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‘Not selling anything, just think you’re cute’:

A theoretical inquiry on ‘daygaming’ as an embodied cultural
praxis

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Abstract

This paper is a move towards furthering the understanding of how the entwinement between embodiment and agency can be understood from a sociological perspective. By focusing on the cultural praxis of 'daygaming', the paper analyzes Youtube material from the 'seduction community' and outlines the community's cultural scripts and discourses with regards to 'daygaming'. Hitherto, the seduction community and 'pickup artists' at large have been examined as disembodied phenomena, while the argument I present centers the affective and embodied dimensions of the seductive practice. The cultural praxis of 'daygaming' is examined as a system of meaning-making, which forms narratives pertaining to the framing and deduction of desire in addition to being presented as a social choice. I argue that the acquisition of the cultural script renews the individual's understanding of what is socially possible and expands their interactional repertoire. This expansion of agentic comprehension yields embodied tensions, as the seduction community's concept of 'approach anxiety' serves to exemplify how the corporeal character of social life can manifest itself. This tension foregrounds how agentic capacity might function in a dialectic between bodily sensations and the individual who interprets and manages these according to certain perceptual schemas and bodily techniques. Finally, the paper discusses how 'daygaming' and the challenges it incurs for seducers can be understood by utilizing embodied aspects of Goffman and Durkheim's work.

Keywords: embodiment, seduction, pickup, agency, phenomenology, dating

“It’s a fact...that in societies like ours, sex truly represents a second system of differentiation, completely independent of money; and as a system of differentiation it functions just as mercilessly.”

- Michel Houellebecq (Houellebecq 1998)

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Introduction: The seduction community and its vocabulary

I define the seduction community as groups of men who mainly congregate online where they exchange advice and experiences regarding how to meet and approach women towards the aim of increased dating and sexual success. As Hendriks' participant observation notes, this community is largely bound together by an idiosyncratic language - a certain use of concepts and vocabulary that is specific and recognizable to the seduction community (Hendriks 2012: 3).

The community is led by coaches who maintain an elevated status and teach new students through YouTube videos, real-life group workshops and personal coaching. The coaches are not merely technical instructors on how to seduce women, but are guru-like celebrities in their own right within the community, where they purvey agenda-setting notions on worldviews, values and lifestyle (Ibid.).

One of the novelties that the seduction community has produced, at least seen through the specter of Western norms of public behavior, is the phenomenon of 'daygame'. Daygame is defined as approaching women on the streets and other social situations in everyday life, as opposed to a nightlife scenario in a bar or a club. Daygaming is distinguished by what is called the 'cold' approach, which are approaches done in public spaces, where romantic advances on strangers are not anticipated. The 'cold' approach is defined in opposition to the 'warm' approach, which occurs in bars, clubs and parties, where interactions with strangers, women in particular, are considered normalized. Daygame is viewed as a crucial skill for the seducer to learn in order to dramatically improve his success rate with women, as the ability to approach a woman in any scenario vastly increases the access of single men to attractive women. Seduction material related to daygaming often includes instructive so-called 'infield' videos of dating coaches approaching women on the street. The workshops take the teaching of daygame a step further, as prospective seducers can at a premium price be taught how to daygame in real life by the close supervision and feedback of a dating coach. These workshops are usually practiced by equipping the student with a microphone, which allows the coach to provide feedback on the student's approach after it has taken place. The feedback often involves adjustments to bodily posture and positioning, voice pitch, manner of touching and conversation framing.

One of the central terms in the internal vocabulary amongst the seduction community is the concept of ‘approach anxiety’. Approach anxiety is described to be the embodied phenomena of heart palpitations, dryness in the mouth and general discomfort that the seducer senses upon the desire to approach an attractive woman. Seducers-in-training often report a helplessness in the face of these somatic sensations, which they try to overcome by various means.

The purpose of this study, unlike the vast majority of prior research on the seduction community, is not to produce observations and analyses on the properties of the community, but rather ‘daygaming’ itself as a social praxis and cultural script. I aim to examine the underlying sociological processes behind the rise of ‘daygaming’ and what it allows members of the community to do. Furthermore, I seek to understand the challenges that ‘approach anxiety’ incurs upon the seducer in their desire to actualize ‘daygaming’ and how this experience is managed. A previous study by O’Neill reported that the results of her interviews with dozens of members of the seduction community reveals “[...] a lack of attention to or concern with the affective or embodied aspects of heterosexual experience.” (O’Neill 2015: 9). In this study, I shall examine how in fact the embodied aspect of the heterosexual experience *is* a central concern for the seducer, not necessarily in an erotic way, but as something to be managed as a pathway towards transformation. Furthermore, I shall maintain that the affective experience of desire is crucial in understanding the motives of the seducer as well and the challenges he faces.

Research questions

- How can ‘daygaming’ be understood as a cultural script and a tool?
- What are the embodied, phenomenological implications of the ‘cold’ approach as an interaction?
- How is ‘approach anxiety’ presented and defined by the seduction community?
- Which techniques of emotion management are presented to overcome ‘approach anxiety’ and how can this management be seen in the light of a structure/agency relationship?

Previous research on the seduction community

A recent study by Whitley & Zhou has noted that despite the growing popularity and cultural relevance of the seduction community, there appears to be a quite small number of literature pertaining to this topic (Whitley & Zhou 2020: 3).

Initial inquiries into the community have tended to be grounded in feminist interpretations, which have analyzed the discourses of the seduction community as a misogynistic set of practices, which dehumanize and objectify women (O’Neill 2015, Denes 2011, Almog & Kaplan 2017). I deem these studies to have done the necessary ‘dirty work’ in deepening our understanding of the rather obvious misogynistic discourses and problematic configurations of masculinity, which are pervasive in certain aspects of the seduction community. However, I argue that a more nuanced examination of the topic yields a deepened understanding of the relation between sexual desire and agency, which I seek to highlight in this work. Furthermore, there hasn’t been any sociological research done specifically on ‘daygaming’, as the tendency has rather been to analyze and characterize the community holistically.

Whitley & Zhou distinguish the current literature as having approached the topic either through a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’, which engages the subject with an inherent suspicion or a ‘hermeneutic of faith’, which attempts to steer clear of value judgements on the object of inquiry (Whitley & Zhou 2020: 3). I argue this distinction to be central in engaging with the seduction community, as the mainstream discourse and certain currents in research are prone to label its members as “pathetic, pathological or perverse” (O’Neill 2015: 1). My stance towards the subject is in alignment with O’Neill’s aim of complicating this narrative without being apologetic towards the community or undermining the feminist critiques (Ibid.)

Method and material

I have focused on analyzing Youtube video material from one of the industry-leading companies in the seduction community, The Natural Lifestyles, as a device of exemplifying the theoretical notions that I discuss in this paper. TNL has operated for 10 years and employs a handful of

dating coaches who run workshops priced between 5000-15000\$, through which they claim to have instructed ‘thousands’ of daygame approaches. (William 2017; The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00: 21:14). Their Youtube channel currently counts 70.000 subscribers and over 5 million total views¹ (The Natural Lifestyles 2008). James Marshall, whose video essays I have largely focused on, is the head coach and CEO of the company, while also being the ideologue behind the company’s approach and service.

