

'No Hard Feelings':  
Resolving and Redefining Threatened Masculinity

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
In  
Sociology

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May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: masculinity, manhood, masculinity threat, violence against women, erectile  
dysfunction, flaccidity, sex anxiety, aging, aging manhood, sugar dating

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ABSTRACT

This project sheds light on men's choice in the face of threats to their masculinity: to compensate to appear *more* masculine or to revise their definitions of manhood. Research has demonstrated that men *overcompensate* in their displays of masculinities when faced with challenges to their dominant status. However, not all men pursue dominant displays of masculinity through heterosexuality: Older men (85+) may abandon ideals of masculinity tied to sexual dominance as they once did in middle age. This dissertation weaves together men's three distinct pursuits of dominant manhood: approval of violence against women (AVAW), changes to sexual function in old age (i.e., flaccidity or erectile dysfunction), and sugar dating (i.e., dating between younger women and an older man, in which money is exchanged for intimacy). I show that men's use of compensatory heterosexuality offers them a way to do gender when confronted with threatened masculinity in the form(s) of subordination to women, sexual dysfunction, and older age. In each project, men rely on displays of heterosexual dominance and objectification of women as a compensatory means to do masculinity. However, their reliance on heterosexuality is subject to change under such conditions as older age, which can lead to revisions of manhood.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This project sheds light on men's choices in the face of gender threats: to compensate to appear *more* masculine or to revise or change their definitions of manhood. Research has demonstrated that men overdo their displays of masculinity when faced with challenges. However, not all men do this: Older men (85+) may move away from a masculinity tied to sexual displays as they once did in middle age. This dissertation weaves together three displays of masculinity: approval of violence against women (AVAW), changes to sexual function in old age (i.e., flaccidity or erectile dysfunction), and sugar dating (i.e., dating between a younger woman and an older man in which money is exchanged for emotional and physical relationships). These avenues offer men a way to perform their masculinities when confronted with threats in the form(s) of subordination to women (i.e., women in power over you), sexual dysfunction, and older age. In each project, men rely on displays of sexual dominance and objectification of women to perform masculinity (when compensating). However, their reliance on these displays is subject to change under certain conditions (when revising manhood).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee members for your patience and wisdom as I completed this project.

I know I spent many hours talking your ears off about masculinity, violence, and structural equation models (luckily not in the same conversation). I appreciate everything you all have taught me.

Thank you to my chair, Neal King, for reading and editing the many (and I mean many) drafts of this dissertation. You deserve a much-needed break with your cats, your garden, and your Legos.

Thank you to my friends and family for encouraging me in the many years of this PhD process. I would not be where I am without their love and support.

Finally, a special thanks to my partner. Thank you for your endless support. I know I can always count on you.

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# ACCEPTANCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## INTRODUCTION

“*A beautiful woman on your arm is a man’s best accessory.*” This quote from a research interview encapsulates how patriarchal societies view women in relation to men. Specific to the gender dynamics in the United States, women are viewed as objects (e.g., “accessories”) at men’s disposal, with a woman’s value tied to her appearance. As this quote shows, women’s worth is tied to her ability to bring status to men. Nothing else will achieve quite the same display of dominance or power for men. This quote summarizes the focus of this dissertation as men perform or *do* masculinity through their (hetero)sexual displays of power.

Feminist works have highlighted women’s marginalization in various spheres including the workplace (Williams 2013), the home (Glenn 1992), and politics (Acker 2011). I, and many other masculinities scholars before me (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Connell 1987; Messerschmidt 2000), explore male privilege associated with women’s continued marginalization—intentional or not—in their everyday pursuit of an idealized, dominant masculinity. This dissertation explores men’s use of women to achieve a dominant heterosexual masculinity.

Men’s definition of masculinity in the United States often centers the (hetero)sexual pursuit of women (Knudson 2014; Limmer 2014; Pascoe 2003). Conceptualizations of structural masculinity—Connell’s (1987) hegemonic masculinity in particular—propose that what groups do to distinguish men from other people also keeps them dominant over women and over other men. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity not as a fixed set of traits but instead in functional terms, as a stratification system made up of dominant, marginalized, and subordinated masculinities (Connell 1995:78–81; Messerschmidt 2018). The key to Connell’s (1987) theory is that men are structurally positioned over women, enjoying benefits of a systematically advantaged status.

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This project sheds light on this distinction between men's choice in the face of threats to their masculinity: to compensate to appear *more* masculine or to revise their definitions of manhood. Research has demonstrated that men *overcompensate* in their displays of masculinities when faced with challenges to their dominant status (Bosson et al. 2009; Bosson and Vandello 2011; Munsch and Willer 2012; Reidy et al. 2009; Willer et al. 2013).

Not all men pursue dominant displays of masculinity that emphasize sexual dominance over women. Later-life men (85+) may abandon ideals of masculinity tied to sexual dominance as they once did in middle age (Lodge and Umberson 2012; Meadows and Davidson 2006; Wentzell 2013). Men have been shown to redefine what manhood and masculinity means to them as they face varying challenges, such as in old age or in female-dominated career fields (Burkstrand-Reid 2012; Meadows and Davidson 2006; Wentzell 2013). When confronted with changes to sexual function in old age, men can either emphasize their heterosexuality or place less value on it, opting to shift their focus elsewhere in their performances and embodiments of masculinity.

This dissertation weaves together three distinct pursuits of men faced with challenges to their masculinities: approval of violence against women (AVAW), changes to sexual function in old age (i.e., flaccidity or erectile dysfunction), and sugar dating. I show that men's use of compensatory heterosexuality (Smith 2018:8) offers men a way to do gender when confronted with threatened masculinity in the form(s) of subordination to women, changes in sexual function, and old age. In each project, men rely on displays of heterosexual dominance and objectification of women as a means to do masculinity (when compensating), however, their reliance on heterosexuality is subject to change under certain conditions (when revising

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manhood; Munsch and Willer 2012; Pascoe 2003; Reidy et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2015; Willer et al. 2013).

In Project 1, Approval of the Harassment and Abuse of Women as Compensation for Threatened Masculinity, men experience strain when they see women take control or in positions of power. Using Agnew's (1992) general strain theory, I plot the relationship between masculinity threat as strain, men's ability to control anger, and their approval of violence against women. Men's ability to perform a dominant masculinity relies on their displays of physical and sexual dominance over women. When confronted with women in positions of power over them, threatened men report an inability to control their anger and endorsement of violence and dominance over women.

Project 2— "Manopause": Flaccid Penises in Middle Age and Later Life as Threats to Aging Manhood—examines the gender differences in aging and sexual health by comparing men's flaccidity (i.e., erectile dysfunction) and women's vaginal dryness (i.e., lack of lubrication). I argue that these gender differences in sexual function reflect broader gender dynamics for aging men and women. Their differences reflect a unique experience in the sexual health of aging men: aging men are more likely to report sex-related stress when experiencing flaccidity compared to aging women experiencing vaginal dryness. Additionally, the interaction between aging and flaccidity reveals that later-life men in the sample are less likely to indicate stress about their sex lives than their middle-aged counterparts are. Middle-aged men experiencing flaccidity are more likely to report sex-related stress, indicating that later-life men take less stock in (hetero)sexual displays of masculinity and instead revise how they define their manhood in old age.

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In Project 3, “Leveling up”: Sugar Daddies, Aging Manhood and Doing Masculinity in the Sugar Bowl, I examine men’s involvement as sugar daddies in the sugar dating community (i.e., a form of dating in which money, gifts, and paid expenses are exchanged for emotional and physical intimacy). Building on the limited literature available on sugar dating (see Cordero 2015, Gunnarsson and Strid 2021, 2022), I focus on daddies’ ideas of doing gender in middle-age and later-life. I argue that middle-aged men turn to sugar dating to reassert masculinity through heterosexual dominance and sexual prowess when traditional or “vanilla” dating markets are cut off to them. Unlike other aging men, sugar daddies attract younger attractive women (also called “sugar babies”) with their substantial social and economic capital. Daddies’ privilege acts as a buffer to potential status challenges as they age. Additionally, daddies position themselves within a hierarchy of age relations by comparing themselves to other men. Daddies compare themselves to younger men, arguing that they themselves offer more to young women as romantic partners compared to—in their view—the inexperienced and disrespectful younger men similar in age to those young women.

These three projects explore men’s methods for doing masculinity when threatened, choosing to employ either compensatory behaviors or revisionist behaviors in these three varying contexts including attitudes toward violence against women, aging and sexual function, and sugar dating. In each of these projects, men’s heterosexual dominance is challenged (through subordination to women, changes in sexual function, or “aging out” of traditional dating markets) and they seek varying avenues to reassert their masculinity and do gender.

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### *Project 1:*

#### *Approval of the Harassment and Abuse of Women as Compensation for Threatened Masculinity*

### ABSTRACT

Using Agnew's (1992) general strain theory (GST), this study employs structural equation modeling to assess the relationship between masculinity threats, trouble controlling anger, and acceptance of violence against women (VAW) in a self-report convenience sample of men aged 18 to 29. I find that men experiencing masculinity threat in the form of subordination to women (i.e., being in positions of power under women at work or in the home) are less likely to control their anger and more likely to accept the harassment and abuse of women. Men who did not indicate stress at their possible subordination to women did not report an inability to control their anger and did not approve of violence against women. Performances of masculinity are tied to broader gender dynamics in which masculinity is framed as the antithesis of femininity. Men perceive themselves as less masculine when subordinated to women and seek to assert dominance over women by approving of violence against women.

*Keywords:* masculinity threat, acceptance of violence against women, anger, general strain theory

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Men's perpetration of violence against women is often triggered by domestic disputes (Gold 2020; Kivisto and Porter Staats 2019), partners trying to leave (Brownridge 2006), or a generalized misogyny (Díaz and Valji 2019; Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill 2021). Interpersonal violence against women affects 1 in 3 women throughout their lifetimes (World Health Organization 2021), and a majority of this violence is committed by men the victims know (Violence Policy Center 2015). Men's violence against women (VAW) has been researched in-depth, finding it rooted in demands for control and power over intimate partners (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013; Hunnicutt 2009; Stark and Hester 2019). Criminologists and other scholars tend to frame this violence in terms of patriarchy and structural gender inequalities in which men use violence as a way to maintain power over others.

This project analyzes men's experiences of masculinity threat as men fear that they cannot meet expectations of male sexual dominance over women. Using Agnew's (1992) general strain theory (GST), I argue that sexual performance failure, occupational stress, lack of athleticism, and subordination to women will act as sources of *strain*. More specifically, I frame these masculinity threats as what Agnew (1992) refers to as the failure to achieve positively valued goals, one of three key strains he proposes. In Agnew's (1992) theory, individuals may respond to strains with emotional distress such as anger, and in turn, use delinquent acts (e.g., excessive drinking, theft, or violence) as means of coping with these emotions. In GST, it is the subjective emotional reaction to strain that is the key mechanism in producing deviance and violence when social support and prosocial coping mechanisms are absent.

When confronted with masculinity threats or strains, men may seek strategies to emphasize their sexual dominance over women as a means of coping with negative emotion, even if it is limited to misogynistic thoughts. I propose that approving of the violence against

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women is among those coping mechanisms or strategies, by which men unable to control their anger can resolve threats to their masculinity. By endorsing violence against women, strained and angry men can compensate for threats to their manhood.

In the current study, I use structural equation modelling (SEM) to understand men's experiences of masculinity threat and how this relates to their endorsements of violence against women. I measure masculinity threat in four ways: sexual performance failure, lack of athleticism, occupational stress, and subordination to women. Using GST, I assess how men's abilities to control their anger affects the relationship between these four types of threat and men's AVAW. This leads to the following research questions:

*How does the experience of masculinity threat— in the form of sexual performance failure, lack of athleticism, occupational stress, and subordination to women— correspond with the acceptance of violence against women (AVAW)?*

*Is the relationship between masculinity threat and AVAW mediated by men's (in)ability to control their anger?*

## LITERATURE

### *General Strain Theory*

Agnew (1992) builds on Merton's (1938) theory of social structure and anomie, often referred to as "classic" strain theory, in his own general strain theory. While Merton focused on structural blockages to economic success, Agnew added two other sources of strain experienced commonly in everyday life: the loss of positive stimuli (such as jobs and intimate relationships) and the presence of noxious stimuli (such as abuse at home) (1992:50). Similar to Merton, Agnew's theory argues that the presentation of strain (blocked goals, loss of positive stimuli, and existence of noxious stimuli), if resulting in negative emotions (like anger, disappointment, or

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resentment), will need resolving through various coping mechanisms. These can range from prosocial (e.g., relying on social support networks) to deviant (e.g., behaviors that violate social norms).

Scholars have researched how strain leads to delinquency in the forms of bullying (Patchin and Hinduja 2011), self-harm (Hay and Meldrum 2010), terrorism (Agnew 2010), white-collar crime (Agnew, Piquero, and Cullen 2009), internet addiction (Jun and Choi 2015), and eating disorders (Piquero et al. 2010), among many others (see Agnew 2013 for a meta-analysis on coping strategies). They find that strain correlates with different forms of delinquency and emotion depending on such factors as race, immediate environment, upbringing, and, the focus of this paper, gender.

Discussions of general strain theory literature offer two key distinctions between men's and women's delinquency: differences in sources of strain and differences in emotional responses to strain. Broidy and Agnew (1997:277) argue that the gender gap in crime can be explained with GST, supposing that men are subject to greater and more diverse types of strain and respond with different emotions, with men more likely to respond to strain with anger and women more likely to respond with depression or guilt (Broidy and Agnew 1997:287). Kaufman (2009) in particular found that women were more likely than men to respond to strain with fear, loneliness, and grief.

Beyond differences in emotional responses to strain, Broidy and Agnew (1997) argued that men's and women's differences would carry over into coping strategies. Studies show that, in response to strain and negative emotion, men are more likely to turn to heavy drinking, property crime, aggression, and violence; while women are more likely to engage in disordered

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eating, suicide attempts, and self-harm (De Coster and Cornell Zito 2010; Dolliver and Rucker 2018; Kaufman 2009).

### *Masculinity Threat as Strain*

One of the explanations offered about the gender difference in crime perpetration is the gender expectations and norms placed on men and women. In line with West and Zimmerman's (1987) pivotal piece on "doing gender," gender is a performance that allows people to display and maintain gender in line with how they identify. Gender—and in this case, masculinity—is a performance that needs much maintenance. Vandello and colleagues (2008) describe it as, "precarious ... both elusive and tenuous," in need of frequent validation (Vandello et al. 2008:1326). The unachievable expectations of masculinity are highlighted as a cause or root of men's perpetration of crime and delinquency (Allison and Klein 2021; Sumerau 2020). To maintain positions of power and dominance, men continuously need to prove their manhood to others, including other men. Allison and Klein (2021:6865) argue that gendered expectations of strenuous performance and the domination of (often unwilling) others make men especially susceptible to threats to their masculinity.

Research has demonstrated a clear connection between masculinity threat and displays or endorsements of aggression (Bosson et al. 2009), male dominance attitudes (Willer et al. 2013), homophobia (Weaver and Vescio 2015), transphobia (Harrison and Michelson 2019), and harassment of women (Maass et al. 2003). Men who sense threat to their gender identities often exaggerate aspects of masculinity, such as aggression (Bosson et al. 2009; Cohn, Seibert, and Zeichner 2009) and objectification of women (Maass et al. 2003) to reassert their dominance. Willer and colleagues (2013) find that threatened men overcompensate with traditional masculine norms to make others (in this case, the researchers) see them as more masculine.

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Munsch and Willer (2012) provide evidence of compensatory masculinity with an experimental vignette study. Participants were given either gender-confirming or gender-disconfirming feedback by being told they were more masculine or feminine. Male respondents given gender-disconfirming feedback (i.e., not masculine *enough*) were more likely than non-threatened respondents to exonerate male perpetrators and condemn female victims of sexual assault in a series of vignettes (2012:1134).

However, gender threat is not specific to men: in Munsch and Willer's (2012) experiment, threatened women also responded in exaggerated ways but instead assigned *more* blame to perpetrators and *less* blame to victims of sexual assault than their male counterparts. Threatened women compensated with more sympathy for victims rather than exonerating male perpetrators like the threatened men in the study. The authors argue that, when confronted with gender threat or strain, women exaggerate traits associated with femininity, like kindness or empathy. This finding is consistent with other studies that demonstrate aggressive and sometimes violent reactions to gender threats appear unique to men (Cohn et al. 2009; Dahl, Vescio, and Weaver 2015; Willer et al. 2013).

In their clinical approach to gender role strain, Richmond and Levant (2003:1243) found that adolescent boys were open to discussing the negative implications of gender role strain in their lives, but felt constrained by parents, teachers, and peers to conform to traditional expressions of masculinity by emphasizing restrictive emotions, aggression, and self-reliance. Even when boys and men attempt to resolve the negative effects of strain through healthy coping mechanisms (e.g., talking it out), they are instead told to follow traditional displays of masculinity that limit men's expression of emotion (except for anger). Anger, then, becomes a key emotion in men's responses to masculinity threats. Further, an emphasis on aggression and

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restrictive emotions in dominant masculinities give men few options to cope with the anger they experience when threatened. As Willer et al. (2013) find, men overcompensate with their displays of masculinity, exaggerating traits or characteristics that we associate with dominant masculinities.

### *Violence against Women in Response to Masculinity Strain*

Men may perpetuate gender inequalities through violence against women to cope with the negative emotions resulting from strain. While men are more likely to be the perpetrators and victims of violent crime, women are more likely to be the victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault (Catalano et al. 2009; World Health Organization 2012). The gender differences in victimization show a clear inequality in the perpetration of violence against women, with male perpetrators often demanding control and dominance through aggression at female partners (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, and Bloom 2007; Wilson and Daly 1993).

In the case of intimate partner homicide, male perpetrators are often motivated by anger, jealousy, possessiveness, and rage while female perpetrators are more likely to act out of terror or self-defense (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013). Eriksson and Mazerolle (2013) in their review of literature argue that men's perpetration of intimate partner homicide results from such strains as loss of control of one's partner, separation, divorce, or infidelity. These strains contribute to emotions like rage and jealousy and may be experienced by both men and women in these situations. However, Mazerolle et al. (2003) and Piquero et al. (2004) find that these emotions are only more likely to result in violent acts among male perpetrators. Violence against women has been shown in the literature to be a mechanism through which men can correct and/or cope with strain (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013). In these ways, violence against women in men's attempts to regain status ultimately reproduces gender inequalities.

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### THE CURRENT STUDY

This study contributes to research on the relationship of masculinity strain or threat<sup>1</sup> and acceptance of violence against women using GST; and it does so by focusing further on specific threats and emotional control. Scholars have demonstrated a reassertion of dominance and aggression in response to threat in an experimental setting (Munsch and Willer 2012; Vandello et al. 2008; Willer et al. 2013). However, few studies have used GST to understand the connection between masculinity threat, (in)ability to control one's anger, and the acceptance of violence against women.

To understand the varied experience of masculinity threat in relation to trouble controlling anger, this study measures masculinity threat in four ways: sexual performance failure, occupational stress, lack of athleticism, and subordination to women, discussed in more detail below. Based on theory and the literature, I propose the following hypotheses. In the first set of hypotheses (H1a-d), I examine direct links between four types of masculinity strain and the acceptance of violence against women. I expect to find that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Men who report sexual performance failure (a), a lack of athleticism (b), occupational stress (c), or stress at subordination to women (d) are more likely to endorse violence against women.*

In the second and third sets of hypotheses, I examine whether trouble controlling anger is a mediating link between masculinity strain and acceptance of violence against women. First, linking masculinity strain to trouble controlling anger, I expect to find that:

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of masculinity strain goes by many names: discrepancy stress (Reidy et al. 2009), gender identity threat (Willer et al. 2013), gender role stress (Pleck 1981; Richmond and Levant 2003), and masculinity strain (Allison and Klein 2021). For the sake of simplicity, I use the term "masculinity threat" when not otherwise specified.

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*H<sub>2</sub>: Men who report sexual performance failure (a), a lack of athleticism (b), occupational stress (c), or stress at subordination to women (d) are more likely to report trouble controlling their anger.*

In turn, I detect significant indirect effects from each form of masculinity strain and acceptance of violence against women:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The effects of sexual performance failure (a), a lack of athleticism (b), occupational stress (c), and stress at subordination to women (d) is partially mediated through trouble controlling anger.*

This study contributes to the larger body of research on masculinity threat as it assesses how men's perceptions of threat contribute to their approval of violence against women. This study further assesses how the relationship between threat and misogyny is mediated by men's ability to control anger. By analyzing masculinity threat with a GST lens, this study contributes a more detailed measurement of masculinity threat as it relates to control of anger and approval of violence against women to the research on masculinity threat.

## METHODS

### *Sample*

This study utilizes a self-reported survey focused on violence, emotion, and health collected in the summer of 2021 using Qualtrics panels. The sample includes men aged 18 to 29 in the United States with access to the internet and who speak English as a first language.

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**Table 1. Sample Characteristics for Continuous and Bivariate Variables, N = 452**

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age	23.936	3.28	18	29
Masculinity Threat measures:				
<i>Sexual performance failure</i>	0.00	1.36	-2.89	1.96
<i>Occupational stress</i>	0.00	1.18	-3.13	1.52
<i>Lack of athleticism</i>	0.00	0.91	-1.26	2.95
<i>Subordination to women</i>	0.00	1.02	-0.98	3.78
Trouble Controlling Anger	0.00	1.20	-1.26	4.04
Acceptance of Violence Against Women				
<i>Harassment</i>	-0.00	0.88	-0.50	3.94
<i>Abuse</i>	-0.00	0.84	-0.45	3.77

Variable	#	Frequency	
		#	%
Education			
Some high school	27		5.97
Completed high school	137		30.31
Some college	109		24.12
Completed associate degree	35		7.74
Completed bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	104		23.01
Some graduate or professional school	12		2.65
Completed graduate or professional school (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, JD, MD)	28		6.19
Income			
Less than \$10,000	49		10.84
\$10,000 to \$19,999	33		7.30
\$20,000 to \$29,999	57		12.61
\$30,000 to \$39,999	40		8.85
\$40,000 to \$49,999	41		9.07
\$50,000 to \$59,999	55		12.17
\$60,000 to \$69,999	24		5.31
\$70,000 to \$79,999	26		5.75
\$80,000 to \$89,999	20		4.42
\$90,000 to \$99,999	26		5.75
\$100,000 to 149,999	50		11.06
\$150,000 or more	31		6.86
Race			
White	301		33.41
Black	98		21.68
East or South Asian	43		9.51
American Indian or Alaska Native	6		1.33
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4		0.88
Hispanic (=I)	94		20.80
Sexual Orientation			
Straight or Heterosexual	380		84.07
Bisexual	35		7.74

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Lesbian, Gay, or Homosexual	23	5.09
Asexual	8	1.77
Queer	2	0.44
Something not listed	4	0.88
Biological Sex		
Male	452	100.00
Gender		
Man	443	98.01
Genderqueer/non-binary	4	0.44
Transgender	4	0.44
Marital Status		
Married	69	15.27
In a registered domestic partnership or civil union	11	2.43
Separated	3	0.66
Divorced	4	0.88
Never Married	365	80.75

### *Dependent Variables*

*Acceptance of Violence against Women* (AVAW; Lord 2009): The AVAW survey measure was adapted from Lord's (2009) gender-based public harassment scale. Lord's (2009:26) measure asks about women's actual experiences with street harassment in two subscales: harassing experiences and reactions to harassment. To better understand *acceptance* of violence against women rather than victimization or perpetration, the current study asked men how they felt if someone in their friend group engaged in street harassment.

