REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DIGITAL FAMILY ORAL HISTORY AND ITS IMPACT ON ADULT LEARNING

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

SUSAN COLE LONDT

DR. MICHELLE GLOWACKI-DUDKA - ADVISOR
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
JULY 2013
ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PILOT: Reflections on the Construction of a Digital Family Oral History and Its Impact on Adult Learning

STUDENT: Susan Cole Londt

DEGREE: Doctor of Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July 2013

PAGES: 124

The Digital Family Oral History Pilot (DFOHP) data were collected and catalogued on a private website blog for family members to learn about their grandfather (ALP) who died without telling his own story. This study examined the outcomes and perceptions of the family members who were engaged with the pilot. A self-selected sample of 17 family members were interviewed and their reflections recorded. The reflections held their perceptions of adult learning as they responded to three research questions. “How did the family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?” “How did the family members perceive themselves as part of a family community through this oral history process?” and “What is the impact on the family relationships?” The reflections were coded and clustered in color assigned categories that revealed the themes.

Findings indicated the family changed in positive ways through knowledge they gained, the new connection via the Internet, through affirmation of each other and the desire that future generations will use this resource. The family perceived themselves in varied positions within
their social structure. The daughter placed herself in the epicenter due to her knowledge of her father (ALP). Family members, who perceived themselves as outliers, identified new knowledge of ALP that will help them move closer to the center in the future. The final research question on the impact on family relations elicited responses such as mended brother/sister stresses and enthusiasm that many of the family participated in the storytelling. The few negative reflections expressed sadness that ALP was not here to see what the family constructed and concern that individual stories did not encroach on the available space. The combined stories and reflections shared enough oral history that ALP was revealed as a person worth knowing to those who did not know his oral history previously.

Finally, with responses such as “learned”, “learning” and “I now know” received from the sample, an environment of non-threatening informal education established new ways of knowing through an activity as simple as sharing story. Implicit informal education though storytelling was the catalyst for bonding between the branches of this family’s tree.
DEDICATION

Take the old prophets as our mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course. You’ve heard, of course, of Job’s staying power, and you know how God brought it all together for him at the end. That’s because God cares, cares right down to the last detail.

James 5:10-11 (Peterson, 2003, p. 2220)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This pilot project and research are the result of the dedication, hard work and thoughtful responses of a large, creative family who were supportive in a plethora of ways. They embraced new ideas, stared into cameras, answered questions, returned texts and learned new technologies. If they had refused at any point, stopped or dropped out, this research would not be available to share.

My committee, Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, Dr. Roy Weaver, Dr. Maria Williams-Hawkins and Dr. Amy Harden were instrumental in guiding the research and offering sound advice. They, too, considered new ideas, answered questions, returned messages and endured technologies. If they had lost interest at any point, given up or stopped editing, this research would not be available to share.

My immediate family in Districts 3, 4 and 7 completed all of the tasks above and assisted in the practicalities of life or this research would not be available to share. Finally, thank you to ALP who “quietly lived and worked for a good while.” He left us his quiet wisdom, the memory of his “squinty-eyed smile” and enough stories to construct his life digitally, available to share.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... iii  
DEDICATION .................................................................................................................... v  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... vi  
List of Figures ................................................................................................................... xii  
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... xiii  
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION ................................................................................ 14  
  Description of Research Opportunity ........................................................................... 15  
  Role of the Researcher ................................................................................................. 17  
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................... 20  
  Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 20  
  Significance of the Study .............................................................................................. 20  
  Limitations .................................................................................................................... 22  
  Definitions ..................................................................................................................... 25  
  Summary of Chapter One ............................................................................................. 26  
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................... 28  
  The Importance of Life Review and Oral History ........................................................ 28  
  Informal Education in Community ............................................................................... 32  
  Informal Education ....................................................................................................... 33  
  The Family as Community............................................................................................ 34
List of Figures

Figure 1. Seven districts of family distribution 43
Figure 2. Participants’ and Principal Investigator’s position in the family 47
Figure 3. Responses to Prompt A 57
Figure 4. Responses to Prompt B 58
Figure 5. Responses to Prompt C 59
Figure 6. Responses to Prompt D p. 1 60
Figure 7. Responses to Prompt D p. 2 61
Figure 8. Clusters of Information-Processing Capacities 64
Figure 9. Prompt A Poster 66
Figure 10. Prompt A with Note Distribution 67
Figure 11. Prompt B Poster 68
Figure 12. Prompt B with Note Distribution 69
Figure 13. Prompt C Poster 70
Figure 14. Prompt C with Note Distribution 71
Figure 15. Prompt D Poster 72
Figure 16. Prompt D with Note Distribution 73
Figure 17. Prompt D with Note Distribution (continued) 74
List of Tables

Table 1. Pace of Introduction of Selected Consumer Goods 37
Table 2. Geographic Distribution of Family members 44
Table 3. Participants’ Demographics 51
Table 4. Color Coding of Responses 55
Table 5. Green/Learning Responses 78
Table 6. Pink/Strong Emotion Positive Responses 79
Table 7. Blue/Strong Emotion Negative Responses 79
Table 8. Purple/Strength and Bonding and Yellow/Enthusiasm Responses 80
Table 9. Orange/Desire Responses 81
Table 10. Beige/Transitioning and Gray/Fact No Emotion Responses 81
Table 11. Total Responses Coded by Color 90
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are so many stories buried on family trees.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Everyone has a story...everyone needs a voice.

Scene: (The camera pans through the sea of faces.) A large family is gathered around the grandfather who is seated in a winged back chair with a stack of copies of a bound book at his side. As he is assured that every one of the family members is present, he starts to silently distribute the books to the eldest person in each family unit, all the while grinning his silly smile with a customary twinkle in his eye. Family members start to open the books and leaf through the pages. They realize that it is his legacy as a narrative. He has recounted his life, highlighting the triumphs and tells lessons he learned from the failures. He emphasizes how he wants to be remembered and imparts the greatest wisdom he has gained from his full life here on earth.

The camera comes to rest on him as he settles back against the chair. Mission accomplished. His legacy is complete and in the hands of his descendants. He can enter eternity fulfilled. (Fade to black.)

Is this a scene from Hollywood? Is this normal for an end-of-life passage? It would be ideal for an elder family member to construct his life history or give her oral history to someone
who could record it for the family, but many times, most times, it does not end this way. In the family of this research study, the great, great grandfather’s (hereafter ALP) decline happened quickly at the end of his long life. He could only utter “yah” or “na” after being incapacitated from a stroke. Those one-syllable utterances took great effort, so interviewing him with open-ended questions was kept to a minimum. His final days spiraled down quickly, and no one anticipated how soon he would pass. There was no legacy, no way to ask him how he wanted to be remembered, no transferal of the knowledge he had gained in his long life to the generations that followed.

So the family was left with the task of constructing his life story for him. Through their sharing of stories of their individual encounters with him, an oral history was pieced together. This history was captured through digital technologies and housed on a private, password-protected website and blog for any of them to view anytime. Each person in the family had a voice, and each person was encouraged to share whatever memory they possessed. No editor filtered the entries; each viewer was given the freedom to construct their own piece of the legacy of his life lived. When the ALP website and blog was launched, all members were invited to enter, to learn informally about him and about each other and share more stories as they are remembered.

Description of Research Opportunity

The digital family oral history pilot (DFOHP) described above occurred over a two-year period with initial data collection starting in July 2010. Data were gathered digitally using audio or video recorded interviews, observations, texts, emails, social media messaging and phone calls. The collection of stories was loosely based on the StoryCorps concept of Dave Isay where
a mobile recording studio travels to cities across the country. Storytellers and interviewers enter the rolling recording studios at an appointed time to record whatever they wish (Kniffel, 2005). This pilot study does not take place in an Airstream® travel trailer on the road. The researcher traveled to the storytellers, who are mostly located throughout six districts in Indiana with a few outliers in Texas and Michigan (Appendix A). The DFHOP was more than audio recording as it was comprised of video, written narrative, historical artifacts, poetry, music and photography.

The writings of Studs Terkel, the great American Oral Historian, also influenced design for the pilot. Terkel interviewed ordinary people acknowledging that everyone has a story to tell and will tell it if there is someone who is listening (Terkel, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2007). While Terkel’s work was published in books, the data for this pilot was housed on a password-protected website and loosely organized to follow the branches of the family tree (Appendix B). The DFOHP site opened for the family’s viewing in the spring of 2013.

The research study that followed the DFOHP was a descriptive case study of a self-selected sample of the family members who participated in constructing and using the website. Their responses given to research questions reflected on the pilot’s impact, their participation in the pilot, and how family relationships changed. The research study was not promoted as a learning opportunity; however the family’s informal learning was also analyzed through their reflections. What they learned about ALP, themselves, and each other determined viability of this type of family oral history pilot in the absence of the person who should be supplying the oral history. Their insights guide recommendations for how other families could use this kind of pilot as a guide to compose posthumous oral histories or group oral histories by the surviving family members.
The reflections of the sample of the DFOHP on their informal learning also served as a guide for further refinement for adult educators who want to be instrumental in facilitating a family struggling with navigating a collective oral history alone. By isolating the best practices of adult education methodology for practical application outside of a classroom, other families may experience similar implicit learning such as the DFOHP family acquired.

**Role of the Researcher**

Academic exposure to the fields of Digital Storytelling, Gerontology, Oral History, Alzheimer’s awareness, and Thanatology converged establishing the merit of each discipline, as well as comparing their similarities during graduate school. I participated in a student-guided life review as a class requirement for a Master’s degree, and witnessed the transformative power of this activity for the woman who shared her life story. In Guided Life Review, the interviewer initiated open ended questions in a one-on-one setting that, after establishing trust and rapport, stimulated storytelling, sharing of details of the interviewee’s life and reflections through a series of regularly scheduled one-hour sessions. The results produced data, rich in narration and meaning to the interviewee. The interviewer then created a life narrative for the interviewee which was member checked for accuracy, tone and completeness. The process resulted in a legacy piece for the interviewee to keep or to share with her family and friends. The woman who was the subject of the Guided Life Review presented her story to her two estranged adult daughters who had been placed in foster care as young girls. The woman was hopeful that the power of her story could encourage her daughters to reconcile with and ultimately forgive her.

The DFOHP in this study cannot be a formal Guided Life Review as described by Haber (2008) since the life being reviewed is of a person who is deceased. Had ALP been interviewed
as few as two years earlier, a Guided Life Review such as Haber (2008) describes below would have been possible.

A life review is a systematic examination of several dimensions of life leading to a recorded life story, usually in writing, but sometimes with the aid of video or audio equipment. This activity can be both a powerful educational tool and a community service when students conduct a guided life review in the community with vulnerable older adults. (Haber, 2008, p. 113)

It was an objective of the DFOHP that an oral history collected from the family could substitute for the decease’s voice and reminiscence as it was carefully pieced together to make a coherent collective. The challenge was to all family members voice and not value one story over another. Chimamanda Adichie (2009) cautions to seek out more than a single story in her TED talk. TED is an Internet repository of talks given by individuals to a convention audience interested in (T) Technology, (E) Entertainment and/or (D) Design. Adichie recounts hearing stories of the Nigerian civil war where her two grandfathers fought on opposite sides. Each grandfather passionately believed in the validity of his reason for war. She knows now if she had not been exposed to the stories of each grandfather, she would have missed understanding different points of view and perceptions from behind both battle lines.

Likewise, the stories surrounding ALP were varied and deep and revealed aspects of him that some of the family would have never known had the small bits not been told or when told, judged to be insignificant and not worthy for inclusion in the collaborative history. Every voice and story had merit and the more voices shared gave more dimension to the history (Adichie, 2009).
I am the eldest granddaughter of the deceased ALP and facilitated the DFOHP. My role in the pilot, in addition to that of facilitator, was interviewer, data collector, observer and librarian/webmaster after the data was collected. I sought to limit my bias as the researcher in the pilot and during the data collection interviews; I did not offer my opinion or voice unless to stimulate stalled storytelling. While I had a vested interest in the pilot, I have been open to the participant’s voices and not interjected my opinions during the data collection of this study of the DFOHP. I conducted the interviews, transcribed the recordings, and analyzed the data for themes and insight. My interest in this study was scholarly, searching for a best practice for repetition of a similar pilot for other families and for establishing efficiencies of the adult education stimulated by informal learning observed in this study for other adult educators to include in similar situations.

My advantage as researcher comes from the personal relationships I have developed with the sample population (my extended family) and my knowledge of their backgrounds and specific familial language and culture. The challenge was to listen to each family member’s reflection about the research questions without tainting the data with bias from other opinions and views that I have heard expressed on other occasions. An example would be if a granddaughter reported a long and heated discourse with ALP over politics. I would have the knowledge that his favorite shirt in the 1980’s had “Undecided” emblazoned across it. The granddaughter’s response would be inconsistent with what I knew about ALP’s demeanor and preferences, but as a researcher I was obligated to report exactly what she shared; her perception was her reality. I have developed excellent selective and focused listening techniques to concentrate on only the opinions expressed during this study. The biggest challenge, for me, has
been abstaining from adding my own experiences and story to the family oral history construction.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study was to understand how a family oral history using digital media and non-traditional research methods and different ways of knowing would impact or change the dynamics and relationships within an extended family structure. Oral histories are usually captured within written texts; however in this study many forms of media facilitated the dissemination of information without the necessity of face-to-face communication. This was made possible for the establishment of the digital family community through the web-based blog created to house the oral family history pilot. This study also supported new knowledge for understanding community and informal education in the context of a family transitioning from a traditional place based structure to a blended Internet community. They have not abandoned the geographic place all together, but are adding to it with the Internet community. The Internet is becoming a valued alternative for extended family interactions.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were:

1. How does a family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?
2. How do the family members perceive themselves as part of a family community through this oral history process?
3. What is the impact on the family relationships?

