

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SUGAR DATING WEBSITES

A Thesis

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by

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Division of Social Work

Abstract
of
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College students across the nation are struggling to make ends meet while pursuing higher education. Because many minimum-wage jobs available to students are insufficient to meet current cost of living, a growing number of students are turning to non-traditional methods of obtaining resources to make ends meet. This study explores one such avenue colloquially known as *sugar dating*. The phenomenon of sugar dating denotes a supposedly mutually beneficial relationship between a *sugar daddy*—a wealthy older male who is able and interested in providing financial resource for his partner—and his *sugar baby*—a younger woman interested in this type of relationship. This thesis aims to explore the ways in which sugar daddies market themselves to college aged women through a content analysis of 50 publicly-accessible profiles collected from an online dating website called SeekingArrangement.com. The 50 sugar daddy profiles were selected from the first 50 of 100 profiles that were available to view, free of cost, on SeekingArrangement.com. After the collection of profiles, the content was analyzed through an open coding process, followed by focused coding and development of themes. Analysis revealed five themes including 1) the sugar daddy's desire for an emotional connection within the arrangement, 2) a desire for a no-strings-attached relationship, 3)

an emphasis on a busy lifestyle, 4) potential deal breakers and desires of sugar daddies, and 5) the social capital and financial provisions that sugar daddies may be able to provide to sugar babies. This study demonstrates the need for further research into the ways that sugar dating sites and sugar daddies advertise themselves and the need for social work professionals to fully understand the implications of sugar dating. Social work professionals should be strongly informed about the sugar dating phenomenon and the ways in which men market themselves to young women. This is because sugar dating arrangements and the process of acquiring such a relationship may have social implications that social workers inherently address in their practice.

_____, Committee Chair
Susanna Curry, Ph.D.

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends who have nourished me with affections, love, and support through their dedicated alliance for success in my life. Without all of you, this would not have been possible. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Nationally, college students all over the world are enduring financial instability (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Hernandez, 2017). Students are facing housing and food insecurity while enduring the pressures and stress that higher education may carry (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Many college students are employed (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017), some even working multiple jobs, to make ends meet but are still struggling to stay afloat (Matthews, 2017). Minimum wage jobs that are available to college students are often not financially sufficient to meet a student's overall needs of housing, food, and other expenses (Matthews, 2017). Additionally, students often have very little free time outside of academia, but are forced to make time to financially support themselves. Working students may have far less time to spend on their studies, which may put them at risk for declining grades and overall academic success.

As a result of financial hardships and demanding academic schedules, some students have sought out non-traditional measures to support themselves. Sex work in college has become an option for students across the country, which can take various forms. One modern form of sex work that has become a popular among college-aged women is colloquially known as sugar dating. Sugar dating has been described as a relationship based on a mutually beneficial agreement (Camila et al., 2015) that is either written or verbal contract (Motyl, 2012) in which the expectations of both the sugar daddy and the sugar baby are made explicit. Accordingly, the sugar daddy is the wealthy male who will provide his

sugar baby, a younger woman, with a financial allowance in exchange for her companionship (Motyl, 2012). The services can include companionship, mentorship, or a non-committed relationship, among other desires or expectations of each party (Daly, 2017).

These arrangements have become increasingly popular with the current economic conditions for students. Studies have shown that college students all over the U.S. are utilizing sugar dating sites, such as SeekingArrangement.com, for financial assistance while in pursuing higher education (Daly, 2017). As these arrangements are becoming increasingly popular, so is social and public scrutiny. Sugar dating is considerably stigmatized and is sometimes regarded as legal prostitution (Daly, 2017). One purpose of the study was to understand the ways in which sites like SeekingArrangement.com and sugar daddies are able to endorse and market themselves to entice sugar babies to create an arrangement.

Research Focus

This study involved a content analysis of publicly accessible dating profiles hosted on what are characterized as ‘sugar dating’ websites. The sugar daddy arrangement varies depending on each party’s interests and goals within the relationship. However, the core basis of the arrangement is for both individuals to acquire or gain something while participating in the relationship (Camila et al., 2015). The purpose of this research is to explore and identify the different narrative strategies that wealthy men, or ‘sugar daddies,’ and sugar dating sites, deploy in their profiles to market themselves to college-aged women, or ‘sugar babies’.

This research will first review the financial crises that many U.S. college students face; provide a brief definition of sex work; an overview of sugar dating and sex work in

college in addition to the possible emotional and physical ramifications; and an examination of sugar dating websites and the incentives for sex workers through a theoretical lens.

Additionally, this thesis will review academic literature that has addressed the sugar dating phenomenon, provide an in-depth review of the methods utilized in analyzing the data collected, and the results of the findings after analyzing the data.

Lastly, this thesis will discuss why this research is imperative to understanding sugar dating as a whole and why it is important to research the ways in which men and sugar dating sites market themselves to potential members not only academically, but by social sciences and social workers in professional practice. The explicit and implicit ways that sugar daddies negotiate their wants and desires in an arrangement have yet to be academically considered. Consequently, this thesis seeks to critically examine the techniques utilized by sites and sugar daddies to entice college aged women in an effort to expand on the public and academic knowledge pertaining to sugar dating.

Chapter 2 of this project discusses the limited existing research regarding sugar dating as well as highlight the theoretical framework that aids in the understanding of this concept as a whole. Max Weber's Theory of Social Stratification (Shortell, 2018) has been used to provide a framework for an understanding of power, wealth, and sex in the sugar dating industry as well as to formulate an understanding of socioeconomic disparities in society. Chapter 3 aims to increase the understanding of how sugar daddies and sugar dating sites advertise to sugar babies through a description of the methodology that was utilized throughout this research. The results of analyzing 50 sugar daddy profiles will be discussed in Chapter 4, which will provide insight into the themes that emerged as a result of an in

depth examination of the content acquired through data collection. The results of this project also note the gaps in our knowledge that must be recognized and addressed for social services and social work practice implications. Finally, Chapter 5 introduces a comprehensive discussion of each theme that emerged and the implications of this research's results.

Literature pertaining to sugar dating is limited as a result of its modern up rise just a decade ago (SeekingArrangement.com, 2017). Currently little research that identifies how sugar daddies and sugar babies conceptualize their dating profiles to become appealing. There is no research that includes the viewpoint of sugar daddies on their sugar dating endeavors. Further, there is currently no academic research that analyzes the ways in which sugar daddy dating sites and sugar daddies market themselves to college-aged women.

There is a great need for professional awareness of the possible social implications, physical, and emotional risks involved in the practice of sugar dating. With sex work popularizing in higher education, the ways in which avenues of sex work are marketing themselves must be researched. By understanding the ways of marketing, greater insight into the individuals who participate would be available. Additionally, it is imperative to know how men are advertising themselves so that there is a greater understanding of the potential effects that their marketing strategies may have on college aged women.

