‘Upliftment’, friends and finance: Everyday concepts and practices of resource exchange Underpinning mobile money adoption in Kenya

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of mobile money transfer (MMT) in East Africa, and Kenya in particular, is facilitating a nexus of inter-personal financial transfers which has hitherto been the least visible dimension of informal finance. At the same time, the success of capturing these flows into a formal service has raised significant enthusiasm that mobile money transactions represent an effective route to inclusion in the formal financial sector. This paper examines this claim through an in-depth qualitative and ethnolinguistic investigation of the everyday concepts and practices of resource exchange. It identifies a focus on relationships rather than resources as at the centre of these informal practices. This suggests a gap between these exchange practices and those of the resource-focussed formal sector. These contrasting perspectives suggest that there is much scope for misunderstanding in developing routes to financial inclusion making it particularly important to appreciate emic perspectives.

Keywords

mobile money; informal finance; microfinance; financial practices; financial inclusion; Kenya; sub-Saharan Africa

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1 Introduction

Mobile money transfer (MMT) has been adopted very rapidly in East Africa and in particular in Kenya. Having been introduced in 2007, by 2013 62% of Kenyans were registered with a mobile money transfer service. More recently Uganda, Tanzania and Somalia have also started to experience increasing rates of adoption to bring them to coverage rates that lead the world (Demirguc-Kunt, Klapper, Singer, & Oudheusden, 2015). Evidence has demonstrated that MMT is being used in low-income and rural communities to transfer funds through their social networks, and goes far beyond its 'send money home' entry point. Rather domestic remittances are the tip of an iceberg of informal financial inter-personal transfers that were far more varied and complex– incorporating gifts and 'assistance' for a range of purposes as well as transfers for school fees, medical expenses, investments, businesses, and loans (Johnson, 2013). Analysis also suggests that those with access to MMT are able to more effectively deal with livelihood risks and smooth their consumption through receipt of such transfers (Jack & Suri, 2014).

For the formal sector, this rapid adoption of MMT has fuelled the vision of the financial inclusion policy discourse that mobile money services are the means to cut costs and improve outreach. Digital services are seen as the future in which mobile money transfer systems are the "rails" for increasing engagement with the formal financial sector.[1] This paper questions this policy conclusion by examining what interpersonal exchange and resource transfer means for low-income people and what these emic conceptions of financial transactions therefore mean for understanding the rise of mobile money and hence for financial inclusion.

Anthropological research presents a huge range of evidence on the nature of everyday financial concepts and practices but this is almost entirely neglected by this policy discourse (J. I. Guyer, 2004; Shipton, 2007, 2009). For example, behavioural economists - frequently criticise gift exchange and see responding to demands from family or friends as a constraint to saving and something that use of formal savings instruments can guard against (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006; Dupas & Robinson, 2013a). Anthropologists, on the other hand, have long debated the distinctions between gifts and instrumental reciprocity in inter-personal transfers bringing to light the blurred boundaries involved. Recently there have been calls in anthropology for a re-working of perspectives to move beyond past embeddedness perspectives and their conventional evolutionary account of the move from socially framed transactions and barter, through to impersonal transactions without social ties, framed solely by market rationalities. Rather, the call is to recognise their enduring embeddedness and focus on the "repertoires, pragmatics and indexicality" of monetary and financial practices (Maurer, 2006, p. 30) as an alternative approach to the investigation of underlying logics.

This paper therefore examines practices of inter-personal resource transactions among low income people in Kenya to identify the meanings attributed to these practices and the values underpinning them. It uses evidence from two research approaches. First, findings from in-depth qualitative research are presented to explore the meaning of inter-personal exchanges which were diverse in terms of their nature, purposes and relational dynamics. Second, ethnolinguistic analysis is undertaken to identify the everyday language of

[1] See for example the strategy of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

borrowing, lending and saving and the salient socio-cultural norms and values which underpin them. The findings highlight the way inter-personal exchange builds relationships and in particular consolidates friendship – even where relatives are involved. The linguistic analysis confirms the importance of a focus on relationships rather than resources in borrowing and lending relationships and reveals core underlying concepts of reciprocity and 'upliftment'. A money 'friend' is not just perceived of instrumentally and there is a strong relationship rather than resource focus at the centre of these practices. This underlines a key gap between the meaning of informal resource exchange practices and those of resource-focussed formal sector transactions.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section presents the context of this enquiry by reviewing the literature on informal financial practices in more depth. The following section explains the research context and methodology. We then report the findings in two sections: first there is a focus on practices and the meanings these involve. The following section focuses on the language used in one of the research sites whose linguistic analysis enables us to identify key values which underpin these practices. The final section discusses these findings particularly drawing out the implications of these different understandings for engagement with the formal financial sector, before concluding.

2 Literature review

2.1 Informal finance, mobile money transfer and formal financial inclusion

The policy discourse has treated the rapid uptake of MMT in Africa, and in particular in Kenya, as evidence of the prospects for rapid financial inclusion. While some studies have been upbeat about the use of MMT as a savings mechanism (by using a definition of savings as funds left in the phone for 24 hours) (Jack & Suri, 2011); others have given detailed evidence of its predominant use as a payments service where funds are moved and cashed out quickly (Stuart & Cohen, 2011). Jack and Suri (2014) have recently demonstrated the welfare impact of access to MMT for consumption smoothing in the face of shocks and hence the importance of such transfers. This finding suggests that there is a clear welfare case for person-to-person payment services and suggests the need to understand this phenomenon in much greater depth.

Table 1 summarises data from an earlier study in Kenya (Johnson, 2013) and from the more recent national financial access survey (FSD Kenya & Central Bank of Kenya, 2013). The Financial Landscapes Study was based on three small towns and their rural hinterlands and shows a pattern in which the last remittance was more often going to a relative or friend, and in this case that these were a dominant source of the last transaction received. The national survey supports the "send money home" headline of sending to immediate family (spouse, parents, children), as it includes urban areas but also demonstrates that a third are most often sending to 'other' relatives and friends. However, when receiving funds the significant role of other relatives and friends is again evident.

This therefore highlights a much more diverse set of ways in which MMT is being used to transfer funds through social networks. Johnson (2013) points out that these transfers were for a range of purposes apart from domestic remittances: such as financial group contributions; weddings, births and funerals; medical and educational expenses. Such exchanges resonate very strongly with Shipton's analysis of the way in which such transfers create relationships of 'entrustment and obligation' (2007) so that giving or lending resources to others creates relationships within which claims can also be made. Hence by providing an efficient and effective payment service, MMT has then made the informal sector a much more efficient competitor to the formal sector by facilitating such transfers. Indeed, data suggests that the proportion of adults who did not send or receive remittances fell from 73% prior to the introduction of MM to 40% in 2009, and to approximately 35% in 2013.[2] This perspective problematizes the policy conclusion that transactions through these means MMT presents a clear route to inclusion in formal financial savings and credit services.

