Concurrent Heterosexual Partnerships, Condom Use, and HIV Risk among the General Population, Zimbabwe

Noah Taruberekera
Linda M. Kaljee
Wellington Mushayi
Hibist Astatke
Navendu Shekhar
Michael Chommie

PSI Research & Metrics
Working Paper No. 83

November 2009 Population Services International
PSI is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization that harnesses the vitality of the private sector to address the health problems of low-income and vulnerable populations in more than 60 developing countries. PSI has programs in malaria, reproductive health, child survival, and HIV/AIDS, and deploys commercial marketing strategies to promote products, services and healthy behaviors that enable people to lead healthier lives. PSI is the leading nonprofit social marketing organization in the world.

Research & Metrics
Population Services International
1120 Nineteenth Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20036

Authors
Noah Taruberekera: Population Services International/Zimbabwe
Linda M. Kaljee: Wayne State University, Pediatric Prevention Research Center
Wellington Mushayi: Population Services International/Zimbabwe
Hibist Astatke: Population Services International
Navendu Shekhar: Population Services International
Michael Chommie: Population Services International


Acknowledgments
This study on multiple concurrent partnerships in Zimbabwe was made possible through support from USAID and DFID. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare in Zimbabwe. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the donors.
ABSTRACT

Purpose: In 2005-2006, there was an estimated HIV prevalence of 18.0% among adults in Zimbabwe. In the past, reducing the number of sexual partners has been a major focus of HIV prevention initiatives. Recent research suggests that engaging in multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP) may be riskier than engaging in a series of sexual partnerships that do not overlap in time. To better understand MCP in Zimbabwe, Population Services International commissioned a qualitative study to document types of MCP, and to explore factors and contexts influencing the practice of engagement in these relationships.

Methods: The current study design was guided by PSI's PERForM framework (Chapman & Patel, 2004). The target population was defined as sexually active males and females aged 18-40, residing in both rural and urban areas. A stratified purposeful sampling strategy was utilized with stratification based on gender, age (18 to 24 years; 25 to 40 years), and residency (urban; rural). Two focus groups of each stratified type (e.g., urban women aged 25 to 40 years) were convened for a total of 16 focus groups. Urban participants were from Harare and rural participants were from Nzvimbo, Musiwi, Shamva, Murehwa, and Mubaira districts, all located within 200 kilometers of Harare. Semi-structured interview guides were utilized to conduct the focus groups. Data from the focus groups were reviewed and analyzed to define types of male-female sexual relationships, combinations of types of relationships within MCP, and consistency of condom use with different partners.

Results: Male respondents provided 64 terms for female sexual partners and female respondents had 38 terms for male sexual partners. The most common types of concurrent relationships described by male respondents included wife or girlfriend and commercial sex worker, wife and small house, and wife and girlfriend. The most common types of relationships described by female respondents included husband and boyfriend; husband and “sugar daddy” or rich man; and husband and other married men. Women also described concurrent relationships with men in positions to provide them with goods, services or favors, e.g., pastors, teachers, and “foreigners.” Both men and women stated that condoms are seldom used with a spouse or in a long-term relationship. While men described condom use as common in their relationships with commercial sex workers, overall condom use was described as inconsistent by respondents. Inconsistent condom use was associated with attitudes of trust and perceived “low risk” of certain types of partners. Respondents stated that young men and women are low-risk because they are perceived to be sexually inexperienced. Inequality within these older adult-adolescent/young adult relationships significantly affects condom use, such that young men and women are frequently not involved in the decision-making process about condom use in their relations with older sexual partners.

Conclusion: Patterns of concurrent sexual partners all clearly pose significant risk especially in light of inconsistent condom. Future interventions for concurrent partnerships within Zimbabwe need to address both decreasing numbers of partners for both men and women, and increasing condom use within all sexual relationships. Misconceptions about risky behaviors and “safe” partners need to be targeted within planned interventions.
INTRODUCTION

The first case of HIV was identified in Zimbabwe in 1985. By 2005, there was an estimated adult prevalence of 18.0%, with higher prevalence among women than men. Since 1990, the HIV epidemic has decreased life expectancy from 61 years to 33 years and more than one million children have been orphaned (UNICEF, 2008). HIV prevalence is similar across the country, though somewhat higher in small towns and mining towns than major cities or subsistence agricultural regions.

In the past, reducing the number of sexual partners has been a major focus of HIV prevention initiatives. Multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP) is defined as overlapping sexual relationships where sexual intercourse with one partner occurs between two acts of sexual intercourse with another partner (UNAIDS 2009). Research suggests that engaging in MCP may be riskier than engaging in a series of sexual partnerships that do not overlap in time. Mathematical modeling demonstrates that MCP can amplify nascent HIV epidemics by as much as ten-fold, especially in high-prevalence communities (Watts & May, 1992; Morris & Kretzschmar, 1997; Finer, Darroch, & Singh, 1999).

The variations in patterns of concurrent relationships for both men and women in Zimbabwe are not well documented and described. In this paper, we present contextual qualitative data on these relationships. These data will provide an important knowledge base from which to further our understanding of the types of concurrent heterosexual relationships among adult men and women living in both rural and urban areas within Zimbabwe. These data will further provide a framework for analyzing determinants of MCP (Taruberekera, Kaljee, Mushayi, et al., 2009), and will be used in the planning and implementation of HIV prevention programs for these populations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid trajectory toward high HIV prevalence in Zimbabwe has been attributed to the internal migration of men to large cities with frequent visits back to their home villages, and, early in the epidemic, to access to money and the development of sexual networks (UNAIDS, 2005). In relation to the latter, evidence from Tanzania and Kenya also indicates higher prevalence of HIV infection among wealthier individuals, possibly as a result of these individuals having more opportunities to develop and maintain MCP (Shelton, Cassell, & Adetunji, 2005).
Epidemiological data from Zimbabwe indicate a decrease in the prevalence of HIV over the past eight years. Explanations for this change include a decrease in incidence rates and high mortality rates among infected individuals. In addition, the decrease in prevalence has been attributed to changes in sexual behaviors including an increase in condom use with non-regular partners, sexual debut at a later age, and a decrease in number of partners and the rate of extramarital relationships (Gregson, Garnett, Nyamukapa, et al. 2006; Central Statistical Office Zimbabwe 2006). It is unclear how HIV prevalence will be affected by recent economic and political conditions that have contributed to significant decreases in access to goods and services in Zimbabwe, including healthcare (Dixon, 2008).

Mathematical models indicate that higher levels of MCP have a greater effect on prevalence and on the spread of the HIV epidemic than do increases in numbers of partners (Morris & Kretzschmar, 2000). Multiple factors account for the greater risk posed by MCP. Research has shown that trust increases in longer-lasting relationships with regular partners, and individuals consequently stop using condoms with these partners (Longfield, 2002). Thus, long-term relationships with multiple partners wherein condom use is inconsistent may pose a greater risk of STI and HIV transmission to the individual and his/her partners than sequential monogamous relationships or short-term sexual partnerships. Furthermore, if an individual’s sexual partners are also engaging in MCP, this increases the number of persons within the sexual network and consequently the risk of transmission. Additionally, the virology of HIV makes those in MCP particularly vulnerable to infection. Within three months of seroconversion (after primary infection), an individual’s viral load is very high, which increases the likelihood of transmission (Hollingsworth, Anderson, & Fraser, 2008). The newly infected individual, if engaging in MCP, will have a greater likelihood of transmitting the virus to multiple partners and their sexual networks. HIV is more efficiently transmitted through sexual networks comprised of individuals engaged in MCP than through sexual networks comprised of consecutive monogamous relationships or short-term sexual partnerships.

Research comparing sexual patterns among Africans, Europeans, and North Americans suggests that Europeans and North Americans often have more lifetime partners, typically in sequential monogamous relationships, while Africans average more partners at the same time (Halperin & Epstein, 2004; Mah & Halperin, 2008). In a Population Services International (PSI) survey, nearly one in three sexually active men and 14% of sexually active women in Botswana reported having multiple concurrent sexual partners. In the same survey, 44% of men younger than 25 reported concurrent sexual practices (Population Services International, 2003). In a more recent study in
Zimbabwe, 32.5% of men and 28.6% of women aged 15-49 reported sexual relationships with more than one “regular partner” (Population Services International, Zimbabwe, 2006).

