# Memos

Session 8 – Ph D Seminar | qualitative methods

Spring 2024

1

2

3

How?

Coding + memos

4

## Caveat!

- No magic formula or easy recipe.
- But an art with principles / guidelines

5

## And software?

NVIVO

ATLAS.ti
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Tools to help organize data, but in the end **you need to do the work.**

6

Inductive

Iterative / continuous

7

8

## Memos and Memo Writing

- Why? To document and think
  - Keep a written record of comparisons and analytical thoughts about the data or data analysis
  - Insights, hunches, hypotheses
- Multiplicity of memos
  - Memos vs. code notes (as a way to dig deeper in categories)
  - Identifying and developing the properties and dimensions of concepts or categories
  - Making comparisons and asking questions
  - Elaborating the relationships between conditions, actions / interactions and consequences
  - Extending the implications of a borrowed concept to your research
  - Developing a storyline
  - Sparked by another memo

9

## Rules of thumb

- Some can come from the data; others can be inspired by literature – exploring a concept.
- Keep data and memos separated
- Don’t wait to write memos
  - They can be short, incomplete
  - Early in the process
  - Whenever they emerge
  - “Don’t wait for the muse”: Just write!
- Evolving: memos are work in progress. They can be expanded
- Keep memos focused on one idea. If needed, write two.

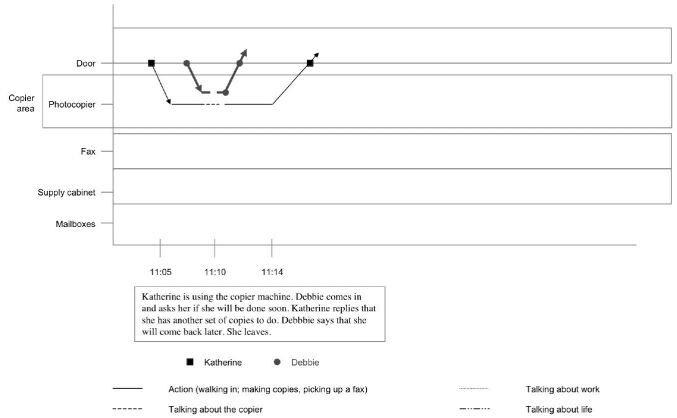
10

## Other forms of memos

- Team meetings as memos:
  - Sharing that triggers further analysis and coding
- Visual devices
  - Standardized (tables, matrix, diagrams, etc.) or emergent and invented
  - Represent visually the relationships: conceptual maps of ideas that visually represent the relationships between codes and categories.
- Summary memos or integrative diagrams: can help you synthesize the content of several memos / diagrams.

