

# SYMBIOSIS OF SWEETNESS? NAVIGATING SUGAR DATING THROUGH EVOLUTIONARY INSIGHTS AND PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY IN MODERN ERA

DANIEL LENGHART

NATÁLIE BAJEROVÁ

## ABSTRAKT

*Tento článek zkoumá složitou dynamiku sugar datingu teoretickou optikou Darwinova přežití nejsilnějších (survival of the fittest), Foucaultovy dynamiky moci a technologií heterosexuálního nátlaku. Zkoumání průsečíku těchto rámců odhaluje, jak sugar dating odráží a zároveň zpochybňuje společenské normy týkající se intimacy, ekonomiky a genderu. Naše analýza poukazuje na to, jak výhodné vlastnosti při zajišťování sugar relationships mohou posilovat existující sociální hierarchie, zatímco mocenská dynamika v rámci těchto uspořádání odráží širší společenské mocenské struktury. Uvažujeme také o tom, jak jsou tradiční genderové normy zároveň posilovány i podřívány. Tento interdisciplinární přístup vyvolává otázky o vyvíjející se povaze intimních vztahů v kontextu ekonomické výměny a digitálního zjednodušení a vybízí k dalšímu výzkumu společenských tlaků, ekonomických podmínek a technologického pokroku, které utvářejí moderní formy partnerství.*

**Klíčová slova:** sugar dating, Charles Darwin, přeživší nejsilnějších, Michel Foucault, dynamika moci, sugar baby, sugar daddy, gender

**JEL klasifikace:** Y10 – Other

## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the complex dynamics of sugar dating through the theoretical lenses of Darwin's survival of the fittest, Foucault's power dynamics and technologies of heterosexual coercion. Exploring the intersection of these frameworks reveals how sugar dating both reflects and challenges societal norms related to intimacy, economics and gender. Our analysis highlights how advantageous traits in securing sugar relationships may reinforce existing social hierarchies, while power dynamics within these arrangements mirror broader societal power structures. We also consider how traditional gender norms are simultaneously reinforced and subverted. This interdisciplinary approach raises questions about the evolving nature of intimate relationships in the context of economic exchange and digital facilitation, urging further research into the societal pressures, economic conditions and technological advancements that shape modern forms of partnership.*

**Keywords:** sugar dating, Charles Darwin, survival of the fittest, Michel Foucault, power dynamics, sugar baby, sugar daddy, gender

**JEL Classification:** Y10 – Other

## INTRODUCTION

In the complex landscape of modern relationships, one phenomenon that has garnered considerable attention is sugar dating, a unique form of companionship characterized by mutual benefits and financial arrangements. To comprehensively understand this contemporary socio-cultural practice, we embark on a journey through the realms of evolutionary biology and philosophy. In this exploration, we delve into the evolutionary perspective, drawing insights from Charles Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest", and simultaneously navigate the philosophical terrain, particularly examining power dynamics through the lens of Michel Foucault.

Evolutionary theories propose that behaviours and traits persist in a population if they contribute to the survival and reproduction of individuals. With sugar dating as our focal point, we unravel how this practice may align or deviate from Darwin's concept of "survival of the fittest". Are the dynamics of sugar dating a manifestation of evolutionary strategies for maximizing reproductive success, or do they challenge traditional paradigms of mate selection?

Simultaneously, we embark on a philosophical exploration, guided by the influential ideas of Michel Foucault, who extensively examined power dynamics

and social structures. Sugar dating, with its transactional nature, invites scrutiny from the perspective of power relationships. How do the participants navigate and negotiate power within the confines of this unconventional form of companionship? Foucault's insights on power, discourse and sexuality provide a theoretical framework for understanding the intricate interplay of authority and consent in the realm of sugar dating.

Together, these frameworks offer complementary insights: Darwin's evolutionary metaphor explains the competitive, selective nature of sugar dating in terms of advantage and survival strategies, while Foucault's power theory captures the complexity of interpersonal power exchanges beyond mere economic transactions. Thus, they are, for us, arguably the best fit among other theories for a multifaceted and critical understanding of sugar dating, addressing both structural and relational aspects within the phenomenon.