As multiple concurrent partnerships potentially is accelerating the spread of HIV, there is a need to specifically address the issue through targeted interventions. In order to develop effective interventions, much more needs to be known about concurrency patterns within cultural groups. Factors such as gender, residency, age, and socioeconomic status can contribute to variations in concurrency patterns. A 2006 study showed that Zimbabwean women who engage in MCP are more likely to be younger, never married and reside in urban areas. In contrast, only socioeconomic status tends to be associated with concurrency among Zimbabwean men, with wealthier men being more likely to engage in these relationships (Population Services International, Zimbabwe, 2006). Our paper seeks to provide greater insight into concurrency in Zimbabwe by analyzing descriptive data on different types of MCP and on attitudes and perceptions regarding condom use within these relationships.

**METHODS**

**Theoretical Framework**

The current study design was guided by PSI’s PERForM framework and employed methodologies from FoQus on Scales (Chapman & Patel, 2004; Population Services International, Zimbabwe, 2007). Utilizing the PSI Behavior Change Framework, FoQus on Scales provides a methodological approach to increase “emic” (insiders’) perspectives in the processes of describing the contexts of specific health-related behaviors, as well as defining determinants for future scale development and adaptation. Through methods such as focus group discussions, these contextual descriptive data are obtained from the identified target audiences (Astatke, O’Connell, Chapman, & Kaljee, 2007).

**Research Objectives**

Population Services International, Zimbabwe commissioned a qualitative study to document types of MCP, and to explore factors and contexts that influence the practice of engaging in these relationships among the general population. The study is a follow-up to a 2006 quantitative survey, which sought to understand moderating demographic characteristics of concurrent sexual practices (Population Services International, Zimbabwe, 2006).
The current paper has the following objectives:

- To describe how MCP are defined and what terms are used by the general population in Zimbabwe for different types of male-female sexual relationships;
- To describe different patterns of MCP and contexts for these relationships; and
- To describe frequency of condom use and associated HIV risk within different types of sexual relationships

Results from this study will be used to develop communication campaigns that aim to foster increased risk perception among those engaged in MCP, with the goals of promoting the reduction of MCP and encouraging safer sexual practices within these relationships. In addition, these findings will help provide a more in-depth understanding of the contexts of concurrent heterosexual partnerships in Zimbabwe and consequently help expand interventions to address concurrency as a driver of new HIV infections.

**Sample and Design**

The target population was defined as sexually active males and females aged 18-40, residing in both rural and urban areas. A stratified purposeful sampling strategy was utilized with stratification based on gender, age (18 to 24 years; 25 to 40 years), and residency (urban; rural) resulting in eight types of groups. Two focus groups of each type were convened for a total of 16 focus groups (Table 1). There were six participants per focus group. Urban participants were from Harare, which is the capital and largest city in Zimbabwe, with a population of approximately 1.8 million residents. Rural participants were from Nzvimbo, Musiwa, Shamva, Murehwa, and Mubaira, all located within 200 kilometers of Harare. Sampling criteria also included socioeconomic status, and participants were purposefully selected from both middle- and lower-income neighborhoods within each site. Place of residence was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status. Research staff approached individuals and screened them in accordance with these selection criteria. Individuals meeting the criteria were invited to participate in the focus groups.
### Table 1: Composition and Number of Focus Groups by Gender, Age, and Residency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 to 40 years</td>
<td>25 to 40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**

An interview guide based on the emergent FoQus on Scales generic guide was used to conduct the focus groups (Population Services International, 2007). Focus group pre-tests were carried out and the guide was revised accordingly (Appendix I). During focus group discussions, free-listing and open-ended questions were used to identify terminology for different types of male-female sexual relationships. Follow-up questions and probes were used to obtain information on condom use within these relationships.

**Data Collection**

The focus groups were conducted in Shona and Ndebele. All discussions were led by a same-sex moderator and were audiotaped. In addition, a note-taker was present to write down the proceedings. These notes were used to clarify data that was unclear on the audiotapes. During the free-listing activity, the moderator listed all determinants mentioned by participants on flip-chart paper and continued probing until the group could not name any more determinants. The audiotapes were transcribed and translated into English. Each discussion took approximately two-and-a-half to three hours. Incentives and transport allowances were provided to participants. The focus group discussions were conducted between September 15 and September 30, 2007.

**Data Analysis**

A research agency in Zimbabwe conducted the initial data analysis. Data from the focus groups were reviewed and analyzed to define types of male-female sexual relationships and combinations of types within MCP. These data were analyzed separately for the male and female focus groups. The data were also analyzed to assess differences among rural versus urban respondents and among older
versus younger respondents. Additional analysis and reviews were conducted at PSI Washington to further consolidate and categorize the descriptive data.

**RESULTS**

**Defining Types of Male-Female Relationships and Concurrent Partnerships**

Prior to discussions about concurrent relationships, participants were asked to free-list and describe different types of male-female sexual relationships. In these exercises, male participants were asked to describe types of female partners and female participants were asked to describe types of male partners. The male participants provided 64 different terms for types of female partners. Female participants provided 38 terms for types of male partners. While there was significant overlap with multiple terms for a single type of relationship, there were also subtle differences between the meanings of terms. The terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive, e.g. a commercial sex worker might have a long-term relationships with a regular client.

The research team categorized the types of female partners into three groups: ‘transactional’ relationships, length of relationship, and various descriptors of the women including age, marital status, and physical attributes. Likewise the types of male partners were separated into three groups including length of relationship, various descriptors of the men, and terms used by women to imply non-sexual relationships with their partners (see Table 2).

| Table 2: Most Frequently Mentioned Terms for Female and Male Partners |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| **Female partners (as described by male participants)** | **Male partners (as described by female participants)** |
| **Transactional relationships**                           |                                                     |
| Money                                                   | 
| *Hure/mahure* [commercial sex worker]                   |                                                     |
| *Pfambhi* [open about being a commercial sex worker]    |                                                     |
| Commercial sex worker                                   |                                                     |
| *Joki*                                                  |                                                     |
| *Nzenza* [exposes herself at night to attract men for commercial sex work] |                                                     |
| *Talibans* [frequent expensive nightclubs and get drinks from men – charge high fees for casual sex] |                                                     |
| *Zvinamira/stickers* [pursue men on payday and offer sex for money or entertainment] |                                                     |

Goods/services

Bitch
Gold digger
Chigundura
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Most Frequently Mentioned Terms for Female and Male Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female partners (as described by male participants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of relationship</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner attributes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual attributes or preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Most Frequently Mentioned Terms for Female and Male Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female partners (as described by male participants)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terms to imply nonsexual relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transactional Sexual Partners**. Among the male focus group participants, 23 different terms were used to describe a woman who has sex in return for cash and a further six terms were used for women who have sex in return for material support. Those individuals exchanging sex for money were most often referred to as _hure_ and _pfambi_. _Hure_ was the Shona word used for a commercial sex worker. _Pfambi_, however, were distinguished from commercial sex workers as women who actually enjoy sex and are not “just in it for the money.” Commercial sex workers were also differentiated based on where the woman meets clients and where they have sex. No trends in the use of terms were apparent according to residency (urban or rural) or age of participants.

毛病. These are ladies who charge a fee for sex. They frequent bars and only love you when you have money. They encourage you to find money by any means possible. You can actually destroy your family when trying to find the money to have sex with a _hure_. [rural male, aged 18-24]

We can differentiate _pfambi_ from _nymza_. A _nymza_ is a person who is after men but is very secretive about what she does. But a _pfambi_ is open and she is known. [urban male, aged 25-40]

The six terms for women who exchange sex for goods or services, with the exception of “gold-digger,” were mentioned only in the rural men’s groups.