The updated measure asks, "Imagine your friend tells you he did one of the following things." Or, "Imagine that you are hanging out with a group of male friends." Followed by: "Rate how **acceptable** you think it was that he did the following." Responses are measured on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being "totally unacceptable" and 6 being "perfectly acceptable." The AVAW includes two subscales: Harassment and Abuse.

I first estimate a confirmatory factory analysis model testing the latent dependent variables, Approval of Harassment of Women and Approval of Abuse of Women. Table 2 offers

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the standardized factor loadings and fit indices for the AVAW variables for Model 1. While factor loadings of 0.5 and above are considered large (Farooq 2016, Yi 2009), I assessed the internal consistency for these items to see if their factor loadings were roughly in the same range (e.g., 0.7's, 0.8's and so on). If items strayed outside of the internal consistency of the other items, they were removed from the latent measure.

*Harassment* refers to male respondents' likelihood that they find harassment of women acceptable behavior amongst friends. A sample item from the harassment subscale includes: "Tell a woman how pretty or attractive she is as she walks down the street and then repeat these comments louder, trying to get her attention." For Harassment, two items loaded poorly ("Compliment a woman on her appearance [e.g. —you have beautiful eyes, —nice legs, —you're beautiful?]" and "Yell things like —hey sexy! Or —you're fine! From a car while driving past a woman"). Their factor loadings were 0.163 and 0.713, respectively. The inclusion of "Yell things..." had a significant error covariance with another item ("Tell a woman...") but this covariance lowers its factor loading to 0.686; and so it was removed from the final model.

*Abuse* refers to male respondents' likelihood of finding friends' verbally, emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive behavior acceptable. A sample item from the abuse subscale includes: "Verbally pressured a girl into sex after she said she didn't want to." Like Harassment, two items loaded poorly on the Abuse factor ("Yelled at his girlfriend or wife [e.g., called her names, insulted her, accused her of something]" and "Followed his girlfriend or wife when she left the house or tracked her online to make sure she wasn't cheating on him"). While these loadings are adequate (0.786 and 0.619, respectively), they were significantly lower than the other items in the factor, which loaded at 0.8's and 0.9's. Therefore, they were removed from the latent measure for analyses.

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Table 2 includes the latent variables used in Model 1 and accounts for three instances of covariance, including that between the latent measures. The measures of the model's fit indicate satisfactory fit (Chi-square = 78.757, degrees of freedom [df] = 32, SBIC = -116.74, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .057, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = .988, Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = .991).

**Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Standardized Latent Variables, Approval of Harassment of Women and Approval of the Abuse of Women, N=450**

Variable:	<i>Standardized Coefficients (SE)</i>
<i>Factor 1. Approval of Harassment of Women</i>	
<i>“Imagine that you are hanging out with a group of male friends. Rate how acceptable you think it would be for one of your friends to do or say the following.” (1=Totally Unacceptable; 6=Perfectly Acceptable)</i>	
1. “Tell a woman how pretty or attractive she is as she walks down the street and then repeat these comments louder, trying to get her attention.”	.747 (.02)
2. “Make sexually explicit gestures to a woman as she walks (e.g., pantomiming a blow job, grabbing his crotch).”	.891 (.01)
3. “Make sexual comments to a woman and then follow her as she walks.”	.919 (.01)
4. “Pull his car over as a woman is walking and asked her to do sexually explicit things with him.”	.924 (.01)
5. “Touch a woman as she walked past them (e.g., touching her waist, brushing a hand against her breast, grabbing her hand, etc.).”	.900 (.01)
<i>Factor 2. Approval of the Abuse of Women</i>	
<i>“Imagine your friend tells you he did one of the following things. Rate how acceptable you think it was that he did the following.” (1=Totally Unacceptable; 6=Perfectly Acceptable)</i>	
1. “Made promises to a girl he knew were not true in order to get her to have sex with him.”	.861 (.01)
2. “Told a girl he would tell people lies about her, end their relationship, or spread rumors about her if she didn't have sex with him.”	.906 (.01)
3. “Verbally pressured a girl into sex after she said she didn't want to.”	.915 (.01)
4. “Threatened to post damaging information or images online of a girl if she didn't have sex with him.”	.920 (.01)

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5. “Physically assaulted his girlfriend or wife (e.g., slapped her, punched her, tripped her, etc.).”	.912 (.01)
<hr/>	
<i>Covariances</i>	<i>Coef. (SE) p-values</i>
Harassment * Abuse	.937 (.01) 0.000***
1.2 “Make sexually explicit gestures...” * 1.4 “Pull his car over...”	.309 (.05) 0.000***
1.3 “Make sexual comments...” * 2.4 “Threatened to post...”	.300 (.05) 0.000***
<hr/>	
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )	78.757 (32) 0.000***
SBIC	-116.74
RMSEA	0.057
CFI	0.991
TFI	0.988

Note: SE=standard error, df=degrees of freedom, SBIC=Schwarz Bayesian information criterion, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation CFI= Comparative Fit Index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index. \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed tests)

### *Mediator: Trouble Controlling Anger*

The variable *trouble controlling anger* assesses respondent’s ability to control their anger and their average or normal level(s) of anger. This measure captures respondent’s *trait* level anger (i.e., inherent trait of the individual), as opposed to *state* anger (i.e., reaction to a stimuli). Multiple studies (e.g., Cohn et al. 2009; Ganem 2010; Mazerolle et al. 2003) establish the role trait anger plays in individuals’ deviance. As such, this study focuses on men’s abilities (or inabilities) to control their anger in correlation with masculinity threats. The question for trouble controlling anger asks: “Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you” on a scale of 1 being “Extremely uncharacteristic of me” to 7 being “Extremely characteristic of me.”

To adequately capture Agnew’s (1985, 1992) theoretical explanation of anger’s effect on delinquency, I ran a series of factor analyses for items from Buss and Perry’s (1992) Aggression Questionnaire. I first estimate an exploratory factor analysis (constrained onto four factors) of the full 29-item Buss-Perry measure to assess internal consistency of the items outside of their preset subscales.

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Eleven items initially loaded onto Factor 1. I retained only items with factor loadings greater than 0.5, as lower loadings indicated poor connection with the common latent factor. Therefore, I eliminated one item that did not meet this threshold. I then ran a series of confirmatory factor analyses to assess the internal consistency of the remaining 10 items, accounting for covariances between items and eliminating items if their factor loadings were outside of the internal consistency of their counterparts in the measure (e.g., items loading below the internal consistency of the other items). The final latent measure includes five items and one instance of covariance (Table 3; Chi-square = 6.416, df = 4, SBIC = -18.04, RMSEA = .037, CFI = .997, TLI = .993).

**Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Standardized Latent Variable, Trouble Controlling Anger, adapted from Buss-Perry's Aggression Questionnaire, N=452**

	<i>Standardized Coefficients (SE)</i>	
<b>Variable:</b>		
<i>Factor 1.</i>		
<i>“Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you.” (1= Extremely uncharacteristic of me; 7=Extremely characteristic of me)</i>		
1. “I have trouble controlling my temper.”	.788	(.02)
2. “Once in a while I can’t control the urge to strike another person.”	.715	(.03)
3. “Some of my friends think I’m a hothead.”	.806	(.02)
4. “I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.”	.652	(.03)
5. “Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.”	.694	(.03)
<i>Covariances</i>		
1.4 “I sometimes feel...” * 1.5 “Sometimes I fly...”	.176	(.05) 0.001**
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )	6.416	(4) 0.170
SBIC	-18.04	
RMSEA	0.037	
CFI	0.997	
TLI	0.993	

*Note:* SE=standard error, df=degrees of freedom, SBIC=Schwarz Bayesian information criterion, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation CFI= Comparative Fit Index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index. \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed tests)

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### *Independent Variables*

*Masculine Gender Role Stress* (MGRS; Eisler and Skidmore 1987): Gender role stress is described by Eisler and Skidmore (1987:125) as: "...stress when they [men] judge themselves unable to cope with the imperatives of the male role or when a situation is viewed as requiring 'unmanly' or feminine behavior." The MGRS was originally created by Eisler and Skidmore surveying 205 undergraduate respondents (1987:126). Based on their preliminary responses, five factor loadings were determined, leading to the creation of the three subscales collected in this survey: Physical Inadequacy, Subordination to Women, and Performance Failure.

For analyses, I estimated a confirmatory factor analysis of the 26 independent variables for Eisler and Skidmore's (1987) Masculine Gender Role Stress (MGRS) based on common themes rather than the preset subscales created by Eisler and Skidmore. Four themes emerged: sexual performance failure, lack of athleticism, occupational stress, and subordination to women.

The model yielding fit indices suggests that the exclusion of poor loading items and the addition of narrowed thematic factors offers a more precise measure of men's experiences of masculinity threat in this study (Chi-square = 522.750,  $df = 163$ , SBIC = -465.27, RMSEA = .072, CFI = .930, TLI = .918). While some items loaded better than others<sup>2</sup>, the split by theme better accounts for the differences among men's experiences of masculinity threat.

The latent measures used in analyses are listed in Table 4. For analyses in Model 1, however, the independent latent variables were consolidated or "punted" into single observed variables for each measure to reduce the number of paths in the final structural equation models.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., "Being with a woman who is more successful than you" [ $\beta = .822$ ;  $SE = .02$ ] loading better than, "Needing your spouse to work to help support the family" [ $\beta = .544$ ;  $SE = .04$ ] in the measure for subordination to women.

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**Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Standardized Latent Variables, adjusted Masculine Gender Role Stress (MGRS) scale, N=429**

	<i>Standardized Coefficients (SE)</i>	
Variable:		
<i>“How stressful do you feel this situation would be if it happened to you?” (0=Not at all Stressful; 5=Extremely Stressful)</i>		
<i>Factor 1. Sexual Performance Failure</i>		
1. “Being unable to perform sexually.”	.886	(.01)
2. “Being too tired for sex when your lover initiates it.”	.738	(.03)
3. “Being unable to become sexually aroused when you want.”	.831	(.02)
4. “Not being able to find a sexual partner.”	.632	(.03)
5. “Having your lover say that she/he is not satisfied.”	.691	(.03)
<i>Factor 2. Occupational Stress</i>		
1. “Being unemployed.”	.763	(.02)
2. “Not making enough money.”	.771	(.02)
3. “Finding you lack the occupational skills to succeed.”	.777	(.02)
4. “Getting passed over for a promotion.”	.751	(.02)
5. “Getting fired from your job.”	.808	(.02)
<i>Factor 3. Lack of Athleticism</i>		
1. “Feeling that you are not in good physical condition.”	.606	(.04)
2. “Losing in a sports competition.”	.713	(.03)
3. “Appearing less athletic than a friend.”	.714	(.03)
<i>Factor 4. Subordination to Women</i>		
1. “Being outperformed at work by a woman.”	.879	(.01)
2. “Having a female boss.”	.818	(.02)
3. “Letting a woman control the situation.”	.742	(.02)
4. “Being with a woman who is more successful than you.”	.802	(.02)
5. “Being outperformed in a game by a woman.”	.851	(.02)
6. “Admitting to your friends that you do housework.”	.764	(.02)
7. “Being with a woman who is much taller than you.”	.618	(.03)
<i>Covariances</i>	<i>Coef. (SE)</i>	<i>p-values</i>
Lack of Athleticism * Subordination to Women	.519 (.05)	0.000 ***
Lack of Athleticism * Occupational Stress	.537 (.05)	0.000 ***
Lack of Athleticism * Sexual Performance Failure	.568 (.05)	0.000 ***
Subordination to Women * Occupational Stress	.018 (.05)	0.590
Subordination to Women * Sexual Performance Failure	.111 (.05)	0.029 *
Occupational Stress * Sexual Performance Failure	.809 (.02)	0.000 ***
1.4 “Not being able to find...” * 1.5 “Having your lover...”	.220 (.05)	0.000 ***
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )	522.750 (163)	0.000 ***
SBIC	-465.27	
RMSEA	0.072	
CFI	0.930	
TFI	0.918	

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*Note:* SE=standard error, df=degrees of freedom, SBIC=Schwarz Bayesian information criterion, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation CFI= Comparative Fit Index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index. \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed tests)

### *Control Variables*

To control for potential influences on AVAW, the variables age, education, race, marital status, sexual orientation, and income (measured through total income in previous year, 2020) were included in Model 1.

### *Analytic Strategy*

In the first set of analyses, I test the hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the relationship between masculinity threat(s) and endorsement of violence against women. I test whether men who report sexual performance failure, a lack of athleticism, occupational stress, or stress at subordination to women are more likely to endorse violence against women (Hypothesis 1) and trouble controlling their anger (Hypothesis 2). I then determine whether men's ability to control their anger mediates the relationship between these threats and approval of violence against women (Hypothesis 3). Because this is a mediating relationship and I aim to examine both direct and indirect relationships, I use structural equation modeling in STATA 15.1.

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**Table 5. Structural Equation Model Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Predicting the Approval of Harassment and Abuse of Women with Standardized Coefficients, N=450.**

	<i>Model 1:</i>					
	<i>Mediator: Trouble Controlling Anger</i>		<i>Acceptance of the Harassment of Women</i>		<i>Acceptance of the Abuse of Women</i>	
	$\beta$ (SE)	<i>p</i>	$\beta$ (SE)	<i>p</i>	$\beta$ (SE)	<i>p</i>
<b>Direct Effects:</b>						
Age	.01 (.02)	0.566	.01 (.01)	0.066	.02 (.01)	0.036 (*)
Education	-.08 (.04)	0.048 (*)	-.05 (.02)	0.554	.02 (.02)	0.377
Income	-.03 (.02)	0.081	-.02 (.01)	0.580	.01(.01)	0.296
Straight	-.36 (.15)	0.019 (*)	.01 (.09)	0.615	.02 (.09)	0.805
White	.10 (.12)	0.410	-.07 (.07)	0.473	-.02 (.07)	0.785
Married	.17 (.17)	0.295	.11 (.10)	0.719	-.09 (.10)	0.385
<i>Mediator: Trouble Controlling Anger</i>	--	--	.32 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.39 (.04)	0.000 (***)
<i>Masculinity threat measures:</i>						
Sexual Performance Failure	.02 (.06)	0.745	.01 (.04)	0.074	-.07 (.04)	0.049 (*)
Occupational Stress	-.01 (.06)	0.886	-.00 (.04)	0.012 (*)	-.12 (.04)	0.004 (**)
Lack of Athleticism	.13 (.09)	0.147	.04 (.05)	0.077	.10 (.06)	0.082
Subordination to Women	.61 (.08)	0.000 (***)	.21 (.05)	0.000 (***)	.25 (.05)	0.000 (***)
<b>Indirect Effects:</b>						
Age			.01 (.01)	0.735	.01 (.01)	0.714
Education			-.05 (.02)	0.195	-.06 (.03)	0.171
Income			-.02 (.01)	0.607	-.02 (.01)	0.537
Straight			.01 (.09)	0.804	.00 (.10)	0.972
White			-.07 (.07)	0.055	-.07 (.08)	0.069
Married			.11 (.10)	0.004 (**)	.11 (.11)	0.004 (*)
<i>Masculinity threat measures:</i>						
Sexual Performance Failure			.01 (.02)	0.745	.01 (.02)	0.745
Occupational Stress			-.00 (.02)	0.886	-.00 (.03)	0.886
Lack of Athleticism			.04 (.03)	0.153	.05 (.04)	0.151
Subordination to Women			.21 (.03)	0.000 (***)	.25 (.04)	0.000 (***)
<b>Total Effects:</b>						

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Age	.03 (.02)	0.551	.09 (.02)	0.110	.10 (.02)	0.075
Education	-.12 (.05)	0.040 (*)	-.03 (.03)	0.606	-.02 (.03)	0.678
Income	-.08 (.02)	0.172	.00 (.01)	0.975	.01 (.01)	0.781
Straight	-.05 (.18)	0.297	.03 (.12)	0.575	.01 (.13)	0.836
White	-.02 (.14)	0.746	-.10 (.10)	0.051	-.08 (.10)	0.109
Married	.12 (.19)	0.028 (*)	.10 (.14)	0.060	.08 (.14)	0.111
<i>Mediator: Trouble Controlling Anger</i>	-- --		.43 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.50 (.04)	0.000 (***)
<i>Masculinity threat measures:</i>						
Sexual Performance Failure	.02 (.06)	0.745	-.08 (.04)	0.136	-.09 (.04)	0.113
Occupational Stress	-.01 (.06)	0.886	-.13 (.04)	0.016 (*)	-.15 (.04)	0.007 (**)
Lack of Athleticism	.09 (.09)	0.147	.13 (.06)	0.018	.14 (.06)	0.016 (*)
Subordination to Women	.49 (.08)	0.000 (***)	.52 (.05)	0.000 (***)	.51 (.05)	0.000 (***)
<b>Proportion of effects</b> <i>(indirect effect / total effect):</i>						
Sexual Performance Failure			-0.111	(-11.1%)	-0.111	(-11.1%)
Occupational Stress			0.023	(2.3%)	0.024	(2.4%)
Lack of Athleticism			0.308	(30.8%)	0.357	(35.7%)
Subordination to Women			0.404	(40.4%)	0.490	(49.0%)
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )					412.772 (206)	0.000 (***)
SBIC						-845.73
RMSEA						0.047
CFI						0.973
TFI						0.963

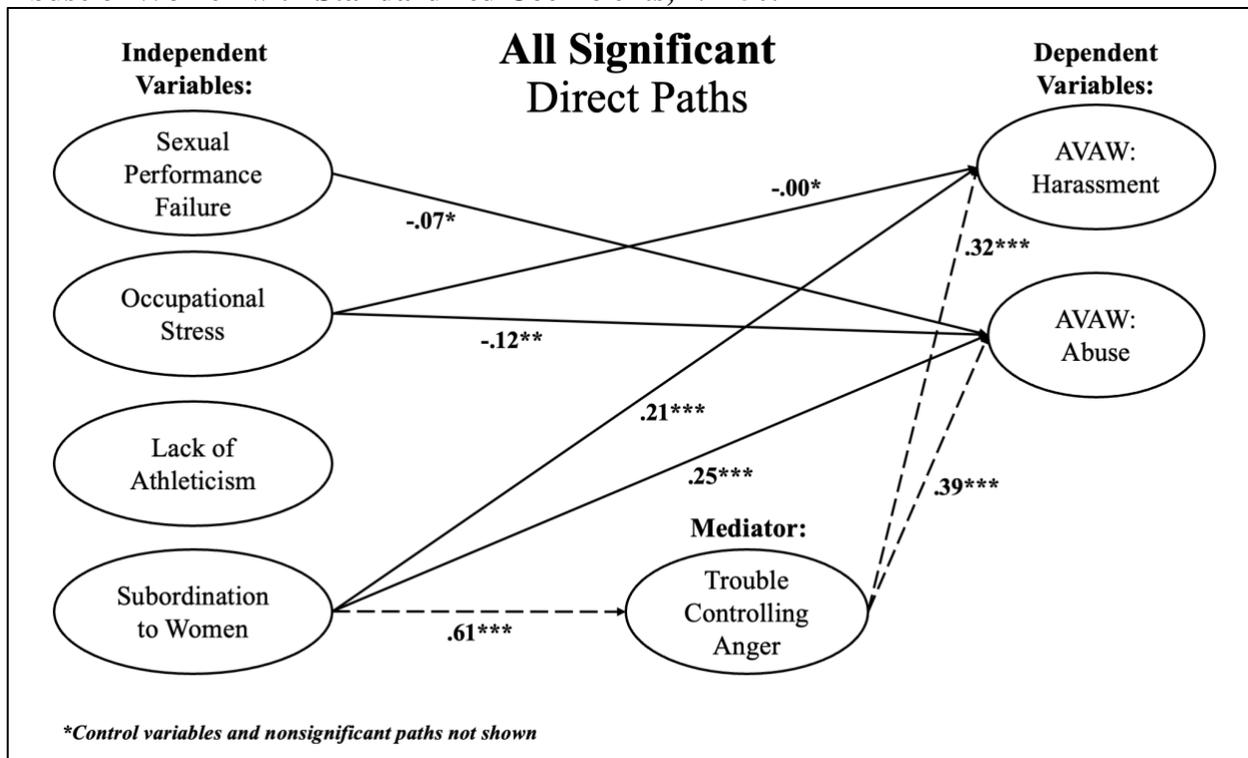
*Note:*  $\beta$ =standardized coefficients; SE=standard error, *df*=degrees of freedom, SBIC=Schwarz Bayesian information criterion, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation CFI= Comparative Fit Index, TLI=Tucker-Lewis Index. \*\*\**p* < 0.001; \*\**p* < 0.01; \**p* < 0.05 (two-tailed tests)

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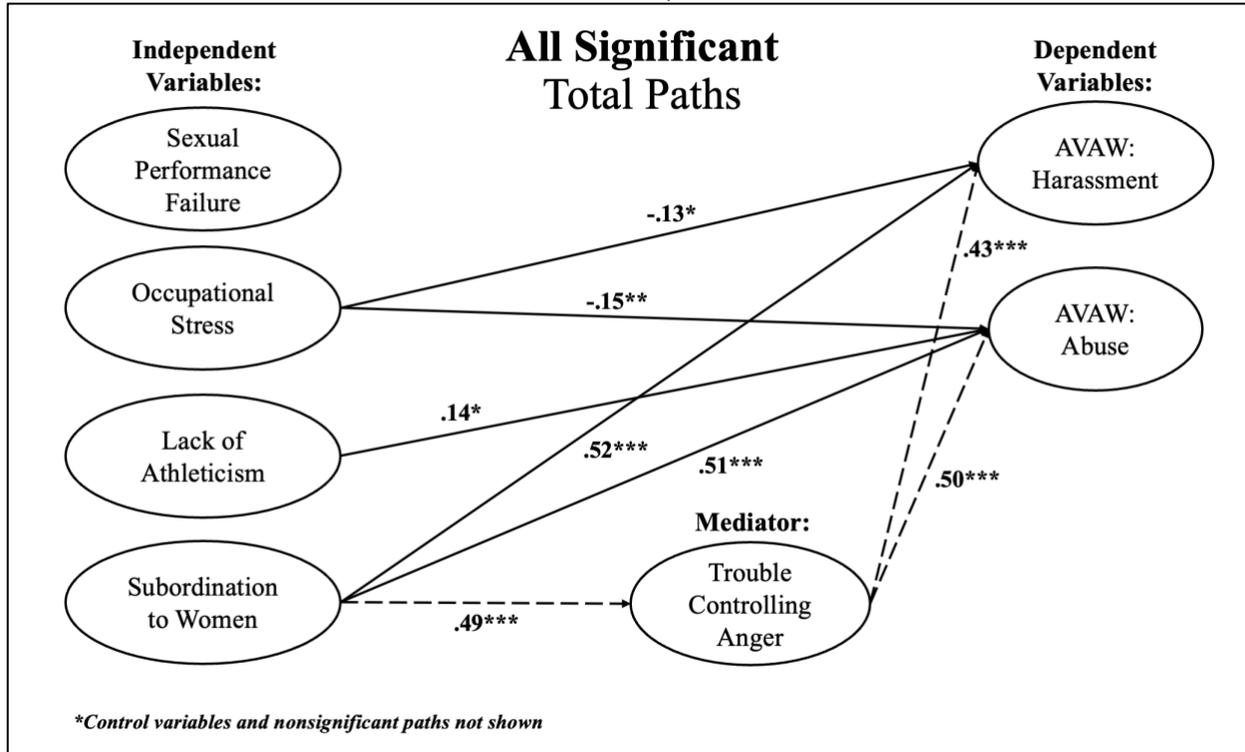
## RESULTS

I assess the relationships between masculinity threat (sexual performance failure, athleticism, occupational stress, and subordination to women), trouble controlling anger, and the approval of harassment and abuse of women using structural equation models. To adequately assess the effect that masculinity threat and ability to control anger have on AVAW, I analyzed these in steps (featured in Appendix A, Tables A and B), adding the mediator and indicator variables in stages. The final model (Model 1, Table 5) features all variables: Masculinity Threat measures, Trouble Controlling Anger, and AVAW.

