

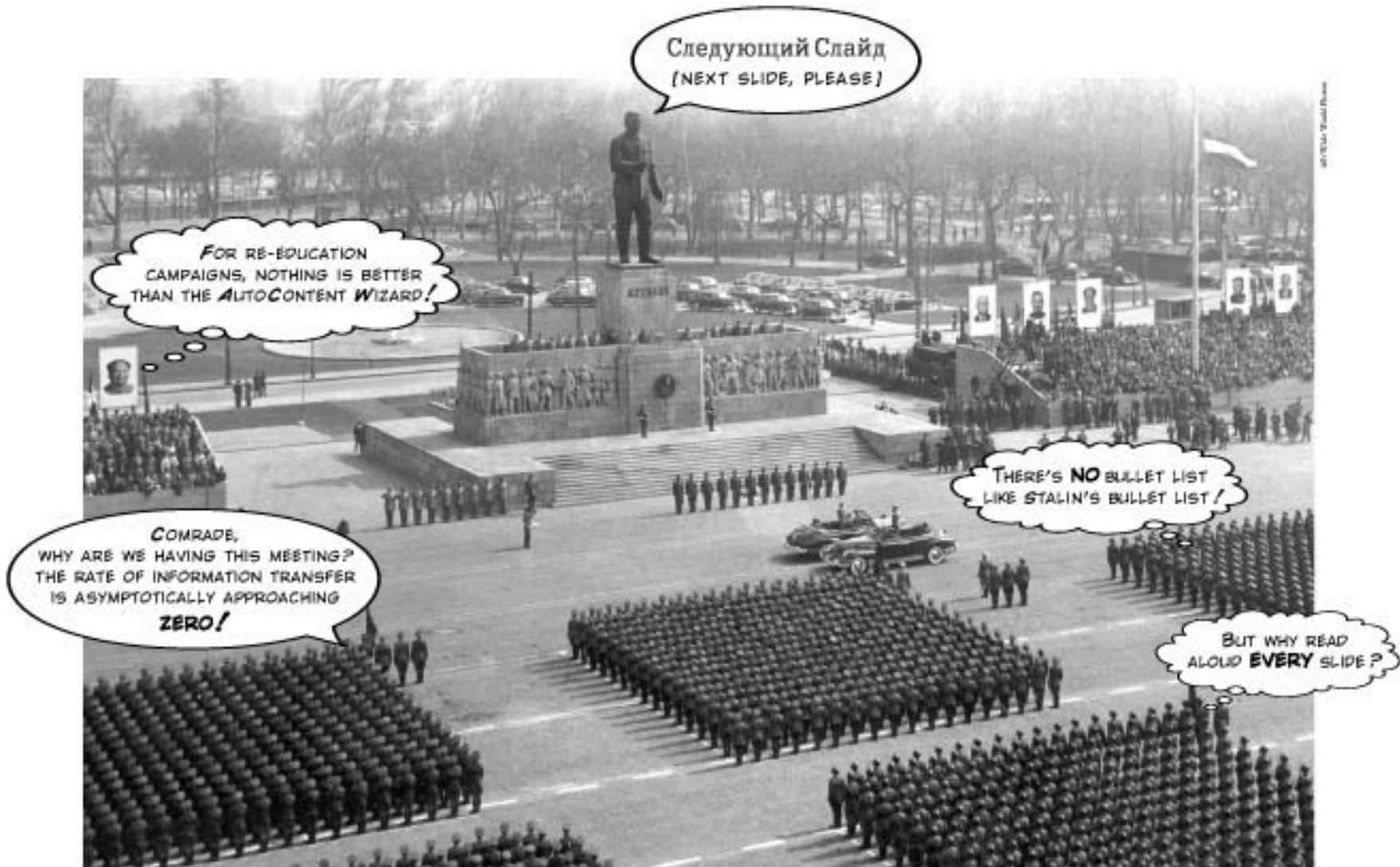


Qualitative Research in a (Messy)
De Facto Mental Health System:
A Practitioner/Reviewer's Perspective

NIH Summer Institute
Qualitative and Mixed Methods
August 2004

Thinking Agar . . .

