

# The State of Seduction

A roundtable of pickup artists, some of whom would definitely not date each other.

By [Jada Yuan](#) Published Jul 21, 2013



*Ink & Oil* (2002), by Lars Hübner.  
(Photo: Courtesy of Lars Hübner)



(Photo: Portraits by Joel Kimmel)

## The Panel:

**The seduction community began online with guys sharing tips on how to pick up women in bars. How has the art of the pickup changed with massive online-dating and hookup apps?**

**Zan Perrion:** The reason the seduction community started is there's a very strong disconnect between men and women. And that shifted into tips on how to get into girls' pants as opposed to addressing the real need, that men have lost our role in society today. We're all hyper-connected online and yet we're fundamentally disconnected.

**Ken Hoinsky:** The online experience for younger guys is not indicative of the real world; it's like they're looking through this distorted mirror. As a woman on a dating site, you are receiving an amount of attention [that is] complete levels of magnitude above what men are experiencing. Nice, good-looking guys are messaging girls and not getting any responses, and over time, they start to think of their self-worth in [terms of] what they're experiencing online.

**Sherrie Schneider:** Technology has changed, but the difference between men and women and the dating philosophy does not change. Man has to pursue woman first to be an effective, long-term, monogamous relationship. We help girls who are too much, because with today's technology they can Facebook a guy and g-chat him and double-text him. A lot of Rules girls thought we were telling them texting wasn't good, and we had to approach texting like a war and that a guy couldn't text, he had to call. But we think that however a guy approaches you, don't be insulted. It's fine. Text with him. But don't text all day and all night. Have boundaries.

**Arden Leigh:** In four or five years of actively dating, I have not dated a man who approached me first. I found that, actually, with my generation, men *are* shy these

days; men are kind of the new women. There have been a lot of guys who've told me later, after I approached them, "Yeah I was really interested in you, but, you know, you're tall, kind of intimidating. I didn't know what to say, what to do." [As a woman] you need a proactive strategy that's not going to come off as desperate, that's going to come off as fun and confident and be able to create attraction with that person.

**Schneider:** This is extremely dangerous information.

**Hoinsky:** The idea that one method works and one method doesn't work is absurd. Different approaches work for different people.

**Schneider:** Well, we are women and women want monogamy.

**Leigh:** Could we not judge monogamy versus polyamory? Because I'm actually incredibly happy being nonmonogamous. As women we should be empowered to have the kind of relationships that we want without that being judged.

### **How does seduction work in this realm of seamless algorithmic coupling?**

**Hoinsky:** People are using online dating as a crutch, as a replacement for getting out there and developing real social skills in the real world.

**Lyons:** This is why the concept "pickup artist" should exist, because there are a lot of guys who don't know how to make online profiles work. Test this yourself: Create two profiles, make them both exactly the same. In one of them put a picture of a hot girl, and the other a hot guy, and do the same with a less attractive girl and a less attractive guy. Send messages out from them and see which one gets the most replies. I get most of my men to create female profiles online to see how men are objectifying women and that's not really what women want, in order to teach them how to pursue correctly.

**Fein:** We say that within four e-mails, the guy has to ask you out. The problem with online dating is when people are not following the rules and have these fantasy relationships with guys where you never meet. That's not a relationship.

**Perrion:** The younger generation that's now becoming dating age does not have the same angst that we have. This is the first generation that has grown up 100 percent digital, with cell phones in their hands when they were small, so for them it's natural to date online. I have a feeling that this new generation is going to reject this whole me-centric, consumer-based, self-help, woe-is-me generation from the nineties. I think they're going to say, "We don't need gurus. We're going to reject all this navel gazing that our parents did."

