

# Perceptions of Sugar Mommy Practices in South Africa

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# Introduction

- Age mixing, cross-generational sex and intergenerational sex are similar terms
- Refers to sexual relationships with an 10 or more years difference between sexual partners
- In this context, the focus is mainly on the 'sugar daddy'.
- Increasing attention to relationships between younger men and older women
- The aim of this study was to explore the occurrence, acceptability and non-acceptability of sugar mommy practices
- Delve into reasons why older women and younger men enter into sugar mommy relationships





# Methods

- An exploratory, qualitative focus group study was conducted
- Diverse (race, age, gender, geo-type, etc.) focus groups across South Africa
- Participants were selected purposively and by snowball sampling - 11 focus groups, with 135 participants
- The aim of this study was to explore the occurrence, acceptability and non-acceptability of sugar mommy practices
- Delve into reasons why older women and younger men enter into sugar mommy relationships
- Ethical approval was obtained from the HSRC's Research Ethics Committee (REC) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the CDC.



## Do sugar mommy practices occur?


Contrasting views arose as to whether sugar mommy practices were present in the various communities:

- “*Yes it does happen, who cares?*” - **Women who have sex with women (WSW), Gauteng** and
- “*Yeah, common things.*” - **WSW, Western Cape; Male Teenagers Western Cape**

Compared to:

- “*... in my community, it is not common; it is regarded as an insult...*” - **Adult males, Limpopo**
- “*Or maybe is in the suburbs; not here in the community*”  
- **WSW, Western Cape**

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## Are sugar mommy practices acceptable? Yes & No

### Love

- “...love doesn’t ask for age...” - **Male teenagers, Northern Cape**

*“Age is only a number, nothing else”*

**- Adult women, North West**

versus

- “...when older people try to advise young men, they say they want to test what their parents tested (sexual desire), so adults discontinue to advise them”

**- Adult men, Limpopo**

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## Are sugar mommy practices acceptable?

Yes & No (continued)

### Social and/or financial gain

- *“Some will accept it because if the older person now gives him money to make love to her, then the child will bring the money home so that the parents can buy food or electricity or so” - Male teenagers, Northern Cape,*

versus

*“They are interested in money ... what other reasons are there that a young man will go out with an older woman?” - Male teenagers, Northern Cape*

# Are sugar mommy practices acceptable?

Yes & No (continued)

## Social propriety

- “Well, men who have large stomachs and wobbly buttocks take off their clothes in front of young girls who are even younger than their own daughters, and they enjoy themselves. So, why should women be shy about what they want to enjoy. Whether it is a man or a woman, it is how you feel” - **Mixed teenagers, Free State**

versus

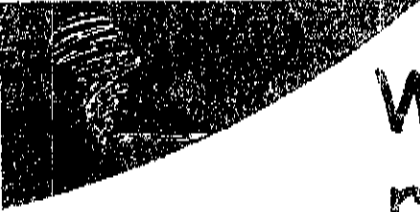
- “I think what causes this is lack of ethical and moral values. If you are an older woman and have a relationship with men younger your age this shows that you have a serious problem in promoting ubuntu...”

- **Adult men, Limpopo**

Source: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za>



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## Why do older women have sexual relationships with younger men?

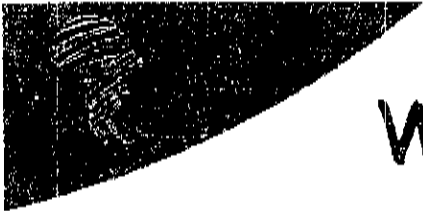
- Sexual fulfillment
- Domination
- Procreation
- Stress relief
- Physical attraction
- Lack of self control
- Youthful feeling
- Migrancy
- No partners of compatible age

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# Why do older women have sexual relationships with younger men?

## Sexual fulfillment

- *“Funa igazi lo mfana”, (want the blood of the young boy). If the man at home does not service well at home, so the woman goes and looks for a young boy and pay him something. This happens visa versa”- **Adult men, Gauteng***
- *“At 50 years some men loose erection and there are diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. These two diseases are enemy to men. So in the absence of sexual pleasure the woman looks around for a younger men. I personally see nothing wrong with that” - **Mixed teenagers, Free State***



## Why older women have sexual relationships with younger men? (continued)

### Domination


- *“The woman wants the man to do what she wants him to do ... the woman wants to sit on his head. The man does things the woman wants him to do. Maybe it’s sometimes like- what do they call it now - black ... blackmail”*  
- **Male teenagers, Northern Cape**

### Procreation

- *“For a baby ... to want a baby”, maybe she’s never had a child ...now ... she really wants one.”*  
- **Male teenagers, Northern Cape**



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## Why do older women have sexual relationships with younger men? (continued)