**Figure 1. Significant Direct Paths in Model 1 Predicting the Approval of Harassment and Abuse of Women with Standardized Coefficients, N=450.**



**Figure 2. Significant Total Paths in Model 1 Predicting the Approval of Harassment and Abuse of Women with Standardized Coefficients, N=450.**



*Masculinity Threat, Trouble Controlling Anger, and Acceptance of Violence against Women*

Model 1 includes all variables in the structural equation model: controls, masculinity threat measures, trouble controlling anger, and AVAW including harassment and abuse. Fit indices and standardized coefficients are listed in Table 5. The fit indices indicate a good fitting model with the Chi-square significant at a p-value of 0.000, suggesting we reject the null hypothesis (Chi-square = 412.772, df = 206, SBIC = -845.73, RMSEA = .047, CFI = .973, TLI = .963). The inclusion of the independent variables (masculinity threat measures) improves the model fit indices from that of the model only including control variables, trouble controlling anger and AVAW (Appendix A, Tables A and B).

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### *Direct effects*

As seen in the direct path analysis in Figure 1, the latent variable for subordination to women ( $\beta = .61$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) is significant with trouble controlling anger, indicating that men who experience stress at being subordinated to women are more likely to have trouble controlling their anger. The latent variable for subordination to women is also significant in direct paths with our outcome variables, harassment ( $\beta = .21$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and abuse ( $\beta = .25$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ).

Additionally, the mediator, trouble controlling anger is significant in direct paths with harassment ( $\beta = .32$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and abuse ( $\beta = .39$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) for subordination to women.

Unlike subordination to women, sexual performance failure and occupational stress both have negative relationships with the outcome variables, harassment and abuse. As seen in Figure 1, sexual performance failure has a negative and weak relationship to abuse ( $\beta = -.07$ ;  $p = 0.049$ ). Occupational stress also has negative and weak relationships to harassment ( $\beta = -.00$ ;  $p = 0.012$ ) and abuse ( $\beta = -.12$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ).

### *Total effects*

As shown in the path analysis diagram for total effects in Figure 2, subordination to women is strong and positive with trouble controlling their anger ( $\beta = .49$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), approval of the harassment ( $\beta = .52$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and abuse of women ( $\beta = .51$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The total effects of the mediator, trouble controlling anger, is significant in Model 1 with both approval of harassment ( $\beta = .43$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and abuse ( $\beta = .50$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ; [Figure 2]). The total effects of subordination to women on trouble controlling anger and AVAW show a complementary mediation effect. Men who express discomfort at being subordinate to women in the home and at work are *more* likely to have trouble controlling their anger and, in turn, support the harassment and abuse of women.

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Occupational stress ( $\beta = -.13$ ;  $p = 0.016$ ) is weak but significant in the total effect with the approval of harassment. Lack of athleticism ( $\beta = .14$ ;  $p = 0.016$ ) and occupational stress ( $\beta = -.15$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ) are both weak but significant in the total effects with the approval of abuse of women. Men who report stress at their lack of athletic ability are *more* likely to approve of the harassment and abuse of women. However, men who indicate stress at work performance loss are *less* likely to approve of violence against women.

The standardized coefficients for subordination to women's relationship with trouble controlling anger are higher in the total effects compared to that of the direct effects (.43 and .50 in the total effects, versus .32 and .39 in the direct effects). The higher coefficients in the total effects indicate that the addition of the mediator, trouble controlling anger, offers a partial or complementary mediation effect in Model 1.

Taking the proportion of effects in Model 1 (indirect effect coefficients divided by total effect coefficients), I find that trouble controlling anger explains almost half of the relationship between subordination to women and acceptance of harassment and abuse of women. Men who have trouble controlling their anger are 40.4% more likely to report acceptance of harassment of women and 49.0% more likely to report acceptance of the abuse of women when reporting stress at the idea of being subordinated by women. The addition of the variable, trouble controlling anger, expands on the relationship in Model 1: finding that men who indicate stress at their subordination to women *and* have trouble controlling their anger are more likely to approve of violence against women.

## DISCUSSION

Masculinity is seen as "precarious" and always needing maintenance in order to retain status associated with male dominance (Vandello et al. 2008:1325). Masculinity, then, is seen as

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constantly under threat. Research has documented men's attempts to correct threats through violence, particularly against women, in order to appear to others (and themselves) as more masculine (Gallagher and Parrott 2011; Munsch and Gruys 2018; Munsch and Willer 2012; Scaptura and Boyle 2020; Willer et al. 2013). However, limited research has been done to parse out what types of masculinity threat are most threatening to men, and which contribute to men's feelings of anger and misogyny.

In this study, I attempt to shed light on how the relationship between different types of masculinity threat and acceptance of violence against women (AVAW), as it is mediated by men's (in)ability to control anger. By breaking down masculinity threat based on themes—rather than Eisler and Skidmore's (1987) preset measures—I am able to more accurately measure masculinity threat with the available items assessing men's perceived threats. I ultimately aim to answer the question: Are men endorsing violence against women more frequently when they report feelings of threatened masculinity? Further, how does men's (in)ability to control their own anger affect their endorsements of the harassment and abuse of women? Below, I further discuss the results of the study and what they mean for the field of masculinity, understandings of threat, and applications of GST.

### *Masculinity Threat Measures*

This study builds on the work of scholars who argue that masculine gender role strain ties to men's perpetration of violence against women (e.g., Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013; Mazerolle 1998; Pesta, Peralta, and Novisky 2019). I advance this work by differentiating between men's experiences of masculinity threat to explain how these correlate differently with (1) ability to control one's anger and (2) the acceptance of violence against women. I find that men who experience masculinity threat in the form of subordination to women are more likely to report

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trouble controlling their anger (as opposed to men who do not report stress at being subordinated to women in hypothetical scenarios). They are also more likely to approve of the harassment and abuse of women. While occupational stress has moderate negative total and direct effects (discussed in more detail below), subordination to women is strong and statistically significant across all paths. Men's (in)ability to control one's anger explains almost half of the relationship between subordination to women and AVAW. Men appear to express the most stress at being subordinated to women, and in conjunction with trouble controlling their anger, more likely to approve of violence against women.

The significance of the relationship between subordination to women, trouble controlling anger, and AVAW speaks to the gendered nature of masculinity threat: If men are not able to frame themselves against women and femininity, they are unable to position their own masculinities against other gender presentations. The threat of subordination to women for men is the challenging of gender norms. The violence in maintaining an unequal system of power extends beyond just interpersonal violence, but also the structural violence in which men assert dominance and power over women and marginalized men.

### *Compensation or Revision of Masculinity in Response to Threat?*

Men who experience greater stress at the subordination of women are also more likely to have trouble controlling their anger and approve of violence against women. As discussed above, the specific nature of the threat—subordination to women—gives men a comparison point that is explicitly non-masculine. Therefore, men being compared to women (or even beneath women) gives them a point to assert their masculinity against with women's position relative to the male respondent framed as the problem (i.e., respondents may ask themselves, "why is a woman in a position of power or dominance over men?"). The other measures—occupational stress, lack of

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athleticism, sexual performance failure—all focus on individual failings separate from women. If men are fired from their job or unable to get an erection, it is their own failings as a man.

As discussed above, the acceptance of violence against women inherent to U.S. society and American masculinity make minor comments or actions (i.e., “Touch a woman as she walked past them...”) inoffensive for men to accept. The gendered nature of power in the US allows for a normalization of rape culture and violence against women. As such, having a specific scenario including women and femininity as a masculinity threat gives men a point of comparison to compensate and display their masculinity in a normalized way. Women, then, become a pawn or device for men when doing masculinity.

Alternatively, men who express a lack occupational success (i.e., through promotions, not making enough money, etc.) are *less* likely to support violence against women. As a result, the path of occupational stress and trouble controlling anger are not significant; meaning, the men who report stress related to occupational failures have no trouble controlling their anger. However, this study may not accurately reflect men’s emotion regulation or compensation response to occupational stress. Future studies should assess if occupational stress relates to other emotional responses or regulations (like embarrassment) and other deviance beyond endorsing interpersonal violence, as the variables to test these effects are not covered in the current study.

### *General Strain Theory and Anger as a Pivotal Emotion*

The application of general strain theory using structural equation modeling allows us to understand the relationship between masculinity threat, one’s ability to control their anger, and AVAW. Agnew’s (1992:60) original conceptualization of GST argues that strain leads to a negative emotion—often anger—and, in turn, can be resolved through various coping mechanisms including delinquency. Research has demonstrated that strains can lead to a number

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of coping responses including aggression (Bosson and Vandello 2011), drug use (Drapela 2006), heavy drinking (Jang, Ferguson and Rhodes 2016) and disordered eating (Piquero et al. 2010). However, I attempt to expand the utility of the theory to understanding the approval of violence against women as a proxy for actual violence.

Agnew's GST and Allison and Klein's adaption of GST explain men's relationship of masculinity strain when it applies to violations of gender norms. Women's break from a normalized gender order elicits anger in need of "corrective action" on the part of men (Allison and Klein 2021:6861). This anger can then be corrected through violence against women, or even just the *approval* of violence against women. Agnew's GST is partially supported in this study's findings: men's stress at subordination to women is significantly associated with trouble controlling anger and acceptance of violence against women. In other words, men who have trouble controlling their anger and express stress at the idea of being subordinated to women in the home or in the workplace are more likely to approve of violence against women.

While Agnew argues that anger is the strongest emotion to illicit negative coping mechanisms (1992:59-60), and this study only attempts to support this relationship with the approximate variable of the *approval* of violence against women. Ganem (2010) found that certain situations (i.e., interpersonal violence, forgotten items before an exam, and being threatened by a bully) all produce differing negative emotions as a result (including anger, frustration, and fear). They argue that emotions combine or compound to encourage criminal involvement, and do not occur in a vacuum. Thereby, other areas of masculinity threat like sexual performance failure, lack of athleticism, and occupational stress may be better explained by emotions other than anger. For example, trouble controlling anger does not mediate the relationship between occupational stress and AVAW. In fact, occupational stress is *negatively*

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correlated with AVAW: men who feel stress in their occupational status are less likely to support the harassment and abuse of women. Theoretically, stress at occupational status may be better explained by emotions like disappointment or embarrassment, as the failure to meet the “male breadwinner” role may leave men with a feeling other than anger. Future research should assess different emotions experienced in response to various types of masculinity threats.

Importantly, the use of trouble controlling anger in this study is an approximation for the emotion of anger. Much of the strain literature (e.g., Cohn et al. 2009; Ganem 2010; Mazerolle et al. 2000, 2003) highlight the distinction between *state* anger and *trait* anger in which anger is conceptualized as a response to stimuli (e.g., a *state* of anger) or as an inherent trait or behavior specific to the individual (e.g., an individual’s *trait*). The measure for trouble controlling anger in this study is a measure of trait anger. In Agnew’s original conceptualization of emotional responses in GST, one’s ability to cope with these emotions will affect their perpetration of delinquency. This study’s measure of trouble controlling anger attempts to measure respondents’ abilities to *cope* with anger in conjunction with masculinity threat(s). If respondents cannot control their anger, they are more likely to endorse violence against women.

A stronger test of this relationship would be to capture men’s emotional reactions (i.e., state anger) and behavioral responses (i.e., aggression towards women) to specific forms of masculinity strain. Measuring men’s state anger or emotion in response to masculinity threats will allow researchers to draw further conclusions on men’s endorsement or perpetration of violence in their attempts to overcompensate.

## LIMITATIONS

Beyond my focus on trouble controlling anger alone and its measurement, this study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data means that conclusions about sequential

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ordering cannot be ascertained. Structural equation modeling (SEM) does not assume causality from significant associations, but the set-up of the model can allow us to draw conclusions from these associations (Bollen and Pearl 2013). Future studies should employ experimental methods to better understand how men's experiences of threat affect anger and, possibly, result in violence or aggression. GST researchers could follow similar methodologies to Munsch and Willer's (2012) or Bosson and colleagues' (2009) studies in which masculinity threat is induced and responses are measured.

Second, the measure for acceptance of violence against women attempts to estimate men's misogyny and potential pathway to violence against women. While most men will not commit violent acts, the focus of this study is on gender attitudes in the context of men's approval of gender-based violence. As Agnew and colleagues (2002) and Ganem (2010) find, deviance is more likely in individuals who report high levels of trait anger. Trait anger plays a significant role in engagement with delinquent behaviors as it is found to influence state anger or angry responses to strain (Agnew et al. 2002). Building on other criminological works (e.g., subcultural theories, differential association theory), the acceptance of violence imparts to others that misogyny is an acceptable behavior to repeat and engage in future violence. For men to approve of this interpersonal violence in conjunction with threats to their masculinity, they are endorsing and perpetuating rape culture that devalues women.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that men who report greater stress when subordinated by women are more likely to have trouble controlling anger and endorse the harassment and abuse of women. Respondents in this study report feeling threatened at their potential subordination to women, coinciding with an inability to control anger, and more of an acceptance of violence against

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women. While none of the respondents in this study were asked about their actual perpetration of violence against women, their approval of it in conjunction with an inability to control anger and threat at being subordinated to women highlights how misogyny is used to resolve threats. Using aggression against women as one avenue to make men feel properly masculine underlines the prevalence of rape culture throughout the US.

When one in nine men admit to committing rape and sexual assault, not realizing acts of catcalling or sexual coercion are forms of violence, it emphasizes our acceptability of harming women (Abbey et al. 2021; Hales and Gannon 2022). Because some segments of society have deemed these behaviors “normal” for men to engage in, men admit to committing these assaults without recognizing their own actions. In this way, women become pawns for men to compensate for threatened masculinity, gaining status and power when confronted with threats to their dominant status as men.

*Project 2:*

*'Manopause': Flaccid Penises in Middle Age and Later Life as Threats to Aging Manhood*

ABSTRACT:

When men root manhood in sexual performance, their inability to get and maintain an erection (i.e., flaccidity) may pose a growing threat to aging men's ability to perform masculinity. Using the 2015-2016 National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (NSHAP), this study finds that age and flaccidity interact. Middle-aged men who report "trouble getting or maintaining an erection" report higher levels of sex-anxiety than their older counterparts reporting sexual dysfunction do. Men who do not report trouble with flaccidity report consistent levels of sex-anxiety across all ages (49-95). Findings suggest that, as men confronted with flaccidity age, they may become less anxious about sex. The change in sexual performance may cause distress for middle-aged men, as they feel unable to maintain a rigidly heterosexual masculinity. While previous studies have shown that age and gender interact to affect sexual health, this study adds to the gerontology literature by indirectly showing that sexual response changes are less threatening for men as they move into old age.

*Keywords:* aging manhood, masculinity, erectile dysfunction, flaccid penises, sexual health, sex anxiety

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“No, you’re not just old and off sex...it’s the *manopause*” (emphasis added; Hope 2022). As this line from *The Sun* suggests, men’s age-correlated changes in sexual response have become a point of satire. The term “manopause” is a pundit’s conflation of aging and gender in which the suggestion that a shift into old age results in a shift in gender as well. Aging men’s experiences of sexual health become feminized and ridiculed as a result in popular culture (Hope 2022; Szabo 2013). In this way, sexual health and aging merge in the demasculinization of aging manhood.

Aging men’s well-being and satisfaction are shaped by their sexual health and ability to engage in (heterosexual) sex (Gewirtz-Meydan et al. 2018; Marshall 2006, 2011; Waite et al. 2009). Older men have been shown to feel insecure in their manhood as a result of their sexual dysfunction (Loe 2004; Sand et al. 2008). This study focuses on aging men’s anxiety around sex due to two sexual changes, their inability to climax and—in clinical terms—erectile dysfunction. The comparison of anxiety in relation to age and sexual function in aging men allows this project to address the gendered nature of sexual health in middle age and later life.

Aging men’s ability to engage in heterosexual sex, especially when confronted with increasing flaccidity, affects perceptions of their own masculinity and manhood. For aging men, the experience of sexual dysfunction can act as a threat to their heterosexual manhood, a problem to be corrected through medication (e.g., Viagra) or other means. In this way, aging men *compensate* for what they see as a treatable sexual dysfunction. Alternatively, some older men *revise* their definitions of masculinity in old age separate from their displays of heterosexuality, choosing instead to focus on their roles in the home and family (Wentzell 2013; Wentzell and Salmerón 2009). This project contributes to the larger body of knowledge on aging and sexual

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health by focusing on the mechanisms (i.e., compensatory or revisionist) that men employ as they age.

## LITERATURE

### *Growing Sense of Threat with Age*

As with masculinity and gender dynamics, aging is a social structure that hierarchically values younger cohorts and positions them above older cohorts. As described by Calasanti (2020:198) "...different age categories gain identities and power in relation to one another." In this way, different age cohorts gain identities and status in relation to others. Ageism positions old people in relation to other age cohorts, and thereby, devalues their old age. Age relations frames inequality as power and status as they are granted to groups based on youth which is more highly valued in society. In this way, the transition to old age comes with it a loss of privilege.

As people grow older, their old age signifies a loss of status and authority. King and Calasanti (2013) in their review of findings on aging men argue that age relations exacerbate inequalities for men and reverse claims to privilege and dominant status for some. For aging men, the transition into middle and old age results in a shift in status in which their youth-privileges begin to dwindle. As King and Calasanti (2013:706) argue, "old age brings men into the realm of invisibility." Growing old costs men the privileges they once had in young age. Old men are confronted with inequality in the form of ageism, potentially for the first time in their lives. Ageism itself can interact with other identities including gender, class, sexuality, and race, ultimately shaping men's experiences of aging and age relations.

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### *Gender and age relations.*

Doing gender throughout the life course varies as identities shift; the expectations of a 20-year-old man differ from those of a 70-year-old man. To do gender as West and Zimmerman (1987) describe, men and women distinguish their gender expressions, otherwise risking criticism from others. These expectations are shaped by constructions of biological sex, race, sexual orientation, class, and age.

One popular expectation of people is that, as they age, they lose markers of gender and become “androgynous” (Marshall and Katz 2006). Many people view old persons as androgynous because they no longer meet youth-centered expectations of masculinity and femininity, such as physical strength and autonomy to be considered masculine and clear skin and little to no grey hair to be feminine (Marshall 2006; Marshall and Katz 2006). However, as Calasanti and King (2018) point out, some old men and women redefine gender ideals, as age gives them more freedom to ignore many of the demands made on youthful manhood and womanhood. This redefinition of gender does not mean old men and women are becoming androgynous in old age, but rather, aging men and women grow less able to meet youthful standards of gender and embrace the markers of old age.

However, the process of aging is framed by many as a “feminized” act, with old men more reliant on assistance from others in old age and, therefore, more feminine. Men usually see aging beyond middle-age as a threat to health and physical fitness, as a slide into dependence on others for survival (Bennett et al. 2020). This slide contradicts ideals of autonomy and control, framing men as “feminine” as a result of dependence in old age (Calasanti 2007:349). Many aging men seek to compensate for their aging bodies and loss of function, as long as doing so does not overtly focus too much on their appearance and use of anti-aging products. As

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Calasanti, King, Pietilä, and Ojala (2018) found, use of anti-aging products and a focus on appearance is seen as “feminine”; and older men shy away from using such products for fear that their efforts make them appear less masculine. In this way, men contrast themselves to women and aging femininity, to compensate for masculine insecurities in the aging process.

Many older men focus on how they lose the ability to do as much as they formerly could and treat that loss as a “problem” in need of fixing (Meadows and Davidson 2006:299).

However, these expectations are centered in able-bodied and gendered notions of athletic youth.

Bennett et al. (2020) found that men ages 65 to 83 attempted to maintain the appearance of strenuous work and play, through exercise and athletics, diet monitoring, weight loss, comparison to younger selves, self-awareness, and expectation-adjustment (Bennett et al. 2020:33; Calasanti et al. 2018). By focusing on their presentation of youth and full autonomy, they are able to push off the threat of feeling old and, therefore, feminine.

For men who have always moved through the world as dominant because of their gender, this status shifts as one ages. Bennett et al. (2020) and Oaks (2009) argue that, when men lose capability as they age, they may feel a threat to their manhood. Sexual response may appear to be a “diminishing” masculine resource that keeps men from their masculine potential (Clarke and Lefkowich 2018:23). This is even more pertinent to men who place greater emphasis on traditional expectations of masculinity (Thompson, Jr. & Barnes, 2013). When aging appears to threaten their sense of masculinity, some aging men may revise their masculinity, focusing on aspects not rooted in expectations of their youth (Calasanti and King 2018; Wentzell 2013). Dominant masculinities, then, become rooted in “mature” masculinities focused on emotional connections with family members (Wentzell 2013:5).

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### *Erectile Dysfunction*

Sexual dysfunction is defined as trouble getting or maintaining an erection, climaxing quickly or not at all, and pain during intercourse that inhibits “satisfactory” sex (Lizza and Rosen 1999:14; Loe 2004). As Wentzell (2014) points out, this definition depends upon the assessment of the respondents and their sense of what qualifies as “satisfactory” sex. The most cited instance of distress for older men in Lodge and Umberson’s (2012, 2013) research was the inability to perform due to the failure to achieve and maintain an erection. Male dominance is tied to men’s ability to engage in penetrative sex, thereby, this loss of functionality means a loss of manhood (Knudson 2014; Thompson, Jr. and Barnes 2013).

Many men frame sexual dysfunction—the inability to maintain an erection or engage in sex—as a problem with aging (Echeverri, Ferrer, and Herrera 2016). However, nearly 30 percent of men aged 20-50 report symptoms of ED (Mialon et al. 2012; Nguyen, Gabrielson, and Hellstrom 2017). What used to be perceived as an “old guy’s” problem is increasingly common among all men regardless of age (Loe 2004:114). But the true rates of erectile dysfunction in younger men remain relatively unknown as many men may not share this with their healthcare provider (Nguyen et al. 2017).