This particular need is crucial as it can indicate the risks involved with these arrangements and it can also provide professionals with better approaches to informed care for their clients who may be interested, or already involved, in sugar dating. The implications of this research are important for social services, undoubtedly social workers, to

acknowledge due to their work with community members and college aged women. Social workers must be conscious of, and well versed in, sugar arrangements, the stigma around them, and the possible emotional ramifications they may cause potential clients. If the social worker's clientele includes college-aged women, there may be a higher chance of a client being engaged in this type of arrangement. Thus, the social worker must be equipped with the knowledge of sugar dating culture and the effects it may have on their client. By expanding our research on sugar dating and how men and sugar dating sites persuade or allure future sugar babies through their marketing strategies, we would could aid in the development of best practices for social workers and other health care professionals in an effort to increase knowledgeable and stigma-free care for their clients. Therefore, this research aims to aid in the slowly expanding understanding of how sugar arrangements are socially impacting college aged adults and the providers that may work with participants.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

In 2017, the average American college graduate had more than \$32,000 in student loan debt (Federal Reserve, 2017). The total amount of student debt in the United States is \$1.4 trillion as of 2017 (Fay, 2017). Over 93% of debt holders in the U.S. have debt associated with education (Federal Reserve, 2017). Currently, 19% of student loan borrowers are behind on their payments, which is a 5% increase from 2014 (Federal Reserve, 2017). The average monthly payment is around \$390 per month (Federal Reserve, 2017), assuming that the college grad has been able to find a decent paying job and is able to afford this on top of US living costs. In the U.S., public universities' tuition cost has risen by 344% since 1980 (Fay, 2017). In addition, both food and electricity costs have risen by 150% over the past 30 years (Fay, 2017).

In 2017, a study surveyed 33,000 students across 70 community colleges in 24 states within the U.S. to shed light on food and housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). This study found that out of the 33,000 students surveyed, 2 in 3 students were food insecure, about half were housing insecure, and more than 13% had experienced homelessness within the past year (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Of these students enduring food and housing insecurity, around 31% were receiving some form of financial aid and working.

Food insecurity was found to be most common in Western states, with a daunting 59% of students reporting food insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Regions with the highest costs of living displayed higher rates of food and housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017).

California residents have one of the highest costs of living in the country (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2015), where the average monthly rent is around \$1,200 per month (LAO, 2015), which is over 50% higher than the national average (LAO, 2015). With the addition of utilities, transportation, and food, the cost of living for a single adult with no children residing in Sacramento, CA is around \$2,600 per month (EPI, 2015). Thus, an individual would need to work full time at over \$16 per hour in order to stay out of debt. To date, California's minimum wage is \$10.50 per hour (Department of Industrial Relations, 2016). One employed on this salary, while working full-time, would roughly make \$1,680 per month. Evidently, the ability to afford housing let alone student loan payments, food, or transportation in the state of California is implausible. Unfortunately, this is the reality for over 40% (Matthews, 2017) of US college graduates that are working jobs that do not require a degree. Due to financial hardships that the many of college graduates face, many students seek out alternative methods to make a sustainable living.

Sex Work Defined

Sex work is a broad umbrella term that encompasses a variety of different professions relating to sex and profit. The confines of sex work are ambiguous and can range from erotic demonstration without any physical contact to non-protected intercourse with several customers (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Globally, there is an estimated 40-42 million

people engaging in sex work, 80% of whom are female and ages 13-25 (Nobullying, 2016). In the U.S., there are roughly 1.5 million people engaging in sex work (Nobullying, 2016).

Every country and region has a distinct configuration of sex work as a result of cultural beliefs, history, socioeconomic factors, and legal schema (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Punitive measures and stigma around sex work varies dependent on the location (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). One study identified two primary forms of sex work as direct prostitution and indirect prostitution (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Some sex work services that are considered to be direct prostitution include: street, where clients are solicited in public; brothel, a location that's primary purpose is to provide sex to clientele; private, direct phone calls between a sex worker and a client; escort, the most privy form of sex work and comparably expensive due to less turn over (Harcourt & Donovan 2005). Street sex work is considered to be the most common type of sex work universally (Harcourt & Donovan 2005). Indirect sex work includes sex for drugs, survival sex, beer girls, massage parlors, lap dances, or bondage (Harcourt & Donovan 2005). Factors that constitute sex work as indirect include the amount of public health risk associated with the service and whether or not the income is supplemental or primary (Harcourt & Donovan 2005). Sugar dating could be considered an indirect form of sex work as the public health risk may be lower and the income could be intended as supplementary and not primary.

Sugar-Dating

Sugar dating is a consensual relationship between a financially successful individual, often a male known as the 'sugar daddy' and a young person that they financially support, the 'sugar baby', in exchange for companionship (Camila et al., 2015). The

arrangements differ across relationships (Camila et al., 2015). There are three components that create a working sugar relationship: a sugar daddy, a sugar baby, and an allowance (Motyl, 2012). The allowance is provided by the sugar daddy to the sugar baby. It differs per arrangement and can range anywhere between \$1,000 to \$5,000 monthly (Motyl, 2012). There is much discussion about whether or not sugar dating is simply glorifying prostitution and some sugar babies have argued that it is not because sex is not always part of the arrangement (Chou, 2017). There are accounts from women who claim that sex is not in their agreement and that their services consist mostly as being ‘arm-candy’ or company at special events and dinners (Chou, 2017). Some accounts from women who have had long careers in sugar dating have described their relationship as way to network for future career opportunities as well as more of a mentorship than an intimate connection (Chou, 2017).

Young women who engage in sugar dating may view their relationship as a great paying job or career opportunity (Chou, 2017). It is indicated that the sugar arrangement is something a sugar baby uses to enhance her social and financial capital in life (Chou, 2017). However, some sugar babies have found the work to be ‘trapping’ in that the money becomes so good, they do not want to stop (Sagar, 2015). There are cases of women who began a career of sugar dating while in college but did not stop sugar dating after graduation because they still had money owed or were unable to save the money due to their lifestyle (Sagar, 2015). There is also the issue of anonymity, as many sugar babies have revealed that they choose to keep their sugar relationship completely private from friends and family (Sagar, 2015), and they may find that keeping such an impactful secret is not only challenging, but overwhelming as well (Sagar, 2015).