Table 1: Destination and receipt of mobile money remittances by relationship

Percentage	**FinAccess 2013** (most often sent to/received from)	**Financial Landscapes study 2011** (last remittance sent to/received from)
MM sent to:	(n=3739)	(n=220)
Immediate family	57	37
Other relatives and friends	32	44
Business related	6	16
Other	5	3
MM received from:	(n=3835)	(n=176)
Immediate family	43	18
Other relatives and friends	44	68
Business related	12	12
Other	1	2

Sources: (Johnson, Brown, & Fouillet, 2012); FinAccess 2013 dataset – authors calculations.

It has long been understood that informal finance has played a significant role in the economies of developing countries, but after three decades of formal financial sector liberalisation and reform, interest in these dimensions of informal finance has waned. Estimates of the size of informal financial arrangements are of course difficult, but early estimates suggested that informal arrangements supplied between 30 and 95% of the credit needs of rural or urban populations (Germidis, Kessler et al., 1991). The role of informal saving and borrowing among friends and family was recognised in early literature on the informal financial sector (Callier, 1990; Germidis, Kessler, & Meghir, 1991) but figures excluded informal arrangements based on reciprocity between relatives and friends. However, even without these, analysts were suggesting that the size of flows circulated through informal finance within the household and non-corporate sector was substantially larger than flows channelled through formal institutions (Nissanke and Aryeetey, 1998, 279). Despite increasing penetration of formal financial services over the last twenty years, the proportion with a formal bank account in Africa is estimated to be 20% (Honohan, 2008) and concentrated in the wealthiest 20% of the population (Beck, Maimbo, Faye, & Triki, 2011)

[2] Own calculations from FinAccess surveys, 2006, 2009 and 2013.

suggesting that there is still likely to be an important dimension of informal financial exchange.

Economic analysis of inter-personal resource exchange has mainly focused on examining the efficiency of inter-personal lending in managing risk. Research in West Africa analyses the extent to which risks are efficiently managed through “balanced reciprocity” in the face of idiosyncratic shocks among agriculturally based communities (Jean -Philippe Platteau, 1997); Udry (1993). Balanced reciprocity is seen as involving a return of the resources which leads to no distributional impact while contrasting with conditional reciprocity in small fishing communities where exchange operates along the lines of insurance (Jean-Philippe Platteau & Abraham, 1987). Recently however, economists –increasingly using behavioural economics (see also (World Bank, 2015) – have criticised inter-personal exchange which responds to demands from family or friends. They see it it as a constraint to saving which the easy availability of formal savings instruments into which funds can be deposited can enable people to avoid, so that they can instead accumulate them (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006);(Dupas & Robinson, 2013a).

Recent research findings from Africa on savings mobilisation through formal savings accounts, showing take-up rates were low, provoke questions about how these services relate to poor people’s money management practices and priorities. The low take-up of formal savings accounts is demonstrated in three experimental studies in Kenya: in one, a random sample of traders and microenterprise owners were given access to a free voluntary savings account in a semi-formal institution. Take-up and use of the accounts was poor, with 13% not even opening the account and 42% undertaking only one transaction in six months. The use by the remaining 45% was highly skewed with some 35% having used the account up to five times (Dupas & Robinson, 2013a). Hence, while they report significant levels of impact, this impact is among a small proportion of the sample. A second study that offered free savings accounts had an active use rate of 18% (Dupas, Green, Keats, & Robinson, 2012), while a third had a take-up rate for free account opening in a formal bank of 27% (Schaner, 2011). Such low take-up rates may be explained by the ongoing transaction costs of account use despite the free opening, but also suggest that other factors may be constraining use.

Experiments with commitment savings are being found to have greater impacts than voluntary savings. A study in Kenya involving fertilizer suggests that a commitment savings product increases use rates (Duflo, Kremer, & Robinson, 2009) and a further experiment in Malawi demonstrated much stronger effects for a commitment savings product than a voluntary savings product (though with much higher baseline use of formal accounts), concluding that there is suggestive evidence that this was because it enabled people to shield savings from others in their social networks (Brune, Gine, Goldberg, & Yang, 2011). An experimental study in Kenya, which sought to promote savings for health expenditure, found that access to a safe box enabled savings and that this could be explained by a mental accounting effect because the money was ‘out of sight’. This enabled the deflection of requests for funds from others (Dupas & Robinson, 2013b).

In view of the recent findings from research on MMT, it would seem important not to jump to the conclusion that the primary problem for inclusion is a shortage of savings instruments that allow people to remove funds from claims made on them by others, or that ‘nudges’ (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009) to save at the right moment can consistently tip the balance. This may indeed be part of the issue for some, but if seen in relational terms, the issue may be how to offer services that fit into the logic of social networks and interactive claims in more meaningful ways.

2.2 Theorising interpersonal informal financial transactions

The most extensive literature on informal interpersonal financial practices in Africa has been anthropological. These include studies on the nature of gifts and reciprocity, as well as more pragmatic approaches, focusing on the dynamics of saving and money exchange (J. Guyer, 1995; Parry & Bloch, 1989). The most notable recent contribution is Shipton's study of Western Kenya, which considers more overtly the relationship to formal financial sector activity. Although recently published (Shipton, 2007, 2009), the study is based on fieldwork undertaken more than twenty years ago. Therefore investigating the phenomenon of informal interpersonal financial transactions in the light of its implications for financial inclusion is pertinent and timely.

The complex question of the nature of resource exchange and what constitutes reciprocal exchange or a form of borrowing rather than a gift has been one of the defining debates in economic anthropology. This debate originated in the 1920s when an essay by French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1954) demonstrated that gifts in various non-western societies were not 'pure' but formed part of a system in which such gifts may later be returned as part of systems of 'total prestation' (gifting) in the circulation of symbolic offerings in traditional societies. The study showed that this 'gifting' equally occurred between social groups as well as between individuals. Mauss' findings precipitated an interpretation of these apparent gifts as systems of reciprocity in which gifts at one point in time result in some form of return or counter-gift – which might also occur in a completely different form – at another.

Mauss' study brought home a fallacy of anthropological research practices of his time. One was that exploring economic phenomena in different cultures through Western concepts – e.g., 'gifting'-, can impede the interpretative process. The other is that one cannot study economic phenomena independently from other social phenomena. However much a breakthrough Mauss' study was in economic anthropological thinking, his analysis was based on gifting as a systemic phenomenon, in which processes of change had no place. A similar structuralist approach was adopted by Marshall Sahlins (1974).