**Bitch.** These are homeless women with no fixed abode. If she gets a man she automatically gets a place to bathe and food to eat, and if the affair turns sour she moves on to another relationship. [rural male, aged 18-24]

**Short- and Long-term Partners**. Many of the relationships in other categories fit within the short-term or casual partner definition, including transactional partners and various partners described through their attributes (e.g., age). Among male respondents, foreign women were specifically mentioned as short-term partners, and among female respondents, two terms for casual partners
were described, each focusing on the partner as “fun” (for entertainment purposes) and the relationship as “short and sweet.”

Love doesn’t last, just like the sweetness of bubble gum. If you fall in love, the period is short, just for that particular time. It quickly ends and you find that the affair has not lasted. So it’s like bubble gum sweetness..... [urban female, aged 25-40]

For the women, the majority of long-term partners were boyfriends or husbands.

Relations with a boyfriend can last up to 40 years, as long as the husband doesn’t find out. [rural female, aged 18-24]

A husband is a partner you have full-time. [urban female, aged 25-40]

You are proud of him [the husband] because he managed to pay lobola [bride price]. You are destined for him, you no longer go anywhere. [urban female, aged 18-24]

Men had more terms for long-term relationships than women did, and included wives, second wives, common-law wives, and “small houses.” A wife and a small house were the most common long-term partners and were mentioned across different age groups and by both urban and rural men.

You are free to go and see your in-laws because you paid what was required. She is the one you are going to stay with for the rest of your life. Death will only separate you. [urban male, aged 25-40, about having a wife]

A small house is a woman who is seen in almost the same light as a wife. The relationship is generally long-term, the man supports her, and she often has a child with the man. Sometimes these are secret relationships, and in other situations a man’s friends and sometimes even his wife are aware of the relationship. Participants described the small house as eager to please the man—especially in the area of sexual relations—whereas the wife is described as more conservative regarding sexual practices and more interested in domestic responsibilities.

There is also the small house or poacher. She is not a prostitute but will have one sexual partner, who might be a married man. She will not entertain any other man except this one with who she is in love. [rural male, aged 25-40]

A small house where I might keep someone who is divorced. I meet her demands like buying groceries and satisfy her sexually. But the affair remains very secret. [rural male, aged 25-40]

It’s a man’s resting place. Say your marriage is not a happy one; you always have problems with your wife. You can't leave her because of strings attached—the children. Your relatives know of the problems in your family. You won’t be open to them that you want to marry so you secretly look for a sexual partner because nobody will support you if you say you are looking for another partner. That’s when
you decide to have a sexual partner called a small house—where you will go after work or when you are stressed by that woman. [urban male, aged 25-40]

Usually a small house attracts a man’s attention because she is the opposite of what the man finds at home, she perfects the weaknesses of the man’s wife. This results in the man spending more time with the small house. A small house is classical, meaning she can have a bath with the man in a tub and can go to hotels like Zimsun and spend the weekend there. [urban male, aged 25-40]

**Partners Defined by Specific Attributes.** Both male and female respondents described and categorized partners by attributes including age, marital status, occupation, and physical characteristics. The most common term mentioned among male respondents was “sugar mummy” and among female respondents was “sugar daddy.” These two terms are very similar in that they imply an older adult in a relationship with a younger person (in many instances an adolescent) whereby the adult provides money and/or gifts to the young person in exchange for the sexual relationship.

Sugar mummy relationships were characterized as older women needing sexual satisfaction. Often these women were described as divorced or widowed. If they were married, this “need” was attributed to a lack of sexual satisfaction from a husband, or a frequently absent husband, e.g., someone who traveled on business for extended periods.

These ladies have money, but the husband has died or is not around for all the time for sex. She has affairs with young boys because they enjoy the same sexual desires as these boys; they still have a strong sex drive. [urban male, aged 18-24]

Any woman above 35 years who has money and wants to have sex with someone between 16-25 years is a sugar mum. She will pay for everything—supply clothing and give money. [urban male, aged 18-24]

Female respondents’ descriptions of the sugar daddy emphasized his wealth and willingness to buy luxury items for young girls.

Old, old men with twin cabs; someone who drives a Wolf [4x4 vehicle] and who says, “I have cash and want to spend it with you.” [rural female, aged 25-40]

An old man who is married with like five wives and who comes to us young girls and displays material things like cars, phones, cash, plenty of things, and tries to meet the demands of young girls and always has cash available. If I tell him I want a phone, he buys it for me. [urban female, aged 18-24]

The young boys are described as receiving cash or other support from the older woman (sugar mummy), but participants also stated that the boys gain sexual experience. Sexual liaisons with young
male gardeners were usually attributed to boredom on the part of the woman (the employer or the employer’s wife).

Relationships with young boys are just for wealthy women who have husbands with good jobs. Husbands most of the time will be out so she will take a young boy and lure him to have sex and give him money but all she is after is sex. [rural female, aged 18-24]

It happens when the husband is not often there. The woman lures the young boy by doing nice things for him, buying him clothes, a cell phone and loves him and they have sex because she is not being satisfied by the husband. She may even have a baby with him, but she will definitely buy him items because she is being satisfied by him. [rural female, aged 18-24]

Young girls who have sexual relations with older men are often referred to as “sweet 16,” and they are described as having relationships with the men in return for goods and entertainment, and to a lesser degree for sexual experience.

Usually these sweet 16s are teenagers who want to experience sex. They can be in love with anybody who is older than she is, in order to get money or to be taken out. [urban male, aged 18-24]

While male respondents only described two occupation-related terms for female partners (“workmate” and “domestic worker”), women included 12 different terms. These relationships would also fit under transactional relationships, particularly in regard to the exchange of sex for goods and/or services (e.g., good exam marks from a teacher, a free bus ride from a driver, produce or the loan of farm equipment from a farmer). No marked differences emerged here between urban and rural women or between younger and older groups other than the types of occupation defined and types of goods or services obtained through the relationship.

Teachers like us school kids. You could have a teacher you are used to. He will say, “if you fall in love with me I will sort out good exam marks.” [rural female, aged 18-24]

[Businessmen] have shops and can find goods that are scarce in these hard times and he takes advantage of this. Most women cannot turn down his offers of love because he has trillions of dollars. [rural female, aged 25-40]

A farmer … a person who we can have a relationship with because there would be nothing I would lack for. Food—sadza, beans, potatoes that I need from the supermarket I would get from the farmer, and I would even get money when he harvests and sells his produce. [urban female, aged 25-40]
Both male and female respondents had similar and corresponding terms to describe the marital status of sexual partners. Male respondents had many more terms for women based on their physical attributes ("ugly," "beautiful") than female respondents.

*Shatirisha* is an ugly girl that loves men. You can’t move around the community with her and introduce her to your friends. She will approach men to have sex with them. [rural male, aged 25-40]

If your girlfriend is beautiful you feel proud to move around while people say “that beautiful girl is in love with so and so.” If you meet your friends, you will have the confidence to introduce her to them. [rural male, aged 18-24]

**Partner Terms to Imply Nonsexual Relationships.** Female respondents also described terms used by married women to describe a concurrent partner as a ‘friend’ or relative.

The husband could be working outside the country, like in South Africa, so you have a boyfriend. The one who is local can be called *babamukuru* [father-in-law] or *babamudiki* [brother-in-law]. [urban female, aged 18-24]

The brother-in-law—he might be the husband’s young brother and he plays games with her. It is called *chiramu*—which means he can touch any part of his brother’s wife lightly, but they end up in love. [rural female, aged 18-24]

**Patterns and Contexts of Concurrent Partnerships for Men and Women**

Participants were asked which of the different types of relationships men or women have at the same time (concurrently), and were then asked to come to a consensus within the group as to the most common concurrent partnerships. The following section focuses on the most common patterns and contexts of those partnerships, as well as identifying ways in which responses varied among the stratified groups (urban versus rural and ages 18-24 versus ages 25-40).

**Findings from Male Group Discussions.** The combination of wife and commercial sex worker (CSW) was common across all groups of male respondents, as was the combination of wife and small house. In addition, a man who is in relationships with his wife and a small house sometimes has a third sexual partner, e.g., a CSW. Urban men in both age groups primarily discussed concurrent partnerships among married men, while rural men also discussed some common combinations of partnerships among single men. Younger rural men cited two types of relationships that involve an older and a younger woman as being commonplace, and older rural men often included a divorced, separated, or widowed woman as a common partner in concurrent relationships (See Table 3).