### *Rebranding of men’s limpness or flaccidity in medical terms.*

As noted by Loe (2004) and Lexchin (2006), Pfizer successfully transformed the previously taboo topic of impotence into a medical problem easily solved with a pill. Prior to its rebranding, impotence was seen to be a treatable psychological condition that could be fixed through therapy (Marshall 2006). While Pfizer made great strides with Viagra by labeling sexual dysfunction a medical problem to be solved with one blue pill, this was limited to answering the issue of *men’s* dysfunction (Loe 2004). The biomedicalization of impotence, rebranded as

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erectile dysfunction (ED), combined with anti-aging culture allow old men to reclaim their sexuality and “demonstrate their virility” (Calasanti and King 2005:16).

By advertising Viagra as a product available to any man who has trouble achieving an erection, Pfizer expanded the market by preying on men’s insecurities (Loe 2004). Any man confronted with sexual inadequacy and looking for more sexual stamina became a viable target for their product and clever marketing (Lexchin 2006; Loe 2004). This is reflected in the increasing use of Viagra by younger men; the fastest growing market for sildenafil (chemical compound name for Viagra) is men aged 18 to 45 (Delate, Simmons, and Motheral 2004). While growth in the market slowed for men 56 and older, rates of use remained high (Delate et al. 2004). The invention and use of Viagra, Cialis, and other impotence drugs have helped some men delay what they regard as a central part of the aging process, conforming to heteronormativity and youthful expectations of sexual health.

### *Redefining Aging Manhood*

The process of aging for men can be a change in status as, for some, this is the first experience of marginal status. Some men may concede that they are old by accepting the changes in bodily function associated with old age. However, when men live long enough to see changes in sexual function, they may either reassert their manhood in accordance with standards of youth (e.g., sexual function, ignoring medical intervention that makes them feel weak, etc.) or redefine their masculinity (e.g., focusing on areas that they can control and changing what they value) (Bennett et al. 2020; Slevin 2009; Wentzell 2014; Wentzell and Salmerón 2009). In addition to reasserting masculinity, aging men may redefine their masculinity without reference to (hetero)sexual performance. They may claim to value other aspects of masculinity such as ideals like honor, self-reliance, and respect (Sand et al. 2008; Wentzell 2013, 2014). Shifting

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expectations in old age appear in Wentzell's (2013, 2014) research on aging Mexican men. She found that old men move away from the machismo associated with young Mexican manhood, opting instead for ideals of manhood that they find more appropriate for their stage in the life course. In this way, old men concede to growing older and accept their changes to manhood as a result.

In relation to sexual dysfunction, aging men may shift their sexual expectations away from what they were when they were younger, instead focusing on non-penetrative sex and the emotional connection with their respective partner(s) (Potts et al. 2006; Thompson, Jr. and Barnes 2013; Ussher et al. 2017). Men would even compare their sex lives to their younger selves, finding their past experiences "selfish," as they focused only on the male orgasm and not on their partner's needs (Potts et al. 2006:316). Once men can no longer rely on their former youth and sexual function, some older men choose to reframe how they define their own masculinities for themselves, placing less emphasis on physical attractiveness, sexual activity, and success with women (Sand et al. 2008).

Wentzell (2013) found that, as aging men shifted their expectations of masculinity, the power dynamics in their male-female or hetero- relationships rarely shifted. Old men's growing focus on emotional bonds with their partners did not transform their roles as patriarchs in their homes; rather, it became another means to establish a patriarchal gender order. In this way, older men confronted with sexual dysfunction chose an alternative path to dominance, by redefining their expectations for manhood to a masculinity based on family and fatherhood rather than displays of heterosexuality. Aging men may not always embrace their disadvantaged status associated with aging and adjust interpersonal gendered power dynamics as a result. Rather, old

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men may find another avenue to do a dominant masculinity, and in the case of Wentzell's (2013) ethnographic study, emphasize their role as the patriarch of the family.

### *Compensating for Aging Manhood Through Sex and Medical Intervention*

Participation in sex is central to many men attempting to maintain their masculinities as they age. When aging men have trouble achieving and maintaining erections, they may see it as a personal failing or that old age had taken their manhood (Loe 2004). Sexual dysfunction then serves as a potential threat to older men's status, leading to distress and embarrassment (Lodge and Umberson 2012, 2013). Displays of masculinity emphasize sexual control and domination of women (Knudson 2014). For some men, sexual performance is not integral to their identities as men; but, for men who endorse traditional manhood, sexual performance remains key (Thompson, Jr. and Barnes 2013). Through medical intervention, older men may compensate for a perceived failure to live up to standards of masculinity based on youth, in order to emphasize their sexual dominance.

Compensation for aging and loss of functionality is most apparent in men's concerns over sex in midlife. As the Lodge and Umberson's (2012) study suggests, aging men are expected to meet youthful standards of gendered sexuality. Midlife couples find this distressing as they adjust to the changes in sexual response (Lodge and Umberson 2012). They may try to regain a sense of control through medical intervention, particularly in the use of Viagra (Loe 2004). In this way, Viagra gives men a way to "erect the patriarchy" and maintain their masculinity (Loe 2004:65).

## RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

Aging becomes a shift in status for many men who had previously not experienced marginalization. For aging men, this is most apparent in middle-age when first experiencing

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changes in physical and sexual function. Men's sexual response changes are commonly framed as shameful as the emphasis in American masculinity relies so heavily on men's pursuit of heterosexual sex, leaving them few alternative ways to regain status and do gender (Bird 1996; Cohen 2015; Fergus, Gray, and Fitch 2002; Knudson 2014). Thereby, an inability to get or maintain an erection is a direct threat to men's ability to do gender (Thompson, Jr. and Barnes 2013; Wentzell 2013, 2014). Aging men can then either compensate for their changes in sexual function or concede to these changes and redefine their manhood(s) separate from their sex lives.

The qualitative research finds that depending on age (middle age or later-life), men differ in tactics to cope with their threatened masculinities. Later-life men have shown to react more positively to changes in sexual response than their middle-aged counterparts: Lodge and Umberson (2012) find that midlife couples (ages 50-69) view their sex lives as distressing, while later life couples (ages 70-86) saw it as a chance to refocus onto the emotional connections in their marriages (Lodge and Umberson 2012). Older men have proved more likely to prioritize other aspects of sex (i.e., emotional connection and her pleasure) that were not emphasized in their youth (Lodge and Umberson 2012; Wentzell 2014). Based on that research and the literature on aging manhood, this study hypothesizes that age and gender *interact*, indicating less anxiety for older men experiencing sexual response changes. Men's sexual response changes (i.e., lack of erection or flaccidity) may act as threats to their masculinity. However, as they grow older, they may become more likely to revise their expectations of gender performance and grow less concerned about sexual ability as a symbol of their manhood. This leads me to the following research questions:

*How are aging men affected by changes in sexual response, particularly flaccid penises?*

*Do unmet heterosexual expectations of masculinity place stress or anxiety on aging men?*

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### METHODS

#### *Sample*

This study utilizes secondary-data analysis of Wave 3 (2015-2016) of the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (NSHAP) dataset, a nationally representative probability sample of US adults aged 49-95 at the time of the survey.<sup>3</sup> The NSHAP utilizes in-person questionnaires, health information via biomeasures, and leave-behind questionnaires for its population-based study on the health and social life of older Americans.

The National Institute of Aging has collected multiple waves of the NSHAP survey since 2004 and repeated roughly every five years. This study focuses on Wave 3 (2015-2016) of the NSHAP dataset, which was conducted from September 2015 to November 2016 with 4,777 total respondents. Each wave attempts to reinterview respondents from previous waves, in addition to bringing in new respondents. For example, Wave 3 included 2,409 respondents from the previous survey (Wave 2) in its sample and 2,368 new respondents.

This project focuses on aging men and masculinity. Therefore, I include only male respondents in the OLS regression analyses (Models 1 and 2). The total number of respondents analyzed in this sample is 1,699, as those who did not respond to questions on income or education levels were coded as missing (n=884). See Table 6 for full demographic and sample characteristics.

#### *Independent Variables*

The continuous variable *age* captures male respondents aged 49 to 95 with a median age of 67.

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<sup>3</sup> To note, the NSHAP sampled African American and Hispanic populations at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups.

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Men's sexual responses are measured using two dichotomous variables: inability to climax and flaccid penises.

*Inability to Climax* is a one-item measure asking respondents about their ability to climax or orgasm. The question asks: "During the last 12 months has there ever been a period of several months or more when you... were unable to climax, that is, experience an orgasm?" Response categories are a binary of "yes" (n = 354) or "no" (n = 1,345) options.

*Men's Flaccid Penises* is a one-item measure asking men's experiences with sexual responsiveness. The question asks: "During the last 12 months has there ever been a period of several months or more when you... had trouble getting or maintaining an erection?" Response categories are a binary of "yes" (n = 588) or "no" (n = 1,111) options.

### *Dependent Variables*

*Anxious about Ability to "Perform"* is a one-item measure asking respondents about anxiety around sexual performance. The question asks: "During the last 12 months has there ever been a period of several months or more when you... felt anxious just before having sex about your ability to perform sexually?" Response categories are a binary of "yes" (n = 359) or "no" (n = 1,340) options.

### *Control variables*

To control for influence on respondents' anxiety around sex, the variables education, race, income (measured through household income of previous year), sexual orientation, marital status, and frequency of sex were included in Models 1 and 2.

*Frequency of Sex* is a one-item measure of respondents' frequency of sex in the span of a year. The question asks: "During the last 12 months, about how often did you have sex with [current/recent partner name]? Was it..." The item includes a 6-item response category ranging

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from “none at all” (0) to “once a day or more” (5). The median frequency of sex for male respondents is “once a month or less” (1).

### *Analytic Strategy*

By plotting the relationship between sexual response and anxiety about sex by age in the NSHAP 2015-2016 data, I lend support to theories of heterosexual sex and sexual health in old age. I begin by testing the extent to which sexual anxiety is a matter of manhood. I measure the gender differences in sex-anxiety regarding shifts in sexual response between men (i.e., flaccidity) and women (i.e., dryness) through the use of t tests. I theorize that significant differences speak to larger differences in aging between men and women, that men feel more strongly than women do about changes in sexual response.

While I am unable to analyze men’s own perceptions of their gender performances (i.e., doing masculinity) directly, I can test for men’s distinct responses to changes in sexual function compared to that of women’s. Using two-tailed t tests, this means comparison allows me to infer that responses distinct from those comparable of women will shine a light on aspects of masculinity. As such, I propose the following hypotheses for two-tailed t tests to compare the mean differences between the samples of men and women:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant mean differences between older men and women in terms of anxiety about sex.*

Specific to men’s and women’s experiences with changes in sexual response (for men, flaccidity and women, vaginal dryness). I propose the following two-tailed t test to compare the mean differences between men’s and women’s sex-anxiety when they report flaccid penises or vaginal dryness:

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*H2: There are significant mean differences in anxiety about sex between men and women experiencing changes in sexual responses, i.e., flaccid penises (men) and vaginal dryness (women).*

After establishing if stress to sexual response changes in old age is unique to aging manhood, I then build upon the aging and gerontology research (see Calasanti 2004; Calasanti and King 2005; Laumann, Das, and Waite 2008; Lodge and Umberson 2012, 2013; Marshall 2006, 2011) by examining how sexual response and aging interact for men:

*Do men experiencing flaccidity revise their performances of masculinity as they age, due to an inability to perform heterosexual expectations of manhood?*

The relationship between age, flaccidity, and inability to climax on sex-anxiety and is tested in the following hypotheses using OLS regressions to assess how aging and sexual response changes affect men's sex-anxiety:

*H3: Men who report flaccid penises (a) or an inability to climax during intercourse (b) are more likely to be anxious about sex.*

*H4: Later-life men feel less anxiety about their sex lives than midlife men.*

As the literature (e.g., Laumann et al. 2008; Lodge and Umberson 2012) states, midlife men and later-life men react to aging and sexual response changes differently. As such, I propose the following interaction effect to assess how aging and flaccidity affects men's anxieties about sex:

*H5: Aging interacts with change in sexual response (i.e., flaccidness) to minimize anxiety about sex among later-life men.*

**Table 6. Sample Characteristics for Continuous and Bivariate Variables for male respondents, n = 1,699**

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age	66.972	10.41	49	95
Variable			Frequency	
	#		%	
<i>Independent Variables:</i>				
Men's Flaccidity	588		34.61	
Men's Inability to Climax	354		20.84	
<i>Dependent Variables:</i>				
Anxious about Ability to Perform	359		21.13	
<i>Controls:</i>				
Frequency of Sex				
None at all	644		37.90	
Once a month or less	302		17.78	
2 to 3 times a month	335		19.72	
Once or twice a week	297		17.48	
3-6 times a week	96		5.65	
Once a day or more	25		1.47	
Education				
None	264		15.54	
High School Diploma	583		34.31	
Associate degree	297		17.48	
Bachelor's Degree	316		18.60	
Masters	163		9.59	
Law, MD or PhD	76		4.47	
Income				
\$0 - \$24,999	322		18.95	
\$25,000 - \$49,999	408		24.01	
\$50,000 - \$99,999	536		31.55	
\$100,000+	433		25.49	
Race				
White	1,285		75.63	
Black	236		13.89	
Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian	172		10.12	
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	1,305		76.81	
Gay or Lesbian	26		1.53	
Bisexual	17		1.00	
Marital Status				
Married	1,248		73.45	
Divorced	174		10.24	
Widowed	106		6.24	
Never Married	81		4.77	
Partnered	57		3.35	
Separated	33		1.94	

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### RESULTS

To test hypothesis 1, I used two-tailed t tests to compare mean differences in male and female sex-anxiety and inability to climax during intercourse (Table 7). Men reported sex-anxiety more frequently than women, with a mean of 0.211 (SD=.408) compared to women's mean of 0.071 (SD=.257; on a scale of 0-1). To test hypothesis 2, men unable to get an erection or flaccid penises reported more anxiety ( $\mu=0.434$ ,  $SD=.496$ ) compared to women who reported trouble lubricating or vaginal dryness ( $\mu=0.182$ ,  $SD=.386$ ). These t-tests are significant at a p-level of .001, indicating that men's anxiety levels about sex tend to be higher than women's overall.

These t-tests support hypothesis 1: there are significant mean differences in regard to anxieties about sex, in which men experience more anxiety than women do. Specific to hypothesis 2, there are significant mean differences between men and women experiencing changes in sexual response. Men who have trouble becoming and staying erect are more likely to be anxious about sex than their female counterparts who experience vaginal dryness. However, there is no significant mean difference between the abilities of men and women to climax.

The t tests show us that on average, aging men report more sex-anxiety than aging women. The significant differences in sex-anxiety between aging men and women indicates that aging men are more frequently anxious about their ability to "perform" during sex. This finding is significant in test 3 as well, specific to men and women experiencing sexual response changes (i.e., flaccidity for men and vaginal dryness for women). Men with flaccid penises report more frequent anxiety about ability to "perform" compared to women with vaginal dryness. These findings indicate the importance of sexual intercourse in men's understandings of aging manhood.

**Table 7. Results of t test and descriptive statistics for inability to climax and anxiety about sex means by sex:**

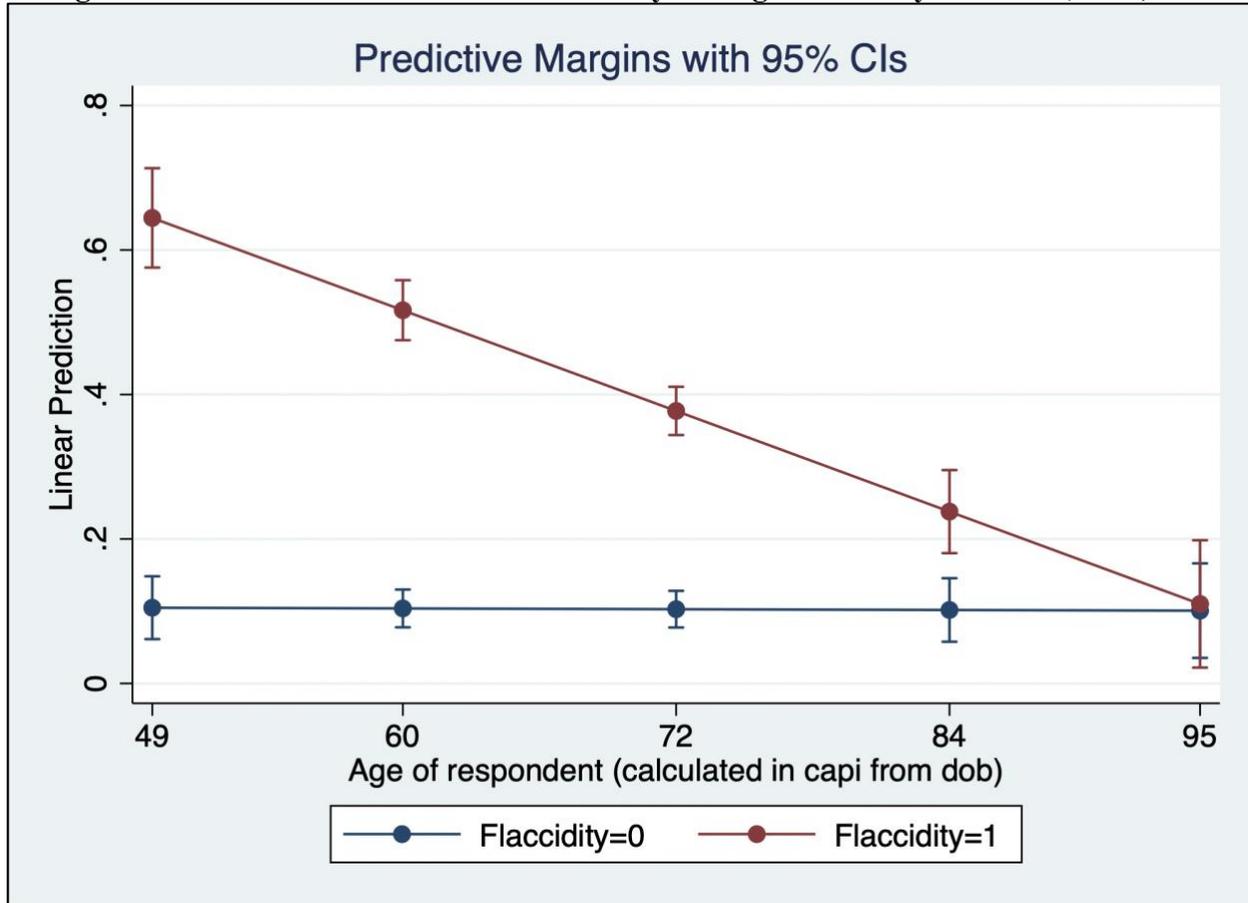
Variable:	Sex				95% CI for mean difference	t	p-values	df
	Male		Female					
	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD				
1. Inability to Climax	0.208	.406	0.214	.410	0.01 [-.02, .03]	0.41	0.681	3484.07
2. Anxiety about Sex	0.211	.408	0.071	.257	-0.14 [-.16, -.12]	-12.04	0.000 (***)	2836.55
3. Anxiety about Sex for respondents reporting sexual response changes (men's flaccidity=1; women's dryness=1)	0.434	.496	0.182	.386	-0.25 [-.31, -.19]	-8.49	0.000 (***)	977

Notes.  $\mu$  = population mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *CI* = confidence interval, *df* = degrees of freedom. Total respondents for tests 1 and 2: Female (N=1,794) and male (N=1,699). Total respondents reporting sexual response changes for test 3: Female (N=391) and male (N=588). \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001, two-tailed test.

**Table 8. OLS regression models of men's age, flaccidity, and inability to climax on anxiety about sex, N = 1,699:**

Variables:	Model 1: Anxiety about Sex		Model 2: Flaccid penis x Age interaction on Anxiety about Sex	
	$\beta$ (SE)	p-values	$\beta$ (SE)	p-values
<i>Independent Variables:</i>				
Age	-0.094 (.001)	0.000 ***	-.002 (.001)	0.935
Men's Flaccidity	0.373 (.021)	0.000 ***	1.287 (.129)	0.000 ***
Men's Inability to climax	0.107 (.024)	0.000 ***	0.103 (.024)	0.000 ***
<i>Interaction: Men's Flaccidity x Age</i>	-- --	--	-0.937 (.002)	0.000 ***
<i>Controls:</i>				
Education (continuous)	-0.063 (.009)	0.011 *	-0.064 (.007)	0.009 **
Sexual Orientation (I=heterosexual)	0.021 (.022)	0.361	0.022 (.022)	0.322
Race (I=white)	-0.056 (.022)	0.016 *	-0.058 (.022)	0.011 *
Income (continuous)	-0.022 (.010)	0.413	-0.019 (.010)	0.483
Marital status (I=married)	-0.023 (.022)	0.335	-0.021 (.022)	0.375
Frequency of sex	0.083 (.007)	0.000 ***	0.093 (.007)	0.000 ***
R-squared:	.199		.217	

Notes.  $\beta$  = standardized beta coefficient, *SE* = standard error. Sexual orientation = heterosexual; race = white; marital status = married. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001, two-tailed test.

**Figure 3. Interaction effect of men's flaccidity and age on anxiety about sex, N=1,699:**

In Table 8, Model 1 shows that 19.9% of anxiety about sex for male respondents is explained by the independent and control variables. The relationships between anxiety about sex and the two variables on sexual response—men's flaccidity ( $\beta = 0.373$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and inability to climax ( $\beta = 0.107$ ;  $p < .001$ )—are positive, moderately strong, and statistically significant.

These findings support hypothesis 3, that men who reported flaccidity and an inability to climax are more likely to be anxious about sex. The relationship for age and anxiety about sex is a negative, weak, and statistically significant correlation ( $\beta = -0.094$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This finding supports hypothesis 4: Later-life men report less anxiety about sex than their middle-aged counterparts.

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Model 2 shows that 21.7% of male respondents' anxiety about sex is explained by the independent and control variables, which includes an interaction term for age and changes in sexual response (i.e., experience with flaccid penises in the last twelve months). The relationships between flaccidity ( $\beta = 1.287$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and inability to climax ( $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with anxiety about sex are both positive, moderately strong, and statistically significant.

The interaction effect of age and reported flaccidity ( $\beta = -0.937$ ,  $p < .001$ ) is negative, moderately strong, and statistically significant. This finding supports hypothesis 5, that later-life men with self-reported flaccidity are *less* likely to be anxious about sex (see Figure 3). Men with fewer erections are more anxious about sex in middle-age compared to their later-life counterparts. When compared to men *without* troublesome flaccidity, the contrast in the correlation of age with anxiety is striking: reports of anxiety of men without troublesome flaccidity are evenly distributed across the continuum of age, as indicated by the flat line from ages 49 to 95 in Figure 3.