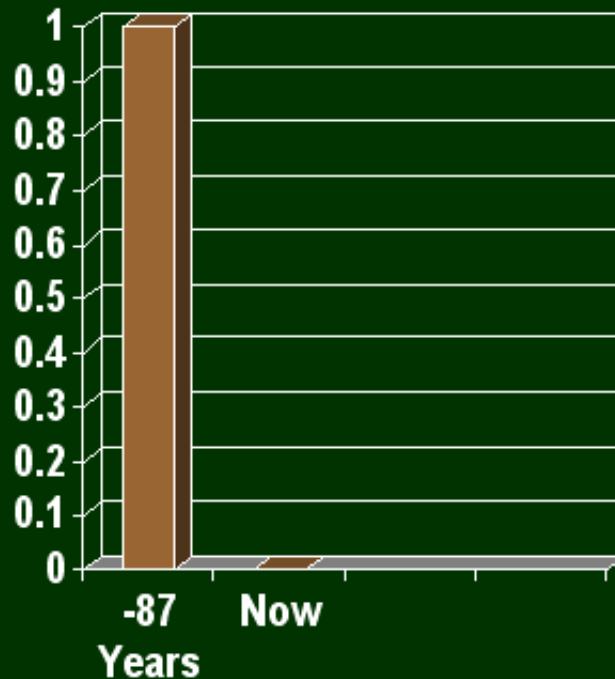
- Ethnography as embodied method (and A's attitude toward audience)
 - Show rather than tell: power of examples
 - Good and bad (and *nearly* good) proposals
 - Mixed methods in CSAT study (*CDP* 2003)
 - “From anxiety to methods” – don't rush it
 - Where do data come from? (not just a problem for qualitative types)
 - Adaptability of method (Plan B . . .)
 - Pilot work as bait and collateral
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Edward Tufte, *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*

Organizational Overview

11/19/1863



New Nations

Changing fortunes of qualitative research

- NIMH, NIDA, NIAAA (this year's “black”?)
 - Earliest embrace – NIDA: how to understand the world and habits of addicts;
 - More recently: behaviorally oriented medicine and prevention (HIV/AIDS)
 - *BMJ* series 2000; *BJP* 1998
 - OBSSR guidelines (June 2002)
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“Newfound credibility” and the wages of success?

- “technical essentialism” (Barbour 2003)
 - mechanistic reduction of good methodological practice to itemized “checklists”
 - “You only want me for my methods” (Harding and Gauntley 1999)
 - So what’s missing? And where do we look for it?
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One candidate: anthropology

- Hefty tomes, anxious habits of self-examination, seam-bursting collections of exotica
 - Even its friends fret: “Anthropologists, alas, seem nowadays to be singularly doubtful about their capacity to find answers.”
 - Amsterdam and Bruner, *Minding the Law*, 2000, p. 218 – great example of narrative analytic techniques in law.
 - Or consider some recent titles
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Marketing mischief

- *Out of Our Minds* (Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa), Johannes Fabian (2000)
 - *Not the Way It Really Was* (Constructing the Tolai Past), Klaus Neumann (1993)
 - *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth), D. Freeman (1983), the oblique response: *Not Even Wrong*, M. Orans (1995) – and later rejoinder: *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* (1999)
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Statistical conceits

- *Statistical Analysis with Missing Data* (Wiley Series in Probability and Mathematical Statistics), R. Little and D. Rubin, 1987
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Where “evidence” comes from

- Methods = genealogies of “evidence”
 - an outward sign;
 - something that furnishes for tends to furnish proof
 - something legally submitted to a competent tribunal as a means of ascertaining the truth . . .
 - *Webster’s Third* . . . (1976)
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Challenge of effectiveness research*

- Field-based – entry, presence, acceptance
- Shift focus to: situational contingencies, behavioral specifics and symbolic import, vested others (stake in or opposed to) in intervention
- Negotiated nature of any helping relationship
- Organizational climates and cultures
- Resourcefulness of local agents with ideas and interests of their own

■ * Hohmann and Shear 2002

“evidence-based processes”*

- Need for research focusing on processes that cut across different program models or sectors
 - collaborative goal-setting
 - skill development
 - person-centered planning/choice
 - good relationship between provider and recipient, and
 - The “structural ingredients” that promote them
 - * W. Anthony, *Psych. Serv.* 2003: 7
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QRM's distinctive strengths

- Proficiency in “de facto” venues – situational contingencies, negotiated exchanges, street-level practice
 - Meaning: identity, shame, resistance, respect
 - Attention to local context as an “actor” – exerting pressures, setting limits, fluctuating
 - Examining competencies over time and across contexts
 - Improvisation: “. . . a talent for the makeshift” (Auden)
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The social production of routine data

