mean that romantic love itself has only recently emerged in Nigeria. When I asked elderly Igbos about their betrothals, about their marriages, and about love, I was told numerous personal stories and popular fables that indicated a long tradition of romantic love. A number of men and women confessed that they would have married a person other than their spouse had they been allowed to "follow the heart." Scholars have documented the existence of romantic love in Africa long before it became a widely accepted criterion for marriage (Bell 1995; Plotnicov 1995; Riesman 1972, 1981). Uchendu (1965) confirms the existence of passionate love in his study of concubinage in traditional Igbo society. Interestingly, both men and women were reportedly accorded significant institutionalized extramarital sexual freedom and a related proverb survives to the present: *uto ka na iko* (sweetness is deepest among lovers). As Obiechina notes: "The question is not whether love and sexual attraction as normal human traits exist within Western and African societies, but how they are woven into the fabric of life" (1973:34).

Exactly when Nigerians in general and Igbos in particular began to conceptualize marriage choices in more individualistic terms, privileging romantic love as a criterion in the selection of a spouse, is hard to pinpoint. In some parts of Igboland and in many parts of Nigeria the social acceptance of individual choice in mate selection is still just beginning. Certainly these changes occurred first in urban areas among relatively educated and elite populations (Marris 1962; Little and Price 1973). Obiechina's (1973) study of Onitsha pamphlet literature indicates that popular Nigerian literature about love, romance, and modern marriage began to emerge just after World War II. Historical accounts suggest that elements of modern marriage began even earlier in the twentieth century (Mann 1985). By the 1970s, a number of monographs about modern marriage in West Africa had been produced (e.g., Oppong 1974; Harrell-Bond 1975).

In contemporary Igboland, young people increasingly value choosing their own spouses. In my village sample of just over 200 married women of reproductive age, over 60% reported that their marriages were choice marriages rather than arranged marriages, and, not surprisingly, the percentages were higher among younger women and lower among older women. The expectation to choose one's spouse is almost universal among young persons still in school. In my sample of 775 students drawn from 19 secondary schools, over 95% said they expected to choose their marriage partners themselves, and the expectation was universal among 420 university students I surveyed. Among married people who chose their own spouses and among young people anticipating choosing a spouse, love is frequently mentioned as one important criterion, though not the only one. Individual choice in mate selection and love as a relationship ideal are connected, but one is not the equivalent of the other.

PREMARITAL SEX AND CONTEMPORARY IGBO COURTSHIP

To understand the emergence and spread of the expectation that marriage partners should be selected by individual choice based, at least in part, on romantic love, it is necessary to know something about premarital sexual relationships and patterns of courtship in contemporary Igbo society. Indeed, certain patterns and expectations about gender roles are established in premarital relationships, and these expectations create difficulties for women to negotiate safe sex after marriage, when the roles of wife and mother become paramount.

Premarital sexual relationships are increasingly common in contemporary Nigeria (Nichols et al. 1986), including in the Igbo-speaking southeast (Feyisetan and Pebley 1989; Makinwa-Adebusoye 1992; Smith 2000). Driven by the spread and acceptance of formal schooling as valuable for both boys and girls and the growth of nondomestic work opportunities for women, average age at marriage for females in southeastern Nigeria has increased from approximately sixteen years old at independence in 1960 to around twenty-one years old at present (Isiugo-Abanihe, Ebigbola, and Adewuyi 1993). A significant proportion of young women now remain single into their late twenties. Most men marry around the age of thirty, the later age at marriage for men attributed to their need to secure themselves economically in order to be able to pay bridewealth and support a family. Concurrent with and also contributing to later age at marriage, more and more single young people are migrating to Nigeria's cities (Oucho and Gould 1993; Gugler and Ludwar-Ene 1995). In the city, young people are less subject to the discipline of their village relatives and more likely to be exposed to peer and media messages about the appeal and acceptability of premarital sex.