Shipton (2007) clearly takes a more dynamic approach. He points out that resource exchanges in western Kenya are not just temporal but intergenerational – linking the living, the dead and the unborn; that valuation is subject to constantly shifting dynamics; and that what might be understood as a gift or a loan can also mutate over time. Arguing that resource exchanges among people in western Kenya are primarily enactments of central socio-cultural values of entrustment and obligation - belonging within a more general 'fiduciary culture'- the study widens the research horizon of economic anthropology to the role of socio-cultural values in framing economic practices.

While the above studies have provided major insights into socio-cultural phenomena and their valuations relating to resource exchange, they are not geared to capturing new modes of interaction in instances of informal interpersonal resource exchanges. Moves in anthropology have therefore been towards a re-working of perspectives and a focus on monetary and financial practices and “repertoires, pragmatics and indexicality” (Maurer, 2006, p. 30) as an alternative approach to the investigation of underlying logics. This shift of orientation implies a much closer focus on what realities people create and what individual and socio-cultural valuations they communicate when they are ‘doing’ resource exchange.

This approach is in line with the central objective of the current analysis, which is to capture individual and socio-cultural valuations of present-day informal interpersonal financial transactions, while taking into account the various realities of resource exchange created in the wake of changing resource exchange environments and their emergent significations (as for instance in the context of MMT). The following description highlights concepts from anthropology and sociolinguistics that delineate the outlines of the analysis.

Various economic and social anthropologists (e.g. Guyer 2004; Ingold (2000); Nustad (2015)) take a pragmatic approach, when they argue that realities are created in the interactions of people with their environment, which are simultaneously co-constituted of people’s experiences in various social domains. Thus, realities are considered as implicitly co-defined by personal and social history. The ethnographer’s job is to trace and explore the implicit references - or the indexicality - of informants’ current realities to personal and social experiences that are implicit in them (Nustad 2015). In line with this theoretical argument, it is not surprising that when Safaricom introduced a whole new concept of money transfer in the shape of MMT in Kenya, it was quick to appeal to widely shared experiences among Kenyans in their advertising campaign (“Send money home”). Addressing a potentially intimidating modern instrument of resource exchange in a familiar context, people were able to create new realities relating to resource exchanges.

Pragmatics in social- and ethnolinguistics has a core focus on language use, particularly in acts of communication. This offers a variety of research domains (e.g. conversation analysis, ethnolexicology, discourse analysis) with an underlying assumption that verbal utterances are produced in social context and therefore do not only include referential or ‘pure’ meanings; indexical or social meanings are equally essential components of meaning production (Blommaert, 2005; Peeters, 2013). Implicit verbal signals in, for example, terms of address, style of communication, metaphors used; and non-verbal signals - such as facial expressions and dress - during communication, are argued to reveal important information about socio-cultural valuations about social status, formal or informal relations, and how people value these.

While indexicality is a central assumption in the two parts of this paper and a basic premise for the analysis, the second part adds a semantic analysis to the pragmatic approach. Using an ethnolexicological lens, it zooms in on *salient* or socially meaningful lexical terms as resources of socio-cultural data, and seeks to uncover the cultural values underpinning these terms. (Wierzbicka 1997;Peeters 2013)

Using the above theoretical framework,,, the analysis addresses two central questions: first, **how** do realities of informal interpersonal financial and resource exchange relate to more familiar and lived realities. Second, **what** socio-cultural values underpin these realities. We employ an inductive and interpretive approach, combining ethnographic research with a study of language use.

3 Methodology

This paper reports findings from two related pieces of research in Kenya.[3] The first part used In-depth qualitative interviews to investigate the nature, purpose and relationships within which interpersonal resource transactions were carried out and analysing these to reveal their meaning. Research sites were three towns and their environs, chosen to represent terciles of Kenya's district poverty rankings (according to GOK, KNBS 2006) and also capturing cases from three ethnic groups. Mathira (top tercile) on the slopes of Mt Kenya, which is ethnically Kikuyu, represents agro-ecologically higher potential zones with extensive small-holder tea and coffee production, while Nyamira (second tercile) also had small-holder tea and coffee but also areas of lower potential among the ethnically Gusii. Both of these locations have relatively high population densities and hence proximity to public services. Kitui, (bottom tercile) is a semi-arid environment where population densities among the Kamba ethnic group are low and service access difficult, and which experiences crop failure and food insecurity on a frequent basis with consequently high levels of male out-migration.

Investigating these transactions opens a potentially vast terrain, extending from dependence on family members for daily survival to occasional interactions with strangers; from interactions that are more clearly symbolic, to those that are more commercial and instrumental. Our focus in the first part was on how resource exchange - not just financial exchange - was important and meaningful in the context of a variety of relationships, while capturing a variety of types of giving/lending[4] and receiving/borrowing. The approach therefore focussed on asking respondents about the support that they had found 'significant or important' to them in the last year, although some spontaneously responded with older examples. In order to get a sense of how this might contrast with transactions which might seem less notable because of their frequency, we also asked about frequent exchanges, which we described as the more day-to-day and potentially small-scale interactions.

In order to open up the discussion, the interview used a social network mapping exercise to initially identify those with whom they interacted in three circles: 'close'; not so close and 'further away'. The interview then asked about the most significant or important support they had given and received from others over the previous year (or longer if they wished). Interviews were carried out by a research team comprising the lead researcher working with a translator and a second researcher. Interviews were held separately, usually with husbands and wives and usually matching the gender of the interviewee and the researcher. The interviews were carried out in Swahili. To open the discussion the term *usaidizi* was used, which means 'help' or 'support' and is the term used to refer to assistance received from others in the broadest way. The nature of this assistance was then probed for the relationships involved and the history of interaction and support exchanged with that person. In this context, significant and important did not necessarily mean the scale of support, but in the way it was reported it was the most meaningful to them. This was followed by a discussion of the most frequent support given and received, with a similar set of questions probing the nature of the relationship and the support exchanged. The

[3] The Financial Sector Deepening Trust, Kenya funded both pieces of research.

[4] Indeed, linguistically, in Kikamba, the term for 'give me' applies to both give and lend, see (Krijtenburg, 2013).

interview ended by asking about the other financial services respondents used and they were asked to locate the institutions on the network map as a means of understanding their perceptions of their relationships with these institutions.

A total of 62 interviews were undertaken in 40 households. The respondents were purposefully chosen from participants in a study undertaken two years earlier who were accessible to the research team at the time of the study. The original sample for a survey had been randomly selected within villages and then purposeful selection had occurred to capture diversity in poverty level and financial service use. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents.