Sex Work in College

Students with demanding schedules and very little time outside of academia have found sex work to be appealing. Recent research was developed in an effort to examine culpability of sugar babies under the Model Penal Code's classification of prostitution (Motyl, 2012), while considering sugar dating site's capability for aiding and abetting illegal prostitution and sex trafficking (Motyl, 2012). This comment suggested that approximately 5% (Motyl, 2012) of students have been involved in some type of sex work and 1 in 5 students admit that they have seriously considered it (Motyl, 2012). SeekingArrangement.com developed a study that indicated the top "Top 20 Fastest Growing Sugar colleges of 2016" (SeekingArrangement.com, 2017). The top sugar college was reported to be Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The only school in California that made the list was San Francisco State University.

There are several testimonials from young women who engage in sex work, such as pornography, in order to make ends meet or pay off student loan debt (Chou, 2017). Female college students that are engaged in sex work have experienced the field in a variety of ways (Kitchener, 2014). One young woman described her journey from sexual abuse to sex work in order to gain self-empowerment (Kitchener, 2014), while another described the world of dominatrix that she has been lead to by her prior profession in sugar dating and escorting (Kitchener, 2014), and a third woman claimed it was the least 'shitty' job that she'd ever had [working in pornography] (Kitchener, 2014). While these specific women all had different stories that led them to their professions, they all had one thing in common: an interest in higher education and the willingness to become

familiar and engaged with sex work in order to provide economic support for themselves, gain financial relief, and to reduce stress schedule while in school (Kitchener, 2014).

In a recent study, it was found that over 75% (Sagar, 2015) of sex workers in school indicated that their sex work was short-lived, meaning they had only held one sugar arrangement and not for an extended period of time (Sagar, 2015). However, some students find sex work difficult to withdraw from, due to the malleable conditions and opportunity for great profit (Sagar, 2015). Sugar dating may also be more suitable for college students due to an absence of punitive statutes regarding these arrangements. Sugar dating, if associated with escorting, may be a more covert and informal exchange of goods for money (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Therefore, the justice system may deter from taking legal action against those involved. On the contrary, commercial sex work, which is asserted as the trade of sex for material goods, is becoming more widespread (Jenness, Kobrak, Wendel, Neaigus, Murrill, & Hagan, 2011). Commercial sex, unlike sugar dating, includes relaxed or casual exchange or barter between a sex worker and client (Jenness et al., 2011). Sugar dating is often comprised of a written or verbal contract (Motyl, 2012) that explicitly states the expectations of both parties involved. The expectations can include the number of times per week, month, or year that the dates take place, the amount of allowance the sugar baby is to be paid and how often, as well as the duration of the overall arrangement (SeekingArrangement.com, 2018). Some sugar arrangements last for a short time (3-6 months), while others can last over the course of years (SeekingArrangement.com, 2018). The length of exchange sex work has also been found to be a factor dependent upon the geographical location (Jenness et al.,

2011). It was found that 9% among young women who practice sex work in California experience this profession as being life long (Jeness et al., 2011).

Potential Risks in Sex Work

One study indicated three levels of risk associated with sex work: lower, medium, and high (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Lower risk is associated with a protective setting, a lesser financial disparity between worker and client, and with limited penetrative sex (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Medium risk is correlated with the more control that the sex worker holds, whether or not the individual has peer support and security, and if the sex is protected (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). High risk is prevalent when the client holds more control leaving the sex worker disadvantaged, when substances are involved, when sex is non-protected, and when there is a high number of clients (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Location is also a factor in the determinant of risk associated with sex work (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005); there is a higher level of risk in low income community sex workers and impoverished regions (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005).

In Southeast Asia and Africa, sex work or heterosexual commercial trade of sex is a sufficiently supported risk factor for HIV (Jeness et al., 2011). Exchange sex has been indicated as an attributal factor in HIV transmission in the U.S. (Jeness et al., 2011). Young women in poverty stricken communities with less access to resources and opportunity, are often forced into sex work as a means to survive (Miller, Fielden, Tyndall, Zhang, Gibson, & Shannon, 2011). It has also been reported that young women first begin to engage in survival sex, the exchange of one's body for basic needs that include clothing, food, or shelter (National Runaway Safeline, 2018), around the age of

14 (Miller et al., 2011). The age group of young women from 14-26 has been found to be more susceptible to survival sex work, infectious disease, unplanned pregnancy, and violence (Miller et al., 2011).

Overall, it has been documented that sex work is directly correlated to a multitude of health risks including sexually transmitted diseases, injury as a result of victimization either physically or sexually, and having a mental illness (Ahrens, Katon, McCarty, Richardson, & Courtney, 2012). In the Midwest Study of Former Foster Youth, a study showed that 27% of female former foster youth who had engaged in sex work had had a history of sexual molestation and 18% had a history of rape. However, the risks are inherently different for that population of young people (Ahrens et al., 2012). As a result of a growing understanding of risk factors for sex work endeavors among young women in the U.S., efforts to support those in the profession have ensued (Miller et al., 2011). These efforts include community health clinics that are dedicated to treating sex workers, young adult support services, youth groups with a primary goal of fostering healthy development and more (Miller et al., 2011).

Sugar-Dating Sites and Sex Work

The primary method for arranging such relationships is through online dating services. Currently, there are over 20 websites that allow members to seek out a companion for a 'mutually beneficial' sugar relationship (Motyl, 2012). These websites offer a platform for sugar daddies to connect with sugar babies in hopes of developing a consensual arrangement, which may or may not involve sexual relations while paying the young women an allowance for their services.

As a result of this financial arrangement, legal discrepancies have arisen due to beliefs that these arrangements are more transactional than purely intimate (Motyl, 2012). Because these arrangements may not solely be transactional, they can be facilitated through dating sites such as SeekingArrangement.com and these sites can stay clear of becoming ‘content providers’, which can incriminate them as fostering prostitution or profiting from prostitution (Motyl, 2012). The way that sites like SeekingArrangement.com collect data regarding member’s wants and preferences around allowance, they offer a dropdown menu with an open comment section which allows for the customer to enter specific content, rather than the website requiring the customer to select an option for various solicitations the site may be offering (Motyl, 2012). Thus, it is not a guaranteed exchange of goods meaning it is not prostitution and the websites are not liable (Motyl, 2012). Not only are there sites to meet a sugar date, there are also online resources that assist in helping sugar babies create the most appealing profiles as well as tips for landing a sugar daddy and maintaining the most profitable relationship (Motyl, 2012).