Related to demographic changes such as age at marriage and levels of urban migration is a changing conception of the nature of male-female relationships. In addition to simply having more time before marriage to try sex, young people value male-female intimacy to a degree their parents and grandparents did not. Premarital sexual relationships are places where young people construct their identities, very often in self-conscious opposition to traditions they perceive as "bush," "backward," and "uncivilized"—their words, not mine (Smith 2000). Sex is being socially constructed as an appropriate expression of intimacy, but also as a statement about a particular kind of modern identity. The place of sex in this creation of a modern Igbo identity and the relationship between modern sexual identities and commodity consumption are very much evident in practices of courtship (Smith 2001; Cornwall 2002). The case briefly described here exhibits many of the patterns that are now common in contemporary Igbo courtship.

> Chinyere Nwankwo met her husband Ike in the town of Owerri in southeastern Nigeria, where she attended a teachers college after completing secondary school in her village community. Ike was eight years her senior, and when they met he was doing very well as a building contractor—well enough to own a used car, a prized symbol of wealth and success. On their first date he took her to the disco at the Concorde Hotel, at that time the fanciest in town. In addition to being educated, Chinyere was a beautiful young woman and consequently had many suitors. Her courtship with Ike lasted almost two years. During that time they often dined out and went dancing together. Among the more memorable events of their courtship were a weekend outing to the Nike Lake resort near Enugu and a trip to Lagos during which they attended a performance by Fela Ransome-Kuti, a famous Nigerian musician. During their courtship, each bought the other Hallmark-like cards on birthdays, and for Ike's birthday, Chinyere baked him a cake. They went to many social events together and acknowledged to their peers that they were a couple. Not long into their relationship, Chinyere and Ike began sleeping together. Many months before they decided to

marry, they were sexually intimate. Prior to approaching Chinyere's people and his own family about their getting married, Ike asked Chinyere. They agreed together to get married and then began the process of including their families.

For Chinyere and Ike, as for many unmarried young Igbos, sexual intimacy constituted an integral part of their relationship, a relationship that they thought of as a romance. Chinyere described her decision to marry Ike this way: "A lot of things are important in deciding whom to marry. You need a good husband who can provide for the family and it's important to find a man who is progressive. I would never marry a man who just wanted a wife to cater to him like a servant. There are a lot of things, but if you are not in love what's the point, really?" Later, in talking more specifically about sex and intimacy she added: "For a good marriage husband and wife need to be compatible. Sex is part of it. A big part. If you are not compatible in bed how intimate can you really be?"

Premarital sex, symbolic commodities such as greeting cards, and public displays of being a "couple" are bound together in the performance of modern courtship in southeastern Nigeria. While young people engage in premarital sexual relations for a variety of reasons, what is striking is the degree to which most young Igbos expect and accept that sex is and should be a part of the process of courtship. Of course there are many competing and sometimes critical discourses about young people's sexual behavior in Nigeria (especially young women's sexual behavior), including those in the idiom of religious morality (Smith 2004a). Nevertheless, the degree of acceptance that sex is appropriate when two people are "in love" is most striking (Smith 2004b).

Equally important is recognizing the degree to which premarital romances tend to support a relatively egalitarian gender dynamic, at least with regard to expectations of fidelity. During courtship, when the couple's relationship is based primarily on their personal emotional relationship to each other, both persons feel an obligation to fidelity. While this obligation is not necessarily observed, an individual who cheats on his or her lover and gets caught knows there is a good chance that the other person will end the relationship. It was my impression that young unmarried Igbo men cheated more than young unmarried Igbo women, but not dramatically so. But most important for the case I want to make, the sanctions each faced were similar. Infidelity during courtship was a personal violation and the consequences had to be negotiated between the individuals involved. Of course young people often enlisted friends to plead their cases, but the grounds for "making up" almost always included a pronouncement of continued love. The patterns and consequences of infidelity that emerge after marriage are quite different, and they result from a very different construction of gender roles that emerges in marriage. The contrast between courtship and marriage is tied to the ways in which conjugal relationships are much more deeply embedded in larger kinship structures and relationships to extended family and community than premarital relationships (Smith 2001).