Albeit certain concepts and cultural scripts, such as ‘approach’, ‘daygaming’ and ‘approach anxiety’ are more or less universal within the seduction community, it is characterized by a multiplicity in narratives, ontology and techniques.

I have chosen to focus on the content from TNL, as it is representative of the modern shift in seduction towards ‘natural game’. ‘Natural game’ distinguishes itself from the initial styles of the early seduction content by espousing a spontaneous approach to seduction and a holistic transformation within the individual, rather than the specific techniques and scripted interactions, which characterized the latter (Hendriks 2012: 4). This distinction highlights the mistake that Almog and Kaplan’s study made, by content analyzing material from 15 years ago as a means of drawing conclusions upon the seduction community at large (Almog and Kaplan 2017). The early material is routinely mocked and ridiculed by the contemporary seduction community, thus making that study outdated and somewhat irrelevant. This is compounded by Marshall’s reference to the diminished role of early scripted techniques in the contemporary seduction community’s methods: “Most of the companies that are teaching seduction professionally around the world don’t do this anymore.” (The Natural Lifestyles 2018: 00:18:30).

The methodological approach to the seduction community has thus far been either interpretative work on ‘instructor’s texts’ or alternatively more empirically grounded research, typically through interviews or participant observation with regular members of the seduction community, rather than the coaches. My approach can be characterized as closer to the former, as the YouTube videos I have analyzed are a form of ‘instructor text’ in video format. The limitations of this approach have been rightfully outlined by Whitley & Zhou, as they argue that the

¹ Youtube has recently removed videos by the seduction community en masse, as they deem them to be breaching their advertising policies. This number must be assumed to have been significantly higher prior to Youtube’s sanctioning of the community.

explanation models and schemas of the dating coaches might diverge significantly from the lived experience and practical interpretation of ordinary members of the seduction community and doesn't give a voice to the latter (Whitley & Zhou 2020: 3). While I initially considered conducting qualitative interviews with members of the community, I refrained from doing so, partially due to the limited resources and scope of this project, which would only allow for a very limited data set. The main reason for choosing this approach is due to my argument that the interviewees of the community are prone to responding according to cultural scripts that they have acquired from instructor texts. This is a salient problem in Whitley & Zhou's study, as it can be observed that the participants interpret their life history according to scripts which are commonly proliferated by coaches in the community e.g. 'the absence of male role models', 'nice guy syndrome' and 'a generation of broken men' (Whitley & Zhou 2020: 12, 17).

The cultural script of 'daygaming' as an empowering tool

"Each of them living apart, is a stranger to the fate of the rest: his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, he is close to them, but he does not see them, he touches them, but he does not feel them: he exists only in himself and for himself alone."

- Alexis de Tocqueville (Tocqueville 1945: 318-319)

I find it central to engage with first, why the tool of daygaming has occurred and what does daygaming allow members of the seduction community to do, which wasn't available to them before?

I will outline the cultural script that the seduction community provides, in terms of why daygaming is essential, and why other alternatives to meeting women aren't perceived as viable options.

[...] Your social circle is useless. Your social circle will yield, what amount of pretty girls? Uh, next to nothing. Because the reality is that most men's social circle include between 1-5 possible women that are single, that might be interested in you, so you're literally choosing to have a dating pool, which is similar to that of someone who lives in a tiny little village or remote village and that's reality for most men in terms of when they are choosing their

partner, they don't really choose them. They have possibly one girl, who might be interested in them in their social circle and if they pull the trigger, she will respond. What's the likelihood that that girl is going to be beautiful, high self-esteem, compatible with you on multiple levels? You have sexual chemistry, yeah? What's the likelihood she is going to be the one, or the best one? Almost nothing, and yet that's the way most men end up in their relationships. [...]*

(The Natural Lifestyles 2017: 00:07:00)

The extract I have presented allows us to identify 'daygaming' as a particularly *modern* phenomenon, which requires conditions of sexual choice, rather than traditional arrangements in addition to urban clusters with dense populations, where large numbers of individuals live without having bodily co-present interactions with other strangers in the public space. This is compounded by an experienced poverty of social ties, which men in the community argue don't grant an abundance of opportunity to form relations with women. As the data from Whitley & Zhou's article suggests, male loneliness, alienation and sexual marginalization are key motivators for engaging with seduction and learning how to 'daygame' (Whitley & Zhou 2020: 8).

The above extract is central as it ties into crucial seductive discourses on choice, scarcity and opportunity. O'Neill argues in her research on the London seduction community that these processes are a product of the culture of neoliberal capitalism, and the seduction community is simply an example of broader socio-political tendencies of individualization, rationalization and commodification (O'Neill 2015). Being a 'man of options' is idealized and viewed as being instrumental in gaining leverage in current and future relationships (O'Neill 2015: 9). Having options is a manner of increasing one's 'value' in the dating market. The marketization of sex is evident here, as the seducer seeks to have 'choice' and can thus 'have' or 'get' 'high-quality women', whom they view on a spectrum of desirability - an evidently consumerist mode towards sexuality and women. The greater one's skill is in seduction, the greater the access one has to 'high-quality women'. Learning seduction is an 'investment' with an expected 'pay-out' of becoming more successful with women (O'Neill 2015: 8).

What can be observed both in O'Neill's study and the various examples I provide, is how the acquisition of sex becomes something to be managed, learned and systematized.

“And we know the reality of the comfort zone is a sexless, lonely, boring life. It’s not safe at all, it’s the most dangerous thing you can choose. [...] It made me wanna cry, when I think about the number of men out there, who are letting this, essentially, what is just a bunch of feelings in their body, box them into a corner where they don’t get to meet the people they wanna meet, where they don’t get to have connections, love, relationship, sex, fun, laughter. They miss all of that stuff, because they are not able to, or they don’t know how, to move through to what is actually a very, very thin and permeable barrier. It’s tragic. And when once you step through that barrier, you realize it’s not an iron wall, it’s mostly an illusion. ”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00:43:50)

By internalizing this narrative, the reality becomes evident - one stands with the choice of either learning daygame or being consigned to a life of missed opportunities. It’s not that the seduction community suggests that one will die alone or be in permanent celibacy, it is rather that one is operating from a lack of *choice*.

Daygame ties into narratives of a full realization of the self and the joys it can partake in, becoming the key towards being a man of choice and expressing one’s desire. It is rooted in a fundamental fear of regret and of not embracing perceived romantic opportunities. Hence, the frequent admonishment of ‘the comfort zone’ and the terrors of a stagnant life. As Hendriks argues, the tools of the seduction community tie into a general will to transform, overcome oneself and engage in a different, better mode of being in the world (Hendriks 2012: 10).

Such is the narrative with regard to the options, or lack thereof, which are available for men who do not engage in daygaming. Then, how does daygaming distinguish itself from these bleak alternatives?

