The bits on the cutting room floor

Erasures and denials
within the qualitative research trajectory

Leeat Granek

Zusammenfassung: Die Späne unter der Hobelbank:
Löschungen und Verleugnungen im Prozess qualitativer Forschung

Während positivistische Forscher einem objektiven Modell folgen, das Af- fekte und menschliche Beziehung als kontaminierende Variablen abstempelt, die ausgeschlossen werden müssen, sind Gefühl und Beziehung ein zentraler Bestandteil sowohl des Zieles als auch der Durchführung qualitativer Forschung. Die Handhabung dieser Aspekte in unseren Projekten folgt präzisen methodologischen Richtlinien, wie zum Beispiel dem Memoing, dem Reflek- tieren, speziellen Validitätskriterien, und ist gekennzeichnet gerade durch die explizite Anerkennung in unseren Berichten. Trotz dieser Richtlinien löschen viele qualitative Forscher und Forscherinnen diese Aspekte aus ihrer Dokumen- tation, und dies geschieht auf drei Ebenen: »Off the record« sind jene Aspekte, derer sich die Forscher und Forscherinnen in ihrem Prozess zwar bewusst sind, die es aber niemals aus ihren Köpfen heraus schaffen. »Off the books« sind die Forschungsteile, die zwar von Anfang an geplant waren, die aber im Zuge des Publikationsprozesses herausgelöscht werden. »Off the charts« ist all das, was integraler Bestandteil des Forschungsprozesses ist, das aber oftmals dem Forscher und der Forscherin selbst nicht bewusst ist, oder was einem idealen Forschungsprojekt so fremd ist, dass es nicht angesprochen werden darf. Während die ersten beiden Ebenen – das was »off the record« und »off the books« ist – stark von der akademischen Realität des Publizie- rens, nämlich in mainstream Zeitschriften, beeinflusst wird, schlage ich vor, dass die dritte Ebene – das was »off the charts« ist – einzig und alleine in der Verantwortung von uns qualitativen Forschern und Forscherinnen lieg, und wir genau darüber reflektieren und berichten müssen.

Schlüsselwörter
Qualitative Forschung, Forschungsprozess, Subjektivität, Methodologie, Universität, Reflexivität
Leeat Granek

Abstract
While positivistic researchers follow the objectivity model where affect and relationships are seen as contaminating variables that can and should be excised, qualitative researchers value emotion and relationships as central to both the purpose of the research and the conduct of it. How we live these values in our work is through a rigorous set of methodological guidelines including memoing, reflexivity, using a different gauge of validity, and explicitly acknowledging emotion and relationships in our reports. Despite these guidelines, however, many qualitative researchers also engage in erasures of our research processes at three levels. What is off the record are the aspects of the qualitative research trajectory that the researcher is aware of but which never makes it outside of the researcher’s mind. What is off the books are all the parts of the process that were part of the initial record, but were erased in the publication process. What is off the charts are all the parts that are integral to the qualitative research process, but which fail to puncture even the consciousness of the researcher, or which are so alien to what is supposed to be happening, they remain unacknowledged. While the first two layers of erasure – what is off the record and off the books – are influenced by the academic reality of publishing in mainstream journals, I suggest that the third level of erasure – that which is off the charts – is something that we as qualitative researchers are uniquely responsible for thinking about and addressing in our work.

Keywords
Qualitative research, research process, subjectivity, methodology, academia, reflexivity

Friend to Friend – Colleague to Colleague
The invitation to contribute to this Special Issue on Qualitative Methods came from its editor, friend, and colleague, Kathrin Mörtl. Kathrin and I met in Toronto where she was doing a postdoctoral fellowship at York University from 2009–2011. Over many dinners and glasses of wine, we spoke at length about our struggles as junior qualitative researchers working in the increasingly quantitatively focused world of Psychology. As in almost every instance in academia, the invitation to be part of this project and to contribute to the volume came out of our working and personal relationship. While we rarely hear the back stories of these invitations, connections, networks and opportunities – the truth, as most of us know, is that we prog-
ress in our careers not only on our own merits, but also through, and with our relationships to colleagues and institutions. Certainly, this is not a bad thing; indeed, it is a human thing. But it is also the thing that is most often left out of the final report.