A final note about Igbo courtship and premarital sexual relationships is the way in which contraceptive use, particularly condom use, is (or is not) negotiated. Young people I interviewed in surveys in local secondary schools, at a local university, and in two large cities were split fairly evenly among those who thought that contraception was a man's responsibility, a women's responsibility, or a joint responsibility. But those numbers obscure the degree to which young people feared broaching the subject at all, an anxiety exacerbated by increasing awareness of the AIDS epidemic. Most contraceptive and condom negotiations took place under the aegis of concern over preventing unwanted pregnancies (Smith 2004a,b). Particularly in relationships self-described as romantic, few young people dared discuss condom use in the context of AIDS prevention because of the insinuation that they or their partners were unsafe (Smith 2003; cf. Preston-Whyte 1999 for South Africa, and Adih and Alexander 1999 for Ghana). While almost all young Igbos know that HIV/AIDS is transmitted sexually, a majority associated AIDS risk with various forms of immoral sexual behavior. Thus, to suggest condom use with a partner implies that one or the other has previously engaged in such wayward or promiscuous sex. In addition, there is a fairly widespread feeling among young Igbos (both men and women) that condoms inhibit intimacy, and it is precisely in love relationships that intimacy is most valued. Incredibly high rates of unsafe illegal abortions attest to widespread failure to use effective contraception in premarital relationships. Popular stories of young women resorting to abortion are legion in southeastern Nigeria and must be interpreted with caution because these stories are part of a critical public discourse about the role of gender and sexuality in social change. Nonetheless, in my sample of 420 university students, 40% of the women who had engaged in sexual intercourse (which was 80% of the sample) reported having had an abortion. As I will explain, ideals of monogamy and intimacy

combine with the continued paramount importance of fertility in marriage to inhibit women's ability to negotiate condom use, even in instances where women know or suspect their husbands are unfaithful.

MARRIAGE, PARENTHOOD, AND MALE INFIDELITY

There is no doubt that both the ideals and practices of Igbo marriage have changed over the past generation. The strength of the conjugal relationship has grown vis-à-vis other family and community relationships. Young couples are far more likely than their parents to share one bedroom, eat together, maintain a single household budget, and live in town away from the compound of the husband's family, which is the traditional place of residence. The quality of a young couple's personal relationship, including the degree of emotional intimacy and sexual compatibility, is more likely to figure in their private assessments of the state of their marriage than was the case with their parents.

But once a couple is married, and certainly once they have children, the importance of their personal relationship as a measure of the state of the marriage recedes in comparison to the tremendous emphasis on successful parenthood. The place of children in adult relationships is central to understanding the whole social fabric of Igbo society. As Meyer Fortes argued quite some time ago, it is "parenthood that is the primary value associated with the idea of family in West Africa" (1978:121). "Parenthood," Fortes says, "is regarded as a *sine qua non* for the attainment of the full development of the complete person to which all aspire" (1978:125). Having children is not only a means to individual personhood, but also a fulfillment of one's obligations to kin and community. Biological reproduction is also social reproduction. Once a couple has children together, particularly once they have a son, there are few socially acceptable reasons for them to divorce. Disputes and incompatibilities that lead to fissures and separations are almost always mediated by extended family members on both sides who see it as their duty to bring the couple back together—most often with the welfare of the children explicitly voiced as the obligation that must reunite the couple. Deteriorating personal relationships are not generally sufficient grounds for divorce. A married woman with children will be on much firmer ground in complaining about her marriage if she can show that her husband fails to support his children than if she complains of personal problems with him.

The striking thing that I want to describe and explain is the dramatic

Fig. 6.1. Although many Igbo couples now marry for love, fertility and successful parenthood remain paramount social values. (Photo by Daniel J. Smith.)

shift in gender dynamics between man and woman that occurs in the transition from courtship to marriage and parenthood (Smith 2001). A more patriarchal gender dynamic emerges after marriage. It is in the expectations about and consequences of marital infidelity that this inequality is most profound, and the sad irony is that even as women continue to deploy ideals of intimacy and love to influence their husbands' sexual behavior, these very ideals prevent the negotiation of safe sex.