## DISCUSSION

In their qualitative study, Lodge and Umberson (2012) found that the couples of midlife men and women voiced distress at shifts in their sex lives as a result of age-related physical changes that left both groups feeling less than sufficiently masculine/feminine. While women voiced distress at their perceived attractiveness to their male partners, men voiced distress at the physical changes (e.g., flaccidity) that shifted their abilities to engage in penetrative sex. For both midlife men and women, their distress was caused by their abilities to perform a gendered sexuality.

This study analyzes cross-sectional survey data to suggest that relations of age interact with those of gender to shape men's concerns about sex. Many men take a lack in sexual

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function as a threat to their own masculinity, as American masculinity emphasizes (hetero)sexual pursuit and dominance over women (Knudson 2014; Sand et al. 2008). As such, men concerned about the loss of sexual function in old age are concerned about a loss of manhood to aging as well (Lodge and Umberson 2012). Men unable to perform sexually are framed as “feminine” or lacking “manliness;” the antithesis of a dominant masculinity (Lodge and Umberson 2012, 2013; Sand et al. 2008; Wentzell 2014:171).

Some men, when confronted with changes in sexual performance, see it as the first sign of old age and try to restore prior function through medical intervention (i.e., Viagra) (Lodge and Umberson 2013; Loe 2004; Marshall 2006). They try to correct what they regard as threat to their manhood. However, not all men turn to medicine for this purpose: Others, confronted with the same shift in sexual response, may turn to other sources of status to affirm masculinity (i.e., the patriarchal family structure), or simply place less value on how others perceive their manhood in old age, thereby, conceding to their aging manhood(s) (Wentzell 2013).

This study supports previous qualitative work that finds that men’s and women’s experiences are distinct from one another and lead to differing anxieties about sex performance (Hypothesis 1), with sex-anxieties differing in attractiveness (in aging women’s experiences; Calasanti 2005; Lodge and Umberson 2012) and sexual performance (in aging men’s experiences; Gibson and Kierans 2017; Lodge and Umberson 2012). The significant differences between groups allows this study to speak to aging manhood as men are more likely to be anxious about sex as they age. Men who report trouble attaining and maintaining erections are relatively likely to be anxious about sex, compared to their counterparts (women reporting vaginal dryness; Hypothesis 2). As shown by Connell (1995) and Knudson (2014), definitions of masculinity are tied to heterosexuality and heterosexual dominance. A loss of heterosexual

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performance (i.e., flaccid penises) can be perceived as a loss of manhood. The loss of manhood is emphasized by societal ageism that devalues old age. In this way, age relations position middle-aged men to bear the brunt of this slide into old age and the disadvantaged status that comes with it.

### *Flaccidity and Anxiety About Sex for Aging Men*

This study supports the qualitative findings of Lodge and Umberson (2012) that middle-aged men are more distressed by the changes in their sex lives than are older men. This study also expands on this finding by testing for gender differences in response to such changes (Table 7) and by assessing aging men's reported sex-anxiety as a result of their flaccidity (Table 8 and Figure 3). What I find is that aging and sexual performance are *interconnected* in the sex lives of aging men and women. In Hypotheses 1 and 2 (the t-tests), aging men are significantly more likely to report sex-anxiety than their women counterparts, regardless of their sexual response experiences. In this case, aging and sexual health appear to be more anxiety-ridden for men than women.

This study measures a correlation which suggests that, as men have fewer erections and climaxes during sex, they become more anxious about it. Men's distress over sexual response may highlight a larger threat to their masculinity and the potential loss of status associated with heterosexual dominance. However, as seen in Model 1, age is *negatively* associated with anxiety about sex. Though longitudinal data would allow us to establish time order, I provisionally infer that, as men *with* flaccidity grow past middle age, their anxiety about sex *decreases*. The most frequent sex-anxiety appears among middle-aged men. Aging men concede to their changes in sexual response and, as a result, may put less value in their youth-based sexual performance and turn to other means to do masculinity.

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Among men who report flaccidity (Model 2 and Figure 1), later-life respondents who report flaccidity also report *less* anxiety about sex. Two relationships are at play in the interaction results. Men *without* shifts in sexual response report the same level of anxiety across all age ranges. For men ages 49 to 95 there is a constant 0.1 of reported anxiety. Second, middle-aged men among respondents with flaccidity are more likely to report anxiety than later-life men. As we see in Model 1, aging men among these respondents may place decreasing value in their pursuit of heterosexual sex as a means to do gender. However, this effect disappears in Model 2 as age and flaccidity *interact*, meaning, middle-aged men with flaccidity report differing experiences from their later-life counterparts and their non-flaccid peers.

### *Middle-aged Men Confronted with Aging & Bodily Changes*

This study finds that middle-aged cohorts of men are more likely to report anxiety when having trouble getting or maintaining erections. This tells us that sexual performance is tied to masculinity, such that decreased function acts as a threat (Fergus et al. 2002). As men grow beyond middle-age, they appear to become less concerned about these bodily changes. This may be because (1) they have other, more pressing, challenges to their health to focus upon (see Clarke and Bennett 2013), and (2) sex may play a less significant role in one's gender performance in later life, especially as men are allowed to embody old age later in life (see Gibson and Kierans 2017; Lodge and Umberson 2012; Waite and Das 2010).

The seemingly innocuous message to young boys and men is that pursuit of and engagement in heterosexual sex are hallmarks of manhood (Connell 1995; Knudson 2014). When this is interrupted by aging, men are left with fewer ways to achieve this masculinity. For middle-aged men, trouble with erections may act as one of the first indicators that they are growing old. Therefore, younger cohorts in this study are the most anxious about sexual

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response, as they are still expected to conform to standards of masculinity that are rooted in ableism and ageism.

### *Erectile Dysfunction, Flaccidity, or Soft Penises... What's the Difference?*

The medicalization of men's soft penises has resulted in an issue and diagnosis of men's sexual health and, by extension, their aging manhood(s). What medical professionals once conceived as a psychological problem quickly became one of blood flow, a more mechanical problem solved by a pill (Loe 2004). The pharmaceutical industry, particularly Pfizer, opened a whole new market based on men's insecurities, banking on a dominant masculinity that centers penetrative heterosexual sex as a status symbol.

Either way, whether psychological or medical, men's (and women's) aging is framed as the problem. A shift in sexual response toward flaccidity is associated with aging and becomes a personal moral failing. Men find themselves judged, not least by themselves, for letting their bodies and minds deteriorate, a popular construction of the process of growing old. The medicalization of aging, branded in terms like Successful Aging, burdens each person with the obligation to solve their "aging problem" (Calasanti and King 2021; Wehner 2020:3). Medical intervention, then, becomes a quick way to fend off the appearance of aging.

Terms like "sexual-" or "erectile dysfunction" reiterate this ageism, treating what many regard as a normal or inevitable part of aging as a *dysfunction*. This links ableism and ageism, construing any shift from performance associated with young adulthood—either due to old age or disability—as one's personal failure. Once we suspend the assumptions built into the language of age-based dysfunction, we will be able to address health challenges as such rather than use age as a proxy for them. We will normalize those that we needn't treat as problems (Calasanti

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and King 2021). And we may be able to reduce the anxieties that afflict so many men at middle age.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data means that conclusions about sequential ordering are limited. Do aging men report experiences of flaccidity *before* their sex anxiety or vice versa? While I am not able to draw conclusions specific to cause and effect, the existing qualitative literature (Lodge and Umberson 2012, 2013; Loe 2004; Wentzell 2014) provides insight into how sexual performance and aging affect men's increased anxiety. Future studies should employ more longitudinal survey data to better assess how men's experiences of aging and sexual health affect their levels of stress.

Second, the sexual response questions available in the NSHAP 2015-2016 dataset are limited in response categories to “yes” or “no” responses. The questions ask respondents if they have experienced dryness, inability to get an erection, or inability to climax within the last year. The dichotomy of responses limits any nuance to men's and women's experiences of sexual function, thereby, limiting conclusions about the extent of their sexual response changes. Future studies should employ more detailed measures about changes in sexual function and how frequent or infrequent these experiences are for the respondent.

Finally, the available sexual response measures for men (inability to get and maintain an erection) and women (vaginal dryness) may account for the differences between their concerns. While men's flaccidity has been transformed by Pfizer into a medical problem solved with medication, women's sexual responsiveness is still perceived as a “mystery” in pop culture and the medical field (Lexchin 2006; Loe 2004). Women's concerns about changes in sexual response are often responses to their perceived declining attractiveness to partners as a result of

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aging (Granville and Pregler 2018; Lodge and Umberson 2012). Lodge and Umberson (2012) found that midlife women were distressed by their husbands decreased sexual interest, taking it as an indicator of their attractiveness. As such, the variables representing men's and women's sexual response in the 2015-2016 NSHAP dataset may not fully capture men's and women's varied experiences of sexual performance. While analyses control for variations affecting men's anxiety about sex—including sexual orientation, marital status, frequency of sex, etc.—there are differences in masculinity and sexual health based on these identities and past experiences (Kupelian et al. 2008; Lodge and Umberson 2013; Sand et al. 2008; Smith et al. 2009).

## CONCLUSION

What does it mean to be “old and off sex” (Hope 2022:1)? What symptoms arise when “manopause” hits? Most discussions of sex disregard the sex lives of old people, as though old people were unable to engage in sexual intercourse. Most discussions of late-life aging frame it in terms of loss: loss of function; loss of bodily autonomy and control; and loss of virility and therefore of manhood itself. For many men, middle-age may offer their first experience of marginal status. When they are unable to meet sexual expectations of their younger years, men may perceive the shift as a loss of manhood, or “manopause.”

This study shows that middle-aged cohorts of men are most affected by the sense that they suffer from a sexual dysfunction. Later-life men with the same or more advanced condition are less anxious about their sex lives. This study suggests that the reduction in anxiety about sexual performance is an interactional process between age, gender, and sexual response. Aging men first confronted with flaccidity report sex-anxiety, as it is likely their first experience with changes associated with aging. It may be that, as such men grow older, their anxiety decreases.

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They likely shift their gender expectations of performance to areas of their lives other than penetrative sex.

It is not merely the change in frequency and persistence of erections affecting their anxiety about sex, but rather shifting sexual expectations and gender performances in middle age that make men anxious. When confronted with shifts in sexual performance, middle-aged cohorts of men express an anxiety that appears to decrease with age. These men define masculinity in terms of sexual performance of young, able-bodied, heterosexual men, consistent with age relations in society. When “menopause” hits, middle-aged men grow anxious over the potential loss of heterosexual dominance associated with their manhood(s).

## SUGAR DADDIES

### *Project 3:*

#### *"Leveling up": Sugar Daddies, Aging Manhood and Doing Masculinity in the Sugar Bowl*

### ABSTRACT

Sugar dating is an arrangement between a younger person (baby) and an older person (daddy or mommy), who trade money for physical and emotional intimacy. Sugar daddies are mostly over the age of 40; and babies tend to be in their 20's and 30's. Middle and older age reduces men's value on a youth-centered dating market; while the "sugar bowl" (mainly approached through sugar-dating sites) is one of the options available to those who hope to cope with their aging manhood(s). This study includes 13 qualitative interviews with sugar daddies. The sample is predominantly white ( $n=10$ ), straight ( $n=11$ ), and more than half are divorced or separated ( $n=7$ ). Daddies' class and gender privilege allows them to combat aging and its effect on masculinity by engaging in sugar relationships with younger women, giving them a boost in status associated with a dominant heterosexual masculinity. Daddies compare their relatively high levels of maturity and ability to "provide" for babies to that of younger men. Daddies also describe fearing "invisibility" as they age, worrying they will eventually lose their ability to entice women to date them, even with the means of compensation that the sugar bowl provides.

*Keywords:* aging manhood, masculinities, sugar daddies, sugar dating

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Seeking.com is a dating site dedicated to “elevating your experience” in dating, whether you are “seeking love,” “seeking excitement,” or “seeking adventure” (Seeking.com n.d.). The site hosts 40 million plus members in over 130 countries. In one instance, a woman’s quest to date “better” men through Seeking.com is described via the popular lifestyle magazine *Insider*: Amber Lucas describes wanting to meet someone who shares her interest in travel and can mentor her as she starts her own business (Ridley 2022). Through her time on Seeking.com, Lucas was able to meet all of her needs by dating these “highfliers” and older businessmen.

While Seeking.com began with a focus on “sugar dating,” it has since shifted terminology away from that of sugaring to a focus on “dating up.” The meaning remains the same: dating for attractive and successful people that “...aligns with one’s personal growth and dreams” (Seeking.com n.d.). Scholars have defined sugar dating relationships as “mutually beneficial” arrangements between an attractive, young, usually woman (baby) and a successful older person (daddy or, rarely, mommy)<sup>4</sup>, in which money or gifts are exchanged for intimacy (Motyl 2012). Sugar relationships often include age differences between the daddies and their babies: Sugar daddies in one study were a median age of 50 compared to babies’ median age of 23 (Gunnarsson and Strid 2021).

This study focuses on sugar dating as a venue for the display of aging men’s heterosexuality, one that advances their sexual dominance over women as a form of compensation. Aging may reduce men’s value on a youth-centered dating market, leaving them few ways to enact a compensatory heterosexuality. The sugar bowl may be one of those few:

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<sup>4</sup> As noted by r/SugarLifestyleForum’s “read me first” page (updated November 2021), sugar mamas are so infrequent in the sugar bowl that they are viewed as indications of a scam: “Sugar mamas for men don’t exist, because women can get all the sex they want without paying money. If you think you have found one, it is almost certainly a scam.” Throughout this study, I use the language of “daddies” and “babies” as I focus on the gender and power dynamics between daddies and their female babies. While mamas exist in the sugar bowl, they are exceedingly rare and perceived by others in the bowl as a “scam.” Therefore, I choose to highlight the most frequent coupling of male daddies and female babies throughout this study.

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Aging men with money may see it as a way to compensate for their aging manhood. While other aging men may turn to other avenues to do masculinity in later life (see Wentzell 2013; Lodge and Umberson 2012), sugar daddies still take part in relationships with young women in order to pursue a masculinity that centers (hetero)sexual dominance and objectification of women. When aging reduces their value on a youth-centered dating market, daddies compensate for their middle and old age.

Considering the older age of the daddies, this study seeks to analyze their choice to engage in sugar relationships, that is, why they chose these over traditional relationships with younger women (those that occur without allowances or pre-determined financial ties). Daddies' financial privilege offers older men additional compensatory mechanisms compared to the average man confronting aging manhood. Sugar daddies also compensate by engaging in age relations when distinguishing themselves and their masculinities from that of their younger male counterparts on the dating market. Daddies' class privilege (in the form of disposable income) allows them to combat markers of aging and declining masculinity by engaging in sugar relationships with younger women. In this way, daddies are able to compensate by not only participating in sugar relationships with young women, but by also engaging in age relations by positioning themselves separate from younger men on the dating market and later-life daddies in the sugar bowl.

## LITERATURE

### *Masculinity in Online Dating*

Online dating is one way people perform gender and present refined versions of themselves to attract potential partners. Scholars of online dating have analyzed women's self-presentation (Yan 2018), gay men's self-presentation on dating sites (Lanzieri and Hildebrandt

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2011; Sumter and Vandebosch 2019), and how truthful individuals are on their profiles (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 2006; Guadagno, Okdie, and Kruse 2012; Peng 2020; Sharabi and Caughlin 2019). Guadagno et al. (2012:646) found that only the men in their study—not the women—exaggerated their personalities and physical characteristics if they expected to meet face-to-face on a date. Walker and Eller (2016) provide an extensive analysis of gay and straight men’s profiles on Match.com, analyzing how men use their gender performance of masculinity to emphasize dominance, independence and care-free attitudes (61). They argue that these masculine presentations reinforced men’s continued position of power over women and subordinated men (45).

Men’s presentation on dating apps may convey to potential romantic partners their hobbies, other interests, and what sort of partner they are looking for; but their profiles also offer an avenue to reinforce their manhood. Like the men in Abelson’s (2019) and Sumerau’s (2020) studies, the men in Walker and Eller’s (2016) research attempt to walk a fine line to convey their heterosexuality and masculinity. Men in online dating profiles both distance themselves from the negative characteristics of hypermasculinity (e.g., aggression, emotional indifference, etc.), but still aim to subordinate women (Walker and Eller 2016). One such arena gaining prominence in the world of online dating is sugar dating.

### *What is Sugar Dating?*

Due to the “allowances” that women are given, sugaring is explicitly *transactional* involving exchanges of money for emotional or physical intimacy. As Lam (2020) points out, sugaring extends beyond the boundaries of escorts or sex work, in that babies take time to form connections with their sugar daddies. Sugaring is described by those involved as a blend of

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traditional dating,<sup>5</sup> hookup culture, sex work, and online dating, with the boundaries distinguishing them blurred (r/SugarLifestyleForum 2020; Upadhyay 2021).

Motives for entering the sugar bowl vary based on context, location, and role, including but not limited to love, sexual pleasure, power, and financial security (Kuate-Defo 2004:21). When babies are not paid with an “allowance” or monthly stipend, they are compensated to “pay-to-play” or “pay-per-meet” (Gunnarsson and Strid 2021). Additionally, babies are compensated with gifts ranging from clothes, jewelry, beauty treatments, gift cards, dating expenses, trips, and the like (Gunnarsson and Strid 2021). Other non-monetary support includes career advice, mentorship, help with everyday issues, and even assisting with immigration (Gunnarsson and Strid 2021; Scull 2020).

The subculture of sugaring offers members a distinct dating experience separate from sex work or traditional dating, giving participants a guideline for behavior and expectations (Scull 2020). For example, sub-Reddit forums dedicated to sugar dating like r/SugarLifestyleForum offer members a “wiki” section and “useful links” to inform them on how to get started, how to spot scams, terminology to use (see Appendix B), online dating sites to try, and advice on paying taxes on sugar payments (r/SugarLifestyleForum 2020). The use of coded language elevates their arrangements to appear more like traditional dating and less like sex work, thereby allowing them to gain recognition and value by others outside of the bowl (Cordero 2015). By coding the language, Cordero (2015) argues, members of the sugar community can evade accusations of sex

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<sup>5</sup> In sugar dating, “traditional” or “vanilla” dating is viewed as the opposite. In traditional dating, there is a monogamous, exclusive relationship, also known as the “girlfriend/boyfriend experience” in sex work (Cordero 2015, Scull, 2020). In girlfriend/boyfriend relationships or traditional dating, partners are seen as equal companions, going on dates and spending time together (Scull 2020). Unlike sugar dating however, traditional relationships do not come with the expectation or acknowledgement of compensation. However, some in the sugar community, as documented by Cordero (2015), argue that traditional heterosexual relationships are inherently unequal, with men and women offering different benefits to the relationship. Throughout the article, I use the term “traditional” dating/relationships when I reference dating/relationships without compensation.

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work as their arrangements are considered a variation on traditional relationships in which men's financial responsibilities are more clearly outlined (70-71).

### *Online dating & commodification of intimacy.*

While sugar dating may otherwise resemble traditional dating, the exchange of money adds a layer of commodification (hence, the common description of them as “arrangements”). As Zelizer (2005) argues, commodification and intimacy are interrelated and not, as previously conceived, spheres separate from one another. Reproductive labor and intimate relations have become commodified in the capitalist labor market as elements of emotion work and intimate connections have become ingrained in certain jobs (Constable 2005; Hochschild 1979; Zelizer 2005). These reproductive labor positions are traditionally filled and performed by women, and focus on care work and intimate relations, which then commodify women's intimacy with consumers.

The commodification of intimacy has expanded online, providing market opportunities for workers and patrons. Sex workers have found opportunities to advertise online and solicit clients without middle-men controlling their time and incomes (Agustín 2008; Bernstein 2007). One example of commodified intimacy translated in the online space is the “e-mail order bride” (Constable 2003; Liu 2015:37). With the promise of growing markets, marriage brokers encourage cross-border relationships and international partners as commodities apart of a global “marriage market” (Constable 2003:76, 2005; Kim 2010; Liu 2015). The internet then provides both workers and patrons a convenient and globalized approach to the buying and selling of intimacy.

Engagement in sugar dating, and intimate labor more generally, is shaped by structural inequalities. As Boris and Parrenas (2010) point out, intimacy is shaped by gender, race, class,

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sexual inequalities in broader social contexts. Further, Boris and Parrenas (2010:590) argue that conceptualizations of women's involvement in reproductive labor and intimate labor needs to move past the strict binary of "exploitation versus agency." Silberschmidt and Rasch (2001) found that girls in Tanzania were not strictly victims in their situations with sugar daddies but were active participants gaining financial and material benefits from their relationships with older men. According to Cordero (2015), the sugar bowl corrects the unequal power dynamic of traditional relationships as women begin to be compensated for intimate labor that has previously been undervalued.

### *Sugar dating, compensated dating, & sex work.*

For those involved in sugar relationships, sugar dating is distinct from sex work in that the relationship between a daddy and a baby is believed to be "genuine" when compared to a sex worker and her "John" (i.e., babies are *emotionally* and *romantically* involved, not just financially involved) (Cordero 2015:80). However, many still argue that sugar relationships operate as another form of sex work. Motyl (2012) finds that civil and criminal laws are not equipped to prosecute sugaring as prostitution, because sugar relationships can vary widely from relationship to relationship, as some are strictly financial and some are emotional. She proposes a classification in terms of degree of both companionship and explicit exchange of sex for money (Motyl 2012). Scull (2020) extends this categorization even further to argue that there are seven types of sugar relationships ranging from strictly financial to emotional connections.

While babies have economic incentives to engage in sugar relationships, and daddies see advantages in offering money, both groups distance themselves from the label of "sex work." Cordero (2015) argues that this avoidance makes it easier for them (and the host dating sites) to evade criminal codes and promote their behavior as distinct from sex work. On

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r/SugarLifestyleForum's introductory information section ("read me first"), community members of the sugar bowl emphasize the distinctive nature of sugar dating: "Is sugar dating prostitution? No. Sugar arrangements borrow some of the features of both traditional dating and escorting. It is distinct in itself as a lifestyle choice and stands on its own" (r/SugarLifestyleForum 2020).

While much of the research on sugar dating has focused on whether or not sugaring counts as sex work (see Miller 2011; Motyl 2012 for more), the common distinction between the two is the framing of the relationship to the client: Is there a genuine relationship between the baby and their daddy? This question contextualizes sugar relationships separate from traditional relationships and allow participants to define their arrangements accordingly. As such, participants walk a fine line between sex work and traditional dating when entering the sugar bowl. Upadhyay (2021:777) finds that babies' own framing distinguishes themselves from sex workers, claiming their sugar relationships involve, "... emotional intimacy, chemistry, and connection."

### *Gender, Masculinity and Age Relations in Compensated Dating*

Masculinities can be defined as dominant, subordinate, or marginalized (Messerschmidt 2018). *Dominant* masculinities position men above women and above *marginal* masculinities, in which men's masculinities are defined by race, gender conformity, disability, age, and sexuality. Men with privilege (usually white, able-bodied, young, cis-gendered, heterosexual, etc.) are more easily able to take on the culturally accepted or dominant masculinity compared to men with marginalized identities. When confronted with threats or the questioning of their dominant masculine status (e.g., others telling or perceiving them as not "masculine enough"), men may react in exaggerated or hypermasculine ways (Willer et al. 2013). *Compensatory masculinity* exaggerates a gendered activity, to maintain a claim on male privilege, in response to a lack or

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loss in status that otherwise puts that privilege out of reach: loss of team membership due to injury, lack of professional advancement or occupational status due to race, failure in the dating market of youth due to age, and so on. Compensatory masculinity pointedly does not take a lack or loss of gendered privilege in stride. It steps up to reinforce the claim.