This interdisciplinary inquiry aims to unravel the layers of sugar dating, offering a nuanced understanding that transcends mere economic transactions. By intertwining evolutionary theories with philosophical analyses, we strive to illuminate the underlying motivations, implications and societal reflections embedded within the practice of sugar dating.

## 1 CONCEPT OF SUGAR DATING

Sugar dating, a contemporary phenomenon gaining prominence in the realm of modern relationships, is a unique form of companionship characterized by mutual benefits, financial arrangements, and often, a substantial age difference between the involved parties. The essence of sugar dating lies in the explicit negotiation of terms, where the expectations and boundaries are established from the outset (Wade, 2017).

This dynamic stands in stark contrast to traditional dating norms, offering a distinctive blend of romance, financial support and companionship. This relationship is based on mutual agreement. Intimacy, camaraderie and companionship is provided in exchange for financial resources or another form of support. Sugar dating provides sugar babies with the opportunity to satisfy their lifestyle and consumption needs, achieve symbols of modernity and conform to popular youth culture. It also enables them to avoid social exclusion and gain acceptance

into social groups. However, the arrangements of each sugar dating relationship may differ (Zembe et al., 2013).

At the heart of sugar dating is the figure of the “sugar daddy”, typically an older individual who provides financial support and gifts to a younger partner, known as the “sugar baby”. This relationship dynamic is rooted in the exchange of resources for companionship, challenging traditional notions of romance and intimacy (Fleming, 2018).

Beyond the conventional sugar dynamics, variations exist, including platonic sugar relationships where companionship is sought without a romantic or sexual component. Additionally, the emergence of online platforms dedicated to facilitating sugar dating has facilitated connections between individuals seeking such arrangements. These digital spaces have become hubs for negotiation and connection, reshaping the landscape of modern relationships.

Even though the reproduction aspect is not strictly mentioned in the definition of sugar dating, it is an important aspect, primarily from the male perspective. Sugar daddies tend to prioritize reproductive-related traits in women, especially physical signs of fertility such as youth and attractiveness, which aligns with traditional evolutionary preferences. Research within evolutionary psychology shows that men generally evaluate partners on indicators of reproductive potential more than women do, consistent with the evolutionary imperative to maximize reproductive success. This holds true in sugar dating contexts as well, where men often seek physically attractive younger partners who display fertility cues, reflecting their reproductive interests (Birkás et al., 2020; Nayar, 2017).

However, the context of sugar dating adds layers of complexity. While reproductive cues remain important, the relationship is explicitly transactional, and men also value factors beyond just reproductive fitness – such as companionship, emotional intimacy and mutual enjoyment – which may not necessarily align with reproductive goals. In interviews, some men frame financial transactions as gifts, which facilitate more genuine emotional connections rather than purely commercial exchanges (Gunnarsson and Strid, 2021). Therefore, men’s mate selection in sugar dating reflects a blend of reproductive interests and socio-emotional as well as economic considerations, often within a short-term mating framework lacking long-term reproductive commitments.

## 2 WILL IT CHANGE US IF WE SWEETEN OUR LIVES?

### A LITTLE BIT OF SUGAR IN DARWIN'S THEORY

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, expounded in his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859), revolutionized our understanding of the diversity of life on Earth. At the heart of Darwin's theory is the concept of a struggle for survival, in which individuals within a population compete for limited resources. This struggle, often characterized by intense competition for food, mates and habitat, creates the conditions for differential success of individuals based on differences in their characteristics (Darwin, 1859). The result is the survival of the fittest (a term Darwin borrowed from Spencer). Darwin's principle of "survival of the fittest" refers to the process of natural selection, which includes the survival and reproduction of individuals with the most favourable genetic characteristics for a given environment. Natural selection becomes the driving force behind evolutionary changes. Darwin proposed that in the competition for survival, some individuals have traits that give them an advantage, which increases their chances of reproducing and passing those advantageous traits on to offspring. This process, known as natural selection, leads to the gradual accumulation of adaptive traits in a population over generations. These adaptive features, or beneficial properties, increase the organism's ability to survive and reproduce in a specific environment (Darwin, 1859). The concept of fitness is key to understanding natural selection. Fitness means the ability of an organism to contribute offspring to the next generation, thus passing on its genetic material. The more successful an organism is, the higher its fitness. Natural selection acts as a filter that favours traits that increase the fitness of an organism in its particular ecological niche. The prevalence of these advantageous traits in a population leads over time to the adaptation of the population to its environment (Darwin, 1859).

