

Sugar Babies and Epstein's Teenagers: What Must We Think?

I'm confused.

You see, I thought the definition of a prostitute was a male or female who accepted money for sexual favors. My online dictionary offers a more chauvinistic definition: "a person, in particular a woman, who engages in sexual activity for payment."

I'm not sure why that definition singles out women, but the sentiment is still in accord with mine.

In our [colleges today](#) we are seeing an uptick in the number of "sugar babies," female students who lease themselves and their favors out to wealthy "sugar daddies," who in turn give the sugar babies money for their tuition, necessary expenses, and certain luxuries.

I have some questions.

Are these college students prostitutes? Or do they fall under the old-fashioned category of mistresses? Can we define Sally, a biology major intent on medical school, as a mistress, "a woman other than his wife with whom a married man has a continuing sexual relationship?" And what if Sally's "sugar daddy" is unmarried or divorced? Is she a mistress or a prostitute? Can she be both?

And what are we to make of websites designed to connect such men and women? Seeking.com/sugar-baby, for example, describes its female candidates, who the site calls "attractive

members," as sapiosexual and hypergamous, meaning they are sexually attracted by intelligence and they desire a relationship that lifts them up in class or stature. The site's owners assure us that more than money is in play here, but then add that sugar babies "are not constrained by traditional definitions of relationships."

What must feminists think of sugar babies? Forty years ago, they used to proclaim that "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." Are bass and trout riding Schwinn's these days?

Recently our news outlets have inundated us with reports of the wealthy Jeffrey Epstein and his sexual debaucheries, many committed with under-age women. Using female procurers, Epstein apparently lured young women, including teenagers, to his New York mansion, his various estates, and to his "Island of Sin," and had his way with them. Awful, I think we'd agree, on the face of the matter. Like some teachers or priests, Epstein groomed underage girls and took advantage of them.

But if we dig a little more deeply, we find that some of the girls themselves helped procure more girls for Epstein, feeding his proclivity for young females. Unlike first reports, we learn that at least some of these girls were not homeless or runaways. They were in school, living with at least one parent, and, as one of Epstein's accusers says, [wearing braces](#). We also find that some of the girls from whom he sought sexual favors returned voluntarily to him time and again, in part for the money he was paying them and in part, we should assume, because the arrangement agreed with them.

So some more questions.

Our schools are failing to teach our young people mathematics, reading, and writing. Are they also failing to teach sexual education? Do we need to explain to teenagers that forty-year-

old strangers requesting massages have ulterior motives? Do we need lectures telling them that a grown man who asks a sixteen-year-old to strip to her underwear is up to no good? Do we need to tell our young people that the guy slipping you two hundred dollars isn't doing so because of the goodness of his heart, but because you performed certain acts?

And where, where in the name of heaven, were the parents of these under-age females? Where were the adults in their lives? Why, for example, did the graduate student whom Epstein had earlier molested allow her younger sister, fifteen years old, to fly off with him to a ranch?

Certainly, we may sympathize with these young women. Feeling crushed by bills in college, it's easy to go online and hook up with a guy who offers you financial relief. You're 25, and you're beautiful, but you're working as a secretary and want more luxuries from life. You're a teenager living in a broken home, or poor, or even homeless, and you figure giving some old guy a massage for money won't do any harm. Or you're middle-class, dazzled by his wealth, and like the money he gives you.

But here is what I'd like to ask them:

If you're selling your body to some rich guy to get through school, how are you any different than a streetwalker? Someday you may want a husband and a family. How will you square that with what you are doing now? And if you were an underaged female abused by the likes of Jeffrey Epstein and you returned repeatedly to his mansion, what are we supposed to think? Yes, you were young and dumb and taken advantage of, but you also took the money and kept coming back. Why? What was the attraction? Did he give you attention you were missing elsewhere? Did you enjoy his company? What?

Some readers may take offense at these questions, regarding

them as rhetorical or as sarcastic. I don't mean them that way.

Instead, I would sincerely like to ask these young women: What were, and are, you thinking?

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[Image Credit: Epstein-Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department, Public Domain; Needpix.com]