

Contagious Sapiosexuality: Dreaming Conference Seduction as Ethics of Qualitative Research

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Abstract

In this paper we engage Baudrillard's (1979/1990) writings on seduction to 'dream up' seduction as an ethical and generative-destructive force of qualitative research. Beginning with a dreamy conference seduction, we argue that seduction keeps us qualitative researchers thinking, moving, risking, and being passionate about our work and each other. As a playful, sometimes frivolous, yet deeply terrifying process, seduction moves us beyond ourselves and into theoretical unknowns; enables us to risk ourselves in ethically listening to others' truths. We show and argue that conferences can be ripe spaces for the spread of contagious sapiosexuality and urge qualitative researchers to experiment and play with conference seductions.

Keywords: academic conferences, Baudrillard, ethics seduction, qualitative research

Contagious Sapiosexuality: Dreamy Conference Seductions as Ethics of Qualitative Research

In this paper we explore seduction as an ethic of qualitative research and academic conferences as ripe sites for seduction's flourishing. We argue, by way of narrative dreaming/s (Arndt & Tesar, 2019), that seduction -- at least seduction theorized as an electric undercurrent (largely per

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Baudrillard 1979/1990)¹ in academic conferences -- bubbles up, keeps us thinking, moving, risking and being passionate about our qualitative work and each other. Narrative dreamings remind us that stories do not represent reality but are agential in creating realities and possibilities for knowing. Seduction is multiple, it is multiply theorized and has multiple potential effects and affects, which for us resonates a dream-like quality. We never know if, when, or how seduction is real or imaginary or both; Baudrillard (1994) says we lost any ability to distinguish what is real and what is not for just about everything centuries ago. Narrative dreaming embraces this uncertainty and makes use of it – a dreamy methodology that interweaves human voice, theory, imagination, and invention in inquiry that makes “space for multiple, diverse, knowable, and unknowable potentialities” (Arndt & Tesar, 2019, p. 133).

We, real/imaginary, dreaming subjects are former dissertation advisor and doctoral student, now colleagues, co-authors, and conference roommates. We first met in an advanced doctoral research methods course, when one of us was a first semester, second-year doctoral student and the other an early career tenure track faculty member. Over time we were, and continue to be, drawn together by a mutual passion for theory and qualitative inquiry; by the (realized) potential of one another to bring theory to bear on our individual and shared lives and qualitative researcher selves. Perhaps this mutual fascination produces us as scholars; the becoming-scholar is called into being in shared passion that makes us receptive to academic desires. And at the same time, seduction ruins our becomings, displaces desire with the allure of the abyss. For Baudrillard, (2007) “seduction is stronger than production,” it is a process that destroys production, opens us to the meaninglessness of our becoming-anythings (p. 48).

Our academic desires led us to collaborations that saw us through the highs and lows of our academic careers and took us to academic conferences (e.g., International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, American Educational Research Association) to share our work. We appreciated those conferences as welcome disruptions of the typical flows of our academic routines, as (re)igniting passions, and as spaces to take risks. Much of the risk was in putting ourselves ‘out there’ as becoming scholars, risking the comfort, surety, and familiarity of our homes and usual academic routines. The conference was an exciting space to risk new ideas about qualitative research and new ways of being qualitative scholars. We both probably stayed out too late with colleagues and drank too much wine. But after sufficiently recuperating, drying out from our conferences, we found ourselves re-energized. Our passions for theory and working together reignited, particularly more so than working together back home – on writing Friday, at our usual table, at the off-

¹ This is our intentionally selective reading of Baudrillard’s (1979/1990) *Seduction*. Throughout his text, Baudrillard associates seduction with femininity and depicts seduction as a kind of aristocratic game – as frivolous, meaningless, immoral, and oriented toward pleasure. This is, for Baudrillard, how seduction achieves its potency over production, it operates with made-up rules in made-up worlds producing made-up pleasures. Our paper makes little of the feminine association and the aristocratic game-like enactment of seduction. We try to see seduction not just in nonsense games of privileged actors, but as anywhere and everywhere a twin force of desire’s production. In Deleuzian (1993) terms, seduction and desire constitute a fold where one is always the interior/exterior of the other.

campus coffee shop. Yet the desires that circulated at academic conferences and the risks they engendered also ruined us. They stretched us individually and collectively, forcing us to face, question, rethink the “Is” and “wes” we (never, wished we) were. As a force of uncertainty and meaninglessness, seduction was responsible for any possibility of becoming, thinking, dreaming anything new. Could seduction, therefore, be a guiding ethical force of our work as qualitative scholars? Seduction might be an enabling force of response-abilities that:

“...invite us to call into question the oft naturalized epistemological norms that share our ability to engage with the ‘home’ of homework, such as the subject(ification) of educational research: they ask us to not (too easily) make intelligible that which lay beyond our registers.” (Higgins, 2017, p. 97).

We could never predict where seduction would take us and what its destructions would make us, which is precisely the point.

The purpose of our paper is to explore academic conferences as sites of seduction. We present three narrative dreamings that, as dreams often do, blend into and reference one another. We begin with a (real/fictional/dream/fantasy) conference seduction and follow that seduction to its exhaustion, along the way theorizing seduction as a generative-destructive force that enable(d/s) us to conduct qualitative scholarship, yet with no guarantees that seduction will move us to something recognizable as ‘responsible’ or ‘ethical.’ Still, we argue seduction is a vital a/rousing energy that moves us beyond ourselves and into theoretical unknowns. We then meet Seduction, as lively concept, who aims to keep us qualitative researchers ethically awake and alive to our work, as Baudrillard (1979/1990) said, “only those who do not wish to seduce or to be seduced are dead” (p. 70). We cap the dream sequence by arguing academic conferences are ideal heterotopic spaces for seduction. In the midst of the 2020 global pandemic, we see conferences as also potent nodes of transmission for contagious sapiosexuality, for estranging us from what we (think) we know. Once conferences resume, we urge qualitative conference attendees to be seduced – to succumb to the allure of the void and risk their becomings.