**Ken, I want to talk about the controversy that came out of your Kickstarter campaign. You used language in the book and on Reddit that was very frank and, some said, "rape-y"—I saw one post about you**

**trying to get a woman to let you “slip the banana in.” But the vitriol only came after you’d put it on Kickstarter and exposed it to a wider audience. What does that say about whether pickup is ready for the mainstream?**

**Hoinsky:** My language in certain parts was clearly regrettable. Basically, yeah, when you’re writing for a small community of people who are like-minded and take the time to read the context, things can make sense in that context. When you blow it out of context and put it in front of millions of people, which is what happened to some of the quotes in my book, you get extreme feminists who say that any dating-advice book is inherently wrong because you’re objectifying an entire gender.

**How do you respond to that criticism?**

**Hoinsky:** I understand that argument but I have thousands of frustrated guys who can’t get dates and are asking for help, so I’m not just going to ignore them. And I’m not going to throw away all of this critique and anger, either. Pickup artistry has not done a good job of dealing with concepts like consent. If you look at *The Mystery Method* book, which is a pretty popular book, the section on sex is basically blank. People don’t want to talk about it. So here’s an opportunity to talk about consent, rape, these really important issues that pickup artists have historically not done a good job talking about. We can take seduction to the mainstream and it shouldn’t be a dirty word. I’ve known guys that are happily married in their thirties with a wife and kids, and they have that marriage because they read *The Game* and they are embarrassed to talk about it. They will never admit to their spouse that because they read *The Game* they got the confidence to start this wonderful life. Let’s fix this problem because the world will be a better place for it.

**Leigh:** Ken, you know I reacted to your posts by proposing a book on Kickstarter with two co-authors, a matchmaker as well as a burlesque artist, called *A Feminist Guide to Picking Up Men*, which Kickstarter rejected. But we wanted to make the point that seduction in itself is not inherently misogynistic.

Where I think you went wrong was you really skimmed over microcalibration. Calibration is the way that a PUA knows whether there is consent or not. And you use the word “force” — “force a woman to rebuff your advances and make her reject you, then you’re obviously coming on too strong.” But in your defense, I will say that so much of the propaganda out there tells women to play hard-to-get and not express when they actually mean “yes.” There is so much shaming out there around women who seem too eager or too desirous for sex. Society says, “Don’t give in too soon, don’t give in even if you want to, don’t make it look like you want to, don’t carry condoms, don’t even look like you know what sex is.” If a man is dealing with a woman like that, who is ashamed of opening up about her desires, it

makes it difficult to understand where there is actual consent or desire that's just being covered up by societal shame and not wanting to seem too easy. What I love about female pickup is that I am making a move and I am initiating things and there is no question about my consent.

### **Define calibration.**

**Leigh:** Calibration is a sharp attunement to your target's reactions in every given moment, literally second to second, so that you can tell whether they're on the same page with you and whether they want to continue moving forward. We also have something in the pickup community called compliance testing, where if I say, "High five!" and you match me, then I know you're into me and I can maybe move forward and put my arm around you.

### **Let's go over a few situations and see how you would game them.**

#### **What's your first move if you're a guy going to a bar just looking for sex?**

**Lyons:** The number one thing I tell my students: Do not go out looking for sex. If that's 100 percent what you want to do, then you should really think about finding something where it's legal to do so and pay for it. Women aren't masturbation boxes; men aren't portable dildos with a heater attached. We're all human beings looking for connection. Just go out to meet people, and if it turns into sex, great, and if it doesn't, also great. Now, there are signs that somebody's open to sex. Look for those subtle signs. Actually, women make the very first move. Always. But that first initial move is a sign that they are open to being approached. And a way of seeing that is if you look at a group of girls interacting, you'll often notice that one of the girls in the group isn't really looking at the rest of the group, and instead is looking around the bar for people. This girl, almost guaranteed, is ovulating and looking to meet somebody that night. That doesn't mean that if you approach her she's going to have sex with you. What it means is she's much more open to a sexual advance and maybe, if she forms a real connection and trust and everything else that you need, maybe you'll have sex that night. But that shouldn't be your goal.

### **Otherwise you'll come off as a creep.**

**Lyons:** I think if anybody, male or female, goes out there with sex as their primary goal, they'll come across as a creep. I have seen women alone in a bar looking for sex, and they just come across as desperate, and guys are like "I am not going to touch that thing. I have no idea where she's been or what she's been doing."