Table 2: Respondents by location, gender and household type

	Men	Women	Total	Hhs: both husband and wife interviewed	HHs: either husband or wife interviewed	Unmarried young men	Female-headed households
Mathira	11	10	21	7	3	2	2
Nyamira	11	11	22	10	0	1	1
Kitui	10	9	19	5	6	1	2
Total	32	30	62	22	9	4	5

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and entered into NVIVO, and coding and analysis was undertaken using an inductive and interpretive approach. The range of transactions reported in terms of types (gift/borrowing); the nature of the transaction (labour, goods, food, finance, credit, advice); relationships (children, parents, siblings, cousins, friends, neighbours) and purpose (need, relationship, past/future reciprocation, confidence of repayment) suggests that the questions were in fact understood quite open-endedly. While the focus on significant or important transactions may have been expected to put more quotidian exchanges in the shade, there were a number of instances where such examples were given as significant suggesting - as intended - this approach did not obviously bias responses. However, the reporting of more frequent transactions was overall much lower. For men in particular, the reporting of these was much lower than for women, and many of the transactions they reported as significant or important were also reasonably frequent[5] ones.

The second part of the paper zooms in on one specific group, the Kamba of Kitui. Since ethnolinguistic and ethnographic fieldwork required a period of in-depth field work, one of the sites was visited for a period of five weeks.. First a list was drawn up of Kamba words used in the domain of borrowing/lending and 'saving'[6] with the help of a Kamba dictionary and later complemented and adapted by Kamba informants from Kitui area. In total 60 informants varying in age, gender and economic status were asked to give explanations of

[5] Though we imposed no definition of frequency.

[6] Scare quotes around *save* indicate that there is no exact equivalent for the term *save* in Kikamba vocabulary.

the words and indicate when/where/and how the word would be used as well as the valuations attributed to it (e.g. degree of importance, negative/positive connotations; emotional resonance). Three field assistants took turns in translating English questions into Kikamba and informant responses back into English. During these interviews some words appeared to be more relevant in the domains of borrowing/lending and 'saving' than others and some more generally shared than others. This resulted in a shortlist of most common words and their referential meanings plus a description of their use and attributed valuations. Simultaneously, ethnographic data were collected. Interviews eliciting informants' personal histories in the Kamba domains of borrowing/lending and 'saving' were complemented with observations of 'resource exchange' role-plays, participation in informal discussions and observations of financial group meetings. In all these activities research assistants were instrumental in finding informants and translating from Kikamba into English and *vice versa*. Video recordings were made of all fieldwork activities, thus enabling an analysis of verbal and non-verbal communications. Interviews, role-plays and group meetings were transcribed and translated into English. Thus it was possible to translate back into Kikamba and explore relevant socio-cultural information that had got lost in translation. Finally, participation in the everyday lives of three different households enabled the researcher to have a closer look into local practices of lending/borrowing and 'saving' and the values and norms of behaviour that are embedded in them.

Kitui area was by chosen for social rather than language considerations. In fact, in each of the three sites, people speak a Bantu language. Therefore, similarity between 'pure' (referential) meanings of terms seems likely. However, poverty, minimal access to adequate services and food insecurity in the Kitui area were expected to be conducive to a variegated network of informal interpersonal exchanges and realities that might not be found in the other two sites. Moreover, it was considered that the practice and vocabulary of resource exchange would be less affected by terminologies that are generally introduced with the presence of more formal financial institutions. These likely circumstances were thought to offer scope for a productive exploration of socially and culturally meaningful concepts of resource exchange.

4 Resource exchange practices in their social context

This section presents findings from the in-depth qualitative interviews which investigated the significance and importance of transactions of varied nature, purpose and relationships. It first identifies key domains of resource exchange in which the practices involved were identified to involve particular patterns of transactions and relationships. It then presents the way in which respondents identified the relationship dynamics of the support as meaningful to them. It demonstrates that boundaries of borrowing and giving in relationships can be unclear with the consequence that a lack of a shared understanding has impacts on the relationship. Finally, we report on how relationships with formal financial providers demonstrate that the same relational dynamic was evident in how these were discussed.

4.1 Domains of relationships and support

Analysis revealed that financial and resource support given for different purposes frequently had distinct patterns of expectation regarding the nature of the transaction, and how some of these converged with particular sets of social relationships. First, exchanges among neighbours were often frequent and more often reported by women and occurred between women. These involved food, essential household items and small amounts of money. These were exchanged both with in-laws as a result of patrilocal residence patterns and between un-related neighbours. This occurred both in the more food secure areas as well as where it was particularly insecure in Kitui.

In cases where food was requested by women from neighbours during the hungry season, this was frequently reported as being requested to feed young children. A number of respondents reported that even where they only had 1kg of maize in the house themselves, that they would give some of this. Where hunger led to requests for money from more distantly located relatives with an offer to repay, there were instances where this repayment was strongly rejected. However, it appeared that such support from relatives was not taken for granted and appreciation was frequently expressed when it was received, so confirming the relationship.

Support for children's education expenses was frequently received from siblings or cousins (of the parent) (see also Shipton, 2007). This ranged from one-off gifts to ongoing support throughout the child's education. The latter was especially the case where the children were orphaned. The reasons given for school fees and related assistance encompassed: first, need i.e. there is no need if the parents can afford it; second, the potential of the child; and, third, the potential for the child to support the giver or others in the future. It was notable that when a young person is earning and does not have the burden of school fees, rather than saving for their own future, the norm is to support the education of the children of a sibling who need the funds at that time. Considering this from an economic point of view the potential returns are likely to be much greater than saving in a bank account, and especially if that child then secures a good job and is able to reciprocate support or connections in future.

In the case of health and other shocks, the patterns of support were less clear. Indeed there were cases where immediate family did not respond to the need for assistance with medical expenses and cases where a more distant friend did. The rationale for assisting can recognise an understanding of idiosyncratic shocks: "you know problems are for everyone, today it's you, tomorrow it's me". On the other hand support was in some cases lent rather than given even among relatively close family members. In such cases the pressing nature of the situation can lead to a lack of clarity over the nature of the support since the terms on which it is given may not be clearly discussed. But if it is agreed as borrowing then the return date is recognised as needing to respond to the circumstances of the borrower and their ability to overcome the problem. Responding to needs created by shocks was frequently referred to as an opportunity to confirm the strength of a relationship.

Finally, we turn to the domain of business. Business people - mostly men - appeared to particularly develop lending relationships with their siblings, cousins and friends who were also in business. For some these transactions are so frequent that they do not even arrange when funds that are borrowed will be returned, trusting that the person will pay when the other gets paid, usually in the space of days or weeks. Where it is clear that those requesting funds are in business and funds are to be used for that purpose then they are more easily given. Even though these resources are usually given interest-free, it is more likely that "something on top" will be given as a result of the value increase obtained from the business purpose to which they are put.

