

# Chester Brown, Male Sexuality, Linguistic Magic, Construction of Normal & Unmarked Power

A discussion of these and other themes in relation to Chester Brown's *Paying For It*, for Feminist Studies in Sexuality, WGS374

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The following is an exploration of the representation of sexuality and the production of “normal” in Chester Brown’s acclaimed graphic novel, *Paying For It*. Any panel or page references in brackets refer to this book; all other cited materials will be referred to in the format (author, year), rather than by page. This is for clarity. Despite my professor’s suggestion that my choice of the term “prostitute” or “sex-worker” will indicate my politics, I have chosen to match the terminology of the man whose views I am exploring; in other contexts, I would be more likely to use the term “sex worker” because it is less stigmatised. Chester Brown, however, seeks to normalise prostitution, including the word. Far be it from me to interfere with his attempt at sorcery.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I have focused on highlighting those power dynamics and assumptions that I see in the text. As reader, you may feel free to object to whichever you choose: my goal is but to render explicit the implicit.

## **The Paradox of Normal: power, masculinity, and the exceptional**

What is normal? Expected, unmarked, mainstream, straight, central, properly formed and clustered evenly around the mean, maybe constructed in the 1950s (Adams, 1997), maybe universally reducible to in-group/out-group dynamics (Tajfel, 1974). Normal is a mathematical term: a line rising perpendicular to a plane, erect like my heroic penis. Nothing escapes gendering; everything is sexual to sexual beings. Normal is whatever is sexually dominant; normal is sexual domination (MacKinnon, 1989).

I am normal. Say “Canadian,” or “student,” and my demographics are assumed: English-speaking heterosexual Anglo-Saxon young-adult male. They require no explication (Battistella, 1990). My intersectionalities are mutually reinforced. Say white, we think Anglo-Saxon. Say any ethnicity, we think man. Say man, we think heterosexual. Am I reducible to these identities (Butler, 1993)? I am more than just normal, and more than the merely normal. Normal people do not use the word “explication,” do not listen to avant-garde music, do not have such beautiful bodies. Normal is plain, unremarkable, beneath me.

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<sup>1</sup> Sorcery is social magic: the willful manipulation of behavioural patterns in others. Anyone who can spell can cast spells: word choice contains more power than people know.

Normal is something I must be and must exceed: it's normal to be sure that you're above average (Gilovich, 1991).

Chester Brown, like me, must be both normal and better than normal, simultaneously unique and universal. Our identities as writers depend on it. Thus, he is a “typical” John (panel 179:7) who wants “the usual” (panel 115:8). His sexual desires and inclinations are constructed as normal, unsurprising. Yet, he is better than other men. More self-confident (panel 87:6-88:6), more honest (panel 22:1), not in need of external validation (panel 96:1-2), a generous tipper (panel 65:7-8) and considerate (panel 67:3): the ideal John. The women he pays wish all their clients were like him (panel 106:6). Like me, he is normal, and better than normal.

## **The Paradox of Nature: rejection, reification and resistance**

Related to “normal” is the “natural,” an analytic category, not itself natural, but constructed: its contents contextually determined and conforming to the biases of the individual theorist (Schiebinger, 1993). “This is natural” and “that is not natural” are tropes by which we can legitimate or undermine whatever parts of the experienced world we choose (Lancaster, 2003). It is natural to misconstrue nature, normal to then take this “nature” for granted. At the same time as patriarchy constructs and reifies nature, it simultaneously presents the merely natural as a thing to be overcome. Blacks are hated not for being unnatural, but too natural; queers for having failed to properly civilize and overcome their base instincts, while at the same time they are told that their “nature” is unnatural. “Normal” becomes compulsory both as an innate biological imperative, and as the idealistic transcendence of nature. Either way we are pressed to embrace the pure form,

natural and better than natural, of normal Anglo-Saxon typified, monogamous, heterosexual marriage (Valverde, 1991).