**Significance of the Study**

The immediate value for the family of the creation of the family pilot was to have an oral history of their deceased member. The lack of a formal family accepted life story created a void
at the death of the ALP who lived an otherwise, long and contented life. The tragedy for this family was not his death, but that they did not feel as though they knew the story of his life and now there was no traditional vehicle to gather the information from him, to create the legacy that should have belonged to and comforted them. Secondly, new or renewed social connections lost in the transition from youth to adulthood of many of the cousins could be an outcome of the DOHFP. The family expanded and relocated as families do and lost the ability to meet corporately, on a regular basis from the sheer numbers of family members as well as the distance that must be traveled for reunions (Appendix A). Even when gatherings occurred, small side communications were the norm, not a focused, intentional storytelling session where one person spoke and all others listened and understood. Knowledge and wisdom were not being transferred, and the family was fragmenting.

An oral history and renewed social connections would be enough to call the DOHFP complete and significant, but as this was a research study, there was more to be gained from research gathered through reflection in an informal educational setting. The act of gathering the oral histories required conversation and dialogue, in some cases, more dialogue between relatives than there had been for many years. All of the encounters, thus far, have been pleasant, voluntary and open to the possibility of sharing even more history at later times. The encouragement received to continue with the pilot was consistent, across the family generations and this positive reinforcement perpetuated reciprocity in the conversations in the field. So the seed for informal education had been planted within the extended family though they may not have been aware of being involved in it. Mirivel (2012) stated that, “Encouraging is any act of talk that gives courage to others or inspires them to grow” (p. 40). Smith (1999, 2008) discussed implicit learning as one of the variances of informal learning, where the learner was not making
a conscious attempt at learning. When the discussion of informal learning was added to the DFOHP website and blog, change occurred as individuals found that informal learning was not painful or perfunctory and gave the bonus of added value gained by participation in legacy creation.

Paulo Freire (1992) noted that love and deep respect are the two items necessary for true dialogue between learners and educators to occur. “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (Freire, 1992, pp. 79-80). The relationships formed or renewed during the DFOHP could help stimulate transformative learning within the family. If transformative learning has occurred as a result of the DFOHP, the interviews and conversations with the sample populations will indicate the learning they have witnessed in themselves and others, furthering the worthiness of the legacy left for the future generations of this particular family.

Limitations

The limits of this research study were within the family and their voluntary participation in both the DFOHP and also their reflections of its impact on them, individually. If they did not share stories, there would not be an oral history. ALP was a very quiet man and so are many of his descendants. If his quietness was found to be a dominant trait that manifested itself in family members who were contented spectators, as he was, and choose not to participate then their stories would not be told. In a like manner, if family members perceived their opinions and reflections as valueless and choose not share their responses, their ability to participate would be voided. ALP gave each family unit a hand written copy of his ancestors names as he could remember them approximately ten years ago. He distributed the documents himself and said,
“There now you know.” His personal value rested in his ancestry not in the life he lived. If
others share his view, then the value of storytelling and reflection will not be deep and rich.

Another limitation related to what stories were shared. Of the 123 relatives, (7 are
deceased) and 42 are under the age of 18 and are not included in this study due to protected
population status. Some of family in the protected population could remember ALP, so their
stories will be added after the research ends. Another potential challenge was if only stories that
were well known, expressed frequently and collaborated were shared again with nothing new
surfacing. At the occasional full family gathering, traditionally certain members are the most
vocal, and have the loudest voice. They will share openly stories that they know. Most of the
family know these stories. The quieter family members who just listen are the ones who need to
be heard. They need to be added to the slim oral history that is currently committed to memory.

The amount of storytelling initially generated could have been so low that it would not
keep the interest high for the pilot or learning new local knowledge from it. In this family, if
there nothing interesting happens during an activity, many members will just abandon the
activity. If the passion to preserve ALP’s life could not be passed throughout the family, then
members may have closed the part of their lives that he occupied and the broken commonality
with the rest of the family will hasten the falling further away of the five separated branches.
The family could have felt that they are being exploited for financial gain or academic
advancement and could have withheld their stories because they did not understand the pilot or
its objectives fully. Since the annual family reunion has not been consistently planned, family
isolated geographically (Appendix A) may not see the researcher as trustworthy or familiar
enough to have shared with openly.
Three of ALP’s children preceded him in death and some of their family members visited him so infrequently that they had no stories to offer. His sister died six months after he did, so her voice and stories were lost. Some of the family members are becoming rather seasoned and had the perception that this family had nothing unique to share or that what happened to individuals should not be shared corporately.

Finally, technology while it can be exemplary in creating new ways of capturing story has limitations as well. Video or audio recording someone’s voice and story makes them accountable, and sometimes too uncomfortable to participate. Even the simple act of taking out a pencil and paper changed the environment from friendly to aggressive. The website creation was daunting and family members not accustomed to social media networking or who do not trust it were slow to enter the site and begin digital interactions. The depth and richness of the website was dependent on the number of adopters who were willing to make the extra effort to gain entry to a password protected site, who took the time to review the data housed in the site and shared any stories that were stimulated from reading the accounts others had provided. A commitment of resources and hardware capable of Internet accessibility was required for dynamic updates, however if static accounts were sufficient, then printed copies U.S. mailed were made for one family. This type of communication makes two way dialogues slow and cumbersome, but keeps the digital divide from halting the pilot all together. The list of limitations was long, but it was just that – limitations. Fortunately, they were not insurmountable barriers. By naming the limitations and the plans to work around or through them, the DFOHP was a viable study and serves as a model for families to adopt who are in similar situations.
**Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Initials of the Grandpa, Dad, or father-in-law, Great Grandpa of Great, Great Grandfather referred to as the subject of the digital oral history. He died in November of 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricolage</td>
<td>The fictive and imaginative elements of the presentation of all formal research. The process of getting down to the nuts and bolts of multidisciplinary research (Kincheloe, McLaren, &amp; Steinberg, 2011, p. 168).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Bridge®</td>
<td>A charitable 501 nonprofit organization established in 1997 which offers free personalized websites to people facing a serious medical condition or hospitalization, undergoing medical treatment (<a href="http://www.caringbridge.org">www.caringbridge.org</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>A detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event (Bogdan &amp; Bilken, 2007, p. 271).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFOHP</td>
<td>Acronym for Digital Family Oral History Pilot created by the family prior to the research study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generativity</td>
<td>Helping to nurture and guide succeeding generations, and leaving a legacy that will outlive the self (Haber, 2008, p. 115).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Learning</td>
<td>Experiences of everyday living from which we learn something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral History</strong></td>
<td>A storytelling pilot that describes the story of one person’s life or a collection of individual stories told together (Janesick, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ted.com</strong></td>
<td>TED is a nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. Since then its scope has become ever broader. Along with two annual conferences -- the TED Conference in Long Beach and Palm Springs each spring, and the TEDGlobal conference in Edinburgh UK each summer -- TED includes the award-winning TED Talks video site, the Open Translation Pilot and TED Conversations, the inspiring TED Fellows and TEDx programs, and the annual TED Prize (TED.com, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thanatology</strong></td>
<td>Narrowly defined - The study of death. Broader definition - The study of life with death left in (DeSpelder &amp; Strickland, 2009, p. 30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational Learning</strong></td>
<td>Attempts to explain how adults make meaning from their lived experience. Set in motion by a disorienting dilemma, adults may reflect upon their response which may lead to new self-knowledge and future learning and development (Hansman &amp; Mott, 2010, p. 171)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Chapter One**

In this chapter, the scene was painted of a family with a deceased older member without an oral history. A pilot project constructed the oral history from the family’s shared stories was completed prior to the research study. The plan for the study was discussed including the role of
the researcher, the purpose, significance and limitations of the study, and the research questions. Definition of terms finished this chapter.

Chapter 2 explores the literature about life review and how to complete a posthumous oral history. Studs Terkel is introduced and his life’s work of listening. Informal education in a community setting is defined and the comparison made between a community and a family. The family community then becomes a digital community when it is established on the Internet. How consumers adopted products historically, gives a benchmark to show how quickly the Internet and social networking is changing now.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

*I still dream that dream. I contemplate what our lives would be like if we knew how to cultivate awareness, to live mindfully, peacefully; if we learned habits of being that would bring us closer together, that would help us build beloved community.*

bell hooks, 2009, p. 223

The Importance of Life Review and Oral History

The literature provided ample examples that established the importance of life review of which oral histories are one way to record a review. Haber (2008) finds an ideal scenario to be a Guided Life Review completed during the second half of life in the stage of Generativity. This is when an adult is most likely to accept their life as having meaning, and will seek to pass on that meaning as a legacy to younger generations (Haber, 2008). With end-of-life care comes the opportunity to listen to oral legacies offered at any time, not necessarily in a scheduled time with an interviewer and audio recorder (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2009).

Many student researchers develop dissertations and thesis related to the topic of life review or oral history, though not in the context of a posthumous creation as was the case of Digital Family Oral History Pilot (DFOHP). Creel (2010) examined the oral history, testimonial, and storytelling within the lives of eight Mexican American women living in the Midwest during
the 60’s and 70’s. The interpretation of the stories told became the legacy for other women experiencing some of the same issues.

In a study to preserve the Diitidaht (Nitinaht), an indigenous endangered language, Chipps-Sawyer (2007) utilizes interactive multi-media to expand on the spoken word by including photographs, family trees, and the actual voice of the linguistic culture. The legacy for this pilot will be the multimedia repository of oral history and artifacts of this Canadian family.

In another study, Biron (2012) gathered oral history from three generations of Franco-American immigrants who settled in the Manchester, New Hampshire area who were aged from 19 to 90 years of age. The oral histories were analyzed within the sociological theories of assimilation, place attachment and identity to discover perceived shifts in the role that the four themes of family, education, religion and discrimination played in the lives of the narrators. All of the studies mentioned above influenced the design of the DFOHP with the different methods or techniques they incorporated and the outcomes that occurred.

Oral History holds such importance that societies have been formed to preserve it. The Oral History Association keeps an extensive website with guidelines, references and sample questions to ask during an interview; the site defines oral history as

A field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies (www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/).
The Oral History Society and Oral History Association both have Facebook pages that offer information to a new generation of history seekers. Oral history’s roots were established in Europe before the Internet existed.

Eric Cregeen founded the Oral History Society of Scotland in 1973 in order to better understand the value of family and community. Cregeen studied the link between oral history and adult education and believed that education does not stop when a child completes formal schooling or studies, but that the adult can take that formal training and use it without the constraints of testing and schedules (Bennett, 2009).

Cregeen, like other oral historians, began voice recording when he realized that his family and community had their own dialect, culture and traditions. He was concerned with the continuing education of everyday people which led him to not only oversee the extra-mural classes established in Scotland, but also the recording of oral histories of the men and women’s lives as well as the stories of their work (Bennett, 2009).

The passion that everyone deserves an oral history is captured in the work of Studs Terkel (1957-2008) of Chicago, Illinois. Terkel’s long life and career revolved around listening to and recording the experiences of anyone he met (Baker, 1992). His book *The Good War* (1984), was a collection of 120 oral histories, or more accurately, memories of World War II. It won the Pulitzer Prize for a new category of General Nonfiction. Terkel spent his entire life talking and listening to everyday people who would share their story with him. Oral history was so important to him that he was still publishing up to the time of his death on October 31, 2008. His last book, *P.S. Further Thoughts on a Lifetime of Listening*, was published in November of that year.
Studs Terkel became interested in the stories that people told as a young child. He was a sickly child who stayed indoors. He listened to the diverse dialogues of blue-collar workers who were patrons in his parents’ hotels in the Chicago area. After college, he recorded oral histories from people from many locations who travelled through Chicago. Unlike Terkel who listened to people who were travelling by him, the StoryCorps, created by Dave Isay, took oral history on the road and traveled to the storyteller. Isay launched StoryCorps in 2003 in New York City first with small stationary booths on the street and later with two Airstream® trailers retrofitted with a studio seating and recording equipment. The trailers, along with a driver and audio technician, were sent off across the country, via different routes (North and South), to selected cities where teams of interviewer and interviewees scheduled studio times via an Internet web form for forty minutes windows to conduct an interview. The mobile state-of-the-art equipment and studio space necessary for producing quality oral history audio recordings destined, like Terkel’s, for the Library of Congress are generated by StoryCorps (Kniffel, 2005). Ironically, the first time a StoryCorps trailer traveled to Chicago, it pulled into Studs Terkel’s driveway. Despite being in rehabilitation from open-heart surgery, Terkel entered the MobileBooth, which was later named in his honor (Kniffel, 2005).

Isay hoped that the StoryCorps would have the longevity of a successful art installation of possibly ten years. The Airstreams®, as well as the stationary booths in New York City are still operating and are a regular feature of National Public Radio (NPR) each week. The oral histories that are filed in the Library of Congress from StoryCorps interviews will someday be added to the recordings from the WPA Federal Writer’s Pilot Program. One of Terkel’s first places of employment as a writer was with the WPA. Both collections combined, will create a large cross-section of oral histories of people from all over the country (Kniffel, 2005).
This brief overview of oral history and its value to society in general and to individual families, specifically, leads to the examination of other benefits for the community from conducting an oral history pilot. The connection to adult education and informal learning began to emerge.