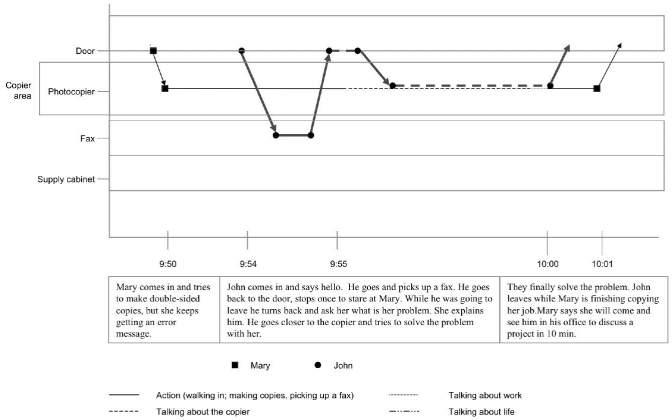
11

**IM1:** A simple example of negotiating access at PH



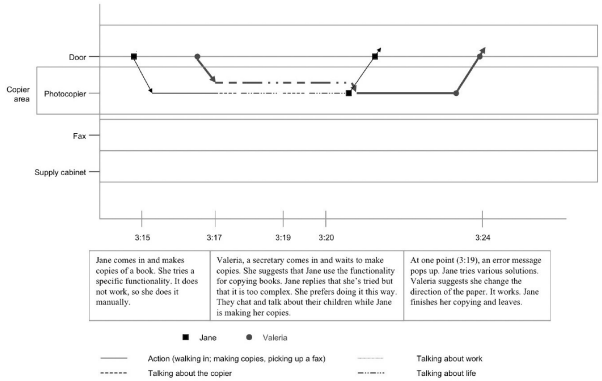

12

**IM2:** Collaboration around the copier at RC



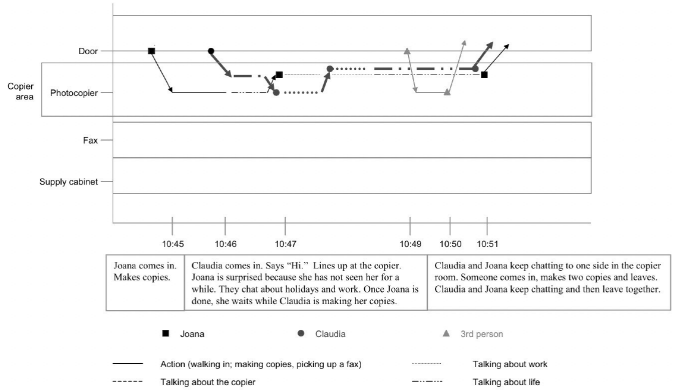

13

**IM5:** Intertwined copier-related and life-related discussion at BS




14

**IM6:** Making copies and talking at PH




15

| Theme | Type | Example | RC | PH | BS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Work | | | ++ | +++ | 0 |
| | Exchanging information | Eva is putting together some copies that she did of articles on a book that they have just published. Margot comes in to pick up her mail. She says, "Hello," and while skipping through her mail, asks Eva what she is doing. Eva replies and they discuss the book and its success. (PH)<br>Joana is making copies. Claudia comes in. Joana looks surprised. She tells Claudia that she has not seen her for a while. Claudia was on holidays. After talking about the holidays, Joana asked Claudia on which project and with whom she is working [Claudia is a freelancer]. Claudia replies that she just started working with Margot on a new book, and she said that she really likes working with her. They talked for a while about Margot and previous projects on which Claudia worked. (PH) | ++ | ++ | + |
| | Collaborating and following up | Gerry is making copies. Ann comes in to take a notebook and some pens. While looking in the supply cabinet, she asks Gerry if she had called someone she was supposed to call for a joint project. Gerry replies she does not have time, but will do it today. (RC)<br>Charles comes in, while Ann is making copies. He tells her that he just got an email with some information regarding a project they are working on together. (RC) | ++ | + | 0 |
| | Politics and gossip | Rachel is making copies and Sophie comes in to make a copy. Rachel says that won't take long. So Sophie decides to stay. While waiting she looks at the bulletin board and sees a newspaper article mentioning one of their colleagues who has just published a novel. She is surprised and asks Rachel if she knew. Rachel did know and tells her a bit more about this book and a previous novel that this colleague wrote. Rachel then asks Sophie if she has fewer arguments with her boss these days. Sophie tells her about a recent crisis. Rachel empathizes and tells her other stories she has heard about Sophie's boss. (RC) | ++ | ++ | 0 |
| Life | | | ++ | ++ | + |
| | Hobbies, family, leisure activities | Joana is making copies. Claudia comes in. Joana looks surprised. She tells Claudia that she has not seen for a while and that she looks great. She asks her if she was on holidays. Claudia says yes. Joana asks where she went. They talked for 3 minutes about Claudia's holidays. (PH)<br>Valeria is queuing for the copier, while Jane, a junior professor is making copies. They chat and talk about their children. (BS) | ++ | ++ | + |

16

## Remember …

- We don't always remember:
  - Write the date (and time) at which the memo / diagram was created. Also helpful to include a reference to the document from which the memo / diagram was derived.
  - Creating a heading for each memo / diagram to facilitate accessibility.
- Insert short quotes or phrases from the raw data in the memo.
- Writing memos is part of analysis.
  - Memos help you documents but they also force you to think with concepts, rather than raw data.
- Rules of thumb and trick of the trade rather than formulas and algorithms

17

## For next week:

- Go back to your notes and start / continue coding
  - As you go along you can start typing some memos
- Share your codes and memos, and refine your codes
  - Memos might emerge
  - Don't forget to think broadly:
    - Supporting data
    - Diverging data
    - Other codes that you think might be related

18