Not all who employ the concept of nature are part of this patriarchal hegemony, and so there exist other constructions of natural sexuality. These tropes are up for grabs, including by feminist thinkers who too are free to define what they like as natural-and-civilized, what they don't like as unnatural-and-primitive. See the recent vehement debate surrounding the "naturalisation" of rape for examples of this in action. Chester Brown can employ these tropes too, simultaneously naturalising and civilising that which he supports. Thus, he constructs jealousy as unnatural (panel 9:5) and as natural-but-immature (page 260). Conversely, he tells us that "it's natural for us to experience loving feelings for many people and to experience sexual desire for many people" (panel 184:2), but that it is only through his "wisdom of age" (panel 124:8) that this has become something he can pursue. His behaviour, then, is both natural and better than natural: he has overcome what came naturally before, and entered into a new, refined nature (panels 182:6-184:4).

Having successfully navigated these two paradoxes, presenting ourselves as natural-and-more-than-natural, normal-but-greater-than-normal, writers like Chester and I become capable of relating our experiences and views, expecting others to care what we think, assured that our navel-gazing reflects unusual insight into the usual. Then, we can deconstruct, reconstruct, undermine and perpetuate the usual at our discretion. This is the power of the writer, the holding of linguistic power above and beyond the multiple dimensions of privilege already taken for granted. This is the power of the Unmarked

Marker, of Adam: to name anything we choose, however we choose. To delineate nature and produce normal as we see fit.

## **Normal Heterosexual Male Sexuality according to Chester Brown**

If Chester Brown is typical, normal, his behaviour is modelled upon and constructs a new model of and for Man. The model is thus: men want sex, and their social reputation will partially hinge upon the continuity of (panel 5:7) and ability to fulfill (panel 54:1) that desire. Sex ideally consists of fellatio performed by a young, thin woman whose body he finds attractive, although her face is less important (panel 98:5), followed by vaginal penetration which pivots around male orgasm. Having an erection is necessary for sex to take place, and after male orgasm, sex is over: he “is done” (panel 119:3). Wearing a condom during all genital contact, including fellatio, is imperative (panel 170:5). Conversation before and after will improve his experience (panel 96:6), but not if she has a thick accent (panel 208:1). The woman’s desire and pleasure are largely irrelevant: one of Chester Brown’s prostitutes was obviously not enjoying herself (panel 145:1-3), but he viewed this positively and saw her repeatedly. Another appeared to be in pain; that turned him on even more (panel 188:3).

Normal men prefer a woman who is precisely eighteen years old: if she is younger he should refuse to have sex with her (panel 78:8), but if she is older, claiming to be eighteen will secure her greater erotic capital, and so lying may therefore be advisable even if some will refuse because of the above concern (panel 108:2). If she is twenty-eight, she is unlikely to be attractive to a thirty-eight year old man (panel 31:6), and if she weighs one hundred and thirty pounds and is five feet and three inches tall, she is not sufficiently thin (panel 32:4). A woman’s breasts must be authentic. Even if they look and feel excellent, they may

be “too good to be true,” because they may be lacking in authenticity (panel 99:1): truth therefore resides not in sensory experience, but in ideas codified by language, revisable by a writer. A man should not reach orgasm too quickly (panel 46:5), and may use a variety of techniques to last longer (panel 58:6; panel 66:3). Ten minutes is an appropriate length of time for sex to last (panel 67:3), and an entire sexual experience need only take half an hour, including conversation before, conversation after, transaction and cleaning up.