<p>| Table 3: Commonly Described Concurrent Partnerships for Men, According to Male Respondents |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                          | Younger | Older | Younger | Older |
| - wife and commercial sex worker (CSW)   |        |      |        |      |
| - wife and small house                   |        |      |        |      |
| - third sexual partner, e.g., a CSW      |        |      |        |      |
| - relationships among married men        |        |      |        |      |
| - some common combinations among single men |      |      |        |      |
| - older and a younger woman              |        |      |        |      |
| - divorced, separated, or widowed woman  |        |      |        |      |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>urban men</th>
<th>urban men</th>
<th>rural men</th>
<th>rural men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife and commercial sex worker</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife and small house</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife and girlfriend</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife and divorced/separated woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend and commercial sex worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife, small house, and commercial sex worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar mummy (chemberi) and widow (shinkadzi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend and mai mutonesi (healing mother)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife and young girl (musikanan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife, small house, and school girl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wife and Commercial Sex Worker.** Men from all of the groups mentioned married men who engage in concurrent sexual relations with commercial sex workers, though a number of different terms were used to describe the sex workers (see Table 2). Men normally seek out commercial sex workers in bars or local beer halls. Men may also contact sex workers at Macheso and Mtukudzi band performances. Participants stated that men seek commercial sex workers because their wives will not entertain them sexually every day and/or because the sex workers are known to be “sexually adventurous.”

Most men who have pfambis [commercial sex workers] find it difficult to enjoy a variety of sexual styles with their wives. But he can do such things with a pfambi because she accepts any style that a man might like. [urban male, aged 18-24]

Urban men visit commercial sex workers on the way home from work. The fact that they get home late will not necessarily be cause for suspicion because the delay can easily be blamed on “transport problems.” On occasions when a man’s wife is away, respondents noted that the man may invite the commercial sex worker to his home. Older rural men also described men seeing commercial sex workers when they are away from home on business trips. As would be expected, men engage in relationships with commercial sex workers when they have money.

When men are penniless they stay at home. They are then very good husbands. Once he has some money he will go to a sex worker [urban male, aged 25-40]

In the majority of cases, the relationship between a man and a commercial sex worker is short-term, literally for the time it takes for the act of sex.

Most of the time is spent at home. At the bure it is hit and run. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Some men may engage in longer-term relationships with commercial sex workers, though these relationships are often still very transient. The man may “replace” one woman for another for a
variety of reasons, e.g., “that one might be more attractive,” or, “if the one I have been going out with disappoints me or kicks me out, I will look for another.” Respondents from rural areas discussed competition between commercial sex workers and stated that the women may become jealous of one another, which can lead to fights. Respondents noted that repeated visits to the same commercial sex worker over a period of two years can change the relationship so that the man will refer to the woman as a small house.

In rural areas, younger men also discussed married men’s relationships with *nzenza*, referring to young girls who are described as “highly promiscuous” but not necessarily regarded as commercial sex workers.

She is not selective about her male partner. Anyone who talks to her nicely will gain. It’s someone who is used to being fondled all over her body. She can have sex with more than one guy in a day. [rural male, aged 18-24]

**Wife and Small House.** Male participants described the small house as a long-term secret relationship characterized by sexual pleasure and personal comforts for the man. In some cases respondents noted that the man may acquire greater emotional attachment to the small house than his wife. Respondents said that it is uncommon for a man to get the same attention from his wife that he gets from a small house. Overall, men in each of the groups described the small house partnership in positive terms.

The respect at a small house is high, as it is where you get comfort when you are distressed by your wife. She will even prepare enticing foods. [rural male, aged 25-40]

I will then have a small house where I know the welcome is great. The sexual styles she offers are way ahead of my wife; her appearance is smarter too. The small house accepts me as I am. [rural male, aged 25-40]

The small house relationship puts a strong emphasis on pleasing the man in return for financial support. While the relationship is considered to be long-term, the amount of time a man will spend with his small house partner on each occasion varies. Some men will try and spend as much time with the small house as possible.

In this instance the husband tries every trick in the book to find an excuse to stay away from home in order to be with the small house. In general the small house tries her level best to treat this man well so he keeps on coming back. [urban male, aged 25-40]
Respondents stated that a situation in which a man spends significant time with the small house and has “left sexual desire at the small house” is referred to as “leaving the sofa outside.” In some instances, a man may have children with his small house partner and/or a man may leave his wife for the small house. However, the financial underpinnings and fragility of the partnership were described in relation to the burdens associated with illness.

In case of illness or death, the man goes back to his wife. The small house will not take care of you if you become ill. All they want from you is money. You might travel to places like Masvingo enjoying yourself with your small house, but when you get ill, she will tell you to pack your bags and return to your wife. [rural male, aged 18-24]

In cases when a small house relationship ends, older urban male respondents stated that the man might replace the relationship with a partnership with a commercial sex worker. He may alternately try to either set up another small house or return to his wife if he had moved out of their home.

**Wife and Girlfriend.** Urban men identified the common concurrent relationship of a man with his wife and a girlfriend. Respondents described a girlfriend as a regular sexual partner with whom there is no exchange of money for sex. Men will spend most of their time with their wives and will only meet the girlfriend when an opportunity is presented.

More time is actually spent with the wife because the man cannot see his girlfriend every day. He can see his girlfriend on Saturday or Sunday for a short time and they can go to different places, like secluded areas like lodges which are not known by his wife. [urban male, aged 18-24]

Some men are work supervisors of their “girlfriends” and if the woman starts to make demands including marriage, the man will “fire” her and replace her with another girlfriend. Sexual relationships might also evolve from existing friendships. In some instances a man may either marry his girlfriend as a second wife or he may set her up as a small house. The latter situation may occur if the couple has a child together.

**Wife and Divorced or Separated Woman.** Urban and rural men aged 25-40 mentioned a concurrent relationship that includes both a wife and a divorced or separated woman. Rural men referred to separated and divorced women as *mvana*. The men described the relationship with the divorced or separated woman as primarily based on sexual desire. Urban men described these relationships as being more sexually adventurous than relationships with wives, and they believed that a divorced or separated woman wanted “to make up for her past unsuccessful marriage.”
Beyond the sexual relationship, the men described engaging in social activities with the divorced or separated woman.

[A divorced or separated woman] will do all sorts of things which are not done by your wife. You will get hot *sadza*, you might go and watch Macheso [a band performance], or go to a soccer match—all sorts of things which you don’t do with your wife. [urban male, aged 25-40]

There is no suggestion that money is involved in these relationships. Rural respondents stated that the man might bring his divorced/separated lover a gift of soap or sugar. It was implied that the woman saw these gifts as important toward helping her to provide for her children.

A *mvana* is less demanding [than a CSW] and your relationship can be long because when you visit her and bring bars of soap and other commodities like sugar, she will have something to give her children. [rural male, aged 25-40]

The relationship between a man and a divorced/separated woman can continue for many years if undiscovered, and older urban respondents indicated that a man may divorce his wife to marry his divorced lover.

**Girlfriend and Commercial Sex Worker.** Having a girlfriend and seeing a commercial sex worker was reported to be the most common relationship pattern by older urban men and both older and younger rural men. The girlfriends are generally described as long-term relationships, and the girlfriends are “serious about marriage.” These young women tend either to abstain from sex until marriage or lay down conditions regarding sexually intimate behaviors. In these situations, respondents noted that a man may seek sexual satisfaction with commercial sex workers.

In most cases the girlfriend refuses to have sex because some are very principled, because they want to get married. Some of them may agree to have sex, but after some time, like three months, but at times you won’t have sex at all. So the *hure* becomes an easy target for sexual gratification. [urban male, aged 25-40]

The man and his girlfriend may also have few opportunities to engage in sexual behavior as the young woman may live at home or be supervised by relatives. An older rural male respondent indicated that men felt pressured to pay lobola for their girlfriends quickly and to have “sex and more sex” with them before the women became suspicious or lost interest.