There are many current debates surrounding these arrangements, claiming they are purely prostitution in disguise and the websites that pair sugar babies with sugar daddies are often fostering online prostitution. While different than prostitution or an escort service, these online sugar data relationships nonetheless imply a similar form of material-social exchange. It has been argued that the penal code set in place does not sufficiently ensure that there is no prostitution taking place within the arrangements (Motyl, 2012). Research notes that it would be plausible to invade the online dating sites

that support sugar arrangements to guard against online prostitution and sex trafficking (Motyl, 2012). Research has categorized types of sugar arrangements and the legal consequences associated with each (Motyl, 2012). A 'Category One' is classic prostitution, the blunt exchange of sex for money while excluding any and all forms of social companionship (Motyl, 2012). In order for a sugar arrangement to fall under this category, the allowance would be paid during each meeting rather than on a monthly or bi-monthly basis (Motyl, 2012). This would constitute prostitution in that both parties are utilizing this arrangement as an exchange of goods rather than a companionship.

A Category Two arrangement refers to long term sugar relationships that often resemble traditional relationships and come with a high sense of companionship (Motyl, 2012). These arrangements do not fall within the perimeters of prostitution. Lastly, a Category Three arrangement is a combination of both a Category One and a Category Two (Motyl, 2012). Arrangements under Category Three display long term sugar relationships with low levels of companionship (Motyl, 2012). There is little socialization within the arrangement and the companionship primarily exists for the frank exchange of sex for money (Motyl, 2012). However, Category Three arrangements are often excluded from the same legal ramifications as Category One arrangements due to the duration of the relationship and the possibility for companionship (Motyl, 2012).

Sugar Baby Motivations and Incentives

A recent study detailed lived experiences and personal perceptions held by participants, including whether or not sugar babies hold mutually exclusive motivations, how they are able to navigate around the stigma of sex work and true romantic

relationships, and how sugar babies exercise their power and agency within their arrangements (Daly, 2017). Some motivations that were explored include the rising cost of college tuition, the inability of families to help provide financial support through university, and independence or flexible work conditions (Daly, 2017). Sex work is a highly profitable avenue for employment considering the limiting conditions students face. Students often have an overwhelming schedule and only have time to work 10-20 hours per week (Daly, 2017). There are not many jobs that offer enough money on an hourly rate that would provide a stable living for a college student (Daly, 2017).

While sugar arrangements may offer a flexible schedule and lucrative output, many participants have reported high emotional distress that is accompanied with stigma and a lack of academic motivation with a growing financial desire. Daly (2017) explored the stereotypes of individuals engaged in sex work and found that the typical image of a sex worker is either a runaway, drug addict, delinquent, or victim of sex trafficking. Further, this research suggested many people assume that sex work does not require a set of skills or intelligence. However, it was suggested that students in higher education may de-stigmatize sex workers due to the class associated with university students and they may be able to legitimize the profession (Daly, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Power and domination are pivotal roles in society, according to Max Weber's Theory of Social Stratification (Shortell, 2018). Weber identified power as both the realization and ability of an individual to achieve their goals regardless of any actions that may be held against them by others (Shortell, 2018). Societal power, which Weber

examines, encompasses social, legal, political, and economic power (Shortell, 2018); all of which coincide with one another (Shortell, 2018). Once power has been obtained, domination ensues according to Weber (Shortell, 2018). Domination is the execution of authority to compel others to do something even if it is against their interest to do so (Shortell, 2018). The individuals who hold power and exert domination are known as property owners, those who have access to more privileged resources in society (Shortell, 2018).

Upon exploring sugar dating through the lens of Weber's Social Stratification Theory, it is indicated that sugar daddies would inevitably mimic the property owners, the individuals who have greater access to a higher standard of living with more opportunity and resources. Whereas, sugar babies would be the property-less, the semi skilled or unskilled individuals who endure a noticeably different standard of living as a result of the absence of wealth (Shortell, 2018). However, the property-less class in sugar dating is becoming more independent in that they are asserting themselves in an effort to fulfill their financial needs. Sugar babies are gaining power, thus domination emerges as a result of them utilizing their power and authority by exploiting the property owners, or sugar daddies, to gain the privileged resources that their authorities have access to.

Conclusion

Based on previous literature, we have knowledge regarding the overall background of sex work and how different literature defines the act of engaging in sex for hire as well as survival sex. Additionally, we have an overall understanding of the modern sugar dating phenomenon and the process by which arrangements and

relationships are developed. Also, from the literature, we are able to understand the range of sex work that is taking place today in higher education along with the potential risks that sex workers face while engaging in the profession. Lastly, we are able to identify and review sugar dating websites and how they relate to sex work while analyzing the members of these sites and their incentives for membership. Consequently, there is a decent amount of information that scratches the surface of the new world of sugar dating. However, there are gaps in the knowledge that must not go unnoticed. As stated with the purpose of this research, there is a crucial need for expansive research regarding the ways in which men are able to market themselves to young college aged women, and how websites do as well, along with the social implications that may arise with these arrangements.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this chapter, I will describe the methodology employed to conduct the qualitative analysis of the data from 50 sugar daddy dating profiles. More specifically this chapter will detail the how the profiles were chosen, categorized, and analyzed. The methods defined in this section depict the approach that was used to gain insight into the overall goal of this project, to understand the narrative ways that sugar daddies and sugar dating websites market themselves to gain possible arrangements with college-aged females.

The general goal of this thesis is to explore the overall process, limitations, advantages, and motivations of a sugar arrangement. Tge qualitative study is a content analysis of 50 publicly accessible internet profiles of sugar daddies, and attempts to identify common narrative strategies used to describe the contours of these material-social exchanges. Through this analysis, I seek to explore the following research questions:

1. How do sugar daddies portray their financial resources and personal wealth?
2. What are common ways of conveying their interest in college-age partners?
How do sugar daddies explain their age difference?
3. How do sugar-dating websites entice new members, specifically college-

aged women?

4. What are common themes found on sugar dating websites that specifically target college-aged women?

These research questions were developed to create a larger understanding of the narrow research that currently exists regarding sugar dating and the nonexistent research of how sugar daddies and sugar dating sites entice college-aged women.

Data Collection

After the approval from California State University, Sacramento's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, a sample of 50 sugar daddy profiles were collected through online searches for public profiles on a website commonly used for these arrangements, SeekingArrangement.com. This particular site was selected due to the availability of public profiles and the popularity of the site. Many other sites did not offer free profiles to view, while SeekingArrangement.com allows a limited preview for interested parties. Public profiles were difficult to locate as sugar dating sites stress anonymity and discretion due to the stigma and implications that follow the participation of sugar dating.

The sources of the data were public profiles, free of cost. To view more than 50 profiles, one must join the site. It was not ethical to join the site due to risks regarding privacy and anonymity. Profiles were chosen from the first 50 of 100 profiles that the site allowed to be publicly viewed without membership. Names and contact information were not included on these publicly available profiles. Usernames were provided however, this project did not utilize members' usernames in an effort to keep their identity protected.

