Ascertaining Sexual Relationship Types (ASERT™)

Kelly K. Hallman

Evolving Methods for an Expanding Field: Global Research with Children and Families in Adversity
Great progress in reducing HIV/AIDS, yet some girls are being left behind

• Among young people, highly differential rate of incidence declines by sex since 2001
• Epidemic progressively younger and female
  – Young women are 2-4X more likely to become infected than males
• Prevention approaches assume
  – relative equality between sexual partners
  – agency to select a safer partner
  – power to use condoms consistently
• For girls, equality, agency and power lacking in some relationships
• Lack of evidence on who girls’ sexual partners are

What is ASERT™?

- **Anonymous**, group-based reporting method
- Applied with pre-existing groups of mutually trusted individuals
- Identifies
  - Range of sexual partner types
  - Criteria used to make partner choices
  - Relationship-specific attributes, ranked by order of importance

Collaborative project

- UNICEF-Tanzania (Dr. Alison Jenkins)
- TACAIDS (Dr. Fatma Mrisho)
- Restless Development-Tanzania (Mr. Phillipo Paul)
- Others: Dr. Sara Peracca, Ms. Neema Matee, Mr. Ilan Cerna-Turoff
- Funding: UNICEF-Tanzania
- Ethical approvals: NIMR (Tanzania), Population Council

Guidelines for using the ASERT Method

- Used with pre-existing groups who already trust each other and feel comfortable expressing ideas/feelings

- Not designed to elicit individual experiences or behaviors; only about “girls like you in this community”
  - Provides more anonymity, safety and freedom of expression

- Applied with similar-age respondents (e.g., 15-19, 20-24 years)

- A safe and private space is absolutely required. Confidentiality of responses and comfort and safety of the participants must be ensured

- Health and psychosocial services should be identified before the exercise, in case of reports of experiences of violence or abuse
ASERT™ method

- Step 1. List types of people girls like you have sex with
- Step 2. Write partner types in column 1 of ASERT™ grid
- Step 3. Identify the reason girls have sex with each partner type
- Step 4. Rank the reasons girls have sex with each partner type
- Step 5. Enter ranked reasons in rows of ASERT™ results grid
- Step 6. Record age and any notes about each partner type

Step 1. List the kinds people girls like you in this community have sex with

- Partner type 1
- Partner type 4
- Partner type 8
- Partner type 2
- Partner type 5
- Partner type 7
- Partner type 3
- Partner type 6
- Partner type 9

Step 2. Write partner types in column 1 of ASERT™ grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNER TYPE</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 7</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3. List the reasons girls have sex with partner type 1

- They take girls to.....
- They give girls...
- Girls feel ..... with them
- Etc........

Step 3. List the reasons girls have sex with partner type 2

- They say ..... to girls
- They provide girl access to ....
- Girls can talk to them about ......
- Etc......

...and so on for each partner type named

Step 4. For partner type 1, order the reasons by importance why girls have sex with that one

1st. They give girls...

2nd. They take girls to.....

3rd. Girls feel ..... with them

4th. Etc........

Step 4. For partner type 2, order the reasons by importance why girls have sex with that one.

1st. They provide girl access to ....

2nd. Girls can talk to them about ..... 

3rd. They say ..... to girls

4th. Etc......

...and so on for each partner type named

### Step 5. Enter ranked reasons in rows of ASERT™ grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNER TYPE</th>
<th>RANKED REASONS FOR HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>They give girls…….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>They provide girls access to…….</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 4</td>
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<td>Type 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 6. Record age and any notes about each partner type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNER TYPE</th>
<th>RANKED REASONS FOR HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>Age of partner type</th>
<th>Notes on partner type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Most important reason</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>They give girls</td>
<td></td>
<td>These men are....</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Second most important reason</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Girls can talk to them about ..........</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Third most important reason</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They take girls to...............</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Fourth most important reason</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>Girls feel ........with them</td>
<td></td>
<td>Girls go to this type when.....</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Second most important reason</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They provide girls access to......</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Third most important reason</strong></td>
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<td>They say ......to girls</td>
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Results: Economic versus socio-emotional continuum of sexual partner types (15-24-year-old females, Tanzania)

Age Difference by Partner Type

Likely HIV Risk Posed by Sex with Partner Type

Program implications

• Sustained female collective action through groups
  – Alternative form of social insurance; group civic participation as demonstration of power; no (or safe) sex for a week local campaign

• Alternative ways for older men to display wealth and masculinity
  – Go beyond social norm and shaming campaigns
  – Mr. XYZ’s Community Hall; Dr. ABC’s Football Club; etc.

• Safer sex campaigns targeted to particular types of men
  – Men over age 40, taxi drivers, teachers, doctors

• Tailored asset building to segments of girls
  – Out-of-/behind-in- school, no steady income, living outside supportive family structure, with young children
  – With provision of emergency cash; housing assistance; safer, subsidized transport; increased AGYW clinic access
  – + financial education, savings, IDs, partner-specific HIV info

Asante sana!!!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner type description</th>
<th>Age group who described this type</th>
<th>Ranked motivations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Much older men ("fataki") (aged 40 and over)    | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Readily provide big money          
2. • No questions                               
3. • Parent-like affection                       |
| Drivers (aged 25-39)                             | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Transport necessity                
2. • Some money                                  |
| Married men (aged 30-39)                         | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • No questions, late night calls, for fear of wife                              
2. • Relationship is secret, men fear wife knowing 
3. • Girl free to have other partners             |
| Bosses (aged 30-39)                              | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Hope for job                      
2. • Provide money quickly when girl has a problem 
3. • Socially desirable to be seen with           |
| Doctors (aged 30-39)                             | 15-19                            | 1. • Cheaper and easier access to health care                                       
2. • Source of health information                 
3. • Reliable source of economic assistance       |
| Teachers (aged 30-39)                            | 15-19                            | 1. • Economic help                     
2. • Secrecy of relationship                      |
| Wealthy men ("mabuzi", "pedezee", "ATM") (aged 30-39) | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Big money                         
2. • Sure money                                   
3. • No love                                      |
| One night stand ("show time, take away, short time") (men of various ages) | 20-24                            | 1. • Fast money                        
2. • No obligations                                
3. • No jealousy                                   |
| Side partners ("kidumu") (aged 20-29)           | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Sexual satisfaction                
2. • Girl is free to have other partners           |
| Neat, show-off boys ("sharobaro") (same age)     | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • They look good all the time        
2. • Good to be seen with                         
3. • They have swagger                            |
| Dancers (same age)                               | 15-19                            | 1. • Attractive                        
2. • Outgoing                                     
3. • Teach girls to dance                         |
| Classmate (same age)                             | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Help with academic matters        
2. • Friendship                                   
3. • Soda, snacks                                  |
| Boyfriend (same age)                             | 15-19, 20-24                     | 1. • Love, marriage                    
2. • Long-term plans                               
3. • Similar interests                            |