**Informal Education in Community**

The immediate value for the family of the DFOHP was the artifact (website, blog or in print) chronicling the life of ALP. Renewed social networking muddied in the transition from youth to adulthood of the extended family was also beneficial. Those two tangible treasures would be enough, however there was more to be gained from this research in the form of informal education. The act of gathering the oral histories required conversation and dialogue, in some cases, more focused dialogue between relatives than there has been for many years. Mirivel (2012) stated that “Encouraging is any act of talk that gives courage to others or inspires them to grow” (p. 40).

The family in the DFOHP may not realize that they were growing or that the act of recounting the stories of their ancestor was fostering informal education, but these possibilities were worthy of this research study. Smith (1999) in an article on the variances of informal learning examines all the ways that adults learn, one of which is implicit learning where the learner is not making a conscious attempt at learning (Smith, 1999, 2008). When the discussion of informal learning was added to the pilot blog, change occurred as individuals found that informal learning was not painful or perfunctory, but added value gained from participation in the oral history construction.
Informal Education

Adult education is many faceted and includes traditional, formal, post-secondary higher education as well as many other ways of knowing. It was during my initial journey into higher education that I learned about informal education. The difficulty I had experienced reconciling how so many members of the DFOHP family held great stores of knowledge not gained through the conventional means of formal education was rectified. It was from informal education that they had accumulated their wisdom and practical knowledge. Woods and Judikis (2002) define informal education as “all teaching-learning that occurs outside of formalized programming” (Woods, Jr. & Judikis, 2002, p. 114). Their definition has at its root the teacher-student or master-apprentice relationship and does not address the self-directed learner or unintentional learner mentioned by Smith above however their definition covers the very basics of informal education. Learning without evaluation (other than self-reflection), without time tables, without linear progression and without certification at the culmination of the course is informal learning and is learning for learning’s sake.

Woods and Judikis (2002) continue to discuss community and knowledge by exploring the epistemological aspects that a community provides for its members. They review community learning while acknowledging that the individuals are responsible to make sense (knowledge) of events experienced within the community for themselves. Although the community can exert pressures to conform and accept cultural truths, similar to an educational system, a learning community does not seek to keep its members stagnant, but gives vivid examples of how education takes place and encourages the individuals to learn (Woods, Jr. & Judikis, 2002).
The Family as Community

Communities usually fit into five categories of nuclear, tribal, collaborative, geopolitical or life (Woods, Jr. & Judikis, 2002). The nuclear category with its description of “immediate family, extended family, surrogate family and legally, financially, and/or emotionally inter-dependent on an on-going basis” (p. 47) clarifies that a family is a community. The family does not need to be functional or successful to be a community. Unfortunately, dysfunctional families are communities too. To this end, it is fortunate that not all individuals in a community need to be exact replicas of each other.

Weissner, et al., (2010) discusses the creation and re-creation of community. The shared meanings, interest and connectedness are intentionally formed. The community provides a place of security and identity, shares values, beliefs and encourages growth. The community’s strength comes from the alikeness and differences of the individuals.

The Digital Community

There was a time when members of a community occupied the same space at appointed times; being present for face-to-face communication was a requirement. Examples are important events in the family such as holidays, graduations, weddings and funerals. The digital age has facilitated another reality for distanced family. Now, simply because family members do not live in close proximity does not keep them from membership in the community. The goal of this study was not to avoid the community gathering, but to find alternative ways to stay connected. Wiessner, et al. (2010) lists descriptors of an online community that include:

A shared goal, interest, need, or activity that provides members with a reason for belonging to the community; repeated active participation, including intense interactions and strong emotional ties between participants; shared access to resources and policies
for determining access to those resources; member reciprocity for information, support, and services; and common context of social conventions, language, and protocols. Degrees of relationships differ, intensifying or weakening depending on participation.

(p. 434)

The DFOHP thoroughly explored the scenario of a family where face-to-face gatherings were becoming more rare from lack of adequate physical space as well as tightly filled schedules and from members relocating to separate geographic locations (Appendix A). The community described by Wiessner can happen on the Internet in a mutually agreed upon space such as the DFOHP website provided. The research evaluated this initial digital presence for a family community previously locked in the convention of going to Grandma’s house on command dates to be counted among the favored of the family. Place is still valued among the oldest of the DFOHP members, as in a “home to return to,” a defineable piece of property, an address where family are obligated to occasionally migrate. This place was often where family members grew up, it could be the place you were born.

**Informal Education in a Digital Community**

Sir Ken Robinson (2012), an expert on education and creativity, related in an interview for Adobe TV that technology is not considered technology if it was put into place before you were born. The example that he used to illustrate this point was that he was born in 1950 and electricity is not an innovation for him. It has always been available to him, but for his grandparents, electricity was a new and exciting technology that they never took for granted. Robinson has found that students who have always known the Internet and social media take it for granted, as well. Younger generations will instinctively turn to digital means to learn from their elders and others and could be instrumental in adopting the familial website such as
DFOHP. The younger viewers will not have to wait for a face-to-face family gathering to hear storytelling of past experiences or lives lived. As this digital family community becomes a reality, there must be acceptance and education on what constitutes a good digital community.

While there are multiple activities one might use to establish community, we believe that storytelling . . . and fostering inclusion through action illustrate things one needs to consider in the development of community, activities that can help individuals or group members connect with and embrace each other within a community context. (Wiessner, et al., 2010, p. 436)

The connecting activity in this study was purposefully using the Internet and the DFOHP website and blog to share and learn from other members of the family. The action could have been as simple as logging in and browsing or as involved as posting video that other family members made and starred in, uploading photographs, creating art and sharing it digitally. The possibilities were varied and numerous.

This study of the perceptions and reflections of family members as they make the transition from a traditional face-to-face community to digital presence offers valuable insights in aiding adult educators as they position themselves to help other families transform to the digital family-based community. Adult educators need to learn the basics of social media networking just to stay connected. Social media does not remain static. New launches and new socially accepted ways to communicate occur rapidly. Robert Putnam (2000) addressed the rate of transfer of historical technologies that changed our lives. Table 1 below, *Pace of Introduction of Selected Consumer Goods*, is antiquated when considering Internet networks today, but gives us a glance at the rate of change in the past.
Table 1

_Pace of Introduction of Selected Consumer Goods_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological Invention</th>
<th>Household Penetration Begins 1%</th>
<th>Years to Reach 75% of homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone (not cell phones)</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air conditioner</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>~48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCR</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Putnam repopulated this table in 2013, the last column heading should be changed to months and an extra column for decline added to make the table accurate. My Space, Facebook®, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest all were introduced since 2003 with some peaking and declining within ten years. The household penetration column also needs age brackets. Networks that adults join and networks that their children use can be totally different spaces on the Internet.

Statistics of social networking adoption are housed on the _Pew Internet and American Life Pilot_ (Feb. 2013) website with a disclaimer that information will be updated as it is received (Brenner, 2013). The challenges for adult educators promoting informal education through oral history and digital presence are multifaceted. It was the goal of this research to share challenges
the DFOHP family faced and the successes they achieved as they moved from geographically centered to a digital community.

Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter 2 established the importance of life review and studies that have been completed using oral history or interviewing techniques. Studs Terkel was introduced as the Pulitzer Prize winning author who spent his life listening and then reporting the stories of ordinary people. Informal education was introduced and the comparison made between community and a family as a community. Finally the new ways for family to connect were discussed with Internet social network adoption and the history of adoption rates for consumers in the United States.

Chapter 3 sets up how the research occurred in this Qualitative constructionist case study. How the family and the data were protected, who participated, a rich description of their lives up to the launch of the DFOHP is presented. How the data was gathered and how it was reviewed, coded and sorted to make meaning from the variety of responses is discussed.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Start with a case study

Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 59

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research encompasses a wide range of methodologies without giving precedence to one over another. Qualitative studies focus on language to gain understanding, but that understanding may be enhanced with the use of charts, graphs, numbers and statistics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This study lent itself to the qualitative methodology of constructionism. The changes measured were captured in the reflections that individuals revealed from the reality they constructed using the experience of the DFOHP. Neither the participants, nor the researcher, held a preconceived notion or outcome for the study. The construction progressed, first by the participants and then was expanded by the researcher as the bits and pieces were made available. The value was as Merriam (2002) describes “. . . the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). The world of the participants of the DFOHP changed and how they reacted to this change individually, then interacted with each other and finally identified the pieces needed to construct
a new (or at least different) world was how the meaning was made (Esterberg, 2002). The research analysis combined the individual reflections and compared them to both the newly constructed reality and social networking of the participants and synthesized what happened. The analysis also examined how it happened and offered the combination of the “where”, “how” and “what” as a knowledgeable guide for others to follow in other families.

For the social research to be manageable, it was focused on a particular time or place or specific event in the participants’ world. The timeframe for this study was contained in the months after the DFOHP was collected and launched. The place was a portal on the Internet, and the specific event was what happened to the participants as they lived this experience.

**Constructionist Theory**

This study was accomplished using the epistemology of Constructionism. While the participants interacted with the rest of family during the development of the webpage and storytelling, they were making sense out of the experience as it was happening. They were putting the pieces into place individually to scaffold a new reality for the group.

Crotty (1998) shared insight into what Constructionism is and is not. Constructionism is not a creative process where the individual must seek out materials, design the reality and make meaning from it. Constructionism allows an individual, while living life, to look at the materials present in his or her life and see what can be built. In this study, the materials were the pieces of reflection, dialogue, interaction, and meaning. They were offered by the group and assembled, through reflection into a whole that made sense for the culture where the pieces, alone, did not. All participants in this study had access to the same data contained by the DFOHP. It was how and what they chose from the pile to build with that added meaning for the rest of the group. All participants had equal voice through their reflections; no design was more worthy, everything
constructed had value. Their reflections were not lengthy descriptions, but small glimpses of what each participant experienced.

Each story in the DFOHP, when arranged with the others to form a whole, constructed a model of what happened to the family during and after the pilot. The construction did not follow a plan, like a blueprint because the result was not known when the construction began. The final product, assembled by the researcher, was the combination of the individual meanings and perceptions, also without blueprint. The challenge for the researcher began after the participants’ successful construction of their reflections. Their reflections demonstrated where they were when their world changed. They were able to express what they made from the pieces defined by the DFOHP, and how the entire family changed. Clough and Nutbrown (2007) encourage researchers to observe how their participants see with new eyes. The researcher sees what is constructed and analyzes how it adds to the culture.

Case Study Approach

The case study approach was appropriate for the 73 member family group. The family reflected on the pilot that was constructed collaboratively within this single bounded case. The case was more narrowly defined as a family case study because it included several generations of a family studied during a specific time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). An idealistic case study scenario is reflections from all the eligible kin in a bounded group; however the more realistic approach includes the reflections from a sample of participants who volunteer. This self-selecting sample fit the criteria for diversity in age, gender, educational background, and spatial position within the family. The sample was adequate to give voice to a cross-section of the group as described later in this chapter’s description of the family (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The reflections were rich, even though interviewing times were brief. To accommodate this
busy, overcommitted family, alternative ways to submit responses were allowed and encouraged to give all opportunity to participate. This convenience allowed the study to come to a reasonable and logical conclusion before individuals discussed it among themselves, before participants were fatigued from inquiries and when the data saturation point was reached.

**Criteria for Selection of Participants**

In order to better understand the participant sample, a description of the family prior to the implementation of the DFOHP is included in this section. The bounded group consisted of the 127 descendants (including spouses or significant others) of ALP and his wife. For this study the five children were assigned to a branch of a family tree designated with their first initial J, N, A, R, or E. The N Branch of the family tree and the E Branch were the most heavily populated with 44 and 37 family members, respectively. The J Branch contained 29 family members, followed by the R Branch with 17 and finally the A Branch with 4 family members. Ten members are deceased, 2 did not participate due to divorce and 42 family members fall within the protected population status being under 18 years of age. The remaining 73 family members were eligible to participate in the case study. I removed myself from the study, serving in the capacity of principal investigator (P.I.) also called researcher. Appendix A contains more information on the family lineage.

**Communication frequency and geographic location prior to the DFOHP**

The eligible family members and their descendants are distributed across six geographic districts of Indiana with outliers in a seventh district consisting of locations in the states of Texas and Michigan. A larger map is housed in Appendix A with greater detail of exactly how the family members are disbursed throughout the state of Indiana and the two other states.
Table 2 depicts the distribution of family members throughout the six districts in Indiana and the seventh district of Michigan and Texas.
The detail offered in this explanation of geographic location is necessary to show how the family naturally disbursed and divided over the course of 30 years. The separation of the five branches is further explained in the narrative to follow.

Of the original five children born to ALP and his wife, the second daughter, the head of N Branch (identified as daughter P 10 in this study) and the youngest son, the head of the E Branch (identified as son P 13 in this study) survive (Table 3). Daughter (P 10) and son (P 13) live near and within two small towns, respectively, in northern Indiana, classified as District 1 for this study (Appendix A). The towns are approximately 20 minutes apart and the surviving siblings do not conduct face-to-face communication, on a regular basis. They each use cell phones as well as land telephone lines but neither sibling prefers telephone conversations as they wear supplemental hearing devices which impede clear reception. Daughter (P 10) is a Facebook® subscriber and will send forwarded email and weekly activity updates to her family and extended family with email accounts. Son (P 13) does not use a computer for business or
pleasure. The home of daughter (P 10) is a large 100 year old farmhouse that does not contain a room to comfortably seat more than 30 people. This home has an outdoor swimming pool that was installed in 1970. In the summertime, daughter (P 10) makes frequent, though unpredictable contact with family members who come to swim from the N, E and occasionally the J and R Branches.