This principle can also be applied to sugar dating, where individuals compete for the favour and attention of their partners and try to increase their chances of success as much as possible (Gunnarsson and Strid, 2021). Research confirms that one of the reasons why men look for younger partners is their attractiveness and fertility. Studies (e.g. Buss and Schmitt, 2019; Šetinová and Topinková, 2021) showed that men prefer younger women because they are perceived as more attractive.

However, many relationships on sugar dating sites involve financial support from the older partner to the younger partner. This indicates that “survival of the fittest” can be influenced by economic factors in this context. In such relationships, it is important to be able to attract attention and maintain the interest of your partner. This may include superior physical attractiveness, intelligence, charm, wit, ability to provide companionship and the like (Belot and Francesconi, 2012). In this situation, the sugar daddy could be perceived as the “stronger” individual because he has the advantage of the wealth and resources that the sugar baby can provide. The sugar baby could then be perceived as the “less powerful” individual because she does not have as many resources and relies on sugar daddy’s financial support. However, a sugar baby may have an advantage in youth and attractiveness, which may be attractive to a sugar daddy (Sumter et al., 2017).

Although the sugar daddy has the advantage of financial resources, the sugar baby may have the advantage of being in demand among sugar daddies. If the sugar baby is very attractive and charismatic, she may have a better chance of finding a sugar daddy who will provide more financial support or other benefits. This idea can be supported by a study conducted by Sarah Daly in 2017 which investigated the phenomenon of sugar dating and its relation to gender inequalities and power relations. Daly pointed out that a sugar baby who has attractive looks and charisma may have more success in finding a sugar daddy who will provide more financial support and benefits (Daly, 2021).

However, in a long-term relationship between sugar daddy and sugar baby, it could be beneficial for both partners to have strong qualities. A sugar daddy might have an advantage in wealth and resources, while a sugar baby might have an advantage in youth, attractiveness and charisma. If both partners could complement each other and support their qualities, it could lead to a longer and more stable relationship (Gunnarsson and Strid, 2021). Studies have shown that relationships between sugar daddies and sugar babies can be very diverse and depend on the unique needs and expectations of each partner (Stice, 2021). It is also important that the relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding, and not on unilateral control or exploitation (Kuate-Defo, 2004). Studies also suggest that when both partners are satisfied with their relationship, sugar daddies and sugar babies can have a positive effect on their lives and relationships (Gunnarsson and Strid, 2021; Stice, 2021).

### 3 SWEET CONTROL? FOUCAULT'S POWER DYNAMICS IN SUGAR DATING

One of Foucault's ideas in his philosophy focuses on power relations within society and how these relations are constructed and maintained through language, knowledge and cultural practices (Foucault, 1980).

In the context of the relationship between older men and younger women, Foucault's theory of gender and sexuality can be applied. Foucault argues that gender and sexuality are constructed as power relations that are the result of social and cultural factors (Foucault, 1978). In his book *The History of Sexuality* (1978) he describes how sexuality has become an object of power in modern society and how gender differences have become part of a system of power and control (Foucault 1978; 1980). The relationship between older men and younger women can be analyzed as a power relationship in which the older men use their economic and social status to obtain younger women as partners (Giddens, 1991).

The theory can also be applied to the phenomenon of sugar dating, where younger women are rewarded financially for becoming partners with older men (Milrod and Monto, 2017). The relationship is based on the economic dependence of younger women on older men who provide financial support and material benefits (Proulx, Caron, Logue, 2006). It allows older men to control and dominate her, which may or may not have a negative impact on young women (Birkás et al., 2020).