### Stress relief

- “...*Sugar mommies want to be loved because their husbands are beating them and undermine them or their men left them for younger girls*”
  - ***Mixed teenagers, Free State***

### Physical attraction

- “One other thing is that as men grow older they get out of shape; they get big belly and they look older than women”
  - ***Adult women, North West***





## Why do older women have sexual relationships with younger men? (continued)

### Lack of self control

- *“...older women do not respect themselves to these young men ...”- Adult men, Limpopo*

### Youthful feeling

- *They say they feel young and loved again because when you are in a marriage for a long time you grow apart and there is no more love but only tolerance. Younger men call them with all the romantic loving words and they feel loved again. - Adult women, North West*

## Why older women have sexual relationships with younger men? (continued)

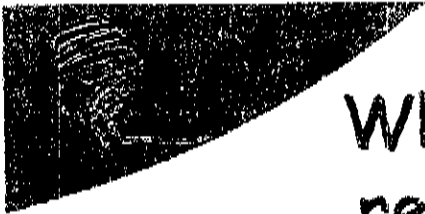
### Migrancy

- *“Sometimes it is caused by when man of the family is working far from his family - places like Gauteng and his wife (is) shy to go for men of her age and go to young man...”*  
- **Adult men, Limpopo**

### No sexual partners of compatible age

- *“You find that the woman is no longer fit to have relationships with men of her age because they reject her, so she tends to go for young men for sex, she finds that she doesn't have a choice”*  
- **Adult men, Limpopo**






## Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women?

- Material gain
- Stress relief
- Being enticed
- Rejection by women of compatible age
- Peer influence
- Belief that older women are purer
- For tender loving care (TLC)
- Older women are more mature






# Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women?

## Material gain

- *It's about money, fancy car, jewelry, expensive clothes, big cell phone, big wallet, lots of cards, credit cards, debit cards, everything!* - **Women who have sex with women (WSW), Western Cape**
- *"Yes, I'm one ... if I, for example, had a Sugar Mommy ... I would have stayed with her, obviously I will now have a banking account because my money gets deposited every month"* - **Male Teenagers, Northern Cape**
- *"Obviously boys would rather date a woman who drives a BMW than a woman who takes a taxi. Even though he might be dating the older woman, he still has a lot of girlfriends and uses the older woman's BMW to get them".* - **Mixed Teenage Group, Free State**



## Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women? (continued)


### Stress relief

- *“They sometimes think that their age group girls cause them too much stress more than older people so getting involved with an elderly person gives them less or no stress” – WSW, Gauteng*

### Being enticed

- *“When you see an older woman dressed in a mini skirt and walking in the public like that, it remains obvious that she is trying to invite younger men by saying I’m still young and beautiful” – Adult men, Limpopo*





## Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women? (continued)

### Rejection by women of compatible age

- *“Young men find themselves being rejected by women of compatible ages, so this results in them loving older women”*  
- **Men of all ages, Limpopo**


### Peer influence

- *“According to my understanding young men are interested in loving older women because they have seen their peer having more money from older women. So they tend to join the other peer as they regard it as good life in order to have money” –*  
**Men of all ages, Limpopo**

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## Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women? (continued)

### Belief that older women are purer

- *“There is an ongoing belief among younger men which says older women won’t make you sick they are as clean as a baby. You won’t go wrong with older women” – Men of all ages, Limpopo*

### For tender loving care (TLC)

- *“...the treatment that you get from the sugar mommies and also the way that he, he treats you, treating you well, more than the same age”  
- WSW, Western Cape*



## Why do younger men have sexual relationships with older women? (continued)

### Older women are more mature

- *“What is true is that older women are experienced in a number of things such as sex, and life in general. They also look after themselves better than younger women. They make sure that they look beautiful and they wear nice clothes because they can afford it”*

**- Mixed Teenagers, Free State**





## Discussion

- The study revealed that sugar mommy practices do occur and there are increasing levels of its acceptability
- Compatibility, availability and attraction outweighs concerns about age difference
- Sexual fulfillment is deemed as the principal reason why older women become sugar mommies
- Some age-dependent motives such as domination and stress relief are also cited
- 'Practical' consideration such as procreation and the absence of the regular partner are further reasons for engaging in sugar mommy practices





## Discussion (continued)

- Material gain is deemed the primary reason why younger men take enter sugar mommy relationships
- This allow men to become materially and socially empowered
- This results in a greater attraction to younger women and allows younger men to support their families
- Older women's maturity, their sexual and life experiences, are also deemed as reasons
- Sugar mommy practices exists, with various reasons why older women and younger men opt to participate in such practices
- Quantitative studies are needed to test related hypotheses and to inform interventions
- Relevant in the context of differential HIV prevalence rates

Thank you!  
Merci!