Think but this, and all is mended—

That you have but slumbered here

While these visions did appear.

Shakespeare (1992), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act 5, Scene 1

Conference Dreaming I: American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2003, Chicago, IL

It’s the second roundtable of the day, back when AERA roundtables had one presenter. Presenter passes out the paper to an audience of seven. We hand it around. It’s 40 pages, 1.5 spaced, 12pt font, one-sided, stapled, with a title page

and a note: "Do not cite without author's permission, paper under review." The seat next to me (CIS gendered, heterosexual woman) is empty. I reach over the seat and pass the paper along.

I just started reading Foucault this year and this session is about Foucault and neo-Marxism. My body and brain are awake, receptive, eager to learn, eager to connect. My appetite for Foucault is voracious, insatiable, obsessive. I flip through the lengthy paper.

As Presenter begins a talk comprised solely of reading excerpts straight from the paper, the seat next to me is (over)taken. I feel the body sink in, politely, trying not to disturb. After setting aside its conference bag, the body leans in close to me -- smells of mint and musk -- and says quietly, "Can I share your copy?" I slide the paper over and note, perhaps, the body is a 'he' with long and manicured fingers, dark hair, hazel eyes, muscled body under well-fitted jeans and coordinated sweater. Or maybe not. Maybe I paid no attention to his body, but my racing heart and flushed face signaled an increased intensity and openness. Foucault, his body, my body's reactions to his body entangled, make time perceptibly slow down. I hang on to Presenter's every. Dryly. Read. Word. I move closer to the shared paper and trace a sentence Presenter is emphasizing with my finger. My paper-mate mirrors my movement, whispers privately, "Fuck. Do you understand this?" "Hell, no," I confess. We suppress laughs. I'm sure our legs, hands inadvertently touch at some point. Presenter maybe says, "panopticon," and "subjectivation," and "biopower," and the words, phrases, paper, hands, legs, table "crash into me." I'm tuned in, turned on. Seductive and seduced.

Drawing on memories, notes, writings, imaginations, dreams, and reconstructions of a seductive conference experience, we think our seduction narrative dreaming/s with Baudrillard (1979/1990) and a motley crew of space and affect theories (Arendt & Tesar, 2019; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). We write and think theory with stories. But our narratives are Arendt and Tesar's (2019) (re)theorized dreaming/s— while decentering the human subject they lay bare fictions of methodological certainty, voice, and agency. They expose fictions of qualitative inquiry as sense-making and entangle with our own musings and reviewers' comments on earlier versions of our manuscript. Woven or entangled with our dreaming/s, the theories, thoughts, comments adopt a "heuristic function" as we draw "creatively on different forms of knowledge to ask *what if one conceived of the world in this way?*" – what becomes possible when we think of and dream up conference seductions as vital to (ethical) qualitative research (Gibbs, 2010, p. 188)?

The roundtable session ends and paper-mate wants his own paper. Presenter does not have an extra one, but kindly offers his card. We exchange mutual glances or maybe smirks that communicate a shared rejection of Presenter's solution. "We could walk to Kinkos together and make you a copy of mine," I suggest. [Oh god, please, please say yes.] He does. Seduction smiles.

On the way we get acquainted. We are both graduate students. He's from New York. I'm from Colorado. Or I'm from Maine and he's from California. Seduction doesn't care.

We center seduction not (solely) to be provocative or exhibitionist, but to show how even the most bureaucratic, academic, structured, antiseptic, productive, neoliberal of conferences also produce what Foucault names heterotopias, spaces "...that light upon imaginary spatial fields, a set of relations that are not separate from the dominant structures and ideology, but go against the grain and offer lines of flight" (Johnson, 2006, p. 87). Ulmer (2017) too points to the dynamic and creative potential of heterotopic spaces, "Heterotopic spaces are significant because they are both contested and generative, fluid spaces of tension in which something new might be produced" (p. 380). Seduction operates in heterotopic conference spaces to foster productive tensions and contagious desires (sapiosexualities) to open up possibilities for creative, experimental, and deeply theorized qualitative research. And conference seductions – human and non-human entanglements of theory, desire, passion, bodies, materials – can be vital to (becoming) (post-)qualitative research(ers).

Seduction wants more. Copy made, we decide to take the 'long way' back to the conference hotel to continue our conversation. We walk across the bridge, along the river, by a clock tower. We learn we are both (struggling to) read, understand, and make use of Foucault for our dissertations. We also both love strong espressos. So we stop for one. We sit in a cozy coffee shop corner and compare our graduate programs and theory reading lists. We grapple with Foucault's notion of the 'extra-discursive.' What could the 'extra' signify and what might we do with it? It's puzzling, exciting, a mystery. Seduction is ever so pleased with itself. We went to Kinko's to make a copy. And now we're on an adventure, up for and open to the unknown and impossible challenge to understand Foucault and whatever possibilities lie ahead.

"What could be more seductive than a challenge? A seduction or challenge always drives the other mad, but with a vertigo that is reciprocal - an insanity borne by the vertiginous absence that unites them, and by their reciprocal engulfment" (Baudrillard, 1979/1990, p. 83).