“If you have the ability to get through this internal hurdle, because it’s much more an internal thing, than it is any kind of external, technical aspect, then you have access to almost any woman on the planet. If you can walk up and say hello, you can start something.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00:17:30)

Daygaming is purported to vastly increase the selection of sexual partners, as the seducer can gain access to any woman that he sees in his lived proximity, to ‘start something’. By cultivating

the ability to approach any woman that the man sees, he becomes able to access a variety of women that hitherto hadn't been available to him. He becomes relieved of scarcity and gains choice and abundance. Furthermore, it's notable that in the discourse that is served, there is a preoccupation with the interior experience, which is suggested to hinder a sense of agency. This interiority is central to this work, and I will explore the embodied and agentic implications that it contains in subsequent sections.

Another related, central narrative of daygaming is its explicit encouragement of male empowerment, as described by another of the dating coaches of TNL:

“Move through these patterns of behavior, become empowered, realize you are not your thoughts. You are...you can be much more than that. You can work with your own psychology in order to start paving a better way forward.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2020a: 00:49:00)

As noted by O'Neill, in the seduction community, accomplishing sexual success takes on the nature of a 'sexual work ethic' and viewing the self as an enterprise, which through the learning of this skill gains greater control and leverage over their intimate life: “[...] a financial consultant in his mid-twenties named Moe explained: 'If you think "Yeah, well, sometimes I get lucky and sometimes I don't", you just stand there and wait and hope somebody will fall in your lap, or anything. But in pickup you...you take action, you do something.’” (O'Neill 2015: 6). These discourses tie into a neoliberal ideology of taking responsibility, working hard and a meritocratic view on the individual, who can achieve success by exercising their personal agency. As Hendriks also argued in his article on the seduction community, there is an undercurrent of a Weberian ascetic work ethic within the community: “The search for sexual enjoyment intertwines with the quest for self-perfection and empowerment through self-discipline and voluntary suffering” (Hendriks 2012: 3). Through his experiences of participant observation in a seduction 'bootcamp', Hendriks observed that “[...] the teachings of the Seduction Community revolve around endurance, sober abstinence from naïve romanticism, critical self-observation, never-ending development of the self, and a tremendous rationalization of social life and intimacy.” (Hendriks 2012: 7).

By acquiring the tools of daygaming and mastering its cultural scripts, the man perceives he becomes empowered in his ability to navigate his dating life on his own terms, to take action and become free of the limitations of scarcity that the common, socially normative mode of mate selection did not provide him.

I argue that this is the central use, reason and cause for the rise of daygaming as a cultural phenomenon. I will engage with this notion through an embodied understanding of structure/agency, as I argue that ‘daygaming’ increases the sense of agency to its adherents and grants them greater leverage in the formation of their social life, becoming a vessel for both agentic capacity and empowerment.

The role of embodiment in the structure/agency debate

One of my core arguments is that ‘daygaming’ reveals a particular, embodied process in the manner in which structure/agency relations are realized in everyday life.

In order to center embodiment as a focal point of sociological analysis, the notion of embodiment itself must be clearly defined and examined. While I shall not draw an exhaustive literature review of the various modes of bodily understanding through sociological theory, I will rather clarify the understanding of embodiment as it is understood and applied in the framework of this paper.

Before discussing the relation between embodiment, structure and agency, I will define which understanding of agency that I am using in the framework for this paper, as agency is central to my analytical purposes. I operate from the sociological understanding of agency that Hays provides in her 1997 article on structure and agency:

A sociological understanding of agency, then, does not confuse it with individualism, subjectivity, randomness, absolute freedom, or action in general, but recognizes it as embracing social choices that occur within structurally defined limits among structurally provided alternatives (Hays 1997: 65).

While the members of the seduction community often like to think of themselves as a group of sovereign men who ‘take action’ and take control of their lives, my analysis of daygaming does not imply that seducers use this cultural script in order to unleash a voluntaristic expression of absolute freedom and sexual desire. Rather, daygaming and its related praxes espouse a social choice that differs from general patterns of social structure, while simultaneously adhering to a multitude of social structures, such as conversational norms, bodily etiquette, hygiene etc. Furthermore, ‘daygaming’ itself is a structurally provided alternative as it is inherently a discursive structure itself, relying on language and conceptual frameworks that are socially originated. The narrative of ‘daygaming’ is a system of meaning, underpinned by subcultural categories and representations, which form a way of thinking about certain experiences and wants. This view of agency is conducive towards understanding the schema of ‘daygaming’ as a presentation of a *social choice*.

Now, I will move on with examining how embodiment can be sociologically understood, and which approach I have chosen to focus on within this particular theoretical framework.

Howson & Inglis propose three “moves” that have been prominent in the way that the body has been a source of sociological analysis (Howson & Inglis 2001). The first move is found, for instance, in Bryan S. Turner’s work in his seminal “Body & Society”, which is characterized by its examination of what society does *to* and *with* the body. That is, the body is analyzed through the specter of an object that is affected by social forces, rather than in its subjective and experienced properties (Turner 1984, in Howson & Inglis 2001: 301).

The second suggested move is the manner in which the work of classic sociological theory has been reappropriated to reveal the bodily components that have been hitherto ignored or neglected by the field, yet have been an ‘absent presence’ implicit in the work - the work of Goffman is one such example. While not explicitly claiming to concern himself with the body, Goffman accounts for the importance of corporeality and affect in his analysis of the interaction order. Another example of such ‘rediscovery’ is found in Shilling’s readings of Durkheim, where notions of ‘effervescence’ and ‘totemism’ are argued to be essential starting points in sociological theorizing on the body (Shilling 1999, 2008). I will engage with this second ‘move’

in the latter part of this paper, as I evaluate the usefulness of Goffman and Durkheim in particular towards understanding ‘daygaming’.

The final move is found in the sociological use of the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty. Rather than focusing on structures, this approach foregrounds the immediate interior experience, agency and intention as the central vantage points of analysis (Howson & Inglis 2001: 302). The difference between this approach and the others is the central distinction between “how societies managed populations through the structural objectification of the body as Körper (the fleshy physical shell), and the individual significance of the experiencing, acting and interacting Lieb (the lived body)” (Shilling 2001: 329). Nick Crossley speaks to this distinction in his separation between a *sociology of the body* and a *carnal sociology* (Crossley 1995b: 43). The former examines *what is done* to the body, while the latter focuses on what the body *does*, and its sentient, embodied praxis. This mode of understanding embodiment is underpinned by an ontological understanding of the individual as a *body-subject*, an embodied agent who acts through acquired cultural scripts, which create a framework for the individual’s repertoire of social possibility (Howson & Inglis 2001: 305). As Crossley states: “The perceiving body ... is ... an agent of cultural praxes, and conversely, cultural praxes are ... the work of an active body-subject” (Crossley 1995b: 48). The body-subject “[...] is able to transform its culturally acquired techniques into competences and into effective action” (Crossley 1995a: 135).