Because men require sex, both out of desire for the experience and for the purpose of image maintenance, they get girlfriends (panel 16:3), with whom they argue and exchange poor treatment: “the people I’ve behaved the worst to were my girlfriends. Each of you saw me at my meanest and pettiest” (panel 11:7-14:2). Having a girlfriend, however, “doesn’t mean you have guaranteed access to sex at any and all times” (panel 17:8), and in most cases couples will have less and less sex over time, especially if they become married (panel 18:4). These relationships are typically exclusive, which is bad because “it’s impossible for one person to meet all of our emotional and sexual needs” (panel 184:1). Eventually couples almost always break up, causing much more misery than they were worth (panel 184:4). Such relationships are therefore very problematic, but are seen as so necessary as to render alternative means of obtaining sexual satisfaction unthinkable (panel 22:1). It is, therefore, normal to be perpetually unsatisfied. Normal is not good enough, and man must strive for something greater. In the words of Nietzsche, what is man but a thing to overcome?

## **The Construction of Normal: new, improved and destigmatised**

Chester Brown’s ideal world, detailed in the appendices, centres around the normalisation of prostitution. His politics, transparently libertarian, are at odds with those of

the educated Torontonians mainstream,<sup>2</sup> but are well-reasoned and argued consistently. There is certainly a strong stigma against prostitution. His openly admitting to paying for sex is unthinkable (panel 50:8), his choice to do so seen as sad (panel 54:5-6) and implying that he lacks self-respect (panel 79:4). His friends wouldn't want to live near a brothel (panel 178:6), wouldn't want a prostitute in their home (panel 50:1) and are so disgusted as to threaten physical violence against him for comparing a woman's appearance to that of a prostitute he knows (panel 107:2). The prostitutes he visits are all presumed to require pseudonyms; some go through more than one (panel 151:1), and in his book he gives each yet another: they require a minimum of three names. One woman he pays is offended at being called prostitute: "I'm not a prostitute – I'm an escort. You think I'm a prostitute?" (panel 199:2). She later remarks that she would think less of a friend upon learning she works as an escort (panel 205:4), implying a hierarchy of stigma and the affective power of linguistic choices: not just her actions but their names condemn her (Leigh, 1997). This stigma, carrying the threat of identity disruption (Goffman, 1963), presents a serious obstacle to those who might otherwise pursue payment as an alternative to the means of obtaining sex constructed herein as problematic. He therefore dreams of a world in which this would not be the case, where prostitution would be accepted and common. "When young people are told that back in 2011 having sex for money was seen as a shameful thing, it will seem bizarre to them. 'It was illegal? Why? It's so... normal.'" Like any good Libertarian, he identifies the biggest obstacle to a healthy society as government interference, regulation and criminalisation. Just as stigma against gays decreased after homosexuality was decriminalised, he hopes the same to be true of prostitution (page 231 and 233-4). Despite this legal focus, his efforts are not in that realm but in the cultural: a graphic novel, not a piece of legislation.

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<sup>2</sup> As I understand it, the standard view here in Toronto is that prostitutes require the protection of the state; the Libertarian view is that the state only makes matters worse. Legalisation vs. decriminalisation.

Rather than leave off simply at wishful thinking, Chester Brown has wielded his power as a writer to effect the changes he wants, in modes both gross (the book on the whole: a highly acclaimed, widely popular text providing a strong case for his views) and subtle (didactic components and models for behaviour presented as matter-of-fact in flowing narrative). Such subtexts of subtle sexual sorcery are surely something to scrutinize sociologically. Regardless of what one thinks of his opinions or politics, and regardless further of the perspective one begins with in approaching this book, one will come away from it with knowledge of where to find a prostitute (the back pages of NOW magazine – panel 51:2), how to know whether an individual prostitute is worth visiting ([www.terb.ca](http://www.terb.ca) – panel 100:5), and quite a lot about the etiquette of how to treat one (panel 26:3-4, panel 168:7-8). This may sound trivial, but it is incredibly powerful: by including these bits and pieces in his narrative, he has educated thousands of readers about what he considers the proper way to pursue sex for money in Toronto. Some have, no doubt, already acted on this information and embodied these models, leading us closer to the world he imagines. Such is the power of text, of the Unmarked, of Adam.