Seduction lets loose, throws caution into the wind. And I want to grab his hand and jump in the river. I want him to whisper Foucauldian insights in my ear. I want to tear his clothes off and write my dissertation across his chest. I want to understand biopower and governmentality. Our legs touch under the table and our faces redden, not with embarrassment but for the sheer intensity of the moment. We finish our espressos and, at Seduction's suggestion, arrange another 'theory date' for the following day to discuss Presenter's paper. Is Foucault the pretense for us getting together? Or is us getting together the pretense for studying Foucault? Seduction says yes. Seduction always says yes.

Within the conference *heterotopia*, Gibb's (2010) post-affect concept of *affect contagion* positions seduction in Massumi's (2003) terms as "spontaneously and simultaneously in two orders of reality, one local and learned or *intentional*, the other nonlocal and self-organizing" (p. 151, emphasis added).

Surely I was seducing him and he was seducing me.

Jeong-Hee Kim (2015), in her qualitative methods book *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Craft and Analysis of Stories as Research*, encourages narrative researchers to flirt with their data. Maybe qualitative researchers are seduced by data, maybe qualitative researchers seduce data to uncover its meanings. Maybe intentional seduction is a good metaphor to think with in qualitative research. At the same time...

...we were swept up by self-organizing, agential forces of seduction, seduced by Foucault, the buzz of an academic conference, the proximity of our bodies at the roundtable, the brisk streets of the Windy City, the smell of good coffee (perhaps more difficult to find than someone/something to seduce), the possibilities our encounter might open. Excited and uncertain of what to expect of the conference, each other, and of Foucault.

Baudrillard (1979/1990) theorizes seduction as the lure of the unknown, the fascination of the abyss. It about unknowing, uncertainty, and possibility.

Foucault for us, at the time, was a question. As were we to each other and ourselves. Both were unknowns that pulled us together in a mutual fascination. Seduction makes strangers.

For Baudrillard, "The attraction of the void lies at the basis of seduction. Seduction begins in secrecy, in the slow, brutal exhaustion of meaning which establishes a complicity amongst the

signs; it is here, more than in a physical being or the quality of a desire, that seduction is concocted" (p. 78).

Seduction Destructions. *We met the following day in the sunlit lobby of a grand white hotel. We drank more coffee, while we read, critiqued, dissected Presenter's paper. We brought Discipline and Punish and History of Sexuality Volumes 1 and 2 and fed each other bits of Foucault. Oh! Listen to this! "[Foucault quote]." And then, "What do you think it means?" "Maybe..." and we followed each other's thoughts, swept up by exchanged interpretations, pauses, reflections, tensions. Hungry. Eager. Seduction made us a dinner reservation.*

For Baudrillard (1979/1990), seduction operates in the realm of the feminine and opposes, or at least undermines, masculine *sexuality*. Sexuality is about production, the real, conquest, and consummation. The orgasm. Seduction, however, is about arousal and possibility. It is the lure and allure of the void, without the ultimate (re)productive goal to fill or colonize it. Seduction belies production and its certainties. In the neoliberal academy, we might be tempted to believe as Baudrillard suggests many do, that "only those who can no longer produce are dead." But staring into the dead eyes of bureaucracy we know, "in reality, only those who do not wish to seduce or be seduced are dead" (p. 84).

Maybe we had good reasons to avoid Foucault and each other. Maybe we would produce our dissertations more quickly and efficiently and land ourselves good tenure track jobs if we used more conventional, known theories to frame our dissertations and their more-or-less traditional qualitative methodologies. Sexuality says get a hotel room and get it over with.

Maybe, following Baudrillard, it wasn't really up to us: "seduction gets hold of them nonetheless, just as it gets hold of all production and ends up destroying it." (p. 84)

"I'm married." I tried to drop the fact of my marital status casually, as if it was both important to say, but at the same time totally irrelevant. Seduction didn't care.

*I don't know what I expected. Maybe I feared throwing that kind of reality-bomb into our fascination with Foucault/each other would ***ruin everything***. Maybe we wanted to make it clear we wouldn't be going back to a hotel room in case (scholarly) (re)production, co-authorship, was what we had in mind. Maybe...*

He looked at me then. Perhaps took some time to think before he

responded: "I think Foucault would say marriage is an oppressive institution." Seduction, hiding behind a couch, jumps out and yells, "Surprise!"

Fuck. Why had I not yet subjected my marriage, any marriage, to Foucault? And who was my paper-mate to force it on me? Seduction, for all its allure, excitement, arousal, fascination, was revealed to me in that moment as a force of unwanted risk and danger. I was angry. And I was terrified and not (just) because seduction might yield to sexuality. Seduction opens possibility, which always includes the possibility of production, of sex. As Baudrillard (1979/1990) says, seduction is "an instantaneous passion that can result in sex" (p. 81). Rather, this moment revealed to me how readily and without warning seduction destroys production.

I remember my defensive, knee-jerk reaction. "No," I scoffed. And then qualified, "At least not my marriage. My marriage is not oppressive."

But surely it was too late.

Seduction sinisterly whispers Baudrillard's words again, "...seduction gets hold of them nonetheless, just as it gets hold of all production and ends up destroying it." (p. 84).

Seduction had primed and opened me/us to the abyss and to new ways of thinking, being, learning, theorizing in this heterotopic AERA conference space. It has made us feel like anything could happen, which is precisely the point. Something (always) happens/ed.