It is this erasure of the back-story that I focus on in this paper. I am interested in exploring what gets erased, cut out, and denied when we conduct our qualitative research projects. In line with the work I have already published (Granek, 2010; 2011), I suggest in this paper that while the specific bits that get cut out of our research and our manuscripts will differ depending on what we happen to be writing about, at the core of these cuts is a research ontology that demands the erasure of affect and relationships in our work. I describe an aspect of this phenomenon most recently in a paper I wrote on the »epistemology of the hyphen« where I argue that in qualitative research, the researcher and the researched, and the researcher and their audience are always in an intersubjective dialogue even as this intersubjectivity is often denied (Granek, 2011). In this paper, I am interested not only in what is left out, but why? Who and what is served by this systematic cauterizing of affect and relationship when it comes to qualitative research?

The Ontological Erasure of Affect and Relationships in Science

In a recent paper examining the evidence that counts, Fine (2012) asked, »in the name of science, what pieces of human tragedy, resilience and protest are being scientifically excised from the public understanding of the structural assault among girls and women’s lives?« (p. 7). While Fine (2012) focused on the interplay between the State and the individual as mediated by psychological science and the evidence it procures, I believe the root of such »excisions« in all of our research projects are historically ontological ones embedded within the scientific discipline of psychology, and subsequently, the methods that have emerged out of it.

The discipline of psychology is rooted in realist ontology. By ontology I mean, the existential study of being that addresses the metaphysical questions around the nature of reality and causality, and in turn, how we come to ask and answer these questions about the topics that interest us. Epistemology, on the other hand, deals with the theory of knowledge, or how we come to know the things we do. Most critiques of positivistic psychology focus on the epistemological aspects of the objectivist method. The critique rightfully
maintains that positivistic empiricists, who comprise a good chunk of the researchers in mainstream psychology:

»... believe that truth is derived from careful and systematic observation of experience of events taking place in the world. Truth emerges because people, like good reporters, assiduously keep checking the facts of their stories. Truth is discovered when a person’s picture of reality and reality itself match up« (Miller, 1992, p. 13).

The positivist assumptions that guide empirical research are essentialist in orientation in that they assume there is an »objective« world to which representation of it can and should be made to correspond. Positivism prescribes a method directed to objectivity by eliminating any outside variables that can skew the results, including the subjectivity of the researcher. This objectivistic methodology thus assumes that the researcher exists outside of the phenomena under inquiry and that there is little, if any, meaningful interaction between the researcher and the subject.

Underlying these positivistic methodological principles (some might say shackles) for objectivity is an ontological understanding of the research world as being completely devoid of relationships and emotion. It is a world driven by pure cognition, objectivity, rigor and disconnected observation of phenomena out there in the »real world«. In the process, it cuts out what is always inherently there, but very frequently denied – our emotions, and those of others we study, and the research relationships we develop with those we come into contact with in our work. In order to understand what gets erased in many of our qualitative research endeavors then, especially when we try to get this work published in mainstream psychology or medical journals, we also need to understand what is less obviously visible first – the underlying ontologically based why some »research bits« get exiled while other bits remain visible.

**Why Erase?**

**A Very Brief Foray into Our Disciplinary History**

The history of psychology wherein it used the methods of natural science as a model are too well known to need repeating here (see: Danziger, 1997; Espeland, 2002; Teo, 2005; Ward, 2002). I have argued in the context of my own work on grief within Psychology that the turning away from emotion rooted in this history has caused a deep disciplinary wound in the field
that is akin to the unconscious pain suffered by individual adults (Granek, 2010; Granek, forthcoming). On individual wounds, the attachment theorist Karen (1998) noted,

> «It is our earliest wounds that are most deeply unconscious, that are almost unknowable, unattached as they often are to memory or language, and therefore, the hardest to question, to symbolize, to verbalize, or to change» (p. 257).

The erasure of these relational and emotional aspects of our science and work is a disciplinary wound that goes so far back, and is so unspoken that we have no language or memory of it (Granek, forthcoming). As a result, what has become »normal« in the research world is a dissociated mode of procuring knowledge that erases large swathes of the research process and all that goes into it, and unfortunately, this has become as true for quantitative researchers as it is for qualitative ones.