**Schneider:** We've had some clients that are actually disappointed that a guy's not trying to have sex with them. It's because they're needy. For a woman, it's more

emotional, and she feels like sex will cement the relationship and he'll call her and they'll date and stuff. But a guy, if he's having sex with you on the first date, he's just interested in sex.

**Lyons:** For sure! But there are some men who also get emotional connection from sex. I know a guy who cries every time he has sex with his girlfriend because he thinks it's so beautiful.

**For those who coach men, if your target is being resistant, how do you win her over? Or is it just about not taking “no” for an answer?**

**Perrion:** The beauty of feminine grace and the beauty of masculine edge is all we have to do is show ourselves fully, nervous or not, shy or not, and you say, “You know what, I like you in that dress. You look great. I would love to see you again.” It's a strong way of approaching the world as opposed to “Would you like to go out for coffee sometime and then maybe date three times and then maybe come up to my house and watch a movie and maybe I'll put my arm around you.” It's just standing on the Earth and saying, “Here's my statement. I'm a guy who likes women and I like you. I'm saying it and you can do whatever you want with that information.” When I talk to a woman, she knows everything about me in the first 30 seconds, because I tell her. I hide nothing.

**You sound really smooth. But what about the really clueless, oblivious guys?**

**Perrion:** That's 100 percent true. When I talk about this stuff, they look at me like they have no idea what I'm talking about. *[Laughs]* Men are trying to measure their success with the results they get — they got a phone number, they got a smile, they got sex with a girl, they got a coffee date tomorrow. But I fundamentally believe that if men start measuring their success by the way they show up in the world of men, it doesn't matter what her response is. You can be tongue-tied; you can run out of things to say. But you showed up, which is more than 95 percent of the men out there are doing. It's “I'm going to put myself out fully into the Earth. I'm going to represent myself.” Then phone numbers and coffee dates and sex are fait accompli. Phone numbers will fall out of the air if they do this.

**Arden, how would you approach a guy in a room?**

**Leigh:** There's three different ways of doing that. An indirect approach, where you give off body-language signals on an animal level that will attract a guy. A semi-direct approach, where you approach one of his friends and eventually say, “Hey, introduce me to your friends.” Or there's a direct approach, which is just going up to a guy and speaking to him, and it doesn't matter what you want to use as an opener. You say something about the situation.

**Schneider:** We highly disagree. We say talking to his friends is a direct approach, he knows it and you know it, he's flattered, but then he gets bored. That's our take.

**Leigh:** My guys don't get bored.

### **What if you wanted to get with a friend's ex?**

**Fein:** That's just not right.

### **What about a platonic friend you want to turn into a sexual partner?**

**Hoinsky:** This is going to sound strange to people, but you have to date other women. If you're in the dreaded friend zone, you have to be seen as desired by other women.

**Lyons:** Any relationship should be a mixture of two things: comfort and attraction. If you're in the friend zone, there's too much comfort and not enough attraction. One of the ways to generate sexual attraction is to be a sexual prowler. If you're hanging out with your female best friend and suddenly you work out a lot and your body is in a great shape, or you go to comedy clubs and you get really funny, your best friend is going to look at you and think, "Wow, when did you get a hot body and become so funny?" They are going to start being attracted.

**Fein:** If you're in a friend zone, find out what books she likes, what movies she likes, what turns her on.

**Lyons:** No, that would push the friend zone further and make them more comfortable.

**Fein:** No, women feel with their head. I had a guy that knew my favorite book was *Gone With the Wind* and he read it, and that made me fall madly in love with him.

**Lyons:** What I'm saying is that only works if the woman is attracted to the guy already.

**Fein:** No, no, I really wasn't and then he read *Gone With the Wind* and I was like, "Oh my god!" I felt like Scarlett and he was Rhett. This was me in college.

**Leigh:** That was a long time ago.

### **What if a guy's been going on proper, respectful dates and wants to move it into sex?**

**Fein:** He can put his arm around you. When they seat you at the table, he can sit at your side of the table. He definitely pays for the check.