Discretion is highly valued on these sites, as arrangements of these sorts may conflict with certain lifestyles. For privacy purposes, I have presented specific examples of texts to highlight the core elements of these themes throughout the project using limited identifiers (e.g. “SD#1 stated...”) so that identification of actual profiles will be unlikely.

Members of SeekingArrangement.com directly posted the profiles that were chosen for analysis. All comments were framed between older men and younger women, and have primarily focused in terms of heterosexual relationships. Particular attention was given to commentary that indicated the desires, expectations, and financial or social capital provisions made available by sugar daddy. This was in an effort to showcase how sugar daddies market themselves to college-aged women. However, as analysis ensued, other factors and subthemes emerged which allowed for an even greater understanding of how sugar daddies market themselves and their abilities to college-aged women.

SeekingArrangement.com promotes the idea of a mutually beneficial relationship between the sugar daddy and sugar baby. A mutually beneficial arrangement is essentially a reciprocal relationship as one party provides a service and the other party pays for the service. However, explicit language regarding sex for money is not allowed on this site as sex for hire, or prostitution, is illegal in 49 states in the US (HG, 2018).

SeekingArrangement.com includes specific guidelines to members regarding communication that they must abide by in order to maintain their membership (SeekingArrangement, 2017). The site states, “DON’T explicitly ask for sex. They are sugar babies, not escorts” (SeekingArrangement, 2017). This may imply that sugar daddies must be more covert in their intentions as this site stresses their distance from

prostitution. As a result of this etiquette, profiles were candid in discussing the expectations and desires for an arrangement.

The profiles have a general list of descriptions that the sugar daddy can utilize in describing himself; some take advantage of this opportunity and write in depth, while others did not fill in the sections at all. However, each profile has a list of identifiers for the sugar daddy to fill-in which include: how long they've been a member of SeekingArrangement.com, their age, their geographic location, what they're looking for in a sugar baby and arrangement, their ethnicity, education, occupation, current relationship status, their net worth, if they have children, if they smoke or drink, their annual income, their lifestyle budget (the amount they're willing to pay the sugar baby in allowance), their body type, height, a section for a headline statement, and an 'about me' section where they can provide some background information on themselves to give the sugar baby an idea of who they are.

Analysis

Profiles were initially copied from SeekingArrangement.com and inserted into a Microsoft Word Document. Each profile was named and numbered according to the chronological order they were collected (SD#1, SD#2, SD#3 etc.). Initially, characteristics were highlighted according to information given regarding age, ethnicity, net worth, annual income, and education. Following this procedure, an open coding process of the first 20 profiles ensued and over 100 codes were presented. Each code was labeled and inserted into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet, which was utilized for the development of an initial codebook.

As a result of a plethora of initial codes, the codes with similar content were then combined, which resulted in less than 50 codes. Afterwards, the next 20 profiles were coded with the original 50 codes and additional codes were added to the initial codebook. At this point, codes were repeatedly combined and deleted in an effort to concentrate the codes into relevant information that could be used as support for my initial research questions. Subsequently, I developed six codes that emerged as themes. Once these six codes were finalized, the codebook was color-coded and commentary was inserted in an effort to visualize the patterns within the information provided. The final six codes that described the information provided by the sugar daddies selected and illustrated patterns found through the coding process later emerged as the themes that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

SeekingArrangement.com identifies sugar dating as the construction of an arrangement between a sugar daddy and a sugar baby. The site illustrates arrangements as an opportunity for individuals to be more direct with their partner in terms of what their desires and needs are in an effort to “stop wasting time” (SeekingArrangement.com) and promptly move towards the ultimate goal—a relationship that is mutually beneficial. The site claims that members will be able to easily state their preferences and expectations of the arrangement through the utilization of their standard profile template. The site’s profiles enable members to describe themselves through various categories including: length of membership, age, location, ethnicity, body type, net worth/annual income, occupation, relationship status, an ‘about me’ section, and a section for what the sugar daddy is looking for.

Sample Characteristics

The data collection yielded 50 sugar daddy profiles along with descriptive commentary used for data analysis. All of the comments that have been noted in this project derived from the information sugar daddies provided in their profiles. The sugar daddies ranged in age from 24-64 years old with an average age of 43.33 years. The highest net worth listed was \$50 million with an annual income of over \$1 million; the lowest net worth was noted at \$100,000 with an annual income of \$75,000. Information concerning the racial/ethnic backgrounds of sugar daddies indicated that out of the 50 sugar profiles selected, 62% identified as White/Caucasian. The second most common

race/ethnicity was Asian. The third most common race/ethnicity was found to be East Indian. In regards to education, 88% of the sugar daddies selected held a bachelor's degree or higher accreditation. Various occupations were identified including, marketing, real estate, and technology, although the majority of occupations listed were described as 'self employed' or 'entrepreneur'.

Among the selected profiles, characteristics and commentary were developed into themes that describe the intentions of sugar daddies and imply the ways in which they market themselves to female college students. The themes that emerged include sugar daddies' desire for an emotional connection, an interest in a strictly no-strings-attached relationship, or friends with benefits style of arrangement, the indication of the sugar daddy's busy lifestyle with an emphasis on a desire to have a sugar baby fill available free time, the deal breakers and overall desires or expectations of an arrangement held by the sugar daddy, the importance of discretion in the relationship, and the social and financial provisions that may be available to sugar babies through sugar daddies.

Desire for an Emotional Connection

Many Sugar Daddies desire an emotional connection, friendship, or companionship. Out of the 50 profiles that were analyzed, 34% (17) noted that they were seeking an emotional connection within the arrangement. Some sugar daddies indicated their desire for a deep connection while others sought a love companion or intimate friendship. For example, SD #5 indicated, "I love making the kind of connection with someone that makes both our hearts beat faster, gets us laughing, and keeps the

conversation and fun flowing freely.” This may demonstrate an interest in an intimate connection that is built on a true understanding and attraction of one another.

Building a strong foundation for a potential relationship was a common sub-theme among sugar daddies that stated their interest for an emotional connection. This overall sub-theme emerged from several sugar daddies’ descriptions of what it is they desired out of the relationship. For example, SD #13 explained,

I am looking for someone exceptional. More specifically someone to travel with, share amazing experiences, and create unforgettable memories. Anything we do together shouldn’t be more enjoyable if it were done alone or with someone else. The best way to do this type of relationship is with two people that are naturally compatible and attracted to each other with financial benefits as a bonus, not a reason.

Here, SD#13 described the emotional connection he is seeking with a sugar baby, expressing that he was interested in creating memories and sharing experiences with someone he may truly be compatible with on an emotional level.