The Irony – What the qualitative method is (supposed) to offer

In a paper I wrote on the dialogical nature of the Self and Other in qualitative research relationships, I coined the term »the epistemology of the hyphen« to capture the notion that the self as the researcher, and the Other, as the research participant, or the audience hearing about the research is in an intersubjective, co-constitutive dialogue (Granek, 2011). Moreover, I suggested that emotion, empathy and mutual witnessing were part of this intersubjective process and that this was the ontological foundation of socially-just qualitative research projects (Granek, 2011). This paper summarizes much of the literature and my thinking around affect and relationships in the qualitative research process and I direct the reader to that work for further explication. Here I want to talk about the promise of qualitative research and how the incorporation of emotion and relationships is supposed to work within this methodological frame.

Jagger noted that, »Western epistemology has tended to view emotion with suspicion and even hostility« (Jagger, 1989/1992, p. 154). This positivistic approach to emotion is evidenced in the way that it is avoided in research as a way of »knowing« or as a potential source of information. Researchers are encouraged to control and suppress emotions, yet, as Gilbert (2001) notes, »this does not mean that emotions are not present, nor does it
guarantee that the hidden emotions affect the research process« (p. 10). To work qualitatively however, is *supposed* to mean working emotionally and relationally. Indeed, it is supposed be rooted in a very different ontological frame than the positivist one already described. It is right there in our methodological tools.

For example, *we are supposed to memo*: Most qualitative methodology involves some type of memoing process. Memos, sometimes-called analytic notes, are the researcher’s reflections about the process of the study. Memoing involves having time to »write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, and speculate about what is going on« (Glesne, 1999, p. 53). Memoing is supposed to contribute to data analysis in a variety of ways. It is supposed to help to identify problems, develop questions, and understand patterns and themes. It also is supposed to allow researchers to explore their biases and assumptions about the direction the research is going in and to »unpack« any thoughts or feelings they might have about the relationships with the participants.

*We are supposed to acknowledge (publically) our »horizons« and engage in reflexivity*: The grounded theory method, for example, involves acknowledging what Rennie (2000) has termed »the researcher’s horizon of understanding«. A horizon of understanding includes the researcher’s own implicit and explicit biases that evolve from cultural, historical, and geographical contexts and they are supposed to be part of the final report we present for publication. There is a concentrated effort to explore and explicate these biases, assumptions and interpretations in order to make them visible. By acknowledging the horizon of understanding and by continually being alert to biases and assumptions through the extensive use of personal reflection, the researcher’s analysis becomes more valid by ensuring closeness to the original text, and to what participants are saying.

*We are supposed to have a different understanding of validity*: Because much of qualitative research is hermeneutical or interpretive, a contributor to validity is the resonance of the findings with the audience or reader (Rennie, 2000). In other words, if the findings make sense on an intuitive and human level and if the reader/audience can identify and be moved by the results, then there is a kind of »truth« to the understanding coming from the analysis. Researchers in sociology have proposed similar conditions for validity.

»Moving from factual truth to narrative truth, such [qualitative] projects can be assessed by their personal, relational, and cultural consequences … the best stories … expand our sense of community, deepen our ability to empathize, and enlarge our capacity to cope with complicated contingencies of lived interpersonal experience« (Tillman-Healy & Kiesinger, 2001, p. 83).
We are supposed to acknowledge explicitly emotions and relationships: Maxwell, for example, states, »your relationship with those you study is a complex and changing entity. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument of the research, and the research relationship is the means by which the research gets done« (Maxwell, 1996, p. 67). This relationship is similar to the importance of the therapeutic relationship (Brannen, 1984; Horvarth & Greenberg, 1994) as the primary element of healing in the therapeutic encounter. On this, Stuhlmiller (2001) notes, »The researcher set up, directs, and facilities the narrative disclosure through utilizing good communication skills that include: establishing a common bond, conveying empathy, respect, genuine acceptance, and regard, and listening, confronting and clarifying. If the narrator experiences these elements, he or she will likely feel valued, important, accepted, listened to, and understood. These are the same conditions that have been identified as essential to creating a therapeutic relationship« (p. 68).

There is thus recognition that qualitative inquiry involves an intensive study of human beings and it requires a high degree of attunement with one’s own affect and an engagement with the relational aspects of data collection and analysis. Through all of these methodological processes, including memoing, acknowledging and reflexively making one’s self-understanding publicly available in our reports, by using a different gauge of validity, and by explicitly acknowledging emotion and relationships in our research processes, we are supposed to be counteracting the ontological realism and associated positivistic objectivism that organize the quantitative research world. The former methodological processes are supposed to be helping us leave in all of the fundamental pieces we claim to value as qualitative researchers that the quantitative projects tends to cut out. The irony, however, is that while most qualitative method guidelines have incorporated these tools as part of their instruction (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999, Glesne, 1999; Maxwell, 1996), we as qualitative researchers are often as guilty of erasing some of our research processes as our quantitative siblings are.