Returning to the dimension of agency towards this topic, the body-subject has an element of choice in its mode of conduct and perception, but this choice can only be realized through a self-distantation and the presentation of alternative, cultural ways of being, rather than existing in a vacuum (Crossley 1995b: 56). This notion of choice also aligns with Hays’ aforementioned understanding of agency as a capacity, which is only made possible by structurally presented alternatives. Crossley’s view on the body-subject as an agent who acquires cultural scripts that it uses to interrogate the social world is central to my understanding of ‘daygaming’. Through this understanding, the use of ‘daygaming’ can be viewed as a choice that is given to the individual in the form of an alternative cultural praxis.

In this branch of body studies, the body is also understood to not simply be a tabula rasa of social forces that reacts upon discourses which are inscribed upon it - the body talks back and reacts in

a continuous dialect with itself and the experienced world. The body simultaneously reacts to and creates bodily cultural schemas. A similar notion is argued by Diane Coole in her 2005 article, where she outlines the relevance of phenomenology towards understanding agentic capacities. Coole claims that “[...] the body is never merely a passive transmitter of messages but plays an active role in the generation of perceptual meaning” (Coole 2005: 128). According to Coole, resistance can emerge from a corporeal source, which can serve as a prelude towards action. Coole describes how the somatic bodily experience can also produce negative visceral reactions such as “[...] tightening of the chest, a constricting of the throat, a stiffening of the shoulders, a knotting in the stomach [...]”, which restrict agentic capacity or a “[...] a quickening of the heart, a rapidity of breaths, a clenching of the fists, an adrenalin rush, a blush, a frown [...], which conversely might enable the agent to be spurred into action or be prepared to do so (Coole 2005: 131). Thus, the central point is that these experiences of emotional saturation are crucial in understanding agency and the understanding of the body as capable of narrowing or expanding the subject’s interactional repertoire. By examining agency through the interior, felt experience, rather than external modes of categorization and discipline, I find that a more acute basis for understanding action can be maintained. The body comes alive and might react in unpredictable fashions, rather than being an information machine, wherein social schemas are uniformly deposited and reproduced. Nevertheless, as Coole underlines, the phenomenological approach does not attribute such corporeal reactions to distal, instinctual origins, but contain learned, culturally contingent components (Coole 2005: 132). While Coole provides theoretical tools to understand agency from a phenomenological perspective, her notions are rather vague with regards to its applicability to understanding the social world and how these tools can be used concretely. My focus on daygaming attempts to make these ideas come to life in order to understand how people actually experience these processes in their lived experience.

Approach ‘anxiety’?

The influence of the embodied experience towards enabling or restricting agency has been established and that it is crucial to understand interactions and subjectivity in a manner that

includes the interior, corporeal experience. In this section, I will examine how these processes manifest themselves in the ‘approach’ experience of the seducer.

The dating coach, James Marshall, speaks explicitly of the sensorial activation that his students experience upon the imminent prospect of approaching an attractive woman:

“[...] Firstly, what happens is this: Your senses perceive a stimulus, which in this case is my eyes seeing the girl. I see the pretty girl and immediately I have a thought about that, which is “She’s fucking hot! I’d like to have a girl like that in my life” and then the next thought “Well, maybe I should go and approach her.” And then what happens is, my body activates. It starts to do stuff that it doesn’t always do. It’s having an unusual response, because now it’s potentially gonna step into an unknown or an unfamiliar territory. And as a result, I start to feel a bunch of stuff which you guys could easily list for me right about what it is for you. The typical ones that most people feel are: dryness in their mouth, butterflies in their stomach, tightness in their chest or in their neck, trembling, sweating, heart-rate increase and a variety of other physical manifestations. And that’s the thing that most guys then go “There is my anxiety” [...]”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00:33:00)

This presentation is also repeated by one of the students on the workshops, in his description and attribution of trying to ‘cold approach’ by himself before being taught by the dating coaches:

“Whilst trying to cold approach, it was always, so many things happened to my body that it never really went there. In the split second where I saw the girl, it was like, my feet would walk away in the other direction, so I actually never really cold approached a girl yet. [...] Now I want to take action and really go after that second where my brain says, or my feet say “Walk away”, I wanna go into this fear.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2020b: 00:05:00)

The sensorial descriptions that James Marshall observes with regards to the corporeal reactions upon the imminent approach are almost identical to Coole’s bodily descriptions of phenomenological sensations, which affect agency. I argue that the negative visceral reaction of ‘approach anxiety’ is a useful example with regards to the entwinement of agency and corporeality, as the body becomes a domain of somatic responses that restrict action.

The first step to actualize ‘daygaming’, is to acknowledge that daygaming is even a possible action. It appears that this mode of interaction only becomes possible once the individual internalizes its script as a cultural praxis:

“One interesting thing about this approach anxiety, is that, before you had the concept that it was even remotely possible that a normal, average-looking, average-income man could run up to a woman on the streets and talk to her and maybe get her number, before you even thought that was conceptually a possibility, you didn’t experience approach anxiety, right? So think about it, if you can think back to a time before you heard about the seduction community [...] before you’d heard about cold approaching, daygame, night game, whatever. And you’re walking down the street, and you see a beautiful woman, you didn’t suddenly feel anxiety. You may feel some other things, like sadness or melancholy, desire, regret. You know, just thinking, “Oh well, there’s a gorgeous girl there, I guess I’m never gonna meet her!” Because how can you meet her? You couldn’t just reach out and say hello to somebody. Could you? No, of course you couldn’t do that. [...] As you start to build this idea like “Okay, I wanna do this. I wanna meet women who don’t just come into my social circle. I wanna have options.” That’s when you start walking down the street, you see the girl, and then you’re like “Holy shit, I got that approach anxiety”, which is kinda the second stage defense. The first stage defense is denial. Not possible, can’t be done.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00:25:00)

Interestingly, James Marshall states that prospective seducers did not feel anxiety prior to their acquaintance with ‘daygame’. Previously, a vague desire was produced upon the sight of an attractive woman, yet he did not have the interactional tools or scripts to act upon this desire. It is the acquisition of the cultural script of daygaming that widens the repertoire of possible social action, which was not priorly available to the individual. The previously discussed emphasis by Crossley regarding the centrality of cultural praxes towards embodiment is clearly relevant here, as I argue that the excerpts can indeed be read as a process in self-distantation and internalization of a new, alternative cultural praxis, which presents a social choice. Furthermore, bodily reaction is shown to be culturally contingent upon learned discourses.

The awareness of this expansion of interactional repertoire produces effects of embarrassment and anxiety in the crossroad between desire and action. The body is a mediator of the actualization of interaction schemas as either an enabling or restricting factor. Thus, it is not simply sufficient to be cognizant of a cultural script in order to realize it, the body must, so to

speak, be brought along for the ride and it might be kicking and screaming. The body allows us to indulge in a wealth of joys and pleasures, while being equally able to impede them.