## **What is Left Behind?**

Situated within the Unmarked, afforded all privilege, Chester Brown and I can take certain elements of “normal” for granted and construct an arrogant and exceptional identity at our leisure, on the basis of which nature will jump to conform to our will.<sup>3</sup> Not everybody has this luxury. Because normal consists partly of demographic criteria, the game is fundamentally different for those with marked, and especially intersectionally marked,

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<sup>3</sup> Did you catch the significance of my use of the word “we” in the second paragraph? Some people are trained to spot that, and for good reason: it has very real consequences; by using it I invoke power. Whether my reflexive remarks render it illustration instead of mere violence is as unclear as it is unlikely.



identities. A queer, half black, half native woman may be of “normal” height, weight, intelligence, socio-economic status and everything else, yet to play the definition game the way I do, she must first do extensive catch-up work to overcome the invisibility and unthinkability unfairly built into her identities, or else innovate other tactics that I in turn cannot emulate: the power of the elusive Marked, the mysterious Other. But what if she Wills not segregation but inclusion? Her exclusion is unnecessary and unfair. Ought we then to reject normality, or, perhaps, identity in its entirety (Butler, 1993)? Perhaps Chester Brown has tried to do so, but not in a way I can approve of. Where are the identities in his book? Nothing is marked, and thus everything reverts to the Unmarked. Language is not fair, and there is no such thing as neutral or unbiased. Mourning the loss of the subjectivities he erased, he frames hiding their faces, removing their histories, editing out their personalities and stripping their bodies of signifiers as protection. This is, evidently, his book, not theirs, and he has no interest in examining his Unmarked privilege.<sup>4</sup>

### **In Summary: symbols can be used to restructure normativity**

Nearly everybody who has put any thought into it agrees that the dominant construction of sexuality is problematic: we don't all agree about what it should be like, but nobody wants it to go on like this. Those who see the extent and systematic nature of violence, dominance and degradation may be wise in taking the most radical position conceivable to them at each moment; if a situation is bad enough, anything you can do to destabilise it could allow the emergence of something better. The tools for this include reflexivity and deconstruction, subversive irony, heterodoxy, drag: anything that will confuse, shock and challenge. Actively resist categorisation, and you cause the categories to shift. This

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<sup>4</sup> Originally there were more comments here about privacy and erasure. They have now been expanded upon in **Appendix I: Erasure of Identity and the Old Ethnographic Trick**, below

is, however, not Brown's objective, and these are not his tools. His presentation is minimally challenging and minimally heterodox: his lovers hide all their thousand faces. His politics are simple and straightforward, his representation of sexuality as uncomplicated as his goal: to insert a slight<sup>5</sup> alteration. To revise, not to reject. He wants not to smash an irredeemable patriarchy, but only to shift it in the direction of wisdom, to make it see that **prohibition makes things worse for everybody**.<sup>6</sup> For prostitution to actually be accepted as completely "normal" seems implausible, but its abnormality hinges on a stigma he has endeavoured to imagine away, and he has already had some small scale success.

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<sup>5</sup> I am not satisfied by sexuality constructed as centred around male orgasm, instead of mutuality of desire, near-infinite variation and the notion of play, and no doubt you would also like a different construction. Lucky then that Chester Brown is not the only one who can spell, and not the only one who can cast spells. But are you dissatisfied, or unsatisfied? If you Will, sow seeds of chaos and breed mutation in Babylon; genderfuck will do nicely. But if your change is to be subtle and specific, there's much to learn from Brown. This essay has sought to do proceed in both ways at once; take from it what you Will.

<sup>6</sup> Remember that my research speciality is drugs; this is not a debate with which I am unfamiliar.