SUGAR DADDIES, HANDBAGS, AND RAZOR BLADES: GENDER AND MARITAL FIDELITY

In premarital relationships, the social rules about fidelity are largely the same for men and women, as I indicated earlier. In Igbo marriages the rules about fidelity are quite different. An older wealthy Igbo man once said to me, when I asked about the consequences of extramarital affairs for men

and women: "If I catch my wife, she is gone; if she catches me, she is gone too." In other words, not only was it not acceptable for her to have extramarital sex, it was also not acceptable for her to object to his having extramarital sex. The levels of acceptance of extramarital sexuality are much more contested than my informant's bold statement suggests, but the idea that Igbo men can and do have extramarital partners is widely acknowledged. A man who cheats on his wife risks little social condemnation, assuming he continues to provide for his wife and children, and does not do something "foolish" like propose to leave his wife for his lover. In fact, among Igbo men there is a certain pride in taking lovers. It is primarily in the way that men construct masculinity in their male peer groups that taking lovers becomes so significant. Being able to have lovers is sign of continuing masculine prowess and of economic success, because, increasingly, women expect their lovers to "perform" economically as well as sexually (Cornwall 2002; Hunter 2002).

When I lived in the town of Owerri ten years ago, people used to lament (but also laugh about) the plethora of cars parked outside the gates of Alvin Ikoku Teachers College on Friday and Saturday nights—cars belonging to married men who were there to meet young female lovers. Patterns of marital infidelity are structured along the dimensions of age, gender, and social class. Alvin Ikoku Teachers College has male students as well. But it was inconceivable that married women would park en masse outside the college waiting for young male lovers. Nor was it possible to imagine that poor men would be waiting outside on foot or with their bicycles. The following example illustrates some of the ways that men's extramarital sexual relationships are organized along various dimensions of inequality.

> John Ezigbo is forty-seven years old. A married father of five, he runs a successful business raising poultry and selling animal feed. Most every night John leaves his house about 5 P.M. bound for Umuahia Club, where he plays an hour of tennis, drinks a few beers, and socializes with the other well-to-do Igbo men who are members of the club. Many evenings, after a postgame beer, he drives off to pick up a young lady friend whom he brings back to entertain, offering her drinks and something to eat from the club's kitchen. Though spouses are honorary members once their husbands are inducted, John knows that he and his girlfriend will not encounter any wives at the club, women who might report him to his own spouse. There is an unwritten rule among the men that wives are not welcome, except on specially designated occasions. The club is a safe place to bring one's girlfriend.
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> John's girlfriends are typically secondary school graduates, who are either attending one of several tertiary institutions in town or seeking employment in some kind of urban office or business. All of them are young, educated, modern girls who wear makeup, straighten their hair, sport fashionable clothes, and see school and the city as means to a better life. John is one of the more blatant philanderers in the club. It is rare to see the same lady in his company for more than a few weeks.

Other men keep much more steady lovers; many do not bring their girlfriends to the club at all, preferring to keep their sexual affairs more private. Indeed, some men do not have extramarital lovers at all. But keeping outside women (that is, outside of marriage) is accepted, indeed socially rewarded, among elite Igbo men (cf. Karanja 1987; Hunter 2002; Luke 2005). Bringing a pretty young lady to the club is done proudly. Many men want their male peers to know that they have extramarital affairs. They tell each other stories about sexual conquests, sometimes including the graphic details. One of the wealthiest guys in the club, who also had the reputation of attracting the most beautiful women, was known by the nickname "One Man Show." No doubt there is much male bravado in all this. Surely some men exaggerate their sexual exploits to their own social benefit. But the fact that perceived extramarital sexual activity is socially rewarded is precisely what I want to emphasize. Most Igbo men share a sense that real manhood implies continued sexual desire and new sexual conquests after and outside marriage.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the economic inequalities in Nigerian society, the ability to have new women is a marker of economic status as well as virility. Men who own cars, belong to social clubs, rent expensive hotel rooms, and have the resources to give women substantial amounts of money and gifts are by far the more desirable married lovers. Such attributes define "sugar daddy." Much as men expect sexual intercourse and an attractive partner to display to their peers, the young women require and exact from their married lovers any number of kinds of assistance (Cornwall 2002; Hunter 2002; Smith 2002). On dates or outings, young ladies pressure their sugar daddies to buy them the most expensive beer, order them special food, and reserve rooms at the fanciest hotels. They routinely