With regards to the tension in the process of internalizing 'daygame' as a possible course of action, I argue that there is a case of conflicting cultural schemas. The first is the normative imperative of 'You shall not walk up to women you don't know and try to seduce them on the street' and the conflicting schema is the one of daygaming, which according to the narrative of the seduction community is imperative towards being successful in life.

Negotiating with the body

Despite the stated omnipresence of anxiety and general embodied restrictions, seducers appear to be able to plough through and succeed in taking action eventually. How is this to be? How do seducers manage their corporeal reactions and emotions towards their agentic goals?

[...] There are so many different things where your body activates with the same kinds of sensations, but you perceive it to be a positive thing, not as anxiety, but as excitement. And what I wanna teach you guys to do [...] is to help guys move from creating abject terror over situations that could actually be perceived in a totally positive way. Now, the jump from "I'm terrified" to "I'm excited" is psychologically often a too big a jump to do in one go. And I'm not suggesting that you go, that every time you see the girl and you feel the stuff and you go "That's excitement!" "I feel awesome", "Girls love me!", "That's my body telling me it's time to go", which is more or less what I feel. [...] But in order to get to that point, what I wanna shift is from a negative association with the sensations to neutral. [...] So I teach this in all my workshops, the first thing is awareness, and then I teach a range of meditation techniques around this, that allow a guy to perceive the sensations in his body and to disassociate from these judgements, these meanings that most guys place on them which is that it is fear, that "I am a loser", that is embarrassment, that there is potential harm. So the thing you need to do is to start catch yourself, and instead of getting lost in the story, the negative movie you are running in your mind, bring yourself back to observing what is going on in your body. [...] This is a style of meditation that allows you to move your awareness throughout your body and observe what is happening, as it is. Not to try and control it, not to try to force it to be something else and not to think about it and make ornate stories about it. Just to observe. "Okay, right now, in my belly, I feel something." And so, what I do with a student, let's say we're out in field, and I say "Okay, there is a cute girl, go and talk to her" and he's like "Ohhh, anxiety.". So what I'll say is "Where do you feel that sensation?" and he'll be like "I don't know, I feel anxiety." And I'll say "Alright, close your eyes. Place your hand where you feel the most intense sensation." That's the first thing to do. So he thinks about it for a while, and drops into it and he says "Okay, here or here." "Alright, now describe it for me in neutral adjectives." And he says "Fear, anxiety, embarrassment." "No, those are assessments. Those are judgements. Describe the actual physical sensation. Imagine I was an alien coming down and I was asking you what are you feeling? I don't understand judgements, I only understand descriptions of, of uuh, of objective sensations." And so he feels it for a while and he says: "Okay, it's a pressure." "Alright, there is a pressure, is there anything else?" "Yeah, there's kind of like an electricity

feeling kind of radiating out.” “Alright, cool, anywhere else in your body?” “Yeah, my knees are kinda vibrating, I feel a bit like jelly in my legs.” “Okay, cool!” and so on and so on. Maybe you feel tingling in your fingertips, maybe you feel your heart rate increasing. Maybe you feel that your mouth is drying up. Okay, these are all physical things that are objectively happening. Cool, that’s the reality right now, we’re not force it to be something it’s not, we’re not trying to get rid of it, we’re not rationalizing it or thinking about it or discussing it. We’re just using our minds as we are a scientist, dispassionately without any emotion observing and just going: “Yeah, there are some feelings there, some feelings there, some feelings there and okay, be with it.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00:34:00)

The techniques that James Marshall proposes can be analyzed as narrative and embodied tools of reinterpreting the corporeal experience. In Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, as it is interpreted by Crossley, the process that the coach describes is a manner of attributing bodily activation to a certain stimulus, as for example, an increased heartbeat does not mean anything without being given a linguistic attribute such as “love” or “anxiety” (Crossley 1995b: 52). These bodily reinterpretations are indicative of Crossley’s notion that “[...] embodied agency is reflexive agency...because this reflexivity is achieved by the medium of language (or other social factors) [...]” (Crossley 1995b: 51). The readjustment that the coach espouses here is to shift from an attribution of the experienced sensations from “anxiety” to “neutrality”. Here, I find it important again to return to the initial discussion on the self-empowering dimensions of seduction. I argue that the process of managing one’s emotions and reactions are tied into a wider, almost Nietzschean narrative of self-overcoming and voluntary suffering. The transformation of the self and one’s palette of actions requires overcoming and negotiating the bodily experience. In aligning with O’Neill and Hendriks analysis of the seduction community as a schema that is inherent to the cultural logic of capitalism, the relationship to the body in the cultural script is one of control and management - the subject must rationalize its relationship to its body. Marshall even goes as far as suggesting to view the body as a dispassionate ‘scientist’. By interpreting the constricting phenomenological experience of anxiety, tension and fear through the cultural scripts that ‘daygaming’ offer, the subject is able to construct narratives that allow them to combat and renegotiate the body’s visceral reactions in terms that are conducive to their desires. The overcoming of such inhibitory anxieties can be a form of a decivilizing process, where the regulatory maxims of social norms have become unbearable to an extent that new techniques of the body emerge to counteract them.

This is firstly done by labelling the sensation as “approach anxiety” to begin with, thus creating a generalized concept that makes the experience identifiable throughout various individual experiences. Furthermore, the discourse of ‘approach anxiety’ problematizes the affective experience itself. The ‘anxiety’ that is felt is deemed undesirable and hindering, as it is a restricting factor towards the ultimate goal of sexual success. Counternarratives might suggest that approach anxiety is a wholly appropriate emotion, which calibrates the individual towards social norms and protects the individual from social costs and dangers. One of the methods that Marshall recommends is renaming ‘approach anxiety’ to ‘approach energy’ to disassociate the bodily sensations from value-laden labelling. The implication here is that the manner in which we identify and articulate our sensations are decisive in how we experience them, and can influence our ability to cope with them. This process can again be read through Crossley’s carnal sociology, in his focus on Merleau-Ponty’s concept of ‘perceptual schemas’, which give meaning and sense to the sensorial impressions that the body experiences (Crossley 1995b: 47). Thus, I argue that the altered interpretation that the dating coach suggests is a recalibration of perceptual schemas in order to accommodate agency.

“[...] So rather than us walking around calling it approach anxiety, so you’re going out to approach girls, you’re there, you see the girl, you feel some stuff in your body and you go “Ah! There’s my approach anxiety. Ah, it’s there. It’s happened.” The moment that it’s happened, “Now it’s taken control of me, I don’t have any recourse.” [...] Instead, don’t call it approach anxiety. If you must call it anything, call it ‘approach energy’. It is your body starting to activate in ways that are slightly usual, due to the fact that you are doing something that is slightly unusual.”

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00: 33:00)

According to this narrative, the body speaks, and the manner in which we interpret and deduce its language is crucial in determining our interactional and agentic repertoire.