The Precious Bits on the Cutting Room Floor

Behind the curtain, there are three veils of erasure within the qualitative research process. What stays off the record are the aspects of the qualitative research trajectory that the researcher is aware of but which never makes it outside of the researcher’s head. What is off the books are all the parts of the process that were part of the initial record, but were exiled in the process
of bringing the research report forward to publication. Finally, that which is off the charts are all the parts that are integral to the qualitative research trajectory and process, but which fail to puncture even the consciousness of the researcher, or which are so alien to what is supposed to be happening in the research process, they remain submerged or unacknowledged.

Off the Record: What remains off the record are the aspects of the qualitative research process that the researcher may be aware of but which never move beyond the individual thought of the researcher in time and place. It’s the invisible data of the project that never sees the light of day because they never move beyond the researcher’s personal awareness. For example, in a study I completed on the grief of oncologists where I used a grounded theory design, there was several bits of data that got left out of the published manuscripts (Granek et al., 2012; Granek et al., forthcoming, a;b;c). One of these very important bits had to do with what was literally said »off the record« once the tape was shut off and the interview was over. As I noted in the publications, grief was a vulnerability, even potentially a liability for the oncologists – an embarrassing and shameful emotion to be curbed and hidden from colleagues (Granek et al., forthcoming, b). What I didn’t say, what was not able to be reported, and what was not included in the analysis of the data were all the stories that oncologists told me once the tape was shut off. Although the oncologists were honest about their experiences and provided thorough, vulnerable, and insightful information about their experiences of grief over patient loss in the interviews, some also struggled in the telling of their stories to retain a professional persona. Indeed, there were many tensions in the interviews between oncologists reporting that patient-loss never affected them, on the one hand and moving into stories contradicting this statement and describing how previous patient-loss influenced many aspects of their work and lives including in some instances, their treatment decisions or their emotions at home and at work (Granek et al., 2012a). This paradoxical tension of moving back and forth between what one knows one is supposed to say in the professional context to what was really happening in their day to day lives in struggling to take control of their affects was most evident in their off the record remarks. These off the record stories that came after the tape was shut off also included narratives around struggling with clinical mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and breakdowns. Or stories about how some patient-loss triggered a reminder of a loved one, exacerbating their grief to a degree that they needed to take time off from work. Or pauses in the conversation where a participant suddenly worried about whether any of their colleagues were going to be able to recognize them through their words. Remarks that cannot be reported on as part of the
manuscripts because they are not an official part of the data are an important part of the research findings, but remain elusive and mostly invisible. These bits may make it into a researchers’ memo in the best-case scenario, but most often remain lodged in the researchers head.

*Off the Books:* What remains off the books are all the parts of the qualitative research process that were initially included on the record, but that were subsequently ousted in the process of bringing the research report to publication. There are a litany of such examples, most especially in the domain of health research and medical sciences where the first things to go in an attempt to publish one’s work is the theory and quotations – two of the fundamental cornerstones of qualitative research (Granek, 2011). Here is where the link to the competing ontological foundations of the research process is most obviously visible, ironically, in their erasures. In an attempt to get our qualitative studies into the scientific domain, we often are forced to cut out all of the elements that most underlie our ontological rationale for our research – the bringing forth of the relational and the emotional – or at the very least, the bringing forth of context, depth and dynamics in our research data. The epistemological »how to« of this ontological foundation are the methodological processes discussed earlier which include memoing, acknowledging and making one’s self-reflexivity publicly available, using a different assessment of validity, and explicitly acknowledging emotion and relationships in the research report. How often these actually make it into our reports is another matter entirely.

In the aforementioned study on oncologist’s grief, for example, the initial manuscripts I wrote were in the 9000 word range. I included rich, beautifully articulate quotations to illustrate each theme. I wrote in the context and the explanations for each finding in detail. I drew out the affect that was present in the interviews. I framed the articles in rich theoretical and historical context. I included a detailed horizon of understanding section where I outlined my motivations to conduct this research as a psychologist who had lost her own mother, grandmother, and aunt to cancer. I did all of the things one is supposed to do when one conducts a rigorous grounded theory analysis. And then, I cut it all out.