4.2 Consolidating friendship through financial support

Friends and siblings were the most frequently mentioned relationships in which significant or important support had been given or received. Cases of significant support were reported from immediate family such as spouses, parents and children but the emphasis of reporting on siblings and friends suggested that it is particularly meaningful when it comes from friends and siblings because it is less taken for granted. In relation to siblings, this can be understood because relationships with them are often much more varied than those with parents or children, not least because siblings are often numerous and may be geographically scattered. Moreover, these relationships beyond the immediate family are particularly useful as they create connections which diversify sources of support and give access to a wider resource base which can also help to manage idiosyncratic risks and shocks.

The exchange of financial support served to develop and consolidate relationships. The open-ended giving and receiving of resources with friends was often explained as being something that was not reckoned even though it could involve some quite significant amounts relative to income. For example, a young man had received Kshs10,000 from a friend to complete the amount he had needed to buy a motorbike and this was not to be refunded. He later paid fees of Kshs24,000 plus related transport and other costs for the friend to attend college. He stated that:

> *"Now when he came to a point of need I also did it. Not looking whether he will give it back or not…no I don't even think of it. [Laughing] I have remembered it because you have asked me!"* …adding that *"he has eaten a lot of my money, I have also eaten a lot of his money. That is just giving each other . ….We help each other."*

Support could also involve surprise gifts in the context of relationships that went some way back in time, so underlining and re-affirming the value of a friendship. For example, a married man who was working as a church evangelist explained an exchange as follows:

> *"We met in Karatina after a long time since we were in school together. We talked for a while then I told him I needed twenty thousand and he said he would send it. He took me to a hotel and we took tea then we parted ways. After a while he sent the money. …When I asked him, after how long was I to repay the money he just said no, I just gave you that money". He used the funds to buy a TV and radio.*

While there was evidence of an expectation that support will be given and received from siblings – and for both men and women this mainly meant their brothers - it is also evident that this was not a relationship that was taken for granted:

> *"He came here to my place and heard me telling my child, who was to go to school "the money that I have cannot be enough for you". Then he told me that he would go and sell his cow and add me the money so that my child can go to school. Just as a joke like that, he went, sold it and brought me the money. It was very shocking to me, ten thousand you are given for free?"*

As a result, the receipt of support from a brother led to him being described as a friend. On the other hand, the discourse on support from friends led to the comparison with a brother in that a friend could be someone with whom you "share more than even a brother". This indicates that siblings cannot always be relied on for support and that when they do give it, they demonstrate their position as a friend. In a similar way, friends who consolidate a friendship by offering financial support can become a "real friend" through demonstrating this value materially.

The affective (that is, emotional) aspect of material support was expressed even more overtly by women who described being happy at "being remembered" or the way a gift received via money transfer meant that "I felt that I am loved". They explained the intimacy of assisting or being assisted to deal with a financial problem through a language of adoption: a neighbour who assisted with a soft loan to help a daughter to go for police recruitment "took the daughter as hers"; a woman who wanted to visit a child in school was assisted because "it was like us having the problem."

However developing such relationships is not easy or straightforward, it involves taking risks in trusting others to abide by a mutual agreement and the possibility of being disappointed when understandings are not adequately shared. A respondent who had lent a friend funds for which a return date had been agreed, was disappointed when the agreement was not kept: "if it is requesting without paying back, it's ok because you will forget but if it's lending, it might not work as it can kill our relationship…… It's like a promise that is not fulfilled. Even the heart to give help dies."

Alternatively, initial disappointment might involve an adaptation of the relationship to the obligation that has been generated. In one case this moved from an expectation that resources would be returned to one where they clearly were not. A respondent had guaranteed a friend's loan from a bank. The friend's charcoal store had been broken into, the charcoal stolen and since he could not pay the loan, he ran away. The respondent and his friends paid the money and then went looking for him. To date they had not asked him for the money but he sells them charcoal at a discount. The respondent reported that:

> *"We don't see any wrong because he sells us charcoal and we are happy that he is coming up. He brought a whole lorry of charcoal. I thought that he would pay us during the time tea farmers were paid bonus but he hasn't. Anyway, we have not asked him and we saw that… it is better if … you know, when a problem comes is when you go and tell him 'I have a problem now."*

It was also evident that developing friendships within which financial resources are exchanged can be a very deliberate strategy. The case of one young man illustrated this well. He was a carpenter in his 30s and he explained how he had borrowed Kshs5,000 from each of his mother and his sister (who verbally abused him in the process) to lend to a friend

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who needed Kshs10,000 to rent land. He explained that he had done this because he had himself had to go to a moneylender to borrow Kshs10,000 when he needed it urgently to buy a piece of land and had had to pay Kshs2,000 for this money (i.e. in interest). He expressed the hope that this friend would also assist him in future when he is in need. This instrumental approach to developing the friendship was more evident among young men and would seem to underline the difficulty they have in accessing other sources of finance from formal institutions or informal groups at this stage in their lives.

However the motive of receiving support was clearly not an instrumental one in most cases and it appears that the affective dimension of the relationship remains morally more important. Indeed the motivation of reciprocal support was overtly rejected in one instance: "You don't help because you've been helped and you don't ask for help because you helped … I am happy I just asked them and they gave me".

4.3 Relationships with formal financial service providers

The way in which relationships were consolidated and appreciated through borrowing was underlined by those who had received multiple loans from banks. They spoke in quite dramatic terms about the importance of this support and compared the bank to other close relations who might assist them. As one man explained:

> *"The bank has brought me a long way. It is even more than the way brothers could have helped me. The bank has brought me from far till now. It is the bank that helped me move to this place where I am now [a house he had recently built]. No one would have done the same."*

So in a similar way to the above discussion of the way in which brothers become 'real friends' when they actually provide support, the bank's loans catapulted it to the centre of the respondent's social network representing an intimate relationship with affective overtones. A business woman presented bank lending in an even more intimate and emotive metaphor:

> *"It is my mother! ... They help me. You know somebody's mother ...if you breast feed that is your mother… So, even if I am oppressed, in interest, it helps me because I know there is no other place where somebody can give me that money."*

This demonstrates how loans are highly valued for the development that these resources have enabled in the respondent's life – and even where there is seen to be a dimension of "oppression" due to the terms of that lending. However, these experiences were the exception rather than the rule. Formal retail lending is difficult to access and national data suggests that only some 4% of the adult population access bank lending compared to 28% who have bank accounts (FSD Kenya & Central Bank of Kenya, 2013). Moreover, even when it is received it can be very difficult to manage due to its strict terms and conditions (Johnson, 2013) which undermine its ability to support them.