In the seducer’s world, the articulation of bodily sensations into certain linguistic terms, allows the individual to transcend being merely a victim of its vicissitudes. This resonates with Shilling’s reading of Durkheim regarding the tension between desire and social structure, as he highlights the sources of pain in the individual and its affinity with a lack of tools to interpret it: “[...] we can never succeed in mastering our sensations and in translating them completely into intelligible terms. They take on a conceptual form only by losing that which is most concrete in

them, that which causes them to speak to our sensory being and to involve it in action” (Shiling 2008: 218).

These reinterpretations do not take a solely cognitive-linguistic character, but also manifest themselves in techniques of the body. Seducers are encouraged to meditate and observe their sensations in an effort to not be overwhelmed by the force of emotional saturation. Establishing a consciousness over bodily sensations allows for their dissolution and management. In Marcel Mauss’ pioneering article “Techniques of the Body”, he states that it is “It is thanks to society that there is an intervention of consciousness.” and “It is thanks to society that there is the certainty of pre-prepared movements, domination of the conscious over emotion and unconsciousness.” (Mauss 1973: 86). If Mauss’ understanding of society in this context is to be understood as a generalized other, I would argue that the techniques of the seducers invert this logic. It is exactly the imposition of consciousness over emotions that potentially allows for a disruption of normalized interactions and the callings of the generalized other. In this particular case, it is the absence of consciousness and the overpowering, paralyzing effects of embarrassment, which allow for the upholding of social normativity. Deviant social behavior can manifest by the conscious regulation and transformation of “pre-prepared” emotion. Nonetheless, the learned techniques of seducers technically have a social origin, rather than an instinctual, biological origin as they are acquired discourses that have risen from the seduction community. Mauss’ article still remains instructive in exhibiting how the acquisition of knowledge is not merely a cognitive phenomenon, but contains equally important techniques of the body, which produce dispositions that the individual uses in interacting with their environment.

Thus, to return to the question, what does daygaming do? Daygaming allows for the deduction of desires into narratives and conceptual frameworks, which allow the seducer to take actions, which are in alignment with their desires. Daygaming fills out a vacuum of desire, which was not met with the prior cultural scripts that were offered by mainstream society. ‘Daygame’ is a practice that has an element of changing how the agent interprets stimuli and managing phenomenological sensations and subsequently tilts the situation towards action and agency. The notions of ‘daygame’, ‘approaching’ and ‘approach anxiety’ become cultural tools, which serve

to position the subject towards its body in an altered fashion (Crossley 1995b: 47, in Howson & Inglis 2001: 305).

It remains central to ask - how can we understand, from a sociological perspective, why the body produces “anxiety” in these situations, which at first glance might give it occasion for pleasure and reproduction? Surely from a rational standpoint, it could only be to the benefit of heterosexual men to approach as many women as possible?

I propose two theoretical answers to this question, one drawing on Goffman’s interaction order, and the other on Durkheim’s dualism of Man.

The Dual Nature of Man

Durkheim’s article “On the Dualism of Human Nature and its Social Contents” can be seen as a central contribution of Durkheim towards sociological embodiment, most notably through the proposal of seeing the behavior of humans through the structure of a *homo duplex* (Durkheim [1914] 2005). Durkheim’s contribution to body studies has most notably been espoused by Chris Shilling, whose interpretations I find fruitful to draw on as a framework to understand the tensions inherent in ‘daygaming’ and the occurrence of approach anxiety.

Durkheim argues that man’s existence consists fundamentally of a dual nature that is in disequilibrium. The individual contains carnal, asocial, bodily and egoistic impulses by nature, which they must renegotiate in meeting with the social, symbolic order.

Durkheim proposes that the dual nature in man is rooted in the sensory, passionate appetites of man on the one hand, and the intellectual, rational life on the other hand. The appetites of the individual contrast with the moral demands of the social world, thus creating a painful imbalance in the human experience (Durkheim [1914] 2005: 44). In order for any society to exist, the life of the group must “enter into” individuals and become “organized within” them; the individual body must be transformed into a social body and learn to translate their sensorial experiences into the language of society and autoregulate their passions in a socially acceptable manner (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 211, in Shilling 2008: 216). This contradiction between man’s two natures becomes a source of suffering that is exclusive to humans, as this dual tension is a

consequence of the civilization of Man, a civilizing process that is absent in the experience of other animals (Durkheim [1914] 2005: 35).

Society must be felt in the embodied selves of individuals and coalesce with their emotional dispositions in order to be maintained as a structure (Shilling 1997: 212). Collective moral sentiments are entrenched in the individual's identity and the body becomes a site for social symbolism (Shilling 2008: 232, 233). The social structure is grafted and tattooed inside the inner life of the socialized being, creating horizons of meanings and inducing affective states of pain, embarrassment or shame upon the notion or experience of transgressing expected outcomes of social interactions. The fabric of society is sensed in the life-experience of the individual as an ordering emotion that proliferates certain behaviors and dissuades others. The individual must reach beyond themselves and maintain emotional dispositions and fix their sensuality in a manner that is conducive and faithful to pre-existing patterns of sociality (Shilling 1997: 207). As Shilling poetically reflects, “We do not, in other words, offer our bodies voluntarily as a social medium. Instead, our sensuous nature attaches us “to the profane world with every fibre of our flesh” while the social world painfully clashes “with our instincts” (Shilling 2008: 218). This pain stems from the perpetual presence of desires, which cannot live and yet never die. According to Durkheim, the individual must be subsumed to a society which ““requires us to make ourselves its servants” and “subjects us to all sorts of restraints, privations, and sacrifices” which “are contrary to our inclinations and to our most basic instincts” yet “without which social life would be impossible” (cited in, Shilling 2008: 218).

The desire to approach

I have established that daygaming may be a tool, which rises at the intersection between the poverty of sexual choice and abundant desire. This unfulfilled desire must be examined sociologically, in order to illuminate how normative modes of interaction create tensions within the individual.

By viewing the desire of single men to approach women through the perspective of the *homo duplex*, the tension between egoistic, bodily desire and the moral social demands of the social

world in a Durkheimian perspective becomes evident. The desire to approach unknown women on the street is an example of “those stubborn features of human sensuality which can prove resistant to social control”, and the subsequent phenomenological internal division (Shilling 1997: 207). In the lens of the heterosexual male, it is an example of one of the basic instincts that according to Durkheim must be truncated for the benefit of the smooth functioning of social life. The sensual impulse of the aspirational seducer ties into the limitlessness that the bachelor experiences, as opposed to the married man who has a regulated outlet for the fruition of his desire and a distinct object to direct it towards: “Civilization had produced a multiplicity of triggers of man’s passions, and only marriage could channel those needs within attainable bounds; bachelors, however, experience limitless horizons, which lead to unrestrained passions that create a disjunction between means and ends, and a state of chronic anomie.” (Thompson 202: 90). Furthermore, Durkheim saw the institution of marriage as essential as a rule to calibrate people’s desire (Lukes 1985: 533). The degradation of these institutions thus leads to the experience of a potentially aimless desire that the seducer feels.