The small A Branch is also located in close proximity within District 1 and 2, though contact with the combined family is rare. The head of the A branch (the widow of the first son) does meet regularly with daughter-in-law (P 12) for business lunches in a mutually convenient location. Both members of the A branch are on Facebook®, but are not connected widely to the other family members who are Facebook® members.

The R Branch inhabits Region 1 and 6 at polar opposite ends of Indiana with nearly equal family members. The head of the R Branch, the second son, died in the 1990’s and attendance by the entire R Branch at large family functions is rare. The swimming pool of daughter (P 10) does occasionally draw a few family members from the R Branch when they are on vacation in Region 1. This branch has a large Facebook® presence with eight of its eleven members using this social media service.

The N Branch has the highest number of family members. It also has the widest distribution from four districts of Indiana and one family in Texas year round and one family who migrates during the winter months (from District 1). The large farmhouse mentioned above comfortably seats about 30 family members in the largest room. On the extremely rare occasion when all 44 family members of the N Branch are present (such as a winter holiday), the accommodations are cramped and conversations are limited to a small groups clustered within the larger space. Group storytelling at such occasions is limited to what can be heard from the
most vocal of the storytellers above the din of the crowd. The four siblings of the N Branch use cell phones and texting to communicate when necessary, but scheduled communication is not the norm. The great grandchildren (and even some of the great-great grandchildren) also use personal cell phones and engage in texting with other family members. The N Branch has a large presence on Facebook® with participation by 18 family members.

The J Branch of the family has a unique dynamic. The oldest daughter died in 1979 and her four children (then aged 18-26) found solace together through musical performance. This branch is centered in Regions 4 and 5 and continues to frequently meet with musical practice or performance as motivation. These improvisational sessions are not routinely announced and family members from other branches rarely attend. Nine members of this branch are users on Facebook®. Son-in-law (P 17) is now the head of the J Branch and he has remarried. He and his new wife maintain contact with the other branches on occasional trips to District 1. Son-in-law (P 17) was a schoolmate of daughter (P 10) and both finished high school in District 1.

The E Branch lives in the closest proximity to each other. Four of the families live on the same street in a small town in District 1 with three more families approximately three blocks away. Only one family from this branch is in another district (District 2) and that is only 20 miles away. Several of the family members of the E Branch are in business together and they communicate frequently via cell phone, text or face-to-face interaction. The E Branch are the most recent Facebook® adopters with six members joining within the past two years.

The inclusion of the Facebook® membership (45 individuals) within the DFOHP family is significant in this study in that it gives some indication of the propensity of family members to accept and use a digital form of communication and Facebook® messages were instrumental in notifying the family of progression toward the launch of the ALP webpage and blog.
A graphic depicting the spatial relationship of the participants at the beginning of the research is included in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Participants’ and Principal Investigator’s Relative Position.*

*Note.* The circles represent the tightness or cohesion of the family with the center of all circles, the epicenter, as the goal. Family (labeled with Identifiers, see Table 3) are self placed on the circles. Verification was member checked with selected participants and found to be acceptable. The Principal Investigator is not in a stationary place, but may move throughout.
How the Digital Family Oral History Pilot Began

ALP spent a large portion of his later adult life in Florida. He was visited infrequently by individual family units when they vacationed in the Sunshine state. When it was decided, by his three remaining children, that he should move back to northern Indiana, he complied. With ALP in District 1, communication between branches was slightly more frequent. Whenever ALP had a birthday, there would be a large celebration. ALP operated a car until he was 95 years old and would appear at family gatherings in District 1 and 2. He owned a cell phone, though calling on it was difficult due to his poor hearing and supplemental hearing devices. The family members sporadically visited with him in face-to-face settings as individuals. One great granddaughter performed domestic chores for him on a weekly basis. His daughter (P 10) made regular weekly visits and when he was moved to a nursing facility, she was with him on a daily basis.

At the time he died, the five branches of the family existed as the lengthy description in the preceding pages details. They were five independent branches separated from the trunk of the family tree. They were at a decisive moment where they could continue to fragment and grow larger as separate branches in separate districts or they could to make the effort to find a means to stay connected. The focus of this study is the story of how the family changed, adopted new technologies and united with the purpose of constructing an oral history for ALP as the endeavor. The reflections of a group of 17 family members who volunteered contain the answers to the research questions posed in this study:

1. How does a family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?
2. How do the family members perceive themselves as part of the family community through this oral history process?
3. What is the impact on family relationships?
Data Collection Protocol and Participant Information

The vision of this study was discussed when the family was gathered in the months just prior to and after ALP’s death. Internal Review Board (IRB) application for Ball State University was submitted (Appendix C), letter of introduction for the research portion of the study (Appendix D), and the Informed Consent (Appendix E) were created. The IRB ruled the research study is exempt (Appendix F). U.S. mail and email copies of the letter of introduction and consent form were distributed to all 73 members eligible to participate. Participation in sharing stories was not a requirement to be included in the study, only the ability to read or view the stories was a prerequisite. A solution was found for family members who wished to participate, but did not have Internet access. Printed copies of the stories and journal entries were sent through the U.S. mail and this alternative form of reviewing the oral history was sufficient for family members to offer adequate reflection for the study. The goal for participation was from two representatives from each of the five branches of the family tree for a total of ten participants. Diverse reflections were welcomed from those family members on the fringe of the project who may have vastly different perceptions and opinions. Seventeen participants engaged in the research, exceeding the target of ten.

Confidentiality of Data

Participant’s names were not used in this study. The positions they held in respect to ALP were their identifiers with the chronological order of when their reflection was received is indicated with a number. The letter P is an abbreviation of the word participant. Examples include: son (P13), daughter (P 10), grandson (P 6), or great granddaughter (P14). Audio and video recordings are housed on a password protected computer and external hard drive for the next two years. The written responses are kept in a locked filing cabinet for the same two-year
period. Emailed responses were printed, stored with the written responses and the e-mailed message deleted. The DFOHP website and blog are also password protected.

Table 3 describes each of the 17 participants with their identifier, age, the generation and family branch they belong too. Gender is also indicated as well as and the region where they live. Their cell phone and Internet connectivity is listed. It also provides data about the temperament of each participant. For this study temperament means their social situation penchant for talkativeness or storytelling or if their preference is to be quiet in the larger group. The participants’ position within the social circle of the family is identified on this table as well as visually in Figure 2. The final column lists the number of words in the reflections contributed by each participant to the data collection process.
Table 3.

Participants' Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Region*</th>
<th>Cell Phone</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Talkative</th>
<th>Storyteller</th>
<th>Quiet in large group</th>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Position in Family</th>
<th>Response Word Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Outside inner circle</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On inner circle</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Outer edge of middle circle</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Outer circle</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Outer circle</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Middle circle</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Outer circle</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 10</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Center of inner circle</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 12</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Outer circle</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Outer circle</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 15</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Rim of inner circle</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 17</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Middle circle</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* see also Appendix A
Gathering the Data

Now that the family had started to explore the website, (or reviewed printed copies of stories, archival materials and art uploaded to the website and blog) the data collection began. The original research questions above were expanded into more “family friendly” interview prompts. Seventeen family members responded to the prompts either by personal recorded interview, email, phone interview, or text.

The participants included a distribution of gender (Male = 6, Female = 11), generation (second generation = 4, third generation = 7 and fourth generation = 6), and ages (22-82). Educational levels were also widely distributed with high school diplomas (3), trade school certificates (3), Associate’s Degree (1), Bachelor’s Degrees (7), and Master’s Degrees (3). A wide variety of vocations were also represented with teachers (4), day care provider (1), architect (1), nurse (1), graphic designer (1), engraver (1), retail clerk (1), barber/hairdresser (2), and retirees (5).

The reflections supplied were also answered in a wide variety of media with most delivered digitally (e-mailed = 12, interviewed by proxy and then forwarded by e-mailed = 2, personally interviewed = 7, telephone interview =1). Technological issues that challenged the participants ability to answer included: do not have Internet service delivered to their homes (4), a computer too old to access the ALP website (1) and do not use email (3). These family members went to the extra effort to go to a space away from their homes to use the Internet to participate in the project and research responses. Two participants waited on the US mail to deliver the hard copies to them. Three branches of the family were represented with the largest contingency from the N Branch.
This study contains numerical data; however, the digits alone would not reveal the change, growth and emotions of the participants. Esterberg (2002) argues that the study of humans cannot mirror the study of the hard sciences such as physics or chemistry. It is the reflections shared that the data becomes rich and meaningful. The family did reconstruct the life of ALP from a few artifacts, their memories, and sharing their stories. In discussion of Ethnomethodological sensibilities, Holstein and Gubrium (2011) highlight the study of doing social life, by studying the population to see “. . . the distinct processes by which they concretely construct and sustain the objects and appearance of the life world” (p. 342). The authors go further to instruct researchers to divorce themselves from assumptions and commitments to the social world and bias. The reflections collected during this study were not anticipated even with the deep observations made by this researcher of the participants over an extended time. The family had no preconception of what their reflections would reveal. They agreed to offer the content of their thoughts, read what others shared, and to construct what they could.

Transcription of Interviews

All interviews were audio recorded or collected as a written document via e-mail. The audio files were transcribed and combined with the written responses into one document with the participant’s name removed. The responses from each of the 17 family members were grouped by research question and listed with the prompt in the order they were received. All participants were sent an e-mailed copy of the document for review, with the opportunity to edit, change or delete any response. Those participants without Internet access were given a copy of the composite responses by other family members living in close proximity with printer capabilities. Three edits were requested and the responses changed or discussed for clarity.
Codes, Clusters, and Colors

The major or strongest words were extracted from each reflection. Each reflection was read and reread to insure that the distillation was the essential meaning conveyed in each phrase or thought. The distilled words or phrases were transferred to a spreadsheet with the participant’s identifier code and the research question addressed as additional headings. The distilled phrases were now ready for coding. “Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Without an efficient way to organize the responses, they became a list of words in a long row with no form or order. Esterberg (2002) states that there is “no right way to code” and that each researcher should experiment to find the technique that works best for them.

You can do open coding in a number of ways. For example, you can simply write your codes in the margins. If you like working directly on the computer, you can use the comment function of a word processing program to insert codes. Some people like to use multicolored highlighters or pens to note key phrases in conjunction with marginal notes; others like to use colored Post-it® notes. You should try a few different strategies to see what works best for you. (Esterberg, 2002, p. 159)

My experience with constructing a whole from little bits comes from the art of quilting. From a stack of pieces of cloth, a single piece is selected and placed, temporarily, on a design wall. The process is repeated with the next piece until the entire wall is covered and a pattern starts to emerge. If the finished design is not pleasing the pieces may be rearranged until meaning is made aesthetically. The quilt pieces are not
static until they are permanently joined into a solid whole by the designer. It was natural to use the Post-it® note strategy described by Esterberg (2002) to sort the reflections by assigning them to colors and then using a large display area to arrange and rearrange them into meaningful groups.

Table 4 shows the colors, their qualifier and keywords to aid in the selection process of colors for the distilled phrases from the participant reflections.

Table 4.

*Color coding of responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Learning, adding to knowledge, discovery</td>
<td>added to knowledge, learned, did not know before, changed, new perspective, made to remember, discovered, know more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Strong emotion, positive</td>
<td>love, enjoy, miss, feel, punctuation! Emoticons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Strong Emotion, negative</td>
<td>discomfort, hate, pressure, sadness, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Therapy, strength, bonding</td>
<td>linked, healed, therapeutic, strengthened, forgiving, recovery from hurt feelings, relief from pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>happy, cool, smiles, laughter, relaxed, one of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Desire or wish</td>
<td>wish, want, request, need, yearn, long for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>Transitioning</td>
<td>becoming, contemplating, moving toward, ready for the next time, uncertain, questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Stated fact, no emotion</td>
<td>a statement with no indication of emotion, no change, no comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each distilled reflection was evaluated using the color codes in Table 4 and then the reflection was transferred to a correspondingly colored note with marker. Due to the position of the participant or their temperament, occasionally the same distilled phrases had entirely different meanings and will appear as two different colors. Also if a reflection contained dual meanings it may be reproduced in two or more colors and the duplicates appear on the posters. An example of this scenario is the reflection, “More relaxed” which was initially coded with beige for transitioning, however on closer inspection, this reflection was made by Great Grandson (P2) and for him to admit that he was relaxed is an expression of enthusiasm (Yellow) for he rarely is in a state of ease. To depict the color-coded notes for this publication a graphic representation follows in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The fourth Prompt, D, had so many responses that it was necessary, for this document, to separate the responses on two pages.
Figure 3. Responses to Prompt A.

Learning Responses
- Changed
  - I did not know... (2x)
  - P1
  - Learned he was laid back
  - P5
  - Gave
    - I learned the most
    - Insight
    - P1
    - Can see now...
    - P1
    - Can see...
    - P5
    - Stories gave me a piece of his life
    - P6
    - Realized she was treated like others...
    - P11
    - Interesting to learn
    - P7
    - Did not know the tobacco story
    - P10
    - Have
      - Knowledge has grown
      - P7
      - Expanded my knowledge
      - P14
    - Learned he is a joker
      - P3
      - Added to my knowledge of him
      - P8
      - Can not know grandparent w/o the other
      - P16
    - Learned he supported his wife
      - P9
      - Filled in the haze...
      - P17
    - Not know...
      - P5

Emotional Responses (positive)
- Liked the part about grasshoppers
  - P4
- Liked the journal
  - P4
- I love life stories
  - P6
- Learned exponentially
  - P7

Neutral Responses
- He was always working
  - P13

Wishful Responses
- I want to know...
  - P1

Emotional Responses (negative)
- No Comment
  - P12
- No Comment
  - P13

Enthusiastic Responses
- Pretty cool! reading this
  - P14
- Changed the course of your life and mine
  - P17

Note: Prompt A was: How did the stories shared on the webpage change what you knew about ALP?
Figure 4. Responses to Prompt B.