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## Appendix I: Erasure of Identity, and the Old Ethnographic Trick

In my section titled “What is Left Behind?” I refer to Brown’s erasure of the identity of the women he discusses. Several of my readers remarked on this, including my professor, who wrote in the margin: “Is this a problem? Could he have made the book theirs too? How? Would this be an improvement?” I should have been clearer and more emphatic: **yes!** First, some personal background: I am a practicing ethnographer who learned his craft in the Sociology department at the University of Toronto, and my research speciality is the socio-cultural determinants of drug effects; my research largely consisting of interviews with drug users. This is analogous to the study of sex work in at least three important ways: 1) stigma 2) frequent illegality, and 3) a need for the lived experiences of those involved to become more visible, so that the stigma may be displaced by a more nuanced understanding. Balancing accurate portrayals with the protection of identity is crucial in both areas.

What I referred to in the text as “the old ethnographic trick” is simple: if your respondent says something that could be used to identify them, but the sentence it appears in is important for the narrative you’re presenting, you cheat and substitute something else which, to the reader, will be functionally identical, but which will misdirect somebody attempting to identify the respondent. Exactly what is or isn’t functionally identical of course becomes a tricky issue. For example, when Brown refers to one of his prostitutes as being from B\_\_\_\_\_, let’s assume he meant Barbados. Is country of origin sufficiently identifiable as to require substitution? If so, is, say, Trinidad interchangeable with Barbados, such that it could be substituted? Is it ignorant and ethnocentric to think so? These are judgement calls, and sometimes hard ones, but it’s a tool at the ethnographer’s disposal. Brown demonstrates

his familiarity with this in his description of a prostitute who had an unsavoury feature with which he felt she could have easily dealt and that her failure to do so was distracting and unattractive. He represents this feature as a hairy mole, asking why she doesn't cut those ugly hairs. In the appendix he reveals that it was not, in fact, a mole, but he changed it in case somebody might recognise what he meant. Great... so why doesn't he do that with other identifiers? Rather than alter tattoos, he removed them completely. Rather than modify life histories to misdirect, he excluded them. All his prostitutes are shown with light skin and dark hair; none is given much of a personality; all have their faces hidden. This is not necessary! If he was doing it for stylistic reasons that would be one thing, but in the preface he mourns having had to do this, that he likes many of the women depicted and would have liked to show more about them. He could have! I respect the book as his story, but as a writer who faces analogous challenges in depicting an also stigmatised field, I see his justification as lame, and refuse to accept its legitimacy. Just as our discussion of sex work is enriched by the inclusion of Brown's experience, so too would Brown's discussion have been enriched by the inclusion of the experiences of the women whose services he procured.

One last remark: Denise explicitly requested that she be included "as little as possible." That's a different situation altogether. He was right to follow her wishes, and to include next to nothing about her. He was, however, wrong to assume that every prostitute he'd slept with required the same treatment. Due to her continued contact with him, she faces an elevated risk of being identified, and her privacy wishes must be respected. This, however, is a special concern, and applying it equally to all others, none of whom had requested it, or had even been contacted in six years, is absolutely unnecessary.

## **Appendix II: Yet Another White Man's Burden**

After the first time he had sex with a prostitute, Chester Brown felt that a burden he'd been carrying was lifted and has never returned. This offhanded remark, elaborated on briefly in his appendices, is very important, and is something in which I can easily see myself. The burden he describes is the pressure to initiate sexual interactions with women; it was lifted because, once he paid for it, there was no longer a need to seek it out in other ways. In this appendix, I will be looking not at the act of sex, but its pursuit. In focusing on my and Brown's experience of difficulties surrounding sexual interactions, I do not mean to imply that ours are somehow worse than those of others. Our privilege as white heterosexual men in Toronto is not in dispute: I merely wish to explore one problem particular to our otherwise very advantaged sexual demographic.