The act of learning seduction becomes a practice of learning new means and ends that can accommodate ‘unrestrained passions’ and limit the pain of the trigger of a passion that cannot be fulfilled. Through the elaborate management of fears, anxieties and embarrassments, the seducer grabs a space for the realization of the needs of the egoistic, bodily self that was previously denied to him. By approaching, the seducer reevaluates a previously crystallized convention of the social world with the final aim of satisfying his sensory, individual and passionate appetite (Thompson 2002: 50).

I argue that the corporeal reaction towards the prospect of the approach is exemplary of Durkheim’s notion of the double nature of Man - the fundamental irreconcilability between carnal desire and the symbolic order. Approach anxiety illustrates in explicit terms how a bodily, egoistic desire rises up, only to be met with an embodied resistance that hampers the actualization of desire - a resistance that Durkheim would argue is rooted in socialized emotional dispositions. This phenomenon is a concrete example of what Durkheim could be referring to when speaking of the forces within us which “expresses something other than ourselves” (Durkheim [1914] (2005): 37). The seducer experiences the ‘individual sensory appetites’ that

are imposed by our evolutionary history and is confronted with the rational demands of society that opposes their realization. The anxiety upon the prospect of the approach is an expression of the phenomenological division of the homo duplex, as it is indicative of “the sway of an internal moral force comparable in strength to a physical force” (Durkheim, 1979: 88; 1919a, in Shilling 1997: 212). This constitution of society in the individual’s consciousness thus can form itself in an emotional habitus, an expected set of somatic responses to social situations, that either credit or discredit the individual as a functioning member of the social order.

Furthermore, the barriers that the internal environment of action presents towards approaching illustrate the significance of “emotionally saturated bases of action” for solidifying internal control, rather than cognitive rationalizations (Shilling 1997: 196). The seducer is rationally aware of the fact that the risks of danger and harm are miniscule in the act of approaching, and yet the embodied sense of embarrassment, fear and aversion is maintained. Approach anxiety compounds the significance of the ‘somatic sector of interaction’, which Shilling emphasises (Shilling 1999: 555). Individuals cannot be deemed merely rational actors, as emotional components of interaction maintain a crucial determining factor in behavior. Perhaps this phenomenon runs contrary to Durkheim’s dualism of the sensory appetites and the intellectual, moral life on the other hand, as it appears that the maintenance of social norms requires a certain sense of irrationality: an inertia that blocks the individual without being able to be dissolved by intellectual reasoning (Durkheim [1914] 2005: 44).

Thus, the seducer’s approach is an attempt at a resistance towards a socialized mental state of embarrassment and anxiety. The approach as an act in itself, is a break in the interaction order and with the shared expectations of behavioral normalcy that is expected (Shilling 2008: 228). Finally, the seducer must choose between recalibrating his emotions in order to accommodate action or to flee and be absolved of the tension residing in the duality between desire and embodied social organization.

The embodied dimension of interaction and the ordering function of embarrassment

Despite the general neglect of embodiment in the sociological canon, Erving Goffman has stood out as one of the key contributors to the development of a bodily grounded sociology. Goffman's dramaturgical perspective places great significance on the maintenance of a social self in the interaction order, which may at any time be discredited. The intrinsic need for a social self is maintained through interactions with other embodied selves that validate the individual as a morally worthy member of society (Shilling 1999: 546). The interaction order contains morally coercive boundaries, that in a socially adjusted individual is sanctioned through emotions, which calibrates the individual to interactional rules. Goffman describes one of the central ordering emotions, embarrassment, towards the interaction order in his article "Embarrassment and Social Organization" (Goffman 1956). Goffman outlines how encounters that threaten to discredit the social self of the individual social life produce "[...] *constrictions of the diaphragm, a feeling of wobbliness, consciousness of strained and unnatural gestures, a dazed sensation, dryness of the mouth, and tenseness of the muscles.*" (Goffman 1956: 264). Needless to say, this description coalesces with the previously mentioned affective experience of 'approach anxiety' by Marshall and his students. Thus, the fear of breaking social conventions and risking the discrediting of social self can be said to manifest itself through physiological sensations in the embodied encounters of individuals. Furthermore, it is beneficial to see a certain alignment between Goffman's notion of ordering emotions and Coole's description of phenomenological agentic capacity. I suggest that Coole has taken Goffman's identification of the somatic sector of interaction and appropriated it as a means of expanding our notion of agentic capacity and integrating it within the framework of embodiment - an approach that I find crucial to this analysis.

Yet, the disordering effects of desire appear to be invisible in Goffman's framework, as the occurrence of 'approach' anxiety might not be seen as ground for problematization, but perhaps rather an indication of a successful socialization. Nonetheless, the Goffmanian explanation model towards approach anxiety provides insight into the 'problem' that the seducer faces and

the reasons for the occurrence of discomfort by the prospect of approaching - the discreditation of the social self and the individual's value as a dignified human being.

This risk that is taken upon the self is identified by the seducers themselves in their narratives of why they feel anxiety:

*What is the thing that really stops men from taking action? I feel it is these two existential anxieties of men which is I: to be ignored, to be not, to be invisible and even deeper and more terrifying is to be seen. To be revealed. That is the thing that men primarily, mostly are anxious about, is when they go up and speak to a woman, okay, so people around might see and you know they might get embarrassed by the social situation, the judgement of passersby, yeah, that can be something that can make people feel weird about and of course for most guys it appears to be much more difficult to approach a girl in a crowded subway than in an open park, because they are dealing with not only the rejection of the girl, but the rejection of the whole train carriage. What is most terrifying about it? It's that the women who they have gone and spoken to, if they have chosen her, is very attractive to them, and if men see a woman who they perceive to be very, very attractive, the perception is that she is somehow perfect.
[...] We perceive that if a woman like that rejects us, because she's seen who we are, that we are not worthy human beings.*

- (The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00: 25:00)

One observes that in the narrative of seduction, the potential discreditation of the social self by the act of approaching is central to explanation models of approach anxiety, hence the affinity with Goffman.

It becomes a central question to ask whether the ordering emotion of embarrassment truly is a solely socially produced structure, as the Durkheimian analysis would imply or whether it is a calibrating emotion of the self, to protect itself from disturbance and harm. The transgression of the ordering emotion might then potentially not be an act of resistance towards the embodied boundaries of the social order, but rather an act of transgression towards oneself: a negotiation between desire and the self that is threatened by disequilibrium. In the case of approach anxiety, it appears that the body prioritizes the maintenance of the self over the uninhibited embrace of desires and potential pleasures. The instinct to not traverse the boundaries of social norms appears to be stronger than the carnal instinct of the individual. Rather than struggling with the impositions of society, we struggle with ourselves and our need for maintaining a dignified, validated social self. Evidently, the self is closely intertwined with society, which provides

individuals the linguistic tools and ontological concepts, which allow the establishment of, in Althusserian terms, a concrete, distinguishable subject (Althusser 1984). Here it is perhaps fruitful to be reminded of Sharon Hays' notion that structures and agency are not mutually exclusive or opposed to each other, i.e. that agency is what structure is not (Hays 1997: 59). Structures of the self are restraining and ordering, but can also be empowering towards the individual and lend tools towards creative and transformative action (Hays 1997: 60). The exact transformative action that is so essential towards the cultural scripts of the seduction community. As Shilling argues with reference to Goffman's interaction order, individuals seek towards a cohesive self that is reaffirmed through embodied interactions with others - a lack thereof can result in painful, deconstructing effects upon the self of the individual (Shilling 1999: 558). There is an element of being exposed and vulnerable that is inherently necessary in the domain of social interaction (Shilling 1999: 546). This notion also coalesces with the seducer's own narrative in attempting to explain the causes of the fear that rise during an imminent approach. It is a fear of exposure and rejection.