**Lyons:** That's all nonsense. She's going to reject that straight away. If you want to move things to be more sexual then you need to find out if someone is willing to engage you on a sexual level. I get them to bring up sex in the third person. You can talk about those people around you, "Do you think those people are on a first date, second date? Are they cheating on each other?" Discuss other people's sex

lives, and then you transition it to when you had your first kiss, when you first hooked up. Turn the conversation onto sex and women get aroused. I'll say to someone, "Don't tell me, but what is your deepest, darkest sexual fantasy?" I don't need to know what it is, but if she's comfortable enough with me to visualize this, then I will benefit from that and she will get aroused. If she does, I find that it's the woman that initiates touching me, because at that point she needs that physical closeness. That is a thousand times more effective than picking up the check.

### **What if you want to start a threesome? How do you suss out that situation?**

**Perrion:** The fundamental thing of open relationships and relationships where there's a third party introduced into it is that the girl who is your girl in your situation has to be the one to start the whole thing. She is the focus, she is the queen.

**Lyons:** If you're in a committed relationship with someone, you shouldn't be adding a third party into it, and if you are, then you should pay for it, that way there's a contractual agreement that goes away at the end. Go somewhere where it's legal, like Amsterdam. That way you have that experience, but don't have to worry about it seeping into the relationship. If you're in a non-committed relationship, the easiest way to do that is to have multiple partners and suggest that you get together.

**Leigh:** In a committed, nonmonogamous relationship, I believe it's the job of the man to build attraction with the new third partner that you're bringing in and the woman's job to build comfort with her.

**Lyons:** Or the other way around. I've had situations where I had the girl be like, "Hey, I like this girl and I made out with her in the club last night, I want to bring her into the bedroom." So she brings the attraction and I build the comfort. I had a period where we did Threesome Thursdays, but it came about because we were all in open relationships and it was very easy to do. You just have one person take the lead and bring the other in afterward.

### **Is it possible to start a threesome cold at a bar?**

**Lyons:** I've done it cold on a number of occasions. The very first time that I had two girls that I made out with at the same time, they were two friends. What happened was I had actually lost my voice the day before, so I couldn't speak. I was writing on a piece of paper. For fun, I would show both the girls the piece of paper, one after another. And it became like a joke for hours: Whatever I would do with one girl, I would do with the other girl, because it was on a piece of paper and I couldn't communicate with them at the same time. I would dance with one and then I'd dance with the other. And after a while, I had them both on each arm, and I made out with one and then I made out with the other one. Then, at the end of the night, the two girls and I went home, we had sex, and in the morning, the girls

were like, “Wow, we had always wanted to sleep together, but we never had the situation.” Again, I don’t feel I initiated it. I felt that what happened was that I stumbled across a situation that was going to happen one day and I just so happened to have the ability to enable them in a situation that was always going to happen. I don’t think anyone could walk into a bar, pinpoint two individual women, and say, “These two. Tonight. I’m going to take them.” Except for maybe Brad Pitt.

**Hoinsky:** Clooney. I think Clooney could do it.

**One of the most memorable concepts of Neil Strauss’s *The Game* was “the neg,” a technique of slyly insulting a woman to prey on her low self-esteem. Are there techniques that are now too manipulative to be used?**

**Lyons:** Neil Strauss is a good friend of mine, and if the biggest thing you took out of *The Game* was the neg, then you obviously didn’t read the book. That book is about a man who searches for love and eventually finds it. He only mentions negging probably five times in the entire book. It’s a story. That’s like reading *Game of Thrones* and being like, “The only thing I took out of it is that everybody has swords.”

**Leigh:** People think negging is an insult that’s designed to lower a woman’s self-esteem so she’ll seek validation from you in order to compensate for that. The truth is that a neg is a statement or action designed to temporarily disqualify oneself as a potential suitor. So, for example, a guy blowing his nose in front of a girl can be a neg, because she’ll be like, “No, if he’s blowing his nose in front of me, he must not be that into me.” It’s designed for her comfort if she feels the guy is coming on too strong.

