

Age-Hypogamy Qualitative Research - Primary Sources

Authors: Drs. Wednesday Martin & Treena Orchard (2023)

Study Description

To examine the key socio-cultural and sexual factors driving age-hypogamous relationships through our lived experiences as well as those of the women and men who take part in our collaborative ethnographic research about these issues.

Study Design & Research Methods

We engage in independent and collaborative auto-ethnographic projects that center our lived experiences, which are the lens through which we understand not only our lives but also how our experiences reflect and shed light on the broader social setting, where relationships of all kinds, including age-hypogamous, are in flux. Participant-observation, a time-honored approach within our home discipline of anthropology, is among the primary methods employed. This refers to our observations of sexual culture, online dating environments, and popular as well as academic writing on the issues that are germane to our area of interest. Participating in popular dating/sexual events as well as engaging with swipe culture in the online dating context are additional sources of information. Our analysis of these relationships is also informed by informal in-person interviews (n=35) we have conducted since 2017 with men who express an interest in intimate relationships with older women.

Together, we conducted a self-reported survey on Instagram, where we and our social media followers are most active. designed to identify trending issues and hot topics that interest our target audience. The target audience was people who have lived experience with and/or insightful comments to make about older women/younger men relationships. The exclusion criteria for our sample were people who did not have this specific lived experience and who did not comment on the relationships we were focusing on. Between July 20 and July 21 of 2023, eighteen people responded to the following question posed on Dr. Martin's Instagram account: "Do you prefer older women/ younger men relationships?" Of these respondents, three were male and fifteen were female.

Our research activities are guided by ethical protocols standard to conducting qualitative research with human beings, including gaining consent from participants prior to asking them formal questions and protecting the identity of all participants by never using their real names, changing any information that could identify them, and in some instances, sharing our preliminary research and analysis with them for feedback and quality assessments.



Key Findings

1. Younger men are increasingly interested in relationships with older women for sexual reasons, including the fact that these women are more experienced, less constrained by body issues, and know what they want.
2. Younger men are attracted to older women because they desire to learn from their lived experiences which are, contrary to ageist social stereotypes, a source of knowledge and a valuable lessons regarding career success, travel, wellness, and mental health.
3. Younger men and older women often have mutual interests in child-free relationships that do not involve children- older women may already have them or not desire them, and many young men do not aspire to the standard romantic narrative of becoming fathers and household heads.
4. Older women desire younger men because they are typically fitter and more in tune with mental health and other lifestyle issues that matter to this group of women.
5. Older women are often in the prime of their lives sexually, financially, career-wise, and in terms of their wellness/mental health, which is a powerful source of inspiration for the men they encounter as well as themselves as they cultivate sexual relationships that honour their creative, kinky, and pleasure-oriented desires.
6. Acknowledging these shifts in the relationship and dating landscape is crucial to demystifying these relationships and replacing harmful sexist and ageist stereotypes with models of sexuality, intimacy, gender, and power that reflect the dynamic desires of younger men and older women in our society today.

Wednesday Martin, Ph.D. is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and feminist cultural critic who blends social science and storytelling to help readers better understand why they feel what they feel, do what they do, and want what they want. She is the author of *Primates of Park Avenue*, *UNTRUE*, and the forthcoming *Free Agent*, a memoir of open marriage, age/lessness, and adventure in LA.

Treena Orchard, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor and Faculty Scholar in the School of Health Studies at Western University. Age hypogamy, swipe culture, and the anthropology of sex, gender, and health among marginalized groups are among her areas of research expertise. Her book *Sexy, Sticky, Sad: Swipe Culture & The Darker Side of Dating Apps* will be published in April 2024.

Our Publications & Allied References

Martin, W. (Sept. 26, 2019). 'When I Hit Menopause, I Found Salvation On Tinder', *Refinery29*, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2019/09/8482329/when-i-hit-menopause-i-found-salvation-on-tinder>

Martin, W. (2019). *Untrue: Why Nearly Everything We Believe About Women, Lust, and Infidelity Is Wrong and How the New Science Can Set Us Free*, Little, Brown, Spark.

Orchard, T. (2024). *Sticky, Sexy, Sad: Swipe Culture & The Darker Side of Dating Apps*, (with a foreword by Dr. Wednesday Martin), University of Toronto Press.

Orchard, T. (July 12, 2023). Guest on Dr. Wednesday Martin's IGTV show Wineless Wednesday, where we talked about swipe culture, age hypogamy, dating apps, and sexuality https://www.instagram.com/p/CundhXvB_IM/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

Orchard, T. (2022). Neither Crone nor Cougar: Navigating Intimacy & Ageism on Dating Apps, In *Gender, Sex and Tech!: An Intersectional Feminist Guide*, Jill Fellows & Lisa Smith, Eds., Canadian Scholars Press, 86-100.

Orchard, T. (Oct. 31, 2021). Interviewed by Simone Paget, Sex & Relationship Columnist for the *Toronto Sun* about dating experiences and featured in the story 'The Allure of the Older Woman', <https://torontosun.com/life/sex-files/the-allure-of-the-older-woman>.

Orchard, T. (Dec. 30, 2020). Guest on Dr. Wednesday Martin's IGTV show Wineless Wednesday, where we talked about sexuality, dating, and social constructions of older women.

Orchard, T. (Sept. 25, 2020). 7 Reasons Dating A Younger Man Is A Smart Choice. *Your Tango* <https://www.yourtango.com/experts/treena-orchard/want-score-younger-guy-me-too-here%E2%80%99s-seven-reasons-why>.