**Other Concurrent Partners for Men with Wives or Girlfriends.** Rural male respondents reported that common concurrent relationships can involve an older woman who is described as either a sugar mummy or a “healing mother.” The sugar mummy was mentioned by older rural respondents while
the healing mother was discussed more among younger rural men. Widows and “sweet 16s” or young school girls were also described as concurrent partners.

**Sugar Mummy (Chembere)**

Respondents noted that the sugar mummy perceives the relationship as a source of pride and wants to be seen with the younger man. However, they also stated that the man often would rather the relationship not be known by others though he enjoys the sexual experience and the degree to which the sugar mummy will please him. Respondents also noted the use of “love potions” by the sugar mummy to maintain the relationship.

Usually *chembere* is experienced in handling men. They often use *mupfuhwira* [love potions] that once she gives you will ensure you always go back for more. [rural male, aged 25-40]

She might buy me clothes or food, or give me money to buy beer…so I will spend time with *chembere*. [rural male, aged 25-40]

The relationship with a *chembere* may last from three to five years. It is generally easy to manage in terms of arranging the necessary rendezvous, given the woman’s independence. Seldom do *chembere* take the initiative to break off the relationship with the younger man.

It is rare for a *chembere* to break off an affair because she will be deeply in love with you. I am the one who would terminate the affair but she will try and mend it because she will be in love with a young boy. [rural male, aged 25-40]

**Healing Mother (Mai Muponesi)**

Younger rural men discussed a type of female partner known as a “healing mother,” or *mai muponesi*, who is perceived to be a sexual teacher. Healing mothers may be widowed or divorced. The perception is that they are “starving” for sex or that some engage in the relationships to support their families. Others, however, fall in love with their young lovers.

*Mai muponesi*, she is there to quench anyone who has sexual desires. She is for everyone. If you want to be entertained you go there. It’s not for a fee, but to serve those who are in dire need of sex. [rural male, aged 18-24]

If the healing mother is satisfied with the young boy’s sex, she will try to let everyone know that this young guy is her real husband. [rural male, aged 18-24]

Respondents noted that the relationship can be something of an embarrassment to the young man, who “will break up the relationship because you don’t want it to be known by everyone.” Male respondents stated that the healing mother seldom breaks off the relationship.
Widow (Shirikadzi)

Another concurrent relationship mentioned only by older rural men is between a man and a widow. The partnership is described as based solely on the sexual relationship, as widows are perceived as having strong sexual desire. The relationship is not necessarily easy to arrange because the widow is often living in the home of relatives, or her movements are supervised by a male relative from her husband’s family. The man may arrange to meet the woman at a friend’s house or go to visit the widow when she is alone. These relationships can be socially risky.

If you are seen with a shirikadzi that stays at her late husband’s place, you might be asked to pay a fine because it is against our culture to have an affair with a shirikadzi who is still residing at the home of her late husband. [rural male, aged 25-40]

The relationships tend to be short-lived, and a man may be involved in a series of relationships with widows.

There are many shirikadzi and one can always be replaced with another. If I am in love with a shirikadzi, there will be another dying to have me because she would not have a husband. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Sweet 16 or Young School Girl (Musikanan)

Older urban respondents discussed relationships between married men and young school girls (musikanan). Generally a man will pick his “sweet 16” up from school and spend some time with her in the afternoon before going home. For the young girl, the relationship is based on receiving money and treats. One man noted, “Once you become broke she won’t see you. Sweet 16 follows the money. It is not a serious affair.”

For the man, the relationship is about sex in exchange for “spoiling.” They will replace their sweet 16 with another young girl once the girl is in her twenties. Some men will only go with sweet 16s who are virgins, replacing them as soon as the relationship has been consummated. These clandestine relationships can have a negative social outcome. One respondent said, “Once people realize I am having an affair with a sweet 16, they will try to humiliate me.”

Findings from Female Group Discussions. Table Four illustrates the combinations of partners that female participants agreed were the more common. Among respondents in the female groups, the most common concurrent relationship was husband and boyfriend. Urban women from both age groups named husband and sugar daddy and husband and rich man as second and third most common. Both younger urban women and older rural women confined their descriptions of
concurrent partnership relationships as involving married women. Younger rural respondents often named concurrent relationships involving men based on their occupation (or more generally as a working man or workmate). Rural women also described women with three concurrent partners. These patterns were less evident among urban respondents.

| Table 4: Commonly Described Concurrent Partnerships for Women, According to Female Respondents |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Husband and boyfriend                        | Husband or boyfriend and sugar daddy          | Husband and rich man                          |
| Husband and multiple partners (3+)            | Husband and young boy                         | Husband and garden boy                        |
| Husband and tout (client of sex worker)      | Husband, manager, pastor                      |
| Teacher, businessman, sugar daddy (with young school girls) | | |
| Husband and workmate                         | Husband and foreigner                         | Husband and truck driver                      |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Younger urban women</th>
<th>Older urban women</th>
<th>Younger rural women</th>
<th>Older rural women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td>ᵃ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵃ</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Husband and Boyfriend.** Respondents in all of the female focus groups mentioned the relationship pattern between a woman and her husband and a boyfriend. Respondents described women with boyfriends as either being unhappy with their husbands or responding to an opportunity for a relationship when a husband is regularly away from home. Married women with boyfriends are perceived to be less sexually inhibited, and boyfriends are considered to be more attractive and more sexually desirable than husbands.

The boyfriend will perform much better than the husband. And with your boyfriend there is no quarrelling, only joy and laughter. [rural female, aged 25-40]

A woman may meet her boyfriend at home while her husband is traveling, or they may meet elsewhere, and the woman will give her husband an excuse about visiting a friend. The woman and her boyfriend may go to a lodge, or in the case of rural settings, find a secluded place in the bush.

The wife will be in love with a working class. They will go to hotels, eat expensive food, be happy, enjoy leisure together, and have sex. [rural female, aged 25-40]

Respondents described the relationship as carefree and only sullied by the possibility of discovery. Undetected relationships may continue on a long-term basis. As noted previously, however, a woman’s relationship with a younger man may end when the man finds another partner.
A specific type of relationship between a married woman and a boyfriend is referred to as the *chikomba*. The *chikomba* may be a friend of the husband, and this relationship creates a situation in which the *chikomba* is trusted and his appearance at the home is not suspicious. The relationship between a woman and the *chikomba* is sexual, with meetings taking place when the husband is away. These meetings might occur at the woman’s home, at a lodge, or, for rural women, in the bush. Younger urban and rural women mentioned this concurrent relationship as being common. For urban women, “a *chikomba* doesn’t mean that she no longer loves her husband, but that stolen sex is interesting.” On the other hand, some respondents amongst this group indicated that a woman might take a *chikomba* “to fix a troublesome husband.”

The relationship lasts as long as it remains undetected and a need is met. The *chikomba* might be replaced by another man if he is unable to provide money or goods to the woman.

> The *chikomba* is for leisure. I need money and comfort—he can be replaced with another *chikomba*. [urban female, aged 18-24]

In cases in which the relationship becomes apparent to the husband, he may divorce his wife, and she may establish a permanent relationship with the *chikomba*. This may also be the outcome if a woman’s husband dies.

**Husband or Boyfriend and Sugar Daddy.** Both younger and older urban women alluded to the concurrent partnership between a woman and a husband and a sugar daddy. Women in such a relationship seem to enjoy it for the luxuries they can afford to buy which enable them to “look good” or to acquire “bling.” The relationship is described as more sexually satisfying for the woman than her relationship with her husband. Since a sugar daddy often has a car, the couple will have sexual relations at a hotel.