There were several layers to this slow (and painful) erasure. In the service of getting the papers into medical journals (preferably those with a high-impact factor – another kind of academic disciplining; see Cheek, 2011), I had to whittle down the qualitative report to a maximum of 3000 words. This decision was not arbitrary. It was not only the voices of the future tenure committee in my head that pushed me down this route, it was the very purpose of doing this research in the first place. My deep desire, as with most
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qualitative researchers, is for this work to be of use. For the research to be read by the audience who would most would be served by it, I had to speak their (very concise) language.

First then, there was self-erasure. This was followed by a set of hearty negotiations with the editors and reviewers of these manuscripts, which meant that still more was cut out. Indeed, by the time the finished product was ready for publication, all the quotations had moved to the back and into a table, and very little self-reflexivity remained. I wish this were an exception. Sadly it is not. In a systematic review of qualitative articles reporting on individual’s experiences of chronic back pain, Newton and his colleagues (2011) found that »a core part of qualitative research, reflexivity, is not adequately evidenced in any of the articles we reviewed« (p. 2). They noted that the relationship between the researcher and the research participant was not adequately considered and that:

»Researchers typically failed to offer an adequate explanation and rationale for their guiding theoretical framework used, they did not give an adequate account for the decision made in the requirement and data collection process, they often did not describe either saturation or how the decision to stop collecting data was made, and finally, they failed to demonstrate reflexivity throughout the research process« (p. 14).

In wondering whether researchers are »thinking qualitatively«, Newton and colleagues (2011) wrote in their conclusion that underlying many of the papers they reviewed were »positivistic undertones« that may have shaped the reporting of these data. Indeed, much as with my own explanation for the lack of reflexivity in my published papers, they question whether these reports reflected an erasure of these processes in the conduct of the study or whether they got taken off the books later at the publication stage. Although the authors include this as limitation of their study in that »a critique can only be made based on the article contents« (p. 16), I think the question of where these erasures are happening, and why, are valid and essential for qualitative researchers to think about. I note again that these erasures, either at the reporting phase – what is left off the books – is not an only an epistemological issue, but an ontological mismatch with our stated goals in engaging in qualitative research. Whether we are sacrificing the ontological integrity of our research endeavors in order to get our work published is a question worth thinking about.

Off the Charts: The last type of erasure is the most invisible sort. In this category are all the parts of the qualitative research process that happen but which fall beyond the scope of our understanding of what should be happening in these research settings. These might include moments of deep,
inexplicable relational and connected moments that happen within the interview process or instances where the interviewer or the interviewee »know« something about the other that was not explicitly said out loud. Phoenix (2010), for example, describes conducting research interviews with women where childhood sexual abuse is implied in the research interview, but not explicitly articulated by the participant. It thus remains an unspoken, but present narrative between the researcher and the research participant. She noted, »the participants do not name the sexual abuse they hint at and say nothing further about it« (p. 169). Although Phoenix »knows« that this is part of her participant’s story, she also »knows« not to push for more or to ask explicitly about it. She writes, »so successful was she [the participant] at signaling this that it was clear to me as the researcher that this was not a site for encouraging further revelation or to attempt to engage in an open discussion« (p. 169).

The notion of mutual knowing between the researcher and researched even though no words are spoken about it is an interesting phenomenon that is rarely addressed in the research process. Some researchers have begun to explain this somewhat invisible phenomenon in the research setting as occurring within the intersubjectivity frame (Blackman and Cromby, 2007; Granek, 2011). For example, in an introductory editorial for a special issue on affect and feeling within research, Blackman and Cromby (2007) noted that all of the contributions:

»… in one way or another posit affect as the capacity of the subject to affect and be affected. That is, what is taken to define human subjectivity is not singularity and boundedness, but rather connectedness and permeability (of border and boundaries). The notion of contagious communication or »affective transmission« as a central modality of relationality has a long lineage within the psychological sciences and cultural theory« (p. 9).

These off-the-charts instances can also include reactions or responses to interviewees that go beyond the time and place or the »here and now«, and as the analysts would say, are triggered by »then and there«. Non-bounded affect and its connection to interpersonal relationships within research settings have been explained as analytical »transference«. Parker (2010) provocatively suggests that not only is emotion present in the research encounter, but that researchers may be unconsciously responding to participants in ways that mimic transference in a psychoanalytical patient/analyst dyad. He noted,

»The term transference in this research is used to describe the way significant relationships from the past, of an interviewee for example, are replicated in the intersubjective
space of the interview, and it is assumed that these past relationships are communicated
to the researcher who then attends to them as their own countertransference« (p.17).