Savings groups and merry-go-rounds[7] were also often also perceived as uplifting their members and placed at the heart of the respondent's social network. This was particularly the case when they delivered money reliably and repeatedly and were seen to be able to help with "something serious". It is therefore the demonstrated reliability and frequency of the bank or group's support to the on-going improvement of their lives that make them particularly valued.

5 Vocabularies and concepts of finance

5.1 Borrowing and lending

Two core concepts were found in relation to the Kamba language of borrowing and lending. The first we refer to as 'lend and pay back' ' which has at its core a focus on the resources involved in the exchange. The second is 'ask and assist' which has a focus on the relationships involved.

The Kamba words for borrow and lend are *kũkova* (borrow) and *kũkovethya* (lend, (lit. make to borrow)) respectively. Informants from Kitui indicated that these words refer to a 'lend and pay back' arrangement, usually without interest. This is general practice and a wide-spread phenomenon among friends and relatives which is also evident from the wider research in Mathira, Kitui and Nyamira. Funds lent to friends or relatives rarely require interest to be paid, especially when they are for education, health, or other shocks. *Kũkova* (borrow) and *kũkovethya* (lend) generally involve a clear arrangement about the return of the funds. A person can indicate to her/his potential lender that this is the arrangement s/he has in mind, by saying: Ngovethye (lend me).

However the most salient and most commonly used Kamba terms for borrowing and lending in the Kitui area, particularly in the rural parts, are *kũvoya* (pray, ask for) and *kũtetheesya* (assist). These terms highlight an 'ask and assist' arrangement in the presence of a need on the part of the person who borrows. Because of this need, it is necessary to ask the other person in a distinct way. *Kũvoya* (pray, ask for) suggests that a humble request is the appropriate way of entreating the other to give him/her the requested resource. In line with this, the lending part is framed in terms of assisting a person in need. Communicating the need of a resource to the lender, the borrower takes into account her/his relationship with the lender. This can vary from *ni thĩna* (I have a problem) in less intimate relationships to straightforward *nenge* (imperative: give) in the case of friends or close family members.

In fact, *kũvoya* and *kũtetheesya* ('ask and assist') create an ambiguous situation; they could refer to a borrowing and lending arrangement, *with or without* any expectation of return. As a result of this not being explicit, it puts the spotlight on the ability of borrower and lender to maintain their good relations. These will be strengthened or weakened depending on how the interaction is played out by each of them. On the one hand, the situation enables the expression of moral or affective qualities, such as closeness, affection, generosity, and obligation. Equally, the situation may put the relationship under strain if the assumptions of shared norms are breached by their actions.

Table 3: Kamba terminology in the domain of borrowing and lending

	RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED	*RESOURCE FOCUSED* (a clear arrangement of return of resource)
'BORROW'	*kũvoya* (pray, ask for)	*kũkova* (borrow) (without interest)
'LEND'	*kũtetheesya (assist)* (generally open-ended arrangement)	*kũkovethya* (lend) (without interest)
'LEND ME'	ni thĩna (I have a problem); nenge (imperative) (give)	
'RETURN'	*kũtunga* (return)	*kũiva* (pay back) *ngovethye* (imp.) (lend me)
'INTEREST'	*ũsyao* (addition on top of)	*vaita* (profit;interest)

As this discussion indicates, the focus of these two pairs of words is very different. While the words *kũkova* (borrow) and *kũkovethya* (lend) in the 'lend and pay back' concept highlight the resources involved in the exchange, the verbs *kũvoya* (pray, ask for) and *kũtetheesya* (assist) in the 'ask and assist'[8] concept clearly focuses on the inter-personal relationship and refers to implicit Kamba values and assumptions relating to borrowing and lending. These assumptions are that both lender and borrower trust that their own and the other's actions are motivated by a shared set of norms and values relevant to resource exchange. These shared values are discussed further below.

When it comes to returning the resources, the verbs used are two: *kũiva* (pay (back)) and *kũtunga* (return). In line with the two sets of verbs used above they also highlight the distinction between the resource focused i.e. *kũiva* (pay (back)), and the relationship focused

[8] However, this is not a 'pure' gift, rather it can be seen as part of a wider system of resource exchanges which Parker Shipton (2007) calls a "fiduciary culture". This involves the "entrustment" of resources which produces resulting obligations. These exchanges can be found in relation to a wide range of resources including land, animals, goods, as well as money. This reciprocity can change form and meaning in the process and operate across generations.

i.e. *kũtunga* (return). *Kũiva* includes a dimension of returning economic value, while *kũtunga* highlights the activity as one of reciprocation, which the use of the term *kũtunga muvea* (literally to return thanks or express thanks) illustrates.

Further, the relationship and resource focused Kamba conceptualisations of borrowing and lending arrangements are also reflected in the words for interest: *ũsyao* (produce, interest) and *vaita* (profit, interest) respectively. The word *ũsyao* is embedded in general human experiences of production and derived from the verb *kũsyaa*, of which the first meaning is ”to give birth”[9]. Literally translated as “that which is given birth”, *ũsyao* applies to an array of products, such as the children of a nuclear family, the chicks of a chicken, the fruits of a mango tree, the interest on a borrowed or saved sum of money. The verb *kũsyaa* from which the noun *ũsyao* is derived can equally be used in a financial context and refers to any type of increase of money on top of the money that is there. By extension this implies that *ũsyao is* not only interest but any addition of money on top of that which a person or a group has. The understanding “addition on top of” relates closely to the original meaning of *ũsyao*, which is produce. Hence the use of this term to mean interest is heavily framed by both socio-economic and socio-emotional associations of the term produce. Its interpretation therefore involves elements related to the variability of the amount involved; the sense of future benefit it entails; as well as experiences of disappointment, shock, stress or contentment with respect to the actual outcome.

Similar characteristics were evident from the wider research. Where a friend or relative borrowed funds for business or a productive purpose, s/he may return them with “something on top” – which is explained as “giving back thanks” which can literally be translated as appreciation (in the emotive sense[10]). This “something on top” is not necessarily small in relation to the amount lent and can depend on the scale of the gain and the gratitude of the borrower. One woman returned a *kanga* and *leso*[11] along with the funds to turn them into a dress in appreciation of being helped with pigeon pea seedlings which had produced a very good harvest - these goods being worth about twice the value of the seedlings.

By contrast the term *vaita (Kisw. faida* (profit)) highlights economic value, is restricted in its use to the financial domain, and does not have a similar general meaning of addition on top of. While Kamba in the rural area preferred to use the word *ũsyao* in financial contexts, in Kitui town informants would spontaneously use the word *vaita* or *faida* (Kiswahili) to refer to interest paid on loans and received on savings.