Heterosexual men in this society are in a strange place when it comes to the pursuit of sex. On the one hand, we're expected to do the "hitting on," a vague, violent metaphor for "our role" in the mating dance. Many women who might be sexually attracted to us will still very much want us to "make the first move." On the other hand, we're vilified for doing so: we're "pigs" who "only want sex," and if we "hit on" the wrong person at the wrong time or in the wrong way we're likely to be labeled as "creepy" and stigmatised, sometimes with disastrous consequences for our reputation and self image. Yet, rather than consensus on what the "right" time or the "right" way might be, we're faced with many contradictory accounts. If I give the same description of a situation to two of my female friends, asking what they think is the appropriate thing to do, one might tell me to be sexually forward and the other insist that doing so would be invasive and disrespectful. So what are we supposed

to do? This is further complicated by an awareness of feminist writing about sexual violence. Very few men wish to think of themselves as violent towards women, and yet most want to think of themselves as sexual towards women. So what to do with arguments from theorists like MacKinnon who suggest that sex is **inherently** violent?

Clearly men are not collectively paralysed by this. Most of us will proceed anyway in one way or another, evaluating social cues to the best of our ability to determine what is or isn't appropriate in a given situation and finding ways of seeking out sexual interactions while minimizing the discomfort for everybody involved. Not all of us are always successful at this, nor do all of us even care that much; many men are profoundly inconsiderate, others downright abusive. But some of us both care, and are not always successful at navigating the complexities of social interactions. Some of us even have cognitive disadvantages here.

Aside from being white hetero male writers in Toronto, Chester Brown and I most likely also have something else in common: high functioning but undiagnosed autism-spectrum conditions. Those familiar with such things will likely spot it in Brown right away, in his emotional neutrality (one of his friends describes him as a robot) and atypical response to social cues, as well as in the particulars of his analytic style, but he's old enough that even had he met all the diagnostic criteria of Asperger's Syndrome as a child, he would not have been tested or diagnosed. Whether or not he meets the full diagnostic criteria, it's very likely that he shares some of the key features, and thus is at a particular disadvantage in evaluating the appropriateness of any given social action, or in initiating social interactions and maintaining them without violating conversational expectations more generally. To maintain his self-image as a "good guy," he then errs on the side of inaction much of the time, which typically precludes the possibility of sexual encounters.

As for my own experience of this, the simplest way to sum up my social philosophy is that I live by the anthropologist's motto: "*homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*:" "I am human, nothing human is alien to me." No matter how you feel, it's okay to feel that way – it's just one way to feel, and we would all do well to strive toward an understanding of as many ways of feeling as possible. Social reality is unfathomably complex, and therefore we ought to be candid about our thoughts and desires rather than taking for granted that simplistic, inherited modes of interaction will be sufficient to inform our behaviours: through honesty we'll discover compatibilities where they exist, and learn to avoid those interactions that are causing suffering. To me, this formulation makes perfect sense... but social interaction doesn't generally work out this way. Even if I think I'm being totally candid, somebody may think that I'm implying a whole lot more than I meant to, or through my candour I may speak explicitly about that which they would have preferred to remain coy. Add to this a natural difficulty that comes with autism spectrum disorders to accurately assess whether or not you're making somebody uncomfortable, and moreover an even larger difficulty guessing exactly why they are uncomfortable if such cues are noticed, and pursuing sexual interactions quickly becomes seriously problematic. Thus, over time, I've become more and more hesitant to express myself sexually towards people. Although the number of women with whom I've had positive sexual interactions exceeds the number with whom I've gotten into a truly awkward situation, the few bad situations have been sufficiently traumatic as to make me afraid of repeating them, and therefore, like Brown, I've learned to err on the side of caution. This may be for the best, but when combined with the rest of the above, it leaves me with a strong desire for sex, social expectations that I'll be the one to seek it out, and the incapacity to actually do so.