Many sugar daddies indicated that they were interested in meeting someone they would be able to “connect” with and enjoy spending time with. A number of personal accounts spoke to a desire for a deeper level of connection with their SD, as for example SD #39, who expressed himself as, “Looking for emotional connection... I prefer ongoing connections....” A long-term connection is something that may be suitable to the desires of SD #39 as he indicated that he prefers long-term emotional connections with a partner. Some sugar daddies are more direct with the type of relationship and emotional

connection they are seeking, as seen with SD #15, “I seek someone with whom I have a natural intellectual, emotional, and physical chemistry... and companionship in and out of the bedroom.” Here, SD #15 definitively stated his intentions with a partner, as he described his interest in an intellectual connection with sexual chemistry as well. This demonstrated that sexual desires are expressed through these sites, only without an explicit nature. This more direct approach to expressing one’s desires for emotional connection could be a method to eliminate the potential for misunderstanding within the arrangement.

There was some relationship between covert sexual implications and a desire for emotional connection within sugar dating arrangements. Due to the website’s formal rules regarding explicitly asking for sex in exchange for an allowance, some sugar daddies expressed their sexual desires surreptitiously. However, for some sex is a form of emotional connection, and therefore, the desire for emotional connection could potentially indicate a desire for sex as well. Nonetheless, a desire for sex is not directly marked by a mention of desired emotional connection. For example, SD #26 stated, “You have to be looking for intimacy. You have to be craving affection... I am in urgent need of hugging a woman.” Here, SD #26 covertly indicated his interest in sexual relations with a sugar baby in that he expressed a requirement for the sugar baby to be seeking intimacy, matching his own desire. Although this member did not use the term ‘sex’, his expression of needing to be in physical contact with a woman may signify an inclination for sex within the arrangement.

No-Strings-Attached

Many Sugar Daddies seek relationships that are No-Strings-Attached (NSA) or Friends with Benefits (FWB). Relationships that are considered ‘No-Strings-Attached’ are described as purely sexual arrangements that do not require any commitment. This is somewhat different than ‘Friends With Benefits’, as these relationships are built on friendships that involve casual sex without a romantic commitment. Out of the 50 profiles that were explored, 18% (9) indicated that they desired to have a casual arrangement, where romantic feelings would be deferred for the duration of the arrangement.

Several sugar daddies expressed a strong desire for a strictly FWB or NSA agreement. For example, SD#6 stated, “Seeking friends with benefits, no strings attached.... I'm not looking for a soul mate on here. I use this site as a way to have a straightforward relationship where emotions don't get confused -- we have an arrangement.” This particular member distinctly revealed that he is not seeking an emotionally romantic relationship with a sugar baby. SD #6 disclosed a desire for a strictly friends with benefits, no-strings-attached arrangement, while asserting his lack of interest in finding a soul mate and maintaining that the liaison is in fact an arrangement, not a relationship.

Other sugar daddies indicated their interest in a non-committed arrangement. The detailed descriptions of the type of relationship desired by the sugar daddy may eliminate confusing or mixed emotions between both parties. The straightforward and transparent approach of sugar daddies can be seen with SD #19 where he described, “I am looking for a mutually beneficial NSA arrangement...No Strings Attached”. This clear-cut

indication supports the idea that some sugar daddies are not interested in an emotionally connected relationship but would rather keep the arrangement casual and without emotions intervening. SD #20 illustrated this theme by stating, “Not looking for a commitment but more like an NSA/Friends with benefits thing”. Emotional connection and commitment are not a priority for SD #20, his desires are outlined through his way of stating exactly what he is and what he is not looking for.

Additionally, two other sugar daddies indicated their desire for an NSA relationship. SD #30 noted, “I’m primarily looking for NSA relationships”, while SD #4 stated, “Seeking friends with benefits, with no strings attached”. These descriptions further support the concept and overarching theme that some sugar daddies are using the site to find women willing to engage in an informal and nontraditional arrangement which will lack in emotional connection and will primarily be beneficial to both parties. This could be seen inadvertently as, sex without emotional baggage.

Busy Lifestyle

Many sugar daddies claim to have busy lifestyles and as such frame their desire for a sugar baby as a way to fill their free time. Out of the 50 profiles that were analyzed, 18% (9) revealed to have extremely busy lifestyles primarily dictated by their careers. This revealed that they hope to share downtime with a sugar baby in a more unconventional manner, as traditional relationships may be more time consuming.

Several sugar daddies expressed that their career takes up much of their time, leaving little time to share in traditional ways. We can see this illustrated through SD #8, as he expressed, "I am very busy with my job most of the time and as such, like to relax

and de-stress to the fullest when I can.... Busy executive looking for a partner in crime to help me enjoy the precious free time I do have.” Here, SD #8 revealed that the majority of his time is spent on his career, leaving little room for free time. However, SD #8 clarifies that he would enjoy spending the little free time he does have, with a sugar baby.

Another sugar daddy who articulated his busy lifestyle is SD #17 who stated, “I am a self employed, very busy, but quite successful executive who doesn't have time (or frankly desire) at the moment for a full-time girlfriend.” This sugar daddy identified that he holds little interest in entertaining the idea of a traditional girlfriend experience. Therefore, he may be seeking a sugar baby to fulfill companionship in light of his hectic work life. Similarly, SD #20 highlighted his desire for balance, “Busy entrepreneur/Investor seeking a little balance in life”. This particular member did not indicate whether or not he is interested in an NSA/FWB relationship over an emotional connection with a sugar baby. However, he expressed a desire to create a work-life balance that may be important to him. SD #23 expressed similarly, “As of late, work has consumed a majority of my time thus shortening free time to find someone to round me out.”

Again, the overarching theme that sugar daddies express very little free time to spend in traditional ways is evident through multiple sugar daddies, along with their quest to find some harmonious balance between their career and personal life with a sugar baby in the limited free time they have.

Deal Breakers and Desires

This theme was developed through analyzing the various descriptions of desires, intentions, and a factor or issue that could potentially cause the arrangement to fail, deal breakers. Some key desires that were indicated by sugar daddies included: a physically fit, sexually attractive, and intelligent sugar baby. Without these desires being met, the relationship would inevitably fail as these desires were often highlighted by sugar daddies as mandatory characteristics of sugar babies. As seen previously, SD #13 is transparent with what it is that he wants from an arrangement. He indicated in his profile,

I would prefer someone relatively close (California or Las Vegas) but if you aren't and want to convince me you will be worth the distance, feel free to blow me away. I can be (very) picky... Under 28, and fit/in-shape only please...You MUST be able to have a sustained, intelligent conversation. No beautiful 'shells'.

Again, SD #13 clearly stated his preferences and expectations from a sugar baby and potential arrangement.