**Lyons:** It’s like in *The Rules*, for example, when they say, “Don’t text a guy too often because its showing disinterest.”

**Schneider:** I feel like *The Rules* have been misrepresented. The way a guy knows that a woman is interested is if he asks her on a date and she says yes, assuming he asks a few days in advance because we won’t go out with you tonight. We’re just teaching women to pull back, to not do everything too emotionally, because they get hurt and we don’t want to get hurt and we want to get the guy. And we find the best way to get the guy is to not initiate and not be overly available.

**There’s a lot of common ground. With *The Rules*, you’re saying *no* in a way that leaves the door open until you get the answer that you want. And with pickup artistry you’re being persistent to get the yes against all the *no*’s that you’re getting.**

**Perrion:** Fundamentally, we just want to belong to something. We want to be



loved and we want someone to love us. I don't think anybody's intentions are bad.

**Hoinsky:** Nobody talks about love because it's a big scary word, but at the end of the day it's about making connections and falling in love. It's a beautiful thing.

**Schneider:** We talk about love and say that sex is a beautiful thing, but it's not beautiful if you sleep with a guy in a hookup and never hear from him again, or get five meaningless texts in a row. When a guy walks into a party he knows in five seconds whom he likes and doesn't like. He either likes the tall blonde or the short brunette. Girls, in our estimation, do not have to stand next to him or ask him the time or do any technique to get his attention. If he doesn't notice you, then he doesn't like you.

**Leigh:** Okay then, Sherrie, let me ask you a question. I originally started crushing on my boyfriend when I saw him on television. I figured out a way to approach him through one of his friends. How was I going to get that guy I wanted that I saw on television if I didn't do anything?

**Schneider:** You're in a nonmonogamous and long-distance relationship, correct?

**Leigh:** Yes, that's correct.

**Fein:** I'm hearing, *He's far away and I had to go see him, and if I hadn't seen him, he wouldn't notice me and I had to make all of the effort.*

**Leigh:** That's absolutely not true.

**Fein:** We don't want to hurt your feelings, but this guy that you're dating — we don't think you got him.

**Leigh:** You don't know me, and you don't know my relationship.

**Schneider:** One on one, if I were to do a consultation with you, I would grill you about why you don't have a bit more. Anytime you want to call we are available.

**Leigh:** Could you be any more condescending? You're going to judge my relationships, tell me I'm not happy, and offer me counsel?

**Fein:** If you were a client, we would do a childhood history and figure out that something happened with Daddy. You should be with someone who is crazy about you.

**Leigh:** He is crazy about me.

**Fein:** Then why isn't he monogamous?

**Leigh:** Because we both like other women.

**Hoinsky:** Listen, if I wanted to sit here and listen to people slut-shame, I would

read my in-box.

**So, do you struggle with your own obsolescence? Are pickup artists and dating coaches talking to an empty room? What's the future of seduction?**

**Hoinsky:** People are still going to go out, they're still going to go dancing, they're still going to go to bars, they're still going to see that cute guy or girl in the corner, and they're still going to hook up. It's not going anywhere.

**Leigh:** I think the newest frontier to seduction that has not been explored is I've had a lot of requests for gay, lesbian, bisexual, polyamorous, and pansexual seduction. I'm hugely in favor of this and I personally am bisexual, but I'm not the expert to write about it. Reid Mihalko from ReidAboutSex is one of the people leading that sphere. How do you take seduction out of just the hetero-normative sphere, where it's absolutely necessary, but that's not the only world that we exist in.

**Lyons:** I just want everybody from our community, which has come up from this whole Ken thing, to represent it accurately. Not everybody should be raised thinking that casual sex is bad.

**Schneider:** We're not saying it's bad. We're saying it's not effective. It just doesn't work.

**Hoinsky:** What I'm hearing are that people are tired of games. That's where we're going. The techniques in *The Game* — they are what they are. Right now it's about being authentic and not lying.