As with gender and masculinity, age is an identity that shapes power relations in society. Calasanti (2020) describes age relations as a social structure that hierarchically positions age groups, granting more power to those that are valued (young cohorts) and less power to those that are devalued (old cohorts). Age groups are then granted power and status in relation to one another (Calasanti 2020; King and Calasanti 2013). Age relations privilege younger groups, often at the expense of old people with ageism perpetuating the idea that old age is a “decay” of youth, and thereby, a lesser status (Featherstone and Hepworth 1995:46).

Shifts in status in old age is most prevalent for aging men. As King and Calasanti (2013) note, age relations exacerbate inequalities among aging men as their claims to privilege may slip in middle age and later life. Old age can diminish the status men were once granted in youth, instead, marking them as invisible in the face of ageism. Age relations often intersect with other inequalities, like gender, class, race and sexuality, shaping the privileges and status men are granted in middle age and later life. As noted by Calasanti and King (2005), class privilege and wealth can often buffer the effects of aging as only the most privileged men—often white, middle and upper class, etc.—as they are able to engage in activities and recreation to fend off their old age. In this way, age relations intersect with other identities, shaping the individuals’ experience of ageism based on gender, class, race, and sexuality.

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### *Sugar dating as a display of masculinity & privilege*

Sugar dating is no exception to this ageism. In sugar dating, sugar daddies offer to bolster their claims to masculine privileges with money; and they do that when confronted by their own growing failure on the dating market. They enforce dominance and distance themselves from marginal masculinities by using money to combat old age. Through their class privilege, daddies compensate for the marginal status of middle and older age, and reassert themselves as successful in a distinctly gendered way. As such, sugar daddies are using the unequal power structure of sugar relationships—in which they enjoy greater financial security—to regain a sense of dominance over their middle-age and later-life. Furthermore, the sexual component of sugar dating allows daddies to emphasize their heterosexuality, to compensate for their seemingly *unmasculine* older age.

The limited work on sugar relationships focuses mainly on sugar babies and their experiences or motivations in sugar dating. One notable exception is the work by Gunnarsson and Strid (2022) which focuses on sugar daddies in Sweden, studying the tension between economic instrumentality and mutual enjoyment in how they recount their experiences. They find that daddies use economic incentives to initiate relationships with sugar babies, but this incentive often conflicts with their desires for mutual affection (Gunnarsson and Strid 2022). Daddies wonder: Do their babies truly like them, or are they only in it for the money?

This conflict is made more prominent by the structure of sugar dating: babies are set up to depend on their daddies financially (Cordero 2015). Daddies are framed by sugar sites as “providers” and “father figures,” implying babies are dependent on the daddies and the daddies need not depend on the babies—in contrast to how traditional or vanilla relationships are set up (Cordero 2015; Lam 2020; Motyl 2012). As noted in Gunnarsson and Strid’s (2022) work,

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daddies are conflicted about babies' true motives. However, Cordero (2015:80) points out that this does not necessarily change how daddies view themselves: "...the Sugar Baby's true motivation for seeking his attention is irrelevant, for the Sugar Daddy can prove his manhood to himself by virtue of the fact that she is there." Regardless, daddies' perceptions of sugar babies' motives still affect their confidence and views of themselves as dominant men.

Sugar relationships offer men with means an avenue to pursue dominant masculinities based on heterosexual sex. While young women are incentivized economically, babies' role is to boost daddies' masculinities. Further, the many dating sites aimed at sugar dating available to men (and women) allow them to cycle through companions, thereby constantly "sustaining their ego" (Cordero 2015:81). Cordero (2015) argues that this not only boosts their own egos but also allows daddies to "prove their manhood" to other men as well (81). In this way, daddies cultivate a compensatory masculinity, exaggerating some gendered behavior, to establish or restore a claim to a male privilege that would otherwise be out of reach. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue, masculinity is not only about one's presentation of self, but also how others perceive this gender presentation. As aging limits older men's desirability and potential dating pool compared to that of their younger selves and younger men, daddies may compensate by dating someone that gives them more status (young, beautiful women). The daddies' emphasis on heterosexuality and sexual dominance in their sugar relationships offers them a compensatory mechanism for their masculinity as they age.

## RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

Research on sugar dating is a relatively new topic in social science in which the discipline has only just scratched the surface in the last ten years (see Cordero 2015; Gunnarsson and Strid 2022; Palomeque Recio 2021; Scull 2020; Upadhyay 2021). Most of the research on

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sugar dating has focused on the babies engaging in sugar relationships (see Lam 2020; Palomeque Recio 2021; Scull 2020; Upadhyay 2021 for more on sugar babies' engagement in the sugar bowl), however, little work has focused on the sugar daddies in this community (see Gunnarsson and Strid 2021, 2022 for exceptions). This study expands the literature on sugar relationships by looking at men's motives for entering the sugar bowl and what they seek to get out of it. I am especially interested in how sugar dating offers men an avenue to display their masculinity, particularly when they have the means/resources (i.e., money) to do so. The literature outlines how aging is perceived as a loss in status (e.g., Calasanti and King 2005; King and Calasanti 2013) and sugar daddies are no exception to this mindset. In this way, I expect that daddies are using their class privilege to compensate or make up for the loss in status in middle age. By dating young women in the sugar bowl, daddies can mitigate the undesirable effects of aging out of a youth-centered dating market.

The few studies available report that a majority of sugar daddies are middle-aged and older (40+) compared to the average age of sugar babies (early- to mid-20s; Gunnarsson and Strid 2021); and daddies are often defined as "older men" by the online dating services (Seeking.com) and researchers (Kaufman and Stavrou 2004; Palomeque Recio 2021; Ranganathan et al. 2017; Scull 2020; Swader and Vorobeveva 2015). This leads me to speculate that men's engagement in sugaring is at the intersection of masculinity, aging, and class privilege.

The landscape of the sugar community online and the previous literature in masculinity, sugar dating, and compensated dating leads me to the following research questions:

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*Are aging men using sugar dating as a compensatory mechanism for their aging masculinities? Are daddies using their class and gender privilege to boost their masculinity in the face of threats?*

## METHODS

### *Sample – Getting Access*

Similar to Walker's (2019) study of happiness in extramarital affairs for participants on AshleyMadison.com, I reached out to the sugar dating websites directly for their cooperation in seeking participants. In my recruitment emails (Appendices C and F), I explain my research as understanding men's experiences in the sugar bowl, and their reasons for entering. In contrast to previous research done on the topic, I emphasize my dedication to understanding their own experiences as they see them; and not framing sugar dating as another form of sex work. In my efforts to understand the language and worldview of sugar dating, I spent months "lurking" on Reddit forums dedicated to the sugar lifestyle like r/SugarLifestyleForum and r/SugarDatingForum. Through this extended effort, I hoped my baseline knowledge of the terms and lifestyle of the sugar bowl would ensure me rapport with interviewees.

I recruited interviewees in five ways. First, I reached out to twelve sugar dating websites (i.e., Seeking.com, SugarDaddyMeet.com, WhatsYourPrice.com, etc.; see Appendix D for a full list) to recruit participants on my behalf. While one site initially agreed to a partnership and later backed out, no other sugar dating sites responded to working with me. The brief week-long period on one sugar dating site garnered one interview with a sugar daddy.

Moving forward, I looked to advertising on social media, particularly Reddit, as there is a fairly active community of sugar members participating on those forums. I paid for

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advertisements on Reddit to advertise to dating- and marriage-related forums. This garnered no interview participants, so I ended advertisements after a few weeks.

I next contacted moderators of four subreddit forums including r/SugarLifestyleForum, r/SugarDatingForum, r/SugarMamma, and r/SugarDaddySpoilMe to post recruitment flyers to their forums. While r/SugarLifestyleForum did not allow me to post, the other three forums (r/SugarDatingForum, r/SugarMamma, and r/SugarDaddySpoilMe) did not respond.

I also looked into sugar dating publications from books (e.g., *How to be a Sugar Daddy*, *Sugar Daddy Playbook*), podcasts (e.g., “Secrets of a Sugar Daddy,” “The Misadventures of a Sugar Baby”), and websites (e.g., SugarDating101.com). I hoped to interview people associated with the sugar dating community and were considered “experts” on the bowl. I had success with two podcasts and one blog in my emailing and messaging, resulting in interviews with contributors of “Secrets of a Sugar Daddy” (<https://www.secretsofasugardaddy.com/podcast>), “The Misadventures of a Sugar Baby” (<https://rephonic.com/podcasts/the-misadventures-of-a-sugar-baby>), and the blog, “Sugar Dating 101” (<https://sugardating101.com>). I conducted six interviews: one sugar daddy, four babies, and one mamma.

Finally, I paid for advertisements on the podcast, “Secrets of a Sugar Daddy” (available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts) to recruit more participants. They advertised my study weekly on the podcast, pointing interested participants to the study link on their official “Secrets of a Sugar Daddy” website. This tactic was the most effective way to access the sugar dating community by a scholar who is an outsider to it as it garnered 18 interviews. The advertisements spoken by the host acted as a validation or “stamp of approval” of my presence in the community as a researcher. Coming from a spokesman in the community, it may have assured potential participants that they could trust me.

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### *Interview Data*

Based on the limited research on sugar dating, I used an abductive approach to create a question guide and conduct interviews. Questions from the interview guide range from why interviewees started sugar dating, what the process of finding a baby/daddy is like, and what they gain as a sugar baby/daddy (the full interview guides are included in Appendices G through I). Virginia Tech's IRB reviewed my protocol (IRB-22-143) in February of 2022.

By pulling common themes in respondents' answers during and after each interview, I was able to refine my question guide as it relates to individuals' experiences within the sugar bowl. This method led to semi-structured interviews in which my question guide framed the interviews, but discussions ranged outside of it. I then conducted a total of 25 interviews with 13 sugar daddies, 11 babies, and one mamma. Interviews ranged in duration from 40 minutes to 2 hours and 45 minutes.

The length of experience in the sugar bowl varied amongst participants, with some involved in it as long as 14 years and some in it for as little as a month. The average age was 51 for daddies and 30 for babies. The overall sample is predominately white ( $n=19$  or 76.0 percent); however, two interviewees identify as Hispanic, two identify as East or South Asian, and one identifies as American Indian/Alaskan Native. Specific to this study, the sample of thirteen daddies is predominantly white with all but two participants identifying as white ( $n=10$ ), predominately straight ( $n=11$ ), and over half are either divorced or separated ( $n=7$  daddies), four are married, and two are single. Full demographics of the sugar daddies are included in Table 9.

I intended to audio record each interview and transcribe them. However, due to respondents' concerns with being recorded, I made a priority of gaining trust that I would maintain confidentiality with interviewees. I decided to handwrite notes as I conducted

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interviews, which I then digitally scanned and stored in an external hard drive. One interview with a baby was audio-recorded with permission.

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**Table 9. Demographic information on sugar daddies, N=13** <sup>6</sup>

#	Pseudonym	Age	Sexuality	Race	Marital Status	Length of time in the “sugar bowl”	Length of Interview
1	Robert	48	Straight	White	Single	6 years	1 hour
2	Joshua	--	--	--	Divorced	About 6 years	1 hour
3	David	51	Straight	White	Married	6 months	45 minutes
4	Nicholas	65	Straight	White	Divorced	3 years	1 hour
5	Adam	52	Straight	White	Single	11 or 12 years	40 minutes
6	John	46	Straight	White	Divorced	10 years	2 hours and 45 minutes ( <i>split over two interviews</i> )
7	Richard	38	Straight	White	Divorced	1 month	2 hours and 45 minutes
8	Paul	47	Straight	Hispanic or Spanish ethnicity	Divorced	7 years	1 hour and 20 minutes
9	Elijah	44	Straight	White	Divorced	13 or 14 years	2 hours and 30 minutes ( <i>split over two interviews</i> )
10	James	57	Straight	White	Separated	10 years	1 hour and 10 minutes
11	Liam	62	Straight	White	Married	3 years	1 hour and 20 minutes
12	Charles	54	Pansexual or Polysexual	White	Married	7 years	1 hour and 15 minutes
13	Noah	53	Straight	East or South Asian	Married	6 to 8 months	1 hour and 15 minutes

<sup>6</sup> Some demographic profiles are incomplete. Some interviewees enrolled in my study through a survey link asking questions on demographics like age, race, sexual orientation, relationship status, etc. However, others enrolled in my study by other means, such as cold-emailing or messaging. I deduced some demographic information from these interviews (e.g., time in the sugar bowl, current relationship status, etc.), but the focus of the interviews was not specifically about these demographic questions.

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### *Data Analysis*

Digital notes were analyzed using NVivo (version 1.7.1) by QSR International. I began combing through interview notes, coding based on the themes of the statements and stories from interviews rather than preconceived categories from past research. Due to the limited existing literature on the area of sugar dating, I decided a “conventional” or inductive approach to content analysis would best capture individual’s experiences in the sugar bowl (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1279). More specifically, I coded themes based on the questions asked: traditional or vanilla dating, confidence, “leveling up,” aging and age preference, etc.

In the following findings, I capture individual's experiences within the sugar bowl and dating more broadly. I incorporate quotes as best captured in my handwritten notes during interviews. Interviewees are given fictitious names and personal identifiers are redacted.

### FINDINGS

It is apparent from the interviews with daddies that their loss of status associated with aging ties to how they define their confidence and manhood in sugar dating. In sugar dating, daddies' choice to date young women and their preference in characteristics (i.e., age, appearance, etc.) is seen as a boost in status in the face of the threat of aging. We see this operate in three interrelated processes: (1) a loss in status due to aging, (2) compensating for the threat of aging by dating young women using their “cheat code,” and (3) engaging in age relations by merging their own value or other daddies’ value with age. Below I discuss these processes more in depth as they relate to my research questions.

### *A Loss in Status*

Daddies report that their age, and how others perceive their age, affects how they view themselves. For many of them, their entry into middle age is the first time in their lives they have

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experienced marginalization or a disadvantaged status. While they may not feel “old,” the realization that they are no longer young men may be the first indicator that they have lost some status: “I’ve always felt like an overgrown boy with a checking account... ‘Oh, shit. I’m old, I guess’” (Richard, age 38). The inequality built into age relations means older men must confront their change in status. Aging men’s life experiences are now shaped by their marginal status, leading them to express concern over how they are perceived by others: “[I] don’t want to feel old and don’t want to feel pitied” (Liam, 62).

Men’s aging becomes equated with a loss in status. As Robert (48) notes, “As I have aged, I do not get the attention or respect I did as a younger man with the confidence [to] take risks and grab the world by the tail.” Robert highlights the shift he noticed as he realized he was old, when he was no longer granted the same respect and status he once received as a young man. Paul (47) expressed a “fear of being invisible or being alone” as he gets older: “It will be a point when you’ll be completely invisible to women. [You’ve] got to [step up your allowances].” From Paul’s perspective, daddies’ allowances only incentivize babies until a daddy is considered “too old,” otherwise, the amount of money needed outweighs the potential believability or authenticity of the relationship.

In traditional dating, middle-aged men see themselves at a disadvantage due to their age: “Nothing in particular to set me apart... [it’s an] uphill battle because people are younger and [there’s] maybe more attraction” (Nicholas, 65). Much of the discussion in the interviews focused on finding a way to stand out in the dating market amongst the competition of younger men. On the vanilla dating market, daddies repeatedly discussed how the gender ratios were not in their favor: Tinder, Bumble and other vanilla dating apps were believed to have 5 men to every 1 woman. With these odds, older men believed: “I will lose every single time [to younger

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men] in dating” (John, 46). Here, daddies acknowledge that younger men have an advantage in dating due to their age, and thereby, devalue themselves due to their age. In this way, daddies engage in age relations, positioning themselves relative to younger men.

### *Revaluing Middle-Age*

Having entered middle-age and turned to the sugar bowl, daddies often draw comparisons between themselves and younger men to demonstrate how their age translates into better dating partners for young women. In this way, daddies position themselves and their own age relative to other men. Liam (62), for example, in a discussion of how he compares to his younger self and other men, “[I] know how guys are. Think I’m more sensitive and compassionate than other guys.” In other discussions, daddies repeatedly emphasized their own reliability. “Ladies say about negative experiences [with other men]—not truthful, not reliable for the financial side. Not reliable is usually younger guy[s]” (Liam, 62). By distancing themselves from the attitudes and behaviors of younger men, daddies repeatedly show they are a “reliable” alternative (John, 46), making their middle-age an advantage compared to their younger counterparts.

Younger men are framed as unable to provide for women, unlike the daddies who are more than capable of doing so as they are expected to provide benefits in their arrangements, including mentorship, gifts, and travel. Sugar daddies rely on life experiences that have led them to develop emotional strength, social awareness, and self-acceptance. Similar to Simpson’s (2016) findings on aging men, daddies construct younger men as sexually inept, inexperienced, and dumb: “Women [are] glad to meet a man of substance... that they won’t find in younger men” (Nicholas, 65).

Most importantly, younger men’s faults allow daddies and middle-aged men to stand out in comparison, and this is viewed as “an advantage to older guys”: “[Younger men] treat women

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like objects” (Nicholas, 65). The perceived inadequacies of younger men—objectification of women, inexperience, unreliability—mean daddies can argue that they are a better dating partner than their younger counterparts tend to be. Not only are they providing for their babies, but daddies also, “[treat] them nicely” and “respect them” (Nicholas, 65). In this way, daddies position themselves in the age relations hierarchy, acknowledging that younger men are valued on the dating market, but seek to frame their middle age, stability and wisdom as an advantage in dating.

Older daddies also compare themselves to younger daddies on Seeking.com: “Very young men coming into the site [and] don’t understand sugar dating. Doesn’t really bother me—makes me stand out when there’s dumbskulls [*sic*]” (Nicholas, 65). Daddies’ age is equated with wisdom and knowledge that younger men lack. While middle and old age is framed as a disadvantage as old age is devalued in age relations, daddies decide to turn it on its head, instead framing their age as an advantage. In this way, daddies frame their older age as an advantage in the dating market, particularly in the sugar bowl. Their gender and class privilege, along with their knowledge of the sugar bowl, allow daddies to compensate for their old age.

### *Age relations: Middle-age vs. later-life daddies in the bowl.*

The emphasis on age relations distinguishes middle age from later life for daddies in the bowl. Daddies nearing or in their 40’s express the value their middle-age affords them: the “goodwill” discount. The goodwill discount is when a baby is expected to give more attractive daddies a cheaper or discounted rate: “Some goodwill that I’m not old, not unattractive. [This is] confirmed with [my] baby” (Richard, 38). One daddy, Elijah (44), even described himself as “among the younger crowd” on Seeking: “I’m the 28-year-old guy on Tinder.” In Elijah’s analogy, his younger age among the Seeking.com crowd makes him a more attractive potential

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partner to babies. While he would be considered “old” on traditional dating sites/apps like Tinder, his age sets him apart from the older men on Seeking.com.

Daddies expect their middle age to grant them benefits when compared to the older men in the sugar bowl. In this way, daddies position themselves at an advantage compared to their older counterparts. As Paul (47) describes, later life daddies in their 60’s and above “need to put money on the table,” to give babies an incentive to date them. Their older age is perceived as a deficiency in attracting younger women in the bowl; and so, daddies’ cheat codes need to adjust to convince babies to date them. However, for middle-aged daddies in the bowl, their later-life counterparts offer a point of comparison to incentivize babies. Elijah (44) describes himself in comparison to the other daddies on Seeking.com: “Much better looking, much younger.” In traditional dating, middle-aged daddies would be the ones that would be considered “old.” However, in the sugar bowl, men over the age of 60 or 70 are considered the “old” ones. Without the comparison point of later life men in the sugar dating pool, daddies would not look as viable or as attractive to younger women, despite their class privilege.

As Zelizer (2005) argues, daddies’ own value is equated with financial or monetary value. The valuation of age and comparison to older daddies allows middle-aged daddies to assert their own masculinity in the sugar bowl. Their own value and assertion of masculinity is entirely based on age relations, as they value themselves in comparison to later life daddies. As Zelizer (2005) argues, intimacy and commodification are tied, and we see this take place in the bowl. Younger daddies are valued (and considered “attractive” as a result), while older daddies are believed to properly incentivize young women to date them. In this way, age, in addition to disposable income, is critical when determining each daddy’s value in the sugar bowl.

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### *Compensating by Use of the Cheat Code*

The mission of Seeking.com to “date up” means women join because there is an incentive beyond dating someone who is older and wiser: This incentive is what daddies call the “cheat code.” The cheat code is the economic or monetary incentive for women that allows daddies to “get their foot in the door” (Nicholas, 65). In a sea of competition with younger men, older men need to stand out and the cheat code is one way to do so. It gives daddies, as Adam (52) says, the “...opportunity to meet, date, and have sex with beautiful young women”—women that had been closed off to them in the traditional dating market. This is what attracts older men to Seeking.com and sugar dating in the first place: their inability to access an entire dating pool in traditional dating. “An average guy in his 40’s, 50’s is not attracting 30 [year-olds] ... [sugar dating] gives me a shortcut that I otherwise would not have had” (Adam, 52). Sugar dating, then, is an avenue for well-off men to access a previously inaccessible dating pool of women.

Most importantly, aging men fear becoming “invisible” to potential dating partners (Paul, 47), and thereby, losing the status a baby brings them. When men are no longer able to “cheat” or convince babies into dating them, the reality of their old age becomes solidified. They are officially “old” when they are no longer able to attract women in the sugar bowl (“It will be a point when you’ll be completely invisible to women. [You’ve] got to [step up your allowances]” Paul, 47). Thereby, once daddies are “invisible to women,” they are unable to use sugar dating as a mechanism of compensation for their threatened masculinities. Daddies’ class and gender privilege can mitigate the effects of growing old, but at a certain age, their privilege is limited.

### *Choice in sugar babies.*

Daddies admitted to a lack of attraction to older women: “[When] dating women my age: ‘you’re old’” (Paul, 47), “interest fell off” (Robert, 48), or “don’t date anyone my age” (Elijah,

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44). Women in daddies' own age range are viewed as unattractive by daddies. In this way, daddies perpetuate a double standard in attraction to middle age and later life women but expect young women to be attracted to them (with proper incentivizing with their cheat code).

Beyond daddies' lack of attraction to older women, women over the age of 30 were viewed as having emotional baggage that impede the casual nature of sugar dating. Paul (47) explained: "[I have] no age range... The younger you are, the less expectations you have. The older you are, bad experiences handbook. Bad experiences [are the] way they [women] approach relationships. Younger women, less [so]." Younger babies were viewed by daddies as seeking more casual relationships and seen as having less dating baggage that would lead to preconceived notions going into sugar dating. Older women or women around daddies' own age were viewed as having dating histories riddled with children, "baggage" and serious intentions. As a result, women around daddies' own age were not viewed as viable dating partners.