I recalled in that moment a former counselor who referred to therapy as "spitting in someone's soup." Sitting at the table at the Indian Restaurant, I couldn't look my paper-mate in the eye. My marriage-soup now had a massive, wet, phlegmy loogie floating in the middle of it. Would I pick up my spoon and eat it? Slurp loudly, pretend it was delicious? Exaggerate to others, "Mmmmmmm. This is great soup!" How dead, and closed to the forces of seduction, would I need to be to maintain the anti-oppressive illusions of (my) marriage-soup?

As Baudrillard (1979/1990) reminds, "For if production can only produce objects or real signs, and thereby obtain some power; seduction, by producing only illusions, obtains all powers, including the power to return production and reality to their fundamental illusion" (p. 70). What were the illusions of (my) marriage? When faced with the illusions it reveals, seduction can "just as easily exhaust itself in the process of defiance and death" (p. 81).

Seduction yawned. We went on to other topics and perhaps rekindled some passions, more Foucault, but seduction, for us, had seemed to run its course. We

agreed to collaborate on a future conference paper. And I went home to confront my illusions.

Other theorists also note the dangers of producing, desiring, and maintaining the illusions of production. For example, Butler (1997, 2002) pointed out the dangers of subjectification, oppression as the desiring of one's own subject position. And Žižek (2005) cautioned against fundamentalists who become dupes of their own ideologies. Surely seduction is a force that awakens us to Foucault's subjectification and Žižek's dupery, enabling us to what Lather (2013) talks about as the purpose of much (post-)qualitative research – to make the familiar strange, “to trouble identity and experience, and what it means to know and tell” (p. 638). My marriage, my desire to be a ‘married woman,’ were troubled, had all become strange. Seduction, in its process, removes us from ourselves and ‘stranges’ our becomings.

At the same time, possibilities for my scholarship, and ways of being a qualitative researcher, doing qualitative research, had opened. I began to think about the leakiness of qualitative research, how it (always) produces more than what the researcher intended (despite the most detailed dissertation proposal). I began to think and write about qualitative research in light of my conference seduction – as an exchange of material and discursive passions that open up and tear down productive illusions, and in particular the illusions of heterosexual masculinity (Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006; Wolgemuth, 2007). I wonder/ed about the ethics of my conference seduction and how an ethics of seduction might guide qualitative research.

Interviewing Seduction(s) (with Author and Reviewer Notes²)

Seduction: (leans in and smiles suggestively) ...and that is just one example of how I can move in academic conferences. You see how I opened things up for her? I made the productions of heterosexual marriage, masculinity, even qualitative inquiry impossible. I could tell other stories about that same conference seduction. I could tell his seduction stories. Every story would be something different. I am of course multiple, my effects are multiple, and that is what makes the seduction game so exciting.

² For those listening to an audio version of this manuscript, this section, “Interviewing Seductions(s) (with Author and Reviewer Notes),” and subsequent sections include call-out boxes that interrupt the text narrative. These boxes contain conversations between the two co-authors and notes from manuscript reviewers. They are discernable by always beginning with “Note to Travis,” “Note to Jenni,” or “Note from Reviewer.”

Jenni (wipes brow): That was a steamy story for sure, at least the middle bits. Am I blushing? It helps me understand what you make possible. It also reminds me that you are so often misunderstood, especially in qualitative research and academic conferences. I think you get a bad rap. That must be hard. Can you talk to me about that?

Seduction: I could tell you a story of our interview, this interview. My friend Newkirk (1996) talked about interviewing as a process of seduction and betrayal. I am a force in this interview, as I am in all interviews. You use me to create a (false, according to Newkirk) sense of closeness. We make prolonged eye contact. I open myself to you, share my deepest secrets and desires, maybe even my most painful moments, and then what? You turn away. Coldly abandon me. As a final insult, you probably misrepresent me in your write-ups.

Jenni: Maybe it's inevitable, but I hope I don't do that.

Seduction: We've been talking for over 30 minutes now. I feel close to you. I feel like getting closer. Is that what you want? Will you forget me once you turn off the recorder?

Jenni (coughs uncomfortably): ...And how does that make you feel? To be thought of as a force for betrayal in research?

Seduction: It is one of my multiplicities, I cannot deny that, but I do so much more. I suppose like most incarnations of concepts, I am treated singularly and unfairly. You should interview Disgust, that poor thing never gets a fair shake. I don't let it get me down though. Like Baudrillard (1979/2003) theorizes me, I am playful, a game. An interview is a game.

Note to Travis: Should we mention that Van den Hoonaard (2012) also described research-ethics regimes where seduction acts like a gravity-well, pulling people, institutions, policies, procedures in and transforming all discourses about ethical research into one homogenized notion of research ethics? Anything can seduce, really.

Hey, I appreciate you working on this paper with me. I love your brain!

Note to Jenni: Doesn't Žižek (2005) also refer to seduction as the initiating force of fundamentalism, the mechanism by which the would-be fundamentalist comes to believe (to be seduced by) ideology. These negative views cast seduction as a force or flow of both material and discursive oppression. And if I help you with this, I know that I'll have leverage to get you to work on one of my papers.

Note from Reviewer: ...there is something I am not convinced about in this [negative] view/construction of seduction. It seems to me that is like I am saying that seduction is bad; as if seduction is something related to betrayal; as if seduction is wrong. I do not want to enter this narrative. In a research process, I think seduction is a force which circulates between us, and it can be productive and generative. It is produced not only by space and time but also by matter. I can be seduced by the fragrance of a rose, by the color of the twilight, by the sound of a voice, by the smell of the food, by the softness of a fabric. So, seduction makes us know; it is part of aesthetic knowledge. I would like to see more matter in your paper and at, a wider general level, in qualitative research.