One example of this can be found in an article written by Lewis (2010) who
wrote a scathingly honest report about hating her participants and experiencing
intense feelings of rage and vengeance towards one in particular. She noted,

»The encounter with this manager was marked by moments of acute emotional intensity
and strain and led to state of mind in me that was full of rage and bent on vengeance.
Yet this desire for vengeance was masked from view, sanitized by the process of writing
academically for publication. The effect was to make the affective register secret and
my state of mind a secretly held undercurrent pulling some of the subsequent work
with the data in a particular direction… This desire for domination emerged out of the
pain of the research encounter and was, I now think, a form of psychic defense against
the is pain but turned into a form of concealed hitting back« (p. 212).

She partly explained her intense response as a kind of projective identification
process with her research participant and concludes that to get to that understand-
at the time she was doing the interviews she would have had to,

»Consider questions that were too difficult to even put into words let alone face and
process. Such as whether the circulation of an affective economy that includes this kind
of triumph also helps us understand our investments in particular intellectual projects.
To ask whether we think expending intellectual energy into the direction of disrespect,
trauma, pain, will help us to »master« – triumph over our own traumas, our own pains
as we go about our work as qualitative feminist researchers« (p.224)?

These off-the-charts moments of connection, transference, intersubjectivity and
intense and passionate reactions to one’s research participants is the most obvious
place where the attendance to our ontological roots as qualitative researchers
with our stated focus on relationships and affect should be made the visible, and
yet, it is exactly the place that is most often left out and ignored in the qualita-
tive research trajectory. In the main these discussions are neither published nor
discussed, and sadly, rarely acknowledged because they are seemingly so strange,
and therefore, seen as an unacceptable part of the research process.

**Conclusion**

I have suggested in this paper that qualitative and quantitative researchers
hold different ontological values when it comes to the conduct of research.
While positivistic researchers follow the objectivity model where affect and
relationships are seen as contaminating variables that can and should be controlled and excised, qualitative researchers *value emotion and relationships as central to both the purpose of the research and the conduct of it*. This is not merely an epistemological issue of how we come to know; it’s an ontological issue of why we do what we do.

For qualitative researchers, the core of doing and knowing is affect and relationships. How we live these values in our work is through a rigorous set of epistemological guidelines that get translated into our methodological tools including memoing, reflexivity, using a different gauge of validity, and explicitly acknowledging emotion and relationships in the research report. While the positivistic methodologies leave all of this out, qualitative researchers are supposed to be leaving all of these in. Despite these guidelines, however, many (though not all see for example, Meekums, 2008; and for an edited volume on secrecy and silence in the research process, see Ryan-Flood & Gill, 2010), qualitative researchers also engage in erasures of our research processes at three levels. What is *off the record* are the aspects of the qualitative research trajectory that the researcher is aware of but which never makes it outside of the researcher’s mind. What is *off the books* are all the parts of the process that were part of the initial record, but were erased in the publication process. What is *off the charts* are all the parts that are integral to the qualitative research process, but which fail to puncture even the consciousness of the researcher, or which are so alien to what is supposed to be happening, they remain unacknowledged.

I have suggested that partly, these erasures come from the very real pressures of publishing our work in mainstream academic publications that tend to be positivistic in their approach and thus have different ideas about what is publishable. Rennie and Frommer, note for example, in a forthcoming review of 207 qualitative and mixed-method research studies published in 21 journals from 2004 – mid 2010 in both English-language and German-language journals that the past few years have seen a notable shift in the publication of qualitative studies. They wrote, »In terms of methodology, over the past few years we see a continuation of a swing toward objectivism« (p. 32).

While the first two layers of erasure – what is off the record and off the books – is certainly influenced by these academic realities, I also suggest here that the third level of erasure – that which is *off the charts* – is also worth contemplating. Despite our methodological guidelines that claim we incorporate our affect and our relationships in our work, and as we do our work, at this level, we are most guilty of erasing that what may be an especially important part of the qualitative research trajectory and of which we are uniquely responsible for thinking about and reporting.
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