Fig. 6.2. Settings of mostly all-male sociality, such as this sports club, contribute to strong positive peer-group pressure about extramarital sexuality. (Photo by Daniel J. Smith.)

ask their sugar daddies for money to pay school fees, start businesses, help their parents, or assist with rent. They also expect their men to buy them gifts—clothes, shoes, jewelry, and even electronics and appliances.

Unlike in their premarital relationships with their wives, few sugar daddies, and indeed few of their lovers, view these relationships as romances. Most men like to see themselves as masters of these extramarital relationships, in charge of their lovers in the same way they want to be in charge of their married households and their money. In male discourse, young female lovers are objectified—discussed as if they are not persons. When the men of the sports club travel to neighboring towns and cities to play tennis tournaments—as they do eight to ten weekends a year—these trips are viewed as great opportunities to meet (and display) their young lovers. In anticipation of a weekend on the road, men ask each other whether they are "carrying a handbag," a reference to taking a young female lover. I often traveled with the club to these tournaments and was struck by how widely this term was used and recognized, in Igbo cities all over the southeast. Even many of the young women knew the meaning of the term, and while they did not appreciate its derogatory connotations, they did not seem too bothered by it—perhaps because they knew very well that women have more power in these relationships than one would guess from male rhetoric.

Yet even men acknowledge, perhaps unwittingly, the degree to which young female lovers have some control over relationships with their sugar daddies. Men often complained that these young women would "bleed" them—manipulating them for money, and even, ironically, for sex. This brief dialogue in Nigerian Pidgin English is typical of married men's discussions about their young lovers.

Chuks: How e de go wit dat new girl from Alvin? E be like say you de busy too much.
Charles: Dat uman no de taya. These girls today na war-o. Di girl done bleed me finish. Na real razor blade.
Chuks: Take am easy-o.

The terms *bleeding* and *razor blade* in reference to sexual relationships have multiple meanings. First, there is the clear reference to economic extraction. Razor blades cut men to bleed them of their money. Second, and perhaps more interesting, is an implication that women are extracting sex; that somehow, even as men view themselves as the aggressors in sexual relationships, they see women as insatiable—reservoirs of bottomless and dangerous sexual desires that can wear men out. Finally, the terms are often used in connection with romance and love, such that women are able to manipulate men's hearts to get their own sexual and material gratification. Much as many men eschew the idea that they are vulnerable to love in these extramarital relationships, they participate in a common countervailing discourse in Igbo society that women have "love medicine" and are capable of manipulating men sexually and romantically (see Wardlow, this volume, regarding similar beliefs in Papua New Guinea).

"Razor blades" and "handbags" imply very different notions of women's agency, one active and dangerous, the other passive and under control, both objectifying, and neither particularly attractive. But these contrasting images reflect well the conflicting representations of women in Igbo men's discourse. And each is, to some extent, representative of the real status of unmarried young women in their sexual relationships with sugar daddies. They are clearly used by men; yet they clearly also use men.