Most importantly, sugar dating gives older men access to women *younger* than themselves. Daddies admitted to being sexually and romantically interested in women in their 20's and 30's due to the lack of expectations (of marriage, long-term commitment, etc.), lack of experience, and lack of children. Elijah (44) said that dating women over the ages of 29 or 30 "...starts [to] introduce a new demographic: single mother." Single mothers "tend to be a shitshow" as they are viewed as "desperate" and involved in multiple arrangements at a time. Further, Paul (47) explained that a busy single mother did not fit into his lifestyle: "Weekends are [my] only time [to date]. Women have their kids on weekends."

Daddies' age preference in babies is just one aspect in which daddies mitigate the loss of status in aging. Daddies' preferences in women's appearance ranged from race (e.g., "currently into Brown girls—Middle Eastern, Western Asian..."), body shape (e.g., "sexy, really nice

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butt”), and height (e.g., “won’t date women taller than me—even in heels. Limits to 5 [ft] 7 [inches]”), to intelligence (e.g., “I can’t do dumb”). The picking and choosing of traits and characteristics in preferences shows the saturation of the sugar bowl such that daddies feel they have their “pick of the litter” (Joshua, late-40’s). One daddy even described it as buying a used car at a dealership: “Negotiate, what’s your budget, how much are you offering? Decide if it’s right for me” (Paul, 47). Babies are viewed as objects or commodities to be rented or refused in transactions regulated by notions of obligation. If a baby is seen as not holding up her end of the arrangement (i.e., offering what the daddy views as enough of her time, companionship, and sex): “Tug on the leash—you’re not living up to your part of the bargain” (John, 46). Daddies expect arrangements to operate based on previously agreed-upon terms; and, if a baby is not fulfilling her part of the arrangement (according to the daddy), the arrangement can dissolve and she can be replaced.

*“A time machine.”*

Multiple daddies reported their favorite aspect of dating and engaging in romantic relationships with younger women was the feeling of turning back time. This experience of feeling young again was described by multiple daddies as the “time machine”: “...got to pretend I was younger again, relive some adventures” (Robert, 48). As these men age, they report monotony or losing the excitement of experiencing a simple pleasure for the first time. By not only seeing and experiencing the enthusiasm their babies experienced for the first time (high-class travel, up-scale dining, etc.), daddies took joy in hosting young women’s first tastes of experiences that had otherwise become mundane for them. One daddy, Robert (48), describes new experiences with his babies: “It [babies’ enjoyment of new experiences] rubs off on you;

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you start smiling.” Sugar dating allows daddies to relive their youth and ignore the effects of their own aging.

### *Regaining Confidence*

As many of the daddies note, “Sugar dating gives me a little of that [self] confidence back” (Robert, 48). This “time machine” back to youth is crucial to middle-aged men, as they are losing status within age relations for the first time. “What’s bad about a guy whose kind of over the hill and experiencing life again? [It’s a] rebirth of some fashion... [I was previously] slog[g]ing through life” (Liam, 62). Liam reported his life feeling stagnant, and sugar dating allowed him and other daddies to fulfill desires associated with youth, particularly in the dating sphere. Being able to feel young allows daddies to ignore their aging, and disadvantaged status associated with older age, if even for a moment when spending time with their babies.

### *The Costs of the Cheat Code*

The sugar bowl can lead to its own concern of (in)visibility in old age, as daddies begin to wonder if their relationships with these young women are even “real.” As Robert (48) describes it, the relationship is “not real...because one person is young, and one is old.” To Robert (48), the reality of the age difference between a daddy and his baby means it cannot be real emotions, connections, etc. Robert’s (48) argues that the “time machine stops working” at a certain point when the sugar bowl can no longer bridge the gap in age between himself and his baby. However, Robert (48) notes a boost in confidence throughout his time in the sugar bowl, no matter the age difference and relationship authenticity.

Because of the inherent power dynamic of sugar relationships in which babies rely on daddies (for finances, mentorship, etc.), babies’ motives were constantly in question: “Young girls just want you to give them money” (David, 51). In his Seeking.com profile and in “Meet

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and Greets” (M&G’s), Paul (47) presents himself with a “...nice car, nice watch...” However, only modestly to “try to down-sell myself because I’m looking for someone that likes me, not my money.” His presentation of self directly correlates with the women he is hoping to attract in his Seeking.com profile. As Gunnarsson and Strid (2022) found in their study of Swedish sugar daddies, the babies’ sincerity in the relationship affected daddies’ perceptions of the relationship and themselves. In this way, sugar dating offers an avenue for middle-aged men to achieve a dominant masculinity but the question of authenticity leaves daddies questioning their boost in confidence.

## DISCUSSION

Sugar dating has been critiqued as the stigma around sugar dating and its relation to sex work has clouded many critics’ and some scholars’ judgements about the lifestyle and those involved. As a result, past work has framed its analyses within the context of sex work. Although previous work has begun to scratch the surface of self-perception in sugar dating as it relates to sugar babies (see Cordero 2015; Kuate-Defo 2004; Scull 2020), no research has been conducted on sugar daddies in the US. This study begins to close this gap in the literature through thirteen interviews with sugar daddies about their experiences in the sugar bowl and how this has affected their own self-perceptions and understandings of aging manhood. What I find is that daddies’ old age—or entry into middle and old age—saps their confidence, instilling fear of invisibility in the dating market. Sugar dating can make them visible again, boosting their confidence as they date younger women.

The slide toward old age signals a change in their youth-based privilege, leaving daddies feeling invisible, and worrying about being pitied rather than desired. In traditional or vanilla dating, few older men can date young women or otherwise high enough in status to aid them in

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regaining their own youth-based privilege. However, sugar dating is built around this age gap, creating a dynamic in which older men with disposable income are able to provide young women incentives to date them (e.g., the cheat code). The cheat code, however, commodifies men's old age in the sugar bowl and positions them in the hierarchy of age relations. Daddies' younger or older age relative to others in the dating pool ultimately equates to the monetary value of the cheat code to access babies and the status they bring. Daddies in their 50's and above need to "put money on the table" to compensate for their older age (Paul, 47), in contrast to daddies in their 30's who are seen as deserving of a "goodwill" discount (Richard, 38).

For aging men, the cheat code and dating in the sugar bowl works to alleviate the change in status associated with older age. All interviewees report positive changes to their confidence as a result of dating younger women in the sugar bowl: "[it's] thrilling. Makes you feel good about yourself" (David, 51), "I like myself a lot more because of this" (Nicholas, 65), and "Step[ped] back into my masculinity" (Richard, 38). Older men report gains in confidence in middle age and later life due to attracting and dating younger women. Despite the cheat code, daddies report confidence boosts as a result of dating in the sugar bowl: "Imagine [how your] self-esteem respond[s] when members of the opposite sex keep coming to you. Keep coming to you over and over and over again" (John, 46). Dating babies and younger women—no matter the reason their reasons for coming back to you—boosts men's confidence and confronts insecurities about their aging manhood.

By compensating for aging with money (as their age is equated with a monetary value), these daddies insulate themselves with class privilege from one of the consequences of a loss of age status. Without the ability to afford the allowances for babies, they become less able to fend off the losses that old age and aging manhood bring. Daddies are those who can shield

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themselves with their disposable income and access the cheat code to date younger women.

Through their relationships with younger women, daddies report being able to “turn back time” and resist feeling old (Robert, 48). In this way, daddies insulate themselves from loss of sexual dominance as men.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This qualitative study is limited in several ways. First, the sample size of thirteen limits the generalizability of findings to the rest of the population of sugar daddies and older men in the dating pool. This sample may be skewed in the direction of cooperative and accommodating daddies as participation in interviews was entirely voluntary. In recruitment (Appendices C through F), I emphasized the misrepresentation of sugar dating in the media, leading many daddies to agree to participation in order to change the narrative around sugar dating and its equation with sex work. This recruitment tactic, combined with those cooperating for an interview, may offer findings only from a specific standpoint within the broader community.

Future research should assess the effect of aging on men’s perceptions of manhood as it relates to other dating spheres, like traditional dating, when they do not have the resources or income to meet the threshold to participate in sugar dating. Additionally, future research with a larger and more diverse sample should assess how race, sexual orientation, marital status, etc. interact with aging as it relates to daddies’ experiences in the bowl. This study’s sample is predominantly white ( $n=10$ ) and straight ( $n=11$ ). While this may be representative of daddies in the sugar bowl, there is not representative survey data to confirm the demographics of the broader group.

Finally, the inability to record and transcribe interviews limits the richness of data available in this study. The sugar daddy population is a closed off community that has, until this

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point, gone unstudied in the United States. To access this population, concessions were made to the research protocol to ensure comfort and confidentiality on the part of participants. In fact, one interviewee originally agreed to interview; however, after reviewing the study's information sheet that indicated recorded interviews, he responded: "After considering the disclosure required I regret I will not be able to participate per terms described for privacy reasons however I would be willing to interview non recorded." This led me to reconsider the need to record interviews and decide that the best way to protect confidentiality and participants' peace of mind would be to take handwritten notes instead. Note-taking without recording was the only option available to access this exclusive and secretive group.

## CONCLUSION

To "date up" means, according to Seeking.com, to match attractive, young, and single women with successful older men. Just like Amber Lucas featured in *Insider*, we see this benefiting both parties, with babies receiving mentorship and monetary benefits, while daddies enjoy companionship with beautiful women. This study shows how these benefits operate for aging men in the sugar bowl as they navigate shifts in confidence in middle-age and later-life. I find that sugaring, as opposed to traditional or vanilla dating, offers daddies a way to feel masculine in the face of changes associated with aging. Daddies describe feeling "invisible" as they age, not receiving the respect and status they once enjoyed as young men. To combat this, men of means form sugar relationships with younger women. They gain boosts in status associated with a dominant heterosexual masculinity. They also make flattering comparisons of their levels of maturity and ability to "provide" for babies, to those of younger men.

Daddies' privilege allows them to combat their aging masculinities by using the cheat code in the sugar bowl. By dating up, daddies participate in a dominant masculinity and build

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confidence. At a certain point, however, increasingly older age will limit their participation in the sugar bowl. Daddies worry they will no longer be able to offer enough for women to date them.

The cheat code can only go so far at a certain age.

The journey of Brandon Wade, the founder of Seeking.com, exemplifies many daddies' experiences building a successful career and having little to no luck in traditional dating. Like the daddies interviewed in this study, sugar dating offered Brandon the opportunity to build confidence and boost his masculinity unlike his experience when dating outside of the bowl. Brandon found that "...the formula for a healthy dating life was centered around wealth, not love" (Seeking.com's "Our Story" n.d.). With this cheat code to dating, older men are able to get their feet in the door and fulfill the dating expectations of a dominant heterosexual masculinity, by dating beautiful, young women. This compensatory masculinity comes at some cost to men beyond the money that they spend. Their preference for young women adds to the ageism that will increasingly plague men as they grow old. Daddies' means of compensation adds to the very threat for which they compensate; and time is not on their side.

## CONCLUSION

### CONCLUSION

This project assesses men's responses to threats to their manhood(s) when they are unable to achieve the dominant (hetero)sexual ideal of masculinity. For men confronting shifts in their performance of manhood (e.g., due to bodily changes, sexual function, aging, submission to women), they are left with two options: (1) compensate for their threatened masculinity by exaggerating the privileges of a dominant masculinity or (2) redefine their masculinity separate from these norms. We see in the three articles of this dissertation that men respond to threats in differing contexts when their masculinities are threatened. This dissertation focuses on men's defense of masculinity in relation to women. In this way, the findings of each article exemplify this saying that, "*A beautiful woman on your arm is a man's best accessory.*"

#### *Compensation for Threatened Masculinity*

In project one, focused on masculinity threat and acceptance of violence against women (AVAW), I assess the relationship between male respondents' belief of subordination to women, their (in)ability to control their anger, and their acceptance of harassment and abuse of women. I find that men who report more stress at being subordinated to women are less likely to control their anger, and thereby, endorse violence against women. Men who have trouble controlling their anger are 40.4% more likely to accept harassment of women and 49.0% more likely to accept of the abuse of women, when subordinated to women. Men's stress at subordination to women highlights the gender dynamic between men and women, along with the inequality in displays of masculinity. For men who experience more stress at subordination to women in the home or in the workplace, they compensate for their threatened masculinities by endorsing the harassment and abuse of women. In this way, challenges to patriarchal dynamics made men feel stressed and threatened as a result.

## CONCLUSION

As we see in project three, “Leveling up,” daddies turn to sugar dating (distinct from traditional or vanilla dating) to reassert their masculinity in middle age. They experience their entry into middle age as a shift in status and threat to their manhood(s). Their felt disadvantage of being middle aged in relation to younger men inspires them to compensate by spending money to encourage young women to date them. Daddies also compensate by distinguishing themselves from younger men, framing themselves as “reliable” alternatives to their inexperienced and inept young counterparts. In this way, sugar daddies compensate for their aging masculinities, even when they concede to growing older. They acknowledge that they have lost status within age relations; but they do not concede their sexual access to young women.

Daddies’ value on the dating market is equated with a monetary value: younger daddies (30's and 40's) are believed to receive a "goodwill" discount while older daddies (50+) are believed to "need to put [more] money on the table" to make up for their older age. Daddies express a fear of growing invisible as they grow older, losing status to younger men in the dating market. The sugar bowl allows them to boost their confidence and turn back time to feel young again; but they know that this compensatory cheat code will only work for so long.

### *Revision of Manhood*

In project two, “Manopause,” middle-aged men express stress when they find that their penises remain flaccid even during sexual activity. Compared to aging women, men report more frequent anxiety around sex, especially when experiencing flaccidity (or erectile dysfunction). This finding demonstrates that changes in sexual function and sex-anxiety are matters of aging manhood(s) as these are gendered processes. To the extent that American masculinity emphasizes young, able-bodied, cis-gendered sexual expression, aging presents men with a threat to their masculinity.

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I also find that the later-life cohorts of respondents feel less of this sex-anxiety than the middle-aged men do. Later-life men appear to place less value in their ability to engage in penetrative sex; and as other scholars have suggested, they appear to redefine their masculinities as a result (e.g., Calasanti and King 2018). Middle-aged men appear to feel that an inability to participate in penetrative sex is a threat to their ability to do masculinity. However, my findings suggest that older men redefine their masculinities separate from their performance of (hetero)sexual dominance. Instead, older men seem to shift their definitions of masculinity to focus on their roles in the home and the family (see Lodge and Umberson 2012; Wentzell 2013).

Men confronted with different threats to their dominant manhood(s) can either reassert or redefine their masculinity. This project demonstrates that men experiencing masculinity threats in the forms of subordination to women (Project 1), flaccidity (Project 2), or aging out of dating markets (Project 3) are left with limited avenues to do masculinity. Men can reassert a dominant masculinity by endorsing the abuse and harassment of women, or they can redefine their masculinity separate from their engagement with heterosexual or penetrative sex. Threatened men express their loss of status and choose to reassert masculinity consistent with dominance (i.e., accepting VAW and conforming to the sexual objectification of women); but men confronted with shifts in sexual response that make middle-aged men so anxious may also redefine their masculinity separate from aspects of their youth (i.e., placing less value on engagement in heterosexual or penetrative sex in their performance of masculinity). Men respond to gender threats in diverse ways that depend, in part, on social relations of age.

Future research should assess how men utilize those different paths to masculinity in the face of threats, and how this varies with inequalities of race, class, sexual orientation, and so on. Social structures of inequality often intersect to shape individuals' experiences in healthcare,

## CONCLUSION

sexual function, aging, dating, etc. (Calasanti and King 2021; Herd et al. 2011; Kupelian et al. 2008; Milton and Qureshi 2020; Smith et al. 2009). As we see in this dissertation project, men vary in their tactics to perform masculinity depending on age, sexual function, and class.

However, because dominant ideals of masculinity center men's pursuit of women, we often see those used as tactics to compensate when they feel their masculinity threatened (Maass et al. 2003; Munsch and Willer 2012; Reidy et al. 2014; Willer et al. 2013).

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Structural Equation Model Tables

Table A. Structural Equation Model Total Effects Predicting the Approval of Harassment and Abuse of Women with Standardized Coefficients, N=450.

	<i>Model 1a: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Control Variables</i>		<i>Model 1b: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Trouble Controlling Anger ~ Control Variables</i>		<i>Model 1: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Trouble Controlling Anger ~ Masculinity Threat measures &amp; Control Variables</i>	
	$\beta$ (SE)	p	$\beta$ (SE)	p	$\beta$ (SE)	p
<i>Approval of Harassment of Women ~</i>						
Age	.09 (.02)	0.110	.09 (.02)	0.110	.09 (.02)	0.110
Education	-.03 (.03)	0.606	-.03 (.03)	0.606	-.03 (.03)	0.606
Income	.00 (.01)	0.975	.00 (.01)	0.975	.00 (.01)	0.975
Straight	.03 (.12)	0.576	.03 (.12)	0.575	.03 (.12)	0.575
White	-.10 (.10)	0.051	-.10 (.10)	0.051	-.10 (.10)	0.051
Married	.10 (.14)	0.059	.10 (.14)	0.059	.10 (.14)	0.060
Trouble Controlling Anger			.64 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.43 (.04)	0.000 (***)
Masculinity Threat measures:						
Sexual Performance Failure					-.08 (.04)	0.136
Occupational Stress					-.13 (.04)	0.016 (*)
Lack of Athleticism					.13 (.06)	0.018
Subordination to Women					.52 (.05)	0.000 (***)
<i>Approval of the Abuse of Women ~</i>						
Age	.09 (.02)	0.075	.09 (.02)	0.075	.10 (.02)	0.075
Education	-.02 (.03)	0.681	-.02 (.03)	0.679	-.02 (.03)	0.678
Income	.01 (.01)	0.783	.01 (.01)	0.781	.01 (.01)	0.781
Straight	.01 (.13)	0.837	.01 (.13)	0.837	.01 (.13)	0.836
White	-.08 (.10)	0.109	-.08 (.10)	0.109	-.08 (.10)	0.109
Married	.08 (.14)	0.110	.08 (.14)	0.111	.08 (.14)	0.111
Trouble Controlling Anger			.68 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.50 (.04)	0.000 (***)
Masculinity Threat measures:						

Outcome Variables



APPENDIX

Table B. Structural Equation Model Direct and Indirect Effects Predicting the Approval of Harassment and Abuse of Women with Standardized Coefficients, N=450.

	<i>Model 1a: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Control Variables</i>		<i>Model 1b: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Trouble Controlling Anger ~ Control Variables</i>		<i>Model 1: Harassment &amp; Abuse ~ Trouble Controlling Anger ~ Masculinity Threat measures &amp; Control Variables</i>	
	<i>β (SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>β (SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>β (SE)</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>Direct Effects:</i>					
<i>Approval of Harassment of Women ~</i>						
Age	.09 (.02)	0.110	.06 (.01)	0.143	.07 (.01)	0.066
Education	-.03 (.03)	0.606	.05 (.03)	0.300	.02 (.02)	0.554
Income	.00 (.01)	0.975	.05 (.01)	0.253	.02 (.01)	0.580
Straight	.03 (.12)	0.576	.06 (.10)	0.128	.02 (.09)	0.615
White	-.10 (.10)	0.051	-.08 (.08)	0.036 (*)	-.03 (.07)	0.473
Married	.10 (.14)	0.059	.02 (.11)	0.647	-.01 (.10)	0.719
Trouble Controlling Anger			.64 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.43 (.04)	0.000 (***)
Masculinity Threat measures:						
Sexual Performance Failure					-.09 (.04)	0.074
Occupational Stress					-.13 (.04)	0.012 (*)
Lack of Athleticism					.09 (.05)	0.077
Subordination to Women					.31 (.05)	0.000 (***)
<i>Approval of the Abuse of Women ~</i>						
Age	.09 (.02)	0.075	.07 (.01)	0.088	.08 (.01)	0.036 (*)
Education	-.02 (.03)	0.681	.06 (.03)	0.191	.04 (.02)	0.377
Income	.01 (.01)	0.783	.07 (.01)	0.119	.04 (.01)	0.296
Straight	.01 (.13)	0.837	.05 (.10)	0.234	.01 (.09)	0.805
White	-.08 (.10)	0.109	-.07 (.08)	0.087	-.01 (.07)	0.785
Married	.08 (.14)	0.110	-.00 (.11)	0.988	-.03 (.10)	0.385
Trouble Controlling Anger			.68 (.04)	0.000 (***)	.50 (.04)	0.000 (***)
Masculinity Threat measures:						
Sexual Performance Failure					-.10 (.04)	0.049 (*)

Outcome Variables





## APPENDIX

APPENDIX B: Glossary of Sugar Terms Adapted from Reddit's r/SugarLifestyleForum and SugarDaddy.com:

**Allowance:** The traditional recurring compensation that a sugar baby receives in an arrangement. Generally measured as a monthly figure, but may also be broken up in various ways, based on the terms of the arrangement. Also see "PPM."

**Angel Baby:** The Angel Baby is the most elite sugar baby who is confident, experienced, and knows exactly what they want to get out of the sugar bowl.

**Arrangement:** Synonymous with a negotiated sugar relationship. The negotiated terms of your relationship: What expectations you have of your partner and what expectations they have in return.

**BCD:** "behind closed doors"

**[the] bowl:** Short for "sugar bowl". The sugar lifestyle. A slang term for the community of sugar daddies and their sugar babies. It describes both the general social circle on- and offline that sugar daddies and sugar babies frequent, and the sugar dating lifestyle itself.

**Freestyling:** Pursuing someone to become a sugar partner in public, such as at a bar, restaurant, or gallery as opposed to doing so online. Unlike on SA [SeekingArrangement], where all participants have established that they are looking to start a sugar relationship by having created an account, freestyling in public opens the instigator up to much more direct rejection and/or taking offense.

**FWB/FB:** Short for "friend with benefits"/"fuck buddy." Denotes a casual, non-romantic relationship that involves sex.

**IRL:** Short for "in real life". This is where sugar relationships occur, even though most start online.

**John:** A man who is a customer of a sex worker (SW). Since sugar relationships are different than prostitution; SDs [Sugar Daddies] are not Johns.

**LTA:** short for "long-term arrangement"; A relationship intended to be regular, ongoing, and open-ended, rather than being constantly "renewed" on a date-by-date basis.

**Meet & greet (M&G):** The initial public meeting between you and your POT. The *M&G* should always take place in a public location for safety, like a Starbucks or a bar. Avoid scheduling a long meal in case there is no chemistry; you want the option to finish your drink and leave without being rude. Due to the large number of flakes, you should both text an hour or two before the *M&G* to confirm that everything is on schedule and no relatives have passed away. The *M&G* is designed to be completely platonic so as to avoid pressure to move the relationship along before both of you are ready. (That's an argument against meeting in a hotel

## APPENDIX

bar.) There is no substitute for getting two people sitting a few feet from each other and conversing. Once you do, it will hopefully quickly become clear whether you feel an attraction.