Foucault's theory can help analyze these problems and suggest possible solutions. It emphasizes that power relations are based on knowledge and discourse. This means that a change in discourse and knowledge can lead to a change in power relations. If the discourse around relationships between older men and younger women changes, this can lead to a change in power and control (Bay-Cheng et al., 2017; Prado, 2009). Foucault's theory and philosophy can be useful in analyzing the relationship between older men and younger women and the phenomenon of sugar dating. There are many research studies that support this analysis and suggest possible solutions to the problems associated with these relationships (Kirkeby et al., 2022; Wade, 2017). For example, a 2022 (Kirkeby et al., 2022) study examined how perceptions of deal power related to sugar dating

condom use. Overall, condom use among all women was highest for casual sexual partners and lowest for romantic partners, with SB condom use falling between these two values. Consistent with social exchange theory, sugar dating power perceptions predicted condom use with sugar daddies, such that women who felt more empowered reported more consistent condom use. Wade (2017) argues that sugar dating can be seen as a form of prostitution and that these men can use their economic and social status to control their relationship with younger women. The issues can be analyzed using Foucault's theory of power and control, which emphasizes the relationship between power and knowledge and how these factors are constructed and maintained within society (Foucault, 1978).

In the case of relationships between older men and younger women, the institutions and disciplines may be, for example, family tradition, culture or society. These can influence how people perceive this type of relationship and how they feel about it. If there is a social consensus towards this type of relationship, it can lead to its normalization and maintenance, even though it can be problematic. If, on the other hand, society criticizes this type of relationship, it can lead to its condemnation and limitation.

A study published in 1996 proves that culture and society play a significant role in how relationships between older men and younger women are perceived and accepted. It examines how cultural norms and societal expectations can influence mate selection and marital success. The authors point out that in some cultures, relationships between older men and younger women are more accepted and even preferred, while in others they may be considered inappropriate or taboo (Bereczkei and Csanaky, 1996). However, their 1996 findings do not fully account for the profound social and cultural shifts that have taken place over nearly three decades, particularly with the rise of digital technologies, changes in gender roles and evolving attitudes toward transactional and non-traditional relationships such as sugar dating. For example, studies on sugar dating emphasize the role of explicit negotiation and mutual benefit, creating dynamics that differ greatly from conventional courtship models and from the cultural frameworks (Darmayanti et al., 2024; Birkás et al., 2021). These modern relationships often navigate a “grey area” between dating and transactional sex, reflecting a marketization of intimacy that was not prevalent or studied in the same way in the 1990s. Furthermore,



socio-economic changes, globalization and shifts in individual autonomy and gender expectations have altered how society views relationships where partners differ widely in age and status. Cultural acceptance varies widely across contexts now, often influenced by digital platforms normalizing sugar dating and by growing awareness of diverse relationship models (Darmayanti et al., 2024).

The findings from Collisson and De Leon (2020) and McKenzie (2015) also offer important insights into the dynamics and social perceptions of age-gap relationships, which directly relate to sugar dating arrangements characterized by disparities in age and status. Collisson and De Leon's study specifically examined how perceived inequity predicts prejudice towards relationships with large age gaps. They found that societal bias against such relationships stems largely from perceptions that age-discrepant couples are inherently unequal, triggering concerns about exploitation or imbalance of power. The perception that one partner is receiving more benefits relative to their contribution creates social stigma, which is frequently expressed as prejudice towards these relationships (Collisson and De Leon, 2020).

This dynamic is highly relevant to sugar dating, where inequalities – in age, financial resources, and social power – are often explicit. The relationship's negotiated and transactional nature may amplify perceptions of inequity, despite consensual arrangements. Collisson and De Leon's findings suggest that a major source of social disapproval towards sugar dating might stem from these perceptions of unequal exchange, which society often views as inherently problematic or exploitative, regardless of the mutual consent and benefits involved.

McKenzie (2015) offers a complementary perspective by emphasizing the complexity and diversity of age-discrepant relationships. Her work argues that age differences alone do not necessarily dictate relational satisfaction or success, highlighting how many age-gap couples navigate these differences effectively, building loving and sustainable bonds. McKenzie suggests that such relationships challenge conventional norms about age homogamy in partner selection and require a nuanced understanding that accounts for emotional compatibility, mutual respect, and shared goals rather than focusing narrowly on age differences.

