



Autoethnography Guidance

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Introduction

Autoethnography is a qualitative approach to data collection that will enable you, as the VCE representative, to systematically capture observations in the field and use those observations as data for communicating impacts.

Auto= self

Ethno = of a culture/ of a people

Graphy= story

“Autoethnography appears to be a relatively untapped methodology in implementation science and offers a fluid, qualitative approach to capturing the nuanced, inter- and intra-personal micro-processes of how a participatory effort unfolds within an unpredictable real-world, community context.” (Steketee, Archibald, and Harden, 2020).

Why autoethnography in Extension?

Many other forms of qualitative data require participant resources — they have to set aside time, share their reflections, perhaps drive/commute to the spot. Autoethnography allows you to set aside time to capture your own observations as well as verbally or written feedback from participants.

Example of data collection methods

Field Notes

1–5-minute timer for self-reflection.

Set a timer and write all the reflections you have from class. Things people said and did, how it made you feel. When the timer ends, stop writing. to keep

it systematic and see what was “most important” in the moment.

You can provide yourself with a prompt like, “what did I notice most from the group today?” or “how am I feeling about the program right now?” Alternatively, you can just free-write.

Cultural Artifacts

In their own words.

If a participant writes in the Zoom chat or emails you or texts you, copy and paste their statements into a running document. The document might have column headers.

Process Evaluation

Have a checklist of all program components.

Use this checklist to determine adaptations needed, capture in person feedback, systematize your observations.

How do I report autoethnography for impact statements?

You can provide as a narrative, via tabular format (Figure 1), or a timeline (Figure 2).

Whether you choose a narrative, table, or timeline, you use the type of data you have (i.e., field notes, cultural artifacts, and process evaluation summary) to tell the story of how your programming is changing lives.

Date	Data	Theme	Analysis
Jan 7	Participant used to have her son walk her up and down the stairs to enter the building	Gaining independence	LIFT is helping participant walk with ease
Jan 9	Participants laughing and standing around before class starts	Cohesion	The group is building camaraderie and a perception of belonging

Figure 1. Example of translating field notes into a tabular format.

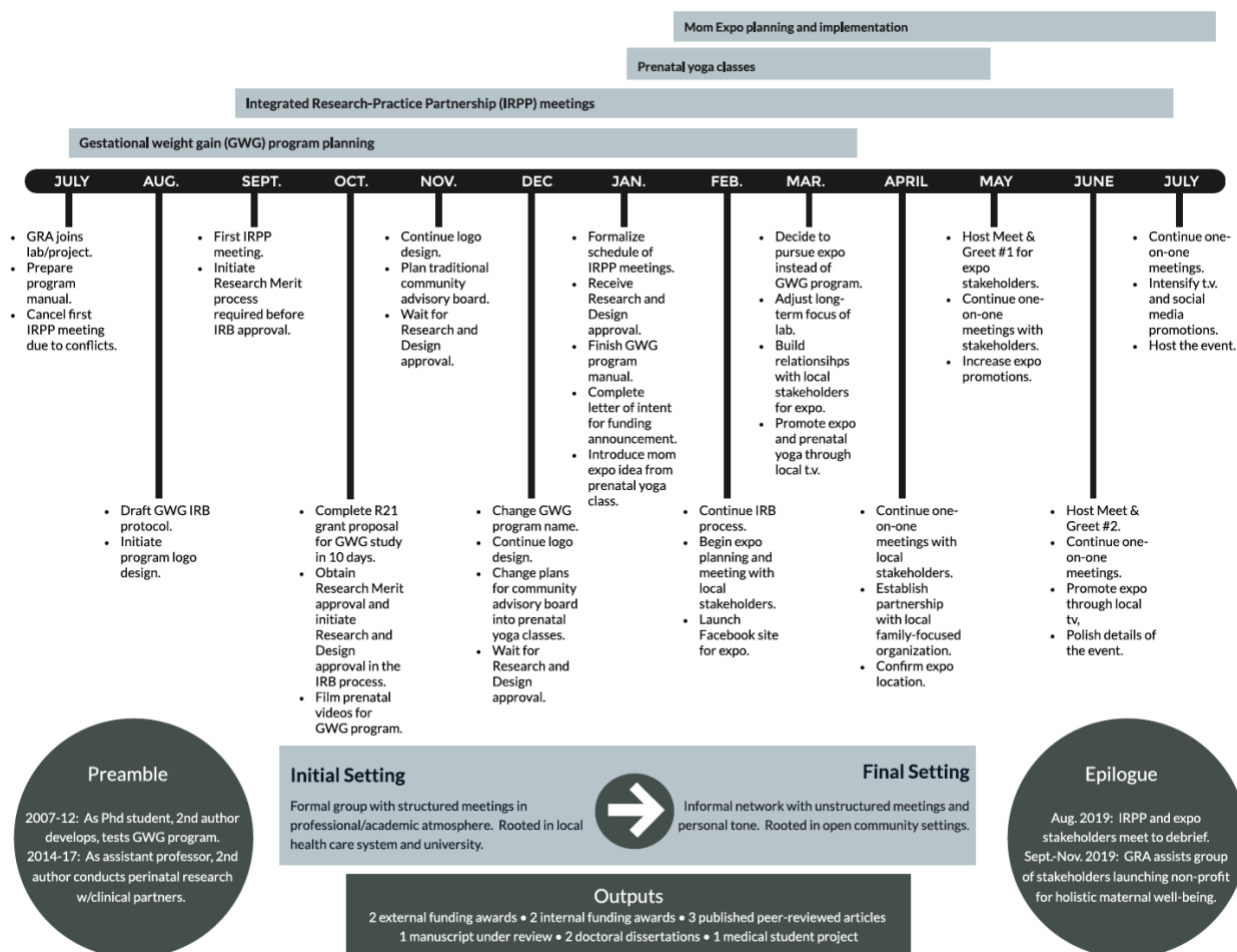


Figure 2. Example timeline for presenting the work accomplished.

Frequently Shared Concerns

This approach will not be taken seriously by quantitative researchers.

What autoethnography lacks in conventional control and *a priori* systemization, is made up for with ongoing, interdisciplinary, theoretical dialogue and critical reflection.

This approach will take too much time.

This approach might require more time in the moment, but it typically takes less time than setting up 1:1 interviews or focus groups and only receiving data from those most able to attend or most interested in providing feedback.

References

Steketee, A.M., Archibald, T., Harden, S.M. 2020. “Adjust your own oxygen mask before helping those around you: an autoethnography of participatory research.” *Implementation Science*. 15:20.

Additional Resources

“How Do I Even Capture That” autoethnography presentation from VCE winter conference, January 2024, available at:

<https://virtualleadershipexperience.com/vcewinter/#>

Template for you to use and amend for your programming and autoethnography data collection.

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