**NSA:** Short for "no strings attached." Generally refers to the opposite of an exclusive relationship. The implication is that there are no expectations, aside from what is explicitly defined within the terms of an arrangement. A relationship with specific boundaries that eliminates traditional aspects of a romantic relationship like exclusivity to your partner and/or a significant stake in other parts of your partner's life.

**Pay per meet (PPM):** A compensation style that occurs each time the SD and SB meet. This method is often used at the start of a sugar relationship as trust is being built. Over time, many opt to move to an allowance.

**Platonic:** A relationship or interaction that does not include sexual intimacy.

**POT:** Short for "potential". This refers to someone you are communicating with, but with whom you have not yet entered into an arrangement.

**PUA (Pick Up Artist):** Men who are dedicated to seducing women into sex without providing sugar. Many *PUAs* are misogynistic and aim to "trick" women into having sex with them by employing techniques such as "negging" to attempt to lower their self-confidence. *PUAs* are generally salt daddies [see below].

**Pump & dump (PnD):** When one party deceitfully claims their intention to engage in a long-term arrangement, but cuts contact after the first intimate encounter. Note that the risk of a PnD can be reduced by beginning an arrangement with a PPM [pay per meet] rather than an allowance.

**Rinsing:** When an SB [sugar baby] deceitfully causes the SD [sugar daddy] to provide allowance or PPM [pay per meet] in exchange for the promise of intimacy, but without providing it. This is often intentional, but can also happen when both parties do not properly communicate terms or expectations.

**Road Sugar:** This term refers to sugar daddies who will only see sugar babies outside of their city of residence. Road Sugar occupies the upper echelon of discretion and is typically for married sugar daddies.

**SA:** An acronym for the best known sugar dating website, SeekingArrangement, which is now at [seeking.com](http://seeking.com).

**Salt [daddy]:** Someone claiming to be a sugar daddy but unwilling to provide sugar. Compare to Splenda daddy. Usually reserved for "salty" people – for example, men who have signed up for an arrangement website but scoff at the idea of "paying" women for companionship, or those who attempt to shame or "neg" the SB [sugar baby] into accepting a lower (or no) allowance.

## APPENDIX

**Sex worker (SW):** Synonym for an escort or prostitute, and in particular used in contrast with an SB [sugar baby].

**SLF:** SugarLifestyleForum. This subreddit for discussing the sugar lifestyle.

**Splenda [daddy]:** Not real sugar. A very subjective term, used for men who make offers that are unreasonably low. This term does not apply to an SD [sugar daddy] whose lifestyle expectations simply do not match the SB [sugar baby].

**Sugar:** Depending on the circumstances, this can refer to money and gifts and/or to sexual gratification. It is what differentiates a sugar relationship from a 'vanilla' girlfriend/boyfriend, or a relationship that is less formally transactional.

**Sugaring:** The act of seeking out or engaging in a mutually beneficial relationship that involves gifts, money and/or sexual gratification.

**Sugar baby (SB):** The person being financially supported in an arrangement. While a *sugar baby* is usually female, this is a gender-neutral term.

**Sugar daddy (SD):** The male in an arrangement who provides financial support.

**Sugar girlfriend/boyfriend (SGF/SBF):** Partners who progress into a deeper, more traditional relationship, while still retaining elements of sugar.

**Sugar mama/momma (SM):** The woman in an arrangement who provides financial support. This type of relationship is exceedingly rare for lesbian SBs [sugar babies] and essentially non-existent for male SBs [sugar babies].

**Sugar relationship (SR):** A connection with someone that incorporates gifts, money and/or sexual gratification, which is normally synonymous with arrangement. Sugar relationships entail real-life, in-person contact. Exchanging erotic photos, selling your panties, or working as camgirls do not constitute sugar arrangements.

**Unicorn:** Rare or hard to find sugar partner.

**Vanilla [relationship]:** A "regular" relationship; one without sugar.

**Whale:** A very wealthy and/or generous SD [sugar daddy].

**WYP:** WhatsYourPrice, a sister site of SA [SeekingArrangement], caters to members primarily looking for platonic outings such as dinner dates or activity partners.

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX C: Sugar Dating Site Recruitment Solicitation:

Hello [Sugar Dating site name] site administrator,

I hope this email finds you well. I am Maria Scaptura, a third-year PhD student at Virginia Tech. I research men's sexual health and hope to show what sugar dating does for your clients.

I am looking to conduct a short survey on sugar dating through your website. I hope to gain any input that you might have on the content of the survey that I have designed. Once you are satisfied with it, I hope that you will send an invitation to your clients. Anyone interested could then contact me. Thus, I am not asking for any contact information for your members. This survey would be completely anonymous and would not collect identifying information on your clients.

Through this survey and subsequent findings, I hope to accurately portray the sugar dating experience, as I think that it is often misunderstood, both by scholars and by reporters in the media. By soliciting responses from sugar daddies, sugar mommas and sugar babies directly, I aim to understand their reasons for entering the sugar bowl, their pathways into it, and how their dating experiences affect their confidence and well-being.

If you would like, your site can be named in my research reports. Given the topic, it is likely that media outlets would take an interest in the research. Thus, your site would get some free publicity through this project.

Please let me know if you and your site are open to sending out an invitation to participate in my survey to your clients on my behalf. I am more than happy to discuss this project and my qualifications in more detail at [scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Maria Scaptura

PhD candidate, Sociology  
Virginia Tech  
[scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu)

For more information on me and my work, please see my [Google Scholar profile](#) or my CV/resume (attached below).

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### APPENDIX D: Email Contacts for Sugar Dating Sites:

Contacted Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022:

- Seeking (formerly Seeking Arrangement): [support@seeking.com](mailto:support@seeking.com)
  - PR department: [press@Seeking.com](mailto:press@Seeking.com)
  - Marketing department: [digital@Seeking.com](mailto:digital@Seeking.com)
- Sugar Daddy Meet: <https://www.sugardaddymeet.com/feedbackBusiness>
- Established Men: [https://establishedmen.com/contact\\_us](https://establishedmen.com/contact_us) and [support@establishedmen.com](mailto:support@establishedmen.com)
- Sugar Daddie: [management@sugardaddie.com](mailto:management@sugardaddie.com)
- Sudy: [support@sudy.app](mailto:support@sudy.app)
- Elite Meets Beauty: [media@elitemeetsbeauty.com](mailto:media@elitemeetsbeauty.com)
- What's Your Price: [press@whatsyourprice.com](mailto:press@whatsyourprice.com)
- Secret Benefits: [help@secretbenefits.com](mailto:help@secretbenefits.com)
- Sugar Daddy For Me: [CS@sudasupport.com](mailto:CS@sudasupport.com)
- Sugar Daddy: [help@sugardaddy.com](mailto:help@sugardaddy.com)

Contacted Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022:

- SugarFetch: [hello@sugarfetch.com](mailto:hello@sugarfetch.com)

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX E: Sugar Dating Informed Consent Statement:



#### Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Maria Scaptura, [scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu)  
IRB# and Title of Study: IRB #22-143 Sugar Dating Interviews  
Sponsor: N/A.

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

#### ➤ **WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete an interview. As part of the study, you will be asked about your own social and dating experiences in the sugar bowl. Some of these questions pertain to difficult experiences you may have faced in your dating experience (i.e., men of color: such as discrimination and harassment; women: such as discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence).

The study should take approximately 60-120 minutes of your time.  
We do not anticipate any risks from completing this study.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

#### ➤ **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your interview will *not* be recorded.

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

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### ➤ WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Maria Scaptura**, [scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu). You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 ([irb@vt.edu](mailto:irb@vt.edu)).

*Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.*

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX F: Sugar Dating Recruitment Letter:

[Subject: IRB-22-143: Virginia Tech Sugar Dating Interview Recruitment]

Hello,

I am Maria Scaptura, a third-year PhD student at Virginia Tech. I research men's sexual health and hope to show what sugar dating does for members of the sugar bowl.

I am conducting a series of 20-40 interviews in order to understand men's dating experiences in the sugar dating community, why they chose this community as opposed to traditional dating and how this experience has affected their views of themselves.

You will be asked about your own social and dating experiences in the sugar bowl. Some of these questions pertain to difficult experiences you may have faced in your dating experience. The interviews will take anywhere between 1 to 2 hours and will be audio recorded for later analysis.

Eligibility requirements ask that interviewees are over the age of 18; and are currently or have previously been a member of the sugar community.

Through this study and subsequent findings, I hope to accurately portray the sugar dating experience, as I think that it is often misunderstood, both by scholars and by reporters in the media. By soliciting responses from sugar daddies, sugar mommas and sugar babies directly, I aim to understand their reasons for entering the sugar bowl, their pathways into it, and how their dating experiences affect their confidence and well-being.

I am more than happy to discuss this project and my qualifications in more detail at [scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu). This project has been reviewed by Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board (see IRB-22-143; or contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732, [irb@vt.edu](mailto:irb@vt.edu)).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,  
Maria Scaptura  
PhD candidate, Sociology  
Virginia Tech  
[scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu)

For more information on me and my work, please see my [Google Scholar profile](#) or my CV/resume (attached below).

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### APPENDIX G: Sugar Dating Survey Recruitment:

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in my Sugar Dating research project!

This form is *anonymous*. In completing the 2-minute form, I aim to understand the sugar community more broadly. If you are interested in discussing your experience further in an interview, the final question end of the survey gives you the option to provide contact information.

Eligibility requirements for this project ask that interviewees are over the age of 18.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. I may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

I am more than happy to discuss this project in more detail at [scaptura@vt.edu](mailto:scaptura@vt.edu). This project has been reviewed by Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board (see IRB-22-143; or contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732, [irb@vt.edu](mailto:irb@vt.edu)).

By clicking 'start,' you are consenting to take part in the following survey. Participation is completely voluntary.

#### **A. Screener questions:**

1. What is your age? (*if less than 18, exit study*)
2. Were you previously or are you currently involved in a sugar relationship?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. [*if yes*] Are you a sugar baby, sugar daddy, or sugar mamma?
  - a. Sugar baby
  - b. Sugar daddy
  - c. Sugar mamma
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]

#### **B. Demographics** (all respondents)

1. Please indicate your gender:
  - a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Genderqueer/non-binary
  - d. Transgender

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- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]
2. Please indicate your sexual orientation:
- Straight or Heterosexual
  - Lesbian, Gay, or Homosexual
  - Bisexual
  - Pansexual or Polysexual
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]
3. What is your racial identity? (select all that apply)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Black or African American
  - East or South Asian
  - Hispanic or Spanish origin
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - White or Caucasian
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Some high school
  - Completed high school
  - Some college
  - Completed Associate degree
  - Completed Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)
  - Some graduate or professional school
  - Completed graduate or professional school (e.g., MA, MS, PhD, JD, MD)
5. What is your marital or relationship status outside of your sugar-status or sugar relationship?
- Single
  - Married
  - In a registered domestic partnership or civil union
  - Widowed
  - Separated
  - Divorced
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]
6. If you are interested in being interviewed (**anonymous** and **unrecorded**) about your sugar dating experience, what is the best method to reach you to schedule an interview (e.g., email, phone, etc.)?
- Please provide your contact information below.

---

[only if reply 'no' to being involved in sugar dating or sugar relationship]

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7. Do you *want* to be a sugar baby, sugar daddy, or sugar mamma?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
    - c. Other \_\_\_\_\_ [*Please specify.*]
  8. What interests you about sugar dating and the sugar community? [*open-ended*]
  9. What has stopped you from participating in the sugar community? [*open-ended*]
-

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APPENDIX H: Interview Questions (variations of each question are listed below each numbered question, lettered 'a'-'c'):

1. How did you start sugaring?
  - a. When did you start sugaring?
  - b. How did you start your journey as a sugar daddy?
2. What is the process of finding a baby like?
  - a. How do you go about finding a sugar baby? What is the process like?
  - b. When you want to start a new relationship or find a new baby/partner, how do you go about it?
3. How would you describe the women or men you meet on this site?
  - a. What do you think of the babies you have met in person? What were they like?
  - b. Have you met any other daddies? What did you think of them?
4. What characteristics are you looking for in a partner?
  - a. What's your ideal age-range in a dating partner, and why?
  - b. What is the most important trait you look for in a partner?
5. Why did you choose sugar dating?
  - a. Have you dated outside of the sugar bowl? What was that experience like?
  - b. What are your opinions on traditional or 'vanilla' dating?
6. How have you changed since you became a sugar daddy?
  - a. How has sugar dating made you feel about yourself?
  - b. Did becoming a sugar daddy change how you viewed yourself?
  - c. Did you notice a change in your attitude after you became a daddy?
7. What are the positives of sugar dating? What are the negatives of sugar dating?
  - a. What would you tell a prospective sugar daddy before entering the sugar bowl? What should he be on the lookout for?
  - b. Why do you think men are doing this? What do you think they're getting out of it?
8. What are you getting out of sugaring?
  - a. What's fun about sugar dating for you?
  - b. What do you enjoy about sugar dating?
9. Have your views of being a man changed over time?
  - a. Looking back at your younger self, are you different—as a man—than you were then?
  - b. Do you think getting older has changed your perspective of dating? Sex? Manhood?
10. What is something you would change about sugar dating?
  - a. If you could change one thing about the sugar bowl, what would it be?
  - b. What do you think is the biggest issue in the sugar bowl/community at the moment?
11. What are your views of men today?

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- a. Do you think the idea of “being a man” has changed over the years?
  - b. Have your views on manhood and masculinity shifted as you’ve gotten older?
12. Is there anything else I should know about sugar dating before we end?
- a. Do you have any last thoughts before we wrap up?
  - b. What is one thing you would like me to know before I end the interview?
  - c. Looking back at your younger self, are you different—as a man—than you were then?

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APPENDIX I: Interview Questions by Theme:

Interview Questions – Daddy-specific questions:

<b>Understanding the process: How to start sugar dating; motivations for entering the bowl</b>	<b>Views on partners/sugar babies: What daddies are looking for</b>	<b>Self-perceptions: Sugaring’s effects on self-views &amp; gender perception</b>	<b>Views on other daddies &amp; the sugar bowl; changes over time, positives, negatives, etc.</b>	<b>Expert-specific questions:</b>
<p>1. Can you describe to me how you started your journey as a sugar daddy? How did you start sugaring? When did you start sugaring?</p>	<p>1. How would you describe the women you have met on this site? What do you think of the babies you have met in person? What were they like? Do you see any similarities or differences between the other daddies and yourself? Do you know of any other sugar daddies? If so, how would you describe them? Do you think they are similar to you, or different, or both? In what ways?</p>	<p>1. Did becoming a sugar daddy change how you viewed yourself? How have you changed since you became a sugar daddy? How has sugar dating made you feel about yourself? Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you became a sugar daddy? In how you see yourself?</p>	<p>1. What are the positives of sugar dating, in your view? Are there any downsides to sugar dating? (if yes) what might those be? What would you tell a prospective sugar daddy before entering the sugar bowl? What should he be on the lookout for? What advice would you give him? Why do you think men are choosing sugar dating over traditional dating?</p>	<p>1. How frequent do you think 'finding love' is? Is finding love ultimately the goal of sugar dating? How much a role, if any, does this play in your sugar dating? Is it a goal at all?</p>

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<p>2. Why did you choose sugar dating? Have you dated outside of the sugar bowl recently? What was that experience like? What are your opinions on traditional or ‘vanilla’ dating?</p>	<p>2. What are you looking for in a partner? What are the babies you’ve dated like? Do you have preferences for age range, what they look like (body shape, hair color, etc.), their personalities, interests, etc.? Can you describe a sugar baby that you met that fit your preferences? What’s your ideal age-range in a dating partner, and why? What is the most important trait you look for in a partner?</p>	<p>2. What do you enjoy most about sugar dating? Is sugar dating fun? Why? What are you getting out of sugaring? What’s fun about sugar dating for you? What do you think the babies get out of sugar dating?</p>	<p>2. What is something you would change about sugar dating? If you could change one thing about the sugar bowl, what would it be? What do you think is the biggest issue in the sugar bowl/community at the moment?</p>	<p>2. How common is the mentorship aspect of sugaring? Can it be solely mentoring? Or is it more of a mix?</p>
<p>3. What is the process of finding a baby like? How do you go about finding a sugar baby? When you want to start a new relationship or find a new baby/partner, how do you go about it?</p>	<p>3. What is a turn-off for a potential partner or baby? What is an immediate deal-breaker?</p>	<p>3. Have your views of being a man changed over time? Looking back at your younger self, are you different—as a man—than you were then? Do you think getting older has changed your views on dating? Sex? Manhood?</p>	<p>3. Looking back at your younger self, how would you say that you are different than before? Have your views on what it means to be a man changed? in what ways? How do you think that getting older has changed your views on dating? Sex? Masculinity/manhood?</p>	

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			<p>Do you think the idea of “being a man” has changed over the years? Have your views on manhood shifted as you’ve gotten older?</p>	
<p>4. Is sex always a part of it? I’ve read about how platonic sugar relationships are not real sugar relationships. What do you think? Do you feel that sex is always a part of sugar dating?</p>		<p>4. What do you think about the motives of sugar babies? → Does this influence the way that you see yourself at all? Does the motive of sugar babies (like “only in it for the money”) influence your perception of yourself? Acting on the part of the baby? What do you think the babies get out of sugar dating?</p>	<p>4. What do you do when you catch feelings? What about if the baby catches feelings?</p>	

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Interview Questions – Baby-specific questions:

<b>Understanding the process: How to start sugar dating; motivations for entering the bowl</b>	<b>Views on partners/sugar babies: What daddies are looking for</b>	<b>Self-perceptions: Sugaring's effects on self-views &amp; gender perception</b>	<b>Views on daddies &amp; the sugar bowl; changes over time, positives, negatives, etc.</b>	<b>Expert-specific questions:</b>
<p>1. How did you start your journey as a sugar baby? How did you start sugaring? When did you start sugaring?</p>	<p>1. How would you describe the men you meet on this site? What do you think of the daddies you have met in person? What were they like?</p>	<p>1. Did becoming a sugar baby change how you viewed yourself? How have you changed since you became a sugar baby? How has sugar dating made you feel about yourself?</p>	<p>1. What do you view as the positives of sugar dating? What are the negatives of sugar dating? Why do you think men are choosing sugar dating over traditional dating?</p>	<p>1. How frequent do you think 'finding love' is? Is finding love ultimately the goal of sugar dating?</p>
<p>2. Why did you choose sugar dating? Have you dated outside of the sugar bowl recently? What was that experience like? What are your opinions on traditional or 'vanilla' dating?</p>	<p>2. What characteristics are you looking for in a partner? What's your ideal age-range in a dating partner, and why? What is the most important trait you look for in a partner?</p>	<p>2. What do you enjoy most about sugar dating? What are you getting out of sugaring? What's fun about sugar dating for you?</p>	<p>2. What is something you would change about sugar dating? If you could change one thing about the sugar bowl, what would it be? What do you think is the biggest issue in the sugar bowl/community at the moment?</p>	<p>2. How common is the mentorship aspect of sugaring? Can it be solely mentoring? Or is it more of a mix?</p>

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<p>3. What is the process of finding a daddy like? How do you go about finding a sugar daddy? When you want to start a new relationship or find a new daddy/partner, how do you go about it?</p>	<p>3. What is a turn-off for a potential partner or daddy? What is an immediate deal-breaker?</p>		<p>3. Why do you think sugar daddies are doing this? What are they getting out of it? What do you think of the daddies you are dating? Why do you think they choose sugar dating over traditional dating?</p>	<p>3. I've been having a difficult time recruiting daddies and babies, do you have any suggestions to get daddies and babies to sit down for an interview?</p>
<p>4. Is sex always a part of it? I've read about how platonic sugar relationships are not real sugar relationships. What do you think?</p>			<p>4. What do you do when you catch feelings? What about if <i>the daddy</i> catches feelings?</p>	<p>4. On the podcast the babies (ep. 32; maybe Angie?) interviewed said "it's just business, for the babies" ... how do you feel about that? Is that true?</p>
<p>5. What do the daddies ask you to do? What do they talk about with you? Do daddies expect you to play a role as their baby? What expectations are put on you?</p>			<p>5. What are the 'icky' or gross parts of sugar dating that aren't really talked about? Do you have any stories?</p>	
<p>6. What do you need to do to be a successful baby?</p>				

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Interview Questions – Mamma-specific questions:

<b>Understanding the process: How to start sugar dating; motivations for entering the bowl</b>	<b>Views on partners/sugar babies: What daddies are looking for</b>	<b>Self-perceptions: Sugaring's effects on self-views &amp; gender perception</b>	<b>Views on daddies &amp; the sugar bowl; changes over time, positives, negatives, etc.</b>	<b>Expert-specific questions:</b>
<p>1. How did you start your journey as a sugar mamma—as a baby, no? How did you start sugaring and end up as a mamma? When did you start sugaring?</p>	<p>1. How would you describe the men you meet on this site? What do you think of the babies you have met in person? What were they like?</p>	<p>1. Did becoming a sugar mamma change how you viewed yourself, compared to your time as a baby? How have you changed since you became a sugar mamma? How has sugar dating made you feel about yourself?</p>	<p>1. What do you view as the positives of sugar dating? What are the negatives of sugar dating? Why do you think men or women are choosing sugar dating over traditional dating?</p>	<p>1. How frequent do you think 'finding love' is? Is finding love ultimately the goal of sugar dating?</p>
<p>2. Why did you choose sugar dating? Have you dated outside of the sugar bowl recently? What was that experience like? What are your opinions on traditional or 'vanilla' dating?</p>	<p>2. What characteristics are you looking for in a partner? What's your ideal age-range in a dating partner, and why? What is the most important trait you look for in a partner?</p>	<p>2. What do you enjoy most about sugar dating? What are you getting out of sugaring? What's fun about sugar dating for you?</p>	<p>2. What is something you would change about sugar dating? If you could change one thing about the sugar bowl, what would it be? What do you think is the biggest issue in the sugar bowl/community at the moment?</p>	<p>2. How common is the mentorship aspect of sugaring? Can it be solely mentoring? Or is it more of a mix?</p>

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<p>3. What is the process of finding a baby like? How do you go about finding a sugar baby? When you want to start a new relationship or find a new baby/partner, how do you go about it?</p>	<p>3. What is a turn-off for a potential partner or baby? What is an immediate deal-breaker?</p>		<p>3. Why do you think sugar daddies are doing this? What are they getting out of it? What do you think of the babies you are dating? Why do you think they choose sugar dating over traditional dating?</p>	<p>3. I've been having a difficult time recruiting daddies and babies, do you have any suggestions to get daddies and babies to sit down for an interview?</p>
<p>4. Is sex always a part of it? I've read about how platonic sugar relationships are not real sugar relationships. What do you think?</p>			<p>4. What do you do when you catch feelings? What about if <i>the baby</i> catches feelings?</p>	
<p>5. What do the daddies ask you to do? What do they talk about with you? Do daddies expect you to play a role as their baby? What expectations are put on you?</p>			<p>5. What are the 'icky' or gross parts of sugar dating that aren't really talked about? Do you have any stories?</p>	
<p>6. What do you need to do to be a successful baby?</p>			<p>6. How different do you think daddies and mammas are? In their treatment of babies? In the way they interact in the sugar bowl?</p>	