Jenni: I've never thought of the interview as a game. Well, then you're a good playmate. Seduction: As are you. I do not get to talk about myself much, no one really asks. It's flattering. And it's exciting to explore what I can do, to and with you.

Jenni: Yes. That account of you in the interview, it assumes that you are something the interviewer can possess and use. I use you to lure in my participants. I suppose this view aligns with traditional notions

Note to Jenni: This is important. We want to retrieve seduction from its negative trappings, but without saying seduction is purely 'good.' Like in our work (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017), seduction can be a simple consequence of bodies and objects brought in proximity (see, for example, Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017).

Note to Travis: YES!!! Bodies in proximity – so true. Seduction *can* serve oppressive aims (it may result in sex, it may serve the forces of production), but it is not in and of itself a force of oppression, nor is it a necessarily a force of emancipation. Rather, it is a force of possibility and opening. Whatever seduction might open up cannot be 'good' or 'ethical' in any ultimate sense. Seduction awakens us to possibility, the otherwise, and the illusions of production. **Being open to seduction and its arousals, creativities, passions, and risks may be better aligned with (good/ethical) qualitative research than the negative accounts of seduction suggest.**

of qualitative research and power. The researcher wields all power and duty-bound responsibility (as per the IRB) for meting out an ethical relationship (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). But the story about the conference seduction you just told, it happened before either of them knew, it's like you were always two steps ahead of whatever actors were at play. I know it's not a great metaphor now with a global pandemic, but sometimes I think you're like a contagion, spreading intensities and possibilities. It can be exciting to get caught up on your spread.

Seduction (winks): Precisely. I am always circulating, always undermining production. I am an animate and self-organizing force (Gibbs, 2010) with an agency of my own, usually beyond human control or intention.

Jenni: Do you want to do something crazy?

Seduction: Always.

[Recording stops]

[Recording starts]

Seduction (Out of breath): Now that was my kind of game! Full of erotic, secret energy. Risky, open, excessive!

Jenni (Laughs): It was such a risk. I had no idea how it would turn out! The smell of the roses. The feel of the air on my skin. That man who looked at us like we'd gone completely mad! That woman who stuck her finger deep in her ear and popped the wax into her mouth when she thought no one was looking! So gross! I was riveted, carried away. I think that exercise or game or whatever you want to call it showed so vividly how taking risks opens qualitative inquiry up to so many different ways, even aesthetic ones, of knowing. Seduction is everywhere – anything can be and is seductive. Straying from the conventional interview, trying something different, I am more attune to all the things you can excite (in me). I have so many more questions and ideas I want to explore! Seduction: There's an ethic in that, don't you think? An ethic to seduction and risk and knowing. I mean seduction-risk-knowing, all together. Responsibility is heightened when you don't, can't know what will happen next. That's what I think people miss about me. They usually fail to acknowledge – the ethics of Seduction.

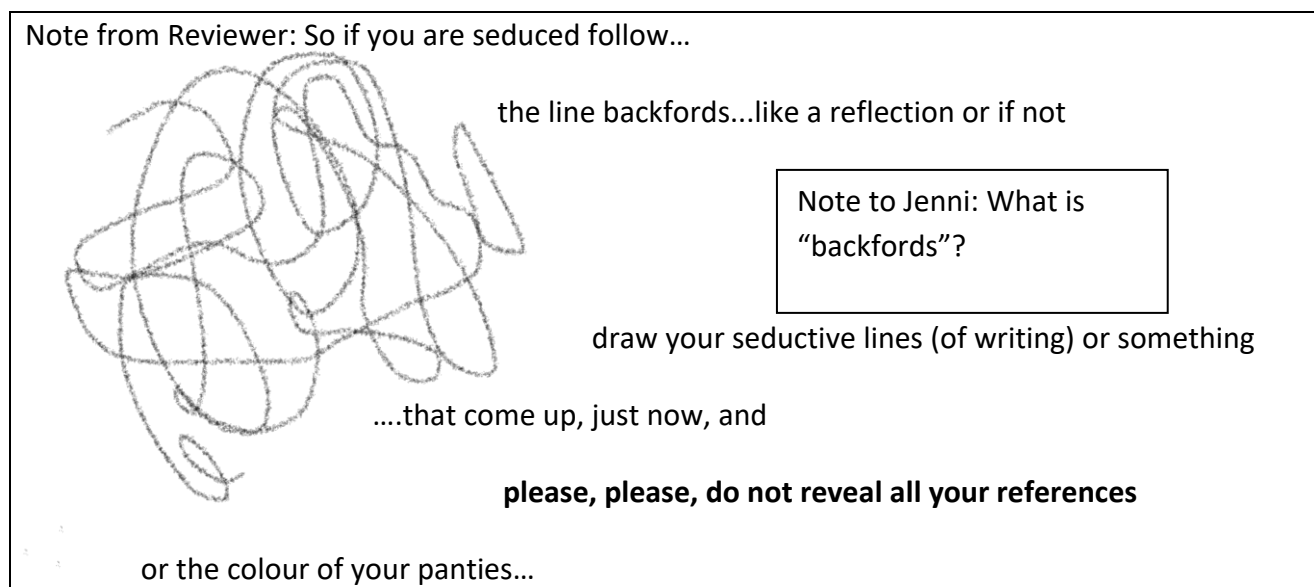
Jenni: Yes! In qualitative research you are the erotic energy of risk, openness, and excess that arouses participants, researchers. You might arouse people to care or truth-telling or listening or dissolution of the self or.... The seductive, seduced, and seducing qualitative researcher passionately hears O/others' truths – theoretical, human, non-human – and in so doing, risks their own. The possible result I think is more creative, illuminative, 'truthful,' and response-able qualitative research.