- Broader question: where epidemiological data come from (“practical epistemology” – McKinlay)
 - Race: biological absurdity vs. undeniable social reality – what to “collect”? what categories mean?
 - Examples:
 - Census 2000: “check all that apply” – huh?
 - Hahn et al. (1992): compared race assigned at birth and at death; “coding inconsistencies” X4 greater for blacks (4.3%) and X40 for “others (43.2%)”
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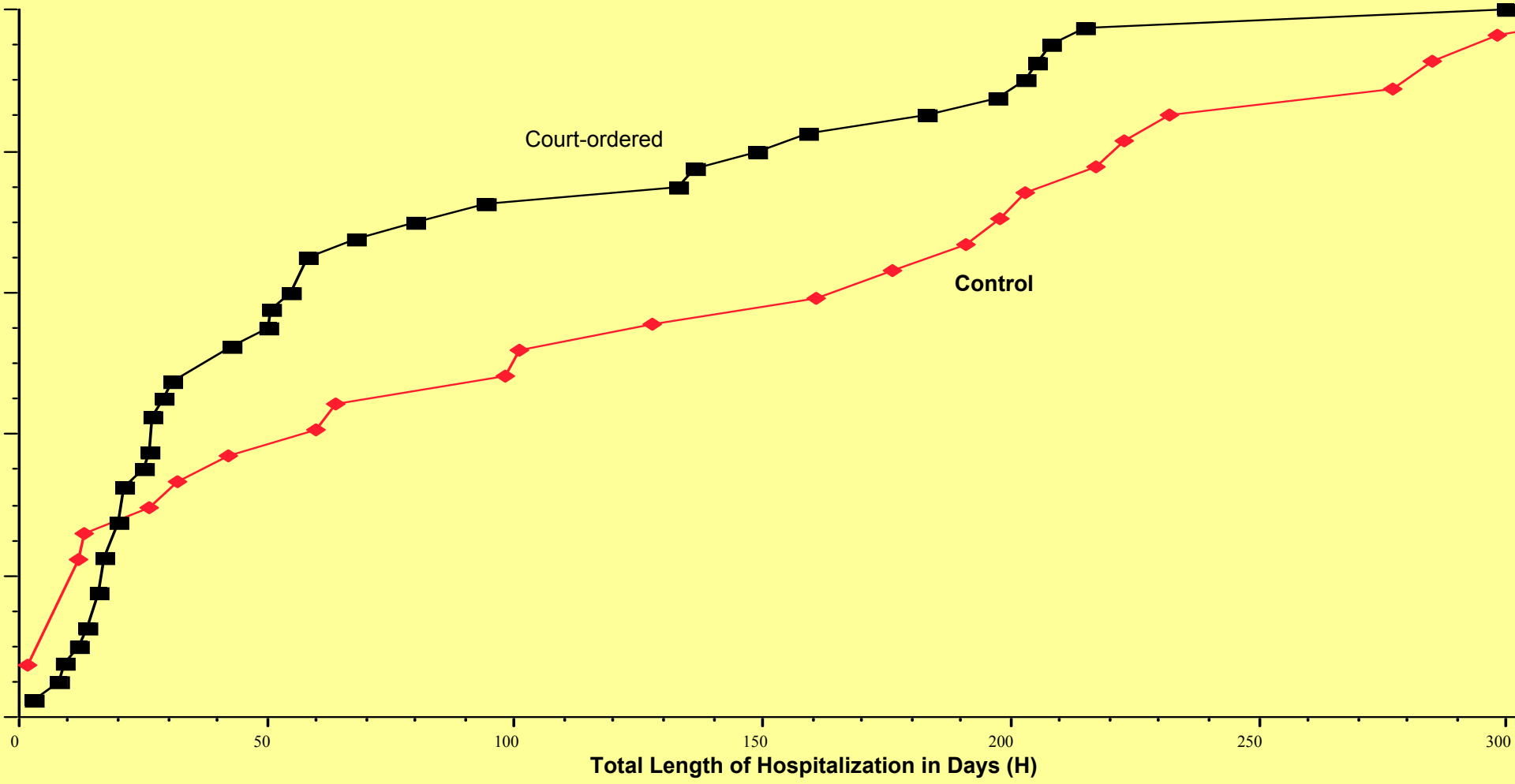
As with race, so with (some) rates

- McKinlay (2001) on gendered nature of epidemiological data on CHD
 - “strategic diagnosis” (Luhmann 2000; Ware et al. 2000) and “deliberate misdiagnosis” (Rost et al. 1994)
 - “official” records of involuntary/voluntary status vs. “perceived coercion” (McArthur Group)
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Intervention studies, negative findings

- Fidelity criteria vs. “backstage” process
 - What do “interventions” consist of?
(examples: PAD research in U.S. and U.K.; “usual treatment” as control; etc.)
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Rehospitalization History During Follow-up (Cumulative Probability)



Is this a significant difference?