From this we can clearly identify two very differently conceived practices of borrowing and lending: the first focuses on the resources and their economic value. The second is a specific type of interaction between two actors in a relationship of ‘ask and assist’ which is overlaid with expectations and norms of reciprocity and involves looking after one another and boosting each other’s well-being - in Kikamba referred to as *kũkilya* (uplift) (cf. *mukilye* (MGR)). However, in practice these two types are not so easily distinguished and the language used in everyday life can move between these concepts producing ambiguity and blurred boundaries such that inter-personal exchanges of resources involve both financial

[9] See Mũtĩsya and Ndũnda 2003. *Kamba-English Dictionary*. Nairobi: Roma Publishers Ltd.
[10] Note that in English “appreciation” is also used to connote value increase in the context of assets.
[11] Both are wraps worn by women; *kanga* is the cheaper, heavier and less decorated piece of cloth.

concepts and the norms and values of everyday life.

5.2 Saving

Kamba respondents were also using two distinct concepts of 'saving'. The first involves an individual or a group "keeping safe" (*kwia*), and the same or another person or entity "looks after that which is kept safe" (*kũsuvia*). The second concept refers to the way in which members of a group "put together" (*kũmbanya*) their resources. *Kwia* (put, keep (safe)) can be used for any kind of items, e.g. chickens, maize, clothes, money, timber. The verb includes a sense of custodianship: – that is of putting and keeping the item(s) in an appropriate place, so that no harm can come its/their way. Most informants intuitively associated *kwia* with "safe" (*kwia nesa* (lit. keep well)). In everyday practice this concept of *kwia* (keep safe) had a closely connected concept of *kũsuvia* (look after, keep safe). One informant explained that you *kũsuvia* your money when you put (*kwia*) it in the bank. The word *kũsuvia* is equally used to refer to a stage after *kwia* (put, keep (safe)). Thus, when you put (*kwia* (put, keep (safe)) money in the bank you expect the banking staff to take care (*kũsuvia*) that your money remains safe in the bank. The verb *kũsuvia* does not entail an association with value increase, but rather value maintenance and typically includes a sense of future benefit. This was clear from discussions with several informants about the different uses of *kũsuvia*. One expressed that she was very much aware that she had to *kũsuvia* (to take care of) her son. When asked to explain what she meant by this, she argued that she made sure she raised school fees for him so that he could finish his secondary school and be able to get a job that would pay him enough to also take care of her.

Table 4. Kamba terminology in the domain of 'saving'

'SAVE'	*kũmbanya* (put/bring together) *kwia* (put, keep (safe)) followed by *kũsuvia* (look after, keep safe)

The second concept - *kũmbanya* (put together) - has a strong reference to the end goal, which is a collection that has added value to the separate parts. It can refer to "putting money together" (as an individual as well as a group), but can equally be used in non-financial contexts such as bringing family members together to discuss a family issue, putting livestock together in a pen, collecting grains to make a heap. The saving aspect comes out most vividly in the context of Kamba *ikundi* (financial groups). Group members put together (*kũmbanya*) their (two-)weekly or monthly contributions in the treasury and the members decide which is their common saving goal e.g. *lesos* (cloth wraps), kitchen utensils or chairs. Members indicate that saving in a group context is much more effective than on an individual basis because of the social control that is inherent to a *kikundi* setting. This seems to suggest that a *kikundi* (financial group) is more than a financial institution. Indeed, members generally argue that they are expected to look after each other and to boost the well-being of all members. This type of group solidarity comes out most vividly in the Kikamba term for a merry-go-round (or ROSCA) which is *mukilye* and literally translates as “the uplifting”. In fact, these expectations are inspired by more general values which are characteristic of group relationships among Kamba: that is, interdependence, belonging and concerted action. Considered against this background *kũmbanya* (put together) means much more than just putting money together, it involves the concerted action of all those who belong to the *kikundi* to improve the well-being of all its members as well as the group as a whole, which at the same time enhances the sense of belonging.

5.3 Shared values: reciprocity, upliftment, belonging and concerted action

It is apparent from the above discussion that there are specific values that are particularly relevant in the context of Kamba conceptualisations of borrowing-lending and ‘saving’. In the context of borrowing-lending, a generally shared value is that of reciprocity – in the sense that the giver may (need to) ask for funds from the borrower in the future. In the Kitui area this reciprocity not only applies to inter-personal resource exchange, but also to exchanges within the *kikundi* (financial group). Members assist a member who is in need, hoping that when they experience hard times they will be assisted too.

This value of reciprocity is also pervasive beyond Kitui. In Nyamira and Mathira the expectation of reciprocity in inter-personal relationships was clearly expressed. For example, when assisting nephews, nieces or other children with school fees, it was explained that they will “help us or somebody else” in future. This response underlines a characteristic aspect of the reciprocity involved which is that it lacks specificity. After all, whether the support will in fact be reciprocated depends on how the child succeeds in education and then in developing their livelihood. Never the less, respondents who had helped relatives with school fees in the past, reported that they were now able to appeal to those they had helped for support with their own children’s education, saying “now is the time to … get the benefit”. Indeed, such a reciprocal dimension of assisting was even used to justify support given in very close relationships of parents and children with children frequently referring to past investments in education that parents had made in them. From the above argument we can therefore infer that reciprocity is a common value in the context of everyday borrowing and lending, and that it generally operates with little specificity and on a time scale that can spread across generations.

The second Kamba ideal or value on which the concept of ‘ask and assist’ (borrow/lend) as well as putting together (save) are implicitly built is that of ‘uplifting’. In fact, uplifting is a much more general value in Kamba society, implying a type of solidarity where one person “boosts” a less well-off person mentally, socially or economically. In many ways, *ikundi* (financial groups) are exemplary platforms for enacting these different aspects of uplifting, as the discussion of “putting together” illustrated. Additionally, it is clear that in the context of a *kikundi* (financial group), uplifting is also closely connected with other Kamba values, such as belonging, interdependence and concerted action. In fact, these values are essential conditions for uplifting other members of the group and the group as a whole. The reasoning behind this is that without a feeling of belonging and a sense of interdependence members cannot truly act in concert and therefore will lack the power to increase the well-being of the group or of its members.

These shared values were found to be pervasive in Kamba society and their importance to borrowing, lending and 'saving' as exchanges of resources, suggests that they are concepts that have significance across the full range of transactions involved.

6 Discussion: 'upliftment' and friendship

These findings reveal the conceptual and value dimensions of practices of borrowing and 'saving' and how the relationships surrounding resource exchange respond to these. In particular, we have shown that there are clearly identifiable distinctions between concepts of lending. However we have also pointed out the ambiguity and blurred boundaries of the terrain in which they are practiced. The concept of 'ask and assist' is much more used than that of 'lend and pay back' and this puts emphasis on the relationship between the borrower and lender instead of on the resources involved. The exchange of resources in 'ask and assist' relationships is underpinned by values of reciprocity and upliftment. When support is received these relationships are consolidated and deepened. In particular, relationships with siblings and friends are consolidated and developed through the exchange of resources and the affective or emotional dimension of these predominates.