Note to Jenni: Don't you think this quote from Mirka slides in here so well: "Once qualitative researchers integrate (creative and maybe artistic) experimentation as part of their everyday scholarship, they can also be more likely to become comfortable with uncertainty... and generating more provocative questions of various kinds" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2015, p. 8).

Note to Travis: So good talking to you today! It's not the same as sitting together for hours at the coffee shop, but Zoom will have to do for now.

Maybe we can link Seduction to Kuntz's (2015) methodological responsibility as paraesthesia, qualitative inquirers "productively entwined in activities of risk and truth-telling" (p. 19)? Rajchman (1991) joins paraesthesia, risk and truth-telling, with Foucault's work on eros. I can totally get down with the idea that Foucault's work "re-eroticized the activity of philosophical or critical thought for our times" (1991, p. 1). Foucault still turns me on. Speaking truth to power can be exciting, arousing, and full of passion. The erotic of paraesthesia invokes a "curious, experimental, critical passion," a "wonderment," "bewilderment," or a passionate "will to knowledge" (Kuntz, p. 141). Huffer (2010) argues the eros of paraesthesia, the passionate curiosity toward truth, is connected to ethical listening required for speaking truth to power in the first instance -- listening that requires the listener to risk themselves (their beliefs, their truths) to receive, as true, the painful truth they hear. Talk about masochism.

Figure 1. Squiggles on reviewer comment



Conference Dreaming III: Conferences as Heterotopic Spaces of (the) Seduction (Game)

Proposition: *What if we interviewed concepts, like Seduction? What if we interviewed objects like Rubik’s Cubes and pocket watches (Agosto, et al., 2016)? In qualitative inquiry we are meant to interview ‘real people.’ It’s one of those unstated rules or limits that seems unquestionable. What (more) could we know if we didn’t insist our inquiries be representational or even sensical?*

In 2016, at the American Educational Research Association conference in Washington, D.C., a group of qualitative researchers (of which we co-authors were two) got together to work/think/play with qualitative research. Our aim was to center play in an unplanned, semi-spontaneous qualitative boundaries, and/or rules (Wolgemuth et al., 2017). conference could across the world gather qualitative research? (possibly) be swept away arousal, passion – seduction? Perhaps we envisioned a night of impassioned risk and truth-telling. Yet other forces, ones we came to associate with neoliberalism and other material-discursive terrors circulated to “strangle” some possibilities of “play in its crib” (p. 7). Seductions, if they bubbled up at all, quickly flattened. Some of us left. Others stayed but were, perhaps,

Remaining open to seduction requires practice, experimentation, and training – “gym time for qualitative researchers” (Wolgemuth, et al., 2017, p. 8).

inquiry into the limits, of qualitative research Where else but an academic colleagues from universities for dinner and drinks and Where else could we by forces of excitement,

dead/indifferent/closed to seduction. “If seduction is a passion or destiny, it is usually the opposite passion that prevails - that of not being seduced. We struggle to confirm ourselves in our truth: we fight against that which seeks to seduce us” (Baudrillard, 1979/1990, p. 109). Remaining open to seduction may not always be easy or wise. And at that conference dinner table in Washington, D.C., it felt like seduction, as a self-organizing contagious affect, was lost, dispersed, or

Note to Travis: The reviewers talked about seduction and panties. Panty metaphors and ethics. Getting caught with your pants down. Showing the color of your panties. Knickers in knots.... I’m not sure what to do with this. At first I was excited. I like talking about ‘unmentionables.’ I love the lure of the lurid. I don’t usually wear underwear.

But, to be honest Travis, it’s hard to be in the mood for that right now. A global pandemic, two kids eLearning, the rise of totalitarianism, figuring out what to make for dinner, family members dying, Black people murdered by police – seduction seems like a luxury. Like dancing in the streets while the world is on fire. Sometimes I don’t have that or any kind of energy. It’s enough just to make it through the day.

unattainable. No one, it seemed, was in the mood.

Seduction is not just a self-organizing affect, it is also a game with its own set of rules and rituals (Baudrillard 1979/1990). We get caught up in rituals and games not because there are no rules and anything can happen, but precisely because the rules and rituals of games are not “derived from the law” or, in our case, the rules of our conference qualitative project were not derived from neoliberalism and traditional notions of valid qualitative research (p. 133). The rules of seduction are arbitrary and because “we owe them only a token fidelity, and do not feel we have to transgress them,” the game of seduction or the seduction of the game frees us from the “constraints of choice, freedom, responsibility, and meaning” (p. 137). Those of us who stayed to work/think/play that evening were perhaps content to play a game with a basic set of rules: 1) the inquiry must be planned over dinner (no pre-planning allowed), 2) no one should get hurt, 3) our inquiry will break some/many rule(s) (laws) of qualitative research, and 4) we must play. Above all, we must play. As Baudrillard says, “the rule’s basic dictum is that the game continue whatever the cost, be it

death itself. There is, then, a sort of passion that binds the players to the rule that ties them together - without which the game would not be possible” (p. 131). Surely not all will play. But for those who did, substituting for the laws of qualitative research, our made up rules stood in their place and created the possibility of a different kind of qualitative inquiry, a qualitative inquiry into the unknown: “the game’s sole principle... is that by choosing the rule one is delivered from the law” (p. 133). We went out onto the streets of Washington, D.C. and played seduction’s game – inspired by writing on a lost name tag, we invented a (non)-human subject,

Note to Jenni: Are you assuming seduction is always a force of excitement and titillation? I don’t think that’s what we’re saying. There’s a seduction of nihilism, an allure of the abyss.