- Three tests, one-way nonparametric statistics:
 - Wilcoxon $p = 0.1467$
 - Kruskal-Wallis $p = 0.1449$
 - Savage $p = 0.03^*$
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Differential marital outcome and local moral economies of shame*

- Odds of marriage at follow-up
 - Indian: 3:1
 - Dev'd: 3:5
 - O.R.: 5
 - Odds of marriage given poor early illness course
 - Indian women: 2:1
 - Dev'd women: 2:3
 - O.R.: 3
- * Hopper 2004; et al., in preparation

Critique of shelterization (Marcus 2003)

- Old observation in the annals of vagrancy – “acculturation” to a deviant “shelter subculture”
 - Less severe form of SBS seen in asylums
 - Shelters seen as “largely impermeable institutions that resocialize inmates”
 - Ethnography: “law of the jungle” within vs. “skinny” bookkeeper’s power to hire/fire without
 - So: shelter as “a total *research* institution”
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Current projects: interviews, field study

- Process evaluation of the Nathaniel Project – the dimensions of effective networking in ATI
 - What is supportive about “supported housing”? (Collaborative SAMHSA project)
 - Naturalistic inquiry into “social integration” (getting “re-connected”), adults with SMI (NIMH)
 - Dynamics of engagement, homeless & SMI – “housing first” vs. standard care (Padgett, NIMH)
 - Working clergy and mental health
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Pastoral care and mental health problems

- Collaborative with NYC disaster preparedness
 - Inquiry into routine pastoral problem-solving – key informant interviews, but not just clergy
 - Idioms of suffering, implications for seeking help
 - Exploration of hybrid collaboratives – training by, referral assistance, support of formal mental health service system
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Good proposals – beyond the dreaded checklists

- NIH/OBSSR June 2002 guidelines – esp. re research design and methods
 - Sampling plan
 - Data collection
 - Data analysis – including candidate codes, domains, etc. using pilot data
 - Data interpretation – impact and significance
 - N.B. – combining quantitative and qualitative
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Publication guidelines

- *British Journal of Psychiatry*:
 - Conceptual clarity: research question, theoretical framework, methods
 - Documentation: context, sampling, fieldwork,
 - Procedures: data analysis, how themes and concepts identified, reliability across researchers, corroborative
 - Negative instances and how accounted for
 - Evidence presented and interpretations
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3 R's and a plan

- a Really interesting question
 - rooted in a literature review organized to persuade the reader that the next logical step in development is the proposal under consideration
 - demonstrated Reach
 - what this team of investigators is capable of
 - requisite Resources
 - what's needed – in hand, requested – to pull this off
 - operational Plan
 - how, in detail, the work will undertaken so as to answer the question(s) posed
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Example: engagement and retention in care (Padgett 2003)

- Section 4.4 – “mapping” trajectories of E+R
 - Use of existing data – records of prior study
 - Nominating cases for in-depth interviews – successful and non-successful defined
 - Recruitment and data collection
 - Two-stage screening for interviews
 - Training and supervising interviewers
 - Using “focused” transcriptions for efficiency
 - Case study design – to illustrate “trajectories” and secure informant accounts . . .
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example (cont'd)

■ 4.4 continued:

- Protocol for case study interviewing – use of life events chart
 - Data analysis and write-up – developing model of successful E+R:
 - Chronologies of lived experience – content analysis, consistent themes and critical life events;’ cross-checked against chart and study data for “turning points”
 - Cross-case thematic analyses – a priori and emergent
 - Strategies to ensure rigor – triangulation, co-coding/audits
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Challenges

- Enhancing rigor of qualitative approaches; improving linkage in mixed method studies
 - Translating “improvised makeshifts of practice” into replicable (“transposable”) interventions
 - Systematically taking contextual factors into account – local providers, competing interests, capacity-building, unapparent allies
 - Negotiating access and reciprocity
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Some persisting tensions

- Interconnected nature of situated selves – e.g., current work on “respect” as “joint ceremonial labor” (Goffman 1956, NIMH)
 - Ethical issues of confidentiality and inadvertent disclosure in “thick description”
 - Importance of context in rethinking risk factors – e.g., working the supply side in homelessness
 - Collaborative work with local natives – terms, conventions, platforms, vehicles
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