Learning Responses
- Will use the resource to learn P2
- Know better now... P3
- Would ask questions of others now P4
- I will be open to other’s curiosities P6
- Changed AFTER know ALP better now P7
- Gained insight P8
- Learned a new way to share P15
- Changed perspective of end of life P17

Emotional Responses (positive)
- Enjoy all the stories P1
- .. feel better now P14
- Preferred private mourning P3
- Glad to feel no pressure P15
- Miss time with family! P11

Neutral Responses
- ALP was a mystery to me P1
- Greater access to family P2
- No change P9
- No change P10

Therapy, strength bonding Responses
- Can reach all the family P2
- Greater sense of connection P2
- Linked family back together P16

Wishful Responses
- Want for my grandchildren P2
- Want my younger kids to share their stories P5

Emotional Responses (negative)
- No Comment P12
- No Comment P13
- Uncomfortable at first P14

Note. Prompt B was How did you change when we constructed this digital oral history for ALP together?
Figure 5. Responses to Prompt C.

Learning Responses
- Some I knew very well P5
- Realize why people are like they are P9
- Have the most knowledge of ALP P10
- Holder of the Heritage P10
- Learning the stories P14
- New way to think P17

Emotional Responses (negative)
- Outsider from lack of story knowledge P1
- Regrets I didn’t have stories P2
- Not more open P3
- Distant with some P5
- No Comment P13
- No Comment P12

Emotional Responses (positive)
- Website treated ALP with respect P2
- Closer P8
- Closer P9
- Head of the family now P10
- Site is Labor of Love P14
- Have always felt closeness P15
- Thankful P16

Transitioning Responses
- Somewhat relaxed P2
- …Yet P3
- Transitioning into a main storyteller P6
- Not sure, a bit more connected P7
- Changing role to historian P17

Enthusiastic Responses
- Somewhat relaxed P2
- One of the family! P4
- Pretty well established P5
- Family will be OK without ALP P14

Therapy, strength bonding Responses
- …feel closer P8
- Great bond through website P11
- Generations becoming closer P14
- Closer P16

Note. Prompt C was Where do you see yourself as a part of the family now that you have heard or read other family member’s stories or contributions?
Figure 6. Responses to Prompt D.

Learning Responses

- Story knowledge gives me more to talk about P1
- Can learn about cousins through web P4
- Comfortable with social networking P14
- Learned from music performance P3
- Intrigued by southern cousins P6
- Learned to transcribe P14
- Learned from writing poetry P3
- Can imagine early life for them P7
- Learned iMovie® P14
- Learned why brother acts abruptly P3
- Made me think of old times P10
- Learned perspectives are different P16
- Learned about brother's history P3
- Know how much family means P11
- Experienced with positive storytelling outcomes P17

Emotional Responses (negative)

- Fearful to share too much P5
- Unsure of other's opinions P5
- Sadness for not knowing ALP better P5
- Makes me miss family P11
- No Comment P12
- No Comment P13

Transitional Responses

- Offers to be Storyteller P17
- No internet is a handicap P14
- Sucks to take the time... P14

Note. Prompt D was What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family?
Figure 7. Responses to Prompt D (continued).

BONDS Responses

Therapeutic
Closer to older generation now
P2

Strengthen family bonds
Can relate better to
P2

Feelings
Don’t get hurt as much
P3

Stronger family bonds
Feel closer
P8

Saw cousins wanting to share
P6

ENTHUSIASTIC Responses

Saw storytelling freely told
P6

Worth all the effort!
P8

Glad family cared enough to share
P10

Positive thing (this project)
P14

... but worth the time
P14

Smiling as I read!
P15

Laughed out loud with others
P16

EMOTIONAL Responses (positive)

Love & commitment stronger
P2

Feeling closer
P8

Love hearing thoughts & feelings
P11

Labor of Love appreciated
P14

Thanks for doing this.
P14

WISHFUL Responses

Desire to hear specific story
P1

Wish to participate in more Oral Histories
P5

Wish just departed cousin had web with Oral History
P5

Wish ALP could have witnessed this
P6

Want my own Oral History told
P8

Want to keep reading
P15

Need face-to-face story also
P17

Note. Prompt D was What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family?
Again, the final prompt garnered so many reflections and comments that two pages were required to contain all of the color codes (Figures 6 and 7). The colors created a pleasing swirl of art-like data manipulation, but clusters or themes had not yet emerged from the responses.

The next step to become further immersed in the data came by transferring the color-coded responses to spaces corresponding with the participant’s spatial position in the family as a way to cluster the reflections for a visual representation. Miles and Huberman (1994) call these sorting spaces displays. Displays can add another dimension to the one dimensional cognitive map by establishing a pre-sorting protocol to the pieces of meaning gleaned from the transcription. When the researcher creates a display, the data becomes known. The complete data set can be viewed at one time in the confines of a single space, or in this study, four large displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The illustration of a cognitive map in the textbook is black text on a white page. A cognitive map is the basis for a mind map in the textbook of Marguilies and Maal (2004). Their instructional guide for decision making or planning takes the cognitive map and converts the text to graphics such as colorful images or illustrations drawn by hand. Marguilies and Maal compare mind mapping techniques to ancient cave drawings, hieroglyphics, and even the doodling of classical artists such as Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo (Marguilies & Maal, 2004). For researchers who are visual learners, a graphic display can guide the analysis more fluently than symbols or spreadsheets. For this researcher, a graphic display that provides the opportunity to rearrange the data returns to the quilting experience. The most meaningful display may not reveal any themes with the first attempt, data that are rearranged like quilt blocks, need to be studied and positioned in different ways for patterns or data clusters to appear.
Clustering data in social science research is a phenomenon replicated in everyday life (Figure 8). All the forks go into one section of the silverware drawer, all the socks go in the top dresser drawer and likewise all the coded data can be sorted and grouped together (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Clustering is not absolutely necessary as themes and networks will eventually appear, but clusters can scaffold with a cognitive map of coded data to give the researcher more opportunity to see important themes and relationships within the data.

Figure 8 gives a list of ideas or schemes for clustering data. These keyword or actions guided the observation of the cognitive color maps in discerning the themes as they merged into clustered groups and meaning started to appear.
The labeled Post-it® notes were placed on large poster sheets with the key elements of the research question in a circle in the center of the page. The spatial rings from Figure 9 which helped position the participants within the family social structure guided the placement of the
notes from each participant close to their location in the family. Central prompts written in the center ring to identify the posters are:

A. Changes about ALP
B. Changes within you
C. Where is your place, now, in the family
D. Changes with your relationships in the family

A simulation of each blank poster precedes the poster with the color codes notes attached in Figures. 9 – 17. Again, the reflections were so numerous for Prompt D that two posters were necessary for this one-dimensional reproduction. The actual poster of Post-it® notes on the wall, used during the analysis was heavy with layers of notes to show all the colors of Prompt D. By manually flipping up the layers or removing them, the phrases were revealed. For this publication, two pages keep the phrases readable.
Figure 9. Prompt A Blank Poster.

Note. Prompt A was *How did the stories shared on the webpage change what you knew about ALP?* Circles move from the outer, through the middle, and toward the inner circle with the closest, tightest bonds in the center.
Note. Prompt A was How did the stories shared on the webpage change what you knew about ALP?
Note. Prompt B was *How did you change when we constructed this digital oral history for ALP together?* Circles move from the outer, through the middle and toward the inner circle with the closest, tightest bonds in the center.
Figure 12. Prompt B with note distribution.

Note: Prompt B was *How did you change when we constructed this digital oral history for ALP together?*
Figure 13. Prompt C Blank Poster.

Where are you in the family?

Note. Prompt C was Where do you see yourself as a part of the family now that you've heard or read other family members' stories or contributions? Circles move from the outer, through the middle and toward the inner circle with the closest, tightest bonds in the center.
Figure 14. Prompt C with note distribution.

Note: Prompt C was: Where do you see yourself as a part of the family now that you've heard or read other family member's stories or contributions?
Figure 13. Prompt D Blank Poster

Note. Prompt D was *What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family?* Circles move from the inner, to middle, and then outer circles. Closer to the middle is a tighter bond.
Figure 10. Prompt D with note distribution.

Note: Prompt D was "What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family?"
For readability, this graphic is on two pages. Page one contains responses from P1 – P8.
Figure 17. Prompt D with note distribution (continued).

Can relate better to P10 P7

Love hearing thoughts & feelings P11

Smiling I read! P15

Glad family cared enough to share P10

Made us closer P10

Laughed louder with others P16

Thanks for doing this P14

Labor of Love! Appreciated P14

Can relate better to P10 P9

Know how much family means P11

Makes me miss family P11

Want to keep reading P15

Feel closer P15

Made me think of old times P10

Glad family cared enough to share P10

Made us closer P10

Learned perspectives are different P16

Positive Thing this project P14

Sucks to take the time... P14

No Comment P12

No internet is a handicap P14

Closer to older generation now P7

No Comment P13

Need face-to-face story as well P17

Offers to be Storyteller P17

Experienced with positive storytelling outcomes P17

Learned to transcribe P15

No internet is a handicap P14

Closer to older generation now P7

P.I.

Note. Prompt D was What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family? For readability, this graphic is on two pages. Page two contains responses from P9 - P17.
How the Themes Emerged

The colors provided more than a visually appealing display of bits of paper; they contained the themes emerging from the reflections. The analysis is the construction of a composite object from the reflections supplied, coded, colored and manipulated. Assuming the role of bricolage as described by Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011), “the bricolage can be described as the process of getting down to the nuts and bolts of multidisciplinary research” (p. 168) and also as a “. . . move beyond the blinders of particular disciplines [to] . . . peer through a conceptual window to a new world of research and knowledge production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 168). The analysis validates the metaphor of quilting as a legitimate analysis practice.

The qualitative researcher. . . is like a quilt maker or a jazz improviser. The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience. (p. 5)

During the assembly of the response displays, the themes, at first were hidden as a bright cacophony of colors assaulted the senses, then it became apparent that the colors were the themes. Each color corralled a distinctive portion of the distilled reflections into a confined space. With the themes identified by the notes oo each of the eight colors, the themes became solidified to use as the best materials for meaning construction which revealed the outcomes of this pilot and research endeavor. Further enhancing the themes were the numerical manipulation of the responses and member checks from a portion of the participants who were readily available.
Inclusion of Participants in Analysis

Member checks are valuable markers to keep the analysis on course, however the admonition of Clough and Nutbrown (2007) to include the participants in every step of the analysis and subsequent written text paints a lovely picture of ultimate cooperation among participants in a research study. If this type of collective analysis is successfully employed, it may be a utopian scenario giving voice and ownership to every participant in every step of the analysis. This perfectionistic approach proved too cumbersome for the participants of this study who were rapidly approaching the threshold of their tolerance for queries. They had previously constructed meaningful objects (reflections) from the materials they found during and after the DFOHP. Their contribution to this research was inestimable, but the formal research data collection was finished and the participants would not be burdened with the analysis.

Summary of Chapter Three

Chapter 3 began with the Qualitative Research methodologies of constructionism and case study to frame the research. The protection of the participants, their reflections and their identities were discussed. An overview of the self-selected sample showed their wide demographics in narrative and table form. The reflections were received through a variety of media, sifted, coded and reassembled onto colorful displays to find the meaning held within them.

In Chapter 4, the themes emerge from the data colors and the research questions are addressed with the themes and specific responses of individual participants.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

But once you become active in something, something happens to you. You get excited and suddenly you realize you count.

Studs Terkel

The Digital Family Oral History Project has begun. The website and blog are live with enough stories, archival materials and family members logged so that digital communication is beginning. There is a sample of video interview, a little audio and the theme song plays whenever the viewer wants to hear it. The pilot project will continue to grow; it is dynamic. The family cooperated in the DFOHP construction and offered reflections on what happened to them and to the family. The reflections were coded, colored, clustered, and themes emerged.

Analysis Began

As stated above, the website and blog became integral in exposing the family to previously unheard stories and written information. This is known because during the first formal interviews, in February 2013, unexpected results occurred. When this research traveled to the state of Texas, one of the oldest members of the family, daughter (P 10) and the oldest great grandson (P 2) agreed to the first audio-recorded interviews with the research questions used as prompts. During these face-to-face interviews, both contemplated the questions carefully and could not offer answers. Even though the oldest family member is also the most socially connected member, she had had no conversations with other family members specifically about
ALP. She did not know their stories from the pilot. She shared that her mourning had progressed, but since the website and blog were not yet operational she could not answer the research questions. Great Grandson (P 2’s) interview, several days later, yielded nearly an identical response. He is one of the more vocal members of the family and often likely to be in the center of a storytelling circle at a face-to-face gathering. It was reasonable to assume, from his social position, that other family member’s stories were held in his memory. His inability to answer the research questions confirmed that the assumption was wrong. He, like daughter (P 10) could not offer responses without the web presence. His further critique of the questions also revealed the need to expand them to be more easily understood by all generations of the family. It was at this time that the prompts were written to accompany the questions during face-to-face interviews or when corresponding through other media (Appendix G).

**Themes.**

**Green/Learning Theme.**

Table 5.

**Green/Learning Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Learning, added knowledge, discovery</td>
<td>added to knowledge, learned, did not know before, changed, new perspective, made to remember, discovered, know more,</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of total responses received were 145, of those 54 expressed some form of learning, perception or discovery that the participants had experienced. The response may have
been offered in the negative such as “I did not know about the tobacco story,” but this was included with Green/Learning because new knowledge had been gained.