## 4 SWEETENED COMPLIANCE: TECHNOLOGIES OF HETEROSEXUAL COERCION IN SUGAR-DATING CULTURES

On the issue of the technology of heterosexual coercion, Nicola Gavey (1992) draws on de Lauretis's concept of the technology of gender (1987) and Foucault's concept of the technology of power (1979). Gavey argues that heterosexuality is constructed through a series of discourses and practices that produce sexuality. This systematically ignores women's desires and allows women to have little say in their participation in sexual acts.

Dominant discourses on heterosexuality place women in the position of relatively passive subjects who are encouraged to submit to sex with men regardless of their own sexual desire. Through disciplinary power, male dominance can be maintained in heterosexual practice often without the use of direct force or violence. The discursive processes that maintain these sets of power relations can be seen as technologies of heterosexual coercion (Gavey, 1992).

A sugar dating relationship, or a relationship of a wealthy man with a younger financially disadvantaged woman, is currently viewed as a common one. In online dating, SBs encounter a lot of pressure as the sugar-dating site only serves as a producer of the subject and is not obliged to oversee the principle of communication between the candidates. Discursive power operates in this relationship, where the role of heterosexual consent is not in question. The type of dating can be described as a type of transactional sexual relationship. In it, a sexual relationship can be exchanged for money or goods.

Author Alex Miller (2011) in his study compares sugar dating to prostitution. In his opinion, it is also an exchange of sexual services for money. On the other hand, others define this type of dating as instrumental intimacy (e.g. Nayar, 2017).

In this case, instrumental intimacy can be seen as SBs using intimacy as a means or tool to achieve their goal. These relationships need to be considered as a hybrid activity between transactional sex (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Furthermore, heterosexual dating is also characterized in the context of financial insecurity: women may seek such relationships because they do not see themselves as having the space to express consent for sexual intercourse in normal relationships (Motyl, 2013; Burkeet and Hamilton, 2012).

According to Gavey (1992), women could learn that sex in a heterosexual relationship with a sugar daddy is something they consent to and not just something they unconsciously desire. SDs do not distinguish consent and non-consent as distinct choices in this type of relationship. The relationship is discursively constructed, and this brings about acceptable parameters.

## 5 SUGAR, SPICE, AND EVERYTHING NICE?

### INTERSECTION OF DISCUSSED PHENOMENA AND OPENING FOR NEW QUESTIONS

Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest suggests that traits that enhance reproductive success are more likely to be passed on to future generations. In the context of sugar dating, this theory can be applied to understand how certain characteristics – such as physical attractiveness, social status or financial stability – become advantageous in securing a sugar relationship. For instance, individuals with higher economic status or those perceived as more attractive may have a greater chance of entering into these arrangements, as they offer more desirable traits to potential partners. However, the question remains: *Is the dynamics of sugar dating a manifestation of evolutionary strategies to maximize reproductive success, or does it challenge the traditional paradigm of mate selection?*

The dynamics of sugar dating can indeed be interpreted through the lens of evolutionary strategies for maximizing reproductive success, but they also simultaneously challenge some traditional paradigms of mate selection, reflecting the complexities of human mating in modern socio-economic contexts.

From an evolutionary perspective, human mating strategies have evolved to maximize reproductive success under conditions of differential parental investment. Women, bearing higher obligatory biological investment in offspring, tend to prefer partners who can provide material resources and protection, which historically would enhance the survival and success of their progeny. Men, on the other hand, often maximize reproductive success through access to multiple mates, favouring attributes indicative of fertility, such as youth and physical attractiveness (Buss, 1989; Buss and Schmitt, 2019). Sugar dating, in which typically younger individuals engage in relationships with wealthier older partners in

exchange for resources, reflects this traditional dynamic: women's preference for resource acquisition paired with men's preference for reproductive cues.

However, sugar dating is not a straightforward reproduction of these evolutionary predispositions; it partially extends and at times diverges from classical evolutionary models. It represents a form of transactional mating that explicitly commodifies companionship and sex, where mate selection involves conscious negotiation and exchange of material benefits. This challenges the traditional paradigm that views mate choice as predominantly driven by unconscious evolutionary cues and genetic fitness. Instead, sugar dating reveals a socio-economic overlay on mating strategies, creating what has been conceptualized as a “mating market”, where individuals actively advertise and negotiate partner qualities in a bid-like process (Pawlowski and Dunbar, 1999).

