

## **A data-database! Keeping track of your fieldwork**

This is about good record keeping in relation to data collection activities. It is distinct from more reflective and conceptual work of monitoring the quality and relevance of your data in relation to your research aims and questions. However a degree of initial analytical work can usefully be fed into these administrative processes.

### **Map and know your data**

Assuming you have collected data from multiple sources (eg. More than one document, interview, observation, video recording). You might also have more than one *kind* of source (eg. Documents and interviews). This is boring but fundamental stuff, and crucial to get right from the outset (or close to it) instead of trying to rescue yourself from a mess later on.

Good record keeping will serve you well, save you time later on, and should meet these criteria

1. Track every separate 'piece' of data collection (eg separate document, interview etc)
2. Link each piece of data to key relevant information (eg. Date, kind of data, approach, participant identifiers etc...); what is relevant will depend on your research
3. Link to a systematic file name approach, where filenames contain relevant information. Eg P03\_V1\_140213 tells me Photo (P) number 3 (03), from visit 1 (V1) on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013.
4. Make it easy to see how different pieces of data link to each other – eg if documents or photographs come from a particular field visit; or if an interview links to previous interviews with the same participant.
5. Keep clear records of participant consent and withdrawal, and any pseudonyms you use.
6. Enable you to track immediate analytic reflections.
7. This should all be integrated so you can cross refer easily. Eg. You did an interview on the day of a site visit – how easily can you find the field notes from that, any personal reflections, other data collected (eg photos, documents).
8. You may wish to 'name' key pieces of data to help you recall them (in the way that you might name an episode from a TV series).

For me the most effective way to do this has been to set up a spreadsheet in *Excel* in which I have a number of different worksheets (all in the same file).

## **In my most recent study, this was what worked for me:**

**Worksheet 1:** ‘Summary’ was based on my field visits (my primary data collection mode). Each row was a different visit. Columns recorded who visited, the date, which number week it was (eg the 1<sup>st</sup> week of fieldwork, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc), day of the week, time of day, which book I would find my original hand-written notes in, what approach I took to observation, a name for the visit, and brief comments (a sentence that reminds me what happened and notes any key ideas).

*The columns made sense because the phenomenon I was investigating worked on weekly cycles (hence the week number being important) when each day had a different schedule (hence day being important). Recording these meant I could easily track all the data relating to one particular week, or for example look up all the data from Mondays etc.*

As I was going I also had a column to keep track of whether I had typed up my notes.

**Worksheet 2:** ‘Photos’ listed all the photographs I took. Each image was given a different row. The columns had: number (a unique identifier for each photo), the date it was taken, the visit number (which links to Worksheet 1), and the filename (which had the photo number, visit number, and a brief title eg ‘22-15 pram walk’ means photo number 22, from visit 15, of the pram walk. I also had a column with a description of what was in the photo and context in which it was taken.

**Worksheet 3:** ‘Documents’ – took exactly the same approach as with ‘photos’ – again linking to visits from the main summary.

**Worksheet 4:** ‘Staff consents’ – Each row for a different member of staff who participated. Columns focused on: name, surname, date they signed the consent form, whether they gave additional consent to be video recorded, when they withdrew (no-one did in the end), and the Alias / Pseudonym I gave them. I also recorded information about their profession, job title, year they started work, qualifications, and key roles in the setting.

**Worksheet 5:** ‘Families’ – Similar to the sheet for staff – rows for each family which participated. Columns for mother name, surname, father name, child names and ages, dates of consent, which room they were allocated to (this means I can track them in my field notes), alias/pseudonyms, and other relevant information (eg those that asked for a copy of the report to be sent to them).

See overleaf for some screen shots to show you what this looked like.

The basic set up of columns and rows in the Summary worksheet 1:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	NH visit	TC visit	Date	Week	Day	Time	Who	Book	Structure	Name	Comments
1	1		5/08/10	0	Mon	Daytime	N	N1	Guided tour and initial discussion with Debbie, Karen, Monica, Jane	First visit	First visual impressions of the building; decision to go for RU as site
2	2		19/08/10	0	Thu	Daytime	N	N1	Meeting with DN and JP; joined staff for lunch BBQ	Planning	Further research planning
3	3		18/10/10	1	Mon	Daytime	N	N1	Loose - playroom, canteen, staff room; welcome session	First impressions	First chance to see families in RU; lots of PCIT work in playroom; saw admission interview in playroom; partnership mentioned in welcome session (in canteen)
4	4		19/10/10	1	Tue	Morning	N	N1	Loose - playroom, canteen, staff room	In the playroom	Noticed glances into playroom by nurses as they walk past; music and CCTV in playroom
5	5		20/10/10	1	Wed	Daytime	N	N1	Loose - playroom, canteen, staff room, corridor, client room	Handover and cake	Sat in on handover in client room, useful informal conversations with staff, cake in the staff room