**Pink/Strong Emotion, Positive Theme.**

Table 6.

*Pink/Strong Emotion Positive Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Strong emotion, positive</td>
<td>love, enjoy, miss, feel, punctuation! Emoticons dignity, closeness, thankfulness, appreciation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pink/Strong Positive Emotion was the second most prominent theme with 21 responses. These responses indicated that the DFOHP had an impact on the participant that was significant enough to share. Examples of the positive emotions included words and phrases such as “love,” “feel better now,” and “thanks.”

**Blue/Strong Negative Emotion Negative Theme.**

Table 7.

*Blue/Strong Emotion Negative Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Strong Emotion, negative</td>
<td>discomfort, hate, pressure, sadness, fear</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Blue/Strong Negative Emotion had only one less response with, 20. The responses in this category had the widest range from “No Comment” out of apathy to “Sadness for not
knowing ALP better” and to distrust of other family member’s opinions “Unsure of other’s opinions about how many stories I shared, I don’t want to seem like a hog.”

**Purple/Therapy, Strength, Bonding and Yellow/Enthusiasm Themes.**

Table 8.

*Purple/Strength and Bonding and Yellow/Enthusiasm Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Therapy, strength, bonding</td>
<td>linked, healed, therapeutic, strengthened, forgiving, recovery from hurt feelings, relief from pressure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>happy, cool, smiles, laughter, relaxed, one of the family</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purple/Therapy, Strength, Bonding (16 responses) and Yellow/Enthusiasm (13 responses) all concerned the larger family rather than the individual. Reflections of feeling closer or stronger were prominent within Purple and praise for the pilot, a sense of pride in the family, and identifying positive emotions, such as “smiling as I read,” “laughed out loud with others,” and “Pretty cool! reading this” were shared.
**Orange/Desire Theme.**

Table 9.

*Orange/Desire Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Desire or wish</td>
<td>wish, want, request, need, yearn, long for</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Orange/Desire theme contained 10 responses that were more individualistic concerning specific items that participants wanted to learn more about or hoped to see happen in the future. The Orange/Desires ranged from “I want my kids to tell their stories of ALP” to “I want to tell my own oral history.”

**Beige/Transitioning and Gray/Fact No Emotion Themes.**

Table 10.

*Beige/Transitioning and Gray/Fact No Emotion Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color of Note</th>
<th>Qualifier</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>Transitioning</td>
<td>becoming, contemplating, moving toward, ready for the next time, uncertain, questioning</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Stated fact, no emotion</td>
<td>A statement with no indication of emotion, no change, no comment,</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final two themes Beige/Transitioning (6 responses) and Gray/Fact (5 responses) though low in number are still significant. Some of the Beige/Transitioning responses indicated an acceptance of new leadership roles, “I need to be open to telling my story” and “I am changing to the role of historian.” The Gray/Fact theme offered some facts that were not shared during the pilot “He [ALP] was a mystery to me” and “He [ALP] was always working.” Other responses indicated the participant did not know how to answer the prompt.

Findings from Research Question 1

How does a family change when constructing oral history about themselves?

As the participants were interviewed, they were asked them to answer this prompt: How did you change when we constructed this digital oral history for ALP together? Answers to this question served to support the first research question. This section will provide insight into how the family members have changed through engaging in this digital family oral history pilot.

A very quiet, unassuming great grandson (P 4), who required additional prompts to answer the questions during a phone interview, responded with a resounding “Sure!” when asked if he would consider approaching a cousin, or other relative, who he does not know well, with a question now. This acknowledgement was a large change for this individual who represents many in the family who have never initiated conversation in the past. At the other end of the spectrum is a grandson (P6), a generation older who can be very vocal and engaging, yet famous for drifting in and out of family gatherings, at will. He offers this insight, “I changed by realizing that people [family] really are interested in you and who you are but you have to create an environment where people feel comfortable initiating. You don’t have to be the one that initiates, just be open to other people’s curiosities.” This grandson is making a commitment to be open and available for questions that perhaps the quiet great grandson will now be
comfortable enough to ask and with their interaction, could start a trend in the family to more conversation between usually taciturn members. In the family prior to the pilot, this kind of two-way communication was rare. This is a large change from the current protocol (at face-to-face gatherings) where a few individuals dominate the storytelling with those on the periphery (who possess a quiet temperament) listening, not sharing, or just leaving the group, unannounced. Other changes within the family indicate a willingness to change in the future.

A granddaughter-in-law (P15) confirms that the large family setting is not ideal with, “I thought this [DFOHP website] was a good way to talk about those things [memories, stories] without being in a big group . . . without feeling pressured.” She embraces the option to contribute (a change for her), since she is now able to make her contribution virtually rather than as the public speaker in a room crammed with relatives. Likewise, a granddaughter (P 3) who identifies herself as, “. . . being a hermit” explained that, “I definitely preferred it [DFOHP] to traveling and hanging out with relatives I rarely see [at a traditional funeral].” She states her preference of her own comfort over interacting with the family community but then she changes, drastically “. . . on the other hand, I missed hanging out with some of the relatives I enjoy seeing.” Her position is evolving, but not yet completed, she is in transition as were six other participants.

A great grandson (P 2) separated from the family by the greatest distance says, “. . . I have changed by gaining greater access to the thoughts and feelings of family members I barely know or see, and this has given me a greater sense of connection despite geographic and physical limitations.” He and his family had no hope of being an integral part of the greater family, due to the very limited number of physical visits they are able to complete biannually. The digital resource has changed his location from an outlier of the inner circle to the possibility of being
within the inner circle as he accesses the resource on a more regular basis. A granddaughter (P 16) verifies this observation with her comment, “This project has helped to link our family back together.”

Finally, one of the oldest members of the family has changed, perhaps the most dramatically. As a major contributor to the DFOHP and a son-in-law (P 17) who just attended the life celebration events after the death of his own son-in-law offers this reflection,

I think some of the great grandchildren missed not having a funeral service [for ALP]….Having just experienced a viewing, [traditional] funeral service, and [funeral] dinner, I have a new respect for the process. It [his son-in-law’s funeral] really helped us all put the experience behind us and feel like his whole life was celebrated with friends and relatives in a way he would have liked it.

The change comes for this family member as he becomes an active part of his own oral history and funeral planning. He had the unique opportunity to experience a family piecing together an oral history versus a life celebration planned meticulously in the hospice days prior to the death of a family member fighting cancer. Though both were difficult events, he has made the choice to orchestrate his own life celebration, prior to the time it is needed. Discussions of death or end of life planning have been a taboo in this family prior to the DFOHP. ALP was 97 years old and the only directives in place at his death were for his body disposal. With the family exposed to the Oral History process, after the fact in the DFOHP perhaps the most welcome change will be engaging in the practice of oral history proactively.
Findings from Research Question 2

How do the family members perceive themselves as part of a family community through this oral history?

For the second research question, this interview prompt was used: Where do you see yourself as a part of the family now that you’ve heard or read other family member’s stories or contribution? These prompt provided answers to the research question in many of the themes, Green/Learning is explored first. Some of the family members reflected that their possession of knowledge gave them seats of authority, “I see myself as the oldest and the one with the most knowledge of him [ALP]” was stated by his daughter (P 10). A great granddaughter (P 5) who spent summers with her added, “I feel like I’m pretty well established in the family. . . ”, but then admitted that, “. . . I will get to know the stories of other family members better when they talk about ALP.” Her position will be made more secure when she has more knowledge from the storytelling. A granddaughter-in-law (P 1) finds herself a victim of a different scenario. She said, “I have always seen myself as a bit of an outsider because I didn’t have much to add about him.” Her lack of knowledge was a gatekeeper for her entrance deeper into the conversations and storytelling of the family. A great granddaughter (P 14) also identifies the knowledge divide “. . . it’s ultimately bringing our family closer together or at least it’s bringing my generation closer to the older generation because we have a chance to learn all these stories that we haven’t heard before.” Her brother (P 2) shares this sentiment, “I had a sense of regret that I had little useful information to share. I now feel a bit more relaxed about my position, since all of his grandchildren and children submitted statements that attest to his quiet nature and to difficulties communicating with him.” Finally, a reflection from son-in law (P 17) acknowledges that [ALP] was not alone in faulty communications, “I didn’t think about the younger generations not really
knowing them [ALP and Grandma] except in their later, more difficult years. They [ALP and Grandma] had their fun side, laughs and good memories . . . these get lost . . . and they were not the same people.”

Another theme that addressed the second research question was Purple/Strength and Bonding within the family. A great granddaughter-in-law (P 7) feels, “. . . closer to those family members now, than I had previously.” She attributes this feeling to having an inner circle of [digital relatives’s stories] to draw upon. A granddaughter (P 11), who lives in close proximity to the oldest generation cluster in northern Indiana, has always experienced a feeling of comfort when around the family and now “Having the [web] site is a great bond and helps to make me feel close to family, even though we do not see each other much.” Another granddaughter’s (P 16) reflection comes from the Pink/Positive Emotion theme, “After reading other contributions, I feel closer to them and I am so thankful to be a part of this legacy.” Her sister’s (P 3) Beige/Transitioning identified her position as changing when she acknowledges that she is not open to others yet. “I like reading others’ comments. . . problem is you have [a] family/extended family of people who are just like him [ALP] . . . hermits.” She is not yet emotionally ready to change her position in the family. She is currently holding genetics responsible for her propensity to “clam up” and stay to herself.

Reflections, as indicated in Table 3, Participant Demographics were accurate when member checked after the DFOHP. Each family member was aware of their social place within the family construct prior to the DFOHP. Their reflections indicate that change was occurring in a closer, stronger direction. Although there were reflections with “no change,” no one states that they felt more isolation or continuing of the previous separation of the 5 Branches of the family.
Findings about Research Question 3

What is the impact on the family relationships?

For the third research question, this interview prompt was presented: *What was the impact on your relationships with others in the family?* This prompt generated the largest number of responses with 52.

The responses started with a great grandson’s (P 2) statement that “My love and commitment to my family has only grown slightly stronger through this opportunity, because I felt strongly committed before”. Others shared similar emotional reflections such as that they knew the pilot “was a labor of love” and “Glad they [the family members] cared enough about him [ALP] to post”. Six responses expressed that they felt or grew closer to specific individuals or the entire family. At a small, two family tree branch (J and N) impromptu evening of music and memories, a northern grandson (P 6) noted that he felt “...there seemed to be a unity within the family members. People who would have normally been quiet and in the background spoke freely and willingly. A deeper bonding happened...”

This evening, early in the pilot was video and audio taped and everyone in the room was eager to offer their stories. No anxiety was exhibited from the 15 family members gathered that night, even when on camera or microphone. Often at family gathering where two or more branches congregate there is an air of tension; however this evening was free from all anxiety. After a story was told, a lively bantering of question and answers would begin confirming details of the story. Two hours of taping occurred that night that have yet to be transcribed. When the transcriptions are posted so that the other family members have an opportunity to review those stories more changes may occur further strengthening relationships between branches.
An insightful reflection from a sensitive granddaughter (P 3) explained one of her everyday relationships, “When he [her brother] ignores my phone calls and texts, it doesn’t hurt my feelings as much as it used to because I tell myself ‘he is a squinty-eyed smiler’”. [This is an affectionate term for ALP featured in the theme song composed about his life during the pilot and posted on the website] (French, 2013). The pilot had impacted her relationship with her brother who lives in the same District (5) in a positive way. Another response from great granddaughter (P 14) who did not attend the music night, reflected change, “I would have to say that I would definitely be more comfortable contacting them [cousins] through the blog or some other social media, after reading their stories, I guess it makes them seem more approachable.” Perhaps the strongest reflection expressed was from a great grandson (P 2) “. . . I think that the sharing of alternative views about the life of our common ancestor is both therapeutic and an exercise that strengthens our bonds.” His comment came from the Purple/Strength and Bonding theme.

The Green/Learning theme supplied a large number of responses (15) to this prompt indicating a wide range of learning experiences. Learning moved from the technical of great granddaughter (P 14) “I learned to use iMovie” and “I now know how to transcribe” to the arts of granddaughter (P 3):

I learned a lot about ALP from my brother’s song (as I learned it so we could sing it together). I would ask him [her brother] questions about how he knew so much more than I did. As it turns out, I learned that he had spent quite a few months living and working with APL. I never knew that” [and] “I hadn’t really thought about ALP until I came up with my poem.
Practical learning involved how information gleaned from the stories could enable the user to have a better experience in future social setting. Granddaughter-in-law (P 1) states that “I think this blog and the stories shared on it will give me more to talk about with other members of the family”. Great granddaughter-in-law (P 7) agrees “I can now imagine their life [as they lived it] then, it makes me understand daughter (P 10) better.” A granddaughter (P 16) learned “Perceptions are so different! I have laughed with others through their participation in this project.”

With this prompt the Orange/Desire theme emerged as family members started to express their desires to interview specific family members and find out more. Their curiosities have been piqued. They now want to seek out information and learn from it. A granddaughter-in-law (P 1) says “I understand the relationship between ALP and his wife was tumultuous at times, I’d like to know what [a cousin and his wife] picked up about their marriage during the time they lived with them in Florida.” A wish was expressed by great granddaughter (P 5) that a cousin who just died in April “…had created a thing like this.” One family member, grandson-in-law (P 8) was encouraged to act, “I want to do this for myself, so my family doesn’t have to.” In a similar response, son-in-law (P 17) was inspired to expand the digital experience to a question and answer time at face-to-face gatherings.