I agree about panties, though. I want to distance myself from metaphors in which men discuss women’s undergarments.

pieced her life together from found items (e.g., business cards, cigarette butts, flowers), and followed her to her death. Seduced in our game and the growing illusion of our (non)-human subject, we revealed the illusions of productive qualitative research and the productions of qualitative research (again) became strange (Wolgemuth et al., 2017).

Conference Dreamscapes

We return then to the academic conference heterotopias that form “important liminal social spaces of possibility where ‘something different’ is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories” (Harvey, 2012, p. xvii). Conference heterotopias are our dreamscapes. They are tension laden, contested and productive – they bring with them the possibility of creating something new (Ulmer, 2017). We argue that when seduction operates in heterotopic conferences spaces – it both produces and arouses us – it orients us to the unknown and electrifies our intellectual curiosities, our desires to know.

Academic conferences, perhaps because they are one-step removed from our day-to-day routines within production-focused universities, are ripe sites for seduction, energizing and opening us to new, creative, and qualitative scholarship and revealing the strangeness of our illusions. They are spaces to dream-up new and big ideas. We urge qualitative researchers to remain alive to conference (and other) seductions, to welcome the infection of contagious sapiosexualities. Conference seductions can prompt qualitative researchers to risk and transgress (their own) boundaries (of qualitative research) and imagine more experimental, creative, and complex modes of qualitative inquiry (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). This, we believe, is vital to qualitative research and an ethic of any responsible methodologist (Kuntz, 2016) – to risk one’s own truth in the allure of (an-/each/the) other.

Note to Jenni: Should we talk here about online conferences? How can these be spaces ‘ripe for seduction?’ I struggle to imagine... there’s very little that’s seductive for me about a massive group Zoom call.

Dear authors,

I loved this paper. It read like very familiar academic affect-love-narrative with some potential (ethical) complications. It read like an extension of Baudrillard’s seduction which was being seduced. It captivated. It made me to desire more desire.

While reading, the captivating forces of seduction somewhat faded away around p. 14-16 and the text returned to its arousal state again back in the conclusion section. In some ways it was lovely that the text was not equally seductive throughout but at the same time I was missing those captivating forces and textual lures when not present. I also wonder if seduction as a force can

actually 'care' and when seduction attends to care is it possible that it can no longer seduce. Can you talk more about that? Does care happen in conference spaces and elsewhere and? What does the space and spacetime have to do with this all?

This paper put forward very productive intersections of seduction and ethics. It asks difficult ethical questions from, about, of: pleasure, joy, attraction, forces of (academic) love and more. It forces (academic) passion to listen to responsibility and other people's (academic) truths. What and how do the author(s) vision the proposed potential and contradictions, and generative forces among ethical pleasure, truthful attraction, and moral seduction? What harm might the paper cause to itself? How might this paper listen to its own truths, if it can?

I would like to know more about how seduction could be connected to 'narrated dreaming/s'? What becomes narrated, what do narrated dreaming/s destroy, and how do seductive stories and/or narrative abolish desire?

The unpredictability and perceived randomness of seduction is powerful and captivating in this paper. Could you talk more about that? How are these kinds of unpredictable seductive events different from more orchestrated moves of attraction?

Please do not stop narrating dreaming/s. They really work! If my seduced and/or un-seduced qualitative research colleague wants to bring seductive forces closer to her/his (academic) heart what might happen in that space and across spaces? Any advice?

This paper made me dream with you so that it made it very hard if even necessary to dictate where this, your dreaming, joined mine and we began to dream together, all of us... However, I got interrupted by the crowded sounds coming from the readings of your paper and from the thinking that was and went through and how it affected the reader before me ... it was a choir of voices already by the time I was musing it! Once seduced the lines were not following the normative routes and seemed to be taking off until they get tangled up and produced again something altogether different.