EXTRAMARITAL SEX AND THE RISK OF HIV

Extramarital sexual relationships pose increasing risks given the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. When I first lived in Nigeria, from 1989 through 1992, few of the men I knew took seriously the risk of AIDS. Most men believed they were not personally at risk because they viewed AIDS as a "gay" disease, a white man's disease, or something that could only be contracted from prostitutes. Among these same men, other STDs were not taken to be too seriously. Indeed, I remember one conversation with some male friends in which they told me that anyone who had not experienced gonorrhea at some time in his life was not yet a man. Easy access to over-the-counter antibiotics led to widespread self-medication for STDs (no doubt increasing drug-resistant strains). During fieldwork from 1995 through 1997, little had changed about people's perceptions of their own risk for contracting HIV/AIDS, and many men in extramarital sexual relationships still preferred to rely on their girlfriends to prevent (or terminate) pregnancy rather than use "pleasure-inhibiting" condoms. While young women were certainly concerned about preventing pregnancy and about the possible effects on their own future fertility of contracting STDs, even among women who had such concerns, negotiating condom use proved difficult in these economically unequal relationships. However, over the past several years, I have noticed the beginnings of a change in the attitude toward AIDS. The change was due in part to widespread publicity in the wake of Nigeria's 1999 and 2003 sero-prevalence surveys. But it is probably more important that some people now knew or had heard about individuals with HIV/AIDS.

Still, in a great many of these extramarital relationships condom use remains difficult to negotiate. Even among the most educated and elite classes—like my tennis buddies—AIDS continues to be represented as a disease of immorality spread through reckless sex with wayward or evil strangers (Smith 2003). Yet almost all real sexual relationships are between people who know each other—one's lover is not a stranger. In sugar daddy relationships even negotiations for money take place in a personal or kinship idiom. Young women rarely ask directly for money for sex. Women often defer their requests for money specifically not to coincide with a recent sex act. A woman's requests are made in terms of needing money for rent or transportation, or even more characteristically so that she can help a sibling pay school fees or assist her parents with a problem in the village. Sugar daddies almost always know the community of origin of their lovers,

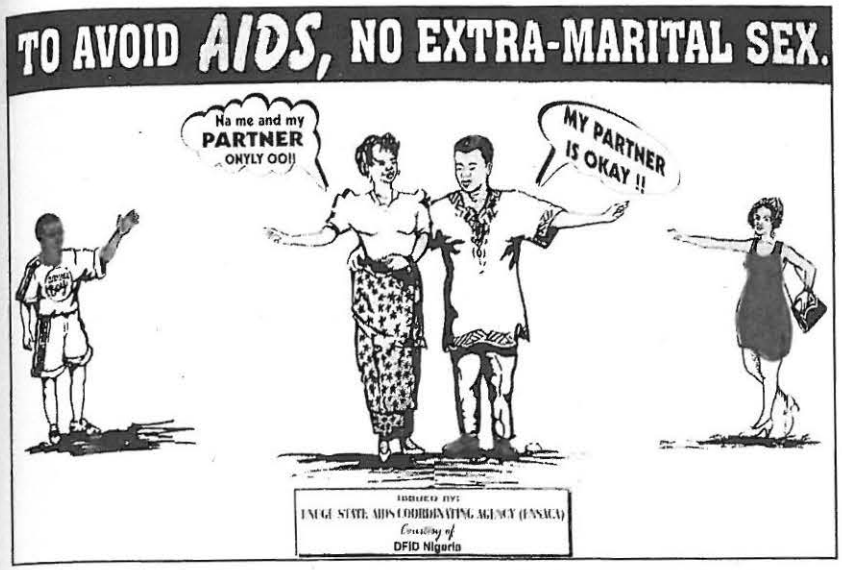

Fig. 6.3. Public health communication about HIV/AIDS in Nigeria has risen dramatically in recent years, including messages about the risks of extramarital sex. (Photo by Daniel J. Smith.)

and likewise the girls know the same about their men. After one's name, one's place of origin is the first question Igbos ask in ordinary conversation. People are always placed in the context of the networks of social relationships that constitute Igbo society. As disparagingly as my elite male Igbo friends seemed to talk about their "handbags," the reality is far more complex. Even as peer-reinforced ideas of masculinity seem to create in sugar daddies the need to possess and control their lovers as objects, other notions of manhood require that they fulfill social obligations to these lovers—obligations that the girls can manipulate by exploiting men's sense of themselves as patrons and providers.