> With sugar daddy I just want to go for joy...because he can afford to go out to Mereki [braai spot] and Macheso [a band performance]. [urban female, aged 25-40]

Whereas a married woman in a relationship with a sugar daddy appears to find the relationship enjoyable, one respondent suggested that a single woman with a sugar daddy finds the relationship “troublesome,” and will quickly move on to other relationships. Respondents expressed the view that unmarried women may feel embarrassed by a relationship with a sugar daddy due to the age difference. In some instances, the women are the same age as the men’s children. Young unmarried women may also leave sugar daddies in favor of younger men or to marry.
The existence of a concurrent relationship with a boyfriend and a sugar daddy was described by both younger and older urban women. Sugar daddies provide young women with money and groceries in exchange for a sexual relationship. One urban woman noted, “If he has cash to spend, I would dance to his tune.” A young woman may compare her younger boyfriend’s and the older man’s abilities to care for her and her family. In some cases, the sugar daddy is referred to as “brother-in-law” because of the financial support he provides to the young woman’s family.

A sugar daddy is flashy—he is the person who wants to use you. He makes sacrifices even to spend two hours with you, and can take even a longer time with you, and even promise to take you to Pandari Lodge. A single boy cannot afford to do that. [urban female, aged 25-40]

**Husband and Rich Man.** Only older urban female respondents mentioned a concurrent relationship with a husband and a “rich man.” The rich man provides money, groceries, and small luxury items in exchange for sexual relations. There seems to be little distinction between these partnerships and relations with a sugar daddy; however respondents noted that for some women, the difference is in the sexual relationships.

You sleep with a rich man for the money and with a sugar daddy for sexual fulfillment. [urban female, aged 25-40]

Other women noted that sex with a rich man is more interesting than with a husband. In some cases a woman may divorce her husband and marry the rich man. However, the woman generally tends to stay with her husband.

A relationship between a married woman and a rich man might be short-term, and a woman might engage in multiple serial relationships. In some instances, however, the relationship can last for a number of years.

**Husband and Young Boy.** Younger urban and rural respondents mentioned the common occurrence of a woman’s concurrent relationship with a husband and a young boy. Women engage in these relationships when their husbands travel away from home, and the primary attraction for the woman is the sexual relationship.

When their husbands are far away women can’t stay long without having sex, so it’s obvious that a woman will be after sex. [urban female, aged 18-24]
Respondents noted that married women view young men as “not bothersome…easy to manage.” And while there is a strong emphasis on sex, respondents stated that these are relaxed and fun relationships in which the couple will go to movies, parties, or music shows—particularly if they are in a town or city. Some of these relationships may last two to three years, but only until the young boy marries or moves away. In some instances, because young boys do not have any money, a woman may leave a young boy in favor of a sugar daddy.

**Husband and Garden Boy.** According to older urban female respondents, a women enters into a sexual relationship with her gardener because she is neglected by her husband or feels sexually dissatisfied.

> A woman who is married but the husband has no time for the wife—she takes advantage of the garden boy. It is us women who propose love to garden boys so that he makes me happy in bed. [urban female, aged 25-40]

Obviously the relationship is not one of equals, but is driven by the gardener’s need to show some acquiescence or risk losing his job. Respondents were not clear about how long such relationships last. Some respondents said that the relationship will continue as long as the gardener is employed. Older urban respondents also mentioned school girls from rich backgrounds entering into sexual relationships with their gardeners.

> She wants to have sex and the only man she sees at home is the garden boy, and she is not allowed to have boyfriends at school. [urban female, aged 25-40]

**Husband and “Tout” (Client of Commercial Sex Worker).** Only rural women mentioned the existence of what they perceived as a fairly common concurrent partnership pattern in which a married woman is also a commercial sex worker. Younger respondents stated that such relationships develop because a woman is not satisfied with the amount of money her husband earns and she wants “flashy things.” As a result, she will engage in sex work servicing clients such as *makorokoza* (gold panners), truck drivers, and visiting businessmen. She will meet her clients at a lodge or in the bush, or will use their vehicle for the purpose of sex. Older respondents described these relationships in slightly different terms. A woman in such a relationship “earn[s] money by going to the beer halls…. She is like a bitch, she will be after cash.” These are generally short-term relationships; however some clients become regulars and engage in sexual relations with the woman at her house. The husbands of these women generally are not aware of their activities.

**Husband, Manager, and Pastor.** Younger rural respondents were very specific in mentioning the triangular concurrent relationships of a wife and her husband, work manager, and pastor. In these
partnerships, a woman is having a relationship with her work manager, and opportunities to be together arise as they attend workshops together in Harare. When returning to her home in the rural area, the woman may then engage in a relationship with the church pastor. She often holds a position at the church which allows her to visit the pastor on the pretext of church business. At the same time, the woman maintains a relationship with her husband.

School Girl and Teacher, Businessman, and Sugar Daddy. Younger rural respondents described a situation whereby a school girl is in a relationship with multiple partners. These partners were identified as a school teacher, a businessman, and a sugar daddy. The relationship with the school teacher is not necessarily always sexual, but may involve an exchange of sexual relations for good examination results. The young girl obtains money from the businessman and “treats” from the sugar daddy.

Other Relationships

Work Colleague
Only older rural women cited a relationship with a husband and a work colleague. A woman may enter into the relationship because she is “in love”; alternately, her motivation may be that she is sexually bored with her husband. The woman will meet with her colleague when her husband is away or the woman might pretend to visit relatives as a guise for a secret meeting. It was not clear how long these relationships last.

Foreigner
A concurrent relationship with a husband and a foreign man was considered among the more common concurrent partnerships by rural older respondents. The women may follow the foreign men to their home countries (e.g., Botswana or South Africa), where the women engage in commercial sex work as a way to earn money. Other respondents discussed married women who become involved with foreign men who have regular business in Zimbabwe. During the man’s visits, the woman and man meet clandestinely at a hotel.

Truck Driver
Rural older respondents mentioned concurrent relationships between married women and truck drivers. In these cases, women offer to exchange sex for money while ostensibly selling drinks or food to the drivers. Some of the women are cross-border traders and will exchange sex in return for transport. Occasionally the partnership will become a love relationship, and the truck driver will want the woman to become a small house. In another situation reported by respondents, a truck driver will replace a husband if the driver is earning “forex” (foreign currency).

Condom Use and HIV Risk In Concurrent Relationships
Male Focus Group Discussions. Urban and rural men in both age groups agreed that condoms are usually used with a commercial sex worker and that commercial sex workers normally carry condoms and/or keep them at their homes. Offering a higher amount or paying in foreign currency will persuade some commercial sex workers to dispense with condoms. However, men noted that the clients usually want to use condoms unless being intoxicated causes them to forget. One of the younger urban respondents thought it safe to have sex with a CSW without condoms, since he assumed that all other men used condoms with her and that she would therefore be free of disease.

With a sex worker it is obvious a condom is used. She is afraid of getting AIDS or an STI. With some of them, if you don’t have a condom there is no sex. Both the sex worker and I will be afraid. [urban male, aged 25-40]

I always use a condom with a hure as I am afraid of STIs. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Several men across different groups noted that condoms are not used with women they termed “permanent hure” (CSWs)—women who are supported by a man on a more permanent basis in return for sex. These longer-term relationships were described as engendering an element of trust. These relationships were associated with risk of STI infection.

Once you have a permanent affair with a hure, a condom won’t be used. She will end up acting like your wife. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Condoms are normally not used with a wife or a small house, although sometimes a wife who is aware that her husband is in another relationship may insist on using condoms.

If a condom is being used with a wife, she might have suspected that the husband has a small house, hure or has an STI. There are some conditions attached to the use of condoms. However, under normal conditions, no condoms are used with your wife. [urban male, aged 25-40]

Condoms might also be used for contraceptive purposes with a wife or small house. Alternately condoms may not be used with a small house if the woman wants a child as a form of security in the relationship. The man may also want children from the small house relationship.

No condoms are used for the small house or the real wife. The main aim for a man at the small house is to have a child. That’s why condoms will not be used. [rural male, aged 25-40]
When a man knows or suspects that his small house has other partners, he will tend to use condoms. Early on in a relationship with a small house, condoms are also often used. When one or both partners has tested HIV-positive, condoms are usually used even within a marital relationship.

Condoms are not normally used with divorced women, since these women are thought to be monogamous and interested in marrying again. While some men stated that condoms would not be used in a relationship with a widow because she would be perceived as trustworthy, others noted that condoms might be used if there is uncertainty regarding her husband’s cause of death.