Moreover, research shows that openness to sugar relationships aligns more strongly with short-term mating orientations rather than broad life history strategies. Short-term mating strategies emphasize immediate resource acquisition and low commitment, differing from the “slow” life history strategies focused on delayed reproduction and substantial parental investment (Meskó et al., 2025). This reveals that sugar dating operates under mating strategies attuned to sociosexuality and immediate benefits rather than long-term reproductive maximization.

Crucially, sugar dating also brings into focus the role of cultural, economic and social factors that shape human mating beyond pure evolutionary logic. The conscious and negotiated nature of these relationships suggests that in modern societies, mate selection incorporates elements of economic exchange and individual choice that transcend straightforward genetic fitness imperatives (Chu, 2018; Nayar, 2017). Participants may pursue non-reproductive motives such as financial security, emotional well-being, autonomy or social status, reflecting the plasticity of human mating strategies in response to contemporary environments.

In summary, sugar dating can be seen as both a manifestation of evolutionary strategies – reflecting sex-differentiated reproductive interests and trade-offs – and a challenge to traditional mate selection paradigms by introducing explicit transactional and negotiated dynamics. It illustrates how biological interacts with socio-economic contexts to produce complex human mating behaviours that cannot be fully explained by classic evolutionary theories alone.

However, this perspective also raises questions about how these dynamics influence the selection of partners and the evolution of preferences within sugar-dating communities. For example:

- How do economic and social pressures influence the selection of traits deemed desirable in sugar dating?
- Do these dynamics reinforce existing social hierarchies, or do they create new forms of social stratification?

Foucault's theories on power highlight its relational and diffuse nature, suggesting that power is not held by individuals but rather exercised through networks of relationships. In sugar dating, power dynamics are complex, with both parties exerting influence over the terms of the arrangement. The sugar daddy often holds financial power, while the sugar baby may wield emotional or social influence.

This framework prompts inquiries into how power is negotiated and maintained within these relationships:

- How do sugar babies and sugar daddies negotiate power within their arrangements, and what strategies do they use to maintain or challenge existing power structures?
- In what ways do these power dynamics reflect or subvert broader societal norms regarding gender, class and intimacy?

Technologies of heterosexual coercion refer to the societal mechanisms that enforce traditional norms of heterosexuality, often influencing how individuals perceive and engage in romantic or sexual relationships. In sugar dating, these technologies can manifest as expectations around gender roles, with sugar daddies often embodying traditional masculine ideals and sugar babies conforming to feminine norms.

This context raises questions about how these pressures shape the experiences of individuals in sugar dating:

- How do societal expectations around heterosexuality influence the formation and maintenance of sugar relationships?
- Do these relationships offer a space for subverting traditional gender roles, or do they reinforce existing norms?

The intersection of Darwin's survival of the fittest, Foucault's power dynamics and technologies of heterosexual coercion in sugar dating opens up several new avenues for research:

- How do evolutionary pressures (e.g. selection for certain traits) interact with power dynamics and societal expectations to shape the sugar-dating landscape?
- Can sugar dating be seen as a form of resistance to traditional relationship structures, or does it reinforce existing social hierarchies?
- What role do digital platforms play in facilitating these relationships and influencing the dynamics of power and attraction?

By exploring these questions, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between biological, social and technological factors in shaping the experiences of individuals involved in sugar dating.

## CONCLUSION

This article has explored the complex dynamics of sugar dating through the lenses of Charles Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, Michel Foucault's power dynamics and the concept of technologies of heterosexual coercion. By examining these theoretical frameworks, we have illuminated how sugar dating reflects and challenges broader societal norms regarding intimacy, economics and gender roles.

The intersection of these theories reveals that sugar dating is not merely a transactional relationship but a site where biological, social and technological factors converge. Darwin's theory highlights how certain traits become advantageous in securing sugar relationships, potentially reinforcing existing social hierarchies. Foucault's power dynamics show how influence is negotiated within these arrangements, often reflecting broader societal power structures. The technologies of heterosexual coercion underscore how traditional gender norms are both reinforced and subverted in sugar dating.