There were similar statements among sugar daddies in regards to physical fitness as a preference and a desire for intellectual conversationalists. SD #24 expressed,

Looks do matter, but not a cookie cutter. My goal is a regular arrangement with one woman. Meet weekly, and travel with me when our schedules permit. Good support and good boundaries. I'd prefer to be your only arrangement, but otherwise completely NSA.

This sugar daddy was coherently definitive in regards to his intentions as a sugar daddy and to what he looks for in a sugar baby. He specified the criteria that must be met in order to engage in an arrangement.

While some sugar daddies were able to clearly describe what they require and long for in an arrangement, another respondent was more abstract- although descriptive in regards to the exact nature of his desires. SD #42 was explicit in the role he planned to play within the arrangement as he reported,

I will be there to help you every stage of your transformation...I will look upon you at each phase of this personal growth, as a gardener does his prized rose...My joy will be in seeing you develop and grow. As I near the end of my first six decades on this planet. I feel that I've earned the right to... indulge my "sweet tooth"...the desire to help a deserving lady to become the complete woman she needs to be.

This particular sugar daddy described his overall goal of being present to observe his sugar baby's growth. This may indicate his willingness or desire to mentor his sugar baby in whatever aspect she may need, whether it be financial or personal. This respondent's illustration was alluring as he asserted his ultimate desires in the arrangement much differently than other sugar daddies. SD#42 described his overall desires as wishing to support the sugar baby whereas other sugar daddies defined theirs as limitations and requirements expected of the sugar baby and relationship.

Discretion

Discretion is an important theme that emerged from the profiles of among sugar daddies on SeekingArrangement.com. This may be in part because some sugar babies are married with families. Of the 50 profiles analyzed, 11 sugar daddies (22%) indicated that they are in fact, “Married but Looking”. Meaning, these individuals are currently married but are also looking for a secondary companion. Of those who indicated that they were married but looking, 45% expressed an interest in discretion within the arrangement.

Multiple sugar daddies revealed that they are married while still seeking additional company in a sugar baby, and expressed a desire for discretion. For example, SD#1 stated, “I need to have a strictly discreet relationship since I have a family.” Evidently, discretion holds to be a high priority for this sugar daddy as he is married with a family and needs to keep his personal life separate from his sugar dating arrangement. Another sugar daddy, SD #9, who is also married but looking, revealed, “I am looking for discretion...I have my own life and I’m looking for somebody that respects that.” This supports the common need for discretion among sugar daddies that are married. There are other sugar daddies that listed discretion as a primary need within their sugar dating arrangement, without listing their current relationship status as married but looking. This is evident through SD#3 who stated, “I would love to meet an honest girl who respects my privacy and appreciates discretion”. This sugar daddy illustrated a desire for discretion along with a need for the sugar baby to respect his privacy. SD #3 may be a particularly private person who prefers to keep his sugar dating arrangements concealed. This is evident with another sugar daddy as well, SD #34, who indicated, “I am a very

private person. Looking for something discreet.” This additionally supports the overarching theme of sugar daddies common need for discretion within their arrangement.

Social Capital and Financial Provisions

There are several sugar daddies that fell under this theme, of having the ability to provide a sugar baby guidance and financial provisions to help them through their journey whilst the sugar daddy utilizes his own social capital to help the sugar baby as well. However, this overarching theme of social capital and economic provisions may be a way in which sugar dating sites and sugar daddies market themselves to college-aged women, as their resources may be appealing to sugar babies in college. As seen in multiple profiles, sugar daddies describe their social capital through lived experience and financial capabilities that may not only appeal to sugar babies, but that could also potentially provide them possibilities in terms of furthering their career or education goals.

For example, SD #7 described himself as, “A life-long learner...I’ve managed to create a life surrounded by great friends and family, a successful career, and endless opportunity to discover new things”. SD #7 has managed to articulate his interest in learning, his bountiful career, and access to opportunity. These indicators support the overarching theme of how sugar daddies may utilize their social capital and life experience to market themselves to sugar babies as they have the means and resources to provide support to a sugar baby. Another sugar daddy, SD #15, also highlighted his education, life experience and ability to offer support by stating, “I am highly educated,

well-traveled...I have much to offer and teach given my patience, calm demeanor, and wide breadth of corporate, start-up, and entrepreneurial business skills and experiences.” This sugar daddy identified the ways in which he would be able to provide assistance to sugar babies through ‘teaching’ and guidance via his knowledge of business and entrepreneurial skills.

Other sugar daddies that have fallen under this category, offer insight into the financial stability they have to offer a sugar baby. This is evident through SD #1, who described himself as a, “Successful gentlemen looking for a love companion that I can help mentor...Offering monthly allowance”. This sugar daddy indicated that he is successful financially, thus is able to offer a monthly allowance for love companionship and mentoring. While he did not state the ways in which he can provide mentorship, or to which topics he is fluent in, he insinuated how he would sustain a sugar baby’s lifestyle financially while offering some guidance in an effort to possibly further her social capital. Willingness to provide monthly allowance and financial support was mentioned, not often, but it was a factor for some sugar daddies.

For example, SD #43 expressed that he was, “open to all financial needs”. This may be enticing for sugar babies that are looking for an individual capable of sustaining their lifestyle through financial support. Another sugar daddy, SD #4, indicated, “you can count on me being dependable. I am fully comfortable with the idea of an allowance”. While the social provisions were not definitive in this statement, the openness to financial provisions was made apparent. Overall, social capital and financial provisions were stated as available to sugar babies by select sugar daddies.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the conclusions of the research and the implications on social work practice. The themes that emerged include sugar daddies' desire for an emotional connection, their interest in a no strings attached or friends with benefit styled relationship, indications of a busy lifestyle and the desire to have a sugar baby fill their free time, the deal breakers and overall desires or expectations of the arrangement, the importance and need for discretion, and the social capital and financial provisions available to sugar babies via sugar daddies. This chapter also discusses how these themes may relate to one another, how this project relates to prior research, and the implications of this research that will aid in the growing knowledge of sugar dating and how sugar dating websites and sugar daddies market themselves to college-aged women.

U.S. college students have persistent struggles with financial instability during their studies leading some to venture into a form of sex work, sugar dating, to make ends meet. Due to these increased financial insecurities as a result of rising costs of tuition and living, college-aged women have been turning to non- traditional ways to gain financial aid and potential opportunities for social capital. The need for research into this phenomenon is rising as these arrangements are becoming more popular. With the increase of research regarding sugar dating, social service professionals will be able to adopt best practices with a greater understanding of the social implications that sugar dating may have. In order to identify possible social implications of women in college who are involved in sugar dating, it was vital to understand how sugar daddies and sugar

dating websites market themselves. As a result of this project's content analysis, six themes were identified that may give insight into the potential social ramifications of sugar dating and the significant need for further research.

