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The Secret Life of a Sugar Baby

Madison Crimi-DeMichele

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The Secret Life Of A Sugar Baby

Cash-strapped college students seem to be seeking arrangements



Madison Crimi-DeMichele

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“Once, I was single, I said, ‘fuck it.’”

It is 8:00 a.m. on a recent Monday and everyone on Whittier College’s campus seems to be cranky and cramming for finals. I am walking across the quad with someone who appears to be an average college student. Jessica (the subject’s name has been changed to protect her privacy) is cute and short with an athletic build. Overwhelmed like everyone else, she is trying her best to meet due dates, budget her money and attempt to have a life at the same time. She’s a typical college student with one big exception: she was a sugar baby.

A sugar baby engages in a quasi-romantic relationships with a sugar daddy (or sugar mama) who is typically older and wealthier. In exchange for time, companionship and sometimes more, sugar babies receive money, gifts or other compensation. Sugaring, as it is called, appears to be a trend among cash-starved college students. So, maybe Jessica’s experience as a sugar baby isn’t all that unique after all.

Jessica tried sugaring after some friends and cousins told her about SeekingArrangement.com, which says it offers “relationships on your terms”. Providing “a new way for relationships to form and grow” and which features on its homepage a blond in a red dress leaning against an executive-looking guy with a sharp suit and a fantastic hairline.

Her friends told Jessica that by signing up she could get money for simply going on dates with men. The benefits could include the opportunity to go on vacations, or even get tuition paid for. She thought it sounded easy and fun, but was worried that nothing can be that simple. Even with her small misgivings, when she broke up with her boyfriend, she decided to give it a try.

“I broke up with my boyfriend a little while ago, and I said *the next time I’m single I*

should just do it. People do it all the time, but since I had a boyfriend, I felt weird,” she said. “However, once I was single, I said ‘fuck it.’”

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Jeremy Bauer-Wolf, a freelance reporter based in Washington D.C., writes about student trends in higher education. His work has appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun* among other publications. He recently wrote an article, “Students With Sugar Daddies” for insidehighered.com [that details Seeking Arrangement’s appeal to college students.](#)

“It’s a website that promotes relationships between a younger, cash-strapped individual, a sugar baby — stereotypically envisioned as an attractive woman — and a wealthier, older man (or woman), a sugar daddy or sugar momma. Sugar babies may be showered with cash or gifts and are spoiled and pampered in exchange for their company — or more, depending on the circumstances.”

Seeking Arrangement has over 10 million active members, eight million are sugar babies while the other two million are sugar daddies or mamas. While some have criticized the site as being a veiled escort service, CEO Brandon Wade stated in 2014 interview with CNN that Seeking Arrangement is *not* a form of prostitution.

“Every day, a dozen of prostitutes and escorts are kicked off the site because certain language is flagged by algorithms — in an effort to maintain the ‘cleanliness’ of the site,” he told CNN. Wade added, “Accusations of prostitution have clouded Seeking Arrangement since its inception, and I’ll admit there is a fine line. But my intentions are pure. Why must we define a lifestyle we don’t understand as unsavory?”

College students have gravitated to the site. Of its 3.2 million users in the U.S., 1.2 million — almost 40 percent — identify as college students, [according to Bauer-Wolf’s article.](#) Many say it’s to relieve the financial burdens of higher education, whether loans or living expenses.

Jessica, a student-athlete, said there was not enough time in a day for her to manage a job, school and practice. Seeking Arrangement gave her another option to maintain her monthly expenses and maybe have a little wiggle room with spending money.

She said that when she signed up, a lot of men would reach out to her but she has only replied to a few. “The majority of them are creepy or they get really aggressive, especially when you don’t respond right away they will block you. Some of them are overly dominant, so they also get offended if you don’t respond. They ask things like, ‘Why don’t you want me, I have money?’ Some just come off weird and overly affectionate, “that is a no for me” she said.

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“He lived in a nice gated community, so figured if I were to scream, someone would hear me.”

Meeting a stranger online is a risky proposition, especially for young women who are often meeting on the man’s terms. It took Jessica a while to meet someone she felt reasonably comfortable with. He was an attractive 33-year-old DJ and businessman whose longtime girlfriend, he said, cheated on him. As a result, he said he didn’t want anything serious. He said he traveled a lot and just wanted to meet new people. He did not come off as aggressive and was the youngest and most fit she had communicated with, making it easier for her to say yes.

Even so, Jessica was aware that she was taking a big chance.

“Honestly it was pretty risky,” she said. “He told me to meet him at his house — he could have killed me. But he lived in a nice, gated community, so I figured if I were to scream, someone would hear me.”

Jessica told her friends where she was going and what she was doing and gave them these instructions: “If I do not send you one text by this time... then come get me, you better find me.”

On the first meet up, all they did was discuss each others intentions and get to know one another. Jessica made it out alive! During the second encounter, though, things got hot and heavy.

Jessica said her sugar daddy once gave her \$600 for spending money when she went on a trip and would take her on \$300 shopping sprees. But it came with a price. “After the first time we hooked up, it felt like sex was expected every time,” said Jessica.

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“It seems that these college girls may not understand the harm they are doing to themselves. Sex and money are not a part of ‘the good life.’ That is, they do not lead to happiness.” — Professor Rodriguez

After a month and a half, she started to feel like it was not worth the time and effort. “He started to get really clingy, that’s how they get because they feel entitled, since they are paying you for your time. So, they want you to always be available to them.”

Jessica’s sugar daddy would ask her to drive 45 minutes to see him during ridiculous hours of the night even though she had to study and get to an early- morning practice. She knew at that point it was getting to be too much and had to cut him off before anything dangerous happened. She said living a double life was taking its toll as well.

“Another reason why I stopped was because I was lying to my parents,” Jessica said. “They kept asking where I was going and I would have to lie. And its pretty hard to explain to your sugar daddy that I can’t drive to see you at 2:00 a.m. because my parents won’t let me leave.”

After a few weeks of telling him she was busy or out of town, her sugar daddy eventually got the hint.

Aside from the safety risks of this type of relationship, there may also be an emotional toll to pay for going down such a transactional path with one’s time, energy and body. Whittier College professor Albert Rodriguez, who teaches a course on the philosophy of love and human sexuality, believes everyone deserves to be treated as ends in themselves and not simply as a means to an end. When someone allows themselves to be a means to an end, he says, they are aiding in their own objectification.

“These sugar daddy — college student jobs are 90–99 percent of the time unnecessary,” says Professor Rodriguez. “They are used to alleviate debt and help buy oneself things that they probably don’t need. I think they are very dangerous and have effects for the rest of one’s life. I once heard a very wise Buddhist say, ‘The body does not forget.’”

“We carry all our baggage always... It seems that these college girls may not understand the harm they are doing to themselves. Sex and money are not a part of ‘the good life.’ That is, they do not lead to happiness. *They. Just. Don’t.* This type of prostitution is totally different than being a prostitute who has no other options. If the ‘street’ prostitute does not sell his or her body or goods that can mean no housing or eating etc. In other words, it is for survival.”

College Students

Sex

Sugar Baby

Sugar Daddy