Our analysis raises important questions about the future of intimate relationships in the context of economic exchange and digital facilitation. As digital platforms continue to shape the landscape of sugar dating, it is crucial to con-

sider how these technologies influence the dynamics of power, attraction and social norms.

Ultimately, this research suggests that sugar dating is a multifaceted phenomenon that challenges simplistic categorizations. It invites further interdisciplinary inquiry into how societal pressures, economic conditions and technological advancements interact to shape modern forms of intimacy and partnership. By exploring these intersections, we can gain a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of human relationships in the digital age.

Future studies should continue to explore the ways in which sugar dating reflects broader societal trends and challenges traditional norms. This includes examining the role of digital platforms in facilitating these relationships, the impact of economic inequality on the selection of partners and the ways in which individuals navigate and resist societal expectations within these arrangements. Through such research, we can better understand the complex interplay of factors that shape the experiences of those involved in sugar dating and contribute to a more nuanced discussion of intimacy, power and technology in contemporary society.

## REFERENCES

- BAY-CHENG, L. Y., E. MAGUIN & A. E. BRUNS (2017). Who Wears the Pants: The Implications of Gender and Power for Youth Heterosexual Relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55 (1), pp. 7–20. ISSN 0022 4499.
- BERECZKEI, T. & A. CSANAKY (1996). Mate Choice, Marital Success, and Reproduction in a Modern Society. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 17 , pp. 17–35. ISSN 01623095.
- BIRKÁS, B., N. MESKÓ, A. N. ZSIDÓ, D. IPOLYI & A. LÁNG (2020). Providing Sexual Companionship for Resources: Development, Validation, and Personality Correlates of the Acceptance of Sugar Relationships in Young Women and Men Scale (ASR-YWMS). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, pp. 1–15. ISSN 1664-1078.
- BURKETT, M. & K. HAMILTON (2012). Postfeminist Sexual Agency: Young Women's Negotiations of Sexual Consent. *Sexualities*, 15 (7), pp. 815–833. ISSN 1363-4607.
- BUSS, D. & D. SCHMITT (2019). Mate Preferences and Their Behavioral Mani-

- festations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, pp. 77–110. ISSN 1545-2085.
- BUSS, D (2010). Sex Differences in Human Mate Preferences: Evolutionary Hypotheses Tested in 37 Cultures. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 12 (1), p. 1.14. ISSN 1469-1825.
- CHU, C. S. K (2018) *Compensated Dating: Buying and Selling Sex in Cyberspace*. Berlin: Springer. ISBN 978-981-10-6973-4.
- COLLISSON, B. & L. P. DE LEON (2020). Perceived Inequity Predicts Prejudice towards Age-Gap Relationships. *Current Psychology*, 39 (2, ), pp. 2108–2115. ISSN 1046-1310.
- DARMAYANTI, D. P., N. I. IDRUS, M. TANG & P. HIJJANG (2024). Love or Transaction: The Difference Between Sugar Dating and Conventional Dating. *International Journal of Religion*, 5 (10), pp. 2863–2872. ISSN 2633-3538.
- DARWIN, C. (1895). *On the Origin of Species*. London: John Murray.
- DE LAURETIS, T. (1987). *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- FLEMING, P. (2018). *Sugar Daddy Capitalism: The Dark Side of the New Economy*. Cambridge: Polity. ISBN 978-1509528202.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. United States: Penguin.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 – 1977*. New York: Random House. ISBN 039473954X.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1*. New York: Random House. ISBN 9780241385982.
- GAVEY, N. (1992). Technologies and Effects of Heterosexual Coercion. *Feminism & Psychology*, 2 (3), pp. 325–351. ISSN 0959-3535.
- GUNNARSSON, L. & S. STRID (2023). Varieties of Sugar Dating in Sweden: Content, Compensation, Motivations. *Social Problems*, 70 (4), pp.1044–1062. ISSN 0037-7791.
- KIRKEBY, K. M., J. J. LEHMILLER & M. J. MARKS (2022). Sugar Dating, Perceptions of Power, and Condom Use: Comparing the Sexual Health Risk Behaviours of Sugar Dating to Non-Sugar Dating Women. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 59 (6), pp. 731–741. ISSN 0022-4499.
- KUATE-DEFO, B. (2004). Young People's Relationships with Sugar Daddies and