We need a way for the very oldest family members, me and my brother-in-law, to stay in touch with all the newer members coming into the family thru marriage and births. They need a chance to talk to and hear about the old people of the family. On our side, [P 17 is an in-law] my grand nieces and nephews tell me they like to hear stories about their ancestors.
This statement from a member of the second generation validates that storytelling is now an accepted and valued activity, regardless of the delivery method. It has a unifying effect not only on this family but has been observed in other families as well.

Table 11.

Total Responses Coded by Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Qualifier</th>
<th>Prompt A</th>
<th>Prompt B</th>
<th>Prompt C</th>
<th>Prompt D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Emotion (neg)</td>
<td>Beige 5</td>
<td>Beige 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact, no emotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning, knowledge</td>
<td>Green 6</td>
<td>Green 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire, wish</td>
<td>Orange 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Emotion (pos)</td>
<td>Pink 4</td>
<td>Pink 5</td>
<td>Pink 7</td>
<td>Pink 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy, bonding</td>
<td>Purple 4</td>
<td>Purple 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Yellow 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Findings**

The four prompts that were used to generate interviews for the reflections answered the three research questions for the self-selected sample of the family of the DFOHP (Appendix E). The first research question, *How does a family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?* indicated a positive effect on the family with most of the reflection indicating gained knowledge (Green/Learning), a new way to connect (Purple/Strength and Bonding) and
affirmation (Pink/Strong Emotion). Also hope that future generations will use this resource (Orange/Desire) was indicated.

The second research question, *How do the family members perceive themselves as part of the family community through this oral history process?* indicated that a wide range of perceptions exists about positioning within the family. One family member perceived herself at the center of the family circles because of her extensive knowledge of ALP. A granddaughter likewise placed herself very close to the center. A granddaughter-in-law indicated that the lack of story knowledge kept her from the inner circle. Outliers on the family circle identified ways that the DFOHP will help them move closer to the center. Geographically distanced family members show enthusiasm for the new connection as other family members see their position changing through new roles into which they are transitioning.

The third research question, *What is the impact on family relationships?* generated the largest number of reflections. Green/Learning themes were the highest (15) with learning occurring through art, imagination of lives lived, technology and learning of other family member’s perspectives. This prompt also generated a large reflection on the Purple/Strength and Bonding theme (9). Reflections that feelings have mended, that family are willing and open to sharing with other branches and closeness and stronger bonds were reported by five reflections.

Yellow/Enthusiasm reflections were also high with seven praising the family’s participation, the effort required to produce the pilot, and positive emotional responses from the stories other’s shared. Blue/Negative Emotional responses (8) indicated that family members were concerned about sharing too many stories, that the lack of Internet access was a hindrance and sadness for not making the effort to know ALP better during his lifetime.
The final question to be answered within this research study is *What is the impact of the DFOHP on Adult Learning?* The impact, as reflected in the total Green/Learning theme responses (54) is that informal adult learning occurred. Of the 17 participants, 15 indicated acquiring knowledge, changing, discovering a new fact or story, or remembering by-gone days. The participants were also exposed to critical thinking and self-reflection, and new ways of knowing of which they may not be aware.

**Summary of Chapter Four**

Chapter 4 analyzed the eight themes that emerged from the data and used the themes with individual participant responses to answer the three research questions. *How does a family change when constructing an oral history about themselves? How do the family members perceive themselves as part of the family community through this oral history process? What is the impact of family relationships?* The themes also reveal whether informal education has occurred during the study.

Chapter 5 looks at what happened, how it happened, what could have happened differently and what we would like to see happen in the future.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

In the 21st century, knowledge will have no gatekeepers. There will be few knowledge authorities, and those that exist will have purview over smaller and smaller areas of knowledge. The responsibility for judging and using knowledge will rest with the learner.


Conclusions

The early adoption of the Digital Family Oral History Pilot website and blog by members of all five Branches of the family is encouraging. Prior to the DFOHP smaller branches, especially those whose original sibling has died, were starting to slip away from the larger family. With users registered from each branch, the possibility of a “social epidemic” spreading throughout the family by mavens becomes a greater possibility. Gladwell (2002) discusses mavens and their unique role in information dissemination. “Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know. For a social epidemic to start, though, some people are actually going to have to be persuaded to do something” (Gladwell, 2002, p. 69).

If the responses to the research questions from the sample are a true indication of trends within the family then the spread of the stories throughout the social networking and subsequent face-to-face opportunities is a reasonable possibility and something that this family is going to do. As family mavens emerge, they should keep the interest in the website, digital communication, and bonding moving forward. They can support the efforts of the participants
who acknowledged their changing roles to storytellers, historians, and promoters of more oral histories. Not everyone will decide to join the discussion with the mavens right away. A recent encounter with granddaughter P11 of Branch E revealed that she and her sisters discussion of the website has stimulated the desire from non-adopters to learn more about it. The sharing and discussion could encourage future acceptance of what some of the family initially rejected (Baldwin, 2005). As expected, the whole family did not adopt the website as a new communication tool simultaneously.

During the proposal of the DFOHP pilot and research study, stern warnings were issued about conducting research within one’s own family and that families involved with a will or estate could be difficult. At the time of this writing, no relationship tensions have been discovered within the family or lack of respect shown toward the researcher or the topic of the study. Some of the family members were reluctant, initially, to share stories about ALP. The perception was that there was not “much to tell”; “who would be interested in his story anyway”; or “the stories would take away from the dignity of a dead old man with no recourse to defend himself.” It is difficult to trust someone, even a family member, with stories of such a personal nature but as the DFOHP continued, more trust ensued.

The reflections and other informal conversations at early summer (2013) family gatherings indicate that the stories of the DFOHP are captivating and that many are interested in being a part of the website now. Comments from the website indicate that the family is engaged, “This is great to read. Thank you [P 5] for transcribing. What a blessing” and “Gosh I want to know what happened to [the second son]! It’s like a great, American novel. Hope [P 5] isn’t sneezing too much from the age of the journals.”
**Early Replication.**

The pilot website has spawned a sister site with the launch of www.ihavethingstodo.com. This is a third generation family oral history blog that captures mourning through creative writing of a wife, granddaughter (P 16), for her husband. The participants expressed the desire for the creation of this site in their reflections and it has come to fruition. Goodman (2002) confirms the healing effect of art on traumatic life experiences in her work in peace culture; storytelling, as well as reflection and creative writing, are both therapeutic art forms.

**Learning can go unnoticed and be comfortable.**

The family may deny this, but it now fits the definition of a learning community. When the family reflection participants embraced the DFOHP and shared what they were doing with other family members, they were encouraging learning. Their reflections revealed this mindset in their desire to keep other members connected and learning as well (Woods, Jr. & Judikis, 2002). The words “education”, “learning” or “gaining knowledge” were never mentioned verbally or in print during the interview portion of this study, however most of the participants had at least one reflection that indicated that they learned something new, acquired new knowledge or had gained a greater appreciation for story and oral history.

The sample portion of the family gained insight and developed stronger bonds from something as simple and pleasurable as oral history. Adult education practitioners may take comfort that sometimes the only agenda needed is storytelling and listening, with learning naturally to follow. The circle of rocking chairs at the Highlander Educational Center in New Market, Tennessee (Horton & Freire, 1990), testifies to the thousands of stories shared there by divergent people. Using rocking chairs to relax and share their tale of struggles in work or life or education is less threatening than knee-to-knee interviewing. Just by rocking, sharing and
listening, tensions are released and solutions replace them for all kinds of social issues and life improvement. Myles Horton witnessed this phenomenon too many times to doubt its validity. He did not have to teach *at* people for them to learn; they learned through telling their own story and listening for similarities in the stories of others (Horton & Freire, 1990).

**Recommendations for the Family**

Since this study had no model, there were some aspects that could have functioned better. Those included an informal technology training where one person from each branch or each geographic district became familiar with log-on procedures and acquired, at least a minimal, knowledge of the website. This would have allowed a more timely web presence for a family member experiencing difficulties with navigation. Also, it was discovered that when two of the family members volunteered to help with transcription of archival materials and video, their efforts not only accelerated the supply of materials for the website, but augmented their bonding with the site and family. It could have been beneficial to have more of the family involved in the creative process in the pilot, which could have led to a faster launch of the website and more time for reflection from those who were slower to adopt. The sharing of managerial responsibilities is planned at the conclusion of this study. A cousin has already accepted the role of co-editor of the ALP website and others can employ their talents in writing, photography, poetry and song.

Finally, establishing a network pairing family members who do not have home Internet delivery to a family member who is connected creates a digital “buddy” system. Sharing digital resources will save on U.S. mailing costs and the issue with lag time when a dynamic webpage is printed and out of date as soon as ink touches paper. The additional contact between “wired buddies” could establish even more bonds within the family in lateral directions. There will
come a time when the digital buddy system is no longer needed. Just as Sir Ken Robinson (2012) takes electricity for granted, so will the youngest of the current generation who grow up with the Internet as a household commodity and assume its connectivity is a given.

**Ends.**

The DFOHP family took for granted that ALP would live to be 100 years old. That was his goal but his life ended just shy of the mark. His ashes were returned just a few days from the 100th anniversary of his birth from the medical facility where he donated his body and will be interred on the family plots in northeastern Indiana this summer. His physical journey will end. He can put him to rest knowing that the family will not dissolve because he is no longer present. Because of the DFOHP and oral history of his life, constructed from the retelling of small pieces, the family is stronger and connected in a new way. We will not end.

Maybe ALP, my grandfather, knew what he was doing by not giving us a detailed summary of his life. Perhaps there was more to him than a “squinty-eyed smile.” He might have known that we would need to construct something corporately to have closure when he was gone, that art is therapy. Maybe that was the reason for his thousands of Pretty Punch® thread-paintings; no one really knows why he made so many. Perhaps he left the mystery of his life story as our blank canvas; so there is never an end.

**Recommendations for Researchers.**

The DFOHP was accomplished by this family and could be replicated by other families. The legacy of ALP was created, shared and preserved by his family after he died. Other families may be in a similar situation with a family member dying or incapable of supplying an oral history. A facilitator for a family who cannot establish a path or begin the process may be
instrumental in asking probing questions to start the sharing needed for the family oral history and assuming the role of information gatherer for families reticent to share with one another. Other families may also, as this family was, hesitant to open the topic of end-of-life.

I held a unique position as a non-participatory family member and researcher. My deep knowledge of this family and its peculiarities, spatial relationships, and member temperaments came from observations over five decades. I was also familiar with their culture and understood their language, its meanings and innuendos, which became valuable when coding and interpreting reflections. On the other hand, the family was also familiar with me, yet they still were hesitant, occasionally, to listen to my requests or suggestions as a researcher. A facilitator from outside the family would enable all members to participate simultaneously.

Establish trust within the context of mourning.

A researcher who is not a family member or does not have an extensive history with them will need to allow ample time in the field to identify relationships, cultural dynamics and to build trust. Extreme caution should also be practiced when first eliciting memories from a family maneuvering through the early stages of the mourning process. ALP was 97 years old. He lived a good life. His beloved dog preceded him in death, and his passing was not unexpected or unwelcome. Yet at some of the earliest interviews, the tears still flowed easily and often. The value of a cushion of time passing for the family is expressed below:

I do feel that this project is valuable because it allows many members of the extended family to offer what memories they deem appropriate without the limitations of time or physical proximity. The grieving process at the passing of a loved one can take place over time, with a bit of distance from the passing,
and the stories and catharsis can be completed with a bit of dignity (Great Grandson P 2, 2013).

**Talking to Grandpa is better than talking about Grandpa.**

The best way to capture an oral history is before the person dies. The DFOHP brought a fragmenting family back together, but a digital presence for a living family member could accomplish the same bonding throughout the greater family with additional benefits to the family member whose story is told. He or she may still be able to interact on cognitively functional days. If hearing is a challenge then subtitles could be activated or other forms of technology enhancements used to aid communication. One of the reflections of the DFOHP was the wish “that ALP could have been here to see what we put together. He could have been just sitting on the edge watching, but it would have been good to still his silly grin” (Grandson P 6, 2013).

Another family would have the blessing and validation that the stories they disseminate are endorsed by the person who lived them. Establishing a web presence prior to death would make it more convenient for family members who are in distant geographic locations to communicate and provide input.

**A digital family presence.**

The Internet is a powerful tool and public social networking has been adopted at a rapid pace. The youngest Facebook® subscriber within the DFOHP family is 11 years old. Social networking is natural for her. Many of her posts to her virtual Facebook® family read like conversations she would have in person, asking for advice, expressing her boredom and her joy at milestones in her life. It would be much better for her to be a part of a private family digital culture, where her questions are not on display to the World Wide Web, but to relatives who care about her, know her and are concerned for her welfare as she develops. Since she will not have a
great, great grandfather to question for advice perhaps the digital network of extended family
could share some of his wisdom captured within the posts, archives and multi-media. The family
culture can be learned informally through digital means.

**Future Research**

The DFOHP and reflections of the pilot met multiple goals. The sequence of events in
the completion of each portion of the entire three part study (pilot, website/blog and research)
constitutes a Theory-Practice-Theory pattern in which the reflections from the family members
provided valuable insights for adult education practitioners in the field of community education
and more specifically informal education. Families can learn informally through story and oral
history creation. Revisiting this family in five years to see how the DFOHP grew or how rapidly
it declined could be of value, especially in the study of transformative learning.

**Arts-based research.**

The family shared in the construction of a tactile artifact from the DFOHP. A large
binder that contains the printed pages of the website, covered in fabrics of different colors that
match the colors the family supplied when asked *What color reminds you of ALP?* The book
will be used at face-to-face family gatherings where an Internet hot spot may be non-existent and
also as insurance again Internet corruption or failure. The rapid responses that the family gave
for their color choices merits further inquiry. The realm of art as research, particularly art
created within a group, holds interest for this researcher.