With a divorced woman, you assure each other that there is no other partner. You will see her as a permanent girlfriend, so if you want to introduce a condom, she will ask you … why condoms have to be used in your relationship when you are deeply in love. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Condom use with girlfriends appears to be variable for both urban and rural men. While some men reported that condoms are generally used with steady girlfriends, others thought that condoms would only be used the first three or four times the couple has sex. No trends were apparent according to age group or urban/rural status.

There was no clear trend regarding the use of condoms with school girls (or sweet 16s). These girls often go along with whatever the older man wants, and thus do not insist on him using a condom. Some respondents noted that school girls may be more worried about pregnancy than HIV or STIs, and if not using other contraceptives, they will use condoms. Men also discussed using withdrawal or relying on oral contraceptives with young girls.

With the young you can have sex without a condom. They respect what you tell them. [urban male, aged 18-24]

A condom is used with a sweet 16 as she is afraid of getting pregnant. The main worry is an unplanned pregnancy, not an STI. [urban male, aged 25-40]

Some of the guys I know don’t use condoms on girls but use the withdrawal method or even buy some family planning tablets. These guys want to feel the real skin-to-skin sensation. [rural male, aged 18-24]

Disturbingly, it was also noted that sex is often “forced” on the young girl and thus she has no opportunity to use a condom.

Condom use with sugar mummies was not discussed at length. However, in one group a respondent noted that condoms would be used with post-menopausal women because it is believed they are
more susceptible to disease than pre-menopausal women because they do not “get rid” of the disease each month.

There was debate in one rural older male group as to whether condoms are used with all partners other than the spouse. While some believed this to be generally the case, others concurred with the view that a man will not use condoms once he falls in love with a woman. From the latter perspective, condoms are only used with commercial sex workers or early on in other relationships.

Condoms must be used on all women who are not your wife. Some people overdo sex and if you decide to have sex with any of these women, you must be prepared to put on a condom. [rural male, aged 25-40]

Younger urban men perceived that older men and married men rarely use condoms. These respondents noted that married men are used to “skin-to-skin” sex with their wives and are unwilling to limit themselves to “less pleasurable” sex in other relationships.

Most married men want to feel skin-to-skin; they are used to feeling the real flesh from their wives; that’s why they even want skin-to-skin with a *hure*. [urban male, aged 18-24]

Some of these younger men described situations in which they acted as mediators for meetings that older and/or married men had with women. In these situations, the young respondents noted that after a sexual liaison the man often still has the unused condom in his pocket. This view, however, was not supported by discussions in the older men’s focus groups.

**Female Focus Group Discussions.** According to female respondents, condoms are rarely used within marriage because “he won’t let you as he paid the bride price.” However, when a wife is aware that her husband has other partners, she may be in a position to negotiate condom use. Similarly, respondents in a younger rural group stated that when a woman’s husband spends a long time away on business, the woman can initiate condom use within the marriage.

I support the argument that condoms can be used because I know someone whose husband worked in Botswana for six years. When he returned they used condoms as the wife was not happy with his health and requested he went for HIV testing. The husband was found to be positive. [rural female, aged 18-24]

Traditionally, it is not acceptable to use a condom with your husband if you are married, unless you have a small baby or there is something you suspect and you ask him to go for testing. But otherwise you can’t. [rural female, aged 25-40]
Both younger and older urban women generally agreed that condoms are not used with a sugar daddy because he provides support and cannot be asked to use condoms. However some urban women and rural women stated that condoms are used with sugar daddies since these men are known to have lots of women and to pose a high risk. In the older urban groups, women differentiated between sugar daddies and rich men and described condom use with the latter. The distinction appears to be whether one can expect a man who supports you to use a condom, rather than whether the man is judged to have a high risk of carrying HIV. Sugar daddies, however, sometimes take the initiative in using condoms because they want to avoid the responsibility of a possible pregnancy. And in the younger rural groups of women it was noted that an “uncle” (sugar daddy) would usually refuse to use a condom after a period of time, though initially it would be used.

We use condoms with sugar daddies as we are aware that they have many girlfriends and condoms protect us from diseases. [urban female, aged 18-24]

The sugar daddies don’t want to use condoms, because of the financial support they give. They consider you like their wife. [urban female, aged 18-24]

Several women across groups believed that condoms should be and generally are used with all non-spousal partners—including boyfriends, husbands’ friends, workmates, and other women’s husbands. However some women stated that condoms would not be used with young single boys and garden boys. Young rural women noted that young boys want to father a child, while other women inferred that young boys are “safe” as far as HIV/STIs since they have little or no sexual experience.

Maybe not with the garden boy as I have reined him in and he doesn’t go anywhere and so he is like a husband. [urban female, aged 25-40]

They are not used with a single young boy—we assume he has not slept with anyone else yet and you can pretend the child is your husband’s if you get pregnant. [urban female, aged 25-40]

Truck drivers were mentioned as a special category by older rural women, but there were differing views regarding whether condoms are used with drivers. While all agreed these men are high-risk partners because they often have sex with women in different towns, the financial incentive to agree to unprotected sex is quite strong:

The truck driver is the one who has a say because he is the one with the cash and because of the love of money you might not think there is an option. You might not even think about AIDS—you will be in need of cash right away.” [rural female, aged 25-40]
Young girls in the rural focus groups believed that the norm for teachers and school girls is to use condoms to avoid pregnancy. Similarly, participants stated that condoms are used during sexual liaisons between managers and subordinates, between businessmen and school girls, and any extramarital relationship with pastors as they “don’t want their name tarnished.”

**Discussion**

The role of multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP) has been increasingly scrutinized as a significant contributor to the higher rates of HIV prevalence in southern and western Africa compared to other regions of the world (Halperin & Epstein, 2004). As previously noted, the immediate increase in viral load during initial infection combined with the likelihood of more sexual encounters with multiple partners during that period of time with may provide a partial explanation for higher prevalence rates. This points to a need to increase descriptive knowledge about types of MCP, the sociocultural contexts in which these relationships occur, and additional risk behaviors within these relationships, e.g., inconsistent condom use. The purpose of our study was to generate information about these issues in the general population in Zimbabwe through an analysis of qualitative data from 16 focus groups.

In terms of defining types of male-female sexual partnerships, we find multiple terms which can be characterized in relation to the length, commitment, and potential risks of these relationships. Patterns of concurrent sexual partners all clearly pose significant risk, especially in light of inconsistent condom use. Furthermore, there appear to be frequent multiple short-term relationships among men and women engaged in MCP, resulting in high-risk intersecting sexual networks.

Engagement in MCP and inconsistent condom use may be associated in important ways with national and household economic conditions in which both basic needs and luxury items are difficult to obtain. These economic factors, particularly for women and girls, often override fears and perceived vulnerability to HIV as they try to meet basic survival needs (Loewenson 2007). Transactional sexual relationships in the form of gift-giving and exchanges of goods and services for sexual favors may become normalized, particularly in resource-poor environments. In research among South African adolescents, the exchange of material goods for sexual favors between same-aged partners was found to be an understood and accepted practice (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2002). Research in South Africa points to multiple social and economic factors including gender constructs and inequalities contributing to women’s engagement in these transactional sexual relationships,
including the privileged economic position of men within society, the need and desire among women to access power and resources, and social norms regarding men and concurrency (Hunter, 2002).

Inconsistent condom use with concurrent partners increases the risk of HIV infection. Our focus group data suggest that inconsistent condom use is associated with trust between partners and misperceptions about partners’ HIV risk levels. These data are similar to qualitative research which indicated that seroconversion among Zimbabwean men was associated with perceptions of risk in relation to promiscuous behaviors and identification of partners as “safe” (Ray, Latif, Machekano, & Katzenstein, 1998). In our study, while condom use is reportedly higher among individuals engaging in higher-risk behaviors, e.g., multiple short-term partnerships, it remains inconsistent.

Even though some concurrent partnerships involve two long-term relationships, the risk of HIV transmission still exists within these networks. The small house phenomenon is common, and because of the level of trust within these relationships, condoms are generally not used. Thus even though not all small houses stay faithful, a majority of men in these relationships assume faithfulness on the part of the woman and perceive her as low risk. Moreover, men who keep small houses are frequently away from their own homes, increasing the likelihood that their wives also have concurrent partners. Married men with small houses may engage in additional concurrent partnerships such as with commercial sex workers, sweet 16s, and divorced or separated women, increasing their risk and their partners’ risk of HIV infection.