- Sugar Mummies: What do We Know and What Do We Need to Know? *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 8 (2), pp. 13–37. ISSN 1118-4841.
- LECLERC-MADLALA, S. (2003). Transactional Sex and the Pursuit of Modernity. *Social Dynamics*, 29 (2), pp. 213–233. ISSN 0253-3952.
- MCKENZIE, L. (2015). *Age-Dissimilar Couples and Romantic Relationships*. Berlin: Springer Nature.- ISBN 978-1-137-44676-3.
- MESKÓ, N. J. EHLERS & A. N. ZSIDO (2025). Short-Term Mating Orientation Predicts Openness to “Sugar Relationships” More Than Life History Strategy. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 23 (2), , pp. 1–12. ISSN 1474-7049.
- MICHÈLE, B. & M. FRANCESCONI (2012). Can Anyone Be “The” One? Evidence on Mate Selection from Speed Dating. *Journal of Human Resources*, 48 (2), pp. 474–507. ISSN 0022-166X.
- MILLER, A. (2011). Sugar Dating: A New Take on an Old Issue. *Buffalo Journal of Gender, Law & Social Policy*, 20, pp. 33–68. ISSN 2151-3473.
- MILROD, C. & M. MONTA (2017). Older Male Clients of Female Sex Workers in the United States. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 56 (6), pp. 1867–1876. ISSN 0004-0002.
- MOTYL, J. (2013). Trading Sex for College Tuition: How Sugar Daddy “Dating” Sites May Be Sugar Coating Prostitution. *Dickinson Law Review*, 117 (3), pp. 927–957. ISSN 0012-2459.
- NAYAR, K. I. (2017). Sweetening the Deal: Dating for Compensation in the Digital Age. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26 (3), pp. 335–346. ISSN 0958-9236.
- PAWŁOWSKI, B. & R. DUNBAR (1999). Impact of Market Value on Human Mate Choice. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 266 (1416), pp. 281–285. ISSN 0962-8452.
- PRADO, C. G. (2009). *Foucault’s Legacy*. New York: Continuum. ISBN 978 1441130815.
- PROULX, N., S. L. CARON & M. E. LOGUE (2006). Older Women/Younger Men. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 5 (4), pp. 43–64. ISSN 1533-2691.
- SARAH, D. (2017). *Sugar Babies and Sugar Daddies: An Exploration of Sugar Dating on Canadian Campuses*. Master Thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.
- ŠETINOVÁ, M. & R. TOPINKOVÁ (2021). Partner Preference and Age: User’s

Mating Behavior in Online Dating. *Journal of Family Research*, 33 (3), pp. 566–591. ISSN 2699-2337.

STICE, B. (2021). *The Lived Experiences of College Sugar Babies: A Consensual Qualitative Research Study*. San Marcos: Master Thesis. Texas State University.

WADE, L. (2017). *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus*. New York: W W Norton & Co. ISBN 978-0393285093.

ZEMBE, Y. L. TOWNSEND, A. THORSON, A. M. EKSTRÖM (2013). “Money Talks, Bullshit Walks” Interrogating Notions of Consumption and Survival Sex among Young Women Engaging in Transactional Sex in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Qualitative Enquiry. *Globalization & Health*, 9 (1), pp. 1–16. ISSN 1744-8603.

### **Mgr. Daniel Lenghart, Ph.D.**

Katedra psychologie, Panevropská vysoká škola,

Michálkovická 1810/181, 710 00 Slezská Ostrava

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8239-5012>

Email: [daniel.lenghart@gmail.com](mailto:daniel.lenghart@gmail.com)

### **Bc. Natálie Bajerová**

studied ethics and culture in media communication

at the Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty of Palacký University.

Email: [natalka.bajerova@seznam.cz](mailto:natalka.bajerova@seznam.cz)