

A COMPRESSED ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF  
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT  
IN A SUSTAINABLE RURAL AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

A Dissertation

By

BRICCA PRESTRIDGE SWEET

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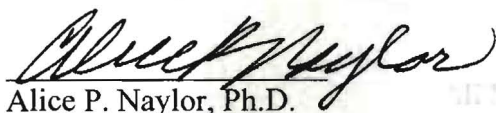
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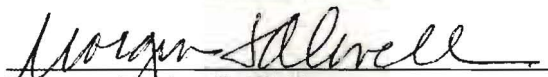
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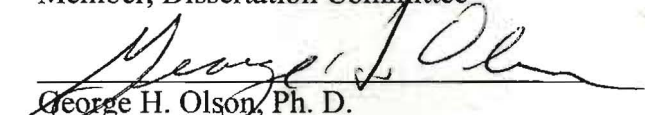
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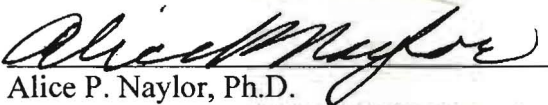
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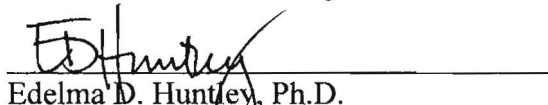
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## ABSTRACT

### A COMPRESSED ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN A SUSTAINABLE RURAL AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM (December, 2007)

Bricca Prestridge Sweet, B.A. Idaho State University

M.A. Pepperdine University

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Dissertation Chairperson: Alice Phoebe Naylor, Ph.D.

I explored the question, “What factors enable family and community involvement (FCI) in a sustainable rural afterschool program?” My design, a compressed ethnography, is appropriate when the researcher has an established relationship with the case, is focused on a specific aspect of cultural context, and is willing to use data elicitation strategies, such as the interviews that I used in this case.

The setting, Sparta Elementary School in North Carolina’s Alleghany County, provided an opportunity to examine the dynamic interaction of rural education with the phenomenon of FCI. This Appalachian community allowed rural characteristics to be viewed as strengths rather than deficiencies in implementing the Mountaineer Millennium afterschool enrichment program, which started in 1999 with federal grant funds, and is still operating in the 2007-08 school year.

My initial theoretical proposition was that the way that this afterschool program honored local heritage through its community-based activities enabled high levels of FCI.

I interviewed 63 individuals, selected through purposive sampling, observed the program in operation, attended meetings, assisted with grant proposal development, and participated in several family events during the five weeks that I spent in Sparta between January and May, 2007. I used both an inductive and deductive recursive approach to analyze my interview data, which led to seven factors enabling FCI in this rural afterschool program: heartfelt need; supportive leadership behaviors; overcoming perceived class distinctions; pedagogy; promoting collaborative relationships; rural community strengths; and a highly visible and varied curriculum. These factors enabled FCI through their dynamic interaction in developing social capital among the families, community members, program staff, and school personnel. Theories of class distinction, new science leadership, and a pedagogy of place held explanatory power in their capacity to promote social capital among these typically discrete groups.

I provide recommended courses of action for afterschool program leaders, aligned with these seven factors, and suggest additional ethnographic research in other settings to extend these findings across community types as well as validate their usefulness for building FCI in the regular school day program.