

RECLAIMING PERSONAL AND PEDAGOGIC IDENTITY THROUGH SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTIVISM: AN EDUCATOR'S JOURNEY AND COLLABORATION IN
FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES

A Dissertation

by

ANDY MATTHEW ROBERTS

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Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
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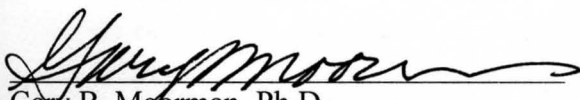
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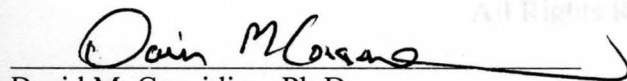
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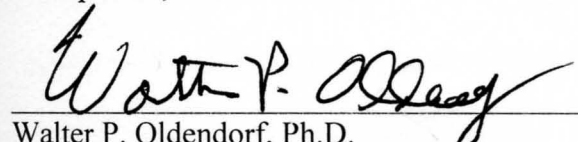
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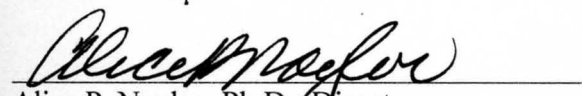
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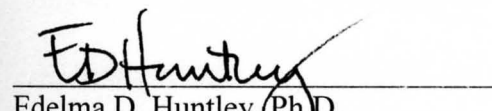
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ABSTRACT

RECLAIMING PERSONAL AND PEDAGOGIC IDENTITY THROUGH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM: AN EDUCATOR'S JOURNEY AND COLLABORATION IN FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES (May 2008)

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Currently, the majority of family literacy studies have focused on parent and child with the assumption that improving parents' literacy skills results in better education experiences for their children (Nickse, 1990). There is also significant research that measures pedagogic preconceptions and assumptions of pre-service teachers (Blanton, et al, 1998; Moore-Hart, 2002). However, few family literacy studies investigate how specific literacy contexts influence teaching preconceptions with pre-service teachers as subjects (Fitzgerald, 2001; Sulentic-Dowell, 2006). This research is intended to contribute to theory that helps explicate how pedagogic formation and identity of pre-service teachers can be shaped through participation in family literacy and social constructivist practices.

The research data, in the form of questionnaire responses, personal interviews, and focus groups, were collected from pre-service teachers participating in a family literacy project over a ten week period. Interpretive coding of data is presented as conceptual threads developed through qualitative inquiry and methodology. The author also documents the micro-culture of a specific, informal learning community through the

lens of an autoethnographic researcher (Ellis, 2004), intertwining the transformational effects of the literacy program on pre-service teachers with his own narrative of pedagogic growth and self-awareness.

This study explored the Appalachian Family Storytelling Project (AFSP) as a viable platform to operationalize social constructivist practices early in teacher preparation programs. UPartners who recognized AFSP as a tool to engage constructivist practices, as a venue for how theory meeting practice, or simply as an opportunity to teach alternative methods, describe the program as a significant benefit to their teacher preparation. Further, this study explored how most UPartners revealed a capacity for pedagogic growth and welcomed change in their assumptions about teaching once they had the opportunity to engage learners in informal learning collaborations.