I have provided ethnographic evidence primarily about elite men, relatively educated young women, and a distinctly urban-oriented population. One might wonder how sexual dynamics play out in courtship and marriage among poorer men and less educated women who live mostly in rural areas. Certainly the people I have focused on are not the lowest common denominator. Men who cannot afford to belong to a tennis club are not as

well placed to secure young women aspiring to a better life. Nevertheless, similar patterns of sexual relations play out in courtship and marriage among less privileged Igbos. An old adage about social hierarchy in sub-Saharan Africa says that everyone is a patron to a lesser person and a client to a more powerful person (d'Azevedo 1962). A similar nesting of power characterizes patterns of sexual relationships, so that while the young lovers of my tennis buddies expect, for example, that their sugar daddies will offer them Guinness Stout to drink, sexual relationships among poorer people are negotiated with, for example, Coca-Cola. In other words, while the level of expectations regarding economic support and conspicuous consumption is lower, sexuality and sexual intimacy are markers and means of being modern among poorer Igbos, just as they are among the more educated and well off. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the salient point is that because AIDS has been socially constructed as a fearful disease spread by immoral sexual relations with variously constructed others, few people see their own sexual liaisons as fitting into this risky category.

LOVE, MARRIAGE, AND HIV

To conclude, I want to bring attention back to the risks that this situation poses to married women and explain how it is that the very ideals that provide women with significant leverage over their husbands also prevent them from negotiating condom use. Igbo women know that, in general, married Igbo men often seek "outside" women. Many married women certainly suspect, and may even know, that their own husbands do so. When a woman discovers that her husband has a lover, it often leads to terrible rifts—especially among younger couples where the basis for marriage included pronouncements of love, feelings of intimacy, and promises of sexual fidelity. Young Igbo women want their husbands to be faithful. To keep their husbands in line, women deploy discourses about love and call upon Christian concepts of monogamy and fidelity (see van der Vliet 1991 for a similar account about South Africa). In addition, as more women in urban areas are employed outside the home, they are controlling economic resources that give them certain kinds of leverage in their marriages. Anecdotes I heard in conversations among friends suggest that men who are more financially dependent on their wives may be more cautious in initiating extramarital relationships. But overall, women's increasing participation in the formal economy has not dramatically changed the domestic

division of labor and the dynamics of power in the household. Even among the most elite women, the roles of wife and mother remain highly valued.

In contemporary Igbo-speaking Nigeria, extramarital sexuality is largely conceived of as a contest between husbands who want to be and think they are entitled to extramarital sexual relationships and wives who mostly want to rein in their husbands' extramarital activities. In many cases the women's strategies, combined with the strength of conjugal relationships, are effective. Not all Igbo men cheat on their wives. But women find it difficult to appeal to their kinfolk and affines for help and can expect little sympathy from society if they leave a man simply because he has had sex outside the marriage, especially if he has been relatively discreet.

Marriages among the current generation in Igboland are likely to be contracted first between individuals, with love and emotional intimacy as part of the criteria of spousal choice, and with monogamy as the expectation. While most people are aware of the prevalence of male marital infidelity, and of the fact that HIV/AIDS is transmitted through sexual intercourse, a number of factors combine to make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use with their husbands. First, as I have emphasized earlier, despite the rise of a companionate marriage ideal, the collective interests in marriage as an institution continue to emphasize the importance of parenthood in social reproduction. Thus, for a woman to suggest condom use (or any other contraception) for the sake of preventing pregnancy is itself potentially problematic. But more to the point in the context of the AIDS epidemic, a woman's expectation that marriage should be based on love and intimacy, with sexual fidelity as the ideal, means that any suggestion that her husband use a condom can be interpreted by him as undermining intimacy and trust and implying his (or her) infidelity. The irony is that because women rely on ideals of love and intimacy to negotiate relationships with their husbands, trying to protect themselves through condom use is seen as undermining the very thing they wish to preserve. Rather than protecting women, love marriages may contribute to the risk of contracting HIV from their husbands.