Using the split window function to keep the column headings clear while scrolling down the rows (note higher visit numbers):

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	NH visit	TC visit	Date	Week	Day	Time	Who	Book	Structure	Name	Comments
38	33		2/06/11	13	Thu	Evening	N	N9	Shadowing Jo Reid / Pommy Jo	Relaxation session	Shadow Jo Reid for first time; see the change from day to night; go to relaxation in the playroom.
39	34		3/06/11	13	Thu/ Fri	Overnight	N	N9	Shadowing Jo B and Wendy	Pyjama pedagogy	Quiet night with Jo B and Wendy; candid talk.
40	35		6/06/11	14	Mon	Daytime	N	N10	Shadowing Amal and Jo R	A premature departure	With Amal, who is teamed up with Jo Ramjan; first clients have to go home because bub is unwell; intake (in pair) with room 9; fun and laughs in the handover
41	36		8/06/11	14	Wed	Daytime	N	N10	Shadowing Janice	Nothing short of a miracle	Shadow Janice; get to see n-n h/o with client by accident; some real nuggets in here today in terms of body boundaries
42	37		9/06/11	14	Thu	Daytime	N	N10	Shadowing Sue	My favourite bub	Shadow Sue who is I/C but also has a client; some real signs of change this week! And some tough cases too
	38		15/06/11	15	Wed	Daytime	N	N11	Shadowing Jo B	Jo B's first big in charge day	Jo B first experience of being in charge on a weds; atmosphere quite manic: Dr Hona flies in and out, upsets a

The embedding and arrangement of multiple worksheets in the same file:

70	53		5/10/11	25	Wed	Daytime	N	N13	Docs & data	Copyl securi
71	54		10/10/11	26	Mon	Daytime	N	N13& N14	Various	Obser and d
72	55		12/10/11	26	Wed	Afternoon	N	N14	Various	Dads

1 Summary 2 Photos 3 Documents 4 Staff consents 5 Families

Normal View Ready

Example from the 'Photos' worksheet (again using the split window function):

Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review							
F157 k discusses plans and explains to m&d1 about positive reinforcement, george plays around them [off camera]							
1	A	B	C	D	E	F	
	Number	Date	Visit	Filename	Taken by	Description	
83	82	16/05/11	25	82-25 admission	NH	very similar posture, slight smile, looking over glasses at kristin	
84	83	16/05/11	25	83-25 admission	NH	similar pose maintained, is how jo r does 'listening' during this admission	
85	84	16/05/11	25	84-25 admission	NH	jo r leans forward to write out goals as kristin talks, and repeats them back to her	
86	85	16/05/11	25	85-25 admission	NH	jo r leans to show kristin a sleep and settling guide (note red wristband on bed waiting to be placed on kristin)	
87	86	16/05/11	25	86-25 admission	NH	as above, but jo's gaze has moved from kristin to the paper itself; this combined with the pointing pen invites kristin t	
88	87	16/05/11	25	87-25 admission	NH	the discussion continues as kristin changes henry's nappy; jo r asks about his morning and fills out the time chart	
89	88	16/05/11	25	88-25 admission	NH	jo r sorts out the paperwork from admission	
90	89	16/05/11	25	89-25 handover	NH	jo r hands over to leanne, in dr hong's room; nurse-nurse shift handover; leanne has CIR sheet on desk	
91	90	16/05/11	25	90-25 handover	NH	leanne hands over to cathy i/c in rusr	
92	91	16/05/11	25	91-25 checking	NH	leanne peers in and listens to nursery 9, chart in hand	
93	92	16/05/11	25	92-25 in nursery	NH	inside a dark nursery, can just make out blue shirt of leanne - hard to write notes in these conditions for me!	

NB. I can't show the consent worksheets for obvious ethical reasons!

An example of how the photograph files are stored (to show you the links to the filenames in the shot above):