In this perspective, the multitude of experiences that discredit the social self of the seducer in the form of rejections, embarrassments and humiliations by the hands of women are hazardous towards the homeostasis of the self. The seducer must choose between risking being discredited numerous times in the interaction order or to sublimate the full extension of their desires. Conversely, the instinctual desires that the individual experiences, appear to be rather careless with regards to social costs, and must be calibrated by a socialized self. Returning to my reference to Hendrik's point in the beginning of this paper, this is perhaps where the aspect of an ascetic, voluntary suffering becomes the most evident in the praxis of the seduction community. The seducer accepts the prospect of bruising their ego and facing rejection, by the assistance of an overarching narrative of ultimate self-improvement and transformation. Paradoxically, the expression of libidinal flows requires a disciplining of the self and the body.

"The first thing to do is stop giving other people the right to make extreme judgements about you in very short amounts of time. The reality is what she has judged is what is in front of her. All she knows is the 10 seconds that she spent with you. Alright? So that all she has to work with, so the things she will be making her assessments of, whether she wants to continue this or not, are based around your timing, your posture, your eye contact, the way

you are dressed, of course the way you look. [...] She doesn't know what you're really like, all she knows is, in this moment "I don't want to continue with this". [...] This comes down to her making snap judgements based on the small amount of information she has, not on your worth as a human being."

(The Natural Lifestyles 2016: 00: 20:00)

Interestingly, in a move that once again speaks to Goffman's conceptions of the interaction order, Marshall recognizes the inherent humiliation and sting of a rejected interaction. While Marshall recognizes the inevitable everpresence of rejection, he provides tools to overcome this uncomfortable issue. Marshall urges the seducer to compartmentalize the situational self that is presented from a generalized, stable notion of the self. The prescribed solution to this uncomfortable issue lies in the recognition that the presented self is not indicative of the value of the individual, but rather a purely performative self, which the receiver of the approach is evaluating. By this move, the seducer is able to safeguard the notion of his self and increases his capacity to execute an approach. The woman who is being approached can't judge the seducer's self, as the self isn't fundamentally at stake in the interaction. This observation yields that the attribution process is central to the management of emotions in this case, as seducers attribute the outcome of an interaction to the situation, rather than to the self. Furthermore, this process is supportive of Jan. E Stets' suggestion that sociologists ought to pay more attention to the attribution process in emotion management, such as psychologists have for decades (Stets 2010: 266).

The embodied distress that is suggested to be caused by rejection is also managed through techniques of the body, as one witnesses in a video following one of the dating workshops, where Marshall stops a student for a minute after he has been blankly rejected by a woman:

"Close your eyes. Set your posture open, your legs are a little wider. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you. Relax your shoulders, relax your face. Relax your feet. [...] Let's do that for a few more breaths."

(The Natural Lifestyles 2020c: 00:33:00)

Returning to Durkheim, I attempt to compare his aforementioned dualism with my use of Goffman's explanation model of ordering emotions. I deem that Durkheim's notion of dualism

might still be a useful analytical tool, but it must be complemented by a greater sophistication in terms of how the individual and the self are understood.

Durkheim's notion of the tension between egoistic desires and social prescriptions might be a simplified, false dichotomy, with particular emphasis on the *egoistic*. I argue that Durkheim's attribution of the body to the individual, and the intellectual, conceptual world to the mind, might be limited in its scope, as I find that phenomena such as approach anxiety might serve to illustrate how social control can manifest itself in somatic, sensorial forms.

The ego does not prosper in the fulfillment of desire, but rather risks becoming lacerated in its confrontation with rejection, embarrassment and humiliation, which are oft-experienced situations in the life of the aspirational seducer. The fulfillment of desire in the case of 'daygaming' requires a leap of faith that might temporarily destabilize the cushioned notion of the self. Furthermore, this notion challenges the idea that phenomena such as 'approach anxiety' occur due to a vague internalization of social norms that 'holds back' the individual from their desires.

The seductive act is a triumph of desire over the homeostasis of the self. Thus, there is a need for a greater specificity in terms of the ego, the self and the desires that the individual experiences, as these appear to potentially be fundamentally in conflict. When taking the need to protect one's 'face' as a key factor of regulation in social behavior, the Durkheimian dualism between civilization or society and the strictly egoistic desires of the individual becomes flimsy.

Conclusions

To conclude, I have examined how the cultural script of 'daygaming' is a tool that purports to grant its users a sense of sexual empowerment and freedom as a pathway towards personal transformation, which ultimately widens the sphere of social possibility and provides meaning to certain desires. This phenomenon has implications towards the understanding of how cultural schemas can alter the perceived interactional repertoire of the individual, thus I argue that these notions can be useful outside the narrow scope of the seduction community.

The focus on daygaming has served to exemplify the relation between embodiment and agency, as daygame produces a sense of agency within pre-existing social structures, structures which the individual renegotiates through the acquisition of the alternative cultural praxis, which 'daygaming' presents. Yet, the realization of the schema has been argued to be impeded by the restricting bodily experience of 'approach anxiety', which has given credence to a phenomenological understanding of agency and the somatic sector of interaction. Furthermore, it has been shown how discursive schematizations of corporeal sensations in addition to techniques of the body, such as meditation, can be modes of managing the individual's capacity for agency, when faced with ordering emotions. These findings have challenged the conclusions of O'Neill's 2015 study, which suggested that the affective and embodied experience of the heterosexual experience are missed upon the seduction community.

Finally, based on my engagement with Goffman and Durkheim's work from an embodied perspective, I have argued that the tension between sexual desire and social normativity is central to the rise of 'daygaming' and that the discreditation of the social self by the expression of this desire might be instructive in explaining the challenges that the seducer faces in executing 'daygaming'.

These findings have contributed to the complication of the narrative towards the seduction community, as I have sought to argue that the seduction community is not solely of sociological interest from a gender perspective, but also provides insight into how 'daygaming' can challenge preconceived interactional norms.

Further research

This study, like other literature on the subject, has focused on the male experience of seduction. There is a gap in the literature regarding how being 'daygamed' from the perspective of women is experienced.

Lastly, the literature seems to agree that there is an overrepresentation of immigrants from South Asia and the Middle-East in the seduction community (O'Neill 2015: 4; Whitley & Zhou 2020: 8). I suggest that research which specifically examines the experience of sexual marginalization

among this group in Western societies and their subsequent participation in the seduction community could be fruitful.

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