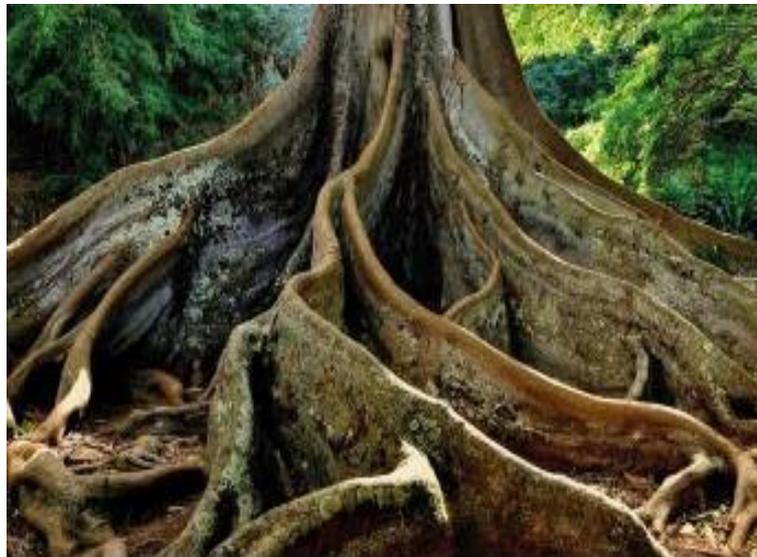


Insight or evidence?

Why we need the investigative energy of qualitative approaches

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Evidence

- The means of proving an unknown or disputed fact; support for a belief (Chambers English Dictionary)
- One or more reasons for believing that something is or isn't true. Objects, documents, official statements, that are used to prove something is true or is not true (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Insight

- The power of seeing into and understanding things (Chambers English Dictionary)
- The ability to have a clear, deep and sometimes sudden understanding of a complicated problem or situation (Cambridge English Dictionary)

RELATIVE STRANGERS

FAMILY LIFE, GENES
AND DONOR CONCEPTION



PETRA NORDQVIST
AND CAROL SMART

Living on the margins

Undocumented migrants
in a global city

Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay

AFFINITIES

Potent Connections
in Personal Life

JENNIFER MASON

What they have in common

- None of these would have been possible without a qualitative approach.
- Intriguing and important questions. Getting beyond/getting inside, seeking insight.
- Range of methods and types of data. Different perspectives and dimensions.
- Insights that reach out to, connect with and sometimes unsettle other forms of knowledge. Helping to push debate and theorising forward.
- Writing style – vivid, engaging, evocative.

Investigative energy in qualitative approaches

- 1. Difficult questions and active reflexivity**
- 2. Intellectual puzzles**
- 3. Investigative dynamics**
- 4. Intimate iterations**
- 5. Knowledge that is 'telling', pivotal, resonant**
- 6. Writing that is evocative and convincing**

1. Difficult questions and active reflexivity

- What am I interested in? What's the intellectual puzzle?
- Where is it 'located'? Where does it happen? And therefore from which potential sources or 'goings on' can I generate appropriate knowledge?
- How might my sampling strategy be generative of knowledge that is telling in relation to my intellectual puzzle and research questions? What work do I want my sample to do?
- What count as data in my study? What is their relationship to my intellectual puzzle?
- What kinds of explanations or arguments can I build from my data? What kinds are outside the scope of my analysis?
- What roles do data and theory play in my argument?
- What do I want the explanation or argument to do?

2. Intellectual puzzles

- **Puzzles with a verve about them – an energy that speaks of something intriguing and important.**
- **Often about connections, relations, entanglements, atmospherics, nuances, ambiguities, and perspectives on the world.**

3. Investigative dynamics

- Thinking from the intellectual puzzle, not the methods.
- Getting in the generative zone.
- An example – ‘Facet Methodology’ (Mason, 2011 and 2018).
 - Facets as strategically/artfully designed investigations
 - Playing with epistemologies



4. Intimate iterations

- **Getting close rather than stepping back**
- **Affinities with data**
- **Generalisation as an investigative art**

5. Knowledge that is 'telling', pivotal and resonant

Intellectual puzzles + investigative energy +
knowledge
= insight

- Insightful knowledge that is 'telling' (Savage, 2010) in relation to particular questions and puzzles.

6. Writing/dissemination that is evocative and convincing

- **NOT ‘reporting findings’ or ‘writing up’**
- **Power and resonance of qualitative arguments and insights lie in the way they are made**
- **We should ‘write otherwise’. Should be absorbing, and ‘able to engage the reader in the kinds of understandings one is trying to create’ (Smart 2013)**

Conclusion

- **Methodology in truest sense.**
- **Insights inflected by and tied together with the investigative energies that have produced them.**
- **Insight is vital.**

End – Thank you