**Capture it on film.**

The saying that “everyone has a story” is modified slightly in the Ball State University
Telecommunications Department to “every story contains a documentary.” Capturing the events
of the DFOHP on film could serve as a visual guide for other families or simply a showcase to
highlight how this creative family united to construct a rich, personal legacy of one of their forebears through collaboration, story and art. Other families could begin this process with the documentary as the model for story capture of their own.

**Other kinds of community.**

The DFOHP family documented in their reflections that adult informal education can happen implicitly. The responses and positive remarks after viewing the website and learning of the stories fulfilled the tenet of Wood, Jr. and Judikis (2002) that:

> Experience remains the heart of the matter, but it is inherently social rather than individualistic, for we experience the world through the lens of ongoing projects, categories, theories, and standards, and all of these are generated by communities (p. 118).

Churches, civic groups, and support communities can all benefit from story corporately told. The Caring Bridge® medical blogging site encourages family care givers (or the patient, if able) to share a personal journey through medical challenges and hopefully, cures. The viewer’s comments offer words of encouragement or share successes others encountered through the maze of modern medicine. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) offer, “The rich mixture of events, values, feelings, and ideas that stories communicate has long made storytelling an important mechanism of social connection. Stories help us relate to one another” (p. 6).

The story does not need to be traumatic to be shared. Every day, mundane, trite, and commonplace are evaluations with which many of us label our own existence. Like the DFOHP family, many feel that there is nothing to share or nothing of value in the telling of our story. More guerilla journalists like Studs Terkel are needed who are dedicated to a life to listening. He believed that everyone has a story and will tell it if they think someone is listening (Grimes,
Terkel constructed riveting tales from the lives of working folks, everyday people, as they told him about their jobs and what they thought about their work. Terkel died at 96 and told stories until his physical story ended.

**Summary of Chapter Five**

Chapter 5 included conclusions that discussed what occurred within the family as revealed in the reflections, themes and analysis. The early replication of the study with a sister website and blog was revealed. The discovery that informal education happened within the DFOHP family community and that the family was enthusiastic for the study and artifact was encouraging for replication in other families. Recommendations for this family addressed changing roles and leadership and solutions for some of the family without Internet accessibility. Recommendations for other researchers included caution to build trust and be cognizant of mourning time frames and rituals. The recommendations ended with the best case oral history of recording the story when the person telling it is still alive. Future research could include documentaries as artifacts and replications of the pilot in more varied communities such as churches, civic groups and support communities that address specific needs where story is valued and shared.
REFERENCES


Creel, K. J. (2010). *This is our home! Chicana oral histories: (Story)telling life, love and identity in the Midwest*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota). 3434246


APPENDIX A

Family Branches Geographic Distribution

Legend
Family Branch = Alpha J, N, A, R or E
Number = Families in that location
Major city listed

Region 1
N-3, R-4
Albion
E-7
Churubusco
A-1
Kendallville

Region 2
N-3, E-1, A-1
Ft. Wayne

Region 3
N-3
Muncie

Region 4
N-1, J-6
Indianapolis

Region 5
J-1
Martinsville
J-3
Bloomington
J-1
Bedford

Region 6
R-3
Evansville
Area

Region 7
J-1
Alpena, MI
N-1
Ft Worth, Tx
APPENDIX B

Family Tree

(*) eligible to participate in research
(P #) indicates a participant in the research study

Father (deceased) + Mother (deceased)

Daughter J (deceased)
Daughter N(*) (P 10)
Son A (deceased)
Son R (deceased)
Son E(*) (P 13)

Each child’s family follows as a branch on this family tree.
Tree Branch J

Daughter J (deceased) + Husband(*) (P 17) + Second Wife(*)

Grandson(*) J1
Wife J1 (estranged)

   Great Grandson J1 (deceased)
   Great Granddaughter(*) J1

   Great, Great Grandson J1

GrandSon(*) J2 + Wife(*) J2

   Great Grandson(*) J2

   Great, Great Granddaughter J2

   Great Granddaughter(*) J2a + Husband(*) J2a

   Great Granddaughter(*) J2b + Husband(*) J2b

   Great, Great Grandson J2b

Granddaughter(*) J3 (P 16) + Husband J3 (deceased)

   Great Grandson(*) J3

   Great Granddaughter(*) J3a + Husband(*) J3a

      Great, Great Granddaughter J3a
      Great, Great Grandson J3a

   Great Granddaughter(*) J3b + Husband J3b (divorced)

      Great, Great Granddaughter J3b

Granddaughter(*) J4 (P 3)

   Great Grandson(*) J4
Tree Branch N  Daughter N(*) (P 10) + Huband(*) N

  Granddaughter N1 + Husband(*) N1 (P 8)

    Great Grandson(*) N1a (P 2) + Wife(*) N1a (P 7)

      Great Great Granddaughter N1aa
      Great Great Grandson N1a
      Great Great Granddaughter N1ab
      Great Great Granddaughter N1ac

    Great Granddaughter(*) N1b (P 5) + Husband(*) N1b

      Great Great Granddaughter N1ba
      Great Great Granddaughter N1bb
      Great Great Grandson N1b

    Great Granddaughter(*) N1c (P 14)

      Great Grandson(*) N1d (P 4) + Wife(*) N1d (P 9)

        Great Great Granddaughter N1da
        Great Great Granddaughter N1db

  Grandson N2 (stillborn)

  Grandson(*) N3 (P 6) + Wife(*) N3 (P 1)

    Great Granddaughter(*) N3a
    Great Granddaughter(*) N3b
    Great Grandson N3a
    Great Granddaughter N3c
    Great Grandson N3b

  Granddaughter(*) N4 + Husband(*) N4
Tree Branch N (continued)

Great Granddaughter(*) N4a + Husband(*) N4a

Great Great Grandson N4a

Great Great Grandson N4b

Great Granddaughter(*) N4b + Husband(*) N4b

Great Granddaughter N4c

Grandson(*) N5 + Wife(*) N5 (P 15)

Great Grandson N5a (stillborn)

Great Granddaughter N5a (stillborn)

Great Granddaughter(*) N5b

Great Grandson(*) N5b
Tree Branch A  Son A Branch

Son A (deceased) + Wife A1 (deceased) + Wife(*) A2

Grandson(*) A2
Tree Branch R  
Son R (deceased) + Wife(*) R  

Granddaughter(*) R1 + Husband R1 (divorced)  

Great Granddaughter(*) R1 + Husband(*) R1  

Great Great Grandson R1a  

Great Grandson(*) R1 + Wife(*) R1  

Great Great Grandson R1b  

Great Great Granddaughter R1  

Grandson(*) R2 + Wife(*) R2  

Great Granddaughter(*) R2 + Husband(*) R2  

Great Great Granddaughter R2  

Great Grandson(*) R2
Tree Branch E

Son(*) E (P 13) + Wife(*) E (P 12)

Granddaughter(*) E1 + Husband(*) E1

Great Grandson(*) E1a

Great Grandson E1b

Granddaughter(*) E2 + Husband(*) E2

Great Granddaughter(*) E2

Great Grandson E2a

Great Grandson E2b

Granddaughter(*) E3 + Husband(*) E3

Great Grandson E3a

Great Grandson E3b

Great Grandson E3c

Great Granddaughter E3

Granddaughter(*) E4 (P 11) + Husband(*) E4

Great Granddaughter E4

Great Grandson E4

Grandson(*) E5 + Wife(*) E5

Great Grandson E5a

Great Grandson E5b

Great Granddaughter E5

Granddaughter(*) E6 + Husband(*) E6

Great Granddaughter E6a

Great Granddaughter E6b
Tree Branch E (continued)

Granddaughter(*) E7 + Husband E7 (divorced) + Husband E7

Great Granddaughter  E7a

Great Granddaughter  E7b
APPENDIX C

Internal Review Board

Study Title
Reflections on the construction of a digital family oral history and its impact on adult learning

Study Purpose and Rationale
This study will examine the outcomes and change of perceptions of the family members through engagement with the collective oral history of a deceased family member.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be between the ages of 18 and 85 and a member of or known to the family.

Participation Procedures and Duration
For this pilot, three research questions will be asked during a short interview of less than one hour. After the responses are analyzed, a focus group will be scheduled where the themes will be revealed and discussion about their accuracy is encouraged. The focus group should last approximately one hour.

Audio or Video Tapes and Storage of Data
For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio/video taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored on a pass-word protected computer hard drive for two years and will then be destroyed.
Data Confidentiality
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Risks or Benefits
There are no perceived risks or benefits for participating in this study.

Protection for Participates
The address of a counseling center in your area will be provided should you experience any discomfort during this study.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason. Please feel free to ask any questions of me before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information
For questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu

Study Title
Reflections on the construction of a digital family oral history and its impact on adult learning

**********
Letter of Introduction

(Proper names have been deleted for inclusion in this publication)

January, 2013

Greetings Family Members,

Many of you participated in the collection of stories and memories of Grandpa. It’s been a slow process, but I hope to launch the private blog this month. The url for the site will be sent as soon as it is available.

To keep the site private, you will need to request permission to enter it. I will get those permissions out as quickly as possible and then you are free to set your own password and view the site, enter comments and add more stories as you remember them. We want the blog to keep growing and be a place where we can continue to share. Plans for the future include adding a space for links to your websites and your blogs. Right now the blog is dedicated to sharing the stories of ALP. It is our site and our site only, please enjoy!

Now for one last request, I have been given permission to interview any and all family members who would like participate in my research about being involved in creating this digital history of Grandpa and what is has meant to you. There are only three official questions:

1. How do you think the family changed when constructing an oral history about him?
2. How do perceive yourself as part of the family community now that you have been through this digital oral history process?
3. What is the impact on your relationship to the family?
The answers to these three questions will guide my research about what we did, how we did it and whether it was a good idea or a bad one. Our answer may provide guidelines to other families who want to do the same kind of thing for their loved one who has passed away or may be caught in the confusion of dementia. I will only have a short time to do the interviews. I am available for anyone who would like to sit and chat.

I know that many have expressed concern about being on the Internet or being video taped or recorded. Privacy in all of these things have been considered in this research. I will not use anyone’s name. I would like to audio record our conversations because that helps me remember what was said. That recording will be just for my use and will deleted after the research is finished. The final paper will be about what we learned from creating the oral history about Grandpa not the stories about him (those are just for us). Everything you share with me about being part of the pilot will be confidential. I will analyze all the information as a group, not as individuals You will have a chance to let me know if you think the themes are correct or if they to be corrected before I submit the dissertation.

I’m so excited about putting this all together and for the opportunity for everyone to have a voice in it. Originally it was suggested that I only interview a small group of family members (about 10) to hear their answers to the three questions. I didn’t know how I was going to pick and choose, because everyone’s experience was different and likewise, everyone’s experience is extremely valuable. Now I can listen to everyone!

Just like the digital grandpa pilot, I need to have your permission to use your answers in the research. I’ve included the Informed Consent Form with this letter. If you would sign it and return it, that would great (I’ve included a stamped envelope to make it easy). On it, there is a space to indicate the easiest way for me to contact you. I will keep the paperwork and digital
files in a safe place for two years and then they will be destroyed. Only the anonymous responses will be in the dissertation.

Please don’t be shy. Even if you didn’t participate in making the digital oral history, I still want to know if reading the blog had an impact on you. If you have trouble getting onto the blog, please let me know right away and I will either walk you through it, or make other arrangements so that you can see the content. I don’t want anyone to be left out.

Your answers to the three questions should be honest. Please don’t feel that you need to answer them in a particular way for this research. Positive or negative responses are equally important. I will do my best to keep your answers pure and not add my opinion to them. I get to voice my opinion only after the research is finished.

How appropriate that we will be completing both of these pilots this spring. Grandpa would have been 100 years old February 19th! It was his goal to reach that milestone. We can honor his memory as we keep the lines of communication open between all of us. Thank you, in advance, for your participation. I’m really looking forward to your responses. Hopefully we will all benefit, together, from the stories and history of Grandpa’s long life!

Fondly,

Susan

Susan Cole Londt • 3511 N. Royal Oak Drive, Muncie, Indiana 47304-2032 • slondt@bsu.edu (slondt@bsu.edu Facebook address also) • 765-631-3254 (texting available at this number also)
Informed Consent

I, ___________________________, agree to participate in this research pilot entitled, “Reflections on the construction of a digital family oral history and its impact on adult learning.”

I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this pilot and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

____________________________________  ____________________________
Participant’s Signature                Date

Researcher Contact Information
Principal Investigator:  Faculty Supervisor:
Susan Cole Londt, Graduate Student  Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka
Adult, Higher and Community Education  Educational Studies
Ball State University  Ball State University
Muncie, IN  47306  Muncie, IN  47306
Telephone:  (765) 631-3254  Telephone:  (765) 285-5348
Email:  slondt@bsu.edu  Email:  mdudka@bsu.edu
Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 28, 2013
TO: Susan Londt, MA
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 418003-1
TITLE: Reflections on the Construction of a Digital Family Oral History and Its Impact on Adult Learning
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: January 28, 2013

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on January 28, 2013 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Editorial notes:

1. Approved - Exempt

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project. Please contact John Mulcahy at (765) 285-5106 or jmulcahy@bsu.edu if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.
APPENDIX G

Research Questions

1. How does a family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?

2. How do the family members perceive themselves as part of a family community through this oral history process?

3. What is the impact on the family relationships?