Respondents stated that young men and women are low-risk because they are perceived to be sexually inexperienced. Not only is this assumption flawed, but the older men and women in relationships with adolescents and young adults are usually involved in unprotected relationships with other partners. This “dissortative mixing” or engagement in sexual partnerships across groups at different levels of risk for HIV has been shown in other populations to increase prevalence (Doherty, Schoenbach, & Adimora 2009; Chopra, Townsend, Johnston et al. 2009). The inequality within these relationships significantly affects condom use, such that young men and women are frequently not involved in the decision-making process. Young men are perhaps at greater risk for HIV and AIDS in relationships with sugar mummies than young women in relationships with older men because the fear of a young woman becoming pregnant appears to encourage condom use. The focus group data also indicate that divorced or separated women, as well as married women, are perceived as respectable and “safe,” implying that they have a low risk of carrying HIV. Consequently, condoms are rarely used with these women. However, research in rural areas of Tanzania and Zimbabwe
indicates that both divorced and widowed women are at high risk for HIV infection (Boerma, Gregson, Nyamukapa, & Urassa, 2003).

Our data revealed distinct differences between rural and urban respondents and between younger and older respondents. Women’s transactional relationships within rural areas seem to be more focused on obtaining basic needs (food, shelter, transportation) for themselves and/or their children, as opposed to urban and younger women seeking luxury items and entertainment. Urban and younger women were also less likely to state that condoms were used with sugar daddies who supply luxury items to them. Rural women, however, stated that condoms would be used in these relationships as the men are perceived as “high risk.” Urban women described relationships between wealthier women and garden boys. Rural women, on the other hand, reported that married women also work as commercial sex workers, which is possibly indicative of greater poverty in these areas.

Future HIV prevention interventions addressing concurrency in Zimbabwe should seek to decrease the number of partners among both males and females, while simultaneously increasing consistent condom use within all sexual relationships. Differences in terms used for relationships as well as different perceived types of concurrent relationships for urban versus rural and younger versus older respondents suggest a need for interventions which reflect these differences. In addition, misconceptions about risky behaviors and “safe” partners need to be addressed. Along the same lines, the need for consistent condom use with all partners must be emphasized, as well as the potential risks even within monogamous relationships.

Issues which are more challenging to address relate to socioeconomic and gender inequalities which enable some individuals in positions of authority, such as teachers and work supervisors, to abuse their power. In relationships in which favors such as high exam scores and job promotions are exchanged for sexual services, the person in the subordinate role may not have the ability to end the relationship or to insist on condom use. These relationships can significantly increase risk for exposure to HIV and AIDS among women and adolescents. More research is needed to better understand intersecting issues of gender and economic inequalities and engagement in concurrent partnerships. Such research should focus on how gender constructs in different cultural contexts affect available choices and the ability to voice opinions in relation to protection from HIV.

These data have limitations because of the small sample size and limited geographic area included in the research sites. Other methodologies such as individual interviews and surveys could help to
further expand upon, clarify, and quantify issues relating to consistent condom use among different socioeconomic groups and with different types of partners.
References


Focus Group Interview Guide-Emergent

PSI CONCURRENCE STUDY

NOTES FOR MODERATOR:

I. INTRODUCTION (5 mins)

I. Introduction (5 min)
- Thank the participants for coming
- Explain the purpose of the focus group discussion
- Tell the amount of time the discussion is expected to last
- Introduce the moderator, the note taker and the assistant and explain what each one will be doing
- Assure that the discussion will be kept confidential. Remind the participants that anything which is said in the discussion should not be talked about outside of the group.
- Explain that a tape recorder will be used since the note taker can’t write down everything
- Ask for their consent to participate and explain that their participation is voluntary
- Explain that there are no right answers and it is okay to disagree. It is important to respect others’ opinions.
- Ask everyone to speak one at a time
- Have participants to introduce themselves and share something about themselves (e.g. ask each participant to says their name and where they live).
- Ask participants to complete the demographic survey

Study purpose:

We are interested in learning about sexual relationships between men and women. We also want to find out more about situations when men or women have more than one sexual partner over the same period of time. We are talking with you today because we would like to learn how best to define and describe different types of sexual relationships and to understand how people become involved in these relationships. This information will be used to help us to develop and improve our interventions.

II. WARM-UP ACTIVITY (10 mins)
III. DEFINING BEHAVIOUR (30 mins)

BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT THE TYPE OF PARTNERS PEOPLE HAVE AT THE SAME TIME, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARTNERS PEOPLE HAVE

1) What types of sexual partners do men [women] have? How would you describe these partners? Record terms and descriptions on flip chart paper so everyone can see them.

2) (a) Which of these partners do people have at the same time i.e. over the same period? Note taker writes down the combinations of partners people have at the same time on flip chart paper so that everyone can see them. For example a wife, a mistress and a school girl or a wife, a girlfriend at work and weekend girlfriend. Note taker physically separates the combination of partners people have at the same time. This can be done by placing a circle or a box around the different types of partners people have at the same time.

- Which of these combinations are most common or typical? What are the top three combinations that know the most about either because you know someone in such a relationship or you have heard a lot about it. Refer back to groups of partners that were generated in question two. Select out three combinations that the participants know the most about and ask the remaining questions about these combinations.

2 (b) What are these relationships like? How do men [women] who have two or more sexual partners manage these relationships? What stories do you know or have heard about men (women) in these relationships?

   i. How much time do men [women] spend with each of the partners they have at the same time?
   ii. What kinds of activities do men [women] do with each of the partner they have at the same time?
   iii. Where do they spend time with each of these partners? Where do they meet each of these partners?
   iv. Which of these partners do men [women] have for a long time? About how long is this? Which of these partners do men [women] have for a short time? About how long is this? With what type of partners do men [women] replace these partners?

(NOTE: all probes under this Q above do not need to be asked. Choose only those that are relevant depending on the situation. So for example if someone starts talking about one of these relationships and only talks about the amount of money men spend you can ask one of these questions to get them to describe other aspects of these relationships.

- 2 (c) Which of these partners do men [women] use condoms with? What are some reasons for this? Which of these partners do men [women] not use condoms with? What are some reasons for this? Refer back to the top three combinations that were identified in Q2b. .
3) How do you refer to men [women] who have two or more sexual partners at the same time over the same period?

Instructions: Once participants have provided their responses, review the types of partners, and combination of partners in concurrent relationships and terms for people who have two or more partners at the same time and ask if they would like to add anything.

IV. IDENTIFYING RELEVANT DETERMINANTS-FREE LISTING (60 MINUTES)

From the discussion we just had about people having more than one sexual partner over the same period we now want to understand the reasons why people engage in these relationships.

Instructions: Write responses on flip chart.

4) What are the reasons you think men [women] get involved in relationships with more than one person over the same period?

Probe for more details on reason (if not spontaneously mentioned): Use the following probes as appropriate after each response. Hopefully the respondents will understand the level of detail that you are looking for after you have done this for the first few responses. If not continue to probe. The goal is to get as much detail as possible on each reason including the ones you getting using the additional probes below from the participants’ point of view.

- What do you mean by [INSERT REASON]? How would you describe [INSERT REASON]?
- What is an example of an [ INSERT REASON ] that leads to having …
- How does [INSERT REASON] lead to having concurrent partnerships?

5. What are the reasons men [women] don’t have more than one partner at the same time?

Probe for more details on reason (if not spontaneously mentioned):

- What do you mean by [INSERT REASON]? How would you describe [INSERT REASON]?
- What is an example of an [ REASON ] that leads to having …
- How does [INSERT REASON] lead to having concurrent partnerships?

V Wrap up [10 min]

The purpose of today’s discussion was to:
• Find out how concurrent relationships are defined
• Find out reasons that lead people to practice these relationships

Is there anything else that you like to add to help us better understand the things that we talked about today?