Giving out resources is nevertheless risky and the relationship may have to adapt to arrangements that are ambiguous or result in disappointment if values are not shared and conduct breaches the assumptions made. Nevertheless, it appears that young men, in particular, strategically develop friendships within which resources are exchanged as a response to their limited access to affordable funds. The domain in which the resources are to be used is also important to how the exchange is understood. Resources given in the context of business, education, health, hunger or emergencies, involve different sets of underlying expectations and assumptions regarding the nature and timing of the return. The evidence above suggests that when formal financial service providers lend repeatedly they begin to conform to the dynamics people expect within these resource exchange relationships which involve reciprocity and upliftment.

When value increases as a result of lending, it is predominantly viewed as the produce of a process which is an "addition" or "on top of". This has implicit understandings of it being the outcome of a natural (re)productive process. As a result, , uncertainty and variability are distinctive features of the outcome.. Value increase is not expected in 'ask and assist' relationships – especially where the funds are given in the context of education, health or other emergencies.

On the other hand, with respect to 'saving', there are two dominant local (complimentary) concepts. One is "keep safe and look after"; the other is "put together". "Keep safe and look after" embodies ideas of custodianship and doing this over time involves a sense of maintenance of these resources in ways that ensure future benefit. "Put together" is associated particularly with 'saving' by members of a group. 'Saving ' in "put together" group relationships are underpinned by values of upliftment, interdependence, belonging, concerted action and reciprocity.

While the concepts of 'saving' and borrowing have appeared to be fairly distinct above, the importance of the relationships and the values involved suggest a link. The woman who used the term *kũsuvia* (look after, keep safe) in relation to her son's care so that he could also care for her in the future has a connotation of long term development of the resource for future benefit. Lending through 'ask and assist' invokes the value of upliftment and hence has a similar notion of development of the resource in the form of the person receiving the funds. In caring for or looking after a friend or sibling through assisting when they have a need (and sometimes even when they have not actually asked or expressed such a need), the lender is also therefore keeping that person safe with the scope to receive reciprocal benefit in the future. Hence, we can see a link between borrowing and 'saving' through the concepts of reciprocity and upliftment underpinning these relationships. Nevertheless, there is also ambiguity and many potentially blurred boundaries regarding the assumptions underlying exchanges.

The practices and concepts identified here clearly contrast with those involved in formal financial sector activities. But the ways in which two respondents talked about their experience of upliftment through multiple borrowing from the sector confirm that they bring the same expectations to this sector as in their everyday context. Hence this suggests that when low-income people approach the formal sector, they do so with their own language, concepts, ideologies and values. On the other hand, formal financial providers approach transactions with low income people with very different values and assumptions which are likely to be at odds with these values. Since the above examples of formal providers are the exception rather than the rule, and the terms and conditions of formal lending are strict and difficult to manage, this starts to explain why providers' actions may be misinterpreted and result in disappointment and disillusion.

For example, on the saving side, banks pride themselves in the security of their client deposits. Nevertheless withdrawal charges erode this from the perspective of clients as the element of 'keeping safe' and value maintenance is damaged when less is ultimately withdrawn. Moreover, in time the element of value return is also eroded by inflation and the negligible interest rates on savings accounts. This contrasts with the way in which value return is expected to be maintained under the concept of *kũsuvia* (keep safe, look after) and future benefit is hoped for. On the borrowing side, it is clear that in contrast to the prevalence of interest free resource exchange in inter-personal relationships, banks are resource focused and engage in 'lend and pay back' rather than 'ask and assist' relationships with their clients.

Second, and more positively, it shows that low-income people are interested in providers with whom they can develop long term relationships. Financial service providers who can demonstrate their ability to operate with characteristics of shared values, such as reciprocity, upliftment, belonging, interdependence and concerted action are likely to have greater appeal to and loyalty from their clients. This evidence shows how material support is a central feature in the development of close relationships with both friends as well as family members. The importance of material support translates to the case where financial institutions provide similarly reliable support which enables people to develop themselves - these relationships too become valued and seen as intimate. This underlines the need for formal financial institutions to be able to create relationships that are seen to provide a mutual exchange of support.

However, if formal providers are to effectively respond to the dynamic of reciprocity and upliftment, this particularly means finding ways to enable low income people to access loans even if these are small. Without access to borrowing, savings in financial institutions are a one way exchange that does not resonate with the nature of friendship and mutually supportive and reciprocal relationships, nor with everyday practices in which borrowing and 'saving' are frequently in conjunction. Providers who can make access to small scale loans easy, affordable and flexible are likely to make significant strides in the market and this has recently been demonstrated by the rapid rate of adoption of the M-shwari savings and loan account, which runs over the mobile phone and allows for small loans to be easily accessed (Cook & McKay, 2015).

A further dimension that would respond to everyday understandings is if loan product design were to respond more closely to the circumstances of the borrowing and the borrower such that relationships are developed and preserved. For example, emergency loan products that respond to shocks may be designed to allow more flexible repayment schedules which respond to the borrower's ability to repay, in particular because shocks frequently make this more unpredictable. Alternatively, the way in which productive investments produce a return and result in "something on top" resonates with the idea of a return resulting from risk taking rather than interest and may better embrace this local understanding. It chimes more closely with the idea of dividends on equity investments in which risk is taken by the investor, and with the Islamic finance concept of *musharakah* or profit sharing.

7 Conclusions

This paper has investigated key practices, concepts and values that underlie everyday resource exchange as the wider nexus of inter-personal financial transactions which mobile money transfer is facilitating by enabling exchange over distance. It has demonstrated the way in which relationships are developed and consolidated through these exchanges such that they create ongoing relationships of support which endure over time.

Through an examination of everyday language used in one of the research sites, it has shown that there are distinct words used for borrowing and lending which focus on the nature of the relationship involved in 'ask and assist' exchanges in contrast to those that focus on resources in 'lend and pay back' exchanges. This analysis has further revealed the underpinning values of reciprocity and 'upliftment' which underlie these exchanges in which one "boosts" a less well-off person mentally, socially or economically.

Together this evidence identifies the critical importance of the focus on relationships rather than resources as at the centre of these practices and underlines the gap between the meaning of informal resource exchange practices and those of resource-focused formal sector transactions. The view that people's rapid adoption of mobile money is therefore indicative of their readiness to engage with the core practices of the formal financial sector and hence a direct route to formal inclusion is at odds with this evidence. Rather it suggests that there is much scope for misunderstanding in developing routes to financial inclusion which make it particularly important to appreciate emic perspectives.

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