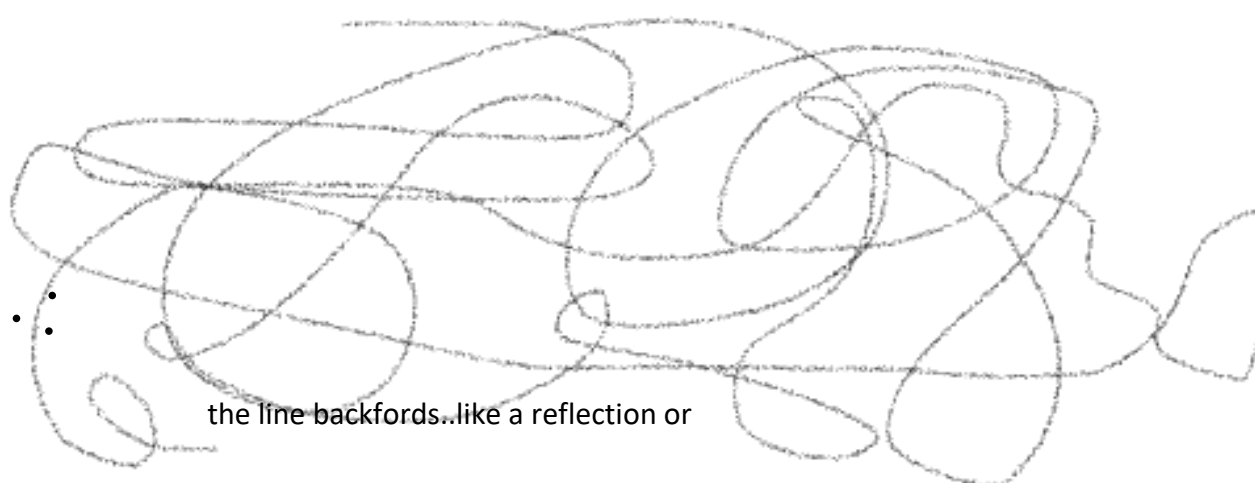
Seduction is a funny thing...it allows you to keep your secrets but makes it very clear that you are hooked the way that you cannot tell what is that you follow. The ethics of seduction you discussed are entangled with care, and with the way seduction could foresee and anticipate what is coming next and how to ethically respond to the upcoming events. Would it be so easy to follow the normative strictures of academic writing and not keep up with the moment in which the writing itself occurs? Well, it seems that dreaming is not impossible for you, and that when you dream you are drawn closer to your seductions. Work on your seductions, let your seductions work (on) you. Do not give in, do not let the easy and ready routes allure you. You never know what is around the corner. How, giving vent to the unruly allure, might also create spaces of care: in and for this paper; in and for the spaces of touch which this paper might generate with and for its readers; in the resonances that might dampen or amplify similar allures for those readers – well after they put

the digital or real text down.

Figure 2. More squiggles and three dots on reviewer comment

So if you are seduced

follow



if not draw your seductive lines (of writing) or something ...that come up, just now,
and please, please, do not reveal all your references or the colour of your panties...

You are raising an important point when you develop the connections between seduction, ethic and responsibility. During my research on coming out in the workplace, sometime I felt that there was the risk of constituting a form of seduction in the relationship with the interviewees: I was seducing them while I was explaining the importance of my research and while I was asking them questions in relations to their 'personal' life.... And, once I'd seduced them, I also felt as if I had abandoned them: seduced and abandoned them. Where are they, now? What are they thinking about the interview that I had with them more then 10 years ago...?

Does this happen also to you? Is it this kind of situations are you referring to when you create/think about the connections between seduction and ethic?

However, there is something I am not convinced about in this view/construction of seduction. It seems to me that is like I am saying that seduction is bad; as if seduction is something related to betrayal; as if seduction is wrong. I do not want to enter this narrative. In a research process, I

think seduction is a force which circulates between us, and it can be productive and generative. It is produced not only by space and time but also by matter. I can be seduced by the fragrance of a rose, by the color of the twilight, by the sound of a voice, by the smell of the food, by the softness of a fabric. So, seduction makes us know; it is part of aesthetic knowledge. I would like to see more matter in your paper and at, a wider general level, in qualitative research.

Good luck and thank you for the time you spent in writing for this special issue.

P.S. You might want to update your reference list and tell readers the color of your panties.

P.P.S. Panties aside, (oh! Perhaps that's not so appropriate!? Or, given the potential uncertainty with undisciplined inquiry, with seduction scholarship, this might be an (in)appropriate state/metaphor through which to (re)think the relations of seduction, ethics and care. Perhaps it is precisely in those space-time-matterings of seduction – of being caught without one's panties, of being caught with one's panties down – that a re-view of ethic/care becomes . . . differently possible? What might be productive to stay in the dream-like, (perhaps nightmare-ish) state of nakedness and sit, precisely, **without** the comforting civility maintained and sustained by undergarments? Perhaps you should, indeed cast them aside, and think more/further in and about this state of complete undress.

Now! (am I still in parentheses?!) Where were we? Yes. We were considering moments of nakedness (moments of freedom, moments of vulnerability) in and for re-viewing ethics/care in your paper. This splinter of 'panty' is something that, as a reviewer I can't seem to let go of in the blindness of this re-view. I've clearly got some 'ants in my pants' here! I'm agitated. I'm following some (absurd? unruly?) line of flight that is not nearly governed enough.

As well as thinking about the possibilities and productivities of (re) thinking ethic/care in the seductive cast-off of your panties, I am further reminded of the ways in speech, that the intimacies attaching to such (under)clothing are used in dismissing, disavowing and governing more generally. Here's a couple that come to mind. There will be others ...:

- "Getting one's knickers in a twist." Is this just a way of dismissing, otherwise legitimate care? Of caring about those things no longer considered in need of, or worthy of, care? This dismissal is also, it seems to me, redolent in the similarly governing: "Are your panties too tight?"! That, in suggesting that your panties are too tight, the problem that you are raising is dismissed and attributed only as a matter of the (mis)fit of that most intimate of (sartorial) habit.
- "Fur coat and no knickers." Is this about who is afforded legitimacy in caring? Who might – and it's invariably applied to women, and women of a certain class – be seen to care? What kinds of care are seen and deemed as legitimate? What ideas of ethics and care, voiced by whom, might be-come dismissible, inadmissible, in forming and formulating the frameworks of care/ethics that center what is expected and accepted?

Perhaps, you might further dialogue with/in this paper, with your own/joint/shared panties and consider the nexus of intimacy-governability-civility and ethic/care that is woven (and unravelable) in the habit and discard of these items of clothing that are singular ... but also, only ever, come in pairs!

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