The leading theme that developed through this project was the sugar daddy's desire for an emotional connection with a sugar baby. The emergence of this theme indicated that men are not only seeking sexual relations with sugar babies, but they are also interested in creating a bond with a sugar baby that could potentially lead to a long-term or meaningful relationship. The desire for an emotional connection implies that some individuals who become involved in sugar relationships do not strictly seek out purely sexual endeavors. The idea that sugar dating may be comprised of entirely covert sex-for-hire practices can be seen in prior research regarding sugar arrangements as 'sugar-coated' prostitution (Motyl, 2012). Prior research has observed sugar dating as prostitution in disguise and analyzed the liability that sugar babies and sugar daddies hold under the legal penalization policies that surround prostitution. The lack of distinction between prostitution and sugar dating can lead to simplistic understandings of the sugar-dating phenomenon. This theme that emerged conflicts with the second major theme developed within this project, many sugar daddy's interest in a friends-with-benefits or no-strings-attached relationship. This is because the findings suggest that sugar daddies may also seek out non-committed and strictly sexually pleasurable companionship rather than a deeply seeded emotional connection.

Additionally, prior research regarding the potential risks of sex work related directly to a sugar daddy's interest in a no strings attached or friends with benefit styled

relationships. Casual sexual arrangements that are accompanied with a financial allowance could potentially put the sugar daddy in more power as he is making decisions regarding the frequency of payment and amount of allowance. Prior research has indicated that risk is prevalent when the client, who is providing financial assistance, holds more control, which may in turn leave the sex worker, or sugar baby, disadvantaged (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). With non-committed relationships, sex may be non-protected and multiple sexual partners may be involved, which can lead to higher levels of risk as well (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Non-committed relationships were notably sought after by sugar daddies, which implies that some sugar daddies are looking for an arrangement that is primarily founded on sexual relations. With the potential for risk being greater in these types of arrangements, health care professionals and social work professionals must be well informed in order to develop the appropriate approach and best methods to address potential harm that could result from risky sexual endeavors. The need for discretion was of high importance to sugar daddies. Prior research has indicated the stigma around sex work and those who engage in such practices (Motyl, 2012). As a result of strong social reproach of sugar dating, discretion has been encouraged through the websites that facilitate sugar arrangements. On the SeekingArrangement.com blog, it describes that sugar dating is often viewed as taboo and therefore many members opt to keep their involvement private (SeekingArrangement.com, 2017). The blog also offers tips and suggestions as to how a sugar daddy can ensure discretion within his sugar dating endeavors. For example, the

blog advises sugar daddies to use the app called Snapchat, which deletes messages immediately after the recipient has read the content.

Additionally, the site suggested that sugar daddies, “keep their stories straight” (SeekingArrangement.com, 2018) in case of uncomfortable run ins with personal circles while with their sugar baby, and to be cautious in selecting meet-up locations with their sugar babies to eliminate chances of seeing colleagues, friends, or family members (SeekingArrangement.com, 2018). Due to sugar dating sites, like SeekingArrangement.com, not only encourage but also aid in the teachings of how to maintain discretion among arrangements, the theme of discretion developed and implications of shame were presented. Shame surrounding the involvement in a sugar dating arrangement could be a result of the inherent stigma of sugar dating. Prior research has explored the stereotypes of individuals who engage in sex work and found that the archetypal depiction of a sex worker is a runaway, drug addict, delinquent, or victim of sex trafficking (Daly, 2017). Further, prior research implied that many people assume that sex work does not require a set of skills or intelligence (Daly, 2017). While this is an inaccurate representation of women in college who engage in sugar dating, the image of sugar dating is tainted as it relates to sex work. Therefore, feelings of shame may ensue. Thus, social service and health care practitioners must be pivotal in understanding possible emotional ramifications of sugar dating in order to develop best preventative or therapeutic measures and approaches to better help their college-aged clients.

For individuals in college, creating relationships with people who may be able to help them advance their career could be imperative to their success. Therefore,

networking and forming links with others who may be in your field of employment could be crucial. Through links and bridges to specific people and groups, one could gain economic opportunity through job placements and experiences. Some individuals who have been able to achieve great success in their life may be willing to share their tips or guide others through the process by which they took to succeed. Therefore, sugar dating may potentially be an ideal platform for college-aged women to gain networks with successful men that could potentially advance their careers through mentorship and guidance. This became apparent through the development of the theme regarding the social capital and financial provisions that may be provided by sugar daddies to sugar babies. The power that sugar daddies may have and how they are able to use their social wealth as a means to not only gain the company of a sugar baby, but to provide social opportunities for the selected sugar baby, has been indicated in previous research. Social capital is a sought after commodity as it has been found to encapsulate connections, channels, and links to associations that may allow one to move upward on the “socioeconomic ladder” (OECD, 2018). The opportunity for sugar babies to build social capital was implied when sugar daddies offered to provide mentorship and guidance to interested sugar babies. As upward mobility is indicated as a commodity through the theoretical lens of social stratification (Shortell, 2018), opportunity for social guidance and career or educational mentorship is highly appealing to college students.

While most of the themes that emerged from this study were directly related to prior research, one theme was found that did not, the indication of a busy lifestyle and the desire to have a sugar baby fill their free time. Because there is a lack of research

regarding sugar daddies' intentions, these themes had not been discussed previously, indicating a need for further exploration. Students, particularly working students, often do not have the luxury of flexible schedules and free time for pleasure (Goldrick-Rab, 2017). However, this is often due to the number of hours that students need to work at a full or part-time job in order to make ends meet. This implies that student-turned-sugar babies that agree to meet once per week, may be paid equal to, if not more, than they would at their traditional job. In addition to the allurements of 'easy' or 'quick' money, the potential for more free time that a student could devote to studies may be greatly appealing. This implication denotes the overall problem, student's overwhelming financial burdens. Therefore, more must be done to research these issues to properly alleviate the greater issue.

Further research of the issue presented and the implications of this study, by the social science field, particularly social work, is crucial. This is because the popularization of sugar dating arrangement has delineated greater social issues that social service and health care professionals face in their practice. Due to sugar dating's recent debut, there is a crucial need for social service professions to acknowledge and understand the phenomenon. Social workers in particular must be aware of the social implications, physical, and emotional risks and ramifications that may be involved in sugar dating. Social workers often work directly with college-aged women that may be engaging in this type of arrangement. Thus, it is imperative that social workers must be supplied with insight of the sugar dating culture and the influences it may have on their client population. Further research of sugar dating and how men and sugar dating sites entice

potential sugar babies with their marketing tactics is essential in developing best practices for social workers, health care professionals, and other social service agents to increase informed care for their clients.

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