Brown evidently used to suffer from the same problem. He mentions various times when women called him “cute” or otherwise reacted positively to him on the street, which perversely resulted in insecurity. Feeling that he may have missed rare opportunities for sex, while at the same time fearing causing discomfort by wrongly assuming that they were okay with being approached sexually, he would endlessly obsess over his inaction: this was his “burden.” This is a regular occurrence for me, and I still haven’t figured out what to do about it. I absolutely do not feel comfortable hitting on somebody simply because they were being friendly toward me... it could mean too many things, and I don’t want to immediately sexualise every encounter. However, I do want to have sex, and I also know that many women do find me attractive, so presumably some of those who are friendly towards me would like me to hit on them. But what ought “hitting on” even consist of, if I’m to transcend the violent model of sex? I have no solution to this right now other than to wait for the “right” situation in which things will seem natural and it will be clear that everybody’s comfort levels are being met. Because I’m young and reasonably attractive, chances are good this will work out for me, but what if I was older and uglier? My refusal to play the game isn’t really much of a solution except for a desirable few, and I don’t know how we as a society can adequately deal with this. Chester Brown claims to have found the solution: by paying for sex, we make the arrangement explicit, and the difficulties of pursuing interactions and assessing appropriateness diminishes remarkably.

I must say, there’s something compelling about his solution. I have never paid for sex, but I’m probably a lot more likely to now that I’ve read his book, and I know I’m not alone in that: a male friend of mine just yesterday told me that reading it made him think of calling an escort. This is what I was describing as sorcery in my essay: through what he

wrote, Brown has influenced patterns of social behaviour in non-trivial ways, and brought us closer to the society he envisions. Like anyone else, of course, I have friends who insist that prostitution is always exploitative, but I can't accept this. If I were to pay for sex right now, the most likely person I'd pay would be a female friend who occasionally escorts and who, due to the nature of our relationship, is likely to be sexual with me at some point in the future even if I don't pay her. However, she's very busy, and has other partners, so if I want to sleep with her **tonight**, not "likely... at some point in the future," calling her and offering money I know she could use would certainly speed up the process. If I need the sexual release badly enough, why not?

That does not, however, mean that I'm ultimately convinced by Brown's approach. The world he describes in which paying for sex is seen as normal and common seems completely unrealistic to me... it doesn't seem to acknowledge the complexity of either social or economic life, particularly in the context of global systems of domination and discrimination, and it exaggerates the agency and independence of the various social actors. That's not to say it won't be an excellent solution for some people... it may well be. Though I don't doubt it was an excellent solution for Brown, it will not be so for everybody. I have no moral qualms about paying for sex, but that doesn't mean I actually can afford to start doing so, for one thing, and even though I know my friend is not opposed to either sex with me or sex for money, that doesn't mean that entering into a financial arrangement wouldn't complicate, even compromise, certain aspects of our friendship. What if I pay once, and then invite her over another time just to eat dinner and hang out? Will she assume I'm going to be paying her, or that I'm after sex? Employer/employee relations can easily become problematically unbalanced. Since we're both intelligent adults, no doubt we could mitigate

such miscommunications by talking it over, but the bottom line is that sex and affection create highly charged spaces which not everybody is equally capable of navigating effectively. Brown's solution makes that space easier to navigate for one group who otherwise are at a marginal disadvantage: men who lack social skills but have money. Hopefully, as scholarship in gender studies continues to produce material about masculinity, and we do more to collectively negotiate the meaning and value of romantic, intimate and sexual relations, more alternatives for sexual fulfilment will emerge – not just for the privileged, but for everybody.

### **Appendix III: “Aren’t you forgetting something? ...the muh-nee”**

*(this originally appeared as a concluding paragraph in the main text, but due to format changes is now more appropriate here. It deserves more expansion than I am willing to give it at this time)*

The text contains little awareness of the economic assumptions necessary for Brown's model to be sensible. Not everyone can afford to pay for sex. Without descending into the morass of debates surrounding libertarianism, I will instead suggest the connection to Bourdieu's theory of class, which suggests that economic, social and cultural capital are mutually transferable (Bourdieu, 1980). To this, erotic capital has recently been added as a distinct form of “social worthiness” (Green, 2008): those who are seen as sexually desirable gain status and access to the social, cultural and economic resources of those who desire their company. This process is at play whether or not money changes hands, and the extent to which direct payment does or does not alter this demands further research.